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INVISIBLE SCARLET O'NEIL AND THE WHITMAN AUTHORIZED
EDITIONS FOR GIRLS:
HOMEFONT REPRESENTATIONS OF THE AMERICAN FEMININE
AND THE FEMININE HEROIC DURING WORLD WAR II

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the popular construction of femininity in the United States during World War II and the ways in which a set of mass market series books for girls participated in and reflected the persuasive campaigns of government, private industry, and mass media to script feminine roles and behaviors in the United States during and shortly after World War II. The dissertation illustrates and explains how the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, and especially Invisible Scarlett O'Neil, the first female superhero in the American culture industry, reflected and modeled the lives of women in three stages. Overall, cultural representations of women began as domestic paragons of good behavior and traditional feminine beauty, changed into women working in traditionally male jobs to maintain and defend the homefront, and then gracefully returned to the domestic sphere. Geertz's (1973) idea of common sense as cultural system is extended to consider the cultural symbolism and cultural presuppositions that impacted the stories and were presented in the stories of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls.

While studies have been done concerning the intertwining of propaganda imperatives and adult popular fiction, this dissertation helps bridge the literature gap between propaganda studies and children's popular fiction. Further, the cultural definitions and uses of Denning (1987), Cawelti (1976), and Wright (2001) are extended to examine a set of formula fictions based on newspaper strips, comic books, and motion-picture stars. In addition, the work of McGrath (1973) and Albrecht (1956) concerning the interaction of popular fiction and popular culture, the work of Gates (2003) concerning fantasy, and the work of Butler (1990) concerning identity and gender are

extended to analyze how *The Whitman Authorized Editions For Girls* reinforced the social norms of the World War II period and operated as cultural fantasies of American femininity during this period. However, as Nava (1992) points out, the auditioning of identity through the consuming of cultural norms can sometimes be an empowering moment of finding identity and power in that identity. Many a reader may have grown up to fight crime without being invisible and to wear pants beyond 1945. I like to think they did.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

American popular fiction and popular children's series fiction participated in supporting directives of the war effort during World War II. Many scholars of children's literature have looked at ways in which writers have shaped the cultural and commercial imagination of feminine identity. This dissertation extends this work to consider the construction of femininity in the culture industry of the United States during World War II and the ways in which a set of mass market series books for girls participated in the culture industry imagination of femininity. The Whitman Authorized Editions of Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls Featuring Your Favorite Characters, especially Invisible Scarlet O'Neil (see fig. 1.1), the first female superhero in American popular culture, are examined as cultural artifacts of this participation. Before, during, and after the major campaigns by government, private industry, and mass media to get additional women into and out of the wartime economy workforce, the Whitman Authorized Editions reflected and modeled the lives of women in these stages¹. Homefront representations of women began as domestic paragons of good behavior and traditional feminine beauty, changed into women working in traditionally male jobs to maintain and defend the homefront, and then gracefully returned to the domestic sphere. Following the lead of Maureen Honey in her study, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (1984), in which she points out the connection between American fiction written

¹ Similar efforts, not within the scope of this dissertation, were directed at boys and men through the Whitman Authorized Editions of Mystery and Adventure Stories for Boys and other mass-market fiction and entertainment medias within the culture industry.

and published in magazines during World War II and propaganda story suggestions of the Office of War Information (OWI)², and implementations of these suggestions by the Writers' War Board (WWB), I suggest the congruence also takes place in popular children's series literature for girls as exemplified by the Whitman Authorized Editions, even without formal directives from the OWI and WWB.

In 1927, leading American propaganda theorist Harold D. Lasswell defined propaganda as “the control of opinion by significant symbols” (Shulman 1990 3; Lasswell). Propaganda efforts in World War I had been dramatic and hyperbolic, raising post-war fears about the effects of propaganda on democracy. Public and political discourse debated the righteousness of propaganda in the cause of national security and the dangerousness of propaganda against democracy and free speech. In 1940, President Roosevelt appointed a special committee, the Propaganda Committee, to study the pros and cons of utilizing propaganda in wartime. John J. McCloy, the assistant secretary to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, told the committee that propaganda warfare was just as necessary for the mobilization effort as ground and air warfare (Shulman 1990 5). Propaganda theorist Brett Gary notes that after World War I “Campaigns and techniques of mass persuasion were an ineluctable condition of modern existence” (Gary 1999 1). By World War II, propaganda as a necessary and appropriate tool of persuasion was recognized and practiced by state and corporate interests³. Allan Winkler concludes in his analysis of the OWI during World War II, “In the end propaganda reflected American policy, and indeed America itself” (Winkler 1974 303). I use the term to refer to the

² For a complete list of acronyms used in this text, please see Appendix B.

³ For in-depth historical examinations of propaganda and American democracy, see Gary, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War* (1999); Schulman, *the Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945* (1990); and Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (1997).

overarching persuasive efforts of government and corporate forces during World War II to mobilize the citizenry of the United States behind the war effort to do work and embody behaviors as preferred and prescribed by the government.

Following the example of Michael Denning in his study, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (1987), I look at the Whitman Authorized Editions as part of the emerging culture industry of World War II in the United States. Working from Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1944), Denning provides a working definition and defense of the concept of culture industry:

It avoids a static and ahistorical dichotomy between elite culture and popular culture, since it marks the decisive break from earlier elite and folk cultures and emphasizes the effects of that break on both cultures; and it draws attention to the commodification of culture – the restructuring of cultural production by wage labor, a capitalist market, and a capitalist labor process which divides, rationalizes, and deskills work” (Denning 1987 25).

The construction of the culture industry in the United States was and remains a work in progress, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing today. I use the term ‘culture industry’ to describe the books and the larger context of newspaper comics, comic books, motion pictures, and other media because it avoids making a judgmental and ahistorical dichotomy between elite culture and popular culture and it makes the connection between culture and commodification. It allows a treatment of texts that includes the influences of production and consumption that make the contextual surround in which they were written.

One dimension of my treatment of the culture industry brings out a component that is perhaps surprising: the children's literature publishing industry. Specifics have to do with the ability and tendency of aspects of the industry to license and move content across media as an industrial context. Denning speaks of the dime novel as "a central component of the emerging culture industry" (Denning 1987 15) and studies the books because they are locations of "the intersection of the new mass culture and the culture of the new masses" (Denning 16). I look at Invisible Scarlet O'Neil and the Whitman Authorized Editions to decipher places of intersection between propaganda imperatives and the culture industry and World War II. The intersection of the culture industry and children's publishing is especially powerful because the culture industry influences the structure of stories read by emerging young citizens.

This is significant because production and consumption, story and reading matter. The power of story and the reading experience not only change people's lives but also help people to make those changes, and the culture industry that creates stories is an affecting part of what makes the stories that provide opportunities for change. The culture industry is not just an imposed construction from above; it also engages with ordinary experiential consciousness of people within and around imperatives.

In *Enchanted Hunters: The Power of Stories in Childhood* (2009), Maria Tatar borrows from Mary Louise Pratt the idea of a contact zone. Both speak of the idea of colonialism, stating that when peoples of different geographic locations and cultures are forced together, there are inevitably conditions of coercion, inequality and conflict. Tatar uses the idea to think about the conditions navigated by children as they engage with stories and reading in the process of growing up and forming their own identities. Tatar

treats stories as part of these conditions, as contact zones, as places of coercion and conflict that are often complicated by adult involvement with child interpretation and are, in effect, colonizing forces in child development. I extend the idea of stories as contact zones to think about what is being represented, conveyed, and communicated in stories as translated through contextual cultural forces. In other words, how do the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls represent, convey, and communicate to readers the contextual cultural forces of the imperatives of the World War II propaganda campaign in the United States?

In his book *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (1983), Clifford Geertz argues in his chapter “Common Sense as a Cultural System” that common sense is what we build from shared cultural symbolism that comes from shared cultural presuppositions. I use Geertz’s notion of common sense as a cultural system, and add it to Tatar’s treatment of stories as contact zones. I look at the cultural symbolism and cultural presuppositions that impact the stories and are presented in the stories of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls; these in turn impact the common sense of the reader.

Catherine Sheldrick Ross in her article “Metaphors of Reading” (1987) talks about two dominant forces of reading, reading as eating and reading as a ladder. If we are what we eat, then it follows that we are, at least to an extent, what we read. If we read to climb, it similarly follows that the choices we make as we climb toward adulthood are at least partially informed by the normative images articulated in what we read⁴. This

⁴ For examples of professional opinion from the 1930s and 1940s that what children read influences aspects of their character and development see Terman and Lima’s *Children’s Reading: A Guide for Parents and Teachers* (1931) and Josette Frank’s (Executive Director of the Child Study Association of America) book, *What Books for Children? Guideposts for Parents* (1941).

dissertation does not speak to the specific cues that readers took from the stories and acted upon, but rather looks at the options given readers in a set of series books for girls as influenced by the culture industry in a time that was far more complicated than the books suggest.

During the period of World War II in America, government and private forces convened in a mobilization project of propaganda under the auspices of patriotism in general and the preferred patriotic role of women specifically; print media and children's literature served as sites of persuasion. Dorothy Ducas, chief of the Magazine Bureau under OWI, used the idea that fiction has the power to affect and even shape public attitude as justification for more funding for more staff. In speaking to the Author's League, she asked writers to incorporate themes suggested by her office. Her specific request was to promote a supportive attitude towards women in the public workplace, against the existing traditional Victorian image of women in the private home.

Through the Office of War Information (OWI) her Bureau published the *Magazine War Guide* and the *Magazine War Guide Supplement*, which directed fiction writers to include government-sanctioned messages in support of the war. The overarching theme was optimistic patriotism tempered by self-sacrificing hard work. The point was to create stories that supported the war effort and characters that served as model supportive citizens. A favored cause was mobilization of women into the workforce and war effort. She asked publishers, editors, and authors to publish, promote, and write fiction that supported new images of women, especially in terms of work, thus making the war appear appealing to women.

Ducas understood that the whole population, and particularly the working class, was needed to win the war. Accordingly, she wrote the guides with a special eye on pulp fiction and popular fiction, those fictions presumed to be most popular with working class adults and children. Leo Rosten, deputy director of her parent office OWI, concurred when speaking at a meeting of magazine editors on April 5, 1943. “Pulp magazines reach one of the largest and most important audiences in America. Propaganda is aimed to hit the readers of pulp magazines more than any other group” (Honey 1984 43). Ducas told Gardner Cowles, the director of the domestic branch of OWI, that it was “in the pulp field where 15 million readers [would] get their war messages disguised in fiction” (Honey 1984 43). Elmer Davis wrote the opening message in the February-March 1944 *Magazine War Guide*:

I believe that the job of writing about the war in this next year is, if anything, more important than it has been since Pearl Harbor. It is worth every professional writer’s effort to stick to his last. Never before in history has the written or spoken word meant so much in the actual progress of war... There is, in my mind no higher type of war work for the well-qualified professional writer than the self-assigned job of explaining the war – in vivid, human terms. It is to be hoped that more of them... will devote themselves to doing this job – in whatever manner and for whatever publications their writing is best suited (*Magazine War Guide* February-March 1944 1-2).

Ducas created a New York office staffed by writers experienced in mass-market formula writing. The writers created propaganda formulas, providing sample adventure

and romance tales including details in support of the war. Published in the *Magazine War Guide Supplements*, complete formulas appeared in the fall of 1942. Suggestions were explicit and included characters buying war bonds, planting victory gardens, and conserving and recycling materials needed for war production (*Magazine War Guide* November/December 1942). In the spring of 1943, the supplements retreated to generalities but continued the suggested details, leaving writers more freedom in weaving the propaganda points into their plot constructions. The general successful models of formula fiction could remain the same, and it was hoped that the popular fiction would continue to enjoy its popularity. The idea was that the government could harness that popularity through the prodding of patriotic propaganda that the supplements provided. For example, in the classic construct of good versus evil, of hero versus villain, it was suggested that the heroic be cast as shining Americans and the villainous as Japanese or Germans. Other story lines included the uninspired girl rejuvenated through working for the war effort and falling in love with an American soldier (Honey 41-45). While studies have been done concerning the intertwining of propaganda imperatives and adult popular fiction, studies about propaganda imperatives and children's popular fiction are lacking.

The Whitman Authorized Editions of *Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls Featuring Your Favorite Characters* supported the aims of OWI and its collaborators. The series is an example of children's popular formula fiction of the era utilizing female characters from newspaper strips, comic books, and film. The books are particularly relevant because they effectively combine the markets of three massively popular culture mediums in one set of cultural artifacts, acting as a cross-section of American popular culture of the time. In the current era of franchising of popular cultural productions, when

corporations like Disney link their cinematic productions with other kinds of entertainments (books, musicals, and toys), the Whitman series is an early example of an inverse relation, creating fiction from other popular culture products rather than creating popular culture products from fiction. With a strong history of consumer tie-ins in their children's fiction, the set of books published during World War II offers a prime opportunity to examine popular consumption of common sense and culture.

In defining formula fiction I adopt John Cawelti's definition from his book, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976) in which he defines formula fiction:

Formulas are cultural products and in turn presumably have some sort of influence on culture because they become conventional ways of representing and relating certain images, symbols, themes, and myths. The process through which formulas develop, change, and give way to other formulas is a kind of cultural evolution with survival through audience selection (Cawelti 1976 20).

According to Cawelti, formula "is a means of generalizing the characteristics of large groups of individual works from certain combinations of cultural materials and archetypal story patterns" (Cawelti 7); and "by confirming existing definitions of the world, literary formulas help to maintain a culture's ongoing consensus... one aspect of the structure of the formula is... confirming some strongly held conventional view" (Cawelti 35). Bradford W. Wright in his book, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (2001) follows Cawelti's lead in a treatment of comic books:

Formulas that appeal to audiences tend to proliferate and endure, while those that do not, do neither... formulas are the consequence of determining pressures exerted by producers and consumers, as well as by the historical conditions affecting them both (Wright 2001 xv).

I extend the definitions and uses of Cawelti and Wright to examine a set of formula fictions based on newspaper strips, comic books, and motion-picture stars. The Whitman Authorized Editions are a combination space of that which is produced, consumed, and reiterated in that they star newspaper strip heroines, comic book heroines, and motion-picture heroines and newspaper comic stars who were major faces in the culture industry of the United States before the books and made more eminent through the books.

Popular media of any kind can be interpreted as a means of social engineering. This is not a cause-and-effect relationship of absolute results, certainly, but definitely a more subtle conduit of influence and persuasion, of leading by example, and of modeling. The books are popular products of the United States culture industry that in turn may have some influence on popular culture and presumably on the consuming readers of popular culture.

Because popular fiction must appeal to a broad and popular audience to attain and retain its popular status, characters and plots that these books create and disseminate present a clear picture of what girls were ingesting in their fiction about popular feminine ideals during World War II. As they are popular, they also indicate some of the shared cultural myths and symbols of the time about the cultural idealization of women. The

popular fiction operates as formula fiction that can be used to shape and reflect cultural attitudes toward gender.

Judith Butler presents the idea of performativity in her book *Gender Trouble* (2006; 1990). Performativity is the idea that gender is a cultural meaning, a performative act that creates the girl through the very action of calling a person a girl; for example, when a girl is called a girl, how she acts is what makes her a girl, thus acting as a girl makes her a girl. Gender, she says:

[O]perates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates... The performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration (Butler 2006 xv).

As we shall see, Invisible Scarlet O'Neil's "gendered essence" mirrors this performativity. Whitman Publishing Company provided in its *Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls Featuring Your Favorite Characters* a full-length novel about this first American female superhero. The set of books, especially including the novelization of Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, is an invaluable site for examining the popular imagination of American femininity at a time when the image and role of the American feminine was undergoing seemingly drastic changes. The Whitman Authorized Editions reflect these changing patterns in women's lives. If girls and women understand themselves and

identify themselves by what they read and what constitutes their popular culture media images and commodity choices, what were some of the options offered during World War II?

Erving Goffman in his 1979 book *Gender Advertisements* points out that images of women portrayed in media present “gender displays” that function as gendered role modeling (Goffman 1979). Angela McRobbie talks of “shared cultures of femininity” (McRobbie 1994) and Mica Nava points out in her 1992 book *Changing Cultures: Feminism, Youth and Consumerism*, “The buying of commodities and images can be understood both as a source of power and pleasure for women (it has indeed given them a sense of identity, purpose, and creativity) and simultaneously as an instrument which secures their subordination” (Nava 1992). Girlhood, the age of the aimed readership of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, has been proven as a particularly sensitive time in a woman’s life, a time in which she is especially susceptible to and influenced by media images of gender role modeling (Brumberg 1997; Gilligan 1982; Pipher 1994). As formula fiction using characters from multiple forms of mass media, the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls can be used to decipher and examine what popular culture imaginations of femininity were being shaped and reflected at this time.

The wartime requirements of American women mandated enormous changes to their everyday lives. Women’s lives grew to expand significantly out of the domestic sphere into paid employment and public life and then back into the domestic sphere again. Women were required to adopt jobs traditionally held by men while maintaining their roles as nurturers and homemakers in the domestic sphere and remaining traditionally feminine in appearance and attitude. As wartime economy necessitated

women's entry into the workforce, the end of the war just as strongly advocated women's exit from the paid workforce to make room for men returning to the homefront. The postwar feminine requirement was just as domestic as the pre-war requirement, and models of women as war workers permeated popular culture in the middle.

As managers of homefront affairs by the stark fact of being on the homefront while the men departed for the warfront in ever-increasing numbers, women were recruited to the three R's of wartime, as sponsored by the OWI: Rationing, Recycling, and Recruitment. Rationing controlled the consumption of products such as sugar, coffee, meat and gasoline through government delivered ration books. Recycling encouraged the saving and gathering of materials such as nylon stockings, aluminum, tin, and other scrap metals, rubber and waste paper for reuse in war materials production. Recruitment brought women out of the home and into the paid workforce and armed services, and was the major impetus for changing the role of women in American life (Anderson 1981; Campbell 1984; Gluck 1987; Hartmann 1982; Kessler-Harris 2003; Rupp 1978).

More than five million women joined the workforce during WWII, though it was not automatic or easy, in myriad jobs. A partial list includes: architect, aerodynamic engineer, astronomer, attorney, barber, billet operation helper, butcher, cargo loader, chemist, chipper, commercial airline checker, conductor, crane operator, draftsman, electrician, electrical engineer, fireman, flame burner, flash welder, forest fire fighter, garbage collector, grinder, keel welder, laborer, lumberjack, mathematician, mechanic, meteorologist, milkman, physicist, pipe fitter, railroad track tender, riveter, scraper, shipfitter, slaughterhouse vein pumper, team hammer operator, taxi driver, telegraph operator, tool machinist, traffic cop, and welder. Women also worked as police officers,

lawyers, statisticians, journalists, and members of symphony orchestras as well as farmers and harvesters. Additionally, women worked for the Civilian Defense as air-raid wardens, firewatchers, messengers, drivers and auxiliary police, along with the traditional women's work of teaching, nursing, clerical, restaurant, and domestic service (Kessler-Harris 2003; Milkman 1987).

This was in contrast to 1936, when 82 percent of all Americans were against hiring women, opining that if husbands had a job, wives should stay at home (Oppenheimer 1976). When war brought the condition of a new economy, not everyone in the country was ready to let go of the firmly entrenched gender roles that had ruled popular opinion for so long. In the first six months after Pearl Harbor, only 80,000 women of the estimated 750,000 women who applied were hired in defense industry jobs. Prejudicial objections against women in the workplace held until the sheer numbers of men leaving the work force due to volunteer and draft conditions forced industry and society to rethink their objections and hire the remaining able bodies: women. In April of 1942 the War Manpower Commission (WMC) headed by Paul McNutt admitted that the "gap of workers will have to be plugged almost entirely by women" (Colman 1995 47). The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted a shortage of six million workers by late 1943, giving industry more reason to abandon, temporarily at least, prejudices against hiring women in traditional male employment.

By the end of 1942, the labor shortage was beginning to slow down production of necessary war tools. The WMC and the OWI went into action, increasing the propaganda machine. Posters were made with pictures and slogans supporting female involvement in the home front war effort. Magazine articles such as the *Reader's Digest* November 1942

article, “Ma’s Making Bombers!” (Meyer 1942). Short promotional films were made and shown at movie theaters, before feature films, telling women that to be patriotic was to take a war production job at places like Curtiss Wright Aeronautical making engines for war planes (Colman 66).

In public opinion polls concerning attitudes of whether or not women should work, the 1942 questions asked, “As things are now do you think married women should work in war industry?” The overwhelming answer was in the affirmative, with 60 percent approving, 13 percent disapproving, and 27 percent giving conditional responses (Oppenheimer 45). A widely circulated cartoon, first printed in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* on Saturday, January 9, 1943, showed a tiny Paul McNutt, Chairman of the War Manpower Commission, measuring the biceps of a woman in overalls with a wrench in her hand and kerchief and safety goggles on her head, awarding her Miss America 1943. In honor of the war, she was awarded for her work, in addition to her beauty. Paul McNutt realized the marketing nature of the propaganda effort to get women into war industry jobs, calling it “a tremendous sales proposition” (Colman 65).

When the war ended in 1945, and starting as early as 1944 when the war’s end was beginning to be predicted, so did the extraordinary job opportunities for women end. Women, who worked seven days a week, week after week, were handed pink slips, with and without entitlements to severance pay (Anderson 1981; Campbell 1984; Chafe 1974; Hartmann 1982). When the men came home from war, the jobs reverted to traditional gender lines once again, and the new line of propaganda espoused that the good girl was not a career girl after all, but the girl who just wanted to stay home. Reconversion became the mission.

Major themes promulgated by government and non-government creative arts agencies in support of the war effort were: the glamorization of war jobs in a counter-image to the negative idea of women in the workplace, the presentation of homefront war work as heroic and self-sacrificing, and the maintaining of traditionally feminine characteristics such as prettiness, compassion, and altruistic tendencies, a veritable triumvirate of feminine idealistic. These imperatives were all expressed in children's popular fiction during World War II.

The new images of American femininity supported by government and private propaganda and expressed in American girls' fiction, were not, in actuality, any sort of "feminist reordering of national values" but rather more of the same with the added value of more work. The campaign in fiction as elsewhere was about self-sacrifice, a theme neither new nor revolutionary for women. What was new in World War II was that women were requested and required through cajolery, both subtle and blatant, to self-sacrifice outside of the domestic sphere in the public labor force. To convince women to make the jump and men to accept the jumping, the image of woman self-sacrificing in the working world was projected and co-opted as a national symbol of collective labor in service of patriotism. The imperative was self-sacrifice and selflessness for the sake of others. The first female superhero, Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, was the penultimate Rosie, the laboring female who deftly avoided all controversial pitfalls of morphing gender roles: she worked hard and constantly, always for others, always staying pretty, and doing so while absolutely invisible. She is the Rosie for the pre-war and the post-war generation. No one has to look at her tying a bandana or gripping a wrench: she's invisible and therefore not to be noticed or acknowledged, a perfect exemplar of Tillie

Olsen's silenced woman (Olsen 1978). The first female superhero was the ultimate war heroine who could be safely carried past the temporary requirements of war into the traditional and regular environs of gender roles. Invisible Scarlet O'Neil embodies both the American feminine and the feminine heroic in who she is and what she does.

Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls demonstrate a three-part cycle: first with women in the domestic sphere, second with women in the work force, and third with women returning to the domestic sphere. The OWI and WWB support the transition of women from the domestic sphere to the workforce and back again; the books are filled with corresponding supportive examples. The characterization of Invisible Scarlet O'Neil represents the hard work and self-sacrifice required of women in the labor pool of World War II while keeping her conveniently invisible, eradicating any notion of feminist restructuring of American femininity in the national identity.

William Chafe talks about the rise of paid employment among married women during World War II and hypothesizes that such paid work was liberating for the feminine psyche and accordingly largely responsible for the American women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Chafe 1972). D'Ann Campbell in turn argues that the feminist revolution was "a reaction against the suburban family ideal that fascinated the war generation" who were traumatized by the forced laboring of women during World War II and created a renewed emphasis on the traditions of feminine domesticity in the latter half of the 1940s and the 1950s (Campbell 1984 15). But Leila Rupp states that the war had no permanent effect on the involvement of women in the labor force (Rupp 1978 176). Betty Freidan, writing in the early 1960s, posits that the trouble with modern American women's lives is that after World War II women were

generally denigrated to housewife status, mothering their children and husbands, and operating not wartime factory machinery but instead new kitchen technologies that rendered their input almost irrelevant, and they knew it. Women were sent back to the domestic sphere at the same time that modern technologies replaced their usefulness in that sphere (Friedan 1963). In his later book, *The Rise and Fall of the American Century* (2009), Chafe admits that the changes in women's roles and employment were temporary, and that World War II "was too soon to declare a revolution" (Chafe 2009 122).

While building on the research of women's labor historians, my aim here is not to make a judgment on the after-effects of World War II on the labor lives of women, nor to closely examine the interplay between the real working lives of women during World War II and the fictionalized models of ideal American femininity during the same period. This study takes a different approach. Rather than postulate how the labor history of women affected the working and psychological life of women in the decades following World War II, this study reveals that the three-stage cycle of women during World War II, from domestic laborer to paid laborer to domestic laborer, is reflected in the American imagination of femininity of the time as expressed through the popular culture industry mediums of film, newspaper comics, and comic books and again in the children's literature made from those mediums. To summarize, the cultural artifacts specifically used to examine this thesis are the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, a set of series books that were written for young women and that used characters from film, newspaper comics, and comic books as the heroines. In these books, the heroic role modeling for

girls reflects the real life modeling of domestic laborer turned paid laborer turned back to domestic laborer.

After this introduction, Chapter 2 outlines the origins and history of mass-market fiction in the United States and then provides a brief history of the changing role of women and women's work in the United States through World War II. I explore the structure of the propaganda efforts to get women into the workplace and discuss three Whitman Authorized Editions from the pre-mobilization stage. Women wage-workers during World War II are the focus in Chapter 3. I examine specific propaganda campaigns, including government directives and examples in the form of advertisements, film, and fiction, including Whitman Authorized Editions. Chapter 4 addresses demobilization and the changing face of women in the culture industry as the United States turned toward demobilizing the female workforce. I closely read Whitman Authorized Editions as illustrative examples. Chapter 5 continues by looking at Invisible Scarlet O'Neil as the first female superhero in the culture industry of the United States. I look at other examples of the feminine super-heroic in that industry, discuss the idea of the feminine heroic in literature, and trace models of the feminine heroic in mythology. I connect these manifestations of the feminine heroic and the changing notions and expectations of femininity during World War II as they were represented in the body of Invisible Scarlet O'Neil. In the concluding Chapter 6 I look at a series of books within the Whitman Authorized Editions series that serve to illustrate the three stages of women in the workforce during World War II. I reconsider the interplay between the culture industry as a whole and in popular fiction, and build on ideas of how stories matter in the

lives of young readers. I end by connecting the cultural construction of femininity and the feminine heroic during World War II and suggest avenues for further research.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN AT HOME: PREMOBILIZATION

In the movies, in fiction and advertising in women's magazines, the modern U.S. housewife is portrayed as the sort of woman who keeps her figure, her husband, her makeup and her humor no matter how tough the going. One effect of this constant propaganda is that millions of U.S. women are doing just that (*Life* 1941 78-85).

The story of women in the United States in World War II moves women from the home to the work force to the home again. This study looks at popular fiction which reflects that journey and these roles, specifically a set of series books for girls produced and consumed during World War II. I will review here the origins of the mass-market series books for girls and the Whitman Publishing Company in the United States from the early 1900s through World War II, and show how the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls supported wartime government efforts enlisting women to work in a manner that did not compromise their femininity. Following this is a brief history of U.S. women working outside the home from the early nineteenth century to World War II. An explication of the extent of the government's efforts to effect changes in women's participation in war efforts follows. The concentration is on labor and the aesthetics of beauty as I look at the type of work women performed in real life and in mass-market fiction and how women behaved and looked doing work in both. Finally, as examples of pre-mobilization fiction, the motion picture star Deanna Durbin is introduced, as well as two Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls starring her as the heroine, *Deanna Durbin and the Adventure of Blue Valley* and *Deanna Durbin and the Feather of Flame*, and the

book *Polly the Powers Model*, starring a prototypical Powers Model girl working as a model, a profession based on the aesthetics of beauty.

The major areas of commercial success in the 1940s in what was considered children's literature publishing (i.e. in books intended for child readership) involved comic books, Big Little Books, Little Golden Books, series fiction, trade books, and award winners. Although in 1922 the American Library Association (ALA) initiated the annual Newbery medal for "the most distinguished American children's book published the previous year," and in 1938 the ALA established the annual Caldecott Medal for "the most distinguished American Picture Book for Children published in the United States during the preceding year," books of this canonical stature are different from the mass-market fictions of which the Whitman Authorized Editions are a part, and are not the focus of this study.

The history of mass-market fiction has roots in the popular fiction that appeared between the 1840s and the 1890s with the help of the penny press. In the 1840s, the 'story papers' were born. The story papers contained serialized stories, fashion, advice, news, and sermons and were eight pages of newspaper. In the 1860s the dime novel was developed from what was originally a 50 page, 5" x 8 1/2" supplement in 1842 and sold as an 'extra' for *New World* readers. In 1860 'Beadle's Dime Novels,' a weekly ten-cent series of 100 page, 4" x 6" pamphlets of fiction were especially popular with soldiers during the Civil War. In 1875 dime novels were largely replaced with 'cheap library' publications, weekly five and ten-cent series of 16 or 32 page pamphlets with two or three columns of print, about 8" x 11". The cheap popular fictions died out for five major reasons: John Lovell's attempt to buy out the industry and his business's failure in the

Panic of 1893, the International Copyright Agreement of 1891 which ended uninhibited story exchange and pirating across the Atlantic, the development of the Sunday newspaper, and the boom of the magazine industry (Denning 1987 10-12).

Michael Denning, in his book *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (1987), traces the historical and ideological foundation of scholarship concerned with popular fiction. He notes that the first collector and scholar of dime novels and nineteenth-century popular fiction, Frank P. O'Brien, found the literature to be "intensely nationalistic and patriotic in character, obviously designed to stimulate adventure, self-reliance and achievement" (Denning 13)⁵. Edmund Pearson, a librarian and author of the first book about dime novels in 1929, *Dime Novels: or, Following an Old Trail in Popular Literature*, was similarly nationally-minded in both the books he chose to review and the interpretations he made about them. O'Brien and Pearson looked at dime novels as remnants of a simpler and purer age, "literally saturated with the pioneer spirit of America" (Denning 13). Denning writes that "Several central judgments about dime novels are the result more of collectors' tastes than of historical analysis, tastes that owe much to the myths and ideologies of... twentieth-century popular culture" (Denning 15). He finds that many scholars took a nostalgic approach to an idealized United States. He suggests instead that, "Far from being an uncorrupted moment before the onset of mass culture, the dime novel industry is a central component of the emerging culture industry." His approach to the books is a concern "with the intersection of the new mass culture and the culture of the new masses, with the place of dime novels within working class life." His intent is to "rescue" the books "from a kind

⁵ Quoted from Denning, who found the description in the catalog of The Beadle Collection of Dime Novels from the New York Public Library, 1922.

of patronizing and patriotic nostalgia” (Denning 16). In this dissertation, I situate my study of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls not only according to halcyon, sentimental, or nostalgic visions of the changing roles of the feminine in World War II but also according to the real life media messages presented to women and the real lives of women in the context of World War II in the United States. “Contrary to popular belief, the women who entered war production were not primarily middle-class housewives but working-class wives, widows, divorcees, and students who needed the money to achieve a reasonable standard of living” (Honey 19) and needed to look good while working to maintain a passing standard of femininity. The Whitman Authorized Editions, which have their origin in the dime novels and series books written for and about the working-class, portray upper-middle class white girls posing as and embodying working class girls. As mass-market fiction, cheaply available, they are still intended for the working-class audience that made up the majority of the female workforce during WWII.

The history of mass-market fiction for girls is commensurate with the growth of the genre as a whole within the culture industry. Working-girl popular fiction novels, for example, grew into prominence alongside the rest of children’s literature since the 1840s. Working-girl novels of popular fiction are different from domestic novels of canonical fiction in that they are about girls and women who do wage work and have adventures outside the domestic sphere. The girls’ series mystery and adventure stories of the 1920s and 1930s, such as the *Nancy Drew* books, “are liberated descendants of the moralized domestic fiction read by girls and women in the 1800s” (Billman 12). Denning understands the working-girl novel to be “a central narrative of working class

womanhood, resolving in a variety of imaginary ways the contradictions between wage work and the gender ideologies of the dominant culture” (Denning 1987 185). Like Denning, I am “examining and interpreting common if often despised texts to illuminate the cultures that produced and consumed them, arguing that they can be seen as the dream work of the social, the slips and jokes of a political unconscious” (Denning 1987 207).

Such works increased exponentially in numbers. From 1890 to 1900, an average of 404 children’s books were published each year, many of which were mass-market fiction series books about working girls. From 1900 to 1910 the average was 548, and from 1910 to 1920 the average was 664 (Deane 8-9). The Dorothy Dale series began publication in 1908, Motor Girl series in 1910, Outdoor Girls series and Ruth Fielding series in 1913, Campfire Girls series and Nancy Drew series in 1930, and Sue Barton, Student Nurse series in 1936 (Billman 157-159). By 1940, the industry had expanded and recovered from Depression-era lows and 825 new titles were published (Bechtel 1941 297). In that same year American children bought more comic books, 7.5 million, in one month than ten times the total number of children’s books published (Marcus 2008 144-145). DC Comics averaged sales of 800,000 copies per issue (Wright 14). Series books such as those published by Whitman Publishing Company were considered barely better than comic books, and were given little to no attention by the experts and canon-makers of children’s literature, except in comments of derision and disdain.⁶ If anything, Whitman was considered slightly more detestable than comic books due to the combination of marketing and content. While series were not esteemed, they were

⁶ For a history of critical reception of series books, see Chamberlain. For professional negative reviews see Kinloch; Mathews; and Terman and Lima. For professional positive reviews, see Anderson; Darling; and Frank.

significantly cheaper in price than traditional trade books, and were distributed widely. Thus, they were available to greater numbers of the population.

The Whitman Publishing Company began originally as the Western Printing and Lithographing Company, founded in 1907 in Racine, WI. The company ended up with a hefty inventory of children's books in 1916 when their client, Hamming-Whitman Publishing Company of Chicago, went bankrupt. Their books were default debt payment. Ever the entrepreneurs aware of market possibilities, Western bought the whole publishing company, moved it home to Racine, renamed it Whitman Publishing Company, and proceeded to print and sell inexpensive mass market fiction ranging from novelty books to picture books to story books. The brother owners, German-American Edward H. and Al Wadewitz, hired salesman Samuel E. Lowe to boost sales⁷. Lowe proceeded to sell lower-priced books to the national five-and-dime store chain S.S. Kresge Company (which eventually became K-Mart and then the Sears Holdings Corporation), starting with ten-cent coloring books. He convinced the chain to place the books next to items that mothers bought weekly, such as sewing supplies, and to place the books year-round rather than only on holidays as was then the norm. Lowe was the first children's book publisher to take advantage of the lucrative market of the five-and-dime store; the strategy was a raging success (Marcus 2007 6-8). By the 1920s, Whitman Publishing expanded to selling toys such as playing cards and jigsaw puzzles with their affordable books, just like John Newbery had pioneered centuries before in 1744 with his *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book, Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of little Master Tommy and pretty Miss Polly; with an agreeable letter to each from Jack the Giant-*

⁷ Lowe was a trained social worker, which perhaps gave him special insight into what children and their parents might like and purchase. For more biographical information about Lowe, see Marcus 2007.

Killer; as also a Ball and Pincushion, the Use of which will infallibly make Tommy a good boy and Polly a good girl (Demers & Moyles 104). Though Whitman did not sell balls or pincushions as Newbery had, and did not seem to have any overt or covert concerns for the amelioration or education of child characters and child readers, Whitman did capitalize on the joint-marketing of toys and books, selling ten million books and almost five million decks of cards in 1928 alone (Marcus 2007 10-15).

During the Depression, Lowe took Newbery's example of cheap books with market tie-ins a step further by creating a ten-cent series of miniature pocket-sized books he dubbed "Big Little Books," carrying the adventures of familiar popular culture characters out of comic books and newspaper strips such as Dick Tracy, Orphan Annie, and Invisible Scarlet O'Neil (see figures 2.2 and 2.3). His idea was to license characters with proven mass appeal in popular culture, thus guaranteeing a pre-set sales audience. In December of 1932 he met with executives of the *Chicago Tribune-New York News* syndicate. He negotiated an agreement in which the licensor (the syndicate) received a percentage of the wholesale price of each book or product based on a licensed character. He began with licensing the newspaper comic strip character Dick Tracy and in December of 1932 published the first Big Little Book, *The Adventures of Dick Tracy*. Four months later he published the second Big Little Book starring his second licensed character, *Little Orphan Annie*. By the spring of 1933, the first two Big Littles had sales totals of over 600,000 copies each. On April 19, 1933 he wrote to Disney with the hopes of gaining a new licensing contract, asking specifically for the rights to Mickey Mouse. Mickey Mouse had hit the film screen in 1928 as Steamboat Willie, and by 1933 the Mickey Mouse franchise had already spawned Mickey Mouse clubs in the United States,

Great Britain, and Canada. After some negotiating Disney agreed, and the first Big Little starring Mickey Mouse, titled simply *Mickey Mouse*, was based on already published Mickey Mouse comic strips in June. Disney signed an exclusive contract with parent company Western later that same year, for all Disney characters in all book formats. The contract lasted through the 1980s until Michael Eisner opened the licensing to bids from other publishers (Marcus 2007 10–15).

The chapbooks or dime novels of the Depression Era, Big Little Books were made from the scraps of magazines and sold for a dime. They were 3 5/8" x 4 1/2" x 1 1/2" in size and up to 432 pages in length, with a picture on the recto and corresponding text on the verso (Molson 1984). With covers looking like full-color Sunday newspaper comic strips, Big Little Books captured the mass-market appeal three years before comic books hit the scene in 1935. By 1936 the company secured contracts with Dell Publishing Company and, capitalizing on their stable of licensed characters from Disney and the *Chicago Tribune-New York News* syndicate and others, began publishing Dell's *Popular Comics* to cash in on the comic strip and comic book market. Lowe set up a subsidiary of Whitman, the Artists and Writers Guild, which hired artists and writers to create and print books completely inside Whitman Publishing Company. Dell Publishing Company hired the Guild to print Dell Comic books. Dell also sublicensed Disney and other characters from Whitman, who by licensing contracts controlled the character printing rights (Marcus 2007 10-16). By 1940, Western had a Beverly Hills office as well as its New York office and Racine headquarters, and was licensing characters from Loony Tunes and Merrie Melodies. It also successfully launched Little Golden Books (Marcus 2007 47), a set of picture books based largely on stories from the public domain, nursery

rhymes, folktales, children's prayers, etc., and sold for \$.25 apiece – six could be purchased for the average price of one traditionally picture book⁸.

Alongside the success of comic books, Big Little Books, and Little Golden Books was the enormous success of series books, as evidenced by the Stratemeyer Syndicate⁹. The Stratemeyer Syndicate was most likely established in 1906 and definitely incorporated in 1910. A series fiction factory, it operated on two main ideas: one, to publish hardcover series books for fifty cents, about half the going rate for hardcover books at the time; and two, to use a stable of writers to pump out books written according to a prescribed formula. Edward Stratemeyer had been writing juvenile fiction under a pseudonym since childhood and sold his first fourteen dime novels and five magazine stories in 1892. He worked at Street and Smith, a dime novel and magazine publishing house, and had the opportunity to finish manuscripts by both William T. Adams of *Oliver Optic* fame and Horatio Alger, Jr. Taken together, his experiences convinced him that he could start his own house, increasing output through a stable of writers who would write according to his formula and at a rate that would enable bargain prices. He would create the series concept, develop an outline, and pay a writer to use the outline to write a 200-page book. When Stratemeyer died in 1930 his two daughters continued the Syndicate (Billman 1986 19-23; Stoneley 2003 91-94).

Sales of series books in general and Stratemeyer series books in particular were spectacular. The first Stratemeyer series were the *Bobbsey Twins*, marketed as by “Laura Lee Hope”, and the *Motor Boys*, both begun in 1906. *Dorothy Dale*, *Outdoor Girls*, the

⁸ For an extensive history of Little Golden Books, see *Golden Legacy: How Golden Books Won Children's Hearts, Changed Publishing Forever, and Became an American Icon Along the Way*, by Leonard S. Marcus, 2007.

⁹ Many scholars have researched the Stratemeyer Syndicate. For a sampling, see Billman 1986 and Johnson 1993.

Motor Girls, the Moving Picture Girls, and Ruth Fielding were other early series. In the first ten years of the twentieth century Stratemeyer and others published 46 series books written for girls, and in the next ten years another 94 specifically for girls (Billman 1986 22; CLRC 1992). In addition to the economic benefit brought to the publishing houses, the books brought a new kind of girl to reading audiences: a heroine who stepped out of the traditional confines of domestic literature and into the world in motorcars across the country to have adventures, solve mysteries, and work as motion-picture stars. Whitman Publishing Company owed quite a bit to its Stratemeyer predecessors for the style and concept behind the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls.

