

Australian Girl Readers, Femininities and Feminism in the Second
World War (1939-1945): a study of subjectivity and agency.

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ROSEMARY FERGUSON WEBB, BA, MA.

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Abstract

The thesis argues that in the unique society of second world war Australia girls had agency and used this agency so that the meaning of both the idea of 'girl' and the idea of 'young femininity' were altered. They did this in ways which made their experience of girlhood and young womanhood more satisfying. Furthermore, their agency created a notion of youthful femininity which would subsequently form a foundation for the emergence of second wave feminism in Australia in the early second half of the twentieth century.

Using Foucauldian notions of the way power works in modern western societies, the thesis traces the relative contributions of the authorities responsible for shaping girls and of the girls themselves to the emergence of a new discourse of girlhood by 1945. The thesis focuses on six qualities of girlhood recognised by *both* authorities and girls by the end of the war. It demonstrates the way these qualities challenged the idea of 'girl' the authorities had at the beginning of the war even while girls were coming to see the same qualities as part of girlhood. It also charts the developing acceptance by Australian society of these qualities as part of femininity. To do this it looks at the way reading was understood by wartime authorities as a tool for shaping the ideal social subject. The thesis also, through reader response and memory theory, deploys memories of reading as an instrument which allows the researcher to uncover how girls themselves understood their relationship to the world and to others. In order to do this it draws on a specially constructed archive of the memories of both authoritatively approved and disapproved wartime reading as it was experienced by one hundred and thirty two women. These women were girls between the ages of twelve and eighteen at some time during the second world war.

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I compared the readers' memories with wartime reading authorities' ideas of girlhood in order to trace the girls' contribution to emerging notions of girlhood and I could not have done this without help from the following. The skills and support of some truly dedicated librarians and archivists in state libraries, education department libraries, high schools, state elementary schools, private schools and Catholic schools gave me access to documents containing authorities' ideas. Wollongong University Library deserves a special mention for giving a home to, and so making available, the comprehensive collection of Australasian education department school magazines originally started by Doris Chadwick and on which Chapter Two depends. A remarkable resource!

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Introduction

In any remaking of social orders and power relations, there must be two stages: first the telling of stories (the creation of myths) that make it possible to think new things, and then the painstaking transferral of thoughts into actions.

Marianna Torgovnick.¹

At the outbreak of the second world war thirteen-year-old Edith was the eldest healthy daughter in a family of six living on a hardscrabble, Australian farm. She appeared to be a respectable girl living a recognised social identity. For six hours each day she was being educated to the minimum legal level in a one-teacher country school. Before and after this time she cared for her brother and sisters and helped her mother in the feminine farm activities associated with dairy management.² Her roles as country schoolgirl and farm daughter were preparing her for her future service of local marriage and maternity. However, this notion of Australian girlhood was already splitting apart under the dominant groups' development of late capitalism with its demands for new femininities and the concomitant struggle of patriarchal interests to retain traditional masculine power in the gender relationship. These were also pressures that were soon to be intensified by the contingencies of war. Furthermore, respectable Edith was herself not only contributing to this rupture of the accepted notion of youthful femininity but also to the emergence of another idea of girlhood, one which she would find more satisfying than the identity authorities currently approved for her. By applying Torgovnick's notion of the role of stories to Edith's life at this time we can see this girl's effect as an agent in the emergence of a new idea of youthful femininity.

In 1939 Australia was a modern, literate society.³ As a girl Edith was reading in a regulated way at school. She also read in a less-directed way at home and through friendships. She read traditional conservative stories and she also read newer, popular texts. All this reading was accepted as part of girlhood. Edith was influenced in her ideas of the place of girls in the world by this material and through these reading

¹Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, p 69.

²Lake, *The Limits of Hope*, pp 177-178; Alston, *Women on the Land*, pp 33-34.

³For mass literacy as a given in modern British societies see Altick, *The English Common Reader*; Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*. In the Australia in the first half of the twentieth century, Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*.

relationships, as well as by the immediate conditions of her life beyond reading. In order to make sense of this multiplicity of often-conflicting ideas she drew on all these experiences in telling herself stories of how to be a girl. Of course, in these stories she chose those aspects of the experiences which most pleased her. Such stories don't exist only inside one's head. They are formulated as a precursor to being acted. Across the years of the second world war, Edith's notions of girlhood were expressed in her daily life. Here the conditions of Australia as a modern, wartime state influenced the way in which her ideas were received. The movement of social ideas towards modernity was creating confusion over the meaning of femininity.⁴ The notion of service as the contribution sought from all citizens in response to war as a condition of emergency was valorised. Together, these forces created a unique situation that allowed the social acceptance of many aspects of Edith's stories which at other times would have been regarded as transgressions and corrected. And as Edith matured society shaped her into a relationship which gave her a powerful position from which to pass on these emerging ideas of femininity; the role of mother in the post-war domestic mother/daughter relationship.⁵ Such daughters grew up to become young women in a nation experiencing second wave feminism.

* * *

Edith's experience of femininity ranges across the concerns underpinning this thesis. The thesis grew out of my sense that the emergence of second wave feminism in Australia could be explored in terms of profound continuities as well as the unique circumstances of its historical period. It seemed to me that one way of situating second wave feminism in Australia as the result of continuities was by demonstrating that second world war Australian girls had agency and used it in ways that changed the social power relationship. As a consequence of this approach the thesis engages to answer three historical questions. Did wartime Australian girls have any agency? And if they did, how did they exercise it? Why did they exercise it? In the following

⁴My working definition of modernity here draws on Foucault's notion of public regulation of the population as the necessary support of a growing capitalist state. See Rabinow, 'Introduction', *A Foucault Reader* pp 17-18. I traced the way modern regulation through expert knowledge had progressively drawn together ideas of women and Australianness by the time the second world war approached by using Finch's, *The Classing Gaze* and drawing on Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home* and Craig Campbell, 'Secondary Schooling, Modern Adolescence and the Reconstitution of the Middle Class', *History of Education Review*, vol 24, no 1, 1995.

⁵Edith's idea of her girlhood and the play of all these forces are represented in full at the end of this chapter.

sections I explain how the notions of second wave feminism and wartime girls' agency are connected and how I used reading in a society conceptualised as the outcome of three layers of discourse to answer these questions. These notions led to my constructing a thesis in which the analysis of girls' contribution to six key qualities of youthful femininity is a case study demonstrating wartime girls' agency and its effect on feminism. Reading offered an approach which would allow me both to trace girls' contribution to the key qualities and provide historical sources for this exercise.

The thesis addresses three relative gaps in feminist studies which, when explored in connection with each other, argue for the effect of historical continuities on second wave feminism. These are the notion of some continuities informing Australian feminism, the idea that such continuities might be transmitted through ordinary women rather than active feminists and the concept of the domestic mother/daughter relationship as a channel for these continuities. Looking at the existence of some *continuities* informing Australian feminism does not mean I am looking at feminism as an unfolding progression. Rather I explore some of the ways social influences in wartime Australia created subject(ive) positions which later social circumstances would draw on in the active feminism of the 1960s and 1970s.⁶ The validity of my approach is borne out by the emphasis on continuities as well as change in feminine life in the raw material on which this study depends. However, originally the approach grew out of an undergraduate discussion I had with my fellow-students on the genesis of second wave feminism in Australia. Although the discussion was confused and (for all of us) ill-informed it was a powerful one, not only taking place in tutorials but continued around coffee later on.⁷ Most people in the discussion appeared to conceptualise feminism as two separate times of public movement divided by an abyss of quiescence. Lake had not published *Getting Equal* with its explicit argument and widely cast evidentiary net postulating an interwar ('post-suffrage') feminist movement then, so the distance between 'feminisms' seemed even wider to students.⁸

⁶I agree with Dyhouse, 'there is no simple tale of steady progress towards sexual equality' (*Girls Growing Up*, p 2), and also acknowledge there are several scholarly ideas about the pattern of Australian feminism (see Simic, 'A Hall of Selective Mirrors' in *Lilith*, vol 10, 2001).

⁷See Lake's argument for this cultural gap, *Getting Equal*, p 6.

⁸Lake, *Getting Equal*, p 9; see also Lake, 'Giving Birth to the New Nation' in Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath and Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, pp 228-229; Irving, 'Citizenship' in Caine, *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, pp 27-29.

Consequently, the concept of feminism the discussion seemed to be circling around led to ideas of second wave feminism as an event and as the Australian reflection of ideas imported from elsewhere, particularly the United States of America. These notions seemed to sit so lightly on the top of historical understandings of the development of social organisation, they raised more questions than they answered. It seemed to be important to look at some ways this active feminism could emerge from existing Australian society. The thesis is a movement in this direction.

The student discussion subsequently led me to an awareness of a second gap. Much feminist research, especially in work on subjectivity and agency, has focussed on notable women. The effect of this is to make the contribution of ordinary women to feminism shadowy.⁹ Feminism in Australia has had two periods in which it was foregrounded as a powerful, popular activist movement among women; in the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰ As a popular movement second wave feminism involved a broad swathe of women from the upper working and lower middle classes particularly.¹¹ Therefore, a study of why this demographic felt it could behave in this way should be useful. Since *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson's examination of the reflexivity between shifts in social organisation and shifts in the way the ordinary population understood itself, the value of history from below has been widely acknowledged.¹² By opening up our knowledge of *the role of ordinary women*, as this thesis does, new light is cast on ideas of the meaning and development of feminism.

Out of this last understanding grew a notion that highlighted another gap. This one seems to me an area of unacknowledged understanding rather than a lacuna. It is the power of the *Australian feminine domestic relationship* between mothers and daughters. Despite the increasing public organisation of femininity, in the period of

⁹Bulbeck, *Living Feminism*, p 6; Joan W Scott, 'Books' in *Australian Historical Studies*, 115, 2000, p 359; Standish, 'Reviews' in *Lilith*, 2001, pp 176-177.

¹⁰For nineteenth century feminism as a popular movement in Australia see Grimshaw, 'Contested Domains' in Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath and Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, pp 170-174. For its depletion of popular energy and the loss of information about continuities in feminism see Lake *Getting Equal*, p 10 and p 6. For the period of second wave feminism as popular activism see Larbalestier, 'Identity and Difference' in Caine, *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, pp 152-154.

¹¹ See Note 55 in this chapter.

¹²See for example, Green and Troup's comments in *The Houses of History*, p 33. For Thompson's ideas of agency and 'history from below' see the 1963 preface to *The Making of the English Working Class*.

second wave feminism young women still had close ties with their homes and mothers were still recognised as significant in guiding girls into womanhood. The domestic feminine relationship was clearly a continuing force in the organisation of Australian society.

Few historians have looked squarely at the meaning of the Australian feminine domestic relationship, although many draw on its existence in focussing on other aspects of feminist and social history. Bulbeck in *Living Feminism* and, particularly, Bell and Hawkes in *Generations* focus on the effect of the domestic mother/daughter relationship in modern Australia. In 'Reconciling Our Mothers' Lives', Huggins, Saunders and Tarrago trace the meaning and influence of the relationship through race and gender. In *The Classing Gaze* Finch grapples with the infiltration of this relationship by middle-class, masculine, knowledge-based interests into Australia's working class as part of the process of normalising the working class. There are also important works addressing the role of women in interwar and wartime Australia which recognise in passing the significance of the feminine domestic relationship.¹³ In these works the relationship has been tangential to the main purpose of the study rather than the focus. Nevertheless, these histories also, to a limited extent, reflect the power of the relationship. Consequently, all these works have been important in contributing to my developing understanding of the Australian mother/daughter relationship as an auxiliary to modern femininity.

From these gaps came the idea to test the notion of feminism as continuity using the idea of ordinary women and girls as social and historical agents and the power of

¹³In Kingston's *My Wife My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann* the relationship between mothers and daughters is part of the background to changes in women's work. In McCalman's *Struggletown* the relationship is part of an examination of the life-course of a generation of working-class men and women. Reiger focuses on the effect on women and society of changes in ideas of motherhood from the domestic to the public. Smart, and Darian Smith and Wills address effect of developing public regulation on girls in ways which imply the loss or re-direction of the power of the feminine domestic relationship. Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', *Showgirl and the Straw Man: Journal of Australian Studies*, 71; Darian Smith and Wills, 'From Queen of Agriculture to Miss Showgirl', *Showgirl and the Straw Man: Journal of Australian Studies*, 71. Darian Smith's *On the Home Front* explores the social history of wartime Melbourne and in doing so gives tantalising glimpses of this relationship with reference to ideas of girls in successful and unsuccessful families. For successful family life see pp 149-150, for 'failed' family life see pp 133-134. The domestic mother/daughter relationship is also reflected among the multiple relationships affecting women in the wartime social histories such as those by Connors, Finch, Saunders and Taylor, and Goldsmith and Sandford. See also Hetherington's 'Families and Children in Wartime Western Australia', Buttsworth's 'Women Colouring the Wartime Landscape' in Gregory, *On the Homefront*.

the feminine domestic relationship in Australia. As I have acknowledged, discussions about Australian second wave feminism as an ‘offshoot’ of imported ideas raised questions for me involving the historical reasons for its emergence. If history is tracing the process of change, what kind of influences would cause a broad movement towards the public struggle for women’s rights among young middle-class and upper-working-class women in a post-war society which was still strongly affected by its British settlement history?¹⁴ Post-war Australia was a society in which good women were represented as naturally returning to the home to raise families.¹⁵ Not only scholarly studies, but also the reflections of a feminist on the early life of the second wavers offered some ideas for hypotheses. Kaplan, in considering the emerging spirit of second wave feminism in Australia, raised the issue of the feminists in relation to their mothers as a point of personal experience.¹⁶ Australia at this time was still a society in which ordinary mothers influenced ordinary daughters towards young womanhood through a combination of their own experience and state regulation.¹⁷ Mothers were a powerful influence on girls’ ideas of youthful femininity. This approach led to my realisation that a focus on the complex ways in which the feminine domestic relationship interacted with public regulation posed another important question. Could second wavers have been influenced by their mothers into ideas of womanhood which allowed them to imagine a popular, public movement for women’s rights where young middle-class and upper-working-class women were contributors?¹⁸

In Australia, I hypothesised, the mothers’ generation contributed to the pre-conditions for second wave feminism. Yet these older women did not see themselves as ‘feminists’.¹⁹ They saw themselves as respectable, non-transgressive members of the patriarchal society of the 1950s and 1960s, raising their daughters to be good

¹⁴For the class basis of feminism see Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 217-219. For a brief overview of the power of British settlement in relation to feminism see Standish, op cit, p 177.

¹⁵Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p 233; Saunders and Bolton, ‘Girdled For War’ in Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia, Domination and Negotiation*, pp 394-395.

¹⁶Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest*, 1996, pp 6-8.

¹⁷See Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, 1981, for the traditional feminine domestic relationship in British societies. For Australia at this time see Kaplan, *ibid*; Bell, *Generations*. For the developing effect of regulation on domestic family life see Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*.

¹⁸Clearly, I am not arguing this is the only influence. Historians argue that the movement is tied to a multiplicity of social conditions and other movements, see for example Kaplan, op cit, pp 24-25; Bulbeck, op cit, p 24.

¹⁹Bulbeck, op cit, pp 3-4.

women.²⁰ How could such women also influence these same daughters to challenge patriarchy in a mass, public movement? One consequence of these thoughts was the understanding that perhaps I needed to re-conceptualise *feminism*. Perhaps feminism could be subtle, continuous and diverse as well as public, unique and grouped. Such a concept changed the way I could think about women's rights and social change.²¹ If both these concepts were feminism then they must link in some way. Perhaps the two existed on a continuum. Public feminism could be another form of expression of the struggle for women's rights rather than a sudden eruption after years of quiescence.

Ideas of pre-conditions for second-wave feminism embedded in Australian society, the importance of ordinary women and the power of the Australian mother/daughter relationship led to my thinking about *agency* as part of youthful femininity in the previous generation. Kotre argues that we understand who we are through the way we remember ourselves and that we tailor these ideas to our current circumstances.²² Second wavers' mothers, in influencing their daughters towards young womanhood, had done so partly through the understanding of young womanhood they had interpreted through their own youthful experience. This moved my focus to thinking about the process by which the previous generation as girls might have come to understand young womanhood in ways that linked with the characteristics shaping the second wavers into imagining a mass public struggle for women's rights. This earlier generation were girls during the second world war. Consequently, the meaning and effect of girls' agency in second world war Australia became the central consideration of this thesis.

* * *

Australian wartime girls' potential for agency was part of a society which can be seen on a *Foucauldian* basis through the notion of discourse, that is social ideas as the outcome of both authorities' notions and the lived experience of the subordinate

²⁰Bell, op cit, p 26; Kaplan, op cit, pp 6-8; Bulbeck, op cit, pp 95-96.

²¹Simic, op cit, draws on Joan W Scott's work to emphasise the historical meaning of feminism as the product of a relationship between the concerns of women of the period under consideration and those of the feminist historian, p 6.

²²Kotre, *White Gloves*, pp 87-89 and p 172.

group.²³ The thesis focuses on girls' agency by looking at the relationship between the girls and authorities and social ideas of youthful femininity. At the same time, it recognises that this relationship was influenced by both different layers of discourse and by a repertoire of discourses in each layer. Some layers were experienced more immediately by wartime girls than others. Furthermore, respectable girls, finding the authoritative demands of one discourse in the layer most immediately affecting them uncomfortable, were often able to draw on a different and more satisfying discourse from their repertoire in that layer.

The emerging notion of wartime Australian girlhood is conceptualised as part of the final stratum in *three contiguous layers of discourse*. The term *global* is used here to refer to those discourses characterising the western nations. Capitalism and patriarchy were the *global discourses* shaping Australia as one of the western nations. However, Australian girls experienced the ideas of femininity supported by these global discourses more immediately through complex understandings of femininity in a repertoire of four significant *national* discourses; Britishness, citizenship, motherhood and sexuality. The final discursive layer is the *emerging* wartime discourse of youthful Australian femininity, analysed here as 'naturally' including public voice, public struggle, being leaders and being followers, an understanding of moral truth and a capacity to act as a group. To sum up, the key qualities of girlhood in this layer of emerging discourse are an outcome of the way girls experienced capitalism's and patriarchy's global ideas of femininity through the significant national discourses.

Wartime Australia was a (western) British society.²⁴ In this kind of society the owners and functionaries of capital, and British middle-class men were the most powerful groups. The discourses of capitalism and patriarchy were dominant and reached globally across all such societies.²⁵ These discourses maintained the power of those associated with capital and of white, middle-class men by exploiting 'others' through the ideas and the resulting practices in social relationships of class, race and

²³ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1, p 99.

²⁴ For the institutionalisation of British values in Australia at this time see White, 'A Backwater Awash: The Australian Experience of Americanisation', *Theory, Culture and Society: Explorations in Critical Social Science*, vol 1, no 3, 1983.

²⁵ Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, pp 2-4, pp 27-28.

gender.²⁶ This thesis focuses mainly on the discourses' effect on gender. In western society at this time turmoil in and between the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy ensured that Australia was a society experiencing turmoil over ideas of femininity in addition to that caused by the contingencies of war. The movement in capitalism from a focus on production to a focus on distribution and consumption, and its associated extension of systems of public regulation, was shifting society further towards modernity.²⁷ Traditional capitalist social relations posited women as domestic workers; producers of the physically powerful masculine public worker, and this notion still continued. However, late capitalism positioned women themselves as part of the public labour force in relation to tasks associated with production inside an organised infrastructure as well as with distribution. Women were also seen as limited public citizens for the new roles meant that some economic independence and public mobility became part of femininity.²⁸ Furthermore, for Australia this war was a war to maintain a capitalist society and so the characteristics of the relationship between capital and the population of workers were intensified. Patriarchal traditions of social relations posited femininity as domestic and supportive of masculinity rather than public and independent. This meant that the changes in social relations generated by late capitalism challenged patriarchal interests.²⁹ Interests invested in patriarchy sought to retain the traditional gender relationship partly through renewed insistence on conservatism.³⁰ This was an approach assisted by the conservative nature of war.³¹ Patriarchal interests also sought to negotiate a newly dominant position for masculinity in relation to the emerging ideas of modern femininity.³²

The turmoil in the layer of global discourses affected ideas of femininity in the significant national discourses of Britishness, citizenship, motherhood and sexuality. Consequently, girls experienced in complex and contradictory ways the different

²⁶ Weedon, *ibid.*

²⁷ Foucault, 'Right of Death and Power Over Life' from *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1 in Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, pp 262-263. See also in the same volume, Rabinow, pp 17-18. This concept is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

²⁸ Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, pp 179-187.

²⁹ Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, *ibid.*

³⁰ Saunders and Evans, 'Section Three: Gender and Productive Relations, Introduction', in Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia*, pp 221-224. For a specific focus on conservative ideas affecting employed women in Australia up to the time of the second world war Australia, Frances, *The Politics of Work*, Chapters Seven and Eight.

³¹ Higonnet and Higonnet, 'The Double Helix' in Higonnet, Jenson, Michel, Weitz, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, p 34 ff.

³² Walby, *op cit*, pp 183-184 ; Frances, *ibid.*

values these equally-important discourses gave to femininity. For example, in this era femininity as part of Australian Britishness continued to value race over gender.³³ Simultaneously, through ideas of motherhood Australian femininity maintained the tradition of valuing nurturing femininity over some ideas of race.³⁴ Conflict and competition not only existed *between* different significant national discourses, there was also conflict and competition *within* these discourses as the dominant interests continued to draw on ideas of Britishness, citizenship, motherhood and sexuality to express the now-conflicting femininities they each required. For example, patriarchal ideas represented public, autonomous sexuality as transgressive of ideal feminine service supporting the masculine citizen worker, while capitalist ideas encouraged young women's public, sexualised consumption as part of achieving the heterosexual relationship emblematic of femininity. Both these ideas were understood as Australian feminine sexuality.³⁵ Consequently, Australian girls had a repertoire of doubly complex significant national discourses to draw on in making sense of the world and their position in it.

The process of agency was fuelled by the subjects' insecurity. Girlhood was already experienced as a period of insecurity and heightened need to formulate an identity because of capitalism's and patriarchy's *global* idea that girlhood was a *process* in which the subject moved from childhood to womanhood. Insecurity was intensified through competing and often contradictory notions of youthful femininity born out of the conflict and change in the global layer of discourse. Wartime girls were concurrently being shaped as daughters, ideally influenced into femininity under their mothers' domestic tutelage *and* adolescents, moulded into worker/citizens through public systems of expert knowledge. War also affected them. They were being fashioned as young wartime citizens on the edge of the home front's endeavour to restore security to a nation under attack. A girl could draw on the significant *national* discourses as they related to any of these identities in order to interpret her subject position.

³³Joanne Scott and Evans, op cit, pp 140-141.

³⁴In British society, Hickman and Walter, op cit, p 12. In Australia, Paisley, 'Feminist Challenges to White Australia, 1900-1930s' in Kirkby, *Sex, Power and Justice*, pp 256-258; Paisley, 'White Women in the Field', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 52, 1997, pp 117-119.

³⁵Finch, 'Consuming Passions', pp 109-110.

The term ‘girl’ became problematical in other ways as I thought about this project.³⁶ In the thesis, which focuses on both youthful femininity and non-transgressive agency, the term is used in conjunction with ‘Australian’ to apply to those girls already recognised as respectable members of the nation and between the ages of twelve and eighteen at some time in the second world war. The category ‘girl’ is further narrowed by the notion of *respectability*. The term ‘respectable’ was itself dynamic at this time for it carried a range of developing ideas associated with race, ethnicity and class in line with the dominant interests’ changing focus. Respectable Australian girls were recognisably ‘white’ in a period when concepts of ‘white’ workers and families were being re-defined and extended.³⁷ They were recognisably ‘British’ in a period when middle-class British values were being progressively normalised across the groups already understood as middle-class and working-class Australians.³⁸ This study explores the effects of friction in a developing modern society between authorities’ notions of the socially acceptable girl and the subject’s simultaneous desire to be accepted and her experience of ‘lack’ as part of this identity.³⁹ Respectable girls themselves would struggle to fit within these parameters even while their desire for completeness ensured they would seek the most satisfying ways to do so. These notions position ‘girl’ as a concept with the potential for girls’ to

³⁶Girl is a term used by historians in such ways that several meanings have accrued to the term. Many of the historical studies useful to this study on subjectivity included girls only as part of a focus on the effect of war on the home front. In some works, this led to ‘girl’ appearing to specify a range of identities from children around nine years old to economically and sexually independent young women possibly in their twenties. See for example, Goldsmith and Sandford, *The Girls They Left Behind*, p 7, p 10, p 17; Connors, Finch, Saunders, Taylor, *Australia’s Frontline*, p 1, p 10, p 145, p 147. Participants in oral history projects are also quoted using the term ‘girl’ across a range of meanings, see, for example, Connors et al, op cit, p 4, p 145, p 146, p 147.

³⁷For white identity as a discursive practice, Shome, ‘Whiteness and the Politics of Location’ in Nakayama and Martin, *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity*. For the expansion of white identity as a combined racial and ethnic descriptor of populations in Australia in the interwar period, see Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, Chapter 5, especially pp 147 ff.

³⁸For the process by which the dominant British perceived other cultures’ values as ‘British’ see Hickman and Walter, ‘Deconstructing Whiteness: Irish Women in Britain’, *Feminist Review*, Summer, 1995. Other cultures also contributed to the normalisation of their population, see Corrigan’s ‘Achievements of the Catholic people of Australia in the Field of Education’ which demonstrates the importance of Australian public examination values to Catholic society. For ways in which the working class young were shaped to normal British values see McCallum, *The Social Production of Merit* and Craig Campbell, op cit.

³⁹Here I am using ‘lack’ in the Lacanian sense as the individual’s sense of incompleteness. This is based on the emergence of the self as separate from the completeness of the mother/child dyad. Subsequently, incompleteness is reinforced as we try to imagine a separate ‘self’. This is because we try to return to the satisfaction of completeness through identifying with others. However, we are not able to do this in a complete way for our experience of ourselves and the world always ensures we are in some way in excess of any such identity. See Grosz, ‘Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity’ in Gunew, *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct*, pp 74-75.

influence both the meaning of youthful femininity and of respectability in relation to this idea.

Keeping these strictures in mind, the thesis uses the term ‘girl’ not only as a gendered social category in itself, but also a condition of preparation for entering a gendered social category, womanhood.⁴⁰ The notion of girlhood as preparation for womanhood extends the scope of girls’ potential for agency. Their negotiations can be explored not only for their effect on the changing meaning of girlhood, but also for adjustments to the meaning of approved *youthful femininity*, a condition which slides between girlhood and young womanhood across the ages of twelve to eighteen.

Developing my idea of ‘girl’ also led me to consider how Australian wartime society characterised respectable femininity. The result was the recognition of the importance of *service*. This thesis focuses on an era when wartime pressures ensured the notion of *service* was celebrated.⁴¹ Consequently, the thesis contextualises socially-approved femininity as feminine service in an era when the conflict between modernity and tradition ensured conflict over the meaning of feminine service. It argues this turbulence, the resulting authoritative confusion over the meaning of femininity, and their own experience of unfulfilment created some space for girls to negotiate the meaning of youthful femininity.

* * *

Having both clarified the issues I wanted to address and contextualised the terms on which they depended, I needed a way to explore any connection between second wave feminism and girls’ agency in second world war Australia. For reasons I outline below *reading* became that mechanism. Edith’s story, which started this chapter, gives an insight into the value of this approach. As a member of a modern, literate community, reading was such a large part of Edith’s life that when, half a century later, she told me the story of her girlhood she was able to draw this story together

⁴⁰For the notion of girlhood as a process for entering womanhood in western, capitalist societies see Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p 3.

⁴¹For women as part of a British service society, Tinkler, ‘At Your Service: “The Nation’s” Girlhood and the Call to Service in England, 1939-50’ *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, vol 4, part 3, 1997. For notions of service and femininity in Australian society, Oppenheimer, *All Work and No Pay*, pp 107 ff; Darian Smith, *op cit*, p174.

around the motif of what she read and when she read it. I postulated that, in modern publicly-regulated Australia, reading was an important technology for shaping the subject.⁴² The systems of education and mass media were particularly powerful in shaping girls into approved young womanhood and both of these systems deployed reading.⁴³ At the same time, reading theory has demonstrated that for the individual reading is a personal experience which produces a *subjective* interpretation of one's relationship to the world and to others.⁴⁴ Consequently, reading is a useful lens through which to study how *regulatory authorities* sought to shape girls as feminine. The *reader* also uses it as an instrument for making sense of her world. Therefore, reading can serve as a dual lens, illuminating both social ideals and individual understanding. Consequently, it makes a useful field for exploring wartime girls' potential for agency through their adjustment of the qualities of femininity. As a result of this background the ideas of reading, of education and mass media as systems regulating girls into femininity and ideas of the balance between the way reading was perceived by the authorities and by the girls occupy positions of crucial importance in the thesis.

* * *

The thesis focuses on the different kinds of reading modern regulatory systems used in their shaping of Australian girls to different but simultaneous ideas of girlhood, and the responses of girls to this reading. Therefore, to chart girls' contribution to ideas of girlhood I needed to draw on three *reading-associated archives* as source material. The documents produced by the authorities regulating girls' reading in the education and mass media systems would show me how the dominant interests imagined Australian girlhood. I also needed the response of the

⁴²For the developing tradition of the uses of reading by authorities in British societies see Altick, *The English Common Reader*, Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*. In relation to young women, Flint *The Woman Reader*. With reference to contemporary times, Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*.

⁴³See for example Lake's 'Female Desires' which draws these systems together. There are many studies which address either one or the other of the systems in relation to girls and young women. For education see for example Kyle, *Her Natural Destiny*, Trimmingham Jack, *Growing good Catholic Girls*, Craig Campbell, op cit. For mass media see parts of Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*; Lyons, 'Introduction' in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia*, pp xv-xvi; Wright, 'The Australian Women's Weekly: Depression and the War Years, Romance and Reality', *Refractory Girl*, no 3, 1973, Finch, 'Consuming Passions'. Johnson in *The Modern Girl: Girlhood and Growing Up* addresses post-war regulation through these systems.

⁴⁴Christie, 'Theories of Textual Determination and Audience Agency' in Mills, *Gendering the Reader*.

girls themselves to reading as part of these systems for purposes of comparison. The disparities would form a basis for arguing girls' agency. Finally, I sought an archive of those doubly powerful books and magazines specifically positioned by the authorities as technologies for shaping ideal girlhood and also recalled by those who were the girls. These texts would extend my understanding of how the stories of girlhood could be seen simultaneously as representations of a clearly defined identity by the authorities and as stories opening for the girl readers the potential for negotiating social ideas of girlhood.

Developing the three archives of primary source material which allowed me to evaluate girls' agency in wartime Australia by using reading was a complex experience in which ease and, sometimes unforeseen, difficulty overlapped. The first archive, that of authority's view of youthful femininity, was mainly composed of contemporary material expatiating on reading purpose in text and practice in the education and mass media systems. I drew on texts the education system had generated to explain to its school representatives the way reading should be used to create girls as potential modern young women. Such material reflected the idea of reading as a tool in the elementary schools, the secondary schools and the domestic arena. State Education Department gazettes carried instructions on how the reading in departmental school magazines should be conducted, how libraries would be organised, exemplary lessons and lists of approved books. They also published examiner's reports evaluating the level of 'reading' expertise secondary examination candidates had demonstrated. University manuals provided direction in examination reading as did syllabuses. Public examination papers revealed the outcome authorities expected of secondary reading. School library notes and catalogues proved an invaluable source.

The mass media system's use of reading for shaping femininity is addressed through the reading of popular library fiction and women's magazines. For access to authority's ideas I corresponded with a former commercial library proprietor and drew on a series of wartime articles on the meaning of the commercial library in the newsagents' trade paper, *Ideas*. I also drew on the contemporary reports, lists of rules and catalogues of Mechanics' Institute libraries. Information about ideas of the relationship between the commercial libraries and the state libraries came through

correspondence with a wartime State Reference Library assistant librarian and the 1935 Munn Pitt report on Australian libraries. Finally, the transcript of statements from the publishing industry, authors, concerned parents, importers and traders at the Tariff Board Inquiry into the Publishing Industry of 1945-46 and an early post-war legal appeal against the ongoing banning of confession magazines foregrounded Australian understandings of the relation between young womanhood and these magazines.⁴⁵ They revealed the reasons these magazines were ‘forbidden’ and, therefore, why mainstream magazines were approved.

The second archive was a collection of the memories of wartime girls’ experiences of reading in these systems as part of youthful femininity. One hundred and thirty two women generously shared with me their memories of wartime girlhood reading. While individual differences meant that not all these responses were equally profound and/or wide-ranging, together they offered insight into the reading experience of those being shaped as young Australian women. They matched my criteria for potentially respectable young women through sufficiently meeting the demands of both objective and subjective concepts of whiteness and class. Their recollections of being accepted without too much question in the regulatory programs Australia was using to shape its youth into citizens defined them as white.⁴⁶ Additionally, I was able to situate them as middle-class or working-class through matching their recollections of their father’s occupation(s) with Craig Campbell’s criteria for the Australian class system in the interwar years.⁴⁷ Oral history and memory theory, which I discuss in Chapter One, made it possible to construct this archive of personal history in such a way as to allow me to foreground girl readers’ subjective interpretation of femininity. However, oral history as a method also created some problems which had to be overcome. But first an explanation of the way the project was set up to make the kind of information which was most useful to this project accessible is needed.

My public calls for participants through newspapers, electronic media and personal appeals emphasised that the project was collecting any kind of memories of any kind

⁴⁵*Commonwealth Law Reports*, High Court of Australia: Appellant, Transport Publishing Company Proprietary Limited and Respondent, The Literature Board of Review, vol 9, 1957-1958, pp 111-131

⁴⁶See Theobald, *Knowing Women*, pp 219-220; Joanne Scott and Evans, ‘The Moulding of Menials’ in *Hecate*, vol XXII, no I, 1996, pp 140-141.

⁴⁷Craig Campbell, op cit.

of wartime reading from those who were then girls between the ages of twelve and eighteen. They did *not* ask for memories of wartime girlhood. By this approach, I hoped to attract participants who identified their youthful selves through their reading rather than other girlhood experiences.⁴⁸ As systemic reading focussed so heavily on shaping girls into femininity, I would in this way have material for discovering which reading systems had most affected wartime girls' ideas of femininity and how girls had been able to use those ideas. Secondly, I sought to create a project with open-ended rather than directed responses. I thought that in the delicate and complex realm of subjectivities on which this project depends, empirical evidence rather than historical theorising might more clearly direct me in the first place to 'what was happening' and where it was happening. My theoretical ideas of the education system and the mass media as the most powerful regulating systems affecting girls were verified by the first responses. I followed up with a request which incorporated some mild direction to focus on the experience of reading in the chosen systems. This, I emphasised, was for those who wanted to contribute further. Almost all participants did. This second request was accompanied by a questionnaire which finally asked for the basic demographic information I needed to classify the memories.

This approach to a resource for such a study generated two significant problems. One problem was that the scholarly methods of oral history involving personal interviews and respondent-approved transcriptions would not be possible for the Australia-wide scale I envisaged.⁴⁹ I was a solitary researcher, and I had a research deadline. Walmsley discusses the necessity for adjusting methodology in line with the particular circumstances of a project.⁵⁰ Thompson had solved a similar problem of

⁴⁸This approach was a consequence of the responses to my earlier, pilot studies for the project, through which I progressively discovered the power of popular public reconstructions on individual memory (see Montgomery, ' "We Didn't Know We Were Part of History"', *A Century of Tales, The Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no 22, 2000). For example, in answer to my original, 'tell about your youth in the war' I was directed to *Come In Spinner* (the miniseries version, 1990); to my revised 'tell about your girlhood' I was directed to Moira Lambert's *A Suburban Girl: Australia, 1918-1948* (an autobiography published in 1990). Darian Smith's analyses, as well as my own experiences, helped me put this response into perspective and so discover I needed to gain memories through a relatively untouched subject with which the subjects were deeply engaged. Although I had drawn on different sources and travelled an independent thought path, I had been affected by the problems she discusses in 'War Stories: Remembering the Australian Home Front During the Second World War' in Darian Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*.

⁴⁹Robertson, *Oral History Handbook*, fourth edition prepared under the aegis of the Oral History Association of Australia, 2000.

⁵⁰Walmsley, 'Life History Interviews with People with Learning Disabilities' in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*.

inability to be present for personal interviews at the times appropriate to his project by asking people to produce a written record of the experiences about which he wished to interview them.⁵¹ This approach provided me with a point of departure for developing a project in which I could collect written rather than oral memories of girls' wartime reading from across Australia in the time I had available.

Another problem was the difference between the emotional energy required to respond to such a request initially and the effort needed to keep on responding. This is especially so if the responses are by mail rather than through immediate interview. As a result of this perception, I constructed the questionnaire in a way I hoped would give the participants a reason to respond by giving them a view of how their contribution would support the project. I created the questionnaire as a kind of double column where on the left hand side I asked the question while on the right hand side I gave a brief, general note explaining why an answer would be useful. This source was now completed. Everyone who responded to the second request also responded to this questionnaire. At the same time, my perception of the difficulty associated with follow-up efforts was confirmed. At least one respondent wrote, 'No more, Rosemary' when returning the completed questionnaire. Others hinted at this sentiment.

My third source articulated with both the previous sources. This was an archive of the texts referred to by the regulatory documents and in the memories of girlhood reading. In a project which called for memories of reading but which is actually exploring negotiated femininities, references to the texts can be seen as shorthand for both the authorities' and the girls' interpretations of femininity. The text archive as a material collection emerged as a response to a problem. I assumed I would be able to access any regulated text the respondents indicated was particularly satisfying or unsatisfying through existing libraries. Certainly, bibliographies and information about collections located the literature recalled by histories, authoritative documents and autobiographies of reading as part of boys' reading experience.⁵² The girlhood

⁵¹Slim and Thompson, 'Ways of Listening' in Perks and Thomson, London, *The Oral History Reader*.

⁵²Sources were among others, Australian National Bibliography; Adelaide, *Bibliography of Australian Women's Literature, 1795-1990*; Adelaide, *Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographic Guide*, 1988; Flanagan, *The Australian Vintage Paperback Guide*; Muir, *A Bibliography of Australian Children's Books*, 1976; Muir and White, *Australian Children's Books: A Bibliography, 1742-1972*, vol 1, 1992;

reading recalled by my participants was not so easily available. There appeared to be no publicly-available, broad collection of wartime girls' comics and 'papers' or of pulp romances, nor did magazine collections include confession romance magazines. This gendered silencing of reading experience gave birth to an idea that a comprehensive collection of the remembered reading texts of Australia's wartime girls was a significant addition to the social archives of the nation, as well as an important source for my study.⁵³

* * *

Between them, these three archives drew together reading, authoritative ideas of youthful femininity and personal experience of girlhood in wartime Australia. Together, they formed a source from which I drew the six *key qualities* of youthful wartime femininity which constitute the basis for exploring my hypothesis that Australian wartime girls had agency and used it in ways which subsequently would influence second wave feminism. In each of my historical chapters I chart the contribution of wartime Australian girls in negotiating the meaning of one of these qualities and so assess their agency. The key qualities shared the following characteristics. They were relatively acceptable as part of Australian girlhood. They were satisfying to respectable Australian girls and they also challenged the dominant interests' ideas of femininity. Finally, they matched significant qualities in the subsequently emerging second wave feminism movement.

In this thesis a *quality* is a characteristic socially accepted as a component of femininity without being crucial to social recognition of the subject as feminine. It is seen as part of the *emerging discourse* of approved youthful femininity in a world which is made up of three contiguous layers of discourse, the global, the national and the emerging. The last of these categories is the layer where, this study argues, because of friction between modern authorities and girls and the turmoil of the period,

Lees and MacIntyre, *Oxford Companion to Australian Children's Literature*. This bibliographical material made available information on the mass ephemeral fiction genres common to the contemporaneous reading of Australian boys and men (See for example that referred to in *Parliamentary Debates (Representatives)*, 11 May, 1938, pp 1061-1062).

⁵³Montgomery, 'The Lost Collections', *Ephemera News*, no 34, March, 1996.

the girls themselves have some agency in adjusting the meaning of girlhood and youthful femininity.

These are the six *key qualities* of youthful wartime feminine identity. Firstly, there is an *autonomous public voice* which extended to working class and poor rural girls as well as urban and middle-class girls. Secondly, girlhood as an identity *incorporates a capacity for public struggle*. Thirdly, a *leaders/followers infrastructure in which both roles were understood as feminine was part of girlhood*. Taken together, these qualities could constitute youthful femininity as an active group rather than a passive collective. In parallel, girls were negotiating two further qualities which could potentially give young women reasons to insist publicly on rights they believed were theirs and which society seemed reluctant to support. In this era powerful conservative and modern authorities were in conflict over notions of femininity. In the midst of this confusion, girls gained confidence as women, and also a satisfying position for themselves, through the way they applied the traditional understanding of approved womanhood as ‘natural’ womanhood. Girls negotiated this concept into the fourth quality, *investment in self-selected, satisfying values from approved yet competing and conflicting femininities as a natural quality of respectable young womanhood*. Fifthly and similarly, girls extended in satisfying ways the socially-approved notion that women could recognise moral truth. This was negotiated into the notion that *as girls were in the process of becoming women, girls’ own perceptions of femininity in this turbulent era which opened so many potential understandings were perceptions of moral truth*. This foundation produced the last quality I look at. Wartime girl readers understood *acting as a group to achieve objectives they believed were ‘right’ as part of youthful femininity*. A generation later all these qualities were to combine with others in a formidable social challenge to dominant interests through second wave feminism. That, however, is a generation away and the result of different social pressures. This thesis recognises the emergence of the qualities as subjective, nebulous and growing from multiple and diverse sources around a core idea of respectable femininity as feminine service in a period of considerable social turbulence.

Nevertheless, it is of significance that these key qualities in the emerging discourse of wartime youthful femininity are recognisable in studies of the early development of

Australian second wave feminism a generation later.⁵⁴ Second wave feminism was also broadly based across the middle class and upper working class and particularly it was a movement among young women.⁵⁵ It functioned comfortably both through feminine cooperative group structures and through notions of public leaders and followers.⁵⁶ It was a self-conscious, publicly-active group movement which understood and confidently manipulated the public institutions of the state.⁵⁷ Moreover, it was a movement which drew much of its energy from its sense of being 'right'.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the noted negative features of second wave feminism can also be linked to the key qualities of this thesis. The destructiveness of its idea of the unassailability of 'natural' (essential) standards of femininity is a frequent criticism of the early period of this movement, and of the movement as a whole.⁵⁹ The key quality of a leaders and followers infrastructure, as this thesis will show, was based on the wartime girls' being shaped into universal, unassailable standards of civilisation in the public secondary system. In tracing girls' contribution to the development of these key qualities through memory theory the thesis also opens the qualities' potential for continuity across generations.

The chapters in this thesis are divided to foreground wartime girls' relation to the emergence of the key qualities. Chapter One discusses in detail the theoretical perspectives supporting the method of historical analysis outlined in the Introduction. Each of the six historical chapters (2-7) explores girls' contribution to one of these key qualities. This is done through using a different kind of girlhood reading in each chapter and drawing on reading's dual capacity as an instrument for shaping the social subject and as a space for an individual to make sense of her world. The historical chapters are divided into two parts. The first part discusses the authorities' notions of youthful femininity under the headings 'Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers',

⁵⁴For a reflection of the qualities discussed in the next paragraph in the second wave of feminism see Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 214-230; Larbalestier, op cit, pp 152-155; Kaplan, op cit, Chapter Three.

⁵⁵For class see Curthoys, 'Doing It For Themselves' in Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* p 426; Lake, *Getting Equal*, p 219, p 232-233. For association with youthful femininity as a characteristic of second wave feminism see for example Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 6-9.

⁵⁶Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 229.

⁵⁷Curthoys, op cit, p 426, pp 435-437; Lake, *Getting Equal*, p 235-36, p 230, pp 253 ff.

⁵⁸Lake, *Getting Equal*, p 225- 226, pp 235-236;

⁵⁹Kaplan, op cit, p 4; Larbalestier, op cit, p 154; Lake, *Getting Equal*, p 249; Curthoys, op cit, p 426. For second wave feminism as a politics of exclusion see for example: race, Lake, *Getting Equal*, p 249; ethnicity, Pallotta-Chiarolli, 'Multi-cultural Feminism in Caine, *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, pp 232-235; class, Kaplan, op cit, pp 15-17; sexuality, Lake, *Getting Equal*, p 243.

‘Practices’ and ‘Texts’. The second part looks at the way girl readers experienced youthful femininity. It has a single heading, ‘Memories’.

Chapters Two and Three focus on reading in the elementary school system to trace girls’ contribution to the key qualities. This was a type of reading open to almost all Australian girls by this time. Chapter Two traces the negotiation of autonomous public voice as a key quality of youthful femininity through looking at obligatory, supervised classroom reading. Chapter Three examines the emergence of public struggle as a key quality of femininity, an idea available to those girls who related to life through the books in the elementary school libraries.

Chapters Four and Five focus on the key qualities negotiated from reading in the secondary system. This was a nascent mass system for the shaping of girls into modern womanhood in a developing capitalist society.⁶⁰ Many of the participants experienced its standards as remarkably new and different. The intention of this system was to produce two different kinds of women, those destined for a public career and those destined for an increasingly publicly-regulated domesticity.⁶¹ Taking this differential shaping into consideration, Chapter Four uses examination reading to chart the way that, as a result, the embryonic infrastructure of a public group became a key quality of youthful femininity. Some girls were fashioned into leaders with trust in their own judgment and others into followers with trust in their leaders’ judgment. Yet, amidst this intended diversity of femininities secondary school reading also encouraged an important unity. Chapter Five looks at how the girls’ experience of junior secondary school library reading created another key quality, the idea that *all* satisfying new qualities were extensions of essential womanliness; it was natural for girls evolving into respectable young women to think and behave as they did.

In the last two chapters the thesis focuses on the effect of the mass media system as a source of key qualities. Chapter Six uses approved domestic (mass media) reading to map the development of the key quality that a respectable girl’s idea of a characteristic as feminine automatically made that characteristic moral. Finally, in

⁶⁰Craig Campbell, *op cit*.

⁶¹Elder, ‘ “The Question of the Unmarried”: Some Meanings of Being Single in Australia in the 1920’s and 1930’s’, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 1993.

Chapter Seven I use the pattern of approved and disapproved domestic (mass media) reading to demonstrate how wartime girl readers were able to negotiate the last key quality. This was the idea that youthful femininity included the potential to act as a group to achieve what girls believed were femininities society supported but had failed to direct them into clearly. This quality was experienced by the girls at varying levels of consciousness.

* * *

I opened this chapter by reflecting on the historical meaning of Edith's response. Her story was chosen at random from the more forthcoming and detailed memories of those one hundred and thirty two contributions on which I finally drew to argue my thesis. Yet as Bell suggests, without care the relationship between the social historian and her subject can become one in which the participant's generous and valuable contribution is downgraded to the category of 'source'.⁶² I asked for memories of girlhood reading and was answered by women who felt that in some way reading defined their girlhood; they believed they had a story to tell and saw my project as a way to make their voice heard. However, as a historian I am using their stories to foreground some qualities of femininity implicit in their memories of reading. Here, I let Edith's story speak for itself, representing the women's ideas of their girlhood reading, and then highlight in more detail its meaning as an original source for the thesis.

Edith's Story.

Edith typed her responses as rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis mean she is no longer able to produce legible handwriting. I have changed to upper and lower case the upper case she sometimes uses to facilitate her typing and also broken some of her writing into paragraphs for easier reading.

'Born in my parents home the 3rd daughter of a mature rural couple June 1926. I had two much older stepbrothers & my mother married my father after he was a widower. He had suffered financially from estate duties after his first wife's death so had a mortgage on our mixed farm in northern Victoria. (My mother [was] a homemaker and undertook most of management of dairy herd, of milking and the sale of cream.

⁶²Bell, op cit, pp 264-266; see also Walmsley, op cit, p 128.

[She] milked 40 cows by hand. [We] children helped as much as possible).

Both parents had been good students & were very literate (primary Education [sic]), walking miles to get to schools to get their education. Tragedy struck when my older sister got whooping cough as a week old baby and suffered a stroke leaving her totally dependent for anything she needed in any way. She was a wheelchair patient until her death at 47 years. My brother aged 18 months old also was a victim of this epidemic & had meningitis as a complication leaving him deaf & mute also with some weakness and control of his hands. I was the next child two years later & another daughter was born 2 years after my birth. My mother always stated I was extremely, very independent [sic]. I was also the *only* child of that family born in my parents weatherboard home on their farm, which was 10 miles from any town & doctor [Edith's emphasis]. A near neighbour acted as the midwife Only two children (brother and sister) went to boarding school from our district after year 8 (their mother had been a school teacher before marriage). The district was not considered a disadvantaged one but many neighbours walked off the land taking only personal items (clothing, cooking, general items necessary for living. Things were tough money wise [she refers to a mouse plague and the wartime drought]).

I gained my Merit certificate aged 13 1/2 in 1939 (just after the war broke out) and I left school so I was not able to continue reading the school papers and readers . . . I would have [individually] devoured all the stories in the class readers [soon after they were issued]. Class reading was not so popular as the school was a one room weather board building with one teacher, Grades one to eight taught in this room . . . my last two years there were thirty pupils in composite grades 5 & 6 and 7 & 8. There were only two girls to ten boys. I was the only girl in my grade for the last two years.

[I kept a scrapbook of] the sporting exploits of my family and Agricultural Shows especially local ones.

I did [wartime] comforts knitting and fund raising until 1943 when I began my nursing training.

From this [information] you can imagine my parents were not able to supply us with a lot of books for financial reasons. My biggest access to early books was through a man who worked on the land with my father (and boarded with my parents as part of his wage). He was a member of the town library some 10 miles away. He was an avid Western book reader & I read many of these books that he borrowed for him[self]. He joined the army in 1940 and was killed in action in Borneo. I think I got to enjoy Zane Grey's books mainly because they were available. I did not get access to many more western books until I was 17 1/2 and they were not my choice then.

We received the *Argus* newspaper daily (delivered one day after printing) and this was read cover to cover. There was a weekly paper from the town, the *Pyramid Advertiser* printed Thursdays. This kept up all the local district news and entertainment. As papers and books were scarce, when we could get dry batteries we listened to the ABC or Shepperton radio station which had a series of books which were read by local announcers in hourly segments. I managed to borrow the

books of the Billabong series by Mary Grant Bruce, also we were introduced (via radio) to L M Montgomery's books. All of the Anne series plus a few more. I would have like to read the Louisa Alcott books and the Bronte sisters' books but I was unable to get access to these (except by radio). When the *Women's Weekly* was published I also read this (all areas of this magazine). These were passed along to other farm girls as money was still short. The *New Idea* would sometimes get bought by one or other of our group, too. I wrote to the editors of the papers if I felt strongly about an issue.

In October 1943 I left home to begin my General Nursing Career at the Queen's Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital Fairfield, choosing this because it meant no cost to my parents. All other Hospitals at that time the parents had to buy bed linen, uniforms etc for student Nurses. One of the older Nurses ran a small library for the Nurses in the Nurses Home. It was here I borrowed light novels (some romance or historical preferred). We worked such long hours and our off duty time we often had to go to Lectures [sic].

I have always been an avid reader to this day. After my marriage in 1948 I was able to borrow my first books from free public libraries. Now being a retired Nurse with tertiary certificates I read more and more and feel it must have been the small access and my parents gave me the love of books.

I believe I wanted to be a Nurse [sic] from early childhood. Perhaps my sister Margaret being only 1 1/2 to 2 years older whom I often fed and looked after generally may have been the reason I did undertake my profession. My qualifications until my retirement were R[egistered] N[urse] Diploma, Operating Theatre Nursing and Management [Certificate] (Melb), Certificate of Sterilization and Disinfection.

I will get one of the family to write on any research forms if you still feel that what I read is relevant. It will save you trying to wade through so much irrelevant information.

While Edith's story stands alone, it also clearly harbours the genesis of this thesis. In the opening section of this chapter I draw on Torgovnick's idea of the power of stories to create new meaning to argue that in a literate society reading spread that power widely and so potentially became an instrument of individual agency for apparently subordinated collectivities. I also argue that memories of reading are a way to recover wartime girls' ideas of themselves in the world. Edith's memories of girlhood reading show how those opening ideas are situated with reference to girls in wartime Australia. Reading created a space for her to negotiate a more satisfying identity through the way in which the content of the texts, the process of reading and the way she was positioned by society as different kinds of girl reader came together.

Edith's remembered reading reveals how reading was both a powerful instrument for shaping girls as part of society across the shifting discourses influencing femininity at this time and how girls used reading to negotiate a more satisfying position in society. It reflects the ways reading was used by wartime Australian society both through public regulatory systems and personal influence. As an adolescent, her reading came in the form of school texts. There were also newspapers, magazines, library books and the oral/aural radio reading programs available through her domestic circumstances. As a young worker reading was a combination of lecture notes and the popular novels she used as recreation. All this reading played a part in the way Edith came to understand her relationship to the world. She read as part of several communities and as a consequence absorbed and adjusted the values and interpretations of those communities. However, she also read privately and drew from that reading values grounded in personal satisfaction. Her memories make clear how she absorbed and adjusted these values in complex ways to create a more satisfying subject position.

An example of this adjustment is the effect of ideas of domestic reading in her memories of her development as a young woman. She recalls her parents as both poor farmers and valuing reading as education. Newspapers provided information in that household and the radio provided relaxation. It is the farm worker who understands library books as recreation. Edith was moving from childhood to womanhood in a society where the feminine role in a heterosexual relationship was the emblem of successful transition. She was also on the cusp of undertaking a woman's service to society and, potentially, was positioned to become the domestically-situated eldest daughter/carer. The stories Edith remembers from the farm worker focus on the relationship between men and women.⁶³ The household radio stories she subsequently read are stories of British settlement country girls finding a satisfying position in the world through a mixture of public and domestic womanly service.⁶⁴ She replicated this last pattern through training as a nurse, a position which conflated traditional ideals of nurturing, womanly service and the public performance of femininity in modern, western society. She continued to explore the meaning of heterosexual relationships through novel reading. Moreover,

⁶³ See my analysis of Zane Grey's novels in Chapter Six.

⁶⁴ See my analysis of Alcott's stories in Chapter Three and Montgomery's stories in Chapter Five.

in her recollections her later girlhood reading was further developed as both education and recreation. Finally, although Edith's reading memories focus on her girlhood they also make plain the connection between girlhood identity and girlhood as one part of the life course.

Edith's story of girlhood reading touches in some way on each of the six key qualities of youthful femininity which form the six historical chapters of this thesis. Her public voice as part of modern, western society was already developing when, as a domestic daughter, she wrote to the family's newspapers about issues over which she felt strongly. The nursing examination reading is part of her continuing engagement with public struggle, apparently concluded at thirteen when she returns to the farm as an elder daughter, education completed. Although she experienced gendered isolation at school, magazine reading enabled Edith to understand herself as part of a community of young women before she saw herself as a nurse. This was not only through its content but also through the system of access. The community of magazine readers clearly understood itself as one whose members were entitled to the magazines. It functioned both cooperatively and hierarchically: the magazines were shared; equally, it was a system of trust between leaders and followers through a girl individually making the original choice of magazines and the extensive number of the magazines' subsequent readers. Despite these forays into public life, the change from reading domestically and reading as part of public femininity through her nursing training can be seen as a huge shift in Edith's identity. Yet, this idea of a wider life was assumed by Edith to be part of natural, moral femininity which moved between home and work, similar to that represented in the domestically-approved stories of Anne Shirley (*Anne of Green Gables*) and Jo March (*Little Women*) she had heard on the family radio. Furthermore, Edith remembered the household which approved her listening to these stories as run by a loved and respected mother who understood her daughter's femininity as a combination of capacity in traditional feminine care and independence. Edith's idea of her femininity as part of Australian public life was firmly grounded in her mother's approval. Finally, Edith's references to her marriage and family situate her as a woman in a position of domestic power as a mother.

This thesis depends on a range of scholarly work in the humanities in order to deploy memories such as Edith's to trace how wartime girls could simultaneously challenge dominant ideas of youthful femininity and see themselves as respectable young women. In the following chapter I set out my theoretical approach and explain the theory which underpins my argument.

Chapter One: Theoretical Perspectives.

Introduction.

As I explained in the Introduction, my thesis is guided by the premise that feminism in Australia did not simply erupt as two mass public movements but rather that those movements were, at least partly, a form of some continuing and developing feminisms situated among ordinary women as well as notable women. The thesis does not argue that all women could make a difference to meanings of femininity but that wartime girl readers could make a difference to ideas of approved youthful femininity. It evaluates where the challenges were, what the limits to girls' agency were and the extent to which girls understood what they were doing. This chapter explains the theoretical framework I have used to look at wartime Australian girls' agency from a feminist perspective. It also indicates the scholarly work I have drawn on to support this perspective. It is a far more complex chapter in its structure and ideas than the following historical chapters. However, the theoretical perspectives formulated here, although complex, underpin the ideas in the historical chapters and allow for the smooth and clear development of their arguments. *Five crucial conceptualisations and two analytical techniques* frame my argument that reading gave wartime Australian girls the space to negotiate youthful femininities. These conceptualisations give meaning to the terms girl, reader, femininity and feminism in relation to agency.

The first of the five *crucial conceptualisations* framing my argument is *agency*. Agency is the ability to make a difference to social meaning. The second conceptualisation is that the seed of agency in subordinated people exists through their *subjectivity*, that is the way they see themselves in relation to others and the world. The third conceptualisation is that *wartime Australia was a society affected by the modern power system which ensured that subordinated members of the community had space to negotiate meaning*. The fourth conceptualisation is that *for a subordinated group to effect this negotiation of meaning an interactive process of three conditions which influenced, in complex ways, both the subject and society was necessary*. Finally, I conceptualise *reading as a way to see how everyone in this society understands the meaning of young womanhood*. Through the analysis of authoritative documents reading can be demonstrated as evidence of the controllers' ideas of youthful femininity. Through an analysis of women's present memories of

their wartime reading it can be seen as girl readers' interpretation of young womanhood.

These conceptualisations make possible two linked *analytical techniques* for examining the discourse of youthful Australian femininity to uncover the contribution of girl readers to its wartime meaning. The first of these techniques is *the analysis of the qualities of respectable Australian girlhood for key qualities*. These qualities must be accepted by girl readers and by those who have authority over girls' reading. They must both satisfy girls and challenge the dominant interests of patriarchy and capitalism. Furthermore, they must be recognisable in studies of the early development of the second wave feminist movement. The key qualities and their method of selection are discussed in detail in Section One of this chapter under the heading 'Tracing Agency, Part I'. The second technique is *the analysis of the development of each one of these key qualities through the effect of the three interacting conditions and their complex influence on the subject and society*. This technique reveals girls' contribution to the emergence of the key qualities. It is discussed in Section One under the heading 'Tracing Agency, Part II'.

This chapter has four sections. In the first section I frame up the five crucial conceptualisations and their relation to the analytical techniques. Here it becomes clear that the three interacting conditions necessary for a subordinated group to negotiate meaning will form the foundation of this evaluation of girls' agency. In each of sections two, three and four I foreground one of the interacting conditions to explain how I deploy the crucial conceptualisations and the analytical techniques to evaluate wartime girls' contribution to the emerging discourse of youthful femininity in wartime Australia.

Section One: The Relationship Between the Approach, Premise, Argument and Analytical Framework.

This thesis analyses social change in Australia by examining the shifts in youthful wartime femininity through six key qualities which challenged the dominant interest and satisfied girls. Australian wartime society was governed by patriarchal and capitalist democratic interests which sought social relations that

maintained dominance for (white, middle-class) men and for the owners of capital. The thesis focuses on the way *girls* negotiated the key changes. Therefore it interrogates the girls' agency as the agency of a subordinated collectivity. It does this through recognising agency's relation to subjectivity and searching out the space which allowed for social acceptance of the way in which the girls saw themselves as developing young women. This first section establishes the critical apparatus supporting this approach.

1. Agency and Subjectivity: The First and Second Crucial Conceptualisations.

This part of Section One develops the crucial conceptualisations of agency and subjectivity. As its foundation for seeking to uncover wartime girls' contribution to changes in youthful femininity, this thesis takes up Joan W Scott's understanding of *agency* and its relation to History. *Agency*, Scott argues, is the capacity to change social meaning. As society is based on power relations, agency is the subject's capacity to change the balance of power relations in her favour by changing meaning.¹ Scott acknowledges History is about tracing and understanding the forces or agents of change in society and contends that historians should look for actors in the changing meanings of power relationships. She recognises the legitimacy of recent criticisms of historiography. She draws attention to concerns that the exploration of change through tracing patterns of development in empirical data or analysing development as humanism or as science does not illuminate the fundamental sources of social agency; rather it reinforces some accepted dominant agents as fixities.² From this basis, it can be argued a useful approach to historical research is to focus on agency.

These ways of thinking about agency and History have, in turn, shaped my approach to the topic as post-structuralist and as feminist and so influenced the way I have conceptualised *subjectivity*. Scott argues that post-structuralist theory offers a critical perspective which can more clearly reveal agency in social change. This theory postulates that social meanings are created through subjects. She contends the subordinated subject is in herself the result of a combination of approved social ideas and their outcomes, and personal, lived experience informed

¹Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, p 42.

²Scott, *op cit*, pp 41-43.

by both ideas in excess of those which are socially approved and her psychic drives.³ The consequence is an individual's *subjectivity* or how she sees herself in relation to the world and to others. This conflation of social control and personal experience is a source of the historical struggle for agency. Modern society can be seen to be organised through notions of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. Approved discourses normalise only that experience which appears to support the *dominant* interests. Consequently, the *subordinated* subject in these categories feels confined by social expectations which ignore her range of lived experience. Ideally, she wants her interpretation of herself to be recognised as socially important. Therefore, she seeks spaces society offers to adjust the dominant discourses in ways which take into account her lived experience.⁴

A broad group of feminists argue that western society is patriarchal and that women are historical agents in the way I have outlined.⁵ Therefore, the agency of women should be charted as part of history.⁶ This perspective provides me with a point of departure to argue for the need to explore girls' contribution to history. The collectivity known as 'girls' is doubly subordinated in a society which is not only a patriarchy but also a capitalist-based democracy where the contributing citizen is an adult.⁷ Not only are the girls I study part of society's idea of women, they are still in the process of becoming adults in a community where adulthood is a necessary quality for the contributing citizen worker.

Because of their understanding that western society is patriarchal, many western feminist thinkers have situated their attempts to trace the capacity of women to change the meaning of power relationships around analyses of the

³Scott 'The Evidence of Experience', in Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, Lydenberg, *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader* p 94.

⁴Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', pp 94-96.

⁵For feminist views of society as patriarchal see Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, pp 2- 3; Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, p 20, p 26; Gatens, 'Introduction' to *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality*; Pateman, 'Contracting In' in *The Sexual Contract*. For feminist ideas of women as agents of history see Scott, 'Gender', p 29; Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, pp 10-25. Other feminist ideas of the relationship between women, men and society can be found in Weedon, *Feminist Practice*.

⁶Some overviews of feminist thought demonstrating this idea, especially in relation to post-structuralism, are to be found in Grosz, 'Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity' in Gunew, *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct*; Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory*; Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*.

⁷Gatens, op cit, pp 126-127; Pateman, op cit, p 3.

social category of gender in the discourses shaping women.⁸ They foreground gender as a category of social organisation in which femininity is represented as subordinate to masculinity and is therefore a site of women's confinement and struggle to have their psycho-social experience valorised. Scott firstly defines gender in this type of society as 'a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes'. Importantly, she also sees it as a signifier, capable of changes in the meaning of the relationship.⁹ Drawing on these ideas I situate gender as a basic component of the critical perspective of subjectivity and agency in this thesis. Therefore, I argue, a demonstration of girls influencing the readjustment of Australian gender relationships demonstrates girls' agency.

The focus on girls' subjectivity and agency rather than their identity is a significant development in Australian feminist historical studies.¹⁰ As well as addressing identity at the expense of subjectivity and so obscuring girls' negotiations of their world, there had also been a lack of division between girls' subjectivity and women's. This has led on occasion to a hiatus in historical understanding. For example, Reekie assumed that middle-aged feminists of this wartime era objected to working-class feminine sexuality at the same time that many working-class women were supporting their campaigns to 'restrict working-class women's sexual activity'. Lake, however, by drawing on documents which revealed girls' subjective views of sexuality, was able to argue that the feminine sexuality this collectivity objected to was not that of the working class but that of the young.¹¹ A preparedness to address the category of youth subjectivity, therefore, is an important addition to Australian feminist history.

Nevertheless, the position of girls in Australian society creates problems for the scholar approaching history from this point of view. While some Australian historians have recognised the value of understanding girls' agency through their subjectivities,

⁸Scott in 'Gender', p 29; Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, p ix; Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, pp 10 ff.

⁹Scott, 'Gender', p 42.

¹⁰For some examples of developing ideas of how to use this approach: Cameron, 'The Flappers and the Feminists' in Bevege, James, Shute, *Worth Her Salt*; Mackinnon, 'Educating the Mothers of the Nation' in the same work, especially pp 69-70; Kyle, *Her Natural Destiny*, e g p 197, p 214; Barbalet, *Far From a Low Gutter Girl*.

¹¹See Lake, 'Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II', *Australian Historical Studies*, 24 (95), 1990, p 279.

there is very little source material illuminating the subjectivities of ordinary Australian girls of this era.¹² The theoretical perspective which allows me to come to grips with this problem is discussed later in this chapter under the heading ‘Reading as a Lens’.

To sum up, Scott argues that subordinated individuals have historical agency and this is traceable through their subjectivity. This is because the subject is the outcome of not only those ideas the dominant group approve, but also of personal experience. Furthermore, subordinated subjects will seek the social spaces through which some of their own interpretations of their experiences can become approved meanings.

2. Modern Power in the Social Space of the Subordinated and the Conditions Necessary for Their Agency: The Third and Fourth Crucial Conceptualisations.

Having recognised girls’ agency as the negotiation of satisfying ideas of approved femininity, I had to understand wartime Australia as a society with the space for the *subordinated collectivity* perceived as ‘ordinary girls’ to negotiate these ideas. This understanding draws on two conceptualisations. Firstly, I deploy the Foucauldian notion of *modern power* as exercised through public systems for shaping the subordinate into approved social ideas. Here, I highlight the way that *the power to create approved ideas in modern society moves between authorities and subordinated collectivities in these systems of public regulation.*¹³ Secondly, I outline how *three interacting conditions must be present in the social space in which the subordinated collectivity can move for them to be able to affect approved ideas in a satisfying way.* The importance to my thesis of Foucault’s concept of modern power and his concept of the subordinated having access to a social space which provides the potential for agency means that I discuss his notion of the mechanism supporting these ideas in some detail. However, although Foucault’s ideas are a useful tool for understanding agency through subjectivity,

¹²Bulbeck, *Living Feminism*, p 6. Earlier studies were skewed towards the truly marginalised and transgressive through their dependence on institutional documents. Barbalet, op cit, used the files and correspondence of the State Children’s Department, Theobald in her chapter, ‘Daughters of the State’ in *Knowing Women* drew on state departmental and school records. Mackinnon in *Love and Freedom* emphasises the singularity of her sources, some letters and diaries of young women, p xvi and p 11. Lake also drew on young women’s diaries in ‘Female Desires’.

¹³Grosz, ‘Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity’, in Gunew, *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct*, p 85, pp 88-89; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Part Three; Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Part 1, The Will to Knowledge*, pp 92 ff.

feminist thinkers acknowledge they need to look further for an empirical understanding of how such agency is possible for women.¹⁴ To understand the way girls can affect ideas of young womanhood through modern power relations, I have drawn on work by De Lauretis and by Raissiguier. This allows me to argue *that girls as a subordinated collectivity have the social space for agency in Foucault's notion of the modern power system through the effect of three interacting conditions influencing the subject and society in complex ways.*

My analytical approach to exploring girl readers' wartime agency initially focuses on Foucault's notions of power in modern social organisation and the formation of the subject. I have chosen this approach because the source memories reveal how wartime girls' experience of power was tied to modern public regulation of the subject mediated by earlier notions of girls' 'natural', domestic guidance into womanhood.¹⁵ As a consequence, the historical chapters analyse youthful feminine agency with a strong emphasis on the shifts, gaps and anomalies in the social power systems shaping the wartime discourse of Australian girlhood.

Looking at wartime Australian girls through the Foucauldian notion of *modern power* reveals their position as a *subordinated collectivity* in a *modern society*. In 1939 Australian females between the ages of twelve and eighteen were called girls. They were being fashioned as approved young women through relations of power influenced by the nation's dominant capitalist and patriarchal interests. Older ideas of British middle-class social values as a natural consequence of the human spirit still existed. However at this time, the modern notion of normalisation meant that girls were increasingly being fashioned as members of society through the expanding use of powerful regulatory systems approved by capitalist and patriarchal influences. In these systems formal knowledges of the 'truth' about the processes of human life shaped the social subject.¹⁶ The newer

¹⁴Grosz, 'Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity', pp 90-91; Hollway, 'Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity' in Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine, *Changing the Subject*, p 237. See also, 'Introduction', Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, p 22.

¹⁵Dyhouse, op cit. In Australia, for example, Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, p 187.

¹⁶See for example Finch's study, *The Classing Gaze* for some early truth/knowledge domains normalising Australian girls and women and Reiger's *The Disenchantment of the Home* for the expanding effect of normalisation by the interwar years.

knowledge discourses drew on the public identification and regulation of certain populations at one pole and the performance of the individual body at the other to normalise the subject. Such knowledges increasingly laid claim to the meaning of ‘girl’.¹⁷ A consequence of this was that young female Australians of this time were extensively affected by two modern regulatory systems shaping them into youthful femininity; the education system¹⁸ and popular mass media.¹⁹ Both systems used reading as a discursive practice. These systems especially affected girls from working-class and employed middle-class families, the greater part of Australia’s youthful femininity.²⁰

However, Foucault argues that while traditional power had been both hierarchical, and extreme in its corrections, this modern system of power depended on a grid of constant surveillance and gentle correction from several sources.²¹ It is in this difference from traditional power that the *social space for subordinated collectivities in a modern society to exercise some agency in a non-transgressive way* exists. As I pointed out in the previous paragraph, modern power was totalising in the way it sought to create mass, normalised populations, but it was also individualising in the way it was performed. Together these two approaches gave all socialised individuals some access to power. Firstly, individuals were drawn into the modern social system through both the discipline of constant surveillance and correction as part of the process of normalisation and the pleasure of self-perceived identity such surveillance engendered in the

¹⁷Dyhouse, op cit, especially Chapter Four, ‘Adolescent Girlhood, Autonomy Versus Dependence’. For some beginnings in Australia, Finch, *The Classing Gaze*. For an overview of the role of education, Matthews, ‘Education for Femininity’ in *Labour History*, 1983 (45).

¹⁸Theobald, op cit, especially Chapter Seven, ‘Daughters of the State’. Mackinnon, op cit, especially Chapter Four. In British societies, Jenkinson, *What Do Boys and girls Read*. In the antipodes, Scott, *Reading, Film and Radio Tastes of High School Boys and Girls*; Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, pp 61 ff; Lyons, ‘Reading Models and Reading Communities’ in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*.

¹⁹In Australia, White, ‘A Backwater Awash: The Australian Experience of Americanisation’, *Theory, Culture and Society: Explorations in Critical Social Science*, vol 1, no 3, 1983, pp 116-7; ‘Introduction’, Spearritt and Walker, *Australian Popular Culture*; Lyons and Taksa, op cit; In British society; Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England, 1880-1915*; Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing Up in England, 1920-1950*; Jenkinson, op cit; Scott, op cit.

²⁰Craig Campbell, ‘Secondary Schooling, Modern Adolescence and the Reconstitution of the Middle Class’, *History of Education Review*, vol 24, no 1, 1995, pp 68-69.

²¹Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

subject.²² Then, as well as surveilling and correcting the individual as part of the process of normalisation, modern power also gave her the further pleasure of a limited opportunity to exercise power herself through some surveillance and correction of herself and others.²³ This meant that modern power was extended rather than weakened. Subjects could become part of the surveilling group of the truth/knowledge systems at quite an early stage of the process of normalisation. Through their own surveillance subjects reinforced the regulatory systems. They also supported what they saw as the most satisfying discourse channelled through the regulatory system. Consequently, a girl gained increasing access to power as she progressed towards the norm. A corollary of this was that a girl progressively had some space to express her pleasure in what she perceived as her essential (girl) self.

Work by De Lauretis and by Raissiguier demonstrates how the production of social identities through this Foucauldian notion of modern power creates feminine agency as the result of three *interacting conditions*, in each of which society and the subject are linked.²⁴ In their analyses agency takes place in a society which has already generated several socially-approved ideas of girlhood, so that the subject has a repertoire of ways of imagining femininity.²⁵ Additionally, this society is one which shapes the subject's psychic response so that she mediates the lack in one girlhood identity by drawing on fulfilling aspects from another.²⁶ Furthermore, the society offers the subject socially approved ways of expressing her negotiated femininity.²⁷ The ideas of all these scholars have provided me with a foundation for my second analytical technique.

²²For Foucault's notion of discipline in modern society ('the distribution of individuals in space', p 141) I have drawn primarily on *Discipline and Punish*. For his notion of pleasure as a modern source of social dynamism I have used particularly ideas in 'The Repressive Hypothesis', *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1, pp 44- 45.

²³Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, pp 135-150, Grosz, 'Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity', pp 86-90.

²⁴Raissiguier, 'The Construction of Marginal Identities': in Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, Lydenberg, *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology*. De Lauretis, 'Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness' in *Feminist Studies*, 16, No 1, Spring, 1990.

²⁵De Lauretis, op cit, p 135; Raissiguier, op cit, p 143.

²⁶De Lauretis, op cit, p 136; Raissiguier, op cit, p 145.

²⁷De Lauretis, op cit, p 136; Raissiguier, op cit, pp 140-141.

3. *Reading as a Lens: The Fifth Crucial Conceptualisation.*

Regulated reading is a useful lens for evaluating respectable girls' agency in negotiating femininities. *All* the interacting conditions I draw on are incorporated in each of the three aspects of reading I use in the historical chapters to explore authorities' ideas of young womanhood and girl readers' experience of it. As I discussed in the Introduction these are the social discourses affecting girl readers, the practices associated with a particular reading and the texts. The first part of each chapter draws on contemporary documents in the light of scholarly studies of youthful feminine identities to explore reading authorities' ideas.²⁸ However, to address ordinary girls' responses to these aspects of reading in the second part I needed to recover their wartime subjectivities.

In the part of this chapter where I conceptualised agency and subjectivity, I outlined some of the problems associated with the historical recovery of girls' subjectivities. I have drawn on oral history and memory theory, the field of reader response, and feminist theory to conceptualise memories of reading as a picture of wartime girls' subjectivity. This approach also highlights the participants' opportunities for agency in the meaning of femininity. I drew on three ideas to establish this approach as one which would reveal girls' subjectivity. One idea was that memories of reading are memories of the relationship between the text's representation of some approved social ideas and the reader as a social subject affected by both social ideas and individual experience. Another important idea was that memories of reading are memories of a powerful experience for each participant. Additionally, the understanding that this experience is focussed on youthful femininity is significant. I will discuss this perspective in detail, but first I want to situate the value of oral history as a technique in feminist historiography.

²⁸ Authorities' ideas of interwar Australian girlhood as an identity socialised for work are explored in Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*; Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria, 1880-1939*. In relation to education, Matthews, 'Education for Femininity: Domestic Arts Education in South Australia'. In relation to law, Bavin Mizzi, 'Understandings of Justice'; Backhouse, 'Her Protests Were Unavailing'. More broadly in relation to girls' position in society, see Darian Smith and Wills, 'From Queen of Agriculture to Miss Showgirl', Conor 'The Beauty Contestant in the Photographic Scene', 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene'; Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia'.

My thesis has been influenced by the many feminist and social studies that have illuminated female lives in this period through the effective use of oral history. They used a range of critical theory and women's memories both as a single source and in conjunction with other aspects of material history.²⁹ I found memories of girlhood alone were not sufficient to give me access to girls' wartime subjectivities. Without a focus, the memories could be too diffuse, yet an interviewer-set focus could also narrow the responses.³⁰ Simultaneously, as Darian Smith's work on oral history and memory has shown, subsequent commemorations and re-creations of a popular focus could mediate memories of 'how I was then'; an issue I also experienced in my initial attempts to set up this project.³¹

Now to address the way I have used oral history and memory, reader response, and feminist theory. It is important to acknowledge here that the conjunction of personal history and reading which infuses this thesis is the consequence of the ways oral history and memory theory and reader response theory, in combination, can make the potential for agency in wartime girl readers' subjectivities visible. This results in the opportunity to trace qualities of femininity in some way attributable to girls' negotiations. Using these theories, the personal histories of those who were the girl readers became my source for understanding how girls interpreted youthful femininity.

I drew firstly on two ideas developed in Kotre's review of memory theory and its application to personal history. He contends that the mature subject remembers 'how I was then', even as she subsequently tailors this memory thematically into a story of how she has become what she is now.³² He demonstrates empirically the theory that

²⁹Examples of histories drawing on oral history and memory are as follows: in British wartime society Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*; in Australia, Goldsmith and Sandford, *The Girls They Left Behind*; Connors, Finch, Saunders, Taylor, *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-45 War*. Examples of histories which combine oral history with material histories in Australia are firstly two which cut across the period without focussing on it specifically, Bell, *Generations*; Dreyfus, *Sweethearts of Rhythm*. Histories of the wartime period include Darian Smith's *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime*; Buttsworth, 'Women Colouring the Wartime Landscape'; Reekie, 'Shunted Back to the Kitchen? Women's Responses to War Work and Demobilisation'. These last two are included in Gregory, *On the Homefront*.

³⁰Walmsley, 'Life History Interviews', op cit, p 130.

³¹Darian Smith, 'Remembering Romance' in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, p 123; Darian Smith, 'War Stories' in Darian Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*. See also Note 48 in the Introduction to this thesis.

³²Kotre, *White Gloves*, pp 185-187.

the subject's memory recalls this historical subjectivity through the selection of powerful emotional experiences; that is 'memories'.³³ Secondly, I turn to reader response theory for the idea of reading as a way of making meaning which also reveals the extent of reader influence. Reader response theory has developed the concept of reading as a way the reader makes sense of the world. She does this through the interaction of a text which contains socially-approved ideas and herself as reader. The reader is at once a socially-shaped subject and an individual whose experience of psycho-social life is in excess of the approved discourses.³⁴ Sometimes this is called the 'separation of reader and text'. Additionally, several feminist critics and social historians draw on the way reading is used in powerful ways to shape girls into women.³⁵ This makes girls' reading memories likely to be memories of how they understood femininity. Furthermore, girls' experience of reading in wartime Australia is relatively untouched by those public commemorations and recreations which reshape remembered subjectivities.³⁶ This means that in these memories women are less likely to have had others' ideas of how they were as reading girls influencing their recollections.

