University of Roehampton London

DOCTORAL THESIS

Tending, mending, caring
constructions of motherhood in popular children's literature from 1945 to 1960

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Award date:
2020

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

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Tending, Mending, Caring:

Constructions of Motherhood in Popular Children's Literature from 1945 to 1960

by

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

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2019

Abstract

This thesis examines narrative constructions of motherhood in popular children's novels published in the U.K. between 1945 and 1960. The interrogation considers family fictions intended for readers of nine years onwards, alongside narratives of development aimed at a female teenage audience of up to sixteen years. It focusses on texts by women writers, most of whom have received little or no attention from scholars in the field of children's literature. In the case of two better-known authors (Enid Blyton and Noel Streatfeild) the thesis analyses elements of their work that have not previously been scrutinised. The study argues that the novels offer significant representations of maternity which are in dialogue with societal narratives on the changing role of mothers in post-war Britain. It proposes that, as widely-read texts that affirm and challenge received ideals of motherhood, these stories, conventional in form, are open to both compliant and resistant readings that would have played an active role in the creation of subject positions for the young reader. Combining evidence from socio-historic sources as well as literary texts, the research investigates the discursive engagement of the corpus in five substantive chapters, each indicative of shared thematic ideological preoccupations. Performative motherhood is examined through the lenses of the significance of home, domesticity and housework, so-called 'working mothers', maternal responsibility for feeding, and the maintenance of femininity. In bringing together such varied aspects of maternal discourse, the thesis makes innovative links between the history, sociology and children's fiction of motherhood in this period.

By rehabilitating formerly well-read, but now-neglected non-canonical works, this study contributes new perspectives within the academy for both children's literature and motherhood studies. It concludes by evaluating the extent to which maternal ideology of the long 1950s remains a potent force in mothering today, demonstrating that these texts still have resonance.

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Note on Referencing and Abbreviations

- In accordance with English and Creative Writing departmental guidelines, the referencing system follows MLA conventions.
- MLA does not require the citation of publication dates within the body of the thesis, but because of the historical nature of this investigation, publishing dates are noted following in-text citations, and also at the first mention of any title.
- The bibliography conforms to MLA guidelines, being arranged alphabetically by author's surname, and then by title where more than one work by the same author is listed.

- CWA — Chatto & Windus Archive
- HMG — Her Majesty's Government (H.M.Government as publisher)
- MOA — Mass Observation Archive
    - DR – Directive Replies
    - FR – File Reports
    - TC – Topic Collections
- ONS — Office for National Statistics

Acknowledgements

My primary thanks go to my supervisors, Director of Studies Dr Lisa Sainsbury, and Co-Supervisor Dr Alison Waller for their guidance, enthusiasm and unstinting support throughout this project. I am extremely grateful for the insights and experience they have so generously shared. I would also like to thank the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature and the English and Creative Writing Department at the University of Roehampton, who have fostered a welcoming environment and provided much-valued research facilities. My NCRCL PhD colleagues have supplied support, good advice and lots of laughs – thank you, Anne Malewski, Emily Corbett, Erica Gillingham, Nick Campbell, Sarah Pyke and Sinéad Moriarty. Special thanks to Karen Williams for nobly proof-reading a couple of my chapters and offering valuable encouragement.

Thanks are also due to my children, Hannah Waddilove and Joe Shapiro – quite apart from my immense love and pride in both of them, it is they who transformed me into a mother, and in that regard are partly responsible for the existence of this study. Huge appreciation for the invaluable support given by Hannah, who not only sustained me with inspiring post-its and down-to-earth advice throughout the project, but heroically read whole chapters and offered thoughtful comments at the final editing stage. Finally, it is virtually impossible to express my appreciation for the backing I have had from my husband Harry Shapiro during the PhD journey. His contribution ranges from surviving the early tantrums (mine) to ensuring that the later necessary supplies of wine and coffee were always available. In the midst of his own writing commitments, he has been a rock, and I could not have completed the thesis without his amazing tolerance and understanding. Harry – I guess this means that what follows is your fault?

Introduction
Tending, Mending and Caring

This is a mum. A mum has two very important jobs to do. One is to look after her children. The other is to do everything else as well.

Jason Hazeley *How it Works: The Mum* 2016

Women's psychological mothering role grew just as their biological role decreased. Women's mothering today stands out in its emotional intensity and in its centrality for women's lives and social definition.

Nancy Chodorow *The Reproduction of Mothering* 1978

Figure 1: Needle Case 1959
Photograph by author 2015

1. Conception

The needle case chosen by me as a Mother's Day present in 1959 (Fig 1) is still in use sixty years on, and it has acquired a significance in relation to this research project that is beyond its sentimental value as a *lieu de memoire*. The symbolism of pastoral sub-Greenaway imagery and mawkish verse – more reminiscent of the Victorian 'Angel in the House' than the lifestyle of the hard-working, self-employed mother I presented it to – was as inappropriate to the reality of motherhood in 1959 as it is in 2019. The idealised conception of motherhood it evokes was, nevertheless, an element of maternal discourse in the 1950s; these years were a time of marked change for women, especially within the family, and constructions of maternity were often contradictory. This thesis investigates motherhood in the era through the optic of once widely-read, but now largely-forgotten literary works for children. I analyse developments in U.K. maternal discourse during the period 1945 to 1960 by examining key texts and authors within their socio-historic context, in order to reveal their discursive engagement. The thesis is the first full-length critical study to specifically interrogate literary representations of motherhood in popular writing for a young audience in the post-war years.

The perception of the 1950s as a period of social stability and conservative family values (implicit in the nostalgic nineteenth-century imagery of Figure 1) is discussed by historian David Kynaston in *Family Britain* (2009) and by Deborah Philips and Ian Haywood in *Brave New Causes* (1998). It is a commonly-held vision, as demonstrated by the response to a newspaper excerpt from Kynaston's book, sub-titled "Imagine a country where doors are left unlocked, children play in the street and people really do look out for each other. Fantasy? No, Britain just 50 years ago" ('Vanished Britain' 2009). The piece inspired over a hundred online comments, the great majority of which eulogised the period: "Oh happy days! Of course they weren't perfect but by and large safer, happier and with a sense of security" (ibid). The construction of an assumed role for women, as housewives and mothers, is an aspect of this fantasy that may contribute to its pervasive appeal. In the above epigraph from *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), Nancy Chodorow articulates the beginning of the 'social definition' of women via motherhood in this period, when growing emphasis on their 'psychological mothering role' assumed it to be central for women's lives. As Philips and Haywood point out, the vision is realised largely through the creation of a historical narrative for the post-war period in which women happily relinquished their wartime jobs in favour of recreating the home, and embraced maternity to replace the population losses of the war. The reality was far more complex; while significant numbers of women did (not always willingly) give up work to become full-time wives and mothers, there was an upswing in the number of women in employment post-war compared to pre-war, an increasing proportion of whom were mothers combining the 'dual role' of paid work and motherhood. Jason Hazeley's 1950s pastiche *The Mum*, cited above, from the 'Ladybirds for Grown-Ups' series (2016), wryly observes that such mothers tended to be expected, alongside childcare responsibilities, to 'do everything else as well.' Achieving this ideal in the performance of motherhood featured across a range of

contemporaneous discourses on marriage, femininity, citizenship, employment and consumerism, all of which impacted changing patterns of maternity.

The myth of a cosily-complacent decade and a wholesale reversion to traditional domesticity for mothers is being challenged by scholars such as sociologist Lesley Hall (2013) and historian Claire Langhamer (2017), who argue that the 1950s can be seen as "a period of instability rather than unthinking smug conventionality" (Hall 2013:166). This project builds on such socio-historical research in demonstrating the discursive contribution of popular children's literature to constructions of motherhood. As Karen Coats observes, children's novels are a form of cultural script which can "act as paratexts that condition the practice of mothering. [They] encode powerful schemas that tell us how mothering should and should not be performed in the larger world" (2015:107-108). This proposition is fundamental to my project. Novels such as Shirley Darbyshire's 1954 *Young Nurse Carter* and its sequels establish the grounds of engagement; they address concerns that dominated contemporary maternal discourse, including marriage, quality in the performance of mothering, interaction between maternal responsibility and career goals, and the demands of domesticity. When the fictional Caroline Carter, qualified nurse and midwife, has a daughter, the reader is told that she "was happy, supremely happy, to give herself up to looking after the helpless little scrap so dependent on her for everything" (Meynell 1958:9). So far, the conventional image of the dedicated domestic mother prevails. Yet – only a few pages later – Caroline, missing her career, is musing that, "as far as she was concerned the business of devoting herself to the assistance of others by nursing would always be the most significant thing in her life" (27). Like many of the works in my corpus, this novel, while carefully avoiding too overt a challenge to received notions of idealised maternity, has a covert agenda. The career Caroline yearns for is a caring profession calling for qualities of 'devotion to the assistance of others' that were considered

inherent to motherhood; and moreover, the heroine is "*prepared to agree* that the *natural* fulfilment of any woman was to be happily married and to produce a family" (27 my emphases). The societal normativity of motherhood implied in the adjective 'natural' is nevertheless challenged by the uncertain compliance of Caroline's conditional 'prepared to agree', a linguistic referencing of the prevalent debate regarding maternal employment. So the political subtext of the book questions prevailing ideologies of mothering, while ostensibly adhering to them, and its subsequent narrative development, as Caroline returns to full-time nursing, clearly engages with the problematic issues facing mothers. Albeit fictitious, conflicts such as Caroline's over the differing demands of motherhood, marriage, work, and self-realisation were intrinsic to maternal discourse during the 1950s, permeating empirical accounts of the motherhood experience. My exploration of the discursive engagement of such constructions of mothers opens to debate the question of whether they sustain, inform or challenge the status quo. I argue that the popular, but currently-neglected, narratives on which I focus are important as, given the widespread contemporary readership of such texts, they would have had a significant role to play in negotiating models of maternity. With the acknowledged potential of popular fiction for identification and focalisation, the works in my corpus are, I assert, capable of imaginatively resolving contradictory images of motherhood to create divergent subjectivities for the reader. Furthermore, I speculate that these novels have a continuing relevance to later configurations of maternity.

2. Aims and Rationale

The central aim of my thesis is to interrogate narrative constructions of motherhood in a selection of popular novels for children written in English and published in the U.K. between 1945 and 1960. The rationale for this project encompasses both recovery and resistance. In bringing essential critical attention to an unexamined aspect of overlooked

texts I contribute original scholarship in the fields of children's literature and motherhood studies. The process of recovery of these forgotten texts has been informed by contextual research – investigating archival material, historical documentation and empirical accounts – in order effectively to historicise the literary works, and thus demonstrate how they engage in maternal discourse.

The chronological scope of the project changed at an early stage; having originally planned to investigate only 1950s publications, it became apparent that extending the temporal range was essential in order to offer a coherent and evidence-based picture of the socio-cultural landscape of motherhood and the discursive contribution of children's literature to a changing ideological climate of mothering. The increasing application of the term 'long 1950s' by social historians has endorsed this shift to a wider lens; first introduced by economist Werner Abelshauser in *Die Langen Funfziger Jahre* as an exploratory model for the years 1949-1966, it is now an accepted form of reference for the fifteen years after the end of World War Two. The cohesive nature of the period, particularly in regard to women's history, is inferred in the recent publication 'Revisioning the History of Girls and Women in Britain in the Long 1950s,' a 2017 Special Issue of the journal *Women's History Review* in which "decade boundaries are dismissed in favour of a longer-term perspective" (Tinkler 2017:1). While it does not address motherhood directly, this issue considers, among other topics, marriage, housework, domestic identity, paid work and femininity, all of which are relevant to my thesis. The changing role of women – interpreted in such varied arenae – is, I suggest, at its most sensitive and nuanced in representations of mothers, and I contend that popular fiction was a valuable participant in the ideological positioning of maternity at this time.

Of the texts that I discuss in detail, six were published before 1950; Enid Blyton's *The Family at Red-Roofs* (1945) and *Six Cousins at Mistletoe Farm* (1948),

Gwendoline Courtney's *Sally's Family* (1946) and *Stepmother* (1948), and Noel Streatfeild's *Curtain Up* (1945) and *The Painted Garden* (1949). Each contains prominent maternal constructions that illuminate the circumstances of their cultural production, while also suggesting varied subjectivities for mothers and families. The ultra-conventional Mrs Jackson in Blyton's 1945 text is counterpointed to a feistily independent co-mother, housekeeper Jenny Wren, who takes on the maternal role when her employer becomes ill, while Courtney's 1946 work postulates a radical distributed style of mothering shared across the family group. The titles I examine published after 1950 also contain varying representations that confirm, conform to or challenge hegemonic patterns of maternity. The two latest-published works, Louise Cochrane's *Anne in Electronics* and Joan Lllewelyn Owens' *Diana Seton: Veterinary Student*, issued in 1960, reflect the significant changes that had taken place in expectations of women and work during the long 1950s and utilise narrative to examine the complex interface between employment and motherhood that remained (and remains) a predicament for both the protagonists and the juvenile reader.

Publishing for young readers in the 1950s is described in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* as "marked by the erroneous popularity of mediocre novelists who could write dozens of books with apparent ease" (Hettinga 1996:vii). This thesis challenges the designation of the writers in my corpus as '*erroneously*-popular' in my assessment of their importance, despite previously-minimal, or, in some cases, no extant critical notice. Thus it is situated within the developing sphere of twenty-first-century academic attention to the rehabilitation of popular literature for both adults and children, initiated in David Rudd's 2000 study of Blyton and Nicola Humble's 2001 analysis of the feminine middlebrow novel. Mabel Esther Allan, Gwendoline Courtney and Alice Lunt were, alongside Blyton and Streatfeild, highly successful in their day, but their work has been sidelined by the academy. Their names appear rarely (if at all) in

overviews of twentieth-century children's authors, even those by commentators such as Victor Watson (2000) or Dennis Butts (2010), who focus on popular writers. Allan, who published fifty-three novels between 1948 and 1960, and one hundred and seventy titles over a writing career spanning fifty years,[1] has a thirty-word entry in Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard's first edition of the *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (1984), unchanged in Daniel Hahn's 2015 second edition. Courtney and Lunt do not appear at all. Elizabeth Poynter's superficial discussion of Courtney's adventure series in *You Girls Stay Here* (2018) is the only academic consideration of this author, but excludes her family stories. While there is some online attention to the work of Courtney and Lunt, it is minimal, appearing in occasional fan posts and on reading-recommendation sites, such as Goodreads, Furrowed Middlebrow and the indefatigable Girls Gone By Publishers.[2] The scholarly attention paid to Streatfeild largely focusses on her work in the career novel genre, with a particular emphasis on *Ballet Shoes* (1936). There has been little notice of her domestic stories, apart from Lois Kuznet's brief article in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (1985) and Nancy Huse's 1994 study, which is detailed, but takes a descriptive rather than a literary analytical approach. Critical consideration of Blyton is much more extensive, and Rudd's works of scholarly appraisal (see Bibliography) pay attention to her popular appeal; his full-length *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature* (2000) is notable for its in-depth analysis. However, Rudd, along with other scholars, focusses on Blyton's adventure, school story and 'Noddy' series rather than family fictions.[3] So the domestic novels that I cite as key texts in this study are largely disregarded, with the exception of *The Six Bad Boys* (1951). This title is discussed by a limited number of critics, and Rudd refers to it briefly in footnotes.

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[1] Source: *Mabel Esther Allan Papers* in the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection.
[2] *GGBP* have reprinted several Courtney titles, so presumably there is still popular demand. Perusal of blogposts and online reviews show that not all of this is fuelled by the nostalgia of the ageing reader.
[3] Rudd offers detailed analysis of 'Famous Five', 'Malory Towers' and 'Noddy' titles.

Alongside close analysis of works by these individual authors, I offer a case-study of the career novel, a short-lived genre depicting the protagonists' progress in a specific field of work, that is highly relevant to the maternal focus of this thesis. Both Streatfeild and Allan contributed to it, and Streatfeild is credited with initiating it in *Ballet Shoes*. The genre has suffered similar critical neglect to other works in my corpus; there is no mention of it in Rudd's 2010 *Routledge Companion to Children's Literature* or Bernice Cullinan's earlier *Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. (1984). The thirty-three chapters of the 'Forms and Genres' section in Peter Hunt's extensive 2004 *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* contain only a five-word sub-clause, "and career stories in general", in a sentence on ballet stories (534). Critical attention that has appeared typically has a socio-historic remit, such as the 1999 article by Evelyn Kerslake and Janine Liladhar, and the informative 2005 research of Stephanie Spencer, although Philips and Haywood do discuss the genre from a wider perspective in *Brave New Causes*. In offering a literary approach to the career novel and a new analytic perspective on better-known writers such as Blyton and Streatfeild, as well as bringing critical attention to their little-known contemporaries, my research excavates a specific canon of neglected children's fiction, recovering it from obscurity to create new knowledge in the discipline of children's literature studies.

In 'Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors' Rudine Sims Bishop attests to the ability of fiction to "offer views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange", and these disregarded texts certainly offer windows to the reality of family life in a time of social upheaval during which the familiar was under challenge (1990:1). My parallel readings of socio-cultural texts as diverse as government publications, childcare manuals, popular lifestyle magazines and Mass Observation reports has informed my interpretation of the work of primary authors, enabling me to illuminate

the interface between fictional representation, maternal discourse and received ideals of motherhood. This strategy affords a firm basis for interrogation of the relationship between contemporaneous versions of the 'real or imagined' worlds the various texts represent. While owing a debt to the critical approach of New Historicism, particularly the model outlined by Mitzi Myers in 'Missed Opportunities and Critical Malpractice', since I do seek to "*integrate* text and socio-historic context" in my re-situation of the children's works I explore, this research diverges from New Historicism in that it privileges the literary text over cultural archive material (1988:42). The location of popular fictions representing motherhood into a social context has served to confirm the importance of reading such texts as a means of accessing the past and uncovering new understandings of discourses of maternity at this significant time for western cultural development.

Popular fiction is often, as Humble points out in *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel*, assumed to be "too easy, too insular, too smug" in its representation of reality, tending towards a conservative stance that is complicit with the hegemonic power structures of society (2001:1). Humble challenges this perspective in her analysis of adult fiction, and the convention that children's literature is a tool for the promotion of conformity is similarly in question. Views such as those of scholar Jacqueline Rose, who asserted in *The Case of Peter Pan* (1984) that the child reader is objectified by adult-created children's books, are under challenge. More recently, Ann Alston avers that children's books are "chronically conventional" since, "even in the more modern texts, the traditional family is depicted as desirable" (2008:26). However, others have focussed on the subversive nature of such texts; Kimberley Reynolds, for example, in *Radical Children's Literature* (2007) and *Left Out* (2016) offers compelling arguments for the transformative potential of children's fiction to shape, rather than perpetuate, the norms of society that produce it. An important proposition of this thesis is that my

corpus, while reflecting and in some cases consolidating traditional maternal discourse, also resists its received positions, and in doing so incorporates overt and covert critiques of the motherhood ideal promulgated in extra-textual official and informal sources. Judith Fetterley declares in *The Resisting Reader* that "feminist criticism is […] characterised by a resistance to codification", and in bringing a necessary critical perspective to the conventional, alternative, and sometimes radical constructions of motherhood in my corpus, I show that these popular works for children are far from being *chronically* conventional (1978:vii-viii). Rather, they have the potential to become a tool of resistance in subverting the dominant ideology of maternity, and allowing readers to engage with their own future life-choices.

3. Theoretical and Contextual Perspectives

Motherhood, according to the 2018 MIRCI Conference,[4] is the unfinished business of feminism, and certainly the maternal role remains a complex and contested issue in feminist research as well as in public discussion. My theoretical approach to the corpus has been underpinned by my own philosophical affiliation to aspects of feminist doctrine; indeed the chosen territory of this investigation – the re-evaluation of a range of texts written by female authors[5] that were largely read by female readers – contains an implicit ideological position. While patriarchal attitudes feature in the corpus, my perspective foregrounds the new mode of 'matricentric feminism', a term coined by Andrea O'Reilly (2016), who argues that the position of mothers should be the starting point for female empowerment. In my reading of feminist theoreticians, I have therefore concentrated on those who specifically address the maternal subject, and who also allow for an historical perspective. The word 'mother' is one of the oldest in the English language, but the term 'motherhood' is relatively new; according to the *Oxford English*

[4] Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI).

[5] With three exceptions; John Cross, Robin Denniston and Laurence Meynell, who between them wrote nine girls' career novels, although a female pseudonym was used for four of these titles. See Appendix 1.

Dictionary it only emerged as a concept (rather than a mere statement of fact) in Victorian times, with phrases such as 'the warm sun of motherhood' (1869) and 'true motherhood' (1875). In *Inventing Motherhood: the Consequences of an Ideal*, Ann Dally concludes from this etymology that "there have always been mothers, but motherhood was invented. Each subsequent age and society has defined it in its own terms and imposed its own restrictions and expectations on mothers" (1982:17).

Julia Kristeva's seminal 1977 essay on motherhood and femininity, 'Stabat Mater', combines a study of the cult of the Virgin Mary with personal observations on her own experience of maternity, and highlights the need for a new representation of motherhood, both in bodily (post-virginal) and social (counter-patriarchal) terms. Many of the fictional works I explore were published twenty or more years before 'Stabat Mater', but were already offering counter-hegemonic representations of the maternal role, as later advocated by Kristeva, in that they engage with "the quest of women […] for an appropriate fulfilment" (1977:184). In order to ground my analysis in a specific historical and cultural context, and bearing in mind Dally's observation on the chronological fluidity of motherhood interpretations, I have chosen to prioritise the study of contemporaneous maternal theorists alongside later work by writers such as Adrienne Rich and Nancy Chodorow. This approach allows me to demonstrate effectively how fictional representations engage with prevalent maternal discourse. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work* (1956) by the less-well-known Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein each pay specific attention to motherhood, and such works, published at the end of the period of 'first-wave' feminism, have afforded crucial insights into the climate of production of my primary texts.

The years following World War Two in the U.K. could, says Dally, "be described as the age of idealisation of motherhood" (1982:92). Such idealisation was

not new – it began in the nineteenth century and is explored in scholarly works on the Victorian family such as Leonore Davidoff's *The Family Story 1830-1960* (1999) and Elizabeth Thiel's *The Fantasy of Family* (2008). However, changing economic and political conditions after 1945 gave official sanction to the "extreme privatisation of motherhood [and] glorification" of the maternal role that characterised the post-war era (Dally 1982:150). William Beveridge, the social architect of the welfare state, did not subscribe to the privatisation discourse (in fact, he campaigned in the 1948 *Voluntary Action* for communal solutions to the mundane tasks done by mothers, such as house-cleaning and laundry), but was influential in constructing an idealistic vision of motherhood. Mothers, he declared in his blueprint for the development of post-war society, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (The Beveridge Report), are charged with "ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world" (HMG 1942:52). Beveridge's vision, which informed political and social opinion after the war, was instrumental in creating a climate in which mothers were required to accept responsibility for the reproduction, both literally and ideologically, of the 'race' and of British cultural ideals for future generations. This noble version of the maternal role, while pervasive, was challenged by contemporaneous social commentators, most famously by Beauvoir, and also by Myrdal and Klein. Beauvoir (who chose not to mother) characterised motherhood as "a strange mixture of narcissism, altruism, idle daydreaming, sincerity, bad faith, devotion and cynicism" (1949:528). In contradiction of a key position in the philosophy of idealisation, that motherhood was the highest pinnacle of achievement for women, she declared that maternity was "not enough [...] to crown a woman's life" (534). While Myrdal and Klein subscribed to the prioritisation of mothering in the case of young children, they specifically attack the contemporary idealisation of motherhood as likely to produce unhealthily over-protective mothers who cause psychological damage to children. The

over-arching proposition of *Women's Two Roles* is that motherhood constitutes only part of a woman's life, and other aspects such as employment and citizenship – which are significant preoccupations in my corpus – should predominate at different life-stages.

The second wave of feminism, that emerged during the 1960s and was influential throughout the following two decades, was characterised by its focus on the politics of reproduction, both in the bodily sense and, with its mantra of 'the personal is political,' in the relationship of reproduction to issues of production. Studies of the maternal experience by second-wave feminist writers Adrienne Rich, Judith Arcana and Nancy Chodorow characterised the idealisation of motherhood as a basis for the maintenance of male authority – social, economic and political – that is essential to patriarchy. Rich, who offers a powerful account of her own experience of maternity in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, distinguishes between two meanings of the term motherhood; institutional and personal. The "institution of motherhood is not", she asserts "identical with bearing and caring for children", and moreover, the "twentieth-century ideal of the mother and children immured together in the home [and] the specialisation of motherhood for women [...] is a late-arrived development in human history (1977:42/46). Her distinction between individual motherhood, "the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children", and institutional motherhood, which "aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control" leads her to conclude that "the woman's body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected" (55). Arcana's *Every Mother's Son* focusses on a psychological interpretation of motherhood, and links this to similar socio-economic consequences, claiming that since men "no matter how sympathetic [...] have never been mothers [...] they are, [as] adult men, culturally empowered to dominate us" (1983:97). She declares in *Our Mothers' Daughters* (1981)

that problematic relationships between mother and child are the likely results of such domination, but cannot be blamed on the mother, since they are a product of maternal oppression and entrapment within the patriarchal system. While my focus is on the matriarchal rather than the patriarchy, I have used the work of these later feminist theorists to explicate the conflicted relationships between mother and child and mother and society that appear in the novels.

Chodorow's extensive study into *The Reproduction of Mothering*, one of the most significant works on the entwinement of psychological and sociological aspects of mothering, links the individual psychic experience and subjectivity of mothers to the role of maternity in a gendered society. Motherhood, in her view, is reproduced both at the level of social organisation and at the level of personal development by a complex system that depends on the domestic sphere of the family as the institution within which the economic and social requirements of society are met. Thus:

> The reproduction of women's mothering is the basis for the reproduction of women's location and responsibilities in the domestic sphere. [...] Women in their domestic role as houseworkers reconstitute themselves physically on a daily basis and reproduce themselves as mothers, emotionally and psychologically, in the next generation. They thus contribute to the perpetuation of their own social roles and position in the hierarchy of gender.
> (1999:208-9).

In a discussion of 'The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother', Chodorow and Susan Contratto assert that the fantasy of perfectibility has contributed to societal oppression of women, while also "spawning a recurrent tendency to blame the mother" (1989:80). Citing nineteenth-century maternal ideology and post-Freudian theory, they argue that such blame and idealisation of mothers leads to a deterministic view of motherhood which is damaging to both mother and child.

The research of such twentieth-century maternal theorists informs my analysis, since the vision of the 'ideal mother' and the practice of 'mother-blaming' is very evident in the fictional constructions and is intrinsically linked to their ideological

function. When Mr Berkeley deserts his family in *The Six Bad Boys*, for instance, it is not he, but the "discontented Mrs Berkeley" who is apparently at fault (Blyton 1951:20). Similarly in *White Boots* (1951) Aunt Claudia, the maternal villain of the piece, is held directly responsible for all her niece's problems. The conflicted 'unhealthy' maternalism predicted under patriarchy by Myrdal, Klein and Arcana is evident in bullying Aunt Millicent of *The Vine-Clad Hill* (1956), who seriously undermines her daughter's self-esteem, and in the narrow possessiveness of Dora's mother in *Young Nurse Carter*, who "had not encouraged her or helped her" to become independent (Darbyshire 1954:106).

More recent scholarship on female embodiment has provided an alternative theoretical lens to address the motherhood experience, and my discussion in 'Chapter Five: Body' utilises theories of twenty-first-century feminist philosophers such as Iris Marion Young and Susan Bordo. In 'Throwing Like a Girl', the titular essay of *On Female Body Experience* (2005), Young references Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir to discuss femininity from a phenomenological perspective. Bordo's earlier article, 'The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity', designates the body as cultural metaphor, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault to argue that the female body is a "*practical*, direct locus of social control" (1997:90). Such ideas inform my consideration of the maternal body and its relation to the feminine in the fictional construction of maternal subjectivities. Chodorow's description in *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* of the "ambivalence about maternal bodies [experienced by] many women, both as mothers and as daughters or would-be mothers" is hinted at throughout my corpus, but, as the investigation reveals, novels for older readers (in the career genre and Mabel Esther Allan's work) offer a particular challenge to the embodiment of social control described by Bordo (1989:91). Paradoxically, given the constraints of 1950s fashion and contemporary assumptions of normative femininity –

exemplified in the tight waists and billowing skirts of Dior's 'New Look' – this challenge is most evident in the protagonists' appropriation of bodily adornment as a means of empowerment. The heroines *use* the body to exploit the cultural capital of femininity in pursuit of life goals which subvert received ideals of motherhood and the female role.

Analysis of the values encoded within the texts has been further informed by the work of Bourdieu, Roland Barthes and Louis Althusser on the social transmission of ideology. In *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984) Bourdieu deploys the term 'habitus' to encapsulate ways in which individuals are socially positioned, a concept that proves fruitful for my discussion of maternity in relation to class aspirations. Barthes demonstrates in *Mythologies* (1957) that food consumption is infallibly linked to nationality and social identity, a point illustrated in *Six Cousins Again* when Rose Longfield's upper-middle-class attitudes, evident in her "dainty" meal-tables and "plates with lace mats on", are compared unfavourably to the more plebeian spreads of her nemesis Aunt Linnie, served on a "spotted cloth […] with never a lace mat to grace them" (1950:22-3). In the 'Six Cousins' series, *White Boots* and *Those Dreadful Children* (1949), the habitus constructed by the fictional mothers regarding feeding practices, examined in 'Chapter Four: Food', establishes the dining-table as a metaphor for class.

Althusser's use of the term "interpellation" in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' to describe the process by which ideology constitutes individuals as "(free) subjects" who, being "hailed" by ideology, then "freely accept [their] subjection", is especially relevant to the creation of a maternal identity, in the fictional narratives and in the real world they purportedly represent (1971:118/123). His account of how a person becomes a self-conscious subject posits the theory that institutions such as family provide the developing subject with categories within which she can recognise

herself. As institutions which do not, on the whole, "function by violence" (unlike official units of state power, such as the police or the courts, which Althusser designates Repressive State Apparatus), the family, the education system, communications and literature – all of which I examine in the contextualisation of my corpus – constitute Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) that tend to operate within the private domain and, primarily, "function by ideology" (97). Motherhood itself, as an institution which exerts power through indoctrination rather than force can, I argue, be designated a *gendered* ISA, and both my maternal protagonists and their daughters demonstrate its workings. It is, according to Althusser:

> a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognise* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the "still small voice of conscience"): "That's obvious! That's right! That's true!"
>
> (116).

Beyond the effects of such interpellation on personal identity, it is, Althusser states, a characteristic of ideology to be "endowed with a structure and a functioning such as to make it […] an *omni-historical* reality, in the sense in which that structure and functioning are immutable" (108). The strength of the hegemony of idealised 1950s motherhood lay in the assumption that its maternal values were ahistorical and thus immutable, and in the fact that these values were concealed under the guise of 'obviousnesses'. This hegemonic structure is represented, but also challenged in the novels. Configurations of the conventional maternal ideal, such as Streatfeild's Cathy Bell or Blyton's Linnie Longfield, are depicted engrossed in the household tasks of cleaning and preparing meals for their families, apparently 'freely accepting subjection'. Nevertheless, the simultaneous engagement of these texts in critiques of the domestic ideal is evident in the delineation of the problems such characters encounter, and through the representation of their daughters. The ideological status quo is called into question in undomesticated Jane Bell and Jane Longfield who are in the process of

constructing an adult identity beyond the maternal subject. As these young protagonists are focalising characters, their response to interpellation by prevailing ideology is indicative of the challenge the texts can offer to received maternal values.

My discussion also utilises the ideas of Peter Hollindale and John Stephens regarding the operation of ideology in children's literature. Hollindale's long-established definition of the workings of "explicit" and "passive" ideologies in his 1988 article 'Ideology and the Children's Book' remains valid, and has proved useful in detecting the "unexamined assumptions" contained within my texts, which, as both these critics agree, are likely to be all the more powerful in effect since they consist of the "widely *shared* values" that are taken for granted in society – more obviousnesses (1988:12-13). Hollindale posits three levels at which ideology functions in children's literature: the "intended surface ideology" that reveals "explicit social, political or moral beliefs of the individual writer", actively seeking to influence the reader; a "passive ideology" that reflects the "unexamined assumptions" of writer and society; and the "organic ideology" rooted in language through which writers for children are "transmitters [of] the worlds they share" (10-15). Such assumptions reflect the "world its author lives in" and their impact arises from the fact that it is also, of course, the same world inhabited by the implied, and actual, child reader (15). Hollindale's description of the ways in which ideology is inseparable from language is a thesis developed in more detail by Stephens in his seminal 1992 study of *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. Acknowledging Hollindale's early contribution to the exploration of ideology in children's literature, Stephens' influential work extends this examination through the wider areas of linguistic and narrative theory, including the construction of subject positions for the reader. The "ideological struggle" according to Stephens "pre-eminently takes place in language", a proposition that leads him to

consider the relevance of narratological techniques to the discourse of children's texts (1992:10-11).

My own exemplification of the operation of ideology in my corpus is further informed by attention to the narratological components of mode, point of view, and narrating voice explored by literary critics Gerard Genette and Mieke Bal. Of the five main concepts discussed by Genette in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1988) – frequency; voice; mood; order; duration – it is the utilisation of narrative techniques such as focalisation, and 'voice' (who speaks, and from where), that have proved particularly relevant for my analysis. Genette distinguishes between narrative function, which is fundamental, and narrative perspective, the point of view adopted by the narrator, which he designates 'focalisation', defining this as "a restriction of 'field' […] that is, a selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called omniscience" (1988:74). In her 2017 edition of *Narratology* Bal refines this proposition to assert that when a focaliser coincides with a character, the reader "will, in principle, be inclined to accept the vision presented by that character" (2017:104). While the narrative voice in my texts varies from the first-person character-narrator common to the books for older readers, such as those of Allan, to the third-person authorial narration of Blyton, Courtney and Streatfeild's work, it is notable that focalising *characters* appear throughout the corpus. In terms of Genettian narratology, they perform both a "testimonial function", affirming the truth of the events in the story, and an "ideological function", emphasising the values expressed in the text (1988:130-131). Focaliser protagonists such as Streatfeild's irrepressible Ginnie in *The Bell Family* (1954) and Allan's independent Phillipa of *The Vine-Clad Hill*, both drive the plot and reflect on the outcome of the action, operating as Bal theorises in that they 'speak to' the implied reader, either directly (Phillipa) or indirectly (Ginnie), offering her a range of possible subject positions. Focalisation is, according to Stephens, "a key part of the

outworking of ideology", and I show the use of this narratological technique as a fundamental device for acculturating the reader that appears throughout the corpus (1992:67).

In negotiating my investigation, I have found Foucault's concept of discourse as the embodiment of power relations a useful lens for excavating the power issues played out in relation to motherhood. Foucault's exploration of the microphysics of power in *Power/Knowledge* (1980), which I discuss in the 'Home' and 'Food' chapters, is especially relevant to the position of mothers. In an era when the conflicting demands of domesticity, childcare, citizenship and employment for mothers were matters of wide debate, maternal access to power is demonstrated in the texts at both micro and macro levels, from Cathy Bell's insistence on table-manners and decisions as to who will wash-up in *The Bell Family* to Anne White's engagement in the country's scientific future in the technical career novel *Anne in Electronics*. Foucault's notion of 'biopower' developed in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), a regime in which subjects regulate their own behaviour without being subject to force, is applied in the discussion of 'Chapter Five: Body'. At a physiological level, Foucault argues, the growth of consumer culture brought "a new mode of investment [in the body] which presents itself in the form of control by stimulation. [...] Be slim, good-looking, tanned" (1988:57). His theory of how power operates is illuminating in revealing the impact of mothers willingly regulating their own "conduct, and way of being" in line with prevalent social values, the pursuit of acceptably 'feminine' bodies, and the further inculcation of such self-regulatory behaviour in their offspring (18). Daughters are encouraged to be "groomed physically" in order to succeed in the adult world (Lewis 1955:9). The young protagonists' manipulation of such corporeal standards in pursuit of their own identity is an indicator of what Foucault describes in *The History of Sexuality* as "'reverse' discourse" (1976:101). In my corpus, reverse discourse is apparent in the resistance

many of the texts offer to prevailing systems of power and social control, whilst still functioning within and exploiting such contexts. Heroines such as engineering Anne and vet Diana, working in male-oriented environments, deploy existing customs as indicators of assertion rather than submission, determined to maintain femininity while proving "every bit as efficient as a man" (Owens 1960:61). My discussion also references more recent explorations of the operation of power in children's literature by Clementine Beauvais (2013 and 2015), utilising aspects of her theoretical approach to demonstrate how the career novels, in particular, empower the reader in construction of an independent future identity. In a broader sense, Foucault's emphasis in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* on the re-examination of interstitial literary texts, that have "never acquired the status of an oeuvre", alongside non-literary representations, affirms the validity of my theoretical approach (1972:136). By investigating peripheral texts including newspapers, lifestyle magazines such as *Woman* and radio broadcasts such as *Woman's Hour*, this thesis effectively locates the "everyday transient writing" of my corpus within the wider arena of its production and consumption (136).

That arena was defined by the recent establishment of the welfare state, and the ensuing climate of social change informs constructions of motherhood in the corpus. I contend that these maternal representations can offer relevant and sometimes radical perspectives towards issues surrounding motherhood that are topics of intense debate in the cultural texts. Children's literature, as Reynolds (2007 and 2016) and Julia Mickenberg (2011) point out, can be radical in content and/or form, and while the novels I discuss are conventional in form, they nevertheless contain content that questions as well as confirms social norms. Apart from the career novels, which *were* conceived with a reformist agenda, the literary texts are not consciously political, being written with intention to entertain, rather than educate or inform the reader. However, radicalism in children's literature, defined by Mickenberg and Philip Nel as that which

can “challenge the status quo and promote social justice, [offering] subtle critiques of the existing social order”, does appear in such unexpected guises (2011:445). Since many of the narratives I examine contain transformative role models for mothering that do challenge the status quo, and thus could, as I argue, inspire societal and cultural change, it is in this sense that the term radical is used throughout the study.

The socio-cultural context, summarised below, is important for my investigation since it is now generally accepted that motherhood (rather than the physiological and psychological aspects of mother*ing*) as a construct that has evolved across time, has been inevitably influenced by economic, religious and political trends. Recognising that historical investigation is as much a study of the time in which it is conducted as the time it takes as its object, I have considered recent re-appraisals of post-war motherhood by twenty-first-century scholars, such as Dolly Wilson (2006) and Claire Langhamer (2017) on employed mothers, and Caitriona Beaumont (2013) on domesticity, in order to ensure that this account is grounded in robust evidence. Dally’s concept of the ‘invention’ of motherhood, rooted in U.K.-based historical and social research, is reinforced in the more recent focus on cross-cultural studies by maternal scholars such as Lisa Baraitser in *Maternal Encounters* (2009) and Gill Rye, whose 2018 edited collection *Motherhood in Literature and Culture* considers European interdisciplinary perspectives on maternity in the forms of fiction, poetry, film and personal reminiscence. The specific engagement of children’s literature scholars is evident in a 2015 Special Issue of *Children’s Literature in Education* entitled ‘Mothering in Children’s and Young Adult Literature’, although this collection does not address the popular writers of my corpus. Motherhood practices are understood to be determined not merely by the biological laws of childbearing and breastfeeding, but by conventions that are “contextualised within social, historical and cultural frameworks” (Reynolds 2009:1). This proposition, important in my study, foregrounds ideologies of motherhood

rather than the basic physiological aspects of mothering, which do not (with one exception) appear in my corpus. Pregnancy and childbirth are great unmentionables, except for the unusual case of Caroline Carter (discussed in 'Chapter Five: Body'), and while feeding of children is an important ideological tool in the construction of fictional mothers (examined in 'Chapter Four: Food'), lactation is not represented. Despite such exclusions, which are not untypical for contemporaneous children's fiction given the age of the implied reader and the literary conventions of the era, the value of the textual representations of maternity across the corpus lies in their ability to shed light on conflicts in 1950s constructions of motherhood. The maternal, as Rye points out, "signals a site of potent intersection between […] psychosocial practices and cultural representations," and in the following section I outline aspects of the social climate of the post-war years in order to establish the cultural site of my corpus (2018:8).

4. Socio-Historic Context

In the aftermath of an inclusive war with its direct impact on domestic as well as military populations, the social, economic and political situation in the U.K. during the long 1950s created fertile conditions for a reconsideration of motherhood, and the examination of received positions that had been little questioned previously. Stable families were considered crucial to post-war reconstruction, and restoration of the pre-war ideological investment in the family, based on the centrality of the mother's role in the home, was a critical aspect of government policy that was regarded as an effective route to national consensus. However, the wider horizons experienced by the contribution of women (including mothers) to the war effort, a desperate financial crisis (Britain was virtually bankrupt in 1945), and social changes within the family were to mitigate against full-scale acceptance of a straightforward return to domesticated maternity.

The landslide victory of the Labour Party in 1945 heralded an era of social change that, it was hoped, would create a new and just society. The establishment of the Welfare State,[6] on the lines established in the Beveridge Report, with the passing of the Butler Education Act (1944), the Family Allowances Act (1945), the National Health Service Act (1946), the National Insurance Acts (1946), the Town Planning and New Towns Acts (1947) and the National Assistance Act (1948), was intended to provide the population with security 'from cradle to grave', eliminate poverty and reduce social injustice based on class distinctions. The years from 1945 to 1951 did witness remarkable social gains; 900,000 new homes were built, a free health service was established, old-age pensions and sickness benefits became widely available, and state education was provided for every child up to the age of fifteen.

However, wartime victory was succeeded in the U.K. by a period of extreme economic austerity; partly the result of accumulated war debts and extensive damage to the physical infrastructure of the country, this was also a continuation of economic decline that had begun pre-war and was accelerated by the post-war loss of empire and waning international power. The period of austerity, which lasted into the early 1950s, was marked by a shortage of material goods and the imposition of rationing even more stringent than during wartime. Such social conditions were especially demanding for mothers, and the consequences for their role as homemakers and food providers, evident in the work of Courtney and Streatfeild in particular, is explored here through the maternal representations of *Curtain Up*, *Sally's Family* and *The Bell Family*.

During the war years many women had postponed childbirth, and, on a personal level, it was inevitable that women (and men) would want to start families after the disruptions of war. Politically it was also deemed a national priority, necessary to replace population loss, and mothers were (obviously) crucial to the project. The

[6] A term originally coined by Alfred Zimmern as a deliberate contrast to Hitler's concept of the 'warfare state'.

prevailing pronatalism, subject to detailed analysis in Denise Riley's *War in the Nursery* (1983), had two purposes; alongside her reproductive role, the stabilising presence of a home-based mother, was felt to be crucial to a unified national consensus. However, there were contradictions in this official discourse of maternity; there was a serious shortage of labour for post-war reconstruction, and archive sources demonstrate that, while promoting ideals of home-centred motherhood, the state was simultaneously in "pursuit of women" to enter the workplace (Crofts 1986:33). Despite its focus on family and domesticity, evident in the abolition of central funding for nurseries and the official refusal to prioritise childcare places for working mothers, economic imperatives in industries such as transport and textiles required the government to encourage mothers, especially of school-aged children, to return to the labour force during the early post-war years. The *Economic Survey* for 1947, entitled *The Battle for Output*, urges women to "actively help in the national effort" and employers to "adjust their conditions of work to suit […] the convenience of women with household responsibilities" (HMG 1947:39). Riley speculates that the burden of domestic labour for mothers, exacerbated in early post-war years by rationing, queuing, and lack of domestic technology, was one factor influencing mothers to avoid the option of full-time jobs. Certainly the vast majority of employed mothers worked part-time; the percentage of part-time women workers rose from 12% in 1951 to 26% in 1961 (Hakim 1979:4). Nevertheless the post-war retreat into domesticity still left more women out at work than had been the case before 1939, and census statistics show that this increase is largely accounted for by the participation of married women, whose employment rates went up from 21% in 1951 to 32% in 1961 (ONS). So, despite the gendered division of unpaid domestic work and the unavailability of childcare, the 1950s were to become a crucial period for reassessing expectations of mothers and employment, a societal preoccupation that is the key focus of 'Chapter Three: Money'.

My corpus reflects the tensions within the family and society that arose from this reassessment, and the ambivalence it aroused in mothers. Olivia Johnson in *White Boots* yearns for work to contribute economically to her poverty-stricken household, but prioritises domestic duty; “I see advertisements for people wanted, but they always seem to be wanted at the same time I’m wanted here” (Streatfeild 1951:16). In *The Six Bad Boys* Blyton engages directly with the home versus work aspect of maternal discourse in a vitriolic condemnation of the working mother. While the novels effectively reveal societal anxiety engendered by the increase in maternal employment, they also, I argue, offer resistance to such established positions in constructing positive alternative models of motherhood. Sue Barton, as frustrated as Olivia by the limitations of domesticity, returns to work as the mother of four children, one of them a young baby. Despite the demands of her dual role, Sue affirms in *Sue Barton: Staff Nurse* that she is “a sight better off” when working than staying at home (Boylston 1953:65).

Once fears of a falling population had diminished in the early 1950s, attention switched from quantity of children to the quality of child-rearing; concerns about the effects of maternal employment were fuelled by social fears around disaffected youth, juvenile delinquency, and moral panics over ‘latch-key kids’. Advice on ‘good’ mothering proliferated, with books, magazines and government pamphlets advising on practical aspects of childcare such as feeding, bathing and toilet-training. Child welfare clinics were established, cookery classes were offered to mothers, and talks about child development were broadcast. Research on theories of maternal deprivation, attachment and emotional development by psychologists such as John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott was published in both academic and popular formats, as well as being disseminated in magazines and through radio programmes. Preoccupations with the impact of inadequate mothering on the mental and emotional health of the child informed this analysis of the mother-child relationship. Bowlby’s work was particularly

influential; despite a limited evidence-base from the experiences of wartime evacuees and institutionalised children, his ideas became popularly interpreted as an argument for constant maternal presence. His research fitted very conveniently with a political investment in home-based motherhood and with the prevailing anxieties regarding social stability explored in 'Chapter Three: Money'. "Deprived children", he declared, "are the source of social infection as real and serious as are carriers of diptheria and typhoid" (1951:182). The use of the terms 'deprivation' and 'social infection,' in highlighting the alleged social as well as the personal impact of poor mothering, laid a heavy double burden of responsibility on the mother.

The plethora of advice and recommendations in this intense focus on mothering both undermined and elevated the role of mothers. Despite the much-valued benefits of the welfare system (free orange juice, cod-liver oil, subsidised milk and baby foods), direct state intervention in childcare was often resented by mothers themselves, who felt disempowered by official advice. On the other hand, the great importance of motherhood to society at large was explicit in Bowlby and Winnicott's work. In his advisory pamphlet *Can I Leave My Baby?* Bowlby assures mothers that, although "they may be dog-tired and shorter-tempered than they would wish, it is a great compensation to feel that they *really matter*, that no-one else will do" (1958:6). Winnicott's radio talks further promoted the status of the "ordinary devoted mother"; as a citizen her creation of a supportive home and a facilitating environment would ensure "the stable and healthy families that form the only basis for the stability of our society" (1945:25). The aspirational vision of maternal ideals implicit in these discourses of maternity informs the overt ideology of the primary texts, while the impossible constraints such idealisation imposes form a covert subtext in their representation of mother-figures.

By the mid-1950s, models of family and marriage were changing, at least theoretically; research by contemporary sociologists Michael Young and Peter Willmott

described the emergence of a “new kind of companionship [in which] man and wife are partners” (1957:30). This concept of companionate marriage foregrounded mutuality and task-sharing between husband and wife; while it may have been flawed in reality, it permeated 1950s socio-cultural discourse, and can be perceived in my corpus as texts contrast the relationship expectations of mother and daughter protagonists. While the fictional mothers accept, willingly or reluctantly, a conventional home-based marital role, their daughters aspire to more companionate partnerships. This is a particularly prominent feature of the career novels, where mothers of the heroines are invariably depicted within the domestic environment, cooking, serving and cleaning. Mrs Lee of Mary Elwyn Patchett’s *The Lee Twins: Beauty Students* (1953) is emblematic of such characterisation; in the opening chapter, having prepared and served her husband’s lunch, she is shown happily washing-up while he rushes back to the office. The daughters in these texts are likely to be themselves depicted in the office, hospital, or workshop, and insist on husbandly compliance to career aims before committing themselves to marriage and childbearing. Janet Finch and Penny Summerfield’s retrospective sociological overview, ‘Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage’, reveals “a rather contradictory picture” of 1950s marriage, concluding that its conceptualisation as equal partnership was largely illusory, since a rigidly-traditional demarcation of tasks still prevailed (1991:17). Representations of companionate marriage in my corpus reveal this gendered aspect to domesticity; while heroines of the career genre establish professional equality by successfully maintaining their working identity, the husband’s domestic role tends to remain limited.

The concept of companionate marriage, however flawed, did serve to draw attention to the emotional aspects of family relationships, a focus that was enhanced by the development of ‘The Home-centred Society’, postulated in a 1959 radio broadcast by social scientist Mark Abrams. Abrams discusses the impact of growing material

prosperity, alongside the increasing domestication of U.K. society in the latter 1950s, on the role of mothers within the family. These developments shifted the emphasis back towards a more inwardly-directed familial perspective for mothers' lives, the inherent contradictions of which are analysed in my first two chapters, 'Home' and 'Work'. Maternal characters such as Allan's Mrs Dennison (*The Summer at Town's End* 1954c), Blyton's Mrs Kent (*The Six Bad Boys*) and Streatfeild's Cathy Bell (*New Town* 1960) struggle to reconcile a need to participate as citizens in the wider community, and the domestic requirement to spend time, energy and money on enhancement of the home space.

At a time when family incomes were rising, and the availability of desirable domestic goods such as vacuum cleaners and refrigerators was increasing, there was also a national economic imperative to encourage spending on the products of British industry. The shifting power relationships within the family engendered by the expanding role of mothers as consumers ultimately became enfolded into their identity as citizens, a development that had earlier been predicated by John Newsom. Women as purchasers, he declared in his influential 1948 polemic *The Education of Girls*, were responsible "as citizens for the economic well-being of the nation" (1948:97).

The consumer boom of the late 1950s, combined with the welfare gains of the late 1940s, particularly in the areas of health and education, were to lead to what Ian Haywood describes as an "embourgeoisement" of British society (1997:93). Promulgation of approved, generally middle-class, values was held by government to be desirable for social cohesion and the children's texts investigated here reveal aspects of contemporaneous debates on social position in which the NHS and the wider educational opportunities offered by the Butler Act "became emblems of the new 'age of consensus'" (90). Societal changes impacting on class homogeneity, such as the re-housing of families in new out-of-town estates are directly examined in *The Summer at*

Town's End and *New Town*, while a challenge to the discourse of marginalisation for non-academic school-leavers is evident throughout the career novels. This genre is openly a project of social engineering, aimed by publishers at "roughly the fifteen and sixteen-year-old who doesn't come from a very cultured background" (CWA 13.5.1954).[7] Protagonists are depicted as emerging from independent, grammar and secondary-modern schools to take up jobs in hairdressing (*Pauline Becomes a Hairdresser* 1958), gardening (*Sheila Goes Gardening* 1957) and cookery (*Cookery Kate* 1955), all validated as worthwhile professional life-choices. The authors in my corpus, all themselves middle-class, critique some class assumptions, notably those which relate to social definition by birth or wealth. In contradiction of newer post-war assessments of class by income rather than heritability, these writers focus on lifestyle and manners as preferred indicators of social value; the snobbery and materialism of mother-figures Aunt Claudia in *White Boots* and Rose Longfield in *Six Cousins Again*, for example, are presented as likely to undermine the family unit, and thus implicitly the unity of the wider society of which it is part. The ideological participation of these texts in contemporary promotion of the manners and mores of the unifying middle-class ideal grounds them in the establishment of the more egalitarian society that was held to be so necessary in the recreation of post-war national identity.

5. Research Methodology and Text Selection

The assumptions underlying this project – that motherhood matters and that popular fiction is ideologically powerful – have inevitably informed my methodological approach. In assembling my corpus, the range of possible texts was intimidating, even within the temporal parameters limiting the study; despite austerity conditions, children's book publishing in the U.K. increased exponentially during the long 1950s, from 715 titles per year in 1945 to 2,500 by 1965 (Hunt 2019:329). My selections have

[7] Publishers' correspondence in the Chatto & Windus Archive.

been governed by three criteria, each discussed below: form and genre, intended readership and contemporary popularity. The latter two are particularly relevant for consideration of the impact on the reader of values encoded in the texts.

I have focussed on works written in realist form, defined simply by Sheila Egoff as "fiction that depicts actuality (as opposed to fantasy or narratives set in far-off times or places)" (1981:33). Hunt goes further, describing realism in literature as "an interesting concept [that] sits uncomfortably between fantasy (where the rules of the world are suspended) and romance or adventure (where the rules are bent)" (1994:166-167). Several authors in my corpus are particularly scrupulous in depicting 'actuality', by inserting meticulously-researched detail into the imaginary world of story. Streatfeild persuaded her secretary to learn ice-skating and asked a famous skating judge to review the manuscript of *White Boots* (Huse 1994:92). Allan describes visiting Switzerland and spending "weeks in Bellinzona" in order to write convincingly in *The Vine-Clad Hill* (1988b:9). The editors of the careers series frequently turned to author-practitioners to ensure authenticity, commissioning Evelyn Forbes, formerly beauty editor of *Vogue*, for example, to write *Brenda Buys a Beauty Salon* (1954). Such attention to settings and characterisation ensures that the text apparently reproduces the world in which the readers live, a feature of literary realism embedded in what Catherine Belsey designates illusionism.

This mimetic effect, according to Belsey's *Critical Practice* (2002), is key to the ways in which realist texts convey ideology. Illusionism, which persuades readers to accept the fictional world as an analogue of reality, draws the reader in and thus enhances the ideological effect of narratological techniques such as focalisation that acculturate her. The "hierarchy of voices which establish the 'truth' of the story" in my corpus, including that of the narrator, who may be internally or externally focalised, is also integral to its engagement in post-war maternal discourse (2002:64). The "moment

of closure”, which Belsey identifies as the third element of classic realism, is invariably a triumphant re-statement of values that have underpinned the story, encouraging the reader’s acceptance of these (65). While such endings may be non-realistic – both Lalla and Harriet of *White Boots*, for instance, are destined to become world-famous skaters – since narrative is, as Barbara Hardy famously described it, “a primary act of mind,” then the objective reality of a text is to some extent irrelevant; its effect can only be judged through the subjective experience of the reader (1977:12).

Within the realist form, I analyse the genre of domestic stories, family fictions that either locate the narrative in the surroundings of home, or deal with the protagonists’ movement from the parental to an independent home environment. As Hunt points out, Blyton’s mystery series, which deploy modes of realism and are ostensibly located in the ‘real’ world, “are best read as ‘romances’”, a comment that applies to popular writers I excluded completely from consideration, such as Malcolm Saville, who produced many of the adventure/mystery genre stories that dominated children’s publishing in the 1950s (1994:167). The texts I examine go against the grain of this better-known contemporary writing for children, by utilising tropes of realism in the context of humdrum daily lives. They exploit day-to-day routine, rather than the creation of unrealistic bucolic idylls or the routing of villains, in order to depict character development and plot outcome. In further contradiction of a familiar adventure trope, these stories do not dispose of parental figures so that the child protagonists can operate independently; on the contrary, they create complete families in which parents and other significant adults play important roles and in which ordinary events of the characters’ lives produce drama and suspense. While the presence of a maternal figure was intrinsic to my selection, none of the texts are ‘about’ mothers (unlike, for instance, school stories which are self-evidently about school life, however unrealistic), so their contextualisation of motherhood has been overlooked. However, I

argue that the realistic delineation of domestic life and the interaction of familial relationships, in foregrounding the significance of the maternal role both within and beyond the home, ensures that the works of my corpus are all the more powerful as cultural scripts. The domestic sphere becomes, in Nicholas Tucker's words, "the biggest adventure of all" (2001:67).

My interrogation of motherhood in these fictions, in revealing the ideological underpinning of its representations, governed the second criterion of selection. I consider texts written for readers of between nine and sixteen years, since research has demonstrated the marked impact of the transactional act of reading during this age-range. Reading is recognised to be constitutive of the reader as well as of meaning, as Louise Rosenblatt memorably puts it: "A novel [...] remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols [infused with] intellectual and emotional meanings" (1995:24). According to Joseph Appleyard's observation of child readers, the age-range I focus on incorporates two crucial stages of readership. By the "later childhood" ages of nine to twelve, he describes the "reader as hero and heroine", engaged in an affective response to character, allied to a search for identity and social information (1991:57). The next-stage choices of the twelve-years-plus adolescent "reader as thinker" are, he opines, governed by a more sophistcated search for "identification, [...], realism [and] food for thought" (101/113). Stephens concurs with an analysis of the reading event in which identification is crucial to the transmission of ideology, arguing that "the negotiations between a reader and a text are analogous with the relations between a Self and an Other in [the] actual world" (1992:54). Thus the more a text persuades the reader into identifying with the protagonist (and/or the implied reader), the more s/he will absorb the implicit and explicit values of that text. The likely effect of reading at these stages is therefore, I

suggest, particularly relevant to the impact of the ideological systems influencing constructions of motherhood in my corpus.

The corpus falls into two sections regarding postulated readership, which correspond to Appleyard's classification of reading stages. My selection of books appropriate to the age parameters has been determined by the implied reader within the text and by the ages of the main characters. The works of Streatfeild, for example, focus on protagonists around the age of ten years – such as Jane in *The Painted Garden*, Lalla and Harriet in *White Boots*, and Ginnie in *The Bell Family* – all of whom are focalising characters and thus 'speak' to the implied reader. Blyton's central characters have a range of ages, but again, focalisers tend to be between ten and twelve years of age. Ten-year-old Bob's response to his mother's decision to go out to work is key to the explicit message of *The Six Bad Boys*, while the relationship of eleven-year-old Susan and ten-year-old Roderick to their respective mothers foregrounds the domestic-maternal ideal of the *Six Cousins* duology. Even when falling outside of Appleyard's 'later childhood' age range, as do sixteen-year-old Molly and fourteen-year-old Peter of *The Family at Red-Roofs*, Blyton's characters are invariably psychologically, if not chronologically, pre-adolescent, and the implied reader constructed by the text thus falls within the 'reader-as-heroine' category.

In contrast, the career genre and the works of Allan that I discuss are clearly addressed to the twelve to sixteen-year-old 'reader-as-thinker'. Protagonists, initially between the ages of fifteen and eighteen years, are on the point of, or have already left school, and are engaged in the process of formulating an adult identity. The relationship of the characters with mothers and co-mothers is crucial to this formulation, as is the realisation of their own future maternal potential; in a significant number of titles, the central character is herself later depicted as a mother. At a time when the concept of a separate 'Young Adult' (YA) literature had yet to emerge, the work of Allan and the

career series authors anticipates the social-realist writing of subsequent decades. The books were certainly welcomed in contemporary reviews as a transitional form of literature; as one reviewer states, they catered for readers at the "in-between stage in their reading tastes, when the adventure or school story is no longer satisfying, leading away from *The Worst Girl in the School* [and] dealing with real experience at a more mature level" (Whitehead 1956:546).

Inevitably there is some melding of assumed readership patterns; research evidence from the archives of the two main publishers of careers books (Chatto & Windus and Bodley Head) demonstrates that the titles were popular with younger readers aged eleven-plus, as well as the target audience of incipient school-leavers from fourteen years upwards. The works of Courtney and Lunt also cross boundaries, with focalising characters from age ten to twenty-four years (*Sally's Family*) and fourteen to adult (*Secret Stepmother* 1959), as well as an implied reader of secondary-school age. In my consideration of such proto-crossover texts, the publisher's choice of imprint or use of marketing material has been a useful check for the selection process. William Collins, for example, published Courtney in its 'Seagull Library Classics' imprint, intended for older readers, which lists titles by Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain as well as careers stories. George Harrap blurbs describe Allan as a writer of "novels for older girls", while Hutchinson designated her *Margaret Finds a Future* (1954b) as a "Junior Novel" (back-cover quotes).

While the gender of the reader has not of itself been a criterion for selection, a notable aspect of the publication and marketing of the texts in my corpus is their direction towards a female readership. Blyton, who, as Rudd notes, was read avidly by both boys and girls, is the exception, but when publishing houses separated their lists by gender, a common practice of the time, Allan, Courtney, Lunt and Streatfeild are invariably designated "Girls' Titles", while the Bodley Head and Chatto & Windus

series, specifically created for a female market, are lauded in contemporary press reviews as “jolly good reading for fourteen to sixteen-year-old girls” (*Parents Magazine*, qtd in cover blurbs). This gendered construct of the reader, arising from an essentialist view of femininity, proved to be significant in terms of ideological impact.

My focus on the popular, the third criterion of selection, was linked to two key concerns of the investigation; the rehabilitation of neglected texts and the likely effect of their ideological involvement in maternal discourse. Popular fiction, especially for children, can be dismissed as transitory and lacking in literary value, but the development of cultural studies as a legitimate academic pursuit has led to a revival of interest from literary critics and historians alike. Since its emergence in the 1950s with the work of socio-literary theorists such as Barthes in France (*Mythologies* 1957) and Marxist critics Richard Hoggart (*The Uses of Literacy* 1957) and Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society* 1958) in the U.K., the discipline of cultural studies has validated the consideration of ‘history from below’ as an important mode of interpretation for society and literature at all levels. As Williams points out, literature is not autonomous; “we cannot separate literature and art from other forms of social practice” (1980:43). Scholars in the world of children’s literature have engaged with this trend; early work by Mitzi Myers (1988) and Tony Watkins (1992) on New Historicist approaches, and Dennis Butts (1992) on the social context of children’s literature emphasises the unique light that popular fiction can cast on the society in which it is produced. A growing awareness within the academy of the importance of the popular form as a literary as well as a socio-cultural artefact is attested by work such as Humble’s *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel* (mentioned above), Shirley Foster and Judy Simmons’ study of nineteenth-century stories for girls, *What Katy Read* (1995), and Pat Pinsent’s more recently-published *Out of the Attic* (2006), which deals with once-popular, but now neglected twentieth-century children’s authors.

This attention to the recovery of forgotten texts appears in Watson's analysis of series fiction (2000), and in *Popular Children's Literature in Britain* (2008), edited by Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts and Matthew Grenby. In the latter, Grenby seeks to define the popular in terms of reader experience; the term 'popular' is, he points out, "peculiarly slippery" and can be understood in literary terms as implying, "the quotidian and the 'low'" (2008:1-2). The study of popularity and children's literature is, he asserts, "a very timely undertaking [that] calls for a reassessment of our understanding and interpretation of the workings of popularity" (1). My investigation is thus situated within a growing body of critical attention to the rehabilitation of popular, but often-disregarded works for children, that re-evaluates their contemporary, and potentially current, importance. In my contribution to critical reassessment of the popular form, the invocation of the lens of motherhood – a topic of ongoing importance that may be quotidian, but is far from 'low' – reinforces the argument for the continuing relevance of the once-celebrated texts in my corpus, enabling me to demonstrate their importance as both literary and social documents.

My specific textual choices were guided by a definition of popular that considers what has been "well-liked or commercially successful, or both" (Grenby 2008:2). I judged these attributes on practical quantitative bases; either the number of titles an author produced, the length of their writing career, or publishing information such as print-runs and new editions, as well as contemporary reviews. I recognise that sales, in the case of children's books, can be generated by adult purchasers rather than the end-users, and that availability and distribution of titles is determined more by publishers and other gatekeepers, such as parents, teachers and librarians, than by readers. Nevertheless, in view of the longevity and saleability of Allan and Streatfeild's work, not to mention that of the ubiquitous Blyton, and the huge demand for career books for girls during the 1950s (indicated by basic print-runs of six thousand per title and

frequent reprints), it is reasonable to infer that these books were popular with readers as well as gatekeepers. Courtney and Lunt were less prolific, but their work was repackaged and reprinted by different publishers throughout their writing careers. Such popularity is crucial in ideological terms. Tucker declares in *The Child and the Book* that, "...nor should it even be thought that it is only fiction of a high standard that can have a positive effect upon readers' imaginations" (1981:7). In an extension of his point, I argue that the popularity of my corpus, notwithstanding its literary standards, would have heightened its contemporaneous impact. The publication statistics imply an extensive readership, and this broad constituency for the works is important when considering their engagement in maternal discourse.

In order to ground my work within its historical and cultural context, I considered only novels published in the U.K. between 1945 and 1960. In assembling my focal texts I used the exhaustive catalogue of the British Library which, as a deposit collection, can be considered comprehensive. However, given the unsettled conditions of the immediate post-war years and economic constraints on publishers (which may have inhibited their adherence to the deposit requirement), I supplemented my exploration with research in The Women's Library, discussions with specialist publishers such as GGBP, and perusal of online blogs such as Furrowed Middlebrow and Goodreads, as well as participating in digital academic communities such as Mapping Maternal Subjectivities, Identities and Ethics (MaMSIE). Having read an extensive range of titles for inclusion in my study, five authors and one genre emerged from the selection process as meeting the necessary requirements of form, readership, and popularity. The family fictions of Mabel Esther Allan, Enid Blyton, Gwendoline Courtney, Alice Lunt and Noel Streatfeild, alongside the girls' career novel, all have shared generic features, engaging with the discursive construction of maternity in the long 1950s in ways that offer productive sources of engagement in that construction.

Several writers who do meet the readership and popularity criteria were nevertheless excluded from the study on the grounds of form. Margaret Biggs, Pamela Brown, Irene Byers and Monica Edwards, similarly popular in their day (and generally disregarded now), all wrote novels in the domestic genre that contain maternal characters. However, while starting in the realist location of the protagonists' home, their stories segue into modes of mystery and crime adventure (Brown and Byers), school or pony story (Biggs and Edwards). The change of focus from the family to the thriller, or from home to classroom and stable, places them outside the scope of this project. Blyton's oeuvre has been subjected to similar methods of scrutiny, resulting in exclusion of the majority of the (approximately) seven-hundred full-length stories that she published. Mysteries such as the 'Famous Five' and 'Adventure' books, and school stories in the 'Malory Towers' 'St Clare's' and 'Naughtiest Girl' series contain important maternal constructs, but the early exclusion of mother-figures from the plot places these so-called 'romance' fictions outside the parameters of my investigation.

Close readings of the selected texts with particular attention to their narrative techniques has been pre-eminent in my methodological approach. In seeking coherent answers to research questions, I then analysed the fictional works with reference to a wider sphere of contextual contemporary sources. Although my academic focus is predominantly literary, I thus combine the traditional close reading of texts with a critical approach that has been influenced by the model of cultural studies. In *Representation*, cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues that the value of a text is always contingent and context-specific, and describes the discursive approach as "concerned with the effects and consequences of representation – its 'politics'" (1997:6). So while my thesis privileges the children's novels of the writers discussed above, their works, both a product and a functional component of 1950s maternal discourse, cannot be read ahistorically. Accordingly my investigation locates them within the social and political

context from which they sprang, in order to demonstrate how they engage as narratives in post-war maternal discourse. The range of contextual material has included reports, reminiscences and individual diaries from the Mass Observation Archive; newspaper articles; women's lifestyle magazines, including *Housewife*, *Parents Magazine*, and the market leader, *Woman*; popular journals such as *Picture Post*; government publications and policy documents; advertisements; radio broadcasts, particularly *Woman's Hour* and the talks of child psychologist Winnicott; childcare manuals; and sociological and psychological publications by prominent commentators such as Bowlby, Newsom, Myrdal and Klein.