Whitman Publishing Company secured character licenses to newspaper strip characters from the *Chicago Tribune- New York News* syndicate for Big Little Books and used the characters to move into the hardcover series market. Nancy Drew had sold six thousand copies at the New York City Macy's alone in the Christmas season of 1932 (Billman 1986 3) and comic books were selling between eighty million and a hundred million comics every week by 1940, Superman alone grossing \$950,000 for DC in 1940 (Wright 2001; Marcus 2008). Comic books sold 12 million copies each month in 1942 and more than 60 million in 1946. 70 million Americans read newspaper strip comics daily in 1942 (Hartmann 119812 190-1). Combining the format and plot structures of the Nancy Drew books with popular culture characters from newspaper strips and comics seemed a guaranteed commercial success. It was a perfect marketing combination.

Accordingly, Whitman Publishing Company began printing a new kind of book in 1941, hardcovers called Whitman Authorized Editions. They sold for \$.25 to \$.39 each (Molson 1984 148), beating even the Stratemeyer Syndicate in pricing. They are octavo-

sized hardcover books, generally 8" x 5 ½" x by 1 ½" in size and 248 pages in length with around 15 chapters and 20-24 illustrations. The inside covers are decorated with dramatic black and white illustrations and the colorful, splashy dust jackets convey the famous characters in action and bear advertisements for either additional Whitman publications or, during World War II, patriotic propaganda. Another Whitman Publishing Company publication of the time is *The Fighters for Freedom* series, lasting from 1943 to 1944, with titles such *Sparky Ames and Mary Mason of the Ferry Command* (1943), *Norma Kent of the WACS* (1943), *Sally Scott of the WAVES* (1943), *Nancy Dale, Army Nurse* (1944) and *Kitty Carter, Canteen Girl* (1944). The characters are original.

The *Fighters for Freedom* series and the Whitman Authorized Editions were intended for the slightly older reader. Where the Big Little Books had illustrations on every recto lifted directly from the comic strips with a simple story on the verso created by the Whitman stable of writers, the Authorized Editions concentrated on textual narrative with a clear story arc and used enlarged illustrations sparingly, with some chapters having no illustrations¹⁰.

Though written for boys and girls, the books with which this dissertation is concerned are those written expressly for girls during World War II, Whitman Authorized Editions of Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls Featuring Your Favorite Characters. The books licensed characters with proven commercial popularity from the newspaper strips, comic books, and motion pictures and featured careers newly available to women. In the Authorized Editions, Whitman Publishing Company continued their

¹⁰ For a specific example, consider *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil*: the book has 15 chapters and 21 illustrations. Chapter 1 contains 2 illustrations; chapter 2, 1 illustration; chapter 3, 2 illustrations; chapter 4, 2 illustrations, etc.

profitable trade of combining markets, following a long tradition of fiction writing as industrial production based on cultural life.

The ‘literary factories,’ as publishers of cheap popular fiction can be called, operated through a team of researchers and writers. Edward Bok, the editor of *Ladies Home Journal*, described the writing and publishing process of creating popular fiction formulas in 1892: employees scoured the news for interesting stories; managers selected the best for writers who would turn the news item into an outline for a fiction story (Denning 1987 17). The formula was eventually handed down to a writer, who quickly wrote a story accordingly. The underlying goal was profitability. The author of the story was mostly irrelevant. What was important was the trademarked or licensed character, pre-established as successful in the culture industry and re-used in the fiction to create another marketable product¹¹. Whitman Publishing Company took the tradition of selecting stories from newspapers and other media outlets and extended it to also taking characters from the larger culture industry. Whitman took characters from newspaper strips, comic books, and motion pictures and produced books with the characters as the stars. Examples include Invisible Scarlet O’Neil from newspaper strip and comic books; Brenda Starr, Girl Reporter from newspaper strips; Blondie from newspaper strips and later motion pictures; Deanna Durbin from motion pictures and Jane Withers from motion pictures.

Following the path of Lowe and the lucrative Big Little Books, they created whole new stories in a larger and longer format for the slightly older reader, based on the model of the Stratemeyer Syndicate. Some characters were previously harvested for Big

¹¹ It is because of this emphasis on character rather than author that I have chosen to not include biographical information about the authors of the Whitman Authorized Editions in this research, considering it beyond the parameters of this study.

Little Books, such as Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, who had two Big Little Books and one Authorized Edition, and Little Orphan Annie, who had seventeen Big Little Book titles and one Authorized Edition. The stories for the Authorized Editions, however, were all new. The Authorized Editions were written by a stable of writers, or in the cases of the books with characters from the newspaper strips, often the authors of the original strips.

The inside flaps of the dust jackets of all the books advertise the other Whitman series publications, and during the war years, the Fighters for Freedom series and patriotic messages about war effort support work. The book jacket flaps do not have information about the books themselves. For example, the front flap of the book jacket of *Little Orphan Annie and the Gila Monster Gang* of 1944 advertises the Fighters for Freedom Series, the Famous Classics series, and saves room at the bottom for the following message of homefront support for the war effort: "For Victory – Save Cooking Fats and Grease! Grease makes bullets and shells and bombs for our soldiers. You can help them win!" (Gray 1944) (see fig. 2.4). The back flap is even more forthright in its patriotic approach:

Your Country Needs Your Help. Every boy and girl, as well as every man and woman, can have a share in winning the victory over the enemy we are fighting – a victory which *must* be won if America is to remain a symbol of liberty and freedom throughout the world. You can help. Everyone can do his share in the desperate battles to protect our liberty by buying War Savings Stamps and War Bonds regularly. To buy them is to become a true soldier of Democracy (Gray 1944) (see fig. 2.5).

The stories themselves concentrate on the exploits of the newspaper strip, comic book, and motion-picture characters, fueled by patriotic imperatives of war effort labor and consumerist prerogatives of buying the very latest outfit complete with hat and gloves.

However, within the Whitman Authorized Editions of *Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls and Boys Featuring Your Favorite Characters*, the reader might also detect a subversive hint of leftist politics. Invisible Scarlet O'Neil and her compatriots work for the common good, saving the poor from the rich, the innocent from the corrupt, and the generous from the greedy. They sympathize with the single parent home and protect the virtuous from the conniving. They embody the domestic values of girlhood as expressed in the history of children's literature for girls and use consumerist costumes as cover to bravely go forth to defend the ideals of a proletariat America.

The books also support a trend toward realism with a glamorous edge, mirroring the newspaper comic strips, comic books, and motion pictures from which they take their leading ladies. They are decidedly pro-labor but almost devoid of references to ethnic minorities; their internationalism is limited to supporting the war effort abroad. The books are about famous women portrayed as working women acting heroically. While not overtly appearing on any best book lists for progressive children, they could be perceived as presenting progressive girls, even if they are often modeling or purchasing a new outfit every other chapter.

What then, were the social formations of American women in the historical context in which the Whitman Authorized Editions were published? Primarily, the formations are a tale of labor and the changing roles required of that labor. The women of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls are working women who defend the helpless

against the powerful and support American democracy and justice and the betterment of humankind across the globe in World War II. Invisible Scarlet O'Neil particularly exemplifies proletariat traits, deftly combining proletariat working-girl values with the messages of the culture industry.

Julia L. Mickenberg, in her book, *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (2006) acknowledges that children's literature is generally accepted to be supportive of the majority popular opinion:

By reaffirming the existing social order, much of the familiar children's literature... at least implicitly supports the individualistic values of capitalism and the policies of the United States abroad, reifies traditional gender roles, and assumes a white, middle class norm (Mickenberg 7).

Peter Stoneley in *Consumerism and American Girls' Literature 1860 – 1940* is in agreement. “In the literary machine of the syndicates we find the engineering of consumption in the pricing and packaging for the product, but also in the way luxury modern items are foregrounded in the novels' thematic content” (Stoneley 2003 90). In terms of role modeling for girls, it is also important to note that the commitment to modernity is at surface-level only; the dominant characteristics of the heroine remain firmly entrenched in traditional ideals of femininity. The girls may be having adventures, in fact may be roaming the country as single, capable young women, but their capability is tempered by “an intense and almost ideological control... There are attitudes and protocols to which the girls must conform at all times” (Stoneley 94). In the Whitman

Authorized Editions, the imperatives involve working for the war effort, first at home, then in the labor force, and then at home again, and looking good while doing so through all three stages. Consumerism is, in the ideological philosophy of each book, surrounded by real-life propaganda of feminine action and behavior. New outfits on perfect bodies and new hats are imperatives.

Stoneley examines the relation between consumerism, girls' literature, and the construction of the feminine self. He asks, "In relation to the characters and readers of girls' fiction... is the girl buying, or is she sold?" (Stoneley 5). I take his treatment of the consumerist spectacle and carry it beyond purely material goods into ideology. I put the political into the equation and examine what sort of messages readers are receiving in the popular fiction of World War II, specifically the participation of popular fiction in the propaganda of the war effort. What are the readers being sold on how to work and how to look and how to behave? Stoneley points out that Baudrillard recognizes, "The subject's desires are at least as important as his or her labor power... there is then a process of 'ideological binding' at work, whereby the subject's 'own' desires become hopelessly tied into the requirements of supply and demand" (Stoneley 5).

Stoneley theorizes that the emergence of consumerism created a notion of femininity that dominated popular culture and that girls' literature is a major vehicle for consumerist instruction. "Consumerism was and is an especially effective means of discipline and control precisely because it seems to liberate and empower" (Stoneley 5). If consumerism is meant as a means of buying ideas and acts as well as things, the participation and infiltration of patriotic propaganda into popular fiction becomes all the more interesting. "Like consumerism itself, fiction both empowers and constrains: it

empowers because it permits the reader to assume other guises; it constrains in the sense that to read is always to engage in the act of ‘directed invention’” (Stoneley 11). I extend Stoneley’s ideas to pertain to the Whitman Authorized Editions. The “directed invention” of the Whitman Authorized Editions is prescribed patriotism in the form of both duty and beauty.

Keeping this in mind, I utilize Dorothy Smith’s idea of “relations of rules” and Wendy Griswold’s idea of a “cultural diamond” in my close readings and analysis of the Whitman Authorized Editions and their representations of the feminine and the feminine heroic during World War II. Smith, in her book *The Everyday World as Problematic* (1987), talks about the “relations of rules” as a means of being aware of organizational relations of power in society. Griswold, in her book *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World* (1994), points to the importance of placing texts into a larger relational system of context. She uses the text, the creator, the consumer, and the social world as points on a “cultural diamond” (Griswold 1994). In the social world examined here, women and girls are of primary interest.

How then can American girls in the United States be described? Writing in 1835, Alexis du Tocqueville pondered American girlhood:

Before she has completely left childhood behind, she already thinks for herself, speaks freely, and acts on her own. All her doings are ever plain for her to see. Seldom does an American girl, whatever her age, suffer from shyness or childish ignorance. She, like the European girl, wants to please, but she knows exactly what it costs. She may avoid evil,

but at least she knows what it is; her morals are pure rather than her mind chaste (Hine 1999 99; de Tocqueville 1835).

Girls and single women were involved in the first big push of American industrialization, comprising a key component of the labor force that made the textile industry possible. In an ironic effect of history, girls made the clothes that took clothes making out of the domestic sphere, where girls made the clothes¹². In textile mills across New England in the early nineteenth century, girls as young as nine years old worked as factory girls, or mill girls. Preceding mandatory schooling by a century, girls lived in a work environment where the main interaction was with their peers, but there was hardly enough time for the influence that marked the public school experience of the twentieth century. A typical millwork day in 1835 began at five in the morning and ended at seven in the evening (Mintz 2004). At the same time, increased wealth brought by industrialization demanded more child labor. The middle class required domestic servants, who were most often girls of teenage years. There was huge migration from farms and rural areas in America and Europe to urban American cities. In 1895, one out of every six children was still dying after no more than five years of life. Even with factory work, girls were more likely than boys to live at home (though they tended to work at other people's homes), and no matter where they worked, girls were more likely to gift their wages to their families to provide needed support (Hine 1999; Mintz 2004). Education depended on class, ethnicity, and geographic location. The urban middle class stayed in school longest, with the rural and urban working class leaving early to go back to work. In many recently immigrated families and ethnic groups, it was common for the

¹² Friedan's interpretation of women being displaced by technology in their own homes as part of the tragedy of feminine post-war demobilization echoes this earlier trend. See *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

daughters to quit school and work, so the boys could remain learning (Hine 1999; Mintz 2004).

The changed face of girlhood began in the late nineteenth century. On the one hand, middle class girls were more physically active than they had been; on the other hand, the Gibson Girl appeared in the late 1890s. Drawn by Charles Dana Gibson, the Gibson girl was unparalleled in popularity and was referred to as, “the American girl to all the world” (Gibson 1969). She had an hourglass figure, upswept long hair with falling tendrils, and long, shapely legs. She was confident and aware of her sexuality. She was largely untouchable, but her clothes often fell off her shoulder as she looked back at her audience: she was a new girl role model, pretty and not afraid or ashamed to show it, and she permeated popular culture (Patterson 2005). Though the girl’s bicycle was introduced in 1890, and girls’ groups like the Camp Fire Girls and Girl Scouts were formed in 1910 and 1912, respectively (Brumberg 1998; Mintz 2004), it was the Gibson Girl who brought girlhood away from self-accomplishment and into self-advertisement. She was a fashion icon of untouchable yet accessible sexuality, the girl every girl could emulate. In the years that followed, and with the added influence of flapper girl images after World War I, girls cut their hair, shortened their skirts, wore stockings and heels, and started smoking. Girl-based industries sprouted, and girls started spending their money on skin creams, diet tonics, and sanitary products. Image became identity. Where early Victorian girls judged themselves on their demure modesty and behavior, the modern girl judged herself on her bold appearance and image (Brumberg 1998; Justice-Malloy 1998; Mintz 2004). Visible desirability was the new currency.

In 1904, the term adolescence was coined by G. Stanley Hall in his popular book, *Adolescence*. He introduced the cultural construction of adolescence as its own developmental and social category (Mintz 2004; Schrum 2004). The word “teenager” came into popular use in the 1930s and 1940s (Hine 1999; Palladino 1996). *The New York Times* first used the word “teenager” in an article on October 18, 1942 about the selling of war stamps to high school girls through Saks, the department store¹³ (Massoni 2007 26; “Tricks” 1942). The girl of thirteen to nineteen was officially no longer a child, but an adolescent, with space and time between her parents’ home and her marriage. She had years of living on her own, working, socializing, and supporting herself. Work outside the home, the image of the Gibson Girl, motion picture stars, and series fiction all provided models that moved girls beyond Victorian and Edwardian guidelines of modesty and home life, and girls reacted.

During World War I over 100,000 women worked in defense factories, but most women workers labored in traditional feminine fields, and only 5 percent of the women war workers were new to the workforce. Most temporarily transferred from low-skill, low wage jobs to capitalize on the wartime economy. While some women were allowed to rise out of feminine-designated work, most in government service and private industry were forced to resign shortly after the Armistice. A 1919 Women’s Bureau study found that women were disallowed in 60 percent of the examinations that led to civil service work. Even the women workers of the Women’s Bureau were the victims of gender discrimination: their salaries were limited to \$1,800 while similar jobs held by men

¹³ The full title of *The New York Times* article is “Tricks Bring Crowd to Buy War Stamps.” The use of the word “tricks” is another example of publishing awareness of the uses of persuasion and propaganda to spread the national war message to the female audience. Massoni notes also, “The first editorial reference” mentioning teenage girls “is in relation to a consumer event. The first advertisement using the word “teenager” in *The New York Times* was October 4, 1934 (Massoni 26 – 27).

workers in the Bureau of Labor Statistics were granted \$3,000 (Chafe 1974 53; Hartman 1984).

Once World War I ended, there was no inclination to continue any support of women in the workforce that would resemble emancipation or even equality. Though two million women did join the workforce in the 1920's, the actual proportion of women over fourteen who were in the workforce only increased by the aforementioned 1 percent, not a huge number by any standard, especially taking into account factors such as population growth and how many women were eligible and able to work (Chafe 1974 55).

Meanwhile, high school enrollment increased almost 400 percent between 1910 and 1930, and girls comprised over half the student population. By 1930, the federal government worked to expand schooling even further, as both a means of educating the youth of America and as a means of keeping youth out of the shrinking labor market during the Depression.

Decennial census data shows that in 1910 25.2 percent of American women fourteen years and older were in the wage work force. In 1920 the number lowered to 23.3 percent of women fourteen years and older. In 1930 the number rose 1 percent to 24.3 percent. In 1940, 25.4 percent of women fourteen years and older were in the workforce, only .2 percent more than women fourteen years and older in 1910 (Oppenheimer 3). During World War II, over six million women joined the wage work force, increasing the size of the female labor force by 50 percent. "Temporarily at least, the war caused a greater change in women's economic status and outlook than a prior half century of reform..." (Chafe 1991 121).

The kinds of jobs women were allowed to work and hold changed as well, with limits. In 1900, most women who worked outside the home worked in domestic service, agriculture, unskilled factory work, and as teachers. Stenography and typing, listed as the eighth most popular job held by women in 1910, moved to the third most popularly held job by 1930. By 1940, before the onset of World War II, 45 percent of women worked in non-manual white-collar jobs outside domestic service, farming, and factory jobs (Chafe 1974 55).

The history of American ideals of feminine beauty is in part a consumer history driven by market and popular supply and demand. This also involves a cultural history of fashion in which the production of image and identity are tied in with the working lives of the girls and women wearing the fashions as well as the popular culture notions of what constitutes beauty.

What works in one decade does not necessarily work in the next. By the 1920s clothing was made outside the home in ready-to-wear styles, and women took cues from advertisements in magazines and newspapers and images of famous movie stars. In the late 1930s in a study conducted about why girls cared so much about fashion, girls replied that it was because they were girls, and caring about fashion was an inherent characteristic of being a member of the feminine sex (Schrum 28). Dress was their identifier. By the 1940s clothing manufacturers and retailers were making and marketing clothing specifically for teenagers, with “teen” sizes for the younger teens and “junior” sizes for older teens and college-aged girls (Cook 2004; Massoni 2007; Schrum 2004).

The New Woman of the 1920s was popularly seen as one who eschewed social convention, and was able to do so through economic independence gained by joining the

labor force. She bobbed her hair, shortened her skirts, flouted her knees, smoked, drank, danced, and flapped. She won the vote and joined the wage work force, establishing her capability and independence. The number of women in the labor force grew from 8,429,707 to 10,679,048 in the decade, and most of them were single and in the city (Chafe 1974 50). In fact, the mythology of the partying flapper of 1920s represented a minority. By the end of the 1920s, 57 percent of women doing wage work, those who supposedly comprised the Flapper phenomenon, were either foreign-born white women in domestic service or African-American women in domestic service, not at all like the partying office girl image (Chafe 1974 58).

The most visible change concerned practices of beauty. Propriety was out, cosmetics and diets were in (Brumberg 1998; Mintz 2004; Vallone 1995). By the end of the Roaring Twenties, deodorant use and shaving were habitual for many American girls, as was tanning and mouthwash. By 1935, Kotex came in three sizes, and one was even called “Fibs” (supposedly to ensure that using Kotex would support the fib that a girl wasn’t having her period) (Merskin 1999; Schrum 2004).

The Depression complicated popular opinion about women in the labor force. In 1936, public opinion polls asked the question, “Do you believe that married women should have a full time job outside the home?” 15 percent of the national total responded in the affirmative and 48 percent responded in the negative (Oppenheimer 44-5). During the Depression with its defining unemployment and economic duress, there were not enough jobs for the men who traditionally formed the labor force. As such, there were both official government and unofficial public attitudes in popular culture against women joining the workforce. There was federal legislation against married women taking jobs

and a general propaganda campaign from government, mass media, and even labor groups against women working (Kessler-Harris 2003 252-258). However, women wage workers continued to work, and their numbers rose by 1.1 percent.

In the 1940s, the first magazines designed specifically for teenager girls hit the newsstands. *Calling All Girls* debuted in July of 1941 and *Seventeen* in September of 1944. *Calling All Girls* focused on the younger teens, containing “subjects that appeal to girls of 9 to 14” (*Calling All Girls* September 1941). Added to the fact that mass produced consumer goods largely replaced homemade goods, and advertising of these consumer goods increased 600 percent in magazines and 200 percent in newspapers between 1916 and 1926, and advertisements were more about guiding girls to be socially acceptable through fashion, the girl consumer market exploded (Cook 2004; Schrum 2004).

In World War II, the clothing that matched ideas of beauty in turn matched the stage of what was expected of women in working life. Labor and aesthetics complied with each other’s prerogatives. The clothing matched and supported the three stages of the role of woman, from homemaker to worker to homemaker again. Ready-to-wear fitted clothing, with the occasional and exciting advent of pants, represented the first and third stages, and economy dressing, work suits, and military outfits marked the second stage. When women worked in the home, easy fashion was suitable to domestic labor and life. When women worked outside the home, clothing was again suitable, this time with specially designed clothing to match wage work of factory and military life.

Many women war workers of World War II comprised those who had to work to maintain a survivable standard of living, and were working outside the home before the

war, though these are not the women addressed in propaganda or reflected in the Whitman Authorized Editions. According to a major Women's Bureau survey of ten major war production areas, almost 30 percent of women had been in the work force for ten years, 50 percent for thirty years, and only 25 percent for less than two years. The women who comprised the workforce were mainly working class women, single, married, divorced, and widowed, working to survive. Only about 33 percent of the women surveyed described themselves as housewives. The rest were women accustomed to working who appreciated the job opportunities the war economy provided, having lost their previous employment in the Depression economy. Many were previously employed in domestic service and especially appreciated the pay raise that war work provided. The women were not upper or even middle class. Only 46 percent of the women workers surveyed graduated from high school and 10 percent had some college education. Of the women working, solid percentages were black laborers. They too had been previously employed and used the war economy as an opportunity to turn to jobs requiring higher skills and granting higher wages. The women workers were working because they had to (U.S. Department of Labor 1946).

Prior to World War II women workers were primarily limited to jobs of lower skills and lower wages. World War II changed their options not because of any general cultural recognition of women's merit and capability, but because men disappeared from the work force at the same time job opportunities increased. The supply and demand of the wartime economy opened a door for women workers to precisely the jobs to which they had previously been denied access. War industry work was skilled labor with higher wages and the added benefit of unionization, though unions then were not known for

being supportive of women's rights. War industry work wages in plants and factories averaged 40 percent higher than work in traditional prewar feminine fields. In Detroit, for example, the average weekly wage of women in factories was \$40.35, an absolute improvement over the average wage of \$24.10 to \$29.75 that women earned in traditional feminine fields such as restaurant service and retail sales. Women reacted accordingly and flocked to defense industry labor (Honey 1984; Milkman 1987).

In 1939 women held 8 percent of production jobs, while in 1944 women held 25 percent of production jobs. In 1943 45.3 percent of women factory workers were in the higher paid positions of production and out of clerical and service positions. By the end of 1943, women accounted for 40 percent of workers in the aircraft industry, around 34 percent of all ammunition workers, 10.6 percent of steel production workers, 10 percent of shipping workers, and 8 percent of railroad workers. In the ten major production areas surveyed by the Women's Bureau, 50 percent of women in trade and domestic service left for industry jobs and 66 percent of women in food and beverage jobs left for industry work. The war brought previously inconceivable opportunity for women. While it remains true that most women did stay in feminine fields of lesser skill, wages, and job security, a significant number made the jump to the higher skill, higher wages, and secure jobs of traditional male dominated fields. Some women became, for example, truck drivers and postal workers (U.S. Department of Labor 1946; Honey 1984; Milkman 1987; Colman 1995).

The public perception of women war workers during World War II was quite different from reality, as referred to earlier. The common cultural portrayal was women workers as young, white, middle-class and working not for survival or even financial gain

but out of sheer patriotic fervor for the country in general and men on the warfront in particular, a description that also fits the women of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls. The kinds of messages disseminated through the various media touted altruism as the ultimate feminine imperative.

Initial attempts by government to mobilize women into the workforce met with resistance and ended with failure. Though the government predicted the labor shortage and women's availability to ameliorate the situation, industry was reluctant to the point of refusal in hiring women for traditionally male fields of work. The War Manpower Commission and the War Department suggested, with full expectation of compliance, that employers hire women in the war economy industries such as aircraft work, riveting, etc., insisting that women, being available, were suitable for the work.

Employers, however, just as adamantly refused on the grounds that women were unfit and therefore unsuitable and so certainly not available for the work. Popular media concurred. In September of 1941 *Life* magazine ran an eight-page article valorizing the housewife. Photographs showed a 32 year-old wife and mother of three in Kankakee, IL blissfully performing domestic duties. The accompanying text reads:

In the movies, in fiction and advertising in women's magazines, the modern U.S. housewife is portrayed as the sort of woman who keeps her figure, her husband, her makeup and her humor no matter how tough the going. One effect of this constant propaganda is that millions of U.S. women are doing just that (*Life* 1941 78-85).

Since direct suggestions were not working and commands were out of the legal realm of democratic government, alternative action was necessary. The solution was a

jump into manipulation of public opinion through propaganda. Though government could not overtly command employers to hire women, it could influence the public to change their opinions about women and working, and thus affect the mindset of employers and potential employees alike and solve the worker shortage problem. The jump into propaganda efforts, however, was affected by difficult starts that contributed to delayed mobilization (Jones 1976; Koppes & Black 1977).

The Office of War Information (OWI) was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 13, 1942¹⁴. President Roosevelt's initial aversion to government involvement with propaganda was due in part to the global distaste for propaganda because of Hitler's extensive use of it and in part to his personal memories of George Creel's actions as head of the Committee on Public Opinion during World War I. The distrust of propaganda by many in government was also due in part to Axis propaganda efforts and the power of uncontrolled rumors and in part to the memory of Creel.

Created by Executive Order a week after the United States entered World War I, Creel's supported mission in the Committee on Public Opinion was to rally American opinion behind the war effort through a media explosion of posters and pamphlets, war bond sales, and sometimes live volunteer speakers who preached the war effort during intermissions at movie houses. Creel termed his campaign "the greatest adventure in advertising" and firmly believed the ends justified the means (Winkler 1974 3). His committee used the dangers of isolationism as a means of drumming up support for the American effort in the war against the Germans, and some credit him for directly or indirectly being responsible for the informal American renaming of sauerkraut as "liberty

¹⁴ For an extensive and clarifying history of OWI, see Winkler, "Politics and Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942 – 1945."

cabbage” (Winkler 3). After World War I, Creel and his efforts were remembered more for efforts of nationalism that instilled hatred and hysteria towards non-Americans than for patriotic contributions to any war effort (Gary 1999; Sproule 1997). Though his lessons of “advertising” as a method for changing public attitude were soon recalled, the discordant entities, philosophical positions, and preferred methods of government agencies in charge of disseminating information slowed mobilization success.

Axis propaganda was reported by government agencies such as the Office of War Information, Office of Facts and Figures, and the Bureau of Intelligence. On Sunday morning, March 29, 1942, OWI announced the release by OFF of a pamphlet, “Divide and Conquer,” which documented fifteen propaganda objectives in the United States. The release reported, “The pamphlet describes German propaganda methods in continental Europe and warns that the United States is now being subjected to a ‘total barrage’ of the Nazi strategy of terror” (Advance Release OFF March 29 1942). The pamphlet itself quotes *Mein Kampf* extensively:

At the bottom of their hearts the great masses of the people are more likely to be poisoned than to be consciously and deliberately bad. In the primitive simplicity of their minds they are more easily victimized by a large than by a small lie, since they sometimes tell petty lies themselves but would be ashamed to tell big ones... An untruth of that sort would never come into their heads, and they cannot believe that others would indulge in so vast an impudence as gross distortion. Even after being enlightened, they will long continue to doubt and waver, and will still believe there must be some truth behind it somewhere. For this reason

some part of even the boldest lie is sure to stick – a fact which all the great liars and liars’ societies in this world know only too well, and make base use of (Quoted in Divide and Conquer 1942 2).

In 1942, the OWI led a broad propaganda campaign. Among other missions, it worked to get women involved in the war effort. A large part of the push was getting women out of the home and into the work force. The designers of World War II propaganda acknowledged the power of story and the reading experience and moved to actively manipulate it. One example of their efforts included a series of photographs depicting the similarity of domestic work and factory work. One set showed a Mrs. Luella Tyler hanging up her clean sheets on her line to dry in one photograph and washing and drying aluminum sheets in a factory in another, with her body and materials placed in careful symphony (Roeder 1993 74) (see fig.2.6).

President Franklin D. Roosevelt instructed OWI to come up with a program that would create guidelines for the press, radio, and motion pictures detailing how to instruct the American citizenry about the war effort on the homefront through their various mediums; how to act as intermediary between federal agencies and the radio and motion picture agencies; and how to coordinate the war-information activities of all federal agencies. The Domestic Branch of the office declared itself run by a “strategy of truth” and sought mainly to convey to the American public why the war was necessary (Winkler 1974 5). Roosevelt appointed as Director liberal newsman Elmer Davis, who believed firmly in the dissemination of information. “This is a people’s war, and to win it the people should know as much about it as they can. This Office will do its best to tell the truth and nothing but the truth” (Davis 1943; Winkler 1974 47; Honey 1984 31).

Though instructed to work with federal agencies, Davis and his officers found it increasingly difficult as the war went on to obtain permission from the American military to disseminate accurate information. Eager to be effective, the OWI settled for raising morale through the culture industry rather than telling the truth about the war (Winkler 1975; Roeder 1993) and worked with the media industries to maintain and improve nationalistic fervor for the war. As Davis said, “The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people’s minds is to let it in through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized” (Koppes & Black 88).

The Magazine Bureau, established in June 1942 and headed by journalist Dorothy Ducas (married name Herzog), a good friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, was created to educate and encourage publishers, editors, and writers to promote the publicity needs of government agencies in support of the war effort. The Bureau disseminated posters, pamphlets, and photographs to publishing houses. The main function of the bureau was to gather all the propaganda into one publication, the bi-monthly *Magazine War Guide*. Publication began in July of 1942 and ended in April of 1945. The office handled two major campaigns: Women in Necessary Services begun in the fall of 1943 and Women in the War begun in the spring of 1944. The fall campaign dealt with labor force jobs not directly involved with the war industry, jobs such telegraph operators, clerks, and taxi drivers, and aimed to convince women to take the jobs in the spirit of self-sacrifice and patriotic duty. The spring campaign concerned itself with convincing women to take the temporary but necessary military jobs involved with ending a war so as to open up

permanent homefront positions for men. One campaign urged women to join the labor force and the second campaign urged them out of it.

Private publishers, authors, and artists were not averse to overt and oblique messaging and the reasoning was both patriotic and economic. Directly after Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, at the suggestion of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., popular mystery writer Rex Stout, of Detective Nero Wolfe fame, created the Writers' War Board in January of 1942. Thousands of writers joined in commitment to write songs, musicals, plays, comics, short stories, and novels including patriotic propaganda. Oscar Hammerstein and Pearl Buck were members. Rex Stout catalogued the four thousand members by genre, expertise, and region, making it easier to contact the best writer for each cause in every pocket of the United States, and created a board for management and committees aimed at fulfilling specific propaganda messages. Its first annual report declared, "[We] are united in the belief that the Board should furnish whole-hearted support of any measures which the government considers necessary to a speedy and complete victory over the Axis" (Howell 1971).

The magazine industry set up a group, the Magazine Advisory Committee, to ensure optimum communication between government propaganda machinery and the magazine publishing industry. In fear of rationing, particularly of paper goods, publishers complied as a means to curry favor with the government and be allowed to remain in business. While some editors demurred from biasing informational news stories, all were amenable to modulating fictional stories.

Prior to the establishment of the OWI, leaders in the advertising industry had approached government officials, interested in setting up cooperative efforts for using

advertising to support the Allied war effort. Unsuccessful, the advertisers instead formed the War Advertising Council (WAC) in November of 1941. Similar in purpose to the OWI, its goal was to disseminate information about the war to the American public. At the founding meeting, James Webb Young of leading agency Young and Rubicam pronounced, “We have within our hands the greatest aggregate means of mass education and persuasion the world has ever seen” (Honey 1984 31). The industry was not entirely altruistic in intent. Because capitalism and big business had failed to take care of the American populace in the Depression, both capitalism and big business were not enjoying a very good reputation. By connecting American products with American patriotism, corporations had a prime opportunity to improve their name and make consumerist habits synonymous with being a good American (Fox 1975).

Ducas’s main duty as head of the Magazine Bureau was the *Magazine War Guide*. Published twice a month, it was the major line of communication between OWI and the magazine industry. It began publication in July of 1942, just one month after the Bureau was established, and ran through April of 1945. Over time it was sent to four hundred to six hundred magazines that had a combined readership of more than 140 million people. *Magazine War Guide* provided publishers overt directions about the new idea of American femininity and appropriate feminine wage work in the wartime economy. It even gave a three-month lead on desired topics, giving editors time to produce the preferred content. (Honey 37-38). The *Guide* suggested presenting female characters performing work necessary for the war effort including industrial labor, factory work, aircraft, nursing and clerical labor. The *Guide*, following the appeal of romance and adventure fiction, thought that if the jobs could be portrayed as romantic

and adventurous, and if the female characters performing them could be presented as pretty and glamorous, then more women would seek employment. And if the work was an integral, almost ubiquitous part of the fictional characters' lives, then perhaps that too would make it more attractive for women to seek work outside the domestic sphere, and that both women and men would support their efforts.

The domestic homefront effort was also necessary. In the *Magazine War Guide Supplement* for Love and Western Love Magazines of September 1942 it was recommended that stories remind citizens of the value of the collective homefront effort, emphasizing that, "Fiction should bring out the... spiritual satisfaction of serving the common cause." The October 30th 1942 *Magazine War Guide Supplement* for Confession Magazines re-iterated, "It should be easy to weave stories bringing out the many ways in which, by united efforts, all the wide range of things that need to be done if we are to win this war can be done more efficiently." The October 15th 1942 *Magazine War Guide Supplement* for Confession Magazines left no doubt as to the intent of its imperative: "It is for the women of America to say whether America shall live slave or free."

The *Magazine War Guide* was not the only conveyor of prescriptive dictums. The OWI used all forms of mass media: film, newspaper, radio, books and magazines as well as photographs, posters, and pamphlets. One example is the ultimate feminine icon of World War II, Rosie the Riveter, who is discussed in Chapter 3.

Other feminine icons were presented through film. During the same time period, the Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) was formed in June of 1942, headed by liberal Nelson Poynter. As Davis said, the motion picture could be "the most powerful instrument of propaganda in the world, whether it tried to be or not" (Koppes & Black

89). That summer, the film industry had in some stage of production over two hundred films that addressed the war, mostly indirectly as background to standard plots of adventure, mystery and romance. To help make the war and the war effort a more purposefully direct presence, the BMP published a manual titled *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, putting forth the official OWI interpretation of how the war should be disseminated to the public. The introduction to section five of the manual is called “The Home Front: What We Must Do, What We Must Give Up to Win the Fight” and details the call specifically: “This is total war. That means there is war work for every American. Motion pictures can render valuable service in helping the civilian understand the what and the why of his contribution to the war effort” (U.S. Office of War Information 1942).

The manual itself, beyond press purposes and introductions, is a clear reflector of New Deal ideals and the Cultural Front of the 1930s. It terms the war as a people’s struggle of international proportions. It is not a class war, a race war, or even a national war. Rather, it is a war against fascism and for democracy, a war for a world in which every man, woman, and child of every class, race, and age would have a right to a decent standard of living, employment, housing, health, and happiness. The war is presented as a fight for a common man, a popular man, equal across the globe. The manual reads: “Any form of racial discrimination or religious intolerance, special privileges of any citizen are manifestations of Fascism, and should be exposed as such” (Koppes & Black 92).

Complexities come in the interpretation of such directives. The manual asks directors to ask themselves a basic question before they make a movie: namely, “Will this picture help win the war?” Studios could and did decide what means of encouragement

would constitute such help, and had their own ideas about why the war was being fought and for whom. And the film industry was first and foremost a business: storytelling formulas had to be adhered to that would make the industry money: commerce before patriotism. In a divergence of interests between the profit motive and the patriotic motive, capitalism was the bottom line. And politics across the OWI, the BMP, and studios and directors were not always in agreement.

By December of 1942, the BMP requested that all studios send scripts to the BMP for review before production (Lingeman 184). The BMP had no legal recourse to insist the studios do so, but Poynter and company did earn some cooperation. Unfortunately, some of the cooperation introduced them to scripts with isolationist, violent, and xenophobic tendencies – everything the OWI and BMP and the U.S. were supposedly in the war to fight against¹⁵. *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil* and the other Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls had some instances of such attitudes, but mainly focused on formulaic presentation of wartime ideologies of American femininity.

Other films formed a more satisfying compromise, for propaganda and profit. *Mrs. Miniver* was a film based on the book by Joyce Maxtone Graham (otherwise known as Jan Struther) with Greer Garson as an English housewife stoically enduring wartime conditions and promoting the war effort. It was the highest box-office grossing movie of

¹⁵ For an in-depth analysis of the BMP and the *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, especially regarding the liberal politics of most of the BMP members who tried to keep the films free of “any form of racial discrimination or religious intolerance, special privileges of any citizen” as they “are manifestations of Fascism, and should be exposed as such,” see Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, “What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945,” *Journal of American History* 64-1 (June 1977): 87-105. The story of Twentieth Century Fox’s *Little Tokyo USA* is particularly compelling, as the BMP recommended against it, decrying the “Gestapo Methods” of the American characters against Japanese-Americans and asked, “Did somebody mention that we are presumably fighting for the preservation of the Bill of Rights?” and called the film, “An Invitation to the Witch Hunt.” The U.S. Army, however, approved and the producer Colonel Jason Joy was aggressive in his support, and so the movie was made.

1942 and won six Academy Awards, earning praise from Churchill himself, who sent studio head Louis B. Mayer a telegram saying the film was “propaganda worth 100 battleships” (Hoopes 1994 99-102; Yellin 2004 100). *Casablanca*, the 1942 Academy Award winner, depicted the international resistance movement, the suppression of the need of the individual in face of the greater good of the larger community, and the idea of the U.S. as the ultimate haven for those fighting for such democratic ideals.

In the summer of 1943, the idealism of the OWI and BMP changed. Poynter and the other New Deal officers left the organizations, leaving Ulric Bell in charge. Initially a New Deal politician, during the war he advocated absolute censorship of any themes or portrayals he viewed as uninspiring. He worked closely with the military and their ideas of security rather than political ideas or idealism, and changed the accepted concept accordingly. By the fall of 1943 every studio except Paramount let OWI read all of their scripts, and Paramount discussed theirs. In 1943 OWI read 466 scripts; in 1944, 744. 390 cases were documented with content deemed inappropriate and of these, seventy-one percent were changed to the OWI’s satisfaction. It was no longer in the studio’s interest to make a film that didn’t comply with the second-generation OWI and BMP. Mobilization was complete.

In October of 1941, Roosevelt succumbed to pressure and the undeniable power of story and created the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) headed by Librarian of Congress and Pulitzer Prize winning poet Archibald MacLeish. MacLeish was anti-Fascism, anti-isolationism, yet also anti-Popular Front. In his personal writing he urged America and its artists to join the war effort. As Director of the office with the unfortunate acronym of “OFF” he promised to promulgate only a “strategy of truth” with

no hyperbolic if rousing “bally-hoo methods” and to present facts and figures that would be “neither perverted nor colored” (Winkler 14). Heading a unit alternately nicknamed the “Office of Fun and Frolic” and the “Office of Fuss and Feathers,” and with a lack of cooperation from Roosevelt and the military branches, MacLeish argued by February of 1942 for the closing of OFF in favor of a broader, better organized information dissemination system which he would categorically prefer not to head, recommending instead a member of the press with whom the press as a whole might more willingly cooperate. In his recommendation letter to Budget Director Harold D. Smith he wrote, “I hardly need to add, in case it has any relevance, that I am NOT the man” for the job as head of this recommended new information system (Jones 1976; Winkler 1974).

Other offices within government also dueled for control of centralized propaganda and mobilization efforts. The Office of the Coordinator of Information, headed by reserve-Colonel William J. Donovan, was convinced of the power of propaganda through Nazi example, and believed the United States should use the same tool for American causes, with negligible allegiance to facts and figures. The Foreign Information Service, headed by playwright and presidential speech-writer Robert E. Sherwood and created in August of 1941, operated with the intention of informing the world, domestically and internationally, of the ideals and aims of U.S. domestic and foreign policies. Sherwood was a fervent interventionist and like MacLeish used his personal writing to express his views and to urge other artists to actively follow them. In May of 1940, for example, he took out a full-page advertisement reading, “STOP HITLER NOW,” in newspapers in 100 cities across America for William Allen White’s Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. He gathered other writers in the arts and journalism who shared his

opinions and spread information through, among other means, the first iteration of the radio program the Voice of America (Jones 1976; Winkler 1974).

The disjunction between these department offices, especially after Pearl Harbor, led to the Bureau of the Budget, headed by Milton S. Eisenhower, conducting a survey of war information needs in February of 1942. The survey recommended better liaison practices and the Bureau of the Budget proposed a consolidation of domestic information dissemination into one agency. On June 14, 1942, after securing Elmer Davis, author, journalist and popular radio commentator as Director, Roosevelt signed into creation with Executive Order No. 9182 the Office of War Information (OWI). Edward R. Murrow called Davis “fair” and “tough minded.” The order mandated in a list of Director duties that the first duty was to:

Formulate and carry out, through the use of press, radio, motion-picture, and other facilities, information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government.