4. Tracing Agency, Part 1: The First Analytical Technique.

The first analytical technique draws on the crucial conceptualisations of agency as the ability to change meaning, subjectivity as an individual's view of herself in relation to others and reading as a way to see how everyone in society understands the meaning of young womanhood. This is the technique I deployed to select the key qualities I used to evaluate girls' contribution to the emerging wartime

³³Kotre, op cit, pp 93-103.

³⁴Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism*, p 63. Across reading theory, Mills, 'Introduction' in Mills, *Gendering the Reader*, especially pp 8-12. As it affects girls, Mitchell, *The New Girl*, p 6; Flint, *The Woman Reader*, pp 35-43.

³⁵These works focus on both identity and subjectivity. For the former, see for example, Cadogan and Craig, *You're a Brick, Angela*; Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, Marchalonis, *College Girls*, Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*. For examples of the latter see Mitchell, *The New Girl*, Flint, *The Woman Reader* and Juhasz, *Reading From the Heart*. These examples refer to girls only. I have not also included here the useful analyses of women and reading on which I also draw. See also in Australia, Lyons and Taksa, op cit, Chapter Nine

³⁶Perhaps 'untouched' because the popular re-creation of girlhood through memories of reading has been so narrow. Girl readers of these generations are seen as 'children' until thirteen when they become 'adolescent' in *Australian Readers Remember*, Lyons and Taksa's accessible oral history, p. 89. Turner and Grant Bruce often appear to be singled out as the writers of Australian girls' books in the first half of the century. See for example, the entry for 'Girls' in Lees and Macintyre's *Oxford Companion to Australian Children's Literature*, pp 183- 184. See also the cover of *New Librarian*, August 1994 which features the Pound Collection.

meaning of youthful femininity. It is a *comparative process*. As I have explained in the Introduction, the key qualities had several *criteria*. They were acceptable aspects of youthful femininity. They satisfied wartime girls. They challenged the wartime dominant interests' notion of femininity. They also had to be seen as qualities of femininity which had a role in the early second wave feminist movement. I used the three archives to *compare* the reading authorities' idea of young womanhood in wartime Australia with the way ordinary, respectable girls saw themselves in relation to the world. Six qualities satisfied my first three criteria and, as I noted in the Introduction, these key qualities are also charted in scholarly studies as part of the early second wave feminist movement.³⁷

There is another issue governing the recognition of the key qualities in this historical study. Other studies, in a fragmented way, have already addressed the qualities as part of Australian girls' emerging understanding of youthful femininity by this time.³⁸ These studies indicate that not all the key qualities were recognised as part of young femininity by all girls. In line with this thinking, each of the six historical chapters focuses on the emergence of one of these key qualities in girl readers' interpretations of femininity through a particular experience of reading as the outcome of different combinations of ethnicity and class. In this way the key qualities are situated demographically.

³⁷I have set out the key qualities at length in the Introduction and briefly recapitulate here. Firstly, there was an autonomous public voice. Then there was a capacity for public struggle. Another key quality was the idea that young womanhood could have the infrastructure of an active group rather than a passive collectivity. While these three key qualities were understood as new femininities, they, and the two that follow, could be seen as extensions of 'natural' young womanhood. This idea that certain new qualities could be naturally feminine became the fourth quality. Additionally, young women could understand the way they recognised femininity as a demonstration of their capacity for interpreting moral womanhood. Finally, they could act as a group so that they could occupy a position of moral femininity when they believed that other machinery in society had failed to position them appropriately.

³⁸For example: Public voice: Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*; in Australia, Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia: Contesting Meanings of Citizenship, Femininity and the Nation in the 1920's', *Show Girl and the Straw Man, Journal of Australian Studies*, 71, 2001; Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*. Public struggle: Strange, op cit; in Australia, Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*; Lake, 'Female Desires. Feminine group infrastructure: Strange, op cit; in Australia, Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia'; Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*. Seeing characteristics of conflicting femininities simply as an extension of natural femininity: Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*; in Australia, Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*, Lake, 'Female Desires'. Judgment of morality: Dyhouse, op cit; in Australia, Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*; Lake, 'Female Desires'. Group action: Strange, op cit; in Australia, Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*.

4. *Tracing Agency, Part II: The Second Analytical Technique.*

The second analytical technique for uncovering wartime girls' agency depends particularly on the way I have conceptualised this agency as the result of a social space simultaneously occupied by the three *interacting conditions*: competing and conflicting ideas of socially-approved girlhood/young womanhood; the individual's psychic need to imagine young womanhood across these ideas; some social acceptance of the young womanhood imagined by the individual.³⁹ This technique involves tracing the effect of the interacting conditions on girls and on society in relation to the key qualities so that these groups' respective contributions to the establishment of the newer meaning of youthful femininity are revealed. From this perspective I can then evaluate girls' agency.

Firstly, I trace the influence of the global and national discourses on ideas of young womanhood being channelled through the education and mass media systems. This reveals how social conditions generated competing ideas of femininity in wartime girls' regulated reading experience. Thus I can ask which images respectable girl readers drew on to imagine femininity. Secondly, I examine the way the regulating systems shape the girls' psychic drive to mediate an approved image with aspects from the other available identities in interpreting a fulfilling femininity. Consequently I can analyse which femininities the girls use and how they are used to make the girls feel fulfilled. Finally, I explore the way society and, especially, the authorities in the regulating systems which were responsible for developing girls as women understand the performance of femininity. As a result, I can see which of the girls' interpretations were accepted as already approved ideas.

The selection of the key qualities of the emerging wartime idea of youthful femininity made the first analytical technique necessary. This selection has already been carried out. Therefore it is the *second technique*, the analysis of girls' contribution to the emerging discourse through the *interacting conditions necessary*

³⁹Refer to my discussion of work by de Lauretis and by Raissiguier in '2. Modern Power in the Social Space of the Subordinated and the Conditions Necessary for Their Agency: The Third and Fourth Crucial Conceptualisations'.

for agency, which forms the foundation for this historical exploration. In Sections Two, Three and Four I explain how I deploy the crucial conceptualisations in relation to each of these interacting conditions to trace the contribution of girl readers to the emergence of each of the key qualities. I will then be able to evaluate the contribution of wartime Australian girl readers to the emerging discourse of youthful femininity.

Section Two: Social Conditions Generating Competing Femininities, and Girls' Subjectivity and Agency.

This is the first of the three sections which detail the second analytical technique. This section explains how I have deployed the first-mentioned condition, the girls' existence in a society experiencing a period of sufficient social turbulence to let them imagine young womanhood as a repertoire of feminine identities. In this section I firstly show how this happened in second world war Australia. This was a time when stresses on the interests influencing the dominant discourses meant that several competing ideas of approved femininities were channelled through education and the mass media and were simultaneously being mediated through domestic influence. I have drawn on three important studies to argue that the development of the capitalist system, the re-articulation of capitalism and patriarchy because of this development, and the second world war were the great stresses that affected the way Australian girl readers understood femininity. These are Dyhouse's *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy* and Higonnet and Higonnet's 'The Double Helix'. Secondly, I demonstrate how memories of reading can be analysed to recover wartime girls' understanding of femininity as a repertoire of identities both individually and collectively. Section Two is underpinned by several of the crucial conceptualisations: agency as the ability to make a difference to social meaning; subjectivity as the way people see themselves in relation to the world; a period of competing ideas of femininity as one of the three interacting psycho-social conditions necessary for agency in subordinated groups; reading as a way to understand how different groups in this society saw womanhood.

As a result of the contiguity of global and national discourses which contributed to the shaping of femininity, Australian girls had a repertoire of significant national discourses on which they could draw to understand themselves as respectable women. These national discourses, as I have outlined in the Introduction, were sexuality, citizenship, Britishness and motherhood. All the discourses used gender as a salient category of social organisation and by 1939 femininity was established as the subordinate term in the gender binary. However, this was not experienced as a static value. The years 1939-1945 were a period in which the dynamism of socio-economic development and the consequent re-articulation of the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy was intensified by the pressures of war. A diverse body of literature has established that, as a result girl readers had repertoires of national ideas of femininity which were splitting apart under the weight of contradiction and competition.⁴⁰

Though education and popular media were the two public regulatory systems deeply involved in the shaping of Australian girls into young womanhood at this time, they did not account for all the powerful influences on girls. Foucault recognises that while public regulation was a useful technology for capitalism, and therefore expanded as the capitalist society expanded, the system of public regulation developed in a piecemeal way.⁴¹ Earlier systems of social regulation into femininity still retained influence in parallel to the public systems as well as being co-opted by them. In British societies (whether metropolitan or of settlement origin), the feminine domestic relationship was still a powerful force. As a consequence girls in these societies were shaped through a complex relationship between public and domestic systems. Reiger has demonstrated how the public regulation of motherhood in Australia was expanding in these years.⁴² Yet, as Dyhouse argues, domestically-based guidance into womanhood through

⁴⁰For sexuality see Finch, 'Consuming Passions' in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*; Lake, 'Female Desires', *Australian Historical Studies*, 1990, 24 (95); Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, Chapter Six. For motherhood see Darian Smith, pp 132 ff, pp 190-191. For conservative Britishness, Willis, *The Women's Voluntary Service*, Ph D thesis, Department of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, pp 5-6. For citizenship both conservative and modern, Pennay, *On the Home Front: Albury During the Second World War*, pp 23 ff; Spaul, *Australian Education in the Second World War*, pp 38-62; Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, pp 174-176. See also the other home front histories cited in this thesis.

⁴¹Rabinow, 'Introduction', Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, p 22.

⁴²Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home..*

mothers, who had also been guided into womanhood by their mothers, was a key process in developing girls' femininity.⁴³ Mackinnon's work on Australian women, who as girls were shaped by the public systems of higher education and professional training between the end of the nineteenth century and the middle of the interwar years, reveals how these girls sought to make sense of themselves and their world by drawing on both public regulation and domestic influence.⁴⁴ All these systems were conduits for competing ideas of womanhood.

Here I will develop the way I have drawn on the study by Walby that elucidates the effect of stresses on the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy. Walby contends that as capital shifted its focus from production to distribution capitalist interests began to challenge the older ideas of femininity as only privately supportive of the masculine arena of public production. Femininity now could mean paid public work founded on making goods and on distributing them to consumers and, consequently, on living in a consumer-oriented society. This change was affected by the way patriarchal interests strove to re-align the gender relationship with reference to capital in order to maintain a dominant position for masculinity in this era of new femininity.⁴⁵ The task of schools was increasingly complex. As well as maintaining the older gender roles and relationship, they sought to shape boys and girls as public workers and as masculine and feminine public citizens.⁴⁶ One important task of mass media was to harmonise conflicts emerging from changing dominant ideas of the social subject.⁴⁷ Thus schools and mass media can be seen as channels for shaping girls as public, paid workers and consumers as well as supportive wives and domestic producers. A further challenge arose as these regulatory systems were torn between representing girls as public workers and girls as subordinate public workers.

⁴³Dyhouse, op cit, Chapter One, 'First Lessons in Femininity: The Experience of Family Life'.

⁴⁴Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*, pp 83-89.

⁴⁵Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, pp 177 ff.

⁴⁶Holbrook, 'Apathetic Parents and Wilful Children? Vocational Guidance in the 1930's' in Theobald and Selleck, *Family School and State in Australian History*; Blackmore, 'Curriculum Assessment and Certification, 1930-1960', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1991.

⁴⁷Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, p 4 and p 210; Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood, 1920-1950*, pp 5-7. In Australia, Wright, 'The Women's Weekly: Depression and the War Years', *Refractory Girl*, No 3, 1973.

There are several histories which shed light on how the development of the capitalist economy and the social tensions generated by those seeking the re-articulation of capitalism and patriarchy created competing ideas of young womanhood which affected Australian girls. I draw on these in a specific way in the historical chapters as I outline the complex national discourses affecting girls' experience in their different roles as readers. Other studies reveal in more general ways how girls could be affected by the changes in capitalism and patriarchy. White suggests the development of the capitalist economy meant the use of education and popular media as sites of challenge to ideas of Britishness and citizenship in Australia.⁴⁸ The work of Holmes and of Elder on Australian women's sexuality and ideas of motherhood provides a starting point for me to contend that wartime Australian girl readers, through their own embeddedness in family and public society, would have experienced conflicts resulting from changing ideas.⁴⁹ However, it is Lake's analysis of an ordinary girl's subjective interpretation of femininity in the second world war which is crucially important to this study. 'Female Desires' reveals how deeply wartime girls were embedded in the twin regulatory systems of education and mass media. It also makes clear how important a technology reading was in shaping these girls to femininity and how powerful reading was as a tool girls used in making sense of their position as feminine in the world. Lake's study shows how reading channelled the insecurities and stresses affecting the dominant discourses to the girl reader as a repertoire of competing femininities.⁵⁰ It also reveals that such pressures were not a consequence of the event of war but rather the product of an ongoing process. This is important, for the embeddedness of these girls in respectable society is a significant focus of my study.

Higonnet and Higonnet demonstrate war as another contemporary reason for that stress on the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy which leads to social conditions supporting the competing interpretations of femininity. They develop the idea that war institutionalises new femininities even while it maintains

⁴⁸White, 'A Backwater Awash: The Australian Experience of Americanisation' in *Theory, Culture and Society, Explorations in Critical Social Science*, vol 1, no 3, 1983, pp 112-116.

⁴⁹Holmes, 'Spinsters Indispensable', *Australian Historical Studies*, No 110, 1998; Elder, ' "The Question of the Unmarried"', *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 18, Summer, 1993.

⁵⁰Lake, 'Female Desires'.

the binary gender relationship. It does this by moving women into the roles of the absent male population.⁵¹ At the same time, war is by nature conservative. Therefore, the conservative patriarchal ideas were newly foregrounded. No matter how clearly roles were recognised as masculine in the pre-war years, when women took them on as a consequence of the pressures of war, these functions were automatically feminised. They were recast as supportive of the nation's paramount task, defence through masculine military service.⁵² Furthermore, traditional middle-class femininity did not disappear. It was newly elevated as the reason for masculine military service.⁵³ In wartime the traditional ideal men of the race were protecting the ideal women as part of the maintenance of the ideal society. Nevertheless, the wartime experiences demystified areas hitherto considered naturally masculine and so women had a picture of themselves functioning in new ways.⁵⁴

There are diverse studies of the Australian home front which explore how war affected ideas of young Australian womanhood. These too are used in the historical chapters to outline the discourses affecting girls' specific experiences of reading. The studies tend to address young womanhood rather than girlhood as the entree to womanhood. Nevertheless, through extrapolation they have become an important source for showing the conditions which allow for a subjective repertoire of national femininities. There are several studies which mainly feature social notions of feminine identity.⁵⁵ Among these are also histories which reveal how the wartime public regulatory systems sought to affect girls as part of

⁵¹Higonnet and Higonnet, op cit, p 33.

⁵²See also Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, pp 78-79. In Australia, Saunders and Bolton, op cit, pp 376-391.

⁵³Higonnet and Higonnet, op cit, pp 37-38 and pp 39-40. Tinkler 'An All-round Education: The Board of Education's Policy for the Leisure-time Training of Girls, 1939-1950', *History of Education*, vol 23, no 4, 1994, pp 393-394. In Australia, Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, pp 175-176.

⁵⁴See also Saunders and Bolton, op cit, 378-383 and Oppenheimer, op cit, cf pp 107-111 and pp 128 ff.

⁵⁵Saunders and Bolton's 'Girdled for War: Women's Mobilisations in World War Two' provided a useful overview to the wartime shifts and continuities in femininity. Work such as Bayne's *Australian Women at War* and Buttsworth's 'Women Colouring the Wartime Landscape' have been valuable for their more detailed insight into social pressures associated with changed ideas of femininity and work which affected wartime girls. Oppenheimer's *All Work and No Pay: Australian Civilian Volunteers in War* was important for its demonstration of the nexus between voluntary home front work and social acceptance of more powerful public positions as part of youthful femininity. Rosemary Campbell's *Heroes and Lovers* and, more particularly, Finch's 'Consuming Passions' clarified the pressures associated with the meaning of heterosexual relationships as a consequence of the combination of socio-economic change and war.

Australia's youth.⁵⁶ A second inventory includes those histories of wartime femininity which foreground women's experience of war.⁵⁷ Darian Smith's *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-1945* has stood alone in providing me with an overview of a society at war while shining a narrow but vital beam on girlhood's relationship with wartime society from the point of view of both girls and of society.

This section sets up the critical framework to uncover the effect of Australia's social conditions on girl readers' capacity to imagine the meaning of youthful wartime femininity. So far I have delineated a society in which regulated reading provided for the individual and collective imagining of femininity as a repertoire of ideas. However, I needed a tool to analyse girl readers' understanding of femininity as the outcome of this repertoire. I drew on reading theory and memory theory as I outlined them in Section One to conceptualise reading memories as an instrument for the critical analysis of the ways in which girls' notions of femininity were affected by this repertoire. The reading theory I have outlined in Section One contended that reading was used by authorities to shape the social subject and that such shaping could apply collectively to a cohort. I also explained how I deployed memory theory's argument that memorable incidents were those which seemed powerful experiences at the time. In order to use reading in this way I drew on scholarly work which demonstrates that reading did this in relation to shaping wartime Australian girls into femininity.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Work by Bessant and more particularly by Spauld addresses the reflection of wartime shifts in elementary and secondary school reading. Bessant, 'British Imperial Propaganda and the Republic' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 42, 1994; Spauld, op cit, Chapter Three. Darian Smith's history of wartime Melbourne partly reflects the mass media reading situation for wartime girls.

⁵⁷Reekie's 'Shunted Back to the Kitchen? Women's Responses to War Work and Demobilization' highlights women's understanding of their position in relation to wartime work. Connors, Finch, Saunders and Taylor's *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-45 War* and Goldsmith and Sandford's *The Girls They Left Behind* range over work and relationships for girls as part of wider social histories. In the first case this is Queensland society's experience of war and in the second case this is as part of an Australian history of women's wartime experience. In this section I also include some autobiographies of interwar and wartime girlhood in which I found useful insights for my history of girls' subjectivities; Ker Conway's, *The Road From Coorain*, Lambert's *A Suburban Girl: Australia, 1918-1948* and Walker's *Roundabout at Bangalow*. Trimingham Jack's *Growing Good Catholic Girls* was valuable as a lens for middle-class Catholic values as they applied to, and were experienced by, girls in the middle of the twentieth century. Rutherford's 'Another Empire' functioned in a similar way for working-class Catholic girls.

⁵⁸For reading deployed as a technology shaping the modern individual girl into femininity see Flint, *The Woman Reader*; Mitchell, *The New Girl*; Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*. For reading deployed in

Additionally, I have used reading theory's concept of the separation of the reader and the text to highlight how reading is a regulatory practice in which feminine identity can be interpreted in simultaneous diverse ways in a period of multiple youthful femininities. Here I have deployed the work of Christie and of Mills. Their empirical investigations reveal the separation between the intention of a text and its received meaning is based on social experience.⁵⁹ Mills also empirically shows how the reading subject can experience herself as embedded in multiple, imbricated social discourses when making sense of a text.⁶⁰ On all these bases I argue that memories of reading in a period of multiple social conditions can reveal how the subject is drawing on various discourses in order to imagine her relation to others and to the world.

Both material and ideational situations fed into the collective effect of girls' wartime reading as a source of ideas of a femininity that could be imagined across a range of discourses, and in this thesis I have drawn on both. Histories of the book demonstrate reading material to have been widely and cheaply available and literacy a part of everyday life for Australian girls by this time.⁶¹ There are several studies on the central place of reading at all levels of the Australian education system, although none specifically focus on its connection with femininity and gender.⁶² Mitchell contends that, in the twentieth century, western society's production of reading as instruction in youthful femininity was matched with the development of the publishing industry. Consequently, by 1939 there was a wide

the collective shaping of girls into femininity see Mitchell, op cit and Tinkler op cit. For reading as a powerful memory associated with femininity see Mitchell, op cit and Juhasz, *Reading from the Heart*.

⁵⁹Christie, 'Theories of Textual Determination and Audience Agency: An Empirical Contribution to the Debate' in Mills, *Gendering the Reader*, pp 62-64; Mills, 'Reading As/Like a Feminist, in Mills, *Gendering the Reader*, pp 26-27.

⁶⁰Mills, op cit, p 27, p34, p 39, p 41.

⁶¹For materially-oriented histories of reading see Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*; Arnold, 'Cultivating the Armchair Reader: The Circulating Library Movement in Melbourne, 1930-1960', *Books, Readers, Reading, Australian Cultural History*, No 11, 1992; several of the chapters in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*. For reading as part of Australian girls' everyday life see Lyons and Taksa, op cit; Lyons, 'Reading Models and Reading Communities' in Lyons and Arnold, op cit, pp 371-375.

⁶²For the elementary school. For some examples see, Bessant, 'British Imperial Propaganda and the Republic', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 42, 1994; Gibbs, *Victorian School Books: A Study of the Changing Social Content and Use of School Books in Victoria, 1848-1948*, , Ph D Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987. For secondary and tertiary levels, Dale, *The English Men: Professing Literature in Australian Universities*; Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*.

representation of femininities available to girls through popular, voluntary reading.⁶³ This is supported as an Australian development by Lyons and Taksa's survey of interwar Australian reading.⁶⁴

Bringing together theory in reading and in memory allowed memories of reading to be analysed to show how wartime girl readers in the regulatory systems imagined themselves as feminine through several identities and a repertoire of complex and competing national discourses. Consequently, the thesis is argued by focussing in each historical chapter on a commonly remembered system in which reading is deployed by authorities and on the class and ethnic sub-populations of the girls it affects. Such an analysis clearly reveals how the girls imagined new femininities through mediations and adjustments between current discourses. However, these new ideas are not the result of social conditions alone. As I have previously argued, a psychic response which drives the subject to imagine femininities other than those approved by the dominant interests is another of the interactive conditions necessary to girls' agency. The ways in which this psychic pressure on wartime girl readers can be traced and evaluated are discussed in Section Three.

Section Three: Psychic Responses, and Girls' Subjectivity and Agency.

While discussing the second analytical technique in Section One I defined a psychic response which would seek features across several approved identities in order to imagine a satisfying subject position as a vital condition for girls' agency. In this section I draw on the crucial conceptualisations of agency as the ability to make a difference to social meaning and subjectivity as the way people see themselves in relation to the world. I deploy the idea of a psychic response which seeks to negotiate identities as one of the three interacting conditions necessary for subordinated groups' agency and the conceptualisation of reading as a way to look at how girls understood young womanhood. From this basis I explore how wartime Australian society shaped girl readers so that they would look for

⁶³Mitchell, *The New Girl*, Chapter 1; see also Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*.

⁶⁴Lyons and Taksa, op cit.

satisfying femininity by compensating for the experience of lack in one identity through drawing on and adjusting discursive fulfilments from across the range of approved identities. I do this by analysing the way reading shaped girls' psychic responses in wartime Australia. Then I further conceptualise the adjustments as powerful experiences so that they are likely to become part of memory. Those who identified as wartime girl readers, a pre-requisite for the participants in this project, were also likely to be those who imagined and remembered mediated femininities.

The first part of this section puts in place the relationship between two aspects of regulated reading which shaped wartime girl readers psychically as subjects who negotiated ideas of femininity. Firstly, wartime girlhood identities ensured the girl reader was experiencing profound double insecurity. This occurred through the combination of girlhood's basic definition as a state of becoming a woman, with its attendant sense of incompleteness, the confusion over what kind of woman a girl might expect to become, and how she was to perform in both becoming a young woman and as a young woman. Secondly, reading as technology was a way to assuage that insecurity, yet in doing this it heightened the readers' need to draw on and adjust her repertoire of discourses of femininity in order to achieve fulfilment.

I develop the theory underpinning this process in the succeeding paragraphs. However, an example of this insecurity, reading and a girl's consequent adjustment of ideas of femininity possible because of the existence of both reading and the repertoire might be useful here. My participant, Barbara, read and remembered Winifred Holtby's *South Riding*. She recalled the 'importance [her word]' of *South Riding* in terms of its depiction of a recognisably feminine, heterosexual young woman who was also a successful public, independent citizen. Barbara read *South Riding* as she was being structured into the idea of the heterosexual relationship as the entree to womanhood. Her broader memories reveal that while she yearned for womanhood she also had a sense of vulnerability over what she believed to be the subordinate position of women in the heterosexual relationship. For her this was clearly exemplified in the idea of domestic maternal citizenship. In remembering this story she devoted most of the space to the heroine's constant access to social power while a lifelong 'spinster school teacher'. Barbara did not refer specifically to the

heroine's failed love affair with a deeply conservative man which forms a large part of this novel. (This relationship failed because of the schoolteacher's personally ambitious outlook which moved her towards public feminine citizenship, as well as the man's conservatism which ensured that he saw the ideal woman as a domestic maternal citizen.) Instead she noted, 'I took [the heroine's] words to heart and was not a bit worried that I always found work more attractive than the couple of young men who asked me to marry them but did not believe in working wives!'. She quoted these words as, 'I was born to be a spinster and, by God, I'm going to spin'. As Mitchell points out, remembered stories are the stories that have most satisfied girls.⁶⁵ Barbara's memories of reading, with their emphasis on this version of *South Riding*, can be interpreted as revealing reading's importance in giving her a means to interpret her two concerns about feminine sexuality (that she had to be feminine, yet domestic heterosexual femininity would confine her). She felt she was supported in finding a satisfying subject position by drawing selectively on her repertoire of discourses of feminine citizenship.

The Lacanian principles of lack and ideas of fulfilment existing through an insufficient language support the notion of wartime girls being shaped into a psychic response which impels them to imagine youthful femininity through adjustment of the approved concepts. These principles are part of some feminist thinking.⁶⁶ To explain girlhood as a condition of a profound and perpetual vulnerability that sought security through femininities negotiated across the subject's repertoire of discourses I have drawn on the work of Hollway as my foundation study.⁶⁷ This is because Hollway not only uses the Lacanian notions, she also seeks to explain the psycho-social connection between imagining and expressing subjectively-adjusted discourses of femininity. She does this in a way which can articulate with the ideas of the social-practice theorists. (Social practice theory has proved valuable to my understanding of how some of the girls' newly-imagined femininities can be seen as socially approved. I discuss this further in Section Four).⁶⁸ To explain reading as a way for girls to assuage the

⁶⁵Mitchell, op cit, p 6.

⁶⁶Grosz, 'Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity', pp 78-80; Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory*, p 51, p 63; Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, p 81-83; Gatens, 'Psychoanalysis', in Caine, *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, p 477.

⁶⁷Hollway, 'Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity' in Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine, *Changing the Subject*.

⁶⁸Hollway, op cit, pp 227-228.

insecurity resulting from competing ideas of useful femininity I deploy Belsey's argument. Belsey develops the concept that a Lacanian understanding of the social subject opens the idea of reading as deeply implicated in shaping female readers' into imagining fulfilling femininity which is both mediated by current ideas and in excess of them.⁶⁹ This argument is situated in the relationship between the way the text's content is structured and the process of fiction reading.

Hollway has represented Lacanian anxiety as a sense of insecurity experienced through the performance of a binary gendered relationship in western society. Human completeness is socially divided into masculine and feminine characteristics. For example, autonomy is a masculine characteristic while nurturing is a feminine characteristic. Other studies demonstrate how the social role of respectable Australian girls in this era meant that the specified masculine characteristics represented as necessary to complete them were always either missing or tentative.⁷⁰ This was because as girls they were already recognised as feminine and therefore they were being shaped to feminine characteristics. However, as girls they were progressing towards the goal of womanhood and true femininity. The emblem of this achievement was a feminine role as part of a respectable, heterosexual couple, and access by proxy to the completing characteristics. Therefore, girls were by definition incomplete subjects. Hollway argues that the subject seeks to resolve gender-based lack through investment in those aspects of her discursive repertoire that seem best to accord with her need to understand herself as complete.⁷¹ This situation encouraged girls and young women to draw on aspects of other feminine identities which in some way made up for the missing characteristics in order to experience fulfilment.⁷²

The inherent insecurity of girls' position as a subject progressing towards the psychic completeness of womanhood was reinforced by conflict in the way wartime society constructed the condition of becoming women. Girls in Australia were daughters, influenced in their progress towards womanhood by mothers in

⁶⁹Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, pp 14-19.

⁷⁰Elder argues these years saw girls experiencing greater pressure to be heterosexual in order to be feminine. Elder, ' "The Question of the Unmarried"', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 1993, p 153.

⁷¹Hollway, *op cit*, pp 238-239; Mackinnon drawing on Hollway, *Love and Freedom*, p 147.

⁷²See Mackinnon's use of Hollway's ideas in *Love and Freedom*, pp 147-149.

the British cultural tradition in the seclusion of the home.⁷³ They were also adolescents who were publicly regulated in education, paid work, leisure pursuits and, as Smart has shown us, even in housing.⁷⁴ Finally, as Oppenheimer and Willis independently demonstrate, they were active young citizens. They had independence and responsibilities as members of a homefront society.⁷⁵ There were no clear demarcations between these competing ways of being a girl. Daughters were supported as adolescents and female adolescents were understood as daughters.⁷⁶ Both adolescents and daughters were encouraged to be active young citizens.⁷⁷

However, the insecurity of girlhood did not reside only in its sense of being detached from a secure immediate identity but also in pressure and confusion associated with future identity. The social incentive shaping girls was the promise of fulfilment when young womanhood was achieved. I have drawn on literature which explores the meaning of young womanhood in these years to argue that girls' anxieties were heightened by their knowledge of the importance of this achievement. Tinkler's study of the relation of the modern girl to the popular media illuminates the way the dominant discourse of girlhood's potential for transgression was translated into girls' magazine stories and articles as moral and/or social failure. Every girl was vulnerable to this failure.⁷⁸ As I have argued, studies show us how both novels and magazines were understood by working-class and middle-class girl readers and the administrators of reading as instruction in how to be feminine. In texts directed at girls, 'failure' was represented through

⁷³For British cultural values in middle-class Australian homes in the period encompassing the interwar years and the second world war, see White, op cit, pp 112-117; Kingston op cit, p 119-121, Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p 150.

⁷⁴For education see Miller and Davey, 'Family Formation, Schooling and the Patriarchal State' in Theobald and Selleck, *Family, School and State in Australian History*; Holbrook, 'Apathetic Parents and Wilful Children? Vocational Guidance in the 1930's in the same work, Craig Campbell, op cit. For paid work see Frances, op cit, p 124 and p 147; Kingston, op cit; Elder op cit. For leisure pursuits see Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', *Showgirl and the Straw Man: Journal of Australian Studies*, no 71, 2001, pp 2-3. For housing see Smart, op cit, p 7; Kingston, op cit, p 121.

⁷⁵Willis, op cit, pp 260-261; Oppenheimer, op cit, pp 114-115.

⁷⁶Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*, pp 83-91; Craig Campbell, op cit, pp 57-62.

⁷⁷Willis, *ibid*; Connors et al in the work cited, p 153; Spaul in the work cited, pp 57-62; Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', pp 8-15, are some examples of work which indicates this generation was part of this situation.

⁷⁸Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p 152, p158, in detail pp 166-172.

its cost to the individual. The reading girl's anxiety was heightened by the amount and intensity of this social effort devoted to directing her in the right path.⁷⁹

This anxiety was compounded by wartime girls' simultaneous fashioning into several subject positions. Girls were being forged into adult femininity as sexual beings, as embryonic maternal citizens, as public workers and consumers and as the feminine part of a wartime community.⁸⁰ Furthermore, all these positions were being affected coevally by the repertoire of national discourses which defined womanhood in this era. This psycho-social situation is elucidated contextually in each of the historical chapters under the heading 'Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers'.

I deploy reading theory to clarify how girls were positioned both as individual subjects and as a collectivity in ways which allowed them to mitigate this triple sense of insecurity founded in ideas of girlhood as an incomplete subject position. This depended on the fact that there were several competing ideas of girlhood, and in the competing ideas of that womanhood to which they were progressing. Girls sought experiences which allayed their psychic insecurity. Reading was one of these. It is an integral argument of this thesis that the ways in which reading allayed wartime, Australian girls' insecurities can also be demonstrated as a process which heightened their need to mediate lack through drawing on aspects of other approved feminine identities. I draw on Belsey's exploration of the connection between content and process in popular reading for the idea that girls were shaped into needing to negotiate femininity across their repertoire of available identities. This same work allows me to argue that, furthermore, these wartime girls were shaped into understanding negotiated femininities as approved femininities. I have used Mitchell's study of modern girls and reading to argue that reading meant these mediations had a collective dimension.

⁷⁹See also Flint, op cit, on the tradition of girls' advice manuals, pp 71-73; Tinkler on popular magazines' expansion and their purpose as texts advising/managing interwar/wartime girls into womanhood, p 5.

⁸⁰For sexual beings see Elder, op cit; Lake in 'Female Desires'. For embryonic maternal citizens see Elder op cit; Lake in 'Female Desires'. For consumers see Finch, 'Consuming Passions: Romance and Consumerism During World War II' in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*; Public workers implies both paid and voluntary work in this time of war. See Elder, op cit; Willis, ibid; Oppenheimer, p 114; Spaul, op cit, p 58.

Belsey used Radway's empirical study of the Smithton readers to show how Barthe's ideas of rapturous reading creating and consolidating new ideas applies not only to high culture, but also to popular reading.⁸¹ Radway has argued readers can only imagine fulfilment through the heterosexual gender relationship, yet the subordinate feminine position in this binary relationship is unsatisfactory to them.⁸² Therefore, they are satisfied by stories which allow them to negotiate across their repertoire of femininities and dream a femininity which makes them feel complete. An example of this is the popularity with women readers of romances which represent the nurturing hero, despite western masculinities which approve the self-reliant, individuated man. Radway situates the reason for this in the psycho-cultural position of women which makes a nurturing emotional bond (usually situated in the mother/daughter relationship) a source of deep satisfaction and at the same time makes heterosexuality an imperative.⁸³

Belsey extends Radway's argument by highlighting the potential power of this response to affect the meaning of femininity in society. Most of the recollected texts in my project were, like the stories Radway's readers discuss, texts of classic realist fiction. Belsey sees this reading as shaping the reader through both the way the content is structured and through reading as a psychic process. She argues that there are three major technologies structuring the content; a hierarchy of discourse, an illusion of reality and closure as a representation of fulfilled desire.⁸⁴ However, any or all of these can be read for meanings different to those intended originally according to the reader's needs and experience.⁸⁵ Belsey contends that the women readers were profoundly driven to negotiate femininities as a consequence of Lacanian psycho-sexual sensation grounded in the relationship between the content/structure of the text and the reader. The sense of fulfilment in the closure is the result of the interaction between the structural developments and the reader's psycho-sexual need. The halts and slow progressions in the story as a consequence of 'reality' are a stimulus for intensifying pleasurable sensations reached in the climax/closure. However, the

⁸¹Belsey, *op cit*, pp 34-37.

⁸²Radway, *Reading the Romance, Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, pp 207-208.

⁸³Radway, *op cit*, pp 135-141.

⁸⁴Belsey cited in Boardman, 'The Glass of Gin' in Mills, *Gendering the Reader*, p 203.

⁸⁵Radway, *ibid*; Boardman, again drawing on Belsey, *ibid*.

completion of the text also brings about a sense of loss and a desire for a return of the pleasure; that is also, a return to the world in which the reader has imagined a femininity negotiated from her repertoire. Thus, not only does reading encourage a girl to imagine femininity in ways which make her feel complete by negotiating current approved ideas, it also makes the process of doing this a sensual imperative.⁸⁶ Consequently, through repetition girl readers consolidated the adjusted femininities they were interpreting in their ‘avidly’ chosen reading as their understood way to be feminine in the world.⁸⁷

Mitchell recognises that reading both shapes modern girls as a community and allows girls to negotiate the values of the girls’ community. She argues that by 1915 in British societies girls had become a separate social identity, ‘no longer a child, not yet a (sexual) adult’.⁸⁸ This was an identity which both included and divided the girls of the middle and working classes. With this unique identity came unique social experiences and anxieties. Being authorised to read certain material specified as ‘girls’ reading’ was one of these experiences. This material also depicted girls’ relationship to the world. The expansion of popular literature and competition in the publishing world ensured that several ideas of girlhood were available to the readers. This meant that girls had the opportunity to choose the most satisfying representations of their relationship to society. Consequently, reading, as well as an instrument for the social shaping of girls into a community, also became an instrument for girls’ own negotiation of their place in a community holding similar values.⁸⁹ I deploy this argument as a point of departure to argue that the experience of reading for wartime Australian girls ensures that each of the key qualities of youthful femininity I focus on has a collective dimension. While individual girls were negotiating these satisfying qualities, many girls were individually negotiating any one of the qualities at this time. They experienced this activity as part of being a member of the collectivity known as ‘girls’.

⁸⁶Belsey, op cit, p 35.

⁸⁷This notion of ‘avidness’ as well as the word itself is common to Radway, Belsey and, I will argue, my participants. See Radway op cit, p 17, Belsey, op cit, p 34, p 37.

⁸⁸Mitchell, op cit, p 3.

⁸⁹Mitchell, op cit, pp 3-4.

Finally, as part of my crucial concept of reading as a way to reveal how girls thought of womanhood, I see girls' reading as the basis of powerful emotional experience. Once more I deploy Kotre's discussion of memory selectivity as a way to fulfil 'memory's real interest: the creation of meaning about the self'.⁹⁰ I have already explained in Section One how the notion of powerful experiences as experiences remaining in the memory is significant to this study. To amplify the notion of the 'powerful' in a way which is useful to this section, I have used Kotre's argument that memory theory shows that personal memory is based on two strands; the emotion associated with a powerful first-time experience and the interpretive explanations founded on perceived patterns associated with powerful emotion.⁹¹ The idea of girlhood as a process of becoming a woman means that many of the understandings and thoughts associated with reading at this time must have been both new experiences for the reader and experiences always focussing on femininity.⁹² The idea of the 'avid' reader shared by Radway, Belsey and my participants reveals the powerful emotion attached to the repeated experience of reading, as the reader sought both comfort and rapture.⁹³

Using this critical framework it is possible to trace how girl readers could imagine the key qualities as part of respectable young womanhood by mediating the lack in a particular feminine identity through association with fulfilments attached to other approved identities. However, girls' imagined satisfying femininities are not synonymous with approving acceptance of these femininities. Rather, they are the fulfilment of one of the conditions which could lead to their emergence as an approved discourse. In the next section I set out the critical apparatus which reveals the way imagined ideas can become approved ideas: here the final interacting condition for girls' agency and the final step in my second analytical technique for tracing and evaluating girls' agency meet.

⁹⁰Kotre, op cit, p 87.

⁹¹Kotre, op cit, pp 87-106.

⁹²The anxieties of the girl readers in Tinkler's study, *Constructing Girlhood* exemplify this idea. See for example, pp 152-153.

⁹³See Note 91.

Section Four: Social Practice, and Girls' Subjectivity and Agency

Accepted discourses must be socially expressible and socially approved. This means that those key qualities of youthful femininity which the girls imagined were also acceptable as part of respectable Australian wartime girlhood. This is the last of the three interacting conditions conceptualised as vital for the agency of subordinated collectivities which I deploy as the foundation of my second analytical technique. Uncovering reasons why the key qualities were socially approved is the last step in the process of tracing and evaluating the influence of girl readers on the ideas of wartime, youthful femininity. Like the others, this section draws on the crucial conceptualisations of agency as the ability to make a difference to social meaning and subjectivity as the way people see themselves in relation to the world as well as the notion of the importance of the three interactive conditions. However, here I deploy both ideas in the crucial conceptualisation of reading. Not only is reading a way to see how girls understand the meaning of young womanhood, it is also a way to see how society is able to accept their imagined femininities as socially-approved young womanhood. To trace the way girls' imagined femininities became acceptable I frame up regulatory influence and subjective response from a psycho-social perspective. The wartime regulatory systems impelled girls to express their imagined femininities and Australia's wartime ideas of femininity allowed certain expressions to be understood as part of approved femininity. Then I discuss how reading was both a source of psychic impulsion for girls to express their negotiated ideas and a facilitator of socially acceptable ways in which to do this.

Firstly, in the critical framework I develop to reveal reading as a source of impulsion for girls to express satisfying femininities, I have deployed the work of Hollway and of Young. Hollway, drawing on ideas of the socially-created subject, bridges the gap between theoretical ideas of power and social practice through the notion Giddens refers to as ways of 'going on' in society as an immediate response to psychic anxiety. Young's ideas allow me to make visible how the potential for self-consciousness involved in ways of going on is also a potential for girls to see themselves as an active group. This last idea is important in an argument premised on the connection between these girls' agency and the popular public feminism of the next generation and so I clarify it here.

Hollway argues that the individual has agency in the negotiation of new discourses in instances when her gendered performance causes her to feel incomplete. In seeking to assuage that insecurity the individual adjusts her expressed subject position so that she can perform in a way which makes her feel less vulnerable. However, she can only put into practice a subject position that fits within social ideas of femininity and the ways she has of 'going on', or as Hollway puts it, 'a result of the contradictions in our positionings, desires and practices - which result from the coexistence of the old and the new'.⁹⁴ The term 'ways of going on' is important to my ideas of the way reading facilitated the approved performance of imagined femininities rather than why reading impelled that performance. I will discuss it further in the second part of this section which focuses on how reading facilitates the expression of negotiated femininities. Here I want to emphasise that reading was a technology shaping wartime girls in and to several roles, all of which foregrounded their incompleteness and insecurity in performed social relationships and so impelling them to resolve their anxiety. Consequently, girl readers were always seeking ways to perform those imagined femininities which made them feel more secure.

Feminism implies that underpinning the struggle for recognition of women's social rights is a consciousness of identity as a woman. I have drawn on Young's work to conceptualise psycho-social expression as the point where self-consciousness is an issue in wartime girl readers' adjustment of ideas of young womanhood. In doing this I have defined feminism as part of a continuum on which the individual moves towards an understanding that she is acting as part of a group which supports and extends social rights for women. While the idea of collectivity through reading is canvassed in all the chapters of historical inquiry, Chapter Seven foregrounds a collective self-consciousness by drawing on ideas of the difference between femininity as seriality and femininity as a group in girl readers' expression of feminine service.

Young has addressed in detail the way women subjectively move towards feminist consciousness. Drawing on Sartre's series theory, she argues that for much of the time

⁹⁴Hollway, *op cit*, pp 259-260.

female subjects passively carry out routine practices and habits intended to move towards certain objects as part of a 'less organised and unselfconscious collective unity'. Their direction is defined through common social experience. This is a series. However, at times when their movement towards what they see as the socially-defined object is impeded, they seek to achieve that object by self-conscious action which mutually acknowledges the group.⁹⁵ As their goal is defined by their perception of the socially promised object, so this goal can extend the rights girl readers seek beyond those recognised by dominant interests.

Secondly I developed a critical framework to uncover the way in which reading facilitated a socially acceptable expression of girls' interpretations. This depends on a definition of society as the outcome of the linguistically expressible. Consequently, in looking at reading as a facilitator of the socially-approved expression of satisfying femininities I have used socio-linguistic theory to support Giddens' 'ways of going on'. Rules and resources are an important part of social practice. Giddens has argued that in social practice the girl reader finds ways of 'going on', that is responding in an immediate way to the pressures of life, by drawing only on those rules and resources she already has at her disposal. Resources are those aspects of subject position, such as status or position in relation to another, which give the subject an opportunity to effect change. Rules are the understood formulae which allow us to 'go on' in an immediate situation without transgressing.⁹⁶ The subject is never completely aware of the range of rules and resources at her disposal, hence the use of the term 'going on' rather than 'deciding'.

I use this idea of familiar rules and resources with the notion that girl readers occupied several, poorly-demarcated positions both as girls and as future young women to conceptualise reading as a source for negotiating new satisfying, approved femininities. As I have noted in Section Three, girls experienced reading as daughters, adolescents and active young citizens. They read as preparation for maternal citizenship, youthful sexuality and public work and consumption. Each of these

⁹⁵Young, 'Gender as Seriality' in Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy*, especially pp 23-24.

⁹⁶Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, pp 14 -25. Subsequently applied and developed in his later work. See Derek Layder, *Understanding Social Theory*, p 138 and p 146. Hollway, op cit, uses these ideas of social practice to explore how the social individual invests in certain subject positions, p 227.

positions was part of a differently conceptualised, binary gender relationship. Some of the positions acknowledged femininity through qualities regarded as masculine in the other relationships. Girls, by their very definition, were lacking any immediate potential for secure completeness through gender relationships. Therefore, they invested across the positions they were offered in those qualities which gave them a sense of completeness.

A socio-linguistic perspective reveals that wartime Australia provided girl readers with the opportunity to express as socially approved those femininities which satisfied them but which also changed the approved positions. In its focus on 'respectable', non-transgressive agency the thesis recognises those with agency must have some control of language to express their negotiated ideas in ways society imagines as approved. This is a two step process. As I asserted at the beginning of this section, the negotiated femininities must firstly be expressible to the subject herself as approved femininities and then unexceptionally expressed in society. The thesis draws on Grosz' elucidation of Derrida to understand how wartime girl readers could express and perform their satisfying interpretations of femininity as an approved part of society. Derrida argues that language supports changes in power relationships. To do this it uses the concepts of binaries and hinge terms.⁹⁷

Derrida has argued that western language is formalised around binary pairs and that the dominant component seeks to construct a society which maintains this relationship. Yet experience is excess to this system and in this excess lies the possibility for shifts in expressible meaning. Such shifts centre on the concept of the hinge term, a term which incorporates both the unexpressed and the approved.⁹⁸ Grosz shows how Irigaray has consciously demonstrated the possibilities of this concept with the expression 'two lips' as a definition of women's sexuality; this term incorporates both the penis as the object of desire in women's sexuality and auto-erotic self-containment as the fulfilment of female desire.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Grosz, 'Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity', pp 93-97.

⁹⁸Grosz, *ibid.*

⁹⁹Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, p 115 -119.

Tinkler has shown that, in the context of second world war society, British girls unconsciously experienced the unification of diverse representations of femininity across the range of discourses affecting them. This occurred through the hinge term ‘feminine service’ and its corollary ‘feminine leisure’ as a part of the approved system of service.¹⁰⁰ As I outlined in the Introduction, this powerful wartime idea of service can also be seen to exist in Australia. Tinkler’s perspective allows me to perceive the competing interests regulating young womanhood through reading as commonly seeing femininity as feminine service. In both the public regulatory systems most powerfully affecting girls (education and mass media), reading was a technology through which girls were being shaped into femininity as feminine service. The hidden, auxiliary shaping influence of the feminine domestic relationship also shared this perception.¹⁰¹

I trace the girls’ contribution to each of the key qualities from the perspective that both the girls and society understood these qualities as an aspect of feminine service. The section in the historical chapters headed ‘Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers’ draws on the large body of work which reveals that while the idea of feminine service was used to harness Australian women as a resource for Australian men in the discourses of Britishness, sexuality, citizenship and motherhood, it was also used in competing and conflicting ways. In traditional notions of femininity womanly fulfilment was represented as masculine approval of a woman’s supporting service, a position which focussed women on personal relationships and made them constantly vulnerable to men’s caprice. However at this time, historians like Elder and Reiger argue, the capitalist-supported spread of public regulation developed ideas of feminine service in the key discourses so that it had also begun to mean service to the patriarchal state.¹⁰² Oppenheimer contributes to this notion by showing how the British middle-class tradition of female philanthropy was extended to become part of working class feminine life also in second world war Australia, as public regulation

¹⁰⁰Tinkler, ‘At Your Service: The Nation’s Girlhood and the Call to Service in England, 1939-50’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, vol 4, part 3, 1997, pp 353-354; Tinkler, ‘An All-Round Education: The Board of Education’s Policy for the Leisure-time Training of Girls, 1939-50’, *History of Education*, 1994, vol 23, no 4, especially, p 386.

¹⁰¹Lyons and Taksa, op cit, Chapter Twelve, ‘Pride and Prejudice: Some Myths About Readers’.

¹⁰²Elder, op cit; Reiger, op cit, p 216.

normalised the values of middle-class femininity.¹⁰³ Furthermore, Finch and Rosemary Campbell contend that coevally the development of capitalism was shifting the meaning of feminine service as the domestic support of masculinity.¹⁰⁴ It too was becoming more publicly expressible and therefore, publicly judged. The public visibility of feminine service whether to the state or to individual men could grant individual women more autonomy and security. Simultaneously, patriarchal influence ensured feminine service was invested with the necessary binary gender relationship in all its forms. Thus the new forms had the potential for social approval.

The common idea, across diverse notions of the meaning of reading and diverse notions of femininity, that girls were being shaped into femininity as feminine service allowed readers to perform their more satisfying imagined femininities. For example, being part of a heterosexual relationship was represented to girls as feminine pleasure, but so was maternal approval, and mothers supported conservative notions of womanhood. Therefore, a good daughter reading a domestic romance story in a woman's magazine as part of her preparation for her future position as a passive, virtuous wife could not attend dances (and so initiate her heterosexual life) alone. However, an active young citizen reading about homefront support programs as part of a story in a women's magazine could offer herself as a partner at Australian Red Cross or church hall dances for national troop morale. Both ideas of service were potentially part of the wartime girl reader's experience of approved femininity and the ways girls found to perform them changed the meaning of respectable youthful femininity. A respectable girl could make an autonomous decision to attend a dance as a feminine wartime citizen supporting troop morale on the home front and so contributing to the maintenance of the approved (and conservative) state. As a result, the sexually-protected, story-reading daughter could retain the satisfaction of maternal approval as a good daughter non-transgressively preparing for her own future domestic life. Simultaneously, she could experience satisfying control of her heterosexual life through her feminine position at the dance.

¹⁰³Oppenheimer, op cit, pp 107 ff. For the transference of both ideals and women's sense of the power potential associated with British female philanthropy to the settlement society see Windschuttle, 'Feeding the Poor and Sapping their Strength' in Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History*, p 54.

¹⁰⁴Finch, 'Consuming Passions'; Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity*, Chapter One and Chapter Three.

I draw again on the ideas of memory theory developed in Section Three of the association between powerfully experienced conditions and memory and of the bases for the memory's selection. Here, I use this notion to argue that as a consequence of associations between reading, imagined satisfying qualities of femininity and the expression of those femininities as part of respectable girlhood, memories of girlhood reading would include the negotiated, acceptable femininities. Firstly, this is because the relationship between regulated reading in wartime Australia and the girls' opportunities for space to express their imagined femininities means that reading was a powerful experience. Additionally, it is because both the need to express the imagined femininities and the reception of their expression combined repetition of a significant experience with experiential novelty for the girl reader moving uncertainly into the new territory of preparation for womanhood.¹⁰⁵

This is the critical framework supporting the analysis and evaluation of reading as a space for girls to negotiate the key qualities of youthful femininity in wartime Australia. However, the tools developed here are only half of what makes good history. The understanding and skill with which they are wielded is the other half of successfully charting social change. The rest of the thesis will undertake this task. There are six key qualities. Each of the following six historical chapters traces the influence of wartime girls on one of these qualities.

¹⁰⁵See the discussion of Kotre's work on memory and personal history in Section Three of this chapter.

Chapter Two: Elementary School Classroom Reading and Voice

Introduction

The historical chapters explore the way girls' experience of reading in a society affected by the pressures of the global discourses, national discourses and war gave them the space to negotiate the key qualities as a means of finding a more satisfying way of being feminine. By 1939 Australian girls were being shaped as workers and as young wartime citizens through the elementary school system. Reading was part of that shaping and in this chapter and the next I look at its effect in relation to girls' agency.

In this chapter I argue that girls' experience of elementary school classroom reading gave them the space to negotiate the first key quality of public voice as part of approved youthful femininity. Girls from working-class and poor rural families often had no other opportunity to imagine voice as part of their own interaction with others and the world.¹ I have focussed particularly on their experience of this reading, for social change as a result of the development of capitalism and the pressures of war ensured that the greatest change associated with the meaning of feminine voice was evident in these groups. Their classroom reading focused on the graded school magazines and readers produced by the state education departments.

As this study deploys the autonomous state education systems of wartime Australia, and as this war takes place in a period when education levels were being renegotiated, in this chapter and Chapter Three I have allowed some latitude in interpreting the term 'elementary education'.² Instead of focussing on whether a level was early secondary, super-primary, post-primary or primary for girls of twelve or so, I have accepted as memories of elementary education any school recollections in this age group that do not clearly relate to secondary school.

¹For first half of twentieth century effect of girl's voicelessness as part of the tradition of British patriarchy: in working class homes, Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, Chapter One; in Australian homes Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, pp 120-121; McCalman, *Struggletown*, pp 55 ff; at work, McCalman, op cit, pp 123 ff; Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p162; in rural communities, Barbalet, *Far From a Low Gutter Girl*, pp 61-64; McIntyre and McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, pp 202 ff.

²Cunningham, McIntyre, Radford, *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, pp 33-36, 43-46 etcetera. Bessant, 'The Emergence of State Secondary Education' in Cleverley and Lawry, *Australian Education in the Twentieth Century*, pp 127 ff, p 133, pp 135-139.

Voice is defined as making autonomous decisions about one's own life as part of a publicly-active collective. This identity took precedence over domestic femininity where the subject was isolated and subordinated to the interests of others, in other words, voiceless.

The notion of voice as part of youthful femininity emerged from the way the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy were shifting under the pressures of war and so influenced girls' experience of the national discourse of citizenship. The discourse of citizenship supported capitalism and patriarchy in their differently-recognised, but common maintenance of the dominance of white, middle-class men through the deployment of a balance of ideas based on the binaries underpinning the nation's categories of social organisation; gender, class, race and ethnicity. This approach led to citizenships of different value. The dominant elements in each of the social categories were understood as having voice because they were rational and trustworthy. The girls were already part of the dominant element in some of these categories. However, the categories were ranked and girls were part of the dominant element only in the lower-ranking social categories. Ranks could shift as a result of the way dominant groups met challenges to their interests. I argue that in wartime Australia the rank importance of the social categories underpinning citizenship shifted in response to such challenges to the interests supporting the global discourses. Race and ethnicity superseded class and gender as the most important social categories. This shift reinforced in the elementary school girl reader the idea that, as a wartime British Australian, she had an approved voice.

The section on social discourses puts in place the complex ways forces were already affecting girls' experiences of voice at this time. The developments in capitalism which extended ideas of women's position to one of public as well as domestic work, led to Australian girls reading in the elementary education programs as adolescents. That is, they were being publicly regulated into ungendered Australian citizenship and this idea encouraged voice.³ However, patriarchal interests ensured that working-class girl readers were coevally experiencing domestic and labour market ideas of feminine citizenship which included voicelessness. At the same time,

³White, *Inventing Australia*, Chapter Nine.

the increasing sense of national jeopardy was significant in taking the idea of voice as part of youthful femininity beyond the classroom through notions of wartime Australian citizenship. Consequently, working-class girls as active young wartime citizens had access to a world where their decision-making met with both school approval and domestic understanding.

Aspects of elementary school magazine reading practices forged an enthusiastic girl reader into someone who imagined she possessed voice as part of being a young British Australian citizen in wartime. Publishing and teaching practices combined to shape this reader so that she had an idea of herself as firstly, a publicly rational and trustworthy individual when not all readers were like this. Secondly, she understood herself as a member of a group with a public as well as a private identity. Thirdly, she was someone upon whose voluntary and willing reading contribution the group depended for its success.

There were also aspects of the texts which allowed the wartime girl reader to interpret voice as part of youthful femininity. The first was the idea of departmental school magazine reading as a source of information about the world and how to be in it.⁴ Secondly, the conservative nature of education meant that the texts strongly emphasised the individual's willing contribution to the state through traditional ideas of natural binaries.⁵ This continued while the pressures of war meant that the magazines reflected the changes in the order of importance of the social categories supporting these binaries. The section on texts analyses the cover illustrations of the school magazines to explore how wartime girl readers were shown they occupied social categories of shifting value and as a consequence occupied not only subordinate social positions but also dominant positions.

Memories reveal firstly the way these girls could imagine autonomous, willing public contribution as part of Australian femininity through wartime elementary classroom reading. Secondly, the memories show how the experience of reading in

⁴Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, p 191; Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p 71; *Education Gazette and Teachers Aid*, 17 June, 1941, p 164.

⁵For an example of the way in which war could be used to both maintain the binary gender relationship as it affected girls and change girls' contribution to the state see Tinkler, 'At Your Service', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol 4, part 3, 1997, p 353-354.

Australia's wartime society allowed the girls to see an immediate connection between their classroom reading and the way they performed beyond the classroom as active young citizens. Two case studies explore some of the dimensions of voice as part of youthful femininity which were open to elementary school girl readers.

Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers.

Traditional dominant ideas of citizenship were gendered. Masculine citizenship was founded in the public role of the citizen worker while feminine citizenship was understood as personal domestic service supporting masculine needs. This citizenship relationship gave women little voice. However, by 1939 an 'ungendered' category of citizenship had emerged which drew on the notions of masculine citizenship. Australian girls attended elementary schools and were being shaped through this education as ungendered citizens with a capacity for public voice as future public citizen workers. Simultaneously, notions of feminine citizenship were still powerful in the urban working class, the rural labouring class and small farming communities. The dynamics of capitalist development and patriarchal struggle to retain masculinity as the dominant aspect of the gender relationship affected such girls and women in ways which appeared to extend rather than change the traditional idea. However, the pressures of war were beginning to effect change in both school concepts of citizenship and, more subtly, in domestic concepts of feminine citizenship. These changes combined to influence ideas of voice as part of youthful femininity in rural and working-class girl readers in the elementary schools.

Elementary schools created a space for Australian girls to understand themselves as voiced citizens. By 1939 the elementary education of Australian youth had been institutionalised.⁶ As 'youth' girls as well as boys were part of the elementary education system.⁷ Urban working-class girls and girls from rural areas who had few other youthful encounters with the modern systems of public shaping experienced elementary education.⁸ Authorities understood the shaping of ungendered citizens as

⁶Theobald, *Knowing Women*, pp 196 - 199; Cunningham et al, *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, p 19, p 21.

⁷Theobald, *ibid*; Matthews, 'Education for Femininity', pp 31-33.

⁸Cunningham et al, *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, p 19; Holbrook, 'Apathetic Parents and Wilful Children?' in Theobald and Selleck *Family School and State in Australian History*, pp 143-145; Trethewey, 'Solving "The Retardation Problem"', *History of Education Quarterly*, Fall, 1999, pp 267-270.

one of the roles for this level of education.⁹ By this time, ideas of public citizenship in Australia and middle-class, masculinist values had been conflated. Wartime girls were part of education programs developing citizen workers in an Australia imagined as both a British, capitalist democracy and a modern capitalist democracy.¹⁰ In each of these ideas of Australia the concept of the citizen was informed by notions of the masculine role.¹¹ In both ideas of the nation, public voice was an aspect of citizenship. British ideas of citizenship were predicated on the willing public contribution of the rational, trustworthy individual to the British state.¹² Modern ideas emphasised the informed public contribution of the rational, trustworthy citizen to the maintenance of the democratic state.¹³ After the outbreak of World War II elementary schools supported programs in which girls were represented as active young wartime citizens publicly supporting their beleaguered empire and nation.¹⁴

The tangle of British and modern values which constituted feminine citizenship by 1939 made voice a limited quality for poor rural and working-class women and girls. Aspects of traditional citizenship, which was seen as maternal and domestic, combined in complex ways with modern values of the female worker in notions of how women should serve the state. Twentieth century feminine Australian British citizenship focussed mostly on motherhood, domesticity and individual personal service to others.¹⁵ While the voluntarism associated with traditional British ideas of female philanthropy or ‘parallel power’ offered some British Australian women an opportunity for public voice, these were, at the least, middle-class women, part of the

⁹Matthews, *ibid*; Reynolds, ‘Citizenship and Geography Education’, ANZHES Conference, 1996, p 578.

¹⁰White, *Inventing Australia*, Chapter Nine;

¹¹For school representations of the masculine/universal British Australian citizen in see Reynolds, *ibid*; Salter, ‘Libraries and Citizenship’ in Cunningham, *Education for Complete Living*, especially pp 481-482. For similar representations of the masculine/universal modern Australian citizen see Cunningham et al, *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, p 110; Kandel, ‘The Free Library Movement and Its Implications’, New South Wales, *Education Gazette*, 1 February, 1938, pp 30-32.

¹²For the way interwar and wartime schools encouraged this idea with the inclusion of voice see Reynolds, *ibid*; Holbrook, ‘Rewards and Punishments in New South Wales’ Classrooms’, *Melbourne Studies in Education*, vol 38, no 1, 1997, p 4; Bessant, ‘British Imperial Propaganda and the Republic’, p 4; Spaul, *Australian Education in the Second World War*, p 59-60.

¹³For the developing emphasis of modernism and the idea of the voiced citizen in the classrooms of this era see Spaul, *op cit*, pp 102-109, pp 164-166, Holbrook, ‘Rewards and Punishments in New South Wales’ Classrooms’, p 4; Kandel, *op cit*.

¹⁴Spaul, *op cit*, pp 57-60

¹⁵Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, p 174, p 149.

traditional pattern of the middle classes directing the lower classes.¹⁶ Furthermore, this feminine power doubly silenced poor rural and working-class women. This was because those who had it used it to emphasise to other women the importance of maintaining a gender relationship in which femininity was the personal and individual support of institutionalised masculinity.¹⁷ The tradition of female philanthropy was strong in rural areas and this ensured feminine voice belonged hierarchically to middle-class womanhood.¹⁸ For poorer rural girls and women work and domesticity were still synonymous; women's family farm labour was 'behind the farm gate'.¹⁹ Consequently any voice poor rural women had was personal and isolated rather than public and collective.²⁰

At the beginning of the war girls and women from the working class were also almost excluded from spaces for feminine public voice. Modern Australian feminine citizenship was constituted as a period of public employment before marriage, modern motherhood and domesticity.²¹ The new paid positions through which women could gain social and economic freedom by directing female welfare generally demanded qualifications from the higher levels of education.²² Secondary education was in the process of being normalised as an aspect of middle-class femininity.²³ Those jobs understood as employment for working-class women were clearly subordinate positions. The female relatives and friends of the urban, working-class readers were employed in factories and as lower clerical workers.²⁴ In these positions they were subjected to employer-based patriarchal practices which created them as silent and

¹⁶Beaumont, 'Whatever Happened to Patriotic Women?', *Australian Historical Studies*, No 115, 2000, pp 279 ff; Smart, ' "For the Good that We Can do"', *Australian Feminist Studies*, no 9, 1994, Autumn, pp 40-41, p46.

¹⁷Smart's articles on the middle class organisation of public, mass women's groups as instances of interwar urban parallel power make a case for this power as a strand in institutionalising women's public identity, but also clearly base this identity on personal service to the masculine. Smart, ' "For the Good That We Can Do" ', *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 19, Autumn, 1994, pp 47 ff; Smart, '"A Mission to the Home"', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol 13, no 28, 1998, pp 215-216. For country organisation, Kenworthy-Teather, 'The Country Women's Association of New South Wales in the 1920's and 1930's', *Journal of Australian Studies*, No 41, June, 1994, p 76.

¹⁸Kenworthy Teather, op cit, p 70; Willis, *The Women's Voluntary Services*, pp 307-309.

¹⁹Alston, *Women on the Land*, pp 64-72.

²⁰Alston, *ibid*.

²¹Elder, ' "The Question of the Unmarried"', pp 158-159; Matthews, op cit, p 148-151.

²²Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, pp 131-132; Elder, '"The Question of the Unmarried"', *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 18, Summer, 1993, p 164.

²³Campbell, 'Secondary Schooling, Modern Adolescence', *History of Education Review*, vol 24, no 1, 1995, p 66.

²⁴Kingston, op cit, pp 60-61.

subordinated.²⁵ Union emphasis on the breadwinner as male meant that the union structure was another patriarchal hierarchy.²⁶ Such a structure ensured that keeping female employment conditions as less than those of male workers was an ongoing union issue.²⁷

War was the catalyst which, through ideas of feminine service, broadened opportunities for women in these groups to make autonomous decisions about their lives. Australia experienced the pressures of war in a way which shifted the notion that class and gender were the premier categories of public citizenship. In this war being British Australian was the most significant marker of an individual's right to be a public citizen, and in these social categories of race and ethnicity Australian rural and working-class women belonged to the dominant binary. At first this change was very limited.²⁸ However, the idea of Australia as a homefront society labouring to preserve its existence as a white, British, democratic nation extended, especially after the Japanese attack in late 1941. The urgency of the situation both drew more women into public collectives and opened opportunities for these women to speak autonomously.

This happened in two ways. Support for Australian troops through fundraising and the provision of morale-focussed 'comforts' became the paramount voluntary issue. Australia's small population meant that opportunities for female voluntary workers now increased.²⁹ Another change was generated through the socio-economic upheaval brought about by the absence of the men as troops and Australia's role as a supply line for the Pacific war. This meant the deployment of women from these groups in public positions through the women's military service and paid homefront work.³⁰ Consequently, ideas of feminine service as both voluntary and paid wartime work drew women of the rural poor and the working class from domestic isolation and developed their sense of public feminine collectivity. Girls' association with these

²⁵Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p 184.

²⁶Frances, *op cit*, pp 170 - 172.

²⁷Frances, *The Politics of Work*, pp 107-108, pp 161-162.

²⁸McKernan, *All In!*, p 85; Oppenheimer, *op cit*, Chapters Five, Six and Seven, p 101; Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p 55 - 58.

²⁹Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p 56; Oppenheimer, *op cit*, p 103. See Chapter Seven for detailed explication.

³⁰Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p57-59; Oppenheimer, *op cit*, p 128 - 132.

women, as their daughters, sisters and neighbours, ensured they experienced some potential for feminine voice in these two social collectivities.

These wartime effects on working-class femininity were occurring coevally with the schools' support of young active wartime citizenship and public voice in all readers. As a result wartime working-class and rural elementary school girl readers were experiencing domestic support through example for their public performance of voiced citizenship at the same time they were being encouraged into public voice as active young wartime citizens through the school magazines.³¹

Practices

Three aspects of classroom reading practice encouraged and extended the idea of a public voice as part of youthful femininity. Firstly there was the development of the reader's idea of herself as a rational and trustworthy individual. Secondly, there was the forging of the reader as a member of a group to which she individually contributed rational and trustworthy service. Finally, there was the fashioning of the reader to an understanding that her group's success in reaching a goal was dependent on the contribution of her rational and trustworthy service. These aspects came from two sources which reflexively supported each other; the practices of departmental school magazine publication and the practices of classroom reading. Readers were also shaped to recognise that not everyone was capable of rationality and trustworthiness. However, judgment and public voice were characteristics of those who were capable. In these practices the individual as part of normal, ungendered Australian youth was foregrounded so that girls who identified themselves satisfyingly through reading were shaped to understand voice as an Australian characteristic. This perception was strengthened in many girls because their reading took place in coeducational classrooms.³²

³¹Bayne, *Australian Women at War*, p 9; Spaul, op cit, pp 44-45.

³²As I have argued in this chapter's section on social discourses by this time learning to read was no longer class specific but had been normalised in line with middle-class, masculine values. For the interwar development of coeducation in Australia see Turney, 'Continuity and Change in the Public Primary Schools, 1914-1932' in Cleverley and Lawry, *Australian Education in the Twentieth Century*, p 51; Cunningham et al *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, p 21.

Girls were shaped into being willing contributors of service and having public voice as part of this service through several of the techniques associated with the school magazine as the focal point of elementary school classroom reading. As part of developing the readers as citizens, the techniques were designed to develop them as rational and trustworthy. Rational and trustworthy readers willingly contributed their service to completing the approved task in the approved time and space and had a public voice based on judging what was needed to support the completion. Reading lessons were built around reading a text from the magazines. Departmental publication practices ensured individual readers were responsible for their magazines' cleanliness, wholeness and presence at each reading lesson. Although all other published texts used by girls in the elementary schools were distributed and collected at the beginning and end of each lesson as 'school stock', this policy did not apply to the magazines. Instead, the magazines were cheap enough for each reader to have her own copy.³³ Classroom reading practices also shaped the reader to complete public individual tasks willingly.³⁴ All readers sat in the classroom in rows behind desks for reading lessons. Individuals read silently and wrote answers to questions about what they read. In this activity readers were both self-regulated and supervised by the teacher.³⁵ Sometimes readers were asked to read 'orally' as individuals.³⁶ Reading lessons shaped subjects to recognise that those who could complete their tasks most successfully were more rational and trustworthy than those who could not. There was public praise for a reader's expeditious completion of the task.³⁷ This was often linked to activities, which gave them voice. For example, successful silent readers were asked to read their ideas aloud to the class.³⁸ Competent oral readers were chosen to read important material aloud.³⁹ If she finished before the majority of the class a

³³For school stock policy see for example, The New South Wales Education Gazette, 1 August, 1939, p 222. For expected work that meant magazines needed to be the property of the reader see *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools*, New South Wales Department of Education, 1941, p 157. School magazines from this era in the researcher's collection reveal the extent to which readers were expected to care for and annotate the magazine during the course of their school work.

³⁴See departmental gazettes and syllabuses. For example, *Education Gazette and Teacher's Aid*, 24 January, 1940, p 13.

³⁵Western Australia, *The Curriculum for Primary Schools*, 1936, p24, p 26; Queensland *The Syllabus* (1930), p 22 and *Amendments* (1938); New South Wales, *Course of Instruction*, p 178.

³⁶For example, NSW *Course of Instruction*, (1941), p 25, p 177. Respondents, with the exception of one or two, appeared to have internalised the school reading 'names', they use them frequently and see no reason to define them.

³⁷Western Australia *The Curriculum*, pp 67-68; New South Wales, *Course of Instruction*, pp 176-177; Sinclair, *Tales Out of School*, p 167 and passim for the daily conduct of classes.

³⁸Sinclair, op cit, pp 149-150, 169-170; New South Wales *Course of Instruction*, p 157.

³⁹See Western Australia, *the Curriculum*, p 62.

reader could sometimes choose her own supplementary further reading.⁴⁰ Efficient readers were the ones likely to be asked to distribute further material to the class.⁴¹ In small schools ‘good’ readers could be monitors trusted with the supervision of readers with marginal skills.⁴²

In creating the girl reader’s understanding of herself as a member of a group to which she individually contributed rational and trustworthy service, magazine publication practices and classroom teaching again combined. The idea of the girl as a useful group member revolved around the notion that individual expertise in using judgment and voice would support the completion of the group’s task. The magazines were graded according to the reading levels expected in a school year and then published as a monthly series. In each graded year the whole class as a group had to complete reading lessons from the monthly series. Therefore, the reader’s appropriate contribution to the closely-supervised reading exercises I have already discussed could be understood as a group task. Classroom reading practices also encouraged the capable reader to exercise judgment and voice in completing the group task in more independent ways. Girl readers performed as part of the class in simultaneous oral readings.⁴³ A competent girl reader here could become a self-appointed lead reader and set an efficient pace. Girls were also members of in-class reading groups based on members’ greater or lesser reading capacity.⁴⁴ A competent reader was likely to be in one of the less-supervised, more-capable classroom reading groups where her pronunciation and explanation of difficult words, for example, would contribute to allowing the group’s completion of the reading.⁴⁵ Additionally, the visible amount of time teachers devoted to correction of groups with marginal reading skills made it possible for the less-supervised reader to understand herself as responsible for her own contribution to her group.⁴⁶ Furthermore, if she were one of the appointed monitors of the less-capable reader groups, her opportunities for self-directed contribution were even further increased. These practices encouraged such a girl to

⁴⁰Cole, *The Rural School in Australia*, pp 196-197;

⁴¹NSW *Course of Instruction* (1941), p 160, p 177; Sinclair, op cit, p 23.

⁴²Cole, *The Rural School in Australia*, pp 196-197;

⁴³NSW *Course of Instruction* (1941), p 178.

⁴⁴Queensland *The Syllabus* (1930) p 2, NSW *Course of Instruction* (1941) p 177-178, Western Australian *Curriculum for Primary Schools* (1936), p 62.

⁴⁵New South Wales *Course of Instruction*, p 157.

⁴⁶New South Wales *Course of Instruction* (1941) p 177, Queensland *The Syllabus* (1930) p 2.

feel she was a 'better' reader than others were. Consequently, she could feel she was a more rational and trustworthy member of the group and someone who 'naturally' had some public voice.

The magazines were instruments which ensured that competent girl readers would associate the exercise of their voice with the satisfaction of belonging to a successful group. The successful group was the group which was recognised as completing the task in the specified time and space. Again, individual judgment and voice were emphasised as contributions to this completion. Group rewards for success crosscut with individual rewards in this system and so reinforced in competent girl readers ideas of the value of their voice. Magazine reading levels were linked hierarchically. On completion of one level a class succeeded in achieving the goal of promotion to the next grade for the following year.⁴⁷ If a girl was a member of a class which easily completed this task she would be known as part of a 'good' class.⁴⁸ If, during the year, the class had reading groups, a reader could compare the reading freedom and power of members of her normalised group with that available to more closely supervised, less successful groups. She could also understand her own contribution as lead reader as a factor in group or class success.

Texts

Competent girl readers were shaped through classroom practice into the idea that they had voice as part of belonging to the dominant element of a prominent binary relationship; rational and trustworthy classroom readers and classroom readers who were less rational and trustworthy. This was an outcome of an education program shaping girls for a society in which citizenship was constructed through binary relationships and voice belonged to the dominant binary. However, beyond the classrooms gender was a prominent category of citizenship and the characteristics of rationality and trustworthiness were seen both as masculine and as the reason masculinity was the dominant binary. Consequently, it might be expected that outside

⁴⁷New South Wales *Course of Instruction* (1941), p 157. Victorian *Education Gazette and Teacher's Aid*, 23 January, 1939, p 9. See also Trethewey, op cit, pp 264 - 265.

⁴⁸Education departments had ways of indicating 'good' classes, for example, the twice yearly examinations held in Victorian primary schools not only indicated whether or not the student was good but also if the class was competent as a class. Cunningham, McIntyre, Radford, *Review of Education in Australia*, 1938, pp 49-50.

the ungended classroom lessons girls' ideas of the self as a willing contributor of public service would wither. However, elementary school departmental magazines laid ground which ensured wartime girl readers would develop a public voice as part of feminine citizenship.⁴⁹ The texts did this through two linked aspects. Firstly, they situated the reader as the receiver of authoritative information about what the world was like. Secondly, they represented the readers' role in the world as a series of conflicting and competing binary positions across the social categories of race, ethnicity, class and gender. Consequently, as the wartime emphasis on service began shifting the binary emphasis from gender to race, girl readers could understand public voice simultaneously as both conflicting with ideas of feminine citizen service as a supporting service and as part of ungended Australian wartime citizen service.

The texts situated the reader as a learner about the world and her place in it as a contributing member of a powerful group.⁵⁰ They connected the known world of the elementary school individual reader with the individual in the larger worlds of nation, empire and 'the west'. Girl readers were positioned simultaneously at various points on a continuum of collective power, morally, politically, economically and socially. Most of the magazines used terms like 'school' or 'children' in their titles while the surrounding banner design attached these terms to the state, the nation, the British empire and the historical world of western knowledge: ways of thinking, political power, technology and art.⁵¹ For example, the Victorian magazine's banner included the lamp of knowledge suspended over and between the public architecture of the ancient, western world and the modern, western world and bracketed the whole with a globe, book and quill on one side and tools on the other.⁵² The immediate meaning of how this knowledge built/was building the civilised world was represented through the central cover illustration, sometimes a line drawing, sometimes a black and white

⁴⁹School readers and school magazines can be seen as interchangeable for the purposes of classroom reading. Some states foregrounded the magazine/paper and saw the reader as supplementary, some saw them in the reverse order and some as equal. See for example, Victoria's *Education Gazette and Teachers Aid*, 22 January, 1941, p 10, NSW *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools* (1941), p 159, Queensland *The Syllabus* (1930), p 24 and *Amendments* (1938).

⁵⁰Queensland *Syllabus* (1930) p 28; Western Australian *Curriculum for Primary Schools* (1936), pp 26-27; NSW *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools*, p 153.

⁵¹For example, New South Wales, *The School Magazine; of literature for our boys and girls*, South Australia, *The Children's Hour*, New South Wales Catholic Schools, *The Catholic School Paper*, Western Australia, *Our Rural Magazine; Written specially for Correspondence Pupils*, Victoria, *The School Paper* and Queensland, *The School Paper*.

⁵²See Figure 1 this chapter.

photograph. This illustration changed with each issue. However, it always represented knowledge in terms of an approved social relationship within the empire and/or the nation and/or the west and, either implicitly or explicitly, the reader's place in, and contribution to, this relationship.

As a collection, the central illustrations, which played such an important part in reading the meaning of the text, clearly demonstrate how the binaries of race, ethnicity and class which supported citizenship intersected with the binaries of gender. The covers were designed to be influential. As the first visual part of the magazine they were meant to attract the individual reader and persuade her to look inside. They related either directly or indirectly to material inside the magazines so that they could be discussed as part of several reading lessons.⁵³ In this way readers were directed in their understanding of the cover's meaning. A consequence of these features of the covers was that the girl reader was clearly represented to herself as a multiply-positioned rational, trustworthy subject. She was thus shown a way to continue beyond the classroom her idea of herself as choosing public contributory service as part of being a rational, trustworthy citizen.

These covers reflect the complex intersections of race, ethnicity, class and gender entangled in the changing ideas of service and voice represented through the departmental magazines. As part of ideas developing before the war, elementary school girl readers were normalised as racially white in a society where whiteness was a symbol of the qualities of rationality and trustworthiness as defined by the dominant capitalist economy.⁵⁴ Black was a quality of the invisible other Australian in public cover scenes such as the one on the New South Wales *School Magazine* for November, 1942 which represented the busy, (white-) peopled modern Australia of 'Martin Place, Sydney'.⁵⁵ For the citizens-in-training, this was not only a place where white Australians existed, it was also a place where they served the state through stringently-defined employed work and/or public consumption. The clock, the shop

⁵³For example, see the Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 23 January, 1939, p 9 and the cover of the Grades VII and VIII *School Paper* for April of that year. This was captioned, 'Shakespeare's Country'. Included in this edition was a short play demonstrating Shakespeare's civilised morality and a 'Workers for Mankind' segment on William Wilberforce and Britain's abolition of slavery.