Immersion in such contemporaneous material has given me a practical perspective on the reality of lived maternal experience. While this is not an empirical study, perusing the non-digitised items in the Mass Observation and Seven Stories collections provided an experience of 'fieldwork' in the archives, affording a contemporary authenticity to underpin my theoretical propositions. Such contextual research enabled me to locate my texts within the web of 1950s maternity and to determine how they engage in its discourse. May Hobbs, a school-leaver in the 1950s, describes in her autobiography *Born to Struggle* a 1953 interview with the Youth Employment Officer, "a right old git", who advised her, "don't think of making a career out of anything because you'll only give it up to get married and have kids" (1973:28). In this 1950s world, the fictional protagonists of Allan, Streatfeild and the career novels often face similar attitudes from familial or institutional characters, but single-mindedly pursue their ambitions. Some, such as the eponymous heroine of *Elizabeth, Young Policewoman* (1955) reject marriage and maternity altogether, while others rehearse the possibility of 'having it all' – professional qualifications, marriage, motherhood *and* ongoing job satisfaction.

The much-debated figure of the ‘ideal mother’ is a pervasive aspect of maternal discourse that appears throughout my corpus. Posited by prominent figures such as Bowlby and Winnicott, and an ever-present element of popular and political comment, this ideal is often represented by oppositional constructs such as Linnie and Rose Longfield in Blyton’s ‘Six Cousins’ books and Cathy and Rose Bell in Streatfeild’s *The Bell Family*. The use of binary oppositions is a narratological technique widely used across the corpus, appearing in Allan’s work and the career titles, as well as in novels for younger readers. The ideological power of binaries lies in their simplistic counterpointing of maternal constructs, which clearly label the values implicit to the text, while also revealing the conflicting demands of maternal identity that are prevalent features of lifestyle magazines, advertisements and other sources in my contextual research. Such oppositional representations of the maternal-domestic ideal can furthermore, as I will show, open the narratives to resistant readings; the fictional representations of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mothers offer the subversive potential for what Rich describes as “re-vision – of seeing with fresh eyes [and] from a new critical direction”, thus empowering readers in the process of constructing their own subjectivities (qtd in Fetterley 1978:xix).

The thesis makes innovative links between the history, sociology and children’s fiction of motherhood in this period. In recognising the need for a socio-historical contextualisation of motherhood and by reading the literary works alongside other cultural texts, I demonstrate how the narratives weave in and out of maternal discourse. This strategy seeks to overcome the limitations of a rigidly text-based approach, and my consideration of the field of production of the primary sources informs my assessment of the influence of the popular texts that are my focus. These books are, I argue, following Bishop, both mirrors that reflect and consolidate customary assumptions, and

sliding doors that, in also resisting and challenging received positions, open up new interpretations of the maternal role at a time of social and cultural transformation.

6. Structure of the Study

The thesis is organised thematically, to highlight the features of 1950s maternity depicted in the children's texts and contextual sources that are the basis of the study. Both fictional and factual accounts indicate that perceptions of good motherhood in the post-war era had become allied to issues that, in some cases, are peripheral to child welfare. These included maternal presence in the home, domesticity and housewifely skills, the question of remunerative employment, the ability to cook, and, alongside all these, the maintenance of femininity in both appearance and behaviour. In recognition of the importance of these aspects for my investigation, each one is explored in a separate chapter of the thesis. As the perspective shifts from internal spaces of the home to external participation in society and to individual perceptions of identity, the examination of motherhood becomes more intimate, moving from the social structuring of maternal spaces towards a focus on the personal and embodied. While the key concerns of the study – home, work, money, food and body – are dealt with in five substantive chapters, the authors, and sometimes the same novels, appear and reappear in different chapters according to the context. Each chapter discussion is thus indicative of shared thematic ideological preoccupations across the corpus. This organisation has enabled me to align textual and contextual evidence in a topic-focussed format that serves the aims and objectives of the project.

'Chapter One: Home' deals with the concept of home as both a physical space and a cultural construct that is itself a metonym for motherhood. Loss of the home was a not-uncommon experience in the immediate post-war period, and here I examine texts by Allan, Blyton, Courtney and Streatfeild in which families are physically relocated to a new home. Drawing on the contemporary writings of Winnicott that extol the

autonomy of the mother within the home, and Foucault's theory of the link between spaces and powers, the chapter investigates the house as a space that both reflects and shapes the roles of its occupants. In exploring the ownership of domestic space in the texts as this relates to power structures within the family, I argue that the positioning of the mother, usually in the kitchen, is a significant marker of both the power and the constrictions of the maternal role.

In 'Chapter Two: Work', I discuss the onerous functional tasks that were required of mothers to maintain home spaces effectively, alongside their fulfilment of social expectations by reproducing and caring for children. The binary depiction of mothers in Blyton and Streatfeild's work illuminates the contemporary discourse that conflated maternal nurture with domestic labour as equally valid manifestations of 'motherwork', and I investigate the use of domestic skills as a marker of 'good' or inadequate motherhood. The concept of motherhood as citizenship, created to rebuild consensus after the war, established the mother-housewife role as a form of gendered citizenship that posited traditional maternity as a stabilising force in society. Reflecting on Ruth Lister's theories of 'social citizenship' and George Tomlinson's contemporary prescription for citizenship education, I argue that the depictions of normative and transnormative families in Blyton, Courtney and Streatfeild's texts afford opportunities for readings that challenge the received ideology of domestic maternity.

'Chapter Three: Money' takes this development a stage further in its investigation of the vexed debate surrounding the question of mothers working (for remuneration) outside the home. I establish the parameters of this debate through a close reading of Blyton's essay into social realism, *The Six Bad Boys*, followed by wider consideration of how the career novels – many books but written to one formula – weave into the discourse around 'working' mothers. The chapter explores the contemporary climate of this discourse with reference to the sociological studies of

Myrdal and Klein and the psychological theories of Bowlby and Winnicott, while also teasing out Althusserian workings of ideology in the depiction of maternal protagonists. I create a template for maternal 'Types' across the career series, and argue that this formulaic genre, in representing the needs of the mother herself and her duty to society at large, as well as to her child, allows for both complicit and resistant readings, thus offering the potential for a radical re-interpretation of maternal identity.

The focus shifts towards the personal and the domestic in 'Chapter Four: Food', which examines the emotional and practical issues associated with 'foodwork' for mothers. In children's literature food is a famously iconic symbol of adjustment to the social order, and I argue here that it is even more significant as a litmus text for the quality of mothering. The works discussed, by Blyton, Courtney, Lunt and Streatfeild, were produced or set between 1945 and 1954, the decade when food rationing markedly exceeded previous restrictions. The chapter discusses the emotional significance of food in the mother-child relationship, with reference to the psychological theories of Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud and Winnicott, alongside evidence of the practical constraints experienced by mothers at a time of extreme shortage. Utilising Barthes and Bourdieu and the more recent cultural work of Sarah Sceats (2000), as well as sociological investigations by Kate Cairns and Josee Johnston (2015) and Michelle Szabo (2017), I argue that, while food is a demanding measure of maternal competency in the texts, it can also be construed as a Foucauldian ingredient of maternal power, both at the micro-level of the dinner table and the macro-level of national reconstruction.

In 'Chapter Five: Body', attention returns to the individual figure of the mother (in more than one sense), as an exemplar of feminine identity and a pattern for ideal motherhood. The chapter examines novels written for the older reader of twelve-plus, in order to analyse the tensions between the mother's sense of her own body and her influence on her daughters, the potential mothers of the future. A case-study of the

mother-daughter conflict in Allan's *The Vine-Clad Hill* is followed by re-evaluation of the career genre for its contribution to the wider discourse of 1950s femininity. I discuss these texts in the light of contemporaneous models of femininity and maternity from Beauvoir, Klein and Newsom alongside recent work on embodiment and gender by Iris Marion Young (2005) and Chris Shilling (2012). Framing my discussion with the theoretical constructions of Chodorow, Bordo and Young, I show that the metonymic link with femininity in the texts is realised both through delineation of the body as objective physiological entity, and through the phenomenological body, as experienced by its owner or an observer. I argue that, in their representation of maternal bodies, the texts engage in the discourse of maternity to create a range of subject positions that both sustain and resist hegemonic femininity. In exploring received notions of the feminine and maternal ideal, they provide sites for negotiation of a new social construction of femininity and a new ideal of motherhood, based on empathy rather than physical or functional attributes.

My argument for the re-examination and recovery of these now-neglected texts is rooted firstly, in their potential as fiction for identification and the construction of subjectivities for the reader, and secondly, in the conviction that the broad constituency they once commanded would have enhanced the impact of the ideological positions inscribed therein. I show that, at a time when the role of women in society, and of mothers in particular, was being contested, the popular fictions I explore were discursively engaged, both reflecting and challenging prevailing concepts of motherhood. They are thus worthy of rehabilitation as social documents, since they offer an illuminating perspective on an important period of recent history. Even more significantly, I argue that, as literary works depicting alternative, occasionally radical constructions of maternity, my corpus has the potential to be a tool of resistance. I show that its representation of mothers offers the opportunity of resistant, as well as complicit

readings, and that, in critiquing dominant ideologies of motherhood, the novels afford a valuable space for readers to explore a range of approaches to the maternal subject.

Chapter One
Home: Significant Spaces and Maternal Powers

A happy home and family life is the bulwark of a Nation.

Mass Observation Archive 1942

"This looks like a home!" Lucy exclaimed, putting down her knife and fork and looking round contentedly.

Gwendoline Courtney *Sally's Family* 1946

For the first time in British history, the home has become a place that is warm, comfortable and pleasant to live in.

Mark Abrams *The Home-centred Society* 1959

Figure 2: *Woman and Home* 1950

Advertising Archives

1. Introduction: True Place of Woman

The October 1950 cover of the lifestyle magazine *Woman and Home* (Fig 2), showing a fashionably-attired woman in a well-appointed home, inset with two smartly-dressed children and presenting an elegant tray of tea, epitomises the aspirational vision of home and motherhood that prevailed in the post-war years. In the wake of a destructive war, John Ruskin's romantic nineteenth-century concept of home as a "place of Peace [and] shelter from all terror" was a seductive notion; his symbolism, depicting home as a sanctuary in which, "this home […] is the true place and power of woman", held sway into the early twentieth-century, before being inevitably disrupted by two world wars (1865). After 1945 the appeal of this idealised vision returned, as established forms of family life, signified by the presence of a mother in the home, came to be regarded as a national 'bulwark' – in the words of the Mass Observation correspondent above – against the remembered chaos and social disruptions of wartime.

The delight that fourteen-year-old Lucy expresses on being re-united with her siblings in a newly-acquired home after evacuation (epigraph quote), is taken from *Sally's Family,* published shortly after the war. Her pleasure is rooted in both the

physical space and the emotional significance of home for the family group, topics that I deal with here in particular reference to placement of the maternal figure. By the end of the 1950s, the material investment in the home space, discussed by contemporary social scientist Abrams in 'The Home-centred Society' (cited above), was combined with developing expectations of motherhood that both confined and empowered mothers.

This chapter investigates the 'Home-centred' phenomenon as exemplified in stories which depict families physically relocated to a new home. Given the extensive wartime destruction of property, loss of the home and adaptation to a new domestic environment was a common post-war experience that involved a re-assessment of roles and relationships for both mothers and their families. I examine the significance of home as a locus for constructions of motherhood in works by Mabel Esther Allan, Enid Blyton, Gwendoline Courtney and Noel Streatfeild. Courtney's *Sally's Family* deals directly with the dilemma of bombed-out families at a time of limitations on properties, furniture and replacement consumer goods. While the other texts discussed in this chapter do not specifically reference the war, they inhabit a similar territory of post-war shortages, financial stringency and changing circumstance. Blyton's *The Family at Red-Roofs* and *The Six Bad Boys*, Allan's *The Summer at Town's End*, and Streatfeild's *The Bell Family* and *New Town* all depict families in transition; to a different house, a new community, and a redefinition of the domestic space. In each novel the importance of the material home as the foundation of the story is indicated by its placement at the beginning of the text, usually in the first few pages, where its entry into the narrative includes detailed descriptions of the physical spaces within it. In the chapter I offer a reading of the home and its spaces as the site of maternal influence and power that explores how the books formulate differing constructs of motherhood.

I firstly investigate the historical context within which these fictional works were produced, in order to clarify the social significance of home as both a concept and

a material place during the early post-war period. I show how the terms 'mother' and 'home' were markers that became conflated as symbolic of the good family and its value to society, while considering the impact of post-war investment in new types of home and community; the ideology of domesticity is discussed in relation to development of the home-based maternal role at a time of familial flux. I then examine the texts for ownership of specific spaces in the house as an indicator of power structures within the family; moving around the home from kitchen to study, dining-room to bedroom, I discuss how dislocations in ownership relate to the influence and constrictions of motherhood. Drawing on Foucault's philosophical hypotheses regarding the potential link between spaces and powers, and the psychological theories of contemporary paediatrician Winnicott on the role of mothers, I analyse the engagement of the children's texts in prevailing discourses of maternity. Utilising comparisons with popular magazines, including *Woman and Home* and *Housewife*, I consider how the novels create images of motherhood which both reinforce and interrogate conventional expectations of the maternal. Notwithstanding their foregrounding of the domestic setting, and despite an ideological preoccupation with the stereotypical representations of motherhood extolled in the rhetoric of 1950s government (outlined in my 'Introduction' p31ff), these texts do, I argue, offer alternative models for maternity that aligns them with much of my corpus as capable of both confirming and challenging the status quo.

2. The Significant Home

Home, a term that carries considerable ideological baggage, is simultaneously a spatial, temporal and emotive concept. Its etymological origin in the Old Norse *heimr* links the word to its simplest, and still current, definition of "abode", but also implies "world", a derivation that is particularly relevant to the "full range and feeling of Modern English *home* as a conception" (Buck 1949:459). In discussing the phenomenology of the house

and its inside spaces in *The Poetics of Space*, philosopher Gaston Bachelard declares that "our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (1958:4). In the post-war years this 'cosmos' was marked by a growing emotional and physical investment in the family residence, as a 'world' where spatial control, personal freedom and the ability to limit access to outsiders became important elements in the construction of home as the immutable centre of family life, as well as a lived material space.

The increasing domestication of British society at this time was described by later sociologists as a distinctive development exemplified in "the modern domestic ideal of an affluent nuclear family living in a home of their own and enjoying the benefits of leisurely home life, [...] with emphasis placed on the privacy of the individual household rather than the wider community" (Crow 1989:20). The term 'nuclear family' is itself a relatively new twentieth-century usage to describe a family group comprised of two parents plus their children, which the American *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* claims was first used in 1941, though the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates it back to 1925. The existence of non-nuclear families immediately after the war, because of the loss of fathers in conflict, was one factor in increasing societal attention to family life and the growing significance of the home; a tendency that is identified in a number of social studies as "the one post-war trend that stands out against all the rest" (Obelkevich 1994:144). Paternal loss features in my canon only in *Sally's Family*, where it is mentioned peripherally; in this text, as in the rest of the literary works, the focus is on rebuilding the ideal family through the maternal figure.

The presence of the mother within the home was intrinsic to such reconstruction and became a primary feature of post-war discourse. Winnicott was a notable advocate for the autonomous position of the mother at home, constructing the domestic environment as a place of power for women within a patriarchal society. In *Getting to*

Know Your Baby he declares that, “Everyone knows that an Englishman’s home is his wife’s castle. And in his home, a man likes to see his wife in charge, identified with the home” (1945:21). While thus implicitly endorsing the patriarchy, Winnicott nevertheless elevates the home as a privileged space for mothers, “because *nowhere else* but in her own home *is woman in such command*. ***Only*** in her own home is she free, if she has the courage, to spread herself, to find her whole self” (1957:88 my emphases). In his 1957 broadcast, *Home is Where We Start From*, Winnicott described his concept of the “good-enough mother”, who is devoted, but also responsive to her children’s changing psychological needs after babyhood, creating an emotional symbiosis he designates “the facilitating environment”, that will support their maturation towards independent adulthood (1986a:144). The literary texts play a role in reinforcing this ideological imperative; descriptions of the physical home in these stories are imbued with maternal imagery, so that the ideology of ‘home’ extends to the narrative construction of motherhood. The new house in *The Family at Red-Roofs*, for example, creates a Winnicottian facilitating environment for the Jackson family. In accordance with Winnicott’s expectations that the maternal presence should be one of welcoming and ever-available amiability, ‘Red-Roofs’ is described in the opening sentence as waiting to welcome the Jacksons in terms that reference maternal qualities of cosiness, warmth and homeliness:

> The little white-washed house seemed to smile in the warm sunshine. It sat there snugly in its big patch of gay garden [and] the pretty gabled roofs were a deep, warm red. It is [the children declare] “a darling house”.
>
> (Blyton 1945:7).

Even the brass front-door knocker welcomes “in the shape of a smiling head”, and the all-protective roofs are red, a colour symbolic of love, passion and visceral physicality; evoking further qualities of motherhood, they are also ‘deep’, ‘warm’ and ‘pretty’ (1945:9). Mrs Jackson. who is described as little, like the house, replicates this image as the Winnicott ideal of an enabling mother, who “had worked hard for the children, […]

keeping them happy, and often going without things herself in order to give them treats" (1945:26).

In contrast, the unwelcoming home environment of Jack's family in *The Six Bad Boys*, where they "all lived together in two rooms [which] were dirty and smelly and untidy" is replicated in the maternal figure, who has a "whining voice and a miserable face" (Blyton 1951:89). In reality, responsibility for such an inadequate home may have been attributable to the socio-economic situation of the family, a likelihood unexpectedly acknowledged by Blyton, who expresses empathy for Jack's not-quite-good-enough mother,[8] while still focussing on the importance of the material home: "Poor woman, she had long ago given up all hope of getting a place big enough for her large family, and had lost heart" (1951:89). The home is thus coterminous with motherhood; the lack of a home-like 'place' has, it is implied, diminished Mrs Harris' capacity for maternal emotion – she has 'lost heart'. Notwithstanding such awareness of social factors influencing motherly ability to create a comfortable home, this text, as with much contemporary media, overwhelmingly defines what constitutes a good or bad home in terms of the mother-figure within it; whether she is 'good' or 'bad', present or absent, the ideological assumption of such works is that home *is* the mother, as mother is the home.

The political function of the maternal figure in relation to home was developed by Winnicott in the radio broadcasts that established his views as influential in lay as well as psychological circles. He made over fifty broadcasts from 1943 to 1962, and these popular talks exemplified his primary aim (common to the many academic publications and parental advice pamphlets he produced), to draw attention to "the immense contribution to the individual and society that the ordinary good mother [...] makes" (1986b:124). In a 1957 broadcast, 'The Mother's Contribution to Society', he

[8] Although her narratorial assessment of maternal competence elsewhere in this text is unsympathetic.

emphasises the recent “great increase in the awareness of the value of the home [which] provides the only real basis for society, and the only factory for the democratic tendency in a country’s social system” (124). The use of terms such as ‘factory’ and the repetition of ‘only’ in Winnicott’s rhetoric firmly situates the home as a workplace for the production of secure families, thus establishing the concept of a maternal presence within the home environment as crucial for social stability. This symbiotic relationship between home and the mother was a staple of his talks; specifically addressed to the ‘ordinary’ mother, they promulgated the notion that ‘good-enough’ mothering, creating the ‘facilitating environment’ of home and the emotional relationships therein, could alone lay a stable basis for the psychological health of the individual that would later translate into a positively good society. In a 1969 talk given to the Progressive League, Winnicott continued to promote the political importance of the synergy of mother and home:

> There is special significance in the devotion of the ordinary good mother to her infant. […] Mass interference at this point, in a society, would quickly and effectually lessen the democratic potential of that society, just as it would diminish the richness of its culture. […] The innate democratic factor in a community derives from the workings of the ordinary good home.
>
> (1986c:258-259).

The concept of mothers as citizens promoted by Winnicott was endorsed by a post-war government determined, according to historian Elizabeth Wilson, “to bring the whole nation within the circle of citizenship [and] women were central to this scheme […] as a stabilizing and civilizing force” (1980:2). Stable families were to be the ‘bulwark’ that would re-unite society, as the received understanding of the maternal figure central to the concept of home became linked to a vision of home as place. Reynolds discusses the conventional two-parent family represented in much twentieth-century children’s literature as “based on the centrality of the wife (usually also a mother) ***in** the home.*” (2005:27 my emphasis). With the coming of peacetime this ideologically-prevalent

construct of the family had been revived, and as austerity conditions eased, the actual maternal presence deemed so desirable in the home was assumed to mean a return to traditional roles for mothers.

The importance of the mother-figure in providing security and remaining present in the home for the psychological benefit of her children was further articulated in Bowlby's influential work on maternal deprivation, in particular his widely-read *Childcare and the Growth of Love*, published in 1953. The strength of this prevailing ideology ensured that the home and the maternal figure, located within it both philosophically and physically, operated "as a conservative force against the cultural degeneration" of society that was feared in the wake of wartime disruptions to family life (Reynolds 2005:27). In such an ideological climate, mother and home, each considered lynchpins of social stability, became conflated as symbolic of both the good family and the good society.

The 'ideal' home, the 'good' family, and the 'good' mother, are concepts entangled in myth to the extent that they have, in a Barthesian sense, become naturalised – "Nature and History [are] confused at every turn" (1957:11). Such socially-constructed notions had their roots in the Industrial Revolution when urban growth and social change led to the majority of the population working outside the home, so home came to mean a space for 'family' rather than 'work'. Consequently, the importance of home, particularly for the middle classes, was enhanced as an alternative to the outside world, a place dedicated to the family and focussed on the centrality of the mother-figure. Hence the socio-linguistic term 'family man' has no corresponding phrase for women; in the home dynamic, family *means* woman, specifically as mother. The nostalgic power of this modern myth gained potency in the late 1940s and early 1950s climate of material deprivation and familial reconstruction, combining with the general hope that society was in the process of positive change.

This optimism was countered by the stark reality of everyday life for mothers and the home life of their families in the victorious, but bankrupt Britain. One third of U.K. homes had been demolished or seriously damaged in World War Two, and in London alone, 100,000 families had lost their homes in the bombing. There was a shortage of building materials to replace or repair houses and of labour to build them, consumer goods were in short supply and expensive, and rationing was still in place. The average weekly wage was £6.8s.0d[9] and "getting a new home was a desperate and lengthy business, involving waiting lists and lots of luck, even for the middle classes" (Leighton 2009:12). The shortage of available houses was exacerbated by the post-war increase in marriages and births, and home building, combined with utopian plans to clear inner-city slums, was high on the political agenda for the Labour government elected in 1945 and the succeeding 1951 Conservative government. The winning Labour Party manifesto had rallied the nation by its political commitment to provide 'Homes for All.' In the November 1945 *Picture Post*, Labour MP Barbara Castle criticises Winston Churchill for failure to fulfil his earlier declaration of treating the housing needs of the population as a military operation, and describes her own government's commitment in terms of war imagery. Outlining the "campaign to win the Battle of Housing", she promises that "as, in the coming months, the labour flows back into the building industry, 'Operation Housing' will be truly launched" (1945:12). By 1956, with the support of both parties of government, almost three million new homes had been built in the post-war housing boom.

Additionally, the demand for scarce material goods to furnish the home space was recognised and fuelled by these governments, who were concerned to raise civilian morale, and in the process promote industry and develop economic growth. So the long-held concept of home as a metaphoric space, symbolic of family and stability, became

[9] £6.40p.

combined with a focus on the physical entity of home and its contents. Contributors to the Mass Observation Directive question 'What does 'home' mean to you?' had emphasised its importance as "a place associated with actual physical comfort and a psychic space within which to establish and develop personal and family identities" (qtd in Langhamer 2005:344). The female interviewee who described "a happy home and family life [as] the bulwark of a Nation" was anticipating the principles that were to direct social policy after 1945, when the modern home, the mother and the family inhabitants were construed as both the symbolic and actual centres of post-war reconstruction (MOA 1942:FR:1616). The conflation of home, family and national interest is evident in a *Picture Post* article of July 1945, entitled 'How to Get the Houses', which discusses practical means to meet the need for family homes; the author declares that the housing question was "more than a personal problem, it [was] a problem for the nation" (Edelman 1945:16-17). This preoccupation with the home found a national outlet in the 1951 Festival of Britain, an event that was conceived as a "tonic to the nation" by politician Herbert Morrison and encapsulated his vision of "a new Britain springing from the old" (Conekin 2003:230). Over sixteen million people were to visit the festival site on the south bank of the Thames, and the technical marvels of the 'Skylon' and the Dome of Discovery were, for mothers, likely to be eclipsed by the more down-to-earth exhibits of labour-saving domestic machinery and modernistic easy-care home interiors on display.

Many of the homes built post-war were in new housing estates on the outskirts of towns and cities, and the development of these estates changed both the physical environment of home, and the meanings invested in home and community life. Contemporary architects and planners, as well as politicians, believed that "better-planned housing could lead to better societies", and this government-led strategy extended beyond the new estates to the creation of so-called complete 'new towns',

totally original communities in green but urban settings (Leighton 2009:10). The New Towns Act of 1946 resulted in the establishment of twenty-seven new towns between 1946 and 1955, eight of which were built to house Londoners on the outskirts of the city.[10] Based on Ebenezer Howard's idealistic aspirations for garden cities, described in *To-morrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898), these developments were promoted as modern, affordable and convenient places to live; a generation was to be introduced to the joys of indoor toilets, and landscaped estates where, the town planners boasted, a tree could be seen from every window.

Such resettlement scenarios are explored in Allan's *The Summer at Town's End* and Streatfeild's *New Town*. Faced with the prospect of moving from her "very very old and rather derelict" home near the docks to a new housing estate outside the town, Allan's Mrs Dennison anticipates the opportunity with mixed feelings (1954c:11). Like the real-life subjects of Young and Willmott's mid-1950s sociological study, *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957), this fictitious mother fears a potentially alienating loss of community and social solidarity attendant upon the move, declaring, "We're townspeople, and I've heard of any number of folk who haven't liked being moved so far out" (17). Lack of amenities was also a concern; "They say there'll be plenty of shops, and schools and churches, and even a cinema, out at Town's End before they've finished, but there aren't now" (16). Mothers in Young and Willmott's study expressed similar concerns about their move to new estates, but nevertheless valued the inevitable improvements in the physical environment of home. One typical interviewee, Mrs Sandeman, declared that: "Back in Bethnal Green we had mice in two rooms. After that this seemed like paradise" (1957:127). In her 1958 study of Liverpool slums, researcher Madelaine Kerr found similar inner-city conditions: "Frequently several rooms in a house are out of use, owing to damp, the ceiling having collapsed and caused general

[10] Stevenage (1946); Crawley (1947); Harlow (1947); Hemel Hempstead (1947); Hatfield (1948); Welwyn Garden City (1948); Basildon (1949); Bracknell (1949).

disrepair" (1958:27). The housing conditions of the fictional Dennison family are clearly based on such scenarios; as daughter Tessa explains, "Mother managed to keep our house clean somehow, though she often got disheartened when the plaster fell down, and the kitchen wall got damp and horrible, and mice wouldn't keep out of her well-scrubbed cupboards" (Allan 1954:12). Ultimately, despite the "rather raw-looking tangle of half-built houses and semi-laid-out roads", Mrs Dennison decides to move her family to Town's End, persuaded by the material benefits of a new home with "all the advantages. The garden, and the labour-saving things in the kitchen, and a bathroom and everything" (25/15). The subsequent narrative explores the adjustment of this mother and her family to their new home, where the advantages of its physical condition compete with their sometimes-difficult adaptation to a changed social situation. Ultimately however, the move proves more than materially beneficial; the family learn to engage successfully with the new environment and Mrs Dennison in particular develops from a narrowly-focussed housewife to an outwardly-facing participant in the community when she is invited to teach cookery skills at the newly-established Women's Institute.

A similar plot is the basis of *New Town*, in which the Bell family move away from their close-knit community in urban south-east London to a semi-rural locality. The London neighbourhood is based on Deptford, an area familiar to Streatfeild from her five years as a Women's Voluntary Service volunteer running a mobile canteen during World War Two. Despite being "a crowded, dirty, noisy place to live in", the area is loved by the local inhabitants who enjoy "the jostling gay life of the streets" (1954:12). In contrast, Streatfeild's imaginary Crestal New Town, located on the edge of the original Crestal village, is based on Harlow, and consists largely of the "great blocks of flats" depicted in the cover illustration (1960:145 Fig 3).

Figure 3: *New Town*. Illustration by Shirley Hughes.

The story demonstrates how, despite the utopian models for such communities, failures of planning could lead to social dislocation and isolation for the new inhabitants. As the Bishop explains to the Bell children, who are finding it hard to adjust to their new environment, it is an "experiment in a new way of living" that is failing because:

> All types of people have been moved here, not because they wanted to come, but because they needed homes. None of them knew each other, and they have different backgrounds and ideas. So at the moment Crestal New Town is just a collection of flats with different families living in them, instead of, as in ordinary towns, people knowing each other and having common interests, for here they share nothing. This means that Crestal New Town won't be a proper place until it's got some history, shaped itself, and got things of which it can be proud.
>
> (1960:154).

Making Crestal 'proud' becomes a central component in the story of *New Town*, initially involving only the efforts of the children of the family. Once Ginnie Bell has conceived the idea of a "Crestal New Town Day" however, the construction of the mother comes to the fore, as part of Cathy Bell's contribution to 'shaping' Crestal involves organising a flower show for this planned community celebration (199). Convinced that her project will be an embarrassing failure, in the event Cathy is publicly congratulated by the Bishop on her "magnificent" efforts (253). As with Mrs Dennison in *The Summer at Town's End*, the blossoming process of this home-centred mother from her inwardly-domestic orientation towards an outward-looking

participation in the community is depicted as a modification of the maternal role in response to the change in home environment.

The conflict of maternal identity between a home-based domesticity and potential community role experienced by mothers such as Cathy and Mrs Dennison is representative of the shifting family structure in society that was taking place despite the contradictory context of powerful pronatalism and a persisting understanding of domestic duties that assumed the presence of a home-based wife and mother. According to Williams in *Marxism and Literature*, the dominant ideology “constitutes a sense of reality […] beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives” (1977:110). In the fictional works of this chapter, the authors, publishers and adult purchasers of children’s books are largely complicit, either explicitly or passively, in the provision of material to support the prevailing ideological consensus and meet the contemporary need for stability. Empirical research by feminist historians Liz Heron in *Truth, Dare or Promise* (1985) and Jane Lewis in *Women in Britain Since 1945* (1992) has provided further evidence for the view expressed by Wilson that giving central importance to the mother’s presence within the home was a crucial aspect of government policy; promoting women’s traditional role in the family was not only regarded as an effective route to the much-needed national consensus, but would also serve to rebuild the population, repair social disruption of the war years and, it was hoped, reconcile the nation to the continuing economic privations of peacetime. The creation of large imaginary families, such as Streatfeild’s *The Bell Family* and Blyton’s Jacksons in *The Family at Red-Roofs*, each with four children, an employed father and a home-based mother (as well as a dog), has the primary narrative function of affording ample opportunity for the representation of familial conflict. But such creations also contribute to the maintenance of ideological consensus in the form of culturally-desirable pronatalism, reflecting the political priorities of a government

concerned to create full employment for the male workforce. Gender roles defined by these family structures were endorsed in the administration of society; the introduction of family allowances, for example, designed to encourage population growth, also operated as an incentive for women to opt for motherhood and domesticity.

Such governmental emphasis on the synergy of mother, home and social stability is reinforced in magazines such as *Woman and Home* (Fig 2), whose title is a clear pointer to its intended audience and its ideological stance. The examination of similar publications is a valuable exercise in understanding cultural constructs of motherhood in the home that are shared by the novels. *Housewife*, a name even more revealing of the perceived role of its readers, was established in 1939 as a monthly aimed at a middle-class audience, joining previously-established weeklies *Woman* (1937) and *Woman's Own* (1932) in endorsing the primacy of the domestic role for mothers. The dominance of this ideological assumption throughout the 1950s is demonstrated by the arrival of *Woman's Realm* towards the end of the decade. The publication's launch in 1958 indicates that room remained in the marketplace for yet another lifestyle magazine that focussed on home as the 'realm' where, as the first editorial declaims, "every woman finds happiness and fulfilment, […] bounded though it often is by kitchen, nursery and household chores" (1958:3). The editorial and advertising content of the magazines reinforces the ideology of maternal domesticity, and their enduring popularity in the post-war years suggests that they played a valuable role in supporting their readers, who struggled to maintain the domestic ideal in the face of extreme shortages of household goods, clothing, furniture and food. This struggle fell totally on the housewife and mother: "Happy and lucky is the man whose wife is houseproud" *Housewife* had declared in 1939, a message it revived in 1945 (qtd in Stevenson 1984:178). Articles entitled 'While Mother's in Hospital', 'Eliminate the

Cockroach' and 'Three Lucky Babies' appear consecutively in the January 1945 edition of *Housewife*, wherein the duties of the mother are made perfectly clear:

- "Who looks after the older children when Mummy is busy having the new one?" (Blythe 1945:40).
- "The housewife whose house harbours these pests is to be pitied." (Housing 1945:43).
- "There are, alas, some mothers who are just too busy with other things and too tired or indifferent to bother to collect the [cod-liver] oil despite the fact that the Government has made it as easy as possible for them." (Children's 1945:46).

Fathers rarely feature in the pages of these magazines; there is no suggestion, even when mother is 'busy' having a new baby, that father should take on any childcare responsibilities. And it is clearly a maternal duty to take advantage of the freely-available nutritional benefits of the new welfare state; notwithstanding her exhaustion or 'other' responsibilities, the mother is blamed for her 'indifference' in the face of the allegedly-enabling structures of a patriarchally-benevolent government. The fact that domestic responsibilities were regarded by both sexes as the "paramount and private task" of women was partly responsible for maintaining this pattern (Pope 2013:16). While the mother faced with pestilential cockroaches is to be 'pitied', it is still, the *Housewife* article points out, her job to eliminate them – and her fault if she does not. Even younger women acquiesced in this concept; Pearl Jephcott, who conducted an extensive survey of eighteen and nineteen-year-olds in the late 1940s, concluded that "It is a matter of principle, even with those girls who are maddeningly irresponsible in every other way, that a woman's first duty is to look after her own home" (1948:73).

Turning to the fictional texts of this chapter to explore such patterns, it is notable that the ideal of maternal domesticity prevails even in the work of Streatfeild, whose first, and most famous, children's novel had postulated a radical representation of family life. In *Ballet Shoes*, published in 1936, none of the three sisters is biologically related to one another or their female carers, and the book contains at least six putative

co-mothers, only two of whom have domestic responsibilities; all these characters provide different aspects of maternal nurture for Pauline, Petrova and Posy. In contrast, *The Bell Family* and *New Town*, which chronicle day-to-day events in the nuclear family of vicar Alex, wife Cathy, their four children, Esau the dog and Judges the goldfish (who gets a whole chapter to himself), offer a more normative construction of domestic motherhood. The production history of these two titles may have contributed to their conservative nature, since the Bell family sagas, although published in book form in 1954 and 1960 respectively, were originally written in the late 1940s as radio scripts for BBC Children's Hour. *The Bell Family* was first broadcast in August 1949 and *New Town* (entitled 'The Bell Family Again') in October 1950 (*Radio Times*). The BBC was then still heavily influenced by Reithianism, a philosophy inspired by John Reith, founder and first director-general of the BBC. The son of a Scottish minister, he applied his Presbyterian convictions and social and political conservatism (he was an admirer of Hitler) to the creation of the BBC as a high-minded public service broadcaster, and it remained one of the most traditional pillars of social conservatism in the 1950s. It is possible therefore, that the original medium for these stories did to some extent control their message. At the time, with television a rarity, the radio was an immensely influential medium attracting huge audiences – an estimated two million adults and four million children listened daily to Children's Hour in 1950, and *The Bell Family*, broadcast on radio in six-part serials every year from 1949 to 1953, was one of the most popular children's programmes, frequently voted top play of the year (Bull 1984:203).

Hence, whilst radio listeners to Streatfeild's Bell family stories were experiencing the beginning of recovery from post-war austerity, the books themselves are still imbued with the realities of those experiences, especially in respect of the mother's domestic responsibilities, which are exacerbated by the Bells' poverty

alongside the political-economic situation. In 1947 Streatfeild contributed an article to one of the last WVS newsletters, in which she lists the frustrations of post-war life: "The sheets that wear out, top and tail them as you will. The shabbiness of the house, the desperate need for paint and repairs, the carpets that wear out and are frayed […] standing in queues…" (qtd in Bull 1984:188). These conditions were articulated by visitors to the 1946 *Britain Can Make It* exhibition, who reported to Mass Observation that "they now realise how shabby their own homes are [...] it seems that a long-established satisfaction with homes has been disturbed" (MOA 1946:FR:2441). Their laments could be the voice of mother Cathy, describing her problems in maintaining the impoverished vicarage: "Now [...] I see how much wants doing. The dining-room's a disgrace, there's a piece of paper coming off the hall wall, the big armchair in the drawing-room has an enormous hole" (Streatfeild 1954:199). Or discussing her fantasy of buying new bed linen: "Wouldn't it be heavenly, imagine no mending and no topping and tailing" (1960:119). As the dilapidated hall is unwelcoming, the 'enormous hole' prevents the armchair from offering a comfortably-maternal embrace and the 'disgraceful' dining-room detracts from family mealtimes, Cathy's preoccupations link the physicality of home with the mothering role. Her attention to these minutiae of domesticity locates the text firmly in the temporality, and difficulties, of early 1950s motherhood. Streatfeild's work here engages in a shared discourse of maternal domesticity, which is partly created through the real-life social conditions described above and partly constructed through such fictional representations. Cathy's concerns to create an attractive welcoming environment for her family establish the house and its contents as metonymic of her caring maternity.

Courtney's *Sally's Family* also foregrounds the significance of the house as a metaphor for nurturing maternity. Like the Streatfeild texts, it is discursively engaged through its delineation of the constraints that post-war austerity imposed on the

homemaker, although, unlike the Bell family duology, it depicts a decidedly non-nuclear family. Twenty-four-year-old Sally Hamilton and her five younger siblings have been separated by evacuation throughout the six years of war; their father was killed in action and there is no mention of a biological mother. When the siblings are re-united at the end of the war, Sally initially takes on full responsibility for rebuilding the family. The importance of the house itself as the site of this re-creation is emphasised by the naming of the first chapter, 'Ingleholm'. Detailed representations of Ingleholm's "battered and weather-beaten [and] forlorn appearance" and "dismal [and] depressingly neglected" interior set the scene for the problems that the family will have to overcome (1946:13-14/17). The "very bare and barrack-like" house contains a minimum of institutional furniture, and prevailing social conditions are articulated by Sally's younger sister, ten-year-old Pookum, who points out solemnly that, "the problem of houses and furniture is very acute" (10/47). Further evidence of the un-home-like nature of the house comes from newly-arrived seventeen-year-old sister Kitty:

> When eventually she was free to inspect her new home she turned to Sally in anything but wordless disgust. "We can't possible live here! It – it's appalling! Why on earth did you drag us away from comfortable homes to an awful hole like this? [...] Kitty, suddenly flopping down on the only chair, began to cry. After being hopelessly spoilt for six years, the desolate house seemed even more depressing to her than it had done to Sally.
>
> (33-34).

The emotional and practical problems consequent on wartime evacuation and the separation of families are the long-term challenge faced by the Hamiltons, one that is addressed in terms of mundane practicalities. Sally's explanation to her family of their economic situation pinpoints the problems imposed by the contemporary housing crisis and shortage of consumer goods:

> I know this place is bare and bleak at the moment – but we're extremely lucky to get it. [..] As far as furniture is concerned, I'm afraid we'll just have to be willing to camp out, as it were. Even if we could get permits to buy furniture, we haven't the money. We'll just have to use our ingenuity to make the place as comfortable as possible with what we have. Which isn't much...
>
> (48).

Engagement with the house becomes key to solving these problems, and in the process Ingleholm itself is transformed, becoming a facilitating environment in which the siblings settle emotionally, interact as a family, and develop as future citizens. The Hamiltons are initially "all very much inclined to go his or her own way", while Sally, in her self-assumed role of substitute mother, "struggled on single-handed with her unaccustomed task of running a house and family" (64-65). It is only when each member of the family takes on responsibility for improving the material condition of the home and sharing equally in the many domestic duties which Sally, as putative mother, had assumed to be hers alone, that familial identity is re-created. The eventual conversion of 'spoilt' Kitty, who agrees to take on the cooking, marks the turning-point from which the family begin to develop into a cohesive social unit. The fundamental solution proposed in this text is the construction of an unconventional pattern of maternity wherein all six siblings adopt a mutual approach to the domesticity conventionally assigned to the maternal figure. As each individual connects in a practical way with the physical environment of the house, together making Ingleholm into a place of home, the family becomes a co-operative entity, designated by the siblings' communal enactment of mothering.

3. The Power of Domestic Space

Having considered ways in which the post-war focus on the material actuality of home provides a landscape for social constructions of motherhood, I now turn attention to descriptions of home spaces within the six fictional texts in order to investigate how these reveal familial power structures, with particular regard to the maternal figure. Foucault argues in *Power/Knowledge* that:

> A whole history remains to be written of *spaces* – which would at the same time be a history of *powers* (both these terms in the plural) – from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat. […] Anchorage in a space is an economico-political form which needs to be studied in detail.
>
> (1980:149)

He points out that until the eighteenth century the house was an “undifferentiated space”, but that areas within it have since become specified and functional, with rooms such as kitchen, dining-room, bedroom or children’s room allocated to certain activities or people in ways that “prescribe a form of morality for the family” (149). Foucault defines such spatial allocation as a mode of class prescription, but here I will be applying his proposition of the powers encoded in the ‘tactics of the habitat’ to the construction of maternity. I examine depictions of homes in terms of the collection of spaces within them to interrogate how the placement of the mother and other family members inside the home illuminates the balance of family power. Disciplinary powers in particular are, in Foucault’s view, intrinsic to space in literature and in reality, and I interpret the use, ownership and ‘anchorage’ in domestic space in these texts as signifiers of the exercise of, and limitations to, the operation of maternal power.

Streatfeild’s duology locates the Bell family in two contrasting home environments, urban and rural. The books, doubtless because of their origin as radio serials, describe the domestic settings in minute detail, affording the listener a clear vision of the landscape of the story. These descriptions function as what Barthes terms “realist operators”; serving to “embed fiction in the real world”, they offer the reader a rich representation of domestic space acting on the levels of both story and discourse as a metaphor for motherhood and family life (1966:268). The significance of the house itself is early made clear – in *The Bell Family*, two-thirds of Chapter One, ‘About the Family’, is devoted to an evocative presentation of place rather than people. The detailed analysis of St Mark’s Vicarage, first of the family homes, discusses the internal layout and its many problems; it is “an ugly Victorian building, with a lot of space wasted in passages” and containing “enormous sunless, chilly rooms” (Streatfeild 1954:12). The external environment is equally daunting; despite the lively streetlife, mother Cathy, on first arrival in the “crowded, dirty, noisy place […] felt quite ill, the

neighbourhood made her so depressed" (12). The dank and inconvenient vicarage is located in a "gravelly scrap of earth [without] a tree within miles; perhaps, Cathy decided, it was there being no trees that gave her that sinking feeling inside." (13). Cathy accepts without question that she has no control over her husband's choice of location, since "Alex thought the place where he was most needed was the loveliest place to be" (13). She attempts to focus on imagining improvements to the depressing interior of the vicarage, but her lack of success is obvious, even to her husband. The Reverend Alex Bell, perceived as a saint by his parishioners, is repeatedly depicted as detached from the quotidian concerns of his nearest and dearest (marked here by the narratorial 'even'):

> Cathy knew it would be no use saying to him: "Oh Alex, do tell the bishop we won't come here". [But] she was looking so depressed when she got into the bus to go home that even Alex noticed it. "Cheer up, darling, I'm sure we're going to be very happy there." Cathy's reply tried to sound hopeful, but only succeeded in sounding doubtful. "I suppose we shall. But, my goodness, Alex, what a lot wants doing."
>
> (14).

Power relations within the Bells' marriage are clarified in Streatfeild's indirect reporting of Cathy's state of mind at this early stage of the story, and, some years later, little has changed. Although she has come to value the local community, Cathy still struggles with the external environment of her home, commenting to Alex that "I've been so happy in this vicarage that often I forget how hideous it is here" (190).

As the book progresses however, Cathy's influence within the family is revealed to be in internal rather than external space, and rooted in the maternal rather than the marital relationship. Spaces inside the home are, Foucault points out, allocated by character as well as by function, a pattern that is stereotypical in children's literature; father in his study, mother in the kitchen, children in their bedrooms. Once the narrative proper starts in Chapter Two, when the family have lived in the vicarage for eight years, the maternal territory is, unsurprisingly in such a conventional household, firmly

established as the kitchen. Cathy is depicted here preparing the family tea while she waits for her children to return from school. She emerges briefly from this space into the hall to query her husband's telephone conversation, but is quickly returned to it, as "Alex came back to the kitchen with Cathy" before discussing the call (23). When parish helper Miss Bloggs arrives unexpectedly for tea, it is Alex who opens the front door, while Cathy "*called from the kitchen*. 'You must be soaked, Miss Bloggs. Take her into the dining-room, Alex. Tea won't be long.'" (25 my emphasis). And when the children get home, "Cathy came to the kitchen door" to greet them. (26). Not venturing into the hall, but continuing in her food preparation, Cathy monitors her family's arrival and behaviour by ear rather than leave her territory; she "laid down her knife and went again to the kitchen door. 'Take off your wellingtons, darlings, before you come into the hall, and hang up your mackintoshes.' [...] Cathy waited to hear the wellingtons removed, then she went back to her sandwich spreading." (26).

Cathy's customary confinement to this space is reiterated throughout the Bell family stories; crucial conversations with the family factotum Mrs Gage take place there and her children invariably gravitate there on returning home – in the scene above, her daughters, having removed the wellingtons, "came running down the passage" to the kitchen to greet her (27). And when Alex "shouts for" her to tell her he has, without consultation, invited the Bishop to lunch, Cathy's inevitable reply of "Here, darling. In the kitchen" raises the question of how he could conceivably have assumed her to be anywhere else (1960:14). Despite such reinforcement of the domestic stereotype, the ownership of this space, which Cathy shares with her 'daily' Mrs Gage, has a dual significance as a maternal signifier. The kitchen was then, as now, customarily described as 'heart of the home',[11] an epithet also commonly used in contemporary

[11] In a 2019 Google image search for 'heart of the home', 47 of the top 50 results were illustrated with the mantra 'the kitchen is the heart of the home'. The 3 exceptions were advertisements for cookware or cookbooks, such as *Nigella Kitchen: Recipes from the Heart of the Home*.

lifestyle magazines to conceptualise the ideal of traditional motherhood. So Cathy's anchorage here indicates her emotional power as well as the restrictions imposed by her maternal role. In the illustration of the homecoming scene described above, the peritextual symbolism is clear (Fig 4). Cathy is shown centred while slicing bread for those sandwiches, and her children are clustered closely around her – she demonstrably holds a central and powerful position within the family dynamic (29). Thus the kitchen space is simultaneously a place of confinement and a locus of maternal power; while physically restricting the mother, it is also symbolic of the psychological power of the maternal figure. As the personified 'heart of the home' the kitchen is not only where Cathy is supposed to be, but where, in total control, she is, in Winnicott's terms, "captain of her own fate" (1945:22).

Figure 4: *The Bell Family*. Illustration by Shirley Hughes.

Having established the Bells as a conventional nuclear family with Cathy as the stereotypically-domestic mother, Streatfeild's spatial construction of maternity in these texts nevertheless offers another model. Mrs Gage, the working woman who cleans for the family, is also frequently located, when at the vicarage, in what she describes as "our kitchen" (1960:188). She is, notwithstanding her employed role, a complementary mothering figure for the Bell children; when Ginnie is in trouble, she turns to Mrs Gage, who "hugged Ginnie to her [and] stroked her hair" (1954:65-6). These signs of physical

affection designate the maternal relationship between the two, which is also one of practicality. When Ginnie believes that she may have contracted mumps which will prevent an important family outing, she confides her worries to Mrs Gage, who, as a co-parent, elects to take her to the doctor; "not for the first time, it was Mrs Gage who came to the rescue" (180). Ginnie's biological mother welcomes the shared involvement of this co-mother in the family group; "she often asked advice from Mrs Gage", telling her that, "you're the right person" to deal with Ginnie's problems (52-3). Cathy's appreciation of shared maternity readily accommodates her own exclusion from some aspects of her children's lives; she "knew without exactly knowing it, in the way mothers do, how often troubles were taken to Mrs Gage to be sorted out which never reached her or Alex" (1960:180). This awareness is contrasted to Alex's lack of perception:

> Alex said to Cathy: "I think there's a mystery somewhere." Cathy laughed. "I'm certain there is. But you pay Ginnie her shilling, and ask no questions. This is one of those sleeping dogs that wise fathers and mothers let lie."
>
> (1954:120).

Alex perceives Mrs Gage only as a friend, and has little concept of the impact that separating from this maternal figure will have on his family. When he breaks the news of his plans to transport his family from south-east London to Crestal New Town:

> Eight horrified eyes were turned on Alex. Leaving Mrs Gage! Mrs Gage who was family! It was like talking of leaving Esau, or Angus. Ginnie spoke for them all. "Don't be silly, Daddy, if going to Crestal New Town means leaving Mrs Gage, then we just aren't going."
>
> (1960:38).

Alex, as family patriarch, does enforce the relocation to Crestal, but Streatfeild's plot ensures that co-mother Mrs Gage remains within the family. There are few facilities in the new town, where "it's easier to get ice-cream [than] a decent cauliflower" and Mrs Gage's husband exploits the lack of infrastructure that is undermining the community by renting a small-holding and setting-up a much-needed greengrocery shop (102). The

collaborative mothering dyad of Cathy and Mrs Gage thus survives, offering an alternative representation of maternity within a normative family.

Streatfeild's portrayal of the kitchen as a place of maternal power is crucial in this reconstruction of motherhood. When the move to Crestal is planned, Mrs Gage's distress at the realisation that, "soon there would be no 'we' about the vicarage kitchen", signifies the intimacy of her mothering role in the family (188). Thus while Cathy appears as the conventionally-domesticated mother of 1950s discourse, her ready sharing of this significant room with Mrs Gage is a pointer to the kitchen as a space of power where subversion enters the textual construction of maternity. Mrs Gage's presence there prevails even in her absence, as does her emotional importance: "Her laugh seemed to cling to the kitchen even when she had gone home, and [...] it was not possible to say what Mrs Gage meant to the children" (180). This dual-mothering relationship, which is highly valued by Cathy as well as her children, is implicitly contrasted with the isolationism imposed onto contemporary mothers. The impact of an overwhelming weight of maternal responsibility, inspired by the psychological writings of Winnicott and Bowlby, and reinforced by popular journals such as *Mother and Baby* (launched January 1956), is eased in the Cathy-Mrs Gage pattern of co-maternity, which reveals an unexpected dimension of maternal discourse in the depiction of an otherwise-normative family.

The ideological importance of the kitchen extends beyond the construction of maternal confinement and power systems; the space is further significant as an indicator of 'good-enough' versus damaging motherhood. Cathy's placement in the kitchen marks her as a 'good' mother, and caring Mrs Dennison of *The Summer at Town's End*, who also accepts her mothering responsibilities without question, "made straight for the kitchen" when viewing her new house (Allan 1954c:26). "Mum's heart was won by the kitchen" her daughter states, and it is on this basis that Mrs Dennison, who, unlike

Cathy Bell, makes decisions that control family destiny, resolves to move her family to the new home (28). Maternal alienation from, or ineffective skills in the kitchen as a marker for poor motherhood is an alternative trope in the texts. Mrs Lacy in Blyton's *The Family at Red-Roofs* is a selfish and exploitative mother who refuses to engage with the kitchen space: "Mrs Lacy did not mean to learn anything if she could help it. She never thought it was her own fault if anything went wrong […] but blamed the stove or the saucepan or the way the wind blew" (1945:152). Her failings are also realised in emotional neglect; "constant mishandling" of three-year old Alfred has "turned him into a bad-tempered little bundle of nerves. Cuddled one minute and slapped the next, he never knew a moment's security" (141). The ultimate condemnation of Mrs Lacy's maternity is the narrative implication that her neglect of kitchen skills could lead to the horrific death of her children. Molly, the much-exploited mother's help, is "haunted by the fear that the house might get on fire and the children be burnt. Mrs Lacy never could remember to see that the kitchen fire was safe when she left it" (151). While Molly takes over the cooking and much of the housework, as well as childcare, in her concern for the children's well-being, the collaborative mothering between her and her employer is tainted by negativity rather than the co-operative maternity characteristic of the relationships between Cathy and Mrs Gage or within the Hamilton family. Molly objects to being treated as a maid-of-all-work when she is supposedly employed as a governess, and her concerns are expressed through her role in the kitchen; "Molly did most of the cooking now. She liked cooking […] but she resented Mrs Lacy's laziness. It would be so easy for her to learn how to [cook] properly" (151).

In contrast, Molly's own mother Mrs Jackson is located *in* the kitchen both practically and emotionally. Like Cathy Bell, this character is constructed to a conventional maternal pattern, immersed in domesticity, and subservient to a kindly, but

patriarchal husband. The power balance of their marital relationship is represented in terms of appearance and function: "Mr Jackson is tall and broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced, with a twinkle in his eye. Mrs Jackson is small, hardly up to his shoulder, with rather an anxious little face and kind blue eyes" (8). In further demonstration of their conventionally-defined gender roles, Mr Jackson explains to fifteen-year-old Peter that, "'Mother, bless her, isn't much good at figures and bills and things. [These] should be the man's job. A man should always shoulder that kind of responsibility'" (68-70). Molly, the eldest, "feeling a little left-out" on hearing this, is told that "you can help in the household, Molly dear – share the responsibility of that with your mother" (68-70). In the kitchen however, the small-statured, anxious, kindly, but financially-illiterate Mrs Jackson is in control. Enveloped in her apron, an iconic symbol of domesticity, she is depicted washing-up, having previously baked for her children. Her proficiency at domestic tasks validates her ownership of the kitchen, as evident in the possessive pronoun: "Mrs Jackson bent down and opened the oven of *her* gas stove. She pulled out a tray of new-baked buns. Miss Wren looked at them with approval" (36 my emphasis). Notwithstanding immersion in the values of maternal domesticity, this text, like *The Bell Family*, posits an alternative scenario of maternity that suggests a challenge to received assumptions of motherhood. Jenny Wren, employed as a maid by the Jacksons, becomes, like Mrs Gage, a co-mother for the children, who see her as a "kind of anchor" when their own mother is hospitalised (101). She too takes ownership of the kitchen space, which, under her management "twinkled everywhere you looked" (40). The emphasis on spaces widens here to include both the kitchen and the actions taking place within it. Baking, for instance, with its implications of warmth, homeliness and sustenance, can be metonymic for motherhood, and Jenny Wren's baking skills are entwined with her maternal role: "She could bake the most delicious pies. She would scold Michael for something he had forgotten, and the next moment she would hand

him out a hot jumble from the oven" (40). The synergy of this mutual maternity and its grounding in the kitchen territory is illustrated in Figure 5. Jenny Wren and Mrs Jackson, both garbed in aprons, are "washing-up the cooking and baking dishes together", while Peter, who is, significantly, located centrally between them, looks on (36-37).

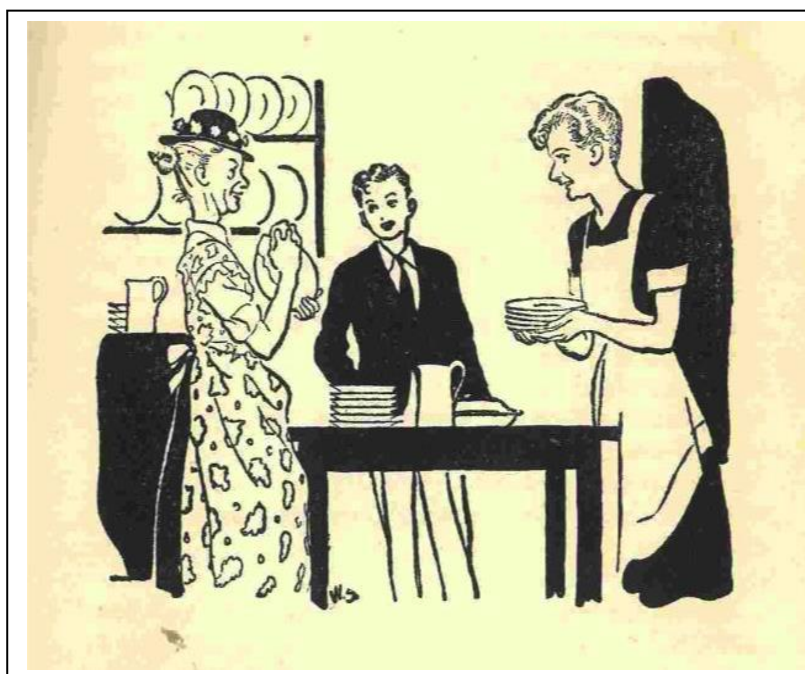

Figure 5: *The Family at Red-Roofs*. Illustration by W. Spence.

There is undoubtedly a certain irony in Blyton and Streatfeild's positive depiction of domestic factotums as substitute mothers at a time when, as Lucy Delap's article 'For Ever and Ever: Child-raising, Domestic Workers and Emotional Labour in Twentieth-century Britain' confirms, any type of domestic help was difficult to obtain, and live-in servants were increasingly rare (2011:1-10). Given the politically-conservative tendencies of each writer, the presence of such characters may have been fuelled by nostalgic reversion to a time when domestic service for the middle classes was taken for granted, even in less-well-off homes. As Catherine Butler points out, most post-war children's books are set within a "bourgeois milieu" informed by the "largely-homogenous class perspective" of their authors (2017:260). Streatfeild's work, Bob

Dixon observes, is noted for portrayals of "three-servant-poor" households,[12] and the financial constraints of the Jackson and Bell families are clearly outlined (1977:13). Mr Jackson tells his wife that the rent of Red-Roofs is "expensive [at] two pounds ten shillings a week",[13] and the Bell children long to earn money to help their impoverished parents (Blyton 1945:12). But Mr Jackson still plans to employ "a maid for your mother [and] a man for the garden", while how Cathy can possibly afford to pay the ubiquitous Mrs Gage is a never-resolved issue (29). Despite socially-unrealistic aspects that reveal the disappearing middle-class world inhabited by these narratives, *The Family at Red-Roofs* and *The Bell Family* do provide fictional constructions of co-operative maternity that present a practical alternative to the restricted isolation experienced by many real-world 1950s mothers. It is in this challenge to the status quo that the texts offer a profound contribution to a discourse of motherhood that was overwhelmingly influenced by the rhetoric of Bowlby, Winnicott and their popularisers.

The diminution of domestic help for mothers in the real world was accompanied by the increased tendency to conflate the kitchen space and the activities therein with the quality of maternity; a blending of the discourses of domesticity and motherhood that was promulgated by government and media as one way of reconciling mothers to their increased domestic burden. Such symbiotic propaganda is evident in a 1950 *Woman's Own* editorial, exhorting its readers that the kitchen:

> ... is the room more than any other you love to keep shining and bright. [...] A woman's place? Yes, it is! For it is the heart and centre of the meaning of home. The place where, day by day, you make with your hands the gifts of love.
> (qtd in Ferry 2011:6).

It can thus be assumed that Jenny Wren's mothering role is evidenced in the 'twinkling' shiny kitchen and her making of 'delicious pies' and offerings of 'hot jumbles from the oven' to the Jackson children; these are, in the somewhat mawkish language of

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[12] Reducing to two or one-servant-poor in later-published works. Although unusually, the Johnsons of *White Boots* (1951) have no domestic help at all.
[13] £2.50p.

Woman's Own, 'the gifts of love' that confirm her maternity. Factotums such as Jenny Wren do not appear in *The Six Bad Boys* (published six years after *The Family at Red-Roofs*), but Blyton's foregrounding of a kitchen presence as the ultimate marker of maternal quality is even more apparent in her binary representation of next-door neighbours Mrs Mackenzie and Mrs Kent. The primary significance of the kitchen here is as a place of family food preparation; while Mrs Mackenzie welcomes her children back from school for a cooked lunch every day, Mrs Kent, the 'villain' of this book, resents having to cook lunch for her son, and "cannot imagine why Mrs Mackenzie doesn't let all her three take sandwiches" (1951:36). Her emotional withdrawal from ten-year-old Bob, which is, the reader is specifically informed, the cause of his slide into a life of delinquency, begins when she decides to prepare packed lunches for him, rather than be available to cook him a midday dinner. Appropriately then, the kitchen is the first site of Bob's rebellion as an incipient 'bad boy':

> Suddenly something snapped and temper flared up in him. He hated the fire and the breakfast things and the kettle and everything else! [...] He hurled the breakfast crockery across the room and laughed when it broke into pieces. He took the kettle from the stove and threw that at the wall. It broke a picture. He kicked all the mats up and put his hands in the dead ashes, scattering them all over the room. What a mess!
>
> (84).

Bob's destruction of the kitchen highlights the importance of this space and its contents as a maternal signifier. It is notable that Bob's fury is vented primarily using food-related items such as crockery, kettle and breakfast utensils; since Mrs Kent has opted for a life outside the restrictions of the kitchen, and, in her son's eyes, turned away from her motherly duty of meal provision, he ensures, as a consequence, that her kitchen is no longer a 'shining and bright' place. In choosing not to engage with the kitchen, mothers such as Mrs Lacy and Mrs Kent are represented as maternal failures; their refusal to be confined in this space is a rejection of the powers, as well as the limitations of motherhood. It is in these negative characterisations that the active ideological stance

of the texts conforms most obviously with the conventional discourse of maternity – such constructs endorse the traditional notions of normative motherhood that were being disseminated by childcare and social pundits during the post-war years.

Courtney's *Sally's Family* is the exception to such normativity in its creation of a family where maternal caring is a shared endeavour, although it is relevant to the centrality of the kitchen in the construction of motherhood that this mutual nurturing still begins in that space. After their long separation by war, the communal co-mothering of the Hamilton family is initiated in a scene when Sally, exhausted by her inexperienced attempts to take on multiple motherhood tasks, breaks down. In response, Kitty takes over the cooking of dinner from her older sister, while all the siblings attempt to produce the family supper:

> Pookum got out the thick mugs and plates, and Lucy cut the bread and butter in slices so thick that they raised protests from the entire family. […] The cocoa, as made by Guy for supper, was the thickest Sally had ever drunk, and neither Kitty nor Robin, who both had a try, proved an adept at cutting bread and butter, but somehow they all enjoyed the meal.
>
> (1946:54/77).

Their efforts in the kitchen unite these previously disparate family members, and an initial lack of skills does not prevent the brothers and sisters from developing into a cohesive unit in which 'maternal' power, in the kitchen as elsewhere, is shared by each member of the group. Such a radical interpretation of performative maternity distinguishes the text from that of the other writers in this chapter. However, the narrative of *Sally's Family*, despite its subversive aspects in terms of maternal function, does conform to the prevailing ideological climate in its celebration of the re-unification of family and the restoration of post-war domestic stability; a stability that is further demonstrated as the Hamiltons develop a co-operative use of spaces extending from the kitchen into other areas of the home.

While the kitchen is the primary site where the politics of maternal power are revealed in all the fictional works, this is balanced with the delineation of other areas of

the home and their occupation by family members in ways that demonstrate wider familial dynamics. The house and home as a conceptually-unified space, was, as discussed, significant as a symbol of the reunited families that were crucial to the restoration of social stability, and reflected a governmental agenda that promoted the ideology of domesticity. A focus on the kitchen, with its links to feeding/nurturing, and the emotionally-central mother-figure within it, endorses the perception of homeliness; a perception reinforced in the metaphorical use of baking, which appears in every text. However, moving out of the kitchen into other areas of the house reveals elements of family relationships and power structures that indicate a more dislocated reality. The relationship between space and power that could, Foucault avers, dictate familial "forms of morality" – a 'morality' that fitted in with the post-war government's need for stability – could also, as he acknowledges, emerge "as a historico-political problem" (1980:149). The changes in family expectations during the 1950s were, as mentioned, perceived as both historically significant and politically problematic by contemporaneous commentators, and I now discuss how these relate to familial power structures through an examination of the utilisation and ownership of study, dining-room and bedroom spaces in the novels.

The use of kitchen space as a metaphor for nurturing and powerful motherhood is counterpointed in the Bell family saga with Alex's position in his study; a space assumed to be an inviolable sanctuary, sacrosanct from interruption, in which Alex enacts his professional and paternal responsibilities. Entrance is by invitation only, as Cathy points out to Mrs Gage during the Bishop's visit; "Don't be silly, when have I ever gone into the study unless I'm sent for?" (Streatfeild 1960:18). Only the irreverent Mrs Gage challenges this place of patriarchal power, "giv[ing] the study a good turn-out" once a month, despite Alex becoming "the nearest thing he could be to cross" at this routine; her position of power in the family clearly extends beyond the kitchen

(1954:17). Otherwise, the study remains a citadel of paternal power. It is a transitional space between the outside world of work and community and the inside world of domesticity, and thus upholds the assumption, reflective of the normative family of 1950s discourse (also common to children's literature), of the father figure as the link between the two. As a vicar, Alex works both within and outside the home, and his study is the place where the external world enters the sanctuary of home. Parishioners are invited therein to discuss weddings, funerals, christenings and crises – infuriating Mrs Gage, who evidently also claims territorial rights to the hall: "they march in and sit in our 'all, waitin' to walk with their muddy boots right across the study carpet which I've just washed" (55). Visiting male relatives Grandfather and Uncle Alfred are taken into the study for a chat, leaving Cathy with the women, wondering: "what I'm to do with the other two I don't know. Alex's mother is all right, but an hour of Rose!" (217). When the Bishop or parish helpers such as Miss Bloggs visit, they are closeted with Alex inside the study to discuss matters relating to the world outside the home. Crucially, in terms of the powers invested in the study space, it is here that decisions are made which have far-reaching effects on both family *and* community. It is as a result of the discussion in the study during the Bishop's visit, from which Cathy is excluded, that Alex decides to move his family from their much-loved home at St Mark's vicarage to the unwelcoming new town of Crestal. The study as a site of power is evident when Alex announces this; as the authoritative tone and language, particularly the repeated use of the first-person and possessive pronoun, make clear, neither the children nor Cathy have control over this life-changing move:

> The Bishop came to tell me he was offering me a new parish. At first *I* could not make up *my* mind to go, there's so much *I* want to do here, but in the end *I* saw the Bishop was right. *We're moving* just after Easter.
>
> (1960:36 my emphases).

The power invested in the study is set against Cathy's dominion of the kitchen, where she, with the support of Mrs Gage, is affirmed by her children as the hub of family life,

"the most gorgeous mother in the world" (1954:46). As the base of her emotional power this is the place to which the family bring their problems, personal, social and practical, to be solved – just as the parishioners take theirs to Alex's study. But the matriarchal power, while highly-valued, is inward-looking, towards the family and the domestic environment of home. In the study, power is directed outwards; Alex's re-location decision affects the external community (as well as his family), and also involves a significant movement in space – Crestal is over thirty miles away. As with the original transfer to St Mark's, so dreaded by Cathy, the study-space is where the externally-focussed male-centred powers of Alex and the Bishop prevail.

In further affirmation of the Foucauldian concept of powers embedded in spaces, Alex's study is the place of family discipline, a site of direct surveillance where the patriarchal figure decides on punishments and establishes standards for acceptable behaviour by his family. Cathy is not responsible for punishment, and her separation from this aspect of parental control is indicated by her exclusion from the study space; when Ginnie, the middle 'problem' child in the family,[14] is being punished, she is heard "howling in the study with Dad [while] Mum's shut in the drawing-room" (206). As a loving father, Alex rejects crude punishments, declaring to his daughter that, "I don't see how taking a strap to you fits the crime", while accepting, albeit reluctantly, the disciplinary responsibility imposed on him by paternal expectations: "I hate punishing you. But now I've got to" (208). Cathy's maternal power resurfaces after discipline has been dealt with, but is nevertheless more significant than her husband's, as she plans an inclusive outing that will serve to re-knit the family group into a harmonious unit. She tells her elder daughter that, "I don't know what punishment Daddy is giving poor Ginnie, but if he doesn't send her to bed early, perhaps we could all take supper to the park"; a restoration of family wholeness that also involves provision of food, in indirect

[14] A position occupied by Streatfeild herself as a child, and subsequently a stock character in her stories.

reference to her power base of the kitchen (211). Just as Cathy accepts her non-disciplinary role, Mrs Mackenzie of Blyton's *The Six Bad Boys* concurs with a similar separation of powers, while endorsing her husband's harsher disciplinary methods. Mr Mackenzie administers what his wife describes as "spanking" to his children:

> Her husband grinned, and began to fill his pipe. "Poor Donald! He got a whacking last week, didn't he, for borrowing my bicycle without telling me, and putting it back in the shed covered with mud! But he knew he deserved it." "Well, you're his father [and] he knew he'd earned the whacking. He won't borrow things without asking again."
>
> (1951:23).

