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From Ballet Shoes to Polyjuice Potion: Performing Girl Heroes from 1936-2007

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Contents

Abstract	**3**
Acknowledgements	**4**
Introduction	**5**
Chapter One – Filling Shoes: Girl Heroes as Celebrities in Noel Streatfeild's Work	**42**
Chapter Two – 'I will be a spy and know everything': The Performance of Spies in Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* and Judy Blume's *Starring Sally J Freedman as Herself*	**90**
Chapter Three - Schoolgirls Sometimes: Performing Different Identities in Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* and Michelle Magorian's *Back Home*	**126**
Chapter Four – 'I know a lot about heroes, because of my book': performing through chaos and confusion in *A Long Way from Verona* and *Fire and Hemlock*	**167**
Chapter Five – 'Anything's possible if you've got enough nerve': performance, magic and saving the world in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series	**212**
Conclusion	**258**
Bibliography	**265**

Abstract

This thesis examines girl protagonists who demonstrate heroism through various types of performance beginning with Noel Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* (1936) and concluding with J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007).

According to Seth Lerer, 'Girls always seem to be put up on stages' in children's fiction (Lerer: 2008: 229). Performance offers opportunities for different types of heroism, from becoming celebrity heroes to saving lives. My focal texts feature three levels of performance; engaging in performance-related talents including acting, dance, sport, writing and magic; acting to lead double lives or conceal secrets; and pressure to perform to appear conventionally feminine. I argue that the novels feature contradictory messages regarding performance: on some occasions girls are empowered by performing or using their creativity, but performance can also become problematic if girls become too immersed in their roles or are compelled to perform against their will.

My thesis consists of five main chapters. The first examines how girls become celebrity heroes when they discover they have artistic talents in three of Noel Streatfeild's novels: *Ballet Shoes* (1936), *Party Frock* (1946) and *White Boots* (1951). My second chapter focuses on Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964) and Judy Blume's *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself* (1977) and considers how girls become heroes in their imagination by assigning themselves roles as spies. The discussion then turns to two novels where girls are required to perform different identities both at school and at home in Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969) and Michelle Magorian's *Back Home* (1984). Chapter Four concerns the most complicated forms of performance-related heroism in my thesis, and analyses how girls create stories and adopt different roles to make sense of chaotic events in Jane Gardam's *A Long Way from Verona* (1971) and Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock* (1984). The final chapter examines how girls perform magic to save the world in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, with my discussion focusing on how Hermione Granger takes on the roles of director, actress and activist.

I address several research questions throughout my analysis of the focal texts which are summarised in the conclusion. How performance enables a girl to have agency, and what heroic acts she manages to accomplish through performance are crucial to my discussion. Situations where performance is necessary are a key area of focus in the thesis and I analyse what happens to girls who refuse to perform or perform too much. I consider the extent to which the focal authors endorse performance, and whether the authors encourage girls to pursue ambitions or if they imply that they should perform only when it is necessary for survival or benefiting others. I address how the texts engage with the idea of 'girl heroes' and determine whether the term is simply an alternative description of young heroines or if it carries greater significance because the term 'girl' stresses that she is an unusual or even an inappropriate type of hero who is playing a temporary role.

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on how girls demonstrate heroism through different types of performance, beginning with Noel Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* (1936) and concluding with J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007). My decision to focus on the girl hero and performance in this thesis was inspired by Seth Lerer's idea that

> girls are always on the stage, that being female is a show, that there is always as the girl grows up, a tension between staging one's behaviour for the delectation of others, and finding some inner virtue in devotion to the family or to learning (Lerer: 2008: 229).

Lerer's argument that girls are putting on a performance is apparent in my chosen texts, as the protagonists' performances are not restricted to playing roles on stage. The contradictory messages regarding performance are indicative of a girl's struggle to assert herself in a patriarchal society. Since the nineteenth century, fictional girls have been encouraged to pursue ambitions, but their agency is curtailed if they become successful or show potential to disrupt authority. Ambiguous messages about performance are apparent in my focal texts: a girl can be empowered if she chooses to perform, but there are some occasions when performance is a requirement, which arguably causes her agency to be compromised.

Performance encompasses different types of heroism in my discussion: girls become celebrity heroes in Streatfeild's novels, in other texts they are heroes in their own imagination to help them solve problems, and in some cases, they perform heroic acts to save lives or make a difference to the world they live in. However, there are occasions when performance becomes problematic, as girls are compelled to take on new identities against their will or feel pressured to suppress their personalities. My focal texts feature three levels of performance: the employment of performance-related talents; acting to conceal secrets or lead double lives; and the compulsion to

perform traditional feminine roles. I argue that performance serves as a form of agency for young girls and provides them with potential to be heroic, but that the focal texts also feature contradictory messages regarding performance, which limit the girls from developing or sustaining heroic identities. Discovery of a performance-related talent is empowering for young girls because they are able to use it in their heroic journeys. On the other hand, there are limitations attached to performance. Girls have to be given the privilege to perform heroic roles as a challenge as those who self-select as heroes find that their actions backfire on them. Girls can achieve their heroic objectives if they perform their roles convincingly, but performance can also cause them to lose their sense of agency if they are doing it against their will. There is also the issue of what happens once the heroic journey is complete, and whether there is potential for the girl to continue being a hero, or if it is a temporary role that she must relinquish once she reaches womanhood. Ultimately, performance and performativity are integral to the development of the girl's heroic identity in these focal texts, but a girl's empowerment through performance can also be undermined.

Methods of performance-related talents I consider include acting, dancing, writing, and using magic. Roles girls play range from Pauline Fossil acting the part of Alice in Wonderland in Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* to Hermione Granger impersonating Death Eater Bellatrix Lestrange in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Girls create their own heroic personalities through stories, as is apparent with amateur spies Louise Fitzhugh's Harriet Welsch and Judy Blume's Sally Freedman, and avid readers Polly Whittacker and Jessica Vye, whilst Penelope Farmer's Charlotte Makepeace's fluctuating identity compels her to perform the role of a 1918 schoolgirl.

In her examination of schoolgirls in Enid Blyton's *Naughtiest Girl* novels and Rowan McAuley's *Go Girl!* series, Lucinda McKnight argues that:

> The girl in the text, the girl made by any arrangement of drawn lines and letter signifiers is a flimsy typographic stencil layered into a much more elaborate collage, always in formation. The elements of this collage are always calling each other into being, always relational, struggling to assert diachronic depth and linearity and flatter synchronic juxtaposition so that we can make meaning even as multiplicity spins meaning away (Smith: 2019: 24).

This statement is particularly apt in relation to my chosen texts, as excessive performance results in girls losing sense of their identities. The struggle to 'assert diachronic depth and linearity' is particularly apparent when girls lead double lives. The most obvious examples of this are in Gardam's *A Long Way from Verona (*1971), Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969) and Jones's *Fire and Hemlock* (1984)*,* in which girls increasingly become confused about their identities through continual acting, but it is also apparent in Streatfeild's work when girls begin to manufacture their celebrity images. Girl characters in literature have been leading double lives since the nineteenth century. A notable example is Charlotte Brontē's Jane Eyre who takes comfort from 'a tale [her] imagination created, and narrated continuously' when she is dissatisfied with her life as a governess at Thornfield Hall (Brontē: 1994: 111). Jane's example was followed by Frances Hodgson Burnett's Sara Crewe and L. M. Montgomery's Anne Shirley, who both create stories for themselves to help them cope with hardship. Sara takes on the identities of a soldier and a princess when she is subjected to cruel treatment by Miss Minchin, and Anne imagines herself to be inside an Arthurian tale when she struggles to relate to her guardian Marilla. Leading double lives potentially offers girls more capacity for heroism, as is the case with Harriet Welsch and Sally Freedman when they imagine themselves as spies, but this becomes complicated when the boundaries between reality and imagined lives become blurred as Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker discover. Concealing secrets or

aspects of one’s identity requires a significantly higher level of performance than acting a part on stage, and it is also arguably apparent that girls are required to perform to remain in favour with their peers.

Girls in fiction have faced pressure to perform to live up to feminine ideals since the nineteenth century. Early fiction for girls placed emphasis on a girl’s physical appearance and her development into womanhood. Dawn Sardella-Ayres and Ashley N. Reese argue that ‘the socialisation of the heroine into the roles of wife and mother remain central to girls’ literature’ (Sardella-Ayres and Reese: 2020: 34). Career prospects for girls improved throughout the twentieth century, but the pressure for girls to aspire to being physically attractive was, and is, still evident. In 1950, *The Years of Grace,* a collection of essays edited by Noel Streatfeild was published. These were targeted at teenage girls and covered many topics including careers advice and ways to enrich learning through leisure time, but they also featured a section on appearance and the importance of attractiveness. A woman doctor acknowledged that ‘[e]very girl cannot be beautiful, but every girl can – and must – be attractive’ (Streatfeild: 1950: 19). Make-up designer Elizabeth Arden advised girls to ‘not merely imitate others, but be individual, for the style that may be extremely becoming to one face may not suit you’ (p.80). Arden highlights the need for uniqueness, and both authors emphasise that there is more than one way for a girl to be beautiful, but the extensive discussion of looks in Streatfeild’s work illustrates how young girls continued to be preoccupied by their appearances. Nearly 70 years later, writing in *Feminists Don’t Wear Pink and Other Lies* (2018)*,* actress Evanna Lynch, who played Luna Lovegood in the *Harry Potter* films, reflects upon her own experiences of how she felt about her appearance when growing up:

> I liked me. I knew me. I knew I didn't have to be beautiful to be worthy and it was much more valuable and interesting to have thoughts, dreams and plans to heal the world…And yet all the while, the expression of unbridled femininity was something I could not get over (Curtis: 2018: 23).

My selected novels feature several talented girl protagonists, but their looks often impact on their prospects or how they are perceived. Streatfeild's girls are anxious to find the right clothes to be engaged for parts. Polly Whittacker is initially unconcerned about being beautiful but her attitude changes when she meets Tom Lynn. Hermione Granger transforms herself for the Yule Ball and almost becomes unrecognisable because of the effort she makes with her appearance. Despite their talents, these girls are still, to a certain extent, compelled to be aesthetically pleasing, particularly when it comes to impressing male characters.

In her thesis 'Tending, Mending, Caring: Constructions of Motherhood in Popular Children's Literature from 1945-1960,' Kay Waddilove describes motherhood as the 'unfinished business of feminism,' stating that 'the maternal role remains a complex and contested issue in feminist research as well as public discussion' (Waddilove: 2020: 16). Selected texts in this thesis feature unconventional families, and traditional gender roles are frequently challenged. Single women in Streatfeild's novels appear content without husbands, and women in later texts combine work with raising their families. Penelope Farmer and Michelle Magorian also question the ideal of the nuclear family with rigidly defined gender roles. However, whilst the authors celebrate social change and warn of the dangers of reverting back to defined roles within the family, several of the authors appear compelled to incorporate romance into their plots. This could be attributed to pressure to provide readers with a conventional happy ending for the girl hero, or because they struggle to know what to do with the girl hero once she has completed her heroic quest.

My thesis addresses several research questions whilst taking these three aspects of performance into account when examining the focal texts. I consider the extent to which performance empowers a girl, what heroic acts result from her utilising her performance-related talents, and what types of performance the authors appear to endorse. Whether a girl is encouraged to perform to pursue her ambitions, or if performance should be employed only if it benefits others is a key issue in my discussion. I also consider what happens to girls who perform too much or choose not to perform at all. My analysis concerns how the texts engage with the idea of 'girl heroes'; whether it is merely a term to describe young heroines, or if it carries significance because the emphasis on the term 'girl' stresses that she is an unusual type of hero who is playing a temporary role.

Heroism and Girl Heroes

For centuries, the term 'hero' was associated with men who demonstrated bravery and women were referred to as 'heroines.' The *Oxford English Dictionary* attaches several different meanings to the term 'heroine.' She can be 'a woman distinguished by performance of courageous or noble actions; a woman generally admired or acclaimed for her great qualities or achievements' or 'a woman lauded or admired by a specified individual or group.' In the context of classical mythology, a 'heroine' is 'a woman of superhuman qualities, or abilities, favoured by the gods.' It is also used to refer to 'the central female character in a story, play, film etc; one whom the reader or audience is intended to support or admire' (*OED*: 2020). These definitions highlight how what constitutes a 'heroine' can be interpreted in a variety of ways. What they all do imply, though, is that a heroine is someone who inspires others in

some way. Heroism has long been associated with saving lives or possessing superpowers, but it is also used in the context of celebrities. Rising stars in the acting, writing and sports professions are often asked about their 'heroes' in interviews. As my focal texts feature girls who are gifted with artistic talents, some of whom are motivated to exert more influence on the worlds they live in, it can be argued that they all have the potential to be regarded as 'heroines,' and can discover different versions of 'heroines' through their experiences of reading, performing different roles, and encountering different women, both celebrities who provide them with inspiration to pursue their talents, and those they regularly come into contact with.

Since 2010, the Girl Museum, a virtual museum run by volunteers, has been working on a Virtual Heroines Quilt project, which encourages women and girls to write a short blog post about who they consider or regarded to be their heroines when growing up and why. Every even year, the posts are published each day during Women's History Month in March. 2016's and 2018's virtual quilts were themed around women's work during the First World War and women from the Medieval and Renaissance period. Women and girls featured on the six quilts include women from history, current celebrities, and fictional female characters. People from children's literature and film include those with superpowers such as Hermione Granger, Sophie Hatter from *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986) and Wonder Woman. Carroll's Alice, Anne Shirley and Jo March continue to be loved. Disney's Tinker Bell also makes an appearance. The author explains that Tinker Bell helped her come to terms with changing emotions during her teenage years:

> Her swings in personality are explained by her small size which prevents her from holding more than one emotion at a time. I've experienced (and continue to) this

> wash of emotion as I've grown from a girl into a young adult. Negative reactions can be overwhelming, but if a fairy can experience this, we can all forgive ourselves for it too (Girl Museum: 2014).

The contrasting fictional characters highlight how the term 'heroine' connotes several different meanings. This is emphasised in Lauren Caldwell's 'Unknown Heroine' post in 2010. She writes:

> Is the heroine my mother…for teaching me, loving me, honoring [sic] ME! Is it a teacher? Was there one gesture or one moment in a classroom that changed my life? Oh, I know! The ultimate heroine is that movie star, the one I worshipped as a teen. Sometimes, I still worship women that I do not know. It has nothing to do with brave deeds. I do not have a lone heroine (Girl Museum: 2010).

Moreover, she acknowledges that she has encountered a 'multitude of unknown heroines' and doubts that 'any of them are household names.' This seems to suggest that every girl is capable of being a heroine for somebody, even if she does not receive the same recognition as prominent female leaders, activists, or celebrities.