In his article, “OWI has a Job,” a revision of statements he made before the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, Davis outlines his own philosophy about and commitment to OWI. The second paragraph begins:

There is ample proof that if we do our job right, we may succeed in shortening the war. Great generals of all time have recognized the value of psychological warfare and propaganda as adjuncts to the work of their fighting forces (Davis 1943 5).

He continues, calling attention to Hitler as “the most expert and successful propagandist of our time,” and dispelling distasteful association by observing:

Propaganda is an instrument; it may employ truth instead of falsehood in its operation... and it may be directed to worthy instead of unworthy purposes. To condemn the instrument, because the wrong people use it for wrong purposes, is like condemning the automobile because criminals use it for a getaway (Davis 7).

OWI’s Motion Picture Bureau worked with the film industry and the Radio Bureau with radio stations and made suggestions for war-related dramatizations. According to the charter of OWI, the office had conflicting duties, “such as publicizing the administration’s domestic program and giving the public an accurate account of the government’s mobilization efforts” (Weinberg 1968 81). Davis was forced to rely heavily on advertising and radio executives to run the government promotional campaigns selling bonds and promoting mobilization. He depended on the Bureaus to run the campaigns to convince the American public to do what the government wanted them to do. While Davis was still devoted to disseminating the truth, he grew more and more inclined to propagating persuasion. Some writers inside OWI were uncomfortable with the balance. Gardner Cowles, Jr., a midwestern newspaper publisher and founder of *Look* magazine, was director of the domestic branch of OWI and handled most of the promotional propaganda concerning the homefront. The staff was divided between writers who believed in disseminating news about the war, and advertisers who believed in selling the war. Cowles delivered promotional propaganda advertising activism such as war bond

purchasing, salvaging, and rationing, and his methods were most akin to advertising techniques (Koppes & Black 1977; Winkler 1974).

When Cowles reorganized the domestic branch in February 1943, some writers quit over what they perceived to be the sacrifice of truth in favor of outright manipulation and exhortation, especially as the new management was all in entertainment and advertising (Weinberg 1968). Writers held a four-hour meeting with Cowles, complaining about pamphlets being suppressed unless they were “made more palatable.” Cowles and Davis made no policy changes, and writers quit and released a press statement with their concerns “about high-pressure promoters who prefer slick salesmanship to honest information” (Weinberg 87). Cowles hired William Lewis, former vice-president of Columbia Broadcasting System and James Allen, sometimes motion-picture executive, who in turn hired Price Gilbert, former vice-president of Coca-Cola, to head the Bureau of Graphics and Printing (Weinberg 85). All favored a new flavor of information dissemination, what they thought the public should hear, rather than what was real about the war. The advertising element, the concept of selling, of persuasion over presentation, spurred mobilization. Government, private industry, and media rallied around this new flavor of propaganda. One major effort was the massive dissemination of the kinds of messages that would mobilize women into the work force.

During World War II, over six million women joined the labor force, increasing the number of women working outside the home by 50 percent. Government and popular culture media made every effort to encourage and convince women to work. In the first few months of the war, the attitudes of the 1930s largely prevailed, and employers resisted hiring women in any jobs let alone jobs that utilized non-traditional feminine

skill sets. Economist Margeurite Thibert explained, “It is not easy to forget the propaganda of two decades even in the face of a national emergency such as a great war” (Kessler-Harris 274; Wolfson 47). A 1942 survey of 12,000 factories showed employer acceptance of hiring women workers in only 29 percent of the jobs available. If women must be hired, it was preferred it would only be for traditional domestic skills, such as sewing. A September 1942 Intelligence Report, “Mobilizing Manpower for War,” noted that half of the sample surveyed approved, without qualification, of the employment of women in war industry. Five percent disapproved, and the remaining expressed qualified approval, “the two reservations most frequently mentioned being that women should not be asked to do work beyond their strength and that family life should not be disrupted.” The idea of women working on farms was rejected by 66 percent of respondents and “two respondents in ten vehemently rejected it.” The report surmised, “The necessity for women accepting jobs in war plants is not generally appreciated. Less than half of those interviewed believed that it is now necessary” (Mobilizing Manpower for War 14-15).

As there were still men on the homefront, such resistance was not a problem. A Women’s Bureau official noted that the public could not “countenance the use of women as long as men could be found to do the emergency work” (Women and the War 3). Even government sponsored vocational training programs were reluctant to teach women, in a catch-22 reasoning that predicted industry would not hire women. Government would not train women because industry would not hire women, and industry would not hire women because they were not trained. As of December 1, 1941 only 1 percent of the 1,775,000 workers who had received special wartime production defense training were women (Chafe 1974 136).

Pearl Harbor changed everything. Available men disappeared from the homefront and resistance to women workers was no longer feasible for government or industry. Within a week after Pearl Harbor the American Management Association turned to the Women's Bureau for help in attracting women to the workforce. By April, the 1 percent of women in federally funded training programs rose to 13 percent. By July, the number of jobs for which factories were willing and now eager to hire women rose to 55 percent (Chafe 1974 137). Between 1900 and 1940 the median age of women in the labor force rose to over thirty years old, and 30.6 percent of women ages twenty-five to forty-four were working in 1940 as opposed to 18.1 percent of the same age group in 1900. Married women were only 15 percent of the female labor force in 1900 and rose to 35 percent of working women in 1940.

Reflecting these changes, the first few books in the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls Series are split into two types: those that retain pre-war focus on girls as pretty and spunky, having earnest adventures, and those that bring mention of the war into play. The first group has no labor imperative and a domestic aesthetic; the second group hints at a labor imperative and keeps the domestic aesthetic. Two involve the character licensing of actress Deanna Durbin and the other two involve the licensing of actress Bonita Granville and the introduction of a typical young model "from the famous school for professional models conducted by John Robert Powers," a modeling agency still in business today.

Deanna Durbin is a perfect example of cross media and market utilization. She starred in top-grossing films, even winning a special Academy Award with Mickey Rooney, and spurred fan clubs across the country and into the United Kingdom, including

major World War II allies of the United States. She sold so many clothes, bags, umbrellas, and soap, complete outfits from inside to out, that her name was ubiquitous in popular ideas of beauty. Clothing designer and Popular Front social critic and intellectual Elizabeth Hawes admitted, “If you are going to design clothes for white collar girls, you will study them, know their offices, where they eat, live, dance, where they go for vacations... If you find that they care what Deanna Durbin thinks, then you have to care too.” (Denning 1998 147; Hawes 1943).

Deanna Durbin was born Edna Mae Durbin on December 4, 1921 in Winnipeg, Canada and moved to Los Angeles, California when she was little more than one year old. Her Whitman Authorized Editions appeared at the height of her career when she was twenty years old. At age twenty-eight, she quit the movie business forever, married French film director Charles Henri David, had a son, moved to the French countryside, and dropped out of the public eye.

From the outset, she was a reluctant actress. Originally trained as an opera singer, she was discovered by Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (MGM) at a concert in 1936 when she was just fifteen years old, had her name changed to Deanna, and was signed to an optional contract. Her first film is a short titled *Every Sunday* (1936) in which she starred with Judy Garland, two girls who are determined to save the job of Deanna’s character’s grandfather. It is the gumption and singing talents of both girls that ultimately save the day. When MGM inexplicably dropped her, Universal grabbed her.

Once at Universal, Deanna continued to resist the film business, crying at her first screen test, “I don’t want to be an actress, you’re all torturing me!” (Scheiner 2000 72). The studio convinced her otherwise, and she starred in her first feature film *Three Smart*

Girls (1936) as the eldest of three daughters who set out to save their bumbling, millionaire father from a gold digger, and to reunite their parents. They succeed. The film set the tone for the rest of her career, both fictionally and in real life for her signing studio: most often cast as the savior heroine in films, she is also credited for saving Universal Studios from bankruptcy with her film grosses. *Three Smart Girls* itself grossed two million dollars.

Her fame and critical acclaim spread. With Mickey Rooney in 1938, she was granted a special award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), a miniature statuette “For their significant contribution in bringing to the screen the spirit and personification of youth, and as juvenile players setting a high standard of ability and achievement” (AMPAS).

She earned a reputation for playing perfect, angelic girls. She was known for being gentle and impermeably morally good, a cross between Alice B. Emerson’s Ruth Fielding and Louisa May Alcott’s Rose of *Eight Cousins* and *Rose in Bloom*, but with more verve. As Rose was Charlie’s reward for good behavior (Alcott 1876), so too was Deanna Durbin a force in her films, which most often starred her as an indomitable adolescent in a fractured family, out to rescue or find the absent father. In *100 Men and a Girl* (1937) she gets a job for her unemployed musician father and for another ninety-nine men. Independent and filled with her own agency, she fears nothing and does everything. She continued this habit in her Whitman Authorized Editions.

Her fan club was called The Deanna Durbin Fan Club and began in 1937 after only one feature film. It was founded by four teenage girls and soon had enough funding and support to publish a newsletter, *Deanna’s Journal*. In 1938 another young fan started

a new club, The Deanna Durbin Devotees. The two groups joined, and *Deanna's Journal* was changed to *Deanna's Diary*, complete with an editor. Universal Studios supported the club, funding the journal and providing a small stipend for the officers; the free advertising inherent in fan clubs was worth the small cost (Scheiner 2000; Schrum 2004). Most of the fan letters published in the *Diary* in 1942 and 1943 were from soldiers of many nationalities all over the world. Born in Canada to British parents, she was claimed around the globe.

Fortune magazine reported that her merchandise sales totaled \$2,000,000 in 1939. *Women's Wear Daily* was filled with her advertisements. The branding was complete, if disingenuous. Her handbags, for example, came with Authentic Deanna Durbin Tickets attached to each bag, but the disclaimer was that the manufacturers licensed the name of the star to promote the bags, implying that the actress had nothing to do with the bags (Nash 2006 138-45). All in all, she was a perfect choice with which Whitman Authorized Editions could start their new publishing venture.

Deanna Durbin and the Adventure of Blue Valley: An Original Story Featuring Deanna Durbin as the Heroine by Courtesy of Universal Pictures (1941) (see fig. 2.7) was the first book in the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls. Deanna is described as someone who “liked people and people liked her. It was not only that she was lovely to look at, or that her voice was warm and sweet. Deanna’s charm went deeper than that” (Heisenfelt 1941 9). Deanna goes for her yearly summer visit to her friends’ farm in Blue Valley. The mystery begins when her friends, Mike and Neen Kelsey, unaccountably beg her not to come. Suspecting something is amiss, she perseveres in her vacation plans, determined to spend her holiday helping her friends in need. She arrives to find the

couple afraid of ghosts, terrified of sounds coming from the ravine, and seriously considering selling the farm. Deanna stands her ground:

“But nothing’s going to happen,” she said firmly.” Nothing – except we’re going to find out what this is, and put a stop to it. Why, the very idea! Somebody screaming around here like that! It makes me boiling mad!” (Heisenfelt 1941 52).

Being a “naturally sunny girl” she is filled with altruistic optimism, a Pollyanna in make-up, old enough to travel alone and make her own decisions but not yet modern enough to have her own job or live on her own.

A boy arrives almost immediately, the able-bodied Victor of the “clearest blue eyes she had ever seen” (Heisenfelt 1941 33) to help her “keep cool” (Heisenfelt 1941 65) in the face of the seeming haunting, though when he gets injured in an accident with an ax, she is almost on her own as she struggles through. Deanna, Victor and the surly but good-hearted neighbor Meyers set up watch. She meets a reporter, Mr. Porter, and he helps, too, taking pictures and sending her to a police inspector, Mr. Byrd. It turns out the new arrivals in the area, the supposedly crippled mother Mrs. Foster and her son Steve, are actually a cross-dressing criminal father-son team, the Raleighs, who want to scare the Kelseys into selling their farmland for the pristine and priceless spring of fresh water on it. The criminals are trapped, the Kelseys keep their farm, and they have the promise of money. “Maybe you wouldn’t become millionaires, but I’ll bet you’d all be mighty comfortable!” (Heisenfelt 1941 218). The first thing Mrs. Kelsey plans on buying is “a blue silk dress” from a catalog she has been admiring “and proper shoes to wear with it” (Heisenfelt 1941 219).

Polly the Powers Model and the Puzzle of the Haunted Camera (1942), the next book in the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls series story, revolves around a young model, career girl Polly, who comes home for a vacation and saves her family from financial ruin by solving a mystery and anonymously giving her relatives her hard-earned wages. Though she is a career girl, the focus is still domestically that of family. Continuing the Victorian tradition, though she makes her money as a model, she modestly refuses to acknowledge her own beauty:

“Bosh, Sooze, I’m not beautiful.”

This was a matter of divided opinion. Polly’s features were not perfection, but they were better than that – unforgettable. Framed by the lovely outline of her dark hair, her gray-green eyes were wide apart, her nose small and ever-so-slightly blunt at the tip, her mouth full and softly curved. Her face was delicately slender, with high cheek bones.

All this the camera had recorded, but much more. Polly gave a glowing reality to everything she did, whether she stood tall and slender in a shimmering gown, whether she bent over a baby buggy, or whether she sat on a rough stone wall” (Heisenfelt 1942 16).

She made her living selling products to women, and “genuinely believed in the products she helped to display” (Heisenfelt 17). And all of it was out of an altruistic desire to help her family:

“I wanted to do something at home,” Polly had said.

But Polly had done more than merely want to help. She had made sacrifices, not tremendous ones, perhaps, but sacrifices nonetheless, in

order to send home, every other week, all that she could spare... It was only natural for Polly to send the money” (Heisenfelt 21-22).

The mystery is another haunted story of false ghosts, and Polly finds her family terrified. In a nod to Depression-era literature in which the girl heroically saves the day for the family, here it is Polly, the daughter, who rescues the father from financial ruin and worry. In another nod, in the midst of all the excitement and instruction to buy, Polly and her friends throw a “hard-times party” in which everyone is allowed to wear old clothes (Heisenfelt 127). While she solves the mystery, each chapter is peppered with descriptions of the latest fashions available for teens and women. For example, in chapter one readers learn of Polly’s sister Susan’s “low heels” (13) and Polly’s dress, which her Susan admires “in every small detail... from the small crown of her soft, red hat to the tips of her trim, open-toed black slippers” (16).

The Whitman Authorized Editions match trends in the fashion industry. By World War II, the top purveyors of fashion were not the upper classes but celebrities in the form of movie stars, athletes, models, and youth peer groups. Teenagers increasingly had their own sections in department stores and girls regularly shopped without their mothers (Schrum 2004 23-25). Teens followed advertisements in magazines such as *Calling All Girls* and *Seventeen* while single and married women faithfully followed what was left of the “Big Six”: *Woman’s Home Companion*, *McCall’s*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. The entire nation read magazines such as *Life* and *Look* (Zuckerman 1998). Polly sells Wishing Cap Cosmetics, washing machines, fur coats, and bathing suits (Heisenfelt 1942 45, 59, 74) and each chapter carries a description of what it is like to work as a model.

Polly doesn't solve the mystery alone. She tries for a good half of the novel to keep problems to herself, but by page 143, when she becomes truly scared, she can no longer help herself and asks a boy to help her:

He stood squarely, a tower of strength, a friend ready and willing to listen. He would be ready to help her, too, Polly knew...

"You can trust me, Polly" she heard him say...

"I know I can trust you, Lee," Polly said. "And I need somebody to trust. I – we're in a terrible mess, Lee" (Heisenfelt 1942 143-4).

The mystery is solved, the blackmailer sent packing, and Polly goes back to work to earn more money for her family.

The second book to star Deanna Durbin brings the first hint of World War II. *Deanna Durbin and the Feather of Flame: An Original Story Featuring Deanna Durbin as the Heroine by Courtesy of Universal Pictures* (1941) (see fig. 2.8), again written by Kathryn Heisenfelt and illustrated by Hedwig Jo Meixner. The book is a forceful piece of patriotic fiction. In this mystery adventure story, Deanna Durbin inadvertently gets caught up, through the purchase of a hat, in a traitorous plot of the Feather of Flame gang to steal U.S. Government aircraft plane plans. It all begins when Deanna, as a good, altruistic girl, again sets out to help a friend, though this time, in a reorganization of priorities, she helps her country rather than her friend. Dressed in a blue suit that was "definitely a salute to the navy, complete with insignia, gold buttons and a short cape" (Heisenfelt 1941 13), she starts out onto the city streets. "Her hat was blue, too. 'But I'd like a red one, I think.'" Compelled by an urge to get a nice red hat to match her outfit,

she is even propelled by the wind to shop and therefore eventually find and foil the traitors:

In that instant the wind seemed to tug at her cape and skirt, urging her closer to the building.

Deanna looked again at the hats. There was one, in the right center. It looked like felt, and was very simple with only a band of the same bright color and one perky feather standing up like a finger of flame.

“I want that hat!” Deanna said stubbornly, and, looking into the shop over the hat, she saw the face of the saleslady watching her...

“I want that hat,” she told the woman...

“I said,” she repeated, “I want that hat” (Heisenfelt 1941 16-17).

Deanna, it seems, wants a new hat! But in this case, consumerism first appears to bring her trouble. It transpires that the feather on the coveted hat is the symbol of a traitorous gang and when she purchases the hat she unwittingly becomes a player in their nefarious deeds. Though initially she feels “like a helpless bird under the claws of its captor” (Heisenfelt 1941 42) she soon rallies herself and plays along with the gang under the assumed identity of a willing accomplice so as to learn the real identities of the traitors and turn them in to government authorities. Consumerist tendencies therefore are not trouble as initially feared, but rather distinctly patriotic, as her consumerism provides her the opportunity to work saving her country from traitors.

Chapter after chapter throws her into nerve-wracking situations in which she feels she will surely be caught. She finally meets the head villain, Emal Rehtaef¹⁶ and learns that the plot is to steal plans for U.S. defense aircraft. She also meets a fellow innocent, and is desperately happy to see him. “ ‘Why doesn’t he get me out of here?’ she wondered” (Heisenfelt 1941 85). In the pre-mobilization stage, women are still conforming to traditional gender norms and depending on men for rescue.

That evening when the plans for the U.S. planes are to be passed on to the bad guys under cover of performances at a nightclub, Deanna has had enough:

“I have been in doubt all day, horrible doubt!” Deanna told herself. “I’ve even doubted *who I was*. But now I know! I’m not going to pretend any more, to any of them, that I’m one of their gang. I’m myself, a patriotic American, and I’m going to get those plans and keep them! I won’t give them to anyone – unless I’m sure! I won’t...”

The music began again. Deanna’s lips parted and she sang the famous, familiar, ringing words of Irving Berlin’s song.

She forgot them all. She rose, on wings of song, to a world in which she had always (would always, she prayed), found release...

They were waiting, the men and the women, those who shared the sentiment of the song, and those who would bring disaster to her country...

Tears were in her eyes now. The spotlight caught them, made them glimmer like diamonds, but Deanna’s voice did not falter. She was only

¹⁶ The villain’s name, Emal Rehtaef is perhaps meant to spell “Feather of Flame,” backwards. In a perplexing twist, it instead spells “Lame Feather,” backwards, which could signal that traitorous men are not masculine men.

half aware of the tears though one crept through from her lashes and spilled down her cheek. Her head raised itself in an attitude of prayer. It seemed that she stood on a high mountain, that all her country, so big, so new, so different, was spread out there before her. In a gesture of supplication, unrehearsed, Deanna's hands came out from her, reaching upward.

“God bless America, my home, sweet home!”

This was America. This was home. (Heisenfelt 1941 206-08)

The plans are saved, of course, and the bad guys stopped and caught. On her way home to her friends and mother, she hums softly to herself, “God bless America, my home, sweet, home!” (Heisenfelt 1941 220).

Irving Berlin wrote the “God Bless America” melody originally for a song called, “I Love My Wife,” for his World War I show, *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*, but the song did not make the final program. On November 10, 1938, the night before Armistice Day, Berlin gave the song to Kate Smith¹⁷. In September of 1939 she sang the patriotic song on her weekly radio show, *The Kate Smith Hour*. She closed her show with the song three weeks in a row; she neglected to do so the fourth week and her audience loudly and strongly objected. She sang it every week thereafter (Smith 21).

Thus the patriotism in the Whitman Authorized Editions begins, and though the company starts another series devoted to war topics, The Fighters for Freedom series (1943-1944), war effort themes also permeate the stories of the Whitman Authorized

¹⁷ Kate Smith's own role in the war effort was considerable. She sold over \$600 million in war bonds: \$112 million of it in one twenty-four hour radio marathon on February 1, 1944. For more information about the role of music and propaganda and patriotism, see Smith, *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War*.

Editions Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls, as we shall see in the next chapter on the mobilization of women into the workforce.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE: MOBILIZATION

Now it can be seen. Our entire manpower problem is most acutely a problem in womanpower.

(Business Week 1943 108)

There was nothing she liked better than to don a pair of overalls, tear down an automobile motor, and put it back together again. In spite of that, Peggy had a girl's fondness for pretty clothes and gay parties. She always purchased just the right colors to enhance the beauty of her fine gray eyes and her auburn hair. (Radford 1946 17)

The construction of gender in American society during World War II emphasized some aspects of women's lives while other aspects were downplayed or ignored. What was emphasized in popular culture, in images and fiction, affected girls' perceptions of themselves and their imaginations of possibility. The conflation of gender and patriotic effort and consumption, especially in maintaining traditional feminine roles while taking on men's work, complicated the real lives of women, the popular opinion of women, and the models young women were given through which to imagine themselves. These are the issues explored in this chapter.

In 1940, the number of women fourteen years and older in the wage work force was 12,845,259, 24.3 percent of all persons in the labor force and 25.4 percent of all women of working age. In 1944, the number of women fourteen years and older in the wage work force was 16,880,000, 32.9 percent of all persons in the labor force and 32.3 percent of all women of working age. By 1945, the number of women fourteen years and older in the wage work force was 17,940,000, 34.7 percent of all persons in the labor

force and 34.0 percent of all women of working age. Between 1940 and 1945, over 5 million women, 5,094,741, joined the workforce (Women's Bureau 1945 Statement 20).

Many employers were reluctant to be a part of this change and resisted hiring women; yet as the women were the only available bodies for labor, employers had no recourse, and women by default became a large proportion of the American work force. In 1940 the total number of women employed in the ten major areas of war production was 626,600. By 1944-45 women employed in the same areas had doubled to 1,266,200 (Women's Bureau 1946).

A key aspect of the changing face of women in labor was the kind of work women were doing. Previous to the inception of the war economy, women largely worked at service jobs that featured varying degrees of skill and consistently low pay. The war economy provided a variety of jobs that were high-skill and higher pay. The average weekly take-home earnings of women employed in specified industries in Buffalo and Erie County, New York in 1944, serve as an example. In the order listed in the Women's Bureau Statement, war plant workers earned \$35.00, aircraft plant workers earned \$37.90, and workers in essential civilian manufacturing earned \$24.10. Clerical workers in war plants earned \$31.00, clerical workers in aircraft plants earned \$33.10, and clerical workers in essential civilian manufacturing earned \$25.50. In contrast, laundry workers earned \$21.60, and store employees earned \$18.90 (Women's Bureau 1945 Statement 11).

Women became machinists and leaders, and worked as riveters, crane operators, drill operators, etc. War factories paid wages that were 40 percent higher than traditional women's work. Urban women went into the countryside to do agricultural work,

“manning” the farms: twenty-nine thousand women joined the Women’s Land Army. Women even joined the armed forces, with 350,000 women enlisted in military service.

The sub-groups of women working are also worthy of notice. Minority women were hired. Married women and mothers were hired. Bans on hiring married women were lifted and the average age of employed women correspondingly increased. Other married women did volunteer work, rationing resources, supporting troops on the homefront, and planting victory gardens. Younger women worked in factories and volunteered and school age girls threw themselves into patriotic activities.

In June of 1941 President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 banning discriminatory hiring practices in war-related industry in the private and government sectors “because of race, creed, color, or national origin”; gender is not mentioned. But women were needed in the work force, and this included women of color (Honey 1984; Hartmann 80).

These changes were temporary. As tempting as it is to believe that the feminist revolution of the 1960s and 1970s that swept women into the American workforce had its concrete beginnings in World War II labor practices, this simply is not the case. Women were hired during World War II as a matter of expedience and necessity. No lasting changes permeated American culture regarding gender roles and female capability. Though some historians have claimed World War II as the “watershed event” that forever changed the work lives of women (Chafe 1972), more recent scholarship revises this appraisal, noting that the changes were temporary (Anderson 1981; Campbell 1984; Honey 1984; Milkman 1987; Hartmann 1982). The women worked, but not permanently.

Women also worked at a lesser wage than men. Women joined unions, but the unions took a no-strike pledge during the war and took limited action to aid the situation of women workers. The NWLB (National War Labor Board) supported a uniform pay scale for men and women as recommended by the WMC but also allowed loopholes for discrimination in pay scales. General Motors, for example, legally paid women less than men by calling men's work "heavy" and women's work "light." Some CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) unions wrote equal pay provisions into their contracts, but many did not. A Women's Bureau Survey of eight contracts in the Midwest showed that only half had equal-pay provisions (Chafe 1974 154-5; International Labor Organization 1946 221). Women were hired, but most were unceremoniously released when the men returned from war, ready, available, and expecting to be hired again to work on the homefront. Women, encouraged by government and popular culture during the war to work and sacrifice as a patriotic imperative, were after the war encouraged by government and popular culture to retreat from the labor force and retrench into homemaking and spending money in the consumer market. Women were being given different scripts through which to communally interpret their culture, as reflected in Tatar's idea of text as spaces of coercion and Geertz's idea of common sense based on shared cultural symbolism.

During the war, the War Manpower Commission threw themselves into the second stage of enlisting women in the war effort, permeating all aspects of American popular culture in the forms of billboard ads, magazine ads and articles, newspaper ads and articles, radio ads and shows, film promotions and full-length movies, and fiction in magazine and book form. One such billboard in 1943 read as follows:

‘What job is mine on the Victory Line?’

If you’ve sewed on buttons, or made buttonholes, on a machine,

You can learn to do spot welding on airplane parts.

If you’ve used an electric mixer in your kitchen,

You can learn to run a drill press.

If you’ve followed recipes exactly in making cake,

You can learn to load shell (Baxandall & Gordon 1995 248).

The message was clear, and directly tied to drawing women out of the homemaker front and into the war work front. As further encouragement to private industry, government often paid to train women workers and to renovate factories that would switch to producing war materials. For example, in 1942, Pennsylvania’s State Department of Public Instruction set up a War Production Training Program for the federal government. The program trained 750,000 people, including 121,041 women in 167 school districts. Many of these women went on to work at the Philadelphia Radio Corporation plant, making and testing fuses for shells (Women Workers 2009) (see fig. 3.1).

To not only encourage but enable women in the wartime workforce, government and private industry instigated practices that would help women who were both workers and homemakers. The Pentagon set up a shopping center for its workers. Daycare centers were provided to watch children while the women were at work, and some factories created grocery stores, butchers, and beauty shops with night hours in or near the plants. Some cities enforced nighttime hours for stores, and others joined together with merchants to make domestic duties easier for women war workers (Riley 1994).

In the Niagara Frontier Area, a consumer group was created by union members of the AFL (American Federation of Labor), CIO, and IAM (International Association of Machinists) as well as factory managers from twenty-eight war plants in the area who asked Buffalo storekeepers to consider the plight of working women. In response, the merchants promised to hold some of their stock back until the evening hours (Kossoudji & Dresser 1992).

In 1940, before the United States entered World War II, only 5.6 percent of married women whose husbands earned more than \$3,000 a year were in the work force. Conversely, 24.2 percent of married women whose husbands earned less than \$400 a year worked outside the home (Chafe 1974 57). Public opinion polls queried whether or not married women should work. In 1942 a NORC poll asked, “As things are now do you think married women should work in war industry?” The national totals counted 60 percent approving and 13 percent disapproving with 27 percent giving conditional responses (Oppenheimer 1976 44-5). However, a 1943 public opinion poll asked, “Would you be willing to have your wife take a full time job running a machine in a war plant?” A national cross-section of married men answered 32 percent in the affirmative and 55 percent in the negative with 13 percent giving conditional responses (Oppenheimer 1976 44-5). The stigma of women working, especially married women, had to be overcome. To this end, the image of women in American mass media during the mobilization effort was created to attract women into fields left empty by the departure of men to the war front, and to form a new cultural mindset that would accept women in new roles.

One of the changes Gardner Cowles made as director of OWI’s domestic branch was to embrace a relationship with advertisers. Before the creation of OWI in the spring

of 1940, advertisers had offered assistance to the federal government. Reflecting Roosevelt's initial discomfort with propaganda as a tool, the advertisers were rejected. In November of 1941, advertisers went ahead and formed their own private organization in support of the war effort, the War Advertising Council (WAC). At the founding meeting, an agency representative lauded their tactics, "We have within our hands the greatest aggregate means of mass education and persuasion the world has ever seen." WAC's chair, Chester La Roche, spoke with even greater urgency and conviction:

There cannot be total war effort unless the informational weapons at hand are properly used...we know the people, we know how to make them read; know how to plan huge informational efforts... our channels of communication to the American people are the most efficient in the world. Not to fully understand them, their capabilities, is dangerous; not to use them to the fullest is to hamper the war effort... (Honey 1984 34).

WAC's interest was not entirely patriotic. They were losing accounts from manufacturers who were switching from producing consumer goods to defense production; by June of 1942, 29 percent of prewar production had been replaced due to material shortages and factory conversions to war products (Honey 31-33). Advertisers needed replacement accounts and the United States government became a major client.

One of the major advertising campaigns was the recruitment of women into war industry work. Between 1943 and 1945, 16 percent of the advertisements in American print publication involved direct pleas to women to join the war effort (Honey 109). Cowles appreciated WAC's philosophy. He established Ken Dyke, former marketing head of NBC and advertising director for Colgate-Palmolive, as chief of OWI's Bureau

of Campaigns, and appointed Dyke the government contact person with WAC. WAC in turn appointed a full-time consultant to the campaign bureau. The bureau worked with WAC and with the War Manpower Commission (WPC) on labor recruitment issues, and published the monthly *War Guide for Advertisers*, which provided topics, times, and methods for specific advertising campaigns. The campaigning was split into four major prongs: women as volunteers, women in industry, women in necessary services, and women in the armed forces. An overarching theme across all four prongs was the maintenance of women in traditional gender roles adopting work on a temporary basis for the traditional feminine reasons of self-sacrifice for the sake of others, especially men. Above all, women had to remain feminine looking. “Beauty for duty” was a common refrain.

Volunteer work was women’s work. Office of Civilian Defense chief Fiorella LaGuardia urged women to give “An Hour A Day for the U.S.A” in *Ladies Home Journal* in December of 1941. Woodbury Soap, in addition to their “Another Woodbury Deb Marries” campaign in 1942, ran advertisements urging young debutantes to be unselfish, and give up their social lives for volunteering as service club hostesses and message couriers (Straub 1973 8). OWI declared in November 1942, “Women who don’t go off to war must be increasingly the very backbone of [volunteer] work.” OWI elaborated:

The field of working with the problems of human beings in war has been pioneered by women, and in that field they are pre-eminent. Where their good works were once done in a casual and individualistic fashion, a new spirit of professional pride in the job has sprung up. The

woman volunteer of today, whether available for full-time or part-time war work, takes training, keeps her work up to a high standard of quality and dependability (War Jobs for Women 41).

OWI considered inserting patriotic themes into fiction an efficient and successful method of injecting patriotic imperatives into the psyche of the American public.

Volunteer work among women was especially encouraged. Included in the *Magazine War Guide* were suggested plot points supporting the idea of volunteer labor in Victory Gardens, the Waste Fats Campaign (saving kitchen fat for glycerine for explosives, gun mechanisms, and hydraulics; the goal for 1943 was 200,000,000 pounds of 16,667,000 pounds a month), and the Red Cross (*Magazine War Guide* May-June 1943, February-March 1944).

In 1943 the Whitman Publishing Company responded and presented a novel, *Boots and the Mystery of the Unlucky Vase* (see fig. 3.2), about the pretty, perennial college student Boots from the famous newspaper comic strip, *Boots and her Buddies*, by Edgar “Abe” Martin. She does everything the OWI espoused and then some. Boots frets in no less than four extended conversations that she hasn’t volunteered enough for the war effort. She does not feel “essential” (Martin 1943 19, 20, 28, 57) (see fig. 3.3).

[Boots] tried to explain her feeling of uselessness and aimlessness, pointing to all the worthwhile things that “Cora and the Prof are doing.”

“Yeah, but you’re up to your ears in defense work, too,” was Pug’s wise rejoinder. “Gosh, you’re kicking plenty of ‘should’ stuff around, with all the time you devote to Red Cross, First Aid, plane spotting, air raid protection...”

Boots' passion for her country contributed to her popularity and was deeply appreciated by her readers. The more her readers appreciated her patriotic activity, the more patriotic she became, and the more patriotic she became the more she was appreciated.

This is another example of Butler's theory of performativity: by enacting and repeating the ideological behavior of the culture industry and the social world in which it is produced and consumed, Boots reinforces the social conventions. By incorporating conventions into her life and performing them with her body, she makes her choices seem not choices but the only natural option. By performing convention she reinforces convention and makes convention more real. By the novel's end, Boots and her friends volunteer in the Red Cross, First Aid, plane spotting, and air raid protection; they also bake cookies for servicemen, date servicemen to cheer them up, buy war bonds, salvage household goods, and make do with rationed foods and gasoline, all while looking beautiful.

On July 6, 1942, *LIFE* magazine published an article describing the "Glamour girl of 1942... the heroine of new order... the woman aircraft worker" (Girls in Uniform, 1942). The cover pictured a waving American flag with the headline, "United We Stand." On September 22, 1941, the same magazine had published an article lauding the housewife as the ultimate in American femininity (Occupation: Housewife, 1941).

In early 1942 a survey of 623 major defense plants showed that only 27 percent considered hiring women, as men were still available to work. Also a factor was that many factories had to be shut down while they were refitted for defense work. By early 1943, only one out of eight women in the prime demographic for employment deemed factory work acceptable for women; by late 1943 women factory workers grew by 77

percent at Ford plants and 139 percent in General Motors plants. A Women's Bureau survey of women in war industry work found that 75 percent of the working mothers also had complete charge of homemaking work on top of their paid position and that 40 percent of all working women could make that exhausting claim (Campbell 1984 112-117; Oppenheimer 1976 138-142). 20 percent of the women working in 1944 were in war-related industry (Goldin 1991 753). Of the women working in March of 1944, 2,690,000 were working in industry jobs. Of these women, 49 percent were new to the labor force; 31 percent had been homemakers, 16 percent were students, and 2 percent were doing other things (Milkman 1987; Colman 1995 106).

LIFE Magazine portrayed junior nurse aides on their April 26, 1943 cover; women pilots on their July 19, 1943 cover; women steel workers on their cover of August 9, 1943. In September of 1943, OWI announced a competition for the magazine with the best front cover picturing women war workers in September of 1943 (Rupp 95).

The flow of women into industry jobs with higher skill and wages meant there was an enormous dearth of labor in the traditionally feminine industries. Women were needed as secretaries, telephone operators, stenographers, laundresses, waitresses, and other such jobs in service and clerical industries (see fig. 3.4). In the fall of 1943, the propaganda offices joined in a "Women in Necessary Services Campaign." OWI wrote: "These jobs will have to be glorified as patriotic war service if American women are to be persuaded to take them and stick to them." The Magazine Bureau asked fiction writers to write stories about women finding happiness in service industry work and told editors and writers that the goal was to make women realize that the "necessary service" jobs were just as glamorous and patriotic as the war industry jobs. "By and large, women do

not view work of this kind as war work” the Bureau explained. “Stress the unglamorous, strenuous, often overlooked civilian jobs” (Honey 1984 40).

Whitman Authorized Editions was already there. In 1942 they published a book starring the very glamorous Ginger Rogers as a telephone switchboard operator, *Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak* (see fig. 3.5). Ginger Rogers was born Virginia Katherine McMath on July 16, 1911 in Independence, Missouri and died as Ginger Rogers on April 25, 1995 in Rancho Mirage, California. Best known for her screen partnership with Fred Astaire, she danced and sang her way to stardom in *Flying Down to Rio* in 1933 and *Roberta* and *Top Hat* in 1935. She then moved on to more dramatic roles and starred in many proletarian, “working-girl” films, including *Kitty Foyle* (1941), for which she won an academy award.

Ironically, she was a founder of the right-wing Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (Denning 1998 155; New York Times 1941),¹⁸ and a vocal conservative, expressing her anti-communist and anti-Popular Front ideals by blacklisting the writers who brought her the most fame. Her mother, Lela Rogers, who wrote her Whitman Authorized Edition in 1942, testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1947, that Ginger “Bravely refused to speak a typical piece of Communist propaganda, ‘Share and share alike – that’s democracy,’” which had appeared in Dalton Trumbo’s script for the very successful *Tender Comrade* (Friedrich 1986 303; Denning 1998 155).

¹⁸ Other founding members included Sam Wood, Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Gary Cooper, Walt Disney, Roy Brewer, Barbara Stynwyck, John Ford, Irene Dunne, and John Wayne. The committee lobbied for the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to investigate Communist influence in Hollywood, setting off the blacklisting that began with HUAC’s arrival in Hollywood in May of 1947. Patricia Bosworth reported that Humphrey Bogart gave Ginger Rogers the fish-eye for her politics at a party thrown by Norman Mailer, to which he invited the right and left alike. Wood even carried his own notebook around of people he suspected, and was one of the first “friendly” witnesses to testify. See: Otto Friedrich, *City of Nets: A Portrait of Hollywood in the 1940’s* (NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 167-68; 376.

The first sentence of the first page of her Whitman Authorized Edition puts Ginger in line as a patriotic necessary service worker:

Ginger Rogers sat at the telephone switchboard of the Seaview Arms Hotel in a city on the West Coast. One pump-clad foot tapped a lazy rhythm on the circle of wood that held together the long legs of the stool on which she perched. Eight hours a night, six nights a week, she sat there, answering in that “voice with a smile” the thousand-and-one strange requests...

The tapping foot was a sign that Ginger’s heart was free, that she liked her work and knew that her efforts were appreciated by everyone, from the office downstairs to that last guest in the single room near the noisy elevator shaft (Rogers 1942) (see fig. 3.6).

By August 1943, 146 magazines had agreed to participate in wartime propaganda on behalf of women’s successful transition to waged work, reaching 87 million readers. The Magazine Bureau was confident in its success: by its own count, 2,135 stories and articles promoted by its publication, *Magazine War Guide*, had been published. The traditional role of women’s magazines, focusing on women’s roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers, was adapted to include the nationalistic mission of the war effort. Patriotism was the new femininity. Precipitating the Magazine Bureau’s survey of 1943, *McCall’s* March 1942 issue had a section called “On the Home Front” featuring real woman interviews about problem-solving war issues such as taking over a husband’s duties, finding childcare, and balancing the work of homemaking with the war effort (Zuckerman 1998 193-95). “As the job of being female in America has transformed, so

necessarily have the publications that provide advice and guidance to women” (Zuckerman 1998 xiii-xiv).

The history of the consumerist connection with women’s magazines, be it actual products or the selling of the war and women’s role in it, has a solid originating history. The editor of *Ladies Home Journal*, one of the oldest and most successful women’s magazines in the country, declared to an advertiser’s meeting in the first few years of the magazine: “Do you know why we publish the *Ladies Home Journal*? The real reason [we publish a magazine]... is to give you people who manufacture [the chance to sell] things that women want...” (Zuckerman 1998 7).

Boots in her Whitman Authorized Edition of 1943 takes up the additional load of working as well as volunteering. She exclaims, when ruminating upon her volunteer work, “But I could hold down a job and do all these things on the side” (Martin 1943 22). She does not feel better until she spots a war bond kiosk and decides to empty her purse for the cause. In line, she meets women who work as a nurse’s aide, a riveter in an airplane plant, and the mother of three servicemen, respectively. Boots muses, “They’re all essential, in their own way” (Martin 1943 28) and resolves to get a job. Delivering home baked cookies to recuperating servicemen, Boots literally crashes into Mr. Buffington of Buffington Motors, a plant refitted from automobile production to plane and bomb production. He offers her a job and humbly, Boots starts working as his receptionist. Though exhausted, she soon realizes “the magnitude of the job the company was doing to help win the war, and she accepted her own small but vital role in the plan with willingness and grim determination” (Martin 1943 96). When she sees the blueprints for the plane the company is building, she knows the enemy would do anything to get

them, and takes pride in herself for working, the company for building, and the country for fighting. When payday comes and Mr. Buffington delivers her check she does her part to continue her patriotic duties and bolster the American forces.

“But – haven’t you forgotten something?” Boots inquired.

He turned sharply, and waited for her explanation.

“You haven’t taken ten percent out of my pay for bonds,” Boots admonished.

Mr. Buffington’s mouth dropped open in surprise.

Boots continued, “Friends of mine, swell friends, are fighting all over the globe. And I want to do what I can to help, too!”

Her employer’s face softened, and the pleasantest expression Boots had ever seen him wear covered his features.

“I think I’m going to like you,” he said earnestly. (Martin 1943 104-5).

Boots incorporates all the qualities promulgated by the OWI: she is selfless in her devotion to her friends and country, volunteers and works for the war effort, and maintains her beauty and sunny demeanor. Later we will see how Boots even dates for duty.