⁵⁴Moreton Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, pp 5 ff.

⁵⁵See Figure 2 this chapter.

and office frontages, the presence of only white people in the cars and on the street symbolised these ideas.⁵⁶

The reader's idea of herself as a voluntary public contributor of the ethnically dominant group was supported through ideas of Britishness. Rationality and trustworthiness were associated with ruling. They seemed to be most clearly found in 'British stock'. By 1939 both the metropole and the subaltern acknowledged whiteness as a foundational emblem of 'British' qualities.⁵⁷ As ideas of whiteness expanded in Australia, schoolgirl readers of many backgrounds were represented to themselves as British stock in Australia.⁵⁸ South Australia's *The Children's Hour* in April 1942 featured Britain's flag and Australia's in an overlapping motif which made the Union Jack on both prominent above the title of Eliza Cook's poem, 'The Flag of the Free'.⁵⁹ The conjunction of the flags and the poem makes clear that the British Australians, that is schoolgirl readers, are represented by both flags. Consequently, they are the willing, rational shouters of 'Justice the warshout'; they have voice.

Another interwar discourse that encouraged a girl to see herself as part of the dominant culture was the idea of modern Australia. The covers fashioned girl classroom readers as performers in the public systems of a modern, technological nation which incorporated public femininity. The cover of the Victorian *School Paper* for April 1942 was captioned, 'Developing Australia: Peacetime Civil Transport. Above are pictures of two modern forms of transport used in our own state'.⁶⁰ The pictured train and plane were represented by the caption as ways in which the reader as citizen-in-training takes part in the adventure of developing the modern state: 'Most boys and girls will be able to name the type of aeroplane shown and the line on which the train runs.'

⁵⁶Davison, *The Unforgiving Minute*, especially Chapters Three and Five.

⁵⁷Thompson, 'The Language of Imperialism', *Journal of British Studies*, vol 36, no 2, 1997, p 173, p 151, pp 154-155; Roe, 'We Can Die Just as Easy Out Here', Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars*, p 98.

⁵⁸Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, pp 129-130. The idea of biological whiteness expanded it became both a vital and an invisible quality of being British Australian. Drzewiecka and Wong, argue certain cultural practices are linked to whiteness, but those who identify with the practices don't understand them as racial, they see them as universal or as natural. See 'The Dynamic Construction of White Ethnicity', Nakayama and Martin, *Whiteness, The Communication of Social Identity*, p 198.

⁵⁹Figure 3 this chapter.

⁶⁰Figure 1 this chapter.

At the same time, these texts were portraying Australian girls as domestically feminine and clearly subordinate to masculinity. The New South Wales *School Magazine* of June 1944 featured the first stanza of Henry Lawson's poem, 'The Sliprails and the Spur'. The title symbolically contrasts passive domestic confinement and support of masculine endeavour with public choice and adventure as the feminine and masculine contribution to developing Australia.⁶¹ The verses tell this story.⁶²

As I have argued, elementary school girls in the classroom were already understood as ungendered citizens in training. In the authorities' developing experience of the war this notion was extended into girls' further representation as ungendered (and therefore masculine) contributing wartime citizens. *The Children's Hour* cover for October, 1939 featured an address from 'the Prime Minister of Australia' which conflated 'School Children' with 'Australian people', 'British people' and the 'true man'. This collectivity was represented as a group where 'the doing of justice' was the ongoing service of the individual. Contribution towards defending that just group was the immediate goal.⁶³

Wartime magazines additionally represented a world in which modern 'classless' femininity with its public activity intersected with traditional ideas of supportive femininity directed by men. This too was part of the complex ways in which girl readers could understand themselves as publicly active and feminine. *The Catholic School Paper* of February, 1945 pictured 'The wife of Australia's new Royal Governor General [who] is here wearing her WAAF uniform'.⁶⁴ Despite her royal status, the picture portrayed a young woman clearly similar in appearance to the middle-class ideal girl readers were being encouraged to emulate. She is at once a British wife and, as an auxiliary service officer, a homefront public worker.

Most significantly, this classroom reading represented the wartime girl reader to herself as an immediate part of homefront active public service in ways which showed her gender was feminine yet she was part of other dominant binaries and therefore entitled to a voice. *The Children's Hour* cover of February 1944 was a photograph

⁶¹Rowley, 'Sliprails and Spur', *Span*, No 26, April, 1988.

⁶²Figure 4 this chapter.

⁶³Figure 5 this chapter.

⁶⁴Figure 6 this chapter.

which represented elementary school girls as rational contributors to wartime Australia through their donations of handicrafts to the Schools Patriotic Fund.⁶⁵ The girls occupying this position were ‘naturally’ white.⁶⁶ The cover also showed the reader they were British. The girls in the photograph are wearing girl-guide uniforms, garments which made working- class girls indistinguishable from middle-class girls.⁶⁷ Guide membership was voluntary so these emblems of belonging to the Guides are another representation of girl’s rational choice of active public citizenship. Furthermore, such girls could identify as middle-class in their voluntary fund raising activities which clearly associate them with the tradition of female philanthropy. They are photographed with the President of the Red Cross.⁶⁸ The girls are further represented as conservatively feminine through the caption. This makes plain that their public efforts are designed to support the morale of men whose active military service as Prisoners of War is clearly much harder than any homefront service. The cover is a pictorial representation of youthful feminine service to the wartime nation as the outcome of the individual girl’s decisions about how she will conduct her life.⁶⁹

Memories:

Reading, which education authorities regarded as a technology for shaping young Australian citizens, is remembered by those who were the wartime girl readers in ways which can be interpreted as steps in the development of voice as a quality of youthful femininity. This was a consequence of the combination of classroom reading and the idea of girls as young, active wartime citizens. Four aspects of the way elementary school girls experienced classroom reading were influential in developing their ideas of voice as a quality of Australian girlhood. Firstly, the memories reveal that established Australian femininity seemed isolated and voiceless to girls, yet they also lived in a time which let them imagine more satisfying ideas of young Australian womanhood. Secondly, elementary classroom reading developed in girl readers a sense that being part of a public collectivity was a more satisfying feminine role than their domestic femininity. Thirdly, classroom reading created in girls a sense of the

⁶⁵Figure 7 this chapter.

⁶⁶See Note 62.

⁶⁷See Chapter Three on girls’ leisure as activities approved by authority.

⁶⁸Oppenheimer, op cit, pp 184-187; Darian Smith, op cit, p 56 make clear the middle-class, feminine roots of such voluntary service.

⁶⁹Figure 7 this chapter.

importance of their individual, public contribution to the group's success. Finally, the contributions asked of them in classroom reading were based on their rational, trustworthy choices in public activities. Girl readers' classroom voice was extended by its close association with their simultaneous experience of citizenship service to wartime Australia.

Forty nine respondents recalled departmental magazines or 'readers' prescribed as set reading in the elementary class room.⁷⁰ Although some felt this reading was 'slow' and wanted more text and some wanted better-quality practical reading experiences, no one remembered it in terms which suggested they were alienated from it. Many of these memories belong to those who were girls from urban working-class families or the lower levels of the middle-class. Other memories I have particularly focussed on are those of the daughters of the rural poor; small-farm and rural labouring families.

The sense of isolation and voicelessness as part of domestic and employed femininity for their mothers' and their own generations was a powerful recollection for some working-class respondents. Shirley (72) recalled at length her mother's battles to enter public wartime work in the face of her dockyard fire-fighter father's insistence that her role was to support him domestically. Shirley (89) remembered her mother's oppression in a paid employment which seemed an extension of private patriarchy. She wrote of her mother as 'clerk and general dogsbody for her uncle who was a leather merchant engaged in components for service footwear'. In Victoria, Diane (77) noted that her working aunt 'painted such a grim picture' of the subservience and confinement of clothing factory employment Diane was convinced that only education and a middle-class job underpinned feminine freedom and satisfaction. In New South Wales, Joyce (37) came to the same conclusion and avoided the factory work her friends were drawn into for apparently 'easy' money. She chose post-school training in dressmaking.

Several rural readers recollected their mothers' lives in similar terms to those Edith (90) used of her mother's existence on a struggling farm ten miles from the nearest

⁷⁰Readers, like magazines, were collections of approved printed and visual texts distributed by the departments of education to be cared for and read by pupils at a certain elementary level. The reader contents were designed to be absorbed across a school year, the magazines' contents across a month.

township: 'Home maker. Mother undertook most of the management of the dairy herd and milked forty cows by hand [twice a day]'. In addition to her normal 'home making', Edith's mother had two physically handicapped children to care for. Readers from this background also recall their own long induction into this idea of femininity. Mary (18), on a similar farm in South Australia, noted that after finishing Grade 7 in her rural school she then 'stayed home, helping on the farm and with the youngest children'.

However, the memories of elementary classroom reading, for many of those who came from lower middle-class, working-class and poorer rural families, can be seen as highlighting their sense of place in a satisfying public collectivity not available elsewhere. The positive reading memories of urban working-class girls often focussed on the public performance of collectivity. Joy (31) and Susan (32) were the daughters of a salesman and lived in a Perth suburb. Like others, they reflected on collective classroom reading as part of learning a public decorum:

Oral reading was the norm each day at primary school. We were taught to regard punctuation as comprehension signposts, when to pause, when to raise or lower our voices and *correct* (their emphasis) pronunciation of words. Oral reading allowed us to extend our vocabularies because the meanings of words were discussed in class'.

The organisation of small country schools meant rural girls performed reading through more varieties of school collectivities than urban girls. Betty's (59) reading experience was a mixture of the school grade system and the family group. She reflected, 'Ours was a small rural school, twenty pupils. We recited the poetry together so that over the years we were exposed to lots of poetry. We also read our [graded] stories aloud to one another and to the whole school'. Sometimes these memories focussed on performing as a member of a large public collectivity in a more abstract sense. Helen's (58) father was a forestry officer. His job ensured the family lived in remote areas. She remembered reading as part of a larger unseen school collectivity, noting, 'In the country, I loved the magazine of Blackfriars' Correspondence School'.⁷¹

⁷¹The New South Wales Department of Education published a school magazine directed specifically at correspondence school readers as a group. This was *The Outpost*. It contained approved writing by experts like the standard school magazine did. It also contained approved contributions from the readers as a regular feature, thus encouraging among them a sense of themselves as part of an extended 'classroom'.

There were memories of the class being read to by the teacher in both urban and rural schools.⁷² Kath's (80) elementary education was difficult and interrupted. She chose the teacher reading to the class as her single memory of elementary school class reading, although the book seems a surprising choice for the familial age grading used in small schools. She recalled, 'In mid 1936-1940 I attended Yeungoon State School'. She went on, 'The state school teacher used to read to us. I particularly remember *Pickwick Papers*'. This memory could have, at most, been of her first senior elementary year, fifth grade, for Kath recalled Yeungoon closed after she completed fifth grade due to lack of numbers. Even an abridged version of this novel would have demanded a high level of interpretive skill.⁷³ It seems the experience of collectivity must have been at least as important as the story itself for this reading to have remained in Kath's memory. There are many such happy recollections of class 'storytime'. The tone and number of memories of the varieties of public collectivity associated with elementary school reading reveal that public collectivity was a satisfying experience for the readers.

Respondents' memories can be interpreted to argue that the girls understood that a concomitant of their membership of this happy collectivity was their capacity to perform reading. Girls knew reading was performed in special ways. Esme (5), whose father ran a fishing tackle shop, remembered, 'We had special lessons for reading at school'. Shirley (106), from a small Tasmanian farm recalled, '[t]here was a lot of class reading . . . We had a special period for reading'. Reading performance was remembered as a collection of special features. Pursuing a place in a satisfying public collectivity through performing reading led enthusiastic girl readers to believe voice was part of their subject position.

One reason for this was that girls appear to have imagined that in school reading the class was a unit which depended on teacher-approved individual contributions for its success. 'We read round the class', Shirley (106) explained. Betty (59), as I have

⁷²While this activity is not strictly part of departmental magazine/reader reading, it has the same characteristics of involuntary selection on the part of the girls and a public collective aspect.

⁷³For example, the 1912 edition by Carlyle Smith, 'abridged and edited to suit the requirements of the Department of Education, Victoria' or the later Whitcombe and Tombs edition (No. 603) 'for ages 12-14'. These are in the researcher's collection.

already shown, remembered how in her small school the pupils read their texts to each other. Many memories, such as the one I discussed earlier of Joy's (31) on pronunciation, suggest that girls realised approved reading contributions were being assessed by the teacher while girls were in the process of learning them.

Completing the task in teacher-directed time and space was remembered as an important basic feature. Annita (65), the daughter of a barber, remembered class reading as regular, taking place 'every day'. Joan (53), whose father worked as a blacksmith, recalled 'time set aside in the afternoon for reading'. An understanding of time management is implicit in the phrase 'time set aside', a term also used by Elizabeth (75), the daughter of a country postmaster. Fiona (68), whose parents ran a small grocery, was another who saw time management and task completion as part of this reading. She noted, 'we read after work was finished'. For many of the respondents 'class' as a feature of reading meant classroom as well as a collectivity. Several, such as Joy (31) and Susan (32), refer to reading 'in class', meaning in the classroom. Others used the term 'school'. Fiona described the physical setting of both the classroom and the library as separate places for different kinds of elementary school reading. The language in these memories suggests that the girls felt they had mastered the time/space element of reading that the teacher expected. This can be interpreted to argue that girls experienced their time/space mastery as part of being approved readers.

The notion of individual contribution began to position the readers as public decision makers about their public actions. Participants' reading memories can be read to reveal that these girls understood they should contribute to the class in a self-regulated way as well as through teacher direction. The earlier recounted memories of Joy (31) and Susan (32) can be understood not only as memories of being taught how to read 'properly' but also as memories of satisfactions associated with the mastery of that style of reading when they were asked to read aloud either to the class or as part of it. Rosalie's (138) memories, discussed in the next paragraph, make it plain that she felt she knew *how* to read aloud in the approved way and that she experienced the satisfaction of being able to choose to read like this when called on. Consequently, good readers developed a sense that voice was part of their approved reader contribution.

Along with ideas of individual contribution, the memories can be interpreted to show how girls thought that for reasons of personality and/or circumstance not everyone contributed equally to the class' approved reading performance. Rosalie (138), a timber-getters' daughter at school in a country township, noted that *Wind in the Willows* was a story the class read in her senior elementary years. 'I hate that book,' she emphasised, 'because half the children in the class couldn't read properly and it was very painful listening to them stumble over very easy words'. Sheila (132), the daughter of a poor farmer, reflected at length on her early country education in a small school, her youthful awareness of her own poor reading skills, and her sense that the education of rural children meant they had limited opportunities for becoming approved readers in comparison with urban pupils. She went to a '[o]ne teacher half-time school - school one week, none the next while teacher was at another half-time school. Went in the mail car. Got to school at 10:30. Left at 2 o'clock . . . Country children got to school as best they could and left at fourteen'. Sheila saw herself as fortunate in finally being able to attend school in suburban Concord while staying with her cousins. She believed that only this allowed her to pass the examinations for secondary school. Nevertheless, she recalled a sense of incapacity and marginalisation at a secondary level which she associated with her earlier country schooling: 'By the time I went to Glen Innes [for high school] I could hardly read a thing . . . my spelling was always terrible because I [had] always seemed to miss spelling lessons'. The enthusiastic readers can be seen as knowing that class success in reading was part of a power relationship between the readers in which dominance offered several pleasures. Voice was associated with being leaders in the classroom reading relationship. Some of them linked reading leadership with being able to occupy more powerful positions beyond elementary school instead of being caught up in traditional feminine subordination.

Most of these respondents remembered themselves as approved elementary-level readers. Consequently they had an idea of themselves as possessing voice in the classroom. It can be seen that having this voice was valuable to them for they associated it with access to pleasures. One pleasure was the sense of being more approved by authority than other members of the class. Kath (80) described herself as a 'competent' reader and noted that she was 'always top of [her] class'. Pat (7), a

baker's daughter in suburban South Australia, referred to herself with satisfaction as the 'bookworm of the class'.

While the first pleasures associated with voice related directly to reading and authority, girls also found the pleasures extended into areas associated with greater socially-based independence. Another pleasure was a girl's sense of herself as a contributor to the success of a group she wanted to belong to. I have already discussed the way girls understood classroom reading as a collective activity. Joan (53) recalled herself as being considered a good reader, being chosen to read aloud to the class and so moving them all through the story. Memories of school reading make clear that these girls associated their role as approved school readers with the freedom to choose. This was another pleasure. Both Fiona (68) and Peggy (36) remembered being rewarded for capable reading with 'free reading' from the classroom library. Kath's (80) good reading ensured she could make some choices and voice her decision in the wider world. Her 'top' position resulted in prizes and she recalled going to the local newsagent as a prize-winner to select her prize books.

The remembered school reading texts and the way respondents remembered them, can be used to establish that the girls had internalised the values they were being shaped to through reading performance. Voice is one of these values. Recollections focussed on texts which foregrounded individual contribution to the success of the group through initiative, struggle and action, often as part of a public collective.⁷⁴ These memories also reveal that girls identified with the social categories of race, ethnicity and class as well as gender. Beth (62) recorded "'The Drover's Wife" by Henry Lawson and [Tennyson's] "Morte D'Arthur"'. Both were texts remembered by many participants. Betty's (59) father was a farmer in Victoria. She attended the local state school ('twenty pupils') until the last year of the war. 'We had our "Readers" for each year', she reflected. 'I can still recite . . . poems from most years - "My Country", "Daffodils", "Australian Sunrise", "Clancy" etc. These stories [sic] made a great impression. "The Drover's Wife", "Lost in the Bush", "Fire at Ross's Farm" have been part of my heritage'. Other memories make even plainer that girls saw

⁷⁴ Although these were not the only themes in the prescribed texts. For example, there were highly descriptive texts suggesting the satisfactions of British scenery. Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' is the lone example of this genre in Betty's memories.

themselves as part of the dominant binaries in some of the three social categories additional to gender. For example, Amelia (54) came from a family whose immigrant mother spoke no English and whose father spoke little of this language. She recalled the school paper as ‘very Australian - [invisibly, naturally white] kids lost in the desert, using blacktrackers etc.’ and a ‘great influence’.

For the working-class and rural girls for whom successful school reading was important, the autonomous public voice shaped in classroom reading was also related to wartime feminine service. The notion of feminine public service to a beleaguered nation had already begun to be assimilated in some of the readers’ families through their mothers’ roles. The conclusion to the battles between Shirley’s (72) parents over her mother’s public war service, which I discussed earlier, was remembered as a compromise between her father’s expectations of his wife and her mother’s understanding of the importance of her public service.

I argue that for most elementary classroom readers their public voice beyond the classroom was developed through the connection between traditional and modern feminine wartime service. Early wartime ideas of knitting as feminine war work were supported in the school magazines.⁷⁵ This knitting was experienced as domesticity and as personal service to men. Yet it was also recalled in ways which suggest it drew girls into some sense of the public collectivity of women as trustworthy contributors to society’s goals. War savings, fund raising and salvage programs were promoted by the magazines too.⁷⁶ These latter programs allowed girls to focus on public service to the state rather than domestic service to the man. Furthermore, they were less directed than the knitting. In the more clearly public programs girls not only exercised their voice through deciding *how* they would carry out public service but also chose *what* service they would undertake. Additionally, some potential for girls to recognise they had voice existed because of these programs’ greater opportunities for self-direction in carrying out the tasks.

Girls from across social categories came together to knit as a wartime citizen service. Some were not only originally voiceless because of their gender but in some

⁷⁵*The Children’s Hour*, ‘Supplement’, April 1941, p 8; Oppenheimer, op cit, pp 2-3, pp 110-112.

⁷⁶Spaull, op cit, p 58.

cases because they belonged to the subordinate binary of the other social categories. Almost all participants attending state schools had recollections of school-related knitting as part of British-Australia's war effort. Lesley (70), the daughter of a rural teacher, thought it was part of the school's wartime curriculum. Winifred (126) the daughter of a shoe shop proprietor remembered knitting at school 'for the Red Cross'. Valda (85), a railway labourer's daughter, noted school knitting 'for the Comforts Fund'. Rosalie (138), who was half-conscious of a difference based on her barely-acknowledged Aboriginal inheritance, remembered 'knitting squares for something or other as war work'. Amelia (54), whose mother spoke no English, knitted socks for the British/Australian war effort through the school programs. She remembered how more competent knitters voluntarily supported her as part of the group's contribution to the war effort; 'I never learned to turn a heel. Someone always did it for me.'

There were also notions of knitting which attached to less publicly-situated ideas of femininity. Beverley (76) reminisced about knitting for the services through the Australian Comforts Fund while at her Catholic primary school. 'Those boys were my heroes,' she recalled. Many respondents remembered wartime knitting as a personal, domestically-oriented service to men who were protecting Australia. Valda (85) pointed out the knitting was for 'the servicemen'. Fay (107) recollected how girls in her Tasmanian class were encouraged to add little notes to the recipients of their completed garments in order to emphasise the personal gratitude the knitters felt. Joy (31) had memories of how wartime school knitting was tied to domesticity. 'Knitting was given out as a compulsory part of homework at Princess May [Fremantle's girls' school]', she recalled.

Memories of wartime knitting ranged in complex ways across many of the issues which were contributing to voice becoming a quality of youthful femininity for working-class and rural girls. The memories reveal the continuing power of ideas of traditional feminine citizenship. However, wartime knitting, like elementary classroom reading, also drew a range of girls together as part of a satisfying public group. Its success depended on the rational, trustworthy contribution of individuals. While the knitting was often seen as compulsory for these girls, the way in which it was carried out, like reading, can be seen to have drawn on the individual's capacity and autonomous choice.

As the war progressed girls were encouraged into forms of public wartime service in addition to knitting. War savings, fund-raising and salvage programs further reinforced ideas of voice as part of girlhood.⁷⁷ Through memories of these programs, elementary school girls can be seen to imagine femininity as active as well as supportive. Girls interpreted their individual public contributions as making a difference to maintaining another group to which they belonged, Australia. Furthermore, the contributions were of a kind that enabled the competent classroom readers to see themselves as already possessing the capacity to make these contributions. The habits of thrift and regularity with both time and materials which had been part of their performance as good classroom readers could now be applied to activities which would clearly maintain the nation. Shirley (72) was twelve when the Japanese attacked Darwin. She recalled her understanding of the effect of her war savings: ‘. . . a war savings certificate [would] help the war effort (certificates were valued at sixteen shillings to be held for several years and cashed for a pound)’.⁷⁸ ‘Buying war savings certificates through the school was seen as a patriotic means of saving pocket money’, Dorothy (63) remembered of her Victorian state school days. In Adelaide Fiona (68) and her friends ‘tried to bring along at least sixpence a week for our war savings certificates’.

Fund raising activities in this war drew on other values and skills the girls had developed through reading. The celebration of fund raising through masculinist public labouring activities undertaken by the elementary state school children in the first world war had disappeared.⁷⁹ The traditional, middle-class, feminine donations of time, labour and skill in urban, public ventures organised around varying degrees of cooperative collectivity became the basis of school-encouraged fund-raising.⁸⁰ Girls remembered fund raising activities in association with the feminised endeavours of the Red Cross and the Comforts Fund.⁸¹ Diane (77), from the flour miller’s family, recalled raising funds for the Red Cross through her school. Joan (53), a naval

⁷⁷McKernan, op cit, pp 234-235; Oppenheimer, op cit, pp 132-144; Spaul, op cit, p 58.

⁷⁸War savings certificates were part of the government’s intention of changing the life of the nation in order to increase the war effort in 1942, Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, pp 222-223; Oppenheimer, op cit, p 133.

⁷⁹McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, p. 51.

⁸⁰Spaul, op cit, pp 59-61; Oppenheimer, op cit, p 137; McKernan, *All In!*, pp 231-234.

⁸¹Oppenheimer, op cit, p 184, p 147-153; McKernan, op cit, pp 236-237.

blacksmith's daughter, reflected on her fund-raising for 'Comforts' and noted she still treasures the certificate she received through her Victorian state school for her efforts.

While fund raising could be actively school-directed, some respondents had memories of autonomously-developed fund-raising activities carried out with school approval. Both Lucinda (22) and Fiona (68) attended elementary schools in South Australia. Lucinda recalled participating in fund-raising concerts run by her school. Fiona told the story of her more clearly self-directed school-based efforts:

At Primary School [sic] two or three special friends and I organised a couple of "in school" concerts to raise funds for the war effort. Admission one penny. This was done with the permission and cooperation of the teaching staff in 1941 and 1942, as also for the occasional lunch time stall when we sold fruit from home gardens, and when ingredients could be spared home-made toffees, rock or "queen" cakes, toffees [sic] etc . . . each for a penny or tuppence.

Other memories reveal how approval of elementary school girls' participation in the war effort could move between school and wartime society. Beverley (76), a city baker's daughter, was enrolled at a Catholic school where she remembered knitting as the emphasised contribution. She and her sister belonged to the Junior Red Cross as an extra-curricular activity. She explained that raising funds for the Red Cross was a particularly important activity for them, '[their] eldest brother being a P.O.W. in Germany'. The sisters, she recalled, 'held several bazaars and raffles'. Some memories of successful fund-raising enterprises outside of school appear even more clearly to draw on the participant's autonomous public voice. '[A]s a twelve year old' Lorna (116) recorded 'a friend and myself [in suburban Melbourne] collected items and sold them on a stall in our street and raised two pounds for the war effort.' Lorna was twelve in 1943.

Women's membership of local voluntary organisations was common in country townships.⁸² The sense of national jeopardy that prevailed after Japan's entry into the war drew girls into the projects of the voluntary associations at an earlier age.⁸³ Betty (59), the daughter of a farmer, remembered being involved with her whole family in the organisation of district sports days for war effort fund raising while she was still at

⁸²For example, see Willis' discussion of volunteering and parochialism in relation to the Camden community in Chapter One of *The Women's Voluntary Services*; McIntyre and McIntyre, op cit, p 209.

⁸³For example, Willis, op cit, particularly pp 260-261; Willis, *War and Community*, MA (Hons) thesis, Chapter Five; Oppenheimer, op cit, p 114, p 190; Pennay, *On The Home Front*, p 23.

school. Kath (80) recalled being drawn into a sense of emotional and moral commitment to her youthful job as a timekeeper for Euchre parties organised to raise money for the local chapter of the Patriotic League. Shirley (61) detailed her memories of the local commitment to Australia in an isolated timber hamlet in 1942. She was still conscious of the urgency of that wartime situation and offered some thinly-veiled criticisms of those whom she remembered as not appearing to respond to the national drive:

[W]e mainly concentrated on our war effort, reading would have been put on hold as we worked hard and long to raise money and do the knitting. We also worked a forty eight hour week. My eldest sister who didn't dance or play sport read all the time . . . I knitted all the time (the scarves had to be seven feet long and fourteen inches wide) and did that on my way to school and back home [Shirley left school at thirteen]. I did jumpers and socks. We ran dances, balls, concerts, card nights all for the "war effort" . . . We were on fund raising committees at fourteen.

Memories of the involvement of working-class and rural girls in the wartime organisation of fund raising can be seen as reinforcing in them the middle-class British value of the willing, rational contribution of the citizen to the state as a moral imperative.

The participants' memories suggest that the fund-raising schemes approved by the elementary system also encouraged in girls a confidence in urbanised independent public life as the second world war developed and the sense of national urgency increased.⁸⁴ Yvonne (28), the daughter of a mechanic in a Western Australian town, and Bernice (17), whose father was a mail officer in a South Australian city, both recall selling school-generated raffle tickets by themselves outside the school and family with the approval of elementary school staff and parents. This sense of urban independence is also reflected in some of the memories of salvage activities. Joan (20) remembered that 'as a Girl Guide I collected newspapers in a cart on Saturdays'.

The memories of salvage programs suggest that it was possible for girls to imagine how their self-confident public activity meant they were contributing directly to Australia's war effort. Annita (65), remembering a school-sponsored salvage program

⁸⁴This sheds an interesting light on findings such as those in MacIntyre's *Sunraysia*, published in 1948. In his study of an area of smallholdings and dense rural population clustered about a large township, he records that 'a much greater proportion of daughters than sons leave the [fruit growing] district and about half of these go to Melbourne', pp 63-65.

in Victoria, noted she took part in 'scrap aluminium collection for the war effort - to make planes I thought.' Yvonne (28) recalled saving silver paper 'rolled up in balls for melting down for war requisites'. The girls experienced the pleasures of social approval over these efforts. Doreen (16), in a rural school in South Australia, recalled that 'collecting metal, silver paper etc for [the] School Patriotic Fund [I] got as far as my Wings before going to High School'.

Finally, the shift of girls and women into traditionally male jobs and roles during the war allowed women to understand themselves in new ways. One consequence of this was that girls were, to a limited extent, encouraged to imagine themselves acting as rational trustworthy contributors to Australia. Ann (129) had the job on her home farm of 'reporting to [the nearest large town] every aeroplane which passed [in their area], either seen or heard'. Shirley (61) left school at thirteen and a half and became a telegram delivery girl in 1942, a job she understood as having wartime importance.⁸⁵ She noted that it was 'very hard [emotionally]. I had to deliver the telegrams to say that either their sons or their husbands had been killed'. The nature of wartime military service required some working women to contribute their feminine skills differently in order to support the troops. In Australia nursing was one occupation affected by this pressure.⁸⁶ This change also opened a space for girls to contribute rational, trustworthy service.⁸⁷ Joy (104) 'as part of the Girl Guide community work helped at RNS hospital once a week in the wards, either running errands or giving out treats after school. [She] loved it'. As part of the Australian war effort these girls were feminine and autonomous.

Elementary school girl readers across the range of social categories were experiencing approval over their making autonomous, public choices in classroom reading performance and in wartime feminine service. The combination of these experiences allowed the girls from poor rural and working-class backgrounds, as well as those whose class backgrounds gave them more public freedom, to understand voice as part of youthful femininity.

⁸⁵See also Phippen, 'A WW II Oral History Project: Private Perceptions: Public Pronouncements' *Voiceprint*, no 7, 1996, p 17.

⁸⁶Buttsworth, 'Women Colouring the Wartime Landscape' in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, pp 64-65; Rice, *The Close of an Era*, p 75; Bayne, *Australian Women at War*, p 21.

⁸⁷Coleman and Darling, *From a Flicker to a Flame*, p 84; Oppenheimer, *op cit*, p 190.

The ideas of citizenship informing elementary school reading and ideas of wartime feminine service combined to allow girls to negotiate autonomous public voice as a quality of youthful femininity. However, voiced citizenship in Australia depended on an individual's position in the complex and shifting balance between the social categories of race, ethnicity, class and gender. This meant that each girl experienced different aspects of the tangle of competing, conflicting and supporting ideas through which she could understand the wartime service of youthful feminine citizens. Consequently, the ways in which girls negotiated voice were individual and diverse. The following case studies trace the journeys made by Rosemary (81) from an urban, working-class family and Eloise (11) from an isolated farm as they came to understand that girls and young women had an autonomous public voice.

The memories of Rosemary, the daughter of an urban working-class family, suggest that elementary school reading changed her interpretation of youthful femininity from one of subservience and acceptance to a condition that incorporated public autonomous voice. Her memories foreground the conflict between these two ideas of femininity and the difficulty young women in working-class society had in expressing non-traditional ideas of Australian girlhood.

Rosemary was a member of a family in which women were positioned as domestic, isolated and oppressed. Her mother was the harried wife of a truck driver and worked at caring for the family's five children. Some of these children, Rosemary among them, were seen as belonging to the mother but not the father and this difference was reflected in his attitude. 'My mother had little to spend,' she recalled while also noting, '[my] stepfather indulged his son [with purchased luxuries]'.

Rosemary's memories suggest that home influence had begun to shape her into the family's idea of femininity. She was, she remembered, 'compelled to babysit, run errands, homework or housework . . . Being the eldest of five children, had many chores so reading was a luxury'. As her position began changing from child to woman she experienced pressures which encouraged her to see her mature life as one of subordination and direction by others:

At eleven or twelve I started my periods and began to take an interest in boys. Mum took me into the bedroom, handed me the medical book and said, 'Read this.' and that's all. So I read and looked at the pictures, diagrams and found medical terms and the names of the illnesses bewildering . . . I [later] read this book secretly as I wasn't sure that I was meant to read more than on the first day shown me as Mum put it away again in a manner that seemed it was taboo to see and read in full as the page I was to read was only about menstruation.

These memories demonstrate that Rosemary had already begun to understand her family thought her body existed for domestically-based service to others and that she should think this too. They also suggest that she found this idea unsatisfying and wanted more autonomy, associating this with feeling more secure.

Rosemary's memories can be interpreted as showing that her dissatisfaction with domestic isolation and subservience was mediated by her education in complex ways. School allowed her to identify as part of a normalised public group with the potential for voice. However, her working-class background ensured her position was on the margins of school society with its middle-class values. She attended several state primary schools as the family moved around and then Preston Girls' School. This was a domestic arts school which offered girls a three year course. The constant moving prevented her from settling into her schools. She recalled of Preston Girls', 'I wore no uniform and hated it. No money for materials for Art, Cooking etcetera'. She left in her second year, as soon as she reached fourteen. In reflecting on school life she recorded, 'I think about schoolgirls' problems, bullies, jealousies etcetera'. Despite the problems she records, these memories suggest that school offered Rosemary an idea of femininity which was potentially more satisfying than any she could imagine through her home.

Rosemary appears to have understood reading as an emblem of identity. Her sister, she noted, also had the opportunity of education through reading school readers and school papers, but took it no further. June returned to the romance magazines and girls' papers Rosemary saw as common to working-class girls. It would seem that, as a consequence of feeling that reading reflected identity, school reading became a way for Rosemary to be connected with the powerful public social relationships the departmental magazines and readers told her about. 'I loved all schoolbooks' she recalled, 'Especially school papers and the Grade IV and V papers . . . also the

magazines provided an escape into fantasy'. 'Religion,' she explained, 'teaches us to care, share, love no matter what sex, nationality, colour of skin or creed. I learnt such things from books [even as I] learnt love of country'. Among other texts, she lists, 'How they Brought the Good News from Aix to Ghent', 'extracts from the Bible', 'Greek myths and fables', 'Clancy' [sic] and 'A Sunburnt Country' which, she notes, 'I dearly love'.⁸⁸ Through her school reading Rosemary appears to have identified as an (invisibly) white British/Australian citizen in ways which associated citizenship with voice. Her remembered texts, and what she remembers learning from texts, feature approval as the outcome of recognising and undertaking ungendered tasks necessitating public, autonomous contributions to society.

Despite her unhappiness at school Rosemary longed to complete her studies. '[I left school at] fourteen years but would have liked to have done third form' she recalled, even as she remembered her sense of marginalisation associated with the lack of uniform and fees. Her dream of completing this final junior year clearly included a uniform and money for art and cooking materials. Her memories of lunch hours spent reading in her various school libraries suggest that she read as a way of overcoming loneliness because classroom reading had shown her the pleasures of such reading. Rosemary records she continued to read the books she found in those libraries after she left school. She chose stories incorporating the values of middle-class womanhood with its apparent control and public voice despite economic poverty. She nominated *Jane Eyre* and *Anne of Green Gables* as meaningful books and dwelt at length on the influence of *Little Women*: 'I read *Little Women* and any stories on human endurance and survival. Such reading helped me . . . my plight is not unlike the hardships of Alcott's little women'. She reflected that despite their poverty these women contributed publicly and willingly to their society and so kept their self-respect. Rosemary's memories can be read to suggest that her inability to undertake third form education was experienced as the denial of her identity as part of normalised, classless, public womanhood of modern Australia. They also suggest she substituted reading as an emblem of her continued belonging to that group.

⁸⁸ All these stories, regardless of nationality or origin are represented in Australian schools as part of British heritage. I discuss some meanings and effects of 'Britishness' in Australia in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

The way Rosemary remembers leaving school can be seen as demonstrating her belief that autonomous public status was part of her femininity. Home influence ensured she started work at fourteen. She did this unwillingly. She became a wartime telegram girl and ‘delivered “regret to inform you” telegrams from the war office’. On the basis of other responses, it might seem to be easy for a subject to understand herself as a public contributor to wartime society through such a job.⁸⁹ However, I have argued in the preceding paragraph that Rosemary’s transition from school to work was experienced as a further, family-based denial of opportunity for her to identify with the socially powerful. This transition would have given her family’s ideas of femininity as a condition of domestically-based subservience new power over Rosemary. Consequently, her memories of work focussed on the opportunities it gave her to escape from family expectations into public life and both social and economic freedom. ‘It was outdoors [away from her mother and stepfather and the household] and the money was good’ she recalled. In Rosemary’s memories the frightening potential for being drawn back into domestic, subservient, isolated femininity seems to have had a greater prominence than ideas of war service.

Rosemary’s memories can be interpreted to show that she understood that, as the daughter of a poor, working-class family, she would have few, if any, opportunities to contribute as an autonomous public citizen and this was an unhappy condition. It is also clear that school reading shaped her to see that as an Australian and as a modern woman she should have such opportunities. Consequently, she found ways to reject femininity as a condition of domestic subservience and silence. Yet, as she remained a working-class girl, she was constantly aware of the fragility of her access to voice as a quality of youthful femininity.

Eloise’s (11) experiences of elementary reading as both an urban and a farm girl reveal that she understood that an autonomous public voice could be an attractive part of youthful femininity, but not on a farm. For Eloise a satisfying young womanhood was necessarily an urban womanhood. Eloise’s parents were farmers in remote parts of Western Australia. As a consequence of their care for her education she lived with her grandparents in Perth while she completed grades five and six, then returned to the

⁸⁹For example, Shirley (61) who was also a telegram girl remembered it as a difficult but important contribution to wartime Australia. See also Phippen, *ibid*.

farm to finish grades seven and eight by correspondence. The same care ensured she finished her final year of education in a girls' boarding school.

Eloise's descriptions of her school reading can be read in terms of the gap between the voicelessness of traditional British Australian femininity in rural life and modern, voiced Australian femininity with its ideas of paid public work and choice of leisure. However, the elementary education system allowed her to imagine voice as part of youthful femininity through subtle and complex mediations of race and class on gender rather than through the straightforward shaping of the ungended citizen through reading that the authorities claimed was occurring. Eloise's memories of elementary school reading suggest that, for her, the elementary education system was gendered in ways which favoured boys. She recalled 'boys always commandeered the encyclopaedias' she listed as her favourite reading in the classroom. She remembered that there was very little other classroom reading material. She recalled that it was her network of elementary schoolgirl friends which provided her with access to satisfying reading, adding that 'to counter [the primacy of boys in getting classroom reading texts] we had a network of our own and swapped comics galore'.⁹⁰ These recollections suggest that, for Eloise, voice was part of youthful femininity as a result of girls accepting they had a part in public life as a consequence of their ungended Britishness; public voice was part of being white and having middle-class values. Her lived experience meant she drew on the rules and resources of race and class to understand voice as part of the collective behaviour of girls rather than the individual behaviour of ungended citizens.

Eloise remembered how choice and public activity were also part of girls' leisure in the city:

We could wander at will. One could say city people have access to Saturday afternoon pictures with serials etcetera cartoons and two feature films and we also had friends with whom we could spend our spare time . . . No one even contemplated a [girl] being at risk. Dogs were friendly, traffic was practically non-existent (petrol rationing and few people owned a car anyway) as for being abducted or assaulted - no one had ever heard of such a thing.

Her recollections demonstrate that the notion of feminine collectivity and voice also extended to ideas of school's corollary, leisure periods.

⁹⁰I explore this issue of girls' networks at some length in Chapter Eight.

Eloise's memories of school reading on the farm seem to be the converse of her experiences as a city school reader. Firstly, correspondence lessons ensured she had access to all the set texts and to much other reading matter. However, the lack of company made this seem an unwelcome privilege. 'I had a book called *Writers' Treasury of Prose and Drama* which filled in many a quiet patch', she recalled.

Additionally, her rural life meant that Eloise worked at directed tasks immediately serving the interests of the farm:

When I contemplate country life - we had dogs and horses to keep us busy. Jobs to do inside and outside the house. So we really came back to reading [including her correspondence work] at night by the light from a kerosene lamp or on Sunday when we were only permitted to feed the animals etcetera. No *real work* was done on Sunday [my emphasis].

The phrase 'real work' can be interpreted to show why she remembered the city rather than the country as a satisfying place for a young woman. She uses it to record a life of relentless physical labour, isolation and yet another layer of subordination. For two years in early adolescence Eloise, as a farm daughter, worked for her father's interests and the government's interests in a capacity later filled by grown men:

During daylight hours we were always flat out on the farm. The government was calling for more food production and it was impossible to get help until the Italian POW's were made available. Therefore, we often had to yard and handle sheep, mend fences, move flocks, turn windmills on/off, feed animals and open gates. We were often out late finishing at night.

These memories suggest that Eloise experienced subservience and isolation as virtually unrelieved aspects of her farm life, although she recalls her role as one of subservience to government rather than parental demands. In her recollections of similar subordinations in the city her sense of the oppression of service appears to have been offset by the opportunities for public freedom and choice in the tasks and through the related concept of leisure as a space for public freedom and choice. Certainly she recognised farm work as a contribution to wartime Australia, but it was a contribution which failed to satisfy her after her experience of urban training for work and citizenship service with its potential for feminine voice.

Eloise's elementary reading experience exposed her to two kinds of feminine service. She experienced rural feminine service as isolated and voiceless. Modern, classless, urban feminine service appeared to offer her some opportunities to make her own decisions for a life beyond domestic subordination and confinement. Unlike Rosemary, Eloise's life as a daughter had also included a parentally-approved potential for choice between the two kinds of femininity. Her year of boarding-school education was designed to be preparation for getting 'a [paid, public, middle-class] job' and Eloise remembers how at that time 'war was just ending and there were plenty of jobs available'. In mid-adolescence she made her choice: 'I left school at fifteen years. Went to Perth and took a job in an accountant's office'. The emphasis on her awareness of paid jobs suggests that before leaving school Eloise had already identified with the youthful femininity which, in her experience, included voice.

In summary, elementary school classroom reading drew girls' attention to voice as a characteristic of the socially dominant. It also ensured the competent girl reader understood herself as belonging to the dominant part of the elementary school class. Combined with the experience of being a young wartime Australian citizen, this allowed such girls to negotiate voice as a quality of youthful femininity. The possession of public voice is a foundation from which a girl can recognise that she is entitled to struggle publicly to make that voice prevail. In the next chapter I explore how elementary school library reading contributed to some respectable wartime girls being able to interpret public struggle as part of youthful femininity.

Chapter Three: Elementary School Library Reading and Public Struggle

Introduction

In demonstrating how elementary school reading created a space for Australian girls to interpret the key quality of public voice as part of approved youthful femininity, Chapter Two also showed how elementary schools as regulators of social discourse ensured that wartime girl readers experienced simultaneous, conflicting subject positions. For a girl to accommodate all these femininities was psychologically impossible. Girl readers invested in those femininities, which most fulfilled them. Dominant ideas of gender at this time recognised a hegemonic relationship between masculine public struggle and subordinate, feminine, domestic struggle. However, school library reading encouraged some elementary school girls to see themselves as ungendered public winners. This chapter argues that, as a result, girls were able to extend ideas of respectable, youthful femininity to include the key quality of public struggle unlimited by gender considerations. This was because an idea of both masculine and feminine forms of struggle as truly complementary aspects of respectable femininity was the most satisfying interpretation of young womanhood these girls were then able to negotiate.

This chapter focuses on the way the pressures on the interests underpinning the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy affected the national discourse of Britishness. Britishness led girls to imagine that public struggle unlimited by gender considerations was a quality of femininity. Australia understood itself as a British settlement country and valorised idealised British attributes as part of its national character.¹ The concept of struggle as moral and therefore respectable was one of these attributes. Evangelicalism as a source of Britishness meant that Britishness was founded on middle-class notions of the individual's struggle to be good. The dominance of middle-class, patriarchal interests was also reflected in this struggle. The good man's struggle in the early twentieth century was an extension of the evangelical ideas of competing with others in the amoral public world of commerce and politics both to make it moral and to earn a place from which he could provide a

¹White, 'A Backwater Awash' in *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol 1, no 3, 1983, p 112; White, *Inventing Australia*, p 144.

private home for himself and his family.² Masculine morality was reflected in the development and support of the 'law' and, synonymously, of British justice.³ In the British home a good woman, his wife, would serve this man spiritually, sexually and domestically, reinforcing his ideas of goodness, so that he might continue to act with justice in the public world. Good women struggled in the private home to subdue their own desires to the needs of men and of their families so that they might support goodness in the world through this service. This was 'virtue'.⁴ Masculine struggle focused on public competition against others, winning and imposing one's own (moral) view on the world; feminine struggle focused on the quiet domestic achievement of morality through the successful struggle to serve the interests of others rather than one's own.

Gendered struggle continued to inform ideas of good British men and women in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵ However, in Australia at the beginning of the second world war, feminine notions of struggle had been modified as a reflection of the shift in capital's focus from production to consumption. In addition to domestic struggle against oneself, limited public competition against others, a notion which in its entirety was understood as masculine struggle, was also recognised as feminine. The feminine limits to public competition grew from continuing patriarchal influence which positioned modern feminine service as ultimately domestic after a girl had served for a short period as a worker in the public arena. Consequently, for girls the notion of public competition against others was limited to the time before marriage and motherhood. Furthermore, the real purpose of disciplining subjects into public competitiveness was to create the qualities necessary for the demanding lifelong struggle in the public arena.⁶ Not only was it expected that a girl would not need to perform such service, shaping her to masculine levels of competitiveness would clearly impede her visualised future service of domestic support. As a result, the spaces for competition were usually gendered spaces and girls could usually undertake public competition only against other girls. This feminine public

²Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p 112; Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p 173.

³Bristow, op cit, pp 189-191.

⁴Davidoff and Hall, op cit, pp 114-115.

⁵Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, pp 4-13. In Australia, Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, p 38, pp 74-86.

⁶ For the continuation in interwar Australia of the notion that team games involving public competition shaped boys for leadership and public struggle see Kirk and Twigg, , 'Civilising Australian Bodies', *Sporting Traditions*, No 2, 1995, p 24.

competition was understood as an interlude in, rather than a prelude to, the competitors' life service.⁷

The key to girl readers' negotiation of public competition unlimited by gender considerations as a quality of youthful femininity was a complex, reflexive process involving two principles of wartime elementary school library reading; the voluntary reading of approved books and understanding such reading as a leisure activity. These principles meant girls experienced the pleasures of both public competition and domestic struggle in ways where each of these discourses reinforced the satisfactions of the other. At school girls read as publicly-trained adolescents and, as Chapter Two has demonstrated, classroom reading was one of the few spaces in which girls were created as ungendered, public winners and losers. The graded levels of library texts and the notion of library reading as voluntary ensured that it was an activity for classroom reading winners. The voluntariness was part of education departments' intention to make this reading a home-based leisure activity. School-approved reading as home leisure meant that girls already shaped to the pleasures of public competition also read as daughters being influenced into domestic struggle as part of good womanhood. Here the reward was experienced as maternal warmth. However, mothers were part of the modern discourse of motherhood as well as the traditional discourse. They emphasised 'health' as a quality of girls' leisure. Public-winner-conditioned readers were also pre-disposed to gain mothers' approval by taking part in the 'healthy' pastimes of competitive team games and girls' societies. In turn, these public-competition-oriented 'domestic' pastimes shaped girls further to the pleasures of public winning. Library-book reading in the home sharpened reading skills. So elementary school library-book reading as a good daughter was experienced as also influencing the satisfactions of the successful school girl.

Dynamic notions of health and leisure mediated the evolving Australian ideas of Britishness. These influenced the social discourses affecting the readers.

⁷For the way competition in Australian girls' sport was rooted in traditional notions of femininity see Kirk and Twigg, op cit, p 10. For women's role in the public arena, Elder, "The Question of the Unmarried", *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 18, Summer, 1993, p 164. Domestic struggle was still the way women's moral struggle was understood, especially that of 'ordinary' women, see Davies and Hawker, 'Ivy Lavinia Weber, MLA' in Bevege, James and Shute, *Worth Her Salt*, especially, pp 302-303, Lake, 'Depression Dreaming' in Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, pp 251-253.

Consequently, by 1939 girls were already positioned to find space in the practices and texts of elementary school library reading to negotiate the idea that competition unlimited by gender considerations was a quality of youthful femininity. The practices of this library reading ensured girls who had already experienced themselves as ungendered public winners in a limited way saw how the pleasures of both kinds of struggle could apply in a wider arena. Simultaneously, they extended the girls' approved opportunities to experience these pleasures. The library reading texts represented both kinds of struggle as part of femininity and highlighted the unfulfilment of a womanhood which encompassed only one of these notions of competing. Some texts implied public struggle unlimited by gender was an ongoing part of modern womanhood.

The respondents' memories reveal that struggle unlimited by gender as a quality of youthful femininity was interpreted by a relatively exclusive population of girls. While the foundation for this negotiation existed for most Australian girls, it was narrowed by the necessity for the subject to already have some understanding of herself as an ungendered winner. The memories also revealed the complex, reflexive process through which library reading as leisure connected approved behaviour in the school and the home. Girl readers experienced moving across the pleasures of successful limited public competition against others, successful apparently unlimited competition, and successful domestic struggle against one's baser self. Consequently, the idea of a complementary relationship between the two gender-based notions of struggle *in their entirety* as part of a satisfying femininity was reinforced. Two case studies show that the library readers came to this interpretation of competition through the combination of girls' collective and individual experience.

Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers

By 1939 social discourses focussing on Australian Britishness positioned the library readers to interpret a complementary relationship between domestic struggle and limited public competition as part of being a good young woman. Australian girl readers in elementary school libraries were understood as having an inherited capacity for struggling towards the moral position. Institutional ideas of Australia meant that the girls would be educated and influenced into using this capacity in feminine service

to the state. Ideas of traditional feminine service as support of the public masculine citizen still continued. However, socio-economic change and the woman's role in the modern focus on health and leisure as sources of the nation's efficiency had begun to develop ideas of limited, public competition as moral modern feminine service. This notion of limited public competition developed in ways which would position the girl readers to negotiate unlimited public competition as a quality of youthful femininity.

Ideas of Australia ensured that struggle towards the moral position was approved both at school and at home for girl elementary school library readers. Australia was imagined as a settlement country of the British empire.⁸ In this empire earlier Protestant British notions of struggle as part of morality were fused with later notions of the fittest race winning the competition for survival.⁹ This Darwinian view of the world had made the capacity to struggle for morality an inherited characteristic of those with 'British blood'. Furthermore, approved struggle in British society was represented as an unassailably moral struggle. As British imperial power developed it was understood as the outcome of that gendered service to the state associated with the traditional gender division in struggle. In the first part of the twentieth century ideas of 'Britishness' and 'whiteness' in Australia moved into a relationship of some synonymity.¹⁰ By 1939, the possession of certain bio-cultural features now specified as 'white' meant that non- 'British blood' girls were recognised as capable of 'white' behaviour and were normalised as British in Australian schools.¹¹ As a result, the idea of struggle as part of being a good girl was extended to girls across Australian society regardless of British ancestry. Additionally, in the British homes, British mothers were influencing daughters to struggle to be 'good'.

Traditional gendered notions of struggle were not only governed by different service values, they also offered men and women different pleasures. When the good

⁸White, 'A Backwater Awash', p 112.

⁹Bristow, op cit, pp 171-173.

¹⁰This recognition was a complex mix based on institutional and popular ideas white behaviour. Some girls who would formerly have been recognised as other were now effectively biologically white (Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, pp 147-150).

¹¹At the same time, other ideas of the capacity for British behaviour were less clearly biologically related, even though the idea of white behaviour was based on biological capacity. See Anderson, *ibid.* Fletcher's *Documents in the History of Aboriginal Education* show how New South Wales schools accepted Asian children and some children recognised as Aboriginal, pp 131-132, p 147, p 168, pp 171-172. This study also reveals the racially-based social pressures some children experienced to discourage their school attendance, p 140, pp 141-146.

man struggled against others publicly to make British justice prevail he experienced public competition according to clear rules against specified others for the achievement of a definite goal in the public world. Achievement of this goal was rewarded publicly with wealth, position and honours and these were socially constructed to seem like immediate returns for effort.¹² The good woman struggled at home against her baser self. This struggle was less clearcut and consequently could be less satisfying. It depended on the individual's recognition of her own selfishness and the denial of self-interest in favour of serving others. The ideal result was feminine virtue, a condition that in turn created the harmonious and productive British home. This goal was expressed in a variety of ways and so there was no clear picture of what its achievement was like.¹³ The represented feminine rewards of family love and respect were as hazy as the goal. Both goals and rewards depended largely on the character of those holding power in the family home rather than on a woman's effort and achievement.¹⁴ For girls, pleasure in this idea of struggle was situated in the warmth and intimacy of a domestic relationship in which a good mother guided her daughter into understanding the pitfalls of self-interest.¹⁵

However, by the 1930s the idea of limited public competition was clearly being added to that of domestic struggle as part of the notion of the moral young Australian woman. Two socio-economic changes influenced this development through their common emphasis on notions of health. One was the change in economic focus from production to distribution and consumption. Feminine labour was becoming part of this evolving public marketplace. Thus adolescent girls were being trained to undertake paid public work for a short period.¹⁶ Modern ideas of the role of the citizen worker shaped the good worker to carry out tasks as part of a 'fair' (just) contractual exchange with the employer.¹⁷ Health as a source of worker efficiency was part of this exchange. Health as part of 're-creating' the worker for her contracted service was also part of justice.¹⁸ The just British society was idealised in schools and so care for

¹²Davidoff and Hall, *op cit*, p 230; Bristow, *op cit*, pp 190-191; Carol Dyhouse, *op cit*, pp 4-7.

¹³See for example, Dyhouse, *op cit*, pp 6-8, p 12.

¹⁴Davidoff and Hall, *op cit*, pp 191- 192; Dyhouse, *op cit*, pp 4-7, p 26.

¹⁵Flint, *The Woman Reader*, pp 194-195.

¹⁶Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, Chapters Four and Five; Elder, "The Question of the Unmarried", pp 154-155.

¹⁷Davison, *The Unforgiving Minute: How Australia Learned to Tell the Time*, pp 80-81.

¹⁸In British society in relation to girl workers Hargreaves, *op cit*, pp 109-110; Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, p 187. In Australia in relation to girls, Kingston, *op cit*, pp 121-122; O'Hanlon, 'For the

her health was represented as a rational contribution on the part of the citizen worker.¹⁹ Girls were also being trained for ultimate positions as mothers of the race. This meant they were affected by another socio-economic change, that of British Australia's continuing shift in the interwar years from notions of inherited racial superiority to the development of national superiority through authoritatively intended 'efficiencies', social strategies directed to a visible goal.²⁰ Healthy practices producing a physically and morally healthy population were constituted as one field for efficiencies and so public competitive games or 'sport' for young women were approved.²¹ Despite some criticism over the potential outcome if feminine sport were to be pursued too energetically, its practice was seen as contributing to youthful players' developing capacity to produce healthy babies, thus fulfilling part of their feminine role.²² At the same time, this femininity ensured that girls' sport was understood as limited by the players' adult potential for maternity.²³

Wartime girl readers' understanding of unlimited competition as part of youthful femininity was so powerfully affected by the notion of sport this next part of the section unpacks the relationship between sport and competition and their link to girls'

Upholding of Womanhood: Melbourne's Interwar Hostels for "Business Girls", *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol 70, no 2, November, 1999, pp 123-124; Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 71, p 7.

¹⁹Education departments saw as 'worthy' the idea of the primary school subject individually maintaining her health as part of her contribution to the just society. This view and notions of how girls should be made aware of this relationship can be found in the primary school 'Health and Physical Education Syllabus', for the New South Wales Department of Education, 1941, pp 124-129. Elementary school girls also read about this ideal in relation to girl workers in the school magazines. For example, Western Australia's *Our Rural Magazine*, 'Ready-made Clothing', May, 1943, pp 100-103; South Australia's, *The Children's Hour*, Grade VII, 'Made in South Australia: Icecream', April, 1941, Supplement 47.

²⁰For earlier notions of Britishness as inherited racial superiority reflected in still-popular juvenile literature and activities, see Bristow, op cit, p 33, p 184. Expansion of the idea in the interwar years of British societies developing superiority through efficiencies is discussed in Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, pp 28-29; Hargreaves, p 120. In reference to Australian girls see Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', p 1. Australian schools at this time linked health, efficiency and physical fitness, see New South Wales Education Department *Course of Instruction*, 1941, pp 124-125. They used the 1933 English physical training syllabus, see Cunningham, McIntyre, Radford, *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, pp 163-164. The Board of Education, *Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools*, London, 1933, emphasised the connection between physical 'efficiencies' and a strong nation, p 6, p 8.

²¹For Australian attempts to develop 'efficiencies' of physical and moral health in relation to girls in the interwar period see Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia'. For team games as a technology for making British girls of all classes 'healthy' for service to the nation see Hargreaves pp 120-122. In Australia, Fischer, *Years of Silent Control, PhD thesis*, pp 130-131; *New South Wales Course of Instruction for Primary Schools*, p 146; Board of Education *Syllabus*, p 8.

²²In British societies, op cit, p 28; McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women*, pp, 204-205. In Australia, Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia' p 1, pp 13-14.

²³McCrone, op cit, p 211. In Australia, Kirk and Twigg, op cit, p10, p 13. In the interwar years, Dunn, *The Dauntless Bunch*, p 85.

elementary school library reading. Ideas of health and leisure are the elements in this link. Leisure in this thesis is understood as a technology for supporting approved systems rather than as free time.²⁴ While girls believed they were resting from school and home-based training as citizen workers and maternal citizens, leisure activities continued to shape them.²⁵ School was represented as training future citizens through sedentary, intellectually-engaging tasks.²⁶ School-approved leisure reading was represented as rest from intellectual demands.²⁷ However, as I discuss in the sections on practices and texts in this chapter, leisure reading showed girls the roles of modern good feminine citizens while its performance shaped them into the behaviour and values of modern good feminine citizens. The emphasis on movement and exhilaration in sport as school-approved leisure meant it could be seen as rest from sedentariness and intellectual concentration.²⁸ However, as I discuss below, sport continued through ideas of health and efficiency to train girls to be citizen workers and maternal citizens.

The same leisure activity could support several identities. As daughters Australian elementary-level girls were understood as being shaped for domestic struggle in the home by ideal mothers. This was preparation for maternal citizenship.²⁹ Home-approved leisure reading was represented as rest from learning to undertake household tasks serving others.³⁰ Mothers were part of changing Australian values too. By 1939 they understood some public regulation was part of feminine life.³¹ As I discuss in the sections on texts and practices, girls' school-directed leisure reading, was understood by mothers as suitable girls' reading and therefore it was part of the leisure reading

²⁴Here I draw on Strange's use of Rojek's ideas, Strange, op cit, p 191-192.

²⁵For children's ideas of school and preparation for life in interwar Australia see Holbrook, 'Rewards and Punishments', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, vol 38, no 1, 1997, p 14 and Holbrook, 'Apathetic Parents and Wilful Children', in Theobald and Selleck, *Family, School and State in Australian History*, pp 147-148. For girls' understanding of home training see McCalman, *Struggletown*, p 53, p 55; Holbrook, 'Apathetic Parents', p 148, p150; Sinclair, *Tales Out of School*, p 53-55.

²⁶Blackmore, 'Curriculum Assessment', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1991, pp 16 - 17.

²⁷Salter Davis, 'Libraries and Citizenship' in Cunningham, *Education for Complete Living*, p 477, p 479; 'School Libraries Report', *New South Wales Education Gazette*, 1 July, 1935, pp 180-181, 1 June, 1944, p 139.

²⁸For ideas of sport as girls' recreation in interwar Australia see Dunn, op cit, pp 83-85, Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', p 7. For elementary schools' recognition of sport as recreation, see New South Wales *Course of Instruction*, 1941, p 132 and Board of Education *Syllabus of Physical Education Training*, p14, p 37.

²⁹Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, p 150.

³⁰I deal with this in detail in Chapter Six.

³¹For Australian women's understanding of public regulation as part of feminine life by 1940, Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, p 217; as part of girls' life Sinclair, op cit, pp 36-37.

approved at home. Mothers also approved of sport as leisure. In mothers' eyes, sport released girls from the confines of the house and it was also part of the public development of the future healthy maternal citizen.³² For girl readers in the school library, leisure linked sport and school library reading and ideas of the complementary nature of domestic struggle against oneself and public competition against others as part of being a good girl.

The concept of 'sport' which was disseminated as leisure through most wartime elementary schools was rooted in the notion of the individual's public competition against others as part of contributing to the just state. Traditional, middle-class private schools used team games to develop moral individuals who would both lead others and compete against others for a clear goal and according to rules.³³ For girls the games were modified in order to emphasise cooperation and health (for future maternity).³⁴ Notions of Britishness, developing healthy bodies, and cooperative, contributing personalities were incorporated into the state schools' charter to fashion the child as an efficient worker for the capitalist-supported state. Consequently, the team game had a place in state primary schools.³⁵ By 1940, Kirk and Twigg argue, the team game was synonymous with sport across both gender and class.³⁶ Despite some change in emphasis to accommodate developing ideas of the modern Australian citizen, the games also continued to support certain traditional British values. Among these was the morality of public competition against others by the specified group. Here individuals contributed to moving the group towards a clear goal according to clear rules and resulting in the satisfaction of the acknowledged win.³⁷

As I have indicated, by 1939 feminine physical team games were also seen widely in society as part of the way the nation's good young woman fulfilled her obligation

³²McIntyre and McIntyre in *Country Towns of Victoria* record hockey and basketball teams made up of daughters still living at home in their 1941-42 survey, p 211, p 218.

³³Kirk and Twigg, 'Civilising Australian Bodies', *Sporting Traditions*, no 2, 1995, pp 4-7.

³⁴Kirk and Twigg, op cit, pp 10-11; McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women*, p 211. In Australian private girls' school see for example, Tuckey, *Fifty Years at Frensham*, pp 46-47, p 131;

³⁵Kirk and Twigg, op cit, pp 19-22; New South Wales Department of Education *Course of Instruction*, 1941, p 146. Australian schools used the 1933 *English Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools* (See Cunningham et al, *Review of Education*, 1938, pp 163-164). With reference to notions of team games, health and character see pp 6-7 and pp 28 ff of this text; Cunningham et al, *Review of Education*, 1938, p 163.

³⁶Kirk and Twigg, op cit, pp 10-11, p14, p 22.

³⁷Kirk and Twigg, op cit, pp 24-25.

to future motherhood.³⁸ Girls' competitive games were extended into after-school and work leisure.³⁹ They were used by groups such as the Girl Guides and the YWCA, which sought to maintain modified traditional feminine values as part of modern British society.⁴⁰ Mothers approving these team games as after-school, domestic leisure were giving their daughters the pleasure of maternal approval for the development of notions of some public competition against others as well as for the development of healthy bodies for maternal citizenship.⁴¹

As a consequence of changing ideas of Britishness in Australia, greater numbers of girls across extensive racial and class groups were encouraged in powerful ways to understand themselves as embodying traditional masculine *and* feminine notions of moral struggle. However, society's ideas of youthful feminine leisure allowed girls to experience domestic struggle and public competition as complementary characteristics of the good woman only in a limited way. In the next two sections I argue that the link between notions of sport and school library reading in combination with the texts and practices of this reading gave girl readers ideas that all public competition could be unaffected by gender. It also gave them a space to negotiate a complementary relationship between domestic struggle and the newer, school-based idea of public competition which could exist throughout adult feminine life.

Practices

I argued earlier that by 1939 traditional feminine notions of domestic struggle against one's baser self had been modified. The traditional masculine notion of struggle, recognised as public competition, had, to a limited extent, also become part of being a good girl in Australia. Three aspects of elementary school library reading practices positioned girls to negotiate from this position an understanding that unlimited public competition, limited public competition and domestic struggle were all complementary aspects of moral femininity. Firstly, school library reading was

³⁸Dunn, op cit, pp 84-85; Smart, 'Flappers, Feminists and Miss Australia', pp 6-7. Some implication of this issue also exists in the Board of Education *Syllabus*, p 11.

³⁹Participation in competitions which demanded out-of-school time was accepted, see New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 September 1939, p 260.

⁴⁰Dunn, op cit, pp 84-97, pp 107-109; Coleman and Darling, *From a Flicker to a Flame*, pp 56-57. The YWCA was the Young Women's Christian Association.

⁴¹By this time both Guides and YWCA activities were supported by the women's arm of the protestant churches. See Coleman and Darling, op cit, p 14; Dunn, op cit, p 73.

part of elementary education. This meant the girl school library readers read both family stories and girls' boarding school adventure stories as approved representations of young feminine experience. I will argue closely in the section on texts that these two genres worked in concert to give the girls space to negotiate the emerging idea of struggle. Secondly, library reading as a voluntary activity drew on skills which made it attractive to girls who already understood the pleasures of public competition and winning. Some of this competition appeared to be unlimited by gender. Finally, the performance of school library reading foregrounded the pleasures of domestic struggle and of public competition as complementary pleasures.

The practices of education authorities meant that in 1939 school-approved library reading was relatively widely understood by girls as part of elementary school education and as part of leisure. The 1935 Munn Pitt Report had encouraged authorities to think about libraries as technologies for shaping democratic modern citizens and as the most recent evolution of the British citizen.⁴² Education authorities recognised that the 'reading habit', that is voluntary, engaged reading of appropriate material as a satisfying activity, was the way to inform and involve this citizen.⁴³ Elementary schools were understood as the places where 'boys and girls' laid the foundation for their development as citizens and so there was great emphasis in the elementary syllabuses on forming library reading as a lifetime habit.⁴⁴ This meant that school library reading needed to encourage the idea of reading library books as home-based leisure.⁴⁵ However, this same report also drew attention to the fact that there were no libraries suitable for this purpose in the Australian school system.⁴⁶ Therefore, in the subsequent years the influential state departments of education

⁴²Cunningham et al *Review of Education*, 1938, p 143-144; Kandel, 'The Free Library Movement and Its Implications' in New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1938, pp 30-32; Salter Davies, 'Libraries and Citizenship' in Cunningham, *Education for Complete Living*, pp 476-490; Cunningham and Pratt, *Review of Education in Australia*, 1939, p 14 and pp 21-22.

⁴³'School Libraries Report' in New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 July, 1935, pp 180-181; Kandel, op cit, p 30; Salter Davies, op cit, p 477.

⁴⁴For example, New South Wales *Course of Instruction in Primary Schools*, 1941, p 153, p 178; Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 17 July, 1941, p 201.

⁴⁵'School Libraries Report', pp 180-181; 'Suggested Outline of a Course of Instruction in Library Method for Schools' in New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 December, 1938, p 395; The Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 17 June, 1941, p 166; New South Wales *Course of Instruction*, p 178.

⁴⁶Munn and Pitt, *Australian Libraries*, pp 105-106.

attempted to normalise library use as leisure through both instruction and through practical access.⁴⁷ This was necessarily a huge and an expensive endeavour.

The establishment of school libraries was not only an expensive undertaking, the urgent need for their establishment was recognised at a time when money for the nation's education was understood as limited.⁴⁸ Considerable effort and ingenuity were exercised in giving lessons in the use and meaning of libraries and in providing practical access to libraries in elementary schools. Standardised lessons in how to use the library did become a feature of school experience for elementary pupils. Some states specifically timetabled library periods while others incorporated library lessons in the English syllabus.⁴⁹ State departments of education organised for some teachers to be trained at centralised library schools.⁵⁰ They made detailed sample lessons available to all teachers.⁵¹ Similarity also existed in the reading materials as systems were set up wherein all library books had to be approved by central authorities.⁵² To create practical access to libraries the authorities encouraged local fund-raising teams. They praised parent-supported libraries serving groups of schools in sparsely populated regions. Some departments liaised with state-funded libraries and the railways to make library reading available to distant schools. 'Book boxes' were a consequence of this approach.⁵³ The authorities responsible for other education systems were also affected both directly and indirectly by the Munn Pitt comments. Private schools featured library-use lessons as part of developing modern British feminine citizens.⁵⁴ The extension of the Catholic system to include success for their candidates in the state public examinations encouraged Catholic schools to develop their libraries.⁵⁵ By 1939, it can be argued, education authorities' practices had

⁴⁷Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, pp 142-152.

⁴⁸Hyams and Bessant, *Schools for the People?*, p 162; Spaul, *Education in the Second World War*, p 34.

⁴⁹*The Weaver*, 1941, p36; New South Wales *Course of Instruction* (1941), pp 177-179; Queensland *Syllabus* (1930 and 1938), p 25.

⁵⁰Cunningham, et al, *Review of Education 1938*, p 145; Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 18 February, 1939, p 53.

⁵¹New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 December, 1938, pp 394-401; 1 March, 1941, p 45.

⁵²New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 June, 1944, p 139; New South Wales *Course of Instruction*, 1941, p 179; Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 17 February, 1944, p 51.

⁵³Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, pp 142-152. This information is available in greater detail in the various state education department gazettes.

⁵⁴*The Weaver*, 1941, pp 36-37; 1945, p 33.

⁵⁵Beovich, 'Catholic Education in Australia' in Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, pp 104-105; New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 July, 1939, 'Casino School of Arts', p 186.

ensured most elementary school girls understood library reading was part of school-approved leisure and that this reading was to be partly undertaken as home leisure.

The influence of educators in combination with publishers' activities and the pressures of war ensured that wartime girls' most frequent elementary school library reading would be the girls' family story and the girls' boarding school story. The elementary school library collections in use in the war were those established in the 1930s. As the early discussions and library lists reveal, educators of this time understood the importance of both reference and information texts and fiction.⁵⁶ However, the scarcity of funding for establishing libraries and the cheapness of popular hardback fiction compared to reference texts meant that schools found it expedient to invest in approved popular novels rather than reference and information genres.⁵⁷ The novels were often gendered. In the 1930s approved fiction for girls emphasised both domestic girlhood and the newer ideas of girlhood. For publishers interested in profit, cheap reprints of popular stories and cheap editions of story genres which had already proved popular had become efficient ways of making money.⁵⁸ Two of these publishers' lines appeared to represent girls in ways education authorities approved. The girls' family stories showed girls undertaking the domestic struggle for British femininity. The boarding school stories showed more modern girls learning to compete in public in limited ways. Consequently, these genres appeared first on the approved library lists and then in relatively large numbers as suitable books for girls on the elementary school library shelves.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Kandel op cit; Salter Davies op cit; 'School Libraries Report' op cit; *Victorian Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 1945, p 54, p 244.

⁵⁷For example, compare the New South Wales' departmental ideal in 1935 of 'at least forty percent of the library should consist of books of travel, history, nature study, science and general knowledge, including magazines, periodicals and reference books'. ('School Libraries Report', op cit, p 180) with the 1941 suggestion for guarding the few expensive books of this nature available in most libraries in 'A Portable School Library' in the *Gazette*, 2 June, 1941, p 163. (This was a complex struggle for the 1941 *Course of Instruction* also encouraged teachers to follow the 1935 report (p 179)). Out of the four hundred and eighty titles in the Wollongong Girls' School library catalogue to the end of the second world war approximately eighty, or sixteen percent, are books of information and reference material.

⁵⁸Eyre, *British Children's Books in the Twentieth Century*, pp 21-23.

⁵⁹The Wollongong Girls' School catalogue listed a collection catering for infant readers of six through to super-primary readers of fourteen. Family stories and school stories were listed in the School Libraries Report as only as some of the fiction appropriate for senior primary girls. However, out of the four hundred and eighty books there are thirty five which are easily discernible as belonging to these genres.

Wartime exigencies meant that these original collections were the ones which shaped wartime elementary girls' ideas of school-approved library reading. At the beginning of the war books in Australia were predominantly imported from Britain under the empire book agreement, or were published locally under licensing arrangements from British firms.⁶⁰ War had exerted pressures on both aspects of this situation and this in turn narrowed the availability of new library stock.⁶¹ The relative unavailability of new books meant that school library policies focused on preserving the 1930s collections in place at the onset of war.⁶²

Now to explore the ways in which school library reading practices attracted girls who already understood the pleasures of public competition and how the specified practices reinforced this understanding. Girl library readers experienced strong pressures through library classes and other classes to be publicly competitive. For many readers competition seemed ungendered. As I have discussed, one goal of library classes was to develop an individual subject who read approved literature voluntarily as part of her lifetime idea of private, individual leisure. However, competition was always a feature of school classroom performance and, as I also discussed in Chapter Two, Australian elementary classes were often coeducational. The way in which the principle of library reading as a voluntary, pleasurable activity emerged from collective, classroom shaping, ensured that those girls who identified as school library readers already understood themselves as leaders in the just society of the school classroom and winners in public competition. Library reading classes reinforced this. One example of how this occurred is the choice of library monitors from among the 'competent'.⁶³ Ordinary classes also reinforced it. For example, the New South Wales school syllabus made the in-class, silent reading of a school library book a possible reward for those who completed class exercises most rapidly.⁶⁴

⁶⁰Nile and Walker, 'The Paternoster Row Machine' pp 9-10 and Alison, 'Publishers and Editors' pp 33-34 both in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*; Fabinyi, 'Australia', in Taubert, *The Book Trade of the World: The Americas, Australia, New Zealand*, vol II, pp 351-352.

⁶¹Book importations were now of low priority compared to perceived war necessities and local supplies of paper had been severely curtailed: Eyre, op cit, pp 25-26; Frances, 'Australian Print Workers' in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*, p 118.

⁶²New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 June, 1944, p 139. While there are no elementary school notes available on this issue, both Wollongong High School's library notes (*The Gleam*, 1943, p 17) and Abbotsleigh's library notes (*The Weaver*, 1942, p 34) make these pressures on school libraries clear.

⁶³Victoria's *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 17 July, 1941, p 201.

⁶⁴New South Wales *Course of Instruction in Primary Schools*, pp 176-178.

Furthermore, although reading library fiction texts often gendered girls, the conditions associated with choosing school library reading also reinforced the subject's pleasurable perception of herself as a public achiever in an ungendered way. The system encouraged individual, voluntary reading choice. This was envisioned as offering the reader individual fulfilment.⁶⁵ However, the schools' focus on apparently ungendered age grading and examinations had made ungendered, age-specified reading levels part of the way girls understood competition.⁶⁶ The way they could choose their library reading also encouraged these competitive values. Girls were shown that they should choose some books because their representations of girls' experience would satisfy them.⁶⁷ However, some of the suitable books for girls in the elementary school libraries were ungendered books.⁶⁸ The libraries were designed to be opened for book exchange and reading at lunch times and other school times when both girls and boys were free to choose their leisure activities.⁶⁹ The departmental focus in the library lists was on age grading. Recommended systems for organising the collection made the grading of books visible to the girls through their position on the library shelves.⁷⁰ Reading difficulty was also made visible through print sizes and in the number and quality of the illustrations.⁷¹ The pleasures of library reading for girls therefore existed not only in choosing meaningful stories but also in choosing the books which only those who achieved 'high' standards of reading could enjoy. These readers could be either boys or girls.

⁶⁵'School Libraries Report', p 181; 'Primary Schools. Notes on Revised Subject Headings. Reading', *Victorian Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 18 August, 1941, p 236.

⁶⁶Trethewey, 'Solving "The Retardation Problem" in Primary Education: The Case of South Australia' in *History of Education Quarterly*, Fall, 1999, pp 264-265 and Note 3; Blackmore, 'Curriculum, Assessment and Certification', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1991, p 13.

⁶⁷While school library technologies didn't always emphasise books as gendered, the publishing catalogues available for all to read in the back of the editions held by the libraries advertised them in this way. Researcher's collection.

⁶⁸For example, the Victorian elementary school library starter list included a universal '12-14' list, *Victorian Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 22 February, 1945, pp 54-55. The New South Wales school library starter list also included a universal 'Upper Primary' list. See *School Library Report*, op cit, pp 183-184. Scott draws attention to the way girls also read books specified as boys books for pleasure in *Reading, Film and Radio Tastes of High School Boys and Girls*, pp 56-57.

⁶⁹'School Libraries Report', p 181.

⁷⁰'School Libraries Report', p 181.

⁷¹For library organisation, see 'School Libraries Report', p 181. An exceptionally clear example of the visual emblems of graded reading is the Whitcombe and Tombs' editions featured on the school library lists which also specify age-graded levels of difficulty on the title page.

Lastly, this section demonstrates how school library reading encouraged girls to understand the pleasures associated with public competition as complementary to those of domestic struggle. As I have indicated, as part of making library reading a habit school library books were lent for all readers to take home and read.⁷² Additionally, school-approved reading was also one of the kinds of reading modern Australian mothers approved as a way to influence girls into womanhood.⁷³ Therefore, once at home, girls' school-approved reading became part of the good mother's kindly guidance of her daughter into moral womanhood.

Texts

As I have outlined, elementary school libraries sought to shape senior girls as leisure readers using two genres, the girls' family story and the girls' boarding school story. These genres represented two different ideas of femininity in which different notions of struggle defined moral feminine service. Aspects of each of these texts contributed to readers interpreting a complementary relationship between the domestic struggle to serve others willingly and ideas of public competition, both limited and unlimited by gender, as part of being a good girl. Both girls' family stories and school stories demonstrated how moral womanhood involves struggle. Through family stories readers were shaped to want the warmth and intimacy attached to domestic struggle. However, the subordination and uncertainty associated with domestic struggle were less attractive aspects. School adventure stories represented domestic and public competition as complementary aspects of moral girlhood. The clarity, certainty and autonomy of public competition could be seen to compensate for the disadvantages of domestic struggle, especially by girls already shaped to the attractions of public success. Some boarding school stories imply that a modern good woman can serve in ways which connect domestic struggle and public competition unlimited by the gender discourse. Such an idea offered girl readers a notion of femininity which would give them full access to the pleasures of both public and domestic concepts of struggle.

⁷²See note 44, 'School Libraries Report', p 181; New South Wales *Course of Instruction* p 178.

⁷³I discuss ideas of the feminine domestic relationship and approved reading as a technology in detail in Chapter Six.

A brief textual analysis of an example of each of these two most common library genres reveals ways in which wartime girl readers were positioned to understand this. The examples are a 1935 edition of Louisa M Alcott's 1868 publication, *Little Women* and a 1934 reprint of Winifred Darch's 1932 novel, *Girls of Queen Elizabeth's*. Foster and Simons argue that continuing accessibility is the essential characteristic of an influential book.⁷⁴ Both these stories qualify as accessible through availability and through content.