Since the 1980s, scholars have questioned the use of the term 'heroine' and democratic terms 'female hero' and 'girl hero' started to appear in literary criticism. Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope's *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (1981) offered an insightful response to previous examinations of the heroic journey in literature by critics such as Joseph Campbell and Dorothy Norman, who focused on the male hero's development. They argue that 'women are and have always been heroic but the culture has been unable to recognise female heroism'; 'on the archetypal level the journey to self-discovery is the same for both the male and female hero' (Pearson and Pope: 1981: vii). Moreover, they stress that the female hero's journey is a unique experience: it 'differs in important particulars because of the roles and opportunities afforded to each sex in Western society,' thus indicating that what constitutes an act of heroism depends upon people's social

positions, what limitations are placed upon them, and how effectively they can challenge social pressures (viii). Pearson's and Pope's decision to use the term 'hero' instead of 'heroine' to describe a female character's experience is explained in their preface:

> Patriarchal society views women essentially as supporting characters in the drama of life. Men change the world and women help them. This assumption has led to inaccurate literary terminology and criticism. For some time critics have called male protagonists 'heroes' or 'villains,' and female protagonists 'heroines' (Pearson and Pope: 1981: vi).

This implies that the term 'heroine' carries less significance than 'hero,' and is misleading when used to describe a female character's experience. Their study uses the term 'female hero' and mainly focuses on adults, but girl protagonists from children's literature feature in their analysis including Lewis Carroll's Alice, Louisa May Alcott's Jo March and Madeleine L'Engle's Meg Murry from *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962). The continued use of the democratic 'female hero' arguably anticipated the rise of the term 'girl hero.'

Diana Wynne Jones's Polly Whittacker in *Fire and Hemlock* (1984) is also unimpressed when her peers refer to her as a 'heroine' after she stands up to the school bully. In her opinion being called a 'heroine' is 'nothing like being a hero, which is inside you. This was public. People asked for her autograph and wanted to be her friend' (Jones: 200: 104). Polly's dismissal of the description 'heroine' and her insistence that being a 'hero' is 'inside' her indicates that becoming a 'heroine' merely raises her status to that of a role model whilst she regards being a 'hero' as something more permanent as it is part of her personality. Similarly, in Carrie Jones's 2008 novel *Girl, Hero,* the protagonist Liliana Faltin imagines herself performing heroic actions to protect her family from violent men. In her letters to dead actor John Wayne, she expresses her desire to become a 'hero' instead of a

'heroine,' a role that she describes as 'sweet' and 'understanding,' though she is often required to display these qualities to console her father (Jones: 2008: 466). For Liliana, the role of 'heroine' requires passivity in contrast to that of the hero. Polly and Liliana are unenthusiastic about being thought of as heroines, reflecting on Pearson's and Pope's argument about its seeming to devalue female characters.

The term 'girl hero' has increasingly appeared in children's literature criticism when referring to female protagonists in children's literature. It covers girls who perform 'heroic' actions in fantasy worlds such as Hermione Granger and Philip Pullman's Lyra Belacqua from *His Dark Materials,* but also girls who defy gender conventions in classical children's literature including Louisa May Alcott's Jo March and Laura Ingalls Wilder's Laura from the *Little House* series. It is unclear when the term 'girl hero' first appeared in literary criticism, but the past two decades have seen increased interest in heroic girls in literature and popular culture. This coincided with the 1990s Girl Power movement which celebrated female self-reliance and independence. Girls and women were depicted with superhuman qualities on television shows such as *The Powerpuff Girls* (1998-2005), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Veronica Mars* (2004-2019).

Despite the emergence of democratic terms 'female hero' and 'girl hero' to describe female heroism, they are still interchangeable with 'heroine' in literary criticism and it is difficult to discern the difference between them. Liliana Faltin implies that heroines are kind and passive in contrast to heroes who take active roles in defeating evil or fighting injustice. Rebecca C. Hains suggests that the 'sweet' and 'understanding' girls Liliana refers to can still be regarded as 'heroes'. In her article in the *Girlhood*

Studies journal, 'The Origins of the Girl Hero: Shirley Temple, Child Star and Commodity, Hains argues that girl heroes are not a new phenomenon and traces the development of the girl hero back to the 1930s when the media 'brimmed with depictions of little orphan girls who behaved heroically…They fought for the underdog, pursued justice in an unjust world, and effected change, always making the best of bad situations' (Hains: 2008: 62). Many of these orphan girls were portrayed by child actress Shirley Temple, who appeared in 22 films between 1934 and 1940. Her roles included those of Little Orphan Annie, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, Heidi, Sara Crewe and Mytyl in Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird.* Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* also includes a reference to *The Blue Bird* when Pauline and Petrova Fossil are cast as Tyltyl and Mytyl.

Hains argues that orphan girl heroes from 1930s films share many similarities with those of the 1990s television shows:

> In the 1930s and in the past decade, heroic girls have functioned as an emblem of hope in society – a positive attribute, especially in comparison to the problematic ways in which girls are sexualised and trivialised in other media representation (Hains: 2009: 71).

Here, Hains is referring to the increased rise of girls with superhuman qualities featuring on television shows in the 1990s and 2000s. These characters possessed the magical powers that their orphan girl protagonists lacked, but as Hains observes, what they both do share is a sense of optimism to counteract and resist societal hardships and injustices. The 1930s orphan girl compelled audiences to be hopeful during an economic crisis, and the 1990s superheroines celebrated powerful women who challenged gender conventions, endorsing the Girl Power movement, and encouraged girls watching them to be independent and believe they could achieve the impossible. Admittedly, ordinary girls do not have magic at their disposal, nor are

they going to be required to fight vampires or 'evil witches', but young girls managing to triumph over seemingly more powerful figures in these shows offered inspiration for girls to imagine that they could achieve similar outcomes in realistic situations.

Shirley Temple's passive orphan girl characters contrast to Buffy Summers and Veronica Mars and would probably not have appealed to Polly Whittacker and Liliana Faltin, but Hains's suggestion that these contrasting protagonists can all be regarded as heroes emphasises that the term 'girl hero' can encompass many meanings. Heroic girls are on a spectrum from those who inspire others by becoming role models to girls who fight battles to defeat evil characters. Diana Wynne Jones also implies this in her work *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing*, a collection of essays offering opinions on writing and insight into her own novels. Writing on *Fire and Hemlock* in 'The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey', she defines the hero as 'the one you identify with in the story,' and states that 'heroes are brave, physically strong, never mean or vicious, and possess a code of honour that requires them to come to the aid of the weak or incompetent and the oppressed when nobody else will' (Jones: 2012: 1314). Crucially, 'above all, heroes go into action when the odds are against them.' (1319). Jones reveals that she was motivated to write *Fire and Hemlock* because she hoped to 'have a real female hero, one with whom all girls could identify and through that, all persons – a sort of Everywoman' (1408). In some respects, Polly Whittacker represents a difficult ideal to aspire towards given that she is conventionally pretty and a promising writer whilst also possessing the heroic qualities Jones refers to. On the other hand, many of the aspects of heroism Jones identifies could be applicable to many girls in children's literature, including the orphans Hains examines, who express desires to help the vulnerable and inspire

others to change. Moreover, in her lecture 'Heroes', Jones argues that heroic action does not necessarily involve fighting battles or breaking curses when she opines that tennis players are 'perfect models of heroes' because they possess a 'larger-than-life quality' and 'stood out among other people even if you didn't know that one was the star – and this is very like the way everyone follows the hero of the story' (p. 2165). Jones's assertion that tennis stars are heroes could arguably also relate to girls in my focal texts who pursue talents, and demonstrate exceptional ability in writing, acting, dance and magic.

I concur with Hains and Jones in their suggestions that the term 'girl hero' connotes several meanings. My selected girl heroes are on a spectrum from aspiring actresses and dancers in Streatfeild's novels to girls who save lives in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Some girls are in preparation to become heroes with an aspiration to make a difference in the world, such as Petrova Fossil in her desire to become a pilot, and Harriet Welsch has an ambition to become a spy. I would argue that the term 'girl hero' is applicable to girl protagonists who rise above challenges whilst they are young. The focal texts in this thesis feature a range of girl protagonists with contrasting personalities who excel in different talents in both realistic and fantasy settings. Girl heroes in my texts frequently occupy positions of responsibility: some girls take active roles in solving mysteries or saving lives, such as Blume's Sally Freedman, Jones's Polly Whittacker and Rowling's Hermione Granger, whilst Streatfeild's girls support their families financially. My analysis is concerned with the adolescent story of survival and how girls become heroes by triumphing in difficult circumstances. The selected texts feature girls who are disadvantaged: the Fossil sisters and Ginny Weasley experience financial hardship,

Fitzhugh's Harriet Welsch, Magorian's Rusty Dickinson and Farmer's Charlotte Makepeace are all marginalised at school, and Polly Whittacker, Jessica Vye and Hermione Granger face chaotic and dangerous events whilst battling with adolescent concerns. Authors empower these girls by giving them talents, which help them to cope with hardship and enable them to engineer a change in their circumstances, highlighting how a girl can be deemed a hero even when the odds appear to be against her.

Female Empowerment and Celebration of Girlhood

Talented girls in children's books continued to emerge whilst social changes for women occurred in society. Streatfeild's writing career began during the inter-war years when circumstances were significantly different for women. The number of casualties suffered during the First World War meant that many women were unable to marry and were required to support themselves financially. Streatfeild's novels feature many unmarried women working as servants and teachers, and her girl protagonists do not assume they will marry. Her most famous protagonists Pauline, Petrova and Posy Fossil pursue successful careers in acting, aviation and dance, and there is no mention of their marrying in later books. As marriage could not be guaranteed, girls had more agency to explore alternatives with the possibility that their dreams could be fulfilled, but it was also necessary for them to do so. One of Streatfeild's biographers, Angela Bull, argues that *Ballet Shoes* marked a turning point in how women on the stage were perceived:

> Both the pleasure with which Pauline and Posy naturally regard their successes and the importance which they attach to them was a daring departure from tradition. Professionalism was made, for the first time, acceptable (Bull: 1984: 140).

In addition to not being able to take marriage for granted, women also pursued careers traditionally associated with men including transport, law, and the civil service. Petrova Fossil becomes a pilot during the Second World War and Magorian's Peggy Dickinson trains as a mechanic whilst working with the Women's Voluntary Service.

A number of the focal texts in this thesis were published during or after the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and '70s. The Women's Liberation Movement is often now referred to as second-wave feminism, and it focussed on gender inequality within the workplace and in marriage, as well as gender roles. In 1968, half a century had passed since the implementation of the Representation of the People Act, which granted women over the age of 30 the right to vote. The fiftieth anniversary of female suffrage prompted discussions about what women had actually achieved in these five decades. The first Women's Liberation Movement conference was held in 1970, coming out of the 1969 History Workshop in 1969, where feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham had argued that women's history should be a separate academic discipline (Fraser: 2021).

Campaigns for women's equality at work and in education gathered momentum in the 1960s. 850 women machinists at the Ford car factory in Dagenham went on strike in 1968 to protest about receiving 15% less pay than their male colleagues employed in similar roles. This led to the creation of the Equal Pay Act in 1970, which made it illegal for employers to provide unequal wages and working conditions, although the legislation was not implemented until 1975. In addition to advocating for equal pay for equal work, women's rights' activists also campaigned

for access to free contraception and for better childcare facilities. Inequality in the workplace continued to persist throughout the twentieth century despite the Sex Discrimination Act coming into law and the Equal Opportunities Commission being set up in 1975 to protect female workers. In the 1980s, Julie Hayward managed to obtain the same wages as her male colleagues only after she took her employer Cammell Laird to court, and a tribunal ruled that her cookery skills and qualifications were of equal value to those of her male colleagues who worked as joiners and painters (British Library: 2013). Equal pay for women is still an issue to be resolved in the twenty-first century. A 2021 study conducted by The Fawcett Society revealed that four in ten participants were unaware that women were entitled to a right to equal pay for work of equal value, and only 36% knew that women could ask male colleagues about their salary at work if they suspected that their employer was discriminating against them. This highlights how there is still considerable work to be done to achieve gender equality in the workplace (Fawcett Society: 2021).

Campaigns for gender equality coincided with more women entering the political sphere. Many countries throughout the world selected their first female political leaders in the second half of the twentieth century. Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the world's first female Prime Minister after being elected to lead the Sri Lankan government and served three terms between 1960 and 2000. In 1979, Margaret Thatcher was the first woman to become Prime Minster in Britain and she remained in office until 1990. 1988 saw Benazir Bhutto being chosen as Pakistan's first female leader. Canada elected Kim Campbell in 1993 and Jenny Shipley became the first woman to take charge of New Zealand in 1997. The Labour Party's introducing of all-women shortlists in the 1990s resulted in over 100 female MPs being elected in the

1997 General Election in Britain. The number has continued to rise in the past two decades and there are currently 225 women in the House of Commons, meaning that over a third of Britain's constituencies have a female MP (UK Parliament: 2022). Celebration of female self-reliance was prominent in the 1990s with the rise of the Girl Power movement. Social media has made it easier for feminist campaigners to raise awareness of issues affecting women and girls throughout the world. 11 October 2012 marked the first celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child. This is observed every year to celebrate the work of women's rights' activists, whilst reiterating that more needs to be done to address gender inequality throughout the world. An increased interest in girl activists has been apparent in the media in the past two decades. Human rights advocate Malala Yousafzai nearly lost her life in 2012 through campaigning for girls to have the same educational opportunities as boys. Her determination to continue pursuing her cause resulted in her winning the Nobel Peace Prize at the age of seventeen in 2014. She remains the youngest winner of the prize today. Activist Greta Thunberg has been urging world leaders to address the issue of climate change since 2018. She inspired the School Strike for Climate movement, which involves children forgoing lessons on Fridays to demonstrate outside Parliament to pressurise governments to find renewable sources of energy as alternatives to fossil fuels. Yousafzai's and Thunberg's work is ongoing, and their objectives are yet to be achieved, but their determination to advocate for justice is inspiring for young girls, and it can be argued that they could be described as real-life girl heroes.

The first two decades of the twenty-first century saw a rise in the celebration of girlhood. The online Girl Museum was founded by art historian Ashley E. Remer in

2009. It features virtual exhibitions, podcasts, blog posts from girls giving their own opinions about gender issues, activity pages, and a shop to buy merchandise championing female independence. Collections include portrayal of girls in art, girls in the suffrage movements, girls in STEM, and girls from ancient history. Representations of girls in art, history and culture are explored in the GirlSpeak podcast. The Girl Museum is involved with several projects alongside the Heroines Quilts for Women's History Month. These include Sites of Girlhood, which recognises girls' contributions to history throughout the world by placing blog entries on a map, and new sites are uploaded onto it each year. Contributions from specific girl communities regularly feature: past projects include 'Incredible Girls', a celebration of the achievements of girls under 25, girls in gaming, and girls' family histories. Their current virtual exhibition 'Little Witches' raises awareness about girls who were accused of witchcraft in Early Modern Europe.