In these examples of the exercise of paternal authority the Streatfeild and Blyton texts conform most closely to received conventional expectations of the operation of power within families, wherein traditional fatherhood acts as a foil to the position of the mother. In their decision-making for all and their imposition of discipline on their children, fathers such as Alex and Mr Mackenzie establish bounds to the maternal power enshrined in the kitchen.

Although there is a clear separation of functions depicted in such conventional parenting patterns, the barriers they set up to matriarchal power are nevertheless permeable. Blyton's paternal constructions are one-dimensional characters who are rarely present in the narrative, either because of their work role, or because they are specifically removed to service the plot. Mr Jackson of Red-Roofs, for example, disappears in Chapter Eight, believed drowned, and only returns in the last few pages of the story. Mr Berkeley of *The Six Bad Boys* deserts his family early on. Streatfeild's Alex Bell, while physically present, is shown to be unaware of the emotional needs and day-to-day preoccupations of his immediate family. In contrast, the characterisation of both positive and negative mother-figures is extremely detailed; the positive representations are depicted in close physical contact with their offspring, and much of the time this contact takes place in the kitchen (see Fig 4). It is the area of the home where life-sustaining meals are prepared, and where emotional nurture as well as food is

always on offer; symbiotic links that are explored in detail in ‘Chapter Four: Food’. The equation of power with love, encoded in the mother’s central role within this space, extends to the maternal influence in re-calibrating the togetherness of family after disruptive incidents, such as Alex’s punishment of Ginnie, and is reinforced in the doubling presence of the nurturing co-mothers. The foregrounding of the power of the maternal is evident in both the volume of text allocated to mothers and in the quality of their characterisation; it invariably overrides the disciplinary and externally-focussed power exercised intermittently by shadowy father figures.

The importance of the dining-room, and even the dining-table itself, as a pre-eminent shared family space, is evident in all the texts. As a place for feeding this is an arena of maternal focus that is a forum for family discussions and exchanges of news, a place of family bonding and the customary locus for celebrations. Meals are carried from the kitchen to the dining-room by the mother figures; Cathy and Mrs Gage in *The Bell Family*, Mrs Jackson and Jenny Wren in *The Family at Red-Roofs,* Mrs Mackenzie in *The Six Bad Boys* and Mrs Dennison in *The Summer at Town’s End*. While indicative of an apparently secondary position as servitors in the domestic hierarchy (Mrs Gage and Jenny Wren of course, are employed as such), the delivery of food is more important as a sign of the primacy of the maternal role for these characters; they are the bringers of sustenance, both practical and emotional, to the children of the family. In stark counterpoint, the disintegration of the Kent family in *The Six Bad Boys* is preceded by Bob and his mother eating separately rather than together at table, and by Mrs Kent locking the larder, thus denying Bob access to food. Dining-room family gatherings are particularly significant for *Sally’s Family* since maternal functions are distributed across all family members, rather than being invested in one or two biological or adaptive mother-figures, so meals at the dining-table signify a coalescence of the Hamiltons’ joint maternity. Having begun working together to transform the neglected house into a

family home, their discovery of a second-hand “small drop-leaf table” in the attic, leads to the experience of “what was probably their most enjoyable meal since their arrival at Ingleholm” (1946:92). The dining-room with its retrieved table signals the transformation of both place and people; it “looks like a home” as Lucy declares happily, just as the disparate siblings are beginning to ‘look like’ a family (104). Such dining-room scenes are indicators of the powerful maternity presented as key to a successful family, whether distributed or individualised. The apogee of this success is the mother. Blyton’s Mrs Mackenzie sits “at the head of the table” (1951:70). Streatfeild’s Cathy “look[s] happily round the table. ‘We wouldn’t change any of them. We know we’re lucky parents, don’t we, Alex?’” (1954:164). Both locate their maternal achievement in this space. Such scenes, involving mother, father and children seated together, accord with the hegemonic nuclear family pattern so promoted in 1950s discourse. In their depiction of the importance of the dining-room as a place of maternal influence and family togetherness, these fictional works weave into contemporary representations of the normative in family life.

The familial unity enacted and reinforced in the maternal spaces of kitchen and dining-room can however disintegrate in other areas of the home. This dislocation occurs even in *Sally’s Family*, where both children and adults exercise control over family spaces, and where, with no father to impose patriarchal power structures, the study, for example, becomes a place of *self*-discipline. This space, cleaned and sparsely refurbished with junk unearthed from the attic, is then colonised by the academic members of the family. In the chapter entitled ‘Ambitions’, brother Robin is pushed away, instructed by Guy and Lucy to “Go and worry someone else” when he tries to invade their sanctum, in which they “settle down steadfastly to spend a certain part of each day studying”, in pursuit of aspirations to become, respectively, a barrister and a surgeon (1946:194-5). The pair have already exercised the power of renaming, from

‘Schoolroom’ to ‘Study’, and continue to appropriate ownership of this territory as a place of control for themselves. However, in recognition of the generally more equal ratio of space to power among members of the Hamilton family, it is significant that the study does not remain an impregnable citadel. It becomes a temporary bedroom for Sally after she injures her foot, and then undergoes a “marvellous change” when transformed from “the sober study” into a Christmas dining-room (190). So the familial fracture between Robin and his siblings is healed, as the room reverts to a communal space that is used for celebratory meals with all members of the family.

In the other texts the spatial powers conferred on the child protagonists tend to be confined to their bedrooms; it is in the contested ownership of these somewhat liminal spaces, which can be both a haven and a place of constraint, that the unified vision of mother-centred homeliness, represented in the dining-room or kitchen scenes, becomes splintered. The marginal status of the children’s rooms, existing on the fringes of family territory, in contrast to mother’s position in kitchen and dining-room, and father’s in the study, is a further indication of the power dynamic that prevails in the Jackson and Bell families. In their bedrooms the Jackson and Bell children exercise some control in the organisation of their possessions and pursuit of their hobbies. Peter Jackson of Red-Roofs and Paul Bell of the vicarage aspire to be doctors and each possess a “treasured microscope”, which is carefully stowed in their bedroom (1945:28; 1954:54). The “Meccano sets” and “fish and insects” beloved by Angus Bell are displayed in his room, while Jane Bell uses her bedroom for ballet exercises (1954:54). Notwithstanding this technical ‘ownership', in bedroom spaces the children remain subject to adult control; Angus is required to clean out his caterpillar boxes more regularly than he would like, and Jane is cautioned not to pull the towel rail she uses for dance practice away from the wall.

The bedroom can also be a place of punishment; being sent to bed, or isolated in the bedroom, is a common discipline imposed on the child protagonists. When Ginnie is rude to relatives, it is decided (by Alex, naturally) that "for a whole week Ginnie had to go to bed the moment she came home from school" (1954:109). Her later punishment for (temporarily) stealing a baby extends from physical to psychological constraint, devised by Alex to teach Ginnie "to think what is right and what is wrong" (209). Ginnie, spatially confined against her will is, more significantly, mentally controlled, in her own space and elsewhere, through the medium of conscience; the bedroom is transformed from a private space into a site of surveillance, a Foucauldian cell. Such physical and mental surveillance evokes Foucault's famous analysis, in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon design for institutional buildings, which adopts the architectural concept of a central control tower that would facilitate control of behaviour through the potential for constant observation, in order to "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1975:197). Home can be as valid a site of surveillance as prisons, and Foucault argues that such approaches to discipline aim to produce "docile bodies" that will behave precisely as required, a position that Ginnie, as the defiant non-conformist of the family, is determined to resist (138). She attempts to maintain ownership of her space by being "grand about her punishment. 'As a matter of fact Miss Virginia Bell is quite glad to go to bed, she gets bored hearing people talk, talk, talk, all the time'" (1954:109). But as the defiance is balanced by the voice of the implied narrator – "Of course it was not true, and everybody knew it was not true, and all the family felt miserable for Ginnie" – Foucauldian surveillance prevails (109).

The dislocation of the family home represented in the usage and ownership of spaces within it is a mirror to the differential elements of power attributed to family members and the social systems within which they operate. While father has his study,

and the children (in a limited sense) their bedrooms, the maternal figures in these texts have no ‘room of their own’; even the kitchen is shared with co-mothers such as Jenny Wren and Mrs Gage. The corollary of this apparently less-than-powerful relationship to spaces is the textual perception of ideal motherhood as all-embracing; the good mother, it is assumed, *is* the home. So the positioning of the mother, whether in kitchen or dining-room, is a significant marker; while acknowledging the constrictions of the maternal role, these spaces, as sites of physical and emotional nurture, confirm the base of her power, which resides in love and nourishment rather than crude authority and punishment. In their shared kitchen and dining-room spaces the positive maternal figures represented here reassemble the disparate elements of family life and restore the home as one unified space, which meets the needs of family members as well as the socio-political responsibilities of the mother.

4. Conclusion

The idealised version of 1950s maternity that had reverted to earlier romantic models of the place of wife-and-mother, rooted in conventional roles for women as home-based mothers and housewives, is usefully examined through the optic of home and its significance in the construction of motherhood. The texts analysed in this chapter are, with the exception of *Sally’s Family*, among the more conservative of my corpus in their representation of the maternal role; in the main they operate from an ideological acceptance of traditional motherhood. The fact that they were produced in the early post-war years, when the need for stability was at its height, may well be a significant factor; the privations and restrictions of life in the post-war home are clearly reflected in the struggles of Cathy, Sally and Mrs Dennison to bring into existence the physical conditions that would create the ‘facilitating’ environment then considered so desirable for social stability and family nurture. However, while offering a revealing insight into the material circumstances that impacted on the day-to-day lives and performance of

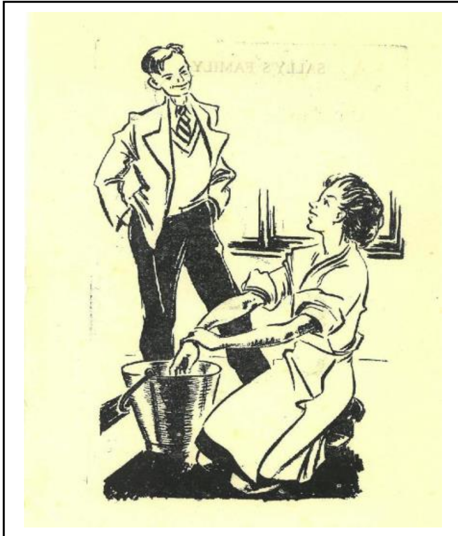
mothers, these fictional works do more than just reflect the reality of motherhood; in offering a selection of maternal behaviours they also have a discursive contribution to make.

Even the more orthodox representations of mothers as home-based housewives in *The Family at Red-Roofs*, *The Bell Family* and *New Town* are balanced with options of co-mothering dyads and willingly-shared motherhood. The maternal constructs in these three stories offer a subtle alternative to prevailing Winnicottian and Bowlby-ite notions of the indispensable, ever-present one-ness of the biological mother. Furthermore, the conventional interpretation of familial power relationships encoded in the characterisation of stereotypical father-figures, who take decisions and dispense discipline from the isolation of their studies, is challenged in the narrative absence, either physical or psychological, of the often one-dimensional paternal characters. In contrast, the precedence attributed to the emotional value of the mother in the kitchen and dining-room confirms her primacy; as spaces for all the family, but infused and controlled by the maternal presence, these are where physical and psychological nurture resides, and where maternal power is confirmed. *Sally's Family* differs from the other works in offering a representation of mothering as a performative activity that can be undertaken by more than one or two figures. Although still affirming the prevalent consensus of the importance of family for social and national stability, this text, containing no resident father, provides a more subversive interpretation of family and maternity in an unusual portrayal of communal mothering.

The growing domestication of British post-war society in the 1950s identified in socio-historical studies was promulgated through the notion of the stabilising influence of the home-based maternal figure, and the texts examined here confirm that trend. However Hall's argument in 'Domestic Ideology' (2013) that the decade was actually a period of instability is endorsed by feminist scholar Lynne Segal's concept of the period

as a time of change that was characterised by “tense domesticity and anxious conformity” (1994:4). Both conformity and tension are evident in the children’s texts discussed above. While they depict mostly conventional family set-ups, the narratives weave potentially-radical as well as traditional strands into constructions of motherhood, demonstrating an engagement in the discourse of maternity that both confirms and challenges the “unthinking smug conventionality” previously regarded as characteristic of the times (Hall 2013:166). They also indicate the underlying instability of the period as they participate in the increasingly-fraught discourse of domesticity; a topic that will be examined in detail in ‘Chapter Two: Work’.

Chapter Two
Work: Mother as Housewife and Citizen



After a last determined attack on the bathroom taps, in a vain endeavour to restore their pristine brightness, she went downstairs feeling unutterably weary, faced with the interminable task of preparing another meal for her hungry brood.

Gwendoline Courtney *Sally's Family* 1946

Homecraft forms an important part of education for the family life of a good citizen [that] every girl will need to understand. The main weight of the shopping, the cooking, the making and mending, the furnishing, the minor household repairs […] is likely to fall on the housewife.

Ministry of Education *Citizens Growing up* 1949

Figure 6: *Sally's Family* 1946

Illustration by Jeanetta Vise

1. Introduction: Motherwork

The concept of 'work' in relation to motherhood was interpreted in a variety of ways during the long 1950s; duties and values allocated to different facets of 'motherwork' were changing, both in response to social and economic factors, and in the light of developing ideological and philosophical attitudes. In *Maternal Thinking* (1995) Sara Ruddick defines the tasks of 'motherwork' as the preservation, nurturance and growth of the child and training her/him to fit into the social-cultural context. I utilise the term here with particular reference to women's unpaid labour involved in those responsibilities. Discourses of motherhood and domesticity were in flux, and aspects of the maternal role such as nurturing – the emotional care of and responsibility for children; childcare – the physical care of children; housework – as it related to the care of home and family; and the desirability – or not – of paid employment for mothers were under debate. Central to the debate were the values accorded to these differing aspects of maternity, and their accommodation within the emergent notion of motherhood as citizenship. Initiated by a government intent on restoring stability, the constitution of 'mother' as 'citizen' was embedded into the rhetoric of the welfare state.

As I explore in this chapter, it was to develop into a concept which incorporated the debated facets of the maternal role into both a private and a public construction of motherhood that would inform beliefs and attitudes regarding the work of mothers at societal and individual levels.

Having previously explored the home as a location and a philosophical concept inextricably bound up with motherhood, I now discuss how the work of mothering came to be regarded as politically critical. I first investigate how the new language of 'citizenship', while focussing on the inward-looking, home-based role of mothers, linked an essentialist identification of women in their socio-biological functions as wife and mother with public duty. I go on to consider the role of the mother-as-housewife and the functional tasks of housework required to maintain the home space, with particular attention to the assessment of domestic skills as a marker of 'good' or inadequate motherhood. I conclude by considering the search for solutions to the problems of housework, a quest that became increasingly visible as the 1950s progressed. In examining how maternal maintenance of the domestic sphere was reconfigured as an outward-facing contribution to the wider world of nation and state, I refer to novels in my corpus that focus on the day-to-day household work of mothers. None of the maternal protagonists featured appear to contemplate paid employment, and I will analyse the textual constructions of maternity that emerge from their preoccupation with housework and childcare. I discuss works by Blyton, Courtney and Streatfeild, with specific reference to Blyton's 'Six Cousins' series and *The Family at Red-Roofs*, Courtney's *Sally's Family* and *Stepmother*, and Streatfeild's *The Bell Family* and *New Town*. I address the ideological position of these novels utilising the theoretical framework proposed by Hollindale in 'Ideology and the Children's Book', discussed in my 'Introduction' (p24). There is a wealth of contemporaneous sociological commentary on motherhood, and the children's books are examined with

reference to the work of social theorists Beveridge, Bowlby and Newsom, and alongside official sources such as Tomlinson's 1949 government policy document *Citizens Growing Up* (cited in epigraph). Popular journal *Picture Post* and women's lifestyle magazines, including the upmarket *Housewife*, provide further contextual evidence. In framing the engagement of the literary works with the incorporation of the housewife-and-mother persona into citizenship, I argue that they both reproduce and challenge the hegemony of domestic maternity, and, going beyond the analyses of 'Chapter One: Home', I show how they also demonstrate the burdens this hegemony imposed on mothers.

The term 'work' is derived from the Old English *weorc*, and both this noun and the OE verb *wyrcan* carry the primary sense of "perform physical labour" (OED). Secondary definitions include "to ply one's trade" and to "exert creative power, be a creator" and each of these derivations are relevant to the various aspects of 1950s motherwork. Housework tasks at the time certainly required a considerable output of physical effort, and contemporary debates on the work being done by mothers in the home were characterised by attempts to designate housework as a 'trade' or profession, albeit unpaid, which incorporated the raising of children as a creative contribution to society. Nevertheless, and despite the considerable labour performed by housewives and mothers in the immediate post-war years, 'work' was, by common parlance, most often understood to refer to paid work. This distinction is persistent; in *Keywords*, cultural theorist Williams refers to "the predominant specialisation [of the word work] to paid employment" and cites as example the fact that "an active woman, running a house and bringing up children, is distinguished from a woman who *works*; that is to say, takes up paid employment" (1976:282). Recent online descriptions still define work as "an activity, such as a job, that a person uses physical or mental effort to do, *usually for money*", "a person's employment or occupation, especially as *a means of earning*

income" and "the expenditure of *energy for financial gain*". (CED my emphases). The implicitly-gendered nature of such definitions has been discussed by Carol Shakeshaft, who condemns a subtextual androcentrism in any description of work which only includes professional activities free from any domestic functions. She makes a compelling argument for a redefinition of the notion of work as inclusive of maternal and domestic responsibilities, pointing out that, for women, particularly mothers, it is a concept "which refers to a life pattern, […] a progression through adult life which can include time spent in and out of the workplace" (1987:64). The exclusion of domestic labour from official and informal designations of 'work' has nineteenth-century origins; in the census of 1881 women's household chores were, for the first time, excluded from the category of productive work, a move that, in separating paid and unpaid labour, was to devalue the latter. Housewifery ceased to be categorised as a Census Occupation – housewives were classified as 'unoccupied' on the basis that otherwise they might be counted twice, once as housewives and again as working in a specific occupation. In the *1951 Census Occupational Tables* this separation remained in force; married women "engaged in unpaid home duties" are treated in the statistics as "economically inactive" (HMG 1956:2-5). Moreover, in the stringent rationing regulations that were imposed after the war, housewives were classed as 'sedentary' and received fewer clothing coupons and more limited rations than employed workers (Wilson 1980:21). The contentious issue of paid employment for mothers outside the home became a significant aspect of maternal discourse during the 1950s, and will be dealt with in 'Chapter Three: Money'. In this chapter I focus on how mothers' biological and nurturing function became embedded in, and was often judged by, their proficiency in housewifery, and how, in a move away from the devaluation of housewives described above, motherwork, *not* done for remuneration, came to be incorporated into the developing notions of citizenship for women.

2. Vital Work to Do: Mother as Citizen

As families with a commitment to child-bearing and rearing were considered crucial to stability in post-war reconstruction, giving central importance to the mother in the family was, according to Heron, "part of an effort of national reconciliation […] and consensus that was being made in many parts of Western Europe as order was imposed on the threat of chaos" (1985:5). Wilson concurs, declaring the outcome of this approach was that "Women's traditional role […] was made a lynchpin of consensus" (1980:2).

Stability and consensus were to be underpinned by the formation of a welfare state that placed family maintenance at its centre. Official concern about familial instability, which was attributed to rates of marriage failure and wartime losses, and could potentially lead to a decline in population, led to the establishment of the *Royal Commission on Population* in 1945 and the *Report into Procedure in Matrimonial Causes* in 1946. This governmental anxiety is reflected in popular media; a *Picture Post* article of 1945 refers to fears that the "declining birthrate, caused by the unwillingness of young people to marry and have children […] will be a heavy handicap to Britain's recovery" (Edelman 1945:16). The pronatalism of the late 1940s judged women with small families "to be deficient in their duty to the nation", and thus the need to produce children was seen as the primary duty of women *as citizens* (Webster 1998:120). As the Commission's final report made clear, it was considered imperative for the national interest that mothers have three or, preferably, four children, and the families in the texts under discussion here conform to this pronatalist progenitiveness. There are six siblings in *Sally's Family*; the Verneys in *Stepmother*, the Bells in *The Bell Family* and the Jacksons in *The Family at Red-Roofs* all adhere to the four-child pattern; each Longfield family in the *Six Cousins* duology has three children. Although sibling conflict often informs the plot, large families are represented in these novels, in crucial

affirmation of pronatalism, as both socially and emotionally rewarding; “we have more fun than any other family I know” declares Jane Bell (Streatfeild 1954:210). In discussing Prudence’s well-off (but unhappy) two-child family, “as Mrs Jackson often said, the bigger the family the less each child could have. Still, the Jacksons didn’t want their family to be any smaller. They couldn’t spare a single member of it!” (1945:11). Two of the Hamilton sisters, having lived separately in one-child families for six years as war evacuees, come to the same conclusion:

> “Lucy, did you like it better when there was just you – I mean before we came here – or now that you’re one of a family?” “Now, of course!” Lucy declared, without the slightest hesitation. “Miss West was awfully kind, but – you’re all *min*e, if you know what I mean. We all *belong* to each other.” Kitty did know…
> (1946:223).

Later, when Kitty, who initially has problems adjusting to the financial limitations and hard work of life with her siblings, receives a letter inviting her to return to her indulgent and well-off evacuation home, an emotional scene ensues:

> “Oh, Kitty – do you want to go?” Pookum exclaimed almost reproachfully, and Kitty suddenly gave a queer little laugh. “Of course I don’t! I’d hate to go.” “But – the Howards can give you so much that we can’t.” It cost Sally a tremendous effort to say it, but she felt she had to try to be scrupulously fair. “They can’t give me all my family”, Kitty declared, almost defiantly, and Pookum’s hand slid into hers. “I want to stay here and help, and see how Guy and Lucy get on, and look after Pookum and Robin, and … this is my home and I’d *hate* to leave it!”
> (248).

The emotive language and repeated use of emphasis in these two excerpts reflects the current importance attached to pronatalist values. The luxury-loving Kitty’s rejection of material comforts in favour of life with her large, albeit impoverished, family is linguistically embellished; the language of ‘belonging’ in the conversation with Lucy, and the intensity in her ‘almost defiant’ use of the term ‘hate’ in response to the letter, affirm the textual privileging of the large and stable biological family. This affirmation is reinforced in the emotionally positive responses of her siblings; her sister’s supportive hand sliding into hers, “a lump in Sally’s voice”, and her brother’s “face

betraying peculiar satisfaction", are all summed up for Kitty by Pookum, who has, she declares, "never been so ex-cess-ive-ly pleased in my life" (248).

By the time the *Royal Commission on Population* reported in 1949, official demographic anxiety had been somewhat allayed by the post-war baby boom. Nevertheless, the understanding that child-bearing and child-rearing should be a crucial part of women's national duty remained; as Beveridge had famously declared in the introduction to *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, "Mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world" (HMG 1942:52). The immediate post-war drive for population replacement was further reinforced by the need for a growth in trade and consumption to fuel economic recovery, so pronatalism continued even when fears of a diminishing population receded; discourses of maternity during the early 1950s continued to validate the establishment of large families, but for economic rather than eugenic reasons.

The provisions of the welfare state initiated between 1944 and 1948[15] largely reflected Beveridge's views on the public importance of the maternal role; he considered that "the welfare of mothers and children should have first consideration in any social security plan, in order to further the future well-being of the community" (1942:40). The incipient welfare state was welcomed by the majority of women: "It's going to be a grand thing for family life", as one respondent to Mass Observation wrote in her diary (MOA 1943:FR:1673), while another described it as a "triumph for the women's cause" (MOA 1942:FR:1616). The Central Office of Information later reported on "the fact that three out of four mothers take the trouble to attend welfare centres" as a sign of such appreciation (1959:6-7). However, state provision was predicated on the assumption that women would be available in the home to mediate welfare services in this way, and thus reinforced gender determinism and economic

[15] See 'Introduction' p30.

dependence. Organisations representing women's interests, such as the Married Woman's Association and the Women's Freedom League, while fully approving the concept of the Beveridge Plan, raised concerns about issues of independence and autonomy contained in the implications of the domestic role for wives; the "denial of any personal status to the woman because she is married" as a WFL pamphlet put it (Abbott 1943:4).

The public and private nature of gender roles inscribed in the social security provisions that were the basis for such concerns can be perceived in the traditionally-organised marital relationships depicted in the literary texts. Membership of the welfare state incorporated a peculiarly-gendered notion of citizenship that was couched in terms of reciprocal duty between husband and wife and between citizen and nation-state, an ideology that is inscribed in the assumption of wifely duties taken by the protagonists of Courtney's Verney family, as well as in the interactions between husband and wife portrayed by the Longfield and Bell parents of Blyton's and Streatfeild's texts. The prescriptive gender roles implicit in these familial patterns were written into the administrative structure of British post-war society. As Lewis observes, women's citizenship role after the war was specifically to redress the decline in population and provide domestic support for men in employment, so married women's eligibility for the benefits of the health service, for example, was based on their (employed) husband's insurance payment (1992:92). Even family allowances, conceived initially by Beveridge as a model of financial remuneration for mothers, as well as an explicit incentive for women to choose maternity and domesticity, could not be considered in any way a 'wage'. In order to encourage population growth, Beveridge and the *Royal Commission on Population* had recommended reasonably generous family allowance rates of eight shillings a week per child, starting with the first child, and proposed a further array of maternal assistance, such as home helps, rest homes for tired mothers and subsidised

holidays for needy families. These proposals were watered down by parliament; while the family allowance, for instance, was, after extensive protests from feminist politicians, paid to the mother rather than the father, it was only awarded for the second and subsequent children, and at a much lower level than previously recommended.

The nuclear-family model of wage-earning husband-father and home-based housewife-mother producing and caring for the children represented in the 'Bell Family' and 'Six Cousins' stories, promoted as the ideal for both social and economic reasons, was a pattern which reinforced the domestic status and economic dependency of women. The Beveridge Report makes this clear, stating that, "For all married women, *that is housewives* […] there will be new benefits […] as well as comprehensive medical treatment, both domiciliary and institutional, for *all citizens and their dependents*" (HMG 1942:9/14 my emphasis). Despite the bespoke form of citizenship allotted to mothers, housewives were evidently separate from 'all citizens'. As this language implies, under the new social welfare provisions, a mother, like her children, would be considered her husband's financial dependent. The texts in this chapter, with the exception of *Sally's Family*, each depict households wherein the paternal rather than the maternal figure is invested with financial power, and thus are largely compliant in endorsement of the prevailing economic pattern. Blyton's two Longfield mothers, for example, hold considerable domestic power; hard-working Linnie is highly valued by her family for exemplary housewifery, and pretty sister-in-law Rose is indulged by her devoted husband, who considers that "he was lucky to have someone […] whom everyone else would admire" (1950:24). Nevertheless, both maternal characters concur in an unquestioned, if somewhat discontented, acceptance of their financially subordinate position. Linnie engages in economically-productive labour on Mistletoe Farm; she "took her share of the farm produce and used it or sold it or stored it", but, despite constant hard work, defers to her husband in monetary matters (92). Her desire

for new curtains for her own and her daughter's bedroom, for example, is subordinated to his decision to invest in "something much more important – machinery, or new hens, or feeding stuff" (16). The non-productive Rose has no direct control of money, but assumes she can wheedle her husband into spending what she wishes by behaving "like a spoilt little girl" (66). When she decides to spend money secretly on new dresses for herself and her daughter in preparation for a party, the language used positions her as a child, since she calculates that "David would probably only *scold* a little" (95 my emphasis). A similar incident is described in Streatfeild's *New Town*, when Cathy, in most unusual defiance of husband Alex, decides to sell some donated clothes in order to buy her daughter a new dress. As she explains to Jane, "Daddy likes me to pass on anything we can't use to that society to help poor clergy [but] this time I am going to deceive him. […] I'm not going to have you with nothing decent to wear at the farewell party" (1960:82). These fictional mothers do not overtly protest their lack of financial autonomy; monetary control, as in the real world, is deemed the prerogative of the male head of household. Their anomalous position rests on the definitions of 'work' discussed above, in which the contribution of domestic labour (that is considerable for Linnie and Cathy) is devalued. 1950s sociologist David Reisman comments, with specific reference to housework, that:

> the housewife, although producing a social work-product, does not find her work explicitly defined and totalled, either as an hour product or as a [pound] product, in the national census or in people's minds. And since her work is not defined as work, she is exhausted at the end of the day without feeling any right to be, insult thus being added to injury.
>
> (1950:262).

The insult and injury embedded in the marital ideology of the 1950s, wherein housework is not 'explicitly totalled' in terms of either time or money, assumed that the husband as sole breadwinner would exert full control over finances. This was to become a recurrent theme in the socio-cultural discourse on motherhood and citizenship that developed during the decade, as it became apparent that women's public role as citizens

was enfolded into their private position as housewives and mothers. In the early post-war years the citizenship liabilities of housewives tended to be expressed in terms of contribution to a national effort, so women would, for example, be exhorted to help the coal industry by careful use of fuel: “Women can’t dig coal – but they can do the next best thing: use it as economically as possible” (HMG 1948:2). The more specific distinctions that emerged between paid and unpaid roles has been discussed by Lister, who deploys the useful term ‘social citizenship’ in *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* to distinguish between the divergent perceptions of citizen-as-carer and citizen-as-wage-earner that came to dominate motherhood discourse (1997:169-171). Her discussion reflects on the position taken by Tomlinson in the Ministry of Education pamphlet, *Citizens Growing Up: At Home, In School and After*. In a concept that was novel for its time, Tomlinson asserted that the unpaid domestic and child-caring role should be incorporated into citizenship alongside that of the wage-earner; his exploration into the provision of education for citizenship argues for a concept that included both private and public responsibilities. He describes “Homecraft [as] an important part of education for the family life of a good citizen”, but assumes a gendered perspective; he was convinced that the private/domestic role would inevitably be undertaken by the female:

> Most girls, and, to a less extent, most boys also, need some training in the duties and responsibility of conducting a home. Nearly every girl will need to understand the arts and skill that furnish and provision a home […]. The important, and often-neglected, part that can be played by the men and boys of the household is not forgotten. But the main weight of the shopping, the cooking, the making and mending, the furnishing, the minor household repairs, the fuelling and heating, and even the gardening and the poultry keeping, above all, the budgeting and catering, is likely to fall on the housewife.
> (1949:28).

It is intriguing, in view of this daunting list of tasks likely to ‘fall on the housewife’, to speculate what ‘important and often-neglected part’ might actually be left for men and boys to do. Tomlinson is vague on this, but what is abundantly clear from the political strategy he outlines is that while women were included as citizens, it was only through

their private role as mothers and home-makers; citizenship for women was regarded differently from that of their male peers. Their contribution to the state was, to use Lister's term, configured as a form of 'social citizenship' that elevated the position of unremunerated housewife into an allegedly-equal, but certainly-different role to that of the wage-earning citizen, who was assumed to be male.

As Beveridge's comments on their 'vital work' made clear, a mother's responsibility was not only to the nation-state and the "British race", but also encompassed "ensuring the adequate continuance" of both (HMG 1942:52). The discourse on motherhood as it related to the quality of child-*rearing*, both physical and emotional, rather than quantity of child-*production*, became more prominent in the early 1950s once quantitative fears of a falling population had diminished. Having fulfilled her biological duty by producing sufficient children, maternal quality became preponderant; the continuing role of mother-as-citizen was to run her home and raise her offspring in order to enhance the future of the nation, to promote "British ideals in the world" (52). The shift of emphasis from quantity towards quality in the responsibilities of maternal citizenship is evident in the proliferation of socio-psychological research; figures such as psychologists Bowlby and Winnicott proved to be extremely influential politically, as well as becoming popularised in lifestyle magazines and through radio broadcasts. A preoccupation with what Bowlby describes as 'mother-love' and Winnicott as 'devotion', informed analysis of the mother-child relationship and became a matter of intense debate that emphasised the importance of the maternal role to society at large.

Bowlby, who was noted for his research into young children separated from mothers, and the development of attachment theory, was a key figure in the debate.[16]

[16] Bowlby acknowledged that his concern with maternal separation and attachment was influenced by personal circumstances. Born into an upper-middle-class family, he was cared for by nannies as a child, only seeing his mother for a brief time each day. He was also sent to boarding school at a young age; both situations proved traumatic for him.

His work for the World Health Organisation on displaced children after the war, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, published in 1951, was reissued in 1953 as *Child Care and the Growth of Love*, an abridged Penguin publication intended for a wide readership. The main conclusions of this study – that mothers are central to a child's development, that maternal deprivation is a key cause of mental ill-health, and that any maternal separation will adversely affect a child to some degree – provided useful backing for political measures such as the widespread closure of day nurseries after the war. Fifty percent of wartime nurseries were closed by 1955, although these closures were driven by administrative and financial as well as ideological factors; central government subsidies to local authorities for nurseries were halved in 1945 and abolished entirely in 1946 (Bruley 1999:120). Nonetheless, the practical outcome of the loss of community childcare facilities was to reinforce established views on the role of mothers. Despite the fact that Bowlby's conclusions had been generalisations based on the unhappy experiences of wartime evacuation, or of children in the impersonal care of institutions, they were to be generally interpreted as an argument for the constant presence of the mother. In providing a 'scientific' backing for traditionalism, his emphasis on "the absolute need of infants and toddlers for the continuous care of their mothers", and the "social infection" posed by children deprived of this, fitted in very conveniently with pronatalist ideology underlying the establishment of the new type of social citizenship for mothers (1951:107/182). As Penelope Lively, a novice parent in the 1950s, remembers, the influence of Bowlby's ideas was internalised by mothers and thus self-perpetuated – a sort of maternal Panopticon that "struck fear into the heart":

> A warm continuous relationship with the mother throughout its early years was essential to a child's mental health, one was told. […] Leaving any child under three, even for a short period, was a major operation [so] the mother who had been thinking of slipping off [...] thought again, more responsibly.
>
> (2001:185).

Bowlby's strongly-worded strictures on the social importance of a loving maternal presence accorded with those expressed, somewhat more mildly, by Winnicott. In radio talks Winnicott consistently attacked health professionals for placing too much emphasis on physical care and hygiene at the expense of emotional development; his ideal maternal citizen "didn't mind [when] the urine trickled down and soaked you. In fact by these things you knew you were a woman and an ordinary devoted mother" (1957:4). Winnicott's elevation of the work of 'ordinary' mothers into citizenship resided in his conviction that "the first successful relationship between mother and baby [is] the only true basis for a relation of a child […] eventually to society. In human affairs the more complex can only develop out of the more simple" (1945:16).

The overt values of the Blyton and Streatfeild texts engage with this political discourse. In their construction of motherhood at the level of explicit ideology, Blyton and Streatfield operate in accordance with Hollindale's assertion that, "a large part of any book is written not by its author but by the world its author lives in" (1988:15). Each regularly utilises the transparent narrative device of presenting two opposing styles of mothering, in which the contrasting maternal models are developed though their characterisation of the mother in light of her psychological impact on the child protagonists. As well as her depiction of Linnie and Rose Longfield, Blyton uses this technique in her direct comparison of Mrs Jackson and Mrs Lacy in *The Family at Red-Roofs*, Mrs Mackenzie and Mrs Kent in *The Six Bad Boys*, and Mrs Carlton and Mrs Taggerty in *Those Dreadful Children*. In addition to the comparison between Cathy and Rose Bell, Streatfeild deploys this device in her presentation of Bee and Aunt Cora in *The Painted Garden*, Aunt Claudia and Olivia in *White Boots*, and Mrs Wintle and Pursey in *Wintle's Wonders* (1957). Rose Bell of Streatfeild's Bell family and Rose Longfield of Blyton's Mistletoe Farm are located in almost identical positions of binary opposition to their sisters-in-law, Cathy Bell and Linnie Longfield. Streatfeild's "fair-

haired, pretty, most beautifully-dressed" Rose Bell, whose main interests are her clothes and foreign travel, prioritises social life over her child, spending her time "having clothes fitted, and sitting on committees for charity balls" (1954:88; 1960:23). Daughter Veronica is an only child (so in that respect Rose has already failed in her quantitative maternal duty of citizenship), who is materially indulged but emotionally deprived. She "hate[s] being parked first here and then at home" when her parents go on holiday, and her immaturity is linguistically indicated in her use of the parental nominatives "Dada and Mumsie" (1960:75). Her cousins consider her a "poor mimsy-pimsy stuck-up minx", and in defining the impact of Rose's self-centred maternity on her child, the implied author tells us that Veronica, "took after her mother only more so […] she had a far whinier voice" (1954:43/88). Rose Longfield is also obsessed with fashion and appearance; "she was a year older than [Linnie], but looked ten years younger" (Blyton 1948:10). Like Veronica's mother, this Rose treats her children in a chronologically-inappropriate fashion and is herself, according to her brother-in-law the farmer, "a silly butterfly" (26). The description, with its metaphorical implication of 'flighty', carries connotations of a skittish, ephemeral and unreliable nature that is at odds with the responsible hard-working citizen-mother envisaged in the rhetoric of Beveridge and Tomlinson. The implied author, in direct address to the reader, delineates the practice of butterfly-mothering:

> Oh, how silly she was! She fussed, she pouted, she squealed, she simpered – and she spoke to all the children, her own as well, as if they were about five years old. No wonder Melisande, Cyril and Roderick were peculiar with such an odd mother!
>
> (10).

The language used to describe Rose's behaviour – her child-like 'pouting' and 'squealing' – is a sign of her own immaturity and a pointer to her ineffectual mothering. Such linguistic codes are at play in both sets of texts and contain an unsubtle interpretation of each mother's failings, which are clearly shown to have a negative

effect on the developing characters of their children. As Hollindale argues, "ideology is inseparable from language" and "language [is] inseparable from the climate of ideas and values at work" in society, and the name bestowed on the two maternal characters is itself linguistically significant (1988:15-16). The word 'rose' is derived from the Latin *rosa*, meaning a fragrant flower; redolent of beauty and delicacy rather than utilitarian practicality, it invokes the images of decorative fragility that inform Streatfeild and Blyton's characterisations. In their representation of negative motherhood, both characters operate at each of Hollindale's levels of ideology – explicit, passive and organically rooted in language. The citizenship values implied in Beveridge's vision of 'British ideals' are notably absent from the self-regarding 'silly' mothering styles of the two Roses, and the binary textual delineation of these mother-figures is clearly reflective of the world inhabited by the author, as well as transmitting the "widely *shared* values" of contemporary society (13).

While the new discourse of maternal citizenship constrained women into an apparently-reactionary home-based role, the emphasis on the special role of the mother, clearly reflected in these novels, was also seen as enhancing for women. The Blyton and Streatfeild stories examined here, while not overtly political, implicitly endorse such cultural assumptions when describing how mothers raise their children; the fact that Linnie's Longfield's Susan is being "brought up right", while Jane Bell is becoming "a daughter [Cathy] could share things with and rely on" is a marker of the effectiveness of their mothers as citizen-carers. (1948:42; 1960:52). As Tomlinson asserted, for "good citizenship […] the home is the first training-ground of character", and these young protagonists are represented, in contrast to their poorly-mothered cousins, as being on the way to developing into mature characters and responsible citizens themselves (1949:7). Moreover, the emotional insufficiency of the two Roses as maternal citizens, indicated by the behaviour of their 'peculiar' or 'whiney' children, is further

compounded by their incompetence as housewives; both are deficiencies that can be interpreted as a failure to fulfil their political duty of citizenship. In an ideologically-complicit affirmation of the integration of good mothering with domestic skills, neither Rose Bell nor Rose Longfield, both of whom employ servants to do the housework, are able to perform effectively in the 'housewife-as-citizen' sphere so intrinsic to contemporary perceptions of successful motherhood. The aspirant Winnicottian vision of maternal status in the domestic sphere that offered a reorientation of motherhood towards the responsibilities of the participant citizen had, however, failed to give due account to the hard labour of 1950s housework. This drudgery became a barrier to the reconfiguration of mother-as-citizen that needed to be addressed, a process that will be discussed in the following section.

3. The 100 Hour Week: Mother as Housewife

Sociologist Ann Oakley declares that 'housewife' is a term "often used casually to mean 'woman', 'wife' or even 'mother'", and points out that the frequently-used phrase 'housewife and mother' links the practical tasks of caring for a house with the nurturing role of caring for children in an elision which prioritises housewifery over maternity (1974:ix). Derived from the Middle English *husewif*, the implications of the word have not varied from its first-known usage in the early thirteenth-century; described as a "woman, usually married", the housewife is defined in task-oriented terms such as "managing a household", while the power balance of that household is implied in her descriptor as "wife of a householder" (OED). The housewife, it would appear, may manage the household, but not own it. While it is not (yet) acceptable for a female to contract marriage with a house, the synthesis of house and wife into one word does, as Oakley asserts, imply connections between womanhood, marriage and the dwelling-place of a family. The derived assumption that the roles of mother and those of housewife are fully coterminous was inherent in the gendered notion of citizenship for

women in the 1950s. As socialist historian Sheila Rowbotham has pointed out, "In capitalism housework and childcare are lumped together. In fact they are completely different. Housework is drudgery [while] caring for small children is important and absorbing work" (1973:122). Moreover, as Oakley observes, "children are directly antithetical to the demands of the housewife role: they are neither tidy nor clean in their 'natural' state" (1974:102). The official discourse of post-war motherhood, rooted in the detailed proposals of the Beveridge Report, failed to acknowledge such contradictions. In his later publication *Voluntary Action*, Beveridge is sympathetic to the workload burden of mothers, but still makes no distinction between the physical tasks of housekeeping such as washing, cooking and cleaning, and the nurturant aspects of mothering (which may well, of course, include cleaning-up mucky children):

> The housewife's job with a large family is frankly impossible, and will remain so, unless some of what has now to be done separately in every home – washing all clothes, cooking every meal, being in charge of every child for every moment when it is not in school – can be done communally outside the home.
> (1948:264).

It is also notable that Beveridge mentions the housewifery tasks washing and cooking first; the mother role, despite its importance – to child, society and to what he earlier described as the "continuance of the British race" – is, in practice, submerged, if not entirely subordinate to, that of the housewife (HMG 1942:52). However, Beveridge does display a more enlightened perception of the issue than many of his policy-making colleagues, recommending improved consideration for the housewife as:

> part of the general change in the direction of reforming effort which is long overdue, from improving conditions and giving more leisure to the paid worker in the factory, to improving conditions and giving more leisure to the unpaid worker in the home.
> (1948:264).

His recognition that domestic work *was* work is taken further in this alignment with paid work, which identifies housework as a socially-productive activity, equivalent to the economically-productive contribution of the factory worker as a problem requiring

intervention. Although Beveridge's well-intentioned advocacy of communal solutions to the problems of the over-worked housewife and mother was supported by left-wing political groups, including the Family Endowment Society, the Labour Party Fabian Group and feminist MPs such as Eleanor Rathbone, after the change of government in 1951 when Winston Churchill's Conservative Party was returned to power, the political climate militated against such so-called 'socialist' solutions. Nevertheless, by the mid-1950s the received notion of work as solely a paid and workplace-based activity was being challenged, and domestic labour, especially for mothers with large families, was becoming recognised as a mammoth task. A series of articles in popular magazine *Picture Post* in 1955 and 1956 that demonstrate this shift in attitude engendered a huge volume of letters and culminated with a forceful article entitled *Motherhood – the Job with the 100 Hour Week*. Journalist Charles Hamblett offers a "portrait of a modern mother of four, driven, like most mothers, to exhaustion every day", in which he details the regular tasks of a housewife:

> Few men work as long and many can barely visualise what the ambiguous term, 'housewives' duties', really involves. They include cooking, cleaning, scrubbing, window-cleaning, house decorating, washing, ironing, first-aid, nursing, carrying coal, humping laundry, sewing, mending, patching, darning, cleaning sinks and drains, helping neighbours, caring for pets, and polishing […] Add to this the fact that it is the wife, not the husband, who must face the day-to-day responsibilities of doling out what money there is on household goods, and you begin to understand some of the pressures put upon the housewife.'
> (1956:18-19).

While the article, in line with contemporary thinking, conflates the roles of housewife and mother, it also, as had Beveridge, aligns motherwork with the economically-productive work that was restoring prosperity to the country. Hamblett, having observed that statisticians estimated an average of twelve hours a day would be spent on housework, compares the job of his interviewee mother to that of a man in heavy industry, concluding that, "women like this […] form the most important section of our community. Even the world's statisticians are agreed that housewives, as a body, are

consistently the hardest workers" (19). The article ends with an explicit reference to the ambivalent position of housewives and mothers in relation to the benefits of the welfare state:

> It is impossible to arrest the tax on health caused by child-bearing and child-care. Housewives are the most neglected class in the rehabilitation and convalescence schemes of the National Health service, according to the British Medical Association. [They] have more ailments than other women and a major contributing cause is lack of leisure due to the demands of young children. (20).

The lack of leisure for mothers critiqued in this article was evident in societal expectation of domesticity. Similar enumerations of housework tasks are reiterated in policy documents such as Tomlinson's *Citizens Growing Up* as well as in advice manuals of the time. Directly aimed at the housewife and mother, these address the reader in the voice of a sympathetic, but better-organised friend, offering ideas on how best to deal with the daily workload. Hamblett's statistical estimate of twelve hours a day for housework looks remarkably optimistic in the light of many such publications. The 1953 *Housewife's Pocket Book*, "designed for every woman who is concerned with the making of a happy and delightful home", concedes that "Home management is not an easy job, and […] can easily become sheer drudgery", before discussing the variety of tasks and skills required – a range which extends the housewifery responsibilities listed in Hamblett's article and Tomlinson's pamphlet – from "repairs and decoration" to "social life" and "etiquette" (Wallace 1953:11).

The deadening impact of daily responsibility for tasks that could be tedious and were always repetitive is described by many real-life respondents to Mass Observation. 'Accidia', the mother of six children, who had studied English Literature and Modern Languages at Girton College Cambridge, identified herself for the Co-operative

Correspondence Club[17] as ‘a housewife and mother’ and was positive about motherhood:

> On the whole, I enormously enjoy my children. [They involve] hard work in plenty, fatigue, exasperation at times but interspersed with those moments of sheer breath-taking happiness and delight that only the company of the very young can provide.
>
> (MOA 1951:TC:24/1/4).

But in discussing her attitude to housework she describes:

> My life endlessly spent in tidying the muddles of others, cleaning the horrid little house, […] my own life at the moment seems a dull waste, a vale of (unshed) tears, an empty vessel, a froth of frustration. […] I am bored, bored, BORED.
>
> (MOA 1955:TC:24/1/4).

The frustrations of housework compared to the rewards of mothering expressed by Accidia, which prefigure later sociological analyses of the relative satisfaction of these roles by second-wave feminist scholars such as Rowbotham and Oakley, outlined above, are hinted at in my corpus. It is significant in the subject positioning of the texts that protests are generally expressed in the narrative voice of daughters – who may become mothers – rather than directly by maternal figures, since it is the young protagonists with whom the implied reader is most likely to identify. Streatfeild’s Jane Bell, a focalising character, resents that her poverty-stricken mother has to “spend hours in hot weather cutting up a beastly old velvet house-coat to cover a chair”, whereas Cathy, the voice of compliant maternity, links this distasteful task to her mothering role, declaring that she is “glad of the old brown velvet to cover the chair” (1954:210). While the novel’s explicit ideology of maternal domesticity is expressed in Jane’s admission that “I’m a silly fool to mind, and you’re an angel not to”, her concerns are ultimately construed as justifiable and prioritised over her mother’s submission (211).

Cathy’s position reflects the post-war societal move towards a deliberate revaluation of maternity as the most rewarding aspect of the housewife role. In

[17] The Co-operative Correspondence Club (CCC) consisted of a group of mothers who exchanged pseudonymous letters and articles about their everyday lives in the form of a circulating magazine. The club magazine lasted from 1935 to 1990, and the letters are now part of the Mass Observation Archive.

response to commonly-expressed negative attitudes of actual mothers such as Accidia, the linking of maternity with housewifery would, it was hoped, help to establish homemaking itself as a worthwhile career. This melding of the two roles, in conventional terms already considered normative, was crucial to the establishment of female citizenship, so the construction of 'good' mothers as skilled housewives became pre-eminent in motherhood discourse. Advertisements such as that for Vim scouring powder (Fig 7) were integral to this process; the assertion that cleaning the bath will earn "Full marks, Mum!" presupposes (and imposes) the assumption that mum is responsible for cleaning, despite the fact that it is "Young Jimmy [who] left the bath ringed with half the playground's grime" (Winship 1987:61). The advertisement also carries a subliminal message that 'Mum' is a better mother for carrying out the task so effectively. Such adverts invested housework tasks with emotional significance that could be mediated by mothers into love for their families. There are even mood-raising consequences for mother in using the right scouring powder, as Vim icon 'Sudsy' informs her; "Sudsy Vim is made to make you feel bright about *all* your cleaning" (61).

Figure 7: 'Sudsy Vim'.
Illustration from Winship.

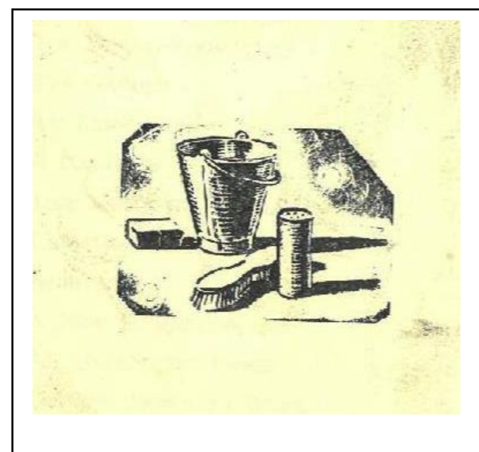


Figure 8: *Sally's Family*.
Illustration by Jeanetta Vise.

A more honest depiction of the reality of the bathroom-cleaning task is presented by Courtney, when substitute-mother Sally, unsupported at that stage by her family, attempts to fulfil her self-imposed role of housewife-and-mother:

> Sally found that keeping the bedrooms and kitchen tidy and struggling with meals kept her prentice hand almost fully occupied, and so she did not make much progress on the augean task of cleaning down the rest of the house. On the last day but one of the holidays, however, she made a determined effort and finished cleaning out the bathroom thoroughly […]. After a last determined attack on the bathroom taps, in a vain endeavour to restore their pristine brightness, she went downstairs feeling unutterably weary, faced with the interminable task of preparing another meal, for her hungry brood were beginning to clamour for their tea.
>
> (1946:65).

Courtney's representation of Sally as the striving housewife – whose unidentified packet of scouring powder illustrated on the title page (Fig 8) may not have been Sudsy Vim – accords with the reality of domestic work described by Beveridge, Hamblett and Tomlinson. When Sally arrives at Ingleholm the house is "neglected and dirty", because, a neighbour points out, the former tenant had not "used either hot water or soap on this place for a year" (15/23). The language used (referencing the legendary stables of Greek king Augeas, uncleaned for thirty years) evokes her overwhelming struggle to tackle the 'augean' cleaning task. In unquestioning adoption of prevailing notions of maternal domesticity, Sally attempts to deal with all the housework herself, tidying and cooking as well as cleaning, and the unrewarding nature of her assumed responsibilities is clear: endeavour is 'vain' and the repetitive tasks involved are 'interminable', while the additional pressure of familial expectations on the housewife-mother is evident in her hungry and 'clamouring' brood. Sally's twice-mentioned 'determination' in the face of these odds, inevitably leads to exhaustion. The solution offered in Courtney's text is familial participation; Sally's 'unutterable weariness' precipitates a family crisis, which leads to everyone taking on a share of responsibility for housework. A communal "sense of achievement" is created, as Sally describes: "You do feel proud when you look at something and think *we did that*! I feel I want to pat ourselves on our backs every time I come into this room and think what it looked like the day I came" (127). The communal responsibility for housework taken in this text is a challenge to the assumption in official discourse that *educating* the housewife,

rather than *assisting* her, was the way forward. Organising her day more efficiently, along the lines of *The Housewife's Pocket Book* for example, was promulgated in both popular and political media as the most effective route to the creation of the efficient housewives and mothers needed to underpin stable and happy families. Courtney's text offers a radical option of shared workload that anticipates the social approach recommended by Beveridge in *Voluntary Action*, transforming the tedious performance of household chores into a joint effort that promotes family cohesion.

The Streatfeild 'Bell Family' and Blyton 'Six Cousins' duologies construct a more traditional model of the exemplary hard-working housewife and domestically-oriented mother common to 1950s domestic ideology, which assumes the conflation of the good housewife with the good mother. Streatfeild's Cathy copes, assisted by her daily help Mrs Gage, with virtually all the tasks enumerated by Hamblett and Tomlinson, cooking, cleaning, mending and patching-up furniture in her inconvenient vicarage homes. On moving from a town to a country location, she reluctantly accepts responsibility for the family pets, including newly-acquired poultry: "Of course Mrs Gage and I have weakened, so we now prepare the hens' mash, and there's Esau [the dog] and all of you to feed, and often the goldfish" (1960:240). In comparison, her sister-in-law Rose, presented as an emotionally-inadequate mother, delegates housework to paid servants, a pattern she and her husband transmit to their daughter. Veronica is reminded by her doting father that she does not need to acquire domestic skills, since, even when she marries, servants will be provided: "Things are different for you, Veronica, pet. When you marry, there'll be no need for you to do your own [housework], Dada will see to that" (1954:104). Despite a leisured life and economic advantages, which are repeatedly contrasted to the hard work and financial constraints limiting Cathy's opportunities, Rose is described as discontented with her lot: "because she had nothing to do [she] was bored, and showed it by always speaking in a whiney

poor-me voice" (1960:23). Having turned her back on a domestic role, Rose focusses on a social life outside the home, as a result of which her daughter is emotionally lonely: "Aunt Rose was out a lot, and Veronica left to herself had to find her own amusements" (195). Treating her child as a decorative doll who can be dressed up, or neglected, at will, Rose provides a "pink frock with blue ribbons to match the cake" for Veronica's ninth birthday, but has no appreciation of her daughter's need for affirmation beyond such attention to the externalities of dress and appearance (1954:99). The imputation of poor mothering implicit in the superficial maternal gaze, as "Rose looked dotingly at Veronica. 'You look nice in anything, pet'", is reinforced by her daughter's immature behaviour – Veronica "cried if anything was refused her" (1954:88; 1960:23). Rose's unaware maternal behaviour is linked to her non-domestic role by her placement in opposition to the hard-working housewife Cathy. Streatfeild thus promulgates the received assumption that good mothering is indissolubly connected with the practical performance of the mother as a housewife, and in this respect the text is complicit with the officially-approved position that domesticised motherhood is in itself an important occupation.

The message that good housewifery correlates with good motherhood, whereas inadequate (especially if lazy) housewives are likely to be bad mothers is even more explicit in Blyton's 'Six Cousins' series, a duology characterised by the dominance of the maternal portraits over those of the eponymous six cousins. Mothers Linnie and Rose Longfield are, as with Cathy and Rose Bell, juxtaposed as templates of 'good' and 'bad' motherhood; hard-working farmer's wife Linnie is set against town-bred and superficial Rose. In the first title, when the three town-based Longfield children, Cyril, Melisande and Roderick are sent to live with their country-dwelling cousins after their house is burned down, the conflicts that arise between the two sets of siblings are attributed to their contrasting experiences of mothering; the maternal quality of each

mother is specifically expressed through her housewifely competence. The exemplary housekeeping of Linnie, who “swept about from this room to that, efficient, quick and commanding” is matched by her empathetic mothering (1948:12). She is, according to her daughter Susan, “the best in the world – she was a *mother*”; Rose meanwhile, in Susan’s opinion, “wasn’t a real mother at all. Hadn’t she let all her three children live at Mistletoe Farm for eight months and only come to see them once?” (1950:8). Rose has retired to a nursing home after the fire, although uninjured, and is upbraided by Linnie for abrogating her maternal responsibilities. Seeing “the dainty beautiful Rose, lying in bed, looking perfectly well, Mrs Longfield felt angry. ‘When are you going to get up, Rose?’ she said bluntly. ‘David needs you. And the children need you too’” (1948:27). Linnie’s anger and her ‘blunt’ comments are the vehicle through which the overt ideology of this text is expressed. Here Linnie’s voice takes on the philosophical position of the implied narrator in a tirade on the responsibilities of wife and mother:

> “The wife should be a responsible woman, Rose. And you are not. You won’t take up your responsibilities. You don’t help at all. You are trying to escape all the tough things of life. […] You’ve a husband who needs help. You’ve three children to see to. You should get up from this bed and dress and go to your duties.”
>
> (27-28).

These ‘duties’ are expressed in terms of housewifely chores. When the urban Rose responds to Linnie’s criticism with an absurdly romantic view of her sister-in-law’s country lifestyle, she is swiftly disabused as Linnie describes the reality of her daily tasks: “You know you’d hate to live in a farmhouse and manage hens and ducks, and make butter and cook. [….] You wouldn’t like to be without constant hot water. You’d hate oil-lamps” (27). In the sequel title, when Rose is eventually, and reluctantly, installed in a farmhouse of her own, she relies on two full-time maids to do the housework in her “easy-to-run, completely modern home” (1950:13). Both implied narrator and protagonists’ voices point out the contrast with Linnie, who manages her old-fashioned and inconvenient farmhouse with one elderly retainer. Rose’s failure to

do her own household chores, represented as a combination of ignorance and indolence, denotes her maternal inadequacies. The disjunction between husband David's expectations of Rose as a country housewife, modelled on Linnie's example, and Rose's own understanding of the role, drives the plot in this second title. On their first evening in the new home, David regards "his pretty young-looking wife with pleasure. […] She would look nice even in the dairy, making the butter and setting out the bowls of cream. She would look nice feeding the hens" (37). His facile unspoken assumption that they will "plan out the work together" is negated in his wife's simultaneous musing: Rose "had no thought of feeding hens, or grading eggs, and certainly not of washing them. As for making butter, well, she didn't even know how to, so that thought never occurred to her" (38). David's objectifying male gaze, which equates appearance with function, problematises the role of rural housewife he is expecting his wife to assume so easily; his privileging of 'looking nice' will not, he is to discover, be relevant to her performance of productive labour or willingness to take on the duties of farmer's wife.

The comparison between the two mothers in terms of housekeeping skill as a metaphor for good motherhood is most explicit in the Christmas dinner at Mistletoe Farm, to which Rose and her family have been invited. Linnie, as "a good housewife, had forgotten nothing", and the description of the celebration spread, with familial acknowledgement of the effort involved in its production, is linked directly to an appreciation of her maternity:

> Crackers, fruit, nuts, jokes – everything was just right for Christmas. Mr Longfield glanced proudly at her. His Linnie certainly worked hard every day – but whatever she did was very successful. […] "And she's cheerful all the time!" he thought. He called out a toast. "To Linnie – all our love – we couldn't do without her!" The children raised their glasses of orange-ade and lime-juice, and shouted at the tops of their voices. "Mummy! My love!" "Best mother in the world!"
>
> (64).

This affiliation of Linnie's housework and mothering roles is counterpointed by the implied narrator's reference to the internalised reaction of Rose, who is excluded from

such appreciation. Having previously decided not to host Christmas in her new house because "she didn't really feel up to coping", Rose begins to consider her own maternal relationships: "Would anyone ever toast her like that, with delight and joy and love? She couldn't help feeling just a little bit doubtful" (61/65).

Rose's doubts are realised in the increasing disillusionment of her husband and children as her poor housewifely skills are fully revealed when crisis strikes the household, and her two maids decide to leave. Rose is shown to be unable to cope with the most basic household tasks:

> Rose opened a tin of cold meat and cut herself. It took five minutes to bandage her finger, and she sat down for another five minutes because the sight of blood upset her. […] Sunday was a muddle, [and] Melisande began to feel rather impatient with her mother. "Fancy taking twenty minutes to make one bed!" (109/115).

The ultimate affirmation of Blyton's overt ideological position regarding the synergy of housewifery and motherhood follows when Rose's maternal credibility is redeemed in the final chapter, 'A Proper Family Again'. Having threatened to leave the family because of the lack of household help and her own reluctance to take on domestic tasks, she discovers that her need of her children transcends her dislike of housework. In a resonant echo of Linnie's constant "rushing round", Rose "rushed round doing this and that. She was very tired, but she was no longer miserable" (21/153). Maternal contentment, rather than misery, is found here in conformity to the conventional ideal of the housewife-mother. Rose is last situated in the kitchen, clad, most significantly, in one of Linnie's overalls:

> Melisande stared at her mother in surprise, for she was wearing something she had never seen her in before! "Mother! You've got an overall on!" she said. "Oh Mother, it's so *queer* to see you in that – but you look nice and homey. I like it." (154).

As well as being standard garb for household work in the 1940s and 1950s, the all-enveloping overall is a potent symbol of acceptance of domesticity. Streatfeild's domestic treasure Mrs Gage always wears one. So does Blyton's Jenny Wren (see Fig

5). When Sally Hamilton surveys her daunting cleaning task at the beginning of Courtney's *Sally's Family*, the first question her neighbour, experienced housekeeper Mrs Rees asks is, "Have you got an overall?" (1946:22).[18] So the donning of this iconic domestic garment signals Rose's capitulation to the conventional housewife-mother persona; in wearing it, she has literally 'put on', as well as taken on, the role of maternal exemplar Linnie. Her newly-acquired motherhood identity is further indicated in the language used to describe her appearance. The earlier objectifying gaze of husband David, who "wanted someone decorative […] dainty and pretty," is replaced by daughter Melisande's vision of the solidly-based 'nice and homey' aspects of her mother's new apparel (1950:24). In this conclusion, homeliness and the maternal housewife's domestic contribution are privileged over meretricious 'decorativeness', as overalled Rose, "looking flushed and young again", prepares high-tea for her family (154). As with the Streatfeild works discussed, the acceptance and ready performance of the duties of the housewife is presented here as crucial to an approved maternity. The capitulation of Rose in the persona, as well as the clothing, of Linnie, is key to what Hollindale would designate the 'explicit ideology' of Blyton's text, whose overt contribution to maternal discourse is a confirmation of the value of domestic motherhood.

However, both the 'Six Cousins' and 'Bell Family' titles, while containing prominent expressions of satisfaction and fulfilment in the role of housewife that are fully in accord with an established ideology of domesticity, do suggest contradictory factors that offer opportunity for resistant readings. Blyton's implied narrator declares that Linnie, who carries the overt message, "took it for granted that these things were her job, to be done well and lovingly for her husband and children, and she did them, and was happy in the doing" (1950:69). Cathy is resigned to the distasteful household

[18] The symbolic resonance of this garment persisted; it was later ironically personalised in 'Mrs Overall', the stereotypical charlady of *Acorn Antiques*, in Victoria Wood's 1986 TV sketches.

chores (such as “beastly” chair-covering) her poverty imposes, telling her daughter that, “I’d [not] miss one minute of watching my children grow up for all the money in the world” (Streatfeild 1954:210). Nevertheless, the over-burdened and exhausted housewife described in Hamblett’s ‘100 Hour Week’ is clearly visible in the depiction of Linnie constantly “rac[ing] about the house doing the hundred and one jobs that were forever waiting for her” (Blyton 1950:8). Meanwhile Cathy describes herself as “too tired. I’ve got so much to do I can’t feel anything anymore” (Streatfeild 1960:240). It is also significant that both characters have limited chances to pursue their own interests. Linnie confesses to her nephew that her love of music and reading is “rather gone from me now, Cyril, with so much to do and think of” (Blyton 1948:58). Keen gardener Cathy “let the garden she had dreamed of making drop. There are no time-spenders like gardens, but she had meant to sneak some. Now […] she knew she had been wrong” (Streatfeild 1960:220). There is a paradox in this portrayal of the negative effects of harsh domestic reality; the surface construction of maternity in the ‘Bell Family’ books, deployed even more blatantly in the ‘Six Cousins’ series, depicts Cathy and Linnie as conventionally-ideal mother figures, whose housewifery skills are indissolubly linked to the quality of their mothering. This explicit position is contradicted in the narrative when the characterisation of Cathy and Linnie as mothers exhausted by domestic responsibilities, and deprived of opportunities for self-expression, subverts the overt message of positive domesticity. These contradictory representations of the maternal lifestyle have the potential to undermine the textual depictions of contented motherhood in ways that could, as Fetterley discusses, “make possible a new effect” on the reader that may “in turn provide the conditions for changing the culture that the literature reflects” (1978:xx).

Such resistant readings, which could indeed influence the subject position of the implied reader, constitute an alternate strand of the contribution the texts make to

maternal discourse, as the covert acknowledgement of the price of acquiescent compliance to normative maternity offers a subversive challenge to the received maternal ideal. The heavy demand that society placed on the housewife and mother, previously treated as a private and personal problem solvable through the normalising adaptation of the mother to domestic conformity, was being overtaken as the 1950s progressed by a growing identification of domesticity as a public and social concern. In the next section I discuss the search for solutions to that concern, and examine the engagement of my corpus in this endeavour to ameliorate motherwork.

4. The Treasure: Servants, Machines and Education Solutions

A prominent aspect of the emerging discourse around the difficulties associated with domestic maternity as citizenship at this time was the attention paid in the media to the vexed question of solutions to the housework problem. The issue came to the fore during the early years of the 1950s after suggestions for community management of practical tasks in the home, as advocated by Beveridge and others, had failed to materialise. Despite the emergent concept of ‘companionate’ marriage (within which home responsibilities would apparently be shared more equally), and nods towards shared effort – Tomlinson’s “important […] part that can be played by the men and boys” – gender determinism permeated this debate (1949:28). Mothers remained the focus of the dialogue, and suggested solutions included the use of paid household help, the availability of modern domestic technologies as servant-substitutes, improvement in the performance skills of housewives (‘upskilling’), to be achieved through the informal and formal education of women and girls, increased sharing of household tasks within the family, and the developing power of the mother as consumer. I will be examining each in turn, and considering the gendered nature of such domestic discourse in my following discussion.

The classical servant solution was less available in the changing economic conditions of the times; a marked reduction in the number of domestic workers, and the tendency of those employed as such to vote with their feet if dissatisfied, as Rose Longfield's two maids had done, became a crucial preoccupation, especially for middle-class housewives. Lifestyle magazines commonly referred to the employment of 'helps' as a central concern for middle-class mothers; the monthly glossy *Housewife*, for example, featured a long-running cartoon, 'The Treasure', depicting the trials and tribulations of employing a charlady. The increased educational opportunity afforded by the 1944 Education Act, the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen in 1947, and the post-war increase in clerical and retail work had given female school leavers a wider choice of employment; fewer opted for domestic service, and paying for help to ease the burden of housework, even if affordable, became more difficult. Domestic employees after the war were likely to be non-residential and part-time – the 'daily' – so Cathy Bell's Mrs Gage is a more chronologically-realistic figure than Rose Longfield's full-time live-in cook, Ellen, and seventeen-year-old maid Sally. The majority of housewives, whatever their income or class, were, like Nan in Courtney's *Stepmother* or Sally of *Sally's Family*, required to manage their role without paid help.