Little Women was a book available in many school libraries for girls across the spectrum of the Australian education systems. Angus and Robertson, Oxford, and Harrap editions of the novel were on the ongoing influential school library lists published by the New South Wales' state education department.⁷⁵ Casino School of Arts Country Schools Section, which depended on this list, transported books in boxes as part of a travelling library system which served both state and Catholic schools.⁷⁶ 'Classic' girls' family stories like *Little Women* were also a featured part of the girls' private school libraries.⁷⁷ The popularity of classics meant that many of the books in a classic series were likely to be on library shelves. These stories could therefore resonate more powerfully because of a reader's knowledge of other books dealing with the heroines' lives. *Little Women* fitted into this category. Other volumes from the series were also on elementary school library lists and library registers reveal this direction had translated to the kinds of books on the elementary school library shelves.⁷⁸

Books approved by Australian education authorities in the interwar years as girls' family stories in the 'British' tradition connected with modern Australian notions of femininity through the combination of traditional, middle-class womanhood with a

⁷⁴Foster and Simons, *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls*, p 13.

⁷⁵New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 July, 1935, p 183-186; New South Wales *Syllabus*, 1941, p 179. It also appeared on the Victorian elementary school library list, *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 22 February, 1945, p 54.

⁷⁶New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 July, 1939, pp 185-186.

⁷⁷Foster and Simons define girls' 'classics' as 'books such as *Little Women*, *What Katy Did* and *The Secret Garden* [which] still retain their place as standard items on the classics list of . . . twentieth-century publishing houses, and sales figures confirm their continuing popularity with girl readers' p x. For the popularity of classics at private girls' schools, see for example, *The Weaver* library notes, 1940, p 23.

⁷⁸For example, *Little Women* and *Jo's Boys*, were two books in the same series and were respectively numbers 111 and 110 in the contemporary library register for Wollongong Girls' School.

new world emphasis on ‘classlessness’, nuclear families and some girlhood freedoms.⁷⁹ They also focused on traditional ideas of domestic struggle as part of a femininity characterised by its middle-class valorisation of domesticity, moral purity and personal service to others. Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women*, was an American and the story is one of girls in a ‘new world’ American society. However, Alcott came from a background which meant she shared with British authors ideas of approved femininity as the outcome of gendered, evangelical struggle and racially-based capacity.⁸⁰ The text I refer to for my arguments in this thesis further emphasises the accessibility of this story of traditional femininity for wartime girl readers. It features on its cover the popular contemporary actress Katharine Hepburn as ‘Jo March’. Hepburn played Jo in the 1934 RKO film and in 1935 Angus and Robertson published this edition.⁸¹

Little Women is the tale of a year in the life of the March girls at a time when they are changing from girls to women. At the beginning of the story Meg is sixteen, Jo fifteen, Beth thirteen and Amy, ten or eleven.⁸² It traces the passage of each of the girls through situations highlighting their domestic struggle. The girls’ behaviour is firstly influenced by their ‘bosom enemies’, that is their spiritual faults. However, they ‘conquer themselves so beautifully’ as they discover their ‘better’ nature and as they are guided by their mother’s advice that they become ‘little women’.⁸³ Marmee, their mother, a good woman, both influences and adjudicates the level of success in this struggle in a close and loving relationship with each of her daughters. The domestic adventures of *Little Women* are represented as part of a hegemonic relationship of gendered struggle. The reader is continually reminded that the girls’ experiences take place in a north American town during the American civil war. This is a righteous war against the south. It is also a public, masculine competition and, as such, the pre-eminent struggle. On the first page of the first chapter the reader is told ‘[Marmee] thinks we ought not to spend money for pleasure when our men are suffering so in the army. We can’t do much, but we can make our little sacrifices and we ought to do it gladly.’

⁷⁹Foster and Simons, op cit, p 5, p 14, p 17.

⁸⁰Saxton, *Louisa May*, p 107.

⁸¹Walker, *Halliwell’s Film Guide*, p 664. See Figure 1 of this chapter.

⁸²*LW*, pp 13-15, p 201,

⁸³*LW*, p 20.

The story of the eldest daughter demonstrates the feminine experience of struggle. Meg March yearns to be part of fashionable society, a role she believes is denied her by the family's relatively impecunious condition. She sometimes falls into a discontented mood because of this lack.⁸⁴ As the house guest of a friend from a wealthy background, she experiences stylish pastimes and is feted because of her prettiness.⁸⁵ On one level, this is everything she has wished for and she is delighted. However, the event also reveals to her that for some women feminine public competition supports the pretty dresses and fashionable parties. She overhears her friend's mother suggesting that Marmee is encouraging Meg's friendships and public appearances as part of achieving public wealth and status for her daughter through an advantageous marriage. Meg is repelled by the sense that the self she is becoming increasingly conscious of as feminine should be imagined as undertaking public competition. She is also disgusted at the thought that a mother, the epitome of traditional femininity, should strive for a public 'win' in this group's idea of marriage as the outcome of a publicly conducted competition between women.⁸⁶

At home Meg discusses her concerns with her mother and is informed that her repugnance for public competition is part of the nature of a good woman. Marmee makes clear that any such public competition between women for a place in the world is a corruption of womanhood. It is not possible to both be a good woman and indulge in the autonomous, public competition Meg's wealthy friends take for granted as a support of stylish social life. Marmee also makes clear that it is good men, not good women, who compete to achieve a place in the public world. The role of the good woman is to support them in their endeavours. Marmee, the quintessential good mother, explains, not only to Meg but also to her second daughter, Jo, 'mother's lips are the fittest to speak of such things [as the meaning of femininity in marriage] to girls like you . . . I want my daughters to be beautiful, accomplished and good; to be admired, loved and respected, to have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married and to lead useful, pleasant lives with as little care and sorrow to try them as God sees fit to send. To be loved and chosen by a good man is the best and sweetest thing

⁸⁴*LW*, pp 52-53, p 122.

⁸⁵*LW*, p 122, p 124.

⁸⁶*LW*, pp 125-126.

which can happen to a woman . . . I'd rather see you poor men's wives, if you were happy, beloved, contented than queens on thrones without self-respect or peace . . . Make this home happy, so that you may be fit for [a] home of your own'.⁸⁷ Meg has been introduced to the conditions of feminine domestic struggle.

The rest of Meg's story traces her domestic struggle and her successes in giving up her desire for fashionable femininity in favour of moral femininity.⁸⁸ The narrative's closure shows her as the fiancée of a poor but good young man, John Brooke; she has taken steps towards the rewards of good womanhood.⁸⁹ The rewards of feminine domestic struggle are pictured fully through the figure of Marmee in the story's closure. *Little Women* ends with the return of the girls' convalescent father and John Brooke from 'the war'. Marmee's ideal womanhood is now represented in the light of the rewards she has 'earned'. She has her loving and respectful husband beside her. Her family is harmonious. Her daughters are set on the road to good womanhood in their turn.⁹⁰ Yet the picture is also infused with the uncertainties attaching to domestic struggle. Marmee's service is confined to the domestic sphere. She is subject to the decisions of a husband who has already 'lost his property in trying to help an unfortunate friend' and his health through insisting on going to war.⁹¹ She must still struggle against her own faults such as her bad temper and endure the insults of her husband's irascible aunt, if she wants her family to be harmonious.⁹² She understands her daughters may fail as good women.⁹³ Her husband is still not well and she knows 'how lonely and helpless we should be if anything happened to him'.⁹⁴

English Winifred Darch's 1932 novel *The Girls of Queen Elizabeth's* (*Queen Elizabeth's*) was one of several of the girls' boarding school adventure novels on the 1935 list. It was featured under the heading 'New Books' as 'new to most school libraries' and is marked with an asterisk as one of the books which should be used to form the core of a well-balanced library. Darch's work was heavily represented in

⁸⁷*LW*, pp 139-140.

⁸⁸For example, *LW*, p 218, p 257, p 296, pp 310-313.

⁸⁹*LW*, p 316.

⁹⁰*LW*, p 320.

⁹¹*LW*, p 55 and p 19.

⁹²*LW*, pp 114-115.

⁹³For example, her concerns about Amy, *LW*, pp 273-275.

⁹⁴*LW*, p 65.

departmental school libraries.⁹⁵ She was a senior English (Literature and Language) mistress at a county high school and a guide officer.⁹⁶ This profile contributed to her recognition by education authorities as a writer of modern girlhood. Frith argues that only limited public competition was represented as part of this modern femininity in the approved texts.⁹⁷ However, Darch's authorial understanding bridged the life experience of the real contemporary school girl and the purpose of public competition as part of modern feminine education.⁹⁸ Her girls' (boarding and day) school adventure stories drew on the 'ideal' of the boys' school story as a strategy for pleurably shaping British boys of all classes into public contribution to a British community.⁹⁹ However, they did not simply reflect the established masculine genre. They were part of a newer genre which foregrounded those aspects of public life which matched developing ideas of modern, British femininity.¹⁰⁰ As I have mentioned, Frith has argued that, in line with contemporary ideas of women's service, these stories imply a truncated public life and its closure in favour of marriage, the emblem of womanhood.¹⁰¹ Some of them do, but a sufficient number also either imply or represent continuing femininities incorporating a complementary relationship between domestic struggle and public competition.¹⁰² *Queen Elizabeth's* is this latter kind of school adventure.

In *Queen Elizabeth's* the concept of feminine public competition is ambiguous. The story represents public competition as part of moral womanly service in ways that are both limited and unlimited by gender. Queen Elizabeth's School (Bessie's), a fee-paying school, is steeped in British, middle-class traditions of female philanthropy as a service to the state. It shapes the girls to the management of *other* girls (and, potentially, *other* women) through the prefect system.¹⁰³ Girls' sport fits easily into

⁹⁵For example, Wollongong Girls' School register, numbers 76, 167, 195, 616.

⁹⁶Cadogan and Craig, *A New Look at Girls' Fiction From 1839-1975*, p 158.

⁹⁷Frith, 'The Time of Your Life: The Meaning of the School Story' in Steedman, Urwin, Walkerdine *Language, Gender and Childhood*.

⁹⁸Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, p 57.

⁹⁹Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p 80; McCrone, op cit, p 257.

¹⁰⁰Ray 'School Stories', in Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, London, Routledge, 1996, pp 348 ff; Auchmuty, op cit, 64 ff.

¹⁰¹Frith, op cit, pp 123 ff.

¹⁰²Auchmuty, op cit, 124-127. See Elder, "'The Question of the Unmarried'" for emerging notions of lifelong public struggle as feminine, pp 163-164.

¹⁰³*Q E*, p 8, p 18, p 94. For middle-class traditions of female philanthropy in British societies as a way to women's public leadership see Ross, 'Good and Bad Mothers', p 174; McCarthy, 'Parallel Power Structures', p 6. Both are in McCarthy, *Lady Bountiful Revisited*,

this tradition and the school is acknowledged for its prowess in girls' team games.¹⁰⁴ Bessie's girls understand the satisfying ideas of clear opposition, rules and goals leading to an immediate reward as part of being good girls. Furthermore, the story suggests that the school's major impediment to its girls preparing for the modern paid, feminine public service directing other women is its lack of the material equipment required to undertake modern, secondary examinations rather than its having ideas that domestic femininity is the only follow-up to school.¹⁰⁵ Bessie's is on the verge of closing down because, financially, it cannot meet the demands of modern education and 'efficiency'.¹⁰⁶ However, the girls' grounding in teamwork and public competition for the goal means that together they succeed in saving their school. Some of the competition leading to Bessie's salvation is unlimited by ideas of gender.

The British school story genre valorises its concepts through ideas of tradition. These traditions are tied to ideas of innate superiority as part of being biologically and ethnically British.¹⁰⁷ Darch represents the Bessie's girls' tradition of struggle as not only gendered public competition but also ungendered competition through a complex combination which makes both unassailably British. In addition to ideas of limited public competition attached to Victorian values of female philanthropy, the school's notion of struggle is also informed by ideas of public competition unlimited by gender-based considerations through its connection with Queen Elizabeth I. Bessie's was endowed as a girls' school three hundred years earlier and named in honour of the queen.¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth is recognised in this British school as the ruler of a civilised society that is the result of public victories for the natural moral superiority of Britain's ruling class.¹⁰⁹ Her role in this society is used in ways which imply the school approves the idea of unlimited competition as part of femininity.¹¹⁰ The Australian girl readers had the cultural capital to understand this connection.¹¹¹ The plot develops the idea that changing times have brought about new opponents in the game of human (class- and race-based) superiority and the strategies for winning must

¹⁰⁴ *QE*, p 22.

¹⁰⁵ *QE*, p7, pp 19-20

¹⁰⁶ *QE*, pp 19- 20.

¹⁰⁷ Bristow, op cit, pp 77-80 for boys; for girls Auchmuty, op cit, p 57.

¹⁰⁸ *QE*, p 11.

¹⁰⁹ *QE*, p 11.

¹¹⁰ See Figure 2 of this chapter. *QE*, pp 28-29.

¹¹¹ See, for example, *New South Wales Course of Instruction*, 1941, 'The Social Studies Syllabus', p 43.

be modified accordingly.¹¹² Limited public competition is now combined with the sense of unlimited competition as the girls of Bessie's, which 'had flourished for three hundred years' oppose the intentions of inspectors representing a newly-emerging state control of the school system. These latter want to normalise a 'laborious' state education for girls via the new high schools.¹¹³ Truly British women and girls are shown to have a 'natural' capacity for understanding struggle is necessary to create a moral outcome. As social conditions change British women need to struggle differently to maintain the moral British state. As natural leaders they also have the capacity to adjust the way in which it is appropriate to struggle so that they will always win.

In this school story, unlimited public competition as part of modern British femininity is unquestionably the outcome of British moral capacity. It is also clearly based on the modern ideas of team sport already experienced by the readers. Britishness as the capacity to see and struggle to create the moral world, rather than feminine Britishness, is foregrounded in a team game where the girls of Bessie's win and the school inspectors lose. The rules of limited feminine competition Bessie's girls have learned through team games and the prefect system become rules in a game where competition is unlimited by gender. One team in this 'game' consists of those forces whose goal is to close Bessie's; England's depressed and changing economy which has reduced the value of the endowment supporting the school and the Board of Education inspectors who withhold financial grant approval on the grounds that the school's standards and resources are not 'modern'.¹¹⁴ The other team is comprised of the girls of Bessie's. Their goal is to establish Queen Elizabeth's as a functioning school taking truly British traditions and standards into the modern world, ultimately contributing to re-vivifying the depressed society and so serving 'Britain'.¹¹⁵

The senior girls are made aware at the beginning of the story of the rules which will govern their win. The school must become examination efficient and then will have access to government grants. However, its traditional income has been severely reduced and this has led to reduced staff and a lack of the new education resources.

¹¹²*QE*, pp 24-25.

¹¹³*QE*, pp 26-27

¹¹⁴*QE*, pp 20-21.

¹¹⁵*QE*, pp 24-25.

Even the most naturally scholastic of the senior girls cannot bring credit to the school for she does not have access to the libraries and teaching needed to reach her full potential.¹¹⁶ Money must be found to finance the new education resources and improve examination results in the first place. The inspectors will then be forced to approve Education Board grants and the school will have further resources for modern education and further improve its examination performance.¹¹⁷ The result will be the continuation of Bessie's as a successful modern school; a victory for the girls.

From the position of underdog the girls of Bessie's act in accordance with team game rules. Under the leadership of Laurel, the school captain, they acknowledge themselves as a public group, articulate their common goal and specify those whom they must compete against to win.¹¹⁸ They look at how they should contribute publicly at an individual level.¹¹⁹ They support each other.¹²⁰ As a consequence, Judy's quick-wittedness in spotting an overlooked will leaving currently valuable property to the school and Jennifer's profound and methodical intelligence which allows her to understand the will's value solves the school's financial crisis.¹²¹ In the closure all the girls are immediately rewarded in an assembly which praises the spirit of Bessie's at the same time as announcing its continuation as a modern British school.¹²² Additionally, Jennifer, whose scholarly application unravels the will's meaning and ensures the school is able to receive financial benefit, is the recipient of a scholarship to Oxford as part of the provision of that will.¹²³ Jennifer's understanding of the will implies she is capable of functioning competitively in the world of Law. The story represents Law as a domain where public competition is unlimited by gender.¹²⁴ In the closure, Jennifer's future as a university-qualified lawyer is already being canvassed.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶ *QE*, p 9.

¹¹⁷ *QE*, pp 20-24.

¹¹⁸ *QE*, pp 29-30.

¹¹⁹ *QE*, p 43, p 44.

¹²⁰ *QE*, pp 36-37.

¹²¹ *QE*, pp 81- 83.

¹²² *QE*, pp 87-89.

¹²³ *QE*, p 92.

¹²⁴ *QE's*, pp 42-43, pp 77-78

¹²⁵ *QE's*, p 78, pp 92-93.

As background to the story of the satisfactions of public competition there is another story. This one shows how domestic struggle is satisfying not only because it generates emotional warmth but because it can also contribute to girls' public success. Judy and Jennifer are sisters and day girls at Bessie's and their home life is given a significant role in the plot. Darch uses the traditional discourse of feminine domestic struggle with one's baser self to show Judy and her older sister at home in the roles of domestic protegee and mentor. They discuss how Judy should learn to re-direct that part of her quick-wittedness which gets her into foolish escapades, instead channelling it into socially useful activities.¹²⁶ Judy attempts to be cooperative by giving up her free time to sort and cull some old legal papers belonging to the school under her sister's direction. The valuable imbrication of domestic struggle and public service is now spectacularly foregrounded. Judy's quick-wittedness in combination with her newly-avowed determination to help Bessie's in sensible ways allow her to spot the will among these papers and save it from destruction.¹²⁷

These two examples of approved elementary reading demonstrate how domestic struggle and public competition were represented for the girl readers. The two genres in combination reflected the shortcomings as well as the satisfactions of domestic struggle. They revealed the potential for complementarity between domestic struggle and limited public competition in feminine modern life. For girls who identified strongly with public success as well as domestic satisfaction, this reading offered the psycho-social space to interpret a femininity which would incorporate a truly complementary relationship between all the British ideas of struggle. Good girls could think about a satisfying feminine life which encompassed domestic struggle and public competition both limited and unlimited by gender.

Memories

Elementary school library reading resonated in complex, reflexive ways in girls' lives to encourage them to negotiate a femininity which included an ongoing, complementary relationship between domestic struggle and public competition both limited and unlimited by notions of gender. I argue that four aspects of the

¹²⁶*QE*, p 15, pp 83-84.

¹²⁷*QE*, p 89.

respondents' memories of this reading reveal how the social discourses affecting girl readers, the library practices and the texts as they have been outlined in this chapter combined to contribute to this negotiation. Firstly, in girls already shaped to desire ungendered public competition, school library reading reinforced the notion of ungendered, competitive pleasures through both texts and practices. Secondly, readers were simultaneously experiencing the pleasures of gendered public competition through other school-approved competitive leisure activities such as team games and girls' societies. Thirdly, library reading was also leisure and schoolgirl leisure needed domestic maternal approval. This was forthcoming for both reading and sport. Consequently, girl library readers, through text and practice, were shaped to appreciate the satisfying warmth which rewarded domestic struggle. They also experienced that warmth as good daughters participating in the girls' leisure of sport and membership of girls' societies. Finally, through extending the subject's skills in recognised public competition, both gendered and ungendered, and encouraging her desire to compete publicly these domestic leisure activities also positioned a girl for further success as an ungendered adolescent. Elementary school library readers had powerful reasons for negotiating a feminine identity which maintained a truly complementary relationship between the traditional idea of domestic struggle, the newer notion of limited public competition and the emerging key quality of public competition unlimited by ideas of gender suitability.

Elementary school library reading was a memorable experience for my respondents. Furthermore, it is possible to perceive in the memories that as girls many respondents felt this reading either was or should have been a pleasurable experience. Esme (5) came from a small business background and lived in Melbourne. She recalled reading books from her state elementary school library as 'special'. Lesley (70) a Victorian country schoolteacher's daughter reminisced:

Reading matter was very limited but the [Gillies'] Bequest travelling library serviced such [rural primary] schools or at least the one [I attended]. This meant that a box of about one hundred mixed books arrived every month. Many titles arrived more than once so I re-read them, sometimes several times.

Sheila (25), at a Brigidine convent in suburban Melbourne, had memories of being 'strongly encouraged [in] reading' by the nuns and of taking home library books. Elaine (2) remembered how the small private school in South Australia, which she

had attended since the age of nine, took its senior elementary girls to the Adelaide Children's Library on Friday afternoons.

Elizabeth (121) in recalling how her school 'was very active in promoting general reading, reader's choice, both at school and at home' also reflected, 'I'm a bit amazed, looking back at my adolescent reading, at its anglocentricity! [her emphasis]'. The extension of normalisation through education by this time had made this British bias part of the experience of girl library readers with access to other cultural values.

Amelia (54) recalled her Western Australian rural school library reading as part of a childhood in which the mother waiting at home did not speak English. Bernice (17), a postal officer's daughter, remembered reading her elementary school library books as 'pleasure' books in a practising Lutheran home.

The memories suggest that the pleasures of school library reading were often associated with the subject's sense of her developing expertise. Fiona (68), who described herself as an 'avid' reader, also noted English as her 'best subject'. Joy (104) saw herself as developing ideas of satisfying fiction reading quite early. This reading was the kind approved for senior elementary girls and Joy defined her development as 'becoming choosy'. Valda (137) remembered of her Tasmanian area school days:

... the occasional quiet reading time in the library. This was a very small room and only about twelve could sit around the tables. The books were arranged in three divisions. The reference part was at the bottom of either side. The right hand side was for girls *only* and the left was for boys *only*. I, however, slowly read my way through the library by using the lending system [my emphasis].

This last memory can also be interpreted to suggest that girl library readers were able to see themselves as both gendered and ungendered.

Library reading was also understood as a class activity with its concomitant quality of competitiveness, a quality that could be ungendered. Rosalie (138) recalled coeducational class lessons in how to use the library of her Tasmanian area school. Eloise (11) remembered of her elementary years in rural Western Australia, 'we had a "library" period once a week at school' and referred to classroom competition between boys and girls for favourite books during library time. Class library reading

in Richmal's (101) Sydney suburban school was recalled as the prerogative of those who finished set class work early, as it was in Fiona's memories of her Victorian school:

Each classroom at Primary had a large corner cupboard containing books, many of which had been donated, & pupils were permitted to choose a book to read if they had completed their set, say, arithmetic before the end of the lesson.

These memories suggest that girls who enjoyed school library reading as individual fulfilment could simultaneously understand themselves as 'winners' in an ungendered public community.

Library reading was sometimes recalled as a favourite text or genre. Pat (7) in South Australia has fond memories of how as the 'class bookworm' her state schools encouraged her library reading. Her 'favourite book' was a 'real tearjerker', a family story by Isabel Peacocke, *Quicksilver*. Gwenda's (12) early memories of reading while she was attending a country township school in South Australia reveal the way a girl could recognise the femininities represented in both genres:

Jean of the Fifth. (I don't think this book was widely distributed and it probably died an early death). It was a school story and I was mightily impressed by the innovative punishment that Jean's teacher inflicted on (I think) her. She had to sit in front of a clock, facing it and watch its hands going round for a stipulated time. That really is all I can remember about the story, but I do know that I thought it was really good. I was about twelve . . . [I also read] *Seven Little Australians* and other books by Ethel Turner. (I wept copiously at Judy's death [in the service of the family's youngest and most widely-beloved child] and tortured myself by reading that chapter over and over again).

Barbara (24), who attended state schools in South Australia remembered, 'I read masses of school stories . . . Can't recall any names except Angela Brazil and Talbot Baines Reed [a writer of boys' boarding school stories] and the *Dimsie* books'.

Elizabeth's (121) memories over the years she attended her reading-supportive private school included *Little Women* and *Good Wives* twice among many other girls' family story titles, and the boys' school story, *Tom Brown's School Days*. Memories of the texts support the notion that the girls could pleasurably identify simultaneously with ideas of domestic struggle, limited public competition and public competition unlimited by gender considerations.

The pleasures of school library-approved reading for some participants were associated with the satisfactions of other public, school-supported activities such as sport and girls' clubs. These too shaped girls to public competition and the desire for victory. Jean (135) recorded of her working-class school days in South Australia, 'I was a sports girl, I didn't do much reading' but 'when I was at school there was a series of books *Dimsie Goes to School* etcetera. My girlfriends and I used to give them to each other [as gifts].' Barbara (24), a keen library reader all her life, and someone who recalled both genres, remembered that she 'played hockey and tennis so I always got plenty of exercise, but [all the other] spare moments went to reading'. Middle-class Eve (67), who read adventure books enthusiastically in Victoria, was a girl guide at this time. She pointed out that she earned her Group II Proficiency badge for 'Literature' and so also won points for the patrol to which she belonged in the Guide company competition, as well as for herself. The recollections imply that the girl readers understood the public competitive pleasures of sport and girls' clubs. Furthermore, although these school-supported girls' activities offered participators public competition limited by gender, in the books they were concurrently reading, similar activities were associated with satisfying experiences of public competition unlimited by gender considerations.

The respondents remember library reading in many ways. However, they all recall it in a way that suggests that the education departments were successful in using the elementary school library system to shape girls into approved reading as part of their leisure habit. One result of this is the many memories of the disappointing paucity of school library collections. Joy (104) noted her school library was 'just a cupboard'. Fiona (68) explained of her South Australian school:

There was [in primary school] also a small room used as a library for one scheduled weekly reading period (Grades 5, 6 & 7) but often during winter when it was impossible to conduct outside sports, (no large sports stadium filled with equipment!) the library was much in demand . . . although a trifle crowded [Fiona's emphasis and ellipsis].

Marion (42) at school in Sydney's environs recalled, 'in primary the library was a box of books'. She pointed out that there were few girls' titles such as '*Little Women* and *Anne of Green Gables*, and all the others, not just *Anne*' and these were 'often handed down from the old Mechanics' Institute'. 'Those who read', Marion noted, 'had to use the books [from] both their own and friends homes'. These memories can

be interpreted as participants assuming the library-approved genres were a ‘natural’ part of girls leisure reading.

The library situation combined girls who understood these genres as their leisure reading with the schools’ inability to provide them in a satisfying quantity. Marion’s memory hints at the way girls’ sought to solve the problem. This is extended across the archive of memories to reveal that respondents were able to augment this paucity by gaining access to girls’ family stories and boarding school stories from other sources, both public and private. The genres were read from public sources such as Sunday School prizes, school prizes and through loans from their schoolteachers’ own libraries. School prizes at Eloise’s (11) Western Australian convent were books, as they were at other elementary level schools across the education sectors.¹²⁸ Betty (23), in the South Australian state system, remembered the prize books themselves as dull. However, her primary school also ‘gave prizes of free entry to the Institute Library if one could manage 1, 2 or 3 in English - term by term - I was lucky enough to latch on to these for several years and trotted off to the library after school.’ School was recalled as her source for books like *What Katy Did* and the *Girls’ Own Paper* annuals, to which she was ‘firmly addicted’.¹²⁹ The five girls of Rosalie’s (138) family in a Tasmanian timber-worker’s cottage began their own collection, based on Sunday school prizes, a collection featuring girls’ family stories and boarding school adventures almost exclusively.¹³⁰ Doris (95) attended the state school in a suburb of

¹²⁸The following are examples of this practice across both girls’ family stories and boarding school adventure novels from the researcher’s collection. Grant Bruce’s *Mates of Billabong* went to Betty Heffernan for ‘Citizenship’ in 1940, Ethel Turner’s *Little Larrikin* was Ascham’s form prize to Deirdre Gregg in 1937, *Pollyanna* by Eleanor Porter was awarded as second prize to Jean Stokes at Kiama Public School in 1935, Isabel Peacocke’s *The Guardians of Tony* went to Neta Smith for excellence in sewing in 1942, *What Katy Did at School* was awarded to Doreen Harris for collecting 7/6 for BCAS in 1942. *The Lucky Girl’s Budget* of short school stories by well-known writers in the field went to Jean Collander for good work in 5B in 1933 at Coerwull Public School, Doris Pocock’s *A Will and a Way* was the girls’ third prize in 6th Class at Boronia Park Public School in 1937, Pat Du Ve of the Convent of Notre Dame du Sien at Sale in Victoria was awarded L M Montgomery’s *Rainbow Valley* in 1932 ‘for Excellency’ [sic]. Dorothea Moore’s *Perdita, Prisoner of War*, a mix of girls’ family story and adventure, went to Margaret Sheridan at Canley Ville Ladies School in 1932 and Petersham and Apsley Grammar School awarded Nelson’s *Every Girls’ Annual* to Beryl Touth for ‘Great Improvement’ in December 1938. Dorothea Moore’s *Queens for Choice* was Kathleen Bartlett’s Church of England Sunday School prize in 1943 and her *Tam of Tiffany’s* went to Marie Crago for first year religion in 1946.

¹²⁹*Girls’ Own Paper* annuals available to readers in this era strongly emphasised feminine public competition. See for example *The Girls’ Own Paper Annual*, vol LIV (1934), London, *Girls’ Own Paper* Office.

¹³⁰The girls of this family still have this much-prized collection which contains the following books. *The Mysterious Term at Merlin’s*, JP Milne, *Emily Climbs*, L M Montgomery, *Skipper and Co*, Ethel

Sydney where the contents of the cupboard library were eked out with loans from the teacher's own collection.

Respondents' memories of overcoming the poverty of school library volumes through private sources reveal how girls obtained boarding school adventures and girls' family stories as gifts, both requested and unsolicited, and as gleanings from family bookcases. Jean's (135) memories of the boarding school adventures as preferred Christmas and birthday gifts between the girls themselves have already been recorded. Eloise's (11) parents' commemorative gifts were recalled as schoolgirl annuals. Miriam's (110) urban tradesman father built her a bookcase for books she had acquired as 'gifts at Christmas and for [her] birthdays and as prizes from school and Sunday school. This was the only bookcase in the house.' Bookcases and cupboards in the substantial farmhouse where Kit (26) grew up were filled with her aunts' girlhood collection of Alcott and Turner. Gwenda (12) read the *Katy* books from her mother's girlhood collection. School-approved library reading, these memories suggest, was also strongly approved as domestic reading.

Most respondents recall in some way that in the home girlhood was a period of training for maternal citizenship.¹³¹ Mothers encouraged reading as a way to understand the serving of others as a moral undertaking. Sheila (132), who enjoyed both the genres under discussion, was the daughter of a struggling farmer. She summed up the satisfying experience of school-approved reading which was also home-approved:

While I think about it mother did not only read to us
(Australian poets and their stories - 'The Loaded Dog' 'The
Drover's Wife' - etc. 'The Forsaken Merman' and 'The
Ancient Mariner' - I can remember and see Mother reading
some of these), she taught us how to sew, knit, iron, cook,
where to find the Seven Sisters, the Southern Cross, and
Orion's Belt in the sky and make friends with the local birds . .
. I suppose Mum gave us a taste for *good books* and so we
never got to read much trash, and she did this partly because it

Talbot, *Pam Pays her Debt*, Dora Joan Potter, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Sylvia's Secret*, Bessie Marchant, *The Omnibus for Girls*, no editor noted, *Those Summer Holidays*, Dora Joan Potter, *Rose in Bloom*, L M Alcott, *Emily's Quest*, L M Montgomery, *Dilys at Silverburn*, Kathleen L Macleod, *More About Rebecca*, Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Twins at Bougain-villa*, Laura Reeve, *Diana Takes a Chance*, Catherine Christian, *Captain Anne*, Dorita Fairlie Bruce, *The Daring of Star*, no author included.

¹³¹The readers' memories match the more broadly-based reminiscences Dyhouse draws on in Chapter One of *Girls Growing Up*. Mothers were recalled as shaping femininity through discipline and pleasure, instruction and performance.

was a great way to amuse kids. I can remember whole very wet days when she read almost all day between snacks and meals. In our case, what we read afterwards was largely influenced by, and became a projection of, what was read to us [my italics].

Schoolgirl adolescents experienced school-approved reading as home-approved reading for daughters through notions of leisure. Sheila's memories reveal reading was shown to her as rest from womanly tasks as well as a way to continue service.

Sheila's memories also reveal she understood these moments, in which it is possible to see her mother using leisure reading to guide her towards domestic womanly service, as moments of pleasurable intimacy associated with approval of leisure reading. While some girl readers experienced leisure reading as domestic approval, other memories are of a lack of this approval. Annita (65) remembered a stepmother who insisted on little and hurried reading without providing supporting warmth and intimacy and so incurred her lasting animosity. Joyce (34) experienced coldness when, as a young adolescent, she attempted to discuss with her mother an issue of sexuality from approved reading. She recalled this response as inadequate to the development of the *modern* girl. Joyce explained her mother's response as part of a 'very Victorian' moral code and noted how she was 'never encouraged to do anything [in the way of study or public life]' by this mother. These recollections of deprivation imply that girl readers thought mothers should encourage school-approved leisure reading. School-approved reading with its representations of domestic struggle and of public competition could be seen as a satisfying part of being a daughter in wartime Australia.

Some respondents clearly connected satisfying public competition, domestic struggle, warm maternal guidance, school library reading and sport, through notions of domestically-approved leisure. Joan (141), the daughter of a widow, remembers herself as an enthusiastic, domestically-encouraged reader of both girls' family stories and school stories during the years she attended higher elementary school in country Victoria. She also recalled how she was a member of a girls' non-school basketball team of eight, including the reserve, when she was thirteen or so. This team played in Saturday afternoon competitions. When they needed a treasurer to collect the weekly subscription of threepence, Joan's mother encouraged her into the position, pointing out she should overcome her shyness, for 'someone has to do it or there will be no

game'. She recalled how her mother showed her how to keep a little book with 'names, dates, subs'. Joan also learned how to achieve in the world beyond the world of girls' games as a result of being treasurer. She remembered using the money to buy oranges as refreshments if it was a home game and organising a hire car to take the team and a supervising mother to away games:

[T]he big responsibility [for a shy thirteen year old] built into my little exercise was calling on the Hire Car driver/proprietor and finding out when we had to be at his premises to allow him to get us to the destination on time. I had to make sure everyone knew and they got there on time! No room for a stuff-up! [Joan's emphasis].

Through domestic ideas of leisure, girl readers pleurably performed both domestic struggle and public competition. Moreover, girls were encouraged domestically to struggle for satisfying goals in some ungended public areas beyond the classroom. Consequently, they could be good girls and identify with all the struggles represented in approved elementary school library reading.

Pleasures associated with the idea of leisure powerfully shaped girl school library readers to negotiate a complementary relationship between domestic struggle, gender-limited competition and public competition unlimited by gender as part of youthful femininity. Elementary school library readers came to ideas of a complementary relationship between domestic struggle and public competition as satisfying femininity in ways that were at once similar and diverse, collective and individual. Yet reflexivities between the domestic and public spheres which reinforced the girls' sense that they were good girls in each link all the experiences. Two contextualised explorations of the memories of elementary school library reading as part of leisure in early adolescence chart some paths by which girls reached this interpretation of femininity. The memories are those of Joan (20) and Teresa (33).

Joan came from an employed middle-class family and went to the coeducational state primary school in her Adelaide suburb until Grade 7. She read both girls' family stories and boarding school stories in the school library and focussed on the school stories as her favourites. She singled out the girls' family story, *Seven Little Australians*, as a book she was forced to read in her last year at primary school when 'a new class library was rushed by the others and this was all that was left! [Joan's emphasis]'. Her ambiguous comments on the reasons for her dislike of the book can

be seen to reveal her unease with a story which foregrounds girls' guidance into domestic struggle as part of their development for traditional feminine service: 'My home life was nothing like that and I wanted something more escapist'. This awareness of the unsatisfying nature of domestic struggle in girls' lives is echoed in her comments on other books she read in her search for satisfying school-approved reading. She recalled, 'My girlfriend lent me her attendance prize, *Anne of Green Gables*, which I read. Although I had a stepmother and eventually became a high school teacher, I did not at the time identify with Anne and preferred more exciting stories'.¹³² Joan's memories suggest she had a strong idea of herself as an ungendered winner in the public world. Attempts by the public education system to shape her into domestic femininity as part of the dual notion of British Australian feminine service (domestic and limited public work) appear to have been seen as irrelevant and irritating. 'I was awarded *Sun Chased Shadows*', she noted, 'for coming dux of the school in Grade Seven when I was nearly twelve. It was a dull story about a blind girl finding romance'.

Joan's memories suggest that her experience of school-approved reading as domestic leisure was encouraging her to identify with complementary ideas of domestic struggle and public competition. Unlike school, the domestic system did this with considerable success. Furthermore, this reading not only maintained ideas of gendered public competition it supported the ungendered notions of winning she had experienced so pleasurably in the school classroom. Joan was seen as a good girl at home and it is clear that part of the reason for this was her parents' pride in her school 'wins'. Books are recalled in ways that suggest she understood them as tied to parental recognition and approval of her girlhood public achievements. 'Most of my [gift] books were comic annuals or stories of girls in English boarding schools', she noted. She continued, 'Dad gave my brother, Brian, a Biggles book, and me *Worrals on the Warpath*, Worrals being the female equivalent of Biggles'.¹³³

¹³² Anne Shirley, the heroine of *AGG* wants to become a secondary teacher and earns a scholarship to qualify as one. However, in the story's closure she decides to relinquish the scholarship and teach at a local elementary school in order to take care of her ageing foster-mother. This is represented as the 'narrow path' with 'flowers of quiet happiness', LM Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1935, p 322.

¹³³ Both these characters lead lives of successful public adventure. See for example, *Worrals Goes East: A Worrals of the WAAF Story*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1950, first published in 1944. Blurb extracts from the *Daily Mail* review characterise her as '“Worrals”, a woman of wit, courage and resource, a worthy sister to Biggles'. Copy in the researcher's collection

Joan was encouraged domestically to become confident with the reference and information texts, ungendered texts which were officially desirable but frequently missing from school libraries. Her memories of some of these indicated that as their reader she saw herself as someone with a competitive place in the public world. Her father:

borrowed from someone Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, which I read with great interest, although I doubt if I achieved much success in applying it! He also borrowed for me *The Ridge Memory Course* an expensive set of about ten volumes in a box, which was a genuine method of teaching you how to remember things by association, all of which I read, and some of its principles were of real use to me.

Joan also remembered other approved activities which add to the historian's interpretation that domestic leisure contributed to her ideas of herself as a public competitor. Both Joan's parents supported her Girl Guiding activities, including her independently conducted wartime salvage program as part of this organisation. Salvage was one of the less-gendered homefront programs.¹³⁴

Additionally, Joan's memories of domestic leisure reading revealed how her stepmother, with a light hand, helped her into an understanding of the feminine roles in sex and gender relationships which, unlike the girls' family stories, did not overwhelm her sense of public independence. She recalled:

My knowledge of sex was almost nil, so Mother gave me *How Green Was My Valley* by Richard Llewellyn, which was written in a very charming Welsh way. This gave me a very elementary version. A cinema in Adelaide was showing a film about sex and reproduction, and Mother took me to that. A book was being sold which she bought for me (for a shilling, I think) and that gave me sufficient detail.

In this same atmosphere of domestic warmth associated with being feminine she learned to set aside her own interest in public winning and serve the interests of others. In doing this she also honed those skills which made her a winner in her coeducational classroom. She included the following among her memories of satisfying youthful leisure reading:

Aunty Floss also lent me *Green Light* by Lloyd O Douglas . . . which I enjoyed very much. *Green Light* I read aloud to Mother, Aunty Floss and their mother while they cracked

¹³⁴For salvage programs in schools see Spaul, op cit, p 58. In society see Willis, *The Women's Voluntary Services*, p 283, pp 293 ff.

almonds - lots of [sic], with hammers, for sale, as they had about ten almond trees.

Joan's memories suggest that reflexivities between school and home meant that elementary school library reading provided space for extensive ideas of public competition co-existing with traditional feminine struggle as part of the identity of the good girl.

Teresa came from a working-class, Catholic family in a thriving provincial town in New South Wales. She attended a Catholic boarding convent as a junior day girl and remembered herself as always having been a successful student. 'I was asked [by school authorities] to do the Leaving', she remembered of her final year, 'but between some sickness and a boyfriend, I was not really interested'. She dismissed the school library as 'full of classics' and recalled boarding school stories as her favourite leisure reading.¹³⁵ 'I used to read a lot of school stories', she acknowledged. She drew for most of these stories on sources other than the school library. Like Joan's reading, they were domestic rewards, 'birthday presents, both [the] books and [girls] annuals'. She clearly valued them noting, 'I still have a lot down the back [in my storage shed]'. Teresa also added, 'I always wanted to be one of those girls'. Of course, in one sense she was a 'boarding school girl'. However, the religious foundation of Catholic school life meant it emphasised maternal citizenship and domestic struggle as the qualities to which girls should ultimately aspire.¹³⁶ Teresa's wistful comment can be understood as expressing both her recognition of the satisfactions of feminine public competition in the boarding school stories and her awareness that such femininity could never be unequivocally a part of her own school life.¹³⁷

Teresa's memories reveal that, despite her school's focus on a traditional girlhood, she had experienced public competition as satisfying femininity through several leisure activities other than reading. Some of this was gendered. She noted briefly, 'I played sport, a netball team, and my out-of-school hours were taken up [practising and playing]'. Another of these activities was clearly even more important to her. It

¹³⁵ Archived books from this time in Teresa's school library and library notes reveal girls' family stories, lives of the saints and reference books for public exams.

¹³⁶ Trimingham Jack, *Growing Good Catholic Girls*, p xi, p 21.

¹³⁷ The strong British evangelical tradition implicit in girls' boarding school adventures ensured the otherness of their represented femininities for Teresa, even while she had some experience which allowed her to identify with these girls. See Burley, *None More Anonymous?* pp 154-155.

was recalled at great length. This activity touched on ungendered competition. It was dancing as part of a dancing school troupe. Here the performers were both boys and girls, although there were more girls. She recalled they were chosen competitively by the school to feature in its public performances. Her memories also imply that Teresa also understood these performances as a contribution to Australia's great public competition of this time, the war itself. She noted, 'during the war we entertained the troops'. The representations of satisfying feminine competition in the boarding school books made stories in this genre a fulfilment for Teresa who had herself experienced some of the pleasures of public competition. Furthermore, as Teresa continued reading this genre enthusiastically she developed her skills in understanding and absorbing ideas. In turn, these skills supported her into those positions of public winning which were part of every school classroom.

However, this summary of the reflexivities between school and home in tracing the connection between approved reading and public competition as a quality of youthful femininity is incomplete without factoring in Teresa's experience of domestic struggle. It is clear that she, like Joan, was seen domestically as a good girl. Her troupe dancing, which encouraged her satisfaction in public competition, was remembered in ways that indicate it was the outcome of strong domestic support. The troupe also figured largely in Teresa's memories in ways that revealed how it shaped her into understanding shifts between domestic and public struggle as part of the good woman's life. She recalled how she and her sister had been supported through the home in this activity by a reading mother of whom Teresa said, 'I never knew my mother was a reader until I grew up. She always seemed too busy'. Teresa also emphasised the support and praise the sisters gave each other in this activity, particularly in her comments on how she felt about her sister's capacity. 'Lola was terrific', she remembered. The wartime program Teresa had kept of one of their performances was one on which both the girls' names featured prominently.¹³⁸

Wartime elementary school library reading gave girls powerful reasons for extending their investment in public competition as far as was compatible with social ideas of being 'good'. Readers were already being shaped into the concept of

¹³⁸Copy in researcher's collection. Teresa drew the researcher's attention to the inclusion of her sister's name as well as her own.

domestic struggle against one's baser self as part of femininity. However, they also lived in a period when notions of health and leisure came together so that, for girls, public winning was represented as both a gendered and an ungendered pleasure by the education system which was publicly regulating them into womanhood.

Contemporary notions of health and leisure also ensured that both gendered and ungendered competition appeared to be feminine pleasures endorsed by the domestic relationship which guided girls' feminine development through maternal warmth.

Girls could experience the stories in their library-approved books as representations of the way unlimited public competition as well as limited public competition and domestic struggle were all qualities of a truly satisfying youthful femininity.

Chapter Four: Secondary School Examination Reading and Feminine Service as Leaders and Followers

Introduction

In 1939, more Australian girls than ever had access to secondary education.¹ A consequence of this development was the potential for changes in the relationship between Australian girls and Australian society. These next two chapters deal with the way secondary school reading gave girls the opportunity to negotiate more satisfying ideas of femininity. This chapter focuses on prescribed, examined classroom reading and the public system's effect on girls as it sought to shape them into newer ideas of womanhood. Chapter Five focuses on the girls' self-chosen reading in the school library. Because the memories deal with the senior years of girlhood there is more of a sense of change, in both the expected change from a girl to a woman and change into the new kinds of womanhood the public regulatory systems were fostering at this time. Again, the reciprocal influence of the public systems and the domestic relationship on ideas of girlhood affected the way girls interpreted femininity.

I argue in this chapter that the girls' experience of this secondary school reading, within the context of global and national discourses and wartime Australia, gave them the space to negotiate the key quality of capacity for successful service at every standard of the British socio-political hierarchy as part of approved youthful femininity. Girls recognised that, as well as followers, women could be leaders making autonomous public judgments.

I have allowed latitude in interpreting the term 'secondary education'. This reflects both the way the term was used officially and in the memories of the participants. Post-primary education in Australia took different forms: higher elementary schools, vocationally-oriented technical and domestic schools and academically-oriented high schools with a focus on university entry.² Age on entry to secondary education also varied from state to state as did the length of secondary education.³ However, across

¹Craig Campbell, 'Secondary Schooling, Modern Adolescence and the Reconstitution of the Middle Class', *History of Education Review*, vol 24, no 1, 1995.

²Bessant, 'The Emergence of State Secondary Education' in J Cleverley and J Lawry, *Australian Education in the Twentieth Century*, p 131, pp 133-134, p 130.

³Cunningham, McIntyre, Radford, *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, pp 33-93.

all states there were two standards of secondary education based on years attended: a lower standard and a higher standard, the latter usually offering entry to tertiary education. Participants' recollections reflect this diversity, but all completed the lower level and a select few the higher level. Although the subjects offered in the secondary courses varied, there were a few common subjects. English Literature was one of these.⁴

I have used the term *standards* to discuss both school leaving levels and an individual's consequent citizen service through paid employment, for these were clearly understood by both authorities and girls as linked. For example, a girl achieving the junior school leaving examination standard was seen as one who could potentially serve society at a lower standard in a paid, public capacity by following the direction of others as a lower grade clerical worker. A girl achieving the higher examination standard was seen as someone who could potentially serve at a higher standard by directing future citizens as a primary school teacher.⁵ This notion of standards emphasises the individual level of recognised attainment that allowed a girl to belong to a particular social collectivity while implying her collectivity exists in a hierarchical relationship with other social collectivities.

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, public regulation was being extended because it was a channel for ideas supporting the developing global discourse of capitalism. Patriarchal interests strove to mediate the ideas channelled through public regulation in relation to gender in order to maintain masculine dominance. These stresses on the dominant interests were experienced by some Australian girls as secondary school students being shaped into femininity through the national discourses of Britishness and citizenship. Ideas of Britishness and citizenship at this time legitimated the British construction of Australia as a capitalist state through the notion of the universally-acknowledged civilised state.⁶ European Australia was understood by its dominant institutions as a civilised state. The British concept of public morality and hierarchy as essential to civilisation was the basis of

⁴New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 August 1938, pp 223-225. For a brief survey of all states, see Cunningham, McIntyre, Radford, *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, pp 33-93.

⁵See 'Courses Beyond Primary', New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 August, 1941, p 208. This regulation is framed to ensure teachers, the parents of girls and girls understand the link.

⁶Dale traces the emergence of this concept in Australia in the mid-nineteenth century and its progress to the late interwar years, pp 14-15, pp 83-86.

the interwar Australian idea of the civilised state.⁷ Authorities sought to shape a nation with a similar socio-political organisation to that which was contemporaneously valued in Britain; a hierarchy of two broad standards of willing citizen service, leading and following. Leaders served the state through judging what was best for it and directing the implementation of their judgment as they were understood as having a greater capacity for moral judgment. Followers supported the leaders' judgment. There was a further hierarchical division in the leaders category. Senior leaders had the greatest autonomy in judging and directing society because they were recognised as having a greater moral understanding than junior leaders. Junior leaders made their judgments under the umbrella of senior guidance.⁸ Yet moral Britishness was also a colonising discourse involving race, class and gender. The British masculine struggle for justice discussed in Chapter Three was cast here as 'the Just Rule' producing civilisation.⁹

The key to girl secondary readers negotiating the capacity for performance at every standard of the British socio-political hierarchy as a feminine quality was the idea that the examination subject English Literature was the gateway to understanding and participating in the citizen life of a civilised state. In the interwar years the secondary education system deployed English Literature to ensure hierarchical Britishness was widely understood as synonymous with universal morality, a quality explicated as truth, beauty and righteousness.¹⁰ In secondary school English Literature leaders' judgments on truth, beauty and righteousness were represented as leading to the just nation through united hierarchical service.¹¹ In line with the class, ethnicity and gender based limits on participation in the civilised state, approved stories depicted

⁷White, 'A Backwater Awash', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol 1, no 3, 1983, pp 112-113. Dale, *ibid*.

⁸Doyle, *English and Englishness*, pp 18-19; White, 'A Backwater Awash', *ibid*.

⁹MacKenzie, *op cit*, pp 203-204.

¹⁰Doyle, *op cit*, p 49.

¹¹Studies by Bristow and Mackenzie draw on the notion of Britishness as imperialism to show how literature was a technology for this hierarchy. Mackenzie demonstrates how in this way it harmonised class, race and gender interests (*Propaganda and Empire*, pp 2- 3, p 10, pp 215-218. Bristow, *class and race (Empire Boys*, p 19, p 96, p 175). Mathieson's explication of the Newbolt Report in *Preachers of Culture* makes clear the report's view that English Literature, if implemented, would effect this situation (pp 72-80). See also the Newbolt Report itself on the effect of Literature on life, p336. It was implemented and did so; see Doyle, *op cit*, 39, p 45, p 48. See also *The Newbolt Report*, pp 149-152. Seitz, 'Curricula of Secondary Schools' in Cole, *The Education of the Adolescent in Australia*, pp 162-163 for the continuing power in Australia of the Newbolt Report's recommendations of English Literature studies, especially at the lower standard.

white middle-class men as leaders of civilisation.¹² However, the subject ‘Literature’ was represented in such a way as to appear to promise the reader that the standard she attained here would give her entrée to a place at any one of *all* the levels of participation in the life of the British state. The British Australian state’s dominant institutions were represented in the education system as the most recent outcome of a *racial* capacity for recognising universal, moral values linking back to the ‘ancient civilisations’ of Greece and Rome.¹³ One of the most significant issues connecting British Australia to the idea of eternal civilisation was the idea of willing, hierarchical service from every citizen to this lawful state.¹⁴ English Literature was an important technology for shaping subjects into this discourse. It not only valorised the hierarchical structure as the outcome of a universal morality, it also shaped readers into performing as part of this moral hierarchy. Reading English Literature was a process of having one’s capacity for some moral perception as an heir of the British acknowledged and then being formally assessed for the hierarchical standard to which one’s moral capacity had been developed.

In the section on social discourses affecting girl readers, this chapter demonstrates that in the wartime years global and national discourses were in the midst of changes that laid the foundation for secondary school girls to negotiate an idea of womanhood which included performance at all levels of citizen service. Some junior leadership service as well as public service as a follower was beginning to be recognised as feminine. Modern developments had resulted in girls experiencing a world where secondary education standards were the foundation of the hierarchical level at which women would serve as citizens. However, the practice of making secondary school reading part of the higher standard English Literature examinations without differentiating between levels of leadership meant that the girls were disciplined into understanding Australian women could serve as followers and as both junior *and* *senior* leaders. The English Literature texts told all secondary readers stories of the importance of the British moral hierarchy in maintaining civilisation in ways which matched the readers’ experience of their role in that subject’s classroom practices. The texts also represented the development of senior leaders in a way which matched

¹²Mackenzie, op cit, p 207; Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p 172.

¹³Reynolds, ‘Citizenship and Geography Education’ in Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, *Childhood, Citizenship, Culture*, p 578; Dale, op cit, p86.

¹⁴Dale, op cit, p 86, Reynolds, *ibid*.

higher examination candidates' experience of secondary classroom reading practices. Reading practices and texts could be experienced by girls at both the secondary standards as ungendered.

The memories reveal how, in complex ways the foregoing aspects of secondary examination reading gave girls space to understand that womanhood meant the occupation of any of the range of service positions in the civilised state. Between them, two case studies highlight the ways readers came to imagine a satisfying Australian femininity which could follow the judgment of others, could be guided in making and implementing judgments, and which could also make autonomous judgments.

Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers

Girl readers could not change in one movement from imagining the feminine contribution to citizenship as supportive of the masculine public role to imagining social approval for women serving at either of the two main standards of public citizenship. However, by 1939 the relationship between the global and national discourses had already created several social conditions which contributed to this change. In the first place, feminine public citizenship had been normalised. Additionally, secondary education was preparing a greater percentage of girls for public citizenship. Furthermore, the progress of the war meant that there was intensified pressure to deploy women as public citizens.

By 1939 notions of women as public citizens not only competed with the traditional British ideas of feminine citizenship as supportive of masculine citizenship, they also included the idea of women functioning as junior leaders. The development of the capitalist economy was significant here. The capitalist system had reached a point where its infrastructure was sufficient to allow capitalist interests to consider a shift in focus to include distribution and consumption of products as well as production. This expansion resulted in women being widely employed in mechanised

production and the service industries.¹⁵ Women emerged as junior leaders because of the expansion of the techniques of normalisation through regulatory systems. These systems were an essential support of capitalist expansion.¹⁶ As the traditional areas of women, the family and domesticity, were progressively publicly regulated, their gendered aspect was maintained by employing women in junior regulating roles, such as teachers in departments administered by male public service officers.¹⁷ At the same time patriarchal attitudes ensured that women's public citizenship roles could only be imagined as those of junior leaders and in programs associated with women and children and of followers.¹⁸

The basic concept of the civilised citizen as contributing willing, hierarchical public service to the state was represented as absolute in the discourse of Britishness. However, the service itself was mediated by pressures experienced by the capitalist system and patriarchal interests and so was open to change. Changes in the required service had indirectly led to Australian wartime girls recognising a relationship between a girl's secondary school leaving standard and the standard of citizen service contributed by her as a woman. By 1939 socio-economic change and international tension had meant that leaders of British Australia wanted a broad population of citizens who would work as part of a technologically complex society. Furthermore, the allied nations believed that democracy was the political concept which differentiated them from the fascist bloc. These notions of western modernity meant that contemporary citizens should understand not only that the kind and level of service they were contributing was the result of free choice, they should also see it as important to maintain that freedom.¹⁹ This complex idea of the citizen necessitated complex shaping of the population. Authorities in this capitalist state sought to

¹⁵Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, pp 175-176. In Australia specifically, Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, p 60, pp 92-98; Elder, ' "The Question of the Unmarried"', *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 18, Summer, 1993, p 154, p 158.

¹⁶Rabinow, *A Foucault Reader*, pp 17-18.

¹⁷Encel, Mackenzie and Tebbutt, *Women and Society: An Australian Study*, pp 144-145.

¹⁸Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, pp 185-187; Elder, ' "The Question of the Unmarried"', pp 158-159; Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p 191.

¹⁹For the notion of democracy and fascism as the basis of differentiation in British society see Tinkler, 'At Your Service' in *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol 1, part 3, 1997, pp 354-355. For the idea that the individual contribution of each Australian citizen is necessary to preserve democracy see Cunningham and Pratt, *Review of Education in Australia*, 1939, p 22. Tate discusses the need for both technological capacity and democratic contribution from Australian citizens in 'Problems of Administration' in Cole, *The Education of the Adolescent in Australia*, pp 17-18 and throughout this chapter.

implement their goals through the wider deployment of secondary education.²⁰

Therefore, an increasing percentage of Australia's youthful population was becoming part of the secondary system.²¹

The standardisation of leaving certificate qualifications meant that there was a relationship between levels of education and types of employment. Therefore, there was also a relationship between the standard of education and the standard of citizen service. Girls understood this relationship.²² The employment value of the public examination system ensured that Catholic and private systems also subscribed to this idea of standardised secondary education.²³ An individual's standard was represented by her state-awarded school leaving certificate and this was achieved through public examination. The lower of the two leaving standards, achieved after approximately three years in the secondary system, prepared the successful candidate to enter vocational training and/or for a subordinated position in the paid work force.²⁴ Girls leaving with the lower standard were expected to finish with paid work after a short time and become modern maternal citizens.²⁵ Alternatively, successful completion of the lower standard allowed progression to the higher standard. A higher leaving standard opened the way to careers in judging and directing civilised society.²⁶ The close relationship between higher leaving levels and the new kinds of feminine employment as junior leaders in the helping professions, such as those associated with infant and child welfare, meant some girls were educated to the higher leaving standard.²⁷ Furthermore, the employment of some women as secondary teachers

²⁰Tate, *ibid*; Bessant, 'The Emergence of State Secondary Education' in Cleverley and Lawry, *Australian Education in the Twentieth Century*, p 140; Hollbrook, 'Apathetic Parents and Wilful Children?' in Theobald and Selleck, *Family School and State in Australian History*.

²¹Craig Campbell, *op cit*, p 69; Blackmore, 'Curriculum Assessment and Certification', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1991, pp 11-12; Bessant, 'The Emergence of State Secondary Education'.

²²Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, pp 32-94; Blackmore, *op cit*, pp 18-19.

²³Corrigan, 'The Achievements of the Catholic People of Australia in the Field of Education', *Australian Catholic Education Congress*, 1936, p 290; Lambert, *A Suburban Girl*, p 52; Burrows, *History of Abbotsleigh*, p 79.

²⁴Cunningham, et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, *op cit*. pp 32-94.

²⁵Elder, 'The Question of the Unmarried', pp 159-160.

²⁶Bessant, 'The Emergence of State Secondary Education' *op cit*, pp 135-137. See p 90 in Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, for a reference to the Tasmanian system. This review also reveals separately how each of the other states has similar goals for senior completion.

²⁷Kingston, *op cit*, p 75; Encel, MacKenzie and Tebbutt, *Women and Society: An Australian Study*, Chapter Eight; New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 August, 1938, pp 224-225.

ensured that girls would experience women in leadership positions while they themselves were performing as followers.²⁸

Authorities' ideas of the universalism of civilised citizenship also led to girls having some understanding of secondary school standards as the basis of ungendered hierarchical service. Secondary-educated girls experienced a system in which males and females could be examined in the same subjects at the highest school standard.²⁹ Completion of this standard was often represented in such a way it could seem to school girls that girls *and* boys who achieved it had equal access to tertiary education and further leadership qualifications.³⁰ In schools, employment resulting from the completion of the higher standard was represented as positions of both gendered and ungendered leadership.³¹

The wartime situation reinforced ideas of women as public citizens. Traditionally, war was seen as a time when women supported men in different ways from peacetime.³² After September 1939 both voluntary and paid public work could be represented as women's wartime service contribution. This allowed women's public work to be approved by even the most conservative social elements. For example, through the Women's National Voluntary Register traditional feminine notions of women's voluntary service supporting the troops in the field underpinned the extension of ideas of respectable women as paid public citizens. Skills such as military driving and signalling were once seen as unwomanly. However, their performance by women could release men for active military service. The Australian government responded to the threat from Japan by increasing the percentage of male Australians on active military service. Consequently, after late 1941 women who were

²⁸ Annable, *Biographical Register: The Women's College Within the University of Sydney, 1892-1939*, pp 261-264; Matthews, 'Education for Femininity', *Labour History*, (45), 1983, p 35.

²⁹ Matthews, *op cit*, p 33; see also departmental instructions to parents on the purpose of high schools such as those in the New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 August, 1941, p 208.

³⁰ New South Wales *Education Gazette*, *ibid*; Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, see for each state under the heading 'Examinations in . . .', pp 32-94; Corrigan, 'The Achievements of the Catholic People of Australia in the Field of Education', *Catholic Education Congress*, pp 289-293.

³¹ For an example of gendered leadership representation see the instructions to teachers on what to tell pupils and parents about the purpose of the post-primary schools with reference to boys as potential candidates for the senior public service and technical staff and girls as future teachers' college trained domestic science and needlework teachers, New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 August, 1941, pp 208-209. For an example of the representation of ungendered leadership, see the same article as above with reference to entry to university as preparation for teaching or 'a profession'.

³² Higonnet and Higonnet, 'The Double Helix' in Higonnet, Jenson, Michel, Collins Weitz, *'Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, p 35.

registered with these skills were progressively recruited into paid positions in the women's auxiliary military services.³³ Government encouragement and the Manpower regulations also acknowledged women as occupants of civilian positions hitherto seen as masculine, in order to maintain the home front and directly support the war effort.³⁴

Some of these positions involved feminine junior leadership. The wartime celebration of women's citizen service was therefore also a celebration of women as leaders as well as followers. The mass media had already reflected young women as public workers.³⁵ Wartime media images of women in this patriarchal society emphasised hierarchical feminine positions as part of the nation's movement towards victory without necessarily foregrounding the junior nature of women's leadership. For example, women in voluntary work were depicted as leaders of other women *and* as leaders of contributing citizens.³⁶ Women officers were understood as responsible for women rankers *and* for military service contingents.³⁷ Women supervised other women under the Manpower regulations.³⁸ However, this last relationship could also be cast as women's supervision of war workers. Young women friends and sisters of wartime secondary girls were part of these experiences.³⁹

Girls who were reading as part of the secondary school examination system in the second world war were experiencing a world in which leadership positions were understood as the result of achieving the higher education standards. They also experienced a world which celebrated some women leaders as significant contributors to the maintenance of the civilised nation. One consequence of this situation was that while senior leadership was provided by men, it was possible for girls to overlook the further hierarchical division in the standard of leadership. Girls could simply imagine women serving as leaders and as followers in maintaining civilisation. Furthermore, these activities led to public approval. These were the pre-conditions for girl

³³ Oppenheimer, *All Work and No Pay*, p 107, p 128.

³⁴ Darian Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-1945*, pp 56-58. Oppenheimer, *op cit*, pp 130-131.

³⁵ Lake, 'Female Desires', *Australian Historical Studies*, 1990, 24 (95).

³⁶ Oppenheimer, *op cit*, pp 184-185.

³⁷ See for example the paramount illustration on the front page of the *South Australian Truth*, 12 September, 1942.

³⁸ Bayne, *Australian Women at War*, p 27, p 39; illustrations in Reekie, 'Shunted Back to the Kitchen? Women's Responses to War Work and Demobilization' in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, p77.

³⁹ Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p 59.

secondary readers' interpretation of the complete range of both leadership and follower positions as part of femininity.

Practices

Three practices of secondary school reading contributed to girls negotiating a femininity which included the complete range of leader and follower positions. English Literature was a central experience of their education. Furthermore, it told stories of the British as the racial inheritors of civilised perception. It also shaped school readers into a view of themselves as naturally civilised because they could understand and behave in accordance with the universal (British, masculine) principles of civilisation.

Firstly, English Literature was the core of secondary school reading. It had become a central experience of British secondary school education because of its truth/knowledge position supporting dominant British values. By the first decades of the twentieth century English Literature was central because it legitimised ideas of British imperialism and its social outcomes. It did this through authorising approved ways of reading canonical texts.⁴⁰ In a British education system English Literature was a subject in which students were simultaneously shaped to recognise rightness in social images of British values and to perform those values at one of the approved standards of service.⁴¹ Secondary schools' rationale as the training ground for all lower standard citizens and as the place of preparation for leaders' further training ensured that English Literature was strongly featured.⁴² Girls were likely to experience the subject as compulsory and as occupying a large percentage of the secondary school timetable.⁴³

⁴⁰Dale, op cit, p 46-47, p 49-50.

⁴¹Dale, op cit, p 49-50; Secondary school English syllabuses outlined in the university public examination manuals, for example, *University of Queensland Manual of Public Examinations for the Years 1939-1940*, Brisbane, Government Printer, 1939, pp 26-27 and pp 75-77. 'Syllabus in English', *New South Wales Secondary Curriculum Course of Study for High Schools*, New South Wales Department of Education, Sydney, Government Printer, 1944, pp 3-4.

⁴²Bessant, 'The Emergence of State Secondary Education', pp 135-136; Dale, op cit, p 47-49. For contemporary evidence of pre-eminence see also Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, pp 37-93 and J A Seitz, 'Types of Curricula of Secondary Schools' in Cole, *The Education of the Australian Adolescent in Australia*.

⁴³Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, p 38, pp 50-51, p 65, p74, p 76, p 84, p 93; For Queensland Matriculation subjects see Seitz, 'Types of Curricula of Secondary Schools' in Cole, op cit, p 112. This chapter also includes subject time allotments, pp 134-162.

Secondly, English Literature legitimised British values by developing an approved reading which connected the notion of the reader's innate capacity for morality with the idea that this morality could be developed and then used to maintain civilisation through the citizen's (hierarchical) service to the state. This happened through the relationship between secondary education and English Literature. Secondary education was represented as normal for those capable of British race- and class-based moral development.⁴⁴ Authorities sought to develop this moral capacity through the central experience of English Literature. This secondary school subject showed morality to readers as some innate capacity to perceive British values as good by appreciating them as aesthetic.⁴⁵ English Literature was reading designed to produce an individual who 'naturally' connected reading the authorities approved of as aesthetic with the notion that the social implementation of the ideas it contained would result in civilisation.⁴⁶ The extent to which the reader could recognise this connection was a useful standard for indicating her value to the hierarchy of the British social state. Consequently, publicly recognised assessment of a student's expertise in English Literature was used to indicate an individual's useful standard of citizen service through paid work. Through the secondary public examination system English Literature had a paramount position in the selection of those girls who would leave with the lower standard and take up paid positions as followers and those who after further education would be paid for service as leaders. Additionally, any higher standard candidate who demonstrated clear mastery of English Literature could further develop her capacity for leadership through entry to the next level of education.⁴⁷

Finally, there were the technologies; prescribed texts, prescribed ways of reading and examinations. These were all exercised in an ungendered way on girl readers. In

⁴⁴Cunningham et al, *Review of Education, 1938*, pp 174-177; Blackmore, 'Curriculum, Assessment and Certification', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1991, Scott and Evans, 'The Moulding of Menials', *Hecate*, vol XXIII, no I, 1996, p 141.

⁴⁵Doyle, op cit, p12 and pp 27-28; Margaret Mathieson, *Preachers of Culture: a Study of English and Its Teachers*, pp 37-38.

⁴⁶Dale, op cit, p 3-4; Doyle, op cit, p 49, pp 87-88.

⁴⁷The centrality of English in the public exams has already been demonstrated. Both teachers and students understood the possibility of further education in association with exams. For example, in New South Wales the *Gazette* published information for teachers to give to all final year primary school pupils and some parents on what kinds of employment the public examination standards led to. See *Education Gazette*, 1 August, 1941, pp 208-209.

this period of popular literacy, education authorities recognised that only a narrow sector of available reading material fulfilled the requirements of English Literature.⁴⁸ In order to ensure that all readers had access to the same ideas of aesthetic and moral standards they issued lists of texts nominated as secondary school English Literature reading.⁴⁹ As I argued in Chapter Two, girls in the education system were being shaped into a notion of ungendered citizenship which in reality drew for its values on the masculine experience. In line with departmental policies of ungendered education, apparently ungendered lists of prescribed English Literature texts were issued for lower and higher standards.⁵⁰ However, the uppermost reaches of judgment and direction in education were a masculine domain.⁵¹ Therefore, the lists were informed by these hierarchies' ideas of Literature as training for autonomous judgment as well as guided judgment and as following others' judgment. Consequently, the texts supported the gender, race and class values of masculinist and English imperial society across the full range of service for followers and for leaders.⁵² The texts at both standards were represented as being in the tradition of 'great literature'; true to life, a pleasure to read and valorising natural morality.⁵³ Girl readers attending secondary schools were simultaneously being gendered. They were encouraged to see

⁴⁸See Bristow, op cit, for the emergence of British concern over appropriate youthful masculine reading, especially p 19. Later reflections of this concern inform the *Newbolt Report* of 1921, see for example, p 339, p 252 and pp 149-152.

⁴⁹The lists can be found in contemporary departmental gazettes, some of the syllabuses and the university public examination manuals.

⁵⁰For the nuances in the so-called universal adolescent as the product of Australian secondary education see Johnson, *The Modern Girl*, pp 8-9; Matthews, op cit, p 33. For the power of this idea of ungendered reading and for a clear indication that the 'universal' citizen experience is based on masculine experience see the conclusions Jenkinson and Scott draw from their contemporary surveys of reading. A J Jenkinson, *What Do Boys and Girls Read?*, pp 179-180; W J Scott, *Reading Film and Radio Tastes of High Schools Boys and Girls*, p 194.

⁵¹In this case the authorities involved state departments of education and autonomous universities. Using Queensland as a specific example, see Queensland University *Manual of Public Examinations for the Years 1940-1941*, p 5; Dale p 61. For masculine composition of authoritative boards see Dale, op cit, pp 4-5 and then throughout for its application to Australian universities of the interwar and wartime era. The officers in the higher reaches of the state education departments were public servants and products of these departments' gender-discriminating rules. See Encel, MacKenzie, Tebbutt, op cit pp 144-145.

⁵²Doyle, op cit, p 46; Dale, op cit, p 1-4.

⁵³Doyle, op cit, p 46. In contemporary Australia, Cowling, *The Use of English*, pp 101-103 for the higher standard and Mackaness and Lenehan, *A Handbook of Intermediate English for the Year 1932*, p 71, p 159 for the lower standard. Both Cowling and Mackaness were influential forces on secondary school reading. Cowling was the Professor of English Literature at the University of Melbourne and his book was on the Queensland senior public examination course. Mackaness was also the New South Wales Intermediate examiner (see New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 June, 1943, p 152) and lectured in the Principles and Methods of Teaching in English at Sydney University.

themselves as women in training.⁵⁴ Therefore, girls could imagine they were being told stories of the place of femininity at all levels of citizen service to the just state.

The British Australian education authorities sought to ensure secondary readers were shaped as followers or leaders by developing not only lists of what should be read but uniform lessons on the way to read.⁵⁵ The combination of lessons graded to produce either followers or leaders, the British universal orientation of the lessons and the emphasis on ‘feeling’ as the basis for reading satisfaction contributed to girls interpreting all leader and follower roles as part of femininity. The authorities’ concerns had resulted in centralised syllabuses, similar levels of teacher training, and authoritative comments on the way texts should be understood.⁵⁶ This apparatus, too, commonly reflected the universal, ungendered (British masculine) experience of citizenship. The lessons were designed to shape all readers into the idea that their natural moral perception was reflected in their feelings of satisfaction over a story received as ‘beautiful’ and as ‘true’.⁵⁷ However, the lower standard readers were reminded that their own perception was limited. These readers were rewarded for completing exercises in which they trusted the judgment of leaders in expanding their ideas of the texts’ beauty, truths and representations of goodness.⁵⁸ The higher standard readers were shaped to consider they had some expertise and encouraged to exercise their own judgment.⁵⁹ The emphasised connection between the reader having a ‘feeling’ for the aesthetics of literature and good literature’s representation of the moral world suggested to the reader that she had a natural capacity for morality. However, this kind of feeling was being culturally developed through the lessons.⁶⁰

⁵⁴At school, see Matthews, ‘Education for Femininity’. At home and in society Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p 132-134, p 150; Smart, ‘Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia’, *Showgirl and the Straw Man*, *JAS* 71, p7.

⁵⁵Dale, op cit, pp 2-4.

⁵⁶For syllabuses, J A Seitz, op cit. For teacher training, Cunningham et al, *Review of Education*, 1938, op cit, pp 29-89. For authoritative comments see for example departmental gazettes and university manuals such as the 1939 *Manual of Public Examinations* for the University of Tasmania, pp 56-58; New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 June, 1943, pp 152-153.

⁵⁷Doyle demonstrates this idea of English to be a cornerstone of the Newbolt report and also the way teachers in British societies of the time were already expected to understand English, pp 46-49. Evidence of the way lessons reflected this shaping can be found in Mackaness, op cit for the junior standard and for the senior standard the Victorian class notebook of ‘Leaving English Notes’ belonging to Dorothy Coghlan who attended ‘W(J)IS’ in 1942 (Currently held by Victorian Education Department, Historical Research Unit).

⁵⁸In Australia at the lower standard Mackaness and Lenehan, op cit, p 71.

⁵⁹In Australia at the higher standard Cowling, op cit, p 101 and pp 211-214

⁶⁰For example, at the lower level candidates are told good readers, will understand such characters as David Balfour and Alan Breck in *Kidnapped* as their ‘tried and true friends’ (Mackaness and Lenehan,

Consequently, capable English Literature readers at the highest standard could understand themselves as also capable of the highest level of moral awareness; the standard necessary to senior leadership positions.

Uniform lesson apparatus such as the reading of a prescribed text in order to answer examination questions meant that girl readers were aware that teachers' instruction was a localised part of some greater domain of expertise. It was clear to the readers that the real imprimatur of the expertise associated with English Literature came from public examination success. Teachers were the mentors guiding them to this approval. The relationship between English Literature, the standards of the public leaving examinations and the standards of citizen service contributed to making a space for girl readers to interpret femininity as more powerful than the dominant discourses intended. As I have already argued, examination success was understood as state endorsement for an individual's standard of citizen service through its connection with employment. The higher standard English syllabus did not, of itself, allow for a differentiation between capacity for junior or senior leadership. Therefore, examination success at the higher standard of English Literature meant that the candidate had internalised and performed service values necessary to leadership and understood herself as having been endorsed as someone with the capacity for leadership.

The relationship between standardised practices of English Literature reading and standardised citizen service contributed to girls understanding that femininity had a role across the range of hierarchical service contributing to the civilised state. These practices made it seem to girls that they were moving towards a womanhood where some women could have confidence in their own capacity to make autonomous judgments as senior leaders; some women could assume they could lead society on the basis of their being directed by more senior judgment; other women could feel they contributed to the civilised society through trustworthily supporting recognised leaders.

1935, pp 160-161). At the higher level, candidates for Tasmania's 1938 Leaving Examination were asked to explore how 'Conrad's *Youth* suggests life on a tramp steamer demands more than ordinary courage'.

Texts

English Literature novels were the most popularly remembered secondary school reading texts. These contributed to Australian girl readers' interpretation of femininity as participating across the range of service in a civilised society in two ways. Firstly, while they were originally published as stories which celebrated masculine service to the state, they were now read by girls who had been shaped to regard some of these service values (at each level) as feminine. Secondly, they used emblems of social legitimisation the girl readers could imagine as part of their own present and future life. One of these was guidance by a public mentor. Another was the way this guidance led to the individual's testing and then to paid work directing others. There was also the notion of settlement country leadership. In English Literature the settlement societies were represented in *all* British societies as places where British social and moral primacy meant that those who were at once British-born and yet so flawed they were not acceptable at the directing levels in the metropole, could be useful directing others, even more flawed by a lifetime of distance from the centre, into their closest approximation to Britishness. This idea created the settlements as societies where notions of Britishness could shift yet still be approved.

Prescribed Literature texts ranged across several genres.⁶¹ However, of the seventy four participants who referred to secondary school reading, sixty seven mentioned the school novel either specifically or generically. A brief analysis of a prescribed novel from each of the standards demonstrates both why specific novel genres were chosen to shape secondary readers into the satisfactions of their position in the British Australian hierarchy and the spaces they contained which allowed wartime girls to negotiate with their values. The lower standard example is an 'adventure', *Prester John* (1910). I have chosen it to highlight the emphasis on masculine service as ungendered service. *David Copperfield* (1850), a Victorian domestic novel, is the higher standard example. This has been chosen to underscore the readers' opportunities for understanding that a more dynamic notion of Britishness existed in the colonies than in England itself.

⁶¹Lists were sub-headed variously with drama, Shakespeare, poetry, prose, essays, novels, literary criticism etcetera. See university manuals and education department gazettes.

Cultural hegemony meant that all the stories celebrated the connected moral and socio-political primacy of the British man in a world where British empire was one consequence of this primacy.⁶² The Australian masculine experts who nominated junior school novels in the 1930s were still affected by the 1921 Newbolt Report's intention of drawing working class boys willingly into the corporate enterprise of Britain's hierarchical imperial society.⁶³ Lower standard lists focussed on stories that, while they represented the pleasures of future rewards, foregrounded the idea of being currently guided as an essential part of success. At the same time, they made the contribution of service from the lower standards an important part of maintaining British civilisation through the notion that the possession of some moral sense was a universal component of the British. Consequently, in these stories Britishers publicly develop their innate 'moral' values under the guidance of a trusted leader/mentor. This usually happens through an ultimately victorious experience of physical struggle against those who would threaten the empire. There was some latitude in the choice of novels from these lists.⁶⁴ However, this central idea was usually expressed through a popular story of a young male hero's involvement in imperial action.⁶⁵ The stories were characterised as 'adventures' or 'adventure romances'.⁶⁶ The higher standard lists were designed as a technology for shaping those who would lead both men and women. In organising them the experts drew on university-level ideas of English Literature as the representation of both the private and the public aspects of the civilised world and focussed on what is sometimes referred to as the Victorian

⁶²Said, 'Introduction', *Culture and Imperialism*.

⁶³Mathieson, op cit, p 74, p 78; Doyle, op cit, p 39, p 49 and pp 62-63; see also Scott's and Jenkinson's influential wartime surveys

⁶⁴The 'different' novels can also be seen to have this basic theme and differ only in one or two characteristics, like an absent mentor such as John Ridd's dead father whose ideas are a constant influence on his actions in the struggles against the lawless Doone's in *Lorna Doone* or the masculine narrative perceived through supportive feminine eyes as in *We of the Never Never*.

⁶⁵Novels such as Conrad's *Youth*, Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and *Kidnapped*, Stevenson-Quiller Couch's *St Ives*, John Buchan's *Prester John* and *Green Mantle*, Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Cooper's *The last of the Mohicans*'s, Kipling's *Captains Courageous* and shorter stories appear on the junior lists across Australia throughout the war.