Several non-fiction books marketed towards girls celebrating women's achievements appeared in the 2010s. Francesca Cavallo's and Elena Favelli's *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* was released in 2016 and this was followed by *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls 2* in 2017. Both texts feature short stories about women who challenged gender stereotypes and restrictions to achieve their dreams and/or resist oppression. Past and present accomplishments of women around the world are highlighted in the collections. They include women from several backgrounds including politics, activism, science, art, popular culture and sport. Girls are encouraged to write their own biographies at the end of the books. Cavallo's and Favelli's third instalment of the series, *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls: 100 Immigrant Women Who Changed the World*, was released in October 2020.

Writers of children's non-fiction have also produced works recognising women's achievements in specific areas. Women's contributions to science is a popular subject and recent works published include Rachel Ignotofsky's *Women in Science* (2017), Libby Jackson's *A Galaxy of Her Own: Amazing Stories of Women in Space* (2017), Sumita Mukherjee's *Women in STEM* (2018), and Kate Pankhurst's *Fantastically Great Women Who Worked Wonders* (2019) and *Fantastically Great Women Who Saved the Planet* (2020). Gifted sportswomen are celebrated in Ignostofsky's *Women in Sport* (2018), and *Changing the Game: Fantastic Female Footballers* (2019), curated by Casey Stoney, former England footballer and manager of Manchester United's women's football team. Vashti Harrison showcases the achievements of black women in *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* (2018).

The authors I examine in this thesis would have been aware of increased female empowerment and it is apparent that their girl protagonists admire successful women. However, social changes and election of female leaders did not solve problems for women and girls. New developments in women's rights were met with opposition by conservative campaigners who argued that more women working would result in the decline of the traditional nuclear family. Children's writers reflected upon changing times in their portrayals of empowered protagonists and influential women, but their works also appeared to draw upon conservative views, as they featured ambiguity about how far female characters could progress. This is evident in the focal texts examined in this thesis, as it is implied that girls are pressured to choose between heroism and family life: Streatfeild's girls remain

unmarried, Polly Whittacker insists that she will become a hero instead of marrying a man, and Hermione Granger admits that she is struggling to combine her career with her responsibilities at home. Becoming a hero or heroine in a patriarchal society is a considerable challenge, and despite initially empowering them, these authors highlight how girls are subject to gender pressures regarding how they look and behave. They negotiate these issues through performance, but when their use of creativity extends to acting to conform, it becomes problematic, and it is debatable whether a girl can sustain her heroic identity in the long-term.

Methodology

My research was informed by several resources and this thesis takes a variety of methodological approaches alongside close readings of the focal texts. My analysis considers theories related to performance both on and off the stage. I engage with scholars in the field of Girlhood Studies, and examine the novels in conjunction with their historical context.

Performance theory is associated with scholars Richard Schechner and Victor Turner whose work analyses how societies across the world engaged in performance in their daily lives. In his study *Performance Theory,* Schechner argues:

> Performance is an inclusive term. Theater is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualizations of animals (including humans) through performance is everyday life – greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on – through to play, sports, theatre dance, ceremonies, rites, and performance of great magnitude (Schechner: 2004: vii).

Sociologist Erving Goffman observed that people were inclined to perform to comply with societal expectations regarding gender. He cites a 1950s study of women at American colleges who 'play down their intelligence, skills and determinativeness

when in the presence of dateable boys', and as a result of this 'the natural superiority of the male is demonstrated and the weaker role of the female affirmed' (Goffman: 1990: 48). Judith Butler's ground-breaking essay 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution' was published in the *Theatre Journal* in 1988. Drawing upon Simone de Beauvoir's argument in *The Second Sex* (1949) that 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (de Beauvoir: 2009: 5945), Butler opines that people are conditioned to perform masculine or feminine roles to conform to societal roles. They state that:

> Gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again…Actors are already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives (Butler: 1988: 526).

Here Butler suggests that an individual is acting a part when they uphold traditional ideas about gender. The play 'requiring both text and interpretation' indicates that the performance of one's gender can potentially be disrupted if the person acting has different ideas about their role than their original creator, the patriarchal society which dictates how men and women should behave. However, as Butler points out, rigidly defined gender roles result in 'the gendered body [acting] its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space', which implies that people are still compelled to perform in some way. According to Butler, gender is 'real only to the extent that is performed', but 'Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all' (p. 527-8). To avoid consequences for failure to conform, people are required to provide a convincing performance in a masculine or feminine role, and if they divert from their assigned roles, they need to convince audiences that they are only acting another part temporarily before they resume their original

roles. Butler expanded upon their arguments in subsequent works *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993). In the later study, they elaborated on the difference between the terms 'performance' and 'performativity', arguing that:

> the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice' (Shepherd: 2016: 4276).

Butler suggests that a 'performance' is a type of acting that individuals are happy to participate in, but this performance becomes 'performative' if they are forced into playing parts to satisfy an audience. Upholding traditional gender roles is a 'performative' act as it can often involve people performing against their will to conform to societal standards. Girls being forced into performative acts against their will are apparent in the latter texts in my thesis as Charlotte Makepeace, Rusty Dickinson, Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker are all obliged to perform in roles that have been forced upon them.

Butler's arguments are apparent in my focal texts as there are several occasions when girls and women feel compelled to put on a performance to conform to feminine ideals. My approach to girl performers in these texts is shaped by the work of Performance Studies academic Helen Freshwater, who has published extensively on child performers. In a book chapter, 'Performance Theory: Practice and the Immersion of the Real', Freshwater argues that performance theory

> no longer limits its enquiries to the straightforwardly performative, but stretches its interests to include the realm of everyday life. Here, the boundaries have not only been traversed but also transformed as discrete disciplinary identities undergo a process of dissolution, and the difference between theatre and life becomes increasingly difficult to define (Scanlan and Waste: 2009: 189-90).

Freshwater's analysis of performance in her work on child actors in the twenty-first century explores how the boundaries between theatrical performance and everyday

life can be difficult to distinguish. Her journal article ‘Consuming Authenticities: *Billy Elliot the Musical* and the Performing Child’ reveals how producers of the musical sought working-class boys from the north-east to act the part of the young protagonist to make the show more authentic for the audience. Freshwater’s article is particularly relevant for my analysis of the roles Streatfeild’s girls imitate on stage. Throughout my discussion of the focal texts, I consider how ‘the difference between theatre and life becomes difficult to define’, what happens to girls who perform too much or fail to perform, and whether a girl has to sacrifice her identity to retain her heroic status.

Girls in the focal texts are avid readers who possess artistic talents, and this thesis considers how girls are empowered through reading and how it enables them to shape their heroic identities. The role of books and storytelling, particularly storytelling girls, is an area which has fascinated children’s literature critics. As Evelyn Arizpe and Vivienne Smith note in their introduction to *Children as Readers in Children’s Literature: The Power of Texts and Importance of Reading* (2015):

> Another tension that has emerged through the gathering of ideas around fictional children who read has been the interplay of ideas concerning power and empowerment. To claim that reading empowers is unexceptional, and so it is no surprise to find that several authors explore that empowerment (Arizpe and Smith: 2015: xiv).

Kimberley Reynolds’s *Children’s Literature from the Fin de Siècle to the New Millennium* (2012) also offers a valuable overview of trends in juvenile publishing and historical developments throughout the twentieth century which impacted upon children’s authors. She asserts that the child’s relationship with reading is pivotal to their perspective of the world:

> If we are interested in understanding how our society works – where young people get their attitudes about issues such as sex, gender, violence, government and war – it behoves us to look at what is being read (Reynolds: 2012: ix).

Authors consciously and unconsciously draw upon other literary works and my girl protagonists' experiences are frequently juxtaposed with their predecessors' and contemporaries'. They turn to books to provide answers to problems: these can be works of fiction featuring personalities they can relate to, books where they can literally communicate with their creator by writing to them, and non-fiction books to help them develop their artistic or magical abilities. Sonia Snelling examines the power of storytelling in her PhD thesis '"I had imagined myself into being": Storytelling Girls in Children's Fiction from the Beginning and End of the Twentieth Century' (2010). She highlights how storytelling is often assigned to girl protagonists in children's literature and argues that it provides a vehicle for girls to demonstrate agency. Her thesis also emphasises the power stories have in shaping individual identities:

> The importance of stories to the creation of a sense of self encompasses the intimate memories, autobiographies and fantasies of the individual, and the broader social narratives of history, nation, culture and myth which locate and shape that individual (Snelling: 2010: 6).

Storytelling is not the sole focus of my thesis, but I believe that Snelling's statement can apply to girls who pursue other talents. Literary allusions to other texts are prominent: some girls identify with or try to imitate fictional characters, whilst in other cases, authors directly or indirectly refer to other literary texts which encourage readers to make assumptions about a girl's personality or how she will turn out.

Whilst I argue that creativity and exploring role models give my focal girl protagonists agency and scope to establish their identities, I also acknowledge that there are occasions when it can be problematic if they become too involved in identifying with other people. Maria Nikolajeva's essay 'Everybody Knew That Books Were

Dangerous' in *Children as Readers* highlights how stories can be counter-productive as well as empowering:

> Engaging effectively with literary characters, we are able to penetrate their minds in a way impossible in real life. There is however, a risk of young readers engaging too strongly, which is often referred to as immersive identification. This is a rather immature readerly position and thus being unable to assess their state of mind as separate from one's own…by identifying entirely with the fiction we are reading, we lose our own identity and subjectivity (Arizpe and Smith: 2015: 7).

Streatfeild and Rowling both emphasise the need for limits when girls pretend to be someone else. Aspiring actresses in Streatfeild's works face consequences if they continue to carry on behaving like their fictional characters offstage. Pauline Fossil learns that what is excused in Wonderland will not be tolerated in a 1930s stage school environment. Nikolajeva's observation is considered in my analysis of girls imitating other people, whilst I also contemplate how it applies to girls who pursue various creative talents, the extent to which they empower girls, and whether becoming too preoccupied with their creativity can place them in danger of losing their identity.

Elizabeth O'Reilly's PhD thesis 'The child and adult in contemporary children's literature: Roald Dahl, Anne Fine, Diana Wynne Jones and J. K. Rowling' (2005) was valuable for my work on Jones and Rowling. Her stimulating observation of the bildungsroman genre reflects upon the experiences of girl protagonists in my focal texts. She proposes:

> The term bildungsroman need not apply exclusively to novels in which the protagonists are fully matured at the end. Rather it can refer to stories in which the central character undergoes a learning experience, or more than one, through which he or she emerges with both strength and wisdom, and consequently a general enhanced ability to cope with life's challenges (O'Reilly: 2005: 209).

Involvement with performance and creative activities does indeed provide learning experiences for girls in the focal novels. Experimenting with roles helps them to

discover more about themselves, and they learn from their successes and disappointments when pursuing artistic talents. In light of O'Reilly's comments, I consider the extent to which performance and engaging with female role models empowers girls, and whether some aspects of their creativity serve as a rehearsal to prepare for performance in real life.

The Girlhood Studies journal has provided valuable material for me to shape my thesis chapters. *Girlhood Studies* first appeared in 2008, seven years after 'A New Girl Order: Young Women and the Future of Feminist Enquiry', the first interdisciplinary conference to explore girlhood. Subsequent issues include articles about girlhood, work by and with girls, and reviews and information about new publications in girlhood scholarship. Academics around the world researching girlhood from a variety of disciplines have contributed to *Girlhood Studies,* and the journal reflects upon the range of differing experiences for girls throughout history and in the twenty-first century. Issues have often been centred around particular topics, such as girl power movements, girls living in crises, disability and girlhood, and the impact of social media on girls. The June 2022 issue features a range of subjects including girls campaigning for climate justice, girl athletes in Ethiopia and the fairy-tale quest in video games for girls. In 2019, *The Girl in the Text: Transnational Girlhoods,* edited by Ann Smith, was published, and this features several essays from scholars who have previously contributed to the *Girlhood Studies* journal. One essay that was of particular relevance to my thesis was Lucinda McKnight's 'Naughtiest Girls, Go Girls and Glitterbombs: Exploding Schoolgirl Fictions', which was beneficial for my third chapter examining how girls perform the roles of schoolgirls in Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969) and Michelle

Magorian's *Back Home* (1984). Two articles in *Girlhood Studies,* Jessica K. Taft's 'Hopeful, Harmless and Heroic: Figuring the Girl Activist as Global Saviour' (2020) and Katherine Allocco's 'Putting the Grail Back Into Girl Power: How A Girl Saved Camelot and Why It Matters' (2011), provided inspiration for my final thesis chapter in which I consider J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels in relation to the Girl Power movement of the 1990s.

As this thesis examines the impact of celebrities and influential women upon the girl protagonists and authors, academic articles and primary sources providing insight into attitudes towards women in the public eye are included. Gillian Arrighi and Victor Emiljanow's *Entertaining Children: The Participation of Youth in the Entertainment Industry* (2014) was a valuable resource for my discussion of Streatfeild's novels, particularly Dyan Colclough's chapter 'British Child Performers 1920-40: New Issues, Old Legacies.' Rebecca C. Hains offered some insightful analysis of the Girl Power movement in her article published in the *Women's Studies and Communication* journal 'Power Feminism, Mediated: Girl Power and the Commercial Politics of Change' (2004), which was beneficial for shaping my arguments regarding Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Historical newspaper articles proved valuable for my analysis of girls' experiences in relation to those of contemporary celebrities in my early chapters. For example, Streatfeild's Posy Fossil shares similarities with ballerina Moira Shearer, whilst Harriet Welsch shares characteristics with Second World War secret agents Noor Inayat Khan and Mathilde Carré, although the missions she pursues are significantly less dangerous. Noel Streatfeild's edited collection *The Years of Grace* is particularly relevant for my earlier texts, as it features chapters about several of the careers that many of her

protagonists pursue in her novels, and some of the sentiments expressed by some contributors about the importance of girls putting an effort into their appearances relate to the pressures that are still felt by women and girls today. I draw upon Diana Wynne Jones's collection of essays *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (2012) in my analysis of her novel *Fire and Hemlock* (1984) and Jane Gardam's *A Long Way from Verona* (1971). Her article 'The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey' features prominently in this chapter and it was also beneficial for my discussion of J. K. Rowling's female characters.