And finally, women joined the military. In March of 1942 Congress passed the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) Act giving women, for the first time, partial military status. There were 140,000 in the Women’s Army Corps, 100,000 in the Navy, 23,000 in the Marines, 1,000 in the Air Force, 13,000 in the Coast Guard and 74,000 in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps (Campbell 1984; Honey 1984). By July of 1942,

women had the same rights as men in the Navy and in February of 1943, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve was established, promoting women beyond the clerical status assigned women since females were first allowed in the Marine Corps in 1918¹⁹. In June of 1943, the Women's Auxiliary Corps became the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Throughout the war, 350,000 women worked in the military, but these women were only 2 percent of military personnel (Campbell 1984 19-20).

In the May – June 1943 edition of the *Magazine War Guide*, Ducas made note of the fact that the President had signed a new order raising the quota for WAAC from 25,000 to 150,000, leaving significant vacancies even though 31,000 women had already joined. The WAVES quota was 35,500. Ducas suggested:

Editors consider sending writers to visit the camps, stations, military headquarters where WAACs, WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines are working. Stories which tell thousands of women, who so far have only a sketchy idea of what a woman's military job is [underline original], what these pioneers are doing would be of real value to the recruitment program (Magazine War Guide May-June 1943 19).

In November of 1943 the Joint Army-Navy Personnel Board asked OWI for help in recruiting women into the armed forces and specifically requested that media be used to sway public opinion about women in the armed forces and to concentrate fully on recruiting women into the armed forces. Part of the trouble with enlistment numbers may have been a problem of wages. In the pamphlet, *73 Questions and Answers about the WAAC* (October 1943), a Private was listed as earning \$50.00 per month. A Private, 1st

¹⁹ Pvt. Opha Mae Johnson became the first female Marine August 13, 1918 and Pvt. Lucille McClarren became the first enlisted woman in 1943. See: *Women Marines Association* http://www.womenmarines.org/wm_history.aspx

class earned \$54.00, a Corporal \$66.00, a Sergeant \$78.00, Staff Sergeant \$96.00, Technical Sergeant \$114.00, First Sergeant \$138.00, and Master Sergeant \$138.00 (73 Questions 6). The average earnings of women in the Buffalo and Erie areas of New York, for example, were at least \$20 a week. The lowest paid civilian woman wage worker, a store employee, earned \$75.60 a month while the highest civilian woman wage worker, an aircraft factory worker, earned \$151.60 (Statement 11). Perhaps the Army was aware of the problematic discrepancy. The Women's Army Corps published another pamphlet, *Facts You Want to Know About the WAC* (November 1943), a month later with a special quote next to a picture of a very enthusiastic WAC, "A WAC private says: 'The \$50.00 I get every month is all velvet – all mine! When I was a civilian, I never had that much left after all my bills were paid'" (Facts 17).

OWI's Bureau of Campaigns set the propaganda ball rolling to assist in recruitment, contacting the Graphics, Magazine, Radio, News, and Motion Picture Bureaus for assistance in enticing women into the armed forces. Posters were made, stories placed, spots created, human-interest stories written, and special short films made all in support, directly and indirectly, of the idea of women in the armed forces. WAC created advertising manuals for the War Manpower Commission and the Women's Army Corps. Advertisements showed images of women in uniform completely out of proportion with actual enlistment numbers (Rupp 1978 143), which served to recruit more women to the armed forces and to instill a militaristic attitude within the perceptions of feminine capability for work. The March-April 1944 *Magazine War Guide* provided story suggestions in support of the recruiting campaign for all women's military services. "What the girls do for the Navy and for their country has been told. But

we believe there are magazine possibilities in what service as a WAVE does for girls in the Navy... Interesting stories about individual WAVES are almost as numerous as the 40,000 girls themselves.” Three girls were identified as sample story subjects: Helen Hull Jacobs, tennis star; Joan Angell of *Angel of the Navy*; and “Rosalie Thorne, pistol expert, first woman ever to qualify for the Navy Expert Pistol Shot Medal” (*Magazine War Guide* March-April 1944 15). Similar to the semi-regular “Jabberwocky and Jive” column in *Calling All Girls*²⁰ that informed readers of the latest in American slang, the *Magazine War Guide* provided the latest in WAVES slang, arguably with the idea that the ‘inside’ information would make prospective recruits feel part of the women’s military service community, and encourage enlistment.

As with all other war work, there was the concern of women retaining their femininity while doing masculine work, though with military jobs there were even stronger cultural prejudices that had to be negotiated. OWI strategized that sexual appeal should be emphasized to attract women workers and to reassure the male public that women in the military were acceptable and even desirable. One advertisement read, “The girls in the WAVES are real American women – the kind who love parties and pretty clothes, and who are good at cooking and sewing too. They’re very feminine, and proud of it” (Honey 114).

Joyce of the Secret Squadron, another Whitman Authorized Edition heroine and book (see fig. 3.7), originated as a character in the *Captain Midnight* radio show, which debuted in 1938 on Chicago radio station WGN and aired until December 1949. *Captain*

²⁰ One example is from *Calling All Girls* 25 (January 1944) in which new dating slang is listed, including “zero hour” for the “time set for your date to arrive,” “delayed action bomb” for “a girl who’s always late for a date,” “saboteur” for “a girl who snakes another girl’s date,” “night maneuvers” for evening dates, and “coming in on a wing and a prayer” for “coming home from a drippy date.”

Midnight had a newspaper strip as well, which began in the Chicago Sun Syndicate June 29, 1942. There were comic books and a television show, but the character Joyce Ryan did not make it into those mediums. Joyce Ryan was SS-3, Secret Agent Number 3 behind SS-2, Secret Agent Chuck Ramsey. Captain Midnight is SS-1 and is an undercover agent in the Secret Squadron, “an unofficial organization that served as an auxiliary intelligence and air arm for the United States. Composed of pilots formerly aces of the First World War, it was headed by that mysterious and intrepid leader known as Captain Midnight” (Winterbotham 1942 11). Joyce is the only member of the Whitman Authorized Editions who could be said to be in a branch of the Armed Forces. However, women were well represented in Whitman’s *Fighters for Freedom* series.

Joyce is such a competent and experienced flier that when a suspected enemy flier by the name of Barracuda appears in range, she takes “the battle post in the co-pilot’s seat of the amphibian, while Chuck and Mudd manned the defensive guns at the rear of the plane... ‘I’m agent SS-3 of the Secret Squadron,’ Joyce said with pride in her voice. ‘I expect to take the same risks other agents take. Besides, I can fight as well as any man in the outfit’”(Winterbotham 1942 69-70). Even when she is frightened, “It was the kind of fright that made her yearn to fight back. She wished fervently that she could trade places with Chuck and blast a few of the enemy out of the sky” (Winterbotham 76). And she “wants it understood that you’re not to keep me out of my share of the work just because I’m a girl” (Winterbotham 88).

In addition to the propaganda aimed at women during World War II about working, there was also propaganda that culturally constructed women as pretty objects of obligation (Westbrook 1990; Hegarty 2008). As objects, women were talismans for

men fighting on the front. As women, they had to work homefront jobs and look like the best talismans they could. The obligation was one of reciprocity: if men were to fight, women were to be pretty.

A Proctor & Gamble Co. advertisement for Ivory Soap from 1942 advises, “Keep your Beauty on Duty!” (see fig. 3.8). Showing a close-up of a woman in uniform with a fitted military hat, head cocked slightly to the side, complexion clean and rosy with bright teeth and red, glossy lips, talking on the phone, the advertisement touts Ivory soap as “Defensive care for Dry Skin!” In the background left is a side profile of a marching soldier in battle helmet holding a rifle on his shoulder. To the right is another soldier in battle gear, standing in full readiness as he speaks with a uniformed woman taking careful notes.

Even Tampax brand tampons got into the persuasion act. A 1942 advertisement is titled “Girls in Slacks at War Plants Hail Tampax.” Again in 1943 the company calls women to buy its product using war themed advertisements:

Women at War! Pay Attention to Tampax! Internal sanitary protection makes work easier on “those days.” When your entire life is speeded up by war conditions, you will find Tampax a great help on such days... For Tampax is *worn internally*. It requires no belts or pads... Think what this means to plant workers traveling in buses and to housewives on their feet early and late, giving their best to the war effort...

And again in 1944, “War Workers are Strong for Tampax.”

During World War II, women had double duty: work for the war and look pretty for the men fighting the war. The calls for duty extended from soap to clothes to hygiene

products to cosmetics. Sometimes the admonition to keep feminine and pretty at all costs implied sexual obligation; it was women's duty to be pretty, their duty to date men (especially servicemen), and yet at the same time women were blamed for spreading sexual disease through their aggression and permissiveness, which will be discussed later. On the consumerist side of things, there was celebration of clothes and being attractive, even though some materials were scarce due to wartime restrictions. As Ginger Rogers says upon receipt of a new dress:

Why shouldn't one think one's own clothes nice? You bought a dress because you liked it, and wore it because it suited you. Then why pretend you thought it 'just an old thing I whipped out of a lamp shade,' or something equally silly. You like it so you say so, if you are called upon to say anything (Rogers 1942 50).

The women of the Whitman Authorized Editions subscribed to the admonitions to be pretty and date men, as well as the injunctions to purchase. The feminine satisfaction of pretty clothes was also very concrete.

Every single girl in every single Whitman Authorized Edition spends a considerable amount of time being pretty and making herself prettier. Boots has "long honey-blonde hair" and "pretty lips" (Martin 1943 11). Ginger Rogers has "a long sweep" of "dark brown hair" (Rogers 1942 11); "young, slender and shapely, her long legs carried with a rhythmic swing that started at her waistline and ended in firm, athletic footfalls" (Rogers 1942 36). "Many standing about turned to look as she passed" (Rogers 1942 46). Joyce is an "All-American girl" with "yellow hair" and flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes (Winterbotham 1942). The image of women promoted during World War

It was that women could do the masculine work required by the nation while retaining the femininity the national psyche required of women. Another Whitman woman, Peggy Parker, is a perfect illustration of this combination:

There was nothing she liked better than to don a pair of overalls, tear down an automobile motor, and put it back together again. In spite of that, Peggy had a girl's fondness for pretty clothes and gay parties. She always purchased just the right colors to enhance the beauty of her fine gray eyes and her auburn hair (Radford 1946 17).

Boots is yet another perfect Whitman woman. She is a college student whose buddies are primarily men vying for the position of being her boyfriend. Known as the "Sweetheart of America" she avoids the smoking and drinking and general partying associated with the flapper era and stays pure and innocent, bubbling her way through countless dates. She stays in college until she finally chooses a solitary beau, Rod Ruggles, whom she marries on September 2, 1945, the same day as the formal surrender of Japan in World War II. On Independence Day, July 4, 1946 she and Rod have a baby son, Davey.

In her Whitman novel, one of her jobs is as coordinator for the campus date shop, a service geared to finding dates for men. She finds feminine companionship and entertainment for collegiates, especially for those involved in the defense effort, and for men in the armed forces. Boots considers it her patriotic duty to date, and so do her friends. One boyfriend even gives up his date with her in favor of her cheering up a homesick young flyer instead. Boots is initially flabbergasted, but agrees, and fifth-grader Pug, another character, knows the war is "getting serious" (Martin 1943 198).

All of this has a basis in reality. Sorority girls paid dues in California, for example, for the privilege of being dates for whichever serviceman needed one (Hegarty 2008 126). The Hollywood Canteen opened at 1451 Cahuenga Boulevard in Hollywood, California on October 3, 1942 (it closed Thanksgiving Day, November 22, 1945) as an organization devoted to entertaining and serving troops, and recruited Bette Davis as president and head volunteer. Stars washed dishes, served food, and danced and dated with servicemen, all in the name of the war effort. At the time of the opening over 3000 Hollywood players – not just actors and actresses but directors, producers, technicians, and office workers - registered as volunteers. On September 15, 1943, the one-millionth soldier walked in the door and won a kiss from Betty Grable (Friedrich 1986 108).

Dating for duty was a theme for women beyond the school and Hollywood. A young woman working for Pan-Am wrote to her Navy Lieutenant fiancé, “There seem to me to be nothing but Lieutenants floating around – especially since Wednesday when 3,000 were graduated. That’s turning them out wholesale isn’t it? Well, I can have a date with a different one each night if I feel patriotic enough!” (Smith letter March 5 1943).

While across all media landscapes from advertisements to film to children’s literature there was the constant message of “beauty as duty” and the nearly as constant idea of “dating for duty,” there was also the uglier, dirtier side of the sexuality debate. In 1945 the United States Federal Security Agency of the Office of Community War Services published a pamphlet blaming promiscuous women for the deaths of 33,000 Americans: “During the 26 months from Pearl Harbor to February 7, 1944, the Germans and the Japanese killed 36,000 Americans – *syphilis killed* 33,000 Americans at home during the same time.” It further reads, “For every man the enemy puts out of action –

she puts out three.” The “good-time girl,” be she “prostitute” or “promiscuous,” is responsible for keeping war workers and soldiers from their jobs, possibly even losing the war for America (US Federal Security Agency). Wartime proved to be a time for purity crusades and a revision of germ theory, with women responsible for spreading disease (May 1996 134). When the Social Hygiene Association reported an increase in social diseases amongst high school aged boys and girls, the recommendation was to give the girls (but not the boys) a curfew (Hegarty 2008 117).

The Whitman Authorized Editions, as mentioned, largely avoided the discussion of social disease, except obliquely by encouraging dating, and especially chaste dating. What it did do, was imply the imperative of being pretty and appealing to the male gaze, alluring even, to qualify for heroine status. Interestingly, while the heroine was always pretty, the best friend was decidedly less so. This may be not only an acknowledgement of but also an attempt to be more inclusive of a wider spectrum of real women. But the secondary character was consistently secondary in every way. Ginger Rogers’ best friend Patsy in *Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak* is a typical example. When discussing the ever exciting goal of dating, Patsy asks Ginger, in appreciation of Ginger’s chaste behavior, “You never let one of ‘em get to first base, do you?” She also bemoans her own outcast state:

Nobody ever asks me and you know it. I’m too wide and I’m too short. They forgot to give me a nose and my second chin’s got more character than my first one. I’m pigeon-toed and my underskirt’s always hanging and there’s nothing I can do about it...

She didn't really look as bad as she painted herself... Patsy wasn't really 'too wide and too short.' She was just plump, in spots... Her underskirt didn't always hang down, just at times, and usually when Patsy was trying to make a good impression. Patsy was pretty when she 'fixed herself up' (Rogers 1942 24).

It is unclear what is worse: being "too wide and too short" or being "plump, in spots." Clearly, pretty is the way to go. The quote is also a demonstration of the usefulness of purchased products to 'fix herself up,' and to make all women look better.

Ginger Rogers says "no" to all the men who ask for dates, exhibiting chasteness until she meets a serviceman to whom she says, "yes" out of patriotic sympathy. She only leaves him for a millionaire doing defense manufacturing, perhaps with the understanding that dating a man who provides weapons equipment for thousands of soldiers is more patriotic than dating one soldier.

The exception to the rule of heroine as beautiful is when the type of beauty is "exotic." Captain's Midnight's colleague, Joyce of the Secret Squadron, discussed earlier in this chapter in her role as an expert flyer, is presented as an unassuming, All-American Girl beauty. Joyce is introduced as the pilot of a plane "cutting figure eights and rolling like a playful, winged porpoise," and when the plane lands, "from the cockpit hopped a girl with yellow hair." Joyce Ryan is a teenager. "She is in love with life, adventure, the outdoors, aviation. Joyce is understandable only if you know Americans, for she is an American girl." (Winterbotham 1942 24, 31). In direct contrast to Joyce, Carla Rotan is the books' villainess who is introduced as distinctly different; she is the only major feminine character in the Whitman Authorized Editions who is not Caucasian. Published

in the year following Pearl Harbor, she is “part Asian” and therefore foreign and also symbolic of the enemy. Her good looks are artificially enhanced, aged, and require constant maintenance.

She was in her early thirties and very beautiful. Her black, glistening hair, gave her a strange, exotic look... As she approached... she paused a second, pulled a small mirror from her pocket and daintily daubed her nose with powder. The care she took of her appearance showed that she was conscious of her beauty, conserving of it and anxious to capitalize on its advantages.

This woman was on an important mission, yet she stopped to powder her nose (Winterbotham 1942 27-8).

When Joyce meets her, the woman strikes Joyce as:

A little too perfect. Nothing in the woman’s manners or dress suggested that she was not a woman of good taste, yet Joyce thought she detected quite a different character lurking beneath those eyelids that drooped rather coquettishly over the woman’s eyes (Winterbotham 1942 46).

Joyce is of course right; the woman is in fact an international spy posing as Mrs. F. W. Bosmouth of Boston.

The confusion over the standard analogy of beauty as good continues when the villainess is caught rifling through the Secret Squadron’s plane. A squadron member refuses to believe it: “Chuck is standing up for her just because she looks like a movie queen” (Winterbotham 1942 99). Joyce never trusts her and ultimately catches Carla

through manipulating feminine beauty practices. When Carla captures Joyce and Captain Midnight, Joyce begs to powder her nose before getting shot:

“I – I wonder if I could - could powder my nose!” Joyce said.

The request came with the effect of a thunderbolt. It seemed to bowl Carla over.

“Powder your nose?” Carla stared at Joyce. “You face death and ask permission to powder your nose.”

“You are a woman, Mrs. Bosmouth – or whatever your name is –“ Joyce said. “Surely you understand!”

Carla Rotan the notorious spy stared at the girl.

“Yes,” she agreed, yielding. “I think I do.”

Carla Rotan was beautiful, there was no denying that... This beauty was more precious than anything Carla Rotan had. Everything would be sacrificed for her beauty.

Joyce, too, was a beautiful girl. She was clean-cut, young, and the picture of health. Joyce was glad she was pretty, but she knew most worthwhile things cannot be obtained by beauty alone... To Carla, meeting death with a shiny nose would have been hideous. To Joyce death was death, whether her nose shone or not” (Winterbotham 1942 243).

Caught off guard by Joyce’s seeming extreme femininity, Carla lets Joyce reach into her pocket. Joyce grabs her gun and saves the crew. The exchange is an interesting one as it pertains to the examination of aesthetics and behavior. Joyce’s beauty is a natural one,

and not only prized but preferable. Carla's beauty, however, is overemphasized, with the taint of exoticism, and so brings about her downfall.

Along with natural, all-American beauty came clothes, clothes, more clothes, and some hats and heels. Leila Rupp quotes the section dealing with fashion from a non-government guide to working in industry during World War II:

You must admit, for it is a well-established fact, that you are a vain creature. And all the factory jobs in the country, whatever their other compensations, would not appeal to you if you had to appear before your fellow workers wearing some 'simply horrid looking thing!' (Rupp 1978 147; Baker & Wise 1994 89).

Women's Home Companion brought four women workers to Hollywood and gave them complete makeovers, proving that women really could work masculine jobs and look feminine and glamorous at the same time (Rupp 1978 147). However, according to a Women's Bureau bulletin, *Employing Women in Shipyards*, 9 percent of industry accidents amongst women were due to not wearing proper attire (Rupp 1978 122). Clothing for women war workers served a dual function of safety for the actual women workers and sex appeal for the public gaze. The United States Public Health Service ran a poster series promoting women worker styles. The "Jenny on the Job" series created a prototypical worker who modeled work styles and gave advice on beauty sleep, shoes, and "lifting weights the easy way." The summative example is her poster, "Jenny on the Job Wears Styles Designed for Victory." In it, Jenny models a blue coverall, shoes, gloves, cap, and goggles. A cartoon character, her smile is blinding white surrounded by red lips with blond locks peeking out of a blue cap (see fig. 3.9). Clothing designer and

Popular Front intellectual Elizabeth Hawes wrote about the transformation of women's work and the mass production of clothes in her book, *Why Women Cry – Or – Wrenches with Wrenches* (1943), based in part on her time as a worker at Wright Aeronautics.

The results of a prescribed uniform were... After a few weeks of trying to keep neat or finding some way of looking individual, almost everyone gave up and simply went around looking like hell... The general effect was of a large number of females in a machine shop in pajamas. The eternal sight of plain light or navy blue began to have a sickening effect on one's stomach (Hawes 1943 88).

Others attempted a fashionable approach less sickening. Motion-picture star Veronica Lake, the popularizer of the peek-a-boo style of hair covering the face, publicly adopted an upswept coiffure style for her hair, supposedly in honor of safety concerns for women workers. Turbans, snoods, and bandanas also became popular, in and out of the work place (Hartmann 1982 195).

Assisting women in their mobilization in the war economy was the Women's Bureau, headed by Mary Anderson, and the Women's Advisory Committee to the WMC (War Manpower Commission). Both advocated for "Effective Industrial Use of Women in the Defense Program," the title and subject of the first Special Bulletin publication. The Women's Bureau published a series of bulletins devoted to women and clothing in industry. *Safety Clothing for Women in Industry* was printed in 1941 and gave guidelines for the "well-dressed woman." Starting from the ground, the first section was titled, "Consider your Feet First." The Woman's Bureau also published bulletins about caps for factory work and machinists, as well as a complete guide to shoes. The *Safety Caps for*

Women in War Factories guide, for example, provides pictures of twelve different hats appropriate for defense work (see fig. 3.10). In 1942, *LIFE* magazine devoted two covers to hats, August 24 with Fatigue Hats for work and October 5 with Eye Catcher Hats for feminine fashion (see fig. 3.11 and fig. 3.12). The April 5, 1943 cover featured the “Montgomery Beret” (see fig. 3.13), named after the famed British Field General Bernard Montgomery.

The Gibson Girl of the 1890s and the Flapper of the 1920s were replaced by a new wartime glamour girl, Rosie the Riveter. Rosie the Riveter covered the nation in many guises and mediums. The OWI first introduced Rosie as a sort of every-woman for the war era, a woman who could and would take up the reins of male work in support of the war while maintaining her traditional feminine roles of prettiness and domestic competence. Graphic artist J. Howard Miller created the image for his employer Westinghouse as part of the corporation’s contribution to the war effort. OWI printed the poster known by many, of the woman wearing a polka-dot bandana with complete make-up and polished nails, rolling up her shirt sleeve to reveal enviable biceps, with a speech bubble over her head reading, “We Can Do It!” The advert shows a strong woman pictured in side-view, holding up her right arm at a right angle, showing off her muscles. Her left hand draws attention to the muscle of her right arm, with one clearly visible polished and perfectly manicured nail. Her face is perfectly made-up with lipstick, rouge, structured eyebrows, and long, painted lashes. Her hair is tied back with a polka-dot bandana and her blue work shirt has the sleeves rolled up (see fig. 3.14).

Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb wrote a song titled “Rosie the Riveter” released in February 1943 and debuted by the male group The Four Vagabonds:

While other girls attend a cocktail bar,
Sipping dry martinis, munching caviar;
There's a girl who's really putting them to shame –
Rosie is her name.
All day long, whether rain or shine,
She's part of the assembly line,
She's making history work for victory,
Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie the riveter.
Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage,
Sitting up there on the fuselage.
That little girl will do more than a male will do
Rosie's got a boyfriend, Charlie.
Charlie, he's a Marine.
Rosie is protecting Charlie,
Working overtime on the riveting machine
When they gave her a production "E",
She was as proud as she could be,
There's something true about,
Red, white, and blue about,
Rosie the Riveter.

Next up in the making of Rosie was the magazine cover of The Saturday Evening Post of May 29, 1943 illustrated by Norman Rockwell (see fig. 3.15). The background is a flowing American flag. The woman pictured is in blue work overalls. She is big and

strong, with dirty but rouged cheeks. She has coiffed red curls, a perky pug nose, and bright red lips. She looks down over her shoulder and her strong muscular arms. Resting on her curls are work goggles and a face visor, with an angelic halo behind her head on a field of stars from the American flag. Pinned to the top of her overalls are various pins for the war effort: the Red Cross symbol, a “V” for Victory, and a blood drive emblem. In her hand is a ham sandwich on white bread, and the fingers holding the sandwich are again replete with perfectly polished and manicured red nails. Her lunch box in her lap reads, “Rosie.” Also predominant in her lap is an enormous riveting gun, with the large hose drawing the audience eye down to her feet, clad in red socks and loafers, which are comfortably and confidently set down on a mangled and battered copy of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. The image is clear: the ideal American woman during wartime is strong yet feminine and is working hard on the homefront for victory overseas. The image of the woman worker in the guise of the everywoman Rosie the Riveter permeated public discourse. She embodied traits encouraged by government dictums and propagated by public and private presses.

Another icon of femininity associated with World War II is that of the “pin-up” girl. The original pin-up was Betty Grable, born Elizabeth Ruth Grable December 18, 1916 in St. Louis, MO and died July 2, 1973 in Santa Monica, CA. In 1940 Grable contracted with Twentieth Century Fox and became their top star throughout the decade. She starred in *Down Argentine Way* (1940), *Moon Over Miami* (1941), *Springtime in The Rockies* (1942), *Coney Island* (1943), *Sweet Rosie O'Grady* (1943) and most importantly for this discussion, *Pin-Up Girl* (1944). She was the ultimate pin-up girl, made so by the famous photo of her standing in a white swimsuit in high heels with her back to the

camera, looking over her shoulder at the photographer. The shot was the most popular among American soldiers when it was published in 1943 and for many years after. The end of 1943 ranked her eighth among Hollywood's most popular stars and first among female stars, and military personnel ranked her first in photo requests. Lloyds of London insured her legs for one million dollars and Graumann's Chinese Theater memorialized her pricey legs alongside the nose of Bob Hope and the profile of John Barrymore (Pastos 1986; Warren 1981). Betty Grable urged American wives to send pin-ups of themselves to their husbands on the front lines and single girls, such as the older girls who were reading the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, to send pin-ups of themselves to any serviceman on the front lines, which imposed a sexualized version of patriotic support (Westbrook 1990).

Grable's film *Pin-Up Girl* drew on her carefully formed reputation as a glamorous but good girl. In the film, she played Laurie Jones, a girl popular with the soldiers in her small town of Missoula, Missouri at the local USO Club. She moves to Washington to be a stenographer, answering the call for women workers in the necessary services, and falls in love with a war hero named Tommy Dooley. She tries to pass herself off as a truly glamorous woman only to find that Tommy is looking for a good girl next-door. Relieved, Laurie reveals herself for who she is, and the film ends happily. Part of her success as a real life pin-up girl was not her exotic or even striking beauty, but her modest features that encapsulated the all-American girl next-door image. *Life* reported that her million dollar legs were not insured for being anything special, but because they were average (Westbrook 1990 599). She was a safe ideal of beauty and duty for Whitman Publishing Company to bring to their young readership.

In 1943, a Whitman Authorized Edition, *Betty Grable and the House With the Iron Shutters: An Original Story Featuring Betty Grable Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine* (see fig. 3.16) appeared. The story begins with a pen and ink portrait of Betty Grable standing with a smile on her face and a letter in her hand on the verso, and the narrative beginning on the recto with the announcement, “Chapter One, Anything Could Happen.” The tone of adventure set, readers learn that Betty and her friend Loys Lester are on a well-earned vacation from working and “entertaining in the camps.” They are touring “the United States, of course, because all good vacations begin at home” (Heisenfelt 1943 13). For work, Betty is using her beauty-fueled celebrity to entertain the troops. For vacation, she is staying in the “good ol’ United States of America.”

The publishing house was not the only one to recognize the profitability of the all American pin-up girl and the concept of pin-up girls for war propaganda. Advertising too got into the act. Jergens adopted the slogan as part of their soap and cosmetics campaign. “Be his Pin-up girl!” the ad instructs, “Wear your man-captivating shade of New Jergens Face Powder.” Pictured is a teenage girl with a bow in her long, blond hair, and long lashes and fully painted lips, leaning forward into the picture, looking out the corner of her eye, and holding the wings of an airman. Another example is Lifebuoy Soaps, a company that provided monthly Pin-up girls in their advertisements in magazines such as *Leatherneck* and *Our Navy*.

Cyrus C. Hungerford drew a cartoon war poster as part of the campaign to spur women into the defense industry campaigns. “Their Real Pin-up Girl” portrays a sailor, a soldier, and an airman giving the thumbs-up before a woman labeled “war worker” (see fig. 3.17). Her complexion is peachy and her smile gentle as she looks over her overall-

draped shoulder at the servicemen below. Her lips are bright red and her head-wrap is an army green version of Rosie the Riveter's against a sunny-yellow background. A combination of sexualized pin-up girl inspiration and hardworking woman worker, she is the idealized woman worker of World War II.

Peggy Parker Girl Inventor (1946) (see fig. 3.18) is the Whitman Authorized Edition that serves as the perfect transition piece from mobilization to post-mobilization. Twenty years old with beautiful gray eyes and auburn hair, Peggy is a natural mechanic and inventor (see fig. 3.19). At the time of her novel, her father has been dead for two years and she has graduated from high school and gone straight to the local airplane-parts plant to work. Her mother works as a stenographer at the same factory, and together they maintain their modest apartment while putting all their money into keeping her younger brother Joe in the sanatorium where he is recuperating from lung trouble. "She loved her work at the Dodson plant. She found it thrilling to be a part of this great concern, doing so much to make living more efficient" (Radford 1946 15). And she loved her traditional feminine clothes: "In her dark green evening dress, no stranger would have recognized Peggy as the same girl who was on such familiar terms with turret lathes and socket wrenches. She was thrilled to dress up..." (Radford 1946 18). Just in case the reader thought that either labor or aesthetics was more important, the writer has used the same term to describe both: "thrilling" and "thrilled."

The conflict between labor and beauty, wartime feminine behavior and traditional feminine behavior are repeated throughout the book. Peggy remembers that her father used to say, "Peggy should have been a boy" (Radford 1946 17). She loves her work, but also states that, "After all, one's work was only a means toward making a happy home

with those one loved” (Radford 1946 36). Her beau is continually startled by and can not get used to her knowing so much about machinery as she invents gadgets for factories and fixes motorboats, among other things. Peggy retorts, “The war has proved that a girl can be just about as good at mechanics as a man” (Radford 1946 90). Never mind that in the novel she wins awards for being the best mechanic in the factory. In the small town to which the family moves, she also invents a brand new mechanized cotton picker.

Ted, her beau, invites her to a party and she declines, worried her “clothes will be a mess by the time I get to the club – going in a launch” (Radford 1946 126). People who hear of her skills expect her to be unattractive. “I picture you taking long strides, your hair rolled up tight, your voice loud and mannish.” Peggy is complicit in this equating of skilled labor with the lack of feminine appeal: “Thought my appearance would match my interests, eh?” (Radford 1946 134). Ted does not propose until she has her mechanical tasks behind her. “I’ve just been waiting till she came out of that inventive coma to marry her” (Radford 1946 243). Peggy blushes with pleasure, and Ted and she agree that she can work on her inventions in her spare time. Peggy’s work as a machinist is over; her life as a wife and homemaker begins.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN AT HOME AGAIN: DEMOBILIZATION

How you gonna keep 'em in by the hearth after they've worked on the lathe?
(Fisher 1943 16)

The reversal of imperatives is always complicated, and national imperatives at a time of war and reconstruction are no less so. Women left the work front in majority numbers at the end of World War II and returned to the homemaking front. There was to be no more riveting for Rosie. This chapter examines the economics of reconversion and how this directly affected women, including Whitman women.

The new imperative was supporting men in the homefront rather than the war front, and for women this meant leaving paid labor positions and going home to make room for the men in the postwar labor force. Surveys by the Women's Bureau in 1944 revealed that 75 to 80 percent of women war workers hoped and planned to remain in the labor force at war's end and particularly wanted to stay in their industry jobs rather than return to work in traditionally more feminine fields (Women's Bureau 1944). In 1945 and 1946 surveys by the Women's Bureau revealed that women were unsatisfied and downright disgruntled at being laid-off from their war work positions, reluctant to transfer to feminine fields, and even more unhappy to settle for unpaid homemaking work (Women's Bureau 1946). A *New York Times* article from 1943 argued that with women working and men working, women and men together would have more time at home with the family:

Never till industrialism drove its great wedge between men working away from the home and women working inside the home was there in our

country the yawning crevasse we take for granted between man and wife. Perhaps that strange and unnatural kind of home life may vanish with the more complete utilization of women in industry, commerce, and the professions... If so, there may be ever so much more home life – real home life, with the whole family together – in the future than we have dreamed of (Fisher 1943 16).

Women's preferences and hopes proved to be unrealistic, and the true temporariness of women's positions as workers became clear early on. Back in early 1942 the War Production Board's Labor Division revealed the intended temporality of women in the workforce. "There is little doubt that women will be required to leave their jobs at the end of the war to permit the return of men to their jobs as they are released from the armed forces" (Honey 1984 26). The National Industry Conference Board interviewed male management of defense industry factories and found: "No consideration [was] given to the long-range social or economic desirability or implication of the increased employment of women" (Honey 26). Government and private industry alike saw women's participation in traditional male fields as purely expedient and temporary. There was no intention of emancipation or revolution.

Coming again to the aid of women workers and women's rights, Mary Anderson and her Women's Bureau as well as the Women's Advisory Committee advocated to keep women in lucrative employment. In 1944 the Women's Advisory Committee attempted to correct the persistent and erroneous assumption by government and industry that women's incomes were supplementary and as such easily discarded. "Government and industry must not assume that all women can be treated as a reserve group during war

only, nor should those who wish to stay in the labor market be accused of taking men's jobs... any easy assumption... is to be seriously questioned." (Honey 27). Resistance, as it is said, can be futile, and so it was for women workers.

As the propaganda machine worked toward women in the workforce during the war, by the end of the war and afterwards the propaganda had a decidedly different mission: to get women out. The public seemed to agree. An October 1943 *A Woman's Home Companion* Poll showed that 75 percent of readers thought women should "give back" their jobs as soon as the war ended.

And so women returned to female fields of work, to school, and to homemaking. In November of 1943, 45.3 percent of women industrial workers were in higher skill and higher wage jobs and by November of 1946 only 25 percent of women production workers were in higher skill and higher wage jobs. By April of 1947 the demobilization and reconversion of women workers was complete: prewar employment patterns of women were established and women were once again largely homemakers. Women workers either left wage work or transferred to feminine fields such as domestic service, clerical work, and the food and beverage industry. Indeed, the government and private industry war economy plan had always intended for women to exit the workforce.

In 1944 and 1945 the Women's Bureau surveyed over thirteen thousand women war workers about their attitudes toward work, including their desire or lack thereof to remain in the workforce in the post-war economy. 80 percent of the women who were workers before Pearl Harbor expected to remain in the workforce. 75 percent of the women surveyed expressed their intention and expectation to continue working as part of the postwar labor force, and 86 percent of the women hoped to remain in the same field

of which they had been an integral part during the war. Women who worked in high-skill jobs with higher pay wanted to remain in those jobs rather than returning to prewar low-skill and low-pay jobs. 84 percent of the women who wanted to remain working reported they had no alternative but to work as they had to support themselves and others. Eight percent cited special reasons such as buying a house or providing child education. Eight percent stated they simply liked working and having money of their own. A 1945 Women's Bureau Survey of ex-women workers in Baltimore found that even women who managed to keep their jobs suffered cuts in wages and hours, and often had to change professions. An electrician's helper went from \$48 a week, for example, to \$28 a week as a saleswoman, the only job she could find (Hartmann 1982 93).

With the end of war, defense production reverted to peacetime production. Factories that used to build automobiles and had been converted into bomber plants were reconverted to produce automobiles and tractors for the domestic rather than the defense market. The reconversion changed the nature of jobs available. Management used this excuse as a means of laying off women and rehiring men, claiming that the changes in the job required male application and were no longer viable for women.

Ford Motor Company serves as an example. Riveters were a classification of worker that was born in early 1942 with the rise of defense industry. Riveters were 28 percent of the workforce in 1942 and stabilized between 10 percent and 15 percent through 1945. Riveting was a job directly and solely related to bomber production; there is no riveting in the construction of automobiles and farm equipment. As the war drew to a close and national defense required fewer and fewer bombers, the demand for riveters lessened. Ford laid off its last riveter in July of 1945 and hired men to build cars. Though

men were just as likely as women to be riveters, it was the women who disappeared from the workforce along with riveter positions, and riveting was not the only profession to come to a close (Kossoudji & Dresser 1992). By 1946, women held only 7.5 percent of the Detroit industry jobs, down from 25 percent during the war (Hartmann 1995 92).

So-called “clean” jobs also diminished. “Clean” jobs included clerking and inspecting work that required low amounts of physical strength and exertion, and women held a high proportion of the jobs. At Ford, the clean job of clerking accounted for 20 percent to 30 percent of women-held positions during the war. When the riveting jobs are included with the clerking and inspection jobs, it is clear that between 60 percent to 70 percent of jobs held by women were discontinued as the war ended (Kossoudji & Dresser 1992).

As “clean” jobs decreased at Ford, “dirty” jobs increased. Dirty jobs included foundry furnace work and general laboring. No woman ever worked in the foundry furnace area, perhaps the dirtiest and most dangerous job at Ford and certainly the position that required the most physical strength; even during the war women were less likely by 50 percent to hold a general labor position. Both jobs accounted for 10 percent to 15 percent of employment at Ford during the war and as much as 20 percent after the war.

Five occupations accounted for 54 percent of women’s work at Ford during the war: smoothing (sanding) jobs, stock jobs, assembly work, drill work, and press machining. Smoothing and stock jobs accounted for 15 percent of the jobs at Ford before, during, and after the war and were low-impact. Drill and press machining were similarly low impact and accounted for around 30 percent to 40 percent before, during, and after

the war. Assembly work accounted for approximately 20 percent of jobs during the war and 25 percent after the war. During the war, between 25 percent and 40 percent of women workers were employed as assemblers. After the war, the five occupations accounted for around 57 percent of all the jobs at Ford. Women then, had proved themselves capable and exemplary at almost 60 percent of the end of war and postwar jobs. The question begs to be asked, of course, why management did not keep the women workers for the jobs they knew how to do and were doing and why management did not retrain the women already working in the factories for the reconverted automobile jobs (Kossoudji & Dresser 1992; Milkman 1987).

The answer lies in government mandates and propaganda as well as popular culture preference. Veteran preference, re-assimilation, and reconversion to a peacetime economy required layoffs. Women most likely to keep their jobs in the postwar economy were those in traditionally feminine fields such as nursing, teaching, and secretarial and services industries. The Veterans Preference Act was passed in 1944, with President Roosevelt scribing this endorsement:

I believe that the Federal Government, functioning in its capacity as an employer, should take the lead in assuring those who are in the armed forces that when they return special consideration will be given to them in their efforts to obtain employment. It is absolutely impossible to take millions of our young men out of their normal pursuits for the purpose of fighting to preserve the Nation, and then expect them to resume their normal activities without having any special consideration shown them.

The Act permeated all aspects of hiring, mandating preference in competitive examinations, reinstatement to prewar positions, and all civilian positions in the federal government. With such endorsement women did not stand a chance. The Ford River Rouge factory provides a particular example. Before July of 1942 there were never more than 45, or .0006 percent, women workers out of the monthly average of over 80,000 employees. Within a year, women workers held 11,160 jobs, or 12 percent of the 93,000 jobs at the factory, and the numbers continued to rise throughout the war until women held 16 percent of the jobs. By December of 1946, reconversion to male-dominated employment prevailed and women once again held less than one percent of positions (Kossoudi & Dresser 1992a 519).

The culture industry propagated a different kind of message about the demobilization of women. The dominant picture was of women eager and relieved to return to homemaking. Advertisements reflected the change. Rosie disappeared and Mrs. Homemaker took over. Where overalls and work goggles dominated at the height of the war, the end of the war brought aprons and full skirts. A 1945 AIPO (American Institute of Public Opinion) poll asked, "If there is a limited number of jobs, do you approve of married women holding a business or industrial job if her husband can support her?" 10 percent concurred and 86 percent disapproved with only 4 percent giving conditional responses (Oppenheimer 1976 44-5).

Popular culture reflected this transition. In the 1946 musical *Annie Get Your Gun*, Annie Oakley, touted to be a sharpshooter better than any other man or woman, longs to be married. In Act I her love interest, Frank, sings about the girl he wants to marry, one who is "as soft and pink as a nursery" who dresses in "satins and laces and smells of

cologne” and will sit and “purr like a kitten.” Annie sings a song called “I Can Do Anything Better Than You,” including outshoot Frank, but she rapturously gives it all up to become Mrs. Frank. To be a wife, she has to quit working and excelling outside the home, and to be a wife is worth the sacrifice. The spunky career woman marries her beau in the end and subsumes herself in him.

But some female characters in popular culture did resist if not ignore these changes. Brenda Starr, Girl Reporter, of newspaper strip and Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls fame, continued to work full-time, and devoted herself to her own glamour and success (see fig. 4.1). Brenda Starr had no remnants of Victorian anything. She is pure modernity, a working girl out to make it, with no false modesty or Sam Craig to stumble her Tess Harding, as in the 1942 motion picture *Woman of the Year*, starring Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. Brenda has a paying job as a gritty newspaper reporter and never gives it up. She is a man-eating cover girl diving into center stage, sometimes literally:

“Clad in a one-piece, star-trimmed midnight blue bathing suit, Brenda was poised atop the highest diving board. As she made a perfect, straight dive into the pool, she drew the attention of everyone there... who... gazed admiringly at Brenda.” (Messick 1943 238).

In her Whitman Authorized Edition, she has no less than four marriage proposals, none of which she takes seriously but instead manipulates carefully to achieve her goal of being a star reporter:

“Brenda was enjoying herself immensely. If she had time to wile away, she couldn’t think of a better way to do it than to spend it being the center

of attraction, being bombarded with proposals of marriage” (Messick 1943 117).

She always declines the proposals and goes back to work. Most women depicted in popular culture entertainment, however, did succumb to cultural pressure and the unavoidable reality of being laid-off, and get married.