⁶⁶See 'The Newbolt Report', Henry Newbolt (coord), *The Teaching of English in England*, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1921, pp 148-150, pp 338-340. Jenkinson's 1940 recommendations, while supposedly drawn from empirical research, supported the continuation of the Newbolt influence in junior reading texts for girls, as did Scott's recommendations, although to a lesser extent. Jenkinson, op cit, p 276; Scott, op cit, pp 196-198.

domestic novel.⁶⁷ These novels told the story of imperial Britishness as a civilised society through an outward exploration from the domestic centre.⁶⁸

Secondary school girls who were reading in second world war Australia could receive these stories from complex subject positions. One unintended consequence was girls could understand femininity as more socially powerful than the dominant discourses of womanhood did. Girl readers could imagine that it was part of femininity to make the judgments which, from the highest level, would direct society. This was a result of the connection between the idea of the addressed reader, the significance of emblems in fiction reading and social change. Both the exemplar texts depict an originary 'real world' in which the author addressed the reader as a white, middle-class British male of the second half of the nineteenth century through the reader's relation to this world's values (and the emblems which express those values). However, the secondary girl's experience of contemporary hierarchical service to the civilised state as social discourse and as part of the practices of English Literature had shaped her to receive the stories as the addressed reader. Another source of dynamism was the girl reader's dual position as British and Australian. The stories represented the metropole's strength as founded in absolute standards but the colonies were shown as places where a certain dynamism in the standards of Britishness performed by British stock strengthened the empire.⁶⁹ Consequently, the reader could collude with the paramountcy of imperial masculinity from a feminine position. She could also see herself as the 'hero'. Additionally, she could knit together any discrepancies she perceived between notions of femininity and masculinity and still see herself as British through imagining herself as part of 'colonial' dynamism.

John Buchan's *Prester John* (*Prester*) was part of the schools' lower standard adventure romance genre.⁷⁰ It appeared on the junior list for South Australia in 1940 and again in 1945. It was on the Victorian junior list in 1944. In *Prester* the reader is told a story by a British 'success' of how he 'naturally' came to be 'successful' in a way which celebrates all levels of hierarchy as contributing to the British empire and

⁶⁷In *Desire* Catherine Belsey explains the centrality of the Victorian idea of family in the fiction of this era, p 118.

⁶⁸Said, 'Introduction', *Culture and Imperialism*.

⁶⁹Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p 103, p 107.

⁷⁰*Prester John* was first published in 1910 as *The Great Diamond Pipe* and was a response to fears about the decay of empire. See Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, p 3.

encourages followers to feel secure about supporting the leadership for it leads to the common good. In the second half of the nineteenth century impoverished, seventeen-year-old David Crawford leaves Scotland for 'British' Africa.⁷¹ 'Grown up', he returns to Scotland wealthy and with public status as a consequence of his contribution to Africa's development as a civilised society and therefore, part of the British empire. This was the result of a process in which his innately right feelings about the world were further guided by a mentor and his ability to implement them tested in the field so that he was clearly of value to the state. David experienced three kinds of pleasure as the result of his performance. Through the notion of morality, his natural feelings had been vindicated. He received praise and a sense of belonging from his satisfied mentor. Consequent on this was his third pleasure, paid public status as a leader of a civilised society.

This story could be read by wartime British Australians as young David's development into the ideal British imperial citizen/man.⁷² Firstly, as a stranger in Africa, he experiences the country as mysterious.⁷³ David further translates native activity he finds inexplicable as amorously evil. It is this perspective which provides him with the nucleus of the quest that will make him a fully-fledged citizen; beginning with the exploration of some specific local activity, he will uncover the unknown and place it in the scheme of his world.⁷⁴

The evil potential of the mysterious movement among natives is made clearer by his friend, the equally-penniless Scottish school teacher, Mr Wardlaw, who believes 'we were underrating the capacity of the native . . . it was not his intelligence we underrated but his dangerousness . . . There were five or six of them to every white man . . . [and] they had only just ceased being a warrior race. Think of the lonely farms and the little dorps wiped out of the map. It would be a second and bloodier Indian Mutiny'.⁷⁵ Mr Wardlaw is 'black afraid' in this situation.⁷⁶ His speculations both clarify David's quest for information as part of the maintenance of empire and

⁷¹See internal evidence, *Prester John*, John Buchan, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1938 edition, p 66.

⁷²Haynes, *Seeking the Centre: The Australian Desert in Literature Art and Film*, pp 83 - 84.

⁷³*PJ* p 61.

⁷⁴*PJ* p 61; Haynes, op cit, pp 53-54.

⁷⁵*PJ* p 66.

⁷⁶*PJ* p 67.

stiffen his spine in the pursuit of his quest.⁷⁷ However, the young hero feels both alone and uncertain with only Wardlaw's nervousness for company. He records, 'I felt that I was being hemmed in by barbarism and cut off from the succour of my own kind'.⁷⁸

It is here that Captain James Arcoll appears. He is the British government's chief Intelligence Officer in relation to 'Kaffirs' and an expert in maintaining (British) empire.⁷⁹ Arcoll explains that the natives are being encouraged to unite under Laputa, a 'black Napoleon' who claims to be the descendant of their legendary king Prester John. If Laputa convinces all the tribes of his right to be their king he will 'lead the African race to conquest and empire'.⁸⁰ Arcoll is David's mentor. He both legitimises the younger man's 'feelings' and guides him in developing them. Encouraged, David uses his own courage and initiative to steal the 'fetich' designed to persuade the tribes of Laputa's mystical ancestry and so takes part in stopping this threat to British empire in Africa. The quest to thwart Laputa is represented as a mighty struggle between good and evil. David wins through being the agent of good; after surviving the confrontation which drives Laputa to his death and destroys the fetich, he records, '[m]y first care was to kneel here among the bracken and give thanks to my Maker'.⁸¹

The closure represents the pleasures for David which are attached to his having demonstrated he has developed as a moral citizen. Firstly, he has vindicated the worth of his 'natural' moral perceptions. Secondly, there is the pleasure of having satisfied his mentor who acknowledges he has earned the emblems of belonging; status and wealth. Arcoll tells him, 'You've saved this country, Davie, and I'm going to make sure you have your reward'.⁸² A third pleasure lies in possessing the emblems. The status which is conferred as his reward is a metropolitan public position as one of the imperial ruling class maintaining and extending civilisation. He also becomes the owner of a quarter of a million pounds. In an epilogue to the struggle David Crawford is revealed as the Scottish-based governor of a 'great native training college' in Africa, 'an institution for giving Kaffirs the kind of training which fits them to be good citizens of the state'. 'There you will find every kind of technical workshop and

⁷⁷*PJ* p 71.

⁷⁸*PJ* p 72.

⁷⁹*PJ* p 89; *PJ* p 86 ff.

⁸⁰*PJ* p 92.

⁸¹*PJ* p 229.

⁸²*PJ* p 234.

the finest experimental farms . . . They have created a huge export trade in tobacco and fruit'.⁸³

Furthermore, in the hierarchy of this empire, the less clearly British can also contribute to maintaining civilisation through providing what is represented as a less-demanding leadership. Wardlaw, the flawed man of empire, at once understanding of the most basic imperial responsibility and yet nervous of undertaking it, is able to find both public status and paid work which contributes to civilisation by serving in the African colony. He becomes the head of this training college.

Charles Dickens' novel, *David Copperfield*, was on the higher standard prescribed lists in New South Wales in 1942 and 1945 and in Western Australia in 1945. *Copperfield* shares with *Prester John* the retrospective point of view of a successful British individual presented in a way which defines this position as one in which moral certitude is reflected in social imperialism. Both novels represent the path to moral development as a combination of innate perceptiveness and guidance. However, *Copperfield* offers a wider and more nuanced view of the hierarchical relationships of gender, class and race which make a British world.

Copperfield is a Victorian domestic novel. This genre takes as its basic premise the idea that a true British home is the source of an individual's access to moral understanding. From this point the novel can be read as the evocation of a world in which the pattern of this home is repeated in greater situations and the outcome is the extension of civilisation based on the notion of the just society I outlined in Chapter Three. The inherent moral potential of the British is a racial feature; it is found in the children of marital British homes. Here mothers nurture this virtue in an individual's earliest preparation for contribution to the state in an atmosphere of purity and removal from the struggles of the world. Mothers' duties are numerous. Therefore, less-developed British delegates, the servants, directly support them in the maintenance of this home. Fathers work between the public arena and the home to create and maintain the civilisation which both shapes and protects such homes. In

⁸³*PJ* p 244.

their absence, the delegates offer lesser, but adequate support for the home.⁸⁴ This ideal, hierarchical pattern is replicated in images of the imperial relationship between leaders in metropolitan Britain, colonial officials in settlement countries and the British population in the ‘youthful’ colonies.

The story of the eponymous David Copperfield is characterised by images of the failure of the British home and the consequent chaos and injustice. British civilisation is expressed as middle-class values of thrift, regularity and constancy as well as the preparedness to risk adventure. The former are as applicable in the raising of offspring as in the work place.⁸⁵ Flaws in his middle-class parents’ virtue ensure that, when he is orphaned, young David is cast into the hands of the cruel and the exploitative. As a blacking factory boy he is so ragged, hungry and dirty he might as well have no home and no British status at all.⁸⁶ The only kindness he experiences comes from the fractured British home of the Micawbers. It too lacks many of the middle-class virtues, but its muddled messages of support give him a strange kind of investment in middle-class values and prepare him for relationships with other middle-class mentors later on.⁸⁷ As a result of this bad beginning and further flawed mentors Copperfield’s young manhood is characterised by false starts to his creating a place for himself as a white, middle-class man in British society. His attempts to earn a living slowly improve and he gains a toehold on ‘a man’s estate’ as a reporter of parliamentary debates and a tyro author.⁸⁸ However, simultaneously he is beset by the shambles of his own home under the management of his first wife, spoilt, foolish, pretty Dora.⁸⁹ Dora ensures they are both bedevilled by unsatisfactory servants.⁹⁰ She cannot produce children for him.⁹¹ It is only on his marriage to the capable Agnes, after Dora’s death, that David finally becomes a British man/citizen; the husband of a

⁸⁴ For the British tradition see especially Davidoff and Hall, p 392. The for motherhood, pp 335 ff, fatherhood, pp 329, ff, servants, pp 338-339, pp 388 ff, Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*

⁸⁵ Bristow argues for an idea of nation which from the latter half of the nineteenth century produces fiction representing an ideal British man who combines these aspects (op cit, p 58). This notion underpinned British domestic novels of this era as well as the boys’ reading Bristow addresses. See Waters, *Dickens and the Politics of the Family*, p 168 where David’s maturation as a domestically-supported, self-made man is also as a writer of empire.

⁸⁶ Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, London, Oxford University Press, 1949 (1948), pp 159-161.

⁸⁷ DC pp 162-163

⁸⁸ DC pp 626-627, pp 690 ff

⁸⁹ DC p 641, pp 690 ff

⁹⁰ DC p 639

⁹¹ DC p698

competently supportive woman, the father of morally-developing children, the employer of a controlled household servant, and publicly contributing to civilisation by leading other English speakers to imagine ideal society through reading his published stories.⁹²

David Copperfield's adventures as he stumbles towards manhood also allow Dickens to represent the connection between Britain and its empire in ways which give British colonial inhabitants both a natural socio-moral primacy and some freedom to re-arrange British values. His images of the relationship between the metropolitan British, the British-born in settlement society and those designated as native colonials in the outposts can be seen as an extension of the ideal relationship between the British parents, their servants and their offspring. Mr Micawber, the flawed husband-father, citizen and kind friend of David's blacking factory days, demonstrates his worth by constantly trying to maintain the social position into which he should fit, but finds it hard to do so. In a final attempt to give them an appropriate place the Micawbers are shipped to Australia. In the closure Micawber, flawed when measured against the pure standards of the imperial centre, is successful in the outposts of empire. Here, as British-born, he is able to develop adequate civilisation and 'the just rule' for the inhabitants of the youthful colony. Micawber is last heard of as colonial 'Port Middle-Bay's' popular District Magistrate.⁹³

English Literature through novels like *Prester John* and *David Copperfield* represented civilisation as the outcome of endorsed, public hierarchical service to the state. It encouraged wartime girls who read with notions of both gendered and ungendered citizenship and saw themselves as British Australians to imagine a femininity which contributed to this state across the range of standards.

Memories

Participants' memories of secondary school reading can be used to reveal the way in which girls were able to interpret as part of femininity service to the civilised state across the range of hierarchical standards. Secondary readers experienced themselves

⁹²DC p 866. Also, see Figure 1 of this chapter. This is the illustration opposite p 866 in the text.

⁹³DC p 870

as ‘girls’ in a process of change generated in the first place by their age. This and an originally unknown individual quality gave them a new place as an ungendered part of the citizenship system which supported civilisation. Progressively, they came to understand hierarchical service to the state as an integral part of this system. Progressively, they came to interpret the unknown quality as their innate moral capacity and see the individual’s place in the hierarchy as dependent on the combination of her innate moral capacity and the formal development of that capacity through education. The negotiation of these ideas was made easier by the girls’ ability to see themselves as British Australian rather than British.

Secondary school English Literature was memorable to girls across all three of Australia’s education sectors. Joyce (112) who was at a state high school in New South Wales and Caroline (60) similarly educated in Victoria listed their English Literature texts in detail. So did Elizabeth (121) who was introduced to this kind of reading while attending a private school in South Australia. Many others, like Pat (79) who was a boarder at a Catholic convent in New South Wales, recalled their specific responses to aspects of the lower and/or higher standard of secondary reading through memories of their youthful life as readers.

At the same time, there was a consciousness that not every girl in Australia shared the experience of secondary reading. Marsali (136) pointed out that she was the only girl from her coeducational primary school in the environs of a large provincial town in New South Wales to attend high school. Marion (42), in referring to secondary education at her girls’ state school explained ‘many left at fourteen and most after the intermediate [public examination] at fourteen to fifteen’. The memories imply that reading English Literature was understood as part of being selected for a relatively exclusive social role.

The reading process began with entry to secondary school rather than entry to the first year of public examinations. Some participants, like Diane (77), a baker’s daughter, were the first person in their family to go to high school. Some, like Amelia (54) whose parents ‘had very little formal schooling’, recalled themselves as the first generation of their family to undertake secondary education. The newness was

sometimes associated with changes in social class.⁹⁴ Participants recalled English Literature in ways which associated it with the rawness and tension which accompanies a new experience.

Sometimes the tension was expressed as difficulty in understanding the meaning of the story because of the reader's age. Eris (114) was conscious of being younger than others in her Literature classes and believed this affected her ability to respond to the prescribed novels; she described herself as beginning this reading as 'an immature ten year old, [but] academically sound'. Nor did these tensions diminish as the readers progressed to the higher standard of secondary education. Marion (42) and Millie (124) both attended Burwood Home Science School and separately recalled the burden of the reading list they received on entry to the two years of the senior course. Marion referred to it as 'a list of books etcetera that all educated people should have read'. Millie explained, 'In fourth year we were given a massive book list of recommended books to choose from. I found most of them too old for me (I was only fourteen and a half). There wasn't much time to read other than our text books. I realise now I was too immature to understand them'. Others recalled the difficulty as existing in the newness of the experience. Betty (23) in South Australia referred to the strangeness of 'writing about the writing, if you see what I mean! [Betty's emphasis]'. Irene (77) combined the notions of immaturity and new experience, referring to her problems in understanding English Literature as centred on 'the language mainly. And perhaps that a greater degree of concentration was needed than I was prepared at that age to give'.

At the same time the readers were conscious of themselves as feminine while experiencing this new kind of education. Amelia (54) referred to herself as not only a member of the first generation of her family to attend secondary school but as the first girl to do so. All these memories imply that girls as secondary readers sensed they were at the beginning of a change in their identity. Girl readers in the secondary system were experiencing a process of multi-faceted change, from child to adult citizen, from girl to woman and in some cases from either working class to middle-class or from the traditional to the modern working class.

⁹⁴Craig Campbell, *op cit*, pp 54-55, p 62.

The difficulties and sense of anxiety associated with this reading raise the question of why the girls pursued it, as the memories clearly indicate they did. The answers depend on the girls' sense of themselves as identities in process and as chosen because of some innate value they possessed. The references to age and developing maturity indicate the sense of process. I have already canvassed the girls' feeling of being chosen. However, their idea that this was because they had a special quality is perhaps most clearly revealed through the many memories of 'classics'. This term was often used to refer to school novels participants remembered as difficult to understand. Rita (35), who finished her education at the lower standard, saw 'Sir Walter Scott and Rider Haggard' as 'school classics'. Irene (57), looking back on a secondary education which finished with her completion of the higher standard defined her school reading as 'classics (Dickens, Austen, Conrad, Hardy), hard going'. However, these stories were also acknowledged as repositories of important ideas. Caroline (60) explained that 'the classics figured highly, but perhaps that is why they are classics - they remain in the memory'. Secondary readers came to know they were girls who could, finally, understand them. Janet's (55) memory of classics highlights the readers' sense of English Literature as an emblem of being chosen, of new experiences and of an identity in process. She attended Emily McPherson College from a home supported by her father's clerical work and her mother's factory wage. She noted, 'there were always vague references to the 'classics' ['by people I considered intellectuals']'. Finally, after a lot of searching, I tracked down Homer's *The Iliad*. I couldn't read it then! [Janet's emphasis]'.⁹⁵ These recollections can be interpreted as the readers feeling a sense of satisfaction that they were being inducted into a system which was universal in its values and approved by authorities on civilisation.

The memories reveal how the girls understood themselves as readers who were naturally responsive to the English Literature stories. Caroline (60) recalled how she was a 'compulsive reader' when approaching her English texts. Fiona (68) explained the motivation for her similar response in some detail: 'I have always felt [about]

⁹⁵Janet's lonely search for 'classic' literature doesn't seem so very far-fetched in its understanding when one of the books on the Burwood Domestic Science school 'horror' list for girls only a year older was 'Euripides, *The Alcestis* [sic]'. After some research of her own, Marion (42) discovered a copy of this reading list and contributed it to the researcher's collection.

English text books . . . the same way I *feel* about Art. For me they are both emotional, and extremely personal - and looking back, I am sure I have always felt this way [Fiona's emphasis and capitalisation]'. Girls completing their education at either standard recognised the importance of their inner response. Caroline finished her education at the higher standard and expressed her disappointment over how close reading meant they read too few novels. '[A]s you see, it was very confined' and so 'rather boring', she noted. Fiona left with the lower standard certificate. She recollected her dismay at what she saw as unnecessary classroom elucidation of something she was already aware of, condemning a system in which texts were 'analysed to death'. The way in which English Literature strove to make ideas of textual beauty and British values synonymous with morality means these memories can be understood as the girls' sense of their natural capacity for morality.

At the same time there were recollections of the need for a girl's basic capacity for appreciating English Literature to be developed by those with a greater understanding. Betty (23) was conscious of the effect of teachers as the mediators of the novels' meaning. In explaining her response to the junior novels *Silas Marner* and *Lorna Doone* she added, 'I think if these books had been discussed and talked about I am sure they would have been better appreciated'. Dorothy (63) recorded the difference a teacher's reading of *David Copperfield* had made to her understanding after she had first struggled alone with the book's meaning. Girls appear to have experienced English Literature as a process which positioned them as members of a hierarchy even as they developed their understanding of how hierarchical service supported civilisation.

Some of the recollections show that girls experienced women occupying positions in what they regarded as all the hierarchical standards of a civilised society. As the foregoing paragraph indicates, girls saw themselves as followers. Additionally, Joy (104) explained how at her Presbyterian Ladies College the *school's* selection and discussion of novels was part of the secondary education process. Nance (52) recalled how she enjoyed the reading 'set' by her girls' Catholic secondary school. Cecilia (94), educated at a girls' state secondary school in New South Wales, acknowledged the influence of teachers in directing her responses. Of one teacher she recorded, 'I thank her for opening windows for us'.

Girls recognised the examinations made it important to read and understand English Literature. Some, such as Bernice (17), distinguished between ‘pleasure books’ and ‘school book[s] which we would get examined on for English’. Betty (23) recalled her school texts as reading governed by public assessment, ‘We were supposed to read them in case we got a question in the exam!! [Betty’s emphasis]’. This recognition drove their persistence. Betty continued, ‘I must have had a small glance as I was very conscientious!! and would have hated to have been caught out not knowing anything about them!! [her emphases]’. Shirley (106) remembered, ‘Some of the English novels we had to read and were examined on [were] *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Treasure Island* [and these] were two that I couldn’t read, not interesting. So I read the beginning and the end. No wonder I got a good many questions wrong’. Ideas of the importance of success in the English Literature examination disciplined even unwilling readers into the values of the system.

There were also memories of the importance of the variation between the higher and lower leaving standard examinations in relation to girls’ employment prospects. Vera (1) who attended a business college after some education at the higher leaving standard explained:

Work opportunities for [higher standard secondary] girls were pretty much limited to office work, teaching and nursing.
[lower standard secondary] occupations such as dressmaking, millinery, shop assistant, hairdresser were deemed somewhat inferior.

Marion (42), who attended a junior domestic science school in the New South Wales hinterland, recalled her busdriver father and housewife mother encouraging her to ‘leave after the Inter [the lower standard leaving certificate in New South Wales]’. However, Marion wanted to be a teacher and so insisted on returning to the education system to complete the higher standard. Girls appear to have come to understand the connection between examination standards and the standards of citizen service through employment.

Some participants recalled feeling alienated from English Literature and happily considering leaving school at the lower standard. Shirley (106), who read the first and last pages of *Treasure Island* as examination preparation, remembered, ‘books

[she and her sisters] did *not* read were *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island* [which they] considered boys' books [Shirley's emphasis]'. Margaret (83) left on completion of the lower standard to become an apprentice dressmaker and noted that she then gained her diploma in dressmaking and design at night school. She explained, '*Treasure Island* was a must but it never appealed to me. It was an adventure book more interesting to boys I thought'. Raima (56), who left school at the lower standard, recorded her 'dislike was . . . tales of high adventure which were usually all male epics'. Instead, she recalled information from the handbook of the business college she attended.⁹⁶ She noted such statements as, 'It is your personality, that "something" you can put into your work over and above your mechanical ability that is going to count', 'Your mind will reveal itself in everything you do' and 'In the commercial world the junior secretary will have to act in an emergency, or take responsibility for a departure from established rules'. Marsali (136) in remembering *King Solomon's Mines*, also recalled the unattractiveness of the adventure genre. She left school with the lower standard certificate for what she then perceived as the 'glamour of the local business college', a junior clerical position as 'staff of a local bank' and some financial independence. The power of the memories suggests the girls put some effort into trying to read these stories. Margaret explained she had read these unattractive books because, '[m]y schoolteacher asked me' and her recollection of the schoolteacher's power was echoed by the other participants.

The memories in the foregoing paragraph suggest that some girl readers were so conscious of gender that they could not imagine how the masculine English Literature stories could address them. At the same time, their experience with the teacher in the classroom had already made plain to them one of the most important messages these stories carried; the connection between public knowledge and the satisfactions of social power. The memories reveal that these girls also understood there were many different public knowledges and some of them were clearly gendered. As girls whose education finished at the lower standard they were positioned by authorities to contribute citizen service through following the decisions of others rather than making decisions. Raima's choices from her business college handbook suggest these girls understood their work would be 'mechanical' and

⁹⁶Raima spontaneously included copied excerpts from this handbook with her response.

closely watched. Simultaneously, however, they could imagine a feminine position as a public 'follower' which allowed the good girl some autonomy in judging when and how to use a unique skill to benefit other members of society. Raima's choice of quotations suggests girls could feel this value lay in the separation between leaders and followers. They recognised leaders had the capacity to make overall judgments supporting the civilised society, but leaders could not be expected to understand the nuanced way in which a unique skill could support that civilisation.

Some girls read the prescribed texts and understood them as addressing other social positions yet they recognised that these stories addressed girls' position too. Amelia (54) recorded her lack of engagement with the adventure genre, noting that she thought the stories were more suited to be her brothers' school novels. However, she also emphasised how she learned to persevere in her secondary reading: '[Anything] I started I felt I should (and did) finish'. Amelia completed her secondary education by matriculating and beginning university, originally choosing an English degree but noting she, 'found psychology exciting'. Joan (20) in South Australia specifically, excluded school novels from her discussion of reading without denying the significance of reading them. 'The books I read for English at school', she noted, 'I didn't particularly enjoy, so I'm not including them'. Nevertheless, Joan persevered with English Literature. She recalled being 'a bit young for a job' when she finished her lower standard at fourteen. Her idea of a 'job' was teaching. She completed her secondary education by matriculating to university. These memories focussed on the place of secondary school English Literature as part of a process moving the reader towards citizen service as a leader with the satisfactions of greater social and economic power. As I have argued earlier, girl readers experienced the power relationship in the classroom and the school as a representation of the complete range of civilised power. They believed they had already seen the kind of higher power they were imagining for themselves as part of feminine life.

Readers who completed the higher standard recalled ideas of Australia's relationship to Britain in association with this reading. Joan (20), who finished her education with the highest standard of South Australia's state system, noted, 'I did not read about . . . anything Australian. Most of the books were printed in England then, and this is perhaps why we felt more closely tied to our mother country than we do

now'. Joy (31), at the end of compiling a long list of her lower and higher standard books, reflected, 'Of course all our books for secondary school were imported from England . . . even the *one* we studied for Australian History [Joy's ellipsis and emphasis]'. The higher standard readers were conscious that British Australia was like Britain but was not Britain.⁹⁷ The memories can also be read to reveal that the girls understood that the two nations existed in a relationship of a lower and a higher standard. These memories, like the memories of the girls who were happy to leave school after completing the lower standard, focus on the idea of separation between the hierarchical standards. They also do this in a way which allows readers to imagine the lower standard in this national relationship was free from a total, hierarchically-based surveillance. As with this notion in the ideas of the follower girls, one consequence is that the subject imagines the lower standard in a way which makes it a potential site of social dynamism.

However, although some respondents reflected on the pleasures of the lower secondary education standard others recognised the pleasures associated with ideas of the higher standard. Teresa (33), who left after completing the lower standard, recalled herself as one of the girls the authorities considered sufficiently able to complete her education at the higher standard. She pointed out that 'I was asked to do the Leaving'. Marion (42), who struggled against her parents' expectations to continue in secondary education, noted comparatively that, '[t]hose that stayed on [to enter the higher standard] were literate'. These memories can be interpreted as girls at each of the levels understanding that those who undertook the higher standard of English Literature had demonstrated to the authorities some unspecified greater capacity than those who left school after completing the lower standard.

The way participants recalled the higher standard of English Literature suggests something of what they believed this capacity to be. A greater love of the stories was not essential for achieving this standard. Caroline (60) remembered her higher standard books and named them in order to make the point of how 'confining' they were. She then added, 'the reading, particularly for the Leaving Year (Fifth form then) was rather boring - enough to turn many of us off for life! [Caroline's emphasis]'.

⁹⁷Further girl readers' perspectives of the relationship between England and Australia are discussed in Chapter Six.

Caroline also recalled the performance of the higher English lessons. For her, these were about individual participation in public exercises of judgment: 'We did not have time set for reading apart from discussion during English periods. We [also] took the parts and read Shakespeare's plays in class'. Other readers have memories of higher standard English which suggest they responded to the encouragement to perform public criticism as part of developing the higher reading skills. Gwenda (12) wrote in a girlhood article on her own intentions as a writer, '[writers] should write more about what they think and not what they do; for a writer's thoughts are his [sic] own'.⁹⁸ These girls could see themselves as judges of the social values represented in the text as well as the style of the text. Merna (5) thought Dickens' 'pictur[ed] the crime and crudity of the period [in which he wrote]'. Elizabeth (121) too found him full of a 'harsh realism'. Participants' memories imply that girls saw the higher standard of English as open to girls with a greater innate capacity for moral judgment than that required by the lower standard. They also suggest that girls understood the process of completing the higher standard would further develop this capacity in them and give them the confidence to use it publicly.

Why did girls want to be recognised as having such a capacity? On completing her lower standard of education Joan (20), as I discussed earlier, could not imagine herself in the kind of paid public work available to 'young' girls, but she could imagine herself as a teacher. Marion (42) noted how 'after the Inter. one day of office filing drove me back to school'. She also recalled how she was 'compulsorily stopped' from matriculating through being forced to study 'Art and sewing' at the higher standard in her Domestic Science School and so she 'went to Teachers' College'. Amelia (53) in reflecting on the excitement she associated with the idea of studying psychology at university also remembered she 'never thought about getting paid'. Caroline (60) remembered that she endured the misery of the higher level of English Literature because she wanted 'a man's job'. In her case this was as a bank teller in replacement for a man on active service, a job which in its performance was a disappointment to her. These participants were conscious of the jobs associated with lower standard as follower jobs in the same way the authorities saw them, that is as supporting the decisions of others and bereft of the opportunity to exercise social power. The

⁹⁸Contributed to the researcher's collection by Gwenda. Published in *Chronicles of St Peter's Girls*, July, 1943, p 57.

participants recall their relationship to the higher standard of English Literature in ways which suggest they had invested in a femininity which would give them the satisfactions of being leaders in a civilised society as the education authorities appeared to recognise them; the opportunity for ungendered, autonomous judgment and the opportunity to implement their judgment.

Secondary school prescribed reading shaped girls into the idea that in order to be good they should perform public service as followers or as leaders. It also gave girls the space to interpret a satisfying, respectable femininity which could occupy the range of hierarchical service positions supporting the civilised state. The way in which girl readers negotiated that extended understanding of femininity and invested in a satisfying position varied as their social experience varied. Shirley (72) and Barbara (24) were secondary readers. The rest of this chapter looks at the way each of them extended the dominant idea of feminine service in the hierarchy and found a satisfying role.

Shirley's story explores the way a girl invested in a satisfying idea of herself as contributing service to the civilised state as a follower. She left the Melbourne girls' state school, at which she studied English Literature, when she was fourteen. After a short period at a business college she was employed as an office junior. She was conscious of herself as having a natural capacity for understanding civilised society. Literature can be seen as emblematising this idea for her. She recalled herself as a naturally 'avid reader', noted, '[p]rescribed school reading appealed to me' and recalled her secondary novels by name.

For Shirley, secondary school education was the source of a socially-recognised endorsement of the extent to which her innate capacity had been developed. She discussed 'obtaining a qualification' and pointed out how 'my secondary school only went to Year Three'. Her discussion underlined not only her sense of the separation between the lower and higher standard but that this separation was attached to social rules. She added, 'so at fourteen or fifteen you were obliged to make a choice [as to how you would contribute service at the lower standard]'.⁹⁹

⁹⁹See Cunningham et al, *Review of Education*, 1938, pp 45-46.

She understood that the lower standard meant less development of innate capacity. She also understood that a consequence of this was that individual would not have the opportunity to perform employed citizen service as a leader. She explained, ‘My ambition was to be a journalist’, then added ‘[to be a journalist] at that time required university [standard qualifications]’. Shirley believed that her parents’ working-class ethos and financial position rather than her own capacity to progress ensured that she attended a school where she would leave after completing the lower secondary standard. She noted, ‘Most at this age knew it was expected of them to begin earning and contribute to the household. Further study was out of the question . . . economically beyond my parents’.

Shirley reflected at length on her family’s view of working-class jobs as skills and knowledge which the capable and trustworthy contributed uniquely to the functioning of civilised society. She remembers both her parents’ jobs as significant to the preservation of an Australia under attack. She noted that her father was ‘employed by the Melbourne Harbour Trust for over thirty years as an electrical crane operator’ and emphasised that ‘during the war he gave fire fighting instruction to wharf employees’. Her father’s sense of the importance and demands of his work clashed with what Shirley saw as her mother’s equally important citizen contribution:

During the war my mother studied as war preparation, I believe through the Red Cross, “First Aid”, “Home Nursing” and “Gas Attack Preparation”. The matron of Stonnington Hospital (she conducted some of the nursing lectures) tried hard to persuade her to take up nursing as her exam marks were excellent in all subjects.

She recalled her father opposing this idea not only because a full-time working wife was ‘regarded as a reflection on the man as a provider’ but also because her mother’s public employment as a shift worker would have caused real difficulty to a man on twenty-four-hour call. Shirley remembered her father’s most domestically effective threat was not to stop her mother working but to ‘stop work’ himself, that is withdraw *his* vital services to the beleaguered nation.

Ideas of individual service and the civilised society which were reflected in Shirley’s memories of English Literature and in her memories of her family’s ideas of work infused her interpretation of the satisfactions of an employment resulting from

leaving school at the lower standard. She remembered ‘My mother advised the business studies course as providing some choice of jobs. My Maths marks were quite good and calculator operators were in some demand. At that time you were obliged to learn masses of decimals by rote to reduce shillings and pence to a fraction of a pound in all calculations. In addition book-keeping was part of the course and I also took touch typing as an added qualification’. Of this business college training she noted, ‘[I] completed the course in half the [expected] time’. Shirley remembered that then ‘I was directed to my first job through [the Manpower Regulations]. I was given a choice of two. Both in the city of Melbourne’. The implication is that these skills, united with Shirley’s capacity, were needed as part of ensuring Australia’s victory. Shirley clearly recognised women could function as leaders in the hierarchy supporting the civilised society. She also experienced satisfaction in her own contribution of service designated as follower service. This satisfaction, it can be argued, was not based on directly following and supporting a leader’s moral decisions but rather on the idea of her personal responsibility for her contribution as a support of civilised society.

Barbara’s (24) story is one of how a girl came to imagine she could aspire to the role of a senior leader in British Australia. Barbara was the eldest of the three children of a partner in ‘a very small engineering supplies firm’ and a ‘housewife’. Barbara remembers her family as encouraging her both to remain independent and to strive for the position of social judgment and direction she believed would satisfy her. She recalled, ‘I was determined to be a school teacher, but Dad would not let me go to teachers’ college. He disapproved of bonding’.¹⁰⁰ However, her father advised her to realise her dream by working instead for a university scholarship which had no attached conditions. Barbara recalled a long experience of hard work and financial stricture associated with her position as a secondary reader:

My parents had little money and I was on a very small allowance. I knitted for some friends to earn a bit of pocket money. My parents rarely went out at night, but at the age of twelve I took over the babysitting at our house and was paid the

¹⁰⁰Teachers’ college scholarships for tuition and living allowances were the means by which Leaving Certificate candidates were encouraged to become teachers (See, Mackie, ‘The Training of Teachers’ in Cole, *The Education of the Adolescent in Australia*, p 88). An explanation of bonding - the requirement that in return for their tuition years students would teach in a departmentally-nominated school for a specific number of years - can be found in the New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 August, 1944, p 206.

two shillings that would have gone to the baby sitter. I worked in Dad's office sometimes in the holidays and once as a maid for my grandmother (Horrible experience!) [Barbara's emphasis].

It can be argued that Barbara's parents supported her education as a way for her to express what they all saw as her innate capacity for understanding civilised values. In doing this they also heightened her sense of individual freedom as a quality in the lives of those who had the capacity for leadership.

Barbara recalled how the feminine domestic relationship supported her understanding of English Literature. She recorded that 'Mother encouraged me [in wanting to read for] she was a bookworm'. This background fed into and expanded Barbara's easy understanding of the meaning of public mentoring as a process of moral development in secondary school English Literature. She added to the first comment, 'although I educated her taste as I grew older'. Barbara believed this domestic support was part of what made her 'passionate about English'. In the classroom, Barbara's response to English Literature may have seemed the outcome of public nurturing of an innate capacity, but it was also influenced by feminine experience beyond the classroom.

Barbara's memories can be interpreted as her sensing that English Literature was showing her how the world could be a satisfying place. Through its study she appears to have progressively learned to understand books as sources of information about herself in British society. It was as a junior that she came to understand the hegemony of morally-based public leadership as a necessary part of civilisation. Additionally, through her reading Barbara imagined that the greatest freedoms of British society resided in this elite service of judgment and direction and that in imperial outposts they were offered equally yet exclusively to the most capable citizens:

I think I found some of the books set for study [in junior secondary school] hard at first, but I always found them rewarding in the end. *Prester John* was a set text in the Intermediate. I think I was initially put off by the stuffy male narrator and by a South African setting in which I had no interest. I dutifully read a chapter or so a night. I can remember staying up very late (unknown to my parents) to finish *Prester John* which I hadn't much liked until I came to the use of the password, 'The pressboks (or something like that) are breaking ground'. Then I couldn't put it down. I still remember that moment of thrill quite clearly.

The password in *Prester John* is represented by Buchan as a signal that its young hero is not alone in his opposition to ‘others’ as the forces of disorder, but rather that the situation he has ‘naturally’ perceived is one which the British government also recognises. The story also details the ways David has unilaterally acted on this judgment by opposing those he judges to be the other. The message is written by Arcoll, the youth’s as-yet-unmet, British-government-approved mentor and the one who later makes plain to David British society’s approval of his ‘natural’ perceptions and autonomous response because they have maintained civilisation.¹⁰¹

Simultaneously with her experience of her femininity Barbara could understand herself as ungendered. The power of this memory suggests Barbara recognised the idea that those who are both young and recognised by authorities as capable can aspire to senior public leadership in British outposts. Consequently, the satisfying combination of the pleasure of independence and the pleasure of social approval was available in British Australia to groups with which she could identify.

Barbara’s recollections show she connected her sense of herself as an ungendered secondary school reader and as a feminine reader in creating a satisfying picture of her relationship to civilised society:

I have left the most important until last. Winifred Holtby’s *South Riding* was my Bible during my teens. I must have borrowed it from the Adelaide Circulating Library first, and then continually re-borrowed it. Finally, I saw it in a shop in 1944 [in her final secondary year] and rang Mother from town to ask if it was too expensive . . . My dear Mother said yes [buy it] and it is still on my shelves. It confirmed me in my desire to become a school teacher and gave me something to aim for. It confirmed me in my belief that marriage was not necessary for happiness. ‘I was born to be a spinster’, Sarah [the novel’s protagonist] said, ‘And by God I’m going to spin’ . . . It raised my interest in local government and labour politics and educated me in social responsibility [Barbara’s capitalisations].

Barbara never married, but at the end of this paragraph she added that there were ‘a couple of young men who asked me to marry them, but did not believe in working wives! [Barbara’s emphasis]’. These memories suggest she used overlapping notions of herself as a secondary school reader and as a reading daughter. In this way she negotiated her concerns about traditional feminine heterosexuality and its confinements and her attraction to the hierarchical, civilised society which she believed clearly incorporated women as part of its senior leadership

¹⁰¹ *PJ* p 78.

Barbara appears to have understood that there was a close connection between examinations and the social freedoms she had invested in. She explained:

[I] went straight to the University of Adelaide [from secondary school for an honours degree in English as a first step towards secondary teaching. I] worked very hard to get a scholarship both to help my parents and because it would be a protection against being drafted into munitions.¹⁰²

It is arguable that occupying a 'drafted' position in a munitions factory would also have ensured Barbara occupied a position as a follower. It seems that English Literature was Barbara's guide to imagining an unassailably respectable, satisfying femininity, a womanhood which gave her access to public power and autonomy and social approval as one who maintained the eternal values of civilisation.

To sum up, these memories can be interpreted to reveal that the wartime secondary school readers were aware of themselves as coming to terms with new meanings of femininity. This sense of newness resided not only in some consciousness of the emphasis on gender in the change from child to adult, but also in the sense of occupying feminine roles of responsibility emerging from a changing British society. In their struggle to make satisfying sense of this world readers drew on the rules and resources they were offered through English Literature and the discourses they experienced as girls in wartime Australia. Thus they were able to interpret womanhood as a more powerful identity than the authorities intended. Girls could imagine satisfying feminine public positions as both leaders and followers for they believed both positions allowed the individual to choose in her contribution to the civilised society. However, the way in which they understood civilisation was mediated by their experience. As a result, the concept of civilisation was potentially open to changes significant to femininity as wartime girls began to invest in hierarchical positions concomitant with their notion of the place of femininity across the range of citizen service. This negotiation too was part of the process of larger changes and therefore an additional source of uncertainty. In the next chapter I look at the outcome of secondary readers' response to the atmosphere of insecurity which was such a powerful part of their lives at this time.

¹⁰²There are several studies on both the way women experienced Manpower regulations as coercion and women's unpleasant experience of rigid supervision in the wartime factories. Reekie's 'Shunted Back to the Kitchen?' demonstrates both these issues. See Reekie in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, especially p 77 and p 83.

Chapter Five: Secondary School Library Reading and Natural Feminine Choice

Introduction

This chapter looks at girls' complex experience of 'natural' femininity through the British woman, domestic mother/daughter relationships, and power negotiations in this period of social change. It focuses on how these notions were mediated by secondary school library reading. Conservative British Australian ideas of femininity were derived from traditional ideas of womanhood. Therefore, they were often in conflict with the demands of modern femininity represented by the schools. Girls sought satisfying ways to balance the competing expectations. Secondary school library reading provided girls with an opportunity for the satisfying re-adjustment of ideas of youthful femininity.

The chapter argues that girl secondary school readers re-negotiated the socially-approved notion of natural femininity. As a result, the self-selection of satisfying values from competing and conflicting ideas of womanhood became a key quality of *natural* womanhood in the emerging discourse of approved youthful femininity. My argument is based on the idea that the way Australian girls perceived the relationship between the public and domestic systems shaping them affected their potential for this agency.

In relation to gender, the interests supporting the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy both had reason to draw on past systems for shaping citizen workers even while new ones were evolving as a result of their changing needs. Systems for the public regulation of workers could not be developed in a brief space of time, therefore aspects of the traditional domestic production of workers continued to be valuable. Furthermore, women's role as private domestic supporters of men as public actors was a foundation of the gender relationship power aspect. These dominant groups also drew on the rhetoric of the past discourses supporting traditional capitalism and patriarchy even while the meanings of these discourses were shifting as a result of their contemporary experience of pressure. Consequently, wartime girls were being shaped into young womanhood by both the publicly regulatory secondary school and the domestically guiding mother/daughter relationship.

In these public and domestic systems girls experienced feminine service as part of the national discourses of Britishness and motherhood in complex ways which were associated with the notion of the 'natural'. Chapter Four discussed how girls were shaped into feminine service as modern British citizens. Secondary schools disciplined them into seeing themselves as having a natural capacity for public service in support of civilisation. However, simultaneously, girls were being guided into womanhood through the domestic feminine relationship, where they experienced the national discourse of motherhood from the perspective of daughterliness. In British societies, the feminine domestic relationship was traditionally understood as a mother's natural developing of her daughter into a domestic, nurturing woman such as she was herself; a girl would become a wife and mother.¹ This notion of domestic guidance continued in the interwar years, by which time it had also become a working-class value.² Ideas of natural feminine domestic nurturance and guidance influenced developing twentieth century ideas of motherhood. In this later discourse an individual's change from a child into an adult was regarded as natural bio-social evolution. The naturally nurturing mother was attuned to anxieties generated in her offspring as the result of these changes and she facilitated her child's smooth transition by representing the change in a way which was attractive to her individual child.³ Facilitation was ideally a smooth process for bringing out an already existing feature rather than a discipline, forcing the subject into a required social position.⁴ In the 1930s and 1940s these concepts of motherhood were reinforced and popularised by the object relations psychologist D W Winnicott and his colleagues.⁵ Ideally, the pleasures of the child in such a relationship were maternal attunement to her anxieties

¹For developing concept of domestic femininity in Victorian society see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p 74, p 149. For mother/daughter relationship see Davidoff and Hall, *op cit*, pp 340-341, pp 384-385. For the importance of gender as an earliest awareness in western societies, Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, pp 82-83.

²Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, Chapter One.

³Juhász, *Reading from the Heart*, pp 255-258.

⁴Winnicott, 'A Man Looks at Motherhood' in *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*, p 17.

⁵Juhász, *Reading from the Heart* pp 253-273; For Winnicott's views on the naturalness of maternal attunement and facilitation see, for example, 'A Man Looks at Motherhood', the first chapter of the book based on his 1940's radio talks, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*; for a list of Winnicott's work see *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*, pp 264-276. Winnicott's thought on the importance of attunement and facilitation and the significance of the mother child dyad in an individual's growth was published in the *Victorian Education Gazette and Teachers Aide* in 1942 (20 April, 1942, pp 106 ff).

associated with growth and change and her mother's kindly facilitation of her next life role. These were particularly powerful pleasures for British girls.

In this chapter, the section on discourses affecting girl readers shows how by 1939 secondary school girls were being shaped into new, subordinate power relationships associated with adult femininity and public feminine service. The development of students into modern British citizens was the pre-eminent goal of the secondary schools.⁶ However, the effect of the discourses of Britishness and of motherhood meant that secondary school girls could understand their domestic experience as excess to the school-encouraged identities, yet still recognised as a part of femininity. This approved combination of public and domestic experience let the girls imagine they had other sources on which to draw in negotiating a satisfying role for themselves in their new experience of femininity. This was the pre-condition for girl readers' negotiation of the self-selection of satisfying values from competing and conflicting discourses of femininity as a key quality of the socially-approved idea of natural womanhood. Secondary school library reading practices ensured that girls felt they could accommodate the conflicting demands of their domestic and school identities in satisfying ways and that they should make adjustments to their performance in the more rigid atmosphere of the school, as well as in the domestic sphere, in order to do this. The most popular library texts told stories of apparent support for the patriarchal idea of civilisation in both its traditional and modern form. At the same time they demonstrated that some adjustment of the less-satisfying aspects was a natural part of the way women accommodated the dominant notions. An analysis of one series from the outstandingly popular author, L M Montgomery, reveals how these stories contributed to girls' ideas of personally-satisfying selection from among competing and conflicting notions of femininity as natural womanhood.

The section on memories analyses the way public adolescence and domestic daughterliness met in secondary school library reading to make the selection of satisfying but conflicting ideas of femininity part of natural womanhood. This combination of positions resulted in girls striving to meet the secondary system's normalising insistence on absolute standards of behaviour in their new class and

⁶See Chapter Four.

gender roles by drawing on the rules and resources of the *natural* domestic relationship. The influence of the discourse of motherhood ensured that the approved feminine-point-of-view story of girls' life experience had an especially important place in shaping girls to feel comfortable about the new norms associated with public citizenship. It allowed girl readers to feel approved over choosing the most satisfying of the values and to imagine them as an extension of natural femininity. The detailed recollections of two school library readers, Rosalie (138) and Cecilia (94), reveal the importance of secondary school library fiction in giving girls this agency.

Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers

Ideas of natural womanhood in the discourses of British modern citizenship and of motherhood were different. However, in the experience of secondary school girl library readers the two notions intertwined with each other in ways which formed a bridge between girls' public and domestic life. Girl secondary school library readers could use this bridge to negotiate the self-selection of satisfying but conflicting recognised feminine values as part of natural womanhood.

As noted earlier, by 1939 increasing numbers of girls were being disciplined into modern Australian British citizens in the secondary schools.⁷ Chapter Four demonstrates that such citizenship was founded on the notion that every acknowledged British Australian had a natural capacity for recognising, and performing as part of, civilised society. Civilised society was supported domestically, but directed and maintained in the public arena through a strict hierarchical structure. As modern public citizens were seen as ungendered, girls were being newly shaped into using their natural British capacity for civilisation as part of this rigidly standardised, public identity. This situation ensured girls experienced considerable insecurity, both because they were learning to perform a new role and because their new role insisted on a rigidly prescribed performance from each individual. At the same time, British morality was understood as first nurtured in the home by virtuous women.⁸ Consequently, schools also acknowledged the domestic femininity which supported public citizenship as a less-important but still significant aspect of the

⁷Craig Campbell, 'Secondary Schooling, Modern Adolescence and the Reconstitution of the Middle Class', *History of Education Review*, vol 24, no 1, 1995.

⁸Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp 338-340.

natural British capacity for creating and maintaining civilisation. Girls who had previously been encouraged to think of themselves as children were now simultaneously disciplined into understanding themselves as potential British Australian domestic wives and mothers through both instruction in femininity and representations of femininity in examination reading such as *Silas Marner* and *Pride and Prejudice*.⁹ This was another reason for girls' sense of the secondary school experience as one of disquieting newness.

Girls experienced the discourse of motherhood from the perspective of the daughter. By this time the British idea of motherhood was being normalised through public systems.¹⁰ Consequently, a greater percentage of girls was experiencing being facilitated into natural maternal womanhood by domestic mothers who were themselves considered as naturally maternal. School and the mass media also combined to ensure that girls understood that the pleasures of maternal attunement and facilitation were a natural part of a girl's life. Girls had access to the girls' family stories on the primary school library shelves and to family magazines with articles supporting the notion of facilitation, such as Alan Marshall's 'Through a Man's Eyes' column in the May, 1941 edition of *Woman*.¹¹

The way mothers experienced social and personal pressures however, ensured that the promise of emotional comfort implicit for girls in the feminine domestic relationship was rarely perfectly fulfilled. The maternal relationship was not necessarily a relationship all adult women of this time completely accepted. Cultural values attached to class and race meant that some mothers were outside the truth-knowledge component of the maternal relationship.¹² Some women were not in a position themselves to offer daughters personal warmth and support as they guided

⁹For instruction in femininity see Matthews, 'Education for Femininity' in *Labour History*, (45), 1983, p 35. These novels frequently appeared on the prescribed examination lists at both the lower and the higher standards and were regarded as attractive to girls. An incomplete review of the examination lists reveals *Pride and Prejudice* on the senior Queensland list throughout the war, on the Western Australian senior list in 1939, 1942, 1944, on the New South Wales senior Honours list in 1942, the Victorian list in 1943 and the South Australian list in 1945. *Silas Marner* was on the junior list for Western Australia in 1943, 1944, 1945 and the Victorian list in 1942.

¹⁰Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*.

¹¹For girls' family stories access see Chapter Two. For girls as readers of family magazines, Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, pp 84-86. Marshall's article, *Woman*, 19 May, 1941, p 14.

¹²McCalman, op cit, p 202, pp 206-209; Connors, Finch, Saunders and Taylor, *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-45 War*, p 101, p 127.

them towards womanhood either through the way their own personality had been constituted or through stress.¹³ However, maternal facilitation was particularly attractive to a daughter during periods when she was experiencing significant identity change for it allowed her to diminish the pressure of the ‘new’ by seeing it as a happy natural evolution. Consequently, the secondary school girl was positioned to seek ways to fill in any lack in her access to the maternal facilitation of her evolving womanhood.

At the outbreak of the second world war the contemporary needs of capitalist and patriarchal interests had influenced society so that it recognised, and mothers understood, that the domestic facilitation of daughters was not only as facilitation into domestic womanhood but also into public womanhood. Modern systems of public regulation were increasingly the way the Australian population was being organised. Society in general, and therefore more mothers, were accepting primary and secondary school as part of the modern public citizen’s training.¹⁴ Furthermore, mothers themselves had experience of the public regulation of the modern woman citizen through the infant welfare system.¹⁵ Consequently, by this time society recognised that mothers could also appropriately facilitate a second aspect of natural womanhood, in this case the British woman’s natural capacity for civilised service which underpinned her role as a modern public citizen.

As part of facilitation British Australian daughters were ‘naturally’ experiencing representations of both domestic and public womanhood personally-tailored to make these identities seem attractive to the individual. When there was more than one girl in a family or when friends compared notes of the way mothers represented the identities, girls could clearly see these representations differed.¹⁶ This implied to them that women had some choice in how they would perform femininity. Furthermore, this notion of some individual control over how femininity might be performed appeared to be supported by the secondary schools despite their concepts of

¹³McCalman op cit, pp 57-58, p 60, pp 202-203; Walker, *Roundabout at Bangalow*, p 93, p 116.

¹⁴Craig Campbell, op cit, pp 62-69; Holbrook, ‘Apathetic Parents and Wilful Children?’ in Theobald and Selleck, *Family, School and State in Australian History*, p 137.

¹⁵Reiger, op cit, p 133.

¹⁶See for example, Shirley Walker’s recollections in Walker, op cit, p 117. Of course many of the reading girls would have experienced something like Marmee’s personally-tailored, differential representations of future feminine life to Jo (pp 113-116) and to Amy (pp 273-275) in *Little Women*.

disciplining girls into femininity. Secondary school girls found examination literature recognised the domestic mother-daughter relationship with its facilitation of a girl's movement into womanhood along with its recognition of the naturalness of a girl's basic capacity for understanding the rigid hierarchy of public civilised values. For example, both *Silas Marner* and *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrate the need for motherly facilitation as part of a girl's successful evolution into womanhood.¹⁷ This double experience of maternal facilitation (at home and at school) allowed girls to imagine there was a bridge between feminine values in the public and domestic arenas and that there was some room for negotiation in the performance of femininity. Moreover, a mother's facilitating approach depended on pleasure rather than discipline and seemed more clearly natural because it had always already existed for the growing girls. In a time when secondary schools were disciplining the girls into their new identities, maternal facilitation was simultaneously positioned to be a girl's paramount guide for her new domestic and public identities. The stage was set for girl readers in the secondary school libraries to negotiate new, satisfying ideas of young womanhood as natural, mother-endorsed femininity.

Practices

Two secondary school library practices gave girls used to facilitation the space to negotiate the self-selection of values from competing and conflicting femininities as a quality of natural womanhood. One of these was the difference between the authoritative representations and practice over uniform visual markers as an essential element of belonging to an approved group.¹⁸ The other was the presence in library collections of girls' life experience stories which both facilitated their readers' womanhood and celebrated facilitation.

Simultaneously with the idea that secondary school girls were being newly disciplined into public citizens, school authorities recognised that, because of their

¹⁷In *Pride and Prejudice* the Bennet girls struggle because a foolish mother is unable to provide appropriate facilitation. See for example, Chapter One, Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Sydney, Dymock's Book Arcade, 1945. In *Silas Marner*, a kindly neighbour woman facilitates orphaned Eppie's transition into womanhood. See for example, George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, Great Britain, T Nelson and Sons, n.d. but inscribed, 'For the Leaving Certificate 1926, Cranbrook School, New South Wales, pp 229 and passim.

¹⁸Foucault discusses the importance of insistence on the visually correct as a technology for authoritative shaping of the modern subject. See *Discipline and Punish*, p 187.

British capacity for civilisation, the girls were also naturally evolving into modern British citizens. Consequently, it was possible for authorities to imagine that they could accommodate some latitude in the constancy and extent of their disciplinary correction and still achieve a successful outcome. Uniform visual markers were an important disciplinary technology. Uniformity was represented to girls as essential for social recognition as belonging to an approved group.¹⁹ School uniforms and library books were deployed in this position by authorities shaping the girl library readers. However, girls' experience of library practices in relation to both dress and books made it clear that if they made some adjustment to approved uniform visual markers this did not ensure their exclusion from the group. This experience created the potential for girls to see some self-selected choice as an aspect of their femininity.

In the first place girls experienced this adjustment as part of their own performance as secondary school library readers. Secondary schools sought to discipline girls into accepting visual uniformity as a marker of approved belonging. This applied to the girl readers' own bodies. By 1939 ongoing surveillance and constant correction was ensuring that girls understood school uniforms as part of the normalised appearance of the secondary school girl.²⁰ Girls knew that if they failed to wear uniforms they were, at the least, stigmatised as 'conspicuous'.²¹ In a similar fashion, norms of visual conformity applied to the way secondary school girls wore their hair.²² At the same time, this surveillance meant cohorts of girls were moving towards the notion that, even while uniformity was emphasised, there were opportunities for their satisfying adjustment of the visual markers. The girls' adjustments were drawn from competing discourses of femininity so some could be clearly in conflict with the approved idea of the secondary school girl. As early as the beginning of the 1930s, girls had begun to manipulate the appearance of the 'unbecoming' uniforms which were the result of the British notion of the 'ungendered' feminine citizen. Where their developing identity

¹⁹ For example, school uniforms were represented as essential for recognising a girl belonged to an approved group as a citizen-in-training. See, Burrows, *History of Abbotsleigh*, pp 65-66; New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 2 August, 1943, p 187.

²⁰ Walker, op cit, p 92; 'Our Girls: Jubilee Journal of the Maitland Girls' High School', p 27; New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 'Austerity Uniform for Girls', 2 August, 1943, p 187.

²¹ Walker, op cit, p 92, p 93. See also Rosemary's case study in Chapter Two.

²² See for example the photographs of all the girls of Maitland Girls High School at the end of 1933, *Our Girls: Jubilee Journal of the Maitland Girls' High School*, p 103 and p 98; the photographs of Abbotsleigh girls in 1936 and 1940, Burrows, op cit, on the reverse of page facing p 64 and facing page 65; *St Mary Star of the Sea College: The First 120 Years*, p 44.

as modern young women and future modern wives and mothers seemed more satisfying, they sought to use the uniforms to enhance this identity. Girls also sought the satisfaction of hair styles which supported their ideas of their other identities and yet conformed sufficiently to school values to maintain their position as schoolgirls.²³ School authority frowned on but tolerated such appearances.²⁴ The manipulated dress was still recognised as a school uniform and the girl was still considered a developing British citizen.²⁵

Readers' experience of uniform visual markers in relation to the care and use of their school's library collection reinforced their understanding that authority would recognise belonging through noting only a few of the specified visual markers, thus leaving a space for satisfying individual adjustments. As will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs, girls were involved with the appearance and place of library books as part of 'the (library) collection' in ways which gave them a position of some authority. Secondary school libraries were technologies for establishing norms designed to maintain the dominance of the patriarchy and capitalism. The patriarchal and capitalist world was attractively represented in schools as the 'civilised' world and girls understood they were being shaped into this world.²⁶ Approved books were represented to the girls as emblems of civilisation because they were the repositories of the ideas of civilisation.²⁷ Therefore, books were also objects which 'belonged' and must be cared for.²⁸ In this care the emphasis was on the visual as a way of marking those belonging to civilisation and on their distribution according to these visual markers. Girls were responsible for preparing books in ways which made these ideas of visual markers and the associated distribution clear to them. They were also expected to exercise their power to select or reject books according to the books' visual markers. However, it was possible for girls to carry out their selection using only some of the range of visual markers they had been alerted to. Consequently, girls

²³Walker, op cit, p 114; Lambert, op cit, p 47.

²⁴See for example the tone of 'Our Flapperettes', *The Chronicle*, November, 1929, p 18. Lambert, op cit, p 47, p 55; Middleton, *Disciplining Sexuality*, pp 43-45.

²⁵Sydney Girls' High School magazine, *The Chronicle*, final issue for 1929, p 19; Walker, op cit, p 92; Lambert, op cit, p 47.

²⁶See Chapter Two and Chapter Four.

²⁷An idea foregrounded in the girls' English Literature lessons, see Chapter Four. For books as clarifiers of civilised society and the girls' role in it in relation to the library, 'Library Notes', *The Weaver*, 1941, p 36, 1945, p33.; 'Library Notes, *The Gleam*, 1939, p 29, 1942, p 9.

²⁸*The Gleam*, 1939, p 28.

could elide these ideas into the notion that among the visually-recognised elements of an object some visual uniformities were significant to those who had power and so made the bearer approved. Equally, uniformity or otherwise was socially insignificant for other visually-recognised elements.

Although the levels of involvement differed, girl readers were involved in practices of visually-based care for and/or use of the library collection. Teachers alerted girls to the concept that specified visual aspects of the book were significant to recognising it as part of civilised society. Some schools insisted on books in the library collection being 'blind covered' in holland jackets of a particular colour. Purchased books were covered at the school and students were expected to assist in the covering. Therefore some girls both read approved books with uniform covers and were instrumental in implementing this uniform covering as part of the campaign to preserve valuable objects.²⁹ Where books were uncovered girls read series and the oeuvres of favourite authors. Schools usually bought these volumes from the same publishing house and, by this time, such a house usually published them in uniform editions.³⁰ Furthermore, the schools sought to acquire shelving for their libraries which allowed each book to be stored vertically. Because of the relative uniformity of published book sizing, these shelves were ideally of uniform depth.³¹ Girls both read books numbered similarly through the Dewey system and formally learned how the Dewey numbers were significant in marking a book's place in the collection.³² As a result of this system, shelved books were uniformly positioned according to the way the numbers on their

²⁹*The Gleam*, 'Library Notes', 1939, p 28, 1945, p 17. Book covering was a contested area. See for example, the Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 'Secondary Schools: The School Library and Its Contents', October Supplement, 1944, p 32 and the New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 1 July, 1939, p 186. Books from secondary school libraries in the researcher's collection have what are clearly uniform covers or partial covers, sometimes as repairs, created by an inexperienced hand. For example, Idriess' *Forty Fathoms Deep* (1938 edition) from Wollongong High School, *Emily of New Moon* (title/date page removed but of similar vintage from publication quality) from Queenwood private girls' school.

³⁰For example, Mac Robertson's library register included no 9, *Good Wives*, no 10, *Jo's Boys*, no 11 *Little Women* all from Studley Books, New York. The register also included Montgomery's oeuvre. No 300, *Anne's House of Dreams* (1938), no 301 *Emily Climbs* (1939), no 302, *Pat of Silver Bush*. All these were uniform Angus and Robertson editions. See also Figures 1 and 2 of this chapter.

³¹Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 'Secondary Schools: The School Library and Its Contents', October Supplement, 1944, p 32, 'School Libraries: Bookstands for the Class-room [sic] Library', 17 June, 1941, pp 178 ff; Burrows, *History of Abbotsleigh*, see photographs facing p 48 and p 64; Walker, op cit, p 92.

³²Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 'Secondary Schools: The School Library and Its Contents', October Supplement, 1944, p 32 and 27 January, 1945, p 8; New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 'Suggested Outline of a Course of Instruction in Library Method for Schools', 1 December, 1938, p 394 ff, 1 February, 1939, p 16; *The Weaver*, 1945, p 33.

spines were viewed. Girls chose their books from these shelves and as students and monitors positioned books on the shelves.³³ So, they learned that uniformity through visual markers was important to ideas of belonging.

At the same time these girls' involvement with library care and use ensured they learned that objects could vary in other recognised visual aspects and yet still be part of the collection.³⁴ Some of the covered books had hard covers and some of them had soft covers.³⁵ The series and oeuvres had different titles on the spines and sometimes different pictures on the covers.³⁶ The collection had books of different sizes in height and width.³⁷ Shelving, while ideally totally uniform, was usually developed through a process of accrual dependent on collection expansion and school funding.³⁸ Consequently, the shelves were likely to be mismatched in appearance and height. For some girls, it was clear that even the supposed absolute uniformities were not necessarily policed once they appeared to be in place. A great deal of time was given to learning the Dewey system for the stated purpose of allowing a student to find her way to a particular book.³⁹ Student readers would ideally police these books by keeping them in numerical order when browsing or returning. Furthermore, through their disappointment at being unable to find a volume in its correct place when borrowing, they would seek the help of the librarian who would then restore the

³³Readers were also adjured to replace books correctly on the shelves as they browsed. See for example, *The Gleam's* Library Notes, 1939, p 28; For library monitors and student helpers see 'Library Notes', *The Weaver*, 1941, p 36, 1942, p 34; 'Library Notes', *The Gleam*, 1939, p 29, 1942, p 9, 1943, p 18, 1945, p 17.

³⁴See for example Liz Conor's notion that the way individuals experience their visibility is not necessarily the way the authorities meant it. 'The City Girl: Appearing in the Modern Scene', *Lilith*, vol 11, 2002, p 53, pp 65-66.

³⁵See 'Library Notes', *The Weaver*, 1942, p 34. Limp covered books were likely to be more common than the catalogues reveal. Publishers such as Blackie, University of London Press and Oxford University Press which appear in the catalogues issued books in limp cover as well as in boards at this time. There are several limp-covered books from high school libraries of that era in the researcher's collection, for example *The Story of Captain Cook* published by TC and EC Jack from the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Stuartholme, Brisbane and *Krag The Kootenay Ram and other Animal Stories* from Newtown Boys' Junior High in New South Wales.

³⁶School library registers demonstrate the shelved books in a series or an oeuvre may have been purchased from a range of editions. Libraries did not always strive to make them uniform, see Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 'Secondary Schools: The School Library and Its Contents', October Supplement, 1944, p 32.

³⁷Library lists and catalogues of high school libraries reveal the multiplicity of publishing houses from which the library books were drawn. Examples of these books in the researcher's collection demonstrate their similarity in depth and difference in height and width.

³⁸*The Gleam*, 1945, p 17; Victorian *Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 'School Libraries: Bookstands for the Class-room [sic] Library', 17 June, 1941, pp 178 ff.

³⁹New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 'Suggested Outline of a Course of Instruction', 1 December, 1938, p 395.

order.⁴⁰ However, girl fiction readers soon found that in the school library only a small part of this system was important. For example, a girl could find the fiction shelves then look alphabetically for the first letter of the author's surname to locate a favourite book or author in a school library, even if it wasn't in the 'right' order according to its subsequent numeration.⁴¹

Femininity, as I have argued earlier, was often represented as being accepted in secondary schools rather than celebrated. Secondary education primarily sought to shape girls as ungendered citizens. Yet, paradoxically, while school libraries emphasised discipline as the mode for shaping girls into ungendered citizenship, they also practised and celebrated the feminine notion of facilitation and so encouraged girl readers into ideas that some adjustment of the schools' dominant idea of femininity was acceptable. This occurred because, in addition to their clear aim of shaping of girls as modern British citizens, school authorities also deployed school libraries to shape girls as future wives and mothers. The education hierarchy's British values ensured that 'girls' fiction' valorised traditional, British middle class notions of natural womanhood and the feminine domestic relationship. However, publication practices ensured that through these stories girls were shown that facilitation and its concomitant, adjustment, were natural and pleasurable parts of femininity.

Firstly, educational tenets ensured girls in the wartime school libraries had access to stories which, unlike so much of the prescribed examination reading discussed in Chapter Four, valorised a woman's perspective. In the 1920s the Newbolt report encouraged schools to draw on the reading youth clearly enjoyed if it could be used to guide young taste towards the culturally-valuable. This idea continued to influence education authorities' thinking.⁴² In a 1940 report England's Jenkinson published text recommendations premised on the Newboltian ideal.⁴³ New Zealand's Scott published similar recommendations from a survey of youthful reading in 1946.⁴⁴ Both reports

⁴⁰Ibid, p 394, p 396, p 397.

⁴¹For example, there were many of L M Montgomery's volumes on the shelves at Queenwood, but just finding MON would bring a girl searching for *Emily of New Moon* to her object. The number of this volume was MON 12.

⁴²Newbolt, *The Teaching of English in England*, p 147-150; Salter Davies, op cit, p 488.

⁴³Jenkinson, *What Do Boys and Girls Read*, see p 155 and p 269.

⁴⁴W J Scott, *Reading Film and Radio Tastes of High School Boys and Girls*, p 195.

were influential in the education system.⁴⁵ Both reports revealed that what girl readers liked to read were feminine-point-of-view stories of girlhood in the British new world. Montgomery and Alcott were outright favourite authors in this genre. Coolidge was high on the list.⁴⁶ The cultural connections between England and America were reflected in the girls' stories and so ensured that Australian authorities could see these tales as embryonic reflections of women's role in British societies.⁴⁷ The previous chapter addressed the wartime educational hierarchy's notion that readers and authors shared the same basic idea of the true and the good. A concomitant of this perception was authorities' assumption that those who chose the books for the school libraries perceived each book's whole message. At a further remove they believed that secondary school readers would read the stories approved for them in the same way as the stories were understood by the choosing authority. As a consequence of the foregoing ideas, wartime secondary school libraries offered junior girls access to the favourite stories. The 1940 'Library Notes' in Abbotsleigh's school magazine include four of Montgomery's stories as the 'ever-green "Anne" books'.⁴⁸ The wartime junior library register for the selective Mac Robertson Girls' High School in Victoria listed eight Alcotts, one Coolidge and eleven Montgomeries.⁴⁹

These books also told girls a British feminine life story in which the self-selection of some conflicting but satisfying values from other identities and their incorporation in a negotiated approved femininity was part of natural womanhood. This was partly the result of the authors' own experience of frustration with 'ideal' feminine life and their seeking for potential ways for overcoming these frustrations and partly because girls' life experience was the novel's subject. Because girlhood was understood as a process of change, the stories foregrounded a girl's anxieties over her changing relationship to society and valorised facilitation as part of the discourse of motherhood. The personal, feminine nature of the story meant that the author drew to some extent, and often unconsciously, on her own point-of view in imagining the

⁴⁵Jenkinson was a teacher training college director. Scott was asked to undertake his survey by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

⁴⁶See also Foster and Simons, *What Katy Read*, p 13. For favourite authors among this wartime cohort of girls see Jenkinson, op cit, p177; Scott, op cit, p 9.

⁴⁷Foster and Simons, op cit, pp 4-7, pp 13-19.

⁴⁸'Library Notes', *The Weaver*, 1940, pp 23-24.

⁴⁹A copy of this register is in the researcher's collection.

girl's anxieties.⁵⁰ As a consequence, notions of how a woman could draw on the values of other discourses for satisfaction and still be considered a British woman often became a subtext in the story, there to be absorbed by those anxious over the same issues.⁵¹ These authors belonged to the provincial Victorian middle classes in which a successful woman writer, publicly earning a living, was breaching the feminine ideal.⁵² Additionally, the author's struggle was not over with the publication of her book. Some of these women sought a wider audience than the one among which they grew famous. Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century girls' stories were becoming a profitable niche market for publishers and authors alike.⁵³ This and the increasing popularity of 'series' books meant a girl's-experience book which met a popular need in the marketplace could create the writing of girls' stories as yet another feminine confinement for their authors.⁵⁴ Alcott wrote in several genres, most notably gothic thrillers, and thought that *Little Women* 'the simple story, the kind of moral biography her father dreamed of [her writing], was boring'.⁵⁵ Montgomery complained 'I'm awfully afraid that if the thing [*Anne of Avonlea* written at the request of her publishers after *Green Gables* success] takes they'll want me to take her through college. The idea makes me sick . . . If I'm to be dragged at Anne's chariot wheels the rest of my life I'll bitterly repent having "created" her'.⁵⁶ Yet these women did earn money by publishing their work, did also publish stories beyond 'girls' stories' and still managed to accommodate British feminine values sufficiently to continue to be regarded as respectable women.⁵⁷

⁵⁰Foster and Simons, op cit, pp 26-28; Holly Pike, 'The Heroine Who Writes' in Rubio, *Harvesting Thistles*, p 52, pp 55-57.

⁵¹Foster and Simons, op cit, pp 25-30.

⁵²Foster and Simons, op cit, pp 27-28. Alcott (1832-1888) was the daughter of an American teacher and philosopher (Saxton, *Louisa May*, p 3, pp 7-8); Coolidge (1835 -1905) was the daughter of an American academic family (Foster and Simons, op cit, pp 109-110.); Montgomery (1874-1942) came from a family of successful Canadian, pioneering farmers and was the wife of a Presbyterian minister (Wiggins, *L M Montgomery*, p 2, pp 11-12). See also Pike, op cit.

⁵³Mitchell, *The New Girl*, p 1; Wiggins, op cit, p 36.

⁵⁴Wiggins, op cit, p 43; Pike, op cit, p 56.

⁵⁵Saxton, op cit, p 259, p 295.

⁵⁶Wiggins, op cit, p 50. See also Mary Henley Rubio in her 'Introduction: Harvesting Thistles in Montgomery's Textual Garden' in Rubio, *Harvesting Thistles*, p 4.

⁵⁷Alcott subsequently published work featuring her wider interests anonymously 'feeling overwhelming pressures on her to be virtuous', Saxton, op cit, p 342. For Montgomery, see Wiggins, p116. Margaret Turner also draws attention to other of Montgomery's writings in which she expresses her consciousness of accommodation in the 'popular' books. Turner, "'I Mean to Try as Far as in Me Lies'" in Rubio, *Harvesting Thistles*, p 97.

The girls' favourite stories had a doubly powerful effect in conveying their subversive message. Scholars have argued persuasively that authors or genres which female readers seek repetitively are chosen because their themes provide notions of the world and the reader's position in it which comfort the reader's anxieties.⁵⁸ Anxious secondary school girls already understood the meaning of ideal motherhood and its pleasures for offspring. It is clear that favourite girls' stories on the library shelves could be read as tales of how the textual mothers were attuned to the textual daughters' anxieties over their change from girlhood to womanhood and the maternal facilitation of that change. Girls might see this as a representation of their lived world and so it reinforced the idea that their own mothers would facilitate change. The tales could also be read as strategies in which author-mothers acknowledged the anxieties of reader-daughters and so the telling of the stories could be accepted by the reader as a way for her to imagine a more satisfying natural womanhood. Juhasz has demonstrated that for girls in British societies favourite reading serves as a substitute for maternal attunement and facilitation for the passage from childhood to womanhood.⁵⁹ Many of the favourite stories themselves further reinforce this notion of reading by including stories told by a mother-figure to a daughter-figure as a device for moving the girl protagonist along the road to her natural fulfilment as wife and mother.

Secondary school girls were part of a group which valued standardisation. However, the experience of some latitude in the implementation of uniform standards and the availability of girls' life experience stories in the school libraries combined to contribute to a girl understanding a femininity where the subject could incorporate some self-selected, satisfying differences in conflict with the dominant ideas of womanhood and still clearly be part of the approved group.

Texts

Four aspects of those girls' life-experience stories which were told from a feminine perspective shaped girls into imagining that their choosing of satisfying values from across the repertoire of femininities associated with the national discourses was a part

⁵⁸Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p 17, p 97; for girls specifically, Juhasz, op cit, pp 5-6 and Mitchell, op cit, pp 146.

⁵⁹Juhasz, op cit, pp 13-17, pp 6-8.

of *natural* femininity. Firstly, the stories were clearly about girls preparing for British feminine service as wives and mothers. In this world the dominant (masculine) notion of the good woman represented women as happy to perform subservient service supporting masculine citizens. Secondly, the feminine perspective stories recognised that for girls this total subservience and happiness were contradictions in terms. Therefore, in this feminine perspective ideal mother-figures were shown as understanding that the masculine view of femininity was one which could not make a girl happy. Thirdly, through both facilitating activities and through telling facilitating stories these mother-figures subtly adjusted dominant ideas of the power balance of the gender relationship, re-interpreting the meaning of femininity to a notion of a service which could satisfy a respectable girl. Finally, the exceedingly popular Montgomery books were themselves strategic stories by which a wise older woman supportively represented a girl's achievement of feminine happiness as the result of negotiation of dominant ideas inside the modern, British, patriarchal world.

L M Montgomery's 'Pat' series, *Pat of Silver Bush* and *Mistress Pat*, demonstrates the way these aspects could contribute to respectable girls' ideas of femininity as a condition in which the negotiation of more satisfying meanings was maternally and therefore socially approved. First published between 1933 and 1935, the series tells the story of Pat Gardiner's life as the daughter of a relatively comfortable British farming family in provincial Canada during the interwar years. It covers her experience between the ages of seven and thirty one.⁶⁰ This text has been chosen as an exemplar of influential secondary school library reading for two reasons. Firstly, because the participants' memories reveal how popular and powerful all Montgomery's books were. Secondly, because 'Pat' was a specific recollection and yet the series has not been subjected to the considerable number of subsequent re-creations in popular culture the more memorable *Anne of Green Gables* has had.⁶¹

Montgomery's stories recognise how girls and young women feel distress over certain aspects implicit in becoming a woman according to the dominant ideas in the interwar British societies. In the Pat series these fears centre around a girl's insecurities associated with the change from childhood to paid public work and

⁶⁰Wiggins, op cit, pp 116-118.

⁶¹See Bruce, *Maud: the Life of L M Montgomery, the Creator of 'Anne of Green Gables'*, p 154.

marriage, and the lack of feminine pleasure in womanhood.⁶² Simultaneously, Montgomery paints in detail the way the good British mother lovingly guides the good British girl into re-negotiating a more satisfying, but still acceptable womanhood in order to allow her to fulfil what was understood as her *natural* destiny as a happy wife and mother in a patriarchy. Her story embraces modern British femininity with its newer emphasis on the public role of women yet at the same time places the roots of this negotiation in the ideal domestic tradition of British womanhood.

Ideal motherhood in the feminine domestic relationship is important to Montgomery's plots. Additionally, the attuned author-mother facilitating womanhood for the reader-daughter has also been seen as a significant part of Montgomery's own appeal to her readers.⁶³ In the first of these perspectives a mother's facilitating activities other than stories are significant. However, Montgomery's view of the world makes the story a particularly important technique for facilitation. Her own publications are stories which acknowledge the anxieties of girls over the change from childhood to womanhood and tell how such a change can be satisfying to the girl. In some of her tales the attuned, facilitating mother-figure comforts and encourages the daughter-figure in her natural progression from childhood to womanhood by telling her stories of the fulfilments of the feminine condition. Others of her stories foreground the lack of an ideal mother as a loss to a girl.⁶⁴ In these tales the bereft girl becomes her own surrogate mother and tells her own facilitating stories as she evolves from child to woman.⁶⁵ The importance of stories is clearly evident in the *Pat* series.

The *Pat* series is in itself a story by an attuned author-mother demonstrating to reader-daughters the satisfactions for girls in leaving childhood for womanhood. It is also a tale which demonstrates the central role of both the domestic mother-daughter

⁶²Montgomery, L M, *Pat of Silver Bush*, Angus and Robertson, 1941, p 323, pp 228-229.

⁶³Juhasz, *Reading from the Heart: Women, Literature and the Search for True Love*, New York, Penguin, 1994, p 8.

⁶⁴For instance, L M Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1935, pp 40-42; L M Montgomery, *Emily of New Moon*, Sydney, Cornstalk Publishing Company, 1925, pp 16-17 and pp 61-62.

⁶⁵For instance, orphaned Emily's 'flash' which suddenly makes the ordinary world seem beautiful in new ways and at the same time reassures her of her place as part of it, Montgomery, *Emily of New Moon*, pp 7-8. Similarly, orphaned Anne's belief in the necessity of imagination to support her in the world, *Anne of Green Gables*, pp 13-15.

relationship and the story in making a girl's natural progression into womanhood satisfying. It does this through painting the connection between Pat Gardiner and Judy Plum. Pat lives at home in British Canada with 'understanding' white, Protestant, middle-class parents.⁶⁶ Judy is the household's middle-aged, unmarried, female, Irish, Catholic servant; part of a subordinate group in terms of race, class, ethnicity and gender. Yet, Pat's mother is a two-dimensional figure, often 'upstairs' or 'in the parlour'. Meanwhile, the relationship between Pat and Judy in 'Judy's kitchen' is an ongoing dialogue in which Montgomery shows in great detail how a girl afraid of inevitable and apparently unattractive change is gently and wittily guided into satisfied womanhood in a close relationship with a loving older woman. Despite, or perhaps because of, Judy's Irishness, the values in these conversations are always British values.⁶⁷ Judy herself subscribes to the social superiority of the British and wants her girl to be part of this community.⁶⁸

The Pat series contains both facilitating activities and stories. Like the stories, facilitating activities are based on the idea that the mother has both superior knowledge of how the girl can be accepted in the world as a woman and at the same time be happy. This includes the notion that the mother-figure readjusts the values the dominant masculine world considers feminine. Although the tale involves awareness and comforting of the anxieties attached to modern notions of feminine public work, the focus is on marriage as the emblem of womanhood and I have focussed on this in my analysis of the maternal strategies. In the series activity and storytelling intertwine. Judy not only renegotiates the meaning of 'the good man' as I discuss in the section on the function of story-telling, she also acts to facilitate Pat's marriage to a good man, keeping Hilary Gordon abreast of Pat's state of mind and urging him to be present when she thinks Pat has come to understand that he is 'the good man'.⁶⁹

Although in Montgomery's books activities and stories intertwine for the mother to achieve her goal, the stories are the more detailed representations of the process of renegotiating values to ensure a girl's happiness. In the *Pat* series she reveals how one

⁶⁶Wiggins, op cit, p 116.