Literature Review

Interest in fictional girls started to emerge in the 1970s. Mary Cadogan's and Patricia Craig's *You're a Brick Angela! The Girl's Story 1839-1975* (1975, later re-released in 1986) was a ground-breaking work in the field of children's literature, as it was one of the first to focus on girl protagonists, but also it resulted in the scholarship of girls' stories being taken more seriously. *You're a Brick Angela!* Presents a comprehensive overview of historical developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and includes analysis of a variety of children's books published during each decade. It provided me with a valuable starting point for my thesis, and I aim to expand upon their analysis of some of the children's authors who feature including Noel Streatfeild, Jane Gardam and Penelope Farmer, whilst also updating it by examining later children's authors such as Diana Wynne Jones, Michelle Magorian and J. K. Rowling. Cadogan and Craig collaborated on two other works: *Women and Children First: The Fiction of Two World Wars* (1978) and *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction* (1986). The former provided valuable context for my analysis of *Charlotte Sometimes* and *Back Home.*

Early fiction for girls is an area which continues to fascinate girlhood scholars. Shirley Foster's and Judy Simons' *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of Classic Stories For Girls* (1995) explores a mixture of series and standalone novels targeted towards girls between 1850 and 1920, beginning with Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* and ending with Angela Brazil's *The Madcap of the School.* Joe Sutcliff Sanders covers a similar time period to Foster and Simons in *Disciplining Girls: Understanding the Origins of the Classic Orphan Girl Story 1850-1923* (2011). He offers new perspectives on girls examined in his predecessor's work such as Ellen Montgomery, Anne Shirley and Mary Lennox, whilst also considering protagonists such as E. D. E. N. Southworth's Capitola Black, Frances Hodgson Burnett's Sara Crewe and L. M. Montgomery's Emily Starr. Kimberley Reynolds highlights how specific genres for boys and girls became more defined at the turn of the century in her works *girls Only: Gender and Popular Culture in Britain 1880-1910* (1990) and *Children's Literature from the Fin de Siècle to the New Millennium* (2012).

Emily Hamilton-Honey's *Turning the Page on American Girlhood: The Evolution of Girls' Series Fiction 1865-1930* (2013) documents how series fiction for girls progressed and considers how girls in this genre contribute to social change. Her most recent work, *Girls to the Rescue: Young Heroines in American Series Fiction of World War One* (2020), shows how a specific sub-genre of series fiction evolved to highlight how women and girls participated in the First World War. Girl heroes in these novels undertake a variety of wartime occupations, from helping the war effort at home to working on the battlefield. *Girls' Series Fiction and American Popular Culture* (2016), a collection of essays edited by LuElla D'Amico, covers girls' series

fiction and television shows from Alcott's *Little Women* (1868-1886) to Ina Marlene King's television show *Pretty Little Liars* (2010-2017). Contributors illustrate how series books impacted on popular culture and the everyday lives of American girls. Girls' detective fiction is a particular area of interest, with three essays being dedicated to Nancy Drew and another to Cherry Ames. I do not discuss these characters in detail in my thesis, but Blume's Sally Freedman takes inspiration from Nancy Drew, and other girls in my chosen texts occupy the detective's role, emphasising that my chosen authors have been beneficiaries of this genre.

In 2011, the International Girls' Studies Association (IGSA) was founded. This is a professional organisation for academic researchers, policy makers, practitioners, teachers, and students researching girlhood. The association aims to enhance research and development in the discipline of girls' studies by sharing relevant resources and encouraging discussion. It currently has 258 members from 22 different fields of academic research. Since its formation, the IGSA has held two interdisciplinary conferences in 2016 and 2019. It is affiliated with the *Girlhood Studies* journal and the Girls Studies Scholars Yahoo Group. Members have the chance to be involved in IGSA special issues of the *Girlhood Studies* journal and can also participate in IGSA contributions to the Girl Museum.

In 2012, a special edition of *The Lion and the Unicorn* appeared, which explored the relationship between children and theatre. In her introduction to the journal, Marah Gubar revealed that children's literature scholars had become increasingly interested in performance studies and suggested that it 'should transform not just how we teach our courses, but also how we historicize and theorize about children's literature and

indeed childhood itself' (Gubar: 2012:1). She argues that childhood is 'a performance in which children draw on the diverse scripts offered to them through their culture and collectively forge new ones through play' (p. 5). The journal features a range of articles including Helen Freshwater's essay about the musical version of *Billy Elliot,* contributions exploring theatre productions of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904), and Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1969), by Amanda Phillips Chapman and Beverley Lyon Clark, and Holly Blackford's article examining the ballet of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker* (1819).

Other publications about children's involvement in theatre include *Theatre for Children and Young People: 50 Years of Professional Theatre in the UK* (2005), edited by pioneer of the *Theatre in Education* journal Stuart Bennett. This collection is comprised of thirty-one essays from theatre companies talking about their history and current working practices. Subjects include Theatre in the Community, Theatre in Education, Writing for Children and Young Audiences and Creating and Adapting Material for Performance. Anne Varty examines child performers in the nineteenth century in *Children and Theatre in Victorian Britain* (2008), in which she considers the appeal of the child performer, how they were trained, children's performances in plays and pantomimes, and the debates regarding the issue of children appearing on stage. Gillian Arrighi's and Victor Emeljanow's edited collection of essays *Entertaining Children: The Participation of Youth in the Entertainment Industry,* which focussed on children's participation in theatre around the world from the seventeenth century to the present day appeared in 2014. In 2020, an interdisciplinary study *Children, Childhood, and Musical Theatre,* edited by Donelle Ruwe and James Leve, was published. It includes analysis of children performing in musicals both in films

and on stage and considers how musicals reflect upon adult nostalgia for childhood whilst appealing to child audiences. It includes examinations of popular children's books such as *Matilda, Mary Poppins,* and *Bedknobs and Broomsticks,* Broadway musical *Annie,* and child actors' portrayals of Charles Dickens's protagonists David Copperfield and Oliver Twist.

This thesis offers an original contribution to the field of girlhood studies by including analysis of critically neglected texts such as Judy Blume's *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself,* Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes,* and Michelle Magorian's *Back Home.* My analysis of these texts incorporates three layers of performance, as outlined previously: girls performing on stage or acting parts, girls performing by leading double lives to conceal secrets, and girls performing femininity. A range of genres feature to test my argument that performance potentially empowers the girl hero, but also how it can undermine her agency if she is compelled to perform and becomes too involved in her performance. It includees Streatfeild's career stories, Blume's and Fitzhugh's comedy, Farmer's time-slip fantasy, Magorian's domestic novel, the ambiguous fantasy of Jones and Gardam, and J. K. Rowling's combination of the school story with fantasy. They are mostly discussed in chronological order to determine whether readers can be more optimistic about prospects for the girl hero by the twenty-first century, or if she is still required to choose between a high-powered career or domesticity. Performance becomes more complicated through the thesis chapters: girls find it increasingly difficult to be in control in their performances, as roles are forced upon them, causing them to become disempowered, indicating that despite increased opportunities for women and girls, there is still pressure to perform for approval.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter focuses on three of Noel Streatfield's novels, *Ballet Shoes* (1936), *Party Frock* (1946), and *White Boots* (1951). Girls in these texts engage in several performance-related skills including acting, dancing, sport, and writing, and some characters undertake more than one of these activities. My discussion draws upon contemporary sources and essayists in Streatfeild's *The Years of Grace* (1950) and I analyse my chosen texts in relation to the experiences of performers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It concerns the girl's development into becoming a young star and how she has the potential to become a celebrity hero through playing different roles to establish her identity. I refer to Helen Freshwater's 'Consuming Authenticities' essay throughout the chapter, paying particular attention to her argument about the 'complex relationship between performance and authenticity' and consider whether the roles girls play on stage impact upon their lives off stage. Girls are assigned roles as performers before they begin rehearsing for specific parts: they are expected to continue a family legacy or work out of necessity to financially support their families, and the first part of the chapter is concerned with how the girls respond to their obligations and how they prepare to become performers. I examine the fictional roles the girls act and consider whether they can learn from the experiences of the characters they play. The final part of the chapter explores how the girls eventually find their passion and considers whether playing roles they were uncomfortable with has actually been beneficial for their chosen career paths.

Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964) and Judy Blume's *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself* (1977) are compared in the following chapter. Both novels feature girls who are heroes in their imagination: they perform spying roles to acquire knowledge about people with the intention of exposing dramatic secrets. Spying is also regarded as being beneficial when pursuing other artistic careers. Referring to newspaper articles about Second World War spies in comparison to Harriet's and Sally's experience, I examine how Harriet and Sally perform as spies or detectives, and whether they achieve anything significant, or if the girls are merely creating situations to make their lives more interesting. A recent issue of the *Girlhood Studies* journal 'Locating Tween Girls' has been beneficial for my discussion, particularly Natalie Coulter and Melanie Kennedy's introductory essay, which argues that 'girls lose their sense of self as they enter adolescence' (Coulter and Kennedy: 2018: 2). I debate the extent to which this statement applies to Harriet and Sally and consider whether spying enables them to affirm their identities or if it caused them to become more confused. The first part of the chapter examines how girls prepare for spying by playing pretend games and participating in school plays. The following section focuses on Harriet's and Sally's discoveries, how successfully they collect and retain information, and how they deal with any setbacks they face. I conclude by debating the options available to Harriet and Sally once they abandon the 'cases' they focus on, and whether spying is a realistic career for them to pursue in future, or if they are more likely to achieve heroism by aspiring to become celebrities in their original dream careers as a writer and actress.

Exploration of girls living with fragmented identities is considered in my third chapter when I analyse Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969) and Michelle

Magorian's *Back Home* (1984). Preoccupation with the past is apparent in both novels: Farmer's Charlotte travels between 1958 and 1918, whilst Magorian's novel is set in post-war England. With reference to Lucinda McKnight's idea that a girl is always 'the protagonist in [her] own story', I analyse how Charlotte and Rusty are required to perform to fit in with past ideals. They attend strict boarding schools and encounter oppressive patriarchal figures, but also meet female characters who are desperate for freedom from societal conventions. Charlotte and Rusty struggle to fit in at school: the former contends with two identities as herself and 1918 schoolgirl Clare, whilst the latter is adjusting to life in 1940s England after living in America during the war. The chapter is divided into two halves and considers the experiences the girls have both inside school and away from the educational environment. I examine how girls cope with performing false identities and the consequences they face if they fail or refuse to perform. My discussion considers whether the girl hero is able to achieve more by adopting a different identity or if she needs to resist performing to initiate change.

The fourth chapter explores the most complicated forms of heroism in my thesis, as I analyse how girls perform through confusion and chaos in Jane Gardam's *A Long Way from Verona* (1971) and Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock* (1984). Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker are both enthusiastic readers who create their own stories where they imagine themselves as heroes. Jones's discussion of heroes in her collection of essays *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* have been instrumental in shaping my analysis of Jessica's and Polly's experiences, and I also draw upon Katherine Dalsimer's argument about teenage girls experiencing 'a strange, Alice-in-Wonderland sense of confusion and discontinuity.' I begin by analysing the

protagonists' creativity and consider how reading and writing assist them with their heroic roles. The girls become caught up in situations which seem farcical and sometimes dangerous, and often find it difficult to determine whether what they have experienced is real or part of their imagination. How the girls deal with turbulent events is the focus of my second section and I consider the extent to which they can become heroes when they constantly experience fragmentation in their memories. The final part of the chapter discusses Jessica's and Polly's everyday adolescent struggles and what options are available to them once their heroic quests are complete. I consider whether performing through chaos empowers the girls or if their agency is under threat because their identity has become fragile through being caught up in stories.

The final chapter focuses on J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) and is primarily concerned with how Hermione takes on several performance-related talents including magic, acting and directing. Learning magic serves as a rehearsal to save the Wizarding World from Lord Voldemort's rule, and they also need to master the art of deception to outwit dark forces. Whilst learning magic, girls also have to deal with daily adolescent concerns of studying and relationships, and they are constantly required to perform to conceal their own secrets, or to be liked by their schoolfellows. I analyse the texts in relation to the Girl Power movement and consider the extent to which Rowling endorses it through portrayal of her female characters and if there are occasions when she reverts to stereotypes. The chapter begins by discussing Hermione's role as a director in mystery-solving and campaigns for social justice before turning to her experiments with Polyjuice Potion and impersonating other people. Secondly, I assess how girls find solutions to their personal problems and

examine how Hermione outwits bullying figures to equip her for the final battle against Voldemort’s Death Eaters. I conclude my discussion by analysing how girls and women perform heroic acts in battle and consider whether there are any opportunities for them to continue with their heroism once peace is restored in the magical world.

Chapter One
Filling Shoes: Girl Heroes as Celebrities in Noel Streatfeild's Work

> 'It's not showing off, it's because I thought of something and wanted to see if my feet would do it' (Streatfeild: 1994: 68-69).

Noel Streatfeild's novels champion confident and professional women from the beginning of her writing career in the inter-war years to her death in 1986. Her first children's novel *Ballet Shoes,* published in 1936, provided a subtle reflection on how the First World War affected women. Many were unable to marry because of the number of casualties suffered during the war and were required to support themselves financially, but also to fill gaps in public services. Unmarried women pursued careers in teaching, the civil service, law and transport. Streatfeild's novels feature several single women who work as servants or teachers and her girl protagonists do not assume that they will marry once they become adults. For example, the Fossil sisters in *Ballet Shoes* are brought up by Sylvia Brown and her childhood nanny, and their boarders Dr Jakes, Dr Smith and Theo Dane are all unmarried women who work as teachers. Streatfeild's admiration for professional women is emphasised in her contributions to *The Years of Grace: A Book for Girls* (1950), an edited collection of essays offering teenage girls advice about their appearance, home life, hobbies and careers. Whilst Streatfeild opined that 'the best career for every woman, is of course, taking care of her husband and home', she discourages girls from marrying 'just to be married with all the misery that brings' (Streatfeild: 1950: 289). Instead of prioritising finding a husband, Streatfeild advises that girls focus on potential careers, arguing that '[t]he only fools are the girls who leave school without any idea whatsoever of what they would like to do' (p. 295). Streatfeild's girl protagonists increasingly develop confidence by pursuing several occupations and finding solutions to the problems they experience. This chapter

considers the representation of the rising star in three of Streatfeild's novels, *Ballet Shoes* (1936), *Party Frock* (1946) and *White Boots* (1951), and how girls prepare to become celebrity heroes whom contemporaries and future generations admire for their talent.

Streatfeild shared many of her protagonists' passions for performing arts and pursued several careers before she became a children's author. In 1918, she attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where she received acting and ballet training. Throughout the 1920s, she worked for prestigious theatre directors Charles Doran and Arthur Bouchier, and undertook several Shakespearean roles including Titania from *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Audrey from *As You Like It* and one of the witches in *Macbeth.* Like many children's authors before her, Streatfeild had intended to write for adults, and her first novel *The Whitcharts* (1931) drew upon her experiences working as a chorus girl. She was concerned that the success of *Ballet Shoes* would establish her as a children's author, a sentiment her autobiographical character Victoria Strangeway in *The Vicarage Family* trilogy admits: 'She began almost to hate *Ballet Shoes,* which was still selling like mad and somehow eating up Victoria Strangeway, the novelist, to feed Victoria Strangeway, the writer for children' (Streatfeild: 1971: 94). Despite her initial reservation, Streatfeild published over 25 children's novels, many of which focused on a child's career development. Many of her girl protagonists pursue careers in acting and dancing, and even when the stage does not feature prominently, children still act in Christmas plays and desire to play the principal role. Streatfeild believed that acting lessons could be beneficial for careers completely unrelated to performance. Writing about air stewardess Jean Gordon, who undertook a course in stage training, she argues: 'Life on the stage

needs great control, since one of the first things actors and actresses have to learn is that they are servants to the public' (Streatfeild: 1950: 132). Some of Streatfeild's protagonists are reluctant to pursue careers in the public eye but performing is often a necessity. Petrova Fossil feels compelled to act to contribute to supporting her family financially, and Selina Cole needs to play a part in a pageant to wear her special frock. Performance enables Streatfeild's characters to develop a sense of their own identities and they can often learn from the roles they are given, but it can also be argued that girls can use their stage experience to respond to challenges in everyday life.