As prosperity improved over the decade, the increasing production of labour-saving machinery to reduce the maternal workload came to be regarded as an alternative solution to the practical difficulties of servantless housework. A repeated newspaper advertisement for an innovative gas-fired (as opposed to coal-fired) boiler was entitled 'How to Live Your Life Without Servants – and Enjoy It!'. It describes the housewife as "Maid-of-all-Work. Cooking. Cleaning. Laying the fires. Encouraging them with sheets of The Times. Rushing back to see to the boiler. Servantless. And Bored" (*Times* 1959:9). A series 'Buying for the Home', devised to recommend brands and explain the functions of new equipment that could ease domestic tasks, was launched by *Woman*

magazine in 1959. The first article deals with traditional cooking utensils "geared to modern kitchens", such as "mincers with suction-disc bases that cling to glass-smooth surfaces of plastic working tops!" (Blair 1959:29). The new domestic machinery would, it was believed, not only free up the housewife's time, but also empower her financially as a consumer-purchaser. The literary works tend to eschew such technological solutions; although Blyton's Rose Longfield does benefit from a "modern gas-stove and boiler [and] even a 'frig'!" in her "easy-to-run" farmhouse, these aids are not in themselves presented as solving her housework dilemma; hard work and skills are still required (1950:13-14). Even if affordable, which they are not for sister-in-law Linnie, such mechanical aids could only be partially effective solutions, since in the real world, as the domestic advice manuals attest, housekeeping standards were being encouraged to rise in line with the technology available to enhance the housewife's performance.

In response to the changing climate, magazines and official government publications promoted upskilling, a process of improving the technical performance of the housewife described by Judy Giles in *The Parlour and the Suburb* as a "professionalisation of housework" (2004:70). Popular advice manuals such as Kay Smallshaw's 1949 *How to Run Your Home Without Help* and Elizabeth Craig's 1950 *Housekeeping: a Book for the Single-handed Housewife* were published, directed specifically towards the middle-class wife who, unlike her working-class counterpart, had had little experience of household work. Craig suggests a daunting timetable for the housewife's day; starting at 7.00 a.m. when she should "Draw curtains. Open windows. Clean dining-room and living-room." and ending at 9.00 p.m. when the evening meal had been washed up and cleared away (1950:128). Although the housewife was allocated an "entertain or rest" period between 4.30 and 6.00 p.m., this did entail a requirement to "spend 30 minutes attending to your toilet, your hair and hands, changing your clothes, looking over your wardrobe and seeing to immediate

necessities" (128).[19] Smallshaw's similarly prohibitive list of tasks puts a positive gloss on the acquisition of 'professional' domestic skills, offering enthusiastic advice on doing the laundry, boil-washing nappies, and advocating the use of 'modern' products, such as Vim, for properly scouring the bath. Such books, representing housework as a satisfying activity, endorsed the political agenda of realigning domesticity as an aspect of citizenship, in a policy-led attempt to ameliorate the acknowledged drudgery of the housewife's role. Nevertheless, social concerns around the problem of housework, even when aided by technology, are still evident at the end of the decade. Phyllis Lovell's 1958 *Halving Your Housework*, subtitled "for women who hate doing it", recognises these concerns; it addresses women who "hate housework" and talks of "inspired laziness" (1). Yet the guide continues to reiterate, albeit sympathetically, the familiar formidable array of necessary housewifery procedures. The characterisations of over-burdened Cathy and Linnie, written in the late 1940s, evidently remain relevant a decade later; they are valid representations which contradict the cheerily-complicit pragmatism of the advice manuals to demonstrate the limitations imposed by the extensive demands being made of the 1950s housewife.

The literary works examined in this chapter thus engage in a wider discourse wherein maternal quality is judged by readiness to match these demands, although they do depict mothers as reliant on assistance provided by a 'treasure', if they have one, or the limited co-operation of their offspring (the communal solution described in *Sally's Family* is an exception). In either scenario, housework, in line with prevailing social assumptions, remains predominantly a gendered activity. Streatfeild's Mrs Gage and Blyton's Dorcas and Jenny Wren are female employees, and the assistance expected from the children of the fictional families generally conforms to received gender-

[19] The maintenance of femininity, as yet another obligatory duty of the housewife and mother, was to become increasingly enfolded into maternal discourse as the decade progressed, and will be discussed in 'Chapter Five: Body'.

appropriate notions of household chores. In this respect the texts reflect prevalent ideas of the separation of functions promulgated by contemporary theorists, even those not speaking from a conservative perspective. In their concern to obtain a better deal for mothers after the war, particularly with regard to their entitlements under the newly-established welfare state, left-leaning feminist activists such as Eva Hubback and Margaret Bondfield emphasised the crucial importance of female domestic skills. As Bondfield declares in an epigraph to Newsom's *The Education of Girls*:

> To my mind, the ordering of the home, the bringing up of children, the bringing to the home the best possible help that modern achievements can provide, require not merely the greatest intellectual effort, but the most sustained effort of service, that infinite capacity for taking pains which amounts to genius. (1948:108).

The appearance of this quotation in a conservative work is significant of kindred affinities across the political spectrum on matters of domesticity. Newsom's trenchant treatise, published when he was a school inspector, advocates a traditional and separate curriculum for girls, grounded in domestic subjects, and fostering the skills of mothercraft.

The newly-branded 'domestic-science' teaching envisaged by Newsom was a strand of maternal discourse that proposed formal educational solutions for the problem of housework. Newsom's self-declared remit was "to discover how far the […] secondary education of girls is related to the function of women in modern society […] in the fifth decade of the twentieth century" (11). He was less concerned with the highly-educated girl who might attend university (whom he assumed could acquire the necessary skills without assistance), and focussed on "the 99 per cent who finish their education by the time they are eighteen" (14). His ideas, which were highly influential in 1950s discourses of motherhood and domesticity, rest on essentialist assumptions regarding gender. His fundamental assertions are that "men and women have marked physiological and psychological differences" and that, "for the vast majority of women,

the business of home-making and the early nurture of children is a dominant theme in their lives" (12). A patriarchal separatist agenda is established early in the chapter 'For Women Must Work', where Newsom assumes that 'work' is home-based and that beneficiaries of "the Hoover and the products of Messrs. Heinz" are unquestionably female (23). While women "as mothers, wives and teachers are the true architects of the future", such influence should not, he cautions, be confused with "this mad passion for equality" (108). He proposes that a woman, rather than seeking equality, should "cultivate the things which were best suited to her mind", and his proposition that "we have neglected the special education which girls need to become good mothers and good wives", leads him to recommend that all subjects in a non-academic secondary curriculum for girls should be related to home duties (111). Thus, arithmetic could help with household accounts and cookery, science with the business of heating and cleaning, and geography linked to the acquisition of "commodities used to equip and maintain the home" (118). Newsom had little faith that mothercraft and domestic skills could be acquired as necessary after marriage, declaring that "the theory that these skills can be attained by some sort of inner light which begins to glow a fortnight after the wife has said 'I will', is sufficiently discredited by the painful experiences of too many husbands" (127).

Newsom's recommendations arise from the unquestioned position of male privilege revealed in this comment on husbands. He also believed that, partly as an outcome of the wartime dislocation of home-life, housewifery was insufficiently taught in the home environment since mothers had been unable to pass on skills to their daughters; his solution of assigning responsibility to 'experts' was endorsed by many policy-makers, hence the proliferation of advice manuals. However, his concerns are not upheld in examination of my corpus, whose narratives retain the assumption that

domestic skills would be handed down – a position both traditional and empowering for mothers. As Jenny Wren declares, to nine-year-old Shirley's concern:

> "Why, them's things every girl and woman ought to learn. And if I'm to be spared to be here when you're a growing girl, you'll be learning them too, I promise you that. Yes, you'll know how to keep a house clean and sweet, how to cook and how to bottle and preserve and pickle, how to sew and knit and mend and everything else, if it rests with me!"
>
> (Blyton 1945:154).

This catalogue of home-acquired accomplishments is remarkably similar to the prescribed tasks of the housekeeping manuals, while fictional Jenny's priorities for the female role match the Newsom philosophy of education. When Shirley protests that she plans to become an artist, so "shouldn't need to learn all those things", she is quickly disabused: '"You'll be a woman and a good housewife before you're an artist' said Jenny, firmly" (154). The gender determinism of the assumed correlation between womanhood and housewifery is apparent in Jenny Wren's insistence that older sister Molly and long-staying visitor Prudence assist with housework tasks; the previously-spoiled Prudence is "made to do all kinds of household jobs" despite her incompetence at them (168). Housework competence is not required from the brothers of the Jackson family, whose contribution to the running of the household consists of financial and mechanical tasks.

In further contradiction of contemporary concerns about a lack of home-based domestic education, the training of female family members in housework appears in other texts, where it is construed as an implied solution to the problems of easing the work burden for the mother. The required participation in domestic chores by the child protagonists of Blyton, Courtney and Streatfeild's stories features as a maternal yardstick, a test of character and an indicator of power relations within the family; as in *Stepmother*, when newly-arrived Nan sets her step-daughter "down to the task of making a steak-and-kidney pie [and] peeling potatoes" (Courtney 1948:41). Courtney and Blyton in particular confirm Newsom's essentialist gender-specific position on

housework. In Blyton's 'Six Cousins' saga, Roderick, the youngest boy, is tasked with cleaning the family boots and shoes, while older boys Cyril and Jack are expected to help in outside work on the farm, including the "man's job" of walking the bull (1948:95). The three female cousins, by contrast, are sent shopping, and help daily with washing-up. The quality of mothering, as well as their own developing character, is judged by competence in such tasks. In the opinion of home-help Dorcas, while Linnie's eleven-year-old Susan has "been brought up right", her fifteen-year-old cousin Melisande, ill-trained by Rose, "wants a good shaking up, it seems to me. Puts the glasses into the same greasy water as the bacon dishes. I never did know of such a thing" (42). The task-gender divide is apparent even in Courtney's communally-organised Hamilton family; Sally's allocation of washing-up, dusting and bed-making chores to herself and her three sisters elicits a plaintive query from younger sister Lucy; "Yes. But what about the boys?" (1946:121). In response, Sally asks Robin to clean the kitchen windows and collect sticks for the fire, while Guy is required to bring in coal and light the kitchen and sitting-room fires. As male responses to the 1948 Mass Observation Directive *Housework* make clear, the commonest jobs performed by men of the household were reported to be carrying the coal, chopping firewood and lighting the fire, so these fictional task divisions mirror the realities of post-war family life (MOA 1948:DR:March/April). Such gendered differentiation of domestic labour is evident in much contemporary children's fiction, and its interpretation is a matter of debate among scholars. Discussing publications up to 1950, Hazel Sheeky Bird notes that "'feminine attributes' are largely associated with domestication and girls are often cast in quasi-maternal roles" (2014:32). Watson and Rudd also analyse gendered depictions, of Susan in the 'Swallows and Amazons' series and Anne of the 'Famous Five' books respectively. Watson observes that, as opposed to older brother John, "Susan's exploration is experienced in terms of camp-building and home-making", with

Ransome drawing "propitiatory" attention to her "domestic reliability" (2000:18). Rudd's discussion of Blyton develops this point further, arguing that Anne's acknowledged domesticity can be interpreted as an appropriation of a position of power, since she utilises it to direct the other characters (2000:118).

While the Blyton and Courtney texts examined here conform to the gendered allocation of housekeeping tasks identified by these critics as the norm in contemporary writing for children, Streatfeild's work dents the status quo in her delineation of Cathy, whose behaviour can be interpreted on similar lines to that perceived by Rudd in his reading of Anne. "Cathy counted on family help" and, like Anne, exerts her domestic power in the allocation of housework tasks with little regard for delineation by gender; sons Paul and Angus share the work of shopping, clearing the table and washing-up equally with their sisters (1954:144). When Cathy insists that "you must all help get lunch", her elder son and daughter do the cooking while the younger siblings are told to lay the table and put out drinks for the family (1960:43). Even more significantly Jane Bell, who declares to her mother that she is "not really a useful daughter like some [of the] girls at school who cook beautifully […] and look after the house", is shown determinedly resisting the pressure of her wider family to acquire housework skills (52-3). Rather than taking "extra classes […] in a kitchen, where she'll learn to make a good man happy someday" as her traditionally-minded grandparents advise, this focalising character concentrates on working towards her future career as a dancer (1954:104). Jane's refusal to comply with a gendered domestic identity is later validated when she is successful in obtaining a scholarship to Sadler's Wells School (161).

Streatfeild's message is particularly notable in the light of expectations of normative domestic responsibility held by social reformers such as Bondfield and her contemporaries. Feminist campaigners Gertrude Williams and Marjorie Tait each advocate a wider role for women beyond that of housework, but when addressing

prevailing expectations of motherhood, they accede in the restrictions it imposed on women, including limitations to career choice. As Tait points out in *The Education of Women for Citizenship: Some Practical Suggestions*:

> The woman's right to the guardianship of her children implies her duty to care for them, [and therefore] duty as well as inclination in many cases dictates that women in public life should be specially concerned with the care of children, the sick and the aged, and the handicapped; with food, health, education. (1954:72).

In *Women and Work* Williams deals graphically with the burden of housework for mothers, but nevertheless assumes that responsibility for both house and childcare will inevitably impose limitations on female opportunity; the "endless tasks" of mothers and the "many minor ailments to which children are subject" ensure, she declares, that "the mother must remain with them" (1945:105). She concludes with timid hope for the mother that, "when she has launched her children into the world […] there may gradually evolve a new design for women's lives in which the intimate and intensely personal responsibilities of the home are reconciled with the less personal but vital obligations to the larger community" (127). The writing of such theorists in envisaging a female role beyond housework, while considerably less ambitious than Streatfeild's vision of professional achievement overtly prioritised over domesticity, does extend the concept of maternal duty to the nation-state beyond that of reproduction and housewifery. Their advocacy of wider social participation for mothers, albeit in limited arenae, prefigures the 'dual-role' perception of women's lives later advocated in the research of sociologists Myrdal and Klein (examined in 'Chapter Three: Money').

One logical solution to the housewife's problems, alongside the help of offspring, was predicated in the concept of the 'companionate marriage'. Social scientist Richard Titmuss, in his 1952 lecture on 'The Position of Women', postulated that a more egalitarian form of family life was emerging in which husband and wife worked together as a team (1958:88-103). This had been an aspect of Beveridge's vision, and

contemporary sociologists Young and Willmott attributed the rise of what they describe as the "symmetrical family" to the beginnings of "a new kind of companionship [in marriage] which is one of the great transformations of our time. There is now a new approach to equality between the sexes and, though each has its peculiar role, its boundaries are no longer so rigidly defined" (1957:30). The involvement of husbands in the day-to-day work of the home would, it was assumed, ease maternal burdens, balancing out the gender discrepancies of demanding domestic labour described by Williams:

> A heavy family wash can be exhausting, but men have never shown any eagerness to have such work reserved for them, and the work of the daily charwoman, involving, as it often does, the wearisome carrying of heavy pails of water up and down innumerable flights of stairs has always been free from male competition.
>
> (1945:31).

'Male competition', let alone 'eagerness', to share in gender-specific housework tasks was, however, as noticeably lacking in reality as in the novels. According to the later research of historians Finch and Summerfield, the concept of companionate marriage failed to lead to any greater degree of equality in the performance of housework. Their review of sociological studies of the post-war family points out that 1950s discourses of pronatalism and motherhood did not fully subscribe to the ideal of marriage as an equal partnership, and indicates that Young and Willmott's optimism ignored the continuing gender inequalities in perceptions of unpaid work. The division of labour in the family was still assumed to be a corollary of the childbearing role, so the specialisation of tasks, with men as breadwinners and women as carers and housewives, was perceived both as 'naturally' complementary and also as a rational divide that would maximise the welfare of the household. The empirical evidence of the Mass Observation survey *Housework* endorses this; while the household tasks such as carrying coal and chopping firewood that men admitted to undertaking may have been strenuous, they tended to be time-limited, unlike the more over-arching and ever-present responsibilities of their

wives (MOA 1948:DR:March/April). The idea that roles of husbands and wives in the home were becoming 'symmetrical' during the 1950s is certainly not supported by the advice publications and government directives cited above, all of which direct their advice to the women of the family, on the assumption that coping with housework will remain the responsibility of the mother.[20] The portrayal of interaction between husbands and wives in the children's texts accords with the conclusions of Finch and Summerfield. In an echo of Williams' description of the charwoman's work, Blyton's Linnie Longfield daily carries heavy pails of water upstairs, so that she can have a hot bath. Linnie does not ask her husband for help, telling him: "I wouldn't dream of making you get up out of your chair at the end of a hard day's work" (1948:67). As a representative housewife, Linnie's exhaustion – "I do often feel tired at the end of the day" – is secondary to her compliance in the gendered marital separation of tasks (67). In Courtney's *Stepmother*, when the father of the family, Mr Verney, returns home, accompanied for the first time by new second wife Nan, he immediately:

> sinks down into a deep chair by the fire. "It's good to be home again, Nan! And little short of miraculous to have you here with me! But where are you off to now?"
> "To see about tea" [Nan replied …]. "Don't you realise how late it is? So we're going to have a good tea! I think we need something more substantial than just jam and cake. And you know you married me for my cooking."
> (1948:37).

While his wife retreats in search of the kitchen, Mr Verney starts "reading by the fire, just as in the old days" – from which one can reasonably assume that his expectations of Nan replicate those operating in his previous marriage (38).

In the absence of companionate assistance, the provision of domestic technology, discussed above, was identified as a compensatory solution that would also elevate the cultural and financial power of mothers as consumers. The post-war push for industrial growth and a greater consumption of home-produced manufactured goods in

[20] An assumption that persists today, with chatty 1950s advice manuals replaced by 21st century housework blogs such as TOMM – The Organised *Mum* Method (my emphasis).

order to restore prosperity to the nation was believed, once recovery was established in the second half of the 1950s, to enhance maternal ‘social citizenship’. This assumption is explored by Abrams in ‘The Home-centred Society’, which describes the “new role for the modern housewife as a consumer, [who] sets about putting together ‘ideal homes’” (1959:915). Although his illustrations show a Verney-like separation of roles with father in an armchair and mother busy with childcare or cooking (Figs 9 & 10), mothers were said to be “gaining a new status and control [in becoming] the chooser and the spender” for the family home (915). While this maternal citizen-consumer maintained the inward-looking domestic focus already entrenched in the perception of maternal citizen-as-carer, mothers were now tasked with disbursing the family budget in ways that would both enhance the private zone of the home *and* contribute to repairing the economy of the country. Abrams’ article constructs the home as a site of leisure and consumption in opposition to work, thus erasing the domestic labour involved in the creation of his family-focussed idyll, although he still assumes the mother to have a dominant preoccupation with housework. This stance is reinforced in Abrams’ illustration which, highlighting the alleged transformation of domesticity by consumerism, shows a mother happily surrounded by the newly-available household goods – and still positioned in the kitchen (Fig 10).

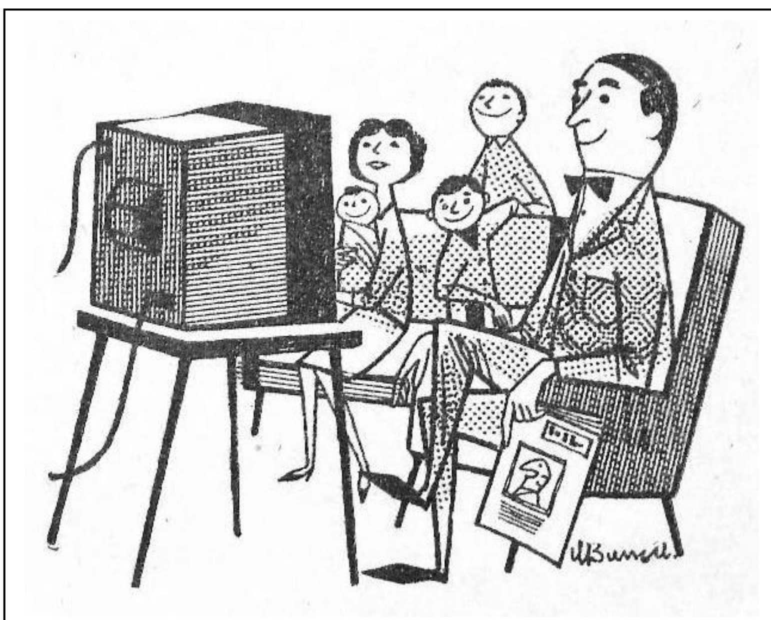


Figure 9: ‘The Home-centred Society’

Figure 10: 'The Home-centred Society'

While the construction of fictional mothers acknowledges their role as domestic consumer, the texts contradict Abrams' representation of its cultural-political significance. Cathy Bell's delight in acquiring "a dozen blue sheets and a dozen blue pillow-cases" and her vision of "stiff silk curtains of a vivid lime green" for the new vicarage is not translated into the increased control over family finances described by Abrams; the sheets are a gift and the curtains are a wistful dream as she reluctantly accepts her mother-in-law's offer of second-hand mustard velvet curtains for her new home (1960:139/109). In the Streatfeild and Blyton titles, consumer power is vested in the negative maternal figures of the two Roses, a positioning indicating that this form of citizenship is not valued. Rose Longfield's aesthetic choices of brand-new "pretty curtains and pretty cushions – and flowers everywhere – and fire-irons shining" is initially appreciated by all; as her niece Jane observes, "Aunt Rose certainly has good taste" (1950:30/16). But Rose's power as 'chooser and spender' is soon contained by her husband, who angrily returns a vanful of goods she has ordered without his knowledge, in an episode that precipitates the pivotal family crisis of the novel. As with Rose Bell, the maternal evaluation of this character is rooted in her performance as a housewife rather than a consumer, and her emotional influence within the family is valued above any financial function. Nan Verney, of *Stepmother*, wields more power as

a citizen-consumer; recently arrived from America, she has “ a love of beauty that was not content with mere utility”, and, having been accustomed to financial independence, one of her first initiatives is to organise a shopping expedition to choose “new curtains, fresh coverings for the beds [and] matching rugs for the floor” (1948:46). However, in the positive relationship she eventually establishes with her step-daughters, whom she teaches to cook and sew, as well as helping to refurbish their bedrooms, her housewife skills are privileged, alongside her empathetic engagement with their developing personalities. The final statement by previously-rebellious fifteen-year-old Elizabeth that “we’d be completely lost without her now” is a tribute to Nan’s domesticity and caring role rather than her financial acumen (190).

The production of these texts in the first five years after the war (*Six Cousins Again* was the latest in 1950), when consumer goods were scarce, may account for their lack of attention to any developing power of the mother as consumer. However this aspect of maternal-citizenship had been anticipated by Newsom and others. In 1948 Newsom highlighted the “national importance” of women as consumers “for the economic well-being of the nation. Food, clothes, fabrics, pottery, furniture and domestic appliances are almost entirely bought by women and [therefore] the position of women as purchasers is one of great importance [that] will react on our trade balance” (1948:97-8). I therefore consider that the literary emphasis on domestic skills, as opposed to purchasing power, indicates the explicit values of the texts. It is ideologically significant that in these works, financial influence is subsumed to the housework aspect of motherhood-as-citizenship in their foregrounding of more customary aspects of the maternal-citizen configuration. The quality of motherhood, evaluated by the characters’ domestic skills and emotional engagement in childcare, outflanks their role as ‘choosers and spenders’, which is represented as at best irrelevant, and at worst antithetical to ‘good’ mothering.

In the absence of the radical communal approach described in *Sally's Family*, other options such as the use of paid help, acquisition of domestic technology to replace the disappearing domestic worker, education in housewifery skills, familial assistance, including marital task-sharing (if offered), and consumer power could only offer limited solutions to the practical problems of housework for mothers. The ultimate 1950s political solution to the '100 Hour Week' problem was a perceptual one. By absorbing the role of housewife and mother into a peculiarly gendered notion of citizenship, the combination of the satisfactory raising of children with the effective performance of housework was constructed as a positive contribution to the nation-state; domestic maternity was to be perceived as enriching the world outside as well as within the walls of the home.

5. Conclusion

The range of mothering styles represented in the titles analysed is indicative of the growing emotional and material investment in the work of the house that emerged during the 1940s and early 1950s; an investment later fostered by improved financial security and the increasing availability of household goods. The institutional and economic framework of society created an ideological climate that, underpinned by the provisions of the welfare state and bolstered by increasing attention to the psychological well-being of children, conspired to keep mothers at home. The shifting values in the linked discourses of maternity, domesticity and citizenship that informed the ideological consensus are revealed in the novels of Blyton, Courtney and Streatfeild; their textual constructions of maternity are in accord with the inward-looking domestic aspects of motherwork that had long dominated traditional discourse, and were now being reconstituted in the ideal of the home-based mother as housewife *and* citizen. The emotional and physical nurturing of children is assumed in the texts, as in the real world, to be coterminous with the practical tasks of housework. More crucially, in both

arenae, the skilled performance of these tasks, or at least determined efforts to master them, is configured as indicative of 'good' motherhood. And, as the binary positioning of maternal protagonists in Blyton and Streatfeild's work makes clear, 'good' mothers, such as Cathy Bell and Linnie Longfield, are also construed as good citizens, not only in their assiduous and (mostly) uncomplaining execution of housework, but in their creation of large families, and in their positive raising of these offspring to become responsible future members of society.

While the texts reflect the "deep investment that many […] mothers have made in family life", they also offer a realistic representation of the problems endemic in the conflation of motherhood with housework, and the concurrent enfolding of both into citizenship (Sharpe 1976:45). The optimistic advice of housekeeping manuals and lifestyle magazines were proffering an ideal that is not apparent in realistic accounts by MOA diarists or commentators such as Hamblett and Beveridge, and the fictional accounts offer glimpses of the latter picture. The struggles experienced by mother-figures Sally, Cathy, Linnie and Nan make it very clear that housework and childcare *is* work, and that such labour, albeit valued by family and community, is not financially empowering. In this respect the children's stories do offer some challenge to the conventional ideal, engaging in the discourse of maternal citizenship at a level of resistance as well as compliance. Their depictions of the maternal protagonists' exhaustion and money concerns create a subject position for motherhood which weaves into the emerging discursive climate that appreciated the difficulties and was seeking solutions to the burden of the housewife. While the important role of the *mother*-as-citizen is evident in the explicit ideology of the texts, in configuring solutions that question the prevalent construction of the *housewife*-as-citizen – such as communal family effort (Courtney), and non-gendered participation in housewifery tasks

(Streatfeild) – these novels do, paradoxically, offer both conformist and occasionally-subversive positions to the reader.

The construction of the mother as housewife-and-citizen undoubtedly reinforced much-needed political consensus, and this private-public concept of maternal citizenship was to turn towards a more obviously outward-looking perspective as post-war austerity eased. The emergence of the so-called 'age of affluence' from the mid-1950s onwards was characterised, not only by increasing consumerism, but by a developing socio-political focus on women as employed, rather than unpaid, workers. The cultural impact of those women designated as 'working-mothers' was a matter of particular social concern, and will be considered in the next chapter, 'Money'.

Chapter Three
Money: 'Working' Mothers, 'Latch-Key' Kids and the Dual Role

Many a time before the magistrate had had similar reports of children going wrong because their mothers had left them in order to go out to work.

Enid Blyton *The Six Bad Boys* 1951

Even when the path is nominally open – when there is nothing to prevent a woman from being a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant – there are many phantoms and obstacles looming in her way. To discuss and define them is of great value; the whole position is one of extraordinary interest and importance.

Virginia Woolf *Professions for Women* 1931

Figure 11: W.E.Williams *Woman's Place* 1947
Illustration by 'Sax'

1. Introduction: a Matter of Extraordinary Interest and Importance

The obstacles discussed by Virginia Woolf in her talk to the Women's Service League in 1931, cited above, were still much in evidence during the long 1950s. Traditional values relating to mothers working outside the home, which had been subsumed by the exigences of wartime, were being reasserted with the need for post-war population growth and the restoration of men's economic interests. 'Jobs for the boys' was a rallying cry for politicians of all parties, and a concern that, according to Mass Observation reports, was shared by women as well as men. Only 25% of women sampled agreed that women should continue doing "men's jobs"; as one forty-year-old factory worker and mother of two commented, "I've got to go back into the home. I wouldn't like to keep any man out of a job" (MOA 1944:64/58). Contemporary sociologists Myrdal and Klein endorse this, speaking of a "general reaction, the feeling that the jobs ought to be 'kept for the boys' and that women should make way" (1956:23). So while paid employment of women, including mothers, had increased during World War Two, demobilisation was accompanied by a sharp reduction in the number of female workers. As established in the previous chapter, the closure of day

nurseries, propaganda on the joys of domesticity, and child welfare concerns regarding the maternal presence reappeared once the wartime need for women's contribution to the workforce was removed. There were, however, clear indications of a changing awareness in social attitudes to mothers and paid work, explored in the 1947 government discussion pamphlet *Woman's Place*, illustrated above (Fig 11), indicating both a continuity with and further development of wartime working experiences. Notwithstanding a fixation with 'motherwork', the unpaid domestic labour expected of mothers in assumed corollary of their maternity, post-war discourses of motherhood and shifting patterns of family life incorporated a role for mothers undertaking work outside the domestic environment.

In 'Demobilisation and Discourses of Women's Work', historian Penny Summerfield identifies three interwoven strands of marginality, opportunity and the dual role in post-war discourse, each of which relates to socio-cultural expectations of women as mothers (1998:197-249). The predominant discourse of marginalisation represented paid work as an unimportant and temporary stopgap between education and a woman's involvement in "marriage and motherhood which biologically, socially and morally dominated her life" (200). In contrast to marginality, which was applied to all women, the emerging discourse of opportunity focussed on education and training, particularly for the middle-class girl, as a route to fulfillment through commitment to a career that would function alongside or as an alternative to motherhood. The dual-role concept engaged with this discourse of opportunity, purporting to offer a solution to the controversy around the participation of women with children in the labour market. In their influential study *Women's Two Roles*, Myrdal and Klein promoted the dual role as an approach that would see mothers engaging in a bimodal lifestyle, with a sequential pattern of paid work, an interval dedicated to motherhood and domesticity, followed by a return to the world of remunerated employment. Such participation of mothers in the

workplace, as opposed to, or in addition to, their emotional and domestic labour was to be a fiercely-contested issue in this period, and I will be addressing the interrelated discourses described by Summerfield in my interrogation of the children's texts.

As Lissa Paul pertinently observes in 'Enigma Variations', her discussion of feminism and women's roles, "work and money are the keys to freedom", and there were close links in the capitalist and increasingly-materialist society of the 1950s between these two commodities and the acquisition of maternal agency, both within the family and in society at large (1987:190). Financial power – in the sense that maternal labour acquired a transactional value – was very slowly being realised by mothers, partly through their nascent role as consumers, in addition to participation in remunerated work outside the home. The necessity for economic growth to restore a war-ravaged society highlighted the 'extraordinary importance' of *money* as a factor which infiltrated post-war maternal discourse. In my examination of the world of paid employment in the literary works, I consider both the demonisation and endorsement of the working mother, alongside the idealisation of home-based motherhood, in order to explore the discursive engagement of the texts. I draw on the theoretical propositions of Marxist philosopher Althusser in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' alongside Hollindale's discussion of ideological 'levels',[21] and consider the reflections on power in children's literature explored by Beauvais in 'The Problem of Power' (2013) and *The Mighty Child* (2015).

I begin with a case-study of *The Six Bad Boys*, a rare attempt by Blyton to portray urban social realism, and discuss how this didactic text reworks the philosophies of Bowlby and Winnicott to cast a narrow spotlight onto the apparent impact of the

[21] See 'Introduction' pp22-24.

'working' mother on her child and on society at large.[22] This is followed by a discussion of the career series published during the 1950s, interrogating ways in which titles of this genre, all constructed to a single plot-design, create a formulaic set of mother constructs to weave into the prevailing discourses around working mothers, money and power. Finally, I turn to consideration of contextual sources, including Myrdal and Klein's dual role study, to show how the fictional constructions of motherhood are located within the discursive climate of maternity. I examine the reasons, as revealed in both literary and cultural texts, for the conflict between received assumptions that the main role and highest aspiration of woman was motherhood, and the changing familial structures and wider opportunities for women that were emerging after 1950.

The varied representation of maternal figures in the formula-bound career stories can be interpreted as a corrective to the one-dimensional vision of the Blyton work; in adopting this perspective I consider the possible ideological impact for an implied female readership who are the projected mothers of the future, particularly with regard to their objective need for information and their subjective search for self-identification. In arguing for the potentially-radical impact of the career novels, I investigate how the two different literary formats examined in this chapter interact with the discourses of marginalisation, opportunity and dual role. This approach will establish the relevance of the texts in a contemporary climate of motherhood that was shaped by the influence of childcare gurus, the economic imperatives of national development, and the concurrently-changing employment patterns for women.

2. Latch-Key Kids: Six Bad Boys and Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves

Social concern about the effect on children when mothers worked outside the home, a major aspect of maternal discourse during the 1950s, was linked to the widespread

[22] My use of the commonly-used term 'working' to describe mothers employed for pecuniary reward should not be understood to imply that the home-based mother is not also a worker (as demonstrated in 'Chapter Two: Work').

perception of a rise in youth crime as a result of unsettled wartime conditions and family breakdown. “Some of this generation are suffering from the effects of war on them during their infancy”, the Under-Secretary of State declared to parliament in 1958, expressing a publicly-held belief in links between wartime maternal separation and juvenile crime that had persisted over the post-war decade (National Archives). There was little supporting evidence of a direct connection between criminality and maternal employment; country-wide surveys of working mothers by organisations such as the Mothers Union and the National Council of Women showed “an overwhelming consensus of opinion that there had been no increase in juvenile delinquency due to mothers taking up employment” (Adam 1945:68). These findings appeared in the 1949 *Royal Commission on Population*, but did little to quell a nationwide preoccupation with the assumed assocation between mothers who worked and children who “went astray” (66). The term ‘latch-key kid’ had first appeared in the latter years of World War Two when the need for mothers, particularly those of school-age children, to work outside the home was unquestioned, and in some cases mandatory. In that situation, it became not uncommon for children to have access to the house key, either strung around their neck or hidden near the back door. By the late 1940s and onwards however the term was being used in a pejorative sense, in line with increasingly-prevalent social and psychological concerns about working mothers. Such usage is illustrated in the strong language of an academic article by Henry Zucker which declared that, “the house key tied around the neck is the symbol of cold meals, of a child neglected and shorn of the security of a mother’s love and affection” (1944:43). Notwithstanding his title of ‘Working *Parents* and Latchkey Children’, Zucker devotes this discussion to the responsibility of the mother for his prediction of “social maladjustment in larger numbers and indeed a measurable increase in juvenile delinquency” (43 my emphasis). In her paper on the ‘Good Working Mother’, Wilson observes that post-war deprivation

theorists rarely mentioned the role of fathers; consequently magistrates, police officers, social workers and psychiatrists accepted that any rise in delinquency was most likely to be attributable to "the increasing number of mothers going out to work" (2006:210). As a "leading probation officer" claimed, such mothers "could not attend properly to the upbringing of their children as well" (qtd in Stott 1978:170).

As discussed in 'Chapter Two: Work', Bowlby's ideas, despite being based on inappropriate research and very much a reflection of his own opinions, were widely disseminated and were absorbed into the social consensus on motherhood. Thus they did much to lend 'scientific' respectability to the climate of censure towards working mothers. Good mothering, according to *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, required "the provision of constant attention day and night, seven days a week and 365 in the year" (Bowlby 1951:67). *Can I Leave My Baby?*, Bowlby's chatty, economically-priced pamphlet for mothers,[23] points out that the "exacting job [of mothering] is scamped at one's peril" (1958:6). Separations, he warns, may cause "crippling [which] is far worse than the crippling of the body" (11). Such emotive language, recalling his earlier description of maternally-deprived children as "sources of social infection" as serious as "carriers of diptheria and typhoid", informed much professional and so-called 'expert' opinion, and perpetuated alarmist media stories regarding the dangers of mothers going out to work and leaving their latch-key kids to come home to an empty house (1951:182). Even part-time work was frowned upon; as late as 1960 the glossy monthly *Modern Woman*, which had published previous articles in favour of wives working – but mainly so they could hold more interesting conversations with their husbands – produced a prescriptive piece, warning "You Can't be a Part-Time Mother" (1960:60-61). Venetia Murray's 1956 article in *Picture Post* entitled 'The Children of Women who Work' paints a dire word-picture of deprivation caused by mothers who "park their

[23] One shilling and sixpence: 7½p.

children and go to work", accompanied by photos of tired-looking mothers and their children's "desolate faces" (1956:6-7). Dr Ronald MacKeith, "one of the great experts on the care of children in the country", is cited in her article as stating, in language which echoes that of Bowlby, that separation from the mother "may cause more lasting and irreparable damage to the child even than under-feeding it through poverty" (7). Similar media propaganda, alongside the more academic, if often flawed, sociological studies, permeated maternal discourse, so that the damage to children caused by mothers going out to work became accepted reality; a process that Althusser would later describe as "the elementary ideological effect" (1971:116). The absorption of Bowlby-ite views into widespread societal and personally-held values is an example of Althusser's observation that ideology "imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognise*" (116).

Within the climate of the time, the dangers for children of working mothers became 'obviousnesses' that reinforced the dominant domestic ideology of motherhood. *The Six Bad Boys*, published in 1951 (the same year as Bowlby's *Maternal Care*), is an exemplar of the "ideological *recognition* function" that Althusser describes (116). Blyton's one foray into social realism, this book has a political agenda and a down-to-earth urban setting that is not only unusual for her writing, but anticipates tropes of the 'kitchen-sink drama', a cultural movement of gritty realism that emerged later in the decade, characterised by such plays as John Osborne's 1956 *Look Back in Anger*.[24] Blyton's novel is a contribution to maternal discourse that engages with demonisation of the working mother as the 'obvious' cause of a disaffected, potentially-delinquent generation. In a textbook condemnation of working mothers, the author's contrast of model stay-at-home mum Mrs Mackenzie with Mrs Kent, the single working mother,

[24] Blyton's central character Bob is illustrated washing-up at a typically-1950s 'Butler' sink (p77).

positions itself firmly on the side of the domestic goddess. Ten-year-old Bob's delinquency is directly attributed to his widowed mother's decision to return to work, when he would prefer that she remain at home, keeping the house warm for him:

> "I think I shall soon find a job to do," said his mother. "I'm bored now. And I want a bit more money." "Don't do that," said Bob. […] "I like to think of you at home all day. I don't want to think of an empty house – and no fire – and no kettle boiling. Don't you get a job, Mum."
>
> (Blyton 1951:53).

Once Mrs Kent has found a job, Bob becomes the stereotypical latch-key child, coming home to a house which "stood silent and dark, and no smoke came from its chimney" (74). Blyton's direct address to the reader, as well as her descriptions of the keynote character's state of mind, leave no doubt as to her overt agenda; Bob, we are told, "hated the look of it. It should have had lights shining from it, the glow of a fire, smoke from the chimney, and cheerful sounds when he opened the door" (74). Following the scene described in 'Chapter One: Home' (p83) in which Bob vandalises the kitchen, he is deprived of his door key by his mother; reduced from a latch-key child to an exiled one, his descent into delinquency is clearly attributed to lack of a maternal presence.

In 1946 Bowlby published *Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves: their Characters and Home Life*, a monograph described in Murray's *Picture Post* article as "an analysis of [...] crooks and cosh boys in their late teens, [which] showed that a significantly high proportion had suffered [...] separation from their mothers" (1956:8). Bowlby's paper makes a direct connection between maternal deprivation, leading to delinquency, and a condition he coined 'affectionlessness psychopathy'. While briefly acknowledging socio-economic factors in delinquency, such as "poverty, bad housing, lack of recreational facilities", Bowlby concludes that "a large proportion of children who steal consistently [...] are of an affectionless character which has resulted from their having suffered prolonged separations from their mothers" (1946:54/49). Whether or not Blyton was aware of this research, *The Six Bad Boys* does, like Bowlby, indicate the

existence of social as well as maternal causes of delinquency. Of the other five 'bad boys', Tom, whose parents have separated after constant quarrelling, is the victim of what would then have been described as a 'broken home'; Patrick has an abusive and criminal father; Fred and Len live in fatherless poverty; Jack's large family of eight occupy "two rooms [where] no-one could eat, sleep or read in comfort" (1951:89). However, as the plot structure makes clear, it is Bob, the focalising character who opens and concludes the book, and his mother, as the villain, who between them carry the active message. Mrs Kent's pleasure in obtaining a job that will, as she explains to her son, help them both: "It will *do me good* to get out and about and have a good job that pays good money [and] it will *make a lot of difference to us* if I earn a bit of money", is only touched upon (71 my emphasis). In contrast, Bob's problems – "was he supposed to make his own bed? And who would do the dusting?" – are analysed extensively over two chapters that relay Bob's interior musings on the new situation (73; 74-87). The trivialisation of the motives of the working mother in Murray's article, which asks; "Is it *really* necessary in this Welfare State for a woman to go out to work, or do they do it for the ice-cream and the TV?", was a common feature of contemporary media comment (1956:8). In 1958 the *Times* newspaper published 'Mothers Out at Work', a piece that questions whether mothers should be working to provide the extras that Bob's mother aspires to (1958:13). Mrs Kent's prioritising of her "nice hair and nice hands and a good complexion" over what Blyton represents as the maternal obligation to stay at home keeping the kettle boiling for her son, is suitably penalised when she is described in the final chapter as "young, pretty, *but hard-faced*" (1951:71/136 my emphasis).

Ultimately, in Blyton as in Bowlby, responsibility for a child's delinquency is attributed to the mother; while social factors may play a part, maternal absence, even when only for the duration of a working day, is specifically designated as the cause of serious disaffection and subsequent criminal behaviour. The unquestioned maternal

responsibility for the moral agency of the child is stated in Bob's words, as he explains to idealised mother Mrs Mackenzie, that:

> I wouldn't have done it [stolen money] if my mother hadn't gone out to work. Things got different then somehow. I know lots of other mothers go out to work and aren't home, like you are, to welcome their children and get them their tea – but I bet all those kids hate it as much as I did! I did hate coming home to that cold, dark empty house.
>
> (1951:131).

This position is further accentuated by Mrs Mackenzie's "reproachful words" to Bob's mother; "You know this is all your fault don't you – leaving Bob so much by himself" (134). Mrs Mackenzie's excoriation of Mrs Kent as a "selfish and neglectful" mother reflects contemporaneous research on the divisions of opinion between domestic and working mothers (135). In Ferdynand Zweig's 1952 survey, for example, one interviewee, a home-based mother, commented that, "Working mothers are often spoiled and selfish; they don't care twopence about their homes and children" (1952:26).

In the climate of 1950, when *The Six Bad Boys* was being written, Blyton, even if she had not read *Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves*, would have been aware of Bowlby's culturally-resonant theories and the pervasive media debates over latch-key kids. Her political agenda is clearly stated in the book's foreword; she aspires "to explain some of the wrong things there are in the world, and to help put them right" (1951:6). She is writing here for adults, she explains, as well as her usual audience of boys and girls – "for the whole family and anyone who has to do with children" (6). More research went into the book than was usual for Blyton, and she dedicates it to Juvenile Court magistrate Basil Henriques, "whom I have watched at his Court dealing with these [delinquent] children" (6). Henriques, himself a subscriber to the theory of maternal liability for juvenile crime, wrote a fulsome afterword in praise of the "absolutely brilliant [book, which] shows why the broken home causes children to go wrong" (161).

He later published his own analysis of the issues in *The Home-Menders: the Prevention of Unhappiness in Children*, which pinpoints the working mother:

> Quite simply it seems to me that by far the most far-reaching change in modern society is that the family is not considered to be so important as it used to be, and it is because of this that we have in our midst so many suffering, unhappy and delinquent children […]. Legislation regulating the working hours of mothers of school age children is one of the most urgent reforms required for the creation of good homes.
>
> (1955:23).

So it is fitting that the ideological agenda of Blyton's text is finally restated (just in case the reader has previously missed the point), by the Juvenile Court magistrate who decides Bob's fate:

> The magistrate had the reports about Bob's mother before him – and many a time before he had had similar reports of children going wrong because their mothers had left them in order to go out to work. […] The magistrate called Mrs Kent forward. […] "He is your only child. Don't you think you could give up your work and care for him again?"
>
> (1951:145-146).

When Mrs Kent declines this suggestion, Bob is relegated to the care of unknown foster-parents, although, in a fairy-tale happy ending that reinforces the message of maternal presence, he is ultimately adopted by home-based mother-next-door, Mrs Mackenzie, described by Bob in the final chapter as "a *real proper* mother" (154).

The Six Bad Boys operates on all three of Hollindale's ideological levels; the active ideology of the text, framed largely through the comparison of Mrs Kent with Mrs Mackenzie, is brutally explicit, and the work also conveys Blyton's 'passive' assumptions, those powerful 'unexamined values' that "reflect the writer's integration in a society which unthinkingly accepts them" (1988:13). The unequivocal active and passive ideological positions of the book are further informed by Hollindale's third category, "the world its author lives in […] the zeitgeist", here revealed through the Althusserian obviousnesses of the importance of home-based motherhood (15). These value-systems are embedded within the narrative; the demonised Mrs Kent, rather than the 'bad' boys, is the true criminal of the book, and is duly punished by her own

awareness of guilt and by her potentially-sad future. “She *did* feel guilty about Bob, she knew she had been selfish and neglectful [so] perhaps one day she would wish she had [behaved differently]. Perhaps one day she would be lonely and want her son and he wouldn’t be there.” (Blyton 1951:134-5/149).

However, while the binary positioning of Mrs Kent and Mrs Mackenzie endorses the domestic ideology of motherhood in the strongest terms, the strident authorial narrative voice and the direct condemnation of the vilified maternal figure might well invoke resistant readings. In an online review, Blyton fan Anita Bensoussane rejects the negative characterisation of Mrs Kent, stating that, “readers may well sympathise with Mrs. Kent's need for a job” (Enid Blyton Society). Although Blyton’s intent, explained in her foreword, was to ‘help put right’ the ‘wrong thing’ of mothers choosing to go out to work, the ideological impact of *The Six Bad Boys* may also have been limited by the relationship between the central character and the implied reader. The novel, like all the author’s work, was likely to have been read by both boys and girls, as well as the adults she hoped to influence, and as focalising protagonist, Bob has a crucial ideological function. The power of reader-identification, as Appleyard demonstrates, is remarkably strong for the nine to twelve-year-old readers who are the potential audience for this text, and as narratologist Bal points out, the combination of focaliser with character enhances the possibility of the reader internalising the world-view of that character.[25] Since Bob is unlikely ever to become a mother, the ideological power of reader-identification with the protagonist may be circumscribed for female readers. This speculation is to some extent borne out in Bensoussane’s review; written from the perspective of adult re-reading, she is nevertheless honest about her childhood response to the book, acknowledging that she felt it was “hard on working mothers. There is an ‘all-or-nothing attitude’ [and] no suggestion that any kind of compromise

[25] See ‘Introduction’ p25.

could be reached" (ibid). In her critical re-appraisal, Bensoussane proposes solutions to Bob's problems, but points out that in the story, "Not only are these options not considered, but Blyton appears to condemn all working mothers" (ibid).

The alternatives Bensoussane suggests (part-time working, after-school childcare, holiday clubs) were aspects of contemporary maternal discourse, that, although ignored by Blyton in this book, did form an important part of the motherhood-versus-employment debate. Such wider perspectives are explored in the career genre, which, like *The Six Bad Boys*, was conceived with a clear ideological purpose. The series, aimed directly at a female audience, were "designed deliberately to convey in story form reliable information about specific fields of work", and were intended to be read at an age when its teenage readers were on the cusp of adulthood (Crouch 1972:186). The career girl protagonists, unlike Bob, do face the prospect of motherhood, and as potential (or actual) mothers, their dilemmas and decisions have ideological significance for the key readership, who would themselves be preparing to negotiate future lifestyle choices. The function of these novels, which offer an alternative representation of working mothers to the narrowly-focussed perspective of Blyton's text, and the genre's engagement in the changing climate around motherhood, will be considered in the following sections.

3. Jolly Good Reading: Mothers, Money and the Career Novel Phenomenon

The career novel, a short-lived genre, was highly popular in its day, and thus, it can be safely assumed, fulfilled an unmet need for its target audience of teenage girls. It was dominated by two leading publishing houses, Bodley Head and Chatto & Windus; in 1952 Bodley Head published *Air Hostess Ann*, the first title of its 'Career Books for Girls' series, and the final series titles from the two publishers came out in 1961, although several were reprinted during and beyond the 1960s. Initial response to the concept, hailed as "very new indeed" in the *Times Literary Supplement*, describes a

"series of entertaining, well-written novels for older girls, with much useful and authentic information, by authors who have made a special study of life and conditions in a particular career" (1953:v). *Parents Magazine* considered the Chatto & Windus rival series, launched in 1954 and named, after its editor, the 'Mary Dunn Career Novel', to be "A magnificent series of career novels … which are jolly good reading for fourteen to sixteen-year-old girls." The *Catholic Herald* endorsed such comments: "These books are good novels in their own right for 14-to-16-year-old girls"; while the *Manchester Evening News* commented on the "vivid and exciting stor[ies]" of a "new" genre (quotations from cover blurbs).

However, in literary terms the 'career novel' is generally held by critics to have appeared in 1936 (Carpenter 1984:96; Crouch 1972:185; Hunt 1994:120), with the publication of Noel Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* in the U.K. and Helen Dore Boylston's *Sue Barton: Student Nurse* in the U.S.A. Like the 1950s genre series, these two titles foreground the world of work as an arena which both drives plot and informs characterisation in a way that was new to children's literature. The preoccupations underlying the format were, however, far from novel; they reach back at least into the eighteenth century when Mary Wollstonecraft argued that a woman should not be "dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence", nor be expected to "waste life away the prey of discontent, who might have practised as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their own industry". […] How much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread" (1792:158/161). Wollstonecraft described Mary, heroine of her only completed novel, as "a woman, who has thinking powers", and a tenuous link with the future career series can be found in the portrayal of Mary's mother Eliza (1788:np). Eliza bears an uncanny resemblance to mothers of the career genre protagonists, depicted in home-based domesticity as a contrast to their ambitious career-oriented daughters; her neurotic empty life and

fondness for vacuous novels anticipates the characterisation of Pan's mother in *Pan Stevens: Secretary*, a woman who reads several novels a week and "couldn't remember anything about the ones she'd read the week before" (Hawken 1954:41). Wollstonecraft's narrative device of negatively representing the effects of maternal exclusion from the world of work is typically deployed in the career genre as a pointer to its inscribed values.

Bodley Head had acquired U.K. publishing rights for the 'Sue Barton' novels in 1939, but the exigencies of wartime delayed exploitation of this conceptual asset until 1952, when the titles were incorporated into their Career Books list. After the launch of the Chatto & Windus list with *Young Nurse Carter*, other publishers jumped on the bandwagon, and by 1961 over one hundred career books for girls had been published, sixty-one of which were from the two pioneering publishers (see Appendix 1). Print-runs of six thousand were standard for all series titles, reprints were common throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, and some books were re-issued into the 1970s; the second revised edition of *Margaret Becomes a Doctor* (1957) appeared in 1971.

Despite their prolific output and contemporaneous popularity, authors and publishers of the career genre have attracted little theoretical attention from children's literature scholars, and critical comment that has appeared tends to be negative. Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig refer dismissively to the novels a "no more than fictionalised handbooks", and Carpenter's *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* describes them as merely "a mask for a romantic story" (1976:303; 1984:96). The few academic articles published adopt a limited, often derisory, socio-historic approach, while popular author Jacqueline Wilson remembers the books as "dreary accounts of how to pursue a relevant career" (2009:85). There are exceptions; Philips and Haywood analyse the genre as a cultural and literary phenomenon in *Brave New Causes*,[26] and

[26] Deborah Philips also published two articles on the career genre – see bibliography.

Spencer discusses their informal educative function in *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s* (2005). In my own work on the series for an M.A. dissertation, I investigated social changes during the 1950s in terms of job opportunities for female school leavers and contested the negative critical consensus.[27] My brief entry on the genre in the second edition of the *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* encapsulates this conclusion, stating that the books offer "awareness of the wider female opportunities available in the post-war world" (Hahn 2015:106). While I make occasional reference to this former research below, my work here breaks new ground as it explores constructions of maternal (as opposed to teenage) identity, that have not been addressed previously.

The intensive publication programme demonstrates both a social need and a ready market for the books, showing that they were in tune with the needs of the time and the requirements of their intended readership.[28] In 1953 editor Richard Hough at Bodley Head wrote to Chatto & Windus, "There is considerable demand for children's books in this category", and the two organisations, realising the potential of the market, kept one another advised of topics in preparation (CWA 9.4.1953). The lucrative nature of the venture is evident in the close consideration given to the content of the books by publishers, who invested in editorial research and reader surveys to ensure as wide a readership as possible while matching the target demographic of "roughly the fifteen and sixteen-year-old girl" (31.5.1954). The books were much in demand by school and public libraries, and both teachers and parents were regularly asked for comments. Such analysis enabled publishers to establish authorial guidelines for the genre, which were markedly specific when plotlines touched on sexuality, marriage and motherhood. "I will […] get the author to alter anything I do not think is right for the age group" stated

[27] *The Open Path: Career Novels for Girls in the 1950s*. Roehampton University, 2008 (unpublished).
[28] Girls' need for information at a time of expanding employment opportunities may account for the relative failure, in literary and commercial terms, of the very few careers books for boys that were produced in the wake of the success of the girls' series. See Appendix 1.

editor Mary Dunn (24.11.52). Maternal characters were expected to advise on heterosexual relationships and, “a nice boy and girl companionship is quite in order, but the immoral should be avoided at all costs” (20.9.1954). Author Mary Delane was advised, when her heroine in *Margaret Lang: Fashion Buyer* (1956) had become friendly with an older man, that, “We have been very careful to keep away from any suggestion of ‘affairs’ [since] school teachers and librarians are chary about encouraging the reading of such books” (20.9.1954). An innocent massage scene in *Brenda Buys a Beauty Salon* was changed because “I think that the average school librarian would view such a pastime with misgiving” (4.1.1954). The author was further criticised for portraying Brenda as wearing eye-shadow at the age of seventeen: “I doubt her clergyman father would have stood for it” (4.1.1954). Such moral concerns of gatekeepers were considered alongside the preoccupations of educationalists. As Chatto’s Nora Smallwood explains in a letter to Mary Dunn: “I think it is vitally important that these books should be written in decent English, as […] we should not get the necessary backing from headteachers and school libraries unless they are so” (10.12.1952).

In the wider world, the novels were frequently referenced in journals aimed at mothers (such as *Parents Magazine*, qtd above), who would not necessarily have experienced professional training themselves. The fact that female school leavers in the 1950s were unlikely to have mothers with whom they could discuss the entry into work may well have been one factor in the success of the career genre, a conjecture validated by contemporary reviews:

> To such girls the career novel may give just that emotional stimulus *which is lacking in the home environment,* awakening the imagination through a sympathetic identification with the heroine’s day-to-day problems and experiences in entering upon her career.
>
> (Whitehead 1956:545 my emphasis).

The books were being launched into a society just emerging from post-war economic constraints, but where opportunities were opening and traditional assumptions about work and money, marriage and motherhood were being questioned. In an era when the conflicting demands of paid work and maternity for girls planning their future careers were perceived as a difficult issue, the career books, as reviewer Whitehead observed, "deal in a reassuring way with problems which will soon have to be faced" (546).

Philips and Haywood suggest that the series became "emblematic of an ideological investment that post-war British society placed in the idea of the trained, successful woman worker" (1998:58). The gendered nature of the publishing industry, particularly with regard to the management of children's lists, where editors were usually female, is likely to have been a factor influencing publishing investment in 'trained successful women'. This is certainly evident in the commissioning process; the quality of titles in the series was enhanced by the inclusion of successful female authors, such as Allan and Boylston, who were already popular outside the genre field. Otherwise writers were recruited because they had knowledge and experience of the particular job. Boylston was a nurse for almost thirty years, and Angela Mack (*Outline for a Secretary* 1956) and Pamela Hawken (*Pan Stevens: Secretary*) had started their careers as secretaries. Both Forbes (*Brenda buys a Beauty Salon*) and Patchett (*The Lee Twins: Beauty Students*) worked in the beauty business. The fact that the career novels were written and edited largely by women who had been successful in their working lives, either as established writers or as practitioners in the field of their books, accounts for the authentic realism of the genre. Moreover, although the detailed editorial requirements revealed in the archives suggest that marriage and motherhood were not part of the official remit (which specified the professional training and early career experience of protagonists), a number of authors did choose to deal with the juxtaposition of eventual domesticity and maternity for their young heroines, allying

this to continuing job opportunities. Many of these writers were themselves mothers (including some single parents) and thus were aware of the possible dilemmas facing their young female reader in the process of establishing identity and considering future life-roles. Forbes, for example, a journalist and freelance editor, was married with four children; as her tea-planter husband was unable to find adequate work on their return to the U.K. from India, she became the main breadwinner for the family at a time when her children were very young (Spencer 2005:122-3).

The representation of the author as an experienced practitioner with personal insight into specifically female choices regarding the working world versus family life was considered an important part of the reader's response to the values of the genre. So editors specified a female pseudonym whenever possible; Laurence Meynell, for example, was commissioned to write under the name 'Valerie Baxter'.[29] The use of pseudonyms elsewhere appears to be linked to a matching need to create an appropriate image for the implied author; the somewhat unromantically-named Bertha Hogg, for instance, who wrote fashion titles such as *Pauline Becomes a Hairdresser*, was refigured as 'Elizabeth Grey'. Publishers endeavoured to promote reader identification by ensuring that the tribulations of the protagonists, who have career potential but are rarely outstandingly brilliant, had an everywoman flavour; disagreements with parents, uncertainties about impending adulthood, setting-up home, negotiating marital relationships, and returning to work after motherhood are common dilemmas. The eventual representation of many of these characters as mothers who combine child-rearing and earning, is revealing of the debate around money and motherhood that was emerging in the economically-changing climate of the 1950s. The depiction of traditionally-domesticated maternal patterns in the more constrained life choices of fictional mothers of the heroines, which would have replicated familial reality for many

[29] See Bibliography.

teenage readers, foregrounds the redefinition of working life, contemporary marriage and motherhood by the central character that is key to the ideological mission of the series.

The societal changes that inform this mission were underpinned by the gradual re-establishment of economic stability. In a 1957 speech Prime Minister Harold Macmillan coined an enduring political slogan when he assured his listeners that “most of our people have never had it so good. Go around the country […] and you will see a state of prosperity such as we have never had in my lifetime” (qtd in Sandbrook 2005:80). Hyperbole notwithstanding, it does appear that, despite the privations of the early post-war years, the slow growth of the economy during the 1950s inspired a sense of expectation, both of material improvement and social change. Susan Cooper, growing up in the late 1940s and early 1950s, remembers “those years [as] a revelation. We saw the first washing machine, the first fountain, the first television set. The world opening before us was [a] lucky dip of extraordinary things” (1963:54). The visionary displays of the Festival of Britain, which opened to much fanfare in May 1951, anticipated the increased availability of material goods that would fuel increased prosperity. Nine months earlier an unheralded, but for mothers, arguably more significant marker had occurred; in Croydon in July 1950, Sainsbury’s opened the first self-service supermarket, ushering in the economic and material development of an institution that would transform consumer behaviour, and come to facilitate changing social attitudes regarding mothers and paid work.

The rise of consumerism during the 1950s signified by these two events, combined with a rise in disposable income for both middle-class and working-class families, was to contribute, albeit peripherally, to the developing financial status of mothers predicated by Abrams in ‘The Home-centred Society’. As ‘Chapter Two: Work’ demonstrates, such influence was, nevertheless, limited by inherent pecuniary

constraints for non-employed mothers such as Cathy Bell and Linnie Longfield. Since her domestic work was unremunerated, the mother-as-consumer, as Myrdal and Klein observe, was “naturally dependent on her husband’s generosity [and], in principle if not in practice, the financial position is similar to that of a minor” (1956:146). Solutions to this problem had been explored from the 1930s onwards; it was the subject of MP Edith Summerskill’s 1943 pamphlet *Wanted – Babies: a Trenchant Examination of a Grave National Problem*, which championed the cause of payment for the mother and an equal share in the family home as a route to population growth. In a 1944 *Picture Post* article entitled ‘Wages for Wives?’, journalist Edward Hulton reviews the debate, citing a court case in which the £103 saved by a wife who had taken in lodgers was judged to belong to her husband, on the grounds that the house was in his name. This decision, upheld on appeal, produced a crop of arguments in the media as to whether a wife was entitled to anything she had ‘saved’ from the housekeeping money. Hulton concludes that, “Changes are undoubtedly required [regarding] what other payments should be made to a wife. We thus become involved in the deep problem of the whole status and function of women in society” (1944:26).

The financial position of women, particularly once they became mothers, was regarded as crucial to that ‘deep problem’ during the following decade. As discussed in my previous chapter, the debate incorporated a definition of work as a concept that excluded women’s domestic labour, and was intensified by the pronatalist ideology of the early 1950s and the later consumerist focus on the enhancement of the sphere of home. However, as lifestyle journals and discussions in media such as BBC’s *Woman’s Hour* attest, while it was accepted that after marriage a wife would take on domestic duties, this did not inevitably correlate with total withdrawal from paid work. In contradiction of its own pronatalism, the government encouraged mothers to stay in employment during the early post-war years, since, as the 1947 *Economic Survey*

revealed, the prospective labour force of 18,300,000 men and women was "substantially short of what is needed to reach the national objectives" (HMG 1947:39). While the major shortfall was in manufacturing, service industries such as transport, and professions such as nursing and teaching, all of which are dealt with in the career series, were seriously understaffed; during 1948-49 a recruitment target of 6000 women teachers was set, but only 4000 found. The government appeal for women to enter industry was reinforced in popular media; in 1948 *Woman* magazine published a 'Report to the Women of Britain', declaring:

> Hats off to the 50,000 women who in one month joined the ranks of full-time workers. They're real breadwinners, these women, for they are making the goods that pay for the food we buy from abroad. But the factories and workshops could do with more of them especially in textiles, and in some of the engineering trades. Part-timers too are doing fine work. Besides caring for their homes and families, over 500,000 women help the export-drive by part-time work in vital jobs.
>
> (HMG 1948:2).

In 1953 a series of advertisements appeared in the *Radio Times* for Bournvita, a malted-chocolate milk drink. Entitled 'Other Women's Lives', they featured a range of real-life working mothers, such as Mrs Wilson, a 'clippie' on the buses who "puts just as much enthusiasm into her other job as a housewife! […] she is glad to do her bit to make ends meet, and thoroughly enjoys her 'double' life" (1953:52). An editorial in *Woman* entitled 'Shopping on Saturday' pointed out that "for the wife who does a full-time job as well as caring for a family, Saturday afternoon is a blessed chance to buy the rations, search for a few extras in the 'eats' line, and not have to scurry back to the office inside a well-defined hour" (Grieve 1948:3). Presumably Bournvita, marketed to "bring sound sleep and rebuild energy", was necessary for these mothers to cope with the exhaustion commensurate on 'doing their bit' for both economy and family (*Radio Times* 1953:52).

While the increase in women working during this period was largely accounted for by the participation of married women, mothers taking up jobs tended to work part-time; the percentage of part-time women workers increased by 14% between 1951 and

1961 (see census statistics p31). The prevailing gendered division of domestic work and the paucity of childcare meant that most women with small children would not have contemplated full-time employment, despite evidently valuing the financial benefits. Thus their career opportunities were limited, as well as being constrained by social perceptions of appropriate work for women. The career novels, as social as well as literary documents, reflect these changing work patterns while also accurately recounting the domestic responsibilities of the characters. While undoubtedly a mirror of the time, the genre is also more than merely reflective, and it is in the depiction of the heroines' working lives that a more radical agenda becomes evident. In the following paragraphs I discuss how the construction of the protagonists, as workers and future (or actual) mothers, constitutes a viable challenge to the status quo, arguing that here the books offer the reader sites of resistance in a cultural critique of contemporary expectations of maternity.

'Work *and* money' are key to freedom according to Paul's aphorism, and in the 1950s, as Rowbotham points out, going out to work represented "the hope of freedom" for middle-class women, an answer to the domestic isolation and financial dependency of the housewife and mother (1973:81). The issues inherent in the restriction of mothers to the domestic sphere were later to be famously articulated in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, her analysis of "the problem that has no name" that is credited with inspiring second-wave feminism in the U.S.A. (1963:15). Friedan's findings are replicated in *The Captive Wife*, Hannah Gavron's 1966 sociological study of women and work in the U.K., which investigates crises of identity and independence subsequent to loss of employment after childbirth. The view of one of Rowbotham's interviewees that "having money that's really your own is important because it means you have the right to tell a man where he can get off" would never (given the implied reader) be articulated so bluntly in a career novel, but the protagonists' independence and

consciousness as wage-earners is crucial to the genre's ideologically-powerful image of the modern career woman (1973:82). The aspirational vision of the novels contrasts the position of the trained professional woman with the low-paid, low-status work done by many women, whose jobs, often part-time, were characterised as being done for 'pin-money'. This perceived marginalisation debased the value of women's work, allowed employers to exploit female workers, and created a climate of defensiveness in which it was not acceptable to want to work for personal reasons. Sociologists of the time have noted that mothers often felt they needed to vindicate going out to work in terms of the economic advantages for the family, rather than for themselves. One clothing worker observed, "there was a saying that if you worked in the factory you were either among the needy or the greedy. Most of us were needy" (qtd in Rowbotham 1973:290). Aiming for a higher standard of living was defined by such interviewees in terms of familial benefits; from paying for school uniforms or a television to allowing children to stay on at school or having a family holiday. The fictional Sue Barton's justification for returning to work when her husband is taken ill is similarly motivated: "Not that Bill and I haven't done all right, but I don't want it *undone* now. There's the children's education coming up" (Boylston 1953:34).

The intention to show that paid employment could bestow freedom from a limiting system is clearly stated in the publishers' editorial correspondence as well as the texts. *Nurse Carter Married* (1955) for example, the sequel to *Young Nurse Carter*, was explicitly commissioned for the purpose of showing girls that, "even when they are married they will always have a profession that will be interesting with good earnings" (CWA 23.10.1954). The message is reinforced in the third volume, *District Nurse Carter*, when heroine Caroline becomes the full-time working mother of a young daughter. Judy's parents in *Judy Bowman, Therapist* point out that, "with a specialist qualification behind her, a girl could return to her profession later on if she wanted to

[…] having had her children and got them safely packed off to school" (Lewis 1956:22).

The concept of power conferred by financial independence pervades the series, and money problems are constructed as one of the many barriers the heroines must overcome in order to achieve personal autonomy via a chosen career. In 'The Problem of Power', Beauvais discusses different aspects of power with regard to the age-related normativity that governs critical consideration of the adult and the child in children's literature, an approach designated as aetonormativity by scholar Maria Nikolajeva in *Power, Voice and Subjectivity* (2010). Aetonormativity is not a primary feature of the career genre, but although the protagonists are not children, Beauvais' distinction between the 'authority' of adult power and the child's possession of 'might', a power invested in the future, can be extended to the heroines. The notion is succinctly expressed in the title of *Margaret Finds a Future*, in which Margaret overcomes her problems to achieve "a job that is after her own heart" (Allan 1954b: blurb). The medical student in *Margaret Becomes a Doctor*, stricken by family financial crisis, contemplates abandoning her training altogether: "I'm quite a burden, aren't I? […] If I came home and got some sort of job locally, I could help out a bit" (Owens 1957:82). Margaret ultimately decides that her future as a doctor, "earning quite a sizeable income", is more important than current money worries, since "it would be an awful waste of money and training to give it all up now" (56/73). The language of citizenship in the wider sense, and of social obligation, to the whole community and not just the family unit, is invoked to justify this decision: "provided she qualified, she would be able to help hundreds of people. If she stayed at home she would help only two, and when they no longer needed her she would have no career to follow" (73). Margaret's conflicted choice between female family responsibilities and a professional career is vindicated by the narrative outcome of her decision; she is later able to save her father's

life when he has a heart attack, thereby winning over her anti-career mother. This exercise of agency in deciding to remain committed to her training and potential prospects is a demonstration of what Beauvais designates 'might' – "a form of power intrinsically linked to the 'possession' of a future" (2013:81). In contrast to her mother, whose power is limited both temporally and spatially – defined by the always-already present identity of wife-and-mother, and exercised only within the domestic spaces of the home – Margaret's power is located in Beauvais' "potent, latent future to be filled with superior action" (82). And also, of course, filled with more money.