⁶⁷Hickman and Walter argue that Irish values of motherliness which conform to British ideas of this quality are represented by the British as British values in essentially Irish women. 'Deconstructing Whiteness: Irish Women in Britain', *Feminist Review*, Summer, 1995, p 12; *SB* p 2.

⁶⁸*SB* p 74; L M Montgomery, *Mistress Pat*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1940, p 86 and p 289.

⁶⁹*MP*, pp 303-304.

of Pat's fears about becoming a woman is the concomitant loss of power.⁷⁰ In both the story she is telling and the stories Judy tells Pat, Montgomery deploys the story as one of the chief strategies for facilitation by making it a way to present hidden or ignored 'facts' which show womanhood is a natural condition of greater power than society acknowledges. Possession of the hidden facts gives the subordinated identity (in this case, the girl) access beyond social representations to the *real nature* of people and situations. In the girl's imagination this knowledge is of a kind which weakens the power of the socially dominant and gives her room to think of the relationship in other ways which have more satisfaction for her. As a result she has the potential to behave in ways which will give her a more satisfying place in the world. Judy is set up at the beginning of the first book as a great story teller.⁷¹

Judy's stories are chiefly stories for and about women, even when they seem to focus on men. Montgomery makes it plain that men, while enjoying these stories, don't really understand their purpose because their idea of the world is different. Pat's brother Sid, growing up, challenges the meaning of the stories with ideas from the rational world.⁷² Tillytuck, the hired man, becomes a family joke among Judy and the girls as rather than perceiving the anecdotes as stories of relationships, he invariably sees them as structured around a 'central hero', a position he likes to claim for himself.⁷³

The stories Judy tells are framed around categories of social power; the (comfortably) rich are not so different, sometimes being Irish is more satisfying than being British, and men are not superior beings.⁷⁴ It is in this last category that Judy works to smooth Pat's evolution from child to woman. Judy renegotiates patriarchal ideas of marriage and so is able to present it as a naturally happy and satisfying condition for women. British notions represented the contribution of husbands to a marriage as moral and economic and reflected these as the more socially valuable characteristics. The contribution of wives was spiritual and emotional.⁷⁵ Montgomery

⁷⁰For example, *SB*, p 263, *pp* 290-292; *MP* pp 171-175.

⁷¹*SB*, pp 4-5.

⁷²*SB*, p 3.

⁷³*MP*, p 27, p 52, p 55.

⁷⁴*MP*, p 51; *SB*, p 3; *SB*, p 292-293.

⁷⁵Dyhouse, Chapter One.

tells her readers of marriage as a condition of sharing.⁷⁶ As a consequence of this idea she has Judy re-interpret the British values of masculinity to Pat and she uses Judy's stories to do this. Judy is knowledgeable as well as wise. She has a vast store of local knowledge. Her stories tell Pat that the men in the girl's life who subscribe to patriarchal ideas that marriage is the outcome of masculine choice, and exists so that they might harness a woman to their needs and ambitions, are not only arrogant and contemptuous but also silly, and that these men are often social failures. She represents them as part of the fabric of foolish families, or through unendearing mannerisms or silly incidents in their earlier lives. Equally, these stories comfort Pat by emphasising her own value and therefore her right to a relationship with a man who can make her happy.⁷⁷ Thus Montgomery shows the girl readers that in marriage, the emblem of womanhood, good women recognise there is more to the relationship than society publicly acknowledges. Furthermore, this extra experience of the relationship is associated with the *real nature* of things so that it is a natural part of womanhood to reinterpret the dominant, masculine ideas of how women should behave in relation to men.

Not only negative stories, but positive stories also are deployed to renegotiate the patriarchal meaning of marriage and masculinity in this maternal campaign. There are no demeaning tales about Hilary Gordon. Montgomery represents him as a person who is sensitive to the beauties of the earth as 'hardly any boys [were]'.⁷⁸ She has Pat find him 'a delightful companion'.⁷⁹ She has Judy tell Pat stories which make the Irishwoman's appreciation of his qualities as a companion for her daughter-figure clear from the first to the last.⁸⁰ In Judy's stories Hilary's original poverty is the result of a tragedy and other people's thoughtlessness.⁸¹ Like all men in capitalist society he is burdened by 'work'. However, Montgomery represents him as leaving, bravely and sensitively, the comfort of his friendship with Pat, which exists through his access to

⁷⁶For the development of modern ideas of marriage as a condition of sharing by the time of the second world war see Lake, 'Female Desires', *Australian Historical Studies*, 24 (95), 1990, pp 281 ff; *MP*, pp 280-281.

⁷⁷*SB*, pp 260-264, pp 290-293.

⁷⁸*SB*, p 88.

⁷⁹*SB*, pp 85-86.

⁸⁰For the appeal of the nurturant man for girls and women see Radway, p 140, p 168, p 97; for the appeal for girls in a relationship with a man where the woman has a powerful position see Mitchell, *op cit*, pp 167-168. *SB*, pp 90-92, p 294; *MP*, pp 300- 303.

⁸¹*SB*, p 91.

her domestic circle, in order to make his living in the public sphere. Good Hilary does not seek to take Pat with him into hardship as his own domestic support and comfort; his wife. Both through Judy's stories and through representations of conversations between Hilary and Pat, she shows approval over the way Hilary never thinks of Pat as a potential resource for his ambitions. Instead, Hilary is demonstrated as recognising marriage to Pat as the final reward for his own success in his endeavours.⁸² In parallel Montgomery's story tells girls of the demands other (insensitive) young men make on Pat's life as they try to harness her to their plan for success in the world.⁸³ Judy uses her gift of storytelling to valorise Hilary as a husband in Pat's eyes; both sensitivity and need are the qualities of the ideal man for Pat.⁸⁴ Montgomery's closure shows how Pat has grown to love Hilary in a womanly way because he possesses these qualities; she will experience a fulfilling marriage.⁸⁵ It also shows how Pat and Hilary, who understood and followed the *real nature* of masculinity and femininity, have become more centred members of society than people like Pat's brother and his wife. This latter pair, in a fractured way, accepted the dominant notions of men supplying economic and moral values in marriage and women contributing the emotionality.⁸⁶

To sum up, Montgomery represents two intersecting maternal strategies for facilitating girl children into their natural-but-new world of British femininity; facilitating activities other than storytelling and the telling of stories. The re-negotiation of dominant meanings of femininity which would make girl-women unhappy is an essential part of the way these strategies function. The basis of the renegotiation is the revelation of difference between social representations of the gender relationship and the natural gender relationship. Montgomery achieves this value for stories through a technique in which the story-telling shifts between Judy talking to Pat and Montgomery herself telling a story to the reader. It is the same story and always told by the powerful mother-figure. This is the story, ignored in the patriarchal traditions of Literature, of how girls and women experience life in a

⁸²*SB*, p 329, *MP*, p 300.

⁸³*SB* 290-292.

⁸⁴*SB*, p 264, pp 226-227.

⁸⁵*MP*, pp 299-300.

⁸⁶For the centredness of Hilary and Pat's relationship in a society based on British gender values, *MP*, p 301. For Montgomery's representation of Sid and May's marriage as both according to British ideas and as marginal, *MP*, p 233-236.

patriarchal society. The stories tell of the *real nature* of the gender relationship as one where those who are socially represented as powerful are less powerful and those who are represented as subordinated have greater power than is commonly understood. This power comes from drawing on competing discourses of gender and subtly merging some of their values with the dominant idea so that they appear to be firmly located within it. A consequence for secondary school girl readers is the idea that maternal endorsement, as represented by Montgomery and Judy, allows some drawing on more satisfying values from other discourses of femininity as a natural part of British feminine behaviour. Women who do this are rewarded by more satisfying feminine participation in the world.

Memories

The participants' memories suggest that secondary school library reading was experienced as part of their school's insistence on British norms of 'civilisation' through behaviour and its apparent assumption that visible behavioural conformity reflected a civilised subject. This combined with girl library readers' experience of motherhood as a discourse of facilitation to give them the space to negotiate some self-selection of satisfying values from competing and conflicting identities as a quality of natural femininity.

Despite some variety, secondary school libraries were recalled by readers in ways which suggested they were more developed than elementary school libraries. Fay (107), who attended high school in Tasmania noted, 'Hobart High School had an excellent Library [sic]. Both reference and general sections were, for the time [1941], extremely well-stocked'. Joy (31) at a state high school in Western Australia referred to the 'superb library'. Secondary school libraries were also recalled by participants like Judith (43) and Kit (26) who were educated at convents. The libraries were part of private school life for Peggy (36) and Elizabeth (121). The memories suggest that secondary school girls had access to a library they understood as a 'school library' rather than the book collection in the classroom referred to in some of the memories of elementary school library reading.

Participants remember the secondary school library as a place where their leisure reading was organised for them. Fay (107) recalled, ‘Students were encouraged to read [texts approved by authorities] and I took advantage of it . . .’. Lesley (70) reflected, ‘I had no say over selection. Everything was preselected by someone else’. Barbara (47), too, at a state high school, in Melbourne, recalled the separation between reading self-chosen commercial library books as pleasurable leisure and the pressure to read ‘approved books’ as free time reading in the school library. From her nearby lending library Barbara read ‘all F J Thwaites, Ann Hepple, Sara Seale and Jan Tempest. They were nice, light stories and a change from all the school books’. The section on practices indicates the emphasis on British texts in the school libraries. Consequently, these memories can be seen as making it clear that in the secondary education system normalisation into Britishness was a powerful component of school library reading.

Hierarchical standards as an aspect of British citizenship, as I have argued in the previous chapter, were part of British Australian schools. Memories associated with school libraries reflected the forbiddenness and banishment of behaviour outside the standards applicable to normalised femininity. In Chapter Three I discussed the notion of fiction reading as leisure and therefore necessarily limited by the demands of the system it supported and the subject position the girl fiction reader was being shaped into. In a reflection of this notion, Fay experienced criticism in her use of the school library. An altercation over the way Fay’s (107) library card was marked led to a review of her reading records and ‘the teacher/librarian’s deciding that I read far too many books and on discovering that I had also read *The Stars Look Down* (not considered suitable for a by-then thirteen year old [girl]), I was barred from the school Library’. Marion (42) remembered:

I sat for Biology Honours at the Leaving. The books I needed were available to the seniors in the librarian’s office, so none in the junior school could read about the reproductive system. The teachers . . . recounted how a Miss Farr, Head Inspector of Home Science schools, had found a first to third year physiology text of the time dealt with all the systems including the reproductive system and she instructed the relevant pages should be cut out! [Marion’s emphasis].

Memories associated with school library reading highlight the extent of the strategies for disciplining girls into normalised behaviour. Unlike the ambiguously expressed values associated with disapproved home reading which I discuss in Chapter Seven,

values represented in secondary school library reading were recalled in ways which indicate they were presented by the hierarchy as absolutes. The memories of Marion and Fay reveal an insistence on gender-based conformity. If one did not match the normalised, gender-based standards one did not ‘belong’ to civilisation.

Femininity and British citizenship existed in a complex relationship in the secondary schools. This is made clear in the way some respondents reflect their developing new identities as citizens gendered and classed according to British values in recalling their library experience. Both traditional and new middle-class expectations were reinforced in secondary school libraries. Kit (26) at a Catholic boarding school and Lucinda (22) at a private school were daughters of the middle class. Both recalled being aware of careful reading supervision in accordance with class expectations of women’s future lives. Kit remembered ‘there was a small library for boarders, open for a few hours on a Sunday afternoon’ and ‘In our senior years there was a small library of *classics* for the Literature classes *outside set works* [my emphasis]’. Lucinda noted that in the library ‘there was not a great deal of time for [real] reading, we were *too* supervised [my emphasis]’. A career was a potential part of life for women of the newly developing middle-class. Barbara (125), who remembers herself as a bright and ambitious student interested in a subsequent public career, recorded:

I gave up using our school library because I liked to browse and the congestion and crowding prohibited this and it was under the strict control of the senior English mistress who would criticise my choice of reading matter. “You’re too old at your age (14) to be borrowing fairy tales.”

In these memories it is clear school library reading produced in girls a sense that they were being trained to a new social position. They found this new identity confining and at times responded with resistance.

Others recalled the satisfactions associated with being readers of school-library-approved material. Despite the clear memories by many of close supervision in their school library reading Joy (31) believed she had attended ‘democratic’ state secondary schools in Fremantle and Perth. She explained, ‘[t]he idea of censorship, as such, was unknown to me until I entered Teachers College and heard some of my new-found R C friends say that some of the recommended reading was on the Church’s black list! [Joy’s emphasis]’. Richmal (101) recalled how at her secondary school, where she

was the girls' captain, she took care to read only material the library approved as 'people judged you on what you read'. She was most emphatic about this connection. Concurrently with the sense of newness and training, girl readers were conscious of themselves as already belonging to a social group with the civilised standards the school represented and that visible behaviour reflected these standards.

Some memories expressed a girl's concern over a school library which was inadequate for its purpose. Therese (43), from a working-class background, was ambitious for a public career and occupied her place in a Catholic secondary school/convent as a scholarship recipient. Through comparison with other schools she came to believe her education would not prepare her to succeed as one of the emerging class of educated, directing women. Therese drew attention to the poverty of both classroom preparation and library support in her own school. It was with this sense of comparison that from 'the school library for fourth and fifth year' she selected only 'Florence L Barclay's *The Rosary*, Mrs Innes Brown's *Three Daughters of the United Kingdom*, Robert Hugh Benson's *The Necromancers*', even though she made a long and careful list of other books and sources for her reading in her English Honours year. Girl library readers responded to the idea of their newly-introduced identity by both wanting to conform and simultaneously seeking clarification of the newly-introduced norms. They understood the library-approved books should be guides and sources of information.

Participants' recollections reveal the author-mothers' stories of girls' life experience were approved library books. Joyce's (34) New South Wales high school gave her the opportunity to read 'Anne books'. Judith (40) recalled as part of the collection in her convent library, 'Louisa Alcott - *Little Women* and the following book when Prof Bhaer marries Jo'. Rosalie (138) noted that 'in the Lilydale school library I remember *What Katy Did*'. Hobart High School Library was recalled by Alison (108) as 'having all the Anne books' on its shelves. The libraries' inclusion of the author-mothers' stories in their collections encouraged readers to understand that the ideas they read about were ideas approved as part of the schools' normalisation of British femininity.

Memories reveal that the secondary school girl library readers were girls who had experienced maternal attunement and facilitation through the intersection of storytelling and activities other than storytelling. Barbara (24) reminisced about her mother's gentle guiding of her into womanhood; 'Mother sometimes said, "You'll enjoy that when you're older". I always respected her advice'. She added immediately afterwards, 'By the time I was fourteen I was reading without restriction'. Shirley (89) remembered how when she was fifteen her father 'bought *Forever Amber* at Karachi airport. I was itching to read it after Mum finished with it as it was banned in Australia [for its 'sex-obsession'], and I was the envy of my school chums.⁸⁷ She gave it to me with the words, "I know you've read the same things from the library of that period in history"'. Iris (8) pointed out that, unlike school, there were no prescriptions for her reading or discussions about feminine sexuality at home because 'Mother [was] way ahead of her time'. Additionally, as part of maternal attunement, mothers showed girls how they could flout school demands for suitable reading and still be accepted as school girls. After her early banning from the school library for reading 'too much', Fay (107) remembered how her mother 'allowed [her] to join the local lending library and so [she] continued to read'. An only child, Fay did well at school and noted, 'my parents would probably have scraped up the money to send me to school for another three years and then to University'. However, she 'found [school] no challenge' and so she left after successfully completing the lower standard. These memories imply girls found maternal attunement and facilitation as guidance in the passage from childhood to womanhood a pleasurable experience. They also suggest that a mother placed greater emphasis on her daughter's happiness in the latter's movement into womanhood than the schools did. This led to girls seeing their mothers apparently endorse values which conflicted with the public norms of youthful British femininity and at the same time show them how to balance both public acceptance and private satisfaction.

Girl readers also already understood the story itself as a strategy by which a caring older woman lovingly influences a girl into womanhood. Chapter Three partly explores how this was a component of the elementary school girl library readers' experience. Some of the respondents remembered it as part of their satisfying

⁸⁷See letter from Appeal Censor to Comptroller-General of Customs Department, 26 October, 1953, Australian Archives, C4419/1.

domestic experience. Bernice (17) recalled, 'My Mother never went to outside work, for which I was very grateful [Bernice's capitalisation]. She was always there after school and would read to me and tell me stories of her life'. Amelia (54) recorded her immigrant mother's stories in detail:

My mother did tell me Bulgarian folklore tales. Mostly it was a time of famine in the country and people were always starving. I remember one in which the father set the mother and their three daughters to spinning, saying they would eat the one whose thread broke first. The mother saw that the youngest and most-loved girls' thread was about to break and so she broke her own and so they ate the mother! [Amelia's emphasis].

The rules and resources of daughterliness made it easy for girls to understand as pleasures the favourite authors' ideas about maternal support for the movement from childhood to womanhood. It was similarly easy to interpret both the stories and actions mothers perform in the girls' life stories as mothers' guidance of a girl into the meaning of adult femininity.

It is clear that participants' saw Montgomery's works as 'girls' stories' about the change from childhood to womanhood. For many she was bracketed with authors such as Alcott, Porter, Coolidge and Turner. Kath (80) noted, 'My sister gave me two books by Irene Cheyne, hoping Annette would become as classic as Norah, Anne [Montgomery's 'Anne' series] and the March family [Alcott's 'Little Women' series]'.⁸⁸ Alison (108) recorded how, at the boarding hostel for Hobart High School, 'as juniors we were allowed to read the first Anne of Green Gables books but the later ones were only for seniors. Junior girls were forbidden the senior shelves, but hostel girls were lucky as the seniors would let the juniors read their books'. Anxious schoolgirl library readers responded enthusiastically to approved girls' life experience stories which addressed ways girls might experience the satisfaction associated with imaginable personal power as part of approved womanhood. From the foregoing discussion, it can be argued that girls were able to absorb Montgomery's ideas of womanhood by drawing on two aspects of their experience. These were the rules and resources of British daughterliness and also notions of the public understanding that certain visible behaviours reflected the inner values of the performer. They had

⁸⁸Irene Cheyne, *Annette of River Bend* (1941), *Annette and Co* (1942). Norah is the heroine of Mary Grant Bruce's Billabong series. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the response to these books, it is worth noting that the response was problematical. This series was one of those popularly recalled. Unlike the others, it was surprisingly often referred to with dislike.

experienced the former at home. They had experienced the latter as library-reading adolescents

More respondents recalled Montgomery than any other author. Slightly over a third made reference to her. Eris (114), anxious over secondary classroom demands that she undertake ‘mature’ reading and worried about the possibility of her being too young to understand what was being requested of her at high school, noted she ‘fell back with pleasure on L M Montgomery’. Edith (90) recalled borrowing Montgomery’s books in early adolescence after hearing them being read on the radio. Laurie (64) reminisced, ‘I enjoyed reading books by Mary Grant Bruce, Louisa M Alcott, L M Montgomery, Ethel Turner’. Individual titles had been significant to some participants. Many, like Eloise (11), whose secondary education took place in Western Australia, specifically mention *Anne of Green Gables*. Marsali (36) noted, ‘The Anne of Green Gables series up to *Pat of Silver Bush* . . . all came my way’. Barbara (105) also recalled this ‘Pat’ title as part of her reading while at a girls’ state high school in New South Wales. *Emily of New Moon* was a favourite with Kitty (115) at a private school in Queensland. Montgomery’s books were so satisfying some remember seeking for a genre. Helen (29) explained, ‘My reading was L M Montgomery type of books’. Montgomery was clearly a meaningful author to secondary school girls.

Girls had memories of Montgomery both as an oeuvre and a series. Kit (26) ‘read all L M Montgomery’. In a similar way to Marsali’s reference to ‘the Anne of Green Gables series’, Caroline (60) noted she read ‘all of L M Montgomery’s Anne books’. Irene (57) recalled that at twelve she ‘was into the Anne series with a vengeance. I got through most of them that year and continued on [with Montgomery] into 1942’. Readers of Montgomery were also readers who had experience of the way in which satisfying books in the school library simultaneously reflected significant visible uniformities and visible differences.

The memories of sources for Montgomery’s stories shift between school and elsewhere and so reveal both the limits of secondary school libraries in providing Montgomery’s stories and the search for other sources. As Elizabeth (121) noted in trying to place exact sources for her girlhood reading, it was ‘hard to differentiate

between what was required school reading and what was inspired by it'. Diane (77), discussing 'Anne books', remembered that in addition to reading those on the school library shelves 'We usually got a book for birthday and a book for Christmas and sometimes Sunday school prizes and in that way we built up our libraries. Because of this we read favourite books over and over. I remember some of the better ones: Anne books, I loved them'. Montgomery books were recalled as school and Sunday school prizes. They were also recalled as presents from both parents. However, a close reading of some of these memories suggests the parental presents were often chosen by mothers. For example, Shirley (89) in explaining how she received Anne books as parental presents also recalled how in her early adolescence she '[lived with] Mother. I was an only child. Father on overseas service 1940-1942'. Others remembered borrowing Montgomery's books from local libraries. Chapter Six discusses the way in which girls' introduction to local libraries was a feature of their domestic relationship with their mothers. Still other memories indicate the extent of Montgomery's stories as part of the feminine community. Amelia's (54) Bulgarian immigrant background had already shaped her to find meaning in stories of feminine life experience when her newly-married Australian sister-in-law 'started giving me [British] books. I read all of the Anne of Green Gables books by [L M] Montgomery. All the Emily books. *Rilla of Ingleside* and sequels, ditto for *Magic for Marigold*'. The memories reveal the way Montgomery's books were simultaneously approved by patriarchal authority and were a part of the community of women as an activity in which older women gave the books to girls in a spirit of truly facilitating the process of change from childhood to adulthood.

The respondents associated Montgomery's works with feminine satisfaction both through the tales themselves and through the way the tales were read. Jill (84) associated this writer with feminine happiness through her friend Judith. She could 'remember the book case in my friend Judith's house. She had a wonderful collection of books like *Anne of Green Gables*'. Jill 'marvelled that she [Judith] was allowed to sleep in on Sunday mornings and read until lunchtime! [Jill's emphasis]'. Kitty (115) thought of Montgomery's world as a world of happy women. Listing Anne, Pat and Emily by names rather than as part of the titles of books she recalled that, because it was the setting of their fulfilling lives, 'Prince Edward Island will forever remain an enchanted island for me'. Marsali (136), presented with both Montgomery's work and

the Pollyanna stories, enjoyed and still has the Montgomery books but noted of Pollyanna's behaviour and feelings, 'Pollyanna was just *too* unbelievably good. Looking on the bright side in all situations made her an unreal personality. She couldn't really *exist* [Marsali's emphasis]'. She added 'I recall often trying to read them later but not succeeding . . . Pollyanna? No way'. British Australian girls experienced life in ways sufficiently similar to the girls in Montgomery's stories for them to imagine the portrayed satisfactions of Montgomery's girls and young women as part of femininity.

Memories of Montgomery's tales were expressed in emotional language. Kitty (115),

. . . had discovered the delights of L M Montgomery's books [at twelve] - my first was *Emily of New Moon* and after plucking up my courage to move into the adult section where these books were then kept I had to wait my opportunity to rush to the desk while the eagle eye of Chief Librarian Mabel ----- was averted. Children could not borrow books from the Adult Section without an adult's card/permission. I'm hazy on this. But I remember the terror, shivering delight, disappointment of trying to borrow the Anne, Pat and other L M Montgomery books.

Others remembered Montgomery as an author they re-read. Kath (80) recalled, 'copies of L M Montgomery . . . I read several times'. First on Doreen's (16) list of remembered books were 'the Anne books - L M Montgomery. [I read] all volumes many times'. Shirley (89) noted how at twelve she was 'well on the way through L M Montgomery's Anne books which I still love'. All these terms imply the emotional engagement with, and avid reading of, stories in terms which recall Belsey's ideas of popular reading and the rapture associated with new, satisfying understandings of the world.⁸⁹

Secondary girl library readers saw libraries as places for informing them of the world and their relationship to it. Here they experienced the schools' demand for civilised standards as both gendered and ungendered citizens, a sense of belonging to the developing conservative British society schools represented as the civilised world, and a sense of confinement over the way schools disciplined them into the norms of this civilised world. These experiences intensified anxiety in girls who were, as

⁸⁹Belsey, *Desire*, pp 34-38. See also my discussion of Belsey's work in Chapter One.

Chapter Four has demonstrated, already anxious because they understood themselves as subjects in the process of change from childhood to adulthood. As a result of all these perceptions they sought reassurance through some familiarity and found it in the library's stories of maternal comfort. Consequently, girl readers found a space to combine the rules and resources of their public and domestic identities and so renegotiate British femininity to include the performance of self-selected, satisfying values associated with other identities yet still retain their position as part of the absolutist public notion of the natural British woman. Each of the girls who reached this understanding did so by traversing a complicated path of social and individual experience. The stories of Rosalie (138) and Cecilia (94) demonstrate in separate ways how this combination was important to interpreting the quality.

Rosalie's memories reveal her mother's determination to ensure her children a satisfying place in British Australian society despite a class and racial identity as the other. Rosalie was one of seven siblings in a family with a father descended from Tasmanian Aborigines and a British Australian mother. She grew up in a society in which she remembered the 'racial hatred, prejudice and rejection' directed towards Aborigines by the racially and ethnically dominant British Australian element.⁹⁰ Rosalie also came from a working-class family. Her father, an exceptionally clever and talented man, was an illiterate worker in a country township. Rosalie's mother was recalled as a powerful influence in her young life. Suffering from Paget's disease which was eventually to kill her, Mrs Johnson was often 'really ill and confined to bed', times in which Rosalie remembers herself as 'forlorn'.⁹¹

Her mother's determination that her children should have a part in British, middle-class society meant that she focussed on British middle-class standards of behaviour as norms in her children's lives. Rosalie's memories reveal the way her mother shaped her daughters into British Australian values of cleanliness and dress as they grew into adolescence. 'When we girls were home from school,' she noted, 'We were given the task of punching the clothes down into the copper to help the dirt

⁹⁰Medcraft and Gee, *The Sausage Tree*, p xii. Rosalie and her sister Valda were participants in this research. They encouraged me also to draw on their published memoir, *The Sausage Tree*. Although this book was written for a young audience, it is not a children's book in the sense of condescension. The tone is one of straightforward recount and some reflection.

⁹¹Medcraft and Gee, op cit p 47.

bubble out'. Then 'we girls had to push them up and down in the [rinsing] tub that had "blue" added to it, ring them by hand and put them into a big dish ready to be taken out to the long clothes line'.⁹² The girls were also progressively shaped into the importance of their British dress. At eight they were taught embroidery by their British Australian mother and later, as they became adept, made fancy aprons under her supervision, 'In those days everyone wore an apron and we wore our pride and joy everywhere we could so that everyone could see and comment on our work'. 'Mum', she remembered, 'was a hard taskmaster and so our work had to be just so, but how proud we were when they were completed'.⁹³

Rosalie's recollections reveal how her mother shaped her into valuing British social institutions of religion and education as part of life. Sunday School was recalled as an important source of approved and satisfying social life. Here normalised British Australian behaviour shifted between the domestic and the public world. She comments in detail on the annual Sunday School picnic, recalling how, 'We tried so hard to be good at home because there was always the threat of not going on the picnic if we misbehaved. Emotional blackmail was a common occurrence and Mum used it daily for weeks before a special event'.⁹⁴ The Sunday School anniversary was also remembered as a public celebration of the values of British civilisation; 'All the children, about thirty, formed a choir and much practising for perfection took place'. Books and reading were part of this maternal goal for daughters' development. The Sunday school anniversary was also recalled as a prize-giving occasion where 'some lucky ones got extra books for either good work, good behaviour or regular attendance'. Rosalie reflected, 'We were certainly on show to all the local people and some of them only went to church when an anniversary was held'. In this atmosphere, Rosalie remembered her twin sister, Barbara, receiving 'a very special prize of a Bible for being the "most outstanding girl in the Sunday School"'.⁹⁵

⁹²Medcraft and Gee, *op cit* p 16.

⁹³Medcraft and Gee, *op cit* pp 24-25.

⁹⁴Medcraft and Gee, *op cit* p 73.

⁹⁵Medcraft and Gee, *op cit* pp 72-73.

Rosalie also remembered, 'We were determined to do well [at school] and make Dad and Mum proud of us' and also that she was a 'high achiever' at school.⁹⁶ Her secondary years took place in the Tasmanian area school associated with the township. Here Rosalie's memories strongly connected her mother's support with her reading success. 'Mum always gave us plenty of encouragement to read and we can be forever grateful to her', she noted. Stories became an important support in her world. She added that at school she was an 'avid reader' and 'gradually and systematically worked [her] way through the books in the school library'.⁹⁷ She recalled that here there was not only a copy of *What Katy Did*, as I mentioned earlier, but also that 'there were quite a few of the *Katy* series'. Nor was this source of satisfying books sufficient. The sisters also shared their Sunday School prize reading. Montgomery's work featured by title in these memories as *Emily's Quest* and *Emily Climbs*.

Yet Rosalie recalled middle-class, British Australian standards as part of her life in ways which suggest they were negotiated by her mother from identities which were less firmly connected to society's centre than the memories would at first indicate. School was not only a place of achievement for Rosalie, it was also a place of aggression from other children and a constant struggle to assert her social position. However, at home 'Mum was quite sure we were the instigators of the fights'.⁹⁸ Similarly, the family's idea of its connectedness to the church and neighbourhood was savagely counterpointed when Rosalie's mother was hospitalised and critically ill when the eldest of her children was only twelve years old. As a consequence, her father too 'was away a whole week and we were left completely on our own'. 'We still wonder', she commented, 'where all the do-gooders were from the church and why the neighbours didn't offer to help'.⁹⁹

Rosalie's mother created maternal stories as part of the relationship which prepared her daughters for their role in the world. 'Mum also had stories to tell, but hers were always true ones', Rosalie recalled. Those stories were tales of women's power in a patriarchal world and the importance of older women's influence in

⁹⁶Medcraft and Gee, op cit p 14; Medcraft and Gee, op cit p 13.

⁹⁷Medcraft and Gee, op cit p 58.

⁹⁸Medcraft and Gee, op cit p 13.

⁹⁹Medcraft and Gee, op cit, pp 35-37.

making young women happy in their relationship with the world and with others. In giving examples, Rosalie drew on a story her mother ‘loved to tell’ of her own British Australian mother informing the men of her family that their [Sunday roast] dinner would be raw as they had failed to provide her with wood for her fuel stove. The relish in Rosalie’s comment, ‘That Sunday dinner was eaten very, very late in the day’, revealed an inherited perspective. Her second example was her mother’s story of how her mother-in-law had helped her improve her bread bakery. Again Rosalie’s authorial comment on the anecdote reveals the power of these stories in shaping her world view as a woman; ‘Mum always maintained that Granma made the very best bread that she had ever tasted, so we suppose Mum had the very best teacher’.¹⁰⁰

At sixteen Rosalie left school to become a junior teacher in Tasmania’s education system and ‘then to teacher’s college (one year)’. As Cunningham explains of probationary student teachers in his review of British Australian education, ‘They are selected on personal interview and on the results of the Intermediate examination . . . At times girls may be recruited for service in the Department as junior teachers of the lowest grade on completion of the Intermediate examination. They teach for three years, and if their teaching is satisfactory and they have continued their educational work, they then enter the Teachers’ College for further training’.¹⁰¹ Rosalie was sufficiently satisfactory to a British Australian education system to be endorsed as one of its teachers.

Cecilia (94) recalled a background which promised a security of British Australian identity lacking in Rosalie’s. She was the only child of an industrial manager with a long family tradition in New South Wales’ western plains and a mother trained as an elementary school teacher. Cecilia, too, regarded motherhood in the domestic relationship as an important part of the change from childhood to womanhood. However, her memories of domestic life are infused with a sense of dissatisfaction. From her early childhood her mother worked as an infants teacher and Cecilia was cared for by others. She reflected on the association between school and home, ‘my mother may not have been able to [be part of school life as a parent], certainly I never

¹⁰⁰Medcraft and Gee, op cit pp 20-21.

¹⁰¹Cunningham et al, 1939, op cit, p 91.

remember her visiting high school events'. She recalled the domestic emptiness of her adolescent years. 'I seemed to be searching for what I do not know', she explained over her rejection of the factual 'books dealing with growing up, sex and reproduction' recommended by her busy mother and a church worker. She added, '[I] was dissatisfied - lots of diagrams but we were never given any advice on friendship or relationships. It was a lonely time, an awkward, confusing time and I had no means of expressing my fears and embarrassment'.

Rather than focussing on domestic maternal guidance, Cecilia recorded extensively the importance of primary and junior secondary school as she strove to understand her position in the adult world. She recalled this system, as one which produced ideas such as Australians 'belong[ing] to Britain' and intelligent women as capable of gaining a directing place in the public world.

Cecilia's memories suggest that in her anxiety to match the normalised standards emphasised by her formal education, girls'-life-experience stories played little part, if any, in her junior secondary years. Cecilia relegated these stories to the 'childish'. 'Before I went to high school . . . I read *Pollyanna*, *Little Women* and *Good Wives*', she noted. She attended Sydney Girls' High School and remembered, 'We had two library periods per week'. Her memories of school library reading were detailed, 'magazines dealing with travel, ancient history, mythology and some current affairs. Sadly, many of us used our library periods to catch up on homework. There never seemed enough time'. Reading in her secondary school years was further recalled as the prescribed novels attached to the public examinations. She remembered them as demanding and joyless: 'These books took so much time to read and we had as many as eight subjects'. She noted that as a senior she read the Left Book Club publications in the school library. This reading was organised for her by a teacher. There 'was no time for popular fiction' until, '[l]ater [when] we read novels by F J Thwaites, James Hilton. Ernestine Hill and Frank Clune whilst travelling to work'.

Cecilia's reading memories were structured around a series of progressive shocks as she came to realise disparities between the absolute values of the school and her experience of broader life. One of these occurred when the approved public and domestic values of femininity appeared to collide for her for the first time. She was a

clever student and completed the higher school leaving standard with ease. However, on leaving school she 'worked as a laboratory assistant in the Division of Physics, CSIRO. It pleased my parents but I never really felt I had achieved my potential. I did get a teachers' college scholarship but that would have meant leaving home so this was not possible'. Her memories, bereft of the pleasures and most of the disciplines of the feminine domestic relationship, suggest she had no techniques for accommodating both society and her own desires.

A notion of the *natural* was attached to both modern feminine citizenship and the traditional domestic relationship. However, in the idea of schoolgirls having a natural capacity for civilisation, the natural was incorporated as part of rigidly standardised, hierarchical social relationships. Discipline was the instrument which shaped girls into this notion. As Cecilia's story with its emphasis on library reading as a technology for the public guidance of a girl into womanhood reveals, girl readers did not experience this idea of the natural as deeply satisfying. However, in the domestic feminine relationship the emphasis on warmth and facilitation meant that most girl readers were pleasurably shaped into a notion of femininity which included some sense of choice as a natural element. Furthermore, this latter system seemed more natural to girls because it had always, already existed in their growing lives. All this meant that the notion of facilitation was powerfully situated in girls' view of themselves in the world. In addition, mothers used facilitation to support girls' entry into both public and domestic citizenship. Consequently, when girls faced contradictory demands for their performance of femininity, they looked to the facilitating idea of womanhood and therefore felt that choosing the most satisfying elements, even if they conflicted, was naturally a part of femininity. Secondary school library reading with its explicit insistence on adjustment and its encouragement to accept maternal facilitation both reinforced and gave direction to this notion. This chapter's elucidation of the way girls negotiated a key quality of the emerging discourse of femininity, like Chapter Three, emphasises the potential for a bridge between public and domestic influence. So far the thesis has focussed on the dominance of the public systems in shaping girls. The final two chapters reverse this focus. The next chapter deals with domestically-approved reading, the last chapter with the relationship between domestically-approved and domestically-disapproved reading.

Chapter Six: Approved Reading in the Home and Moral Choice

Introduction

The next two chapters shift the focus from the public system to the domestic system in looking at the regulation of girls into femininity. Chapters Three and Five recognised the domestic system as an auxiliary of the public system of education. The following chapters look at the reverse situation and situate the newer public system of mass media as an auxiliary to the shaping role of the older feminine domestic relationship with its domestically-based maternal guidance of a girl's evolution into womanhood.¹ Some of the ideas used in common across these two channels to develop girls' notions of womanhood are addressed in both this and the following chapter. However, this chapter examines domestically-approved mass media reading and Chapter Seven looks at domestically-disapproved mass media reading. I show that because the ideas shared by both chapters are experienced from these different perspectives a consequence is to give girls the agency to negotiate two different qualities as part of youthful femininity. This chapter examines the effect of girls reading popular novels from lending libraries domestically and with maternal approval to argue that such reading gave girls the space to negotiate the key quality of capacity for moral judgment as a part of approved youthful femininity.²

This chapter again posits girls as being shaped inside a world fashioned by the struggles taking place in and between the dominant groups influencing the global discourses of capitalism and patriarchy, but this time from the resulting national perspectives of motherhood and feminine sexuality. While the previous chapter demonstrated how girls negotiated choice as a natural part of femininity, this chapter

¹ See Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, Chapter One, for the way this channel worked to shape girls into women in British societies. For its continuation in interwar Australia, Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, p 187; Richards, *The Ladies Handbook*, pp 42-43.

² I have included commercial, municipal and Mechanics Institutes libraries under this notion of lending libraries as all these institutions were sources of domestic library novel reading in Australia at this time. For commercial libraries and domestic reading see Arnold, 'Cultivating the Armchair Reader' and Reid, 'The Lane Cove Book Club Remembered' in *Australian Cultural History*, no 11, 1992, pp 67-79 and pp 80-86. The researcher also has some of Mr Reid's personal memories of this library. See also McIntyre and McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, pp 161 ff. For municipal libraries as part of domestic reading see McIntyre and McIntyre, *ibid* and Jones, 'Public Libraries: "Institutions of the Highest Educational Value"' in (ed) Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*, especially from pp 163. For Mechanics Institutes, McIntyre and McIntyre *ibid* and Inkster, 'The Growth and Decline of Queensland Schools of Arts, 1849-1981' in (ed) Candy and Laurent, *Pioneering Culture*, pp 268-282.

shows how girls negotiated the idea that the (sometimes conflicting) choices/investments they *naturally* made in how to be feminine were the choices a good girl would make. Girls adjusted approved youthful femininity so that they could choose conflicting feminine values and still be understood as respectable. This consequence depended on contemporary Australian ideas of motherhood as a discourse of morality and the nation's wartime experience of competing concepts of feminine sexuality.

Notions of sexuality and motherhood intersected for girls in complex ways. By 1939 there were two competing notions of motherhood, the conservative and the modern, and I discuss these in detail in the section on 'Social Discourses'. Here it is important to acknowledge their shared concept of mothers as capable of recognising feminine morality and from this basis giving mothers the authority to raise daughters into service to the state.³ The basis of feminine morality in the capitalist and patriarchal state is sexuality. As the biological producers of citizens to serve this state a woman's service to the state is sexual and good women are women whose sexuality benefits the state.⁴ By 1939 there were competing and conflicting ideas of feminine sexuality.

The changed focus of capitalist interests had led to two ideas of Australia, and consequently to a complex feminine experience of sexuality and motherhood. Both these ideas of the state recognised mothers as an important part of the way girls were guided into good womanhood. However, each 'Australia' recognised a different feminine sexuality as the basis of the good woman. Furthermore, some elements of these competing sexualities conflicted. One idea, which had its roots in traditional capitalism, was that of the good woman in *conservative* Australia. This was a notion which foregrounded patriarchal tradition. Australia was imagined as a vulnerable nation, doubly in need of preserving its white Britishness, both from corruption at the

³For the middle-class roots of the older British tradition see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p 149, pp 183-184. For its expansion across class see Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, Chapter One, and p 128 and p 132. For the acceptedness of this racial idea in Australia see Ryan, "'She Lives With a Chinaman'", *War and Other Catastrophes: Journal of Australian Studies*, no 60, 1999, pp 153 ff; Richards, *The Ladies Handbook*, pp 37, 42, 45. For the modern ideas which incorporated the older tradition see Reiger, *ibid*; Richards, *ibid*.

⁴Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, p 76; Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, pp 40-44, pp 49-50.

centre and attacks on the shore.⁵ Here, the good British Australian woman's sexuality was imagined as her *passive* acquiescence to selection by a good man to nurture his children in the sanctity of a home he would provide by his activity in the public sphere.⁶ In this way British Australian values would be *conserved*. Another discourse of sexuality and the good woman was based on late capitalism. This was the idea of the woman in a confident, *modern* Australia connected to the western, technological world.⁷ Here the *modern* woman would serve the state in a life which crossed between public and domestic performance, expert shaping and domestic guidance. An interlude of heterosocial, paid work served as both a way to shape girls as public consumers and as a mechanism for their sexual service. It was seen as a space in which they would take an *active* part in negotiating a relationship leading to marriage.⁸ After marriage, womanly service was seen as supporting the underpinnings of the *modern* state by nurturing future citizens in combination with a good man in the home and expert public direction. Simultaneously, a young woman's new roles as wife and mother would also depend on her continued public consumption.⁹ Even though the war heightened the insecurities of conservative Australia so that the newer feminine sexuality was progressively reflected as immoral, the two dominant interests were sufficiently secure for the nation to continue to represent the competing notions of women's sexuality.¹⁰

The key to girls' interpretation of moral judgment as part of youthful femininity is their domestic experience of feminine leisure. Mothers not only influenced girls into approved service, but also into approved rest from that service. As in Chapter Three, this chapter draws on Strange's use of leisure as it is conceptualised by Rojek. Rather than 'free time', leisure is understood as a technology for shaping socially approved identity.¹¹ The approval of a daughter's leisure was part of a mother's position as a

⁵Haynes, *Seeking the Centre*, pp 83-84; White, *Inventing Australia*, p 144.

⁶For the developing tradition, Davidoff and Hall op cit, pp 322-323. In Australia, Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, p 3; Gilding, *The Making and Breaking of the Australian Family*, p 59.

⁷White, *Inventing Australia*, p 150.

⁸Elder, 'The Question of the Unmarried', *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 18, Summer, 1993, pp 158-160.

⁹For modern marriage see Lake, 'Female Desires', *Australian Historical Studies*, 24 (95), 1990, p 281; for experts as part of 'the home', Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*; for continuing consumption see Finch, 'Consuming Passions', Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, p 108.

¹⁰For the intense rejection of capitalist-approved femininity in wartime even as it clearly continued see Finch, op cit, pp 105-106, p 110.

¹¹Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 1995, pp 191-192.

moral arbiter. However, as a consequence of their own changing role in this period, mothers supported leisure attached to conflicting notions of the service of good womanhood.¹² Domestic library fiction reading was regarded as leisure attached to the different ideas of feminine service being developed simultaneously in the wartime Australian home.

The section on social discourses affecting readers shows the effect of the continuing insistence on mothers as moral arbiters for their daughters in a period when competing discourses of sexuality were emerging and girls were positioned to seek satisfying femininity which was also approved by mothers. The practices and texts of lending library reading combined in complex ways to shape girls into a notion of youthful femininity which fulfilled both these criteria and in which a capacity for moral judgment was a quality. I focus on the practices of library reading which combined to make choosing particular feminine stories on the library fiction shelves an act of choosing stories of moral femininity. The texts most popular with girls as domestically-approved lending library reading were novels by Zane Grey and Georgette Heyer. Each of these authors told powerful stories of a different discourse of feminine sexuality. Grey assured all girls of their femininity and that this quality made them valuable. Heyer emphasised moral judgment as part of femininity. Between them these authors made sexuality a site for girls to imagine a satisfying youthful femininity with a capacity for moral judgment.

The second section, 'Memories', demonstrates how girls experienced the discourses, practices and texts associated with domestically-approved popular library reading in ways which gave them space to negotiate a capacity for moral judgment as part of young womanhood. The case studies show how each wartime girl negotiated this quality by a different path.

¹²For the development in interwar Australia of motherhood as a public position and of mothers' access to notions of feminine life as simultaneously public and domestic see Reiger, *op cit*, 'Part III, Socialization'.

Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers

Wartime girls understood the feminine domestic relationship as a channel for their direction into respectable womanhood. A girl looked for her mother's guidance.¹³ Their coeval experience of the conservative and modern discourses of motherhood meant that girls were doubly shaped into seeing mothers as domestic arbiters of moral womanhood. Mothers themselves now recognised that some public regulation of motherhood existed even in the most conservative ideas of the role as part of the private relationships of the home.¹⁴ This understanding had influenced their ideas of the good woman. Wartime mothers understood that there was more than one kind of feminine morality; it could be both domestic and public. Their competing notions of womanly morality were based on conservative and modern ideas of feminine service to the state as sexual service. While these ideas of sexual service were unequally approved by mothers, the newer ideas being less acceptable than the traditional ideas, a mother's recognition of both sexualities appeared to daughters to make both sexualities aspects of moral womanhood. Therefore wartime girls existed in a world where they wanted maternal approval for their developing femininity and could imagine a range of competing feminine values as moral. This was the basis of girl readers seeking experiences where they could interpret a youthful sexuality which combined some feminine sexual freedom *and* wholehearted maternal approval.

A girl's mother was the paramount component of that channel for the dominant interests, the feminine domestic relationship. The dominant capitalist and patriarchal needs ensured mothers could not approve a feminine service other than one which included heterosexuality, stability and subordination in a binary gender relationship so that useful citizens could be produced and supported. Yet mothers were also subjects shaped by the psycho-socio-economic turbulence of the period. This cohort of mothers had themselves experienced shifts and extensions around the conservative and modern meanings of womanly service. Most girls between twelve and eighteen in the war had mothers who were girls in the late Victorian/Edwardian era and who were at the same time women living in the context of the modern nation.¹⁵ These mothers understood their authority as the mothers of girls to be vested in their capacity for

¹³Dyhouse, *op cit*, Chapter One. In interwar Australia, Ker Conway, *The Road From Coorain*, *passim*; Lambert, *A Suburban Girl*, pp 47-52; Walker, *Roundabout at Bangalow*, p 117.

¹⁴Reiger, *op cit*, p 3.

¹⁵*Commonwealth Year Book*, No 37, Canberra, Government Printer, 1949 p 757.

recognising and developing feminine morality.¹⁶ They had been girls and young women at a time when the conservative discourse of keeping girls 'safe' from any influence which would make them sexually unstable or independent was part of the dominant idea of the good mother's domestic role.¹⁷ As mothers they themselves were increasingly regulated into accepting modern public regulation as part of their daughters' lives. They were young mothers in the time of the emerging infant welfare movement and so shaped into accepting expert public advice on their baby daughters' development.¹⁸ At the same time, public advice in relation to growing girls often drew heavily on the feminine domestic relationship and earlier notions of sexual morality.¹⁹ They were the mothers of senior primary school girls at the time of the expanding normalisation of post-primary education for girls.²⁰ They had themselves also been girls at a time when changing social values made modern public employment part of girls' lives and they were the mothers of girls whose post-primary education drew them into modern public employment.²¹ As the mothers of these girls they had daughters working in a public environment that society imagined as a mechanism for an active feminine role in facilitating a marriage in which women would also experience sexual pleasure.²² A concomitant of this idea was girls' independent public activity and consumption.²³ Australian wartime mothers accepted these roles as part of femininity.

Mothers were affected in complex ways by the continued development of the simultaneous and contradictory notions of Australia as conservative and as modern.

¹⁶Smart, 'A Mission to the Home', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol 13, no 28, 1998. See also Jan Ryan, "She Lives With a Chinaman", *War and Other Catastrophes: Journal of Australian Studies*, 1999, for this tradition in Australia.
p 222.

¹⁷Dyhouse, op cit, p 41; For an indication that this had also been the view in Australia see Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, p 83. For the continuation and reinforcement of the connection between domestic safety and sexual safety for girls see Backhouse, "Her Protests Were Unavailing", p 14 and throughout and Doyle, 'The Pyjama Girl', pp 36-37, p 40. Both are in *The Beautiful and the Damned: Journal of Australian Studies*, No 64, 2000.

¹⁸Matthews, *ibid*; Reiger, op cit, Chapter 6.

¹⁹For example, Eulalia S Richards, *The Ladies Handbook of Home Treatment, (Revised and Enlarged)*, Victoria, Signs Publishing Company, 1946, pp 37, 42, 45. The numbers of this book still available in several editions suggest it was a popular household reference book

²⁰Craig Campbell, 'Secondary Schooling, Modern Adolescence and the Reconstitution of the Middle Class', *History of Education Review*, vol 24, no 1, 1995; Holbrook, 'Apathetic Parents and Wilful Children?' in Theobald and Selleck, *Family, School and State in Australian History*, p135.

²¹Kingston, *My Wife My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, Chapters Four and Five; Elder, "The Question of the Unmarried", p 151, Note Three.

²²Elder, 'The Question of the Unmarried', pp 152-153, pp 159-160.

²³Finch, op cit,

The common deployment in these ideas of mothers as girls' guides into femininity ensured that this complexity also affected girls. Both the conservative and the modern discourses of motherhood saw mothers as guiding daughters into moral womanhood. In both discourses moral womanhood was based on feminine sexual service to the state. Conservative Australia expected mothers ideally to prescribe the single traditional discourse of sexual service for their daughters. However, the feminine domestic relationship was also currently serving the modern state. Mothers, I have argued, were part of both these ideas of the state in several ways. Consequently, the ideal conservative domestic relationship was impossible, even for the most conservative mothers. As a result, girls knew mothers as the arbiters of moral femininity in ways which associated morality with sexual service. In this role mothers were experienced as supporting their daughters as domestic women, passively subordinate to the desires and ambitions of men. Girls also experienced mothers, often concurrently, as endorsing their daughters' modern sexuality as part of the path to a subordinate role in a stable heterosexual relationship.

Girls could imagine mothers supporting conflicting notions of feminine sexuality as moral womanhood through their personal experience as daughters, relatives and members of a neighbourhood community. While the nuclear family was clearly emerging as the notion of 'the family', close extended families were still an element of Australian society during the war years even if they did not share the same roof.²⁴ Hetherington has suggested that wartime pressures reinforced the idea of the extended family, especially as far as mothers and their children were concerned.²⁵ Twigg's analysis of the memories of young men and women over the meaning of local dances in 1930s Australia provides an insight into the way girls as daughters experienced modern and conservative motherhood simultaneously.²⁶ Bosworth shows how women in a neighbourhood saw policing the sexuality of other women as part of being a good Australian woman.²⁷ Ideas of feminine sexuality which were performed and expressed

²⁴Darian Smith, op cit, p118-120; Connors, Finch, Saunders, Taylor, *Australia's Frontline*, p 61.

²⁵Hetherington, 'Families and Children in Wartime Western Australia' in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, p 94; see also Darian Smith op cit, p 125; Connors et al op cit, pp 58-64.

²⁶Twigg, 'The Role of the "Local Dance" in Country Courtship of the Nineteen Thirties'. N B This is another study where an analysis of the meaning of 'parents' reveals that at times 'mother' had to be the significant actor. See for example, p 22. For mothers supporting both discourses see also Ker Conway *The Road From Coorain*, pp 95-96 and 111.

²⁷Bosworth, 'Internment' in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, pp 209-210.

through family and neighbourhood relationships had a particular resonance for daughters.²⁸ The evidence of experience here underscores the maternal preference for traditional notions of feminine morality.²⁹

Girls could also understand mothers as simultaneously supporting ideas of the good girl according to the two different discourses of feminine sexuality through the effect of the mass media system in the home. Working-class and middle-class girls, as daughters, lived in a family home.³⁰ Lyons and Taksa have shown Australia had a strong tradition of consuming newspapers and magazines.³¹ They also demonstrate that ideas in the mass media affected the world view of offspring in Australian homes in the 1920s and 30s.³² Darian Smith argues that the interwar levels of mass print media consumption in Australia continued during the war years.³³ Newspapers and magazines considered as respectable were part of Australian wartime households and were available to daughters.³⁴ In mainstream magazine articles, such as 'Is Your Daughter Your Friend?' in a 1941 edition of *Woman*, mothers were represented as daughters' moral arbiters in the home. In the verbal and visual images of a toothpaste advertisement in the same magazine mothers were reflected as supporting daughters into the modern discourse of feminine sexuality. In the magazine's 'agony' column mothers were positioned as recognising both discourses as part of their daughters' sexuality.³⁵

Lake's work has shown that for some girls in this era the associated freedom and power represented as part of the modern discourse of public feminine sexuality was at least as attractive as the pleasures of maternal warmth and intimacy associated with conservative concepts of the good girl's domestically-evolving sexuality.³⁶ This

²⁸Buttsworth, op cit, pp 67- 68; Darian Smith, op cit p 150; Connors et al, op cit p 142-43, p 144, p 149.

²⁹ See all the above references.

³⁰Kingston, op cit, pp 120-121; Gilding, op cit, p 41; Buttsworth, 'Women Colouring the Wartime Landscape' in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, pp 67-68.

³¹Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p 72.

³²Lyons and Taksa, op cit, pp 76-84.

³³Darian Smith, op cit, p 150.

³⁴Lyons and Taksa, op cit, Chapter Six, Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*: pp 89 ff; Wright, 'The Women's Weekly: Depression and the War Years', *Refractory Girl*, No 3, 1973, p 9.

³⁵*Woman*, 19 May, 1941. The power of mothers as daughters' moral arbiters is addressed in Alan Marshall's article, 'Is Your Daughter Your Friend?', p 14; a mother guides her daughter into the new sexuality in the Ipana advertisement, p 51 and mothers are represented as potentially guides for daughters into both discourses of sexuality in the Dorothy Dix column, p 18.

³⁶Lake, 'Female Desires', p 267.

evidence, in conjunction with the domestic situation I have developed in the foregoing discussion, allows me to argue that by the beginning of the second world war tensions existed between girls' favouring of the newer modern sexuality and arbiter-mothers' favouring of the conservative sexuality in households where both the sexualities were understood as part of being a good woman. As a consequence girls would seek experiences which gave them a sense that they could have both the pleasures of sexual freedom and satisfaction and a mother's unfettered approval of this pleasure as a moral activity. Reading lending library fiction was one source of such experience. The conjunction of these subjective pressures with library reading's texts and practices gave girls space to imagine a capacity for moral judgment as a quality of approved youthful femininity. I explore the way this could happen in the next two sections.

Practices

Four practices of lending library fiction reading combined to shape girls into interpreting a capacity for moral judgment as a quality of youthful femininity. Firstly, there were strong historical reasons for understanding leisure reading as a pleasurable, private, independent activity. Secondly, girls were undertaking approved lending library reading from two simultaneous leisure positions, adolescent schoolgirl reader and daughterly moral reader, so that choice in how they saw themselves was possible. Thirdly, the way lending libraries functioned as businesses could create an obstacle between what girl readers believed library leisure reading should be and their experience of it. Finally, when this happened, the idea of reading as pleasure forced girls to choose a subject position from which to reassure themselves that they should continue this activity. Through the warmth and intimacy of the feminine domestic relationship, reading as a moral pastime had more satisfying associations than notions of reading as part of hierarchical public achievement which was available to the schoolgirl reader. Therefore, girls making decisions about what lending library fiction to read or when to read it were likely to experience themselves as making a moral decision.

Library novel reading existed as the balance of several historical ideas which ensured that for girls it was a satisfying activity in which they were trusted to choose, with apparent freedom, novels which appealed to them and to read those novels

privately. There was the Protestant idea of individual, private reading as a means of looking inward to find the virtuous essential self and so becoming a worthy modern citizen.³⁷ Reading was also understood as an activity which could shape the way the reader thought, especially if it was undertaken as a private pleasure.³⁸ Furthermore, women's novel reading was traditionally a middle-class, domestic pastime.³⁹

Ideas of leisure meant that girls read lending library fiction in the home as adolescents as well as daughters. Leisure as the re-creation of the subject for public citizen service and for education through moderate and refreshing activities was part of interwar ideas of the nation's efficiency.⁴⁰ Library fiction reading was already commonly regarded as recreation for workers.⁴¹ As capitalist and patriarchal forces began to normalise the public shaping of women, so the idea of popular fiction reading in the home as their recreation had become part of femininity.⁴² Schools encouraged adolescent re-creational reading as part of being a rational, trustworthy citizen in training.⁴³ However, their notion of recreational reading as the development of a lifelong habit made it an activity partly pursued in the home.⁴⁴

In the home, popular fiction reading as leisure was an instrument mothers could use in influencing girls into being good women. However, in this period of change in ideas of good womanhood there were several potential meanings for this leisure. The Victorian concept of approved reading as a way of ensuring daughters and wives passed time virtuously between the demands of domestic nurturing was still an issue.

³⁷In reference to the roots of this notion in Protestantism see Manguel, *A History of Reading*, pp 52-53; Lyons, 'Texts, Books and Readers', *Books, Readers, Reading: Australian Cultural History*, No, 11, 1992, p 5. In reference to the connection between reading, the inner self and the modern citizen subject see Lyons, 'Text, Books and Readers' in *Australian Cultural History: Books, Readers, Reading*, No 11, 1992, pp 5- 6.

³⁸For discussions on the belief that reading shaped thought see Lyons, op cit, pp 8-9; Flint, *The Woman Reader*, p 36. For the more powerful effect of reading as a private pleasure, see Manguel, op cit, p 53. In Australia Lyons, op cit, p 5.

³⁹Lyons, op cit, p 5; Flint, op cit, p 26; Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel*, p 137. In Australia, Lyons and Taksa, "'If Mother Caught Us Reading . . .'" in *Books, Readers, Reading, Australian Cultural History*, No 11, 1992, pp 40-41; Lyons, 'Reading Models and Reading Communities' in Lyons and Arnold, *The History of the Book in Australia*, p371-373, p374-375; McIntyre and McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, p 167.

⁴⁰Arnold, 'Cultivating the Armchair Reader: The Circulating Library Movement in Melbourne, 1930-1960, *Books, Readers, Reading: Australian Cultural History*, No, 11, 1992, p71-72.

⁴¹Arnold, op cit, p 72, both middle class and working class, pp 74-75.

⁴²Arnold, op cit, p 72; McIntyre and McIntyre, op cit, p 167; Ker Conway, op cit, p 89.

⁴³*The Gleam*, 1942, school magazine of Wollongong High School, p 9.

⁴⁴Newbolt Report, p 148; *New South Wales Education Gazette*, 'Suggested Outline for a Course of Instruction in Library Method for Schools', 1 December, 1938, p 395; *The Gleam*, 1943, p 18.

Library fiction reading was also understood as a reward for the good wife or daughter on her completion of domestic service. Lyons and Taksa explore their respondents' complex understanding of the limited and sporadic feminine reading which interspersed domestic tasks as part of household life in the interwar years.⁴⁵ By 1939, mothers had also incorporated adolescent recreational reading as part of the domestic leisure of the good girl. For instance, Ker Conway recalled her mother's encouragement for her to read as recreation after her day in school.⁴⁶

In the home, lending library fiction reading was strongly associated with the feminine domestic relationship and moral womanhood both as a community of values and as individual trustworthiness. Mother-figures guided daughters to certain genres through sharing their own weekly library books.⁴⁷ They expanded daughters' ideas of the role of library fiction by sending their daughters to local libraries as their proxies carrying either requests to the librarian for 'good reads', or lists of satisfying authors, or instructions for the girl to choose books which would satisfy her mother.⁴⁸ Mothers decided when it was appropriate for a daughter to have her own access to this source of satisfying reading and organised daughters' membership and reading time.⁴⁹ Mothers with conservative British Australian values openly supported the independent choice and private reading of lending library books as feminine leisure. Any prohibition for a girl's reading tended to be experienced through her sense of her mother's disapproval rather than outright proscription. This was partly because girls were reading inside a discourse which, while it recognised women's suggestible nature, also acknowledged the value of reading independence.⁵⁰ Consequently, mothers became part of a hidden pattern of vetting girls' library books. Lending library proprietors, for reasons I discuss below, chose books recognised as acceptably moral. Mothers understood the girls' library choices were vetted in this way.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, pp 158-159.

⁴⁶ Ker Conway, *op cit*, p 35, p 89.

⁴⁷ Lyons and Taksa, *ARR*, p 120-122, p 139, Ker Conway, *ibid*.

⁴⁸ Lyons and Taksa, *ARR*, pp 121-122.

⁴⁹ Lyons and Taksa, *ARR*, pp 117-118; Ker Conway, p 35.

⁵⁰ Flint, *op cit*, pp 36-38.

⁵¹ McIntyre and McIntyre, *op cit*, p 168. The two examples of mothers openly 'forbidding' library books in Lyons and Taksa both came from participants who as girls experienced a collective family box of books sent by rail from a distant town rather than individual library selection. The mother here seems to have been forced to undertake the role of censor in full view of her family as the box was opened. Librarians could carry out the role in more discreet ways as I discuss later on. Nevertheless,

However, they did not share their knowledge with their daughters. Daughters were influenced by their reading mothers to understand reading popular library fiction as natural, individually undertaken, unsupervised leisure for good women.⁵²

Lending library fiction in this era came from commercial lending libraries, mechanics' institute libraries and some municipal libraries.⁵³ Although it can be argued that only the commercial lending libraries were real businesses, in order to continue, all the lending libraries providing domestically-read fiction depended on 'trade' or the community's willingness to borrow from them. Therefore, the most successful had business-like attitudes. One of these was the accommodation of community values. A consequence of this was that the libraries further reinforced daughters' comfort with library reading as a moral activity. The atmosphere of the shop library or the successful mechanics' institute library seemed pleurably familiar to girl readers of home-approved fiction. Library reading was associated with domestic comfort, as has been noted. Popular fiction reading was a legitimate domestic entertainment. These two ideas meant a homely atmosphere was important to the libraries.⁵⁴ Cleanliness, pleasant, confined surroundings and well-repaired, neatly shelved collections were seen as an important part of library atmosphere.

At the same time the libraries harmonised with the girl reader's experience of public systems of shaping the public citizen. As modern businesses the practices of lending libraries also mirrored some of the organisation of schools. Adolescent readers accepted the public regulation of time and space, the exchange of contractual obligations and recording. Libraries had systems of surveillance and constant mild correction. Librarians' desks were organised for the observation and regulation of

even these memories imply maternal suggestion rather than absolute forbiddenness. Lyons and Taksa, *ARR*, pp 169-170.

⁵² Lyons and Taksa, pp 121-122, p 123. For an explanation for the inclusion of public library memories here see the following note.

⁵³ For commercial lending libraries see Arnold, 'The Circulating Library Phenomenon' in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*, pp 190-199, Arnold, 'Cultivating the Armchair Reader' in *Australian Cultural History*, no 11, 1992; McIntyre and McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, pp 165-166. For mechanics' institute libraries see Bremer and Lyons, 'Mechanics' Institute Libraries' in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*, especially pages 212 and 213; McIntyre and McIntyre, *op cit*, pp 161-165. For municipal libraries see Jones, 'Public Libraries' in Lyons and Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945*, p 17; McIntyre and McIntyre, *op cit*, pp 161-165.

⁵⁴ Griest, *op cit*, p 18, pp 84-85; McIntyre and McIntyre, p 164, p 166, Lyons and Taksa, *op cit*, p 122, Arnold, *op cit*, pp 71-72.

borrowed books.⁵⁵ Clearly visible from the desk were both alphabetically organised books and books organised in genres which paralleled the expected reading interests of children, women and men.⁵⁶

Simultaneously, another aspect of the libraries' accommodation of community values created an obstacle between girls' understanding of library reading and their ability to carry it out. This was part of the previously mentioned 'hidden practices'. Librarians acted tacitly to satisfy the moral values of their recognised customer base. Notions of middle-class women as both virtuous and nurturing of virtue meant both that proprietors valued middle-class, feminine values in 'librarians' and also that being a private librarian was a way a middle-class woman could earn her living.⁵⁷ These librarians, as noted, chose their stock carefully.⁵⁸ They guided readers to appropriate books based on gender and age through shelf arrangement under titles like, 'romance' or 'wild west' or 'juvenile'.⁵⁹ Another form of gentle direction was personal service in response to appeals for help in choosing the 'right' book or conversations about enjoyable books.⁶⁰ However, there was also directed reading which involved the removal of an unapproved book from a reader and the substitution of an approved book. This was a form of regulation particularly experienced by young readers as part of librarians' attempts to assure parents of their business' moral credential.⁶¹ Ideas of girls as suggestible in relation to reading meant that their reading might be especially monitored by some librarians.

Autonomy and privacy were part of how this reading was understood as a pleasure. Therefore, such behaviour on the part of a librarian clashed strongly with girls' ideas

⁵⁵The trade paper for commercial libraries, *Ideas*, 11 November, 1941, pp 372-373; op cit, 14 February, 1942, pp 52-54, op cit, 13 May, 1943, illegible pagination; Arnold, op cit, pp 74-76; McIntyre and McIntyre, op cit, pp 161-166.

⁵⁶McIntyre and McIntyre, op cit, pp 162-163; *Ideas*, 11 November, 1941, p 372. *Ideas* frequently recommended ways of organising genres so that the attention of those readers to whom they were designed to appeal would be drawn to them. See, for example, 15 September, 1941, p 286, 13 March, 1945, p 122, 12 March, 1943 p 82, 14 April, 1943, p 112.

⁵⁷*Ideas*, 13 August, 1941, pp 246-248; MacIntyre and MacIntyre, op cit, pp 164-165; Lyons and Taksa, op cit, p122. Often such women were both librarians and proprietors, Arnold, op cit, p 69 and pp 71-72.

⁵⁸McIntyre and McIntyre, op cit, p 165, p 168; *Ideas* 13 August, 1941, p 248.

⁵⁹Arnold, op cit, p 71; *Ideas*, 14 April 1943, p 112 suggested this direction could be even more specific; librarians could display certain books as 'suitable for . . . mum' and others for 'dad' and 'John' and 'Mary'.

⁶⁰McIntyre and McIntyre, op cit, p 168; Arnold, op cit, p75; Lyons and Taksa, op cit, p 121-122; *Ideas*, 13 August, 1941, p 246.

⁶¹McIntyre and McIntyre, op cit, p 168.

of library reading.⁶² Furthermore, the personal direction trespassed on a girl's notions of the unique relationship between herself and her mother; mothers guided reading. The relationship between girls and librarians could become a site of tension.⁶³ One likely consequence was girls' withdrawal from at least certain aspects of this reading, such as choosing their own books, after such a clash.⁶⁴ At the same time, ideas of lending library fiction reading as pleasurable meant that girls wanted to return to experiencing all its elements. Consequently, they needed to have grounds on which to choose books which would keep this reading an apparently autonomous, private experience. It is here that my argument crosses between the subject's conscious and unconscious determinations. The warmth and nurture associated with maternal encouragement to read was more satisfying than the discipline and surveillance associated with fiction reading and public shaping.⁶⁵ Therefore, it was also more satisfying to experience the choosing of unexceptionable but fulfilling feminine stories as choosing books approved by mother rather than choosing them as books approved by the public manifestations of the state. Consequently, a girl could choose her library books from a subject position which made it a performance of judgment about moral feminine representations because she was doing something which was approved by her mother or women close to her mother.⁶⁶ The social role girls' unconsciously occupied is revealed in conscious recollections of why they chose to read the books they read.⁶⁷ I look at girls positioning themselves as moral judges through this kind of evidence in the section on memories.

Texts

Here I have used an analysis of stories by Zane Grey and Georgette Heyer, two of the authors most popular with girls, to argue that girls' ideas of their own capacity for moral assessment involved a sophisticated notion of judgment. The disparities

⁶²McIntyre and McIntyre, *ibid.*

⁶³McIntyre and McIntyre, *op cit*, p 165; pers comm from Kevin Reid, who with his mother was the proprietor of a commercial library in the forties. See also Reid, 'The Lane Cove Book Club Remembered' in *Books, Readers Reading: Australian Cultural History*, No 11, 1992.

⁶⁴The tradition of sharing the books which existed for girl library readers and their mothers, and which I discussed earlier in this section, ensured that girls need not deny themselves all the pleasures of this reading.

⁶⁵See Chapter Five for the discipline attached to public shaping through secondary school libraries and girls' dislike of it.

⁶⁶For girl reader's recognition of mother-substitutes in the family structure see for example Pearl K's and Amy M's recollections in Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p 118, p 122.

⁶⁷See for example, Walker, *Roundabout at Bangalow*, p 119.

between the stories of moral womanhood in the most popular texts suggest that girls did not simply reproduce their mothers' judgment. Rather, they drew in complicated ways on their repertoire of values from conflicting discourses of feminine sexuality to understand stories of moral womanhood from several different perspectives. Three aspects of popular library reading texts contributed to the readers' idea of capacity for moral judgment as a quality of youthful femininity. Firstly, the texts were read by girls who were anxious to make sense of womanhood and who understood themselves as trusted to recognise the story of the good woman. Secondly, these texts told a powerful story of the fulfilment of the good woman. As historical novels they gave the story social power through legitimising it historically. Moreover, their meaningful images of fulfilment also made them psychically powerful. Thirdly, the representations of feminine sexuality reflected moral feminine positions which could be seen to range across the competing and conflicting wartime discourses of womanhood. Consequently, girl readers were positioned to invest in ideas of moral womanhood in complicated ways.

It has been argued that we tell ourselves stories in order to resolve our culturally-induced conflicts.⁶⁸ Authors do this and legitimate contemporary concerns through the so-called 'historical' novel.⁶⁹ Wartime girls experienced girlhood as a period of intense anxiety for multiple systems represented it as a condition of identity change. Therefore, they sought stories to assuage their insecurities. The feminine domestic relationship in which girls were daughters being guided into womanhood by their mothers was one of these systems. Maternal influence had contributed in some ways to this insecurity by shaping a daughter from a child to a good woman. However, as the section on practices argues, it had also provided the girls with some reassurance. One of the reassuring ideas was that girls believed their mothers trusted them as good girls. An evidence of this was the maternal expectation that as daughterly library fiction readers they were capable of recognising stories of moral femininity and would select these independently.

Of the two authors, mothers favoured only Georgette Heyer. At the same time however, both Grey and Heyer were clearly favourite authors for girl readers of

⁶⁸Torgovnick, op cit, pp 18-23, Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines, 1751-1945*, p 4.

⁶⁹Hughes, *The Historical Romance*, p 1.

lending library fiction and this was accepted by mothers. Both mothers' and girls' attitudes are evident in contemporary assessments of library reading as well as the responses of participants in this project.⁷⁰ The two authors enjoyed a similar popularity with girl readers in the contemporary New Zealand reading survey.⁷¹ Both were the authors of multiple works and both were heavily represented on the popular library shelves.⁷²

Here I need to address an apparent anomaly over mothers' preference for Heyer and their acceptance of Grey. This centres around mothers' conservative notions of sexuality and the way these two authors depicted womanhood.⁷³ Both Grey and Heyer wrote historical romances in which girls become fulfilled, heterosexual women. In these stories each of the authors had a vision of the state and women's service which resulted in their representing a femininity which corresponded with some of the significant elements across the two competing notions of good Australian women in the second world war. Grey rendered good womanhood as both 'instinctual' and narrowly based. Satisfying feminine service was only possible through a domestically-centred, active, subordinate sexual relationship with a good man.⁷⁴ This idea resonated with the Australian wartime idea of conservative womanhood as *naturally* domestic and maternal. However, significantly for conservative mothers, Grey also focused on what in 1912 (when he was writing) was understood as the new knowledge that all women were sexually responsive. In second world war Australia this notion held the possibility of destructive, autonomous 'instinctual' feminine sexuality. I explore the way wartime mothers integrated their concerns over this idea

⁷⁰Mothers' preference for Heyer is also reflected in *Ideas*' notions of that reading which was popular with mature women see 'Helping Your Library', 14 April, 1943, p 112.

⁷¹Scott, *Reading Film and Radio Tastes of High School Boys and Girls*, p 24. This antipodean pattern is not completely reflected in the coeval English survey by Jenkinson but an exploration of the reasons for this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁷²For the recognised popularity of Grey as a library author see firstly, *Ideas*, 14 April, 1943, p 112. Deniliquin School of Arts Library catalogue for 1935 lists seven of Grey's novels, Perth Library in 1950 had twenty six. For Heyer's popularity see *Ideas*, 14 April, 1943, p 112. Her 1922 novel, *The Great Roxhythe*, was one of the earliest books (number 631) in Bert Butler's successful Green Tree Library which was first set up in Sydney in the early thirties. Butler's credo, "We really tried to have what people wanted" meant he purchased multiple copies of Heyer for whose work he had a standing order. See *Roxhythe* in the researcher's collection and Butler's comments in *The Golden Age of Booksellers*, p 18. The Perth Literary Institute Catalogue in 1950 recorded twenty one of Heyer's novels. The Deniliquin institute library catalogue for 1935 had twelve.

⁷³Mothers' conservatively-based concern over wild, 'natural' sexuality of the kind Grey depicts is explored in Chapter Seven, 'Disapproved Reading in the Home'.

⁷⁴Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons, n.d., 1923 inscription, p 166 and pp 13-14.

of sexuality with conservative notions of the good domestic woman in Chapter Seven. Here it suffices to say that mothers were able to accept what seemed to them to be an ambiguous notion of good womanhood in their daughter's popular novels.

Heyer represented good womanhood as a product of *civilisation*.⁷⁵ Her happy, good women are represented in a variety of highly-socialised service relationships with masculinity. Many of her stories focus in detail on the issues of domestic family which were the primary concern of the conservative good woman, and an element which was represented only in a limited way in Grey. In Heyer's society a subject's position depends on a combination of essential capacity and the development of that capacity through a publicly-based 'education'. A woman's subordination is not necessarily immediately experienced or based on an active, heterosexual relationship. Furthermore, it extends across the domestic and public domains. Therefore, Heyer's femininities also resonated with the Australian wartime idea of modern women. However, as the stories usually situated any diversion from the conservative idea of womanhood as the exciting 'otherness' of such categories as class and ethnicity, they did not clearly transgress conservative notions of womanhood. A relatively conservative heterosexual domestic relationship was always her educated heroines' ultimate reward. Consequently, it was possible for Heyer's reader to imagine a womanhood that corresponded with the *extent* of the values she herself held across both the conservative and modern ideas of femininity. Mothers could enjoy Heyer in different ways from their daughters. They could also imagine that girl readers of both these authors were influenced into ideas of the service of good womanhood as happily carried out through a stable domestic relationship in which the woman is subordinate to a good man. At the same time, ideas of domesticity as a woman's sphere and of immediate subordination through an active heterosexual relationship as essential to femininity were open to negotiation depending on how girls read these authors.

As a consequence of their reading both these authors in the same period of their lives, girl library readers were influenced by powerful renditions of good womanhood as natural and as civilised in ways which, in both cases, appeared to fit into conservative *and* modern ideas of the good woman. The novels positioned girls to

⁷⁵Aiken Hodge, *The Private World of Georgette Heyer*, 1985, p 47.

imagine that, whichever elements of wartime femininity they invested in, they were investing in a moral position. The multiplicity of positions encouraged girls into a consciousness of choice as part of this investment. Therefore girls were also positioned to imagine they could choose what was good. The way in which these authors represent moral femininity is exemplified through a brief analysis of a work of each author recalled specifically by some of the respondents. These are Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (*Riders*) and Heyer's series on the Alastair family, *These Old Shades* (*Shades*) and *Devil's Cub* (*Cub*).⁷⁶

Riders was first published in 1912 and is set in 1871. The author was responding to contemporary masculine fears of the economically and sexually independent New Woman by historically legitimating the 'natural' patriarchal state.⁷⁷ However, his story is also influenced by the emerging early twentieth century notion of all women as capable of sexual pleasure. This is underscored through his imagery rather than any action, but it is significant to the story. The centre of his 'naturally constituted' state is the home in which a woman raises the citizens of the future. However, this home is constantly threatened by destructive external forces and dependent on masculine protection for its existence. Grey uses the idea of the *natural* home as the outcome of heterosexual interaction and as the emblem of women's happiness to explore his ideas of the good woman.

Riders' main plot tells the story of how a lonely and beset girl becomes a satisfied woman through her achievement of a natural home. To gain such a reward she must be a good woman through rendering approved (natural) sexual service. Jane Withersteen, a Mormon, first appears as a successful woman. She is physically mature in a beautiful, western way and has a fine, self-supporting home, Withersteen House.⁷⁸ The first part of the book develops the emptiness behind Jane's apparent success. Jane knows only the narrow world of the Mormons. According to Grey, she rightly recognises feminine misery as an aspect of Mormon marriage and refuses to accept the role of womanly service because it entails an unsatisfying union.⁷⁹ As a

⁷⁶For this analysis I have used the previously mentioned Thomas Nelson edition of Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* and Heinemann's editions of Heyer's *These Old Shades* (1934) and, *Devil's Cub*, (1947).

⁷⁷See Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*, p 10.

⁷⁸*RPS*, p 23 and p 38.

⁷⁹*RPS*, p 87, pp 104-105.

result, when her father died and she inherited his home she corrupted the natural meaning of a home.⁸⁰ Jane has a kind heart and good will.⁸¹ However, it is not these but the fulfilment of feminine sexual service which will both bring her happiness and make her a truly good woman.

The story begins with this unnatural home already in the process of destruction. The process accelerates as Grey shows the reader how without the gendered relationship of service underpinning a home, the home cannot exist. Mormon predators and those in league with them steal or destroy the cattle herds which form the home's income, invade the home itself, and steal the adopted daughter of the house, the child, Fay.⁸² Furthermore, in an unnatural position of public power yet with a woman's perspective, Jane 'unmans' those men who would protect the home, demanding their guns. 'I want to keep you from killing more men - Mormons. You must let me save you from more wickedness, bloodshed', she tells Lassiter, her potential saviour.⁸³ He sees her argument as 'good an' beautiful', but his masculine perspective includes the greater world. '[O]ut here ['gunpackin'] is the difference between a man and somethin' not a man,' he cautions her.⁸⁴

The question the novel seeks to resolve is whether Jane will discover the true meaning of a home and so achieve the enduring satisfactions of the good woman, or be destroyed along with her unnatural home. Jane does discover these 'facts' about the world and her nature, but slowly. She experiences the satisfaction of nurturing a child in her relationship with little Fay, through whom she 'at last found full expression for the mother-longing in her heart'.⁸⁵ She grows into a feeling of passion which cannot be fulfilled by possession, only by subordination to Lassiter's will, a sense so powerful she 'slipped into utter blackness' and from which she rouses with simultaneous feelings of 'joy' and 'fear' at his presence.⁸⁶ She then values the protection he offers, on his terms. This is not only protection from her worldly

⁸⁰*RPS*, p12.