Streatfeild's novels sustained popularity into the twenty-first century and many contemporary children's authors admit to enjoying her novels in childhood. Author of the *Chocolate Box Girls* and *Daizy Star* novels Cathy Cassidy described *White Boots* as 'a little slice of the past, which still captures my imagination, and its themes of friendship, family and staying true to yourself are timeless' (Streatfeild: 2015: 8). New editions of Streatfeild's works continue to be published into the twenty-first century, and some recently discovered short stories appeared in two Virago collections, *Christmas Stories* (2018) and *Holiday Stories* (2019). Her novels have also made appearances on the screen. Kathleen Kelly expresses her love for *Ballet Shoes* and *White Boots* in *You've Got Mail* (1998), and a film adaptation of *Ballet Shoes* starring Emma Watson as Pauline Fossil aired on the BBC at Christmas in 2007.

Streatfeild's fascinating life and career inspired academic scholars to produce biographies of her. Angela Bull's and Nancy Huse's studies provide valuable insight into the author's motivation behind the themes in her novels. Bull reveals that

Streatfeild's books 'offer a clue to at least one of her favourite fantasies. It was the dream of being chosen when all seemed stacked against her' (Bull: 1984: 97). As noted in the opening statement of this chapter, Bull also applauded Streatfeild's characterisation of girls who celebrated their successes on stage. Huse concurs with Bull about Streatfeild's endorsement of girls' confidence in their abilities, affirming that 'Streatfeild's representation of childhood challenges conventional ideas about family, work, taste and individualism' (Huse: 1994: 147). Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig argue that Streatfield's works exploring stage life are superior to those of contemporary ballet writers Lorna Hill, Pamela Brown and Kitty Barne, because they 'convey enthusiasm, even total dedication, without the least suspicion of rapture or intensity' (Cadogan and Craig: 1986: 298). Kimberley Reynolds describes Streatfeild's works as 'rather bohemian tales of female enterprise' (Reynolds: 2012: 34). Girl protagonists excel in their talents, but also develop initiative in solving problems, particularly in *Party Frock* when the children put on a pageant in wartime despite limited resources. Moreover, Streatfeild promotes female independence in her representation of single women, and women are often responsible for resolving arguments or problems, such as Olivia Johnson in *White Boots.* In contrast, Streatfeild is critical of those who do not respect a girl's right to develop as an individual, notably Aunt Claudia in *White Boots,* who is determined that her niece Lalla continue her father's legacy and become a skating champion without taking her feelings into account. Kay Waddilove considers the role of mothers in three of Streatfeild's novels, *The Painted Garden* (1949), *White Boots* (1951) and *The Bell Family* (1953) in her recently published doctoral thesis 'Tending, Mending, Caring: Constructions of Motherhood in Popular Children's Literature from 1945-1960)', in comparison with her contemporaries Enid Blyton, Gwendoline Courtney and Alice

Lunt. Her discussion examines how the changing role of the mother in post-war Britain is reflected in these texts, suggesting that they have the potential to be subversive: 'in critiquing dominant ideologies of motherhood, the novels afford a valuable space for readers to explore a range of approaches to the maternal subject' (Waddilove: 2020: 31-2).

Streatfeild certainly challenged the conventions of her time with the portrayal of hard-working independent women and confident girl protagonists, but it is debatable how applicable her works are for twenty-first century children. On the surface, Streatfeild's works appear formulaic: children (usually girl protagonists) discover they possess a talent and have to overcome setbacks and financial hardships to succeed. In addition, despite endorsing female resourcefulness, her novels also feature a highly moralistic framework when a girl's confidence turns into arrogance and she has to be taught a lesson before she can progress in her desired career. Genteel families living in poverty but still managing to employ servants and governesses are also a difficult scenario for readers to imagine. However, with their emphasis on celebrity culture, they arguably anticipate the rise of the modern-day star. Opportunities for stardom continued to open up in the twentieth century with the rise of the film industry, and developments in technology, the Internet and social media have resulted in fame being more accessible to young people. As Lucy Mangan observes in her memoir *Bookworm* (2018):

> Streatfeild's children are beset by the same worries (frequently half understood percolations down from the mysterious adult world above, or the insecurities that come with needing to make your way in a new school and negotiate friendships with people not immediately willing to offer friendship) as their readers are in real life (Mangan: 2018: 147).

Streatfeild's girl protagonists grow up in an age where the Internet is absent and their self-worth is not determined by the number of followers and 'likes' they have on social media. The celebrity status they desire still carries significant pressure: they are required to work hard if they wish to be successful, but how they perform can impact on how they are perceived by others. Celebrity heroes can easily turn into villains if they fail to deliver on the stage or sporting arena, but also if they are deemed to behave inappropriately. This is possibly more apparent in the twenty-first century, as more news about celebrities and public figures is available through the Internet, and influential people are judged on the way they use their social media platforms. Whilst news did not circulate to the same extent between the 1930s and 1950s, newspapers and magazines were accessible to a wide range of people, and they regularly featured reports about famous actresses, dancers, and sports stars, which Streatfeild acknowledges in her novels when her protagonists' performances are reviewed in the print media. Early stardom affects the girls' behaviour, but it also impacts on their relationships with others. Technology has evolved since the 1930s, but Streatfeild's children and many young people today have similar aspirations: they still experience a mixture of joy and disappointment depending on how their careers are progressing, and their performance is constantly under scrutiny. In this respect, children's experiences of celebrity culture in Streatfeild's novels and the twenty-first century are not too dissimilar, and Streatfeild's work retains a strong relevance today.

Streatfeild's novels are also of relevance to people who do not necessarily wish to achieve celebrity status, as many people take part in performing arts as a hobby in their spare time. Adults take dance lessons to improve their health and fitness, with

ballet classes being designed specifically for adults to improve muscle strength. Popular reality television shows *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Dancing on Ice* have been running since 2003 and 2005 respectively, and several celebrities take part each year to learn a new skill, but also to revive their careers in some cases. Historical pageants have also become popular again in recent years, a notable example being the Kynren pageant, which features a protagonist who dreams moments from history, a part played by Selina Cole in Streatfeild's *Party Frock.* Axbridge in Somerset has been holding a pageant every decade since 1967, with the most recent one taking place in August 2021. A historical pageant commemorating Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee took place on 5th June 2022. The second act entitled 'The Time of Our Lives' depicted seven scenes of life from each decade from the 1950s through to the present day. Dance, ice-skating and pageantry had existed long before Streatfeild published her novels, but her works have provided a valuable contribution to the sustained popularity of performing arts.

This chapter examines the girl's journey into becoming a celebrity and how she develops a sense of identity through performing several roles. Drawing upon contemporary sources, I juxtapose the focal texts and the protagonists' experiences with those of performers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To begin, I provide a brief overview of Streatfeild's possible influences from the world of acting, pageantry and skating. My discussion is concerned with the roles girls in Streatfeild's novels play, both on and off the stage, and the first part considers how they are assigned roles in certain careers and how they respond to and prepare to play them. I then turn to the fictional roles undertaken by the characters and examine how they are applicable to their present situation and if they can learn from them. Lastly, the

chapter analyses how Streatfeild's girls eventually find their passion and considers whether participation in roles they were uncomfortable with has been beneficial to help them progress in their chosen careers.

My discussion in this chapter is influenced by recent work of performance studies scholar Helen Freshwater. A specialist in twentieth-century and contemporary theatre, Freshwater has published several works considering the relationship between performers and audiences, and she has a particular interest in child performers and how audiences engage with them. Her 2012 article 'Consuming Authenticity: *Billy Elliot*, the Musical and the Performing Child' analyses the representation of child actors both on stage and in promotional campaigns, and is concerned with 'the complex relationship between performance and authenticity' (Freshwater: 2012: 155). *Billy Elliot* appeared on the West End stage in 2005, almost seventy years after *Ballet Shoes* was published and nearly twenty years after Streatfeild's death in 1986, but Freshwater's analysis can be applied to Streatfeild's works, as they constantly raise questions about whether the roles characters play are reflective of their situation off stage. Preoccupation with authenticity or lack of it is particularly apparent in Streatfeild's novels: Pauline Fossil's resemblance to John Tenniel's illustrations makes her an ideal candidate to play Alice, whilst in contrast, in *Party Frock*, Streatfield shows that Anne Boleyn is a questionable role for the nine-year-old poetry enthusiast Phoebe Andrews, as an adult audience would have more knowledge than the actress about the circumstances that led to her character's downfall. With reference to Freshwater's essay, I examine how authenticity or limited authenticity impacts on performance both on and off the stage in Streatfeild's novels. Key considerations are whether the world of performance hinders girls from

maintaining a true sense of identity, or alternatively, if performing on stage enables them to showcase more of their authentic personalities, and if girls can maintain any sense of authenticity away from the stage.

Setting the Stage: Performers in the Twentieth Century

The issue of young people performing on stage divided opinion in the early twentieth century. Children were required to have licences that restricted the number of hours they worked, but there was concern about their being exploited. A report by the Theatrical Children's Licensing Committee in 1919 revealed cases of underage children providing false birth certificates, and many were able to work without obtaining a licence. The Children and Young Person's Act of 1933 specified that parental consent was required and that children would need a medical examination, but this was not always completed before licences were issued. Attitudes regarding children performing on stage were contradictory. An anonymous author in *The Manchester Guardian* in 1930 wrote that there was

> something slightly disgusting in the spectacle of a child on stage. Acting in the rigid sense, in a set play, is essentially an adult activity. It presupposes complete self-consciousness. And so the child actor gives the impression of being unwholesomely mature (https://search.proquest.com/docview/478063442?accountid=11528).

On the other hand, Italia Conti, an actress who founded her own drama school argued in *The Times* in 1932 that, 'Just as the future of the British Empire lies in the hands of children today; so does the future on stage depend very largely upon the child actor'. She insisted that it was important for children to start training early, and that restrictions could result in poorer children being denied opportunities:

> The children of the rich can get their training and performances privately and among their friends. The children of the poor, whose playground is often the street, would be deprived of all hope of entering the profession, which has often recruited the biggest stars from the people (http://find.galegroup.com).

Streatfeild herself supported Conti's view. Writing in *The Royal Ballet School* in 1959, she argued: 'I believe if the value of getting used to an audience and the feel of the stage were put in the scales against the chance of a child's becoming too theatrical or burned out, the first would prove to have the most weight' (Streatfeild: 1959: 131). Dyan Colclough also suggests that performing was liberating for child actors in the twentieth century:

> The notion of celebrity and the need for appreciative applause was as much of a draw to theatrical children in the 1930s as it had been to their stage-struck Victorian predecessors and this was fed by public appreciation (Arrighi and Emeljanow: 2014: 85).

This is apparent in Streatfeild's novels: Pauline Fossil enjoys being praised for acting a part convincingly, whilst her sister Posy is determined to leave a lasting legacy in the world of dance. Lalla Moore also enjoys the attention she receives for her exhibition skating in *White Boots,* a career she is predicted to have success in once she abandons her ambition to become an Olympic ice-skating champion. Nevertheless, Streatfeild does warn of the dangers of children becoming too preoccupied with performance in her novels, notably *Apple Bough* (1962) when Sebastian Forum becomes ill through excessively practising his violin.

Children did not always need a theatrical licence to participate in performances on stage, and they had opportunities to showcase their talents in historical pageants. The historical pageant was a significant theatrical development in the twentieth century. French dramatist Louis Napoleon Parker developed the concept of the historical pageant, and he aimed to bring people from a range of class backgrounds

together when producing the shows. He placed emphasis on historical accuracy, a tradition which future pageant organisers took on board. Pageants featured patriotic messages and celebrated historical figures, and many of them focused on local history. Researchers at University College London estimate that there have been over 10,000 pageants in Britain since Parker's first pageant at Sherborne in 1905 (Bartie, Fleming, Freeman, Hutton and Readman: 2021: 3). Nostalgia for the past featured prominently in pageants, but they also provided an opportunity for political campaigners to make subtle statements about their causes. Suffrage campaigners Edith Craig and Cicely Hamilton's *The Pageant of Great Women* (1910) celebrated the lives of famous women throughout history from mathematician and philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria (c.355-c.415) to actress Ellen Terry (1847-1928) to enforce their argument about a woman's right to vote (Pageant of Great Women, Bristol | Historical Pageants). Girls' youth groups also got involved in producing pageants depicting influential women. Some of these included conservative messages about the importance of female self-sacrifice such as the Girls Friendly Society's *The Quest* (1930), whilst others championed women who took active roles in saving lives. One such pageant was Kitty Barne's *The Amber Gate* in 1926, which featured Grace Darling, Flora Macdonald and Joan of Arc. Barne's pageant included a girl dreaming several scenes in history and provided inspiration for Streatfeild's *Party Frock* and her 1968 novel *Gemma.* The Andrews' children's pageant in the former novel shares similarities with Virginia Woolf's final novel *Between the Acts* (1941), which was set in 1939 just before the outbreak of the Second World War, and featured several different scenes from English history, with the young protagonist Phyllis Jones undertaking the role of England.

Ballet dancing increased in popularity in the twentieth century when Sergei Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* began touring Europe in 1908 and ballerinas travelling with the company took an interest in promising young English dancers. Anna Pavlova's company of English girls toured the world between 1911 and 1931, and Serafina Astafieva set up her own dancing school in London when she retired in 1911. Former pupils at the Russian Dancing Academy in London include Alicia Markova and Margot Fonteyn, who are regarded as two of the greatest ballerinas of the twentieth century. Ninette de Valois founded the Sadler's Wells Ballet School in 1931, which was renamed The Royal Ballet School in 1956. Streatfeild witnessed a young de Valois performing with Lila Field's Little Wonders on Eastbourne Pier. She reflects on her memories of this in her autobiographical novel *A Vicarage Family* (1963). The Strangeway sisters 'were spellbound and utterly absorbed. For days afterwards Isabel and Victoria had discussed little else. From where did those extraordinary children come who led such different lives from their own?' (Streatfeild: 2011: 171). Streatfeild expressed further admiration for de Valois in *The Royal Ballet School:* 'She has built it and formed it, and through her school taught it, so she is in a unique position and can be compared to nobody else in ballet history' (Streatfeild: 1959: 92). Scottish ballerina Moira Shearer appeared on the cover of Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* and possibly provided inspiration for Posy Fossil. Shearer received training from Flora Fairbairn, who was a friend of Streatfeild's, and enjoyed a ballet career both on stage and in films, with her most notable role being that of Victoria Page in *The Red Shoes* (1948).