The career genre's foremost remit, to demonstrate that 'superior action' and financial security are desirable ambitions for girls, extends to show that these outcomes can co-exist with the achievement of motherhood, a proposition validated by the later depiction of Margaret the doctor as a working mother. Protagonists such as the two Margarets have the potential, like Beauvais' 'mighty child', to supersede the time and space-limited forms of power exercised by older maternal characters. Their home-based mothers, whose lives are circumscribed by a dedication to domesticity, their sometimes-authoritarian fathers, and the occasionally old-fashioned boyfriend all impose restrictions that the central characters overcome in their dedication to the power of their potential future. The independence, status, self-esteem, and need to work for personal satisfaction implicit in that future is foregrounded in these novels, revealing the role of the genre in the debate on opportunity versus marginalisation. Its contribution to that debate will now be discussed in relation to the newly-defined 'dual-role' life-pattern for women as both mothers and wage-earners.

4. Overcoming Two Adams: the Dual-Role 'Solution'

In 'The Division of Labour Revisited or Overcoming the Two Adams', sociology professor Margaret Stacey invites a reconsideration of incentives and rewards for work, highlighting the gender determinism of classical labour theory:

> There are two quite unrelated theories about the division of labour: one that it all began with Adam Smith and the other that it all began with Adam and Eve. The first has to do with production and the social control of workers and the second with reproduction and the social control of women. The problem is that the two accounts, both men's accounts, have never been reconciled.
>
> (1981:172).

The need to reconcile the conflicting demands of 'production' and 'reproduction' was a prominent feature of maternal and labour discourses after the war, when the demands of the economy and the requirements of women for self-determination were in conflict with the pre-war ideology of family. As the lynchpin of post-war consensus, it was woman's role as mother, rather than worker, that was heralded; despite the desperate need for female labour, government appeals for "women who are *in the position to do so* to enter industry" implicitly excluded mothers, certainly of young children (HMG 1947:39 my emphasis). The importance of full-time motherhood was endorsed by government departments such as the Ministries of Health and Education, who specified in circulars to local authorities that the children of working mothers were not to be given priority for daycare or nursery education. Popular author Monica Dickens, who had declined Mary Dunn's offer to write the first novel in the Chatto & Windus career series, approved such restrictions, warning in *Woman's Own* that career women could be endangering the love of their children by focussing on "shallow ambition [and] interests [that] were not all centred on them" (1956:28).[30] Children wanted a good mother, she declared, not an "efficient career woman who pops in and out of the house at intervals, knows a lot of stimulating people, and can talk about everything, except pleasant, trivial, day-to-day matters that are the breath of family life" (28).

Nevertheless, smaller families and the consequent reduction of time spent raising children were contributing to the 11% increase in married women's employment rates between 1951 and 1961 (see census statistics p31). Earlier marriage, and the

[30] Great-granddaughter of Charles, Monica Dickens published adult novels based on her own career experiences: *My Turn to Make the Tea*; *One Pair of Feet*; *One Pair of Hands*.

decline in birth-rate reported in the 1949 *Royal Commission on Population* to an average of 2.2 children per family, compressed the child-rearing years, so that it became typical in the 1950s for a woman to marry in her early twenties and finish childbearing by the age of thirty. As Wilson points out, the assumption expressed in the 1946 *Royal Commission on Equal Pay* that motherhood and work were "*alternatives* […]. You could either be a wife and mother or a single career woman", was no longer viable (1980:45). Thus 'reproduction' with its attendant 'social control of women' could no longer be so conveniently used to justify traditional divisions of labour. The 1961 Women's Employment Federation pamphlet *Careers: a Memorandum on Openings and Trainings for Girls and Women* (which included a full-page advertisement for the Chatto & Windus career series) ran to one-hundred-and-twenty pages (as against fifty-two in the 1950 edition), and stated emphatically that "marriage and a career are no longer alternatives or incompatible, and to be born a girl in the modern world almost presupposes the acceptance of a dual role" (1961:3).

In this social climate the bimodal pattern of employment advocated by sociologists Myrdal and Klein was already becoming a characteristic of mothers' behaviour in the arena of production. The 1956 *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work*, argued that women should plan for a two-phase career, with a sequential pattern – paid work until the birth of the first child, followed by domesticity and motherhood, then re-entering the labour market as the children became independent. Changing census statistics over the decade confirm the move to a bimodal structure for female employment. In 1951 there was a sharp drop in employment rates for twenty-four to thirty-four-year-old women, but an increase for older married women. By 1961 the tables show a first peak of economic activity for women aged twenty to twenty-four, followed by a notable drop during the childbearing and child-rearing years of twenty-five to thirty-five, then a second peak for married women over forty-five, whose

children had presumably left home (ONS). It can be argued that this trend reconciled to some extent the conflict identified by Stacey between productive and reproductive roles for women. Certainly Myrdal and Klein assert that, whether as mothers or paid workers, women were performing work that was crucial to economic and social progress; an approach rooted in the interests of state and nation-building, that regarded women, in either role, as citizens contributing to these priorities. Their idea that women should not have to choose between a life of paid work without children and one of unpaid work and motherhood challenged the convictions of many contemporary sociologists and psychologists regarding the functional superiority of a family model of male breadwinner with full-time wife and mother. Myrdal and Klein's recognition of the ambiguous status for women within the world of work, once they had become mothers, is indicated in a discarded title for their study: 'Motherhood and Career – Conflicting Roles or Double Opportunity?' In support of their position the authors pay particular attention to issues of child welfare; their 'Effects on Children' chapter confronts Bowlby-ite arguments, using classical analogy to justify the importance of mothers returning to work. Maternal encouragement of dependency is, they assert, likely to be just as damaging to a child's long-term welfare as deprivation. A tendency to dominate, and refusal to allow older children to attain independence, which they designate "the Charybdis of 'over-protection'", could cause psychological damage to the child as potentially problematic as any "Scylla of 'rejection'" evoked by Bowlby (1956:131). Crucially, they argue, "Mothers staying at home run the greater risk of this mistake" (130).

While research-based criticisms of Bowlby's methodology, such as Simon Yudkin and Anthea Holme's 1963 W*orking Mothers and Their Children*, had yet to appear, *Women's Two Roles* makes the point that Bowlby's observations were based largely on the traumatic wartime experiences of children in care. However the authors

do concede that “it seems neither practicable nor desirable that mothers of very young children should go out to work”, and their study recommends attitudinal rather than structural change (187). Notwithstanding awareness of the marginalisation discourse, they do not, for example, challenge the assumption that the home was primarily the woman’s responsibility, and in this respect fail to recognise the effects on production and reproduction inherent in the gendered division of labour later addressed by Stacey. Nevertheless, Myrdal and Klein’s use of the term ‘dual’ makes clear that both the maternal and the employed role should enjoy the same status and require the same amount of commitment, albeit at different points in the life-cycle; motherhood was to be seen as a stage in life rather than the whole of it. Reinforcements of Myrdal and Klein’s message occur throughout the career series; while heroines may accept the requirement to leave work for motherhood, they take early opportunities to return, and the benefits of working are evident. Sue, depicted as a devoted mother, nevertheless confesses to a friend that she is “homesick” for her nursing career and is described by the implied author as “desperately in need of distraction, change and hard work” (Boylston 1953:41-2). On resuming her job, Sue discovers that “her depression was gone – swamped [by] going back to work” (41).

The influence of the dual-role discourse on changing expectations of life patterns is even more significantly represented in the career series emphasis on the importance of making the right choices before beginning work. Myrdal and Klein were critical of women who wasted their training by failing to return to the job market after motherhood, berating them for “a sin against society if they waste the capital of skill invested in them” (1956:158). Girls “must take their future work seriously rather than rely on the mental reservation: ‘Of course I can always get out of it when I marry’” 155). The marginalisation of women and work implied in such ‘mental reservations’ had, according to Summerfield, begun to be seriously challenged after World War Two,

when expanding job opportunities were fuelled by the 1944 Education Act and full employment (1998:199-202). The tendency of women marginalised from the main workforce to take up poorly-paid low-status jobs, moving in and out of work according to the needs of children and family, ensured that they had no long-term commitment to a career. Summerfield suggests that this is a monolithic discourse, affecting all women "whatever their social class or education", whereas the discourse of opportunity "was highly differentiated and offered a range of opportunities" (202). Contemporary commentators reviewing the career novels acknowledged their importance as a tool for counteracting marginalisation:

> Presumably it is still true that many girls and their parents too, look upon a job only as a stopgap before marriage. They therefore tend to accept passively the first thing that offers, without considering seriously any of the questions (What are the prospects? What further training will give the most valuable start to a career?) which would seem of first importance to their brothers or sons.
> (Whitehead 1956:545).

While the career genre is firmly situated within the discourse of opportunity, the editors and writers show awareness of the pervasive influence of this 'stopgap' mentality. Titles on cookery, hairdressing and floristry engage with the concept of marginalisation and promote an awareness of opportunity; as Dunn writes of *Cookery Kate*, her heroine, who continues to work after marriage and motherhood, is "showing that a cooking career is never wasted" (CWA 19.5.1954). The representation of such protagonists as working mothers challenges marginalisation by demonstrating to the reader that life could be enriched, not constrained, by taking their careers seriously.

Denigration of the career genre by later scholars as a tool of marginalisation fails to recognise this aspect. Opinions such as Cadogan's, that "a girl's job expectations will be satisfied by a little money, for titivation, a little leisure, to display its effects, [followed by] marriage after no more than a year or two of work", are not borne out by closer reading of the novels (1976:304). As my following analysis shows, characters who subscribe to such views are consistently presented as old-fashioned and misguided;

they are personifications of the “last remaining barriers of Victorian prejudice” described by pioneering engineer Caroline Haslett in *Problems Have No Sex* (1949:82). Father-figure Mr Seton, for example, “should have been born in the Middle Ages” according to his ambitious daughter Diana, and he expresses his allegiance to post-Victorian gender assumptions in justifying his refusal to support her financially while training:

> “You know how I feel about careers for women”, he went on. “Most girls marry sooner or later, and then all their training is wasted. Now, the position with boys is quite different. One day they will have a family to support, so a father owes it to his son to see that he grows up with a good earning capacity. Money devoted to a son’s education is well spent”. […] “If you’d like to take a short domestic-science course”, he offered generously, “I might be able to do something about that.”
>
> (Owens 1960:26-27).

The negative positioning of Mr Seton in relation to the message of this text is realised in the resentful focalising voice of Diana, who later points out to a friend that her father “actually still uses a cut-throat razor”, and in the supportive role adopted by Mrs Seton (79). As a home-based mother, she is represented knitting in the above scene, while her husband relaxes with pipe and newspaper; common symbols of marital domesticity also used in *The Six Bad Boys* (Fig 12).

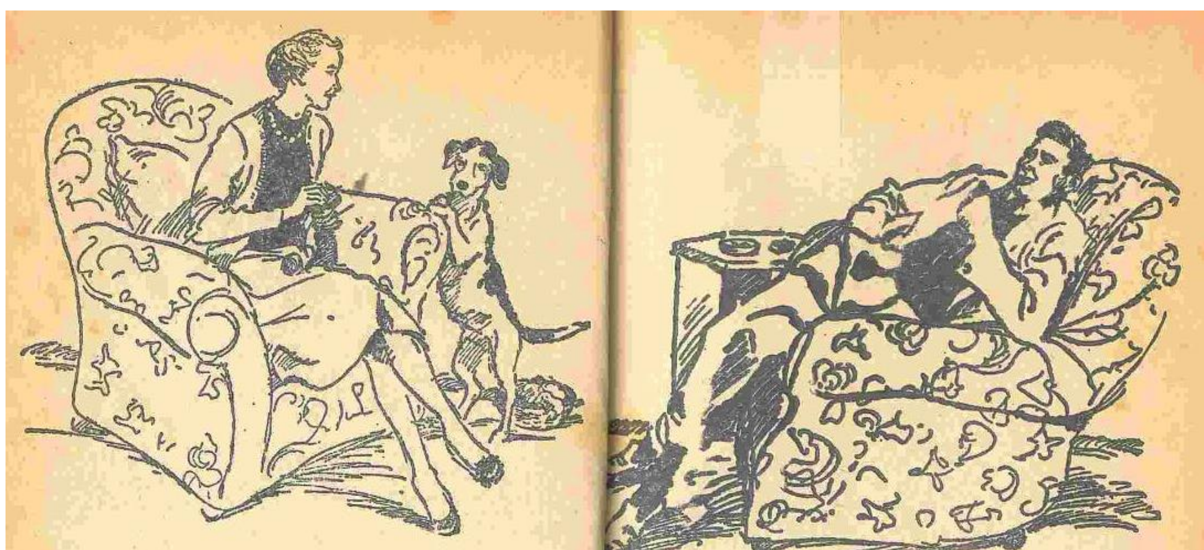


Figure 12: *The Six Bad Boys*. Illustration by Mary Gernat.

It is thus relevant that Mrs Seton "put down" her domestic handwork, in order to proffer a range of arguments which not only persuade her recalcitrant husband, but also provide ammunition for the reader as to why the stopgap approach should be avoided:

> "You know, Henry," she said in her quiet way, "Diana has a very good brain and a definite gift with animals. Quite a number of women today combine a career and marriage. […] Besides, Diana may not marry. Or she may be widowed. Think of poor Mrs Walker down the road, with three small children to bring up on her own. She was never trained for anything and now she's at her wits' end to know what to do. If she'd had a career, life wouldn't have been so difficult for her."
>
> (29-30).

This attitude towards the untrained unskilled mother is a noteworthy contrast to the narrative judgement of the cavalier Mrs Kent in *The Six Bad Boys*. Mrs Mackenzie's vilification of Mrs Kent, in comparison to Mrs Seton's sympathetic opinion and pity for 'poor Mrs Walker', is a touchstone for the ideological positioning of the two stories. One function of the radical texts Reynolds discusses is helping readers become "fulfilled, capable adults by arming them with the skills and information they would need", while Beauvais defines a mission to "modify and improve the socio-political configurations of the world" as a marker of the radical in children's literature (2016:2; 2013:77). Both features are basic to the career genre, and are encapsulated in Mrs Seton's attitude towards working mothers compared to that of Mrs Mackenzie. In the counter-hegemonic career novel, as opposed to Blyton's conservative text, even the domestic mother can be shown asserting the benefits of maternal engagement in the world of work.

In my analysis of the multivalent construction of motherhood in the genre, I classify the maternal representations of the texts into three broad (and sometimes overlapping) categories, which I designate as 'Types':

- Type One is the domestic 'non-working' maternal figure, usually represented by the biological mother of the protagonist.

- Type Two, the ‘working’ co-mother, is a career role model, often embodied as a glamorous aunt or professional mentor.
- Type Three is portrayed by the heroines, and their peers, as potential, or actual mothers.

Each of these Types has an ideological function within the text; Mrs Seton, notwithstanding her ‘modern’ outlook, is a Type One Mother, the non-employed maternal figure. As her opinion demonstrates, in illustrating the values of the genre it is not always the older characters who are depicted as limiting; the device of young Type Three protagonists commenting on their chronological peers who conform to the doctrine of marginalisation is also utilised. In *Anne in Electronics* the central character, contemplating the stopgap lifestyle an acquaintance aspires to – “job in an office, meet handsome young man, marry and settle down” – concludes that, “the life this girl idealised would never have done for Anne. She would have been bored to tears in no time” (Cochrane 1960:137). Eve, a trainee secretary, has similar views:

> I hate the type who only want to fill in time until they get married, and collect their pay packet at the end of the week, having done the minimum of work. […] How much more satisfying to feel for the rest of your life that you made a small success in your career.
>
> (Mack 1956:120).

As focalisers who are also key characters, the declarations of these Type Three protagonists are a powerful narratological factor in the creation of subject positions for the reader. The future benefits of undertaking a rewarding career, reiterated throughout the series, are coupled with the expectation that this would be a lifetime commitment, thus validating time and money spent in training. When Sue Barton’s friend Connie decides that, “she was finished with nursing – preferring marriage to any other career” the narrative position on this choice is made perfectly clear (Boylston 1950:86). Focaliser Sue confesses to “a feeling of frustration – all that beautiful training to end in Connie’s being married” (158). Such challenges to the marginalisation perception that

marriage was an end, rather than a stage of life, is an important aspect of the career genre's discursive engagement.

The genre also explores the extension of what Myrdal and Klein describe as 'the capital of skill' beyond the boundaries of the working world into the realms of family life and motherhood. Mrs Miles, the classic Type One Mother of *Margaret Becomes a Doctor*, having been vehemently opposed to her daughter's profession, is persuaded of its value when her husband is taken ill: "I didn't want you to study medicine, but now I'm glad you have. […] A doctor in the family is going to be more of an asset than I realised" (Owens 1957:106). Sue, unhappy that she has not returned to full-time nursing, is trying to help a neighbour find a new job and is reassured by her ex-superintendent that it is "not that a wife who wasn't a nurse couldn't help in a situation like that – but training makes a difference" (Boylston 1950:11). Even the most fundamental female functions can apparently be affected; nurse Caroline is described as calling on "her skilled professional training [as] she gave herself up to the business of childbirth" (Darbyshire 1955:138). The conceptualisation of giving birth as a 'business' that could benefit from professional training is an extreme, but significant instance of the genre's determination to persuade the female reader that her training and early career experiences would be an investment for life, rather than a short-term stopgap. Such attempts in the fictional narratives to synthesise the competing claims of motherhood and job opportunity indicate the fragility of the emergent dual-role discourse and its attempts to reconcile conflicting points of view. The narratives were carefully crafted to be acceptable to the gatekeepers (librarians, teachers, parents) responsible for distributing the books, so that the ultimate ideological message of opportunity could reach, and then, it was hoped, be absorbed by its intended audience. By keeping a foot in both camps, the career genre was able to contribute effectively to the discourses of motherhood and work.

Innovative as *Women's Two Roles* appeared at the time, the study fell short of a complete solution to the conflict between domesticated motherhood and paid work for women. The bimodal pattern was recommended over part-time work, which the authors feared would lead to mothers being "side-tracked into a blind alley", but as mentioned above, the study does not question the gender divide of work in the home (1956:162). Tellingly, in a 1957 pamphlet, Klein refers to employed married women as *Working Wives*, echoing the gendered nomenclature of government reports and the media in keeping the domestic function of women to the fore. In a later publication, *Britain's Married Women Workers*, Klein suggests that husbands might "lend a hand in the home", thus implying that the main responsibility for domestic duties lay with wife and mother (1965:29). So the dual-role concept, liberating as it seemed initially, could itself become problematic; without any significant male contribution to domestic labour, the requirement to contribute skills and experience to the reconstruction of society, as well as remaining the custodians of familial values, was likely to become overwhelming for mothers. A 1957 article in the *Daily Mail Annual for Girls*, intended to encourage its readers to take up science as a career, inadvertently demonstrates this problem:

> In the 1914-18 war there was a poster addressed to young men which said: 'Your Country Needs You!' Now we are saying this more urgently than ever to girls; *we need you to do all the things you do already, and* we desperately need you *also*, thousands and thousands of you, to take up test-tubes and spanners and form a great new army of women scientists and engineers!
> (French 1957:100 my emphasis).

The conflicts inherent in such attitudes are well-illustrated in *District Nurse Carter*. Caroline struggles to divide her time and energy between "the pleasant flat", "the exacting standards set and expected at St Hilda's" and "Clive and her home life with him"; inevitably, as the implied author tells us, "It was a fight" (Meynell 1958:9-10). Caroline, an exemplar of career genre ideology, triumphs over her problems, but it is significant that her 'fight' is resolved in the plot device of despatching her husband abroad for three years, enabling her to move in with her sister-in-law and delegate

childcare and housework in order to resume full-time nursing. In the second wave of feminism that emerged in the 1970s, the dual-role discourse, as Summerfield points out, became reconceptualised as a "double burden" (1998:249). The outcome of Myrdal and Klein's expectation that efficient organisation of the home by the *mother* would make employment and maternity compatible as the children grew older, was highlighted in 1970s statistical research, which quantified the amount of time dual-role mothers spent on housework. When combined with paid employment, the mother's overall working hours were estimated as "averaging 99.6 per week" (Rowbotham 1973:68). The reality of an exclusively-female burden of domesticity is reflected in the career novels in portraits of both employed and non-employed wives. Working wife Mrs Brown "looks awfully tired sometimes doing her shopping in the lunch hour and having meals and chores to do when she gets in" (Hawken 1954:26). The "endless busyness" of home-based Mrs Carter demonstrates to her daughter that "you have to work pretty hard if you are married" (Darbyshire 1954:25).

Type One Mothers such as Mrs Carter are located firmly within the domestic environment; none of them have paid jobs, and in many cases, appear never to have done so. Nor, apparently, do they contemplate any return to work despite their offspring approaching school-leaving age. In their limited experience of contemporary realities, these mothers expect their daughters to replicate their own experience. Claire's mother "still lived in the atmosphere of her own girlhood, dreaming for Claire of the regimental balls and seasons in Malta which she had known and not really wanting her to work at all" (Barrett 1956:11). Mrs Lee, whose daughters are studying beauty culture, assumes that, like herself, they will "marry before they're twenty", and explains to one daughter's tutor that, "it's far more important really she should become a first-class woman [than] a first-class beauty worker" (Patchett 1953:8/144). As representatives of the marginalisation discourse, Type One maternal attempts to offer opinions on life

goals, particularly regarding the conduct of romantic relationships, are notably futile. Mrs Miles, who “had married almost immediately on leaving school, and had rather taken it for granted that [Margaret] would do the same” is a typical example; she “couldn’t conceive of anyone being content to remain single” (Owens 1957:11/14). In accordance with the ideological positioning of the genre, her expectations are rejected by her pioneering daughter who deprecates the futility of her mother’s socialite lifestyle.

A further tendency to assume that their daughters cannot function as grown-ups – “she was far too young as yet to think of living away from home” – is linked to maternal anxieties about the potential risks of the wider world (Scott 1961:22). These concerns, attributed to the fact that Type One Mothers are out of touch, and generally never have been in touch, with the realities of a working environment, are particularly noticeable in the flying novels, such as *Air Hostess Ann*:

> I know darling, I know I’m being silly […] but sometimes I lie awake at night. And I think of you flying, and I see the plane as a tiny dot up there in the sky with nothing underneath but miles and miles of sea. It would be so easy to get lost. […] I still think flying is an unnatural way for us to get about and aeroplanes go much too fast – five hundred miles an hour or something now…
> (Hawken 1952:81).

Mrs Gardner is only slightly reassured by Ann’s response, a careful scientific explanation detailing the functions of radar, wireless telephony and safe cruising speeds. When the mother of *Angela: Air Hostess* expresses similar worries about her daughter’s choice of profession, Angela explains kindly that, “More people get killed crossing roads than flying! […] This is a British plane and nobody can touch us while we’re safe behind this door” (Roland 1958:9/141).[31] Mothers’ attempts to reproduce in daughters their own life template of contented domesticity lead to tensions in the mother-daughter relationship, since the limitations they would impose are not merely derived from old-

[31] Such maternal fear of flying was a rational reflection of reality. Andrew Marr describes how “the best of the British jets, the Comet, was to suffer lethal commercial delays after a series of crashes in the early fifties” (2007:108). Inevitably, Angela’s ‘British plane’ suffers a near-fatal accident in the next instalment of this story.

fashioned prejudice or maternal ignorance – they are rooted in more fundamental aspects of personal identity expressed in life choices. As headteacher Miss Benbow points out to her ambitious pupil Diana, "when the daughter of a domestic-minded woman chooses to have a career she is criticising her mother by implication. She is saying, in effect, 'The kind of life that was good enough for you, mother, isn't good enough for me'" (Wyndham 1960:13).

The ingrained attitudes of Type One Mothers are prime examples of the strength of 'obviousnesses' contained in the dominant maternal ideology; they are subject to an ISA wherein the existence of specific ideological values is concealed under the guise of what Althusser designates "an *omni-historical* reality", whose functioning is assumed to be immutable (1971:108). Althusser describes this process as: "the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right" (123). Mrs Lee, first depicted cooking and serving lunch to her husband, then contentedly washing-up on his return to the office, is typical, musing that "she was a very lucky woman to have such a husband as Roly, and four, on the whole satisfactory children, a comfortable home and no urgent money worries" (Patchett 1953:9). In Althusserian terms, she "freely accepts [her] subjection" (1971:123). It is significant that, since the experience of such mothers lies within the narrow sphere of domesticity, their scope of influence is limited. Mrs Lee's reservations about her twin daughters' life choices, and the assumption that 'everything will be all right' if they were to adopt the apparently 'immutable' pattern of her own comfortably-domestic maternity is, as elsewhere in the series, challenged by her daughters' refusal to accept the hegemonic status quo. Contemporary advice manuals confirm that the actual mother of the teenage reader would be similarly unlikely to have experience of work. Textbooks such as Grace Palmer's *The Chinese Box*, that encouraged girls to consider wider horizons, advise, "You will not want to do

everything just as your mothers do, for their ways will seem old-fashioned to you. It is good to try new things" (1947:47). The accuracy of the career genre in portrayals of mother-daughter interaction is further verified by the interview transcripts of later researchers such as Spencer and Heron, talking with women who had grown up in the 1950s. A contributor to Spencer's investigation reported that "girls didn't have careers […] they just got married and had children" (2005:166). One of Heron's interviewees remembers "I just wanted life to be different […]. My mother's image of my future had to be challenged" (1985:168). So the Type One maternal representations of the novels would be likely to strike an ideologically-powerful empathetic chord with the experiences of their readers.

The narratological device of constructing Type One maternal figures in oppositional stance to their Type Three daughters, who are focalising characters, ensures that the active ideology of the texts is clear. Narrative "point of view", the question of "who speaks?", as Paul terms it in *Reading Otherways*, tends to govern reader response, so the protagonists' deprecation of maternal life patterns is key to ideological impact (1998:20). The eponymous upper-middle-class heroine of *Monica Anson: Travel Agent* is determined to "earn her own living", choosing her practical career in rejection of Mrs Anson's progression from youthful "deb of the year" to days spent at bridge parties (Meynell 1959:9). Middle-class Margaret declares that "Bridge was a waste of time, so were half those committees on which her mother sat. [They] were really only social gatherings; other, salaried officials did the real work" (Owens 1957:14). Working-class Elizabeth's career plans are greeted with "utter incomprehension […]: Mum said: 'I suppose if it's what you want, you'd better do it, but how on earth you're ever going to meet any nice young man I really don't know!'" (Baxter 1955:19). The novels foreground the heroine's rejection of such Type One maternal advice, whether expressed overtly in direct criticism, or merely implied by her

decision to take up professional training. The privileging of paid work is represented as a sometimes difficult, but necessary rite of passage, brushing aside an impediment to maturity for the central character. While the mothers, dedicated to the practical and emotional care of home and family, conform to the dominant image of the stereotypical 'Bowlby mother', the narrative promulgation of their daughters' 'point of view' demonstrates the genre's challenge to the prevailing hegemony of maternal domesticity.

The presence of older female characters who, in contrast to the biological mothers of the heroines, do have experience of the world of work, is a notable feature of the genre. Cast in the mould of the wise and good-looking headmistress commonly found in 1940s and 1950s girls' school stories, these figures, whom I designate as Type Two Mothers, are constructed in binary opposition to the domestic mothers. Successful in their fields, they are self-assured, authoritative, and often both glamorous and sophisticated. They tend to be described as 'career women', a term which implies long-term commitment to a career structure, as opposed to the 'career girls' who are central to the plot. This is, of course, a gender-prescriptive term as ideologically loaded as 'working wife' – who speaks of the 'career man'? Nevertheless, such characters, exuding confidence and worldly knowledge, operate as positive co-mothers for the heroines, advising them on suitably professional dress, workplace deportment and office politics. Often an aunt, sometimes a colleague, their advice is valued above that of the biological mothers because of their success in a relevant field of work: Aunt Sophie in *Marion Turns Teacher* (1955) is at the top of her profession as an HMI; Aunt Mary in *Margaret Lang: Fashion Buyer* flies all over the world as buyer for a large department store. The model of womanhood presented in the Type One Mothers, limited by domesticity, is challenged in the personality, professionalism and wider horizons of these career-exemplar co-mothers. Their appearance in the text is often constructed as a deliberate assault on the gendered assumptions of the heroine. Caroline, on the way to

meet her new high-ranking boss, the County Superintendent, is anticipating a "paunchy man of sixty", and is therefore:

> slightly taken aback to discover that no man at all was there. The person sitting at the paper-strewn desk who looked up and smiled at her in a very friendly welcoming way was a middle-aged woman.
>
> (Meynell 1958:33).

These co-mothers operate as a basic narrative device for imparting career-specific information to the reader, but their more subtle function is to provide role models that offer possible alternative subject positions. The mechanics of this process will be fully examined in 'Chapter Five: Body'; as with those professional headteachers of contemporary school stories, the high-achieving aunt/colleague is a respected mentor providing both upfront practical advice and indicative ways of being that could be incorporated into future life patterns. However, despite the 'maternal' aspect of their mentoring role, many of these characters are either single or child-free. It is the heroines themselves who are the key narrative figures blazing the trail for combining marriage *and* motherhood with a successful career.

Unsurprisingly, it is the depiction of these protagonists, as Type Three Mothers, that reveals the most radical engagement of the texts with maternal discourse. Linking the more subversive aspects of their message with the identifying character was, the editors were aware, likely to enhance the ideological impact of the genre. Superficially the books are careful to ensure acceptability with pernickety gatekeepers by avoiding too crude a challenge to the maternal hegemony, so the heroines are initially shown prioritising motherhood over career. The fiercely-independent Caroline of the *Nurse Carter* trilogy, having maintained her professional identity throughout two novels, decides in the third instalment that, "with Ann on her hands there could obviously be no question of going on nursing" (Meynell 1958:9). Similarly, Sue, who resigns on becoming pregnant, maintains that "good nurses had no right to waste their talent and their training [but] any mother's first responsibility was to the children she had brought

into the world" (Boylston 1953:145). Total rejection of the career world is frowned upon however; Caroline keeps in touch by reading the *Nursing Mirror* every week, and Sue becomes a 'neighbourhood nurse' whose professional skills are available to the local community. Moreover, having become mothers, the heroines, in early adoption of a dual-role model, are quick to seize opportunities to return to work, finding it preferable, as Sue explains to her friend, "to get used to leading two lives [rather than] just sitting around home all the time." (Boylston 1953:65).

According to Reynolds, "radical writing for children works to break down stereotypical attitudes", including those to gender and class, and the editors of the career novels certainly had a clear political vision, regarding titles on their lists as having the potential to "underpin a new kind of society" (2016:2). The genre's challenge to the hegemony is the more radical when constructing the Type Three protagonists as mothers who move beyond the prescriptions of the dual-role model. While dual role was itself a departure from traditional notions of maternity, the novels go further in exploring the possibilities of maintaining a working identity despite having pre-school-age children. Both *Women's Two Roles* and the career stories address the potential impact of this situation on the children, and Myrdal and Klein's conclusion that it would be "neither practicable nor desirable" is confuted in the career titles, which emphasise instead the provision of good childcare in this situation (1956:187). The fictional Caroline and Sue, each full-time working mothers of pre-school children, overcome the 'practicable' barriers by organising live-in support, an unemployed sister-in-law and a paid housekeeper respectively, to care for their children. The 'desirability' of their work-pattern, a term hinting at dire Bowlby-like emotional consequences for the child, is directly addressed by Boylston. In the chapter 'Young Lady with Lamp' the tantrums of Sue's seven-year-old daughter Tabitha, initially assumed to be the negative outcome

of Sue's return to work, are ultimately revealed as part of a positive maturation process in which Tabitha seeks to emulate her mother's working role (1953:142-152).

In the real world, the so-called 'sacred' duty of motherhood erected an almost-implacable barrier to career achievement; even the high-flying civil servants interviewed in 1952 by sociologist Margot Jeffreys felt compelled to emphasise, not just that their offspring were unharmed by their employment, but that it actually benefited the children, whom, they argued, were likely to be more damaged by a mother staying unwillingly at home. This view was supported by the young Margaret Thatcher, who addressed meetings of the Six Point Group[32] asserting the right of mothers to work, and declared in a newspaper article, 'Wake up, Women', that "*The idea that the family suffers is, I believe, quite mistaken*. To carry on with a career stimulates the mind" (1952:6). In a 1955 issue of *She* magazine, actress Patricia Roc, mother of a two-year-old, justified her work:

> If I am fortunate enough to be able to provide my son – through my work – with the extra little touches and the extra education which will better fit him to face the future on his own, then I am not only entitled, but in duty-bound, to continue my career, and let a good nurse or relative care for him when I am not around.
> (Robins 1955:72).

Roc's oppositional use of the concept of 'duty' is highly significant and her position connects with that of the career novels, where the good of the children is often cited as the justification for mothers returning to work. As Kit advises her friend Sue, she should be resuming her profession rather than, "sitting at home alone, brooding, unhappy. It's unhealthy, and *bad for the children*. You ought to have some kind of job" (Boylston 1953:35 my emphasis). Sue's return to full-time work, with four young children, including a four-month-old baby, goes beyond the dual-role pattern, and exemplifies the importance of a working identity to the mother as an individual. The potential of self-realisation in work for the *mother*, rather than emotional or material benefits for the

[32] Middle-of-the-road feminist organisation that campaigned on six (changing) points relating to the position of women and children.

family or society, is a radical ideological position adopted in several titles. Caroline, initially, like Sue, an upholder of the primacy of maternal presence, returns to work full-time as a district nurse when her daughter is four, telling her husband that "I am feeling very happy today" (Meynell 1958:89). This message is even more explicit in *Valerie: Fashion Model* when the protagonist discusses career prospects with her Type Two mentor. Wanda, who is an experienced and successful model, "showed Valerie a small photograph of a rather serious-looking man with a small boy holding onto his hand. 'I love my job and I've got them to go home to – of course I'm happy', she said" (Lewis 1955:191-2). Census statistics cited by Lewis (1992:74) show that the majority of women having a first child in the U.K. between 1950 and 1954 did not return to work for ten years, so such scenarios are important in their indication of the challenge these texts offer to the dominant practice.

Many of the mould-breaking Type Three protagonists are further shown renegotiating the parameters of the marital relationship as part of their resistance to the limits of the dual-role model. In several texts, marriage to a colleague is only agreed on the basis that the couple will work in partnership while building both their careers and their families. Sue, a newly-qualified physiotherapist, and Diana, recently-graduated vet, accept marriage proposals on the basis that they will work alongside their prospective husbands and share both work and home responsibilities. In *Cookery Kate*, Kate and her husband are depicted as parents to a three-year-old son, sharing childcare and jointly managing what would now be termed a gastro-pub, while their friends Eric and Sylvia, who have two children, "were making money hand over fist" as entrepreneurs running a chain of cafes (Dunn 1955:136). The final chapter offers a gamut of subject positions to the reader; among Kate's group of ex-college friends, Sylvia runs a catering business with her husband, Rosemary is married with a baby, and planning shortly to resume her career as a demonstrator, Dawn is still single and a

successful hotel-receptionist (135-7). The role of the nascent 'new man' is delineated in *Eve at the Driving Wheel* in which the couple plan to open a motel; Eve explains that Pete, who "is a marvellous cook […] will run all the catering and do the cooking [while] I'd run the garage" (Charles 1957:99-100). Such role combination or, in the case of Eve and Pete, role reversal, removes the barriers to combining paid work and motherhood that are implicit in the dual-role model by collapsing its antithesis between work and home; private and public spheres are conflated so that work and motherhood can be seamlessly combined.

Even in careers where such conflation is not feasible, the heroines offer representations of marriage and maternity that create a variety of possibilities for the teenage reader in the process of constructing her own subjectivity. Not all professional women need to be single to achieve success, as Anne the electronic engineer demonstrates. Married to Nigel, who "would never want you to feel you were giving up your professional standing for my sake," Anne is shown five years into her career as a co-mothering "veteran" who mentors a new female apprentice (Cochrane 1960:134). GP Margaret, having overcome her own mother's objections to working in *Margaret Becomes a Doctor*, reappears in *Sue Takes Up Physiotherapy* (1958) as Sue's professional mentor. Unlike the successful but single Type Two mentors that feature elsewhere in the series, Margaret has "a little girl of three, [and] did a part-time job at school clinics" (Owens 1958b:11). As the working mother of a pre-school child Margaret is, alongside Sue and Caroline, symbolic of a challenge to the constrictions of the dual role, as well as an exemplar of the successful combination of motherhood and work. In such representation of working mothers with very young children, the career series writers and editors offer a subversive message on maternity from within a female-dominated sector of the publishing world that, in interrogating the primacy of children's

needs and elevating those of the mother, exceeds the cautious recommendations of Myrdal and Klein.

Thus the limits of societal vision in *Women's Two Roles*, both of potential life-patterns for working mothers and of the gender divide in home-work responsibilities, are extended in the career novels. Sociological studies such as that of Madeleine Guilbert (1966) have shown that women's long-term commitment to their work is directly related to the skill and levels of training involved (cited in Rowbotham 1973:84). So in prioritising the training period, the career novels are not merely facilitating reader-identification and addressing the obvious 'next step' for its school-leaver audience; they are incorporating the concept of a career into a whole-life plan which is generally assumed to involve motherhood. While Myrdal and Klein suggest a professionalisation of women's work in order to create a more highly-regarded version of the traditional distinction between so-called masculine and feminine occupations (with women directed towards 'caring' professions such as nursing or teaching), the literary texts suggest that a wide range of jobs could be available to women who were, or who planned to be mothers. The novels do cover stereotypically-female careers such as nursing and secretarial work, but a significant number of jobs, for instance publishing, broadcasting and advertising, are gender-neutral. Some, such as engineering, racing-driving, veterinary and police work, are set in male-dominated enclaves where the heroines are fully aware of their pioneering status. Myrdal and Klein had observed that, "not all jobs lend themselves equally well to a combination with family life", and not all the careers covered in the series are promoted as compatible with maternity (1956:157). However, titles promoting opportunities as ship's officer or in the armed services are still presented as occupations that, through development of skills and responsibility, could enhance subsequent marriage and motherhood as well as further employment. In contradiction of much critical commentary, the attention to

personal relationships in the plot structure, far from indicating an agenda of marginalisation, is designed to emphasise the discourse of opportunity. Marriage and motherhood are predicated for the majority of protagonists, but aspired to as part of a whole-life pattern; within that plan, motherhood is presented as a viable option that does not necessarily, as *Women's Two Roles* assumes, involve long absences from the arena of work. In representing maternal constructs that reach beyond the dual-role solution, the career genre offers one conceivable mode of overcoming 'the two Adams'.

5. Conclusion

The two forms of texts examined in this chapter – career novels, intended for a readership of teenage girls, who may themselves become mothers, and Blyton's family story, written for a younger audience that would have included both girls and boys – occupy diametrically-opposed positions in 1950s maternal discourse. Post-war reconstruction, being as much a matter of rebuilding family relationships as of providing houses and consumer goods, cast a spotlight on motherhood. The extreme anxiety over the mother's role which characterised the period was partly a reaction to her wartime work, that had challenged pre-war assumptions of maternity, and partly due to the widely-disseminated preoccupations of psychologists such as Winnicott and Bowlby with the mother-child relationship. Consequently the need to re-establish familial and national stability focussed on the situation of mothers, whether at home or in the workplace, in terms of their positive contribution to society through the socialisation of children. Blyton's work, in the cosy guise of a standard 1950s family story, is an extreme condemnation of mothers working outside the home, whatever the age of their children. In contrast, the career novels examine the issues involved in the context of the needs of the mother herself and her duty to society at large, as well as the requirements of the child, offering a variety of alternative options for the reader to consider.

As evident in her family stories discussed in other chapters, domesticity reigns supreme in Blyton's construction of the ideal mother. Her semi-fictionalised autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, describes her own lifestyle as that of a home-based mother, stating that, "it is the mother, always the mother [...] who makes a happy contented home" (1952:118). The irony of this somewhat disingenuous statement from a famously work-obsessed mother (especially in light of her younger daughter's declared experience of emotional absence while Blyton was sequestered in her inviolable study[33]) is worthy of note when compared to the considered views of the authors and publishers of the career genre, many of whom, including series editor Mary Dunn, were also working mothers. In comparison to the simplistic polemics of *The Six Bad Boys*, the career novels, several of which take their protagonists forward into motherhood, treat the heroine's need to continue working, whether for personal or financial reasons, with serious consideration, while also acknowledging the practical and emotional issues involved. The texts anticipate and extend the dual-role career model advocated by Myrdal and Klein, a potential life-structure unacknowledged by Blyton, and their scenarios were justified by social research that was soon to challenge the theories of Bowlby and Winnicott. The pervasive influence of these two psychologists had reinforced widely-accepted ideas regarding employed mothers rooted in the deterministic gender expectations underpinning the hegemony of maternity. Challenges to this determinism appeared as early as 1952, when sociologist Titmuss lectured on women's "right to an emotionally satisfying life" beyond childrearing (1958:102). Yudkin and Holme's extensive research on the children of working mothers concluded that "in favourable circumstances" children could do without their mother's constant presence from the age of three (1963:123). As shown above, the construction of working mothers in several career books extended that chronological boundary, in

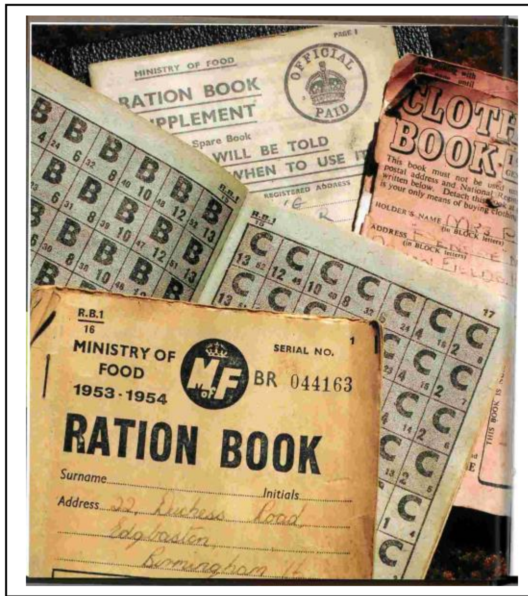
[33] In *A Childhood at Green Hedges* Imogen Smallwood states "there was scarcely a relationship at all. [She] was never, or almost never, a mother" (1989:35/12).

one case to as young as four months. The radical agenda of these books is also evident in their liberal representation of the heroines as working mothers of school-age children, at a time when the moral panics over latch-key children and juvenile delinquents that feature in Blyton's work tended to polarise opinion in both popular media and academic research.

The construction of motherhood in Blyton's text, ascribing strongly-negative values to the concept of mothers going out to work, offers no viable identity for mothers except as home-based housewives. Her extreme representation of Mrs Kent as the ultimate villain, while having the potential to inspire resistant readings, takes for granted the 'obviousness' of a solely domestic role for mothers, and crudely endorses conservative assumptions of family structure. The political message of the formulaic career genre, although conforming to normative expectations of maternity at one level, was able to show that effective motherhood could be combined with a successful career. Its juxtaposition of domesticity with the increasingly varied job opportunities available to the female readers, both as young women and once they had become mothers, demonstrates that motherhood and a career were not inevitably alternatives. Thus these texts inform maternal discourse with a corrective challenge to the status quo that Blyton's polemic directly endorses. Notwithstanding their fixations with eye-shadow and 'decent English', it is clear that producers of the career novels were aware of their engagement in the wider discourse of opportunity for women, as both workers and mothers. The appearance of the genre at a time when the labour market for women was expanding was not coincidental, but carefully planned and orchestrated, making the books particularly significant as consciously-discursive instruments. Close examination of individual novels reveals a combination of accurate depictions of the reality of women's domestic and working lives with substantial representation of the changing nature of maternal roles. In their extension of the emergent dual-role philosophy, these

titles are not the infamous 'mask for a romantic story' that some scholars have inferred them to be. On the contrary, they were an influential genre capable of creating subject positions for the reader that incorporate life-choices inclusive of work, money, power *and* motherhood, and offering the potential for a radical reinterpretation of maternal identity. Nevertheless, as W.E.Williams' cartoon above illustrates (Fig 11 p144), the combination of a working role with domestic mothering responsibilities had a significant impact on the performative development of that identity, and I examine this aspect of motherhood in the following chapter, 'Food'.

Chapter Four
Food: Sustenance, Celebration and Site of Struggle



Has no M.P. an angry wife
Who threatens with a carving knife,
And vows that if he rations bread
She'll see the boys and girls are fed,
And he must give up half his share
Because HE makes the cupboard bare?

Enid Blyton *Sunday Graphic* 1946

Mother *is* warmth, mother *is* food, mother *is* the euphoric state of satisfaction and security.

Erich Fromm *The Art of Loving* 1957

Figure 13: 'On the Ration' 1953-54
Imperial War Museum

1. Introduction: Food for Thought

Alongside the criteria of homemaking, domesticity and employment discussed in previous chapters, models of 1950s motherhood were powerfully constructed through food matters. Severe rationing, limiting access to basic food sources such as milk and bread in the immediate post-war years, constrained the burgeoning reconstruction of maternal identity examined in 'Chapter Three: Work', and was much resented by mothers, who bore the brunt of the practical effects of restrictions. The controls, which exceeded wartime conditions, were imposed by parliament for economic reasons, but even the ultra-patriotic Blyton was moved to protest, sending the above poem to the national press when bread rationing was proposed in the wake of a disastrous 1946 U.K. wheat crop. Ongoing protests around food supplies, in which mothers (represented by groups such as the British Housewives' League, who collected 600,000 signatures on a petition for parliament protesting bread rationing) were highly vociferous, became the catalyst for a surprising reversal of political ideology in the country at large. In 1951, and notwithstanding its establishment of the much-valued welfare state, the Attlee Labour government was roundly defeated by the Conservatives under Winston

Churchill – who had declared that he would fight the election on “houses [and] red meat” (qtd in Hardyment 1995:38).

Food in human society has always carried mythic and social as well as physiological significance; well beyond biological necessity it is infused with cultural power as a carrier of meaning and messages. As Barthes argues, food can be “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviour [each] charged with signifying the situation in which it is used” (1961:24/29). The representation of food in story is a powerful method of connecting the imagined world with prevailing external reality, so that it becomes “a metonymy of the real” (Vallone 2002:47). My investigation of food practices in popular texts as a tool for constructions of motherhood is fruitful in light of the mimetic effect; since it is generally mothers, in both imaginary and actual worlds, who are responsible for food provision and consumption, this perspective is revealing of Barthesian psychological and social signifiers for motherhood. Maternal food responsibilities are, according to Carole Counihan, “a cultural universal, a major component of female identity, and an important source of female connections to and influence over others” (1988:52). There is an ideological dimension to this connective process, and my investigation of the practical, emotional and structural messages encoded in the symbiosis of mothering and feeding draws on constructions of power and identity through ideology as defined by Althusser (1971).

The fundamental symbiotic link between maternity and food is explored from an emotional perspective by Fromm in *The Art of Loving*, his 1957 study of the nature of love in Western culture. He sees food as the primary and primitive indicator of maternal love, indissoluble in infantile perception from the mother herself; as the epigraph quotation emphasises, alongside warmth and security, “mother *is* food” (1957:57). Fromm follows Freudian psychoanalytic theory on the importance of the

oral stage in creating attachment between mother and child; Freud posited 'oral' as the oldest instinct, the first libidinal stage, which he regarded as crucial for healthy emotional and psychosexual development. In this first experience of human relationship, the biological and nutritive function of food is inextricably linked with the psychological and emotional satisfaction of the feeding experience. Such satisfaction, Fromm suggests, ideally exists from birth, when the infant:

> cannot recognise objects, is not yet aware of itself, and of the world as being outside of itself. It only feels the positive stimulation of warmth and food, and it does not yet differentiate warmth and food from its source: mother.
> (57).

He goes on to argue that the unconditional maternal love hopefully inspired at this stage is essential throughout childhood for the child's growing sense of self. A mother's responsibility to provide sustenance for her children is thus far more weighted than merely the basic task of putting food on the table. It is, according to Fromm, and other 1950s psychologists such as Bowlby and Winnicott, crucial for the child's healthy development towards individual adulthood; in offering nourishment, both physical and emotional, to her children, the all-giving mother is demonstrating responsibility for the type of persons they will become.

In her discussion of *Food, Consumption and the Body*, Sceats points out that food is "not bound within any single discourse, but impregnated with meanings from the many and various frameworks within which it figures" (2000:126). My interrogation of the representation of mothers in terms of their negotiation of food and the issues that surround it will address the various discursive frameworks in operation during the post-war period. Food matters are inseparable from questions of gender, power and control, and I will investigate how the prevailing discourse of motherhood accommodated issues such as shopping, cooking, table-manners and family eating habits within the structural ideologies of gender roles, the quality of maternity, and power relations in the family. The use of food customs is, as Wendy Katz has noted, "especially pronounced in

English children's literature [...] as a measure of the child's adjustment to the social order", and this chapter, dealing with food as an agent of control in the specifically maternal enculturation of children into society, argues that the literary narratives both promulgate and critique contemporary expectations of motherhood (1980:193).

Since food was a major preoccupation of British society in the post-war austerity period from 1945 until the ultimate end of rationing in 1954, I focus here on texts relevant to that decade. I refer to novels by Blyton, Courtney, Lunt and Streatfeild; with the exception of Lunt's *Secret Stepmother*, all were produced during those years of post-war food rationing more severe than any imposed previously. (*Secret Stepmother* was published in 1959, but as the heroine Janet leaves school aged fourteen to become a nursery nurse, the story is evidently set between 1945 and 1947).[34] The semiotics of cooking and eating are defined by Lynne Vallone as the "culinary sign", and this sign recurs throughout the novels, a crucial aspect of their discursive engagement with conditions of motherhood (2002:47). The early appearance of the culinary sign, usually in the form of a family meal in the first chapter, is an indication of its metaphorical importance; the presentation of these initial scenes, which are often mirrored in a celebratory meal at the conclusion of the narrative, is a pointer to the ideological positioning of each text. As the furore over bread rationing demonstrated, food was a catalyst for change in this era, and food issues, so strongly linked with the nurturant maternal role, were to become significant factors in the cultural discourse of motherhood to which the fictional works contributed.

This chapter begins by defining and deconstructing the 'foodwork' of the 1950s, considering how its appearance in the texts relates to received assumptions of maternity and the workings of gender, for both adult and child protagonists. I then discuss the

[34] The 1944 Education Act raised the school leaving age to fifteen years, a provision implemented in April 1947. As a post-war English teacher at a County (Secondary Modern) School, Lunt would be aware of this.

relevance of food as a symbolic tool in the construction of normative maternity and calibration of the quality of mothering; as Carolyn Daniel has observed, “it is often the case that food is used to make implicit judgements about a woman [...] including her capacity to love and nurture, and her willingness to sacrifice herself for her family” (2006:108). The final section deals with modes of food consumption as they reveal familial control structures and the operation of maternal power dynamics in both family and society. I investigate these with regard to what Foucault describes as power’s “capillary form of existence”, applying Foucauldian notions of the microphysics of power to the mundane – or not so mundane – processes of acquiring, preparing and consuming meals (1980:39).

2. Sustenance: Foodwork and Gender

‘Foodwork’ – the labour involved in food provision, occurs across the full scope of the food system from production to consumption, requiring, at various stages, physical, cognitive, interactional or institutional input. In the domestic environment, such work carries symbolic meaning in relation to motherhood because of the entwinement of food and nurture. It is also, most usually, a gendered activity; numerous empirical studies since the 1950s – Nickie Charles and Marion Kerr (1988); Carolyn Sachs (2014); Cairns and Johnston (2015) – have demonstrated that, as Sachs states, “Foodwork [is] typically accomplished in households by women as unpaid labour” (2014:5). Still prevalent in Western culture as a gender-defined task that services the heteronormative family, maternal foodwork duties were generally unquestioned in 1950s Britain. Contemporaneous social commentators, such as Williams, while advocating the wider participation of women in society, still assumed that preparation of meals was the mother’s responsibility, although it was acknowledged that this involved a “constant drain on a woman’s creative energies”, preventing her from more satisfying interaction in the wider world (1945:117). During the war, when women were directed into war

work to maintain the national economy, the establishment of government-run British Restaurants had liberated mothers from the need to provide every cooked meal at home by offering ready-cooked nourishing food at affordable prices. Despite criticisms of the institutional quality of the food – "eating there was awfully like being fed by the Government – positively by the Minister of Food himself" – these state-run dining halls were well-used, providing fifty million meals per week in 1945 (Blishen 1972:47). However, such communal cooking and eating fell out of favour in the post-war culture of home-focussed domesticity; Beveridge's suggestion in *Voluntary Action* that, "some of what has now to be done separately in every home [including] cooking every meal [could] be done communally outside the home" was never incorporated into policy (1948:264). After the 1951 election the political as well as the social climate was inimical to such communal concepts and 'cooking every meal' remained an individual maternal responsibility.

Even advocates of fundamental change for women in their working lives outside the home, such as Tait (1954) and Haslett (1949), subscribed to the prevailing assumptions around domestic foodwork, as Haslett's comment when discussing international policy on food shortages inadvertently reveals:

> revolutionary thinking [is needed]. This kind of thinking is done every day in the nation's kitchens by women who, faced with shortage of certain foods, substitute others. They keep their thinking directed towards their end, which is that of feeding the family.
>
> (1949:31).

While lauding the effort involved, Haslett still assumes that mothers were fully responsible for feeding the family. Williams' emphasis on the creative energies needed for foodwork, along with Haslett's 'this kind of thinking' does however elevate the initiative, cognitive and strategic skills required. Maternal or "feminine foodwork" is defined by Szabo as "cooking motivated by caring for others", and during the rationing period such work required ingenuity, time and physical effort as well as revolutionary

thinking (2017:139). Food supplies were limited and certain foods almost unobtainable, shopping was time-consuming, preparation appliances were undeveloped, and kitchens were labour-intensive. Nevertheless, since 'good' mothering was considered synonymous with foodwork, the social pressure to embody maternal perfection was evident at every stage of the process. As Myrdal and Klein point out, although "glossy journals may be full of alluring advertisements illustrating luscious dishes prepared in a jiffy out of a tin, there is, nevertheless, still a certain stigma attached to the use of the tin-opener as a kitchen utensil" (1956:143). Their observation echoes Williams' comment, when discussing communal restaurants in *Women and Work*, that the "whole subject of home-cooking has acquired a vaguely *moral* flavour" (1945:102). The stigma of the tin-opener as an icon of departure from traditional ideals of caring through food is clear when Courtney's Sally surveys her new home; it contains a larder "obviously designed for use in the days when housewives loved to keep large stocks of home-made preserves instead of relying on the canning industry and a tin-opener in feeding their families" (1946:15). Determined to be a good substitute-mother for her siblings, Sally declares that, "I'm going to do my best. […] I'd love to be able to fill all these shelves with jam or preserves" (130). As mirrors of reality, all the works of this chapter designate home-cooking skills as a template for the quality of mothering. The binary oppositions of good and bad mothers in Blyton and Streatfeild, for example, invariably cite food skills as a yardstick, and thus the texts play a part in constructing the social conditions in which gendered foodwork was assumed to be integral to maternity.

The gendered aspect of foodwork was linked to the cultural definitions of male and female responsibilities within the family discussed in previous chapters, particularly with regard to paid employment. As cultural theorist Bourdieu states, "cooking symbolises one state of female existence and of the sexual division of labour", a statement that is borne out in analysis of 1950s Mass Observation diaries (1984:186-7).

While female respondents wrote frequently about buying or growing food and cooking meals, “none of the male diarists gave accounts of food practices, such as shopping or cooking” (Knight 2015). Husbands, it was assumed, were quite literally, ‘breadwinners’; a use of the term, first noted in 1821, that harks back to its Old English etymological origin as “one who guards the loaves” (OED). While the husband went out to work to earn money that provided the family food, obtaining and then processing that food inside the home was a matter for the wife and mother. It is worth noting in this context that many of the most severely-rationed foods were culturally significant in terms of gender. As the later research of Charles and Kerr reveals, meat was symbolic of masculinity in the working-class households they surveyed; the breadwinner father was customarily given priority for meat consumption – as head of the household he would be awarded the “lion’s share” (1988:227). In the literary texts, it is father-figures who take control of the meat element of the meal at table; once his wife has cooked and “put the dishes on the sideboard, […] Mr Longfield got up to carve, *as he always did*” (Blyton 1948:75 my emphasis). In contrast, the Hamiltons, who are fatherless, “had some difficulty in carving the goose, all struggling with it in turn” (Courtney 1946:187). Baking was perceived as an important feminine skill, that to be performed successfully required sugar and severely-rationed fatty foods such as butter and cream. So for the mother whose status was linked to cooking, rationing could become a very personal attack on maternal identity. The indigestible cake baked by Mrs Lacy in *The Family at Red-Roofs* is symbolic of her failure as a mother, while Lucy Hamilton’s disastrous pancakes, accidentally made with mustard-powder instead of powdered egg (a ubiquitous kitchen ingredient at a time when fresh eggs were limited to one per week), are direct allusions to the problems of baking during the rationing era.

The gendered processes involved in foodwork have been conceptualised by sociologist Marjorie DeVault in *Feeding the Family* as: planning, procuring, preparing,

synchronising, serving, eating and clearing up (1991:35-91). In my discussion, I condense this classification into three main areas, which facilitate analysis of how food responsibilities are shared within the fictional families, revealing their construction of motherhood. ‘Prior-foodwork’ involves planning meals and procuring food; ‘Presenting-foodwork’ includes preparing, cooking, serving, and consuming it; ‘Post-foodwork’ consists of clearing away, washing-up and tidying; each will now be discussed in turn.

A 1951 Mass Observation Survey, cited in *Women’s Two Roles*, stated that housewives “spend an average of 71 hours a week on domestic activities, the largest share of which is taken up in connexion with meals, *which absorb one quarter of their working day*” (Myrdal and Klein 1956:36 my emphasis). Given the practical difficulties facing housewives, approximately three hours per day on foodwork sounds a conservative estimate, since mothers were constrained by shortages, high prices and complex coupon allocation systems for different members of the family. So the prior-foodwork of planning meals was a demanding process in this era, as the texts demonstrate. The difficulties of post-war rationing permeate Streatfeild’s *Curtain Up*, in which Hannah’s role as maternal factotum of the motherless Forbes children is almost entirely presented in terms of food. A staunch traditionalist in the devoted family-retainer model characteristic of many Streatfeild novels, Hannah’s mothering is expressed through the contemporary practicalities of foodwork; she is much engaged with the problems of managing ration books, ‘points’ systems and coping with endless queuing, even, when in a good mood, singing about them. A devoted churchgoer, she combines this preoccupation with the words of her favourite hymns: “We plough the fields and scatter, the good seed … Drat the butcher, that’s a wretched piece of meat!” (1945:9). “Do no sinful action, speak no angry word. We ought to spend our points today” (114).

When the children are missing their naval-officer father, Hannah comforts them with a rare sweet treat: “she gave them all cups of cocoa and, as if there were no such thing as rationing, two spoons of sugar in each cup” (9). On the crowded and miserable train journey to London, when the children leave home after the death of their grandfather, Hannah produces a surprise picnic, explaining to the other passengers that, “We had an early breakfast and we’re a bit low-spirited. Nothing like something to eat as a cure for that” (20). The societal obsession with food restrictions so evident in female Mass Observation diarists is here exemplified in the reaction of the fictional travellers:

> The sight of real egg and chocolate biscuits, both at the same minute, excited the other passengers so much that in no time they were talking like old friends. Of course the conversation was mostly about food, but food was what grown-up people liked talking about, so that was all right.
>
> (20).

Hannah’s all-embracing maternity utilises the food-initiated conversation to nurture the previously morose travellers, uniting them in a familial togetherness as she “drew everybody in” (21). Food is here represented as the social glue that brings together the grumpy, half-asleep train passengers; as the maternal enabler, Hannah’s production of food “made a cheerful atmosphere”, and the link between food and mothering is shown to extend beyond immediate family members to the wider community (21).

The system of points rationing that so preoccupies Hannah continued until 1950, affecting many packaged goods such as cereals, pulses and dried fruits as well as basic foods. It was designed to guarantee equitable distribution of staple foodstuffs, and is generally acknowledged to have been effective in narrowing the gap between social classes with regard to food consumption. Nevertheless, while rationing was tolerated as an exigency of wartime, the continuing privations after the war for economic reasons, in order to make more goods available for export, were increasingly resented. By 1947 the adult weekly allowance was thirteen ounces of meat, one and a half ounces of cheese

and one egg. Other basic foods, such as milk and butter, were restricted and potato rationing began in 1947, when frost had damaged much of the stored potato crop. In 1951 the meat ration was reduced to four ounces per week, the lowest it had ever been, and a clear stimulus for Churchill's 'red meat' electioneering strategy. In view of the national agricultural requirements underlying the stringencies, it is notable that the distinction in the fictional narratives between the material conditions of urban and rural lifestyles, while promulgating a cosy literary vision of bucolic abundance, also reflects the arduous reality of the relationship between produce and labour for mothers. Streatfeild's Hannah, we are told, was only able to supply 'real egg' for her picnic because the family had previously lived in a country vicarage where she kept hens. In Courtney's *Sally's Family* the Hamiltons relocate to a village, and rationing constraints feature in terms of the benefits of rural over urban living. On arriving at her new home Sally has forgotten to bring any food, and neighbour Mrs Rees comes to the rescue, with a basket containing:

> "A loaf, some of our own butter" – she looked slyly at Sally – "that's the best of living on a farm. Milk – also our own. […] A few eggs – from our own hens. Some scones – I was baking this morning. A few slices of ham – we've killed a pig recently. There! That should keep you going."
>
> (1946:25).

When Sally protests that she "can't take your rations", Mrs Rees assures her that there is plenty to spare (25). She continues to share unrationed bounty with the Hamilton family, bringing "a chicken, some butter, some cream [and] some eggs" on her next visit (103). The rarity of such produce for these urban exiles is attested by their reactions; after Pookum's delighted squeal of "'Ooh! Cream!' […] the blackberry-and-apple tart with its layer of cream vanished like magic" (106). The reality of the contrast between town and countryside conditions for mothers struggling to procure food is evident in the records of two 1950 Mass Observation diarists. Mrs P, living in rural Dorset, grows enough of her own vegetables to share "a picking of beans" with her

sister-in-law, and later describes cultivating strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, and harvesting sugar peas, which "go on and on, a wonderfully hardy two-purpose crop" (MOA 1950:FR:5475/5476). Mrs U, however, from urban Sheffield, finds shop prices for fresh vegetables, strawberries and tomatoes so high that, "We are having tinned vegetables this weekend. I just cannot pay 2/- for a cauliflower and there was nothing else, not even a fresh carrot" (1950:FR:5447).

The prior-foodwork strategy of growing vegetables as opposed to shopping for scarce produce becomes important to Courtney's impoverished Hamiltons as they settle into rural life. Sally's worries about feeding her family are slightly allayed by her discovery of a large but neglected kitchen garden; "Feeding six people was going to be a problem, and everything would help" (1946:32). Given this text's shared approach to caring tasks, discussed in 'Chapter Two: Work' regarding housework, gardening is undertaken by each member of the family, rather than represented as the sole responsibility of Sally or co-mothering sister Kitty. Elsewhere, such fictional food production is, as for Mass Observation diarists, a maternal duty. Blyton's Linnie Longfield manages the poultry, kitchen-garden and dairy on the farm, while her citified sister-in-law is horrified that husband David expects her to emulate such labour – "you must take on the chickens as well. I want you to feed them, collect the eggs, grade them and wash them for market" (1950:68). In Streatfeild's *New Town*, youngest son Angus is given twelve hens by his grandfather, in order to help with the family housekeeping budget. Initially mother Cathy resists being involved with this food-production task – "everyone [must] understand that I will never have anything to do with hens […] not even preparing whatever it is they eat" (1960:161). Eventually, in compliance with a gendered foodwork role, she succumbs, cooking the daily hen-mash for Angus to feed his flock. When the Bells plan their annual holiday activities, Cathy's focus is on procuring food; her contemplation of "a new kind of jam-jar top" inspires her daughter

to declare, “Jam tops! […] I can see you and Aunt Ann picking mulberries and me and Daddy fishing. It’s almost as if we were there” (1954:186). While the family go fishing, Cathy “looked upon August as the time for filling her shelves”; constructed as a positive mother-figure, even on holiday she dedicates her time and energy to the prior-foodwork duties of fruit-picking, bottling and jam-making (139).

Although the work involved in the rural processes of food production was considerable, the urban labour of sourcing food in the form of shopping, involving severe shortages and much queuing, was also onerous. Despite Sainsbury’s opening of the first British supermarket in 1950, mothers generally needed to visit a variety of shops for food, and in each one – butcher, baker, greengrocer, fishmonger – they could expect to queue. The normality and concomitant frustrations of time-consuming queuing appear repeatedly in Mass Observation diaries; Mrs A records that, “The queue at the butchers was very long, with a wait of 30 minutes or so for each person”, and later that “The crowd at the greengrocer’s was just too awful, as bad as yesterday’s […] long queues for potatoes.” (MOA 1950:FR:5240). Resentment over the long hours mothers spent queuing had been the catalyst for the establishment of the British Housewives’ League; their first activity, before the bread-rationing campaign, had been to collect 17,000 signatures from so-called ‘ordinary housewives’, which were presented to parliament in protest against the prevalence of food queues. Notwithstanding attempts by conservative organisations such as the Mothers’ Union and Townswomen’s Guilds to ameliorate such complaints, most mothers concurred with TG member Constance Hill’s declaration that, “the smiling mother of yesterday is the bad-tempered mother of today [...], we are under-fed, under-washed and over-controlled” (qtd in Hinton 1994:133). As with the vociferous bread-rationing protest, there was a political outcome to maternal discontent; as one mother expressed it, “the

[1951] election was lost mainly in the queue at the butcher's or the grocer's" (qtd in Pugh 1992:291).

The laborious task of shopping is most frequently depicted in the texts as gendered work. As the substitute mother for her younger siblings, fourteen-year-old Janet in *Secret Stepmother* coped with buying, "everything – the bread, the potatoes, the groceries" for the family, evidently sourced, given Janet's resentful phrasing, from a variety of shops (Lunt 1959:25). The task is automatically taken over by newly-arrived stepmother, Beth, who asks Janet's advice on which shops to use. In Blyton, shopping is always a gender-defined task, although often delegated by mothers to child protagonists. Female cousins Melisande, Jane and Susan do the shopping, while their brothers Cyril, Jack and Roderick are expected to substitute for the "man short on the farm" by bringing in the horses, mucking-out cowsheds and feeding the calves (1948:93). In line with her more even-handed approach to familial roles, previously discussed in 'Chapter Two: Work', Streatfeild offers some resistance to this gender determinism. Despite mother Cathy's acquiescence in fruit-bottling and jam-making tasks, food shopping in the Bell family is a regular weekend chore for brothers Paul and Angus as well as their sisters, and all the children benefit from an appropriately food-related incentive; "the reward for all this hard work was money for ice-creams" (1954:64). So while these novels confirm the prevailing (sometimes reluctant) acceptance of maternal responsibility for the gendered tasks of prior-foodwork, they also contain indications of a wider perspective. The desire for structural change that, at a macro-level, could influence the outcome of national elections, could also, at a micro-level, lead to the reconsideration of gender-defined duties at home that is apparent in Streatfeild's work.

As the contextual sources attest, food preparation and cooking became a discursive battleground in the post-war years, so 'presenting-foodwork' constituted an even more remarkable challenge for 1950s mothers than the prior-foodwork

complexities of rationing, shopping, and food-production. The difficulties of cooking appetising meals with limited, often unappetising ingredients, alongside the need of good nutrition for children, was addressed across the media. These topics were a staple feature of magazine articles, government advice pamphlets and broadcasting directed at mothers; the Ministry of Food's 1948 informational film *Feeding the Under-20s*, typical of the trend, was shown country-wide at Women's Institute and Mothers' Union meetings. When *Woman's Hour* was introduced to radio on 7 October 1946 as "a daily programme of music, advice, and entertainment for the home", it always included a recipe. 'Mother's Midday Meal' featured in the inaugural programme, alongside 'Coupon Savings', and advice on negotiating complicated ration books (*Radio Times*). The tradition continued – in 1953 *Woman's Hour* listeners were entertained by a talk on 'How to Buy a Cabbage' (ibid).