⁸¹*RPS*, p 106, p 111.

⁸²For the value and destruction of the herds see *RPS*, p 50, pp 249 ff; for the Mormon invasion of Jane's home *RPS*, p 187, pp 201-202; for the theft of Fay, *RPS*, pp 321-323.

⁸³*RPS*, p 173.

⁸⁴*RPS*, p184.

⁸⁵*RPS*, p 232.

⁸⁶*RPS*, p 329, p 335.

enemies, but from herself. When despite her utmost efforts to mistakenly protect a criminal Lassiter is not moved from his idea of righteousness, she then, ‘seemed to be falling at the feet of a luminous figure -a man - Lassiter - who had saved her from herself, who could not be changed, who would slay rightfully’.⁸⁷

Grey’s idea of Jane’s fulfilled womanhood as an active, subordinate, heterosexual relationship of service to a good man and the opportunity for domestic maternal nurture is powerfully rendered in the closure. This begins with Lassiter setting fire to her inherited home and as they ride away Jane ‘never once looked back’⁸⁸. She is drained of all self-will, in ‘the last of her sacrifice - the supremacy of her love’. Yet this condition is also strangely fulfilling, ‘She thought that if she [only] had little Fay [as well] she would not ask any more of life’.⁸⁹ When Lassiter, without explanation, appears to leave her she passively accepts.⁹⁰ However, he has done so only to rescue Fay and return her to Jane for nurture.⁹¹ Jane has evolved into a woman who can be part of a flawless relationship of gendered service and so has become a woman with a true home. With Lassiter and Fay she enters a paradisaal valley. By bringing down a balancing rock across the opening Lassiter seals it off from the corrupt world of their Mormon pursuers, ‘forever’.⁹² Jane’s finally-achieved home is geographically as well as emotionally natural and the closure implies that here she will fulfil her natural sexual service with a child and a safe place to raise her, both provided by a good man. Jane Withersteen is at last a truly good, and therefore a happy, woman.

Heyer’s notion of the state is of a richly structured, *civilised* society in the British sense of civilisation I discussed in Chapter Four. Grey focussed on natural evolution into a single situation. However, Heyer’s society depends on the *education* of an individual’s essential capacity to create a citizen who can judge how he or she should behave in response to a variety of situations. This society has multiplicities of race, class and gender positions through which the judgment can take place. Fluidity is the cornerstone of Heyer’s stories. Education in her novels shifts between the formal and the informal. No one gender is allocated the position of teacher, men and women

⁸⁷*RPS*, p328.

⁸⁸*RPS*, p 337.

⁸⁹*RPS*, p 368.

⁹⁰*RPS*, p 371.

⁹¹*RPS*, p 374.

⁹²*RPS*, p 382.

teach each other. Heyer moves her characters easily between supposedly conflicting notions within the social categories of race, class and gender. She also focuses on their simultaneous position in the different categories of race, class, ethnicity and gender in order to justify a subject's discursively conflicting position.

The good woman's service for Heyer is to provide this society with future citizens from a subordinate role in a stable heterosexual relationship. The Alastair family series begins in the mid-eighteenth century and, like Grey's tales, these are also stories of how lonely and beset girls achieve the satisfactions of good womanhood through a private heterosexual relationship. However, in Heyer's world, unlike Grey's world, a girl can come to this service from a variety of positions. Heyer draws on ambiguities of gender, race and class to give her heroines greater freedom inside the heterosexual relationship. Born in 1902, she was a girl and young woman in the early interwar years. She wrote in an earlier time, and from an earlier experience, of that progressive extension of middle-class femininity into the public world and the reduction of maternal prescriptions of womanhood which later affected the Australian girl readers.⁹³ Her stories historically legitimate these modern feminine freedoms.

The series begins with *Shades*. Leonie, a girl putatively from the brutal lower orders of mid-eighteenth century Parisian society, is disguised as a boy in order to protect her virtue. This both gives her considerable freedom for heterosocial action and provides the plot. Cold, vengeful Justin Alastair, the Duke of Avon and head of a dysfunctional family, recognises from this boy's appearance the discarded offspring of an aristocratic enemy and 'buys' him in order to flaunt him as a servant. The story must take place inside a heterosexual world and so the girl becomes a woman and marries the man. However it is also a civilised world so the girl/boy learns to be a woman and the man is reformed. The action unfolds through a series of Heyeresque ambiguities which can extend the reader's ways of thinking about gender, class, race and the way women can serve the state. The boy who is really a girl becomes the protege of an English nobleman whose embeddedness in French society ensures he is not bound to English convention.⁹⁴ Leonie is a peasant who has not only the innate

⁹³For a discussion of these aspects of Heyer's life see Aiken Hodge, op cit, p 28, p31, p 35.

⁹⁴For Leonie's ambiguities of gender see, *TOS*, p 70; for the Duke's ambiguities of race, *TOS*, Chapters I to IV, p 157.

delicacy of noble birth, but also access to civilised thought through the decision of the parish priest to tutor her.⁹⁵ These ambiguities lead to a gender relationship in which the balance between dominance and subordination is nowhere near as absolute as in Grey's story. The Duke teaches Leonie how to occupy the place, for which she has an inborn capacity, a position as a woman in the civilised (British!) world.⁹⁶ Leonie, less consciously, teaches the Duke and his family to value each other in a story which demonstrates how the continuity of civilised families is the basis of the civilised world.⁹⁷

While Leonie's marriage makes her a woman with access to the womanly satisfactions based on domesticity and an active sexual relationship with a good man that is not all it does. It also extends rather than impedes the possibility of public life which was marginally hers before marriage and suggests further the possibility of an autonomous, public role. This becomes apparent in the second book, *Cub*, in which moral femininity is represented as having access to considerable domestic and public autonomy in a world of social ambiguities. This story takes place twenty five years later and revolves around the abduction of respectable, bourgeoisie Mary by Dominic, the wild young son of Leonie and her duke. Leonie, as a married woman of an older generation, now knows an independence and power she could not have had access to as an unmarried girl. The Duke is 'away' for most of this story. It is wealthy, socially-powerful Leonie who decides and acts on what is 'right', even though she believes Alastair will not agree with her.⁹⁸ She makes a decision to support respectable Mary and insist that Dominic marry her.

Cub is also the story of the next generation of women. From this perspective it can be seen as a representation of the continuities of heterosexuality and sexual stability as characteristics of the good woman in a society which has moved further towards modern notions. In this world it is possible to see the emergence of ideas that good women have a role across the public and private spheres and can function in society

⁹⁵*TOS* pp 19-20.

⁹⁶*TOS*, p 105, pp 136-137.

⁹⁷Leonie teaches the duke and his family to value each other through both facilitation and precept. Chapter XXII, pp 156-158, p 206, p 250. This is represented as particularly important for the story is premised on the idea that the failure to value one's family is the end of civilization. See for example, pp 85-86.

⁹⁸*DC* p 161, pp 298-299.

without a personal heterosexual relationship. This story, too, shifts easily between supposedly conflicting values. Mary is not only a bourgeoisie, she is also descended from an aristocratic line on her disinherited father's side. She draws on her moral and physical courage to maintain her sense of self when abducted by the rakehell Dominic. This young man has a basic sense of 'justice' because of his inherited Englishness but is wild because of his inherited Frenchness. Mary's determination to be sexually, socially and economically independent despite his onslaughts is underpinned by idea that she has been born with the best qualities of the bourgeoisie as well as having an aristocratic 'nature'.⁹⁹ This is the story of Dominic's education rather than Mary's. Mary, who is Dominic's teacher, has already had her own potentially fine nature developed through a public education so that she is a civilised feminine citizen, hence her civilised behaviour under duress.¹⁰⁰ As a consequence of this aspect of her protagonist, Heyer is able to insert into the novel not only notions of respectable girls' as part of public systems of education, but also female support systems as a consequence of this public shaping and the possibilities of female economic and sexual independence through paid work.¹⁰¹

In *Cub* female independence and autonomy are associated with British rather than masculine notions of courage and rationality. In this way their approval as British femininity by the British patriarchy, here represented by the Duke as Englishman, aristocratic ruler, husband and father, becomes possible. In the closure, Leonie's behaviour is accepted by the returned Duke for she has contributed to saving his heir's place as a member of (British) society.¹⁰² Mary's behaviour towards her abductor and over her own now-damaged place in the social world develops Dominic's sense of justice. He grows to admire the courage and 'common sense' of the way in which she values social approval both for him and for herself. As a consequence he also understands himself as someone who should be married (and to her) rather than someone who can be an abductor (of her) if he feels like it.¹⁰³ He has learned to be *civilised*. Despite its public setting the story focuses on the domestic relationships of a

⁹⁹DC, p 31, pp 33-34; For the notions of teaching and education in their relationship see DC pp 118-119.

¹⁰⁰For Mary's public (as opposed to domestic) education see DC, p 133.

¹⁰¹For publicly founded female support systems see DC, pp 133-134; for female independence and paid work, DC, pp 118-119.

¹⁰²DC, pp 298-299.

¹⁰³DC, pp 291- 292.

family. The Duke is aware of how Mary's approach in this private realm has supported, and would continue to support, the public Alastair family name.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, her performance receives patriarchal endorsement.¹⁰⁵ With the Duke's imprimatur, Mary's behaviour which Heyer represents as understood by some groups as masculine and bourgeois in a world which claims to value women who are feminine and aristocratic is translated into ideal British femininity.¹⁰⁶ Mary is approved as a good woman and rewarded with the promise of a Heyer-style, satisfying marriage to a properly-educated, *relatively* good man.¹⁰⁷ Both Leonie and Mary achieve this reward of good women. At the same time, such a marriage could be seen to belong in the ambiguously-structured, civilised world and so it would not confine them or render them passive but rather offers varieties of autonomous experience within the patriarchal state.

Lending library readers were exposed to maternally-approved stories supporting a number of complicated versions of the contemporary discourses of femininity. This was part of the way the discourses, practices and texts constituting this reading brought together the problems and some potential solutions for wartime girls' struggle to understand themselves as respectable women and feel individually satisfied. The next section explores the effect of these forces on girl readers.

Memories

This is a history of challenge to dominant ideas by a subordinate group, but it is also a history of respectabilities rather than transgressions. This section draws on memories of the discourses, practices and texts associated with lending library fiction reading to show how wartime girl readers could invest in an apparent paradox; a subject position in which moral feminine service was the result of their negotiation of competing and conflicting discourses of womanhood. The reason for this was that girls negotiated a youthful, feminine subject position which included a capacity for moral judgment. Apparent maternal endorsement of competing feminine sexualities was crucial to this negotiation. 'Memories' clarifies the role of the maternal

¹⁰⁴DC, pp 286-292.

¹⁰⁵DC, p 292.

¹⁰⁶DC p 280 and ff, p 288.

¹⁰⁷DC, p 293.

imprimatur as part of domestic popular fiction reading in both giving the readers space to negotiate moral judgment as a quality of youthful femininity and limiting that judgment.

Lending library fiction reading was the most commonly remembered domestically-approved reading. Eighty of the one hundred and thirty two respondents specifically recalled this reading in conjunction with the home. Twenty eight of these further specified living in a family with a mother and a father with a semi-skilled job when not on war service. This would have been the lowest social class common to this group of readers. Twenty seven indicated they belonged to similarly constituted families where the father normally earned his living in one of the newer professional, business or clerical capacities. There were few memories of this kind of reading from respondents who were unquestionably from unskilled working-class families. Girls from isolated farms were the most clearly defined domestically-based group without memories of lending library reading.¹⁰⁸

Respondents associated this reading with the experience of the shift from childhood to early young womanhood as a time of insecurity and disappointment. Merna (4) recalled that at eleven, ‘having lost my dear father in a RAAF accident I became somewhat introverted and took to reading as an escape’. Another reason Merna read satisfying books was she ‘had a few nasty characters in [her] own life who[m she] needed to escape into [her] daydreams from’. She remembered her library fiction reading as immoderate and shifting between public and domestic girlhood with a rapidity which collapsed the meanings of leisure and the division between service and leisure under the burden of her need. Merna read on the

[t]ram and train to [secondary] school, walking- even from the tram stop. . . I would walk home from Unley City Library reading as I walked, even while crossing the road. If tooted at by startled motorists I merely growled, ‘Legs were made before wheels!’ and kept on.

She ‘even propped up [her] book and read while [she] did the ironing’. Gwenda (12), beginning with a disclaimer that she couldn’t ‘remember very much about [her] reading habits in during World War 2’, went on to put Georgette Heyer library fiction in the first part of her attached list and noted about her novels, ‘Just *loved* those when

¹⁰⁸See Edith’s (90) story in the Introduction to this thesis for the problems of library reading for farm girls.

I was about eighteen [Gwenda's emphasis]'. Gwenda also recalled her coeval wartime experiences as a fund-raiser in wartime Australian society in a way which underscored the tension between Heyer's representations of heterosexual relationships and those relationships in her own world:

I was an entrant in a Red Cross Queen competition and won! I was 'crowned' at a crowded ball. You might be amused to hear that my eighteen year old partner that night was an airforce lad. At interval time his mates took him outside to celebrate my win and unfortunately mixed his drinks. He subsequently vomited on my blue tulle 'Madame Jeanne' ball gown - and then blacked out! [Gwenda's emphasis].

The connections the respondents make between the memories of this reading and the memories of their lives at this time suggest that girls read favourite lending library fiction while experiencing change, a sense of lack of control over this change and disappointment in what they perceived as indications of their future position as women.

Girls came to understand the satisfactions of lending library fiction reading both through being schoolgirl adolescents and through being daughters. Chapters Three and Five explore the way that education authorities' ideas of library fiction reading as recreation situated this reading as adolescent leisure in the home. Chapter Five also demonstrates how school girls could see popular fiction library texts as satisfying while simultaneously experiencing the public shaping of leisure reading with its supervision of reading as part of the hierarchical standards of British Australian citizenship as deeply unsatisfactory. The memories section in Chapter Five drew in detail on Fay's (107) and Barbara's (125) remembered distress over this aspect of high school experience.

At the same time, respondents' memories of coming to popular library fiction reading through the feminine domestic relationship were unanimously positive. Mothers were recalled as introducing girls to this reading as part of a daughter's potential for womanhood. As Janet (55) explained, 'During 1941 [when I was fourteen] my mother decided it was time for me to start reading *books* [Janet's emphasis]'. Kit (26) remembered, 'When we went on holidays Mum would look about for the three-penny library and we would join for the period of our stay'. The sisters, Susan (32) and Joy (31), in Fremantle, were eleven and fourteen year old high

school girls when the war began. They recall a family of women readers and discussers: 'Our mother would introduce and recommend'. Joy remembered that as a result of their mother's recommendations 'Georgette Heyer was read by us all'. These were memories of mothers guiding girls from childhood towards complex ideas of womanhood as feminine service across the current discourses of femininity and in an atmosphere of promise, nurture, cooperation and freedom. They were also memories which suggested the development of shared values and interpretations between mothers and their daughters.

Memories of mothers' roles in this domestic reading indicate mothers saw the activity as leisure in ways which attached to several ideas of feminine service. Valda (85), whose mother was chronically ill, undertook a substantial domestic and caring role so her father could continue his job as a railwayman. She remembered being encouraged by her 'wonderful' mother to enjoy 'any book I fancied' from 'a small library in a corner shop down near Brighton Beach railway station'. Then she 'read before tea, sitting in the rocking chair beside the wireless' and within call of her mother. Her reading was a pastime between daughterly tasks. Barbara (24), also remembered her mother's role in her popular fiction reading as one of feminine facilitation and community. '[S]he encouraged me,' she noted, 'she was a bookworm too'. She recalled this reading in association with the study she and her family saw as paramount because it would lead to her approved career of English teacher. 'I was a fast reader,' Barbara wrote, 'which left me time for other books'. Barbara was passionate about her fiction reading and her parents put 'no restrictions' on her: 'at breakfast, (in the toilet!), on my way out. I always read in bed at night [Barbara's emphasis]'. Barbara would complete her secondary education and begin a university degree by the end of the war. Despite the exuberance of her memories, her fiction reading has the hallmarks of modern recreation. It is clearly remembered as moderate and sustaining of what she considered to be the real tasks of her feminine life, school and work. In Western Australia Joy (31) and Susan (32), both of whom completed senior high school in the war years, were encouraged by their mother to finish afternoon domestic chores, homework and then read. Sunday was a good day for a 'long read' in their household. Millie (124), who read fiction after chores were completed, detailed the jobs she was expected to finish as the daughter of a skilled working-class home in a rural suburb of Sydney, 'feeding fowls, kindling, piano

practice, homework'. These recollections suggest girls experienced maternal ideas of leisure shifting smoothly between the domestic and public notions of feminine service.

Girls also experienced library reading as something their mothers' understood as a 'safe' pastime. Pat (7) remembered how her busy mother, frequently absent as a South Australian railways union representative, encouraged the reading of popular fiction from the library as a way to keep her two daughters safe and amused. Their father was away on war service: 'Mother worked, and I look back now over the years [to] relatively happy days with my sister Shirley and me in lounge chairs chewing on our passion, dried apricots, with our [library] books'. Gwen (100) recalled getting most of her novels from her 'aunt, a retired nurse [who] opened a small, very popular lending library'. She acknowledged the pragmatism of her mother in giving her the opportunity to read: 'I think [she] thought it was a *safe occupation* [Gwen's emphasis]'. Notions of girls' 'safety' as safety from sexual behaviour which would stop them from being regarded as good girls, and mothers' responsibility for that safety, were part of wartime ideas of girlhood.¹⁰⁹ These memories can be understood as demonstrating that when girls performed library reading they knew it was an activity their mothers considered suitable for good girls.

The foregoing memories can be interpreted as revealing how girls experienced reading as part of their mothers' shifting ideas of how girls could be good young women. It was also clearly a means for the maternal development of shared values and interpretations with a daughter. Together, these pieces of evidence allow me to argue that girl readers of lending library fiction were firmly based to occupy a subject position where an unfettered choice of their reading meant they were exercising moral judgment about femininity. Other memories suggest that notions of privacy and autonomy associated with this reading ensured that girls believed they could freely choose their own lending library fiction.

¹⁰⁹Darian Smith, op cit, pp 133- 134.

Respondents clearly believed pleasure, privacy and autonomy were elements of the ideal lending library fiction reading experience. Many, like Pat (27), recall how they 'loved' this reading. Janet (55) remembered:

[My mother] took me to the three-penny lending library in a little shop. Very popular they were in those days. In exchange for my three pence I was given Georgette Heyer's *Powder and Patch* for one week. I was hooked. Every available minute and [all available] money was spent in Miss Looby's shop reading through every romance book she had [Janet's emphasis].

Pleasurable reading of approved novels was also often recalled as an intensely private experience. Pat (113) painted an idyllic picture of the place of chores and reading in the wartime life of a middle-class daughter on the outskirts of Sydney:

I grew up on a two acre property [near enough to Sydney for an importer father to work in the city] with two cows, chickens, fruit trees and a vegetable garden. I built myself a tree house and spent many happy hours there reading and dreaming.

She 'dreamed' with Georgette Heyer novels or, 'as the war progressed', Rupert Brooke. Elaine (130), working at fourteen, remembered 'home' in the hot summer hours of the Queensland weekends: 'I would sprawl out on my bed on Saturday afternoons and devour every word [in novels from the Brisbane library], oblivious to all'. Each of the four sisters in Enid's (14) South Australian family 'always' had a book beside her bed. Reading in bed was a favoured choice; for a number of respondents this was seen as making reading time a time of one's own. Pat (50) remembered, 'I trained myself to wake at daylight and read in bed'. She also read in bed at night as did Yvonne (28) in Western Australia. Sharing a room with her two sisters, Yvonne read by torchlight under the blankets. Furthermore, the importance of autonomy to the girl reader featured largely in these memories. Its denial to Fay (107), when she read in the secondary school library, led her, with the support of her mother, to seek out lending libraries as a substitute for providing fiction. Valda's (85) satisfaction over her mother's approving her reading 'any book I fancied' from the local lending library has already been noted. The combination of pleasure, privacy and autonomy let girls dream about their lives with the story as stimulus for individual ideas of satisfaction. What they dreamed about I discuss a little later on by drawing on their memories of Grey and Heyer.

Judith's (40) explanation of her girlhood idea of library fiction reading revealed an understanding which combined the ideas of public femininity, domestically-centred

satisfaction, maternal support, entree to the adult world, private pleasure and readerly autonomy. 'School [library] reading,' she recalled, 'was not as good as home [lending library] reading'. She explained, 'I had free range at the local lending library. I used to do Mum's borrowing at sixpence and a shilling a book during the holidays. Both parents read a lot, I saw them at it - don't remember any but adult books at home'.

Readers could experience maternal approval, library fiction reading, the discourses of feminine sexuality and morality in complex ways. Girls knew their mothers considered some stories moral and some immoral. Kit (26), remembering her reading forays into *all* the reading material in their house, noted, 'A fair bit of that would not have been approved by my mother if she found out'. Pat's (7) mother, happy about the library reading as a *safe* activity, was 'scathing' about certain library books, namely, those by Netta Muskett whose novels emphasised feminine pleasure in sexuality from a woman's point of view. Enid (14) remembers being 'subtly discouraged' domestically from reading the Elinor Glyn novels available at her local library. Glyn was known for a similar approach to Muskett. Some mothers, however, read books which supported the discourses of sexuality other mothers disapproved. The library novels Bernice (17) selected as her mother's proxy were by Ruby M Ayres and Georgette Heyer, 'her favourites which I consequently read and devoured'. Ayres also was a writer who canvassed the idea of women's sexual pleasure from a woman's point of view.¹¹⁰ Enid was able to recall how her school friends shared with her the library fiction her own mother disapproved and which their mothers had approved. Girls could understand that maternally-approved, moral stories extended beyond their own mother's moral values.

Moreover, the participants also had the opportunity to experience these other stories as part of domestic reading. Many participants' remembered their mother's moral values in terms of how their mother clearly trusted her daughter's choice in library fiction reading. Some of these memories reflect the friction between girls and

¹¹⁰Ayres, like Grey, wrote stories which supported the conservative discourse and imbricated it with the new understandings of feminine sexual pleasure. See Donohue, 'Ayres, Ruby M(ildred)' in (ed) Sage, *Women's Writing in English*, p 30. Interwar and wartime publications of Ayres' novels are part of the researcher's collection. Information about Glyn comes from the same sources. (see Keates in *Women's Writing in English*, pp 277-278). In addition to books in the researcher's collection, there is analysis of Muskett's themes by Rachel Anderson in *Twentieth Century Romance and History Writers*, second edition, pp 476-477.

female librarians. Fay (107) in Tasmania recorded a satisfying conclusion to her distress over the rigorous discipline of publicly-shaped library reading. She noted that after her altercation with the school librarian over 'suitable' reading, 'Mother allowed me to join the local lending library and so I continued to read'. Gwen (100) recalled how she chose and read 'all the popular romances Georgette Heyer, Ernest Raymond etcetera, but she [the librarian] wouldn't let me take out *Brave New World*, obviously she disapproved of it'. Secure in the knowledge that her mother saw self-chosen library reading as an occupation for a good girl, Gwen recalled, 'I did take it out when her offsider was on the desk'. She read it at home. The girls' experience of the combination of maternal recognition of the moral novel across the spectrum of feminine sexuality and notions of reading independence gave them the opportunity to read satisfying stories from each of the conflicting discourses of feminine sexuality as a moral activity.

The domestic relationship also included fathers and they too affected girls' fiction reading. However, the fact that this fiction was read openly by girls in the home meant that mothers also approved the stories. Beth (62), from a 'protective' family with six daughters, noted, 'We read Mum's and Dad's choices as well as our own. Friday night was always Library Night, a highlight of the week . . . Dad, he had a Zane Grey period and I read them all'. No one served as a proxy chooser of her father's books and some, like Valerie (44), remember, 'Dad would let me read his library books if they weren't due back'. Most remembered reading approved by fathers was of the western-romance and mystery genres which romanticised the traditional gender relationship. Therese (43) recalled a breadth of vision in reading her steelworker father's institute library books that, she felt, was lacking in the novels offered to her at her New South Wales convent school. However, her memories reveal authors whose stories represented conventional gender roles.¹¹¹ Perhaps this apparent 'breadth of vision' she felt was represented in her father's reading lay in the fact that it was introducing her to an adult, masculine point of view rather than to reflections of broader social relationships. Both Teresa (33) in New South Wales and Shirley (72) in Victoria recalled how much they liked Grey's western romances. Teresa was introduced to this writer through her father's selections from his returned soldiers' club library. 'My

¹¹¹Edgar Wallace (1875-1932), Leslie Charteris (1907-1993), Conan Doyle (1859 - 1930).

father belonged to the Soldier's Club Library', she recalled, 'I got books on Dad's card. Westerns because Dad had westerns. Zane Grey, especially *Purple Sage*'. Shirley's father, a fan, took out novel after novel by Grey until he had exhausted his library's stock. Shirley read them all. Library fiction associated with fathers is often remembered as a window onto a wider world. Nevertheless, both texts and practices of the reading in this relationship foregrounded femininities which emphasised conservative, gender-based hierarchies.

As the recollections thus far make clear, the most memorable of these stories were those of Zane Grey and, overwhelmingly, those of Georgette Heyer. Nineteen of the respondents mention reading 'westerns', a library section of popular American frontier society novels in which Grey was heavily represented. Of these sixteen specify Grey's writings or name his books or both. Feminine reading by other popular authors was more or less equally available with Heyer's popular historical romances in the lending libraries, but did not even begin to receive the same amount of recognition in respondents' memories.¹¹² Heyer, with forty specific references by name and/or title is accorded a popularity in current memory which is matched in Scott's New Zealand wartime research.¹¹³

The way in which Grey's novels were remembered reveals their importance to the girl readers. Elizabeth (75) recalled how she 'loved' them. Shirley remembered herself 'consuming' them. The stories were not thought of as westerns as the readers believed men enjoyed them (as action stories), even though many of the respondents referred to them as westerns.¹¹⁴ Kath (80), in commenting on how much she disliked westerns, specifically exempted Grey's oeuvre. More precisely Vera (1) explained they were not 'westerns' but 'romances', a term most respondents understood as

¹¹²Hepple and Duffield were constantly reviewed and recommended as library stock (*Ideas* 13 July, 1944, 12 January, 1945, 12 September, 1944, 12 June, 1945,). They were also featured in advertising recommendations for libraries (*Ideas* 17 April, 1943). Bert Butler's interwar library book supply company had a standing order for Muskett novels from her publishers (Dearnley, *The Golden Age of Booksellers*, p 18). The Perth Institute library by 1950 had twelve volumes of Hepple, twelve volumes of Muskett and eighteen volumes of Duffield. Even struggling Deniliquin in 1935 had a copy of Duffield who had first published only in 1931. Duffield and Hepple are mentioned five times in totality by respondents to the survey, Netta Muskett, four. No respondent recalled a title of hers by name.

¹¹³Scott, op cit, p 24, Table V11.

¹¹⁴Clark Mitchell's analysis of *The Virginian* as the prototype of westerns such as Grey wrote reveals why Grey's stories are at once truly westerns and yet seem to girls to be romances (Clark Mitchell, *Westerns*, pp 95-98. See also Tompkins' discussion of the pleasures of westerns in *West of Everything*, pp 4-5.

stories of the achievement of feminine satisfaction through a heterosexual relationship of love.¹¹⁵ Merna (4), as I have shown, had a particularly anxious and insecure girlhood. Her memories reveal the powerful effect of Grey's promises of feminine security and satisfaction through the 'natural' binary, heterosexual relationship:

I can remember in *West of the Pecos* by Zane Grey, the heroine (lying unconscious) disguised as a boy is discovered by the hero when he opens her shirt to reveal a pair of beautiful breasts. Similar breasts were revealed in several Tarzan books! [Merna's emphasis].¹¹⁶

Merna and Beth (62), and others like them, recalled reading Grey's oeuvre at the beginning of their change from childhood to womanhood. However, no respondent remembered re-reading or collecting his books. These memories support the argument that Grey's vision of femininity with its emphasis on *naturalness* was important to girls trying to move from identifying as children to identifying as women.

Like Grey, Heyer was read with avidity. As well as further recollections, some of the memories I have already drawn on are worth incorporating with others here in order to highlight the passionate quality of the girls' responses to her. Elizabeth (121) had 'a love affair with Georgette Heyer novels'. Bernice (17) 'devoured' them. Laurie (64) 'loved' them. Janet (55) was 'hooked' on them. Merna (4) explained that everything she recorded about her reading was 'strongly etched in [her] mind', and then went on to note that she read 'everything I could beg, borrow or steal by Georgette Heyer'.

The readers' memories of their first readings of Heyer are often associated with memories of their mothers. Shirley (89) recalled how she 'discovered Georgette Heyer':

I was a member of a private library in Acland Street St Kilda, where the children's books filled the lowest shelves at floor level. By the time I was twelve I'd read all that interested me including many schoolgirl stories by Angela Brazil and lifted my eyes to the shelves above.

My mother who read constantly, and still does at eighty nine, merely remarked, 'I see you've grown up, and we shared . . . from then on.

¹¹⁵I discuss the reasons for this definition of 'romance' among girls and women in Chapter Seven.

¹¹⁶The common denominator of these incidents is the visual recognition of the feminine body by masculinity is the beginning of fulfilment for a deprived girl. I have not been able to gain access to *West of the Pecos*, but such an incident also occurs in Grey's most popular novel, *Riders of the Purple Sage* pp 66-67. *The Son of Tarzan*, p 59 is another example of this story in books Merna remembers.

Susan (32) and Joy (31) not only remembered that 'Heyer was read by us all', they also remembered their mother discussing the plots and laughing with them over some of the improbabilities. Memories of Heyer suggest that reading this author was experienced as being an immediate part of the feminine community of values represented in her novels.

Unlike Grey, this author's satisfying effect was recalled in a variety of ways. Heyer, too, was remembered as a writer of romances by respondents such as Elaine (130) and Thurza (122). Heyer was also a teller of historical stories to Laurie (64) and Elaine (2). Others, such as Richmal (101), Kit (26) and Merna (4), emphasised Heyer's stories as a history of women's public and domestic lives in western cities. Elizabeth (121) fitted into this category and she was careful to specify Heyer's 'historical novels not her detective stories'. For Roslyn (35) Heyer's protagonists were 'strong women' and this made her stories satisfying to read. These memories can be interpreted as revealing that there was more than one way for girls to read Heyer's idea of the world.

Readers' satisfaction with Heyer is expressed in the number who recall repeating the experience of absorbing her stories. Vera (1) reflected how she first read Heyer through maternally-approved library reading and subsequently came to own Heyer's books. Merna (4) had a similar memory. Elizabeth (121) noted that across girlhood at school and home and young womanhood at home and university she 'was in the habit of re-reading books [she] had enjoyed, especially *These Old Shades*'. If Grey assured the readers of the essential importance and pleasure of the heterosexual and subordinately gendered service of the good woman, the memories of Heyer suggest that readers looked to her for meaningful modern ways of living femininity as feminine service. In each case the avidity with which girls read these books argues, as Belsey has suggested, that the reading powerfully affected the way the reader interpreted her position in the world.¹¹⁷

Kitty (115) and Barbara (125) were two readers of popular library fiction in this time of girls' psycho-social insecurity and need to make sense of gender relationships.

¹¹⁷Belsey, *Desire*, pp 34-38. See also my discussion of Belsey's work in Chapter One.

In different ways they drew on popular novel reading their mothers approved to imagine satisfying values from the competing discourses of feminine sexuality in complex ways as part of their being good young women. A subject position which incorporated moral judgment as a quality of youthful femininity allowed them to do this.

Firstly, I have deployed Kitty's powerful memories of the psychic satisfaction of reading popular novels to look at how important it was for girls to invest in notions of femininity which were both satisfying and moral. Kitty's father was the town engineer of a major provincial centre in the north. She read amid the educational expectations of the new middle class. She also experienced wartime evacuation and subsequently lived with her mother and younger brothers in a house her grandmother ran as a boarding house business. All the women contributed to the public and private service associated with femininity in this household, and popular novel reading was both domestic and recreational leisure.

Kitty's popular novel reading was encouraged by her mother and grandmother. Academically successful, she enjoyed the romances as feminine stories. At the same time she recognised their distance from school and university ideas of Literature with the accompanying notion that these latter texts were more demanding representations of universal, rational values and therefore also important to her. 'I wasn't a deep reader,' she noted of the library novels, '[b]ut I loved reading . . . As I grew older (over fourteen and could borrow from the adult section) I worked my way through Georgette Heyer, D K Broster, Jeffrey Farnol - any [British] historical novel I could lay my hands on except Scott'.

Kitty's text-focussed recollections emphasised her sense of womanhood as an unknown experience which also promised new, half-recognised fulfilments. She remembered:

. . . the richness and colour of those full-skirted ballgowns worn
by beauties with carefully powdered hair, holding mysterious
masks before their eyes.

She reflected on the qualities which engendered this intensity of feeling in the 'historical novels, particularly the novels of Georgette Heyer' in ways which also

reveal the importance to her of equal heterosexual contribution rather than feminine passivity:

There seemed to be so many intrigues and disguises in the novels and I was harrowed by the misunderstandings between the hero and heroine but always relieved they were sorted out before the end and lived happily ever after.

Kitty's idea of feminine satisfaction was public and heterosocial:

[She] loved the descriptions of the clothes, houses and vehicles of those days. Of course this sort of novel concentrated on the lives of the wealthy and the sumptuousness of the materials - fabrics; satins and velvets and brocades appealed to my senses. The carriages drawn by elegant, high-stepping horses seemed to skim the roads more lightly than modern cars.

Kitty's memories of Heyer and the similar novels demonstrate the rapturous, anticipatory, sensuous nature of the domestically-approved reading which made it a force in the reader's negotiation of newly-imagined ideas of feminine service.¹¹⁸

However, for Kitty, as for the earlier-mentioned Gwenda with her memory of the fund-raising ball, the role of the young woman in wartime Australia did not match the satisfying picture of femininity imagined through reading the Heyer novels. Kitty noted that '... although at the time I loved reading about the beautiful heroines, I have remembered few of them, but I have vivid recollections of some of the heroes. No doubt in my reading I *was* the heroine [Kitty's emphasis]'. When she sought for these experiences in her own entry into adult society she experienced considerable disappointment:

I believe the disillusionment I suffered when I attended a ball for the first time can be blamed on my addiction to these novels. Instead of a hall with marble columns, chandeliers and gilt chairs with brocaded seats, there we were in the galvanised iron pavilion of the local show society, a few palm leaves arranged around the walls, folding chairs in so-called alcoves and rather harsh electric lighting. Somehow the wartime evening clothes lacked richness and colour.

On the other hand, Kitty recognised the separation between Heyer's English storybook world and the one she inhabited with its 'wartime evening clothes'. At the same time she experienced Heyer's pictures as accurate representations of moral as well as pleasurable young womanhood for Heyer was an author approved by her mother and her grandmother. Therefore, Kitty felt comfortable in negotiating a

¹¹⁸Belsey, *ibid.*

femininity which was strongly mediated by Heyer's notions. The 'ball' might reasonably have been seen as a 'local dance' of the kind Twigg's respondents recall as 'communal fun and carefree romance' bringing together young people who were separated by the distances associated with Australia.¹¹⁹ Yet, despite the 'wartime evening clothes' and the 'galvanised iron pavilion', the power and direction of Kitty's memories make it possible to argue that for her it was still imagined in Heyeresque terms as a public ritual of civilised heterosocial activity and erotic excitement. According to Twigg, for girls the local dance was often a prelude to feminine service as the immediate sexual, emotional and domestic comfort of a good man, whose more important role was public.¹²⁰ Heyer heroines, as I have shown, continued to enjoy public life and autonomy after marriage. Gwenda, unable to reconcile the two worlds, carried her distress over the Australian wartime world's failure for over half a century. Kitty was able to imagine her dance partly in Heyeresque terms with the concomitant implication that 'liv[ing] happily ever after' could also be imagined through identification with the Heyer heroines. Therefore she was able to say of this occasion, '... but I did enjoy myself'.

Not all girl readers of Heyer identified with her heroines' active heterosexuality. There were other ways to read her. The sense of vulnerability and lack was experienced differently by each girl and so other readers used the library novels to imagine a different idea of the good woman. Barbara's story forms the second case study. Her memories show another way in which a wartime girl reader by drawing on Heyer negotiated a satisfying moral femininity which challenged dominant ideas of womanhood. Barbara's vision extended the notions of feminine sexuality associated with the discourse of modern womanhood.

Barbara was firmly endorsed by her mother as a trustworthy reader. Her disappointing experience of supervision and direction in reading secondary school library fiction was superseded by domestic satisfactions. 'Anyway,' she noted after her public chastisement when the English teacher/librarian believed her choice of leisure reading material from the school library was beneath the school's expectations of her, 'my parents belonged to the New South Wales Bookstall Library

¹¹⁹Twigg, op cit, p 25.

¹²⁰Twigg, op cit, p 22, p 25.

. . . The point is I was allowed to browse as much as I liked in the Bookstall Library in the school holidays and borrow on my parents' subscription . . . My parents took the view that youngsters in their teens could read whatever adults read apart from rare exceptions'.

Barbara drew on discourses of motherhood and of female sexuality in experiencing domestically-based fiction reading as a great satisfaction. She understood herself as a domestic daughter and knew that reading could be a domestic reward; 'Mornings' she noted, were busy, 'even when not studying, [they] were taken up with domestic jobs to relieve my mother on the days she was at "war work"'. Equally, recreation for public life was often foregrounded in her memories of this reading. 'Once I left school,' she reflected, 'there was not much time for reading except on holidays as I had lots of exams to sit for . . . Looking back I marvel now that I managed to read the heaps that I did'. Earlier she had read 'especially in the school holidays or in bed at night'. Barbara noted, 'I read many of the books my mother borrowed as we shared a taste for period novels'

Barbara remembered the novels she shared with her mother were those by 'Farnol, Heyer, Orczy'. She elided her mother's approval of these authors as moral writers into approval for the societies they wrote about as moral societies. She explained she could 'work up no interest in the desert outback'. She 'was an Anglophile from way back and [her] greatest dream was to go there'. Her use of the term *go there* suggests Barbara imagined England in the way a visitor to a society would see it, that is as public spaces and openly displayed relationships rather than as the domestic and intimate life necessary to *live there*. As her dismissal of Australia as 'the desert outback' implies, Barbara's dream of Heyer's England was a dream of *civilised* society constituted by urban life and people who understood the social values which supported civilisation. In understanding and appreciating English life as public and clearly displayed Barbara also believed she understood and appreciated civilised values. These ideas contributed to Barbara negotiating a fulfilling femininity in Australia as a public service directing moral British/English values in local society.

In the first place Barbara imagined herself into this dream of civilisation as an Australian woman through a university education in the arts.¹²¹ However, a combination of wartime and family circumstances denied her this opportunity. Her own earlier experiences in the school library had shown her the power of women librarians in modern society to judge and direct values. In a period of some financial difficulty for them, her mother, father and aunt combined to pay her fees to the New South Wales Library School. Her dream of translating herself from girlhood to civilised womanhood was now a ‘dream of being part of the [New South Wales] Public Library’s Reading Room staff’.

At this time head librarians in such libraries were men and the structure was clearly patriarchal.¹²² In 1941 Barbara was employed in the state public library under a head librarian known both for his recognition of any woman who could distinguish herself as a junior librarian through sound qualifications and his apprehension over women as career librarians.¹²³ Barbara maintained her identity as a moral young woman in this public position of feminine service by completing the junior library examinations and securing her low-level employment. Thus she appeared to fit into the modern discourse of femininity as a limited period of public paid work in a subordinate position as an interlude before a domestic personal relationship.

Barbara’s recalled her early library work in some detail:

The Mitchell Library (that is the Australian Wing) was a closed shop to all but holders of reader’s tickets, and these would be granted on the lines of the British Museum Reading Rooms.

But there was still what we called the Country Circulations Department which is where I worked for my first nine months (with Public Reading Room shift work at the week-ends). The ‘Country Section’ as we called it catered to people living beyond the Sydney Metropolitan Area. And it was a lending service. To individuals or family groups books were sent by rail or post for cost. Also to a few special groups (nuns in a country convent, prisoners in a country gaol and the odd lighthouse keeper); several books at a time which they could borrow-select from printed lists on general topics (travel, agriculture etcetera) or they could indicate the kind of reading matter they liked and leave it to the library staff to select some titles they’d not borrowed before.

¹²¹See Dale, *The English Men*, Chapters Two and Three for the primacy of British values in English Literature as it was taught in Australian universities in the first half of the twentieth century.

¹²²Encel, MacKenzie, Tebbutt, *Women and Society: An Australian Study*, p 119.

¹²³Encel et al, pp 119- 120.

These memories reveal how strongly she understood herself as a public part of a British/English civilisation; judging, directing and supporting a society in civilised values.

Barbara remembered passing her junior examinations with considerable success and this pleasure reinforced her ideas of the importance and satisfaction of her library service. Her memories of herself as a student at the library school suggest Barbara was subjectively positioned to connect higher education and both a clearer vision of and participation in the civilised state. ‘As a would-be Arts undergraduate,’ she recalled, ‘I compensated by trying to read as many as possible of the books set for Arts 1-3 English essays and exams’. At this time, passing examinations in the library service and the public service was not only a way to be employed in a junior library position for both men and women, it was technically also a way to promotion to senior library positions for both.¹²⁴ There were many promotion steps. These were all linked to education and the passing of exams. Educating herself for the next step seemed to bring her nearer to the centred role in a civilised society she desired.

Public authorities appeared to approve the idea of ‘equal’ access to examinations. At the same time, Barbara believed that this was an era when, ‘there was still the previous generation, and that meant parents and employers and academics [thinking], “why waste a good education/training etcetera on girls, they are only time servers for the most part”’. However, she emphasised that in her life as a daughter there was approval for her desire for public promotion. With her mother’s household support she studied ‘to gain promotion; apart from Library School studies, there were Public Service Exams once I had started work and the exams of the Australian Institute of Librarians’. As I have previously argued, good girls were understood as undertaking paid public work for a limited period before becoming the subordinate part of a domestic heterosexual relationship. However, the essential patriarchal notion of female sexuality as necessary subordination in a heterosexual gender relationship was also represented in the library service through a public, formalised, impersonal gender relationship between female librarians in the lower positions and the patriarchal state, emblematised by the male head librarian. Between these two

¹²⁴Encel et al, *ibid*.

notions, Barbara's desire for a position in which she could exercise the capacity for the moral judgment she believed she had was immediately acceptable. It could also be a position a good girl could hold for a much longer period than the short interlude society assumed to be girls' public working life. Barbara was able to use the idea of promotion as it applied to the library service to express her satisfying idea of herself as a good young woman serving a civilised society by extending that civilisation.

To sum up, womanhood in Australia was founded on sexuality. In wartime Australia tension between conservative and modern discourses of sexuality created conflicting demands on girls aspiring to womanhood. Simultaneously, both discourses acknowledged maternal approval as the emblem of a girls' socially-acceptable developing womanhood. The connection between maternal approval and notions of morality in relation to femininity meant that girls experienced behaviour supported by maternal approval as moral behaviour. For girls, lending library reading was a focus for all these pressures. One consequence was this reading gave them the space to invest in self-chosen, satisfying values from conflicting notions of femininity and still feel they were good girls. In an activity deeply approved by mothers, girls could recognise any included values, even if they conflicted, as moral values. By extension, girls could develop some feeling of power by imagining they had the capacity to judge morality. However, a girl as a daughter also experienced the movement from childhood to womanhood as part of wartime society's insistence on traditional, passive feminine sexuality. This discourse, with its focus on the girl's lack of control in her developing identity, exacerbated her insecurity. The next chapter looks at how girls functioned as a group and drew on disapproved domestic reading to negotiate a notion of youthful, feminine sexuality which increased their sense of security.

Chapter Seven: The Pattern of Approved and Disapproved Magazine Reading in the Home and the Autonomous Group

Introduction

The last chapter looked at how girl readers of lending library fiction, as adolescents and particularly as daughters, drew on maternal endorsement of their freedom to choose this reading to believe they could invest in self-chosen, conflicting ideas of womanhood while continuing to see themselves as good girls. This resulted in some experience of security amid the insecurities of girlhood. This chapter continues the focus on the psycho-social insecurity of wartime girlhood as a consequence of both girlhood's socially recognised role as a period for the reshaping of girl children as women and as a result of girls being simultaneously shaped into competing and conflicting ideas of femininity. Like the previous chapter it looks at feminine sexuality as one source of insecurity and foregrounds many of the same ideas of feminine citizenship. However, the reading site is different. Consequently, girls as a group drew in other ways on their discursive repertoires in their negotiation of a more secure subject position and so affected the production of a quite different quality.

Capitalist and patriarchal ideas of social relationships posited girls as a passive and subordinate *collectivity* being shaped into approved womanhood. However, this chapter argues that the wartime girl who concurrently read mass magazines which were domestically approved and those mass magazines which were domestically disapproved had the space to negotiate the key quality of acting as an autonomous public *group* as part of approved youthful femininity. This was the result of a process in which three strands intertwined. One strand was the girls' understanding that girlhood was a period of progress towards womanhood and that a feminine position in an active heterosexual relationship was essential to womanhood. Therefore girls felt that knowledge of how to achieve this position was vitally important to them. Another was conflict between the conservative idea of passivity as a feminine sexual trait and the modern idea of achievement-oriented feminine sexuality which gave women some power in the heterosexual relationship. Australian girls were predominantly shaped by conservative institutions, such as the feminine domestic relationship and the education system, and yet had access to systems such as the mass media which represented the modern concepts. The result was that girls guiltily sought for themselves experiences

which gave them knowledge about modern, achievement-oriented feminine sexuality; the magazine reading pattern was such an experience. Finally, the unique pressures of wartime Australia resulted in a situation where conservative institutions approved girls' achievement-oriented sexuality as part of wartime citizenship. By extension, this situation appeared to validate girls' activity as a public autonomous group in their gaining of this sexual knowledge through disapproved magazine reading.

The chapter foregrounds specific ideas in using the terms 'group' and 'community' by drawing on the work of Young and of Taksa. Young uses the definition of a group as firstly, a passive series related to each other through their common, unconscious, expectation of taking part in a particular set of social practices. When that expectation fails for some reason beyond their control, the series organises itself more consciously to achieve the expectation, and having achieved it the consciousness fades and it dissolves.¹ This idea of dynamism is supported by Taksa's argument that the subject experiences her role in society through simultaneous and shifting membership of several communities. When a community no longer fills an individual's psychic need that individual will drift away from it.²

This chapter's argument depends on the national discourses of sexuality and citizenship as they were affected not only by the tension between the dominant interests influencing the global discourses of modern capitalism and conservative patriarchy, but also by the way Australia experienced the second world war as two wars. As Chapter Six elucidates, in a state dominated by capitalist and patriarchal interests a woman's citizenship was based on her sexuality.³ The development of capitalism and the response to this by patriarchal interests ensured that by 1939 there were two notions of sexuality and therefore two notions of citizenship. Conservative sexuality and citizenship was constructed around the notion of feminine *passivity* in a heterosexual relationship; a good woman was chosen as a wife by a good man, she then domestically supported the active public citizenship of that man. Modern feminine sexuality and citizenship recognised women as capable of sexual pleasure

¹Young, 'Gender as Seriality', in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy*, p 24.

²Taksa, 'Like a Bicycle, Forever Teetering Between Individualism and Collectivism: Considering Community in Relation to Labour History', *Labour History*, No 78, 2000, p 8.

³See the discussion of sexuality and motherhood in the introduction to Chapter Six.

and *actively*, autonomously contributing to creating a marital relationship. They did this from the position of active public citizens in the workplace.⁴ After marriage their citizenship shifted between domestic and public activity as they produced future citizens and maintained their homes.⁵ For girls, a major source of insecurity was the way all these competing and conflicting discourses used entry to an active heterosexual relationship as the emblem of womanhood. Additionally, between 1939 and 1941 Australia was represented to Australians as an outlying supporter of the metropole in Germany's attack on Britain. However, after late 1941 Australians understood themselves as part of a nation in direct jeopardy from Japanese military attacks.⁶ For Australians, the major aim of this second war was the immediate preservation of the Australian state. The connection between women's sexuality and the state ensured that the shift in the way Australia experienced war resulted in shifts in notions of feminine sexuality and citizenship. These shifts formed the foundation for girl readers in the approved/disapproved domestic magazine reading pattern to experience the girls' public autonomous group as part of youthful femininity.

The section on the social discourses affecting readers demonstrates how the friction between the interests influencing the global discourses, and the way these interests were affected by war, created ambiguous conditions and pressures on girls in their struggle towards approved womanhood. Girlhood was a period of careful guidance. However, girls were impelled from its beginning to seek, autonomously and as a group, access to instruction about the achievement-oriented feminine sexuality they believed would give them greater control over their entry to a respectable active heterosexual relationship; the threshold to womanhood. The intensifying pressures of war subsequently ensured girls experienced some conservative approval for their achievement-oriented feminine sexuality. Consequently, the foundation was laid for them to extend this approval into approval for their performance as an autonomous public group. Some practices of domestically approved and disapproved magazine reading for girls created an approved/disapproved magazine reading pattern which provided instruction in achievement-oriented sexuality and at the same time forced

⁴Elder ' "The Question of the Unmarried"', p 159.

⁵For the public production of homes and families see Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*. For consumerism as a public activity and women in consumer-oriented marriages see Finch, 'Consuming Passions' in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, pp 107-108.

⁶McKernan, *All In!*, the Introduction and then throughout.

girls to act as a public group in order to achieve it. The texts in this pattern also gave girls instruction in achievement-oriented feminine sexuality and reinforced their sense of its satisfactions. Furthermore, as the war progressed, they reinforced the idea that active feminine sexuality was an approved part of the conservative discourse of feminine citizenship in a wartime society. So this reading contributed to allowing girls to imagine that their performance as members of an autonomous public group in order for them to gain access to instruction in (a now) approved sexuality must also be a socially acceptable quality of youthful femininity.

In the section on memories the respondents' recollections are interpreted to show how the experience of group autonomy as the result of the approved/disapproved domestic magazine reading pattern was dually driven. One force was girls' anxiety for some control over their sexualised entry to womanhood. Another force was their desire for the approval of their mothers. Girls' experience of mothers' ambiguous values over achievement-oriented feminine sexuality and the heterosexual couple relationship encouraged them to imagine they could perform as an autonomous group in seeking this kind of sexual instruction. Memories of their performance as young wartime citizens demonstrate how the apparently-disapproved knowledge they had gained in this equivocal way was subsequently approved by conservative authority figures. The case studies reveal the individual experiences which could lead wartime girl readers in this pattern to understand girls' public autonomous group activity was part of respectable girlhood.

Social Discourses Affecting Girl Readers

Wartime girls in an Australia dominated by the owners of capital and by British, middle-class men experienced themselves as daughters and adolescents and as young female wartime citizens. These were understood as positions in which girls were developing into women. The discourses of achievement-oriented feminine sexuality and citizenship as contribution to the nation affected all these subject positions. These ideas combined in complex ways firstly to create girls whose desire for instructive information in the achievement-oriented sexuality which offered them some control over becoming women would drive them to gain access to such knowledge even while they were aware that it was disapproved. Consequently, girls acted as a public

autonomous group reading domestically disapproved magazines in order to achieve their goal. Later developments in the notion of wartime feminine citizenship ensured some conservative approval for girls' achievement-oriented feminine sexuality and so lay the foundation for girls to imagine their performance as a public autonomous group was also approved.

As Chapter Six demonstrated, a feminine role in an active heterosexual couple relationship was widely understood as the emblem of womanhood, and was therefore the goal of girlhood.⁷ This notion created multiple anxieties for wartime Australian girls. Firstly, because the relationship was the basis for the production of future citizens, girls had to achieve and perform their role in an approved way.⁸ Furthermore, the two apparently competing and conflicting ideas of youthful feminine sexuality between them offered a solution to girls' fear of failing to become part of an approved Australian heterosexual couple. The conservative British Australian idea of young feminine sexuality was most clearly approved by the institutions responsible for girls' development into women. Traditional British ideas of women's sexual role as undiscussable and physically passive had been modified as public regulation expanded.⁹ However traditional ideas of men's sexual responses as uncontrollable and women as able to be responsible for their sexual urges continued, influenced by patriarchal values. This led to the notion that, with an increased role in the public arena, women more than ever needed to refrain from behaviour which might be construed as a sexual overture.¹⁰ This stricture maintained the respectable girl's role in the achievement of a heterosexual couple relationship as a *passive* one. Moreover, conservative ideas of women's sexuality had been given new force as a consequence of wartime anxieties over maintaining the nation.¹¹ Therefore, wartime British Australian girls were confronted with the idea that they had little control over achieving the all-important heterosexual couple relationship in an approved way. Simultaneously, achievement-oriented, modern feminine sexuality competed with the

⁷See also Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p 3. For an Australian perspective, Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia: Contesting the Meanings of Citizenship, Femininity and the Nation in the 1920's', *Showgirl and the Straw Man*, *Journal of Australian Studies*, Number 71, p 14.

⁸Smart, *ibid.*

⁹Elder, *op cit*, p 152.

¹⁰Bamford, *The House Not Made With Hands: Talks to Older Girls*, 1935, p 33; Darian Smith, *On the Home Front*, p1 90, p 195; Graham Taylor, 'The War for Health' in Gregory, *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II*, p 216.

¹¹Darian Smith, *op cit*, pp 175-176; Finch, *ibid.*

conservative discourse. This sexuality had a focus on feminine autonomy in achieving the couple relationship which made it an attractive concept to girls. However, wartime fears which connected women's independent sexuality with the undermining of the nation meant it was condemned as unwomanly by those institutions responsible for shaping British Australian girls.¹² At the same time, the powerful influence of capital ensured notions of consumerist, achievement-oriented, feminine sexuality continued to be represented throughout the war years.¹³

Wartime girls' sexual insecurity was further exacerbated by the lack of direction from their approving institutions over how they should manage the achievement of a role as part of an Australian heterosexual couple. Again as Chapter Six demonstrated, girls understood their mothers as the main sources of approval. Mothers' own understanding of approved femininity was affected by the way they experienced social pressures. Their awareness of the strength of social disapproval for transgressive feminine sexualities ensured that mothers emphasised the most clearly approved sexualities.¹⁴ This meant they were likely to support conservative notions. However, as Chapter Six has also shown, mothers' ideas were open to change as society changed.¹⁵ Consequently, mothers themselves were caught up in the confusion generated by the changing role of sexual knowledge in society.¹⁶ The passing on of this information was sometimes understood as moral and sometimes medical.¹⁷ Older working-class ideas of it as straightforwardly physical had come to be regarded as crude and so had virtually become unspeakable as British middle-class

¹²Finch, 'Consuming Passions', p 114; Lake, op cit, pp 275-276; Darian Smith, op cit, p 176.

¹³Finch, 'Consuming Passions', pp 108-110.

¹⁴The society emerging in the interwar years disciplined women into striving to become part of a heterosexual couple relationship through two ideas; the incomplete woman and the immoral woman. Elder has demonstrated the social position of the respectable woman who 'fails' to achieve an approved heterosexual, couple relationship as one of pity and mockery. Elder, "The Question of the Unmarried": Some Meanings of Being Single in Australia in the 1920's and 1930's', *Australian Feminist Studies*, Summer, 1993, pp 164-166. ¹⁴ Backhouse untangled the powerful, conservative interests behind constituting the woman who takes part in an unapproved, heterosexual couple relationship as immoral. Such a woman was seen as deservedly outside the protection of the law.¹⁴ Backhouse, "Her Protests Were Unavailing": Australian Legal Understandings of Rape, Consent and Sexuality in the "Roaring Twenties", *The Beautiful and the Damned: Journal of Australian Studies*, No 64, 2000, pp 32-33.

¹⁵For emerging notions of the public regulation of sexual knowledge see Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, pp 184 ff; Auchmuty, 'The Truth About Sex', in Spearritt and Walker, *Australian Popular Culture*, p 174, p 181. For the continuation and normalisation in the interwar years of the idea that girls' should be guided into sexuality by their mothers see Reiger, op cit, p 187; Darian Smith, op cit, pp 132-134; Bamford, op cit, p 20; Finch, *The Classing Gaze*, p 55, p 140.

¹⁶Reiger, op cit, pp 181-182; Finch, *The Classing Gaze*, p 125-126; Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, p 282; Goldsmith and Sandford, *The Girls They Left Behind*, p 94.

¹⁷Finch, *The Classing Gaze*, pp 140-142.

values expanded across the population.¹⁸ At the same time mothers were more conscious of pleasurable feminine sexuality than the mothers of their own generation.¹⁹ As a result, it can be argued, mothers were unsure of how to pass on the information. This created a situation where girls' interest in information about their sexuality could not be satisfied by their questioning their mothers.²⁰ Mothers also shared the contemporary national anxieties over youthful feminine sexuality and they wanted their daughters to be accepted as respectable women.²¹ Therefore, what guidance mothers did give emphasised the negative consequences of failing to be respectable rather than focussing on overt direction to daughters on how to manage the achievement of an active heterosexual relationship.

Girls experienced these ideas of youthful feminine sexuality and all their associated difficulties through their relationship with school, the home and the media. Schools gave no explicit information or instruction on sexuality.²² Youthful feminine sexuality was represented to girls at school in this era through the Victorian domestic novel and girls' family stories on the examination lists and in the school libraries.²³ Mothers, in veiled ways, emphasised the traditional, passive sexuality while cautioning against overt feminine autonomy in achieving a role as part of a heterosexual couple.²⁴ Some of those whose parents approved their attendance at a church had access to approved pamphlets such as Bamford's *The House Not Made With Hands*. Others, whose mothers embraced some of the ideas of scientific parenting, could be given copies of mass-published booklets medicalising a girl's introduction to sexuality.²⁵ Often, these both reinforced the 'natural' feminine role in an active heterosexual relationship as 'shy and demure' and 'accept[ing of] his love

¹⁸ Finch, *The Classing Gaze*, pp 125-126; McCalman, *Struggletown*, p 210..

¹⁹ Elder, op cit, p 152; Lake, op cit, p 281.

²⁰ Lambert, *A Suburban Girl*, pp 47-52; Walker, *Roundabout at Bangalow* p 118; Ker Conway, *The Road From Coorain*, pp 144-147.

²¹ Campbell, 89; Lambert, op cit, p 59; Ker Conway, op cit, p 146; Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier: Australian War Brides and their GI's*, p 51; Adam-Smith, op cit, p 256.

²² Auchmuty, 'The Truth About Sex', p 173.

²³ See Chapters Three, Four and Five.

²⁴ Lambert, op cit, pp 48-49; Darian Smith, op cit, p 181, on Bamford's approved talks, pp 194-195; Bamford, op cit, p 20; Adam-Smith, op cit, p 282.

²⁵ Bamford's booklet has two introductions, one by the bishop of Bendigo and one by a multiply qualified doctor. The doctor gives expert assurance that the 'medical information contained therein is sufficiently full'.

and his caress' by representing sexuality as a 'sacred' and 'hallowed' subject.²⁶ They also warned girls of the necessity of disciplining their own behaviour so that masculine passions should not be inappropriately aroused.²⁷ Simultaneously, through magazines and films girls were exposed to ideas supported by the evolution of capitalism that youthful feminine sexuality was public and achievement-oriented.²⁸ However, as I discuss in the section on practices, those magazines which were thought to represent this notion of feminine sexuality were disapproved by mothers and other institutions most immediately guiding girls into womanhood.

The result of all these pressures was a cohort of respectable girls who at once felt guilty over trying to find out instructive information about that active feminine sexuality which they believed would give them some control in achieving a heterosexual relationship, who understood where such information existed, and who felt impelled to act as an autonomous group to seek it out. As I discuss in the section on practices, girls could draw on their resources as schoolgirls and daughters to gain autonomous access to the disapproved magazines which appeared to hold promise of resolving their dilemma. Nevertheless, the exercise was fraught with the sense that society 'disapproved'. However, wartime saw a shift in conservative ideas of feminine sexuality as it was associated with the discourse of women's citizenship. I have argued this led to the girl readers having the opportunity to imagine that unique wartime notions approving limited achievement-oriented feminine sexuality as part of conservative feminine citizenship also constituted approval for their performance as part of a feminine autonomous group.

The nation's experience of war reinforced conservative ideas of traditional feminine citizenship as the support of masculine citizens, but it did this in different ways. There is no question that one of these ways was the attempt to restrict public femininity. Masculine citizens were increasingly absent as men were drawn into

²⁶For feminine sexuality as naturally passive see Bamford, op cit, p 12. For the sacred nature of sexuality see Introduction by the bishop of Bendigo to Bamford's *The House Not Made With Hands*. The doctor's foreword also refers to a girl's sexuality as the expression of a powerful 'unseen Presence [sic]'; Auchmuty, 'The Truth About Sex', p 180. The copy of Bamford in the researcher's collection was sold through the New South Wales Bookstall company.

²⁷Auchmuty, 'The Truth About Sex', p 181; Bamford, op cit p 33, Darian Smith, op cit, pp 194-195; Adam-Smith, op cit, p 282.

²⁸Lake, op cit, p 269; Finch, 'Consuming Passions' p 110; Collins, 'The Movie Octopus' in Spearritt and Walker, *Australian Popular Culture*, p 103, p 107, pp 110-111.

military service.²⁹ This situation fed into the conservative fear that without the immediate personal confinement women experienced through the binary gender relationship, their emotional and sensual capacity could make them sexually irresponsible and so the nation would be destroyed from within.³⁰ The appearance of American troops at a time of absent Australian men reinforced this fear of internally-based national jeopardy.³¹ Fears of sexual uncontrollability if women were 'free' of immediate direction by good men led to conservative institutions attempting to replace this control by condemning the public freedoms associated with modern feminine citizenship as 'traitorous'. This idea was disseminated in criticisms which ranged from concerns about women war workers also 'having the time' to appear publicly without being engaged in war work to ideas about publicly visible young girls. Popular hysteria exaggerated the numbers of girls waiting on the street to ensnare soldiers for an evening of sensual satisfaction which included sexual intercourse and their spreading of venereal diseases.³²

However, another wartime perspective of the conservative notion that feminine citizenship supported masculine citizenship led to conservative approval for limited notions of achievement-oriented feminine sexuality. The role of women in wartime is to take part in keeping the state functioning in the absence of its premier citizens.³³ Therefore, conservative notions of women's contributory role widened. It was accepted that women could undertake public positions normally regarded as masculine in an Australia seen for the duration of the war as 'the home front'.³⁴ Many of these roles involved public choice and autonomy so the publicly autonomous

²⁹McKernan, op cit, p 39, p 72, p 139.

³⁰For the western tradition of men as rational citizens and women as emotional and sensual see Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy*, p 10, pp 11-21.

³¹Finch, 'Consuming Passions', pp 113-114; Adam-Smith, op cit, p 282. For Americans specifically see Darian Smith, op cit, p 223; Rosemary Campbell, op cit, pp 164-166.

³²For frivolous time see 'Readers Have their Say: Lizards', Sydney *Truth*, 25 October, 1942. For girl destroyers of Australia through VD see 'V D Spreads: A *Salt* Report', *Salt*, vol 6, no 7, 1943, pp 1-2. See also Rosemary Campbell, op cit, pp 71 ff. So strong was this fear of women's sexual uncontrollability that these youthful feminine 'traitors' were imagined with no life other than their life of traitorous sexuality. Darian Smith, op cit, pp 174-175. See for example also, Friend's notes in Campbell, op cit, pp 87-88; report of A A Hughes speech at the Interdenominational Conference on Sunday Schools and Youth Work, *The Age*, 15 June, 1942; 'V D Spreads' op cit, pp 1-2 and many titillating articles in *Truth* such as 'Rolling Yanks in Darling Point', 24 October, 1943 where the lack of food, cooking utensils and cleaning was ranged against the prominence of a bed and female nakedness at '9:45 a m' as evidence of 'the girls' lives.

³³Higonnet and Higonnet, op cit, p 34, p 36.

³⁴Darian Smith, op cit, p 58; Reekie, 'Shunted Back to the Kitchen: Women's Responses to War Work and Demobilization' in Gregory, *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II*, pp 75-76.

woman could be seen as an approved Australian citizen by conservative forces at this time.³⁵ The notion that in wartime women should help conserve the state also meant that conservative ideas of women's sexuality altered. Certainly the idea that women's active sexuality was in abeyance until the return of the premier citizens was important.³⁶ However, ideas of men as the premier citizens and women as the supporting citizens were also maintained in wartime Australia by making the home front a place which supported those involved in active military service through voluntary service.³⁷ Maintaining morale by reminding servicemen of the value of the society they were fighting to defend was part of this support.³⁸ Because of the notion that women's role in that society was as sexual beings, some performances which reminded Australian servicemen of Australian women's sexuality and its availability to them were approved as part of voluntary service.³⁹ Women's involvement in the organisation of the voluntary support services and men's short periods of leave in strange towns as a concomitant of active service meant that women had a clear autonomous role in implementing these reminders of feminine sexuality as part of a gender relationship. Girls were active in the voluntary work which supported Australia's troops.⁴⁰

Girls were made aware of conservative approval for this autonomous feminine citizenship associated with voluntarism through several channels. In schools authorities encouraged girls into public autonomous roles as part of wartime voluntary

³⁵Wartime approval for women acting in public autonomous capacities was reflected in mainstream magazines and newspapers. For example, *Australian Women's Weekly*, 25 May 1940 was already featuring autonomous women fundraisers ('Thirteen Friends Form Club for Comforts Fund') and women both deciding to train as engineers and as instructors in engineering ('Defence Society Women Study Engineering Course'). Both articles are on p 35 of a 64 page edition. They are in the news section.

³⁶Darian Smith, op cit, p 175.

³⁷Oppenheimer, *All Work and No Pay: Australian Civilian Volunteers in War*, pp 85-88, p 90.

³⁸Higonnet and Higonnet, op cit, pp 37-38. In *Australia in the second world war* Darian Smith, op cit, pp 174-176; Oppenheimer, p 85-86.

³⁹Dances and Cheerup canteens as part of the Australian (and English) soldier's 'entertainment' clearly connected feminine sexuality with voluntarist support of 'our' servicemen. See Darian Smith, op cit, p 174; Oppenheimer, op cit, pp 79-80, pp 85-86, p 114; Pennay, *On the Home Front: Albury During the Second World War*, pp 23-29. See also Willis *The Women's Voluntary Services*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, p 257, pp 269 ff.

⁴⁰Oppenheimer, op cit, p 114; Willis, op cit, pp 140-144, pp 260-261; Willis, *War and Community: The Red Cross in Camden, 1939-1945*, unpublished MA (Hons), Chapter Five; Pennay, *On the Home Front: Albury During the Second World War*, pp 23-28.

service.⁴¹ Girls at home and in the neighbourhood saw mothers and older sisters act as volunteer citizens in ways which conflated citizenship and some autonomous (and therefore achievement-oriented) sexuality.⁴² Newspapers and magazines available to them encouraged homefront citizen service as part of being a young woman, again sometimes in ways which conflated autonomous citizenship and achievement-oriented sexuality.⁴³

As wartime girls became aware that they would have to achieve a feminine role in a heterosexual couple relationship in order to achieve womanhood, they also became aware that direction over their satisfying achievement of that role from those conservative institutions immediately responsible for their guidance was limited, unsatisfying and confused. However, through independently reading disapproved domestic magazines which gave instruction in the modern notion of achievement-oriented sexuality, a girl could gain clear direction on how she could become part of a couple in a satisfying way. Changing wartime ideas of feminine citizenship allowed these girls to imagine that the way they performed this reading was socially acceptable. The sections on texts and practices clarify the way the pattern of domestically approved and disapproved magazine reading constituted a space for girls to imagine autonomous public group activity as a part of youthful femininity.

Practices

Domestically-disapproved magazine reading functioned in a relationship with domestically-approved magazine reading to contribute to girls' negotiation of their performance in an autonomous public group as a quality of femininity. This section firstly demonstrates the way the practices of this reading pattern made the disapproved reading so attractive to girls. It continues by outlining the practices which shaped the girls into believing that in order to gain access to these magazines they had

⁴¹For schools' encouragement of voluntary service, Spaul, *Australian Education in the Second World War*, pp 57-61.

⁴²Willis, *The Women's Voluntary Services*, *ibid*, Willis, *War and Community*, *ibid*.

⁴³Wright, 'The Australian Women's Weekly: Depression and the War Years, Romance and Reality', *Refractory Girl*, no 3, 1973, p 11; Finch, 'Consuming Passions', pp 106-107. See for example, *Australian Women's Weekly*, 7 February, 1942, p 25; the photographs of the 'earnest committee workers for the 2/3rd Pioneer Battalion Comforts Fund Committee' planning their fund raising cocktail party, the emphasis on the attractive 'blue and white uniforms' of the coffee servers in the heterosocial atmosphere of the munitions factory canteen, the note on the RAAF Central Area Comforts Fund Dinner Party.

to act as an independent public group. Despite a shared idea of magazines as instruction in femininity, domestically-powerful mothers' focus on feminine citizenship meant that their disapproval of American-style romance magazines conflicted with those of their daughters. Girls as a collectivity sought instruction on achievement-oriented sexuality and these magazines were popularly represented and recognised as sources for this information. The second part then shows how the opportunities for reading the romance magazines were connected to notions of authoritative disapproval. Therefore girls believed that reading instruction which focussed on achievement-oriented feminine sexuality must be sought from a subject position which incorporated greater autonomy than the approved subject positions available to daughters and adolescents. Australian wartime girls could do this.

Mothers' focus on magazines as instruction in femininity meant that they endorsed the reading of mainstream women's magazines as domestic leisure by girls as daughters, adolescents and young female wartime citizens.⁴⁴ Traditional British-style romance magazines were included in the margins of this notion.⁴⁵ American-style romance magazines, sometimes known as 'confession magazines', were also regarded as magazines directed at women.⁴⁶ Mothers denounced them as immoral.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the magazines were condemned as reading for young girls by those associated with schools as institutions publicly responsible for the guidance of girls into adulthood.⁴⁸ At the same time, girls, also recognising magazines as a source of instruction, were disposed to seek out these disapproved magazines because they seemed to promise information which would give them some control over entering a heterosexual couple relationship.

⁴⁴For the development of the popular and commercial understanding of magazines as instruction in British societies: Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines, 1751-1945*, p 237; For women's own understanding of women's magazines as instruction, Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, pp 7-8; in Australia specifically, Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p 77, p 85, p 124. I continue to use Rojek's definition of leisure as socially constructed release from socially constructed service, cited in Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, pp 191-192.

⁴⁵See 'mother/daughter' romance magazines, such as *The Oracle*, *Miracle* and *Star*, Tinkler, op cit, p 46, pp 62-63; Jephcott, *Girls Growing Up*, ibid..

⁴⁶For wartime expressions denoting these magazines see Vaupel, 'Writing the Pulp and Confession Story' in Lait, *A Practical Guide to Successful Writing*, p 14. For ideas of them as magazines directed at women, Fabian, 'Making a Commodity of the Truth: Speculations on the Career of Bernarr MacFadden' in *American Literary History*, vol 5, Spring, 1993, p 60.

⁴⁷Coleman, *Obscenity, Blasphemy, Sedition: Censorship in Australia*, pp 150-153; *Parliamentary Papers* (Representatives), 23 September, 1938, pp 112-113; Mrs Marjorie E Pownall's statement to the Tariff Board Inquiry Into The Publishing Industry, *Ideas*, 16 January, 1946, p 57.

⁴⁸*Parliamentary Papers*, ibid.

The immediate reason for both mothers' endorsement and the denunciation and girls' attraction was the way these genres showed young female bodies performing sexually in relation to ideas of citizenship service. Women's magazines fashioned young feminine sexuality narrowly through a focus on the discourse of heterosexual 'love' as the fulfilment of desire.⁴⁹ This discourse was channelled through their replication of romance, that is depictions of how young women came to get love, a condition represented by the heterosexual couple relationship. By late 1941 two ideas of 'love' were represented in the magazines; Victorian Romantic Love and modern True Love.⁵⁰ Victorian Romantic Love was modified in conservative second world war representations to emphasise femininity as sexual self-control and acceptance of masculine direction. In performance, this would lead to domesticity, a natural, spiritually-based, fulfilling condition. Modern True Love represented the fulfilment of desire as a combination of caring and sexual satisfaction initiated by both the male and female partners in a heterosexual couple relationship. Feminine sexual pleasure and feminine choice and activity in achieving this pleasure were features of True Love.⁵¹

Mothers' ideas of young womanhood in wartime Australia meant that they had definite notions of the suitability of the magazines for daughterly reading based on the way the discourses differently supporting the magazine genres ensured they represented True Love and Romantic Love. The romance magazines were closely associated with the rise of consumerism.⁵² Their True Love stories represented youthful feminine citizenship as sexualised, public and consumerised.⁵³ The feminine sexuality in this society was pleasurable, public and consumerist; women contributed to the initiation and maintenance of an active heterosexual relationship through the individual's creation of her own commoditised beauty and her participation in public work and leisure. As I have noted, female awareness of sexual pleasure and women's consequent drive to achieve it were thought in conservative notions of the state to be the key to national destruction through women's uncontrolled sexuality. Therefore,

⁴⁹Tinkler, op cit, p 136

⁵⁰Henceforth, I use initial capitals to denote magazine representations of love.

⁵¹In using these terms I draw on Catherine Belsey's definitions in *Desire* of modern true love (pp 22-23) and Victorian romantic love (pp 118-120).

⁵²Fabian, op cit, pp 51-52 and note 10.

⁵³Fabian, op cit, 60.

mainstream and approved British-style romance magazines prominently represented feminine sexuality as a combination of passivity and, in any focus on war, of desire controlled for the sake of the absent loved one. This sexuality was domestic, supportive of and harnessed to a society which made masculine achievement paramount.⁵⁴ The magazines deployed Romantic Love to encourage women into desiring this social position. However, feminine sexuality was tied to feminine citizenship in both approved and disapproved women's magazines.

Girls' ideas of the value of the disapproved magazines were also reinforced by publishing practices which ensured those magazines appeared to offer relief from their anxieties. Technologies deployed in the mainstream magazines in complex ways pointed to an approved feminine sexuality which promised greater control in achieving a role in an active heterosexual relationship. These technologies also alerted girls to the idea that the romance magazines could clarify this promise.

Mainstream magazines were dependent on the capitalist system as well as being part of a patriarchal society. Consequently, they too sought to create women as consumers. Furthermore, they used the technologies of modern mass culture to do this. Representations of True Love as fulfilling femininity appeared in advertisements in the approved magazines depicting wartime feminine life. These were dispersed among the mainstream fiction and straightforward instruction texts.⁵⁵ Some of these advertisements used the first person confessional and photographs as a mark of 'truth'. The magazines also featured Hollywood-style photography and drawn ensembles framed in the same way as comics or movie stills which demonstrated autonomous commoditised beauty and public activity as the way in which girls and women achieved True Love. They consequently utilised the girls' previous understanding from both other reading and contemporary cinema displays to allow

⁵⁴The imported English traditional romance magazines shared this position, Tinkler, op cit, p 109; for Australian magazine response see Wright, op cit, Finch, 'Consuming Passions'. While still retaining their confession magazine values, the English confession-type magazines changed their more-consumerist approach as the war progressed to encourage supportive, domestic femininity to a greater extent. However, of relevance here is the fact that their text continued the possibility for the reader to be satisfied by their modernist and consumerist ideas. See for example wartime British editions of *True Romances* and *True Story*.

⁵⁵Finch, 'Consuming Passions', p 110.

readers to recognise values and relationships.⁵⁶ Sometimes, there were also similarly focussed stories and articles.

Mainstream ideas mediated these images so that the represented femininity included conservative notions of wartime citizenship contribution. Nevertheless, through mainstream magazine texts girl readers were exposed to ideas of wartime autonomous feminine citizenship which conflated it with both Romantic Love and True Love.⁵⁷ They were also given a referential vocabulary in which photographs, confession and commodification were depictions of feminine sexual power in society.

Through similar technologies romance magazines clearly emphasised, even to the passing eye, ideas of True Love with its concomitant feminine control of entry to and management of the active heterosexual relationship.⁵⁸ The magazines deployed ideas of romance, truth, confession and contemporaneity thematically in their titles to promise solutions to readers' anxieties over the achievement of feminine identity through participation in a modern, commodified culture.⁵⁹ Part of the front cover often carried a picture which was a visual advertisement for one or more of the included 'confessional' stories. These pictures were set into the complete text of the front cover in such a way that they represented the magazines' notion of femininity as the current collective experience of popular, ideal womanhood.⁶⁰

Wartime girl readers had potential opportunities to gain access to the attractive, disapproved magazines. The second-hand trade had made the disapproved magazines available cheaply through magazine exchanges where many of them had a long life.⁶¹

⁵⁶Fabian, op cit, p 62. Girl readers lived in a society with popular culture links between the photographic persona and femininity. See Conor, 'Beauty Contestant in the Photographic Scene', *Showgirl and the Straw Man; Journal of Australian Studies*, no 71, 2001.

⁵⁷As an example, Alan Marshall's forthright article on men and women in modern Australian society confronted the issue of displaced young Australian servicemen with ' "Picking Up" is not Always Cheap', in the mainstream magazine *Woman*, 24 May, 1943.

⁵⁸See for example the movie-poster-like illustration which is the cover of *True Confessions*, October, 1939, figure 1, this chapter.

⁵⁹Some American editions of *True Confessions*, *True Story* and *True Romances* still survived. British editions of the last two were commonly available. Little Publications had produced some editions of the Australian clone, *Real Life Romances* during the war. Researcher's collection.

⁶⁰Fabian, op cit, pp 60-61; Vaupel, op cit, p 17. See also the cover illustration which is Figure 1 in this chapter.