Government manuals were published to help women and men back into postwar life as homemaking wives and working husbands. One gem of advice to “Mrs. America” in 1946 reads, “Let him know you are tired of living alone... You want him to take charge. You want now to have your nails done” (Gourley 2008 133). As stated in chapters two and three, between 1900 and 1940 the median age of women in the labor force rose to over thirty years old and 30.6 percent of women ages twenty-five to forty-four were working in 1940 as opposed to 18.1 percent of the same age group in 1900. Married women were only 15 percent of the female labor force in 1900 and rose to 35 percent of working women in 1940. While this rise set a precedent for cultural acceptance of married women in the workplace, its resistance also set a precedent for getting married women out of the workplace at war’s end. The assumption that women should be homemakers and mothers first was reflected from the very beginning of the campaign for women war workers. The official policy of the WMC was to hire young mothers only when there was no other option, and a means of subtly but surely encouraging young mothers to stay out of the workforce was to provide insufficient childcare (Honey 1984 27; May 1996; Riley 1994).

In September of 1943 the *Magazine War Guide* published an entry chastising women for old-fashioned ideals of getting married immediately; by 1945 such

conversations had reversed their tune. Marriage instead of work was the new publicized goal for women, and the Whitman Publishing Company complied. In 1946 Whitman published Authorized Editions by Ruby Lorraine Radford, a series of titles featuring working girls, and all give up their careers for married life. Mary Anderson, as head of the Women's Bureau, advocated for women workers keeping the jobs that they proclaimed to want and need (Women's Bureau 1944). Women's desires and needs to continue working did not matter however, in view of the male-centric post-war economy. There were two sets of workers and only one set of jobs.

Patty O'Neal on the Airways (1946) reads like a promotion for airline careers. "Patty was a small bundle of pep. From the soles of her flat shoes to the crown of her raven black hair, she was sixty-one inches of energy. She always walked with a sprightly swing..." (Radford 1946 9). She has gone to college for two years and the story starts when she embarks on her aviation course at Carter College. The books reframe the wartime experiences of women with postwar endings, inserting readers into familiar experiences, but changing the endings to match the post-war economy. The familiar experience draws the reader in and enables identification and at the same time uses that identification to script and model a new image of the American feminine.

In the beginning, when Patty flies "she was confident and exhilarated" with her hand "steady and firm" and her "deep blue eyes... farsighted and accurate" (Radford 1946 14). But when she hears of a plane crash of her childhood friend, John Nash, and loses all confidence. She has nightmares and crashes her plane.

In her excitement she used too much speed for landing. The plane bounced horribly when the tires touched cement, causing Patty to become

completely confused. She lost her head entirely. The last thing she recalled later was that the plane was off the runway, and she seemed helpless to do anything about it. She lost her grip on the stick as she was thrown forward. Her head struck the instrument panel and everything went black (Radford 1946 70).

But she conquers her fear and goes up in the plane as soon as she is well. “When she stepped to the ground a few minutes later she felt like someone who had gone forth to tame a lion, only to find a very tame and friendly cat” (Radford 1946 91).

The drama of the story focuses on Patty’s trying for a pilot’s career, which is traditionally more male-oriented, and then settling for a postwar stewardess’s career that is feminine-focused, and eventually leaving both behind for marriage. Dialog unfolds the full cycle: “She could not, would not, give up” (Radford 1946 97). “I wonder. Sometimes I think I ought not to keep at it” (Radford 1946 114). She has tried hard to be a pilot, but also fears she isn’t good enough. “I’ve tried, Dal, honestly I have, but I get no better. Yet I’d give anything in the world if I could be a real pilot. I guess I’m pretty stubborn – rather die than give up when I start to do a thing” (Radford 1946 115). She worries people will think less of her for quitting, though she knows her mother would be relieved to have her safely on the ground, and her boyfriend saves the day by suggesting the lateral move to the appropriately feminine position of stewardess.

“You need not get out of aviation, of course. You might try being a stewardess for a change, then finish your aviation course later.”

“A stewardess?” she repeated. “That never entered my mind – always seemed like a sort of soft job.”

“Don’t fool yourself! There’s plenty of hard work, and plenty of thrill, too, in being a stewardess. They get to see the world just as pilots do” (Radford 1946 117).

The conversation continues with Patty finally agreeing to do it, and Dal promises to get her a position on his plane, with one warning: “A stewardess has to promise she’ll serve a year without marrying before they will train her” (Radford 1946 118). Patty laughingly agrees as she’ll be with Dal anyway, and can avoid making her final decision about being a pilot. Once she joins stewardess school, she hands in “the finest set of test papers we have ever corrected” (Radford 1946 147) validating her in her more feminine career choice.

Patty does well as a stewardess and gains the cherished spot aboard Dal’s plane. Once there, the next part of her adventure begins when the on-board engineer teases her about getting the “matrimonial bug!” “It’s grabbed off three of our stewardesses in the last year” (Radford 1946 164). Industry policy and cultural norms dictated that once women were married they quit the skies.

In the last two chapters of the book, the notion of women training in professional vocations and remaining feminine mesh together in an unexpected twist. The two pilots fall sick from food poisoning and it is left to Patty to fly high over the Chinese mountains, relegating her piloting abilities as back-up skills to be utilized only when men are unavailable, in line with the dominant theme of women leaving the workforce in the demobilization economy. “Patty had a moment of absolute panic... From somewhere deep inside her a faint, small voice seemed to be saying, ‘You’ve dreamed of doing this a thousand times. Now you have what you want. It’s up to you. Are you equal to the

responsibility?” (Radford 1946 234). Patty flies the plane successfully, but can't quite do the work without male assistance, and relies on the recovering male pilots for help in the landing. “Sorry to drag you out, Wint, but I couldn't take a chance on bringing her down alone,” (Radford 1946 240) Patty apologizes. He guides her through the landing: “‘You did it!’ exclaimed Winton. ‘Thank God, I did!’ Patty said fervently, and promptly burst into tears” (Radford 1946 243). Dal is so impressed with her feat that he encourages Patty to go back to school and get her commercial license.

“Oh, Patty, think how wonderful it will be when we're flying about the country as double co-pilots!”

She laughed for sheer joy. Then suddenly she became serious. “But it'll take several months for me to get that commercial license.” She spoke as if that were an eternity.

“But we're not waiting for your commercial license to get our marriage license,” he told her firmly, and pulled her down to kiss her tenderly.

As married women did not work as pilots in the 1940s, her career is clearly over.

In 1946 a public opinion poll queried, “Suppose a young couple want to get married, but the man isn't earning enough to support both of them. Should they wait to get married until he is earning enough, or should the girl take a job so they can get married right away?” 44 percent of men thought the woman should get a job while 39 percent did not. 50 percent of women agreed the bride should work while 33 percent did not, and the others had no opinion either way (Oppenheimer 1974 4-5).

A public opinion poll in 1949 wondered, “Do you think it is all right for a young woman to work for the first few years of married life to help earn enough so the couple can be married?” The national total was 79 percent for the woman working and 17 percent against. 77 percent of men approved of a bride working and 81 percent of women agreed (Oppenheimer 1974 44-5). Overwhelmingly, the support was for women’s work to be temporary work.

In the Whitman Authorized Edition for Girls book *Patty O’Neal on the Airways* (1946) Patty’s best friends and brother follow popular opinion. Ann tells Patty that she is speeding up her training. “It’s really Perry’s idea. I told him I couldn’t marry him till I had my commercial... And Perry’s going to make some changes, too... He’s going to line up to get a job as radio operator on a plane” (Radford 1946 135).

Both girls in the next two Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, *Sylvia Sanders and the Tangled Web* (1946) and *Sandra of the Girl Orchestra* (1946) are nineteen-year-olds living at home. Both leave their small towns with the permission of their fathers to make their way in the big city, Chicago and New York City, respectively. Both are pretty and plucky, though in these novels beauty is mentioned in passing rather than as a regular chapter element as in the previous two stages of war-time publications, pre-mobilization and mobilization.

In *Sylvia Sanders and the Tangled Web* (1946), Sylvia Sanders is a nineteen-year-old girl with red curls and gray-green eyes who moves north to Chicago from her small town in the Carolinas to try and make it in radio. At the beginning of World War II, radio had been “a young man’s industry, and so especially susceptible to the draft.” In November 1942, more than 1,000 of the 5,500 qualified radio engineers had already

joined the Armed Forces. As a result, women's colleges (Vassar is one example) opened training courses for girl technicians.

Sylvia has no ambitions for engineering. She knows she will make good as a performer. There has been no trouble in getting on the air back home, so why should she not she make "good in the big city?" (Radford 1946 12). By page 18, she has met a boy. Only in these later Whitman novels, all written in 1946, do men take such an immediate role. Sylvia is too busy admiring a man to even manage running a simple machine like an elevator, a far cry from Peggy Parker, *Girl Inventor*, though Peggy too loses skill for the sake of a man.

She [Sylvia] was too busy anyhow, thinking how handsome he was, not that his features were perfect, but there was something so friendly, and dreamy, yet strong in his face. In cool-looking tan trousers, and a shirt with a turned-back collar and short sleeves, he looked as informal as any of her boy friends back home. His soft auburn hair was the unruly kind that never looked tidy more than three minutes after it was combed (Radford 1946 18).

Future husband Hal Graham has made his appearance.

By page 26, Sylvia is desperate to perform some domestic duties – activities that do not even come up in conversation let alone action in any of the Whitman Authorized Editions before and during World War II. " 'You just lie there and I'll get our supper,' offered Sylvia... 'I'd love doin' it. I'm rarin' to be at something...'" (Radford 1946 26). She's not satisfied with kitchen work. By page 36 she is attacking laundry: "Think I'll go back to the apartment and wash up my undies, press some dresses, write home, and phone

a friend of Dad's..." (Radford 1946 36). She is ingrained with a deep desire for domestic work and familial responsibility. In 1946, she only makes it to Chicago with her father's permission. In the Whitman Authorized Editions from the previous two stages, from 1941 to 1945, the heroines are single girls who make decisions on their own.

Every time the novel mentions an aspect of Sylvia's paid labor, ostensibly her radio training, it is counter-balanced by a mention of domestic duty. Her moments of independence are diluted with helplessness and dependence. When all her money is stolen, her first instinct is to hope her father can send her more (Radford 1946 145), though she does marginally reassert herself by getting stenography work, a skill she has learned helping her father in his office. Even that job is a reversion to pre-war attitudes as it is a pre-war feminine field.

When the mystery and adventure of the missing silver and the foreboding men come to a crux, she calls a man, Mr. Nat Hudson, for help. He is an older man who is an old friend of her father's; she considers him a stand-in for her dad. Conveniently, the man also works for the FBI (Radford 1946 176) and treats her like a daughter. She "feels worlds better since I've dumped all my worries on you," she tells him (Radford 1946 183). She does not take charge of the investigation as the girls in the previous stages would. Rather, she leaves everything up to him. "I'm not afraid – now I'm with you," she assured him. "I'll be thrilled to help in any way I can." (Radford 1946 193). She puts herself out of the position of leader and into the role of helper. She is still a "plucky" gal (Radford 1946 19, 45, 194) but she depends on men to take care of her problems. Her supportive role as a woman is clearly stated.

During World War II, American women were asked to support the war effort in war jobs, maintain the homefront, and support the men overseas. After the war, they were asked to give up their jobs, return to the domestic sphere, and support men by subjugating themselves and relying on men. This idea of the helplessness of women is reinforced by the relationship between Nat Hudson and his wife. His wife speaks of him gratefully: “He’s a very thoughtful man, Nat is. He never worries me with his business until the real danger is past” (Radford 1946 228).

Sylvia’s own planned union with Hal is presented in the beginning as more of an equitable partnership. Sylvia wants to be in radio and Hal works on the production side of radio and television. He offers to help her make a record of her speaking voice to show producers and advertisers; he writes some brief skits for her to show her range and ability (Radford 1946 87-8). They share their suspicions about the unfolding mystery, understand “the undercurrents of dark energy” through foreboding music (86), and run off for a walk alone together to explore the mystery lake house and talk about their feelings (98). Once back in Chicago, she starts working for him at his Electrical Transcription office as a stenographer (122-4).

The book expresses the confusion and contradictions of the transition stage of the role of women in America after World War II. The career girls seesaw between wanting to work and wanting to be married homemakers. Sylvia’s cousin gets in a heated discussion with a traditional-minded gentleman in the middle of the novel:

“They tell me you young ladies are career girls...”

“I think a woman has the same right to a career as a man,” spoke up Beth, “even if she is married.”

“A man should earn money for his family,” he stated with a finality that invited no further discussion.

But Beth came back promptly. “I’m afraid you’re out of date, Mr. Steiner. The war has proved that a woman can take her place in any field right along with men. And after all, hasn’t she the same right to a full, well-rounded life that a man has?”

“What about children in the home?”

“The guidance and direction of their lives should be the joint work of both parents. Thanks to modern inventions, the drudgery that used to make women slaves is taken care of by machinery. Women are now free to seek other channels of self-expression” (Radford 1946 84-5).

Yet within pages after this glorious speech, Beth quits school and marries a boy back home in her small town down south, giving up her dreams of career and life in a city. And Sylvia too has her setbacks. Over and over she makes mistakes that lead to personal injury, when she insists on remaining friends with suspicious characters in the hopes they can further her career (181) and even resists her civic duty as a witness (231). Hal scolds her for letting “ambition blind [her] to common sense” (149). The new common sense, as Geertz would say, is marriage instead of career, and all symbols in the story point to this conclusion for readers. In *Sylvia Sanders and the Tangled Web*, the first thing the reader learns about the major villainess is that she is single:

Mazie Middlecoff had never married. No wonder, Sylvia thought, for she reminded her of an icebox that badly needed defrosting. She was

all business, and wholly intent upon the dollar. She had none of the redeeming personal qualities... (Radford 1946 164).

Clearly, getting married is the culturally accepted behavior of the times.

Heroine Sylvia's own marriage is assured when her father figure Nat Hudson approves her choice of husband: "That young fellow is keen and fine. You've made a good selection there, Syl" (Radford 1946 197). She confirms at the end of the novel, "I hadn't meant to tell it so soon, but Hal and I are going into another sort of partnership before long. We'll soon be having a little apartment of our own" (247). In the postwar economy, she, like Patty with Dal, makes arrangements for married life, unlike her earlier Whitman compatriots in pre-war and war times who focused on independent life and work.

Sandra of the Girl Orchestra (1946) follows much the same lines as *Sylvia Sanders and the Tangled Web*. Sandra is from a small southern town and moves to the city for her big break as a violinist in a girls' orchestra; all her life she has wanted to be in a girls' orchestra that would be heard on radio. In her small-town orchestra, she works for free. "Mr. Tomkins, the director, was the only paid member of their group, but nobody complained" (Radford 1946 16). Lucia Pincella of New York's Girl Orchestra comes to hear a concert, and Sandra gets her chance to go to the big city. Her parents support her, but her career definitely plays second fiddle: "My child's welfare comes ahead of her career, I can assure you," says her mother (Radford 1946 27). And once she leaves home she moves into a boarding club for girls that is "a home away from home" (Radford 1946 34).

When Sandra arrives in the boarding club the girls talk to her about boys rather than her career (36) and soon a nice Southern boy, Philip Carlton, from a small town 50 miles from her own, rescues her from ice and snow on the sidewalk in front of her boarding house. It turns out he is a pianist who can accompany her violin, and within the week they're meeting for lunch (64). They agree that they do not care much for wage work. "I'm Sandra Middleton, a small-town girl in the big city – with no special desire for fame, just a great yearning to play in a real orchestra." He replies, "I hate any commercial angle connected with it...but... I have to make a living somehow" (Radford 1946 64-5).

As they spend more time together, being attractive to his gaze becomes more important, and more of the text is devoted to clothing description. For their first time playing together, "She wore a new aqua jacket with a black skirt, and put on her aqua earrings." She is rewarded: "You look wonderful," he tells her (Radford 1946 66).

Always earnest and eager, Sandra has no mischief or independence about her. She is a good girl through and through. Philip picks her because:

"You don't smoke and you don't drink and above all things you don't try to act so blanded sophisticated!"

She laughed and replied, "To me, sophistication is the height of artificiality. I've never liked false fronts either" (Radford 1946 111).

Sandra at first insists she has no time for romance and must concentrate on her work. She tells Philip not to:

"get sed-i-mental, as our old cook back home says. You know we've got to keep our minds on the business in hand right now."

He pressed her fingers tightly, and responded warmly, “This business in hand is more important than anything else” (Radford 1946 143).

Her immediate connection to romance is domestic labor. She realizes it is nice to have someone look after her and promptly spends the rest of the novel looking after him, solving the mystery of the provenance of her violin only because she senses it will help him to better understand his family and to further his career. His father breaks the news about her impending nuptials:

“He told me that when he gets some paying engagements, he’s going to ask you to marry him.”

“Oh, Father,” burst forth Philip. “I wanted to tell her that!”

In all three books, Patty, Sylvia, and Sandra learn it is the woman’s job to be patient with the immaturity, jealousy, and petulance of the young men while they mature, relax, and get gainful employment. This is not surprising as the general thrust of popular culture in America at war’s end emphasized the obligation of women to ease the transition of men back into the homefront. As Hartmann points out, advice literature of the time “advocated attention to the male ego, the necessity for rebuilding it, and the importance of women conceding some of their newly found competence and economic independence” (Hartmann 1978 236). The women are back in their father’s houses and work only inasmuch as it will help them partner with their intended grooms and create homes of their own, a far cry from the brave adventures of the earlier Whitman Authorized Edition girls.

Perhaps the most overtly retrograde of all the series characters, Blondie provides innocent comic relief and traditional gender role modeling throughout all the years of the war. Her four Whitman Authorized Editions publication dates (1942, 1943, 1944, 1947) spread through the three stages of mobilization of women during World War II but maintain an unchanging model of femininity; not an innocent girl, not a blushing bride, but a safe and secure housewife, reminiscent of traditional ideals of womanhood and prescient of the 1950s model to come.

Blondie the comic strip and Blondie the character were created by Chic Young and published by the King Features Syndicate beginning September 8, 1930. Introduced as Blondie Boopadoop, Blondie was a pretty flapper with boyfriends galore, one of whom was Dagwood, the bumbling, billionaire heir to railroad tycoon J. Bolling Bumstead. In response to the Depression and falling newspaper subscriptions, Young had Blondie and Dagwood fall in love, with Dagwood being instantly disinherited for marrying a working class girl. Blondie became an economizing housewife and Dagwood became a struggling workingman at Dithers Construction Company, more in line with the majority experience of the country. The family grew to include son Alexander, daughter Cookie, and dog Daisy with puppies of her own.

Blondie's popular iconography extended when Whitman Publishing Company featured her in seventeen Big Little Books and Better Little Books between 1932 and 1949 as well as four Whitman Authorized Editions Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls Featuring Your Favorite Characters books between 1942 and 1947. King Features gave her a comic book presence in *Ace Comics* in 1937 and her own title in 1942. Between 1938 and 1959 Columbia Pictures created a series of 28 feature films about

Blondie, starring Penny Singleton as Blondie and Arthur Lake as Dagwood. The strip was eventually interpreted for television and radio and continues as a strip in 2009 newspaper comics with Blondie running a catering service and Dagwood as the Dithers Corporation's Webmaster. Now drawn by John Marshall, the strip is read by 280 million people in 2,300 newspapers around the globe in 55 countries, translated into more than 35 languages. The universality of Blondie's appeal continues as a conflict-ridden bedrock of popular culture, with Blondie as the pre-Feminist jealous housewife who is smarter than her husband in every way yet perplexingly attached to him and Dagwood as the perennially lazy husband who does nothing but eat sandwiches, nap, and get into trouble.

The first of her Whitman Authorized Editions, *Blondie and Dagwood's Secret Service* (1942) is representative of all her characterizations across all mediums and in the four Whitman Authorized Editions. Though titled after Blondie, the books are really family comedy dramas centered around the husband and worker, Dagwood Bumstead. *Blondie and Dagwood's Secret Service* is the only book that mentions the war. Blondie is first introduced as "his attractive young wife" immediately setting her up as property, as pretty, and as a homemaker, yet Blondie is the smart one who gets Dagwood out of all his mishaps and generally acts as his support staff (Young 1942 12). She has "golden curls and big blue eyes" (15) and fills her time with wifely duties such as making supper, doing laundry, and knitting (15, 24, 28, 30). When in the course of their adventures she gets knocked down and tied up, she worries about him, and he follows suit:

"Now tell me all about it," Dagwood urged in the privacy of the booth.

His mind was still in a whirl from the panic and fright that assailed him when he discovered that Blondie had disappeared from his side.

“Take a drink of water first, dear. You look pale,” Blondie suggested.

She dipped her handkerchief in the glass of water that the clerk had set before her, and wiped Dagwood’s perspiring brow” (Young 1942 50).

Blondie is described as “smart,” “pretty,” and “super competent,” (Young 1942 15, 169; 22, 54; 116). Dagwood is lazy and avoids housework (26), rushes about bumping and bashing into things, sending furniture and postmen flying (75, 166, 247), and quits what he’s doing to make elaborate sandwiches no less than seven times (27, 57, 162, 177, 220, 226, 242). The sandwiches are something of a running joke and trademark, for in each of the books during World War II he makes sandwiches, twice in 1943 and four times in 1944. And yet despite his foolishness in each of the books, Blondie repeatedly succumbs to jealousy over Dagwood (1942 32; 1943 23; 1944 62, 69, 156), worrying that another woman will steal him from her.

Blondie is portrayed as the smart and capable one in all the books. She is constantly working in the home whereas Dagwood frequently misses work, naps at least three times in each book, and is consistently happier to see dinner than he is his family at the end of the day. Part of this is comedy; Blondie and Dagwood get in spats in which he is “being all husband,” seven to ten instances in each novel. Dagwood always ends up impressed with how smart Blondie is but by 1944 being smart distresses Blondie, at least for the next generation of females, specifically her daughter Cookie.

“Blondie! Cookie heard an airplane go by and she pointed up, like this! Isn’t she bright?” Dagwood said.

Blondie shook her head in a concerned manner.

“You don’t seem happy that your daughter is so intelligent,” Dagwood remarked.

“I’m not. It worries me dreadfully. I’m so afraid she won’t get a husband. You know how men dislike terribly bright women,” she said (Young 1944 69).

Blondie was a reassuring presence to those who worried that the experience of women during World War II changed women too much. She helped to re-establish the status quo.

The propaganda throughout the war that called women to employment in traditional male arenas was always tempered by a concern about the immediate and long-term effects on gender roles. The call for women to work was colored with patriotism and the feminine trait of sacrifice, and the demobilization call was to gracefully give way as men returned from war and reclaimed the jobs. The federal government allowed and encouraged the dismissal of women from wartime labor (Rupp 1978; Honey 1984).

Historian William Chafe calls the war a milestone for women in terms of opportunity and changing gender roles and notes that “the most striking feature of women’s employment picture in the years after the war was the number of women who rejoined the labor force, but in sex-segregated and sex-typed occupations” (Chafe 1991 160). 2.25 million women left work between September of 1945 and November of 1946 but in the same period almost 2.75 million women were rehired in clerical, sales, and service positions; Chafe calls it a “paradox of change.” “The less people saw women’s work as a threat to

conventional views about women's place, the greater was the possibility that sex roles could continue to change" (Chafe 1991 167). If polls asked about women working on a financial contributory basis, replies were in the affirmative that yes, women should work. When polls were phrased in a way that spoke of values or poached on traditional male territory, replies were in the negative. This could account for why the Whitman characters Peggy, Patty, Sylvia, and Sandra were partially presented as working partners with their grooms.

Feminist historians have a number of interpretations of this wartime movement of women into and out of the workforce. Feminist Betty Friedan has argued that the war was not a "milestone" but instead a "millstone" for women and that women working in traditionally masculine fields generated a backlash against the progress of women's rights, effectively ushering in the extreme conservatism of the 1950s and later decades (Friedan 1963). In contrast, historian Leila Rupp believes the war had no impact beyond the war years on women's working lives. She notes ways in which propaganda images that purported to support women as workers were simultaneously emphasizing the more traditionally feminine side of female identity (Rupp 1978). Another feminist historian, Susan Hartmann, believes that the changes that occurred, no matter how temporary, laid the foundation for real and lasting changes in the second wave of feminism (Hartmann 1982). Hartmann agrees with historian Karen Anderson that the postwar stress on women in the home was analogous to the wartime stress on women in the workplace because both had the same requirement: the care and protection of the United States, specifically at a micro-level of the family unit (Hartmann 1978, 1982; Anderson 1981). Historian Maureen Honey argues for contextuality, believing that no theories about women during

the war can be supported without considering the popular government and private campaigns that molded public opinion and behavior on the homefront (Honey 1984).

My study of the Whitman Authorized Editions, their reflection of wartime life for women, and their participation in wartime propaganda aimed at women extends Honey's views with data on the feminine cultural values and norms that were presented to girls to ingest in mass market fiction reading. Thus far I have looked at labor and aesthetics in real life and fiction. The following chapter will look at notions of the feminine heroic through the lens of the first female superhero in American culture, Invisible Scarlet O'Neil.

CHAPTER 5

INVISIBLE SCARLET O'NEIL

For such was the tremendous, the unbelievable power Scarlet O'Neil possessed – the gift of voluntary invisibility (Stamm 1943 13).

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil is the first female superhero in the United States, and the star of her own Whitman Authorized Edition in 1943, the height of the mobilization efforts of women during World War II. Set against the background of the World War II recruitment of women as wage workers, and the beginning of their return to the home in Reconversion and de-mobilization efforts, Invisible Scarlet O'Neil is adroitly retrograde in her modesty and functions as an avatar of pre-mobilization sensibility. Scarlet O'Neil's invisible enactments of the feminine heroic reveal a historical continuation of interpretations of the mythological feminine heroic and also showcase a version of women's adjustment to paid employment that is, perhaps unsurprisingly, deliberately incomplete and hidden from view, and, as it turned out, also a prefigurement of events to come as women after the war were herded out of the wage workforce and into marriage. This chapter explores the first female superhero in the culture industry of the United States, Invisible Scarlet O'Neil; looks at mythological and literary treatments of the ideas of the heroic and the feminine heroic; and attempts reconciliation and working theory of the two.

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil is considered the first major female superhero in the United States because she is the first female character in newspaper strips, comic books, or books to have actual super powers. She was born in *The Chicago Times* June 3, 1940.

Her Sunday strip began January 5, 1941. *Famous Funnies* put her on the covers of eight issues: issue 81 (April 1, 1941), issue 87 (October 1, 1941), issue 95 (June 1, 1942), issue 110 (September 1, 1943), issue 121 (August 1, 1944), issue 141 (April 1, 1946), and issue 146 (September 1, 1946). She appeared in stories in twenty-five issues. *Harvey Comics* used her in four *Black Cat* comics, giving Scarlet guest stories in issue 21 (February, 1946), issue 22 (April, 1946), issue 23 (June, 1946), and issue 24 (August, 1946). *Harvey Comics* reprinted her newspaper adventures in three comic books in December 1950, February 1951, and April 1952. Whitman Publishing Company printed two Big Little Books, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil* (1942) (see fig. 2.1) and *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil Versus the King of the Slums* (1946) (see fig. 2.2). In 1943 *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil* (see fig. 1.1) became a member of their Whitman Authorized Editions of Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls and Boys Featuring Your Favorite Characters.

As the first female superhero with super powers, whose height of fame was in the 1940s, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil* serves as an especially relevant cultural artifact through which to examine ideals of the feminine heroic in the United States during World War II. Beginning with her origin story, it is immediately apparent that her origin changes with each licensing across mediums. In her newspaper comic strips, comic books, and Big Little Books, it is her own journey of curiosity that leads to her superpower. In her Whitman Authorized Edition, her power is a christening gift from a fairy godmother. Her origin story splits between active and passive responsibility, between modern assertiveness and fairy tale gifting, between original sin Edenic inquisitiveness and fairy tale gratefulness.

In her newspaper strip of June 3, 1940, Scarlet tells her origin story. She was visiting her scientist father's laboratory and before he could stop her, she put her finger in a "weird-looking ray." "Hm! What's this?" Her father yells at her to "Stop! Don't! You'll..." He knows what will happen to her. He spends the rest of his life working to "perfect this ray" in a process that would include a reversing antidote. For Scarlet, the antidote never comes, and she learns to live with "the weird-looking ray" that has given her the power to become invisible at will. "A highly sensitive nerve" in her left wrist functions as a toggle switch and "by merely pressing it" she turns from invisible "once again to a normal visible person!" (Stamm 1940). The texts emphasize her normality before her superpower, her ability to pass in the dominant social paradigm. The only recognition of her difference from others is that she has "an interesting and exciting life," one that is "invisible," and that she keeps hidden from view. From the beginning, how she looks while visible is just as important as what she can do while invisible.

Next, in 1942 her first Big Little Book, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil*, introduces her in the capitol city of the United States nationalist stage. "Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, the girl who possesses the power to transform herself into an invisible being merely by pressing a strange nerve in her left wrist, is in Washington, D.C." (Stamm 1942).

Her 1946 Big Little Book begins with an explication of her powers and how she uses them.

... the life of beautiful Scarlet O'Neil [was] both interesting and exciting. But Scarlet's life had always been that way, ever since she discovered that she possessed the power to transform herself into an invisible being by merely pressing a strange nerve in her left wrist.

Scarlet prided herself on her ability to use her invisibility to help those in need, whether the persons in trouble happened to be friends or strangers (Stamm 1946).

In her 1943 Whitman Authorized Edition, her character becomes fully and directly formed, and readers are introduced to her character traits, presumably in order of importance. First we are told of her qualifications as part of the beautiful feminine; second we are told of her inherent sentimental goodness working for others; and third we are finally introduced to her super power. A close reading of her introduction reveals the sequence. Immediately, we are informed of her beauty, meticulously described. Primary importance is given to her image, to what she looks like.

The tapering fingers of one hand stole to her lips to stifle the yawn that was forming, but the cool air met her, whipping her long, black curls, snapping her skirt about her knees. The yawn faded and Scarlet was instantly alert and keenly awake. She moved, with several of the other outgoing patrons, down the street, away from the glaring lights, walking with long, graceful strides. If any of the few people looked after her, it would be with whole-hearted admiration, for Scarlet O'Neil was beautiful.

She was blessed with long-lashed eyes, deeply blue as an October sky, a mouth curved in a perfect bow (Stamm 1943 11-12)...

Second, we are given her traits of character. Not just beautiful, she is lovable, attentive, generous, and sympathetic to others, a model of Victorian femininity in behavior, though distinctly modern with her short skirt above her knees and her long legs striding forward in high-heeled strap shoes on tiny feet which are not proportionate to her

body (a prefiguration of the Barbie doll). Yet her presence and strong sense of self is what is important here, even while she retains a Victorian wasp waist and her hourglass figure is clearly on view.

But it was more than beauty of feature or form that characterized the girl. There was a lovableness that drew friends like a magnet, a ready attention to the troubles and sorrows of others, a generous and never failing sympathy (12).

Third, readers are told of her super power, and the private, unacknowledged nature of that power.

Scarlet was beloved of all who knew her, and yet, peculiarly, she walked most often – as she did now – alone.

Alone, but with the secret she would carry always, the secret she must never reveal.

Some late arriving fairy godmother must have come to the girl's christening, and after the other well-wishers had presented their gifts of beauty, of wit, of gentleness, of joy, of courage, this last guest must have said: *“And when she shall press a strange nerve in her left wrist, she shall become invisible. Pressing it again, she may appear as before*

For such was the tremendous, the unbelievable power Scarlet O'Neil possessed – the gift of voluntary invisibility.

It set her apart from girls her own age, from people of any age. It took her out of the world when she chose, into a world of her own, where she could be present among people without being seen.

Had she been a selfish person, mean-spirited, spiteful, the evil that might have come from such a power could have worked endless havoc. But as Scarlet used her precious gift, it brought only good, and it was to her further credit that she sought most earnestly to help those whose need was the greatest – the downtrodden, the misused, the poor and the sick.

An untold number of unfortunate souls recounted their sudden and inexplicable turn of good luck. They did not know that Scarlet O’Neil had been at their side, aiding them, defending them, bringing them joy.

Nor did Scarlet wish them to know. She had eased their burden, made life brighter for them, and then they became a happy memory. Her concern was with the present, with those waiting to be helped (Stamm 1943 12-13).

Invisible Scarlet O’Neil is a beautiful woman who lives in the nation’s capitol and uses her powers for the benefit of her fellow citizens, with no desire for or acceptance of credit or congratulation. She is completely selfless, so much so that the power that enables her to help others simultaneously disembodies her. Her superpower makes her literally invisible and without a body to those she is helping. When she is visible, when she is in her body literally and figuratively, she is anonymously pretty, arguably invisible again through passing in prettiness.

In 1943, the Womanpower Campaign was well under way, supported by the War Manpower Commission (WMC) and the Office of War Information (OWI) with the mission, “recruitment of women into essential civilian and war jobs²¹”. The WMC

²¹ Office of Program Coordination, Office of War Information. *A Service for War Advertising in Newspapers*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943.

estimated that 4.5 million women were engaged in war work by the end of 1942, and 6 million by the end of 1943. The WMC created a Women's Advisory Committee of twelve members, "outstanding women from all parts of the country²²," who were meant to "advise in all matters of major policy as they affect women and the contributions they can make in the prosecution of the war." General employment policies were put in place that would enable female induction into the wage workforce, including equalizing pay by the National War Labor Board, day care provisory recommendations by the WMC, pregnancy and maternity provisions recommended by the Women's Bureau and Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, and general advisements for working conditions by the Women's Bureau²³. The American Council of Education issued a bulletin, entreating college girls "to take enough mathematics and science to provide for specialization in work needed for war, and to take courses not because they want them but because they are useful in the war effort²⁴." The purpose of feminine education was not for individual gain or recognition but for national, collective need. The Council reiterated: "Women students should plan their individual programs to equip them to fill a position at the end of any semester in case the crisis becomes so acute that the national interest demands their services." It is important to note that Invisible Scarlet O'Neil uses her powers in support of the nation, in overt war work and in homefront civil society guardianship and maintenance

The creator of Invisible Scarlet O'Neil was Russell Stamm, who was born April 15, 1915 in Chicago and died of a heart attack on August 2, 1969. In 1934 he started

²² United States, Magazine Section, Office of War Information. *War Jobs for Women*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 1942: 19.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

work in the art department of *The Chicago Tribune* and by the time he was twenty years old in 1935 he was the assistant to Chester Gould on *Dick Tracy* (Whitman published a novel based on Dick Tracy in 1943, *Dick Tracy, Ace Detective*). In 1940 Stamm started sketches for *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil* and decided on a superheroine who would as non-violently as possible help people, particularly children and the poor. When he settled on the idea of invisibility as her superpower, he decided on her wrist as the trigger point, partially because he was so used to drawing Dick Tracy's wristwatch that he unconsciously concentrated on the wrist for Invisible Scarlet O'Neil (Stamm, Jr. 2007).

He was drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces March 22, 1944 and served as a Photo Retouch Artist with the Army Air Corps and later Art Editor and Director of the Army Air Force newspaper. He resumed writing while in the Army, reportedly doing most of the drawing in the barracks bathroom, where there was privacy and light. His arrival at boot camp was heralded with a photograph of Stamm and Invisible Scarlet O'Neil with the caption, “ ‘Invisible Scarlet’ Shows Up”. He auctioned her image for war bond drives, drawing “hot off the easel” images of Scarlet, and selling them for as much as \$1,000 (Stamm, Jr. 2007).

After World War II, Stamm substantively changed his superheroine. She stopped working alone and wandering the streets at night listening to the wind for sounds of trouble, and instead opened her own business and hired a staff who knew of her super power. She gained visibility in recognition but her adventures diminished, and the main storyline centered on the great questions of who Scarlet would marry and when. By 1950 she was stripped of her super power entirely and was just a girl in love with a guy, and the strip was called simply, *Scarlet O'Neil*. A new male character was introduced,

Stainless Steel, who replaced Scarlet as the main character and even usurped the comic strip title in 1955. By 1956, the comic strip was cancelled. In 2007 Stamm's son attempted to reinvigorate and reintroduce Invisible Scarlet O'Neil in a new graphic novel by hiring a comic factory to write the series, but the idea never sold (Stamm, Jr, 2007).

The overarching theme in the mystery and adventure stories of Invisible Scarlet O'Neil is the imperatives of visible beauty and invisible usefulness. Aesthetic function is her feminine obligation with her beauty visible and available to the male gaze. Labor is her heroic function with her heroism of civic actions invisible behind her superpower. Iterations of feminine vanity and reward are expressed through consumerist activities of visible products, and her traditionally masculine heroic performance of civic-minded duty is kept invisible, as seen in chapter one. The first female superhero, in line with women workers of World War II, breaks no new mold of the feminine heroic, and instead follows many historically scripted mythological and cultural archetypes. During a time of wartime tension and fear, the lack of complications and complexities necessarily rendered by change may have been comforting to the reading audience and a cause for her popularity and success.

In her introduction as beautiful, descriptions of her clothes take significant narrative space. Her feminine accoutrements even serve as helpful agents in her invisible heroic deeds since her clothing is not altered when she toggles the nerve in her wrist. An expensive hat, for example, justifies purchase by acting as protective gear from the dangerous unknown (in this case, a wrench falling from above) and saves her life.

Her Whitman Authorized Edition is action packed. She saves an innocent man from a hit-and-run charge, revealing the sons of two prominent politicians as the guilty

parties; she saves a puppy from a kidnapping by a woman after inheritance money; she saves a poor, widower father from a boxing match set up by gambling criminals; she saves an innocent man from death row, revealing a criminal gang as the guilty parties; she foils a tire-stealing racket posing as legitimate firemen (see fig. 5.8); and she helps a junior junkman become a famous motion picture star and survive his abusive father and a kidnapping attempt. Her call to each adventure is heralded by a premonition of danger expressed as a voice out of the wind or an inner voice prompting her to action. In the midst of her heroic acts she remembers to be charitable as well, and buys a poor boy a bicycle and gives a poor girl five dollars to buy a white dress (gifts that themselves reflect traditional gender roles).

The origin stories of Invisible Scarlet O'Neil support the overarching themes of visible aesthetics of beauty and invisible heroics of labor. Her storylines in newspaper strips, Big Little Books, and the Whitman Authorized Edition novel continue the character definition. In the story following her origin introduction in her newspaper strip, she invisibly saves a baby boy from a burning building after the other children have been saved and the firemen and father give up on the last, lost child. The final panel of the story reminds us of her feminine imperative and sets up her next adventure: a beauty contest.

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil enters a beauty contest with her friend Cecelia for a \$5000 prize. Another contestant, Brenda, concocts a nefarious plan with her boyfriend to ensure that O'Neil, Cecelia, and all the other girls will lose: sabotage and fattening pills. Scarlet is lured away to the dock, kidnapped, and thrown on a boat. Before she can be thrown overboard, she turns herself invisible and knocks her kidnappers overboard with a

high-kick worthy of Broadway. She speeds the boat back towards the dock, hoping she is not too late for the contest, and tells the conniving girl, "Sorry, Brenda, your little trick didn't work." Brenda grabs Scarlet's wrist in line for the contest and replies, "You! Well, get back! You're not going ahead of me." Scarlet follows Brenda onstage but runs off in shame and bewilderment when the judges fail to notice her, not realizing she is invisible, sobbing that she must be an "ugly duckling." Finally, she realizes what happened: Brenda made her invisible when she grabbed her wrist.

Even more ashamed of her vanity, but still proud of her beauty, she is thankful that her superpower provides her the means to be useful to others and she resolves to help her friend Cecilia win against the cheaters whom she deems "as crooked as a pretzel." Invisible, Scarlet grabs the fattening pills Brenda plans to use on the other contestants and dissolves them in a cold beverage Brenda orders. As Brenda walks on stage she spontaneously becomes "stout, stouter, and fat!" With such obvious evidence, Brenda's boyfriend can not switch the voting ballots as he plans, and Cecilia wins the beauty pageant and the \$5000 prize, enabling her to get married. Scarlet is "sure glad Cecilia won the contest" and guesses Brenda has learned her lesson. Scarlet has no further thought of her own mussed vanity and unrecognized beauty, and is happy that her friend will have the financial gain. The final panel of the strip provides an opportunity for her to be useful to her fellow citizens once more. It reveals a child stuck on train tracks and Scarlet moving on to her next adventure, racing to save him before he is killed.

Thus in one storyline Scarlet is vain enough to enter a beauty contest, pretty enough to do so, courageous and resourceful enough to escape, modest enough to recover from her vanity, civic-minded enough to use her power to help another and rescue her

friend, community-minded enough to help someone at her own expense, charitable enough to give up money, and brave and motherly enough to race to save a child. While her official super power is invisibility, her important character traits are her ability to be pretty without being vain, modesty, charity towards others, courage, cunning, persistence, and altruism (Stamm 1940).

In chapter five of her novel, *Invisible Scarlet* O'Neil begins her third adventure. Walking down the city streets, she hears the call for help in the wind.

Even though the breeze had softened, though the last twenty-four hours had brought spring nearer with such a bountiful leap, still the warning voice was in the fragrant air. "There is a need! There is a need!" The lovely girl heard it in the flutter of the young leaves, over the cries of children playing marbles on the sidewalks, in the very tattoo of her own smartly clicking heels (Stamm 1943 80).