Ballet dancing was also considered to be beneficial for sporting careers, particularly in ice-skating. In her autobiography *Wings on My Feet* (1940), Norwegian Olympic champion Sonja Henie opines that ballet training enabled her to flourish in her skating career. Henie was an admirer of Anna Pavlova and watched her dance in 1927, an experience which motivated her to alter her skating style:

> Coming back to the ice in the autumn, I wanted more than anything else to make my free skating program a blend of dance and figure skating. I wanted it to have the choreographic form of ballet solo and the technique of the ice (Henie: 2017: 25).

Writing in the *Sport and History* journal*,* Mary Louise Adams suggests that 'skating's proximity to dance' was the reason behind the sport's growing popularity in Britain in the twentieth century, and significantly, 'in the late 1920s and 1930s, the skaters who grounded their programmes in dance were women' (Adams: 2010: 231). Henie dominated in the 1920s, winning three Olympic gold medals, six European Championships, and ten World Championships. Being the first skater to wear short skirts, Henie was able to perform difficult tricks on the ice, and she also popularised white skating boots. As Steve Milton notes in *100 Years of Figure Skating,* Henie 'liberated women's skating from previous restrictions, and hundreds of thousands of young North Americans bought boots inspired by the Henie magic' (Milton: 1996: 23). Britain's success in ice-skating in the 1930s was also a factor in the sport's popularity. British skaters Cecilia Colledge and Megan Taylor emerged as rivals for Henie in the 1930s. Neither succeeded in taking Henie's gold medal position, but they were able to celebrate some success after her retirement: Colledge won three European Championships between 1937 and 1939 and a World Championship in 1937, whilst Taylor won the World Championships in 1938 and 1939. Colledge is credited with inventing several new moves in skating including the camel and layback spins. Harriet Johnson's father likens her to Cecilia Colledge when the

doctor prescribes ice skating to improve her health. Harriet's and Lalla's relationship is also comparable to Colledge's and Taylor's rivalry. After Taylor's success, Britain had to wait another twelve years for another world champion. Jeanette Altwegg's victory in 1951 coincided with the publication of Streatfeild's *White Boots.*

The First Starring Role: Entry into Stage Life and Its Responsibilities

Reflecting on her acting career in her autobiography *The Story of My Life* (1908), Ellen Terry writes:

> I can't even tell you when it was first decided that I was to go on the stage, but I expect it was when I was born, for in those days theatrical folk did not imagine that their children *could* do anything but follow their parents' profession (Terry: 2011: 91).

Despite their being born nearly a century after Terry, the same could be said of Streatfeild's Posy Fossil and Lalla Moore. One is left a pair of ballet shoes by her mother, whilst the other's father was an Olympic ice-skating champion, and a pair of his ice-skates are displayed on her bedroom wall. For Posy and Lalla, the stage appears to be set for them to continue their parents' legacies. Posy faces less pressure than Lalla though, as she has taken on the name of 'Fossil' which is unknown. She and her sisters make a vow to 'try to put our names in the history books because it's our very own and nobody can say it's because of our grandfathers' (Streatfeild: 1994: 31). Pauline is sceptical about their chances of achieving this when she learns she is to receive acting and dancing lessons at Madame Fidolia's school: 'Whoever heard of people on the stage in the history books?', a naïve statement, given that many accomplished actresses and dancers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inspired future stars and biographers to write about them, emphasising that they played a significant part in cultural history.

Despite her initial reluctance, Pauline flourishes in her acting lessons: 'Whether she was a princess, a peasant, or an old man, [she] managed to make them seem real without any dressing up, but just in the way she moved,' and, as predicted, Posy instantly shows promise in dancing (p.56). Pauline's and Posy's abilities in acting and dancing respectively indicate that they have the potential to join stars such as Ellen Terry and Anna Pavlova in the history books.

Performance is deemed to be beneficial for girls who are not necessarily expected to have careers in it. Nana hopes that dance lessons will help Petrova to become 'more like a little lady' (p. 40), and Harriet Johnson's doctor recommends that she takes up ice-skating to recuperate from her illness. A pageant provides an opportunity for Selina Cole to wear a special frock she receives from her American godmother. Expectations are placed upon all three girls when they enter the world of performance. Petrova's Russian origins excite Madame Fidolia who assumes that she will offer a convincing portrayal of Mytyl in their matinee performance of Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* because she has 'an especial debt to the hospital for its goodness towards one of your countrywomen,' although Petrova feels 'very British inside' (p. 81). As the Andrews children's pageant is for Selina's benefit, she has the responsibility of making sure it runs smoothly: she recruits the actors, helps them learn their parts, and ensures they go on stage at the right time and have their costumes ready. Being Lalla Moore's friend and having skating lessons with Max Lindblom is 'rather a special privilege; it means being very ambitious for Lalla and taking as much interest in her success as her teachers' according to Lalla's Aunt Claudia (p. 95) and Lalla's failure to pass her silver skating test almost results in

Harriet's losing her lessons. All three girls are in positions where they are compelled to perform significant roles off the stage out of duty: Petrova needs to display pride in her Russian origins to satisfy Madame Fidolia, Selina plays the part of pageant organiser, and Harriet enacts the role of a devoted friend. Streatfeild's novels highlight how even girls who are not concerned about performing a starring role can easily be compelled to play a part to satisfy those around them, and particularly in Selina's and Harriet's cases, to support the main stars on the stage.

Streatfeild experienced more frustration than reward during her career on the stage. Her success in playing Titania and Audrey whilst touring with Charles Doran's company did not provide her with financial security and long-lasting fame. In fact, after leaving Doran's company in 1922, Streatfeild struggled to secure minor parts in theatrical productions, not because she lacked the talent, but because she did not possess qualities that managers were looking for. Her biographer Angela Bull notes:

> There were too many things against her. Pretty and vivacious though she was, she lacked the kind of forceful personality that could be easily projected across the footlights. She was nice to look at, but she was forgettable. Her height was a disadvantage when she auditioned for ingénue roles. The sweet young heroines of drawing room comedies could not be taller than their juvenile leads; and directors, noticing her inches tended to fob her off with minor parts (Bull: 1984: 92).

Streatfeild's awareness about the potential temporality of a stage career is acknowledged in *Ballet Shoes* and *Party Frock* when discussions occur about what the girls will do if they fail to establish themselves on stage, and if they can still benefit from dancing and acting. Nana is confident that Posy will emulate her mother, feels it is ideal for Pauline who is 'never any good at her books, only fond of that reciting' and is sceptical about Petrova, but opines that 'it might be just the thing for her – turn her more like a little lady' (Streatfeild: 1994: 40). It is not assumed that

Pauline and Petrova will be successes on the stage, but that the training and the skills they acquire from it could potentially give them more career options.

Careers in ballet dancing were just as competitive as those of theatre actors, and aspiring ballerinas were encouraged to consider alternative careers if they failed to establish themselves in the ballet world. Critic Arnold Haskell warned of the dangers of idealising dancers who appeared to move effortlessly across the stage: 'Those on the other side of the barrier from the audience are working people who require discipline, skill, good health, and as practical an outlook as the hospital nurse, the school teacher or shorthand typist' (Streatfeild: 1950: 296). The increasing popularity of ballet meant that the chances of acquiring leading roles were limited and being an accomplished dancer would not guarantee success. The Andrews family have to take this into consideration in *Party Frock* when Sally is chosen to attend extra dance classes with a teacher from the prestigious Linkwell Ballet School, as they are an extra expense and they have the added costs of suitable ballet clothes and shoes. On the other hand, there were alternative careers in ballet if aspiring dancers failed to become ballerinas. Haskell argued that it was a passion worth pursuing:

> If you take up dancing and are well trained from the start, you have not wasted your time, even if you are not one of the lucky ones…Apart from ballet there is the teaching of dancing, and every other branch of the stage, films and television. Ballet training is the finest foundation for every one of these (p. 305).

Mrs Andrews decides that the family should invest in Sally's ballet lessons while she is young as she believes her daughter can have a career in dance: 'She'll have to earn her living when she grows up. The teacher from Linkwell says that even if the child is no good for stage work, she will certainly be able to teach' (Streatfield: 1971: 41). If Sally's parents had not been confident of their daughter's being guaranteed a

career in teaching dance, it is possible that they would not have invested in the extra tuition. The Andrews family's difficulties highlight the dilemma that many struggling families would have faced in deciding whether they could justify the expense of their child's stage training or dance lessons. Given the competitiveness of the ballet and theatre industries, families with little money to spare would probably have been reluctant to fund these pastimes unless they could be assured that it would lead somewhere if their child did not become a successful actor or dancer. In both *Ballet Shoes* and *Party Frock,* part of the preparation for stage training is anticipating potential setbacks the girls might face.

Streatfeild stresses the importance of keeping options open in *White Boots* with her characterisation of Lalla and Aunt Claudia. According to J. W., an author in *The Years of Grace,* Lalla is taking the right steps to become an Olympic ice-skating champion: 'If you have the talent, and your relations have the money, and you started to train young enough (not a day later than your eighth birthday), then good luck to you. You may have a most exciting future, and as well bring honours to your country' (Streatfeild: 1950: 270). Lalla's Aunt Claudia is wealthy and she receives skating lessons from the age of three. Like Olympic champions Sonja Henie and Cecilia Colledge, she undertakes ballet training to improve her technique on the ice. However, whilst Streatfeild acknowledges the importance of dedication to a performance-related career, she also warns that it can impact upon a child's wellbeing. Lalla's entire childhood is centred around skating: she has no hobbies outside of it unless they are deemed to benefit it, she is only permitted to be friends with people who are interested in skating, and she is expected to go on diets when

performing in exhibitions. Overwork causes her to become ill and she suffers two setbacks when she is unable to take her inter-gold examination and her doctor advises her to take a break from skating. As she has invested all of her time in skating, Lalla has little idea of what she can do instead, and laments to Harriet's mother that she has 'got to be something important and how else would I be except for skating?' Aunt Claudia's assumption that her niece will continue her father's legacy and her failure to comprehend the possibility of her not becoming a skating champion has been detrimental to Lalla, as she has been immersed in skating to such a significant extent that she has nothing else to focus on. Here, Streatfeild stresses to readers that self-belief and hard work are necessary for success, but it is also important for children to have interests and friendships outside of their potential careers so they can develop their own personalities.

Once girls decide to undertake performance- related careers, how they appear is crucial for creating a good impression to secure parts. In *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1956), Erving Goffman discusses how people are required to act in social situations in order to fit in. He argues:

> A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished and well articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that must be realised (Goffman: 1995: 81).

For girls in Streatfeild's novels to establish themselves as stage performers, acting a part away from the stage is regarded as being necessary. This includes wearing appropriate clothing, an issue which proves to be problematic in many of Streatfeild's novels. Wearing an old velvet frock to audition for the part of Alice in Wonderland is unthinkable for Pauline Fossil: it is too short and Nana is sceptical of her chances of

being engaged for a part ‘looking like a rag-bag’, but the only alternative is her jersey and skirt, which Pauline reveals is not ideal for auditions because ‘Miss Jay will think we don’t have any clothes if I wear a jersey and a skirt after her saying a frock’ (Streatfeild: 1994: 113). Pauline feels that exposing the fact they are poor will harm her chances of securing the part that will help them to solve their financial problems. To conceal their secret, the Fossil sisters sell the necklaces from their guardian Great Uncle Matthew to one of the boarders, Mr Simpson, who offers to lend them back on special occasions, so Sylvia does not discover that they have sold them to pay for an audition frock. The selling of the necklaces is indicative of sacrifices involved in a career on the stage, but the Fossil sisters are not merely sacrificing possessions but also enacting a performance away from the stage to avoid revealing that they are struggling financially. They have developed their collective agency to address financial concerns, but enhancing their potential careers on stage has also resulted in their sacrificing parts of themselves.

Harriet Johnson also has to think carefully about what she wears both on and off the ice. Dressing like the skater in the ballet skirt she sees on a poster is out of the question, as she has no suitable clothes and has to settle for her everyday jersey and skirt. Not wearing lavish clothes does not mean Harriet will experience prejudice for being poor though. In *The Years of Grace,* J. W. provides the following advice to new skaters:

> Do not feel you have to wear grand skating clothes to start with. Those special skating outfits you see on the rink look fine, but remember you are a beginner, and you don’t want every eye on you as you stagger and fall down. Your safest bet is a full skirt, if possible, and a blouse or sweater (Streatfeild: 1950: 272).

Harriet is envious of Lalla Moore's white skating boots, but the ones provided for hire at the rink are dark brown and the skating manager informs her 'If you want them stylish white ones you'll have to buy your own' (Streatfeild: 2015: 46). Harriet probably benefits from not having a distinctive appearance, as she is reliant on Lalla's help to get her used to the ice. Harriet has to disguise her identity when she visits Lalla's house though, as Aunt Claudia is likely to deem her an unsuitable friend for Lalla if it is made apparent that she is poor. As Lalla has an abundance of clothes, Harriet borrows some of her old ones without Aunt Claudia noticing. Like Pauline Fossil, Harriet feels compelled to maintain a false image of financial security.

Selina has the opposite problem to Pauline and Harriet, as her new organdie frock and satin shoes are deemed too elaborate for everyday use, and there are few appropriate occasions to wear her clothes during wartime. Mrs Andrews opines that Selina's godmother 'has the most inflated ideas about what is worn in English villages at the end of a long war' indicating that Selina would be viewed unfavourably if she wore a party frock without a valid reason (Streatfeild: 1971: 12). Ironically, the Andrews children opt to stage a pageant, which results in their causing more problems related to clothes. Rationing of materials makes it difficult for the children to source costumes for their pageant and they are required to make several compromises. Sally is excited when she learns about Mrs Day's supply of old evening dresses and imagines herself in a flowered crépe de chine but has to settle for 'the skirt of the dull crimson' (p. 153). However, the narrator indicates that she made a good choice: 'She looked quite lovely. A wreath of roses round her hair, her vividness accentuated by rouge. Her stiff velvet Elizabethan bodice, her ruff and her

floating skirt slit up the side, showing almost the whole of one leg suited her beautifully' (p. 203). Sally's ability to compromise has worked in her favour because she has demonstrated sensitivity to the fact that they are living during a war. The pageant has provided the children with an opportunity to show resourcefulness, but it was also necessary to stage a performance so Selina could wear her frock without creating a bad impression. Both Selina's and the Andrews children's performances have gone beyond the roles they play in the pageant.