Limitations to the foodstuffs available inevitably exacerbated maternal problems in presenting acceptable meals. The government advocated unusual foods, such as whalemeat, pigeon and rabbit, to swell rations in the face of increasing shortages. The infamous canned snoek, a tropical barracuda-like fish, was imported as a replacement for canned salmon, and Ministry of Food booklets in the *Food and Nutrition* and *Food Facts* series attempted to encourage the use of such ingredients. The September 1947 issue of *Food and Nutrition* included several recipes for whalemeat, which, it declared, "most people cannot distinguish from beefsteak when it is finely cut before cooking or mixed with strong flavours" (1947:391). Similar overly-optimistic governmental comments, and recipes such as 'Snoek Piquante' failed to convert mothers; most tins of snoek were to remain unsold, although this recipe title became an iconic marker for the less successful aspects of rationing policy. As in other areas of maternal practice (discussed in 'Chapter Two: Work' and 'Chapter Three: Money'), 'expert' opinion, predominantly male, took precedence over practical experience; mothers, it seemed, no

longer knew best. Consequently, well-meaning intentions to create a “healthy generation, guarded by regulation orange juice, halibut-liver oil and milk” were often seen as official interventions questioning maternal competence; an uneasy relationship between mothers and state was being forged over dinner (Cooper 1963:36).

The voice of female authorities on food appears from within the kitchen, and popular media figures such as Marguerite Patten, resident cook on *Woman’s Hour*, were enlisted in the propaganda campaign. Her first broadcast recipe in 1947 was for whalemeat stew, although her description of the main ingredient as “a cross between liver and rather strong meat, with a very fishy and oily smell” may not have enhanced its reputation (Patten 1998:34). Several recipes for cooking rabbit (baked, boiled, dumplings, curried, jugged, potted) were offered in the 1947 summer-holiday edition of *Food Facts*, entitled ‘Filling the Plate: for the Children at Home’ (1947:390). Mothers were reminded of ex-Minister of Food Lord Woolton’s recommendation that “if you want to tell the age of a rabbit, take its head in your hand and squeeze it” (1942:84). Such bizarre advice did little to ameliorate the limitations of rationing, and the well-intentioned but paternalistic media campaign aimed at mothers was ultimately ineffective; in undermining individual responsibility for maternal nurture, official advice tended to produce a resistance in reality that the literary texts replicate.

The problems of mothers dealing with alien and unappetising ingredients is highlighted in *White Boots*, as Streatfeild describes the struggles of Harriet’s mother. Olivia’s husband George Johnson is an economic failure as breadwinner; described affectionately by his wife as “an unpractical old idiot”, George ineptly attempts to support the family on the proceeds of his failing greengrocery shop, and as a result Olivia has little control over the ingredients in the meals she prepares (1951:16). The unequal power depicted in the marital relationship sets this devoted wife against her husband in an illuminating portrayal of the influence of gendered expectations regarding

maternal food responsibilities. Unfortunately for the Johnson family, George's brother William, who runs a smallholding which supplies the shop, "ate the best of everything that he grew, caught or shot", so Olivia is reduced to creating meals from the random and unsaleable leftover items he sends them (8). While rationing is not explicitly mentioned, these items read much like the mysterious ingredients, still on sale at the time of the book's publication, that were promulgated in recipes from the Ministry of Food. When announcing dinner Olivia declares:

> There's enough rabbit for two, there's a very small pike, there is grouse but I don't really know about that, it seems to be very, very old, as if it had been dead a long time, and there's sauerkraut. I'm afraid everyone must eat cabbage of some sort today, we've had over seven hundred from Uncle William this week and it's only Wednesday.
>
> (9).

William is referred to by the children as Uncle Guzzle, because of the impact of his greed on their meals, which suffer from his inferior produce. Unsurprisingly however, it is mother Olivia who suffers most:

> What would not sell had to be eaten and this made a great deal of trouble because Uncle William had a large appetite and seldom sent more than one of any kind of fish or game, and the result was that the family meals were made up of several different kinds of food, which meant a lot of cooking.
>
> (9).

Olivia, like Cathy Bell, is outwardly compliant to social expectations of the maternal role, both in terms of foodwork and of home-based motherhood. Nevertheless, in a rare grumble that reveals the underlying challenge to hegemonic maternity in Streatfeild's text, Olivia describes her problems to a visitor:

> [Uncle William] is sending us the weirdest things. There's no real market, you know, for frost-bitten mangold-wurzels, nor for stored apples that haven't kept. Last year he tried an unfortunate experiment with storing eggs, but it hasn't worked. Sometimes I open twenty bad ones before I come to one good. I daresay you can smell them.
>
> (134).

Olivia's unusual outburst utilises the imagery of unpleasantly-damaged food to draw attention to the difficult issues buried beneath her compliance with traditional maternal

duty. Addressed in the previous chapters 'Work' and 'Money' through the optics of housework and employment, here it is food – rotten apples and stinking eggs – that is redolent of the underlying resentment among mothers trapped in economic and relational servitude. The reader is confronted with a malodorous metaphor that humorously but vividly evokes resistance to the maternal hegemony. At a surface level, Streatfeild's delineation of Olivia's struggles also mimics the practical difficulties for mothers in carrying out their cooking role during the post-war years. In *White Boots*, as in reality, the cooking of specifically-chosen foods is an unlikely luxury and the labour of presenting-foodwork is performed unaided by husbands or children; both the responsibility and the work are allocated to the mother.

In contrast, post-foodwork activities of clearing away, washing-up, and tidying are constructed in the texts as communal family activities, at least as far as child protagonists are concerned. Such tasks remain gendered in the adult sphere; no father is depicted clearing the table or approaching the kitchen sink, although in *Secret Stepmother*, Janet's father is described, in a passage which hints at the unspoken physical relationship with his new wife, as bringing in the coal: "Simon Lloyd entered the living-room at that moment [...]. His strong brown arms were bare to the elbow and he carried the scuttle as if it were no weight at all" (Lunt 1959:25). As previously discussed (p133) with reference to the Mass Observation Directive *Housework*, men reported that they performed tasks such as carrying coal, but considered food-related tasks, including clearing the table and washing-up, to be the responsibility of their wives (MOA 1948:DR:March/April). However, there are some indications of resistance to normative maternal patterns in the novels, as mothers, in refutation of the idealised self-sacrificing mother-figure embedded in 1950s discourse, delegate post-food work to their offspring. There is nevertheless still a sharply-defined gender component in the texts of Blyton, Courtney and Lunt. As described in 'Chapter Two: Work', Melisande, Jane and

Susan of the ‘Six Cousins’ books are expected to clear the table and wash-up, being trained by mother Linnie and co-mother Dorcas to perform these tasks competently, while their brothers work outside on the farm. When Lucy and Pookum in *Sally’s Family* share the washing-up, their brothers bring in the coal and chop wood. Such task-orientated gender assumptions, promulgated by the mother characters themselves, are challenged in the Streatfeild texts. Although, unlike the communal, non-hierarchical structure of the Hamilton household, the Bells are a conventionally-formulated nuclear family, it is here that the gender bias of post-food work is breached. Mother Cathy, in an exercise of maternal power within her home-based sphere, takes control of the children’s participation in post-foodwork chores, “stating clearly what each was to do [since] it would not be natural for any child to wash-up or do any chore that was going unless they had been asked to” (1954:64). “Washing-up Saturday” is routine for sons Paul and Angus, who are also expected to clear the table (25). The pattern is replicated in Streatfeild’s conventional Andrews family of *Party Frock*, whose eldest son John agrees to help sister Sally clear the table, as “it’s not my washing-up night”; clearly washing-up is a regular responsibility for him (1946:157). In such delineation of post-foodwork, while each text negotiates situations in which the labour is not considered to be entirely a maternal duty, the systematic responsibilities conveyed by Streatfeild’s language indicate customary male participation in these chores; a scenario that opens wider possibilities for consideration of gender roles in the family.

In their exploration of different aspects of foodwork, and the construction of maternity in relation to it, these novels reflect the difficulties of food-related labour in the post-war era and are largely coherent with prevalent gender ideologies. Food remains associated with the feminine, although there are instances of a challenge to the status quo in Courtney that is extended further in Streatfeild’s work. The conflicted relationship between the material product and the huge amount of domestic labour

required of mothers in getting food to the table is evident in the wide range of tasks described; a melange of activities from jam-making and hen-keeping to queuing and compiling edible meals from odd ingredients. Cooking and food presentation, arguably the most demanding, but also potentially the most creative foodwork tasks, are represented as gender-linked skills specific to maternity; in the wider narrative of the texts, food is assumed to be integral to the performative identity of motherhood. The symbolic significance of 'presenting-foodwork' tasks, in particular cooking, is played out in the corpus as a means of both judging and celebrating the quality of mothering, an aspect which I will now discuss.

3. Celebration: the Good Mother

Chodorow's contention that "being a mother is being a person who socialises and nurtures, [thus] women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction" situates the motherhood role beyond family into the societal sphere (1999:11). The psychological theorists of the 1950s, generally male, created intmidating standards for this maternal nurture. In their responsibility for moulding the sort of person the child will ultimately become, mothers were exhorted by Winnicott to "Enjoy yourself!" or fail: "the mother's pleasure has to be there or else the whole procedure is dead, useless and mechanical" (1957:26-27). The correlation of the ideal mother-figure with the good society and the well-adjusted child was closely linked to her role of food-giver, as Fromm's discussion of the early feeding relationship makes clear. In a 1946 talk to magistrates entitled 'Some Psychological Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency', Winnicott used food-based metaphors to designate maternal deprivation as a root cause of youth crime: "I put it this way. When a child steals sugar he is looking for the good mother, his own, from whom he has a right to take what sweetness is there" (1984:111). The food motif, representing good mothering and good food as synonymous, appears frequently in post-war cultural texts – the quality of motherhood

is to be evaluated by and celebrated through the medium of food provision. Expert advice was considered crucial in facilitating the desired outcome for both society and individual; in a 1945 speech urging continuing involvement of the government in feeding guidance for mothers, Lord Woolton declaimed:

> The young need protection and it is proper that for them the State should take deliberate steps to provide it. Feeding is not enough, it must be good feeding. The food must be chosen in the light of knowledge of what a growing child needs for the building of a sound body. And when the food has been well-chosen, it must be well cooked. This is a task that calls for the highest degree of scientific catering; it mustn't be left to chance.
>
> (qtd in Hardyment 1995:12).

Food, while remaining the key responsibility of mothers, was thus simultaneously a powerful socialising agent, a marker for the psychological quality of maternity, and a political tool. The persisting role of food-presentation in evaluation of motherhood has been confirmed in later sociological studies; the research by Charles and Kerr into food practices of 1980s families makes clear that mothering is still "defined as being in the kitchen" (1988:6). While, as 'Chapter One: Home' argues, such placement can constitute a position of power, it also imposes immense responsibility. In their furnishing of the product that literally and metaphorically sustains the family, the women interviewed in the empirical studies felt they were judged, by themselves and others, as 'good' or 'bad' mothers according to the quality of food they provided and how it was served and consumed.

Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses[35] as institutions which "function by ideology" can be seen operating in such self-judgements (1971:97). Motherhood, as a gendered form of ideological state apparatus, is a concept in which a particular construction of social and personal identity is created for and internalised by the mother, utilising indoctrination rather than force, and operating primarily within the private domain that Althusser designates the "family ISA" (96). The acceptance by

[35] See 'Introduction' p22ff

mothers of a specific vision of maternity as marked by food is a prominent strand of the popular fiction I am exploring; a theme well illustrated by a dining-table scene in *The Bell Family,* when Cathy's concern over failure to create an acceptable meal for her children signifies her own internalisation of the potent ISA of normative motherhood.

In this episode Cathy has made a brawn, intending to provide her family with a novel and appetising breakfast on a hot day. However, as she explains worriedly to helpmeet Mrs Gage, "I read in a paper that it was easy to make, and all the family would love it, but it doesn't seem to have turned out right somehow" (Streatfeild 1954:183). In response to Mrs Gage's ill-concealed horror at "what seemed to be a cross between cold soup and a half-jellied jelly […], Cathy shuddered. 'Don't Mrs Gage, dear. I had already taken a dislike to it, but now it makes me feel sick'" (183). When the dish is set on the dining-table, the children respond predictably, with well-behaved eldest Paul politely enquiring "I thought brawns stood up", while difficult middle-child Ginnie pushes her plate away, declaring "To me it looks as if it was something somebody had eaten, and…" (185). Eventually the more sensitive Jane speaks for them all:

> "Don't wear your suffering-martyr face, Mummy. We know you meant it to be a nice cold breakfast, but, darling, we can't eat it, honestly we can't. […] How about letting Esau have this?"
>
> (184-5).

Esau the dog also rejects the dish, which ends up in the pig bucket, where, Mrs Gage remarks, "The bluebottles are somethin' chronic this mornin', and I wouldn't wonder if this finished them" (186). While the episode is obviously a humorous parody directed at the media campaigns discussed above encouraging the use of allegedly-nourishing but unappetising foodstuffs (the newspaper article Cathy has read promotes brawn as an economical and nutritious dish), the emotional investment in food as an element of maternal self-esteem, and the provision of good food as an expression of good mothering is implicit in this scene. As Fromm and Winnicott argue, the offering of food is psychologically significant, being both a symbolic representation and a practical

demonstration of maternal love. So its rejection is interpreted as more than evidence of poor cooking technique; Cathy, with her 'suffering-martyr' face, has failed in her maternal role. She identifies and constitutes herself as a good mother, but the brawn that refuses to stand up, which even the dog, let alone her children, will not eat, is a demonstration of maternal love that has failed; its rejection has effectively consigned Cathy's maternal self-image to the pig bucket.

As the continuing shortages of the post-war years focussed national attention on the mother's food-producing function, cooking, in validating the maternal socialisation and nurturing role, became a primary yardstick for evaluation of motherhood. In an exploration of coming-of-age literature for girls, scholar Holly Blackford describes cooking as a political activity which can, in mythic terms, "sort mother-figures into divine sacrificial objects and evil witches" (2009:43). In the historical-literary analysis of *The Witch in History*, Diane Purkiss similarly delineates the food motif as a signifier for the "good" mother as opposed to the "witch-mother", commenting that, "food has significance for women because it is a means of nourishing, sustaining and protecting [whereas] the witch's food reverses this positive charge; instead of sustaining, it destroys" (1996:108). The 'evil-witch' qualities of Mrs Lacy in Blyton's *The Family at Red-Roofs* are revealed by her incompetence at cooking; lazy and exploitative, she chooses to "curl up on the grubby sofa, reading a novel" rather than preparing meals (1945:139). She refuses to acquire cookery skills for the benefit of her children:

> It would be so easy for her to learn how to make a good cake instead of a heavy one that gave the children indigestion and made them sick. It would be so easy, too, to learn to fry bacon properly instead of frizzling it all up.
> (152).

It is significant that what she does cook makes her children ill; the 'heavy cake' that 'made them sick' is, in Purkiss' terms, a maternally-reversed and destructive rather than sustaining foodstuff. Mrs Lacy's damaging mothering is contrasted to that of Molly, her young maid, a "good little cook", who eventually takes over food preparation for the

children, as “she knew that at least they would all get well-cooked meals if she cooked them” (22/151). The emotional as well as the physical importance of food is emphasised when Molly leaves, given the sack by Mrs Lacy. By now, the children apparently prefer her to their own mother, with seven-year-old Terence sobbing, “Don’t go, Molly. I want you. Let Mummy go instead. You stay with us. We love you” (162). Cooking skills evidently have a function here beyond nutrition – they are the pathway to the child’s emotional attachment.

Purkiss points out that “it is normally a maternal duty to offer food and to guard its integrity”, and links “the mother who will not or cannot provide food [with her] dark double, the devouring witch” (1996:280). The descent of Blyton’s Mrs Kent, the unregenerate villain of *The Six Bad Boys*, into such a ‘dark double’, who ultimately rejects her son entirely, is expressed at each stage via withdrawal of food. Her decision to give Bob packed lunches rather than a home-cooked midday meal, which, the reader is led to understand, starts him on the downward path into delinquency, is followed by expecting him to make his own tea while she is at work. When Bob, without permission, takes a meat-pie to share with his gang, his mother starts to lock the larder door, creating a physical barrier between her son and food in an act that symbolises the emotional barrier she is erecting between them. Finally, after Bob’s vandalism of, significantly, the kitchen space (see p83), she refuses to allow him into the house at all until she returns from work, leaving out food in the shed, as if, Bob grumbles, “I was the cat next door” (1951:90). The introduction of the cat – a common ‘familiar’ of the witch – can be construed as a subliminal reference to Mrs Kent’s descent into witch-mother status. In contrast, next-door neighbour Mrs Mackenzie, a “*proper* mother” in Bob’s estimation, cooks three meals a day for the family, succours her newly-arrived neighbours with tea, milk, biscuits and lemonade on moving-in day, and hosts sumptuous birthday teas for her children (154). In discussion of the ‘Hansel and Gretel’

fairytale, Purkiss observes that, in later retellings, “the witch becomes the modern idea of a ‘bad mother’, a greedy consumer who sacrifices children to her own needs” (1996:282). Mrs Kent, who first prioritises her working life over cooking midday meals, and then becomes a consumer spending her salary on clothes and make-up, is such a stereotypical ‘bad mother’. As the witch-mother expression of Blyton’s explicit ideological message she is denied narrative redemption.

The food duties that Mrs Lacy and Mrs Kent resent are acknowledged in Blackford’s paper to be socially-constrictive, “a form of self-control and a way to prepare the female character for repressing inner needs” (2009:42). It is thus conceivable that, notwithstanding the overt ideology of the texts, such characters could inspire resistant readings in the young female subject, who may herself prefer to be curled-up reading on the sofa, or buying make-up, rather than engaged in cooking chores. However, Blackford also argues that cooking can become “an aesthetic expression of the female self”, so considering cookery as a source of maternal power and pleasure, as well as an oppressive activity, is a useful proposition in assessing the potential ideological impact of the novels (42). In my corpus the engagement of mother-figures in cooking tasks relates to their construction as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ mothers. Bad mothers such as Mrs Kent and Mrs Lacy lack the self-control described by Blackford, indulge rather than repress their inner needs and find no expression of selfhood in cooking for their families. Good mothers, such as Mrs Mackenzie and co-mother Molly demonstrate both self-control and self-sacrifice in the cooking task. These characters find in cookery, despite its elements of social repression, a satisfying and ‘aesthetic expression’ of motherhood; they evaluate the success of their maternity by their competence in preparing nourishing food, their willingness to cook for their families and the satisfied affection expressed by their children.

The cake that Mrs Mackenzie makes for her daughter's birthday-party is described in terms that indicate such aesthetic maternal satisfaction; it is "a big birthday cake – a sponge one, with cream and chocolate filling [and] eight coloured candles set around it in sugar roses" (Blyton 1951:69). Celebration cakes can, as Humble states, demonstrate "culinary ego made solid", and there is clearly an egotistical expression, as well as, in Williams' words, a '*moral* flavour', discernible in Mrs Mackenzie's home-cooked food (2010:8). Eight-year-old Pat declares that her birthday cake is "much much better than a shop one", and at the party, the overt comparison between 'good' and 'bad' mothers Mrs Mackenzie and Mrs Kent is extended to Mrs Berkeley, the ill-tempered mother next door – who does *not* bake cakes (1951:69). Her 'bad boy' son Tom and daughter Eleanor "wished they could have a cake like that […]. Birthdays weren't like this at home!" (70). Creamy foods, as Fromm points out, recall the euphoric satisfaction of the primal maternal feeding relationship, while sweet foods, according to Daniel, are associated with "the pre-oedipal maternal aesthetic" (2006:83). So this offering of the cream and sugar-bedecked cake has emblematic significance; metaphoric of the satisfied maternity personified by Mrs Mackenzie, it is both a maternal icon, and, as a luxuriously-rare treat in the time of rationing, also symbolises returning prosperity and increasing consumption.

The teenage Joan, in *House-at-the-Corner*, who surprises her friends by planning to study domestic science rather than go to college, exemplifies Blyton's perception of ideal mother as domestic goddess. When defending her decision she explains:

> I want a home of my own, and […] to be the centre of everything, to make jam for my family and pickles, and bottle fruit – I want my children to eat the things I've made myself, not things out of tins. I want to hear them say, "Mums, this is the best strawberry jam I've ever tasted." Or "Mummy you're a darling to ice my birthday cake so beautifully."
>
> (1947:23).

Such idealistic constructions of motherhood, which, like Mrs Mackenzie's cake, encompass culinary abundance and maternal autonomy, occupied a powerful position in post-war domestic discourse, a position that is explored in depth in Blyton's characterisation of the Longfield sisters-in-law in the 'Six Cousins' series. The centrality of the maternal feeding role is indicated on the opening page, when Linnie, eyes twinkling, watches her children "eating the things she had cooked" (1948:5). In Blyton's development of two contrasting mother characters, food provision and cooking are the main signifiers for the quality of motherhood. Linnie, as a good mother, "makes the best jam, the best pickles, bottles the fruit perfectly" (1950:64). Sister-in-law Rose, when her servants leave unexpectedly, is helpless in the kitchen, and apparently ignorant of the simplest cooking techniques:

> It was quite incredible, but it took her over an hour to get the meal. The potatoes took ages to do in their jackets, and finally they had to be taken out of the oven, cut open and mashed, or they would never have been ready. […] Everyone was hungry and cross.
>
> (109).

Rose's inability to cope with cooking basic sustaining fare like potatoes underlines the emotionally-superficial nature of her mothering compared to the solid nutritional and emotional sustenance of Linnie's maternity. The generous abundance of Linnie's meals, repeatedly compared to the restricted quantities of dainty food served by Rose, is an ongoing metaphor for their respective emotional capacity as mothers. When Rose's family move from Mistletoe Farm to their own new home of Holly Farm, ten-year-old Roderick worriedly surveys the table laid with their first meal:

> Where was the dish of ham, the big fat scones, the great fruit cake, the round cream cheese, the big pats of butter that had always accompanied high-tea at Mistletoe Farm? He […] didn't much like the look of the plate of thin-cut bread-and-butter, and the biscuits and little buns on this tea-table. Why, he could eat the whole lot and still be hungry!
>
> (23).

The descriptors of the food provided by each mother are linguistic code for their contrasting maternal styles. At Linnie's table the adjectives resonate with symbolisms

of maternal shape ('big fat' scones and 'round' cheese), motherly behaviour ('big pats' of butter) and primal memory (the 'creamy' cheese). In contrast, the single plate of 'thin-cut' bread-and-butter and the 'little' buns provided by Rose illuminate the limitations of her motherhood, later demonstrated by her unawareness of Roderick's emotional as well as physical hunger. The use of cooking skills and food quantity to represent the oppositional maternity of generous all-giving mother Linnie and self-centred Rose is mirrored in the depiction of their co-mother-figures. As noted in 'Chapter One: Home' (p57), the colour red signifies warmth, and both size and complexion convey the motherly demeanour of Linnie's helpmeet Dorcas, a "fat, comfortable woman, with a bright red face", who is first encountered "in the kitchen, making a big sponge pudding" (1948:14). Rose's maid is physically and emotionally opposite to 'comfortable' Dorcas; in a mirrored symbiosis of appearance and function, Ellen is a "haughty, sour-faced" personage, whose 'sourness' relates to her emotional capacity as well as her ill-tasting food (1950:28). Ellen does not welcome children in the kitchen, refuses snacks to the hungry Roderick, and, in a plot device that precipitates the fundamental test of Rose's own maternity, will only agree to undertake limited cooking for the family.

In these fictions, as in the empirical research studies mentioned above, the quality of the mothers is evaluated, by children, husbands, outsiders, and themselves, on the basis of cooking skills. Niece Susan remarks that, "I shouldn't think you could boil an egg, could you, Aunt Rose?", but when Linnie cooks lunch for a visitor it is a different story (1950:63). She emerges from the kitchen (significantly, red-faced) and we are told that:

> The meal was a very good one. "You've surpassed yourself, Mother!" said Jack, grinning at his mother, whose face was fiery red with cooking. "Richard, don't you think my mother's a good cook?"
>
> (1948:134).

Times of celebration, such as birthdays and Christmas, are, according to the research studies, particular flashpoints for measuring maternal worth. This calibration through cooking is especially pointed at Linnie's Christmas meal-table:

> The dinner was magnificent. […] "You and Dorcas are the best cooks in the world! Goodness knows what you do with a turkey to make it taste like this," said Mr Longfield, beaming at his wife. "Isn't she a marvellous cook?" "Rather!" said his brother. He turned jovially to his wife. "It's a pity *you* can't cook like this, Rose".
>
> (1950:63).

Brother David's lack of tact is exacerbated for Rose at the end of the meal, when Linnie is toasted by each husband and all the children as "the best mother in the world" (64). Nevertheless, Rose turns out to be not entirely the 'witch-mother' of Blyton's *The Family at Red-Roofs* and *The Six Bad Boys*; unlike Mrs Lacy and Mrs Kent she is afforded maternal redemption once Ellen, the sour-faced maid, has walked out, and Rose is faced with the choice of either engaging with foodwork or losing her family. In accordance with the alignment of cookery skills and good motherhood, she is finally depicted "in the kitchen, making the tea" (154). The generous portions of this meal – of her own volition Rose lays on a "really good high-tea, cheese and ham and all" – signify the character's ultimate transformation from 'bad' to' good' mother (154). The explicit affirmation of contented domesticity in Rose's reformation confirms the relevance of food in evaluating motherhood, and positions the 'Six Cousins' duology within the maternal discourse of the era in its construction of the ideal mother.

The values implied in such depictions of contentment in the role of food-provider are, however, occasionally subject to question in textual glimpses of the less-obvious effects of compliance on the overall quality of maternal life. The representation of Linnie, the undeniably 'good' mother of these texts, is an example of Blyton's explicit ideological message being contradicted in the narrative (see also 'Chapter Two: Work' p124ff). Linnie certainly finds aesthetic satisfaction in cooking, bottling and pickling, but her maternal foodwork involves Blackford's "form of self-control" leading

to the “repression of inner needs”, and while constructed in the mould of the divine mother, she has also become what Blackford terms a “sacrificial object” (2009:42-43). As well as the daily weariness described in the bathwater scene (see p137), Linnie’s acceptance of normative maternity incorporates a denial of her wider aesthetic capacities. The service aspects of her role are clearly evident when her husband shouts for his lunch: “’Linnie! LINNIE! Do come here!’ [...] ‘Can you get me some sandwiches quickly?’” (Blyton 1948:59). The summons leads Linnie to acknowledge to her bookish nephew why “poetry hasn’t much place in my life now”, but her fondness for literature and classical music, subsumed by cooking and caring duties, remain unknown to her children and ignored by her husband (59). In Hollindale’s terminology, Blyton’s ‘active’ or ‘explicit’ ideological values, presented in the simplistic contrast between Rose and Linnie, are here overtaken by the unexamined ideology inscribed in the text; always, according to Stephens in *Language and Ideology*, the more powerful force. So Blyton, a most conservative writer, in a conservatively-constructed text, has inadvertently undermined received notions of appropriate maternal behaviour; although excellence in cooking and servicing the family’s food needs may be an overt marker of good motherhood, it clearly involves personal sacrifice. The “powers of reinforcement vested in […] unconscious ideology” should not, according to Hollindale, be underestimated, and the conflict revealed beneath Linnie’s apparently-acquiescent acceptance of the traditional motherhood role allows for a resistant reading of Blyton’s surface message (1988:13).

Binary oppositions demonstrating maternal alienation from cooking as a marker of inadequate motherhood is a trope that also appears in Streatfeild’s work. Both emotionally-remote Aunt Claudia in *White Boots* and self-absorbed Aunt Cora in *The Painted Garden* employ staff to cook, only entering the kitchen to give instructions, while their respective employees, co-mother Nana and warm-hearted cook-housekeeper

Bella, provide maternal nurturing for the child protagonists. Unsympathetic mother-substitute Aunt Claudia is Lalla's official guardian, but her main interest in her ward is as a potential skating champion, and interactions between them focus on this goal, ignoring Lalla's emotional needs. Such detached mothering is contrasted to the maternal empathy of Nana, a totemic Streatfeild nannie-mother-substitute, who cooks for Lalla, sharing the great treat, in their wealthy upstairs-downstairs household, of making hot buttered toast in front of the fire. Aunt Claudia's negative interaction with food is evinced in relation to her ambitions for her niece, when she imposes a draconian dieting regime designed to remove the "naughty curves" that could hinder Lalla's skating prowess (1951:92).[36] This high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet references contemporary restrictions, when Aunt Claudia explains that, "with meat rationed as it is, it's going to mean a sacrifice all round to see you have sufficient" (93). As the oppositional nurturing mother-figure, Nana refutes Claudia's utilitarian attitude to food, declaring, "the moment I see Lalla looking peaky, it's hot dripping-toast for her tea and plenty of it" (95). Nana is the maternally-indulgent foil to the self-regarding and food-restricting Aunt Claudia, and her abundant provision of comfort food is a standard indicator of the literary good mother. Moreover, the phrase 'plenty of it' would be all the more meaningful for contemporary readers, given that it was emphatically *not* a time of plenty; as with Mrs Mackenzie's cream-laden birthday cake, Nana's offering of luxurious fatty foods such as thickly-spread toast at a time of national food restriction portrays a fantasy environment in which liberal food provision is metaphoric of idealised and selfless mothering.

In *The Painted Garden*, set mostly in the U.S.A., where the Winter family has travelled to stay with their American Aunt Cora, Streatfeild places this metaphor in an international dimension, setting the contemporary restrictions of the U.K. diet against

[36] A preoccupation linking body shape with future career and lifestyle success that features in many of the novels for older girls examined in 'Chapter Five: Body'.

the plentiful affluence of California. The abundance and quality of food available in America compared with the scarcities at home is constantly remarked on by the family. On arrival at their aunt's house, a sumptuous meal offers a stark contrast to the hurried breakfast of bread-and-jam that had preceded the family's departure from England. As edible symbols of 1950s austerity and relative poverty, bread-and-jam figure prominently in the home-based meals of Streatfeild families; Cathy Bell is first depicted in the kitchen "spreading jam on bread" (1954:23). The two iconic ingredients were filling, cheap and, crucially, home-produced. Despite, or because of, bread rationing, this staple foodstuff was always available; the wheat was U.K-grown, as was fruit and sugar-beet for jam, and the Women's Institute had elevated jam-making into a rousing symbol of British national unity and survival in adversity. Streatfeild's ubiquitous bread-and-jam meals serve as Barthesian signifiers of nationality, since they "constitute an information" regarding the endemic drabness and shortages of post-war Britain, as well as evoking the WI imagery of positivist nationalism (1961:29).

Breakfast becomes the rite of passage marking the dividing line between the past (England, austerity and family tragedy), and the future in America which is to prove transformative for the Winter family:

> The first thing they did on arrival was to have another breakfast. Just as if she had known what they would like, Bella had made popovers for them; as well there was the most amazing fruit. Blueberries, the size of gooseberries, served with thick cream. Purple figs. Little canteloupe melons cut in half and iced. Queer soft orange-coloured fruits called persimmons, and a whole bunch of bananas. There was a glass of chilled tomato juice, there was a cereal, there were eggs, bacon, and coffee and cream.
>
> (Streatfeild 1949:95).

This richly-evocative portrait of the breakfast table offers a multi-layered ideological reading of the sumptuous meal. As Hollindale points out "ideology is inseparable from language", and the luxurious spread (in which the metonymic ingredient of cream occurs twice) is symbolic both of the cultural differences between America and the U.K. and of the contrasting maternal constructions of cook Bella and her food-denying

employer Aunt Cora (1988:11). Coming from a country where even apples were restricted – U.K. greengrocers during these years often limited customers to one apple per person – and where children had to be taught how to eat bananas (that is, not with the skin on, or from the side), the 'whole bunch of bananas' on the table represent almost-unbelievable munificence. In *Curtain Up*, the Forbes children, who "could hardly remember what a banana looked like", are so excited by being given bananas that they decide to save the skins and take them into school "to show off" (1945:279). Such foods demonstrate the wealth and otherness of America compared to the poverty-stricken frugality of rationing-restricted Britain. The 'queer' persimmons on Bella's table are so exotic that they are unrecognisable to the Winter family, whose discomfort in the presence of this abundance underlines their cultural alienation: "Nobody was sure if in America it was the right thing to talk about food, but they simply had to" (1949:95).

Food imagery here literally 'fleshes out' the maternal ideology; the richly-sensuous descriptive language draws attention to the abundant maternalism of the provider of the feast. Bella, "very fat, but gay in a bright flowered overall," is bodily and emotionally the archetypal earth-mother of this text (95). Her maternity is embodied in her 'fat' motherly shape, a generous expansiveness which extends to personality; her warmth and openly-affectionate demeanour are evident as she greets the family with "a *wide pleased* smile [and] a *fat chuckle*" (95-96 my emphases). Bella is the maternal opposite to Aunt Cora, who is "thin with bright golden hair" and whose welcome to the family "did not sound or look sincere" (93). Cora's unmotherly nature is signified by a non-maternal thin body shape and the artificial youthfulness of unnaturally 'bright golden' hair. Unlike Bella, who "surely enjoys ma food", Cora refrains from its pleasures – "I have to be so careful to keep my calories right [...]. That's how I keep my figure" (95-96). The self-denying Cora, like Lalla's Aunt Claudia, also denies the

psychological and practical needs of the children, refusing to drive Rachel to longed-for dancing lessons, or allow Tim access to the piano he needs. Bella's mothering, in the American land of plenty, can be expressed in the cooking of sumptuous meals, while Lalla's Nana and Cathy Bell in rationed Britain are limited to providing dripping-toast or bread-and-jam for tea, but for all, a generous approach to food and a willingness to cook it is Streatfeild's marker of good mothering.

This metaphorical thread was woven into 1950s maternal discourse, and, as the later research studies show, remained critical in the evaluation of motherhood. Its fictional presence demonstrates the continuing relevance of these popular children's texts to constructions of maternity; as Purkiss observes, "the role of mother and the role of food-provider are crucially linked even today [and are] central to notions of maternal identity" (1996:99). So figures such as Cora, Claudia and Mrs Lacy, who represent a failure in the performance of that identity, hold up powerfully-negative role models to the reader. The positive models of 'good' mothering, such as Nana and Bella, convey overt messages of the aesthetic and emotional satisfaction attributed to familial food provision. However, the depiction of exhaustion and denial in the characterisations of Linnie, Cathy and Olivia, in whom a realistic discursive engagement with motherhood and food responsibilities can be perceived, affords a contradictory reading of this maternal marker. Nevertheless, as providers of a product which both literally and figuratively maintains family life, such characters do show that food provision can be a conduit for the cultural operation of power, a proposition that will be examined in the following section.

4. Struggle: Table Power

Food is a revealing indicator of the power structures in operation at micro and macro levels in the post-war years, since food strategies were intrinsic to the political and economic recovery of nation-states. Within British society food was regarded as a

primary tool for restructuring the country, improving opportunities for the young, and rebuilding community and family life. Food provision, having been, in Woolton's words, "a munition of war" up to 1945, became a tool for rebuilding the nation-state thereafter (*Times* 1940:2). "Nations are born out of nurseries. Children are like houses; if they are jerry-built, they never recover", declared radio doctor Charles Hill (*Radio Times*). Such acknowledgement of the pivotal role of food created conflicting positions for the power of mothers as key figures in food provision.

The Ministry of Food, operative from 1939 until 1955, was central to the discourse of maternal foodwork, and, as discussed, state directives on feeding and bringing-up children survived the war years, continuing into the 1950s. The much-resented involvement of officialdom in how children should be fed was a compelling factor in *dis*empowering mothers. The patronising tone of Ministry of Food advice pamphlets is echoed in political statements such as M.P. Douglas Jay's infantilising comment that:

> Housewives as a whole cannot be trusted to buy all the right things where nutrition and health are concerned [...]. In the case of nutrition or health, just as in the case of education, the gentleman in Whitehall really does know better what is good for people than the people know themselves.
>
> (1947:316).

Oral traditions of cooking skills passing from mother to daughter, previously disrupted by wartime, were further weakened by these patriarchal voices of expertise. Mothers were encouraged to attend daytime and evening classes on cookery to "refurbish [their] basic domestic skills" (Newsom 1948:127). The captive female school population, much enlarged by the statutory raising of school-leaving age to fifteen in 1947, were subject to increased classroom emphasis on food skills; according to Newsom, "two hours of Domestic Science a week is not enough" (112). In their construction of a gendered subject position for the female reader regarding cooking skills the texts of my corpus tend to confirm rather than challenge this cultural determinism; as Courtney's

headteacher in *At School with the Stanhopes* declares, "girls ought to learn to make preserves [and] that should certainly be an essential part of a girl's education" (1951:85). Since ideological propositions are potentially more powerful in fictional form than through the overt didacticism of government pamphlets or compulsory domestic-science lessons, such conformity, serving as signposting for the reader's potential future as food-providing mother, would reinforce conventional expectations,

Nevertheless, although foodwork, as gendered work, could become, in Counihan's words, "a channel of oppression", its very importance in the national and political realm did, paradoxically, enhance the status of mothers, enabling them to "chart their own way around barriers" (1988:167). Food issues were of course, as discussed in the 'Sustenance' section, a site of struggle, yet the restrictions resultant on austerity measures created new opportunities for the acquisition of maternal power in the public arena, as the successful political protests organised by the "militant housewives" of the British Housewives' League demonstrated (Hinton 1994:129). The role of food as a cultural signifier of burgeoning public power was reproduced at the private level. While the practical impact of food policy on the domestic situation of mothers negotiating food responsibilities is evident in the Mass Observation surveys discussed, the struggles they describe had unintended consequences in enhancing the "influence over others" that Counihan describes as "a major component of female identity" (1988:52). This influence became an empowering factor, and in the following discussion I examine such empowerment in terms of maternal identity. I then consider how mothers' exercise of the microphysics of power through control of table-manners extended beyond the domestic realm into the macro-areas of national identity and class affiliation.

The significance of food in establishing maternal status within the family is evident at the end of Lunt's *Secret Stepmother*, when cooking as a shared endeavour

marks plot resolution. The difficult relationship between new stepmother Beth and her fourteen-year-old stepdaughter Janet has operated as a power struggle through food, starting with a scene at breakfast where Janet and her sister, waiting to meet their stepmother for the first time, "sat at the table, feeling like visitors" (1959:16). The sisters' rejection of the cooked breakfast that Beth has prepared – "Ugh … first thing in the morning!" – is followed by Janet avoiding mealtimes altogether as a mode of resistance to Beth's maternal control (16). In the final chapter however, the sisters prepare breakfast, and Beth comes downstairs to find that:

> In the kitchen a surprise awaited her. The potatoes were peeled, the carrots scraped. […] Cathie was putting the cosy on the teapot, and a dish of bacon and tomatoes was keeping warm on the hearth.
> (165).

A mirror-image of the first disastrous breakfast, this scene of compliance and co-operation through food affirms Beth's transition from excluded outsider to a position of emotional power in the family. Her newly-acquired maternal identity is further demonstrated as her stepdaughters work together with her to prepare Christmas dinner, in an amity that is, Beth declares, "Wonderful! […] a sort of advance Christmas present" (165). As in the railway-carriage scene of *Curtain Up*, this development indicates the power of shared food provision to create familial and social cohesion.`

In her essay 'Deciphering a Meal', social anthropologist Mary Douglas explores how the work of feeding the family utilises food to organise people and activities. The power structures in operation within the family can, she argues, be defined by its food habits: "if food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of relations being expressed" (1972:61). The feeding role of mothers can thus illuminate the operation of familial power dynamics; food, being essential to physical survival, and important in creating psychological attachment between mother and child, inevitably confers power on the food-supplier. In his discussion of the "oral stage" of infantile development, Freud interprets the feeding process as both controlling in its penetration

of the body of the child, and pleasurable in its gratification of desire (1905:117). As those tasked with the provision of food and the supervision of its modes of consumption, mothers occupy a position of power in Freudian terms that is simultaneously negative in its imposition of penetrative control, and positive in supplying a source of sustenance whose ingestion should be a pleasurable experience.

In *Power/Knowledge* Foucault asserts that power does not invariably operate negatively, as it would then become a self-defeating rather than an effective force:

> If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted [is] that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network.
>
> (1980:119).

So following on from Freud's simple dichotomy, the status of mothers that is implicit in their control of food matters can be interpreted as a form of power that moves beyond the boundaries of the pain/pleasure principle. Considered as a Foucauldian 'productive network' which, as well as inducing pleasure through ingestion, also 'traverses and produces *things*', I consider the food power of mothers in my corpus to be a form of influence that, in addition to reinforcing maternal identity, creates a coherent cultural identity for the family and its members – an invisible but salient 'thing' that defines their place within the family group and in the wider society of class and nation-state. The cultural work of the texts in resisting institutional control of food matters and establishing a logistic of maternal power is most evident in their depiction of the private and domestic realm of family meals.

DeVault cites empirical research to argue that setting-up the meal, and arranging for all family members to sit down and eat it together, actually *produces* the family, bringing together its individual members from their separate daily activities outside the home into a "consciously-crafted structure of family life" (1991:78). Such mealtimes create "times of coming together that are thought of – although not entirely consciously

– as *making a family*" (78 my emphasis). This important aspect of family meals was highlighted by contemporary food writer Joan Robins:

> One of the main responsibilities of a mother is the proper care of the health of her family by feeding them to their wholesome satisfaction and *general enjoyment*. The evening meal together will be *the main family event of the day* and will be cherished and planned as such.
>
> (1953:10 my emphases).

The situation governing cooking and serving the family meal is an important marker for maternal identity and status in my corpus: the meal-table is a place of familial cohesion and a site where the exercise of maternal power, as a 'productive' tension between pleasure and control that 'forms knowledge, produces discourse', is seen to be played out. Streatfeild's Olivia may have been as constrained in her food choices by Uncle William as mothers were in actuality by rationing, but at the table she is in control, over both husband and children. When youngest child Edward protests that, "nobody can't say that soup, soup, soup every evening is nice [...] made with his old vegetables", his mother counters with, "what nonsense!", while serving out the vegetable curry she has cooked (1951:182). Olivia's control of family eating, like that of real-world 1950s mothers, is circumscribed by austerity conditions and the social changes taking place outside the home, but in her authority over communal sharing of food at the family table she exercises Foucauldian microphysics of power.

As noted in 'Chapter One: Home', the family dinner table is a recognised locus of socialisation that has been interpreted by Barthes and other cultural commentators as a marker of stability and emotional security. Meals consumed at table with parents and children together are traditionally indicative of the successful family empowered by good motherhood; they represent "idealised family life, in which food is home-cooked and served to the family sitting together" (Lupton 1996:79). This understanding is affirmed by the mothers who informed researchers Charles and Kerr that, "a proper meal is […] where everybody will sit down together and take time over eating a meal

and do it properly" (1988:20). Meals at table as symbols of the power of the mother in establishing quality family life are commonly deployed in the novels; significantly, scenes depicting this symbol appear early in the story, frequently on the opening page. The first paragraph of *Six Cousins at Mistletoe Farm*, for example, is a classic model of what Katz refers to as "the extent to which tea-time in particular is used to dramatise states of harmony or disharmony" (1980:193). It reveals the construction of the maternal figure as lynchpin of the family:

> It was half-past five one April evening at Mistletoe Farm. In the big sitting-room sat five people, finishing high-tea. Three children sat at the table with their father and mother. Mrs Longfield was half-smiling now as she looked at her family sitting round the table eating […]. She liked this time of the day best of all, when *she had the whole of her family there together* in peace.
> (Blyton 1948:5-6 my emphasis).

Linnie Longfield's power over the table is metonymic of her greater power over the family, and such scenes are a repeated trope in Blyton's work. The empowered Mrs Mackenzie of *The Six Bad Boys* sits, like Linnie, "at the head of the table and beamed away at everyone", as does Mrs Jackson in the family's first meal in their new home of Red-Roofs (1951:70). The meal-table scenarios are positive exemplars of maternal power in that, as well as inducing obvious Freudian pleasure in the participants, they also serve to establish the cultural identity of the family group, a positive Foucauldian 'productive thing' that 'induces pleasure' and is 'held good' by family members in acknowledgement of the crucial role of the mother in creating familial cohesion.

Meals at table can nonetheless, when maternal power is not exercised effectively, demonstrate a more problematical familial dynamic, while a fragmented meal, where individuals eat separately, is indicative of the troubled family. In *Six Cousins Again*, Mr Longfield initially delights in the vision of his family having their first meal in their new home: "What a glorious sight! All my family together again! […] It was a wonderful sight to see you all sitting round the table like that" (Blyton 1950:23). However, problems become evident when ten-year-old Roderick, horrified by

the scarce quantity of food on the table, first protests, and then leaves to eat in the scullery; he continues to eat separately from the family throughout the story. The fragmentation of family mealtimes accelerates when inexperienced cook Rose tries to prepare dinner and her husband also absents himself from the table:

> "If I don't get something to eat soon I shall have to go out without anything," said Mr Longfield. "For goodness sake – does it take an hour to get a bit of meat and potato and bread and cheese on the table?" In the end he got a hunk of bread and cheese for himself and marched off angrily. What a household!
>
> (109).

This breakdown of mealtimes in the absence of maternal control of food provision reveals the splintering of familial power structures as first Roderick and then his father choose to exercise individual authority over what and where they eat. Mr Longfield's "hunk of bread and cheese" and Roderick's "great slices of ginger cake", both consumed away from the table, are indicative of a shifting of power from the mother towards individual members (109/70). Roderick's decision to eat "on a tray anywhere he liked" indicates the damaging fissures in family structure that open up in the face of ineffectual maternal power (70). Lacking food skills, Rose can no longer hold the family together at mealtimes, and the locus of power shifts from a communal meal-table, anchored by maternal presence, to sites of isolation, such as farmyard and scullery, occupied by disaffected individuals rather than a cohesive group. Rose's failure of maternal control is contrasted with that of her sister-in-law, who eventually comes to the rescue "with her hands full of food" (114). Linnie's exploitation of the food factor is a powerful demonstration of its efficacy as a tool to restore cohesion to the divided family:

> Before ten minutes was up, everyone […] was sitting around the table tucking into ham and sausage rolls and cheese and cake – and drinking scalding hot tea made the way Linnie always made it – better than anyone else, so everyone declared.
>
> (114).

The ideological implication, that it is with food consumed around the table in the presence of a mother that family fragmentation can begin to be repaired, is reinforced when the opportunity to re-establish maternal power, as modelled by Linnie, is extended to Rose. Roderick, encouraged back to the family table by Linnie's food, invites Rose in: "Come on, Mother […] this is good – *everybody round the table*, plenty of decent food to eat, and lots of talk going on!" (114 my emphasis).

As the mouth is an organ of communication as well as ingestion, Roderick's joy in 'lots of talk' affirms the family table as a locus of communication, a vital component of its place in creating the Foucauldian 'productive network' inherent in contented families. Anthropologists Peter Farb and George Armelagos define "eating [as] the primary way of initiating and maintaining human relationships", and the power exercised by mothers within the family is dependent on the successful maintenance of such relationships (1980:4). The proposition is illustrated in Streatfeild's work, where the shared meal is celebrated by the Bells and the Johnsons as a moment of comity associated with the exchange of individual thoughts or feelings. Olivia is depicted evaluating her poverty-stricken family's mealtimes as occasions for such exchanges, which, in DeVault's terms, 'consciously craft' family life. When rich Lalla is pitied by her friend Harriet for "going home every day with no-one to talk to, except Nana", Olivia considers:

> the funny food they had to eat at home, and the shop that never paid. Then she thought of George and the boys and the fun of hearing about [everybody's] day. Perhaps it was nicer to laugh till you were almost sick over the queer shop-leavings you had to eat, than to have the grandest dinner in the world served in lonely state to two people in a nursery.
>
> (1951:42-43).

Olivia's appreciation of the importance of combining shared food with the sharing of life experiences both affirms her role as the model maternal figure and confirms an ideological message. The enjoyment of familial togetherness and communication at the Johnsons' dinner table, whatever is on it, foregrounds the textual values of an

impoverished but mother-centred family over the isolated grandeur of Lalla's wealthy home.

The family meal is revealed as a different locus of power in relation to the maternal duty to impose codes of proper behaviour at table. Fictional fathers tend to be constructed in the pattern of Blyton's Mr Longfield, who "so rarely said anything at mealtimes that it was quite a shock to hear his voice" (1948:6). It is the mother-figures who exercise responsibility for inculcating table-manners, in accordance with the gendered ideological state apparatus of motherhood. Such inculcation establishes what Bourdieu describes in *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* as cultural capital, "the expression of a habitus of order, restraint and propriety which may not be abdicated" (1984:196). In his exploration of the concept of 'taste', Bourdieu deploys the term 'habitus' to encapsulate ways in which individuals are acculturated and socially positioned. Meal-time rituals, "the manner of presenting and consuming food, the organisation of the meal", are, he avers, "an affirmation of ethical tone and aesthetic refinement" (196). Most mothers in Charles and Kerr's research would have concurred; they "felt that it was important for a child to learn table-manners [...] so that their behaviour was socially acceptable" (1988:21). These interviewees regard good table-manners as a potent vehicle for ensuring that children are socialised into their prevailing culture and class, as well as becoming acceptable to the adult world. The finding is replicated in the investigations of Cairns and Johnston, who conclude that "children's food practices are *widely seen* to reflect the success or failure of *mothers'* socialisation efforts" (2015:67 my emphases). The mothers in these research programmes, separated by over quarter of a century, are responding to the same imperative of interpellation that is evident in the 1950s children's texts. In Althusser's words, they "submit freely to the commandments of the Subject", acquiescing to an ideological system that positions them in the role of socialiser; an instance of the power of the maternal ISA operating

through mothers onto their children via control of manners at the dinner table (1971:123).

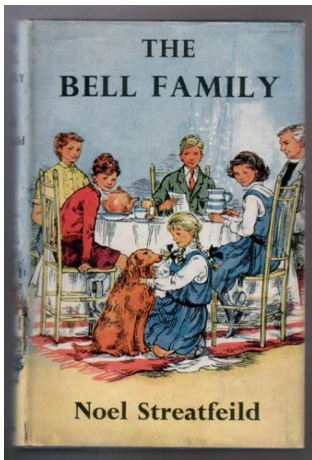


Figure 14: *The Bell Family*. Illustration by Shirley Hughes.

The front-cover of Streatfeild's *The Bell Family* (Fig 14), which establishes the ideological system underpinning this conventional family story, depicts a dining-room scene that is emblematic of the subject position of mothers as represented in family mealtimes. As Kara Keeling and Scott Pollard note, "the rituals of eating and the rituals of the table are compact metaphors for the power […] inherent in family dynamics", and mother Cathy is shown carefully watching the behaviour of her children while her husband focusses on his plate (1999:132). " Cathy was very strict about […] manners", and her maternal authority prevails in the enculturation of family at table (1954:32). In the first meal described, at which parish worker Miss Bloggs is present, the children are required to wash beforehand, shake hands with their guest before sitting down, and refrain from eating the sandwiches especially prepared for the visitor. Cathy's control is evident when, "Ginnie, hoping no-one was looking, stretched out her hand towards the potted-meat and lettuce sandwiches. Cathy was on the look-out. 'Bread-and-jam. They're more substantial.' Ginnie knew she was beaten" (33). Other aspects of polite table-manners, such as remaining seated around the table and not feeding the dog at mealtimes, are firmly imposed by Cathy. In both Streatfeild and Blyton texts the canine

pet frequently functions as a marker for civilised behaviour at table, and Ginnie's embracing of Esau (Fig 14) is quickly dealt with by her mother: "No-one admires Esau more than I do, but this is breakfast-time, and you ought to be sitting on your chair at table" (166). In transmitting values of family, class and society this dining-table is a location, presided over by both parents, but controlled by the mother, in which family members come to internalise those values.

Behaviour during the family meal has therefore an ideological function in which the family ISA of motherhood facilitates wider social expectations through indoctrination. The construction of Mrs Carlton and Mrs Taggerty in *Those Dreadful Children*, another Blyton binary, affirms mothers as the primary conduit for such indoctrination. The two mothers have differing views of appropriate mealtime behaviour, as the lively but undisciplined Taggerty children are dismayed to discover when they go to tea with the polite, ultra-conventional Carltons. Asked to wash their hands before eating, and forced to shut their dog Dopey outside, they horrify Mrs Carlton by their behaviour:

> They really had no manners at all at table. They never passed each other anything. They didn't wait to be asked to take this or that, they just stretched out and took it. They didn't say please and they didn't say thank you. They were certainly not at their best at meals. […] "How dreadful they are!" thought Mother. "Why weren't they taught their manners?"
>
> (1949:48).

A subsequent teatime in the Taggerty household, however, reveals unexpected advantages to Mrs Taggerty's laissez-faire mothering; while identifying herself as a "bad mother" because of her failure to impose manners on her family, she nevertheless provides prodigious quantities of food, an infallible Blytonesque marker for positive motherhood (118). In contrast to the thinly-sliced bread-and-butter and small buns of the Carlton tea, the children feast on:

> Thick buttery slices of bread […]. The buns were lovely. So was the fruity home-made cake, and the slices were enormous ones. Margery couldn't help comparing them to the thin little slices they had at home. These big, thick slices

> looked rude and greedy, but they really were lovely and big when you were hungry.
>
> (69-70).

In its conflation of manners and morals this story is structured in the style of a Victorian evangelical text, wherein the 'rude and greedy' Taggerty children are reformed through family misfortune and religious observance. The ultimate message is that manners do matter, and that, as Althusserian subjects who "freely accept" subjection, it is the mothers' duty to impose these in enforcement of wider social power structures (1971:123). Nevertheless, Blyton is unusually even-handed in her construction of the two maternal figures, and their respective virtues are eventually reconciled:

> Mrs Carlton grew to like the lively, cheerful, easy-going Mrs Taggerty. She saw how much her children loved her and clung round her, though they were sometimes cheeky and disobedient. And Mrs Taggerty liked and admired the neat, well-dressed Mrs Carlton, and sighed when she thought how beautifully she had brought up her three children and how badly-behaved the Taggertys always seemed to be, compared to the Carltons.
>
> (1949:88).

This rapprochment of the mother-figures is replicated in the resolution between the two groups of children. The Taggertys finally acknowledge "how rough we were, we didn't even know our table-manners!", and decide to adopt the Carltons' more civilised patterns of behaviour in order to please their mother after she has an accident (152).

Beyond its function as an ideological tool of social control by the mother, behaviour at table, as both Barthes and Bourdieu observe, has national and class implications. The differentials of nationality and class between these two families conveyed in their food practices are reinforced through naming and appearance. The nominal cultural determinism in the Irish Patrick, Maureen and Biddy is implicitly contrasted to the quintessentially English names of John and Margery, whilst of the two mothers, Irish Mrs Taggerty, "a big plump woman, with untidy hair and a loud voice," is a crude stereotypical foil for the English "neat, well-dressed Mrs Carlton" (19/88). Such simplistic cultural representations hint at the class and national identity issues that

are promulgated at family meal-tables, where maternal control extends beyond the provision of food into the areas of presentation and modes of consumption discussed by Bourdieu. So Mrs Taggerty's "thick buttery slices of bread" compared to Mrs Carlton's "thin ones" are inferential of differences in social class and nationality as well as mothering styles (69). Barthes' essays in *Mythologies* on wine and steak as foodstuffs which have acquired mythological significance as "alimentary sign[s] of Frenchness", while milk is "now the true anti-wine", establish associations of food and nationality that emphasise how cultural investment in particular foods enhances their importance (1957:64/60). His later explorations in 'Towards a Psychosociology' confirm that such foods signify "the mental life of a given society" which contributes to familial and national identity (1961:29). The fact that "the Carltons always had milk for tea" can thus be interpreted as further indicating their quintessential Englishness (Blyton 1949:70).

The celebration meals described, while unrealistic in the context of austerity, nevertheless function as important Barthesian markers of nationhood through foodstuffs. Although Blyton was at her most prolific in the period of extreme rationing between 1945 and 1954 – she published forty titles in 1951 alone, her most productive year in an intensely-productive writing career – her meal-tables in no way acknowledge external reality. The sugar-laden spread on Annette Carlton's party table, covered with "ice-creams, and crowds of cakes and jellies and blancmanges and a big birthday cake", is typical of Blyton's meals in offering a plenitude of archetypally-English foods that signify a vision of restored Britishness equivalent to Barthes' Francophone symbols of red wine and steak (1949:99). The first Christmas meal of Courtney's re-united Hamilton family is a similar nostalgic fantasy, containing the "typical Christmas fare" of "two large trifles, plates of mince pies, small iced cakes" (1946:190). Celebration meals for Streatfeild's Bell family also serve as markers of nationality: "On the table

was a most wonderful supper. Hot soup, salad, game pie, and cold apple tart with whipped cream (1960:255). By providing these foods, the mother-figures in the texts enact a powerful re-establishment of national identity, operating at the micro-level of the family table to feed into the macro-level of re-building the nation-state. In celebrating with typically-British food the characters are in effect consuming their national culture, and upholding both family and nation. Thus maternal feeding, contributing to the physical "continuance of the British race", also provides potent edible symbols of nationhood symbolic of the continuance of "British ideals in the world" (HMG 1942:52).

Alongside this reiteration of national identity, the dissemination of class values is realised in the power of mothers at the dining-table. The reconciliation of behavioural expectations between Mrs Carlton and Mrs Taggerty in *Those Dreadful Children* is characteristic of the embourgeoisement of British society at the time, a trend that was leading to a homogeneity considered socially useful. Middle-class values were held to be desirable for a unified national identity, so in the late 1940s and early 1950s, "there was greater emphasis on the desirability of extending middle-class taste and standards" (Wilson 1980:125). The phenomenon can be traced in other works; the meal-table as an indicator of class appears in Streatfeild's *White Boots*, when Harriet is invited to tea at Lalla's upper-middle-class home, and offered:

> three sorts of sandwiches, chocolate biscuits, and a cake covered with pink icing. At home if there had been such a tea, everybody would have said how scrumptious it was, but Lalla seemed to take lovely food [...] for granted. She sat down at the table looking at the food with no more interest than if it had been bread-and-jam.
>
> (1951:67).

Traditional class assumptions based on wealth and lifestyle are strongly critiqued in this novel; snobbish Aunt Claudia is not "going to cotton onto a shop", but the poverty of the Johnsons is balanced by the narrative prioritising of behaviour (52). It is Harriet's conduct at table, where she "seemed to have pretty manners and to speak nicely", that

confirms her as a suitable friend for Lalla (68). Streatfeild's nannie-figures are invariably the litmus test for class, and as Nana observes of the impoverished Johnson family, "Mrs Johnson's a real lady, as anyone can see, and little Harriet [...] has been brought up as a little lady should" (46-7). Despite the economic disparity revealed in the different contents of Harriet and Lalla's dining-tables, good manners and upbringing – responsibilities of the maternal characters – are shown to be more important for social acceptability than money.

In Streatfeild's *New Town*, use of the dining-table as a signifier of class (and comparative wealth) is evident when rich Sir Alfred and Lady Rose Bell visit the vicarage. The attitude of the northern grandparents, who are also wealthy, is contrasted to the inherent snobbery of London-based Rose:

> Tea was in the dining-room. Cathy apologised for it to Aunt Rose, who liked drawing-room tea, but before she could answer Grandmother said cosily: "I like a sit-down tea, Cathy, dear. […] I never could fancy balancing a cup on my knee."
>
> (1960:216-17).

The social and regional intimations of this scene define the class aspirations of the newly-rich relations (who themselves originated in Bradford), while emphasising the superior values attributed to manners over money. The place of the dining-table meal rather than 'drawing-room tea' as an indicator of class and locale is given a further dimension in Blyton's 'Six Cousins' series, where the mode of eating combines social placement with indicators of rural-versus-urban values. When Rose visits her family at Mistletoe Farm, hostess Linnie decides that she will provide "a cup of afternoon tea and a few cakes" for her guest rather than the usual farmhouse high-tea: "I'll be a real society lady this afternoon and have four-o'clock tea for once!" (1948:77). The institution of afternoon tea as a symbol of leisured lifestyle and social cachet had become, according to Humble, "a fixture in the lives of middle-class women" during the Edwardian period, an important social function requiring the donning of "special tea-

gowns for the occasion" (2010:60-61). As women's lives became less leisured post-war, most mothers would have been unable to aspire to such grandeur, so Rose's preference for "four-o'clock tea", for which she "put on her pretty frock" is, as Linnie observes, a significant pointer to her sister-in-law's self-identification as a "society lady" (1948:77-78).

In Blyton's sequel *Six Cousins Again*, teatime again appears as class and lifestyle signifier, with a whole chapter, 'Teatime at Holly Farm', delineating contrasts between the rural abundance of Linnie's Mistletoe Farm high-teas and the smart pseudo-urban lifestyle that Rose intends to establish at Holly Farm. Humble designates high-tea as "that curious meal which survives from […] rural traditions", and Blyton foregrounds this meal as the primary symbol of the rural-urban divide between Linnie and Rose (2010:17). As Bourdieu demonstrates, modes of food consumption are as much about class identity and social distinction as nutrition, and the settings of Rose's table exemplify her desire to impose urban values. The "dainty meal, the pretty tea-cloth, the plates with lace mats on them, and the silver teapot" are as loaded with ideological messages revealing her upper-middle-class aspirations as its scanty food content points to the quality of her maternity (Blyton 1950:22). Daintiness suggests a prioritising of social etiquette over the familial task of feeding hungry children, and Rose's horror at the provision of such fare as "pickles [and] sausage rolls! At teatime!" indicates the alternative habitus she intends to establish (25). She tells her family that, rather than the rural high-teas of Mistletoe Farm:

> *We'll* have afternoon tea and then dinner later. [...] We'll simply have to get you back to proper ways again. After all – I've come to live in the country, when I much prefer the town [so] I do hope you don't expect me to give up all the nice ways I've been accustomed to."
>
> (25).

Her children "will have to learn their manners all over again", to fit into Rose's aspirational upper-middle-class urban lifestyle, and the damage that her values will

inflict on the family group are already becoming apparent when Roderick, who is "still hungry", leaves the family tea-table in search of more substantial fare (24/26).

While middle-class manners are promoted as desirable in the work of both Streatfeild and Blyton, the snobbery, materialism and upper-class aspirations of characters such as Rose are thus represented as likely to undermine the family unit, and implicitly the unity of the wider society of which it is part. In their delineation of maternal responsibility for conduct at table, both writers engage with contemporaneous notions of received middle-class values as a socially-cohesive force, an ideology of class that emerges in the negative portrayal of the mealtime customs preferred by Aunt Claudia, Rose Bell and Rose Longfield. The loneliness of Lalla's nursery meals compared to the Johnsons' family dinners; the contrast of Rose Bell's uncomfortable teacup-balancing 'drawing-room-tea' with Grandmother's 'cosy' vision of a meal around the table; and the inappropriately 'dainty' urban tea-table of novice farmer's wife Rose Longfield are all indicators of the explicit class message of these texts. By ensuring appropriate modes of consumption at mealtimes, good mothers Olivia, Cathy and Linnie promulgate the manners and mores of a unifying and attainable middle-class ideal.

Maternal control of the dinner table can therefore be interpreted as indicative of mothers' wider social influence. Exercising the microphysics of power in her insistence on certain behaviours, the mother formulates an awareness of class as well as national identity for her children; by wielding authority in the domestic realm, she is also a two-way conduit for societal and institutional power. The type of meals she provides and the mode in which they are eaten can promote (or undermine) approved middle-class values, and her influence in this arena stimulates the establishment of the future stable society considered crucial for the post-war rebuilding of nationhood. In 'The Problem of Power' Beauvais distinguishes between two forms of power in children's literature:

‘authority’, vested in adults, and ‘might’, related to the child characters’ potential future (2013:79-82). In her contribution to present and future social cohesion through control of the dinner table, the mother’s adult imposition of authority over her children in terms of mealtime behaviour can be interpreted as a form of vicarious participation in the might of the child protagonists, establishing their “existence of a future” as potential citizens of the rebuilt nation-state (82).

5. Conclusion

As a semiotic tool that, as Barthes observes, “sums up and transmits a situation”, food in the texts examined here is a revealing signifier for constructions of maternity, gendered relations in family and society, quality of mothering, and the power of mothers to enculturate their children (1961:29). The concept of a family sharing home-cooked food around the table is a widely-naturalised image, itself powerful, that carries connotative meanings – ‘myths’ in Barthesian terms. Such meals represent a system of values inscribed in family life that promote the ideal of a perfect mother serving abundant meals in a situation that ‘feeds’ her family physically and psychologically. The obligation to provide a ‘proper’ cooked meal in compliance with this good mother paradigm, presented in all the texts as crucial to the health, well-being and socialising of children, is particularly emphasised in Blyton and Streatfeild’s utilisation of binary characterisation. The oppositional constructs of sisters-in-law Rose and Linnie Longfield, and Cathy and Rose Bell, are replicated in the simplistic comparison of Blyton’s Mrs Carlton and Mrs Taggerty and the more sophisticated representation of Streatfeild’s Olivia and Aunt Claudia. The message is clear – mother-figures who do not prepare food for their families are represented as detached and emotionally-unreliable, or selfish, poorly-relating mothers, unaware of the bodily and emotional needs of their children. The type and quantity of food offered provides a marker for evaluating the quality of mothering.

While the family habitus, in attention to food practices, are contexts in which maternal quality is judged, they are also “structuring structures [that] implement distinctions between what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong”, and it is through the creation of such cultural capital that the power of maternal influence is realised (Bourdieu 1984:170-2). In a social climate where food was an important factor affecting political stability, the family meal became key to national images of unity and strength, representing the healthy (and thus powerful) nation that politicians were so eager to convey to the world. Control of this iconic marker by figures such as Cathy, Olivia, Linnie and Sally illuminates the micro (domestic) and macro (societal) power of mothers; their ‘capillary’ exercise of power within the confines of kitchen and dining-table flows into the larger blood-vessels and arteries of social and national influence. In their ability to overcome the practical constraints of food-related responsibilities and build psychologically-strong and physically-healthy families, such maternal constructs are essential operators in the creation of a future stable, politically-healthy and powerful nation.

Textual representations of the harsh social realities of this maternal responsibility are balanced by scenes of comforting fantasy. Blytonian accounts of “archetypal feasting” may be, as psychologist Michael Woods opined, “reminiscent of an orgy in an Edwardian emporium”, but even here the reader is exhorted to understand food as a primary indicator of the quality of family life, and the importance of the maternal role in maintaining it (1969:14). This literary celebration of food as a referent of love and security elevates the status of mothers, affording aesthetic satisfaction in their performative role, while demonstrating that, as creators of a stable present and investors in a positive future, they have impact beyond domestic confines. In their intertextual engagement with the linked discourses of food and motherhood in the long 1950s, these novels reflect historical context in the social realities of food life for

mothers, while also establishing the potential of food matters to calibrate received notions of maternity. As socio-cultural documents, the books reinforce contemporaneous media assumptions and retrospective survey evidence on the role of mothers; created during a period when food choices in the U.K. were more restricted than ever before, the texts are similar to one another in their ideological perspective on motherhood. Notwithstanding glimpses of a challenge to gender-determinism in the Bell family stories, the narratives analysed here concur that food is primarily a gendered responsibility. Maternal control of manners and feeding behaviour is, however, an area where, while fictional mothers are subject to Althusserian ISAs, operating as conduits for the wider powers of state and society, yet their own operation of authority and influence in the Foucauldian "capillary form of existence" can be perceived (1980:39).