After the call to adventure is introduced, the clothes enter the scene:

Scarlet knew they were smart, trim little one-strap slippers. She knew her navy suit was becoming, a suit dress, really, with a jaunty vestee and matching coat. But it was her hat that caused her to hold her head just a little bit higher.

"An excuse of a hat," one of her friends had said and Scarlet had grinned. "But a good excuse," she pointed out. "It makes a little bit of material go a long way." And so it did. The scant half-yard of blue ribbon, the cluster of bright flowers and the veil which fell provocatively to her chin was a crown for a young queen to wear at any state occasion.

But strangely, no one seemed to notice it! Scarlet passed several groups of promenaders, and while she did not expect the passersby to stop and stare at her... still an admiring glance *might* have been bestowed upon her! But no one so much as looked in her direction (Stamm 1943 80-81). She sees a friend and calls to him, and still she gets no compliments. “ ‘Well!’ Scarlet gasped. ‘I’ll admit this hat is a little extreme, but after all --!’ She walked more slowly after that, puzzled and a little hurt...” (Stamm 1943 82). She soon realizes that her bracelet is pressing the nerve in her wrist and that she is invisible. Chastised, she passes her first trial with a reach for modesty:

The hat, in which she had taken a just pride, was suddenly annoying. Little as it was, it annoyed her. Scarlet wanted suddenly to be free of it, and of the veil, to let the sun shine fully on her head.

The message, however, is mixed, because vanity is not the only reason for her “just pride” in her hat. Earlier in the novel during her second adventure of saving a puppy from kidnapping, the hat saves her life. As Scarlet chases the kidnapper, “her heart pounding wildly,” she does not notice her danger:

A lineman was working near the top of a telephone pole in this same alley. As Scarlet came near the pole, the wrench the man was holding slipped from his grasp and fell to the ground.

Scarlet heard him cry out, “Oops!” though she did not realize the man was on the pole, nor understand the meaning of what he said. In no way was she expecting to have the heavy tool come crashing down upon

her head... It was fortunate that she was wearing the high-crowned little hat...

Dazedly, she looked about her. "Ouch!" she muttered fervently, massaging her head. "What a bump!" She saw the wrench beside her and drew a deep breath. "WHEW! It's a lucky thing I was wearing this hat, or that thing might have fractured my skull!" (Stamm 1943 57-58).

Modesty is thus tempered by the more powerful consumerism.

In her final adventure of the novel, it is again purchased clothes that help her perform civic acts, crossing from the imperative of visible beauty to invisible usefulness. Clothes provide her with a costume that subsumes her identity as a heroic figure, giving her the opportunity to help a junior junkman, a street child named Skeeter. When her old clothing outfit is ruined foiling the tire-stealing racket, she gets herself something new and different. She purchases another set of clothes:

She liked the outfit – she liked it very much. There was a two-piece look about it, though it was all in one, the bright red blouse with its full sleeves and the swirling black skirt. What set them off were the belt and turban. They were of the same material, richly striped in blue, green, and gold. Scarlet added a chain of rolled gold around her neck and golden earrings... "I feel like something out of the Arabian Nights!" (Stamm 1943 182).

The new clothes give her the opportunity to use her invisible superhero power to pose as a genie, acting as a savior for the street child Skeeter when he finds an old lamp and imagines it as Aladdin's.

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil's first Big Little Book is self-titled and was published in 1942. It is the most overtly patriotic of her texts. The story begins with her taking a tour of Washington, D.C. to look at the monuments:

The war is in full swing these days - America is making sure of victory. Everyone should do his part – that reminds me, I should be doing my share... Our boys are fighting all over the world. Uncle Sam has built a mighty army. Women, too are doing their part – and I intend to help in some way, if I can (Stamm 1942).

Invisible, she tours the city and sneaks into the White House to peek at the President. “Inspired by her visit to the White House, Invisible Scarlet is determined to help the war effort and aid in the defeat of America’s treacherous enemies” (Stamm 1942). After reading a story in the newspaper about an explosion in a defense plant due to sabotage, she rushes to investigate. Scarlet hitches a ride with a produce truck driver, who whips off her own hat to reveal her gender: she is a girl, too (see fig. 5.2). The driver explains.

Sure! My brother had this job before he was drafted and I’m driving the truck until he returns. My name’s Pat. Of course I can’t let anyone know I’m a girl for fear of being fired – and I need the job.

According to *War Jobs for Women*, published by the OWI in November of 1942, “girls driving trucks and tractors have suddenly become a familiar sight to those who travel American highways” (OWI 1942 28) and the WMC had joined with the Department of Agriculture to recruit, train, and deploy women into agriculture wage work such as truck driving, tractor driving, farm machine operation and maintenance, and harvesting. A tractor company ran night classes at dealer locations to teach girls and

women how to operate the machinery²⁵. The WMC estimated that 70 percent more women were doing farm work in the summer of 1942 than the summer of 1940²⁶. By April of 1943 Congress appropriated funds and set up the Women's Land Army program with Miss Florence L. Hall as national leader under the War Food Administration in the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture. Farmers were quoted as reporting that women, compared to boys of 18-20 years of age "were more conscientious, made better use of their time, required less supervision, and the quality of their work was better than that of boys²⁷."

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil's first Big Little Book in 1942 begins by representing the mobilization stage, when women were just beginning to be called for duty and had not yet been socially accepted in male-dominated fields, and retreats into strictly traditional feminine service in the second story. In the first story, Scarlet works as an informal volunteer for the war effort, catching a sabotage ring and encountering women venturing into industry. In the book's second story, she saves orphans from a crooked orphanage director.

In 1943, when the active role of women in male-dominated industry was more necessary and more accepted, Scarlet poses as a Rosie the Riveter character on the front cover of *Famous Funnies* no. 110. Wearing a safety mask over her perfectly styled hair and outfitted in a figure-hugging war worker uniform, she holds goggles in one hand and cradles a prize in the other, "First Prize, Riveting Contest, Scarlet O'Neil." Standing next

²⁵ For a photograph of a British land girl driving a truck June 21, 1941, see fig. 5.13.

²⁶ United States, Magazine Section, Office of War Information. *War Jobs for Women*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 1942: 28-29.

²⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. *Successful Practices in the Employment of NonFarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943*. Bulletin 199. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1944: 9. The publication also provided clothing recommendations (38) including the admonition that "halter and shorts are not suitable" while "bib-overalls" are suitable.

to her is a giant of a man with an expression of frustration, holding a very, very small second prize.

By 1946 in her second Big Little Book, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil Versus the King of the Slums*, she is back to working in the traditional feminine sphere with a hint of progressive behavior: she saves poor people from an unethical landlord of project housing. She exposes the corrupt landlord who is pocketing government money for renovations and leaving his poor and veteran tenants in slum housing. She moves government officials who refuse to amend the situation into the shoddy housing, so they will experience and understand the housing crisis. The slums are suitably renovated by the end of the story into modern, beautiful homes designed by Scarlet's architect friend. In her earlier Whitman Authorized Edition of 1943 her adventures also keep her as a feminine hero of the proletariat, saving the poor, the innocent, the children, and even animals.

Other female superheroes of the time have different characteristics. Wonder Woman is perhaps the most famous of the female superheroes and is often mistakenly granted the position of primacy. However, Invisible Scarlet O'Neil was introduced over a year before her in June, 1940. Before them both was the short-lived Girl with the X-Ray Eyes, who missed superhero status by virtue of quickly losing her super powers and never making it beyond one medium. In August of 1937 the pulp magazine series *Spicy Mystery Stories* introduced a strip called "The Astounding Adventures of Olga Mesmer, the Girl with the X-Ray Eyes." Olga was the daughter of a mad scientist and a female victim of his unnatural experiments, which resulted in her super-human strength and x-ray vision, super powers she transferred to a male hero through a blood transfusion

almost immediately (Daniels 2000 18), ending her unheroic appearances in October 1938. This strip foresaw what happened to the role of women before, during, and after World War II.

Creating his own model for women, psychologist William Moulton Marston introduced Wonder Woman in issue #8 of *All American's All Star Comics*, December 1941 – January 1942. He described her personality and his intent in creating her:

Frankly, Wonder Woman is psychological propaganda for the new type of woman who should, I believe, rule the world. There isn't love enough in the male organism to run this planet peacefully. Woman's body contains twice as many love generating organs and endocrine mechanisms as the male. What woman lacks is the dominance or self-assertive power to put over and enforce her love desires. I have given Wonder Woman this dominant force but have kept her loving, tender, maternal and feminine in every other way. Her bracelets, with which she repels bullets and other murderous weapons, represent the Amazon Princess' submission to Aphrodite, Goddess of Love and Beauty (Daniels 2000 22).

Her first story appears in the back of the book after stories of other comic book characters, as the practice of the day was to include several short stories in one book. The story is about American airman Captain Steve Trevor, whose plane crashes on Paradise Island when he is in pursuit of spies. Princess Diana rescues him and carries his unconscious body in full military uniform to the safety of her Amazonian home. It is an image strikingly different from the more traditional picture of the male carrying the

helpless female body²⁸. He is cared for by the matriarchal society of the island, and Princess Diana nurses him to health. Once he recovers, her mother, Queen Hippolyte of the Amazons, is told by the goddesses Aphrodite and Athena to send Diana back with the captain to fight for “America, the last citadel of democracy, and of equal rights for women.” Diana dons a red, white, and blue costume and follows the Captain back to the US where by day she disguises herself as a “Diana Prince,” and by evening turns into Wonder Woman (Daniels 2000 25). Marston is clear in his intentions, naming Wonder Woman after Diana, the Greek goddess of the hunt, counseled by love (Aphrodite), wisdom and war (Athena), to fight for democracy and women.

Her first cover story is in the January 1942 #1 edition of *Sensation Comics*. Her first *Wonder Woman* issue is June 1, 1942 and depicts her leading a wartime cavalry. In March of 1942 she gives up her nursing career to be a secretary with Army Intelligence in *Sensation Comics* #3. By 1943 she leads Marines against Japanese troops. In July of 1972 she was the first cover of *Ms. Magazine*. She is still in publication and has had her own television show, newspaper comic strip, toys, telephones, candy dispensers, and film, with another film scheduled for release in 2011. She continues to be a powerfully attractive symbol of the feminine heroic, linking independent thought and action on behalf of others.

Comics scholar Trina Robbins claims that the first major costumed heroine is The Woman in Red, the policewoman Peggy Allen, who disguises herself in a red mask and red robe to fight crime (March 1940 – February 1945); and that the first major superheroine is not Wonder Woman but instead two superheroines, Miss Fury in

²⁸ By October 1, 1949, her *Sensation Comics* cover reverted to the more traditional trope of the strong man carrying the helpless woman, in line with the demobilization and domestication messages for women in the culture industry.

newspaper strips and Black Cat in comic books. Miss Fury is the first major costumed heroine in newspaper comics and appeared from April of 1941 to 1952; and her first of eight comic books began in December, 1942. Invented and drawn by a woman, Tarpe Mills, she has no super powers but does have a super costume in the form of a panther skin her uncle brought her from Africa. By day Miss Fury is beautiful socialite Marla Drake. Dismayed one evening that another woman has the gall to wear the same costume as she, she instead puts on the mysterious panther skin. The skin is “cursed,” and when she wears it she fights crime and bad guys. Throughout World War II she mainly fights Nazis in Brazil, and her publisher advertised her as the favorite heroine of at least one large naval training unit (Robbins 16-23).

Black Cat was born in comic books in *Pocket Books #2* in September of 1941, four months after Miss Fury and three months before Wonder Woman. Red-haired film star Linda Turner, named to evoke the popular motion-picture star Lana Turner and touted as “Hollywood’s Glamorous Detective Star,” by day wears a harlequin mask and by night a black cat suit to fight suspected Nazi spies and sympathizers. Her introduction reads, “Linda Turner, Hollywood movie star, and America’s sweetheart, is bored with her ultra-sophisticated life of make believe. She becomes the *Black Cat* – her most adventurous role.” When World War II ended, her introduction changed: “Linda Turner, Hollywood star and America’s sweetheart, becomes bored with her ultra-sophisticated life of movie make believe and takes to crime-fighting in her most dramatic role of all as the – *Black Cat*.” She lasted until 1963 (Robbins 16-23).

Catwoman, of Batman franchise fame, originated in the spring of 1940 as Cat, an anti-hero with no superpowers, a costumed burglar and villainess, who uses her whip

while obstructing forces of good. Other costumed female superheroes include Silver Scorpion (April 1941 – April 1942), Spider Widow (June 1942 – June 1943), and Spider Queen (September 1941 – January 1942). However, none of these costumed heroines or superheroines has real super powers, which brings us back to the Invisible Scarlet O'Neil and the idea of the feminine heroic (Robbins 16-23).

The heroic, and the feminine iteration of the heroic, have a long history in mythology. The heroic figure is a standard and operates as a model of extraordinary human behavior. Mythology is partly a study of epistemologies, of knowledge systems, of how we know things: how to operate and how to exist within those operations. Mythology deals ultimately with faith, with rubrics by which to live, with systems through which humankind can operate. Mythologies of national and gender identity are especially pervasive during specific cultural crises, such as World War II.

The myth of the heroic sets the hero as both an exceptional figure and an ultimate figure in human rubrics of cultural operation. Invisible Scarlet O'Neil was created in the cultural context of World War II, and as such is a part of the contextual culture industry machinations of World War II in the United States, not least of which is the massive mobilization and demobilization of women into and out of the paid workforce. Her foundation structure as a hero, however, has firm roots in mythology. The following is an examination of some heroic and feminine heroic archetypes previous to Scarlet O'Neil's incarnation.

Several scholars, though admittedly dated, have been especially influential in the treatment of heroes and hero patterns, beginning with the Viennese psychoanalyst Otto Rank (1884-1939), the English folklorist Lord Raglan (1885-1964), and the American

mythographer Joseph Campbell (1904-1987). Rank wrote *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1909), Raglan wrote *The Hero* (1936), and Campbell wrote *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949). Products of their own times, these men, while problematic as all of them are male and pre-feminist, serve as a useful starting point in the examination of the masculine heroic and the feminine heroic.

Robert A. Segal, in his book *Hero Myths* (2000) neatly summarizes the different theoretical approaches to the heroic according to community intention. “For Rank, heroes are heroic because they dare to serve themselves. For both Campbell and Raglan, heroes are heroic because they willingly or unwillingly serve their communities” (Segal 2000 xxv).

Rank looks at hero myths as the means through which the self is created, as the establishment of the self as an independent person with a role in the world.

The standard saga itself may be formulated according to the following outline: The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy, in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by a humble woman. After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge

on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieves rank and honors (Rank 2008 64).

Notable in his analysis is the persistent use of the masculine pronoun “he” and the dependence of heroic growth on extraordinary birth and the father figure.

Among most of the Whitman Authorized Editions heroines no mention is made of birth circumstance, and the only mention of fathers is obedience to and appreciation of them in the demobilization postwar books. Invisible Scarlet O’Neil, on the other hand, is reborn as an adult superhero when she succumbs to curiosity about her father’s world. Her superhero birth is accidental and unnatural, born of her father’s science and her own insatiable curiosity. Meddling in her father’s domain, the male domain, permanently alters her, granting her superhero powers. While she gains powers, her superhero skills are never publicly acknowledged and she never attains the rank and status traditionally given to the heroic. By contrast, Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war, had more recognition. Though unnatural as not of woman born, coming instead through the pounding in her father’s head, at least Athena is celebrated for her victorious emergence and her subsequent deeds, especially in times of war. Invisible Scarlet O’Neil is allowed no such recognition or celebration.

Raglan writes that “Heroes in myth serve their communities by their victories over those who threaten their peoples’ physical welfare” (Segal 2000 xxv). Quite literally, in Raglan what stands between the community and its destruction is the sacrificing hero.

Myth as it exists in a savage community, that is, in its living primitive form, is not merely a story told but a reality lived. It is not of the

nature of fiction, such as we read today in a novel, but it is a living reality, believed to have once happened in primeval times, and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies (Raglan 1990 96).

He thinks that myths and the heroes in them function as remnants of what once existed, as instructors of the reality of the time of the story. Invisible Scarlet O'Neil serves her community of fellow citizens by protecting their physical welfare from those who wish them harm. She stands her body between the community and its destruction. She is the sacrificing hero, preserving her national community in a time of savage warfare. She resists corruption and maintains civil society by defending an old, helpless man against false charges and reveals the cowardly sons of politicians as the real culprits (Stamm 1943 15-41); she puts her body between a poor, widowed father and the crooked fist that is set up to punch him, taking the felling hit herself before rising from the ground to strike back (Stamm 80-110); she grants charity to a young girl so the child may buy a dress and grow from an ugly duckling to a beautiful swan (Stamm 144-146); and she even saves a young woman from having to engage in warrior activities, preferring to protect the woman's purity and take on the burden of fighting crime herself (Stamm 110-140). She serves her community by protecting them from the worst of themselves, with a greater ideology of goodness in mind. Though female, she fulfills Raglan's heroic prerogatives.

Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) looks at the hero and development of the self and opines that the hero myth serves four distinct functions: to instill and maintain a sense of awe about the world; to provide a symbolic translation for the world; to maintain social order; and to harmonize human beings with the universe,

society, and themselves. Campbell discusses the monomyth, what he terms the normative path of the hero:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell 30).

The mythological hero is a composite figure with “exceptional gifts” who in fairy tales “achieves a domestic microcosmic triumph,” in myths a “world-historical, macrocosmic triumph,” and in “popular tales the heroic action as physical” (Campbell 37-8). The standard path of the mythological hero is a formula in the rites of passage: of separation, initiation, and return. For Campbell, as in Rank, the hero is male.

Invisible Scarlet O’Neil, gender notwithstanding, succeeds in embodying Campbell’s masculine heroic. Her invisible acts of salvation of innocent citizens instill and maintain a sense of awe; in the midst of war, when many men are battling on distant shores, she remains on the homefront, strong and proud; she maintains social order through her superheroic deeds, punishing the wicked and rewarding the virtuous; and she harmonizes societal problems and universal hopes gone awry. She serves as a fairy tale and a mythological figure, fixing microcosmic domestic issues and macrocosmic national issues. In her popular fiction novel, she physically takes on evil and corruption. She heeds the call to adventure when she listens to the wind, turns invisible to endure tests and trials during the threshold of adventure, and returns to visibility to listen for the wind once again. In her first adventure in the novel (revealing the sons of two prominent politicians as hit-and-run drivers), she hangs on to the back of a speeding car and dodges

bullets. In her second adventure (saving a puppy from a greedy woman) she gets knocked out and left in the closet of a burning building before she scrambles her way to safety. In her third adventure (saving a poor, widowed father from crooked gamblers) she engages in a boxing match, and gets repeatedly punched, falling to the ring floor before she rises to conquer. In her fourth adventure she again dodges bullets and in her fifth adventure she dodges bullets, runs for her life, and gets locked up again. She escapes every time, to physically roam the streets and listen to the wind, ever on the lookout for the next journey adventure of helping others; and all this while female.

When Campbell does directly consider the feminine with the heroic, it is as a female deity rather than a female hero. He speaks of a figure, the Queen Goddess of the World, and describes her:

She is the paragon of all paragons of beauty, the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero's earthly and unearthly quest. She is mother, sister, mistress, bride... She is the incarnation of the promise of perfection; the soul's assurance that, at the conclusion of its exile in a world of organized inadequacies, the bliss that once was known will be known again: the comforting, the nourishing, the "good" mother – young and beautiful – who was known to us, and even tasted, in the remotest past. Time sealed her away, yet she is dwelling still, like one who sleeps in timelessness, at the bottom of the timeless sea (Campbell 110-111).

It is no small order to be "the incarnation of the promise of perfection," on top of "maintaining social order" and "harmonizing human beings with the universe, society, and themselves." Yet it is precisely this that Invisible Scarlet O'Neil performs under the

public gaze. Embodying the feminine, she is a “paragon of all paragons of beauty” and is “the incarnation of the promise of perfection.” Embodying the masculine, she is invisible to detection, silently accomplishing heroic acts. The Whitman Girls and Invisible Scarlet O’Neil are under the imperative to maintain traditional gender standards, to perform publicly and visibly as feminine pretty, and privately and invisibly as masculine useful; and it is this paradoxical model that girl readers are given, in the Whitman Authorized Editions, to digest as imitable roles of the feminine and the feminine heroic. Not just the culture industry of the United States, but also mythological history appears to conspire against a feasible feminine heroic.

Feminist critics have contested the designations “hero” and “heroine,” not only in terms of the word “heroine” being used to refer to the principal female character in a literary or dramatic work, but also in terms of pronouns, of the double-standard implications of the idea of heroism being gendered. The word “heroine” used to describe strong female role models is the feminine-gender version of the masculine-gender term “hero,” and can be problematic in implying that a “hero” is by definition male, and that a female “hero” is a “heroine” and something other and perhaps lesser than a true “hero.” Though acknowledging this split in her book *Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels* (1982), Rachel Brownstein advocates for a gendered representation that avoids the dichotomy and focuses on a distinctly feminine “heroine.”

[The heroine] is unlike all other women, being important and unique, but she is also quintessentially feminine, therefore rightly representative of her sex. A paragon of paradoxes, she is both chaste and suggestive of erotic ecstasy, famous and private, embowered and imperiled; while she is pure

idea, her outlines are hard and clear. Beautiful and virtuous as real people never are, she is the ideal incarnate (Brownstein 1982 xxi).

Her version of the “heroine” is similar to the female deity of Campbell, not yet allowing for masculine “hero” activity.

Carol Pearson, on the other hand, looks at the heroic journey and thinks about gender differences between the masculine “hero” and the feminine “heroine” and sees shared and equitable possibilities for modeling and behavior. Borrowing from Carol Gilligan’s work *In a Different Voice* (1982), which posits that men and women are fundamentally different and react to and behave in distinct but effective ways, Pearson looks at archetypes of the feminine heroic with the belief that “any culture’s or individual’s myths of the hero tell us about what attributes are seen as the good, the beautiful, and the true, and thereby teach us culturally valued aspirations” (Pearson 1989 xxv). For her, a “heroine” is no less valuable than a “hero;” both genders can aspire to what is good, beautiful, and true.

In 1943 Paul McNutt, the chairman of the War Manpower Commission, called women workers “the real heroines of this war” (Straub 1973 10) for doing the traditionally masculine work required of them in addition to their feminine duties on the homefront. But McNutt, as did Ducas, Elmer, Roosevelt, and others, often used the feminine-gender version of “hero,” possibly because they could not quite bring themselves to grant women full heroic status. Or, possibly because keeping the feminine pronoun was comforting in its evocation of a simpler time when heroes are not needed to “serve their communities by their victories over those who threaten their peoples’ physical welfare” against the savagery of war. Or finally, because of a similar nostalgia

for non-wartime when women are not required to sacrifice so overtly and do double duty “incarnating the promise of perfection” and “maintaining social order.”

For a variety of reasons, then, Invisible Scarlet O’Neil is a particularly fascinating character to examine because as the first American female superhero, her story and actions represent what was valued as the feminine heroic during World War II, a time of massive complications and complexities. Through her tales, we see that she embodies the characteristics of both feminine and masculine heroic archetypes, as defined by Rank, Raglan, Campbell, and Pearson. Her goals are “goodness, care, and responsibility” and she accomplishes them with “strength and effectiveness,” she “takes care of others,” and “sacrifices” and slays the modern dragon. She always works hard for others and never requires credit or a reward. She is confident and courageous (Pearson 1989 21-22). She is beautiful. That which is heroic is scripted on and performed by the body of Invisible Scarlet O’Neil.

When visible, Scarlet O’Neil is, as stated, a paragon of beauty and perfection. If ontological definitions of gender are created by performativity, as Butler would say, the very acts of seeing, being seen, and not being seen could be considered a trap of imposed imperatives of identity, and it becomes more important than ever to note that it is not until Scarlet O’Neil becomes invisible that she becomes heroic. When visible, she is part and parcel of the consumerist performances of gender. When she is invisible, she is heroic, though her heroic behavior is an extreme version of traditional feminine attributes of the heroine: altruistic, selfless, and sacrificial.

In his collection *Hero Myths* (2000) Robert Segal provides two examples of the feminine heroic. Both are valued and considered heroic because of their characteristics

that are designated as inherently male. The Amazon is the female hero with male attributes, and Joan of Arc figures as the martyr/female hero with male attributes.

The Amazons are heroic in their independence, their courage, and their skill. They meet males on male terms. In transcending their gender, they blur the boundary between masculine and feminine (Segal 2000 117).

The Amazons are beautiful, seductive, and fierce, yet for all their power they are usually defeated, finally, by males who are stronger. The Joan of Arc figure has a similar trope with a sacrificial element. Like the Amazons, Joan meets males on male terms, but she goes further: she so completely binds her gender with masculine attire that she hides her femininity from view. At her end, she dies for the greater good and is rejected by those for whom she sacrificed.

Both figures serve as models for the women of the Whitman Authorized Editions throughout World War II's three stages of defining women's roles. The Amazons are matriarchal first and go forth to fight ferociously when their homefront is threatened. Joan of Arc also battles for her homefront, taking on male roles in male garb. When the battle is won, she sacrifices herself and is rejected by those for whom she fought. Together, Segal's two figures represent the cycle of pre-mobilization, mobilization, and de-mobilization of women during World War II. Their beauty was first appreciated, albeit in Victorian terms, then subordinated by necessity to fit previously male roles, and finally remodeled in favor of traditional old-fashioned femininity when males were available once again to assume their original roles. In these stages, there was no acknowledgement of the changes within actual individuals, female and male, who performed as their culture and times demanded of them.

Greek mythology also provides, in addition to Amazons, many examples of the feminine heroic. Atalanta is one who exemplifies Rank's hero saga. Atalanta begins her journey abandoned in the woods (in her case, because her father is disappointed that she is not male) where she learns to hunt and survive independently. Once her actions gain the notice and approval of society, her father recognizes her. He agrees to accept her contingent on her marriage to a suitable male. Uninterested in marriage, she is swayed into capitulation by consumable goods: three golden apples. Once these are obtained, her adventures end, and her story ends with her named as wife²⁹. Invisible in the woods, she performs heroic deeds. Visible in society, she is reduced to a patriarchal ornament.

The heroine Cassandra, also of Greek myth, serves as an example of what happens to women who refuse depreciation into culturally constructed gender roles. Apollo falls in love with Cassandra and grants her the power to tell the future. When she refuses his advances he spits in her mouth, ensuring that no one will believe her words³⁰. Her punishment for preferring her own autonomy is to be forever unheeded, disbelieved. She is condemned to an auditory form of invisibility. Her power to foresee the future, and thus advise and warn others of coming danger, is negated. After making her a heroine, Apollo silences her even as she retains her gift. These heroines lose their power and presence when they come in contact with men.

Northrop Frye, in his book *The Great Code* (1982), discusses mythology as having two components: the structure of the story, which makes it literature, and "its social function as concerned knowledge, what it is important for society to know" (Frye 1982 47). The implication is that what a story reveals is what is culturally significant.

²⁹ Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 80; Hamilton, *Mythology*, 244. For a feminist critique of the Atalanta myth, see Powers, *The Heroine in Western Literature*, 44 – 52.

³⁰ Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 171; Hamilton, *Mythology*, 292.

Carl Jung defines archetypes as primordial forms of the unconscious, and archetypal images as literary forms that reflect the repetition of these universal unconscious formulations. Jung thinks about archetypes in both their ahistorical state and their dynamic relationship to the individual and the cultural and experiential context in which the individual exists (Jung 1934 79). The term “archetype” comes from the Greek “archi,” which means a beginning or first time, and “typos,” which means a stamp or original of a series. For Jung, archetypal myths symbolize steps in the development of the unconscious, and the hero myth is a developmental moment that makes possible the journey from childhood to adulthood.

Annis Pratt, in her book *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (1981), talks about archetypes and the feminine heroic. Archetypes “constitute images, symbols, and narrative patterns that differ from stereotypes in being complex variables, subject to variations in perception... archetypal narratives endure through the centuries because of the perennial dilemmas they express” (Pratt 1981 4).

Meredith A. Powers, in her book *The Heroine in Western Literature* (1991), says of mythology, “In these ancient fictional constructions, long explicated solely by men, we are directed to find revealed what is quintessentially inherent, and therefore appropriate, for individual men and women... Archetypes are seemingly infallible, inarguably, psychic *imperatives* [italics original]” (Powers 1991 5). And further, “These stories have had compelling imaginative influence and still operate to confuse the search for an authentic, self-affirming mythology” of femininity (Powers 1991 52).

Scholars of children's literature have found that heroic modeling for girls changes in times of national stress and war. Providing a historical viewpoint of children's

literature, J.S. Bratton notes, “A century of writing for girls had established the norm of the domestic tale, in which the trials of the heroine were involved with the learning of discipline, the internalization of the feminine values of self-abnegation, obedience, and subordination” (Bratton 2000 209). Of a British mass market fiction author, Evelyn Everett Green, writing at a time of British imperial expansion, Bratton suggests, “Perhaps the publishers asked the prolific [author] to add an imperial dimension to her second serial for them, or perhaps she was simply responding, like any popular writer, to the contemporary atmosphere” (Bratton 2000 210). He adds, “Allowing the heroine active participation in imperial adventures inevitably leads, at some point, to a clash of ideological designs, in which masculine behavior will be demanded of her” (Bratton 2000 213). The same could be said of nationalistic and patriotic adventures. Indeed, the Whitman girls in the mobilization stage of World War II, *Invisible Scarlet O’Neil* included, exhibit what was culturally thought of as intensely masculine behavior, though *Scarlet* avoids masculinization by performing her heroics while invisible, thus creating no clash of ideological gender designs.

Speaking of postwar British fiction for girls, Deborah Philips notes, “The heroine of popular fiction for women, in adult romances and in books and comics for girls, has to manage and reconcile these conflicting ideologies of tradition and modernity” (Philips 2000 75). The World War II stories of *Invisible Scarlet O’Neil* exhibit these seeming contradictions. Popular fictions are modern myths of current cultural industry, replete with corresponding feminine heroic figures. “Young women like to read about heroines in fiction so as to rehearse possible lives and to imagine a woman’s life as important – because they want to be attractive and powerful and significant, someone whose life is

worth writing about, whose world revolves around her and makes being the way she is make sense” (Brownstein xxiv).

It is precisely for this reason that some literary and feminist scholars express dismay regarding consumerism and series fiction. Part of the dismay begins with the lament that women were being sold ideas through consuming Victorian sentimental fiction, the precursor to the mass-market children’s literature of the 1940s under discussion here. Victorian sentimental fiction is characterized by saccharine simplification of the struggles of the average girl to be pious, good, and brave. Women of the era, increasingly displaced from their feminine domestic duties by industrialization, turned to consumerist commercial culture to purchase a new femininity. Ann Douglas in her book *The Feminization of American Culture* (1998) calls it “the drive of nineteenth-century American women to gain power through the exploitation of their feminine identity as their society defined it” (Douglas 8).

By the mid-twentieth century, with men focused on fighting in World War II, women at home were the major consumers of American commercial culture. This is another example of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity: as women bought into commercial culture, they performed it, and by so doing reinforced and even created it (Butler 2006; 1990). Women edited and wrote magazine pieces, short stories, series books, and novels reinforcing the commercial cultures they were performing. Pressures of performative influence infiltrated the literature that was the precursor to, and in the process of becoming, mass-market literature. The content purveyed directives of feminine behavior akin to the propaganda missives of World War II that directly and indirectly affected content of 1940s mass-market literature. “Literature... was in the early phase of

intense self-consciousness characteristic of a new mass medium: the transactions between cultural buyer and seller, producer and consumer shaped both the content and the form” (Douglas 1998 9). Moreover, the literature itself was indicative and platformed a new class of consumers: the very act of reading solely for delight or entertainment implied a class not spending time in production but in consumption. What then, were women consuming and performing?

Douglas points out that under the moralizing rubric of sentimentalism, women and men alike were able to cross gender boundaries: “She could become aggressive, even angry, in the name of various holy causes; he could become gentle, even nurturing, for the sake of moral overseeing” (Douglas 1998 10). Inherent in this opportunity was a new possibility for the construction of gender and ideals of the feminine heroic. Douglas despairs of sentimentalist fiction because its authors, especially its women authors, squandered the opportunity for change and instead colluded in their own oppression of traditional gender roles and supported the notion of the feminine as the purchaser of oppressive propaganda.

Sentimentalism provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated. It is a form of dragging one’s heels. It always borders on dishonesty but it is a dishonesty for which there is no known substitute in a capitalist country (Douglas 12).

The feminization that occurs in sentimentalism, rather than heralding a new age of independence and change for women, instead performs a “continuation of male hegemony in different guises” (Douglas 13).

Jane Tompkins in her book *Sensational Designs: the Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (1985) proposes a kinder, gentler approach to sentimentalism. Rather than despairing of it as a collusion of oppression, she suggests a learning opportunity.

Literary texts should be seen, she says:

Not as works of art embodying enduring themes in complex forms, but as attempts to redefine the social order... Novels and stories should be studied not because they manage to escape the limitations of their particular time and place, but because they offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment (Tompkins xi).

She goes on to say that mass market fiction can be looked at not as attempts to join a canon but as attempts “to win the belief and influence the behavior of the widest possible audience.” She sees mass market fiction not as failures of possible changing influence but “as providing men and women with a means of ordering the world they inhabited” and that to understand these texts “one has to have a grasp of the cultural realities that made these novels meaningful” (Tompkins 1985 xiii).

The historical cultural and literary criticism cited here is an attempt to identify some tropes that girl readers were given with which to order their world, to use as a rubric of faith for behavior and as an epistemology of modeling. The Whitman women modeled everyday heroism, performing precisely that which their culture expected of them and what their culture showed them to do, thus helping perpetuate the normative demands of their society. I am not here judging or engaging in disapproval, celebration or

admiration, only revealing the characteristics of the feminine heroic of World War II in the United States as represented in the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls.

Yet another look at the idea of the feminine heroic is presented by feminist literary critic Lee R. Edwards, in her book *Psyche as Hero: Female Heroism and Fictional Form* (1984).

The woman hero is an image of antithesis. Different from the male – her sex her sign – she threatens his authority and that of the system he sustains... Leading a fugitive existence, her presence overlooked, her identity obscured, the woman hero is an emblem of patriarchal instability and insecurity... Western culture's opposing self, the woman hero uncovers fractures in the surface of reality, contradictions in its structure, gaps in its social ideology. Insofar as she resembles the male hero, she questions the conventional associations of gender and behavior. If, like the Bible's Judith or like Joan of Arc, she can do as he has done, then patriarchy's prohibitions are a lie... Changing the relationship of men and women to each other, to heroism and society, might provide the basis of a new cultural order (Edwards 4-6).

Edwards further remarks that heroism "needs an initial instability" and quotes Brecht's Galileo, who states, "Unhappy is the land that needs a hero" (Edwards 6). When the land is happy again, the hero is no longer necessary. "The quest over, the hero rests and rusts, becomes an artifact, a statue, one of many ritualized objects guaranteeing social consensus, preserving stability, order, and a fixed notion of reality... Heroism fades into memory. Nostalgia replaces the dangerous uncertainties of action" (Edwards 7).

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil fits Edwards' interpretation. Different from the male, she would be threatening if she did not subscribe to societal demands of prettiness when visible and perform her heroic deeds only when invisible. Invisible, she is a "fugitive," her "presence overlooked" and her "identity obscured." Unlike the women wageworkers of the time and the iconic image of Rosie the Riveter, who reflected women's masculinization of the time, she avoided all challenges to cultural attitudes about gender by remaining invisible. She was a comfortable hero in an uncomfortable time. She was a female superhero who acquiesced to the demands of the national culture industry during wartime tensions and slipped away when the war ended and her brand of acquiescence was no longer required. The female superhero of World War II was a woman who hid from any public expression of power, authority, autonomy, and strength. In 1950, with the war over and the land not so unhappy, her super power of invisibility slipped into history as no longer necessary to the national psyche, and her comic strip was renamed simply, "Scarlet O'Neil." In 1951 a new character was introduced, Stainless Steel, eclipsing even her visible presence and reducing her further. By 1955, she completely faded away as heroes and gods are wont to do when no longer needed, and the strip was renamed "Stainless Steel." She disappeared from view, making room for the next generation, the next iteration of the feminine heroic.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has analyzed the popular construction of femininity in the United States during World War II and the ways in which a set of mass market series books for girls participated in the commercial imagination of femininity. I extended the idea of stories as contact zones to think about what is being represented, conveyed, and communicated in stories as translated through contextual cultural forces. I illustrated and explained how the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls represent, convey, and communicate to readers the contextual cultural forces of the imperatives of the World War II propaganda campaign in the United States. Using Geertz's notion of common sense as a cultural system, I looked at the cultural symbolism and cultural presuppositions that impacted the stories and were presented in the stories of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, which in turn impacted the common sense of the reader.

While studies have been done concerning the intertwining of propaganda imperatives and adult popular fiction, this dissertation helps bridge the literature gap between propaganda studies and children's popular fiction. The Whitman Authorized Editions of Mystery and Adventure Stories for Girls Featuring Your Favorite Characters are particularly relevant because they effectively combine the markets of three massively commercial culture mediums in one set of cultural artifacts, acting as a cross-section of American commercial culture of the time.

Further, I extended the definitions and uses of Cawelti and Wright to examine a set of formula fictions based on newspaper strips, comic books, and motion-picture stars. The Whitman Authorized Editions are a combination space for what is produced,

consumed, and reiterated in that they star popular newspaper strip heroines, comic book heroines, and motion-picture heroines who were popular before the books and made more popular through the books.

Commercial media of any kind can be interpreted as a means of social engineering. Not a cause-and-effect relationship of absolute results, certainly, they are nevertheless a subtle conduit of influence and persuasion, of leading by example, and of modeling. The books are commercial cultural products that in turn may have some influence on commercial culture and presumably on the consuming readers of commercial culture.

The Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, including the novelization of *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil*, are all examples of popular fiction for girls during World War II. The books reinforce the social norms of the time and operate as cultural fantasies of American femininity. They function as artifacts of an epistemological intention. As Kathleen McGrath suggests in 1973, and Albrecht before her in 1956, popular fiction “reinforces the prevailing social norms” and it is because of this reinforcement that fictions are popular (McGrath 1973 24). Popular fiction represents popular culture, and popular culture represents popular fiction. The Whitman Authorized Editions are artifacts of this interdependence.

John Storey in his book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (2006) provides definitions of what is popular and what constitutes popular culture. He quotes Ray Williams in deciding on four definitions of popular: “well liked by many people, inferior kinds of work, work deliberately setting out to win favor with people” and “culture actually made by the people for themselves” (Storey 5-6). He then presents

his own options for defining popular culture: first, culture that is well liked; second, the culture that is left over after high culture has been designated; third, popular culture as mass culture, as a commercial project of that which is mass produced for mass consumption; fourth, popular culture as authentic culture of the folk, or the people; fifth, popular culture as defined by the ideas of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, where popular culture is a hegemonic space in which dominant groups of society attempt to affect the ideology of the rest of society and the negotiation between the two; and sixth, the postmodernist approach in which there is no difference between authentic culture and commercial culture but instead an interdependence of the two (Storey 6-14).

Most pertinent to my analysis of the Whitman Authorized Editions are the third and fifth definitions, popular culture as mass culture and popular culture as hegemonic endeavor. If popular culture is formulaic and created and consumed in mass numbers and is homogenizing in nature, and can thus function as a hegemonic project of Americanization and as a scripting of shared public fantasy, then the Whitman Authorized Editions are inarguably artifacts of wartime popular culture, a place where popular culture can be seen as “A collective dream-world.” Explaining the idea of popular culture as mass culture, Storey takes from Richard Maltby’s *Dreams for Sale: Popular Culture in the 20th Century* and reiterates, “Texts and practices of popular culture are seen as forms of public fantasy” (Storey 2006 9).

The story of Invisible Scarlet O’Neil is the ultimate feminine heroic fantasy in the American imagination during World War II. Fantasy comes from the Greek *phantasia* (making visible) as evidenced in Greek mythology. Fantasy fiction is “imaginative fiction that allows us to explore major life mysteries without being limited by size, time, or

space” and “springs from the human need to understand the struggle of good versus evil.” In a time of war, when propaganda was rife with isolationist and violent messages of fear and hatred against the foreign, Scarlet provided a model through which to “easily imagine things better or different from what we see in front of us” and also to remain at home with social-domestic concerns. Scarlet does not join a factory or go overseas. She stays at home and busies herself with the plight of the poor, the downtrodden, and the weak. She exposes corruption and rescues the powerless citizen from criminal intent. She is the American public fantasy of the woman who rises to the occasion and does the good deeds needed by society which men at war can no longer do. She is in a sense the mother-protector who takes care of what needs to be taken care of while men are necessarily absent, assuring women and men alike that the homefront will be safe and secure.

In their book, *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults* (2003) Gates, Steffel, and Molson define elements of fantasy. The third quality or element is that “fantasy can also be an effective agency for change, renewal, and liberation... it plays with what might be, makes what does not yet exist, and elaborates any number of possible futures” (Gates 2003 2-6). In a time of trauma such as war, and the consequent massive upheaval in the everyday lives of women, such a safely feminine superhero may have been reassuring as a nostalgic reminiscence of happier times. The importance to the nation of retaining the idealized feminine status quo while mobilizing for war can be seen in Scarlet’s life. The weak and needy are taken care of without overt acknowledgement that such disorder and chaos may not have existed if the men were home. It is a cycle of pain, fear, and need both denied and expressed in the body and actions of Scarlet. Thus she serves an essentially useful role in society, absent the men.