Down the Rabbit Hole of Performance: Identifying with New Roles on Stage

According to Streatfeild, becoming an actress requires 'a special temperament and personality, and remarkable singleness of purpose' (Streatfeild: 1950: 290). Acting convincingly involves being able to identify with the character they are representing on stage. In her article, Helen Freshwater reveals that producers selected northern working-class boys to play the role of Billy Elliot: the three chosen actors were all sons of a steel worker, a pipe fitter and a builder, and writer Lee Hall referred to them as 'real life Billy Elliots' who acquired the role because in the theatre you can smell the authenticity of someone who has had to struggle to get there from a mile off' (Freshwater: 2012: 161). Theatre producers in Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* take a similar approach when casting the part of Carroll's Alice. Pauline Fossil is chosen because she 'looks right for Alice', with her blonde hair resembling the character from John Tenniel's illustrations (Streatfeild: 1994: 128). Pauline's unknown origins and potential to establish herself in the theatrical world relate to Alice's experiencing confusion about her identity and emergence of new possibilities when she falls down the rabbit-hole. Alice's ability to question social etiquette without consequence could

also inspire Pauline's growing confidence on stage. Ellen Terry revealed in her memoir that she 'revelled in Puck and his impish pranks, and unconsciously realised that it was a part in which the imagination could run riot' (Terry: 2012: 276). However, she also acknowledged that identification with a character could prove to be problematic:

> The parts we play influence our characters to some extent, and Puck made me a bit of a romp. I grew vain and rather 'cocky,' and it was just as well that during the rehearsals for the Christmas pantomime in 1857 I was tried for the part of the Fairy Dragonetta and rejected (280).

Newspapers applaud Pauline's performance as Alice and she receives several letters and gifts from admiring children, but her success causes her to develop arrogance and she is confrontational at home and in rehearsals: 'Pauline thought that because she was the leading lady in the theatre she was one in the house too' (Streatfeild: 1994: 136). Like her predecessor Ellen Terry, Pauline also feels compelled to reflect upon her behaviour when she is demoted to the role of understudy after she refuses to follow the stage manager's instructions:

> At first she cried because she thought she was being badly treated…But by degrees, as she got more and more tired from crying, other thoughts drifted through her mind. Had she been rude? Had she been showing off? (p. 142)

Pauline is an authentic Alice both on and off the stage, but unlike her character, she faces consequences for rebelling. Streatfeild is keen to acknowledge the importance of authenticity when casting a part, but also suggests that it is detrimental for an actress to share too many characteristics with the part she is playing. As Peter Stoneley argues in his article 'Ballet Imperial', '*Ballet Shoes* teaches us that success is won by submission and the studious reproduction of others' thoughts and intentions' (Stoneley: 2002: 148). Pauline realises that her acting talent does not make her indispensable. Her understudy, Winifred, is considered to be a more

accomplished actress than she is, and Pauline has to promise to modify her behaviour to be reinstated into her role as Alice. As the stage manager Mr French informs her, 'Alice' was just as much 'Alice,' whether Winifred was acting her or Pauline. Lewis Carroll's words were what mattered' (p. 145). Unlike Carroll's Alice, Pauline faces consequences for her actions both at home and in the theatre. As Stoneley observes, Pauline needs to learn the art of submission: being involved in theatre is not merely about acting parts on stage convincingly, but also knowing how to behave appropriately when not in character.

Harriet is cast as Alice when her family and Lalla act the play at Christmas, but it is Lalla who is the most accomplished actress. Playing the parts of the Red Queen, White Knight and Caterpillar, Lalla is able to 'feel she was the person or the creature she was acting. She knew just the right way to say Lewis Carroll's words to make them sound as funny as they truly were' (Streatfeild: 2015: 231). The range of characters Lalla plays illustrates contrasting sides to her personality: The Red Queen emphasises her dominance in her friendship with Harriet, but her role as the White Knight highlights how she needs Harriet to keep her motivated to work on her figures. Lalla is not cast as Alice, but to some extent she is compelled to act the role off stage because she constantly alters her size for her skating career. Sonja Henie recalls her attitude towards food in her autobiography. At the age of nine, she started to prepare for her first senior championship in Norway. She reveals:

> Besides the concentrated practice hours, I was given a diet scheme that made certain that I would eat neither foolishly nor at the wrong times. It was finally impressed upon me that some eating was necessary, and I meekly gave in and went to breakfast, lunch and dinner at the times when I was expected (Henie: 2017: 15).

Aunt Claudia believes Lalla does not have an appropriate figure for a skater and decides she must be put on a restrictive diet: 'A skater should be slim, and there are a few naughty curves I should like to see disappear' and while she acknowledges that ordinary children should be 'well covered', she insists that Lalla is different and 'we must treat her like a little race-horse' (Streatfeild: 2015: 123). Like Pauline Fossil, Lalla has to break away from her role as Alice off stage. Aunt Claudia's desire to turn her niece into an ideal skater backfires when Lalla's weight loss impacts on her health. Lalla reacts angrily when her aunt expresses concern: 'I thought you wanted me thinner. All those months no potatoes, no cakes, no nothing nice…I'm not Alice in Wonderland eating things all the time to grow littler and bigger' (p. 254). Streatfeild uses Carroll's *Alice* novels to provide a critique of the skating world: she implies that skaters are valued for their appearance rather than their talent, and through Lalla, she highlights how, despite the glamour of the ice rink, skating stars can experience significant anguish.

Selina Cole identifies with Carroll's protagonist when she becomes immersed in pageant rehearsals: 'Selina felt rather like Alice when the 'Red Queen said "Faster! Faster!"' (Streatfeild: 1971: 174) She experiences conflicting emotions when working on the pageant, as she resents being 'the person that everyone shouted for,' but at the same time she is encouraged that people are dependent on her: 'it is impossible to be important to everybody concerned in an undertaking, and not gain confidence' (p. 120). Alice's struggles with the Red Queen's dominance are comparable to Selina's own experiences with her cousins and Philip Day who constantly undermine her. Despite the pageant's being staged for her benefit, Selina senses 'it would only

be her pageant when anything tiresome wanted doing…It would be awfully nice to wear organdie and satin shoes, but you could pay too high a price' (p. 58). Philip's preoccupation with the cousins' scenes results in his neglecting Selina's part in the prologue and epilogue. Selina works hard for her chance to shine on stage, in a similar way to Alice who perseveres to reach the Eighth Square to achieve her ambition to become a Queen, but both girls struggle to establish their authority. To ensure that her dream is achieved, Selina has to demonstrate assertiveness, a characteristic that she normally lacks, angrily reminding Philip 'Wasn't this pageant got up just so that I could wear my frock?' (p. 187) and Philip responds to this by showing her respect in future rehearsals. In contrast to Pauline and Lalla, Selina embodies Alice's traits off stage in a productive way: she experiences feelings of being overwhelmed like her predecessor, but does not feel compelled to change her body despite fears her frock will be too tight, and unlike Pauline, she chooses to confront figures in authority when she has experienced a genuine injustice.

The Andrews children experiment with different roles for their scenes in the pageant before they find the right one. One pageant that possibly inspired Streatfeild's *Party Frock* was the 1935 *Pageant of England*, produced by Gwen Lally. The pageant took place at Langley Park, and featured Lady Harvey, the owner of the land as Queen Elizabeth I. Newspapers praised the pageant for its authenticity: a writer in *The Observer* enthused that 'Historical accuracy has been applied even to the fairies! It certainly reigns elsewhere throughout the pageant'

(https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/pageant-

england/docview/481260632/se-2?accountid=11528). According to *The Times,* the setting for the pageant featured similarities with the one in Streatfeild's novel:

> The pomp and ceremonial and the dancing and merry-making of these episodes have a great green arena for their display. A painted wall overhung with cedars conceals the wooded assembly point and each procession enters through the gates in the wall and slowly fills the arena with colour (link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS202058939/TTDA?u=unihull&sid=TTDA&xid=4dab89c2).

The Andrews children's pageant takes place on the lower lawn of Colonel Day's Abbey which 'looked as if it had been born to be a stage. It was surrounded by a hedge of different flowering shrubs' (Streatfeild: 1971: 70). Sally opts to choreograph a masque for Queen Elizabeth I, a popular figure for twentieth-century pageant writers because her reign was associated with peace and prosperity. Dance was often used in pageants to depict historical events, including the Pageant of Newark in 1936, which featured both amateur and professional ballet dancers (http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1135). Eager to be noticed for her dancing, Sally decides that Queen Elizabeth can be an extra in the scene, an idea that is opposed by Philip Day: 'It's no good you thinking you can tuck Gloriana in a corner. She wasn't that sort of Queen and everyone knows it' (p. 71). She recruits dancers from the Linkwell Ballet School who choreograph a scene where a girl is captured by the fairies and taken into fairyland. Despite having a principal role in the masque, Sally's solo dance involves 'a few bars to express joy and gladness at your freedom, a jeté and off' (p. 165). The role of the girl being carried into fairyland is suitable for Sally because it is the equivalent of her own preoccupation with ballet and distance from reality. Her constant daydreaming about her scene almost puts the pageant in jeopardy, as she neglects her schoolwork despite knowing that Dr Andrews has permitted the children to perform the pageant on the condition that they maintain their places in their forms. After witnessing the Linkwell girls' rehearsal,

Sally feels self-conscious about her own dancing ability and is relieved that she has only a small role. In preparation for the pageant, Sally has received a valuable lesson about teamwork, which enables her to benefit both on and off the stage: she has opportunities to learn from experienced dancers and is prepared for future setbacks. Her scene in fairyland serves as a reminder for Sally to pursue her passion with caution: enthusiasm is vital but becoming too immersed in it could cause her to forget about other important aspects of her life.

Phoebe Andrews faces several setbacks when putting her scene together. She is the most intelligent child in the family and displays remarkable talent in writing poetry, but is unappreciated by her siblings and accused of displaying conceit when she reminds them: 'I write very good poetry for nine and a half, everybody says so' (p. 20). Phoebe's frustration with her family is reflected in her original scene, which is written in Renaissance verse and features her as a young Anne Boleyn. Her gift for acting is apparent in rehearsals: 'she was feeling as she thought the little Anne Boleyn would have felt' (p. 94). Phoebe's choice of role model links to Freshwater's consideration of the complexities surrounding performance and authenticity, as there is the issue of an innocent girl playing a controversial historical figure. A potential audience would have more knowledge about the character than the actress playing her: Phoebe has probably learned about Henry VIII's wives at school and is aware that Anne Boleyn was beheaded but is ignorant of the circumstances that led to her execution, in contrast to the spectators who would know about Anne's alleged adultery. Phoebe's scene is naively narrated and inauthentic in terms of historical accuracy, but it is arguably impossible to create an authentic scene with a child

playing a problematic character. Finding a new role for Phoebe is potentially difficult, as she is determined to be a Queen but none of the other Queens in history are suitable: she is too small to play Queen Victoria or Lady Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth I already features in Sally's scene. It is decided that she will act the part of a sixteenth century May Queen, a symbol of purity in folklore and a complete contrast to Anne Boleyn. Phoebe acts the part perfectly and realises that it was 'just the scene [she] wanted, crown, train and all' (p. 152). Unlike her contemporary Kitty Barne, Streatfeild has limited the number of significant women in the pageant in *Party Frock,* as apart from Queen Elizabeth I, the rest of the female characters are unnamed. Streatfeild's decision to omit many key female figures is reflective of how history is full of unnamed women whose achievements have been lost. Sally's and Phoebe's desires to play principal roles are thwarted when they are reduced to representing nonentities in history, which is indicative of the struggles they will face to establish themselves in their chosen careers. On the other hand, the rejection of potential roles for Phoebe suggests that she needs to aspire towards recognition for her own unique talents rather than modelling herself upon women from the past. Queens from previous centuries can still be admired for their achievements, but new role models are needed in the twentieth century.

Selina has the responsibility of writing the opening and concluding scenes but struggles to establish the identity of the girl she plays in the pageant, a possible reflection of how Selina struggles to find a sense of self in the novel, and how many girls throughout history had difficulties developing their own identities in patriarchal societies. Sally suggests that she can represent 'a daughter of all the Days who ever

lived at the Abbey' which is instantly dismissed by Phoebe: 'I know what you are. You are England. You must write a beautiful patriotic speech and you can carry a Union Jack' (p. 44). A pageant entitled 'The Spirit of England' took place in Southampton in 1935 to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. The pageant received applause in the print media with one journalist in *The Times* describing it as 'a pageant of singular beauty and poignancy' (link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS184888488/TTDA?u=unihull&sid=TTDA&xid=92d3f6b4). It featured a motif of love for England which is represented by an undying flame. In Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, Miss La Trobe's pageant is introduced by the child Phyllis Jones, 'a small girl, like a rosebud in pink', who struggles to convince the audience that she is representing England (Woolf: 2000: 47). Phyllis constantly forgets her lines and has to be prompted by Miss La Trobe, symbolising England's vulnerability and highlighting how she is appropriately cast. Selina's lack of confidence indicates that England's role is potentially ideal for her too. However, the tone of Woolf's and Streatfeild's novels contrast: one is anticipating war, whereas the other is optimistic about England's victory and potential to rebuild again, which suggests that the Spirit of England role needs to be undertaken by somebody more assertive.

Selina is empowered by the thought of playing The Spirit of England and feels confident that she can write her speech, but her plans are thwarted by Philip, who informs her she would need a trident and lions to be convincing. Philip's preoccupation with authenticity and historical accuracy has possibly resulted in his becoming too literal-minded or controlling. In her discussion of *Billy Elliot,* Helen

Freshwater points out that despite the show's being celebrated for its authenticity, it is also inauthentic in several ways. In one particular scene, unlikely dancers deliver a polished performance to the songs 'Shine' and 'Razzle Dazzle,' which 'remind audiences that performance is all about pretence and make-believe, duplicity and deception. It is not, as performed here, about always 'being yourself' or 'expressing yourself'; it's about delivering 'old razzle dazzle' whatever you feel' (Freshwater: 2012: 165). This is apparent when Philip interferes with the pageant and arguably undermines its authenticity. Given that the pageant is marketed as being written by and performed by children, an adult's dictating how it should be performed instantly brings its authenticity into question. His preoccupation with the most talented performers being showcased, such as the Linkwell dancers in Sally's scene, thwarts his own desire for authenticity because he is more concerned about children delivering an accomplished performance than their expressing themselves. Philip's involvement in the pageant results in girls being allocated seemingly passive roles, particularly in the case of Sally's character being kidnapped and taken to fairyland. There is ambiguity about Selina's role as the girl who dreams the pageant, as dreaming girls have the potential to become powerful or powerless depending on what they experience in their dreams. Both the Girls' Friendly Society's *The Quest* and Barne's *The Amber Gate* featured dreaming girls who encountered women from history to inspire them: the former championed self-sacrifice and domesticity whilst the latter encouraged girls to have an adventurous spirit. Selina's character does not appear to have been influenced by any of the people she dreams about though. In her concluding speech she reveals:

> Seven hundred years you've seen. Years of change. Years of gladness. Years of suffering. One thing has remained unchanged. The English heart. The English love of the old customs and the old ways. This pageant sees an end of the old way of life (Streatfeild: 1971: 219).