In their acquiescence to the dominant ideology of maternal domesticity and replication of gendered subject positions within the family, the books are not radical in comparison with the career novels discussed previously – rejecting or adapting the socio-biological determinism of maternity is never an option.[37] Yet the delineation of foodwork as aesthetically satisfying while potentially oppressive ensures that, even in these more complicit texts, resistant readings are possible; at a time when food matters dominated national discourse these works connect the imagined world closely with reality. Their metonymy marks them as significant participants in the cultural discourse of motherhood within which fiction operates, and to which popular fiction makes an important contribution. The references to Lalla's 'naughty curves' and Aunt Cora's 'careful' calorie-counting reveal links between food, body shape and maternalism that are, however, only briefly developed in these novels for younger readers. Such aspects will be explored with reference to the books for older girls discussed in 'Chapter Five: Body'.

[37] Although, as discussed here and in 'Chapter Two: Work', *Sally's Family* does offer some variation on performative maternal patterning.

Chapter Five
Body: Femininity, Fashion and the Maternal Ideal

For a contemporary seven-year-old, to climb onto a scale and to exclaim with horror is a ritual of femininity.

Naomi Wolf *The Beauty Myth* 2002

Waist's perfect, but you've still got too much fat on your hips. You can get that off with a few less buns and by wearing a proper corset belt. And your bust's in the wrong place dear - a good light bra will lift that.

Lorna Lewis *Valerie – Fashion Model* 1955

Mother exclaimed over the fact that I was fatter, and she moaned over my hair and hands and weather-beaten complexion.

Mabel Esther Allan *Room for the Cuckoo* 1953

Figure 15: 'Reducing Your Weight' 1948
Advertising Archives

1. Introduction: Shaping Motherhood

The symbiotic connection between food and the body, physiologically straightforward, but psychologically complex, is evident in the epigraph quotations. The fictional mothers examined in previous chapters generally regard food as a friend, whereas food has become the enemy in the works analysed here. As an aspirant fashion model, Valerie's ambitions can only, according to proto-mother Aunt Catharine, quoted above, be realised by changing both her approach to food consumption and her 'wrong' body shape. Meanwhile Jennifer's mother in Allan's *Room for the Cuckoo* insists on setting her daughter's hair and providing hand-lotion and face-cream to ameliorate the effects of an outdoor life and too many hearty farmhouse meals on her face, body and (implicitly) marital prospects.

Unlike many titles investigated in former chapters, the novels of Allan and the career genre were written for an implied reader of twelve years or over. They are brought together here since the assumed preoccupations of this slightly older readership

are evident in the textual focus on matters of the body and the social concerns linked to embodiment that are expressed in the epigraph quotations. The mother-daughter conflicts arising from the heroines' aspirations to adult femininity, divergent lifestyles, preoccupations with bodily appearance and potential heterosexual relationships are played out in the arenae of both filial and maternal bodies.

I will be interrogating textual attention to the body as it relates to awareness of femininity and the growth of identity for protagonists, and to the uses of fashion and appearance as props in the physical and psychological construction of the heroines as actual or potential mothers. I discuss how such constructions reflect reality while also making an innovative contribution to the wider discourse of 1950s femininity as identified in contemporary media. The novels are precursors for what later became known as the YA identity novel, and utilise popular tropes – of romance in particular – to create a form of *bildungsroman* (maturation narrative), or, in the case of the career genre, of *erziehungsroman* (incorporating a focus on the period of training), in which bodies become significant "as both personal resources and social symbols that 'give off' messages about identity; malleable entities to be shaped and honed by the vigilance and hard work of their owners" (Shilling 2012:7). Originating in late-eighteenth-century Germany with the publication of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the *bildungsroman* is defined by Susanne Howe as a genre that traces a "conscious attempt on the part of the hero to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experience" (1930:6). The heroines of the texts here are engaged in not-dissimilar narratives of development wherein they 'consciously attempt' to realise their adult feminine identity within the expectations of a rigid social order. Such maturation was explicit editorial policy for the careers titles, whose publishers specified that: "development of character should be shown [to] be the outcome of the girl's experience and reaction to the work"

(CWA 29.1.1957). These protagonists are, in Howe's words, "apprentices to life" (1930:10).

I will investigate how theoretical models of maternity and femininity created by contemporaneous thinkers Beauvoir, Klein and Newsom invoke the physicality of the female body, and consider these alongside more recent work on embodiment and gender. The increasing attention to matters of gender and identity in the wake of second-wave feminism stimulated a growing interest in mothering as a political and cultural concept; as Rye remarks "over the last forty or so years, hundreds of books and articles on mothering have been published across a wide range of disciplines" (2018:1). I therefore address the work of later feminist theorists, including Chodorow, Bordo and Young to frame my discussion of the texts.

I argue that, in representing a variety of maternal and non-maternal bodies, my corpus engages in the discourse of maternity to create a range of subject positions that both sustain and subvert the received maternal ideal. I begin by defining the focus on the body, and its relationship with the broader concept of femininity which underpins this chapter. I then discuss how specific models of 1950s femininity are constructed in Allan's work, with particular reference to tensions within the mother-daughter dyad in relation to the growth of identity. The following section on fashion and appearance investigates a selection of career novels for rare textual glimpses of the physiological body, alongside more frequent references to its adornment and enhancement. The final section considers construction of the corporeal and psychological maternal ideal and its impact on the mother-daughter dyad, the enculturation of daughters into adult femininity, and their diverging attitudes to the socio-cultural imperative of a mature heterosexual relationship, leading ultimately to marriage and further iterations of motherhood.

2. The Body and Femininity

Scholars such as Bordo, Young and Shilling have highlighted the extent to which subjectivity is constructed through embodiment, and the notion of the female body as "an entity in the process of becoming; a *project* to be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual's self-identity" is highly relevant to this chapter (Shilling 2012:6). It is now generally accepted that the body is a cultural as well as a physical medium; observations of its shape, clothing and adornment reveal it as a "powerful symbolic form [and] a metaphor for culture" (Bordo 1997:90). In his 1988 seminar 'Technologies of the Self', Foucault describes "practices" by which individuals internalise modes of behaviour and apply them in everyday life; these technologies "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies [...], conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness [and] perfection" (1988:18). Ahead of Foucault's discussion, anthropologist Douglas argued, in her 1982 *Natural Symbols*, that the body is a surface on which the rules and expectations of society can be inscribed, and thus reinforced, a point of view that has come to be widely endorsed in the writings of philosophers, sociologists and feminist thinkers. The body, envisaged as a socially-constructed product which is infinitely malleable, can be 'written on' in response to external imperatives concerning self-regulation and presentation, and adapted into 'ways of being'; a process which is played out in the texts discussed here. By "inscribing the body in culturally determinant ways" such practices constitute it as "a social, symbolic and regulatable [...] object available to others", to be 'read' or interpreted from their own perspectives (Grosz 1990:38).

As mentioned in my 'Introduction' (p29), physical descriptions of the childbearing body and breastfeeding do not appear in the novels under discussion, although the topics are plentifully represented in the popular medium of lifestyle

magazines which I examine, as well as in cultural studies such as Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Pregnancy and childbirth are directly addressed in only two linked texts. In *Nurse Carter Married* Caroline is briefly depicted "preparing for the birth of her baby, [and] attending an ante-natal clinic", and subsequently in the "woman's world […] of childbirth" (Darbyshire 1955:136-8). Her labour lasts "for twenty-four hours", during which Caroline "lost sight of everything but her concentration upon the miracle that was happening in her body" (138). In the sequel *District Nurse Carter*, description is more down-to-earth: Caroline's patient has "pretty violent pains" and "some of the details of all the women's work of cleaning-up might be thought sordid" (Meynell 1958:91). Unsurprisingly, there are still no detailed physiological descriptions – the emphasis is, again, on "the *miracle* [of] an absolutely brand-new human being" rather than the process of birthing (91 my emphasis). Lactation is completely non-existent in my corpus – fictional babies are invariably bottle-fed. These exclusions are indicative of contemporary mores – between 1946 and 1956, for example, breastfeeding rates fell by 50% and "bottle-feeding became the ordinary method of baby feeding" (Palmer 1988:190). They also, inevitably, conform to literary conventions of the era, particularly with regard to children's literature, where the age of the implied reader governed which topics were considered appropriate to include. This narrative gap focusses the reader's attention on performative aspects of maternity rather than its physiological basics, as the works formulate maternal constructions in relation to how they correlate with received ideals of motherhood.

I therefore use 'body' here as a metonym for the wider notion of femininity, since, as I describe below, the two are entwined, both in my texts and in the 1950s era they inhabit. Dating from the fourteenth century, the term femininity, itself a fluid and powerful cultural concept, derives from Latin and Proto-Indo-European roots meaning literally "she who suckles" (OED). This etymology links the word to a specific function

of motherhood, so conceiving, birthing and suckling a child could be interpreted as the ultimate expression of femininity. However, as a construct for which meanings are "continually being constituted, reproduced, and contested at particular times in particular places" it is, I suggest, in the representation of *external* appurtenances that expectations of femininity during the 1950s are most commonly revealed (Hughes 1997:120). As both a vessel of procreation and a medium of enculturation, the body's entwinement with femininity at this time through intrinsic and extrinsic factors is exemplified in the table:

Physical (Intrinsic) Body	**Adorned (Extrinsic) Body**
Size & Shape	Clothes & Underwear
Condition & Health	Grooming & Exercise
Face & Skin	Face-cream & Make-up
Hair	Cutting & Styling
Hands & Nails	Hand-lotion & Nail-varnish
Legs	Shoes & Stockings

Thematising female identity, the texts utilise the bodily adornments of clothing, hair-styling and make-up as symbolic markers of personal growth. Within these narratives, femininity has, as described by Bordo in 'The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity', "come to be largely a matter of constructing […] the appropriate surface presentation of the self" (1997:94).

The concepts discussed in Bordo's essay have been extensively explored by feminist theorists. Their use of 'embodiment', as a term which distinguishes between the objective body (the physiological entity) and the phenomenological body (as it is experienced by its owner or an observer), is key to the presentation of bodies in the texts of Allan and the career genre, where they function as signifiers for the subjectivity and feminine interaction of the protagonists. These books are not *about* the body (any more than they are overtly about motherhood). In *Perspectives on Embodiment*, Thomas Csordas states that "studies under the rubric of embodiment are not 'about' the body per se. Instead they are about culture and experience insofar as these can be understood

from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the-world" (1997:143). My metonymic use of the term body as a marker for the cultural context of femininity is derived from this definition of embodiment as an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source of experience.

Dorothy Smith conceptualises the discourse of femininity as "envisaging a web, or cat's cradle of texts, stringing together and co-ordinating [...] the everyday worlds of women and men with the market process of the fashion, cosmetic, garment and publishing industries" (1988:53). The web concept is useful to position my texts as maturation narratives in relation to their readers' growing understanding of individual 'being-in-the-world'. Allan's work provides role models for an ongoing construction of mature female identity, while the career series (as discussed in 'Chapter Three: Money') were specifically formulated by publishers as a source of professional information in a time of changing opportunity for women. In weaving of the web, both formats contribute strands, beyond story, to the reader's active creation of her own subjectivity.

3. Femininity and Identity in Mabel Esther Allan

The function of the female body as a locus of social construction was particularly marked during the post-war period, when concerns with body image and femininity encompassed a reconsideration of the role of mothers as wives and workers within a regenerating society. Klein's analysis of current expectations of femininity in *The Feminine Character* (1946) frequently uses language that invokes the corporeal – terminology describing the "stereotype of femininity [as] a pattern of conduct to the *growing* girl, [which] influences her life plan, and so contributes in *shaping* her character" suggests embodiment of that stereotype (1946:163 my emphases). The importance of the maternal model in reproducing it is realised in the characterisation of Allan's Aunt Millicent, whose mothering, central to *The Vine-Clad Hill*, is informed by her preference for physically-attractive daughters. As she explains to her niece Philippa,

"I like girls to be attractive and bright, without being too bookish and intellectual" (1956:126). The 1950s, as Carol Dyhouse observes, "proved to be a decade hallmarked by contradictions for women," and Allan's fiction, exploring and critiquing the role of mothers in moulding their daughters, actively engages with such contradictions (1978:308). Writing in simple realist mode, Allan depicts oppositional styles of mothering that challenge the conventional maternal construct, creating subject positions for her protagonists which suggest possible alternatives for female identity. The comparison of the informal maternal style of Philippa's own "unsophisticated" mother Jean to that of "snobbish" Aunt Millicent in the opening chapter of *The Vine-Clad Hill* is an early indication of the novel's explicit ideology (1956:7). Allan questions the concept of a femininity expressed through domesticity and appearance; Jean's "shabby, cheerful house" strewn with papers and magazines, is very different from Millicent's "Four Gables which is usually immaculately tidy", and the mothers' differing domestic values signify their approaches to mothering and feminine behaviour (7).

Philippa, the teenage narrator, is both observer and participant in a struggle with opposing notions of feminine identity wherein the central mother-daughter conflict is conducted on the battleground of the body. Philippa's cousin Tilda, a "thin, long-legged thirteen-year-old," is constantly compared by fashion-conscious mother Millicent to her attractive older sister Clemency (14). According to Marianne Hirsch, mother/daughter relationships in literature are marked by the "not-always-successful process of identification with and differentiation from a mother", and the aspects of this process are separately personified in the interactions between Millicent and her two daughters (1989:20). On first encounter Tilda is described as:

> Plain and awkward and a great contrast [to her siblings]. She seemed to have no graces, […] slouching in her seat with her hands in her pockets, and her face wore a heavy, withdrawn look. She had the Hamlin red hair, but unlike Clemency and the younger ones, it was carroty and rather straight. She wore it fairly long, and it was tied back from her face in two unbecoming bunches. Her

> eyes were greenish and dull [and] under her school coat she wore a fawn cardigan and a too-childish tartan shirt.
>
> (1956:22).

The physiological body, its adornment and its coverings are each called into play here to establish the basis of the mother-daughter conflict. Tilda's carroty-coloured hair, its styling in unbecoming bunches, dull eyes, slouching posture, withdrawn facial expression and childish clothes all designate resistance to her mother's ideal of femininity, while Clemency, by comparison, "looked unbelievably well-groomed, and was beautiful [with] red-gold hair, beautifully-tanned limbs, and frock and shoes of palest primrose" (8/71). Allan's maternal conflict plot centres on the contrast between Clemency and the culturally-resistant Tilda's refusal to conform to her mother's ideals of bodily comportment and decoration. Tilda, Clemency points out, "looks a funny little freak [and] doesn't care a straw for clothes. It breaks Mummy's heart" (73). Even the sympathetic Philippa "could see how much [Tilda's] appearance must annoy Aunt Millicent" (22). The conventional Millicent, a stereotypical upper-middle-class domestic mother, boasts that seventeen-year-old Clemency:

> "has more boyfriends already than most girls, and one or two seem to me really serious. […] I want her to have a really good time for a year or two. Then" – she gave a sigh of pleasure – "she'll marry, I suppose. I *like* girls to marry young. I don't care for all this studying."
>
> (12).

Philippa, also aged seventeen, is similarly assessed by her aunt: "What about you, Pippa? How many boyfriends have you got? You haven't Clem's looks, but you're a pretty enough girl. Or would be if you wore rather more make-up" (44). Millicent's assumption that bodily adornment is necessary, and her appraisal of daughters and niece solely in terms of appearance links here to her assessment of their potential marriage prospects and thus future social status. Millicent's traditional understanding of female aspirations and destiny was being challenged in the external world, and Philippa voices

such challenges within the text. Initially intimidated by her aunt's perspective, she ultimately decides that:

> I couldn't accept Aunt Millicent's values, for I was convinced that there was so much in life that was *not* connected with [attracting] men. So many warm pleasures like getting to know new places, reading, seeing interesting plays and ballets, learning to make one's way in the world. I wanted to be a balanced, intelligent human being, with the means of earning a living that appealed to me. (44).

The voice of the implied author can be perceived in this passage – despite her allegiance to aspects of the romance trope, Allan's work invariably offers alternatives to a conventionally-feminine role. Philippa, as homo-diegetic narrator, is the major focalising character, who offers both a narrative of events and a narrative of words. In *Narrative Discourse Revisited* Genette assigns testimonial and ideological functions to such narrators, whereby they affirm the truth of the story and introduce instructive comment (1988:255-6). Philippa's direct address to the implied reader in the above passage testifies to and reinforces Allan's ideological message. Her rejection of her aunt's version of feminine identity is a Genettian affirmation, utilising Freudian terminology, of the 'many warm pleasures' in a 1950s world beyond Millicent's preoccupation with grooming, make-up and marriageability.

The 'real' author, defined by Barbara Wall as "the person, holding pen [...] who has thought of and written the words", was born in 1915 (1991:4). As biographer Sheila Ray points out, Allan was therefore one of the last of a generation of upper-middle-class girls who (like the fictional Millicent) were expected to live at home, supported by their parents and helping their mothers, until they married. Allan's life however was transformed by her wartime experience of working in the Land Army and as Nursery Warden in inner-city schools, and she ultimately confounded such traditional expectations. While she warns in her autobiographical pamphlet *To Be An Author* against the "dangerous assumptions" of correlating the author's life with her stories, she also acknowledges that, "It's true that there is probably something of ourselves in our

heroines. Each of my books is, in a sense, part of myself" (1982:54). Her successful life as a professional and popular writer was informed by personal and societal conditions relevant to mid-twentieth-century expectations of femininity and woman's role in the family. As someone who "grew up as a second-class citizen just because I was a girl and I never even questioned it for a very long time," Allan confesses that "I don't regard the idea of 'the family' as a basically happy thing" (55). It is notable in light of this declaration that Allan's representation of mothers and daughters both inscribes and offers resistance to traditional patterns, situating her protagonists within a conflicted discourse of maternity. The ideologies of femininity evident in 1950s media and societal attitudes provided no reassuring 'universal woman' pattern which could easily be adapted to biological diversity and lifestyle preference. Intense debates on the maternal role coincided with extended educational opportunities, the opening-up of universities (the fictional Philippa plans to go to Cambridge), wider choices in employment, changing expectations of marriage, new assumptions about citizenship and social class, and growth in consumerism; all offering an unprecedented diversity of adult femininities from which to choose. Allan's exploration of such diversity in the two titles discussed here, *The Vine-Clad Hill* and *Room for the Cuckoo*, positions her narrator-protagonists Philippa and Jennifer in conflict with maternal constructs who select the intrinsic and extrinsic bodily attributes of hair and complexion, clothes and make-up as sites of struggle in their attempts to impose conventional femininity.

Klein's *The Feminine Character* explores these contemporary challenges to fixed and constraining ideas of femininity through analysis of different theoretical approaches. Published just after the war, and preceding Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* by three years, her investigation of "the problem of feminine character" is a path-breaking text that examines the priority accorded to biological over socio-cultural definitions in "ascertaining what, apart from the reproductive and related organs, are the permanent

physical factors which go to the making of feminine characteristics" (1946:97/43). Klein argues that the predominant contemporary conflict for women was between two mutually-incompatible spheres of domesticity and business. "Business functions" require woman to possess "efficiency, courage, determination, intelligence, a sense of reality, responsibility, independence," whereas received views of femininity assume her to be "pretty, sensitive, adaptable, unassertive, good-humoured, domesticated, yielding and soft, and, if possible, not too intelligent" (33-34). The definition of femininity in bodily terms is particularly evident in these lists: women should be 'yielding', 'soft' and, above all, 'pretty'. Although Klein's work, like her later *Women's Two Roles* (co-authored with Myrdal), concurs with prevailing assumptions on the centrality of motherhood and marriage as ingredients of feminine identity, the discussion ranges far beyond its initial remit of domesticity versus employment. Her critical analysis of biological determinism anticipates many of Beauvoir's arguments and prefigures later research by Susan Brownmiller and Judith Butler on physical femininity and gender essentialism.

Beauvoir's famous declaration in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" demolishes the notion of a predetermined female destiny, and postulates the disentanglement of biological femaleness from femininity, a then-radical proposition that is subtly interrogated in the fictional texts discussed here (1949:301). Her consideration of 'The Mother' is particularly relevant to bodily representation, since Beauvoir's notion of the physical effects of motherhood is remarkably negative; it is, she opines, "very difficult to remain desirable with dishwasher hands and a body *deformed* by maternities" (541 my emphasis). This caustic denigration of the corporeal mother links the physical and the cultural, designating the ultimate maternal experience of childbirth as "the time when woman attains the realisation of her feminine destiny" – a destiny that, she argues, consists of dependency

and fundamental inferiority (521). Notwithstanding her dismissive approach to the mother's body, Beauvoir attacks normative femininity under patriarchy, contending that society constructs a vast cultural apparatus dedicated to this 'fabrication', in which a feminine woman is one who accepts herself as Other. Her description of consequential maternal relationships, particularly between mother and daughter,[38] is pessimistic, linking motherhood to cultural expectations of femininity, alongside a preoccupation with physical sexuality. She points out the "extravagant fraudulence [of society's] easy reconciliation between the common attitude of contempt for women and the respect shown for mothers" (538). Entrusted with "the most serious undertaking of all: the moulding of a human being", women are yet denied, in the name of femininity, "the education, culture and responsibilities of men" (539). This proposition is explicitly confronted in the works of Allan and the career genre.

The paradigm of femininity identified by Klein and eviscerated by Beauvoir is a model that is indissoluble from both the physical and the adorned body. It appears in less-scholarly media of the 1950s, where its mutability was clearly a matter of ongoing debate, as readers' letters to *Picture Post* illustrate:

> A Thought on Thinking Women – Since the war, woman has raised herself to the plain which was once man's alone. […] Woman now thinks, and can talk about, politics without losing her essential femininity in the shape of 'gay hats'.
>
> Women and the Vote – The granting of the vote to women has been one of the main causes of the downfall of the sex as woman, and its emergence into the hard, graceless, inelegant travesty of femininity which emancipation and two world wars have made her.
>
> The British Girl – If the British girl-child were encouraged to feel a pride in her femininity early in life instead of being just second-best to a boy, she would possess the natural self-confidence and poise so necessary to good dressing.
> ('Readers' 1948:28).

It is noteworthy that all these comments maintain a link between femininity and appearance; 'gay hats' and 'good dressing' remain a factor of identity for even the most

[38] As opposed to that between mother and son, which Beauvoir regards as less damaged, due to the likelihood of son-preference in a patriarchal society.

‘naturally self-confident’ thinking woman. While this position is endorsed in Allan’s texts, linking them to their era of production, the pride in good grooming evinced by her protagonists is constructed as empowerment rather than restriction. The ideological implication is that attention to appearance should not be regarded as mere vanity, or the unconsidered acceptance of feminine convention, but as an element of self-esteem. Bordo argues that, “conditions that are objectively (and, on one level, experientially) constraining can come to be experienced as liberating, transforming and life-giving”, and attention to appearance is linked by Allan’s protagonists to the independent thinking that is integral in their realisation of a mature identity (1997:90). Dedicated teacher Meg’s view in *Judith Teaches* that “clothes and all that are an awful waste of time” is demolished by Judith, her mentor and mother-substitute, who declares that “general appearance. Good grooming and so on [is] a mark of self-respect” (Allan 1955:56-7). Clothing, as Barthes points out in *The Fashion System*, makes the body culturally visible; whether presented pictorially or descriptively, fashion is, like language, “a system of signification” that defines its wearers (1967:*x*). In her discussion of Barthes, Young asserts that the “certain freedom involved in our relation to clothes” can create an “active subjectivity” for women (2005:73). Judith’s attention to grooming, Philippa’s satisfaction in making her own clothes, and Jennifer’s enjoyment in choosing new working attire are all self-directed (rather than externally-focussed) pleasures. These protagonists are constructed as opposites to the characters of dull Meg, frivolous Clemency and spoilt Rosalie, each of whom, in different ways, have limited horizons bounded by their bodily preconceptions. Allan’s focalising heroines engage with the paradox of femininity described by Bordo and Young, wherein attention to grooming, enjoyment in choosing clothes and otherwise adorning the body, is liberating – a contributory strand of their development towards maturity. The characters embody

Allan's message, that 'active subjectivity' is an achievable and desirable aspect of female identity.

Despite the gradual emergence of the species 'teenager' during the 1950s, described by Abrams in *The Teenage Consumer* (1959), it was a time of limited media for young people. Popular novelists such as Allan were therefore consumed by teenage readers alongside widely-read and influential adult lifestyle journals, which also engaged with the paradoxical ideologies of femininity. Mass-circulation magazine *Woman* was the most successful of its type, boasting an extensive readership across class and age ranges; in 1951 it introduced a special 'teen-page' for younger readers, encouraging mothers to share *Woman*'s interpretation of feminine culture with their daughters. A 1956 article, 'Sixteen and Lovely', establishes the responsibilities of mature femininity:

> You're leaving school […] you'll be a responsible adult at last! […] Smother heroically any impulse to *giggle loudly* or to *run down the office stairs two at a time*. It'll ruin the impression of *lovely serenity given by your pretty face*.
> (Temple 1956:25 my emphasis).

The limitations on behaviour and movement prescribed by *Woman* as part of societal acculturation into femininity – not giggling or running downstairs, maintaining serenity and having a pretty face – are deconstructed by Young in her essay 'Throwing Like a Girl' (2005). Young analyses cultural restrictions on female movement, and makes particular reference to Beauvoir's account in *The Second Sex* of women's existence under patriarchy. The role of feminine comportment in the maintenance of a patriarchal society is noted by Marjorie Ferguson, who argues that lifestyle magazines had a hidden educative ideological agenda, "to shape both a woman's view of herself, and society's view of her. […] They are about femininity itself – as a state, a condition, a craft and an art form which comprise a set of practices and beliefs" (1983:1). As purveyors of informal education, this agenda – not noticeably well-hidden in the above article – endorsed a more traditional template of female identity than that promulgated in Allan's

writing, where adult femininity is defined in terms of character and personality. Notwithstanding her middle-class characters and conventional settings, Allan's version of femininity has a radical edge that links with the challenges to hegemonic femininity issued by Klein and Beauvoir. Philippa's determination to become a 'balanced intelligent human being' echoes the 'efficiency, courage, determination, intelligence' highlighted in Klein's version of femininity, whereas Clemency and Millicent's advocacy of the 'pretty face' and other superficial aspects of bodily deportment described in the *Woman* article are devalued in Allan's narrative depiction of responsible adulthood.

A 1952 advertisement for *Housewife* links the female body to the economic changes that had deprived its middle and upper-middle-class readers of the domestic help they had been accustomed to pre-war. Acknowledging the contemporary requirement for readers to apply their *own* hands to unaccustomed housewifery tasks, the journal still constructs the identity of its readership in a wistfully feminine mould:

> A housewife is more than just a pair of hands – *Housewife* recognises this. Something more is needed too. Leisure, graciousness, elegance. In every issue there are articles of fashion, flowers, fripperies. Articles that stress the gentler, more feminine side of life. For *Housewife* appreciates that women do still think, do still recognise the horizons beyond the carpet-sweeper and the playpen. (*Picture Post* 'Advertisement' 1952:14).

Post-war changes in social structure, stressing the wider range of available feminine identities that Allan explores, were side-lined by such advertisements. The patronising assertion that women, despite their practical tasks, 'still think' and have 'horizons beyond carpet-sweeper and playpen' assumes, as Klein had pointed out, that "as of old, they are interested chiefly or only in clothes, make-up, needlework, cookery and romantic love" (1946:33). Such feminine 'fripperies' certainly take precedence for Aunt Millicent, whose reliance on her Italian maid for housework and Philippa for childcare release her from maternal carpet-sweeping and playpen duties, affording her the leisured and gracious lifestyle *Housewife* eulogises.

Both title and content suggest that *Housewife*, which featured a regular 'Mothercraft' section, was less likely to be read by teenagers, but *Girl*, published weekly from 1951 to 1964, was aimed specifically at twelve to sixteen-year-olds, although it was also popular with pre-teen readers. As younger publication sister to *Woman*, *Girl* purveyed a similarly-conventional version of feminine identity defined by bodily presentation and rooted in domesticity, but was able to be more overtly educational. Its editorial tone aimed to create a parallel readership 'community' as a site within which femininity could be constructed and which would become instrumental in that construction. The mixture of stories, comic-strips, serials and advice columns included highly-prescriptive tutorial features exemplifying domestic aspects of the feminine persona. *Mother Tells You How* describes 'How to Prepare Grapefruit', or 'How to Lay a Table', while *Concerning You* instructs readers on 'Basic Skin Care', 'Shopping Hints' or, daringly, 'Make Friends with Boys' (Russell 2006:37/65/15/128/76). Fashion pages of the magazine introduced readers to the notion of beauty care from early teenage years, and, as in the adult journal, the maintenance and upkeep of the body to achieve true femininity is presented as a necessary project – "even natural good looks have to be worked at" (Gray 1960:14). Readers' letters show that this manufactured acquisition of a female identity was accepted, although not always willingly. As one thirteen-year-old protests:

> Now that I am growing up I have to care more about my appearance. Although I do not want to bother about clothes etc, I must, because, after all, we must keep up with the times!
>
> (*Girl* 1960:12).

Girl and *Woman* assumed that mothers would be familial mentors to their daughters in such 'keeping-up', as demonstrated by a *Woman* article pointing out that, "It's never too soon to start thinking about beauty. Make a note, teenagers!"; the young reader is advised how to make her "first beauty preparations gracefully" (Temple 1957b:17). The assumption of a link between bodily presentation and growing-up in this piece, and the

unwilling compliance of the resistant *Girl* correspondent, resonates with the conflicts between Tilda and Millicent over the construction of feminine identity. Unlike the transformative outcome for Allan's Tilda however, the message in the journals is unequivocally conventional – an ideological agenda that was being reinforced in the arena of formal education.

Notwithstanding the educational reforms established by the 1944 Butler Education Act, schooling practice concurred with the tendencies of popular lifestyle journals. The institutional curriculum continued to emphasise an ideology of femininity that, like *Girl* and *Woman*'s editorial content, was grounded in domesticity and attention to the body. The new post-war tripartite system of secondary schooling was intended to be based entirely on ability and the needs of the individual, but the implicit assumptions of the planners, working from the recommendations of the 1943 Norwood Report, pre-supposed that girls, at every intellectual level, were destined largely for domestic and decorative roles. Newsom's *The Education of Girls*, favouring a separate female curriculum grounded in domestic and artistic subjects, was commended in Education Minister Rab Butler's foreword as a set of "wise and humorous recommendations [...] for girls' schools" (1948:9). Despite the rhetoric of the Butler Act, prior assumptions were still being made as to the 'natural' interests of girls, who were encouraged to view home-making and motherhood as the ultimate fulfilment of their feminine identity. As discussed in 'Chapter Two: Work' (p130ff), Newsom's belief in the economic importance of mothers as shoppers led him to recommend that teaching "discrimination in design and colour" and "cultivation of the aesthetic sense" should be mandatory in girls' education (103-4). His work assumes the vision of femininity incorporated in the 'leisure, graciousness, elegance' prescribed by *Housewife*, and reinforced by *Girl*'s motherly advice on skincare and shopping.

Shopping, particularly for clothes, is one of the activities most often shared by mothers and daughters in Allan's books, and depictions of this conventional activity are formulated as set-pieces that demarcate the dividing line between the mother's version of femininity and the challenge to this represented by her daughter. When Mrs Browne, the traditional mother of *Room for the Cuckoo*, is horrified by her daughter's decision to work on a farm, she concedes that:

> We'll have to go shopping I suppose. You'll need really well-fitting breeches and boots and thick socks, and a double-texture mackintosh. Dear me, how dull! I'd much sooner be fitting you out with pretty frocks.
>
> (Allan 1953:13).

Jennifer, a "gently-brought-up daughter", is however eager to create a new identity for herself and uses her choice of professional clothing, which, significantly, crosses gender lines, to generate this; "I've got lots of frocks [...] I think breeches and boots sound marvellous" (7/13). While Mother continues to focus on the visible body, buying "good hand-lotion" and "deliciously-soft vanishing-cream" for her daughter, Jennifer's own version of femininity ultimately prevails (67). Her initial satisfaction with "beautiful new corduroy breeches, my thick socks [and] gum-boots" eventually culminates in a triumphant statement that "mother was more or less resigned to my [...] peeling nose and general appearance of extreme rusticity" (24/99). Jennifer is empowered by the conventionally-feminine clothes-shopping ritual, an arena she utilises to initiate her personal realisation of feminine identity.

The partial rapprochement between Millicent and the recalcitrant Tilda in *The Vine-Clad Hill* also begins during a shopping expedition, an episode that becomes, in Bordo's terms, liberating and transformative for their relationship. Tilda, whose "eyes sparkle" as she chooses "a really beautiful frock in jade-green silk" is emancipated by her novel experience of clothes as agency rather than anti-feminine armour (1956:136-7). Her selection of a vivid colour is symbolic of a burgeoning assertive individuality that is implicitly compared to conventionally-feminine sister Clemency's preference for

"palest primrose", while the choice of silk, a sensuously-textured material, hints at a developing bodily maturity (71). The contrast with the "fawn cardigan" and "childish tartan skirt" of Tilda's former wardrobe is marked, and Clemency's earlier denunciation of her sister's appearance – "Rummy she should be so plain" – is confounded (22/73). In exercising agency, Tilda is transformed, much to her mother's surprise; "Why, I declare! You're worth dressing, after all. That really does suit you" cries Millicent, whose maternal role is reduced to that of onlooker, as the text foregrounds her daughter's far-reaching perception of feminine identity (137). Having gained ownership of her appearance, Tilda's acquisition of a newly-recognised femininity encourages her pursuance of wider ambitions to study languages at a Swiss international school:

> "I'm to have lots of new clothes, Mother says. We're going shopping in Lugano. […] That will be fun," said Tilda thoughtfully. "But what I *really* care about, Philippa, is going to the mountains again."
>
> (181).

Tilda's appropriation of feminine codes is empowering rather than compliant, being characterised by an extended vision of female identity beyond appearance that echoes the possibilities envisaged in the 'warm pleasures' described by Philippa. And the narrator Philippa's empathy with and championing of Tilda, whose academic aspirations mirror her own future plans, operates as a further challenge to stereotypical femininity. For both Tilda and Jennifer, shopping rituals are deployed to exemplify the conflict of the mother-daughter dyad regarding crucial perceptions of feminine identity. As focalising characters, the denial of their mothers' fashion tastes is an ideologically-powerful signal of Allan's textual dissension from the form of femininity embedded in Newsom's deterministic concept of the female 'aesthetic sense'.

"Sex and domesticity" according to Newsom (using 'sex' to denote attention to appearance in order to attract men), are the two advertising approaches "most likely to appeal to the female mind" (1948:101). Sex is, apparently, "for a considerable proportion of a woman's life, one of her chief intellectual and emotional inspirations"

(101). His vision of a curriculum that would teach girls “how to grow into women and to relearn the graces which so many have forgotten in the last thirty years” was incorporated into all levels of the tripartite system, remaining prevalent in schools throughout the 1950s and beyond (109). The term ‘grace’ was commonly used during this period as shorthand for feminine attributes: pre-transformation Tilda has ‘no graces’, and according to the *Picture Post* correspondent quoted above (p261), the enfranchised woman has become a ‘graceless […] travesty of femininity’. The etymological origin of ‘grace’ in Latin and Old French implies “elegance” and a “pleasing quality”, while closer ties to the physical body became apparent in fourteenth-century usage when it was linked with “beauty of form or movement” (OED). Streatfeild’s two edited books of advice for adolescent girls, *Years of Grace* (1950) and *Growing Up Gracefully* (1955), deal at length with bodily deportment, appearance and clothing, and the former contains a chapter specifically entitled ‘Grace’, written by ‘Cannula – a Woman Doctor’. Her discussion of bodily presentation – “you cannot look your best if you slouch, straddle and sprawl” – is followed by detailed instructions on keeping the body clean (1950:20). All parts are dealt with, including “between your legs” and “your navel”, the latter clearly being an ungraceful area of the body since, “full of nooks and crannies that conceal grime, it needs careful decarbonising” (23-24). Cannula asserts that “the study of glamour [should] become a compulsory subject for all girls at school” (19). Newsom, it would seem, was evidently not alone.

Allan was an ex-teacher whose views on education diverged from such biological essentialism, and her representation of the domestic-science teacher in *Judith Teaches* indicts the gender-based curriculum. Mrs Parslow is “a thoroughly silly woman”, an incompetent teacher and, despite teaching domesticity, an emotionally-neglectful mother (1955:17). Such caricatures of domestic-science teaching were not uncommon, but the 1959 Crowther Report, investigating educational needs after the age

of fifteen, continued to promote a gendered dichotomy. Acknowledging that the aim of education is the "creation of intelligent and responsible citizens", Crowther nevertheless recommends that "the prospect of courtship and marriage should rightly influence the education of the adolescent girl [and] her direct interest in dress, personal experience and in problems of human relations should be given a central place in her education" (Ministry of Education 1959:124). This end-of-decade report signifies a cultural climate in which the female body still defined destiny, and where, as Pauline Marks later observed, the accompanying attributes of femininity had to be "cultivated, achieved and preserved" (1976:183).

Such cultivation of femininity, foregrounded in the obsession with appearance that characterises Millicent's disagreements with Tilda, is the basis of her approval of Clemency. There is however a lack of empathy in Millicent's maternity; despite doting on her elder daughter, the limitations of her mothering are revealed when Clemency, falling in love with an Italian boyfriend, is desperate to conceal the romance from her insular mother. The relationship between Millicent and Clemency, grounded in the superficial femininities of appearance and clothing, is implicitly juxtaposed to that of Philippa and her mother. Faced with a problematic decision, Clemency "hadn't the courage to tell her family – particularly her mother [who would] hate Clem to marry an Italian" (1956:174-5). In contrast, Philippa, unsure whether to take up an opportunity for foreign travel, immediately turns to Jean for advice and support: "Oh Mother! What on earth shall I do? Would you go if you were me?" (14). Allan's depiction of alternative maternal styles constructs the ideal as one of empathetic mothering leading to autonomy. Jean encourages Philippa to travel independently whereas Millicent's eventual acceptance of Clemency's marriage to a "foreigner" is strongly influenced by economic and class considerations that will lead to financial and social dependence for her daughter; Lorenzo's family "seem fabulously rich, and Clem will have a wonderful

time" (12). Millicent's account of Clemency's wedding, describing only the "grand people [and] the beautiful clothes they wore", emphasises her narrow focus on societal status and bodily appearance (185). The overt ideology of this text is occasionally contested, as when the independent Philippa, despite recognising Clemency's shallow frivolity, still compares her own appearance to that of her cousin – although she is comforted when assured by a young male acquaintance that, "you're pretty too, Philippa, and ten times cleverer" (107). And the beautiful Clemency, married at eighteen to her wealthy Italian fiancé, is said to be "very, very happy" (185). Nevertheless, her situation is specifically contrasted with Philippa's decision, supported by her mother, to defer such romantic closure in order to undertake travel, study and work. Allan's explicit values here, questioning the role of the mother-figure in promulgating a conventional female destiny, are radical in their contradiction of 1950s hegemonic femininity.

The description by Smith of such feminine discourse as a "cat's cradle of texts" (see p255), has been extended by later commentators (1988:53). Feminist philosopher Morwenna Griffiths postulates metaphorical "webs of identity", a concept whereby diverse discourses can be "woven" by the individual into a personal framework of self (1995:1). Griffiths perceives a constant two-way process between external and internal forces on the overall shape of the webs; they may be "constrained by the circumstances of their making but they bear the mark of the maker" (2). The expectations of 1950s institutions such as schools and popular media may, as with Tilda and Millicent, have raised conflicted issues of agency and autonomy for young women and their mothers, but ultimately, even if the web is damaged by outsiders, it can, Griffiths concludes, be re-woven by the individual. The young female protagonists of Allan's *Room for the Cuckoo* and *The Vine-Clad Hill* are depicted in the process of such weaving; as with the heroes of *bildungsromane*, they are shown journeying towards psychological and moral

maturity. Eighteen-year-old Jennifer, having succeeded as a farm labourer, opts to go to college; like Philippa, she defers marriage, deciding that "it did seem too soon. I wanted some other experiences first. [Mother] wasn't nearly so enthusiastic" (1953:179). Mother, however, has no say in the matter: "'you'll do as you like, Jen, no doubt,' she said, smiling rather wryly" (180). Philippa's decision to go to university is set against her cousin's early marriage to rich Lorenzo, but, as the narrative outcome makes clear, the values of Clemency and her mother are constructed as inferior. It is Philippa, "working terribly hard" at Cambridge, whose approach to femininity and identity is vindicated in the plot, since she forms a relationship with the Honourable Timothy Randal whom, being both aristocratic *and* English, had been Millicent's first choice for her own daughter (1956:185). Despite Philippa's apparent acquiescence to romance, the conventionally-feminine destiny of marriage accepted by Clemency is not her primary aim. As autodiegetic narrator in classic testimonial mode, Philippa advises the reader on the final page that she and Timothy are "very good friends […]. But just now work has to come first for both of us" (186). The textual endorsement of Jennifer and Philippa's choices, their deferral of marital closure and their considered balance between mind and body, reveals the role that Allan's texts play in both describing and resisting hegemonic femininity. The ultimate narrative interpretation of Philippa, Tilda and Jennifer's attention to appearance and adornment, resisting traditional maternal influences, is that of empowerment rather than compliance. The protagonists' establishment of an individual feminine identity, that incorporates but transcends the received ideal, offers alternative subjectivities for the reader to consider.

4. Fashion and Appearance in the Career Novels

The career novels are self-evidently about post-war opportunities for women in the world of work, but in defining and promoting these, the genre explores issues of femininity and maternity, and how these may be incorporated into the web of identity.

The exploration is largely conducted through the bodily prisms of fashion and appearance; aspects of the physical body such as hair and shape, and of the adorned body such as clothes and make-up, are utilised as indicators of the tensions between the protagonists and their mothers in the forging of a mature identity, career success and fitness for potential motherhood. As with the work of Allan, whose *Judith Teaches* was published in the Bodley Head careers series, these texts, denigrated as romantic potboilers by many critics, both inscribe and resist the hegemony of femininity. Editors and writers are clearly aware of the emerging discourse of opportunity regarding women's working lives, which was beginning to challenge the monolithic discourse of marginalisation discussed in 'Chapter Three: Money' (p145ff). While family members or those in the protagonists' friendship group may subscribe to the marginalisation discourse, the alternative images of femininity in the genre's depiction of mother-daughter conflict promote the opposing and "highly-differentiated" discourse of opportunity (Summerfield 1998:202).

In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger famously declares that:

> Men act, women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves.
> (1972:21).

His assumption that women, as passive recipients of the male gaze, define their feminine identity primarily in relation to men, is critiqued by later cultural commentators such as Brownmiller in *Femininity* (1986) and Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* (2002). Observations such as Berger's appear frequently in popular media of the long 1950s however. The first *Woman's Hour* broadcast in October 1946 included a feature on make-up, 'Putting your best face forward', while a *Housewif*e article in August 1958 focusses totally on the male response:

> Every normal woman tries to make herself attractive to men. […] The painstaking efforts that a woman puts into making herself look glamorous go far beyond the mere obligation to be clean and tidy. She wants to be alluring. […]

> No normal woman can fail to experience a thrill of triumph when the eyes of all the men are fastened intently upon her as she enters the room.
>
> (Mace 1958:18).

A more equitable position on female appearance is postulated by the eponymous heroine of *Judith Teaches*, who declares that, "I never feel right with myself unless I look my best. […] Looking attractive and well-groomed is for oneself, not just for men" (Allan 1955:56/94). Her confutation of the proposition that attention to appearance is merely a tool for pleasing men, and its corollary that female attractiveness is a necessary requirement for the attainment of marriage and motherhood, is vehemently expressed:

> Look at all the married people one meets. Some of them are as plain as possible. But that isn't the point. If you don't want to marry it doesn't matter; heaps of people don't and are quite happy.
>
> (93-4).

This position, unusual for its time, is often ascribed to the focalising heroines of the career genre, and in fact, it is generally the maternal rather than the male gaze which is invoked by Type One domestic mothers in support of the male-focussed concept later expressed by Berger. In delineating conflicts between such conventional, happily-married mothers and their adolescent daughters regarding bodily conformation and appearance, these texts utilise attitudes on marriageability, as Judith does, to illuminate the central ideological position of the series. In *Young Nurse Carter*, it is Caroline's home-based mother, rather than her father, who espouses the conventional outlook:

> "Good heavens" cried Mr Carter, "you women are all the same, everlastingly matchmaking. Why should he fall in love with her?" Mrs Carter smiled. "Caroline is quite pretty you know. And she is growing up."
>
> (Darbyshire 1954:29).

Mrs Carter's maternal identity, maritally-focussed and grounded in domesticity, seeks to reproduce itself by recreating her daughter in her own mould of femininity. In contrast, Caroline enjoys her emerging attractiveness while specifically rejecting a marital outcome. Arrayed in a "becoming and sophisticated" outfit of "scarlet jumper and flowing black skirt":

> Caroline enjoyed dancing with Clive. He was an adventurous dancer but somehow she never had any difficulty in following his steps and the resulting effortless rhythm between them was always exhilarating. [Her] wide skirt whirled, her eyes sparkled, her hair flew…
>
> (53).

The physicality of 'exhilarating', 'effortless rhythm' in Caroline's dancing is emphasised by references to both the intrinsic and adorned body; her sparkling eyes and flying hair and the 'wide' and 'whirling' skirt reinforce the sexual imagery at play here. The event is, moreover, shortly followed by an adamant denial of the marital destiny her mother envisages:

> She was not in love with Clive, or perhaps it was that she did not want to face the thought of being in love with him or with anyone. "I may never want to marry," she reflected. "I may want simply to go on nursing all my life."
>
> (66).

The concept, exemplified in this depiction of Caroline, that ownership of the body and its visible presentation can be a route to independent pleasure rather than a mirror of masculine or maternal expectations of femininity, is not widespread in contemporary representations. Bordo and Young would later argue that such bodily display can be an active exercise of female power, but in 1950s media the shape of the female body, its adaptation to current fashion, and choices regarding clothing and make-up are strictly defined; the feminine project is an overtly reflective one. Fashion, according to Wilson, "plays endlessly with the distinction between masculinity and femininity. With it we express our shifting views about what masculinity and femininity are", and the fashions of the late 1940s and early 1950s were characterised by a reaction to the austerity of the war years and by the assumed reversion to traditional masculine and feminine gender roles (1985:122). Clothes rationing continued in Britain until 1949, but the launch of Christian Dior's 'New Look' in early 1947 had become hugely influential as a reaction to wartime 'utility' wear; the square shoulders, short skirts and military styles of wartime were replaced by a silhouette of "narrow shoulders, exaggerated busts,

pinched-in waists, padded hips, [and] skirts fantastically full or hobbled" (Beckett 1947:26).

Wolf proposes that within any period culturally-imposed ideals recognise only one female form as 'truly' feminine, so "the definition of 'beautiful' constantly changes to serve the social order" (2002:150). The semiotics of newly-cinched waists and long skirts which restricted freedom of movement signify changing societal expectations, as women were redirected from the practical competence of wartime 'masculine' responsibilities in factory, farm and forces towards a new feminine aesthetic, defined by domesticity and decorative self-indulgence. There was some early criticism of the New Look, particularly regarding its extravagance and impractibility. Dior used many yards of expensive fabric for his creations; evening dresses could, as described by a disgruntled shop assistant in *Margaret Lang – Fashion Buyer*, contain "miles and miles of silk organza over layers and layers of tulle [at] one hundred and seventy guineas" (Delane 1956:60). As *Picture Post* commented, "for British women it would require the hoarded coupons of several years" and "even if material and enough coupons were available [...] imagine voluntarily adding to the fatigue of standing in the fish queue with twenty yards of tweed hanging from one's waist" (Beckett 1947:27/29). Notwithstanding such drawbacks, the look was broadly welcomed as a refreshing antidote to de-feminising uniforms, and it is significant that this acceptance was endorsed by women themselves. Penny Tinkler points out that "clothes were particularly important because they embodied layers of meaning," and, despite the likely influence of covert, as well as overt ideologies of femininity on the female population, those layers of tulle clearly represented a concerted reaction to the utilitarian garments reminiscent of wartime dangers and deprivations (2000a:104). *Picture Post*'s article criticises the "reactionary Victorian" nature of New Look fashions, but concludes that, "romantic frivolous clothes have such a seductive appeal. […] Their utter

femininity recalls the splendour and elegance of the pre-war era" (Beckett 1947:29). The independently-minded Mary Grieve, influential editor of *Woman*, defended the full skirts as a "fiery look" of "swinging bravado" (1948:3). The style dominated fashions for over a decade; in 1959 *Woman*'s fashion editor Veronica Scott, in 'Accent on Your Waist', extolled the fact that "waists are in full focus again, for the most feminine line of all", advising her readers to "choose a feminine, full-skirted dress for party time" (1959:10). Caroline's "thrill of happy anticipation" as she dons her "wide black taffeta skirt" to dance with Clive endorses the enjoyment of the new fashions so widely described in the media; yet crucially, as elsewhere in the careers series, her pleasure is interpreted as an article of female empowerment rather than feminine restriction (Darbyshire 1954:52).

Brownmiller argues that, historically, the feminine aesthetic requires constraining both female body and movement – corseting and foot-binding being western and eastern variations on the concept that, being "structurally unsound", a woman's body needs to be compressed by "artificial contraptions" to become truly feminine (1986:36). The physical restrictions of New Look fashion can be interpreted as a symbol of the social, economic and spatial constrictions demanded by women's return to decorative home-situated maternity, while its 'exaggerated busts' and 'padded hips' accentuated secondary sexual characteristics of the female body. Contraptions such as confining girdles and boned bras, known as 'bullet' bras (because they compressed the breasts into a cone-shaped outline) became required undergarments for the New Look, and sales of corsets to provide the required hourglass silhouette doubled between 1948 to 1958 (Haye 1997:187). The full-skirted, belted appearance appears in book jackets of the careers genre, and the complex signification of clothing pervades the two nursing series, extending to almost fetishistic descriptions of uniforms.

Caroline’s fingers “fumble a little” when she dons nursing uniform for the first time; symbolic of encroaching adulthood, the uniform is, in a clear metaphor for her awakening sexuality, “full of awkward mysteries” (Darbyshire 1954:31). In acknowledgment of the constraints imposed by contemporary expectations of femininity and sexuality, much is made of the black stockings, “stiff white collars,” starched aprons, and, of course, the latter-day corsets of tight belts that “made their waists look trim” (32). Sue wears a “tiny crinoline cap, with its frilled base, perched at a slight angle on smooth brown hair. White uniform, white shoes, white stockings and Eton collar were immaculate” (Boylston 1950:8). Such clothes, along with the billowing skirt illustrated in Margery Gill’s generic cover for hardback editions of the ‘Sue Barton’ books (Fig 16) are as impractical as Caroline’s starched bib and stiff collar (Fig 17). The unsullied ‘immaculate’ purity of Sue’s all-white uniform hints at received female sexual standards, while the aprons, classic markers of domesticity, reference a stereotypically-maternal nurturing role. The combination of elaborate and restrictive uniform clothing, which combines subtle sexual undertones with maternal signifiers, symbolises the discourse of femininity that these characters have to negotiate in their transition to womanhood.

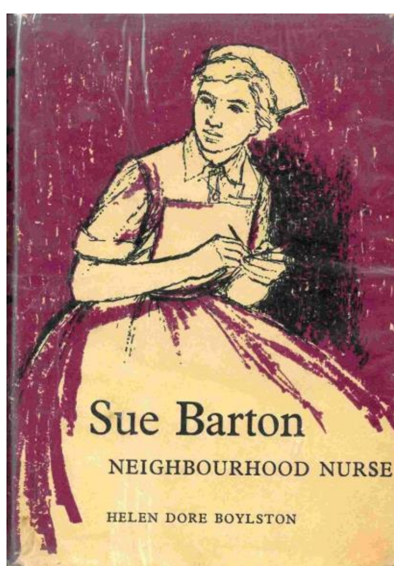


Figure 16: *Sue Barton: Neighbourhood Nurse.* Illustration by Margery Gill.

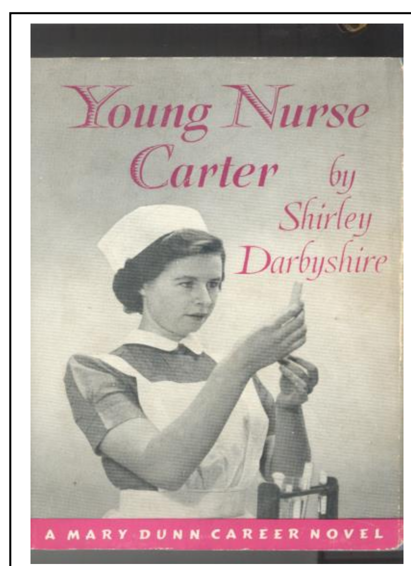


Figure 17: *Young Nurse Carter.* Front cover.

While as a product of the time it is inevitable that the career series should reflect current fashions, the determination of the protagonists to create a professional identity for themselves within the feminine discourse is an indication of genre's challenge to traditional assumptions that can be seen in the frontispiece of many titles:

Figure 18: *A Library Life for Deborah.* Frontis

Figure 19: *Anne in Electronics.* Frontis

The restrictive femininity and hints of sexual provocation encoded in the trim waists and black stockings of the nurses' uniforms are mirrored in the depiction of the librarian's curvaceous figure (she is clearly wearing a bullet bra), but the emphasis here is on a professional, rather than a domestic-maternal persona. Tools of the trade, shelves of books for librarian Deborah (Fig 18) and complicated electrical equipment for engineering Anne (Fig 19), form the background, while appropriate dress codes – Deborah's sensible high-necked jumper and Anne's laboratory overall – indicate dedication to their respective callings, a dedication which is further signified by their serious and thoughtful expressions as they concentrate on the task in hand. Like other heroines of the series, while they may exploit their intrinsic body, enjoy its adornment,

and celebrate its sexual potential, it is their work, and achievement within a chosen career, that motivates these characters.

Pictures of nipped-in waists and spreading skirts, not unnaturally, saturate illustrations of women in the wider media, and both advertisements and journalistic copy contain the assumption that mothers would reproduce this image in their daughters. Wolf postulates that, since clothing is a form of social control, female fashions become more restrictive at times when other controls on women (legal, economic, biological) are weakening, as a way of re-asserting patriarchal power structures. At a time when job and lifestyle opportunities were opening to young women, their mothers would be likely to restore waning maternal influence by encouraging reproduction in their own confined image, as the advertisements below illustrate. While the younger girl on the 1957 catalogue cover stares adoringly at her glamorous, blonde and be-jewelled mother (Fig 21), the mother/teenage-daughter pair in the Grape-Nuts advertisement, affirming that they are "like mother, like daughter," are both engaged in pulling their waist-restraining belts even tighter, demonstrating the restrictive nature of the new fashions, which require them to "keep trim with Grape-Nuts" (Fig 20).

Figure 20: 'Post Grape-Nuts'.
Advertising Archives.

Figure 21: *Kays Catalogue*.
Front cover.

Such mother-daughter images of culturally-reproductive femininity do not reflect the actuality of the maternal body, an apparently gruesome reality according to a 1956 issue of *Housewife* magazine. Its fashion article for mothers advised that, "Most women, especially if they have had children, should wear some sort of support […] with a panel in front to hold their abdomen flat" and, even more damningly, "women having their third or fourth baby should have a maternity corset specially made" (Your 1956:66). The perceptions of maternity demonstrated in this contrast between idealised advertising images and the brutal journalistic realism of such articles (that echo Beauvoir's language of bodily deformity), reveal the conflicted discourse of motherhood; a discourse directly addressed in the career novels, which utilise physical descriptions of maternal bodies to confirm narrative values.

The three diverse categories of maternal 'Types' in the career genre are represented by bodily appearance, as well as by the behaviour and lifestyle factors discussed in 'Chapter Three: Money' (p176ff). Notwithstanding her childbearing history, the Type One Mother is portrayed in most of these texts in the idealised mode of Figures 20 and 21, as slim, young-looking, clothes-conscious, and above all, feminine in attitude. Margaret's mother is "still unlined and clear-skinned at forty" (Owens 1957:14). Mrs Lee has "fair skin and silver-blonde hair [and] eyes as blue as forget-me-nots" (Patchett 1953:9). Pauline's mother is, according to her husband, "as pretty as the day I married her. Prettier if anything" (Grey 1958:16). Such presentation, patterned on the aspirational world of magazine articles, radio broadcasts and advertisements, reinforces images that would be familiar to the implied older reader of the novels. These constructions can be interpreted as a conformative aspect of the texts, but, given editorial concerns to not contravene social conventions (see p159-160), they are more likely to be a strategy ensuring that the works reached (and influenced) their intended audience. By conforming to the hegemonic femininity evident in such

prevalent images, the novels become acceptable to gatekeepers, such as parental purchasers, and it is the more important contrast of Type One Mothers with Type Two and Type Three maternal figures that contains their explicit ideological message.

The fact that biological mothers are represented as relatively youthful, and physically attractive, tends to exacerbate, rather than mitigate the fictional tensions between the mother's own sense of her body and that of her daughter. Sue, having had four children, tries on her old nursing uniform, watched by her young daughter. Tabitha is amused that "the waist lacked an inch-and-a-half of meeting", while Sue reflects inwardly on the psycho-sexual implications: "if the uniform must be too tight, it was gratifying to discover that one's figure had not changed *much*" (Boylston 1953:40). And although Caroline describes her mother as "looking much younger than most mothers", Mrs Carter herself observes "with a little pang," that Caroline "looks much more mature than she did. She's growing pretty. Already she's prettier than I was at her age …" (Darbyshire 1954:8). Chodorow's observation of the "ambivalence about maternal bodies" that mothers apply to their own physicality in relation to that of their maturing daughters is apparent here, linking the texts to prevalent bodily discourse (1989:91).

The majority of Type One Mothers, bewildered or psychologically threatened by their daughters intentions to pursue careers, encode their fears in preoccupations with shape, fashion and clothing. Operating within the familiar female zone of the body, as opposed to the alien world of work, the biological mother attempts to reproduce (again) by imposing a conformist femininity that should ensure her daughter's body will come to resemble her own. The slender and elegant Mrs Richards is unable to limit her daughter's compulsive eating habits, but enrols the reluctant and slightly-overweight Marion in modelling school, declaring "how could any girl *not* love beautiful clothes" (Scott 1961:60). It is only when Marion, described by a fellow student as "plain as a boot, and size fourteen at least", takes charge of her life and successfully rejects her

mother's inappropriate ambitions, that she is able to take control of her own body shape (35). Independence in her chosen career (as a vet) is, she declares, "a much better tonic for me than [mother's] well-dispensed advice. I've lost at least half a stone in the past week" (136). The pattern of the young protagonist exercising autonomy in successfully resisting maternal attempts to replicate a traditional model of femininity is standard format in the genre and intrinsic to its central mission of engagement in the discourse of opportunity. Many of the domestically-based mothers subscribe to the opposing discourse of marginalisation, and the narratives commonly adopt a formula wherein their influence is limited to shopping for clothes and advice on make-up and personal grooming, which is only appreciated by daughters in the early stages of the narrative. Recommendations on dressing for the job interview may be valued; dental assistant Sheila takes her mother's advice to don a "clean, freshly-ironed summer dress and clean gloves, dear" (Barrett 1956:36). Margaret, seeking a job in fashion, declares:

> Mother, I am glad you made me wear a hat and this suit. One or two of the girls looked awful. One had dirty hands, with bright red nails, long ear-rings and no stockings.
>
> (Delane 1956:2).

But such advice is, significantly, disregarded as the heroines begin to exploit the opportunities available to them. The transformative message of the genre emerges as the protagonists leave home, moving away, both spatially and psychologically, from maternal ascendency. Their acquisition of a more radical pattern of femininity, as expressed in personal clothing and styling choices, coincides with their 'putting-on' a professional persona. After her interview, physiotherapist Sue decides that:

> "If I am accepted," she thought on the train journey home, "Mummy has simply got to let me have a perm. […] It's all very well for her to say that perms ruin your hair when hers curls naturally." Sue's lips set firmly…
>
> (Owens 1958b:28).

In *Margaret Becomes a Doctor* the heroine attends her first interview wearing a "grey-flannel suit and dark felt hat [which] made her feel so gauche and school-girlish"

(Owens 1957:21). On arriving at college a year later, her new appearance symbolises transition from the passive recipient of mother's sartorial advice towards a yet-to-be-discovered adult female identity:

> She was eighteen, and a first-year student in a gay red sweater dress. […]. She patted the newly-acquired chignon at the back of her neck and slid into her seat in the lecture theatre.
>
> (25).

The cultural significance of a changed look is emphasised by the implied author's positioning of Margaret's clothing and body language as signposts to her burgeoning sexuality. Her brightly-coloured red dress and gestures of 'patting' the upswept hair style while 'sliding' into her seat are responded to when "a young man with […] unruly hair" moves to sit next to her (25). As with Marion and Sue, Margaret's challenge to the maternal pattern of femininity is represented by her own choice of bodily presentation, signifying development of an adult identity and sexual potential.

Red, with its erotic connotations, is a favoured colour for the career novel heroine navigating away from maternal patterning towards her own embodied femininity. Attending her first dance after starting nursing training, Caroline "felt gay as she put on the […] scarlet jumper", which was "more sophisticated than the plain blue silk frock" worn for parties at home (Darbyshire 1954:52-3). Air-hostess Ann, leaving home for a dance, is:

> slender and radiant in flame red chiffon, her dark curls brushed up in a halo, her eyes sparkling. […] Seized by a fierce elation she realised that very soon now she would be [flying], and that that was what she wanted more than the security and happiness of her old life.
>
> (Hawken 1952:78-9).

Adorned in the sexual statement of her flame-red dress, but with the 'halo' of curls still attesting a youthful innocence, Ann proceeds to "dance through the doorway [...], her wrap flying open, dragging a bewildered young man after her" (79). The assertive body language, the wrap that flies open to reveal body shape, and her leadership of the

confused boyfriend all demonstrate the intoxication in Ann's discovery of the power of femininity and a new awareness of sexual autonomy.

The interface between working and social wear is deployed across the genre to illuminate the problems heroines face in their transition away from maternal femininities, wherein they negotiate the delicate balance between presenting their bodies as acceptable professional and private entities, while also coming to terms with adult sexuality. Ann's moment of 'fierce elation' at the dance and her mother's apprehensions at her career plans are triggered by their mutual but oppositional awareness of the signification of Ann's new uniform:

> Unexpectedly, Mrs Gardner's voice suddenly broke. She looked at Ann's almost full case, with the grey uniform and forage cap carefully folded on top, and turned away, fumbling for a handkerchief.
>
> (80).

Uniform clothing is a particularly potent symbol of the professional world the young protagonist aspires to, so different from the domestic world of her Type One Mother. The transforming power of the uniform produces an inner metamorphosis for Ann as she moves from mere satisfaction with her appearance to an elevated awareness of her new professional identity:

> "It's amazing what a difference it makes," remarked Ann. "I feel miles more confident. I almost feel I could go on duty now and do the job, simply because I know I *look* right."
>
> (70).

The donning of uniform is not only a marker of the working world which excludes the Type One Mother, it is a communal rite of passage. For the protagonists of *Young Nurse Carter*, "by putting on their uniforms, they had assumed fresh responsibilities, fresh commitments. They had started on a career" (Darbyshire 1954:32). The adoption of professional wear is linked with initiation into the peer group, a further indication of the importance of clothing as a marker of maternal separation. The three novice nurses, dressing in uniform for the first time, and bonding over dealing with "apron straps that

were strangely complicated", study their reflections and, as initiates, conclude that "it *is* rather thrilling, isn't it?" (31-2). Ann is similarly affected:

> from now on she was a member of a national service. She was bound by a common code and a common interest with all the girls throughout the world, on lonely airfields and in foreign cities, who were at this moment dressed as she was. […] She made a silent vow to do her best, and to live up to her uniform and all it stood for.
>
> (Hawken 1952:70).

Such sentiments establish a novel form of group identification for the protagonist (and the implied reader). These scenes, setting-up experiences of immersion in the world of work as a common bond, mirror the commonality of the experience of motherhood for women that was a predominant feature of 1950s media. The scenarios created also contest the long-established identity of women solely as 'housewife' or 'housewife-and-mother', explored in 'Chapter Two: Work' and 'Chapter Three: Money'. In utilising clothing as a fundamental and visible symbol, the received social assumption that the pinnacle of female achievement lay in the role of maternal housewife is questioned. The refashioning agenda of the career series that challenges the pattern inherited from Type One Mothers becomes apparent in the heroine's experience of her uniform as signifier of a new identity.

After the protagonist has commenced her (often literal) journey away from her biological mother, the influence of the Type Two Mother becomes increasingly important. Once in the workplace, the heroine needs to conform to ideals of femininity but also look professional. Mother's unsophisticated fashion recommendations are disregarded as inadequate, and the successful older career woman takes over as mentoring co-mother. In addition to offering practical advice, the bodily depiction of this role model provides an alternative aspirational model of femininity. As explicit ideological constructs, these characters combine a sophisticated feminine persona with achievement in the working world. Whether married or not, they are represented as Other, both to the domestic mother and to the older single professional woman. Miss

Scrim, a "tart indomitable" librarian, is typical of this stereotypical spinster figure; she pays no attention to appearance, "hurling on her blue overall […] without stopping even to glance in the mirror" (Lonsdale 1954:29). The presentation of the Type Two Mother is a contrast that invariably confounds previous expectations of the heroine and her own mother that professional success displaces the feminine. Pauline's hairdressing career is supported by two such co-mothers:

> Mrs Braithwaite was not in the least what she had expected – a severe, no-nonsense type of person wearing masculine-type tailor-made suits and shapeless felt hats. She could hardly have looked more different. Her dress was simple, but its colour and line told her it had been carefully chosen. She wore a little make-up, chosen with equal care, and her soft silvery hair had been styled and set by someone who knew her job.
>
> Miss Francis [was] tall and slender with dark coppery-brown hair clustering closely round a beautifully-shaped head, dancing blue eyes, [and] wearing a clear bright lipstick. Her blue-and-white striped blouse was open at the neck, and her dark-grey skirt immaculately pleated. The hands which she clasped lightly in front of her were long-fingered, strong, and capable-looking.
>
> (Grey 1958:23/38).

The competence implied in Mrs Braithwaite's careful fashion choices and the assertiveness of Miss Francis' strong capable hands and 'clear bright lipstick' is combined with traditional markers of femininity. The hint of sensuality in a provocatively open-necked blouse and dancing eyes indicates the significance of the professional mother-figure, who, determined not to be desexualised by dedication to work, establishes a new pattern for feminine achievement. As binary contrasts to the Type One Mother, these mentors offer a bridge of alternative femininity between domestic and professional identity. Type Two co-mothers are occasionally biological mothers themselves and demonstrate that it is feasible to accommodate both identities. Dr Joan Mardon runs an infant welfare clinic where, she advises Margaret, "the hours are more regular than a GP's [and] the major part of the weekend is free, too" (Owens 1957:41/43). In *Valerie: Fashion Model*, co-mother Wanda Mayne tells Valerie how

she happily combines marriage and motherhood of a small son with life as a highly-successful model (Lewis 1955:191-2).

It is however the attitudes of the protagonists themselves to clothes, appearance and maternity in the construction of femininity that carry the strongest message. Usually described in the third person by an omniscient narrator, the Type Three figure is nevertheless the influential focaliser of the career novel; novice model Valerie, "trimmed-up mentally and groomed physically, [becomes] a very different proposition from the half-schoolgirl who stood with one foot turned slightly over and her fingers twisting uncertainly" (9). Operating within a culture where representation of the feminine was closely linked to outward forms, such heroines construct an adult identity that is rooted in, but transcends appearance. The friendship group is also important; as mentors who 'mother' their peers, encouraging achievement of the feminine ideal, they demonstrate the consequences of refusal to adopt external signals of femininity. Deborah, described as a "frump", is taken in hand by her friend Catherine and advised that:

> You wear the wrong clothes. You should wear a pleated skirt and an elastic belt – not too tight though, or you'll bulge. Then your hair […] why don't you have it thinned out a bit? Worn as long as that it makes you look top-heavy, as if you've got no neck.
>
> (Owens 1958a:41).