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil can also be seen as a fairy tale heroine, especially in light of her power being "magical" and given to her by her fairy godmother, as it is in her Whitman Authorized Edition. "On the whole fairy tales are not passive or active; their mood is optative – announcing what might be... The genre is characterized by 'heroic optimism', as if to say, 'one day, we might be happy, even if it won't last' " (Warner 1994 xx).

Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen in their book *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (1992) talk about the feminine body as understood through fashion and democracy. Invisible Scarlet O'Neil can be seen as the pre-Barbie, with her hourglass waist, long legs, and exaggerated breasts. She is the idealized fantasy of the feminine, and fits into the Ewens' description of the American feminine:

The narrow waist indicated minimal consumption of food, an imagistic representation of self-denial. The broad expanses of bosom and hip, accentuating the reproductive roles of women, provided an image of bounty in childbearing and nurturance (Ewen & Ewen 99).

Ewen & Ewen discuss women and fashion from the nineteenth century through the twentieth, and conclude, "In the arena of masculine scrutiny, one's femininity, one's sexuality can never step down from the lineup. Whether flagrant or suppressed, sexuality perseveres as the primary acceptable social definition of womanhood" (Ewen & Ewen 105). The arena is set as being under the male gaze. When visible, Scarlet is the perfect incarnation of sexualized fashion, huge bosom, tiny waist, and dainty feet, an object of fetishized desire. What is remarkable about her is that she does not perform her heroics

until she hides her sexuality and is invisible to all gaze, male and female. She becomes the essence of herself only when she does not exist to others.

The culture industries, as mandated directly and indirectly by government and private interests, dominated by patriotism and the American war effort, produced texts that affected the production of a commercial popular culture. The incorporation of wartime imperatives for women and the presentation of women in newspaper strips, comic books, novels and film, radio, and advertisements all contributed to a specific popular culture of women during World War II: the ideal of women at home, women at work, and women at home again. It was a construct of feminine heroism on the homefront, and women in vast numbers, as seen in the preceding chapters, complied.

No character more than Jane Withers, both in real life career action as a motion-picture star and as a heroine of a trio of books within the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls series, more aptly demonstrated the three stages of the American imagination of women during World War II. Her books were published in 1942, 1943, and 1944 and each directly speaks to what society demanded in pre-mobilization, mobilization, and demobilization times.

Jane Withers was born April 12, 1926 in Atlanta, Georgia. Signed to Twentieth Century Fox Studios, she played second fiddle to the studio's reigning star, Shirley Temple, though she gained a reputation of her own as a spunky tomboy, especially in films such as *Ginger* (1935) and *Angel's Holiday* (1937). She changed studios to Republic Pictures in 1942, and the announcement interview gushed about her being the new pin-up girl at Valley Forge, replacing Lana Turner. At sixteen, she was ready to leave the child star sobriquet behind and become a real modern girl. The article opens,

Mistress Jane Withers, that uningratiating gamin who used to inspire good citizens to thoughts of mayhem (and worse), has grown up practically overnight. Only yesterday she was the cinema's meanest moppet³¹, yet here she was, a refined little lady fairly glistening with glamour, a miniature femme fatale. Clothes, make-up, hair-do, and even the walk – they were all there. The reporter thought he detected perfume in the air. He sniffed, but not unobserved. “It's called ‘N’Aimez Que Moi,’” Miss Withers said. “It's French for ‘Love Only Me’” (Franchey 1942).

In 1942 she starred in her first Whitman Authorized Edition and in 1943 her second, as a woman taking tomboy tendencies to a new level as a trouser-wearing, fishing, gun-toting caretaker of helpless female companions. In 1944 she starred in her last edition as a smiling girl with bright blue eyes and neat, matching outfits. The papers continued to extol her virtues as a beautiful girl grown from a “brat” and tomboy. She celebrated her eighteenth birthday by taking part in the war effort, entertaining nine servicemen and nine female members of the Junior Achievement League at Madison Square Garden. The report in *The New York Times* regaled the event with the opening sentence, “No longer a ‘brat...’” (Jane Withers Has 18th Birthday! 1944). Jane Withers continued her advertising career long after her acting career was over: throughout the sixties and seventies, she appeared in television advertisements as Josephine the Plumber, a woman completely enamored of Comet cleaning products (Darvi 1983; Rivers 1974).

In *Jane Withers and the Hidden Room* (1942) (see fig. 6.1), Jane is a student at a boarding school in a traditional school story. She is “a slim girl with dark brown hair and

³¹ Probably referring to her role when she was eight years old in *Bright Eyes*, in which she played tomboy Joy Smythe who terrorized the angelic Shirley Temple character.

pansy-blue eyes” (Packer 1942 14) returning late to Holly Hall from a sick-leave in California, feeling suitably guilty and apologetic:

“I’m sorry I had to be so late, Miss Brand.” As she spoke Jane turned serious eyes toward the older woman. “But the old flu germs don’t pay any attention to school schedules.”

The girl and the teacher meeting her train are both very excited about the handsome new Professor of Romance Languages, Paul Berthon, referred to as PB. Jane, being a young girl still, has no interest in him or any other boy or man. “ ‘Oh, I thought it [the news] was something really thrilling.’ Jane’s voice was dull with disappointment” (Packer 1942 17). In her childish innocence she is not interested in the outside adult world; Jane is more interested in being back in her beloved school:

The station wagon turned in between the stone pillars, which marked the entrance to Holly Hall, and rolled smoothly up the curving driveway. Jane sighed with pleasure when she saw the ivy-covered buildings of the school, standing among the trees on the knoll. She loved every inch of Holly Hall’s wide, shaded lawns, sloping down to the Hudson, and every nook and corner of its paneled rooms and broad corridors (Packer 1942 18).

This is life as it should be: filled with youthful dreams unsullied by adult concerns, known, comforting, and beautiful. As she encounters her Head Mistress, Jane is “filled with an awed respect for the brilliant, austere woman” (Packer 1942 19). When Jane does fall prey to a schoolgirl crush she is ultimately ashamed and humiliated by her foray into adult matters of sexual dreaming. She “hated herself” and “shuddered” and imagines

“how he must have been sneering” at her desire (Packer 142 151-52); she promptly retreats to desexualized youthful girlish behavior, away from ideas of body and sex. The challenge and novelty of dealing with sexual feelings is overwhelming and Jane returns to her safe pre-aware existence. The story of her relationship with her male teacher parallels the state of the nation at this time: people initially were not interested in knowing about the decidedly adult problem of labor shortages during WWII, and initially retreated from the changes and challenges it would bring, as Jane retreats from Mr. Berthon. The adult and responsible man is the idea of government and the nation doing what it must. By the end of the novel, Mr. Berthon turns into a patriarchal figure she admires and obeys. He in turn gently takes care of her when it is revealed he is an undercover special investigator for the government.

In many ways *Jane Withers and the Hidden Room* is a typical school story modeled after those written by L.T. Meade and appearing in newspaper weeklies such as *Schoolgirls' Own* (1921-36) and *Schoolgirls Weekly* (1922-39). L.T. Meade wrote late-nineteenth-century girls' school stories in which the plots center around the feelings and friendships of girls. The girls themselves are energetic and athletic, pretty and perky, smart but not intellectual, and adventurous and loyal. The stories often involve disobeying wise but misguided and timid authority figures out of loyalty to each other and the school and for the cause of a greater good, such as stopping a crime, rescuing a friend, etc. (Vallone 2003 1805-1816). The stories were particularly popular between the two great wars as a respite from real-life troubles. Following the adventures of lively, loyal, and friendly girls safe in the small worlds of schools was genuine escapist and

constructive pleasure, creating a break from reality and an alternate example of how the world could be.

An example of this protected innocence is the reaction to the robbery that starts the mystery and adventure of the story. When the Head Mistress announces the robbery she is disturbed to the point of trembling, and the hall of girls is shocked: “There was a hushed, horrified silence in the dining hall. A robbery at Holly Hall! It was unbelievable” (Packer 1942 27). The dismay continues for three pages. When Jane and her best friend Ellen find a stolen earring, there is not even a question of their being guilty, and four pages are spent offering accidental alternatives to the concept of thievery. Innocence and earnestness are the sentiments most often expressed. “Miss Abigail would rather lose those precious heirlooms forever, than have one of her innocent girls suspected” (Packer 1942 33).

The book provides a combination of childhood feminine innocence, a state the country surely missed in the midst of war, and pure determination and gumption. When Jane sees suspicious activity she conscientiously “thought and thought about it” and decides that rather than bothering the Head Mistress Miss Abigail, she will take care of the matter herself (Packer 1942 38). When more jewelry is stolen, Jane anxiously asks if there is anything she can do, for she “can’t bear to sit still here at school and not do *anything*” (Packer 1942 80). Jane and her friend Ellen want to help, but they are still considered children, and the detectives are under request from the parents “not to disturb” the girls (Packer 93). In turn, Jane, when she is captured by the thieves, “Hoped that they would not telephone or wire her mother... so her mother would have one more night of

peaceful sleep” (Packer 1942 151). The scenes are of domestic consideration while denying the seriousness of the situation.

Nonetheless, it is Jane who finds a missing jewelry box in the cushion of Mr. Berthon and his sister Lucienne’s couch. As she plans to solve the mystery herself, she “wondered why she wasn’t afraid. But, somehow, her excitement seemed to have driven away all traces of fear” (Packer 1942 122). Like adventurous Nancy Drew and others before her, she is intrepid. She breaks through her bonds and escapes the remote cabin where she is held prisoner and slips through the woods. “ ‘I’m strong and healthy,’ she reassured herself. ‘I could live for days without eating and I’ll surely find a little water somewhere in these woods’” (Packer 1942 159). As she decides to do her part in facing the challenges of the situation, she begins to grow in self-confidence and self-awareness; she knows what is important. She knows her role in the situation. She will not be a bystander.

Beauty and the consumerism associated with it are given short shrift. When discussing the war and the misunderstood hero’s sister, who is eventually revealed to be not his sister but actually the villainess, Jane “felt very old and very wise, picturing this sister, who was probably as beautiful as Mr. Berthon was handsome, catering to the whims of selfish, beauty-mad women, while she longs for her real home and her real work” (Packer 1942 52-3). The woman’s cover story is that she has had to flee Europe. In truth, the villainess is a greedy criminal who works in a beauty shop to identify rich women from whom to steal.

The wealthy upper classes, or at least those pretending to be more than they are, are also censored. Jane’s best friend Ellin sets the stage: “I hate would-be highbrows,

don't you?" (Packer 1942 43) Loyalty to the working class continues. When it is suggested that servants are guilty in the second theft, the youth of America steadfastly deny it:

"I don't think any of the servants had anything to do with it," Ellin stated with firm conviction... "I'll never believe they had anything to do with it," Ellin repeated with young firmness.

"You are very sure of them, aren't you?" Mr. Berthon asked quietly.

"Absolutely" (Packer 1942 91).

To add even more opprobrium to herself the villainess is known to keep company with a racehorse man and owner of "a dozen oil wells and half a country" (Packer 1942 101). It is eventually revealed that this unscrupulous man of wealth and business is the criminal mastermind of the novel.

All the illustrations in *Jane Withers and the Hidden Room* show Jane looking worried, fretful, and vexed. The text consistently refers to her as a "kid" and a "girl." When the bad guys catch her again after her bungled escape, they give her warm milk and offer her a washcloth for her face and a brush for her hair and even apologize for treating her roughly (Packer 1942 169-75). The messages are clear throughout. Young Jane is the idealized good girl who deserves to be treated well, even by unscrupulous and evil thieves. This is the way the world should be.

Jane Withers and the Phantom Violin (1943) (see fig. 6.2) presents a completely different kind of Jane, one who is a single and not childish girl. She lives distinct from

familial relations, mostly outdoors; she is competent rather than desperate, and is skilled in traditionally masculine talents rather than dependent on help from a father figure.

Jane Withers, Greta Clara Bronson, and Jeanne are camping out in a wrecked ship on Lake Superior for the three months of summer. They are all there for the sake of their friend Greta, who is recovering from hay fever and asthma. None of the girls are afraid, because “who indeed could be, with Jane as her protector?” (Snell 1943 21). Jane has a gun. She enjoys looking at it and holding it:

More than once she had taken it down to handle it lovingly. Once, she had taken aim and fired. The short, stout rifle had a great roar to it.

And Jane had a steady aim; she had split the wood in two, first shot (Snell 143 21).

The theme of Jane as protector continues throughout the novel. Jeanne declares, “Our brave Jane, she shall protect us from all evil” (Snell 1943 46) and Greta exclaims of Jane, “She’s capable. She always knows what to do. Nothing will hurt us while she’s along” (Snell 1943 146).

The theme of Jane in full possession of manly, outdoors skills continues as well. She is a fisher:

Someone had told Jane that the waters of Duncan’s Bay were haunted by great dark fish with rows of teeth sharp as a shark’s. From that time the girl had experienced a compelling desire to try her hand at catching these monsters...the reel screamed. In her wild effort to regain control, Jane felt her knuckles bruised and barked, but she persisted... Once again she had the fish under control and was reeling in with a fierce

and savage delight. 'He's coming. Got to come. Now! Now! Now!' (Snell 1943 29-32).

Jane wants to be different and new, and yearns to be the first female in many traditional male professions, including being a ship captain and explorer. In true Rosie the Riveter style, she considers herself just as good as a man, and proves herself so. While Greta and Jeanne sleep, "Jane slipped into slacks" and "paced." She is the captain of their shipwreck camp, "she was the captain of the bridge":

'Why not?' she murmured... 'Why should I not some day command a ship? There would be things to learn. I could master them as well as any man, I am sure.' (Snell 1943 68-70).

Next she determines to be an explorer. "I mean to be an explorer. Were there any celebrated women explorers? Well, I'm going to be an explorer. You watch me" (Snell 144).

While the two girls spread out blankets and spend the day sunbathing, Jane "was for action." She rows the boat to a good fishing spot where she trolls for trout (Snell 72). When camping on land, Jane is the one who keeps guard:

As for Jane, she drew on her heavy sweater, thrust her feet under the blanket, propped the rifle against the tent wall and, folding her arms across her knees, sat at half watch the night through (Snell 112).

Jane's clothing is that of a working woman and she is repeatedly described as a man.

With corduroy slacks, stout shoes, a flannel shirt open wide at the neck, and a small hat crammed well down on her head, Jane might have

been taken for a man as, rifle under arm, she trudged through the deep shadows of the evergreen forest (Snell 1943 74).

Later in the book when she meets some conservation officers, one calls her a man:

‘Excuse me,’ the Conservation man said when the story was done. ‘My name is Mell. As man to man, I’d like to shake your hand... You’re the right sort, I – I’ll get you a job on our force.’ He shook her hand warmly.

Every illustration pictures her in slacks in action poses, and her slacks are mentioned in the text throughout all her adventures.

To be fully competent and capable, Jane and the working Rosies of World War II had to dress in masculine garb. The interplay between women and their necessary role was purely expressed through their clothing. Though the masculinization of female clothing was first perpetuated with the increase of female involvement in sport, starting with the urban use of the bicycle in the 1890s (Ewen & Ewen 113), World War II represents another leap in the representational nature of fashion for women. Jane wears skirts and matching tops when a schoolgirl, and slacks and flannels as an outdoorsman protecting the other women, who are still dressed in skirts.

Jane even engages in battle. She catches a sniper trying to shoot a moose in wild preserve land and fires her own shot to warn the moose and scare away the man. The man in turn sneaks up on her when she is once again fishing from her rowboat for dinner and raises the oar from his own boat to strike her.

The oar was raised for a blow... That there would be a battle the girl did not doubt... Jane was quick. Before the intruder could strike she had seized her oar and was ready to parry the blow.

The oars came together with a solid thwack. Not a word was said as she drew back for a second sally.

This was to be a silent battle.

The man tried a straight on, sword like thrust. It became evident at once that he meant to plunge her into the icy water... Turning upon her a face livid with anger, he executed a crafty thrust to the right, leading her weapon stray. Before she could recover, her boat tipped. She fell upon one knee... (Snell 1943 83-85).

As the mystery adventure story progresses, she uses a sheath knife, a chisel, and a small hammer and sets up camp, building campfires and catching food and cooking it. She is the sole rower of their little boat and takes the girls back and forth from lake to land. In the great storm that capsizes their shipwreck home, she rescues them all, rowing them to shore. But first, she puts on slacks in preparation for her traditionally masculine role as rescuer.

In the novel she is the guardian, warrior, and provider hero, taking care of the girls, fighting for the protection of the girls and the animals on conservation land, and keeping the girls dry, warm, fed, and safe. She fully embodies the spirit of the mobilized, working woman. War is mentioned three times: twice as the rationale for why her French friend Petite Jeanne is in the United States (Snell 1943 90, 116) and once in a cautionary

tale about those who do not give up their gold to the U.S. Government for the war effort. This young woman actively protects her friends, feeding them and keeping them safe.

By the time of Jane's third Whitman Authorized Edition, *Jane Withers and the Swamp Wizard* (1944) (see fig. 6.3), demobilization efforts were already well under way, and the drastic change in Jane's Whitman character matches the new feminine profile. Jane is a child again. She wears dresses and puts slacks on only for messy housework that must be done. Her main characteristic, rather than being mistress of traditionally manly skills, is that of a laughing young girl, bringing cheer wherever she goes.

The premise of the novel has Jane visiting her school friend Cokey, Cokey's mother Alice, and Cokey's brother Eddie at their new farmhouse. The family has left the city behind to go back to the good life in the country. Cokey explains to Jane:

Mom wants us to, of course. She says it's up to us. Dad is still in Washington... We hope he'll be coming home to stay before very long. He'll love it here (Heisenfelt 1944 14).

By 1944, much of the propaganda aimed at women was focused on the imperative to care for the men coming home, to be patient with them, and to devote themselves to making home life comfortable and easy. When Jane is shown the farmhouse setting for future domesticity, she says, "in a burst of happiness, 'Oh, it's so clean – and so nice!'" (Heisenfelt 1944 12). Encouraging these happy feelings of domesticity are in line with the new propaganda.

Before Jane has a chance to enjoy the clean, nice new home, she and Cokey are caught in a rain storm and have to take shelter in a mysterious run-down house that is on the other side of the town bridge and that is inhabited by superstitious people who warn

the girls over and over of the Swamp Wizard. They insist that the girls have to get away. Jane and Cokey want to leave, but the road and bridge are flooded and they are stuck. Faced with mysterious sounds, Cokey quivers while Jane handles the situation with laughter, manners, and positive thinking. She offers to help with kitchen and first aid duties, and repeats her and Cokey's very real desire to return home as soon as nature allows. The Freisson family is painfully mean but Jane refuses to think ill of them, assuming there must be some good reason for their behavior.

When the girls are finally rescued, it is not by their own efforts but by those of Alice, Cokey's mother. Jane is diminished to the status of a child who needs rescuing by a parent figure. She is not tackling dangerous strangers, or shooting rifles, or fishing, or rowing a boat across Lake Superior as she was in her previous book; she is not even rambunctious as a schoolgirl out to catch thieves, as she was in her first book. She is back to being a docile, cheerful good girl doing what is expected of her. A popular 1917 song about women says, "How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Pree?" Here the parallel for women is, how are you going to keep women in the home after they have seen how capable they are and how much money they are capable of earning? Everything in the culture industry mobilized to answer these questions.

Given the interplay between the culture industry, popular fiction, and the representations of the feminine heroic, it is time to examine why these stories matter in the lives of young readers, especially young female readers. Dennis J. Sumara writes, "As a cultural object, the work of literature contributes to the ongoing restructuring and reconditioning of the reader's identity" (Sumara 206). As shown in chapter two, the Office of War Information (OWI) held a similar view, with Davis noting, "The easiest

way to inject a propaganda idea into most people's minds is to let it in through the medium of an entertainment" (Koppes & Black 88). The Whitman Authorized Editions are examples of popular culture literature. If popular culture can be defined as commercial culture and as a hegemonic endeavor, its effects on the audience, young girl readers, are worthy of examination.

Sumara's idea is that "As readers identify with and interpret the experience of characters, they learn to reidentify and reinterpret themselves" (Sumara 209). Catherine Sheldrick Ross, in her article, "Reader on Top: Public Libraries, Pleasure Reading, and Models of Reading" (2009) reminds us that "Reading popular fiction can still raise alarm bells for the guardians of public taste" (Ross 2009 633) largely because of concern over the effect of popular fiction on the young reader and the level of defensive and creative agency in young readers. However, while the concept of young readers identifying through popular fiction, and especially popular fiction that is scripted with particular messages of femininity, can be a tense area of investigation, it does not have to involve the devastation Ann Douglas decries in her lament about sentimentalist fiction. Ross provides an overview of seven models of reading: reading with a purpose, reading only the best, the great reading debate, the reader as dupe, the reader as poacher, blueprints for living, and the reader as game player.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, public librarians were still referring to the public taste for popular fiction as the "fiction problem." Many librarians refused to carry, and sometimes removed from their shelves, popular fiction books such as those by Horatio Alger and May Agnes Fleming. William M. Stevenson, in his "Seventh Annual Report of the Carnegie Free Library of Allegheny, Pennsylvania of

1896” reported, “It is certainly not the function of the public library to foster the mind-weakening habit of novel-reading among the very classes—the uneducated, busy, or idle—whom it is the duty of the public library to lift to a higher plane of thinking” (Quoted in Ross 2009 633). In 1903, on the other hand, the president of the ALA, James Hosmer chided librarians for their “over-officious” behavior (Quoted in Garrison 2003 99) and supported the public’s right to read whatever sort of fiction they wanted, whenever they wanted (Garrison 99).

Children’s librarians and educators especially have been concerned with providing “only the best” for children and for much of history, that best has not been thought to include popular fiction. In 1879, Thomas Wentworth Higginson supported Oliver Optic because the books promoted appropriate cultural attitudes, “The motive that sends him to Oliver Optic is just that love of adventure which has made the Anglo-American race spread itself across a continent” (Quoted in Chamberlain 2002 189). In 1914, Franklin K. Mathiews, chief librarian of the Boy Scouts, wrote his oft-quoted article “Blowing Out the Boys’ Brains,” in which he said of popular and series fiction that “As some boys read such books, their imaginations are literally ‘blown out,’ and they go into life as terribly crippled as though by some material explosion they had lost a hand or foot” (Mathiews 1914). In 1917 Caroline Hewins, writer and publisher of *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, reported ridding her library of Horatio Alger, Oliver Optic, Harry Castleman, and Martha Finley, the authors of popular fiction she dubbed “The Immortal Four.” Anne Carroll Moore warned of the series book, “It is inevitable that it should result in just such a state of arrested development” (quoted in Ross 2009 641). In 1929, Mary E.S. Root published in the *Wilson Bulletin* an article titled

“Not to Be Circulated” in which nearly 100 series books were listed (Chamberlain 2002 193).

Popular cultural theorist John Fiske calls this a view of the consumer reader as a “cultural dupe” (quoted in Ross 2009 646). In this view, popular fiction “manipulates people and colonizes their leisure time, reconciling them to the status quo.” Here readers of the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls would be dictated to by the actions of the heroines with no hope of filtering, mechanically eating and digesting the text and the messages in it. “The reader as dupe” has no choice, and is in fact “A docile reader... helplessly bombarded by repetitious messages and images from series books, romance fiction, glamour magazines, comic books” (Ross 2009 646), etc. Purveyors of OWI imperatives would appreciate this model.

Alternatively, there is the idea of “The Reader as Poacher,” which grants the reader more autonomy and decision in the reading experience and which borrows from Fiske and Michel de Certeau. De Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) presents the idea of a reader as a “textual poacher,” one who subverts the dominant paradigm in a revolutionary act by picking through the text and using only the ideas that suit her or his purpose. Ross extends the model to those who read for pleasure and make their own meaning from texts. So too, Ross points out, does Radway in “Girls, Reading, and Narrative Gleaning” (2002), in which Radway describes girl readers as “self-fashioning” their young identities through picking and choosing through the text. Purveyors of OWI also would appreciate this model, although perhaps a little less.

Accepting the idea that readers identify with what they read, the dueling concerns about what children read are understandable. However, there is a distinct difference

between viewing readers as susceptible to textual inference and viewing readers as active meaning makers and participants in their own identity. The propagandists of government and industry of World War II hoped to influence the reader in a command-and-obey model, as does critic Douglas - witness the former's strident use of popular fiction to disseminate patriotic information and the latter's dismay at the failure of sentimentalist fiction to seize the opportunity to script empowering feminist messaging. I take a milder view, more in line with Tompkins's contextual reasoning of time and place and Radway's "self-fashioning," mainly because of my faith in the individual reader's ability to create his or her own epistemology of behavior. I see the Whitman Authorized Editions as one set of stories that were propagated for girls during World War II, not the only story.

The Whitman Publishing Company does appear to be aware that as readers identify with and interpret the experience of characters, they learn to reidentify and reinterpret themselves. All we need to do is look at the three novels of Jane Withers to see how Whitman identified and reidentified the character to match the changing notions of feminine identity during World War II. In an ironic twist on Anne Carroll Moore's dictum of, "The right book to the right child at the right time," Whitman changed their books to match the changing ideals of popular culture throughout the changing time and needs during World War II.

Butler's theory of performativity is relevant here, as well. Identity and gender, she argues, can be defined through "a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1990 140), and each Whitman Authorized Edition repeats a behavior of gender, going through the phases of traditional "feminine," to feminine with masculine capability and fashion, to strictly feminine again. The behavior and performance change according to the patriotic

imperative, yet remain “safely” feminine. The Whitman women, even in the midst of mobilization efforts represented by Rosie the Riveter, remain objectified through the use of fashion. The Jane Withers regresses so far as to be infantilized by 1944, transforming from a grown, capable woman in pants to a young girl in skirts and plaited hair.

The formulas preferred by Whitman model specific imaginings of femininity that maintained their popularity through maintaining popular images of social norms at a specific time and place. However, although the stories are indubitably instances of cultural coercion and forced symbolism, they are not the only instances in the reading lives of young readers and not the only stories they digest. And, as Nava points out, the auditioning of identity through the consuming of cultural norms can be an empowering moment of finding identity and power in that identity. She reminds us of Foucault’s insistence that “where there is power, however diffuse or pervasive, there is the potential for its resistance” (Nava 164).

This last point suggests several areas for future research. As Nava and Foucault assert, the auditioning of identity through the consumption of cultural norms can be empowering and transforming as well as conforming to the dominant social paradigm. There is the possibility that the World War II dialectic of women at home, women at work, and women at home again might contain seeds for a new type of feminine heroic within the representation of propaganda prescriptions and culture industry creations. Gates, Steffel, and Molson define fantasy as that which “plays with what might be, makes what does not yet exist, and elaborates any number of possible futures” (Gates 2003 2-6). The fantasies of Invisible Scarlet O’Neil and the women of her Whitman Authorized Edition cohort serve as a useful transition to the feminine heroic in later decades. How,

for example, have they presaged the labor and beauty aesthetics of activist modern female superheroes in the ever-growing current medium of fantasy and graphic novels for youth? Examples could include Harimad-sol and Aerin of Robin McKinley's books *The Blue Sword* (1982) and *The Hero and the Crown* (1985), Lyra of Phillip Pullman's His Dark Materials series, and Allana and Daine of Tamora Pierce's Song of the Lioness quartet and The Immortals quartet. What are the histories of female superheroes in the global arena? How do they function?

I look at Invisible Scarlet O'Neil and the Whitman Authorized Editions to decipher places of intersection between propaganda imperatives and the culture industry and World War II. It would be illuminating to consider how feminine identities and ideas of the feminine heroic were portrayed in the popular fiction for youth in countries other than the U.S. during this same period. The identity of Invisible Scarlet O'Neil was her ability to act without being seen, and the roles of women in the Whitman Authorized Editions changed back to the domestic sphere in part because the war emergency was over; but such was not the case where the war emergency turned to reconstruction emergencies. How might the transformations of the feminine and the feminine heroic differ in continuing emergencies?

Denning speaks of the dime novel as "a central component of the emerging culture industry" (Denning 1987 15) and studies the books because they are locations of "the intersection of the new mass culture and the culture of the new masses" (Denning 16). I look at Invisible Scarlet O'Neil and the Whitman Authorized Editions as important historical examples of the involvement of children's literature in the emergent and continuing process of the culture industry, as evidenced by the cross-pollination and

cross-saturation of the books and the new media of the time. The books are important historically because they place children's literature firmly within the culture industry context, a relationship that needs to be more fully recognized. My dissertation is a contribution to fitting the study of children's literature within the larger culture industry context.

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil and her Whitman Authorized edition colleagues also serve as model formulas for the transportation of fantasy and heroic figures across mediums. An examination of the history of the feminine figure in fantasy literature is out of the scope of this dissertation, but my historical research does establish both a precedent and a framework through which to understand the massive phenomenon of the fantasies now being created within the shifting territories of children's literature and new media production. The contact zones of the culture industries of children's literature and new media are increasingly porous and global, morphing across mediums to create and model imaginings of the heroic. My dissertation provides a method of examining these new identities and ideologies presented to girl readers, which in turn provides an important contribution to mapping the tectonics of old and nascent culture industry for youth.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1.1

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, illustration by Russell Stamm, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil*, written by Russell Stamm (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943) front cover.



Figure 2.1

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, illustration by Russell Stamm, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil*, written by Russell Stamm (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942) front cover.



Figure 2.2

Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, illustration by Russell Stamm, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil Versus the King of the Slums*, written by Russell Stamm (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946) front cover.



Figure 2.3

Mrs. Luella Washing Aluminum Sheets in a War Plant and Cotton Sheets at Home, photograph by OWI (Office of War Information), reprinted by George Roeder, *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War II*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993) 74.

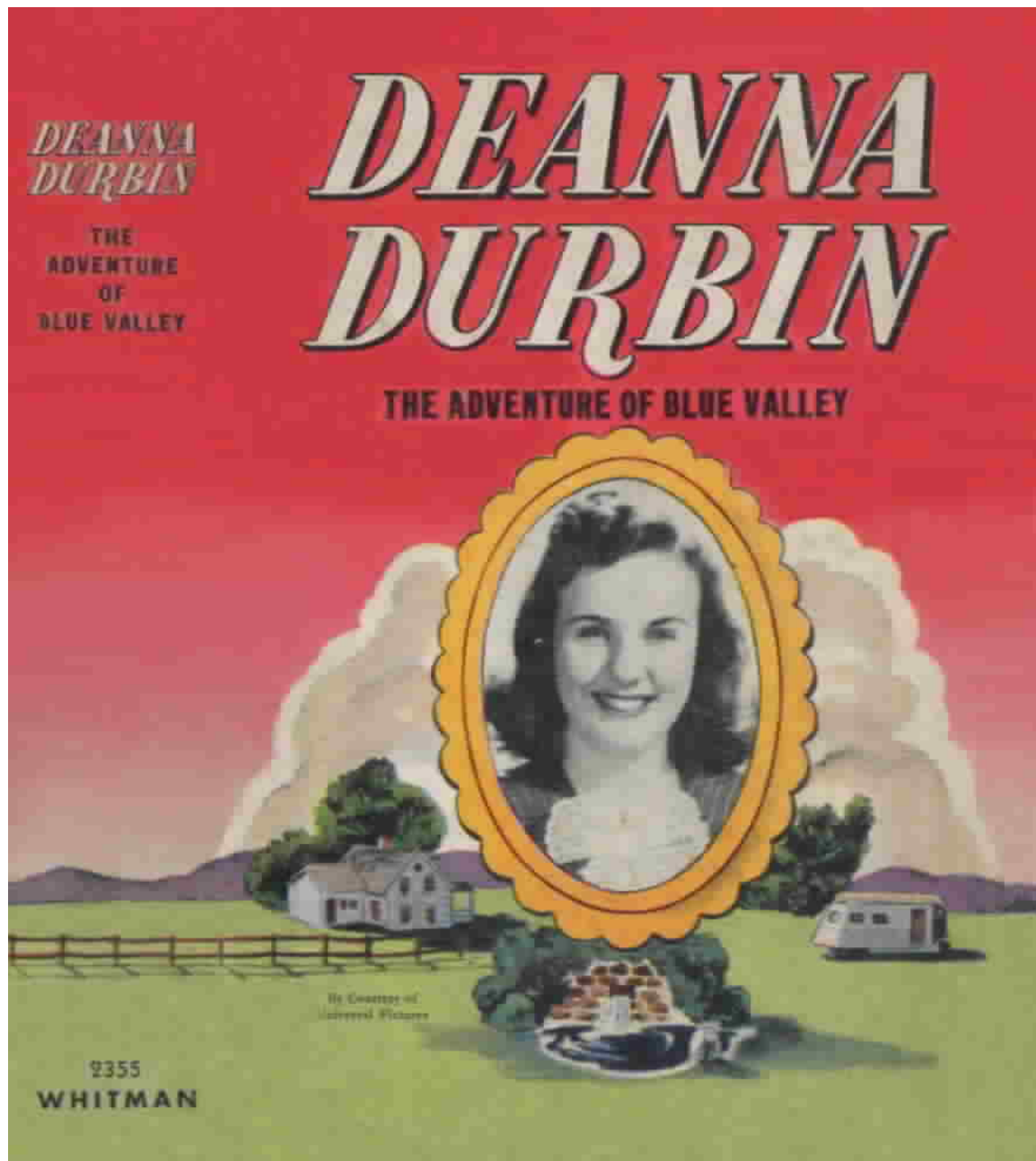


Figure 2.4

Deanna Durbin and the Adventure of Blue Valley, illustration by Hedwig Jo Meixner, *Deanna Durbin and the Adventure of Blue Valley: An Original Story Featuring Deanna Durbin as the Heroine* by Courtesy of Universal Pictures, written by Kathryn Heisenfelt (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1941) front cover.



Figure 2.5

Deanna Durbin and the Feather of Flame, illustration by Hedwig Jo Meixner, *Deanna Durbin and the Adventure of Blue Valley: An Original Story Featuring Deanna Durbin as the Heroine by Courtesy of Universal Pictures*, written by Kathryn Heisenfelt (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1941) front cover.

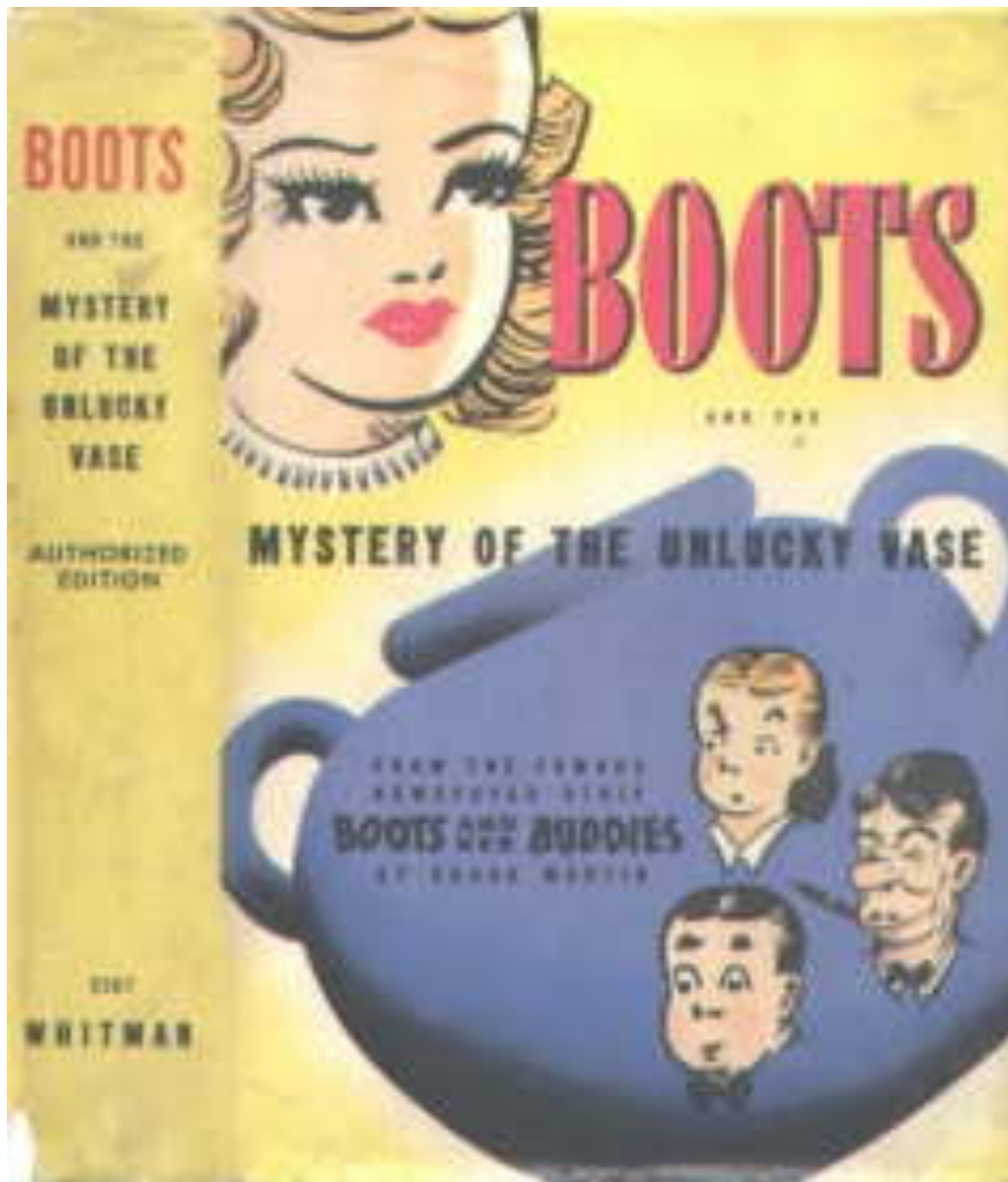


Figure 3.1

Boots and the Mystery of the Unlucky Vase, illustration by Edgar Martin, *Boots and the Mystery of the Unlucky Vase: Based on the Famous Newspaper Strip "Boots and her Buddies,"* written by Edgar Martin (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943) front cover.



Figure 3.2

“Gee Wizz, Boots! Why Are You Worrying?” illustration by Edgar Martin, *Boots and the Mystery of the Unlucky Vase: Based on the Famous Newspaper Strip “Boots and her Buddies,”* written by Edgar Martin (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943) 21.



Figure 3.3

“Victory Waits on Your Fingers – Keep ‘Em Flying, Miss U.S.A.” Produced by the Royal Typewriter Company for the U.S. Civil Service Commission NARA Still Picture Branch (NWDNS-44-PA-2272). Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001.



Figure 3.4
Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak, illustration by Henry E. Vallely,
*Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak: An Original Story Featuring Ginger
Rogers Famous Motion-Picture Star as the Heroine*, by Lela E. Rogers (Racine, WI:
Whitman Publishing Company, 1942) front cover.



Figure 3.5

"Ginger Rogers Was at the Telephone Switchboard," illustration by Henry E. Valley, *Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak: An Original Story Featuring Ginger Rogers Famous Motion-Picture Star as the Heroine*, by Lela E. Rogers (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942) 3.

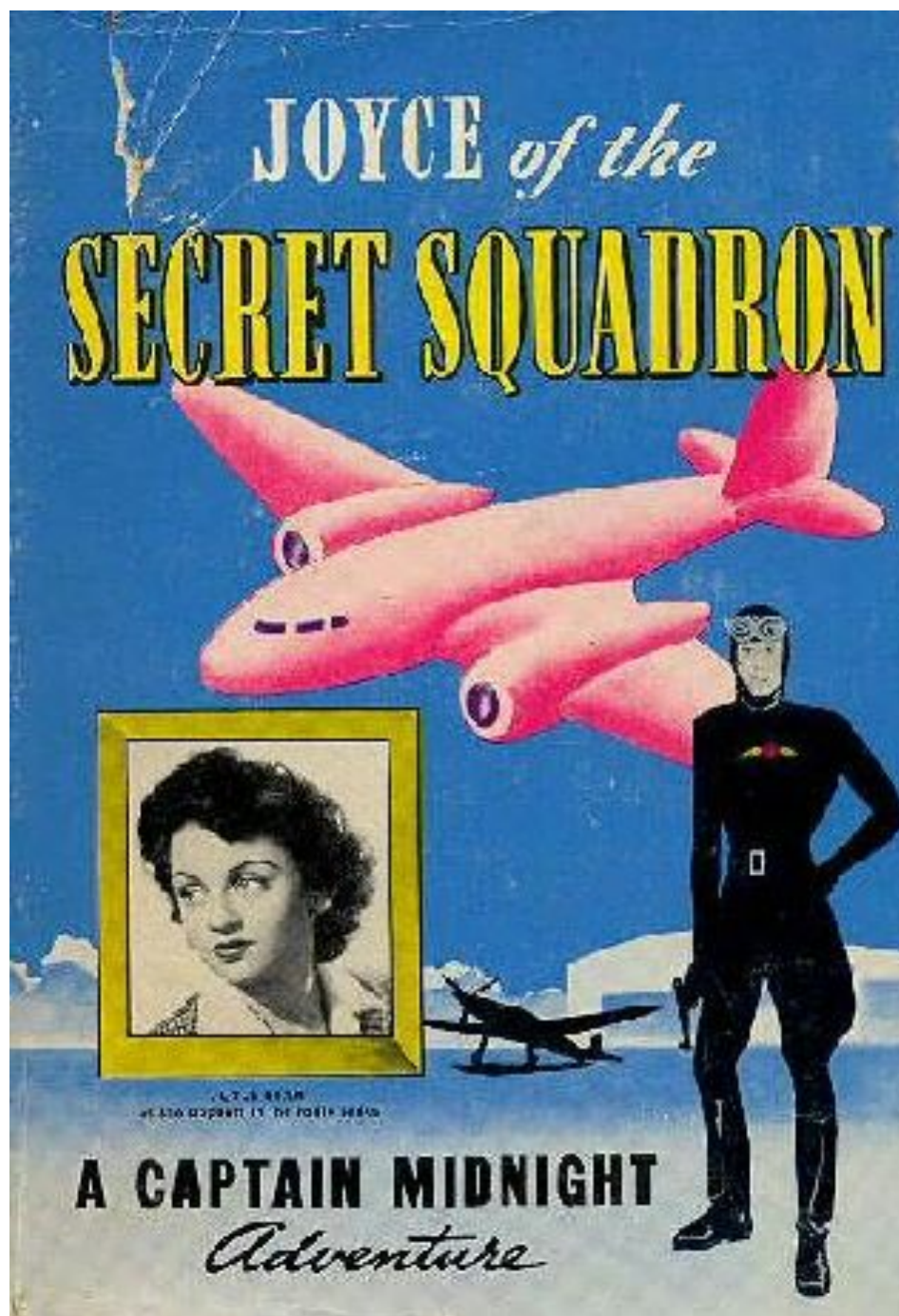


Figure 3.6

Joyce of the Secret Squadron, illustration by R.R. Winterbotham, *Joyce of the Secret Squadron: A Captain Midnight Adventure*, written by R.R. Winterbotham (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942) front cover.