⁶¹Book and magazine exchanges appear to have been a common urban and suburban business in interwar Australia, although their mode of operation makes this difficult to establish (Lyons and Taksa, op cit, p 118). Twenty percent of Lyons and Taksa's participants remembered using the exchanges and

By 1942 American publishers had also obviated both censorship concerns by the Australian state and the power of favourable empire trading terms by distributing British editions of the magazines through Australian newsagencies.⁶² The magazines were marketed as women's magazines and were so attractive to wartime Australian women they were in the lists of top-selling magazines by the end of the war.⁶³ Wartime conditions gave girl readers greater potential access to the publicly-available American-style romance magazines. The presence of American troops and their PX's stocked with American goods meant a new influx of American magazine publications after the bans of the thirties, and the determination to limit dollar imports which had been part of Australia's pre-war support for Britain.⁶⁴ Additionally, Australia's wartime authorities took advantage of the feminine homefront presence and position as readers of popular periodicals to call on women of all ages to undertake salvage collections of paper as a wartime voluntary citizenship contribution. Women responded positively, and all editions of the magazines became potentially part of this salvage even as girls became its collectors.⁶⁵

However, potential access to romance magazines was experienced in an atmosphere of disapproval for the magazines by those whom girls understood as the immediate authorities in their lives. Consequently, girls had to perform this desired reading by drawing on the rules and resources of approved adolescence and daughterliness and using them to create a new position. Relative freedom on the way to school and in recesses from classroom lessons meant girls could buy the magazines, borrow them from peers and read them at school despite the fact that, as I have demonstrated above, schools disapproved of them. Furthermore, wartime meant

for some working class respondents they were recalled as a 'necessity' if they wanted to read. With reference to the long life of magazines, exchanges re-sold second-hand magazines traded to them. Both readers and exchanges made efforts to prolong the life of popular magazines read in this way (examples in the researcher's collection). According to an importer's evidence before the Tariff Board Inquiry of 1945-46 the exchanges also had circulated new but backdated American magazines available before the pre-war bans and the 1939 dollar limit (C S Harvey's evidence, *Ideas*, 14 March, 1946, p 189, p 194, p 196).

⁶²Braithwaite and Barrell, *The Business of Women's Magazines*, p 16.

⁶³Audit Bureau of Circulations figures for 1946.

⁶⁴Potts and Potts, *Yanks Down Under, 1941-1945: The American Impact on Australia*, p 170. For thirties bans see Coleman, op cit, pp 146-162. For dollar import concern and strictures see Butlin, *War Economy, 1939-1942*, p 111. For the effect of dollar import restrictions on pulp magazines in Australia see Coleman, op cit, p156.

⁶⁵Willis', *The Women's Voluntary Services*, p 283 and p 294; McKernan, op cit, pp 234-235; Spaul op cit, pp 58-62. Also through representations of readers as salvagers in the women's magazines themselves, see, for example, the cover of *Woman*, 15 June, 1942 and the editorial.

girls had new opportunities for reading this domestically disapproved material at home as long periods of pleasurable private reading or as reading shared with peers. Cultural ideas of domestic reading as private reading had already given girls some opportunities to read at home without being closely supervised.⁶⁶ Now, domestic supervision further declined. Parents may have disapproved of this reading material. However, fathers were absent on active service and mothers were absorbed in the homefront difficulties of getting family food and clothing as well as paid and voluntary wartime work.⁶⁷ Girls were free to act beyond the demands of daughterliness and adolescence in their pursuit of domestically disapproved reading material.

Girls believed the romance magazines promised instruction in modern, achievement-oriented sexuality which conservative mothers objected to and which girls themselves understood would give them some control over their entrance to womanhood. Therefore mothers disapproved of the romance magazines and girls sought to read them. Consequently, the performance of this reading was the outcome of girls' acting as a public group to satisfy a collective need; girls became the approvers and facilitators.

Texts

The texts in the pattern of domestically approved/disapproved reading reinforced the satisfactions of achievement-oriented sexuality while supporting girls in the idea that some feminine sexual control in initiating an active heterosexual relationship was accepted. In doing this the texts also tied together sexuality and citizenship in ways which could be read as revealing that autonomy was not only part of feminine sexuality it was also truly approved as part of conservative ideas of wartime feminine citizenship. In this way the pattern reinforced girls' comfort over acting autonomously to gain instructive information about a more satisfying sexuality and so contributed to

⁶⁶For the cultural roots of this tradition see Manguel, *A History of Reading*, pp 52-53; Lyons, 'Texts, Books Readers' in *Books, Readers, Reading: Australian Cultural History*, No, 11, 1992, p 5.

⁶⁷For wartime demands on women's time and labour in maintaining the family see Darian Smith, op cit, pp 36-43, p 116 and pp 134-135; McKernan op cit, p 166, pp 170-171. Darian Smith, op cit, looks at the combinations of voluntary and paid war work and how they affected women across classes, pp 55-58, Oppenheimer, p 85 and pp 107-111.

shaping girls into interpreting the capacity to act as part of an autonomously-created, public group as a quality of youthful femininity.

Four aspects of reading both genres in combination made this possible. Firstly, the texts shared the idea that femininity, whether ‘natural’ or achieved through consumerist activity, was not a constant state. Its achievement and maintenance was a conscious struggle undertaken autonomously by the woman. This idea was promulgated both through the content of the magazines and the process of reading them.⁶⁸ Secondly, both the genres represented Love in an active heterosexual relationship as the achievement of femininity. In both genres the reader could get an idea of the misery of being without Love from stories and ancillary texts such as advertisements, illustrations and short inclusions. In these little texts she also received instruction on how to achieve and maintain Love for herself. Thirdly, the little texts were positioned as sidebars to the main story and this contributed to the readers being shaped to feminine autonomy as part of feminine satisfaction. The reader could use the ancillaries to control the pace at which she reached the story’s closure and thus experience the control of her own pleasure both while still imaginatively living in the world of the story and in association with reading.⁶⁹ Finally, both texts set Love in a context of citizenship. The turbulence of the wartime world had made autonomy and public activity an approved part of more traditional ideas of women’s citizenship. One outcome of this was some representation in the conservative texts of True Love with its feminine sexual autonomy as part of approved femininity.

Participants recalled by name and genre romance magazines which reflected both the conservative and the modern feminine sexual discourses. They remembered stories, pictures and advertisements. ‘I Was the Town’s Bad Girl’ (‘Bad Girl’) was the ‘book-length true novel’ published in *True Confessions* in October, 1939. ‘The Lie That Wrecked My Marriage’ (‘The Lie’), was a story in the 12 April, 1941 issue of the mother/daughter magazine *Silver Star*.⁷⁰ Both stories can be read as tales of the satisfactions of youthful feminine sexuality. However, girls were reading women’s magazines under the guidance of their mothers. These authorities were seeking to

⁶⁸Belsey, op cit, pp 35-38.

⁶⁹Fabian, op cit, p 66.

⁷⁰Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p 46.

make their daughters respectable women in a community which valorised passive sexuality and saw achievement-oriented sexuality as transgressive femininity. Therefore 'Bad Girl's' achievement-oriented modern sexuality made it clearly part of the disapproved American-style romances while 'The Lie' represents passive, conservative feminine sexuality and so it was recognised as an appropriate part of the approved magazines.

An analysis of these stories' deployment in the magazines reveals the intricate ways in which content and other textual features worked to create a space which allowed wartime girl readers to negotiate conflicting femininities⁷¹. As well as representing competing and conflicting sexual discourses, both stories also represent the idea that while each of these women has previously failed to achieve true femininity good citizenship on their part subsequently enables their fulfilled womanhood. Thus girl readers, while looking for reassurance over some feminine capacity for control of the heterosexual relationship, were shaped into understanding that control lay in feminine citizenship. To these readers, the combination of the stories demonstrates how achievement-oriented feminine sexuality and autonomous feminine citizenship can be linked in conservative ideas of good women. The combination also gives clear information on how women can autonomously contribute to an active heterosexual relationship.

'Bad Girl' could be seen to celebrate womanhood in modern, consumer capital's democratic society. The 'heroine', Rosemary Fern, is a flawed woman because she was not given domestic instruction in how to manage her sexual passion in order to autonomously contribute to her achievement of a role in a satisfying heterosexual relationship. Consequently she had a child from a brief liaison in which she mistook her passion for True Love, rather than part of True Love, and so she is alone and unhappy. Rosemary becomes a successful modern woman through her active heterosexual relationship with Justin. Her attractiveness for him is dependent on a sexual femininity which is both natural and achieved. He is drawn by what is represented as her natural gardenia-white skin, lustrous red-gold hair and sparkling

⁷¹Each of these magazines would have had a long reading life among Australian girls and young women. The examples in the researcher's collection support ideas of book /magazine exchanges (through stamps) and magazines having been passed on to several readers in addition to the several weeks of sea journey from Britain and America before the 'new' texts arrive in Australia..

eyes.⁷² The story also shows how Rosemary works to develop the pleasant manner which attracts him, while her job as ‘beauty culture’ consultant emphasises the idea of commoditised beauty. The reader has the pleasure of being able to look at ‘Rosemary and Justin together’ on the cover.⁷³ She is also able to read ancillary texts in this magazine which advertise ‘Blush Rose’ face powder ‘enticingly fragrant’ and so ‘gossamer fine’ skin seems ‘natural’, ‘Shampoo for Blondes’ a product which ‘keeps the brilliance, lustre, loveliness’ and ‘Winx’ mascara which creates ‘eyes of romance’, ‘sparkling like stars’.⁷⁴

However, it is not sexuality alone which attracts Justin to Rosemary. The heroine needs to prove herself a contributing citizen in a modern, democratic, consumerist society in order to consolidate her femininity. Rosemary gains a high school diploma and then decides to undertake the vocational training which wins her a job as a beauty culture consultant. She does this with the worthy intention of supporting her baby. Nevertheless, it is through contributory citizenship that feminine citizenship and sexuality meet. It is in the heterosocial public arena that meeting Justin, her boss, becomes possible. The story makes clear that it is her competence in her public role which attracts his attention.⁷⁵ However, as I have demonstrated, her autonomously enhanced beauty plays a role in this situation. The girl reader of this story has ancillary access to advertisements for gaining a high school diploma through home courses and for training in a variety of commercial positions as well as for beauty aids.⁷⁶

⁷²The hero not only speaks this information/observation to the heroine, but does so in the language of the magazines’ advertisements. ‘He had brought me a gardenia, and he said, “White and smooth and scented like yourself . . . Just your creamy skin. The rest of you is much too gorgeous to be a gardenia. You’re an autumn coloured maiden, you know - red-gold hair and amber eyes with dancing light in both”’. *True Confessions*, October, 1939, p 96.

⁷³See Figure 1 of this chapter.

⁷⁴For the powder see *True Confessions*, October, 1939, p 11. For the shampoo *True Confessions*, October, 1939, p 64. For the mascara *True Confessions*, October, 1939, p 12.

⁷⁵Rosemary tells Justin, the store manager on his rounds, ‘It’s fun seeing them [her customers] get prettier and knowing I’ve helped, honestly’’. Then she tells the reader, ‘The dark eyes on me were unusually warm. ‘Fine!’ he said, and passed on without explaining what was fine. But I knew, and there was a kind of glow around my heart all day . . . He was so kind and so fair’. *True Confessions*, October, 1939, p 96.

⁷⁶In *True Confessions*, October, 1939, an advertisement for high school diploma courses at home appears on p 86, book-keeping training is offered on p 82, training in the techniques of Swedish massage as a prelude to professional employment on p 84. These are all positioned on the left hand edge of the verso so that readers flicking through the magazine to get to the first page of the cover story, ‘Bad Girl’ (p 90) could have their as-yet-unfocussed attention caught by these modernist and consumerist possibilities that reading the story would later reinforce.

The remarkably complicated story of 'The Lie' valorises the conservative, patriarchal, British-based ideas of womanhood. This story's heroine, Renee Mayring, is flawed because she failed to control her own sexual passion and as a result roused passion in a bad man and had a child whose legitimacy she cannot vouch for. She too is alone and unhappy. Her paid work as a singer and actress is not represented as fulfilling but rather as necessary breadwinning work which separates her from her child. Her feminine success is emblematised through her achievement of an active, heterosexual relationship with Tom, a fighter pilot whom she has known while she was growing up but with whom she had lost touch.⁷⁷ Tom had always found her 'naturally' sexually attractive.⁷⁸ However, in this story she is unable to marry him because, as a result of a previous episode of feminine misjudgement, she married a good-for-nothing. She now suspects, but cannot prove, that her marriage is bigamous. Therefore, Renee's child is at once putatively illegitimate and yet Renee is tied to the blackguardly Jack Durrant, even though he has deserted her by now. Her struggle is to achieve a position in society where she can marry Tom, as a prerequisite to maintaining that decorum which will retain his Romantic Love. She does this in a way which implicates autonomy as part of feminine sexuality because feminine sexuality is part of conservative ideas of autonomy in wartime feminine citizenship.

Readers of this story have access to a cover picture revealing the misery which accompanies uncontrolled female passion and the lack of a good man's love.⁷⁹ This picture represents the heroine as essentially worthy of Romantic Love; 'natural' blonde hair waves softly down over her shoulders, her dress is simple and she is surrounded by the appurtenances of domesticity. Yet readers also have access to an ancillary text boxed into the third page of the story as advice from 'Your Editress'. In this working class, mother/daughter paper the sidebar uses notions of maternal

⁷⁷In this strongly conservative British story, Tom had been absent serving as a mail pilot in an outpost of the empire. His return is the result of his desire to serve Britain in wartime, 'War! The man she loved was going to be in it; he would fly through death-filled skies' (p 4).

⁷⁸Tom's sexual appreciation of Renee is unspoken beyond a general 'I thought you looked marvellous in the theatre', instead 'all his love for her shin[es] in his eyes' and 'his eyes devour. . . her'. The reader understands Renee's beauty and sexual attractiveness as 'natural' through repeated descriptions in the powerful authorial voice as well as the cover picture of an 'innocent' (infantilised) girl heroine with tears, a round face and uncut, softly waving hair. Renee stands 'slim and lovely', she wears, 'a soft Victorian frock that . . . the soldiers loved', p 6.

⁷⁹See Figure 2 of this chapter.

guidance to encourage an anxious girl to attend dances in order to meet ‘boys’ and also to shampoo her hair and ‘mak[e] herself smart’ in appearance as a basis for ‘popularity’, and to keep on doing this.⁸⁰ Paradoxically, commodities are necessary to achieve and maintain that ‘natural’ passive beauty necessary for Romantic Love.

Another rupture of the conservative discourse of womanhood is situated in Renee’s role as a feminine wartime citizen. It is through her autonomous activity as a contributing wartime citizen, rather than her passive sexual availability, that she achieves the conservative feminine happiness of Romantic Love. In a plot of extreme complexity, the possible bigamist reappears and kidnaps their child. He threatens the baby’s life in order to force Renee, now singing and acting in the troop camps, to steal information about a fighter plane. He lets her know he means to sell this information to the Germans. Renee realises that such an action will harm her fighter pilot, Tom, the man she loves but is denied because of her present situation as Durrant’s (putative) wife. It will also harm her country.

Here feminine sacrifice as part of the active heterosexual relationship is melded with patriotic activity as a contributing wartime citizen. Independently, Renee arranges to inform the authorities and save Tom while personally rescuing her child. She disguises herself as Durrant’s confidant, Rita, and uses her skill as an actress to engage him in a conversation through which he reveals the child’s whereabouts. In this conversation she also discovers her marriage really is bigamous, and thus she is freed to become pilot Tom’s supportive wife. In wartime society, independence and achievement as a feminine citizen result in approved conservative feminine sexual fulfilment.

Both stories represent the idea that a role in an active heterosexual relationship is essential to femininity. Both stories chart a young woman’s path to that femininity. The focus on a wartime feminine citizenship which includes some autonomy in ‘The Lie’ also reveals that Renee has some control over her entry to an active heterosexual

⁸⁰For a class-based idea of shared mother/daughter romances see Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p 46 and p 57. Domestic feminine intimacy is implied in the heading to a sidebar to ‘The Lie’, ‘Your Corner and Mine’. This is succeeded by a short piece of verse suggesting domestically-based discussions of feminine harmony and satisfaction, ‘where we can meet and/ talk of friendly things/And look ahead to joys/ that next week brings’.

relationship. Girl readers, it can be argued, are shown that wartime citizenship is the way to conservative approval for some feminine sexual autonomy. Rosemary's story meanwhile delineates for the reader the process of autonomous feminine sexuality in controlling a woman's entry to an active heterosexual relationship and so fulfils the reason the girls' sought the disapproved magazines in the first place. Finally, the reader's sense of controlling her own pleasure which was part of the process of reading both these stories reinforced in a girl the feeling that autonomous action in achieving her desires was part of girlhood.

Memories

The participants' memories can be interpreted to reveal how four aspects of the domestically approved/disapproved reading pattern contributed to the girl readers negotiating a more secure idea of the sexual feminine citizen and in so doing gave them room to experience young women as an approved autonomous group. Firstly, there was the reader's desire for psycho-social security based on heterosexuality. Secondly, there was the maternal role in influencing girls into a heterosexuality which imbricated citizenship. Thirdly, maternal ambivalence over confession magazines fed into the development of the girls' own community of disapproved-magazine readers. Finally, there was the unique role girl readers were performing as young, wartime female Australian citizens in a rupturing conservative discourse during the period they were reading this material.

Domestically approved and disapproved magazine reading was remembered by many respondents in a linked pattern. Over a third of the participants recalled the American-style romance magazines and all did this with some reference to disapproved reading⁸¹. Forty one of those respondents remembered reading both the mainstream women's magazines or approved romance magazines, and also the disapproved magazines.

Girl readers sought this reading pattern at the same time they were becoming aware of the necessity for their participation in an active heterosexual relationship in order to achieve femininity. Barbara (51) referred to the naivete of herself and her friends in

⁸¹Fifty seven of the one hundred and thirty two respondents.

Victoria as they read the American-style magazines ‘giggling and wondering behind the [school] shelter shed’. Rhoda (3) situated her first readings at the beginning of high school. She remembered bringing *True Romances* home from school to read and ‘hid[ing them] under some things which were in my doll’s pram as I knew my mother wouldn’t approve’.⁸² The domestically approved/disapproved reading pattern seems to have been associated with the reader’s need for information about sexuality as the entry to feminine life. Girls drew on the rules and resources associated with their roles as wartime daughters and school girls to gain access to this information.

The magazines were recalled by girls of the working class and the new and established middle-class. These girls read them in cities, in country towns, in homes and in boarding schools. Janet (55) in 1940 came from country life to live with her parents in Melbourne while her father worked as a clerk in an aircraft plant. This time was remembered as ‘a new vista of [reading] enjoyment. [It was now] five minutes to the main street and newsagent, [this] meant girls comics and especially *Girls’ Crystal*’ and ‘*True Romances* were available at the newsagent too’. Girls at Kit’s (26) convent boarding school in New South Wales also read the magazines. ‘Although forbidden, *True Confessions* and similar magazines were smuggled into boarding school’, she recalled. Even readers such as Peggy (36), from an established middle-class background and enrolled in a closely supervised boarding school, did not find it impossible to develop the approved/disapproved domestic reading patterns.⁸³

There were some who did not even touch on reading in this pattern and yet discussed other kinds of satisfying ephemeral reading. The daughter of an accountant, Sheila’s (25) memories of her young teenaged years focussed on the household’s emphasis on masculinity. This meant not only that she ‘had no access to anything like that [romance magazines]’ but also that ‘from about eleven to fourteen I kept (embarrassingly) a scrapbook on Australian Rules Football [from the newspapers]. My father and older brother were keen fans so I was influenced from an early age . . . I dearly wished I had been born a boy so I could have played.’ Barbara (24), was a

⁸² Respondents used a variety of names but were clearly designating the American-style romance magazines, either specifically as a genre. Possibly this was because of the large number of similar titles available to the girl readers. Respondents also clearly understood these titles as a different genre from the British-style romance magazines which they were more likely to specify by name, *Silver Star*, *Oracle* and *Miracle* being the commonly remembered ones.

⁸³ Her father was the manager of the family-owned merino stud.

respondent with detailed memories of girlhood reading who made no mention of the romance magazines. She also reflected ambivalence about the value and meaning of feminine sexuality. Barbara's desire to succeed and her recognition of ungendered (masculine) norms as the norms of success is dealt with in some detail in Chapter Four.⁸⁴ All these memories suggest that girls' individual notions of satisfaction rather than their class or geographical situation drove this reading.⁸⁵ Participants outside the reading pattern were more likely to be those who recalled domestic backgrounds which emphasised features other than feminine sexuality as the means to security. It would seem that girl readers in the pattern were looking for ways to make feminine sexuality a source of personal satisfaction.

Readers remembered domestic magazine reading as maternally-endorsed leisure. Many of these memories revealed the power of the maternal hand through its invisibility. Respondents like Roslyn (35), a 'working class' daughter, recollected reading their mother's mainstream women's magazines as a transparent household leisure activity; something women 'did'. In Shirley's (61) household, in a Victorian timber town, the British 'mother/daughter' romance magazines *Miracle* and *Oracle* were read every week. Some participants reveal an awareness of their mothers' active role in representing femininity through magazine reading. The sisters Joy (31) and Susan (32), daughters of a sales representative in Western Australia, remembered this reading as a progression beginning with the Phantom comic strip in their mother's *Australian Women's Mirror* and moving to stories and articles. Still others, such as Joan (111), whose father was a country shopkeeper in Tasmania, remembered mothers inducting them into feminine magazine reading through first purchasing child-directed magazines such as *Tiny Tots*, then later, *Girls' Crystal* and so on. For girls in the respectable working and middle classes magazine reading as leisure instruction in

⁸⁴Fetterley's and Schweickart's notions of imasculation as an effect of reading are particularly clear in Barbara's recollections (See Schweickart, 'Reading Ourselves, pp 40-43). Barbara sought modern feminine sexuality and confessed to succumbing to the 'glamour' of feminine accoutrements, 'which half of me despised and the other half loved' yet remembered rejecting the narrowness of the active heterosexual relationship.

⁸⁵Respondents growing to womanhood on the smaller and more isolated farms recalled reading the magazines from parcels of magazines and papers passed on by friends and relatives and saw them simply as 'women's reading' rather than disapproved reading. There is really a need for a separate study of how the girls who grew up on isolated farms and stayed in the rural community understood themselves as women. Many of the responses indicate a worldview which seems to fit with the femininity explored in Alston's *Women of the Land* rather than studies of the 'modern girl'

femininity began in the home. Here mothers were daughters' moral guides and reading community leaders. Mothers approved mainstream magazines.

Sometimes these memories emphasised the generational strength of women's reading. Anne (102), whose parents shared public working roles to allow her father to be both a struggling farmer and the township postmaster, recalled the passing along of contemporary mainstream women's magazines in a way which highlighted feminine connection across generational differences. The magazines were passed from her housewife grandmother to her mother, the de facto post mistress. Her mother passed them to Anne, the daughter, school girl and volunteer war worker (Anne was an air-spotter). Sometimes the memories suggested magazine reading accommodated variations in interest and in ways of reading. Valda (137) and Rosalie (138) came from a Tasmanian township family where five of the seven children were girls. Their mother subscribed to the *Australian Woman's Weekly* and was recalled as having 'a big pile of *Home Journal* magazines'. Their mother was remembered as drawing on the magazines' paper patterns to make clothes for her family. Rosalie, younger than Valda in this shared memory, remembered keeping cuttings of film stars and poring over the resulting scrapbooks, 'We got the cuttings from the only magazine Mum bought, the *Australian Women's Weekly*'. Valda saw this as a 'simple pleasure' she, as the second eldest girl, didn't have time for; Valda read the stories. These memories suggest that through maternal encouragement girls experienced magazine reading as part of a respectable feminine community which could also accommodate differences on the basis of life-course experience. Girls could accommodate the idea of their own focus on sexuality rather than on the citizenship which their mothers regarded as important as a result of their age rather than their lack of respectability.

Other respondents than Rosalie recalled keeping scrapbooks from mainstream sources of commoditised beauties and the men who Truly Loved them. Valda (85) remembered keeping a scrapbook of magazine advertisements because they were so visually attractive, so did Betty (23) in South Australia. Helen (15) recalled a combination of product and result with her approved collection of the Hollywood-style photographs of women film stars printed on the household's Lux soap wrappers. Other pictorial representations of the pleasures of feminine sexuality were also powerful. Dorothy (69) recalled how, in her orphaned youth in an Victorian industrial

town and later in Melbourne, the wartime media photographs she ‘loved’ were those of ‘Australian servicemen and their brides’. Mainstream magazine illustrations appear to have been an important factor in the readers’ interpretations of feminine sexuality as a woman’s autonomously-wielded instrument of happiness.

Stories were remembered too. Valda (85) in recalling her domestically-approved magazine reading also remembered a (naive) story she wrote at thirteen to submit to a fiction competition in the mainstream magazine, the *Australian Women’s Weekly*. Her story revealed the investments one reader made in the conflicting ideas of femininity. The young, female protagonist is a mixture of autonomy and passivity. She chooses to leave her brutal, insensitive father’s house and live independently. She passively waits for the ‘hero’s’ love at first and this waiting seems to be rewarded. However, as she becomes conscious that he is withdrawing from the relationship (over a misunderstanding, of course) she also becomes anxious over her loss. She then plays a major role in achieving an active heterosexual relationship by confronting him and telling him how much she loves him.⁸⁶ This memory suggests that for girl readers the magazine stories were powerful sources for understanding women’s sexuality as an independent means to feminine happiness inside their notions of social approval. The memories of the illustrations and stories can all be seen to imply that the representations of successful sexuality as a condition resulting from constant self-surveillance and maintenance were interpreted as feminine choice and freedom in gaining Love.

Some memories of this reading are susceptible of the interpretation that girls connected independent feminine sexuality to feminine performance as citizens. The collected pictures of satisfied femininity discussed earlier were remembered for the women’s position in society as ‘film stars’ or as ‘servicemen’s brides’. More immediately, Valda (137) and Rosalie (138) remembered the *Home Journals* ‘had many pictures of ladies and children’s dresses. When we each had made our choice, Mum would cut a pattern out of newspaper and then the big moment came, our dress would be cut out and the sewing began’. The new dresses were an element of their

⁸⁶For potentials of difference between the intention of mainstream romance stories as a genre and reader response it is worth comparing this plot with the wartime British romance plots analysed by Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p 167.

participation in a citizenship activity; the Sunday school prize-giving attendance and this was recounted in a detail which suggests it was a source of great satisfaction to the girls.⁸⁷ However, while it can be argued that girls associated sexuality and citizenship, a broader view of the memories suggests that the girls' focussed on the way feminine sexuality rather than feminine citizenship was represented in the mainstream magazines. Their need for psycho-social security meant that girls also focussed on the potential for youthful feminine control in this discourse.

Yet readers of the approved women's magazines were conscious of the absence of clear instruction on that achievement-oriented sexuality by which they could gain the desirable state of True Love. Gwen (100), who recorded reading, 'books that came out as [supplementary] magazines in the *Women's Weekly*', also noted, 'I often wished I could have had material on sex available . . . My first boyfriend, when I was sixteen, urged me to read Havelock Ellis' book on sex'. Cecilia (94) the daughter of an industrial manager and an infants teacher recorded:

I seemed to be searching for what I do not know and was dissatisfied [with approved 'books dealing with growing up, sex and reproduction']. Lots of diagrams but we were never given any advice on [heterosexual] friendships and relationships. It was a lonely time, an awkward and confusing time and I had no means of expressing my fears and embarrassment.

Cecilia remembered the mainstream magazines simply as general household reading for both men and women. It can be argued that the insecurity perceived by girls as a result of the tension between youthful feminine sexuality as passive and naive yet needing to become part of an active heterosexual relationship drove readers to search further than the mainstream magazines for instructive information.

Simultaneously with this approved mainstream reading girls developed ideas about the meaning of the disapproved confession magazines as the source of the instruction they wanted in how to achieve True Love. Roslyn (35) recalled how she was attracted by the way they were at once similar to and 'more' than the mainstream magazines she was used to; '[*True Stories*] were the first glossies I ever saw. I think they were American. They had big writing and photo pictures'. Anne (30) produced a generic story title for the American-style romance magazines to explain her memories. This

⁸⁷Medcraft and Gee, *The Sausage Tree*, pp 68-71

title also gives an insight into the way the sexual lives of the commoditised beauties were imagined as powerful and desirable: 'I Gave My Boyfriend to My Mother, She Needed Him More Than I Did'. Barbara (51) in Victoria, a reader of both kinds of magazine, noted of the American-style romance magazines, 'We believed the titles must be true because of the name'.

The memories situated American-style romance magazines as domestically-disapproved material. Patricia (45) read 'romance magazines when Mum wasn't looking', Barbara (51) recalled 'trying to get hold' of romance magazines 'unknownst to our mothers'. Mothers such as Roslyn's (35) are remembered in ways which show they were understood as believing the confession magazines celebrated achievement-oriented youthful feminine sexuality and that negative results flowed from this. Roslyn (35) recalled her mother's concern over *True Stories* tales of 'girls losing their virginity, destroying their place in society, evil men, stories all about sex, a baby with no father'. Girls appear to have recognised that maternal disapproval was based on the representations of feminine sexuality in the romance magazines.

Yet mothers were women shaped in and by contemporary society as well as to the values of their own girlhood. The memories show that mothers often knew, and reading daughters often understood their mothers knew, that there were gaps in the approved stories of feminine sexuality. Middle-class Cecilia (94) in New South Wales recalled how her mother and a 'churchworker' in combination provided her with approved booklets on feminine sexuality. Margaret's (83) mother, the wife of a Victorian tradesman, was remembered as using lending library fiction as a way to guide her daughter into understanding sexuality. In South Australia, Iris (8), from a pay clerk's family and Joan (20), the daughter of an accountant, also recalled similar situations.

Consequently, the relationship between mothers and daughters over the contents of the approved magazines was more complex than the preliminary analysis suggests. Mothers communicated their objections to the disapproved magazines in ambivalent ways. Few mothers were recalled, like Diana's (118), as actively forbidding the magazines. Some readers, like Nance (52) recalled the American-style magazines by

their absence, as magazines not bought by a household which did buy the *Australian Women's Weekly*. Gwenda (12) remembered the disapproved magazines simply as 'difficult to get'. Katharine (134) recalled them as forbidden in teen years but afterwards available. Many, such as Eloise (11) and Helen (29), both of whom lived alternately in urban and country Western Australia, simply recalled 'discouragement'. Marsali's (136) suburban 'mother frowned on them' and this was the verb Roslyn (35), too, chose to explain her mother's behaviour in her more detailed response. Pat (7) remembers her railway union representative mother 'scorning' them, but also recalled that she understood her mother's demanding job as making her unable to censor this reading and so she 'read them voraciously' at home.

Some mothers were recalled as part of a community which read the magazines as women's magazines. Fay's (107) and Alison's (108) mothers in Tasmania both read them as part of a neighbourhood reading group which also circulated mainstream women's magazines. Others remembered older sisters who read these magazines in the domestic circle. In Victoria Rosemary's (81) sister was recalled as 'read[ing] nothing but' and their hard-pressed mother accepted this. Bernice (17) in South Australia 'nicked' and hid her older sister's accepted magazines. Girls seem to have experienced mother's attitudes to this reading as less than totally disapproving, regardless of any strong statements of disapproval mothers may have made. One reason for this was the general lack of policed proscription. Another was girls' experience of the magazines as reading for a respectable feminine community.

Some participants' memories of these magazines were associated with school and feminine authority. Teresa (33) remembered the romance magazines as forbidden by the nuns at her Catholic day/boarding school in a major provincial town. In Barbara's (105) memories the principal of her establishment school denounced the reading of mainstream *Woman* as well as the romance magazines.⁸⁸ However, both these participants were able to read from other sources connected with their attendance at a school. Being a school girl and a daughter gave Barbara the freedom to read these

⁸⁸ *Woman's* inclusions of modern point of view feature articles and 'columns' by Margot Parker, Alan Marshall and especially, 'Wykeham Terriss' made this magazine a source of controversy in wartime years. See letters page, 15 June, 1942. Another respondent, Thurza (122) remembered how her mother stopped buying *Woman* after the Wykeham Terriss explicit medical and sexological articles started, and how she then began buying it herself.

magazines as well as access to them. She recalled that, as a day girl, she read her mother's copies of *Woman* as well as borrowed romance magazines on the train to and from school with a group of her friends. Perhaps Alison's (108) memories of her high school girls' hostel in Tasmania best represent the ambiguities surrounding the ideas and relationship between approved and disapproved magazine reading which existed even at school:

I boarded at a girls' hostel, very strict supervision . . . *True Romance* and *True Confessions* were supposedly written by girls and women about their sex life. When at the hostel some girl would often bring a copy of one of these and it would be passed from girl to girl - often the best read book in the house. Care had to be taken as Matron would burn any copies she found although we all suspected the Junior Matron read them before they reached the fire.

For similar reasons to those which they applied to their understanding of their mothers' disapproval, girls appear not to have taken seriously the disapproval of feminine authority figures at school in relation to these magazines.

One outcome of this situation was that readers felt simultaneously that the American-style magazines contained vital information on how to become a young woman and that they could not look to their standard providers of instruction to make them available. Girl readers could interpret this division between their needs and their guides' response as no more than a result of different positions in feminine life-course experience. As the earlier analysis of the way Valda (137) recalled her mother, her younger sister and herself reading women's magazines demonstrated, girls had already been shaped to understand that women's magazine reading at once made them part of the community of respectable women and yet accommodated differences in the reader's current experience of that womanhood. The girls could therefore feel that acting with other girls independently of authoritative strictures over these texts in order to achieve young womanhood was part of their common belonging to the cohort on the threshold of femininity. Domestically-disapproved reading created a space where respectable girls could imagine acting as members of an independent feminine public group.

These memories also foregrounded the way in which domestic ideas of the privacy of reading ensured the opportunity to read the disapproved texts. Gwen (100) first read American-style romance magazines as a collection with a friend. This collection

was passed on to them both through a girl they met while holidaying under the supervision of the friend's parents: 'we hid them in a wardrobe so that my friend's mother wouldn't see and disapprove', Gwen recalled. Barbara (105), while a day girl at New South Wales' Methodist Ladies College read '*True Love* or similar [magazines] lent by a friend'. Teresa (33), at a New South Wales convent, read with her friends. Helen (86), the daughter of a widowed woman farmer in Victoria, was educated at an Anglican boarding school. She recalled American-style romance magazines as 'passed on by girlfriends'. Girls clearly extended their experience of the approved idea of magazine reading as the outcome of a feminine community with shared values and interpretations to support their participation in an autonomous group of peers.

This group/community existed as much through cooperation as it did through leadership; girls came to it individually as the shaping forces of their lives shifted in psychic importance.⁸⁹ Joan (46), the daughter of a Methodist minister and 'full-time minister's wife!' recalled of her early adolescence, '*True Romance* circulated through the underground channels somehow or other without our parents being aware'. 'There was always someone with the banned magazines' at Shirley's (61) state school in country Victoria. Annabel (49) remembered, 'some purloined them from mothers and older sisters'. Pat (7) in her early teens purchased them not caring that her mother disapproved, feeling herself safe because of her mother's absence at work and her subsequent exhaustion. Thirteen year old Valda (85) and her sister collected them through the wartime paper salvage program and shared them. Caroline in early adolescence (60) borrowed 'a stack of love story magazines'; someone's collection. Girl readers of American-style romance magazines formed a multi-faceted, independent collective. They were a community, sharing the values of femininity promulgated by the texts.⁹⁰ They were also a group supporting each other to reach a goal apparently promised by society, yet unfulfilled through its guiding networks.⁹¹

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⁸⁹Taksa, op cit, pp 13-14.

⁹⁰Taksa, op cit, p 10

⁹¹Young, op cit, p 27, p 34.

Girls read the disapproved magazines in an attempt to assuage their sexual anxieties. Notions of feminine citizenship seemed far less significant to them than issues of sexuality. However, it was the discourse of wartime feminine citizenship which gave these girls the opportunity to express in conservative society the satisfying ideas of autonomous feminine sexuality they had clarified through their reading of the romance magazines. Significantly, this situation also reinforced in girls the idea that their action as an autonomous group was acceptable.

Many of these readers' memories reflected the institutional understanding that women's voluntary homefront service was more important after 1941.⁹² Alison (108) in Tasmania thought the war was 'vague' until her 'best friend's brother was shot down and killed in 1942'. She remembered this incident as 'a turning point'. Pat (113) noted that her brother disappeared in the fall of Rabaul to the Japanese and his loss is still remembered with pain today. Marsali (136) was fifteen in 1942 and read the magazines while interested in the 'glamour' of feminine work and disposable income in a large provincial town. She also demonstrated citizen willingness. She made camouflage nets during her bank's staff lunch hour, 'Anyone with time to spare was able to pop up [to a room above a central department store] and complete a few rows. I spent quite a bit of time there'. Cecilia (94), interested in, and disappointed by, the American-style romances, sought to contribute to the war as an Australian woman through Voluntary Aid Detachment service, as a member of 'a Women's Flying Club', and through parcels to soldiers: every aspect of volunteer service youthful Australian femininity allowed; public service, potential defence auxiliaries and domestic comforts for troops.⁹³

Most of the memories of voluntary service incorporated images of a girl's relationship with her mother. Nancy (131) remembered how she 'helped [her] mother who was in the local Red Cross, Comforts Fund and prisoner of war organisations'. Feminine volunteering was often domestic in idea and public in performance.⁹⁴ Joyce's (34) mother was recalled as working at 'home duties'. She noted how, while still at school, 'I helped my mother in the canteen run in the precincts of St Andrew's

⁹²Oppenheimer, op cit, p 128.

⁹³Saunders and Bolton, 'Girdled for War: Women's Mobilisations in World War Two' in Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*.

⁹⁴Oppenheimer, op cit, p 89.

Cathedral [Sydney] for the troops'. It can be argued that mothers recognised volunteering could be nationally valuable and clearly feminine and thus gave public contribution a moral imprimatur for daughters.

Girl volunteers in the larger population centres were often more marginalised by their youth than those in rural areas like Shirley (61), who was quoted in Chapter Three as remembering, 'We were on fund-raising committees at fourteen'. Yet in towns too autonomy and achievement as Australian feminine citizens was encouraged. Elaine (130) grew up in Brisbane and was fourteen in 1942. She read and believed she reacted strongly to the disapproved magazine 'contents'. 'I was appalled', she recollected. She waited on tables at 'the Red Cross cafe'. Mary (71) read them in a home she remembers as supporting her autonomous selection of any reading. At sixteen she was helping in the army canteen in Melbourne and at the Seaman's Mission. Some of the voluntary service roles approved for girls intersected with ideas of feminine sexuality. Voluntary service required the readers to relate to young Australian men as young Australian women in the public heterosocial scene, which they could understand as pre-figuring active heterosexual relationships.

Girl volunteers were also more clearly associated with youthful sexuality. They were encouraged to serve as the partners of young servicemen at dances. Alison (108), from a household where American-style romances were a part of feminine reading, remembered with surprise how she was asked as a fifteen to sixteen year old girl to serve as a partner for young men from the district's military camp at fund raising dances.⁹⁵ Jean (117), very slightly older, recalled being asked through a New South Wales branch of CUSA to serve as a partner at servicemen's dances.⁹⁶ Marion (42), for whom disapproved magazines were part of school socialising, recorded in some detail:

The local Presbyterian Church at Kogarah persuaded the officer-in-charge to classify it as part of the [army] camp at Moorefield Racecourse and every night a group of soldiers were marched up (all voluntary). The older ladies gave them supper. We danced and played ping-pong. . . . The whole community was involved.

⁹⁵ Alison was fourteen and fifteen in 1942.

⁹⁶ CUSA is the acronym of the Catholic United Services Auxiliary.

These memories make clear the girl readers often assumed dual roles; at once the passive partners and the negotiators of heterosexual social pleasure for the uprooted young servicemen attending the dances. It could be argued that in their performance of wartime citizenship girls' efforts to seek instructive information about achievement-oriented feminine sexuality through the disapproved magazines seemed to be vindicated.

Memories of domestically-disapproved magazine reading and wartime voluntary service combine to suggest that between them they gave readers experiencing confusion over ideas of young feminine citizenship and sexuality a space to interpret and express the conditions of entry to Australian womanhood in a satisfying way. Consequently, participants seem to have used domestically disapproved magazine reading as both a fulfilment of emotional need at a time of change and insecurity and as junior-level text books to be mastered and discarded. Betty (127), a financially struggling teachers' college student, read *True Romances* through the cooperation of a friend who worked in a newsagent. She remembered the stories as 'drivel and obviously contrived but they were great for relaxation and they fitted the female image of the day'. Ideas of both original need and progression are implicit in Gwen's (100) memory of deciding in senior high school that the stories in the disapproved magazines 'were all the same'. This was also a memory belonging to the later teen years of Roslyn (35) and Raima (56), both of whom were involved in public war work as homefront citizens while they lived at home. Girls left this reading community as individually as they came to it, driven by psycho-social shifts in their needs. No one recalled leaving this reading before they felt they had gained the information they sought in originally joining it. This response suggests that girls experienced their membership of the autonomous group as a quality of social behaviour which, if sometimes marginal, was basically also acceptable.

The memories of Annita (65) and Betty (23) allow for a reconstruction of the way two readers in the approved/disapproved pattern, through their struggles to achieve a satisfying sexuality, negotiated the idea that autonomous groups were part of girlhood. Neither referred specifically to an active heterosexual relationship. However, their memories of disapproved domestic reading elucidate the way this idea generated both

acute anxiety and the promise of satisfaction and so drove girls to act autonomously beyond daughterliness and adolescence in an attempt to position themselves for it.

Growing up in an outer suburb of Melbourne, Annita was twelve in the first year of the war against Japan and at business college in the final year. An unhappy daughter, she recalled:

During these years, with our father away in the Airforce, there was little chance to read and we were not encouraged to do so except at school. My sister, brother and myself were kept busy with chores around the house, ordered about by an unkind stepmother.

Wartime and domestic circumstances combined with Annita's age to intensify the psychic insecurity associated with leaving childhood and entering womanhood.

Annita's memories underscore the complex ways in which the genres interacted in this reading pattern. *True Romance* magazines were remembered as bringing her immediate satisfaction for her sense of lack through notions of a heterosexual relationship:

I also recall the glossy *True Romance* magazines with dramatic headlines on the front page, 'She fell in Love With Her Sister's Husband' or some such thing. The pictures displayed in these magazines were so meaningful and full of love - I just gazed at them.

Her stepmother's mainstream *Australian Women's Weekly* represented instruction on the achievement of a world where respectable women could control their entry to the fulfilment of heterosexual love through commoditised glamour. As a reader she could understand herself as capable of achieving it:

I would browse through the *Australian Women's Weekly* but cannot remember actually reading what was in the pages. My only desire was looking for film stars to paste in my home-made brown paper scrapbook. The comic strip advertisements depicting people with bad breath problems which could be alleviated by Colgate's toothpaste and body odour by Lifebuoy soap always intrigued me. I well recall the smell of green Palmolive soap and would lather myself up in the bath to aim for that school-girl complexion all over.

Annita's memories show how desperately she desired the promised fulfilment of the heterosexual relationship. Furthermore, she could imagine the several and similar technologies used by both magazine genres were instructing her on how to achieve it through her own efforts. Clearly the intersecting pattern of approved and disapproved

magazine reading created a space for Annita to negotiate a satisfying sexuality which was also socially approved.

As she grew older, the position of adolescent girls in modern society gave Annita greater autonomy over what she had progressively established as a source of satisfaction in imagining femininity:

While I was at business college I had a job in a newsagents serving over the counter and sweeping and dusting the shop, Fridays half past four to six, Saturday mornings eight o'clock to twelve o'clock and Saturday afternoons from a quarter past four to eight o'clock at night. [I earned] a shilling an hour [which was] increased to one and six after three months. This was pocket money for the week.

'I would buy magazines where I worked', she noted, 'Just for the pictures.' She recalled of her progressively developing understanding of the household's *True Romance* magazines, 'My stepmother must have read them and would have forbidden me to look'. However, her older sister who also 'read *True Romance* magazines . . . would show me the passionate paragraphs'. At school, she recollected, girlfriends 'who knew I had a crush on certain stars' contributed to her collection. Annita remembered her need as primarily recognised and supported by her peers and herself rather than by her stepmother or any other authority figure.

The approved/disapproved reading pattern and wartime voluntary service intersected to contribute to Betty's recalled idea of youthful feminine sexuality and girls' access to autonomy as both modern and conservative, and as part of a subject position which was deeply invested in wartime Australian citizenship as well as daughterliness and adolescence. Betty was a fourteen year old member of the extended family of a district council worker and a home dressmaker in a South Australian country town when the war against Japan began.⁹⁷ She has memories of being on stage entertaining unknown townspeople and servicemen at fifteen and sixteen and then dancing with them and of regularly staying out until the small hours of the morning (and on one memorable occasion well past it) on these occasions. Wartime conservatives could have seen her behaviour as part of the reason for their general moral alarm over young women and the betrayal of the nation. Yet Betty remembers herself as growing into a respectable, young, modern, Australian woman

⁹⁷Mother, Father, a younger brother and sister and two cousins. Betty's grandmother possibly lived with them and certainly had an important role to play in the daily life of the family.

in these years. Her memories of her wartime approved/disapproved reading experience provide a basis for a reconstruction of some ways in which such a subject position became possible through a complex negotiation of the dominant discourses of feminine citizenship and sexuality.

Betty drew on not only her mother's *Australian Woman's Mirror*, but also her grandmother's *Pix* and *People* magazines, to understand satisfying femininity as public, commoditised, heterosocial and heterosexual. She recalled why these magazines were so important to her teenaged self:

I remember *Pix* ran state by state bathing girl competitions - irresistible to a skinny, unformed teenager!! - I recall a Miss Drake-Brockman from Western Australia - and they were all fabulous!! [Betty's emphasis].

She also remembered her 'great collection of film stars' pictures' from approved magazines. The memorable ones were women film stars. 'I can still recall Sonje Henie, Claire Trevor, Joan Crawford, Myrna Loy', she reflected.

Betty's understanding of the importance and satisfaction of commoditised feminine sexuality led to an intense ambition to become part of the world in which it existed. She wanted to be an artist in an advertising agency, a heterosocial role she regarded as combining the dual fulfilments of association with feminine glamour and the use of her talent:

My big deal in reading/Art [sic] came when I was fifteen or so.⁹⁸ Grandfather gave each of his seven grandchildren a half-sovereign each - at birth I suppose. The back cover [of one of Grandma's magazines] carried an ad for a correspondence school in Commercial Art. First of all one had to copy the test drawing, send it in and receive a free crit. After doing all this I was faced with the facts of life that the Art school wanted x amount of pounds for their course. I wrote and confessed I couldn't afford it and so we crisscrossed with offers until I cashed in my half sov. I could get the course! I did! And it came! Quite a good wad of reading and lots of illustrations. Not too far down the track all the illustrations of *nudes* were secretly withdrawn. I didn't dare ask by whom [Betty's emphasis].

The art school and the 'fabulous job in an advertising agency' with their association with achievement-oriented sexuality were further discouraged in the domestic arena: 'Without warning the whole pad of instructions vanished. Nobody knew anything'.

⁹⁸Betty was fifteen and sixteen in 1942.

The feeling of domestic protection as part of the life of a respectable, sexually maturing girl which I discuss in Chapter Six, was evident in Betty's recording as specifically forbidden, '*True Romances* or similar [but] no other [domestic reading] restrictions'. Nevertheless, she 'got' them from 'neighbours' and noted, 'I recall looking at the pictures but don't think I read the text'.

However, as a consequence of war pressures conservative social and domestic approval for youthful femininity as achievement-oriented and autonomous began to develop. Slightly later, but in the same timeframe as the experience of the frustrated commercial artist ambitions, Betty left school. In 1942 she became a clerk in a solicitor's office. She replaced another young woman who had joined the Australian Women's Army Service. As part of her town's homefront, voluntary war effort:

[a]n orchestra was formed . . . We played at concerts arranged by Council and other people for Red Cross, Comfort Fund, RSL etcetera. Apart from individual items we had community singing. One of my jobs as clerk for the aforesaid solicitor, was to figure out how to make slides of the words of songs which could be projected onto the cinema screen in the town hall - and everyone sing!!! [Betty's emphasis].

Betty's memories of voluntary service also demonstrate her sense of an unassailable Australian femininity which combined a public citizenship of considerable power and freedom, autonomous, achievement-oriented sexuality and approved domestic girlhood:

Our band use to travel to many country towns on Friday nights, give a concert [as part of wartime fund raising], have a mighty, country-style supper then have a dance until one or so. One night our petrol tank was drained so we had to push the car home up the hills and jump on and coast down the other side!! Panic all round when we hit home at four o'clock in the morning.

The rules and resources of wartime service meant the reflexive reinforcement through social practice of an Australian feminine sexuality Betty had first interpreted as a school girl and daughter reading in a linked pattern across domestically approved and disapproved magazines. Feminine sexuality could now be public, autonomous, mobile and glamorous while still connected to social and domestic relationships of approval and support. The way in which the nation's jeopardy was experienced in this small country town meant that after 1941 Betty's 'disobedience' in gaining access to the forbidden romance magazines could be translated into her having taken a necessary step in becoming an approved woman.

Girls understood the disapproved reading as clarifying the process of achievement-oriented feminine sexuality. As young wartime feminine citizens they could express achievement-oriented sexuality as approved femininity. As noted earlier, it can be argued that this approval reinforced in girls the idea that their collective, autonomous action as a way of gaining access to the disapproved reading was acceptable too. This is the last of the key qualities of respectable youthful femininity which I argue became part of an emerging discourse of youthful femininity as a consequence of girls' challenge to dominant interests. The analysis of domestically approved/disapproved reading also brings to a close this exploration of the effect of reading on the meaning of femininity for Australian, wartime girls.

Conclusion

This thesis undertook to answer three questions posed in the Introduction. The first of these was whether respectable wartime Australian girls could be seen to have agency, that is, could they influence the meaning of girlhood. The other questions asked, if they had this capacity, how and why they exercised it. The study, in answering these questions, made girlhood as a social idea a crucial perspective. As a result, its positive outcome firmly situates girls' agency as part of the nation. In doing this it has also filled some gaps which, I argued in the Introduction, exist in the ongoing feminist historical project of understanding the feminine contribution to the idea of Australia. The conclusion will sum up the way the historical chapters have answered the foundation questions. It will also elucidate how uncovering girls' contribution to the selected key qualities of the emerging wartime discourse of youthful femininity has extended historical understanding in three areas; firstly, over continuities informing Australian feminism, secondly, over the social power of the feminine domestic relationship and finally, over the importance of ordinary girls and women as historical agents.

Voice, public struggle, a leaders and followers infrastructure, the notion that adjusting approved femininities so that they were more satisfying to girls was both natural and moral, and girls functioning as an autonomous public group were clearly qualities of the emerging discourse of approved Australian girlhood by the end of the second world war. By selecting these characteristics as key qualities, the thesis shows how this situation reveals girls' agency. This agency was the outcome of a unique combination of the development of capitalism, patriarchy's re-orientation in this light and the pressures of war in a modern society. The combination of these forces created national discourses which represented respectable femininity in competing and conflicting ways. As a result, girls could imagine several ways of being feminine and respectable. At the same time the insecurity inherent in girlhood as a process of 'becoming' positioned girls to negotiate across this repertoire of discourses to achieve their twin goals of womanhood and the greatest possible security for themselves. The dynamism of wartime conditions, particularly, ensured that girls' expression of some of these notions was accepted. Consequently girls were driven to seek agency in a time when their agency was possible; girls contributed to the emerging wartime

meaning not only of youthful femininity but, as this was approved youthful femininity, of respectability in relation to young womanhood.

Each of the first five history chapters (Two-Six) traces girls' contribution to one of the key concepts of approved/respectable youthful femininity which were all part of the Australian world by the end of the second world war. The key qualities challenged the approved notion of Australian girlhood in place at the war's beginning and so their acceptance reshaped the meaning of Australian social relationships. However, it is Chapter Seven which most clearly demonstrates that in negotiating these qualities as part of youthful femininity girls had the agency to contribute to shaping the meaning of Australia. Chapter Seven shows that girls had the space for synthesising and transferring the satisfying qualities of emerging youthful femininity so that individual qualities could become more powerful in their effect. Tracing the emergence of the autonomous public group as part of girlhood in Chapter Seven revealed that girls' own interpretation of themselves and the world contributed to the notion that some autonomous public collaborativeness as part of society was part of approved youthful femininity. It also revealed that the autonomous public group which resulted drew for its existence on girls' voice, public struggle, a leaders and followers infrastructure and the ideas that girls' negotiation of approved views of femininity in ways which would more clearly satisfy them was both natural and moral. It is clear that these girls experienced using the individual key qualities beyond the unique times and spaces in which they emerged. These conclusions lead to an assessment of the relationship between this study and the notion of continuities underpinning second wave feminism in Australia, a movement acknowledged as influential in changing the meaning of womanhood in relation to the nation.¹ Corollaries of this assessment are an increased historical understanding of both the power of the feminine domestic relationship and the role of ordinary women in the emergence of second wave feminism.

Through the process of contextualisation, the outcome of this study offers some specific potential for considering that historical continuities affected Australian second wave feminism. In the Introduction I postulated that the historian could see feminism not only as feminine public group activity for the rights of women but also

¹Larbalestier, 'Australian Feminisms: The Second Wave' in Caine, *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, p 158.

as a perspective women had of their role in society, a perspective which need not even be clearly articulated. This thesis has shown how in wartime Australia a relatively inarticulate feminism existed as the individual and collective perception among girls that young women were entitled to move towards a range of social positions which satisfied them. Nor, as the study has demonstrated, particularly in Chapter Seven, are public active group feminism and unarticulated individual performance feminism necessarily always discrete. The correlation between the key qualities in the readers' notion of young womanhood and the characteristics outlined in the Introduction as defining the early part of the second wave feminist movement suggest there is a link between these two social ideas.² Moreover, while historians have traced several strands contributing to the development of second wave feminism in Australia, these strands do not account in a complete way for the emergence of the movement. Social shifts in education and the period women were involved in childbearing had created room for female discontent.³ Connections, however tenuous, between earlier active feminists and the second wavers are unquestionably significant.⁴ Equally important are the imports from other cultures, the new movements for the extension of political freedoms and the reaction to the way Australia's masculinist tradition sought to assert itself in these new movements.⁵ However, the energy with which early second wavers could espouse the idea of '[overcoming] on a personal level some of the handicaps that are the result of our conditioning . . . the passivity, the feelings of inferiority and inadequacy' suggests that in moving towards second wave feminism this generation could also draw for its strength on other ideas into which it had been conditioned.⁶

²In the Introduction I drew attention to the following links: second wave feminism was a movement based on women's agency across the middle and upper working classes; it was particularly a movement among young women; it had both cooperative and hierarchical group structures; it valued conscious public activism and activism associated with public regulation; it was driven by a sense that it was 'right' to achieve the goals it sought. On the negative side it is often criticised for its apparent insistence on 'natural' (essential) standards of femininity.

³Curthoys, 'Australian Feminism Since 1970' in Burns and Grieve, *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, p 16; Curthoys, 'Doing it for Themselves: The Women's Movement since 1970' in Saunders and Evans, in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, p 435.

⁴Kaplan, Bottomley and Rogers, 'This Life', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July, 2003; Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 7-10, p 218.

⁵For imports see Curthoys, 'Doing It For Themselves', pp 429; Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 221-223. For the new movements see Curthoys, 'Doing It For Themselves', pp 430-434; Kaplan, op cit, pp 24-27. For masculinist attempts to continue dominance see Curthoys, 'Doing It For Themselves', p 429-430, Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 221-223.

⁶Janey Stone quoted in Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp 228-229.

Contextualising the thesis' outcome in relation to second wave feminism reveals that the feminine domestic relationship was also a force in the emergence of this movement. The girl readers in this study subsequently became the respectable mothers of the second wave feminist generation. The study's use of memory theory to understand the effect of reading in shaping the participants' view of young women in relation to the world both foregrounds reading as a powerful experience and emphasises that one result of powerful experiences is that they have some effect on the lifelong interpretation of the meaning of self. As the synthesis of the key qualities in Chapter Seven demonstrates, these wartime girl readers imagined the qualities leading to agency through a feminine public group to be part of the self as a young woman. In the Introduction I argued that second wave feminists grew to young womanhood in a society which, like this wartime society, shaped girls into womanhood through a complex combination of public and domestic systems. Consequently, the thesis has exposed a cohort of future authoritative mothers who understand that young womanhood is a condition including feminine public group agency. At the same time it elucidates the power of the feminine domestic relationship even in a society where the public systems for shaping girls into womanhood appear to be expanding. The hidden power of the feminine domestic relationship in shaping girls' ideas of themselves is made particularly apparent in Chapters Three and Five. Moreover, this cohort did not become the mothers of any generation, but of the generation which formed a publicly active women's group to gain a position they believed, as Janey Stone's comment in the preceding paragraph implies, they were entitled to but had been denied. As I have noted, I argued in the Introduction that the key qualities whose emergence I trace in this thesis can be seen as a link between the wartime girl readers and the second wave feminists. Consequently, the feminine domestic relationship would appear to be a channel for such a link. This perspective argues that not only is the feminine domestic relationship a force contributing to social change, but also, that ordinary girls and women unquestionably influenced the emergence of second wave feminism, and the meaning of Australian womanhood.

* * *

I finished the Introduction to this thesis by highlighting the respondents' role as *contributors* to my project, emphasising the separate goals of the owners of the

memories and the historian. As a historian I was seeking to discover whether Australian wartime girls, an oppressed group in terms of age and gender, had agency to negotiate a more satisfying discourse of femininity. To me the memories meant raw material which could be drawn on to answer this question. As I pointed out in the Introduction, for the respondents the memories were statements of a powerfully satisfying girlhood experience. I want to conclude the study by putting forward another aspect of this relationship, one which began with my first access to the raw material of the data and which developed as the six historical chapters were written. This is the notion of the relationship as a *partnership* in which each of the stakeholders supported the other in achieving her goal. The key word in this perspective is 'pleasure'.

Socio-historical theory encouraged me to see reading as both a discipline and a pleasure as it shaped the subject. However, while some studies represented the effect of reading as a balance between discipline and pleasure this balanced perspective could not account for the spirit of pleasure which so emphatically infused the respondents' memories of their reading.⁷ This spirit appeared not only in the most detailed and reflective responses such as Kitty's (115) but also in the brief contributions of respondents like Rhoda (3) who noted 'My sister-in-law showed me recent notice in the *Advertiser* regarding what girls 12-18 read during war years, so am writing to tell you just a few of the books I read [when] during those years I used to retreat to a favourite tree'. As I absorbed the meaning of the reading experience for those who had been the girls of wartime Australia, I came to realise that the idea of reading as a pleasure had been an important force in girls' agency. While girls read in a period of insecurity and anxiety and their recollections demonstrated reading was a discipline, the greater part of their memories of reading were memories of the activity as an antidote to insecurity. The focus was on the choices and freedoms of the reading experience, both in girls' understanding of the reading performance and in their interpretations of the text.

I came to understand that pleasure was not only the significant factor in the respondents' agency but was also a force in their later participation in this project.

⁷Lyons and Taksa's *Australian Readers Remember* is an example of this balance.

Merna (4) was one of many who explained that her response to my request for recollections of girlhood reading was founded in satisfaction; it had ‘triggered off many happy memories for me, and, I have no doubt, for many other readers’. It is through the experience of pleasure that this study has brought together the goals of readers like Merna and my own academically recognised aim of charting girls’ historical role as social actors in wartime Australia. As the historical chapters have clearly demonstrated, for girl readers agency was a joyous experience and it was pleasure which drove it. Yes, the aims of the historian and the respondents are different, but in the study which is now concluded each one of us has supported the other in achieving her goal. The participants have had the satisfaction of recalling and expressing their pleasurable earlier experience. For me as a historian the satisfaction has also been considerable. My involvement in this partnership has resulted in the development of a more profound historical understanding of girls’ agency.

Appendix: Background Information About Participants

The appendix sets out the way the one hundred and thirty two women whose memories this study draws on as a primary source were constituted as a group. It provides information on how they were approached for the project then tabulates their position in the basic categories used by the study. It also explains any apparent anomalies in this information.

In order to generate a response in potential participants I sent letters to broadsheet and tabloid newspapers in each of the states and was also interviewed on current affairs radio programs. Here I explained the project and asked for any women of any age between twelve and eighteen for the years between 1939 and 1945 who were willing to share with me their memories of reading at that time. The response was far greater than I expected. I originally hoped for twenty five to fifty responses. I received almost two hundred. This meant that, in view of my limited resources, I had to cull the respondents in order to establish a manageable archive. It also told me that this generation of women clearly felt they had a story about who they were and how they experienced the world at this time. In short, my project had a basis beyond my imagination. The first cull was simply a cut off point at a certain date as only one reply of all those I received was notably unsuitable.

The remaining readers became the group contributing to this study. The table on the following pages is designed to impart salient information about rather than the vital statistics of this group. It is designed to establish the significant factual categories used in the study, be clear and simple to read and at the same time maintain the focus on subjectivity which infuses this work.

Some information has been included on a straightforward, factual basis. While I have used first names in order to protect the participants' privacy, the women chose whether or not they wished to be referred to by their own names. The names by which the participants preferred to be known, their necessary numbers (necessary because of the several participants who have the same names), the state in which the participant lived at that time and her year of birth are included on this basis. So is the participant's religion.

In the interests of tabular clarity I have reduced some of the descriptors to very basic categories. In the column headed 'Environment' there are only two categories, rural and urban. Rural is used for women who as girls lived on small farms, large land holdings, in hamlets, villages, country townships and rural entrepôts. Urban indicates girls who lived in cities, city suburbs and large industrial towns. The study itself explains a participant's environment in greater detail where it draws explicitly on her memories. 'Teacher Training' in the 'Education Level' category is used as a term to cover the varieties of practical experience and college teacher education deployed by the separate states to produce their teachers at this time. Again, where a participant's memories are drawn on in detail any 'teacher training' is also detailed there.

As my focus was on subjectivity, I sought the readers' own ideas of their relationship with others and the world through an open-ended approach rather than asking for responses to narrowly-specified categories. In keeping with this approach, the parents' occupations are represented as closely as is possible in table form to a participant's description of her parents' occupations at that time. This leads to some apparent anomalies. For example, some mothers are recorded as undertaking home duties and voluntary war work while others have war work recorded first. This should be recognised as a reflection of a particular participant's memory. The category, 'Education Level' refers to that level of education the participant has indicated as her highest level in the period covered by this study, whether she has completed it or is still in the process of continuation.

Finally, there are some other apparent anomalies in the table, which need to be clarified here. Gaps in the consecutive numbers referring to the participants are occasioned by a second cull. This withdrew respondents who were unable to complete the study for a variety of personal reasons or who supplied information with too many gaps to be really useful to the study. The second cull also accounts for my discussion of one hundred and thirty two participants while there is an apparent list of one hundred and forty one participants. A few of the ages are on the very edge of the project's parameters. I have included them because they fit in terms of months rather than years.

Information About Participants

No	Name	State	YOB	Religion	Environment	Ed Level	Father's Occ	Mother's Occ
1	Vera	SA	1921	Methodist	Urban	Business Coll	Mech Engineer	Home Duties
2	Elaine	SA	1933	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	Primary Producer	Home Duties
3	Rhoda	SA	-	-	-	-	-	Home Duties
4	Merna	SA/WA	1932	Methodist	Urban	Comm Leaving	RAAF, d 1943	Mostly Home Duties
5	Esme	Vic	1928	Non-Catholic	Urban	Business College	Manager/Small Shop	Died in W W II
7	Pat	SA	1929	R Catholic	Urban	Junior Secondary	Baker, Soldier	Union Representative
8	Iris	SA	1930	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	Pay Clerk	HD/Bookshop Asst
9	Margaret	SA	1928	Baptist	Urban	Secondary	Paintshop Supt	HD/Bus'man's Wife
10	Pat	NSW	1928	Anglican	Rural	Senior Secondary	Orchardist & Builder	Home Duties
11	Eloise	WA	1929	Anglican	Rural/Urban	Secondary	Farmer	HD/ Farm Animal Management
12	Gwenda	SA	1927	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	Army Officer	Ran Husband's Agency in War
13	Phyllis	SA	1930	Anglican	-	Business College	Prop Mixed Business	HD/Worked in Family Shop
14	Enid	SA	1926	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	Instrument maker/RAAF	HD for Four Daughters
15	Helen	SA	1928	-	Urban	Business College	Fire Officer	HD/Vol War Work
16	Doreen	SA	1930	Methodist	Rural	Art School	Farmer	Vol Work
17	Bernice	SA	1930	Lutheran	Urban	Junior Secondary	Mail Officer	Home Duties
18	Mary	SA	1924	Methodist	Rural	Elementary	Farmer	HD/Farm Man/Vol War Work

No	Name	State	YOB	Religion	Environment	Ed Level	Father's Occ	Mother's Occ
19	Ann	SA	1928	Methodist	Rural	Elementary	Farmer	HD/Farm Management
20	Joan	SA	1930	Protestant	Urban	Teacher Training	Draughtsman	HD/Piano Teacher
21	Frances	SA	1927	-	Urban	Senior Secondary	Army Officer	-
22	Lucinda	SA	1931	Anglican	Rural	University	Medical Doctor (GP)	HD/Husband's Office Manager
23	Betty	SA	1926	Protestant	Rural	Comm. Sen. Secondary	Council Worker	HD/Dressmaker
24	Barbara	SA	1926	Bap/Meth	Urban	University	Prop Small Eng Firm	Housewife
25	Sheila	Vic	1926	R Catholic	Urban	P/T University	Accountant	Home Duties
26	Kit	NSW	1930	R Catholic	Rural	Senior Secondary	Sheep Farmer	HD/Farm Wife
27	Pat	WA	1924	Anglican	Urban	Secondary	Carpenter	Home Duties
28	Yvonne	WA	1933	Methodist	Rural	Secondary	RAAF	HD/Tailoress
29	Helen	WA	1930	Anglican	Rural	Tech Coll/Hairdressing	Farmer/Contractor	Home Duties
30	Anne	WA	1931	R Catholic	Rural	Elementary	Farmer/Pensioner	Nursing Sister (Dec'd)
31	Joy	WA	1929	Anglican	Urban	Teacher Training	Comm Traveller	Homemaker
32	Susan	WA	1926	Anglican	Urban	-	Comm Traveller	Homemaker
33	Teresa	NSW	1927	R Catholic	Urban	Business College	-	Home Duties
34	Joyce	NSW	1928	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	Sen. Customs Clerk	Home Duties
35	Roslyn	NSW	1925	-	Urban	Business College	A Working Man	-
36	Peggy	NSW	1926	Anglican	Rural	Business College	Man. Family Merino Stud	Home Duties
37	Joyce	NSW	1932	Anglican	Urban	Tech Coll/Dressmaking	Fitter/Engineer	Home Duties
38	Margaret	NSW	1920	Presbyterian	Urban	Sen Sec/Bus Coll	Engineer	Decd, Carer Aunt/Ex-teacher
40	Judith	NSW	1931	R Catholic	Urban	Senior Secondary	Steelworker	HD,(Four Male Lodgers)

No	Name	State	YOB	Religion	Environment	Ed Level	Father's Occ	Mother's Occ
41	Leonie	NSW	1931	Anglican	Urban	Sen Sec/Bus Coll	Dept of Ed Administrator	Home Duties
42	Marion	NSW	1927	Presbyterian	Urban	Teacher Training	Bus Run Prop	Home Duties
43	Therese	NSW	1929	R Catholic	Urban	Senior Secondary	Steelworker/Melter	Home Duties
44	Valerie	Vic	1933	Nil	Urban	Elementary	Driver	Home Duties
45	Patricia	Vic	1927	Protestant	Urban	School to Fourteen	Plasterer/Taxi Driver	Telephonist in Taxi Company
46	Joan	Vic	1931	Methodist	Rural	Teach Training/Uni	Methodist Minister	Fulltime, Unpaid Min's Wife
47	Barbara	Vic	1929	Anglican	Urban	Secondary	Clerk in Trustee's Office	HD/ARP Warden
48	Lucy	Vic	1927	Protestant	Rural	Secondary	Naval Tailor	Naval Tailor
49	Annabel	Vic	1924	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	Tel. Tech. Supervisor	Housewife
50	Patricia	Vic	1928	Presbyterian	Rural	Senior Secondary	Newspaper Editor	Newspaper Receptionist/Reporter
51	Barbara	Vic	1922	Protestant	Urban	Business College	Photog/Munitions Wker	Munitions Wker/HD
52	Nance	Vic	1930	R Catholic	Urban	Teacher Training	Pub Serv/RAAF	HD (Five Children)
53	Joan	Vic	1932(?)	Presbyterian	Rural/Urban	Incomplete Jun Sec	Blacksmith	Ill/Home Duties
54	Amelia	WA	1928	Undefined	Rural	University	Contractor/Heavy Mach	Home Duties
55	Janet	Vic	1927	Protestant	Urban	Dressmaking Apprent.	Clerk	Munitions Factory Canteen Worker
56	Raima	Vic	1926	Protestant	Urban	Business College	Carpenter	House Management
57	Irene	Vic	1929	Anglican	Urban	Business College	Office Manager	Home Duties
58	Helen	NSW	1926	Anglican	Urban	Business College	Forestry Officer	Home Duties
59	Betty	Vic	1931	R Catholic	Rural	Teacher Training	Farmer	HD/Country Seasonal Work
60	Caroline	Vic	1927	Protestant	Rural	Secondary	Railway Supervisor	HD/Vol War Work
61	Shirley	Vic	1927	Presbyterian	Rural	Elementary	Telephone Linesman	HD/No Electricity

No	Name	State	YOB	Religion	Environment	Ed Level	Father's Occ	Mother's Occ
62	Beth	Vic	1931	R Catholic	Urban	Secondary	Valuer: State Land Tax	HD (Six Children)
63	Dorothy	Vic	1930	Methodist	Rural	University	High School Teacher	Home Duties
64	Laurie	Vic	1929	R Catholic	Rural	Teacher Training	Farmer	Home Duties
65	Annita	Vic	1931	Anglican	Urban	Business College	Men's Hairdresser/RAAF	Home Duties
67	Eve	Vic	1932	Cath. Int.	Urban	Business College	Sen. Public Servant	Bding house Keeper/ Mun. Factory Worker
68	Fiona	SA	1930	Protestant	Urban	Secondary	Storekeeper/RAAF	Managed Store During War
69	Dorothy	Vic	1924	Protestant	Rural/Urban	Business College	Turbine Driver (Dec'd)	Dec'd/Cared for by a Widow
70	Lesley	Vic	1932	Nil	Rural	Teacher Training	Teacher	PO Agent/Factory Worker
71	Mary	Vic	1924	R Catholic	Urban	Secondary	Station Master	Home Duties
72	Shirley	Vic	1929	Anglican	Urban	Business College	Wharf Fire Fighting Instr.	Home Duties/Red Cross Vol Nursing
74	Constance	Vic	1929	Anglican	Rural/Urban	Elementary	Pound Keeper/Barman	HD/Pound Animal Carer
75	Elizabeth	Vic	1929	R Catholic	Rural	Senior Secondary	Postmaster	PO Telegraphist/Ex-Teacher
76	Beverley	Vic	1931	R Catholic	Urban	Business College	Baker	Home Duties
77	Diane	Vic	1930	Methodist	Urban	Teacher Training	Flour Miller	HD/Boarders
78	Freda	Vic/Qld	1923	Jewish non ob	Urban	Secondary	Bespoke Tailor	Home Duties
79	Patricia	NSW	1928	R Catholic	Rural	Senior secondary	Stock Agent (Dec'd)	Laundress/Florist
80	Kath	Vic	1931	Presbyterian	Rural	Secondary	Farmer	Managed House/Farm Wife
81	Rosemary	Vic	1930	Protestant	Urban	Incomplete Jun Sec	Truck Driver	Home Duties
83	Margaret	Vic	1923	Anglican	Rural	Ladies Tailoring Dip	Fitter/Machinist (Dec'd)	Whiteworker
84	Elizabeth	Vic	1933	-	Urban	-	PMG Worker	-
85	Valda	Vic	1928	Methodist	Urban	Cert. Comm Art	Railwayman/Soldier	HD/Disabled

No	Name	State	YOB	Religion	Environment	Ed Level	Father's Occ	Mother's Occ
86	Helen	Vic	1927	Anglican	Rural	Secondary	Deceased	Farmer
87	Ruth	Vic	1924	Anglican	Urban	Secondary	Landscape Gardener	HD/Vol Work
88	Eileen	Vic	1928	Methodist	Rural	Teacher Training	Pioneer Wheat Farmer	HD/Ex-Teacher
89	Shirley	Vic	1932	Anglican	Urban	Secondary	-	-
90	Edith	Vic	1926	Methodist	Rural	Nursing Training	Mixed Farmer	Farm Animal Management
91	Margaret	NSW	1926	Anglican	Urban	Teacher Training	Dentist	HD/Ex-Teacher
92	Pat	NSW	-	Anglican	Urban	-	Accountant	Home Duties
93	Rose	NSW	1928	-	Urban	-	Deceased	Clothing Shop Prop
94	Cecilia	NSW	1923	Protestant	Urban	Senior Secondary	Industrial Manager	Infants Teacher
95	Doris	NSW	1927	Anglican	Urban	Teacher Training	Building Trade	Home Duties
96	Joyce	NSW	-	Anglican	Urban	-	Blacksmith/oxywelder	Home Duties
97	Betty	NSW	1927	Methodist	Urban	Senior Secondary	Dyer (Hosiery)	Home Duties
98	Gwyneth	NSW	1927	Methodist	Rural	Nat. Art School Dip	Acct/Poultry Farmer	HD/Farm Animal Management
99	Ailsa	NSW	1926	Presbyterian	Urban	Teacher Training	Plasterer	Home Duties
100	Gwen	NSW	1925	Ang/Meth	Urban	Senior Secondary	Steelworker	Home Duties
101	Richmal	NSW	1927	-	Urban/Rural	Teacher Training	Separated	Promotions-level Teacher
103	Shirley	Tas	1930	Anglican	Rural	Elementary	Shearer/Labourer	Post Mistress
104	Joy	NSW	1932	Presbyterian	Urban	Business College	Mechanical Engineer	Home Duties
105	Barbara	NSW	1931	Presbyterian	Urban	Junior Secondary	Radio/Radar Expert	HD/Ex-Teacher
106	Shirley	Tas	1932	Congregat.	Urban	Secondary	Farmer	Dec'd/Cared for by Eldest Sister
107	Fay	Tas	1928	-	Urban	Junior Secondary	Tram Cond/Soldier	Dressmaker/Munitions Factory

No	Name	State	YOB	Religion	Environment	Ed Level	Father's Occ	Mother's Occ
108	Alison	Tas	1928	Methodist	Rural	Teacher Training	Farmer	Seamstress/Farm Work in War
109	Hilda	Tas	1922	Anglican	Urban	Business College	Retired Cashier	Retired Nurse
110	Miriam	Vic	1930	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	RAAF Carpenter	Vol War Work/HD
111	Joan	Tas	1929	Anglican	Rural	Secondary	Shopkeeper	Home Duties
112	Joyce	NSW	1926	Anglican	Urban	Teacher Training	Railways Blacksmith	Home Duties
113	Pat	NSW	1928	Anglican	Urban	Mech Drafting Cert	Importer	HD/Dressmaker
114	Eris	NSW	1926	Anglican	Urban	Sen Sec/Bus Coll	Pharmacist/Died Wartime	Home Duties
115	Kitty	Qld	1927	Methodist	Urban	University	The Town Engineer	HD/Helped with Boarders
116	Lorna	Vic	1932	Methodist	Urban	Nursing Training	Clerk	Home Duties
117	Jean	NSW	1925	R Catholic	Urban	Business College	Public Service Clerk	-
118	Diana	SA	1927	Anglican	Urban	Sen Sec/University	Clerk	Home Duties
119	Ellen	Tas	1923	Presbyterian	Urban	Secondary	Tram Driver	Semi-invalid/G'mother Ran House
121	Elizabeth	SA	1927	Anglican	Urban	University	RAAF	Home Duties
122	Thurza	NSW	1927	Anglican	Urban	Junior Secondary	Office Manager (Dec'd)	Highly-experienced Stenographer
123	Carol	NSW	1927	R Catholic	Urban	Secondary	Accountant	Home Duties
124	Millie	NSW	1927	Anglican	Urban	Senior Secondary	Sheet Metal Worker	Home Duties
125	Barbara	NSW	1924	Pres/Ang	Urban	NSW Lib School	Clerk	HD/Vol Work
126	Winifred	Vic	1926	Baptist	Urban	Teacher Training	Boot/Shoe Retailer	HD/Part Time Shop Assistant
127	Betty	Vic	1929	Methodist	Rural	Teacher Training	Educated Farmer	Teacher
129	Ann	NSW	1931	R Catholic	Rural	Teacher Training	Farmer/Post Master	Shadow Post Mistress
130	Elaine	Qld	1927	Anglican	Urban	Business College	Comm Traveller	HD/Home Dressmaker

No	Name	State	YOB	Religion	Environment	Ed Level	Father's Occ	Mother's Occ
131	Nancy	SA	1925	Meth/Ang	Urban	University	Medical Doctor (GP)	HD/Vol Work
132	Sheila	NSW	1924	Anglican	Urban/Rural	Teacher Training	Farmer	HD/Farm Wife/ Book Binder
133	Patricia	Vic	1931	R Catholic	Urban	Secondary	Storeman	Home Duties
134	Katharine	Vic	1931	Anglican	Urban	Secondary	Council Gardener	Home Duties
135	Jean	SA	1929	BaptistRural	Junior Secondary	Soldier	Home Duties	
136	Marsali	NSW	1928	Presbyterian	Urban	Business College	Prop Small Eng Co	HD/Family Business
137	Valda	Tas	1930	Presbyterian	Rural	Junior Secondary	Bushworker/Sawyer	HD (Seven Children)/Chronically Ill
138	Rosalie	Tas	1933	Presbyterian	Rural	Teacher Training	Bushworker/Sawyer	HD (Seven Children)/Chronically Ill
140	Ida	NSW	1920	-	Urban	Business College	Unknown By Her	Home Duties
141	Joan	Vic	1921	Protestant	Rural	Teacher Training	Pharmacist (Deed)	Home Duties, 'never went to work'.

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True Romances, UK edition, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945.

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For further details of contemporary books and magazines see individual citations in footnotes.