Deborah acts on this (somewhat tactless) makeover advice and "the result was an instant improvement" (41). A marker for maturity, the clothing, make-up and bodily comportment of heroine and peer group operate as narrative props that designate subject positions in personal life as well as the career stakes. Dora, described as "thin and rather pale with mousey hair and a hang-dog expression on her face", dresses for the dance in an "unbecoming yellow taffeta dress that was quite the wrong colour for her and didn't seem to fit anywhere" (Darbyshire 1954:31). Marjorie is blighted by having "sallow skin" and a "long nose" (Owens 1958b:61/35). Valerie and Deborah, who adopt their

mentors' advice, go on to achieve success in both work and adult relationships, whereas Dora and Marjorie, refusing to exploit the outward form, are narratively destined for failure; each decide to give up professional training. The representation of Valerie and Deborah, who adopt bodily conformation as a tool for success in career and personal relationships (and thus, potentially, as future mothers), marks the more subversive ideological position of these texts. In his discussion of makeover narratives in later YA fiction, Stephens argues that, in transforming appearance, and "realizing the physical, or exterior body, in specific ways, the makeover metonymically expresses a character's unfolding interiority – the intellectual, emotional, and so on" (1999:5). For the successful career novel protagonists, their transformed appearance is an expression of agency, and is also, following Stephens, a metonym for growth in the tradition of the *bildungsroman*; while the heroines refuse to be restricted by gender, they nevertheless exploit the bodily accoutrements of femininity in pursuit of life goals that challenge conventional expectations. Conversely, it is significant that Dora and Marjorie, having rejected opportunities to utilise the feminine power of dress and make-up, fail to demonstrate agency either through establishment of a successful career path or an emotional relationship. In further reinforcement of the message, both return to the Type One maternal home. "Mother has always wanted me to do that anyway" laments Dora, her distress a clear indication of the positioning of the text within a wider maternal discourse (Darbyshire 1954:106). Dora's subjection to the limited life-expectations of her Type One Mother deprive her of career satisfaction and also, it is implied, the possibility of motherhood for herself.

Young's argument for the "liberating and valuable in women's experience of clothes" is affirmed in the determination of the successful heroines to assert their femininity through external adornment (2005:74). Particularly for those protagonists embarking on less-conventional careers, attention to clothing and make-up is

represented as a challenge to the still-prevailing viewpoint expressed in a post-war Labour Discussion pamphlet, that “women become hardened, coarsened and defeminized and thus unattractive if they work outside their homes” (Labour 1946:9). Anne, the engineer, is told by her manager that “we don’t expect you to have as thorough grounding in mechanical matters as boys have”, and the conflicts between her career choice and the 1950s feminine ideal permeate the novel (Cochrane 1960:22-23). Anne is competent and hard-working, but also exploits extrinsic embellishment to sustain her in a masculine working world:

> “I’ll have to remember about make-up,” she told herself, renewing her lipstick and with it her self-confidence and happy outlook on life. […] Anne squared her shoulders and combed her hair. She was ready again for whatever came next.
> (15).

Such co-option of cultural norms was cautiously endorsed by lifestyle magazines as the decade progressed; in 1957 even the conservative *Housewife* declared that “Technical qualifications are not incompatible with female charm” (Harman 1957:148). Veterinary student Diana, accused by her employer of trying to do “a man’s job”, is determined not to “turn into one of those hearty women”, but to show that a woman can remain both feminine and professional:

> She clenched her fists. She would show Mr Blake and men like him that a woman could be every bit as efficient as a man, and yet remain feminine in appearance and outlook. There wouldn’t be any cropped hair, severely-cut shirts and men’s ties for her. She would dress sensibly, of course, but wouldn’t forget lipstick and would keep her fair hair shining and neatly-set, even if it meant washing it nearly every night.
> (Owens 1960:61).

The masculine-referent body language of ‘clenched fists’, counterpointed with Diana’s expropriation of the feminine adornments of lipstick and neatly-set hair, indicates the power of bodily symbols in the protagonists’ maintenance of outward appearances to enhance their sense of self. Similar attention to make-up and hair-styles is endorsed across the genre as, rather than accepting the perceived limitations of the feminine model, heroines exploit its cultural capital whenever needed to “affirm [professional]

identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand " (Butler 1990:16). In a climate which foregrounded the passively-dependent female qualities described by Klein, the career genre engages at a radical level in contemporary discourses of femininity and maternity through heroines who combine normative feminine customs with Klein's allegedly 'masculine' qualities of efficiency, intelligence and independence. Constructed as both professionally successful *and* feminine, Anne, Diana and their cohort demonstrate that femininity is compatible with achievement and potential (or actual) motherhood. Success for these Type Three characters is realised in ways that confound the life-patterns of their Type One Mothers, and involve the realignment in conduct of relationships and reconstruction of the maternal ideal that are discussed in the following section.

5. Romance, Relationships and Ideal Mothers

"I don't want you to be a career woman and become all hard and bossy. You're a pretty girl, […] and you've every chance of making an excellent marriage", declares Mrs Miles in *Margaret Becomes a Doctor* (Owens 1957:14). The shared concerns of the career genre and Allan's novels, functioning as *bildungsromane* narratives of development and maturation, is evident in attention paid to the protagonists' conduct and appearance because, as Margaret's Type One Mother believes, these are aspects of femininity crucial to establishing a romantic relationship that will lead to marriage and motherhood. Such assumptions are explored by Tinkler, who argues that creation of an acceptably feminine appearance is part of the construction of the female body to articulate the "naturalness of heterosexuality and female subordination to men" (1995:179). The texts for older readers in my corpus offer a renegotiation of heterosexual relationships in ways that challenge this hegemonic femininity. In her discussion of the welfare state Wilson declares that, "the State defines femininity and […] Woman is above all Mother, and with this vocation go all the virtues of femininity;

submission, nurturance, passivity" (1977:7). The fictional Margaret's determination to pursue independent life goals conflicts with both the expectations of her biological mother, and this accepted maternal 'vocation', with all its 'virtues of femininity'. I now examine how the texts construct femininity and create maternal role models in bodily terms relative to the 'power' code of the romance – described by Linda Christian-Smith as "a set of relations of power and control that do not favour feminine power and initiative" (1987:375). Her study uses semiotic analysis to identify a set of codes in teenage novels that readers can adopt in constructing femininity; of particular relevance to the body is the code of 'beautification', which Christian-Smith defines as *the* vital feature of romance. Femininity in romance is "synonymous with ornamentation", and beautification "only achieves its effect when girls receive recognition and approval from boys" (383/381).

The feminine-romantic duty of bodily beautification is certainly a frequent feature of contemporary lifestyle magazines, which issued dire warnings if the code was not observed. As *Woman* pointed out:

> A loving wife takes care to keep romance alive. [...] Breakfast never finds her in curlers and a grubby wrap, and housework is over, overalls discarded before she welcomes him home each night.
>
> (Scott 1957:15).

The obligation to 'Be a Beautiful Wife' is later described in appropriately fairy-tale romance terms by beauty editor Helen Temple:

> In real life living happily ever after very much depends on a wise beauty routine. […] A 'stay-at-home' wife [should] just brush your hair, wash your face, put on a touch of powder and a pale lipstick before gracing the breakfast table.
>
> (1957a:43).

Working at beauty is recognised as more challenging (but just as essential) for:

> The 'career-girl' wife [who] will have to make a pact with her husband so that she can have a free beautifying evening on her own, while he goes out with the boys.
>
> (43).

While still a marker of feminine identity, appearance is not such hard work for the heroines in my corpus. Breakfast-time would have been more relaxed for Elizabeth, whose "main stand-by in her toilet arrangements [...] was soap and water"; a practical approach that is favoured over sister Monica's "plucking, painting and polishing", despite "the number of young men [who] wanted to take the smart-looking Monica out" (Baxter 1955:10). Contrary to the beautification code, approaches to appearance for these protagonists do not depend on 'approval from boys' for effect, but are an element of self-respect whereby the holder represents herself to the world. As Judith explains, "I never feel right with myself unless I look my best, and I think it's a teacher's duty to look as nice as possible, […] there's example and all that" (Allan 1955:56). Such characters construct what Bourdieu refers to as a "sign-wearing, sign-bearing body" that, as Judith points out, is linked to professional obligation rather than romantic identity (1984:192). When Brenda, the beauty specialist, decides to revive her flagging social life, she invests in a new wardrobe and, having "studied her reflection as impersonally as she could", embarks on a pro-active campaign of invitations to male and female friends, in a pattern of behaviour far from that of the stereotypically-passive romance heroine. Larry, later Brenda's business partner, and potential boyfriend, puts the concept of male recognition into perspective, advising her that "few men notice what a girl wears. [...] Take it from me, if a man's interested in a girl he doesn't care what she wears. If he's not interested she could wear mink and diamonds for all he'd notice" (Forbes 1954:33). Beautification in these texts is, in Judith's emphatic words, "not just for men"; in contrast to its function in romance, it is appropriated as a form of female empowerment (Allan 1955:94).

The traditional power model for heterosexual relationships described by Klein and Beauvoir was coming into conflict during the 1950s with the perceived development of companionate marriage (examined in 'Chapter Three: Money' p135ff). The ideal of mutuality and task-sharing within marriage had been endorsed by left-

leaning groups such as the Fabian Society, who affirmed the desirability of marriages within which “men and women are becoming comrades”, since a “new set of values will allow women to take their proper place in society, as mothers, workers and citizens” (Fabian 1946:25). As previously discussed, the reality of companionate marriage was illusory, but, according to Finch and Summerfield, the concept influenced thinking in British society “well beyond the confines of academic scholarship” (1991:8). Allan and the career novel writers, operating far beyond such confines, engage in this discourse through their depiction, in terms of both body and behaviour, of Type One and Type Three Mothers, who have differing expectations of romantic relationships. The difference between the two constructs is indicative of an ideological inversion of the romance trope as described by Christian-Smith, since the power code of these texts is characterised in Type Three relationships by a foregrounding, rather than negation, of ‘feminine power and initiative’.

Domestic Type One Mothers are usually, like Margaret’s mother, “almost too happily married” and therefore assume that marriage is the only desirable life-goal for their daughters (Owens 1957:14). Chodorow describes the “all-powerful mothers [who] forcefully intentionally constrain and control daughters, keeping them from individuating [so that] mothers are the agents of their daughters’ oppression” (1989:80-81). In mitigation of such constraint, Arcana claims in *Our Mothers’ Daughters* that it is a product of the mother’s own oppression and entrapment within patriarchy, a proposition also postulated by Beauvoir, who paints a negative picture of the mother-daughter relationship:

> In her daughter the mother seeks a double. She projects upon her daughter all the ambiguity of her relation with herself; and when the otherness of this alter ego manifests itself, the mother feels herself betrayed. […] Real conflicts arise when the girl grows older [and] wishes to establish her independence from her mother. This seems to the mother a mark of hateful ingratitude [and] she is doubly jealous; of the world, which takes her daughter from her, and of her daughter, who in conquering a part of the world, robs her of it.
>
> (1949:532-4).

This description could be a template for Type One Mothers, who, while rarely vindictively motivated, do strive to reproduce the pattern of their own marital relationship in the lives of their daughters. Margaret's mother, having married on leaving school, expects her daughter to do the same, particularly as the presence of a childhood boyfriend replicates "her mother's own romance with her father, which had started in much the same way" (Owens 1957:11). Margaret refuses to marry the socially-desirable George, who believes that "a woman's job is to be decorative" (13). George's focus on the external feminine body as the job-defined feature of woman's role ensures that Margaret, who "didn't dismiss from her mind the idea of a husband and children ultimately", rejects him in an explicit plot device that establishes the relationship values of the text (14). The heroine's later decision to marry Donald, continue working in public health, and her appearance in a successive sequel, *Sue Takes Up Physiotherapy*, as the working mother of a three-year-old daughter, reaffirms these narrative values.

The marital situations of Type One Mothers are never companionate in the interchangeable-role sense of the term, but are organised on conventional lines, with gender-defined task responsibilities. Roland Lee, father of the Lee twins, lies sleepily in an armchair, "stretching out his long legs towards the fire, and taking his after-lunch coffee from his wife's pretty hand", before returning to work, leaving Mrs Lee doing the washing-up (Patchett 1953:7). The subservient pretty hand signifies his wife's compliant femininity, while a sensual satisfaction in her comfortable marital status is hinted at as she "smiled lazily back at him [...] with drowsy eyes" (7/9). Such maternal personifications, rooted in domesticity and physical contentment, are resisted by the young protagonists. Type Three characters expect more equal partnerships, even when they themselves become mothers. Alongside their determined exploitation of the cultural capital of make-up and dress in pursuance of professional goals, the heroines

insist on husbandly compliance to career aims. Anne's determination to remain in engineering is accommodated by Nigel, who assures her that he would "always want you to do that, because you will feel you have to do it to be true to yourself" (Cochrane 1960:134). However a conventional demarcation of domestic tasks prevails even in these more equal relationships, a representation that accords with Finch and Summerfield's research findings. Marital situations in both Allan and the career genre reflect the perception of a gendered aspect to marriage, in which, despite the husband's egalitarian support of his wife's working life, his domestic role remains limited. As Anne points out to her vicar before the wedding, "Nigel understands [my working] and I'm sure he'll help" (134). The assumption that whatever the husband did at home was 'helping' indicates an uneven allocation of domestic responsibilities that was reproduced in reality. In this respect, with the exception of the role-reversal marriage of *Eve at the Driving Wheel* (see 'Chapter Three: Money' p189), the novels do not challenge the status quo. Nevertheless, while the texts are essentially conservative in their ideology of domesticity, once the heroines become mothers themselves, narrative developments reveal a transformative ideology of relationships. Helping (and non-helping) spouses are rapidly disposed of: the husband of mother-of-four Sue contracts tuberculosis and is despatched to a sanitorium for the duration of the story; Caroline's husband takes a job in Africa for three years, enabling this mother of a four-year-old to re-assume her primary identity as a nurse – "the most significant thing in her life" (Meynell 1958:27). Such plot devices ensure that the narrative focus is on Type Three protagonists as mothers and workers rather than physically-subservient wives; their interest in appearance and bodily adornment is self-directed, not, as their domestically-minded mothers assume, the necessary ingredient for 'making an excellent marriage'. Like Sue, whose incipient concerns over her expanding waistline are later overtaken by "the prospect of going back to work", the bodily preoccupations of Type One Mothers

are subsumed in the heroine's affirmation of female agency grounded in professional identity (Boylston 1953:41).

The focus on female self-realisation is further endorsed by the almost total invisibility of husbands in the representation of Type Two professional mothers. Constructed as Other to the biological mother, who is so defined by her marital relationship that she is determined to impose its pattern onto her daughter, these co-mothers operate autonomously as a source of sane emotional advice for the protagonist. As a bridge between domestic and professional worlds, they convey the vital message that successful relationships can be combined with successful careers *and* successful motherhood. The virtually-unseen and, significantly, un-named husbands of Aunt Catharine and Wanda in *Valerie: Fashion Model* are allocated the minimum of words; Wanda's husband is "a rather serious-looking man", while Catharine's spouse is "a successful man" (Lewis 1955:190/6). More subtly, the bodies of the Type Two Mothers remain sexually desirable, confounding the 'deformities' anticipated by Beauvoir. The "well-dressed and happily-married" child-free Catharine is described as "successful, clever and charming", while Wanda, herself a mother, is "slim, elegant [and] a beautiful brunette" (6/9/131). As mentors to Valerie, these female icons are powerful narrative embodiments of explicit ideology, and their advice on romantic and relationship issues is consistently favoured over that of her biological mother.

Thus the conviction informing the lives of Type One Mothers – that a traditional form of femininity indicated by bodily conformity is necessary as a precursor to marriage and motherhood – is replaced by their daughters' absorption in training, work and the determined adaptation of feminine mores to professional ends. Chatto & Windus archival evidence suggests that these fictional worlds are carefully constructed; references to appearance and personal relationships were introduced and modified during editing so that, while career titles do usually have a prince lurking about (and

often a toad as well), these characters are not the main focus of the heroine's life. Correspondence in the Mabel Esther Allan Papers also demonstrates a deliberate foregrounding of independence and adventure over domesticity for her heroines. Typically, it is the non-domestic Type Two professional mother, such as Margaret Lang's Aunt Mary, rather than the biological mother, who creates aspirational models of possibility for the heroine:

> Eatons was the biggest group of Stores in the world, and Aunt Mary an important buyer. Twice a year she came over to Europe for the dress shows; cars, aeroplanes, luxury hotels, all were arranged for her visits to London, Paris, Rome, Madrid and Dublin.
>
> (Delane 1956:10).

Such opportunities for travel and luxury living would be an exotic fantasy in the reality of 1950s austerity – in 1952 the annual foreign travel allowance was capped at £25 and controls remained in place until 1959 (Hansard). The creation of such subject positions for the protagonist therefore opened-up a world of powerful potentialities for the implied reader, diametrically opposed to the enclosed domesticity advocated by Type One Mothers. Central characters will often opt for travel opportunities to create physical separation from any romantic interest, the better to pursue their own goals; making the hero wait is, as Philips and Haywood point out, "a striking expression of a new empowerment" (1998:63). Caroline decides to leave her boyfriend and work in Jamaica for a year, and her mother's romance concerns have little impact on this decision: "Oh, thought poor Mrs Carter sadly, it was very hard to exercise self-restraint when she was so certain that Caroline was managing it badly!" (Darbyshire 1955:105). Such plot devices further contrast with the romance mode where "the progress of the infatuation is constructed as the girl's dominant interest in life" (Gilbert 1993:71).

The novelistic challenge to prevailing concepts of femininity and romance is sharply realised in the contrasting language used to describe mother and daughter responses to such plot events. Type One Mothers, perceiving romance as a precursor to

and “affirmation of the ideals of monogamous marriage and feminine domesticity”, express bodily sexuality only indirectly (Cawelti 1976:42). Mrs Carter describes Caroline as ‘quite pretty’, while Margaret’s mother links ‘prettiness’ with her daughter’s chances of a socially-desirable marriage. In contrast to these saccharine expressions of physicality, the most emotive language in the books is found in descriptions of their daughters’ response to professional achievement, which are expressed in corporeal terms bordering on the erotic. Having rejected Clive’s proposal, Caroline collects her successful exam results and “felt a warm tide of happiness sweep over her; happiness and pride” (Darbyshire 1954:140). Ann “hugs the knowledge to herself almost fiercely, like a new possession: ‘It’s never been so good. […] I really am part of it now’” (Hawken 1952:192). Sue’s response is even more pointed, as, “with trembling fingers, she tore open the stout envelope” and sees the vision of “dozens of attractive posts” ahead of her (Owens 1958b:180-181). Such delight focusses attention on the opening-out of future possibilities for the heroines, rather than the closure of romantic climax.

Janice Radway argues in *Reading the Romance* that romantic fiction can be subject to resistant readings, but nevertheless concludes that romances operate as “conservators of the social structure,” which maintain the status quo by “reconciling women to the patriarchal society” (1984:73/217). By contrast, each strand of plot, characterisation and narrative structure of the texts discussed here challenges the romantic convention that femininity centres on “devotion to home, heart and hearth, that a woman is incomplete without a man, that motherhood is a woman’s destiny and women’s rightful place is at home” (Christian-Smith 1987:368). Romance, as understood by Type One Mothers, involves the construction of femininity in just such terms of others, usually the husband or boyfriend; they regard themselves and their daughters, as “objects of other’s desires with few desires of their own” (Christian-Smith

1993:46). ‘Romance’ for the daughters, experienced in the broader definition of the term as an idealisation of everyday life, rejects this limited maternal vision, incorporating instead a passionate dedication to personal achievement. Femininity is acknowledged to be discursively constructed, and the textual representation of the focalisers, who independently create meaning and value in their lives as workers as well as mothers and wives, engages in contemporary discourse, affording adolescent readers alternative subject positions to those assumed in the romance canon.

Moving on to construction of the maternal ideal, the romantic perception of the ‘ideal mother’ has, according to feminist writers Chodorow and Contratto in ‘The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother’, contributed to the cultural oppression of women, since “Mothers make daughters in their image” (1989:80). This essay poses questions regarding the problems of mother-to-daughter image-making that the texts also explore:

> What happens when the girl does not become identical to her mother? What happens when the girl rejects aspects of her mother? When the girl has the image of her mother, which features of that image does she adopt, does she accept, does she pass on and why?
>
> (80).

Some answers to these questions are postulated in the novels, where it is evident that, while both Type One Mothers and Type Two co-mothers are involved in the re-creation of physical and psycho-social personification in their daughters or mentees, it is the biological mother who is most menaced by the tendency of the protagonist to diverge from a traditional pattern of femininity. Maternal attempts to both perform and perpetuate the ideal, to “reproduce themselves as mothers, emotionally and psychologically, in the next generation” puts the investment of Type One Mothers, in their daughters and in their own chosen lifestyle, under threat (Chodorow 1999:209). Since, as Chodorow observes, “mothering is also a crucial link between the contemporary organization of gender and organization of production”, the divergent

self-images adopted by mother and daughter weave into broader cultural discourse on the constitution of the ideal mother in a regenerating society (219).

The idealisation of mothers has, Chodorow and Contratto argue, “become our cultural ideology” and the imagery of the maternal body is a potent indicator of this ideology (1989:90). Bodily representations of mothers in these proto-YA texts do however show a marked contrast to that of maternal figures in the books for younger readers discussed in previous chapters, which offer constructions of realistically-configured maternal bodies as a visible sign of the quality of mothering. Ideal mothers and co-mothers in Blyton and Streatfeild’s work tend to be cosy, plump, and generally unglamorous figures, albeit loving and nurturing. The “very fat” Bella in *The Painted Garden*, the “plump and short” Linnie Longfield and her “fat, elderly” helpmeet Dorcas, depicted in *Six Cousins Again* as plum-pudding shaped and beaming (Fig 22), are typical examples (Streatfeild 1949:95; Blyton 1948:5/14). They are set against their figure-conscious opposites, whiney calorie-counting Aunt Cora of *The Painted Garden* and slim feminine Rose Longfield in the ‘Six Cousins’ series; relentlessly negative maternal representations, in whom thinness indicates a sterility (as opposed to fecundity) of both body and emotions.

Figure 22: *Six Cousins Again*.
Illustration by Maurice Tulloch.

Neither Type One nor Type Two Mothers in Allan and the career novels conform to the cosy physical stereotype. As discussed, both domestic and professional mothers, whether ‘good’ or ‘bad’, are depicted as slim and attractive. More crucially,

although attention is paid to their, often biologically-unrealistic, maternal bodies, and particularly to their influence on daughters, who are the mothers of the future, the motherhood ideal in texts for older readers is constructed more on the emotional and psychological grounds discussed by Chodorow than on maternal physicality. This representation of ideal maternity is indicative of the age of the implied reader and reinforces the active ideology of the texts. The physical body still matters; 'ideal' mothers such as Caroline Carter are expected, as they were in reality, to maintain sexually-attractive, well-dressed bodies, alongside their responsibility for the physiological and psychological well-being of their children. Novice mother Caroline expresses the demanding range of responsibilities in this maternal ideal. As a "fiercely-protective young mother":

> Nothing that her baby needed must be denied her, it was her first concern; [...] after that she must shop and cook with every sort of care, so that Clive, her man, could be well fed; and then, it was a question of keeping an eye on the "little-shops-around-the-corner" to see what she could pick up in the way of clothes for herself.
>
> (Meynell 1958:10).

The problematic reconciliation of "coquetry and maternity" discussed in Beauvoir's denigration of the corporeal mother, is represented for Caroline, as in popular media, as a task to be tackled (1949:541). The possessor of a maternal body, even when pregnant, was advised by *Woman* magazine that she could "keep her attractive figure [...] if she sticks to these rules [and] takes special pains on her appearance and never lets up on her grooming" (Williams 1959:38). The message is reinforced by *Housewife*: "there are very few of us who can't snatch the odd five minutes for a little self-improvement" (Morton 1956:59). Maternal duties, for both fictional heroines and readers of lifestyle magazines, were not to compromise the maintenance of a fashionably-feminine body.

It is in terms of psychological development however, that contemporaneous motherhood discourse emphasises the more critical importance of maternal influence. According to *Picture Post* series 'Can Psychology Help?':

> The past is our maternal octopus which holds us tight within its unseen tentacles. [This] primary condition of being born of her, part of her, nourished and comforted by her […] is, of course, immensely important subsequently, because it determines much of our unconscious attitudes to life.
>
> (Howe 1950:52).

The novels develop this – while Mrs Lee's "beautiful hands and feet", the "neat little frame" of Mrs Manners, and Aunt Millicent's "extremely smart hat and dull-yellow suit" display the desirably slim, fashionably-dressed bodies of media images, the construction of a maternal ideal in these texts goes beyond such external markers (Patchett 1953:9; Owens 1958b:11; Allan 1956:19). The straightforward fat-thin duality evident in the portrayal of ideal mothers for younger readers is more complex; in referencing contemporary socio-psychological discourse, such as that quoted above, it recognises the age of the implied reader, who would herself be aware of prevailing media constructs.

The thinking of psychoanalytic theorists such as Bowlby and Winnicott had, at a time when families were becoming smaller, prioritised the psychological aspects of mothering, as opposed to the rigid rules on physical childcare laid down by pre-war behaviourists John Watson and Frederic Truby King. Despite the many disputes surrounding the Bowlby-ites, their hugely-influential ideas were adopted by socially-progressive, as well as traditionally-conservative mothers. Studies of marriage by sociologists such as Willmott and Young, and the concept, albeit flawed, of companionate marriage, alongside the alleged growth of the 'home-centred society' postulated by Abrams, also served to focus debate on the emotional aspects of family relationships. This change of emphasis from the physical to the emotional dimension of maternity is evident in Beauvoir's fearsome vision of mother-daughter interaction quoted above (p294), and reiterated in Myrdal and Klein's denigration of the "Charybdis of over-protection", whereby mothers damage their growing children through refusal to countenance the need for independence (1956:131). In tacit

acknowledgement of this shift, the desire of Type One Mothers to continue to influence the bodily appearance and clothing choices of daughters is construed in the literary texts as a denial of their child's emotional development; the "process shaped by the fluctuations of symbiosis and separation" described by Hirsch (1989:20). It is often also linked to personal marital issues, as with Pauline's mother, who attempts to keep her daughter "looking like a kid" (Grey 1958:7). This domestically-absorbed mother who, Pauline complains, "won't let me get any new clothes, and all the ones I've got are so – so kiddish", had "in her twenties, been extremely pretty" (37/12). She is now largely taken for granted by her husband; in keeping Pauline childlike, she contrives to deny the ageing process of her own body and, putatively, its effect on her marriage.

Myrdal and Klein believed that over-protection could lead to "weakness, immaturity, the need for constant reassurance [and] cripple the psychological development of the child" (1956:130-1). Such negative maternity is depicted in the relationship between Dora and her mother, who "hated the thought of her being independent, and insisted that all her free time should be spent at home in Dulwich" (Darbyshire 1954:55). Eventually Dora leaves nursing, suffering both personal and professional failure:

> "I don't really get on with the other girls and I'm never much of a success at parties – not a single medical student has ever asked me to go out with him," wailed Dora. […] "I'll live at home I expect."
>
> (106).

The maternal ideal is represented in the same text by Caroline's own mother. Although we are told by the extra-diegetic narrator that Mrs Carter experiences pangs of nostalgia regarding Caroline's maturing body, she is still young-looking and, more importantly, empathetic and understanding. The positive qualities of her maternity are articulated by her daughter; "Mummy is such fun to be with; you feel she understands such a lot" (8). And while Mrs Carter yearns over Caroline's conduct of her romantic life, wishing her to settle for marital domesticity, from her daughter's perspective she "was always so

understanding and never made any possessive demands" (55). By "acceptance of [Caroline's] right to independence", this mother has, in sharp contrast to Dora's mother, positioned herself as a loving and supportive friend (56). A similar binary appears in the comparison between Aunt Millicent and Philippa's mother in *The Vine-Clad Hill*. Millicent's lack of empathy towards Clemency's emotional needs and insensitive treatment of Tilda is attributed to her lack of awareness of their respective states of maturity. Tilda is thus dressed (and treated) like a child, while Clemency is only valued as a physical clone of her mother. In contrast Jean, who (naturally) has a "pretty face [and] wavy brown hair", encourages daughter Philippa to be independent, and converses with her as a humorous, understanding friend; "'That's what you think', said Mother, and we both laughed" (Allan 1956:7/18).

Important as the conventional femininity of the physical body is, the ideal mother of these texts is, more crucially, attentive to the developing psychological needs of her daughter and respectful of her maturation into womanhood. While bodies matter, empathy matters more. In the stories for younger readers, ideal mothers, as discussed in previous chapters, are judged by their competency in homemaking, housewifery and cookery skills. In these works for older girls, the ideal mother is neither a self-sacrificing domestic goddess, nor an over-protective sentimentalist. Her position is realised in the narrative function of daughters such as Caroline and Philippa, who operate as intra-diegetic focalisers in their affective relation of the interaction between mother and daughter. As maternal, or potentially maternal, exemplars themselves, these characters attest the importance of empathetic mothering for adolescent offspring. Hence the texts engage with cultural changes in familial expectations embedded in a broader appreciation of the maternal ideal; as harbingers of change they testify to friendship between mother and daughter as the key marker of 'good' mothering. Acceptance of a daughter's developing adult identity – and thus potential as a future

mother herself – is marked in these fictions by changes in representation of the maternal ideal: from rounded body to slim, from control to autonomy, and from cook and carer to comrade.

6. Conclusion

In the 1950s climate of educational, media and parental influences, the construction of a future feminine and maternal identity could be particularly demanding. The "sense of not belonging" described by Heron's retrospective interviewees who had grown up as teenagers during this time was endorsed by the mothers interviewed by Myrdal and Klein, who expressed "doubts of their essential femininity" (1985:3; 1956:157). The "socially-stimulated psychological process" of mother-daughter image-making examined by Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* emphasises that "it is important to give women validity for the full range of their femininity," and this validity is apparent in the texts I discuss in this chapter (1999:80). The significance of female bodies as social symbols was (and remains) a key element of the discourse of femininity, and while the novels reflect this, they also illuminate the potential of the body as a personal resource. The implied reader, engaged in constructing a mature female identity at a time of flux for women, is afforded images of femininity and maternity which inform and challenge the prevailing discourse.

Close reading reveals a range of maternal representations. Fictional mothers may embody the slim, attractive, well-dressed media stereotype, but the variety of maternal life-patterns offered is wide; they include the professional career woman, the domestic housewife, and the young 'working' mother. Matters of appearance and marital relationships are incorporated into the development of plot and character in both the career novels and Allan's work, ensuring that maternal constructions are representative of normative femininity and yet also reveal the opportunity for societal change. Deploying positive and negative mother-daughter interactions to promote a feminine

identity that endorses attention to bodily appearance as empowerment, while maintaining the commitment of the heroine to ambitious personal goals, these novels disrupt expectations of both mothers and femininity

The use of protagonists as narrative focalisers is an important aspect of these texts in their address to the slightly older reader. The technique ensures that the explicit values of the novels prevail; it is ideologically significant that, while exploiting the cultural capital of femininity regarding dress and appearance to further their independent career aims, the majority of protagonists also fulfil their socio-biological female destiny by marrying and, in several cases, becoming mothers themselves. While the influence of the romance trope is perceivable, the central characters' negotiation of heterosexual relationships, far from being a romantic surrender, reinforces a radical message; the heroine's insistence on independence and her exercise of agency incorporate a broader perception of ideal motherhood. In creating a range of subject positions, the texts both describe and resist hegemonic femininity. Their popular format, operating within social expectations of the era and superficially conformist, is nevertheless discursively engaged at a reforming level which noticeably exceeds that of the texts for younger readers in my corpus. In offering a transformative challenge to received notions of both the feminine and the maternal ideal, the works discussed here provide the site for negotiation of a new social construction of femininity and motherhood.

Conclusion:
Reflections on Constructing Motherhood in Popular Children's Literature

All human life on the planet is born of woman. The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all.

Adrienne Rich *Of Woman Born* 1977

It is the mother, always the mother, who makes a happy contented home.

Enid Blyton *The Story of My Life* 1952

I don't regard the idea of the family as a basically happy thing.

Mabel Esther Allan *To Be an Author* 1982

Figure 23: Mother and Daughters (1950)
Photograph by G.L.Waddilove

I like to speculate that the mother in the photograph is directing her young daughter's attention, not to the person holding the camera, but to the future. A future that in 1950, despite present austerities, was full of promise. A terrible war was over, the benevolent welfare state had been established, healthcare was freely available, as was education for all, material prosperity beckoned. And families – and motherhood – were changing.

In undertaking this study, I set out to investigate maternal representation in children's books of the period in relation to that changing society. Maternity is an obvious optic for such research; as Rich points out, it affects everyone on the planet, and the importance of motherhood to individuals, to society and to the future of humanity, can hardly be over-estimated. The function of the mother within the home and family, as well as outside it, was much in question during the post-war years and the epigraph quotations from Blyton and Allan, two key authors of my corpus, indicate the divergence of opinion that was to inform an often-polarised debate. The central aim of my project has been to illuminate this topic through interrogation of a form – the popular children's novel – that could, I theorised, be an influential participant in the discursive process. So the refrain of this thesis can be condensed into a single, but

complex question: at a time of societal flux, how is motherhood constructed in fictional works that were consumed by a large number of readers, many of whom could themselves expect to become mothers? The crucial consideration arising from this question led to my investigation of the ideological effect, wherein I analyse how the maternal constructs create subject positions within the text, and, potentially, for the implied reader. I have approached these research preoccupations through the portals of the mother's location in the home, her assumed domestic duties within it, the world of paid work, maternal responsibility for food provision, and finally, in respect of her own embodiment relative to prevailing expectations of femininity, marriage and motherhood.

The application of a methodology influenced by cultural studies has enabled me to locate my texts securely within the web of 1950s maternity, ensuring that the outcome of this study is grounded in contemporary authenticity. As the contextual evidence that I cite from sources such as the Mass Observation Archive, government pamphlets and media outlets demonstrates, the position of mothers was undergoing rapid social, economic and political change, some of which is directly referenced in my corpus. I understand the act of reading to be constitutive of the reader, and the cultural work of these novels would have facilitated mid-twentieth-century readers in their negotiation of such changes; to deploy Bishop's terminology, the books offer 'mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors' that could assist the reader in her growing awareness of a shifting world. Julia Hallam, a nurse-educator who was much influenced by her teenage reading of the career novels, reveals in her memoir the ideological power of the stories:

> I remember that at the time I was reading these books, 'becoming a woman' was at the forefront of my mind. But what sort of woman was I to become? […] For me, these books were landscapes of possibilities, maps to guide me through an unknown terrain.
>
> (2000:49).

Such power is linked to the potential of formula fiction to facilitate identification, particularly for the younger reader. For the adolescent, as Appleyard observes, "realism is now an issue", and the ideological impact for the implied older reader would have been enhanced by the realist nature of the texts (1991:108).

The broad influence of this ideological effect is, as I have argued, inevitably more extensive when operating through a popular form; prolific authors such as Allan, Blyton and Streatfeild experienced long-term and successful careers that ensured their output reached a wide audience, while the shorter-lived productive spans of Courtney, Lunt and the career genre writers still enjoyed high levels of contemporary popularity, as evidenced in the reprints and repackaging of their work. Popular literature and children's literature each comprise a key cultural arena in which the status quo can be questioned, and the widespread readership of these texts would have ensured they had a role to play in negotiating models of maternity. I draw particular attention to the cultural, as well as the literary, importance of my corpus in 'Chapter Three: Money' and 'Chapter Five: Body'.

In this contribution to the field of literature studies, a significant aspect of my research has been the recovery and reassessment of authors such as Allan, Courtney and Lunt whose once-popular writing has been undervalued or completely overlooked in scholarly works. I have also brought critical attention to lesser-known texts by the higher-profile figures of Blyton and Streatfeild in ways that will enhance the retrospective consideration of these writers by the academy. In genre terms, my analysis of the career series has established these narratives as an important form of social engineering that sought, the more successfully because of their story format, to imaginatively resolve the conflicting choices around feminine and maternal identity that their readers were facing. As a rehabilitation of disregarded or denigrated literary texts, this research participates in the developing academic field of attention to the

middlebrow that Humble has explored in the mid-twentieth-century 'feminine' novel, and brings a new vantage point to the study of popularity in children's literature being addressed by scholars such as Briggs, Grenby and Rudd.

The research has yielded some unexpected results; as I discuss in 'Chapter One: Home' and 'Chapter Four: Food', even works delineating the most conventionally-organised nuclear families, such as Blyton's *The Family at Red-Roofs* and Streatfeild's *The Bell Family*, contain representations that confound hegemonic maternity. The collaborative mothering dyads of these two texts, for example, offer alternative patterns for performative mothering that, like a pill in jam, are the more easily absorbed within their comforting container of traditional family tale. The potential for resistant reading is particularly evident in the texts examined in 'Chapter Two: Work', where the overt ideological endorsement of contented domestic maternity is contradicted in the narrative outcome for the exhausted mother characters. The career series discussed in 'Chapter Three: Money', were deliberately established as agents for change, but ensure that their radical engagement in the discourse of opportunity for women is made palatable to gatekeepers by the novels' scrupulous adherence to superficial customs of make-up and comportment that are peripheral to their ultimate message of empowerment and choice. Similarly, in 'Chapter Five: Body', the protagonists' attention to the extrinsic body is presented as a form of ownership that exploits the cultural capital of femininity for the heroine's exercise of agency regarding her life-choices. In creating subject positions for these characters, the texts work to construct the reader's own subjectivity. Essentialising motherhood, that is, assuming maternalism is a quality shared by all mothers, or even all women, so promulgating the "compulsory obligation on women's bodies to reproduce", is a commonality that is, most unusually, resisted in much of my corpus; the majority of the texts communicate ideological positions on mothering that open up, rather than close down debate (Butler 1990:115). While the novels are undoubtedly socio-historic

documents that reflect the climate of their production in their observation of conformity to hegemonic norms, they also recognise and utilise the era's tensions within what Segal describes as that "anxious conformity" (1994:4). Their discursive engagement constructs motherhood in ways that can be surprising for popular fiction. As a contribution to maternal discourse, alongside the many non-literary influences of parental, educational, professional expert, media and government advisors, the books I examine offer instruments of resistance that challenge as well as confirm the status quo in ways that are frequently radical and occasionally subversive.

Kristeva's discussion of semiotics in 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' draws on Bakhtinian dialogism to describe intertextuality as "the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history", a concept that has informed my consideration of the fictional representations of maternity with regard to their continuing influence (1977:39). It is certainly in discourses on motherhood in the 1950s that the privileged sphere given to marriage, home and family was at its most sensitive, and this situation has changed little since, so the discursive element of the novels remains relevant. Twenty-first-century maternal discourse continues to engage with issues such as domesticity, employment, feeding and maternal presence in terms of their relation to the quality of mothering. The acronym-addicted online parenting forum *Mumsnet*, for example, features discussion threads between SAHMs and WOHMs (Stay-At-Home-Mums and Working-Outside-Home-Mums), dealing with standards of childcare, and the perceived problems in opting for either employment or domesticity. While the tone is generally supportive of maternal choice, the occasional comment, such as "You shouldn't have children if you're not going to stay at home with them. Children shouldn't be farmed out to childminders" (posted in January 2019), recalls the tone of Blyton's polemic *The Six Bad Boys* (HildaZelda). Such opinions also mirror the

consensus of home-based mothers in Zweig's 1952 survey, that working mothers "don't care twopence about their homes and children" (1952:26).

The issue of maternal employment, discussed in 'Chapter Three: Money', continues to be sensitive. The tendency to blame mothers for juvenile criminality, the plot basis of *The Six Bad Boys*, reappears in a 2018 newspaper headline on knife crime; 'Maternal Absence Cited as Major Factor in Rise of Youth Violence' (*Guardian*). A 2015 newspaper article entitled 'Working Mothers Don't Need to Feel Guilt' elicited a flurry of response, resulting in a lengthy follow-up piece, 'Women, Motherhood and Modern Society's Values', which concluded that "our society needs to start respecting mums who stay at home with their children" (*Guardian*). Debate on the gendered division of labour within the home, addressed in my 'Work' and 'Money' chapters, has persisted throughout subsequent decades; concerns about the domestic labour of mothers was the theme of International Women's Day in 2017. Billed as 'One Day Without a Woman', participants were urged, in recognition of their extra burden of housework, to "take the day off from paid and unpaid labour" (*Guardian*). A 2019 study by University College London showed that women spent four times as many hours on housework than men, even when both partners were employed, and that "transition to parenthood [leads to] a more traditional division of work" (McMunn 2019:2). In January 2019 *Woman's Hour* devoted three consecutive days of programming to the feeding of young children, in which the guilt-laden responses of many maternal interviewees coincided with the self-judgemental attitudes of the fictional mothers examined in 'Chapter Four: Food'.

Media coverage of motherhood tends to adopt polarised positions (presumably for circulation purposes), as the following two 2013 examples illustrate:

> Children badly need the devoted, unstinting personal attention that only a mother can give. […] If you wonder where those feral teenagers came from or why so many primary school children are not potty-trained, ask yourself if it might not be connected with the abolition of motherhood.

(Hitchens 2013:31).

> The revival of 1950s-style homemaking has added to the burden on today's mothers. We […] worship this feminine motherhood thing and I don't think our children have benefited actually.
>
> (*Times* 2013:1).

Such loaded linguistic references to 'devotion' and 'worship' are taken up by cultural and literary theorist Jacqueline Rose in a 2014 article that critiques the mythology of idealisation, linking it to the still-prevailing rhetoric of blame:

> The subject of mothers is thick with idealisations. [...] The idea of maternal virtue is a myth that serves no one, neither mothers nor the world for whose redemption it is intended. [...] One of the most striking characteristics of discourse on mothering is that the idealisation doesn't let up as reality makes the ideal harder for mothers to meet. If anything, it seems to intensify. This isn't quite the same as saying that mothers are always to blame, although the two propositions are surely linked.
>
> (2014:17-18).

In an echo of Myrdal and Klein's warnings about over-protective mothers almost sixty years earlier, Rose avers that "bringing up a child to believe it is a miracle is a form of cruelty, albeit at the opposite pole from neglect" (17). In her 2018 book, *Mothers: an Essay on Love and Cruelty*, Rose reiterates the point previously made by Chodorow, that idealistic expectations of maternity in which mothers are "held accountable for the ills of the world" is damaging for both child and society, as well as for mothers themselves (2018:12). Notwithstanding her polemicist tone, Rose offers convincing evidence of pervasive idealisation in current discourses of motherhood, a proposition that is supported by the recent research of academics in Rye's edited collection of essays in *Motherhood in Literature and Culture* (2018).

Clearly. as far as motherhood is concerned, we remain ideologically-linked to the world of the long 1950s, and thus the recovery of texts such as those contained in my corpus is a matter of moment. Contemporary readers of these works would have become mothers during the late 1960s and early 1970s when second-wave feminism was on the rise, and are likely to be the grandmothers of today; it is no coincidence that

later feminist challenges to received assumptions of maternity were being anticipated in the fictional constructions I examine. Nevertheless performative motherhood has lagged behind attitudinal and legislative change. Grandchildren of those 1950s readers, devouring currently-popular fiction, still find plentiful depictions of ultra-domesticated motherhood – the hand-knitted sweaters and "sumptuous dinner[s]" supplied by J.K. Rowling's mother-of-seven Mrs Weasley being one prominent instance (1998:53). Even the gynocentric Jacqueline Wilson represents families in which mothers (albeit resentfully) take for granted their responsibility for domestic work, while often also supporting the family economically.[39] The child in the epigraph photo, looking back now over the intervening decades since it was taken, would see that, while much has moved on, much has remained the same. Notwithstanding exponential social changes since 1945, in the Western world the maternal role is a topic of continuing, sometimes vituperative debate, so the cultural work of my texts can even now inform and illuminate.

In the 'Introduction' I asserted that motherhood matters and that popular fiction is powerful and this thesis demonstrates that. While I stand by those aphorisms, there is still much to be done. It has not been possible within the limits of this study to fully investigate every strand of maternal construction and social identity even in the novels I have included, let alone the ones I have been constrained to put aside. Class, for instance, is only discussed briefly despite its importance in the 1950s world depicted in the texts. Titles such as Blyton's *The Put-Em-Rights* (1946) and Courtney's *A Coronet for Cathie* (1950), that address class from opposing ends of the social spectrum, will repay close analysis, while the embourgeoisement of British society would be particularly interesting to analyse further with specific reference to the aspirational ambitions for social levelling expressed by editors of the many career novels (full list in

[39] For a few (of many) examples, see *Midnight* (2003:127); *Cookie* (2008:21); *The Worst Thing About My Sister* (2012:106).

Appendix 1). The urban-rural divide of the period, which I refer to when discussing Blyton, could also usefully be considered for its influence on Allan's work. On a somewhat lighter note, the significance of pets – mostly dogs, but cats, rabbits and goldfish also feature – as conduits for the maternal inculcation of manners and morals is a strand I only mention in passing, having reluctantly abandoned closer analysis of this aspect of family life.

Most importantly, there is patently room in the field of children's literature studies for an in-depth investigation of Allan's extensive contribution to twentieth-century reading for girls and boys. She is particularly interesting as an author who adapted to changing times, writing inner-city school stories for younger children (the 'Wood Street' and 'Pine Street' series, for example) from the 1970s to the 1990s, as well as continuing to produce novels for older girls similar to those examined here (see full bibliography in Appendix 2). On a practical note, it would be enlightening, given the ideological importance I have ascribed to popular fiction, to carry out empirical research examining women's memories of reading these books as young girls, in order to illuminate the other side of the ideological equation while both the memories, and some of the texts, are still available.

As I mentioned in the 'Introduction', mothering is increasingly being investigated from a cultural, historic and literary standpoint that includes the arena of children's books. In opening-up a neglected selection of writing for young people for a study of motherhood and identity, and demonstrating that its texts can still have resonance, I believe this thesis will be a valuable contribution to children's literature scholarship in the twenty-first century. Moreover, it is one that I hope will establish a basis for wider investigation of non-canonical texts in the field, by revealing new dimensions of the children's writers who engaged with a crucial era. The thesis makes an original contribution to the expanding body of literary scholarship addressing

popular and largely-forgotten works whose 'erroneous popularity' had previously caused them to be regarded as unworthy of serious academic attention. I have drawn such attention to these undervalued texts, many of which have never been critically examined, and offer an intensive analysis of their construction of motherhood, one of the most important roles in any society, within the socio-historic context of a decisive time of change for women. In doing so, my research establishes a new perspective in the fields of children's literature and motherhood studies, showing how children's stories can engage in a historic, but still relevant, discourse of maternity.

Appendix 1: Career Series Publications

Bodley Head Career Novels for Girls

Allan, Mabel E.	*Judith Teaches*	1955
Barrett, Anne.	*Sheila Burton: Dental Assistant*	1956
Barton, Ann.	*Kate in Advertising*	1955
Baxter, Valerie.[40]	*Elizabeth: Young Policewoman*	1955
Baxter, Valerie.	*Hester: Ship's Officer*	1957
Baxter, Valerie.	*Jane: Young Author*	1954
Baxter, Valerie.	*Shirley: Young Bookseller*	1956
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Sue Barton: Student Nurse*	1936
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Sue Barton: Senior Nurse*	1940
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Sue Barton: Visiting Nurse*	1941
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Sue Barton: Rural Nurse*	1942
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Sue Barton: Superintendent Nurse*	1942
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Sue Barton: Neighbourhood Nurse*	1950
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Sue Barton: Staff Nurse*	1953
Churchill, Elizabeth.	*Juliet in Publishing*	1956
Darbyshire, Shirley.	*Sarah joins the W.R.A.F.*	1955
Edwards, Monica.	*Joan Goes Farming*	1954
Edwards, Monica.	*Rennie Goes Riding*	1956
Grey, Elizabeth.	*Jill Kennedy: Telephonist*	1961
Grey, Elizabeth.	*Pat Macdonald: Sales Assistant*	1959
Grey, Elizabeth.	*Pauline Becomes a Hairdresser*	1958
Hawken, Pamela.	*Air Hostess Ann*	1952
Hawken, Pamela.	*Clare in Television*	1955
Hawken, Pamela.	*Pan Stevens: Secretary*	1954
Kamm, Josephine.	*Janet Carr: Journalist*	1953
Kamm, Josephine.	*Student Almoner*	1955
Lewis, Lorna.	*Judy Bowman: Therapist*	1956
Lewis, Lorna.	*June Grey: Fashion Student*	1953
Lewis, Lorna.	*Valerie: Fashion Model*	1955
Lonsdale, Bertha.	*Mollie Hilton: Library Assistant*	1954
Lonsdale, Bertha.	*Mollie Qualifies as a Librarian*	1958
Owens, Joan L.	*Diana Seton: Veterinary Student*	1960
Owens, Joan L.	*Margaret becomes a Doctor*	1957
Owens, Joan L.	*Sally Grayson: Wren*	1954
Owens, Joan L.	*Sue Takes Up Physiotherapy*	1958
Patchett, Mary E.	*The Lee Twins: Beauty Students*	1953
Sheridan, Jane.	*Amanda in Floristry*	1959

Chatto & Windus Career Novels for Girls

Charles, Moie.	*Eve at the Driving Wheel*	1957
Cochrane, Louise.	*Anne in Electronics*	1960
Cochrane, Louise.	*Marion Turns Teacher*	1955
Cochrane, Louise.	*Sheila Goes Gardening*	1957
Cochrane, Louise.	*Social Work for Jill*	1954
Cross, John K.	*Elizabeth in Broadcasting*	1957
Darbyshire, Shirley.	*Nurse Carter Married*	1955
Darbyshire, Shirley.	*Young Nurse Carter*	1954
Dawson, Stella.	*Joanna in Advertising*	1955
Delane, Mary.	*Margaret Lang: Fashion Buyer*	1956

[40] 'Valerie Baxter' is a pseudonym for Laurence Meynell.

Denniston, Robin.	*The Young Musicians*	1958
Dunn, Mary.	*Cookery Kate*	1955
Forbes, Evelyn.	*Brenda buys a Beauty Salon*	1954
Heath, Veronica.	*Susan's Riding School*	1956
Lloyd, Beatrice.	*Travels of a Nursery Nurse*	1957
Mack, Angela.	*Continuity Girl*	1958
Mack, Angela.	*Outline for a Secretary*	1956
Meynell, Laurence.	*District Nurse Carter*	1958
Meynell, Laurence.	*Monica Anson: Travel Agent*	1959
Meynell, Laurence.	*Sonia – Back Stage*	1957
Owens, Joan L.	*A Library Life for Deborah*	1958
Pugh, Nansi.	*Antiques and Decorating: the Adventures of Audrey and Anthony*	1958
Pugh, Nansi.	*Two Young Missionaries: Celia and Margaret in Africa*	1961
Selby-Lowndes, Joan.	*Linda Flies* [not published] [41]	
Selby-Lowndes, Joan.	*Sally Dances*	1956

Career Novels for Girls produced by other U.K. publishers

Allan, Mabel E.	*Here We Go Round*	Heinemann	1954
Allan, Mabel E.	*Margaret Finds a Future*	Hutchinson	1954
Allan, Mabel E.	*Room for the Cuckoo*	Dent	1953
Allum, Nancy.	*Monica Joins the WRAC*	Max Parrish	1961
Baldwin, Patricia.	*Ann Hudson, Apprentice Hairdresser*	Victory Press [42]	1963
Baldwin, Patricia.	*Chris at the Kennels*	Victory Press	1962
Baldwin, Patricia.	*Linda Learns to Type*	Victory Press	1961
Baldwin, Patricia.	*Rosemary Takes to Teaching*	Victory Press	1960
Baldwin, Patricia.	*Shirley Anderson, Sales Assistant*	Victory Press	1961
Baldwin, Patricia.	*Susan Kendall, Student Nurse*	Victory Press	1964
Baldwin, Patricia.	*Susan Kendall Qualifies*	Victory Press	1964
Byers, Irene.	*Flowers for Melissa*	Hutchinson	1958
Craig, Georgia.	*Kerry Middleton Career Girl*	Wright & Brown	1960
Haddock, Sybil.	*Vera the Vet*	Lutterworth Press	1949
Lewis, Lorna.	*The Silver Bandbox*	Lutterworth Press	1956
Martin, Nancy.	*Jean Behind the Counter*	Macmillan	1960
Swinburne, Doreen.	*Jean at Jo's Hospital*	Collins	1959
Swinburne, Doreen.	*Jean Tours a Hospital*	Collins	1957
Swinburne, Doreen.	*Jean's New Junior*	Collins	1964
Trewin, Yvonne.	*Jean Becomes a Nurse*	Collins	1957
Walton, Edith C.	*Twins and Drawing Boards*	Heinemann	1956
Weston, Mary.	*Christine, Air Hostess*	Hutchinson	1955

Bodley Head Career/Romance Novels for Girls

Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Carol Goes on the Stage*	1943
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Carol in Repertory*	1944
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Carol Comes to Broadway*	1945
Boylston, Helen Dore.	*Carol on Tour*	1946

[41] Commissioned for a newly-launched sub-series of 'technical' novels (cf *Anne in Electronics*), but never published due to the untimely death of series editor Mary Dunn.
[42] Victory Press was an evangelical publisher, part of the Elim Pentecostal Church. All the titles published deal with traditional female occupations and focus strongly on the adoption of a Christian lifestyle as the basis for dealing with life decisions. Covers and blurbs conceal the proselytising origin and content, but while similar to the nineteenth-century 'reward' book, their publication in this period is interesting as an indicator of the perceived power of the career novel genre to influence lifestyle choices for young women.

Bodley Head Career Guides for Girls Series

Abbott, May.	*Working with Animals*	1962
Brandenburger, Barbara.	*Working in Television*	1965
Creese, Bethea.	*Domestic Science Careers*	1965
Grey, Elizabeth.	*Careers in Beauty*	1964
Grey, Elizabeth.	*Careers in Fashion*	1963
Heal, Jeanne.	*Book of Careers for Girls*	1955
Owens, Joan L.	*Hospital Careers for Girls*	1961
Owens, Joan L.	*Travel While You Work*	1963
Owens, Joan L.	*Working in the Theatre*	1964
Owens, Joan L.	*Working with Children*	1962

World Books Career/Adventure/Mystery Novels for Girls

Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight Air Hostess*	1958
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight and the Diamond Smugglers*	1958
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight – Desert Adventure*	1958
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight in Hollywood*	1958
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight – the Great Bullion Mystery*	1959
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight and the Flying Doctor*	1959
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight and the Rajah's Daughter*	1959
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight – Congo Rescue*	1959
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight – Fjord Adventure*	1960
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight – Pacific Castaway*	1960
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight and the Chinese Puzzle*	1961
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight - Flying Jet*	1961
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight – Canadian Capers*	1961
Dale, Judith.	*Shirley Flight – Storm Warning*	1961
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter and the Mystery Heiress*	1958
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter – the Runaway Princess*	1958
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter in Canada*	1958
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter on Location*	1958
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter – the Holiday Family*	1959
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter – Underwater Adventure*	1959
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter in Australia*	1959
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter – African Alibi*	1959
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter - the Greek Goddess*	1960
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter – the Lost Ballerina*	1960
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter – Hong Kong Deadline*	1960
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter – Festival Holiday*	1960
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter - Golden Yacht*	1960
Edwards, Sylvia.	*Sally Baxter Girl Reporter and the Secret Island*	1961
Scott, Janey.	*Sara Gay Model Girl*	1960
Scott, Janey.	*Sara Gay in Monte Carlo*	1960
Scott, Janey.	*Sara Gay in New York*	1961
Scott, Janey.	*Sara Gay: Model Girl in Mayfair*	1961
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Student Nurse*	1943
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Senior Nurse*	1944
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Army Nurse*	1944
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Chief Nurse*	1944
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Flight Nurse*	1945
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Veterans' Nurse*	1946
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Private Duty Nurse*	1946
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Visiting Nurse*	1947
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Cruise Nurse*	1948

Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: At Spencer*	1949
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Night Supervisor*	1950
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Mountaineer Nurse*	1951
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Clinic Nurse*	1952
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Dude Ranch Nurse*	1953
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Rest Home Nurse*	1954
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Country Doctor's Nurse*	1955
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Boarding School Nurse*	1955
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Department Store Nurse*	1956
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Camp Nurse*	1957
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: At Hilton Hospital*	1959
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Island Nurse*	1960
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Rural Nurse*	1961
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Staff Nurse*	1962
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Companion Nurse*	1964
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Jungle Nurse*	1965
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: the Mystery in the Doctor's Office*	1966
Wells, Helen.	*Cherry Ames: Ski Nurse Mystery*	1968

Career Novels for Boys

Alcock, Daniel G.	*Sam Dykes: Marine Engineer*	Chatto & Windus	1959
Armstrong, Richard.	*No Time for Tankers*	Dent	1958
Armstrong, Richard.	*Sea Change*	Dent	1948
Byers, Irene.	*Tim of Tamberley Forest*	Max Parrish	1954
Carter, Bruce.	*Tim Baker: Motor Mechanic*	Chatto & Windus	1957
Cronyn, St John.	*Robin Martin of the Royal Navy*	Chatto & Windus	1958
Doherty, Charles H.	*Brian Decides on Building*	Chatto & Windus	1960
Hope, Ronald S.	*Dick Small in the Halfdeck*	Chatto & Windus	1958
Longmate, Norman R.	*Keith in Electricity*	Chatto & Windus	1961
Makepeace-Lott, Stanley.	*Alan Works with Atoms*	Chatto & Windus	1962
Meynell, Laurence.	*Animal Doctor*	OUP	1956
Meynell, Laurence.	*Policeman in the Family*	OUP	1953
Meynell, Laurence.	*The Young Architect*	OUP	1958
Shewell-Cooper, Wilfred.	*George: Market Gardener*	Chatto & Windus	1959
Summers, D.O.	*Ken Jones: Electrical Engineer*	Chatto & Windus	1959
Taylor, Duncan B.	*Bob in Local Government*	Chatto & Windus	1958
Taylor, Duncan B.	*Jim Bartholomew of the RAF*	Chatto & Windus	1956
Thomas, Michael.	*The Lamberts Choose the Law*	Chatto & Windus	1958
Wiles, John.	*Tom Runs a Hotel*	Chatto & Windus	1957
Wilson, Granville.	*Jonathan enters Journalism*	Chatto & Windus	1956

Appendix 2: Selected Bibliography - Mabel Esther Allan

[listed by genre, series, pseudonym[43]]

Family Novels for Girls

Year	Title	Publisher
1949	*Cilia of Chiltern's Edge*	Museum Press
1949	*Mullion*	Hutchinson
1949	*Trouble at Melville Manor*	Museum Press
1950	*Everyday Island*	Museum Press
1950	*Seven in Switzerland*	Blackie
1952	*MacIains of Glen Gilleon*	Hutchinson
1952	*Return to Derrykereen*	Ward Lock
1954	*Meric's Secret Cottage*	Blackie
1954	*The Summer at Town's End*	Harrap
1955	*Changes for the Challoners*	Ward Lock
1955	*Glenvara*	Hutchinson
1956	*Balconies and Blue Nets: the Story of a Holiday in Brittany*	Harrap
1956	*Flora at Kilroinn*	Blackie
1956	*Strangers in Skye*	Heinemann
1956	*The Amber House*	Hutchinson
1956	*The Vine Clad Hill*	Bodley Head
1956	*Two in the Western Isles*	Hutchinson
1957	*Black Forest Summer*	Bodley Head
1957	*Sara Goes to Germany*	Hutchinson
1958	*Blue Dragon Days*	Heinemann
1958	*Rachel Tandy*	Hutchinson
1958	*The House by the Marsh*	Dent
1959	*A Play to the Festival*	Heinemann
1959	*Amanda Goes to Italy*	Hutchinson
1959	*Catrin in Wales*	Bodley Head
1960	*A Summer in Brittany*	Dent
1960	*Tansy of Tring Street*	Heinemann
1961	*Bluegate Girl*	Hutchinson
1961	*Pendron Under Water*	Harrap
1962	*Home to the Island*	Dent
1962	*Signpost to Switzerland*	Heinemann
1963	*Kate Comes to England*	Heinemann
1963	*The Ballet Family*	Methuen
1964	*The Ballet Family Again*	Methuen
1965	*A Summer at Sea*	Dent
1971	*The Secret Dancer*	Dent
1972	*An Island in a Green Sea*	Dent
1972	*Time to Go Back*	Abelard Schuman
1975	*Bridge of Friendship*	Dent
1975	*Romansgrove*	Heinemann
1976	*Trouble in the Glen*	Abelard Schuman
1977	*My Family's Not Forever*	Abelard Schuman
1977	*The View Beyond My Father*	Abelard Schuman
1983	*A Dream of Hunger Moss*	Hodder & Stoughton
1986	*The Road to Huntingland*	Severn House

[43] Short Stories (around 330 were published), Novellas and Poetry collections are excluded, as well as two novels MEA wrote for adults.

Career Novels for Girls

Year	Title	Publisher
1953	*Room for the Cuckoo: the Story of a Farming Year*	Dent
1954	*Here We Go Round: a Career Story for Girls*	Heinemann
1954	*Margaret Finds a Future*	Hutchinson
1955	*Judith Teaches*	Bodley Head

Adventure Novels for Girls

Year	Title	Publisher
1948	*The Adventurous Summer*	Museum Press
1948	*The Glen Castle Mystery*	Warne
1948	*The Wyndhams Went to Wales*	Sylvan Press
1949	*Holiday at Arnriggs*	Warne
1950	*Chiltern Adventure*	Blackie
1952	*Clues to Connemara*	Blackie
1953	*Strangers at Brongwerne*	Museum Press
1953	*The Secret Valley*	E.J. Arnold
1953	*Three go to Switzerland*	Blackie
1954	*Adventure Royal*	Blackie
1955	*Adventures in Switzerland*	Pickering & Inglis
1955	*The Mystery of Derrydane*	Schofield & Sims
1956	*Adventure in Mayo*	Ward Lock
1956	*Ann's Alpine Adventure*	Hutchinson
1956	*Lost Lorrenden*	Blackie
1958	*The Conch Shell*	Blackie
1960	*Shadow over the Alps*	Hutchinson
1961	*Holiday of Endurance*	Dent
1963	*New York for Nicola*	Vanguard Press
1963	*The Sign of the Unicorn: a Thriller for Young People*	Dent
1964	*Fiona on the Fourteenth Floor*	Dent
1964	*It Happened in Arles*	Heinemann
1966	*In Pursuit of Clarinda*	Dent
1966	*Ski-ing to Danger*	Heinemann
1967	*It Started in Madeira*	Heinemann
1967	*Missing in Manhattan*	Dent
1969	*Climbing to Danger*	Heinemann
1969	*The Kraymer Mystery*	Abelard Schuman
1970	*Dangerous Inheritance*	Heinemann
1971	*The May Day Mystery*	Severn House
1972	*Behind the Blue Gates*	Heinemann
1973	*A Formidable Enemy*	Heinemann
1974	*A Chill in the Lane*	Nelson
1974	*Ship of Danger*	Heinemann
1974	*The Night Wind*	Severn House
1974	*The Bells of Rome*	Heinemann
1976	*The Rising Tide*	Heinemann
1979	*Tomorrow is a Lovely Day*	Abelard Schuman
1980	*The Mills Down Below*	Abelard Schuman
1981	*A Strange Enchantment*	Abelard Schuman
1981	*The Horns of Danger*	Dodd Mead
1987	*Up the Victorian Staircase: a London Mystery*	Severn House
1990	*The Mystery of Serafina: a New York Adventure*	Bemrose Press

School Stories

Year	Title	Publisher
1949	*Cilia of Chiltern's Edge*	Museum Press
1950	*Over the Sea to School*	Blackie
1950	*School Under Snowdon*	Hutchinson
1952	*A School in Danger*	Blackie
1952	*The School on Cloud Ridge*	Hutchinson
1952	*The School on North Barrule*	Museum Press
1953	*Lucia Comes to School*	Hutchinson
1954	*New Schools for Old*	Hutchinson
1955	*Swiss School*	Hutchinson
1957	*At School in Skye*	Blackie
1990	*Chiltern School*	M.E.Allan

Crumble Lane Series (for younger readers)

Year	Title	Publisher
1983	*The Crumble Lane Adventure*	Methuen
1984	*Trouble in Crumble Lane*	Methuen
1986	*The Crumble Lane Captives*	Methuen
1987	*The Crumble Lane Mystery*	Methuen

Flash Children Series (for younger readers)

Year	Title	Publisher
1975	*The Flash Children*	Brockhampton
1985	*The Flash Children in Winter*	Hodder & Stoughton

Pine Street Series (for younger readers)

Year	Title	Publisher
1974	*Crow's Nest*	Abelard
1978	*Pine Street Pageant*	Abelard
1980	*Pine Street Goes Camping*	Abelard
1981	*Pine Street Problem*	Abelard
1982	*Goodbye to Pine Street*	Methuen
1983	*Alone at Pine Street*	Methuen
1984	*Friends at Pine Street*	Abelard
1985	*The Pride of Pine Street*	Methuen
1988	*First Term at Ash Grove*	Methuen

Spindle Bottom Series (for younger readers)

Year	Title	Publisher
1970	*Christmas at Spindle Bottom*	Dent
1984	*A Secret in Spindle Bottom*	Abelard Schuman
1986	*A Mystery in Spindle Bottom*	Blackie

Wood Street Series (for younger readers)

Year	Title	Publisher
1968	*The Wood Street Secret*	Methuen
1970	*The Wood Street Group*	Methuen
1971	*The Wood Street Rivals*	Methuen
1973	*The Wood Street Helpers*	Methuen
1975	*Away from Wood Street*	Methuen
1979	*Wood Street and Mary Ellen*	Methuen
1981	*Strangers in Wood Street*	Methuen
1982	*Growing Up in Wood Street*	Methuen

Books for younger readers

Year	Title	Publisher
1950	*Jimmy John's Journey*	Dean
1951	*The Exciting River*	Nelson
1966	*The Way Over Windle*	Methuen
1974	*The Secret Players*	Brockhampton Press
1994	*Cat off a Barrow*	M.E.Allan

Writing as Jean Estoril

Year	Title	Publisher
1957	*Ballet for Drina*	Hodder & Stoughton
1958	*Drina's Dancing Year*	Hodder & Stoughton
1959	*Drina Dances in Exile*	Hodder & Stoughton
1959	*Drina Dances in Italy*	Hodder & Stoughton
1960	*Drina Dances Again*	Hodder & Stoughton
1961	*Drina Dances in New York*	Hodder & Stoughton
1962	*Drina Dances in Paris*	Hodder & Stoughton
1963	*Drina Dances in Madeira*	Hodder & Stoughton
1964	*Drina Dances in Switzerland*	Hodder & Stoughton
1965	*Drina Goes on Tour*	Brockhampton Press
1967	*We Danced in Bloomsbury Square*	Heinemann
1991	*Drina Ballerina*	Simon & Schuster

Writing as Anne Pilgrim

Year	Title	Publisher
1961	*The First Time I Saw Paris*	Abelard Schuman
1962	*Clare goes to Holland*	Abelard Schuman
1963	*A Summer in Provence*	Abelard Schuman
1964	*Strangers in New York*	Abelard Schuman
1967	*Selina's New Family*	Abelard Schuman

Writing as Priscilla Hagon

Year	Title	Publisher
1966	*Cruising to Danger*	World Publishers
1967	*Dancing to Danger*	World Publishers
1968	*Mystery at Saint-Hilaire*	World Publishers
1969	*Mystery at the Villa Bianca*	World Publishers
1970	*Mystery of the Secret Square*	World Publishers

Autobiographical Writing

Year	Title	Publisher
1982	*To Be an Author: a Short Autobiography*	M.E.Allan
1985	*More About Being an Author*	M.E.Allan
1988	*The Background Came First: My Books and Places: Part One: Britain and Ireland*	M.E.Allan
1988	*The Background Came First: My Books and Places: Part Two: Other Countries.*	M.E.Allan
1989	*The Road to the Isles and Other Places: Some Journeys with a Rucksack.*	M.E.Allan

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In Memoriam

Rose Eleanor Waddilove

1916 - 1962