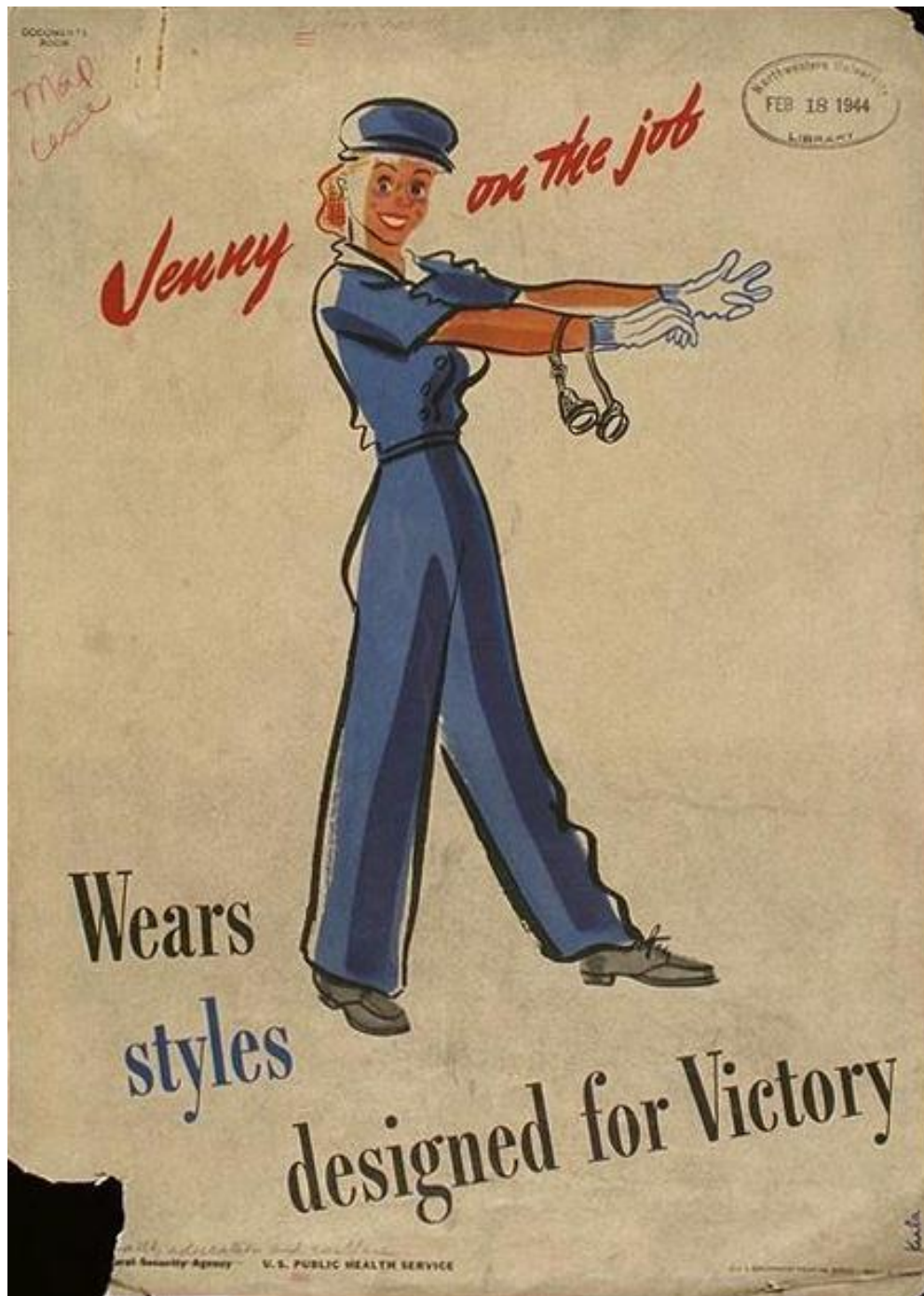


Figure 3.7

Jenny on the Job, U.S. Department of Public Health Service, *Jenny on the Job Wears Styles Designed for Victory*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943) front cover.



Figure 3.8
 Safety Caps for Women in War Factories, US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau,
Safety Caps for Women in War Factories, Special Bulletin 9 (Washington, DC:
 Government Printing Office, 1942) 2.

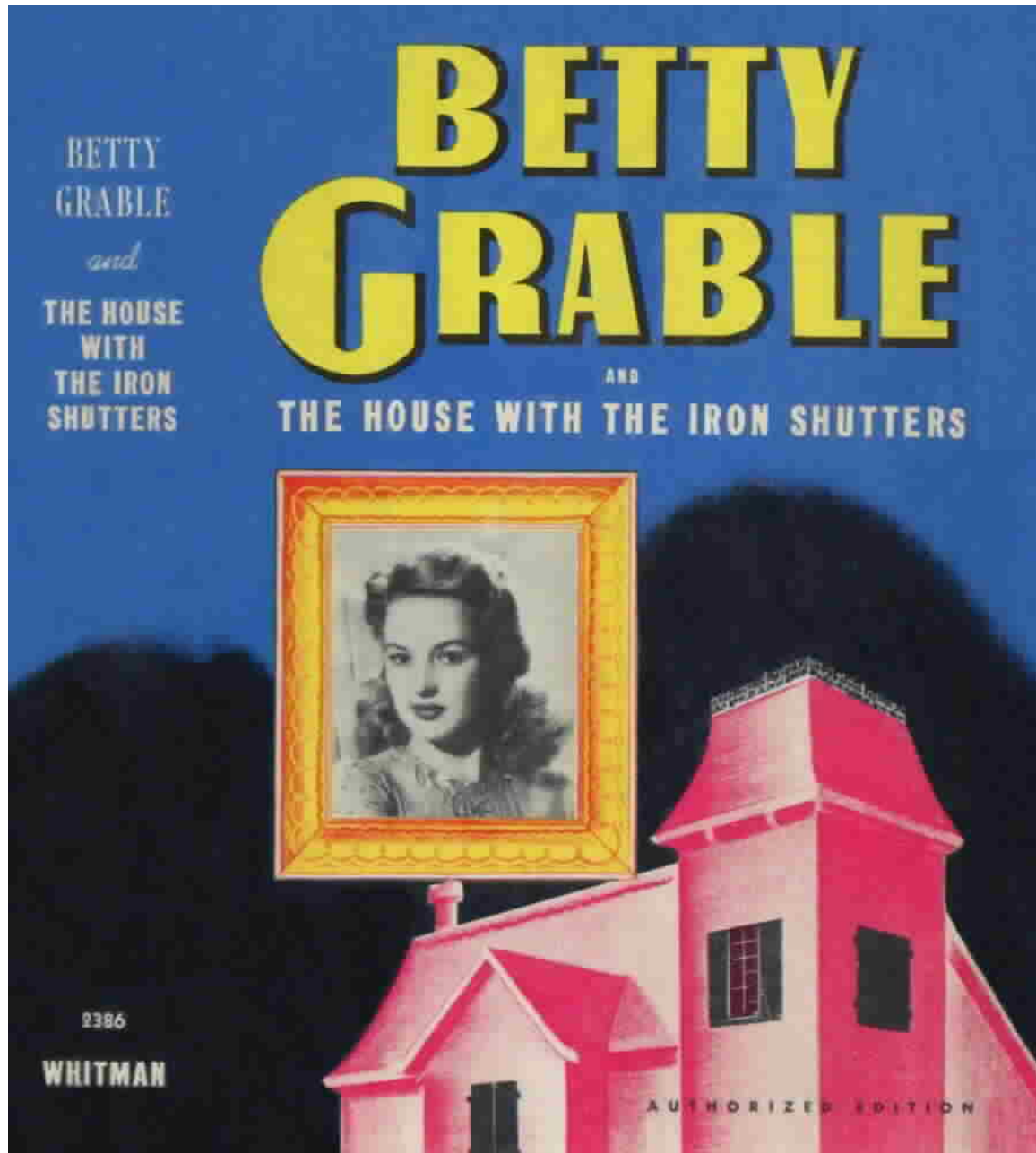


Figure 3.9

Betty Grable and the House With the Iron Shutters, illustration by Henry E. Vallely, *Betty Grable and the House With the Iron Shutters: An Original Story Featuring Betty Grable Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*, written by Kathryn Heisenfelt (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943) front cover.

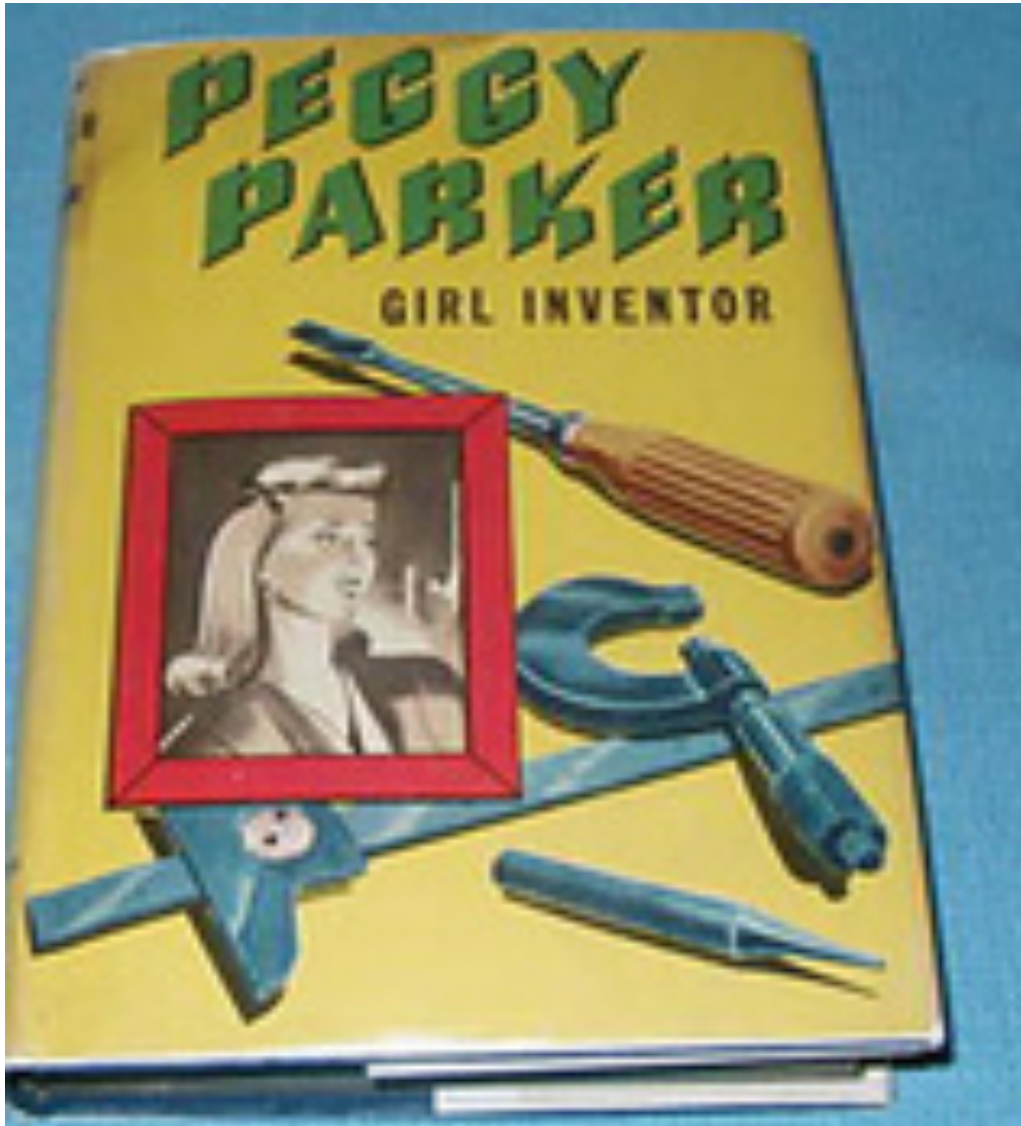


Figure 3.10
Peggy Parker, Girl Inventor, illustration by Dorothy Colburn, *Peggy Parker, Girl Inventor*, written by Ruby Lorraine Radford (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946) front cover.



Figure 3.11
Peggy Parker Enjoyed Working with Tools, illustration by Dorothy Colburn, *Peggy Parker, Girl Inventor*, written by Ruby Lorraine Radford (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946) 16.

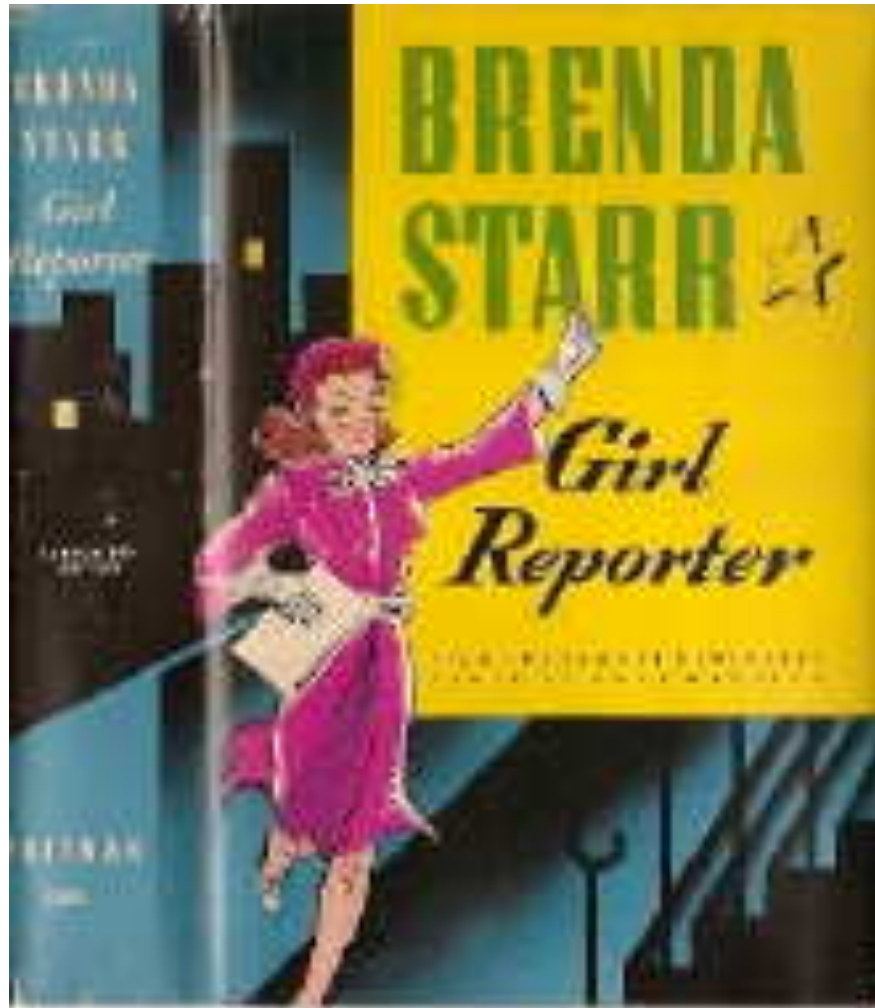


Figure 4.1

Brenda Starr, *Girl Reporter*, illustration by Dale Messick, *Brenda Starr, Girl Reporter*, written by Dale Mesick (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943) front cover



Figure 5.1

She Put One Invisible Foot in His Path, illustration by Russell Stamm, *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil*, written by Russell Stamm (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943) 173.



Figure 5.2

“Because... I’m a girl, too... See!” illustration by Russell Stamm, *Invisible Scarlet O’Neil*, written by Russell Stamm (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943)

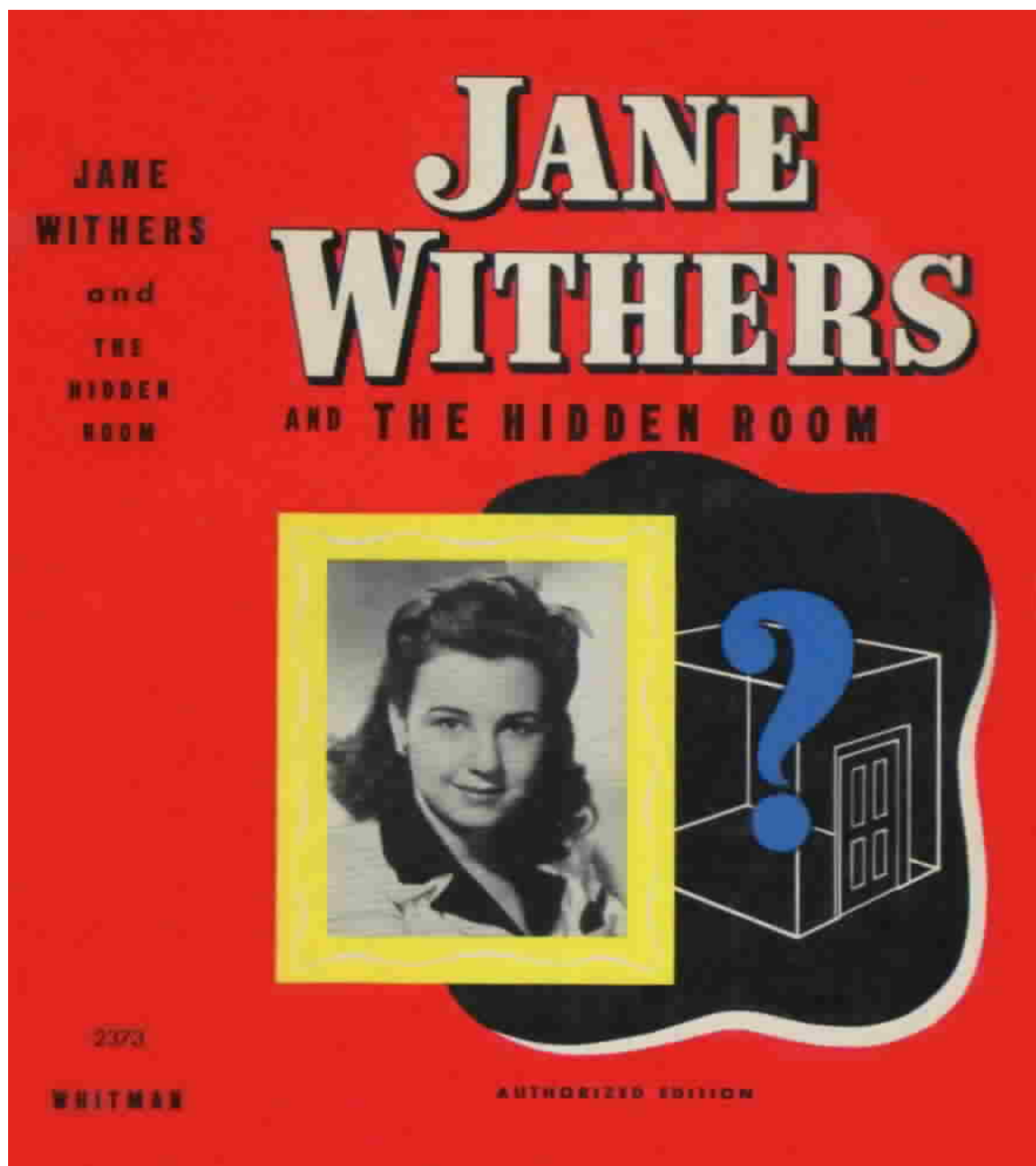


Figure 6.1

Jane Withers and the Hidden Room, illustration by Henry E. Vallely, *Jane Withers and the Hidden Room: An Original Story Featuring Jane Withers Famous Motion-Picture Star as the Heroine*, written by Eleanor Packer (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942) front cover.

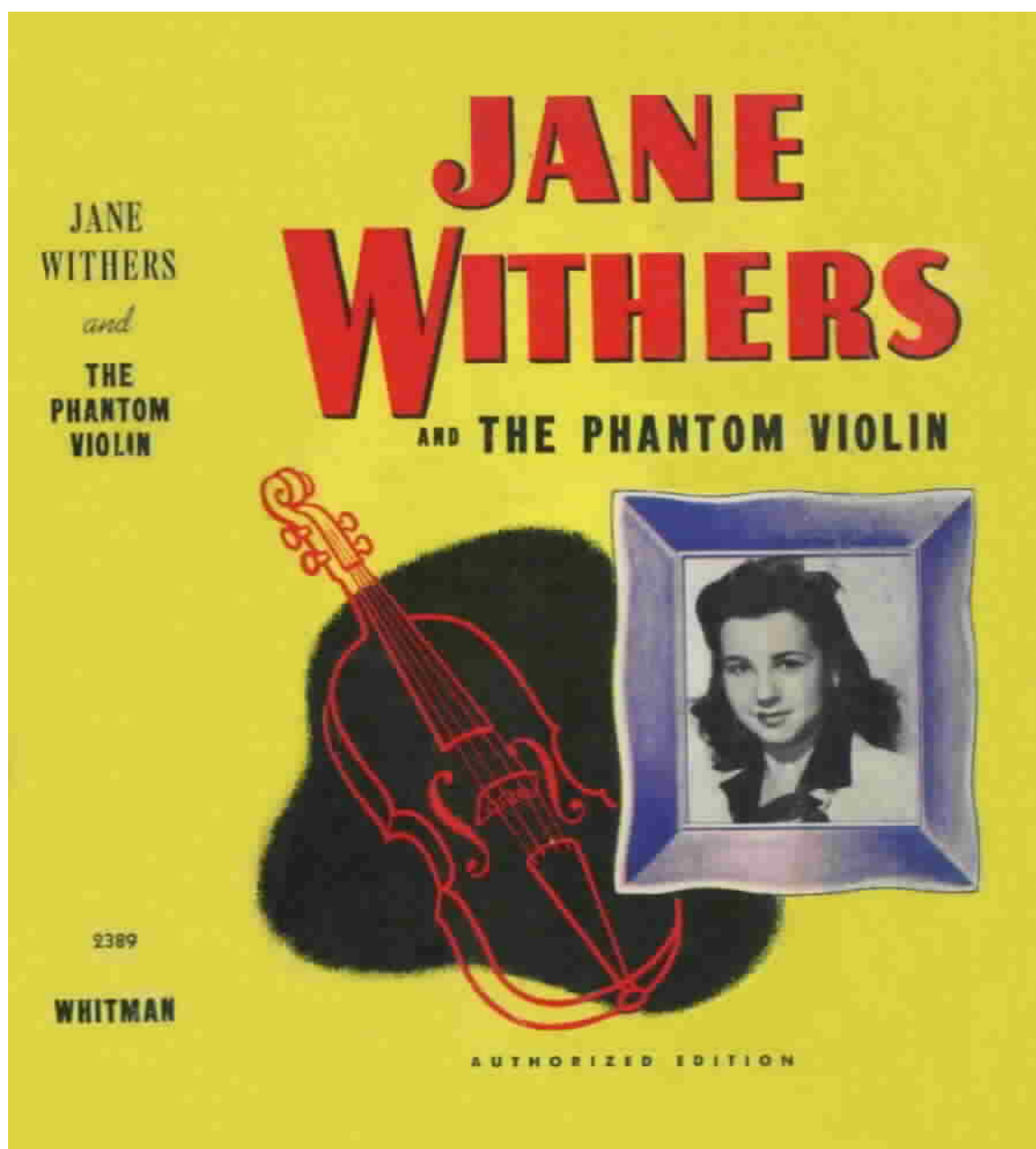


Figure 6.2

Jane Withers and the Phantom Violin, illustration by Henry E. Vallely, *Jane Withers and the Phantom Violin: An Original Story Featuring Jane Withers Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*, written by Roy Snell (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943) front cover.

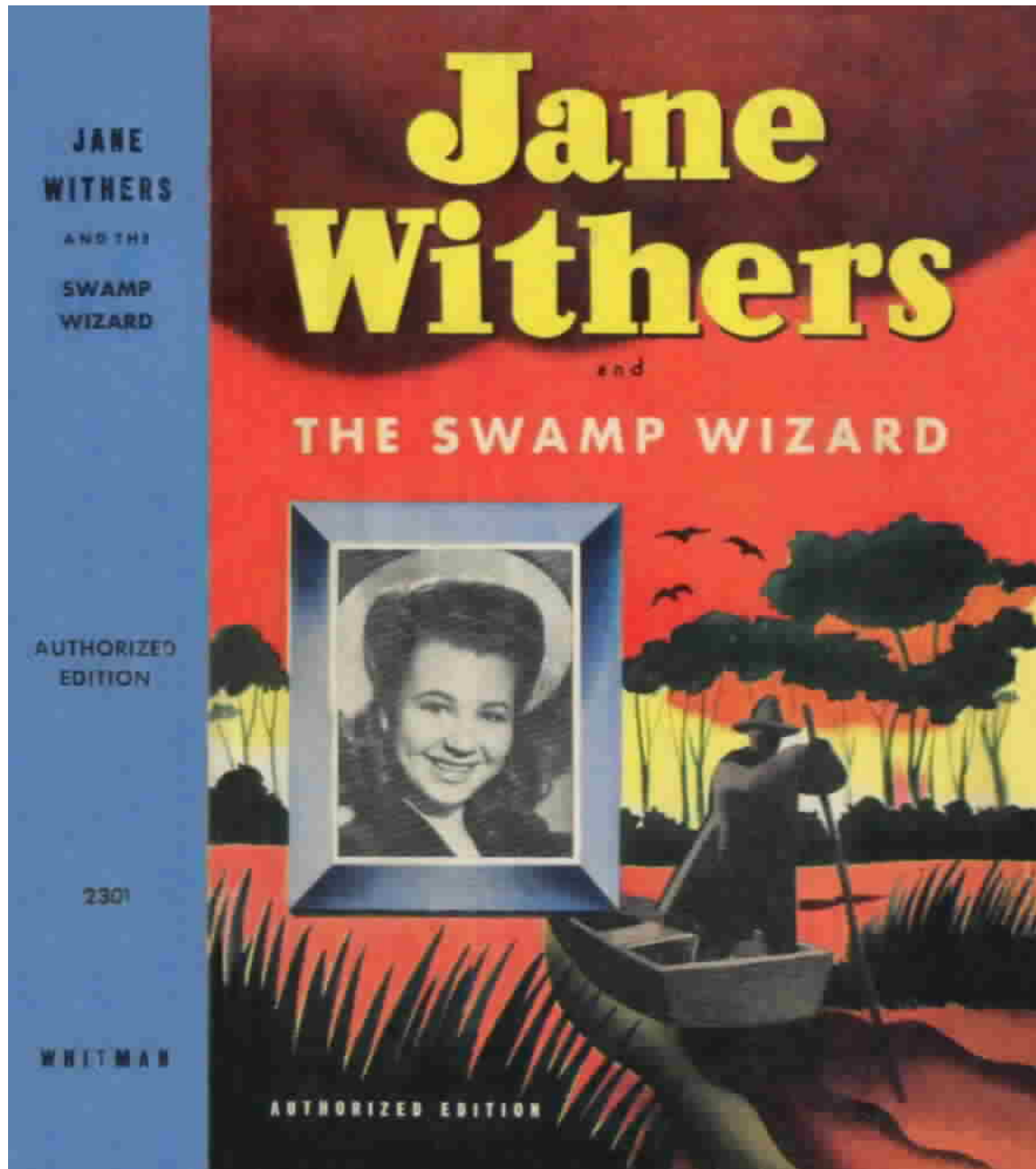


Figure 6.3

Jane Withers and the Swamp Wizard, illustration by Henry E. Vallely, illus. *Jane Withers and the Swamp Wizard: An Original Story Featuring Jane Withers Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*, written by Kathryn Heisenfelt (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1944) front cover.

**APPENDIX A: WHITMAN AUTHORIZED EDITIONS
MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE STORIES FOR GIRLS FEATURING YOUR
FAVORITE CHARACTERS -
1940s EDITIONS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER**

Heisenfelt, Kathryn and Hedwig Jo Meixner, illus. *Deanna Durbin and the Adventure of Blue Valley: An Original Story Featuring Deanna Durbin as the Heroine by Courtesy of Universal Pictures*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1941. (series #2355)

Heisenfelt, Kathryn and Hedwig Jo Meixner, illus. *Deanna Durbin and the Feather of Flame: An Original Story Featuring Deanna Durbin as the Heroine by Courtesy of Universal Pictures*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1941. (series #2356)

Heisenfelt, Kathryn. *Bonita Granville and the Mystery of Star Island*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2371)

Packer, Eleanor and Henry E. Valley, illus. *Jane Withers and the Hidden Room: An Original Story Featuring Jane Withers Famous Motion-Picture Star as the Heroine*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2373)

Young, Chic. *Blondie and Dagwood's Secret Service: An Original Story about the Bumstead Family of the Famous Newspaper Comics, Radio Series, and Motion Pictures "Blondie."* Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2374)

Winterbotham, R. R. *Joyce of the Secret Squadron: A Captain Midnight Adventure*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2376)

King, Frank. *Nina and Skeezix (of "Gasoline Alley"): The Problem of the Lost Ring*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2377)

Rogers, Lela E. and illus. by Henry E. Valley. *Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak: An Original Story Featuring Ginger Rogers Famous Motion-Picture Star as the Heroine*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2378)

Caniff, Milton. *April Kane and the Dragon Lady: A Terry and the Pirates Adventure, Based on Milton Caniff's Famous Newspaper Strip*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2380)

Heisenfelt, Kathryn. *Polly the Powers Model: The Puzzle of the Haunted Camera*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2375)

- Heisenfelt, Kathryn. *Ann Rutherford and the Key to Nightmare Hall*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1942. (series #2372)
- Stamm, Russell. *Invisible Scarlet O'Neil: A New Story Based on the Famous Newspaper Strip*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2382)
- Messick, Dale. *Brenda Starr, Girl Reporter: From the Famous Newspaper Strip by Dale Messick*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2383)
- Westover, Russ. *Tillie the Toiler and the Masquerading Duchess: From the Famous Newspaper Strip by Russ Westover*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2384)
- Heisenfelt, Kathryn and Henry E. Vallely, illus. *Betty Grable and the House With the Iron Shutters: An Original Story Featuring Betty Grable Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2386)
- Martin, Edgar. *Boots and the Mystery of the Unlucky Vase: Based on the Famous Newspaper Strip "Boots and her Buddies."* Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2387)
- Young, Chic. *Blondie and Dagwood's Snapshot Clue: An Original Story about the Bumstead Family of the Famous Newspaper Comics, Radio Series, and Motion Pictures "Blondie."* Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2388)
- Snell, Roy and Henry E. Vallely, illus. *Jane Withers and the Phantom Violin: An Original Story Featuring Jane Withers Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2389)
- Heisenfelt, Kathryn. *Ann Sheridan and the Sign of the Sphinx*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1943. (series #2390)
- Young, Chic. *Blondie and Dagwood's Adventure in Magic: An Original Story about the Bumstead Family of the Famous Newspaper Comics, Radio Series, and Motion Pictures "Blondie."* Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1944. (series #2300)
- Heisenfelt, Kathryn and Henry E. Vallely, illus. *Jane Withers and the Swamp Wizard: An Original Story Featuring Jane Withers Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1944. (series #2301)
- Gray, Harold. *Little Orphan Annie and the Gila Monster Gang*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1944. (series #2302)

- Heisenfelt, Kathryn and Henry E. Vallely, illus. *Judy Garland and the Hoodoo Costume: An Original Story Featuring Judy Garland Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1945. (series #2308)
- Heisenfelt, Kathryn and Henry E. Vallely, illus. *Shirley Temple and the Spirit of Dragonwood: An Original Story Featuring Shirley Temple Famous Motion Picture Star as the Heroine*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1945. (series #2311)
- Radford, Ruby Lorraine and Jo Meixner, illus. *Sylvia Sanders and the Tangled Web: The Story of a Girl's Struggle for a Radio Career*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946. (series #2312)
- Berke, Helen. *Winnie Winkle and the Diamond Heirlooms*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946. (series #2319)
- Radford, Ruby Lorraine and Henry E. Valley, illus. *Patty O'Neal on the Airways*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946. (series #2315)
- Radford, Ruby Lorraine and Lise Fomenko, illus. *Sandra of the Girl Orchestra*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946 (series #2321)
- Radford, Ruby Lorraine and Dorothy Colburn, illus. *Peggy Parker, Girl Inventor*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946 (series #2328)
- Heisenfelt, Kathryn. *Shirley Temple and the Screaming Specter*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1946. (series #2311)
- Heisenfelt, Kathryn. *Betty Grable and the House of Cobwebs*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1947. (series #2306)
- Young, Chic. *Blondie and Dagwood's Marvelous Invention: An Original Story about the Bumstead Family of the Famous Newspaper Comics, Radio Series, and Motion Pictures "Blondie."* Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1947. (series # 2333)
- Radford, Ruby Lorraine. *Dorothy Lamour and the Haunted Lighthouse*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1947.
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APPENDIX B: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIPO	American Institute of Public Opinion
ALA	American Library Association
BMP	Bureau of Motion Pictures
OFF	Office of Facts and Figures (propaganda agency until June 1942)
OWI	Office of War Information (propaganda agency from June 1942)
USES	United States Employment Services
WAAC	Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (until July 1, 1943)
WAC	War Advertising Council
WAC	Women's Army Corps (from July 1, 1943)
WAVES	Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service in the Navy
WMC	War Manpower Commission
WPB	War Production Board
WWB	Writers' War Board

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“Invisible Scarlet O’Neil and the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls: Homefront Representations of the American Feminine and the Feminine Heroic during World War II”

Research Interests

New media and information technologies: online community and affinity spaces
Children’s and young adult literature: culture industry, international and translated texts, immigration, religion, wartime tensions, history of publishing
Childhood and adolescence: cultural studies, development, history, context, representation
Literacy and reading identity
Schools and libraries: collaboration, middle school teaching and curriculum development
Distance learning and pedagogy
Ethnography and Oral history

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BA, English and Philosophy, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, 1991–1995.

Presentations

Nielsen, Anna L. (2010). *Invisible Scarlet O’Neil and the Whitman Authorized Editions*

for Girls: Representations of American Femininity during World War II. Poster Presentation. Creating a Culture of Collaboration: ALISE Annual Conference, Boston, MA January 12–15, 2010.

Nielsen, Anna L. (2007). *Examining Popular Faces of Girlhood in the 1940s: Disappearance or Guerilla Agency?* Anniversaries, Histories, and Colonialisms: Children's Literature Association 34th Annual Conference, Newport News, Virginia, June 14–16, 2007.

Nielsen, Anna L. (2006). *What Kind of Girl Can I Be? Invisible Scarlet O'Neil and Gender Modeling in Whitman Authorized Editions of the 1940s.* Allerton Conference on Family, Youth, and Literature, Monticello, IL, October 20–22, 2006.

Nielsen, Anna L. (2006). *Whatever Happened to Invisible Scarlet O'Neil?* Transformations: Children's Literature Association 33rd Annual Conference, Manhattan Beach, CA, June 8–11, 2006.

Nielsen, Anna L. (2006). *An Ethnographic Study of Online and On-Campus Library Youth Services Education.* Poster Presentation. From Research to Practice: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in LIS Education: ALISE Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, January 16–19, 2006.

Haythornthwaite, Caroline & Nielsen, Anna L. (2004). *Computer-Mediated Communication: Revisiting Conflicting Results.* Ubiquity: Fifth Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers, Sussex, UK, September 19–22, 2004.

Hearne, Betsy & Nielsen, Anna L. (2004). *Online Stories.* First Annual Campus Retreat on Online Education, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL. October 20–21, 2004.

Nielsen, Anna L. (2003). *Islam in Contemporary Children's and Young Adult Literature: Portrayals and Perceptions.* Fifth Biennial Conference on Modern Critical Approaches to Children's Literature, Nashville, TN, April 10–12, 2003.

Publications

Haythornthwaite, Caroline & Nielsen, Anna L. "CMC: Revisiting Conflicting Results." In *Psychology and the Internet, 2nd ed.*, edited by J. Gackenbach. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2006: 161-180.

Hearne, Betsy & Nielsen, Anna L. "Catch a Cyber by the Tale: Online Orality and the Lore of a Distributed Learning Community." In *Learning, Culture, and Community in Online Education*, edited by Caroline Haythornthwaite and Michelle Kazmer. New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2002.

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LIS590LE: Media Literacy and Youth

Teaching Assistant: Spring 2009 (online)
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Urbana-Champaign

LIS504LE: Reference Sources and Services

Teaching Assistant: Fall 2003 (on-campus and online)
Graduate School of Library and Information Science University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign

LIS502LE: Libraries, Information, and Society

Teaching Assistant: Summer 2003, Summer 2002 (on-campus)
Graduate School of Library and Information Science University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign

WISE Introduction to Online Pedagogy

Facilitator: Summer 2005 (online)

WISE (Web-Based Information Science Education) Consortium

Graduate School of Library and Information Science University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign

Teaching – Guest Lectures and Professional Development

ALISE, Boston. ALISE Academy Participant: “Launching a Teaching Career.”

January 12, 2010

St. Catherine University, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, St. Paul,
MN

LIS7210 Library Materials for Children

Guest Lecture: “Series Books in American Children’s Fiction”

September 29, 2009

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Office of Continuing Education

Co-Collaborator: "Humanities in the Classroom and Community: An
Interdisciplinary Holocaust Curriculum for Illinois Educators."

Summer 2003

Program Awards:

2003 University Continuing Education Association Celebration of
Excellence for Creative Noncredit Program

2003 Illinois Council on Continuing Higher Education Innovative
Program Award

2003 North American Association of Summer Sessions Creative and
Innovative Program Merit Award for a Noncredit Program.

Teaching – K-12

Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School

Middle School Substitute Teacher: 2000 – 2002

English, History, Math, and Spanish

Orleans, MA 02653

Library Work

Center for Children's Books (CCB)

Assistant to the Director: 2002 – 2004

Responsible for: Reference, cataloging, reader’s advisory bibliographies

and reviews, educational outreach, volunteer recruitment and management, fundraising, grant writing, monthly and annual budget reports, event planning, promotion, publicity, interdepartmental and community collaboration. Created operations manual, volunteer rubric, and publicity standards. Rebuilt and reorganized the CCB.

Graduate School of Library and Information Science University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

Government Documents Library

Graduate Assistant: January 2002 - August 2002
Responsible for: Reference, web-site maintenance
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Snow Public Library

Reference Librarian: 2000 – 2001
Responsible for: Reference, children’s and young adult services,
programming outreach with elderly and youth populations
Orleans, MA 02653

Awards

Graduate College Outstanding Mentor Award Fellowship: 2004 -2005
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students: 2004
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Professional, Doctoral Student, and Community Service Activities

Professional Activities

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Graduate School of Library and Information
Science
Center for Children’s Books (CCB) Annual Storytelling Concert
Organizational and Promotional Coordinator: “In the Dark of Night: A Scary
Storytelling Concert for Adults” October 25, 2003

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Youth Literature Interest and Culture Group
Member: 2005 – present

Doctoral Student Activities

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities Reading Group: Film, Power, and Society
Founder, Grant writer, and Leader: September 2005 – May 2006

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Beyond Gender Boundaries: Books for Youth Group
Member: 2005 – 2007

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Graduate School of Library and Information Science Youth Services Online Community Bulletin Board Forum
Facilitator: 2003 – 2007

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Graduate School of Library and Information Science Doctoral Study Committee
Member: 2004 - 2005

Community Service and Activities

CoastSweep
Coastal Zone Management, Provincetown, MA
Volunteer: 2009 – present

Outer Cape Chorale, Provincetown, MA
Member: 2009 – present

Professional Associations

ALA (American Library Association)	2000 - present
ALSC (Association for Library Service to Children)	
YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association)	
ALISE (Association for Library and Information Science Education)	2000 - present
Youth Services Special Interest Group	
ChLA (Children’s Literature Association)	2000 - present
IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People)	2002 - present
MLA (Massachusetts Library Association)	2009 - present
MSLA (Massachusetts School Librarian Association)	2009 - present
SHCY (Society for the History of Children and Youth)	2004 - present