No figure in the pageant is presented as an ideal for the dream girl to aspire towards: she remains detached from individuals, and sympathises with the nostalgia for the past, whilst also acknowledging that some aspects of the past need to be left behind. Envious of her cousins' talents and confidence, Selina can empathise with the dreaming girl who remains an observer rather than a participant for much of the pageant. Her speech at the end stresses that changes will occur at the Abbey, which is about to become a youth hostel for American visitors, but it also highlights how things are about to change for Selina. She knows she can return home to her parents now that they have been released from the Prisoner of War camp in Hong Kong, and she has also developed more confidence in herself through working on the pageant. Like the girl who dreams the historical events, Selina witnesses her cousins' achievements, but working on the pageant enables her to value herself for the qualities she has in her different roles behind the scenes.

Posy Fossil and Lalla Moore are predicted to have the most significant starring roles in ballet and ice-skating. Posy does not face reprimands for outspoken behaviour, Madame Fidolia approves of her decision to work on her dancing at home, and she is adamant that she will be irreplaceable: 'When I dance…nobody else will do instead of me; they'll come to see me, and if I'm not there, they'll just go home'. Her sister Petrova 'did not believe it was conceitedness when Posy said things like that, but it certainly was when Pauline said them. Why?' (Streatfeild: 1994: 146). Streatfeild seems to suggest that Posy has a rare gift and that dancers cannot be as easily replaced in the same way as actresses. Posy demonstrates exceptional dancing ability as soon as she joins Madame Fidolia's Academy. Arnold Haskell

stressed the importance of choosing a teacher who took an interest in an aspiring dancer's body shape:

> The very first thing that the teacher will have to decide is whether you are built in the right way. Have you a straight, strong spine, well proportioned neck and shoulders, the right legs and knees, a strong instep and toes that will be able to support the weight of your body? (Streatfeild: 1950: 298)

Madame Fidolia is instantly dedicated to developing Posy's career and there are early indications that she has most of the required qualities Haskell describes: after examining Posy's instep, Madame Fidolia is 'so delighted at the shape and flexibility of her feet that she called the rest of the class to look at them' (Streatfeild: 1994: 36). Like Sally Andrews, Posy is completely immersed in ballet and 'lived for nothing but her dancing classes. She was exceedingly stupid at her lessons, she tried to work, but she could only say and understand things with her feet' (p. 151). She plays parts of an Hour, a Star and an Unborn child, three roles that feature ambiguity: an hour can help to define a dancer's career, but it also highlights how time is limited, unborn children have the potential to develop and grow but they may never be born, and stars can fade quickly or continue to shine. Fellow pupils have few other opportunities to watch Posy dance: she does not appear in charity performances, and her response to their request to dance is to 'give one of her funny imitations of this teacher or that pupil' (p. 152). Part of becoming a successful ballerina for Posy appears to involve giving a performance off stage: as she does not reveal the extent of her dancing ability, people around her display desire to find out more. Through Posy, Streatfeild highlights the importance of potential dancers being confident in their talent, but also remaining elusive when they are off the stage to maintain the interest of their audience. In contrast to stage actresses, Posy reveals more of her true self when she is on stage, as she does not suppress any of her dancing skills.

Lalla contrasts to Posy as her Aunt Claudia is determined for her to showcase her skating talent at every opportunity and her performances attract attention in the media. After appearing at a skating gala, newspapers applaud her performance describing her as ‘A young skating star’ ‘A winsome child skater’ and ‘A pretty little queen of the ice’ (Streatfeild: 2015: 157). Media exposure has the same effect on Lalla as it does on Pauline Fossil: she becomes conceited, argues with her family and Harriet, and displays complacency when working towards her tests. Sonja Henie stresses the importance of learning figures in her autobiography:

> There is probably no sport today in which more concentrated, conscientious effort is required. Your school figure practice alone will take up hours of your time each day if you want to enter the championship class…school figures are vastly important in competition, and they really require time and more time to perfect (Henie: 2017: 108).

Lalla prefers free skating, has little passion for learning figures and does not feel motivated to work on them. After passing her bronze and inter-silver examinations convincingly, Lalla assumes she will receive a similar result in her silver test and dismisses her tutor Max Lindblom’s and Harriet’s concerns about her lack of dedication to mastering brackets: ‘Lalla knew for certain she was going to pass; she had always had everything she wanted’ (Streatfeild: 2015: 182). She is proven wrong when she fails and only narrowly passes on her second attempt. Lalla is allocated the part of skating champion, but her lack of motivation to rehearse by learning her figures suggests that she needs to find a new role more suited to her passions.

Like Lalla, Petrova Fossil’s childhood career is chosen for her, and she has little passion for it. Dance teacher Marguerite Vacani writes about her experiences of one of her pupils surprising her:

> I do not think I have ever seen a girl who appeared to be a more hopeless proposition. She scowled, her hair was lank, her face was spotty, she stuck out where she should have stuck in and vice versa, and she walked so heavily she might have been an elephant rather than a girl who proposed to be a dancer. She had just one thing about her which made me accept her for my school – a blazing enthusiasm for dancing, which touched my heart. You would not have known her a year later (Streatfeild: 1950: 323).

Petrova shares similarities with the girl Vacani refers to: she is not considered to be pretty, and despite not having natural dancing ability, she becomes 'technically one of the most proficient pupils in her class.' However, she lacks Vacani's pupil's enthusiasm for dance: 'it bored her and she looked as though it did' (Streatfeild: 1994: 149). Petrova's failure to conceal her boredom indicates that dancing is not a suitable career for her: simply performing the movements correctly will not be enough to engage audiences if it is apparent that she has no passion for it. Petrova experiences similar problems when acting despite receiving extra lessons and tuition from literature academic Doctor Jakes. She successfully learns her lines when she plays Mytyl in *The Blue Bird* but struggles to play the character convincingly. Acting mistress Miss Jay is unimpressed by her performance in rehearsals: 'we get nothing except Petrova saying lines that she has learnt' (p. 92). Playing Mytyl becomes easier for Petrova when the actors wear their costumes and she finds she can relate to her character's emotions in her final performance:

> Somehow when she and Pauline were left alone on stage, it all looked so dark, and the gravestones so real that she almost made herself believe that ghosts would come when the diamond was turned (p. 102).

In relation to Freshwater's analysis, Petrova is arguably the most authentic character in *The Blue Bird,* as she is from a Russian background and delivers a convincing performance because she can equate her nerves with Mytyl's fear of being in a dark graveyard, indicating that she has the potential to become a successful actress if the scene is right for her. However, consistently identifying with a character does not

come naturally to her, which suggests that she is too authentic for a career in theatre. Nana's prediction that stage training will make Petrova more conventionally feminine is proven false: Petrova will not change because she is unable to be anyone but herself, both on and off the stage. Being authentic presents problems for both Pauline and Petrova: when she plays Alice, Pauline is too authentic in her role off the stage as she constantly seeks conflict with her family and people in the theatre, whereas Petrova is limited by her authenticity because she can only play characters who share similarities with her. Streatfeild acknowledges the advantages of actors having authenticity when her characters are cast in appropriate roles, but at the same time, she stresses that successful actors sometimes need to separate themselves from the parts they are playing.

Stars of the Future: New Opportunities and Roles

> Streatfeild was a great one for combining a pinch of sermonizing with a sprinkle of bliss. In novels, short stories, and cautionary essays, from her 1936 *Ballet Shoes* on into the 1960s, she regularly instructs would-be prima donnas that the obligation of discipline must precede the exhilaration of curtain call bouquets, but she brings forth the honors, floral or otherwise, when she deems a character deserving (Stokes: 2004: 185).

As Sally Sims Stokes observes, Streatfeild's girl protagonists' early experiences of stardom have involved learning many lessons about the importance of hard work and warnings about complacency and arrogance. Girls who respond to setbacks constructively still maintain the vital self-belief needed to succeed in their chosen careers, and many of Streatfeild's protagonists have some exciting opportunities to pursue their passions. Even her most successful characters are required to compromise though, and they find that their dreams about their chosen professions

are not necessarily fulfilled immediately. Pauline and Posy Fossil both prefer acting and dancing on stage to appearing in films. With a growing film industry in Hollywood and the increased popularity of the cinema, Pauline realises that she needs to consider parts in films if she wishes to become a successful actress. She receives considerable attention after appearing as Henrietta in a film about Charles II despite her opinion that 'I wasn't nearly as good as I was as "Edward" and there wasn't nearly all the fuss then' (Streatfeild: 1994: 238). In both roles, Pauline's authenticity or lack of it, has not impacted on her acting ability to perform them: in fact, despite being a closer representation of Henrietta, she regards playing Edward as a more significant achievement. Through Pauline's range of roles, Streatfeild seems to suggest that a gap between authenticity and the actress is necessary in order for her not to lose her sense of self. Pauline's decision to accept another role in a film is mainly motivated by a desire to fund Posy's ballet training. Readers learn in later novels *Curtain Up* (1944) and *The Painted Garden* (1949) that Pauline has become a famous actress in Hollywood. She does not abandon her dream of acting on stage though and recognises that appearing in films has been beneficial for her career: 'I came here because of paying for Posy but in the end it's going to give me what I want. After this picture I'm going to play Juliet in New York, and later on perhaps in London. Juliet! I'm so happy I can't tell you' (Streatfeild: 1976: 283). Pauline's hard work and sacrifices have finally enabled her to secure a part she genuinely loves. Just as she was cast fittingly as Alice at the age of twelve, Pauline is also appropriately cast as Juliet because she makes sacrifices for a person she loves. Her varied roles emphasise that potential actresses need to compromise and accept any parts they are offered before they can achieve the ones they desire.

The importance of compromise became apparent to Streatfeild early on in her acting career. When struggling to find work after graduating from the Academy of Dramatic Art, Streatfeild felt compelled to accept a role as a chorus girl in a musical comedy. Knowing that her family would disapprove, she disguised her identity by using her stage name Noelle Sonning (Bull: 1984: 74). A new identity also opens up new possibilities for Posy Fossil, who opts to use a different name when her ballet career does not go to plan. When prestigious ballet company owner Monsieur Manoff agrees to teach Posy, it is difficult for readers to imagine that her dream of becoming a ballerina will not be achieved. Posy reluctantly accepts dancing roles in films when she needs to support herself financially and uses her stage name Posina. In a letter to Holly Forbes in *Curtain Up,* she reveals: 'when the war's over, I mean the name Posy Fossil to be known by everybody who loves dancing' (Streatfeild: 2015: 237). The roles of chorus girl and dancers in films are deemed unsuitable by Streatfeild and Posy, but they become comfortable playing them when they invent new identities for themselves off stage. With Posy, Streatfeild creates a wider gap between performance and authenticity than she does with Pauline: the latter is not ashamed of playing any parts she acquires, but her playing a range of roles makes it difficult to associate her with a particular character. In contrast, Posy is concerned about being defined by where her ballet is showcased and feels she cannot remain her authentic self if she does not believe in her dancing, but she can perform authentically in films as Posina. Posy's adopting of a stage name highlights how some authenticity issues can only be resolved if a performer sacrifices their true identity when they are in the public eye. Ballerina Moira Shearer, who provided Streatfeild with inspiration for Posy Fossil, enjoyed success on stage and received praise in newspapers for her performances, but many of the reporters focussed on

her appearance rather than her dancing. A writer in *The Manchester Guardian* in 1951 described how she looked 'like a fairy princess come to life,' but also that 'her technique has been adequate enough but not memorable' (https://search.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/moira-shearers-triumph/docview/479188828/se-2?accountid=11528).

Similarly, when she enacted Odette and Odile in *Swan Lake* in 1953, another journalist opined that 'her distinction has depended much less on her technique than on her natural gift of dazzling good looks' (https://search.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/swan-lake-at-covent-garden/docview/479522834/se-2?accountid=11528). Despite her preference for stage work, Moira Shearer enjoyed more success in films, particularly in *The Red Shoes* (1948), which a writer in the *Essex Newsman* applauded for being 'the first film to tell the full and enchanting story of the ballet, both on stage and behind the scenes' (link.gale.com/apps/doc/GR3226825960/BNCN?u=unihull&sid=BNCN&xid=c363035c). As an admirer of Moira Shearer, it is likely that Streatfeild would have been aware of the media attention to her looks, and Posy's determination not to appear in films is reflective of her desire to be recognised for her talent rather than her appearance. It is never implied that Posy's success can be attributed to her looks in Streatfeild's 'Shoe' novels. Future pupils at Madame Fidolia's academy are in awe of her: Rachel Winter is excited to meet her because 'Posy Fossil was a legend in the school. There had never been a dancer to touch her,' (Streatfeild: 1976: 44), and Ethel Forum is delighted when Madame Fidolia declares that she is 'the most talented child I have taught since my great pupil Posy Fossil (Streatfeild: 1967: 166). Posy has acquired celebrity status at the dancing school and emphasis is placed on her ability, but Streatfeild is reluctant for any aspiring dancer to emulate her. Readers know that

Ethel is offered a place at the Royal Ballet School, but there is no indication of how her career progresses. Streatfield encourages girls to pursue passions for dancing but also emphasises that achieving heroic status in the theatrical world is rare, and Posy Fossil is possibly an unattainable role model to aspire towards both inside and outside of her novels.

Pauline and Posy are misguided in their assumptions that becoming an actress and dancer will prevent them from entering the history books, as both acquire legendary status in the Academy because of their successes on stage and screen. Petrova is unlikely to achieve fame in the theatrical world, but she does have potential to establish herself in a different profession. She develops confidence when studying for a ground licence and despite being too young to fly, 'she knew that when she did an aeroplane would obey her, just as certainly as Posy knew that her feet and body would obey her' (Streatfeild: 1994: 151). Petrova's pursuit of activities which challenge gender conventions makes life at Madame Fidolia's Academy more bearable for her: she reads her books about cars and aeroplanes during rehearsals and even enjoys playing the part of Mustard-seed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because she has an opportunity to fly on stage. Pauline predicts that her sister will be renowned in the history books alongside Jean Batten and Amy Mollison, two women who are both inspiring role models for Petrova. Amy Mollison, formerly Johnson was the first female pilot to fly solo from England to Australia in 1930. New Zealand aviator Jean Batten broke several records throughout the 1930s including Amy Johnson's flight time from England to Australia. Johnson frequently published articles about flying and encouraged young girls to take it up. Writing in the *Daily Mail* in 1938, she advised women who wanted well-paid jobs to '[g]et into the aviation

business while the going is good' (tinyurlgalegroup.com/tinyurl/59k9j9). Aviation provided a variety of career options for women including exhibition flying, teaching, photography and design. Johnson promised that women could learn for a small fee, urging them to '[g]o to an aerodrome and see for yourselves, and I guarantee that, however much you like life on the ground, you will soon want to be in the air' (tinyurlgalegroup.com/tinyurl/59k9j9). Petrova qualifies as a pilot and serves in the Women's Auxiliary Service during the Second World War, impressing Academy pupil Mark Forbes: 'She's the only sensible one. Pretty good for a girl to be a pilot. She's the only one I'd like to know' (Streatfeild: 2015: 107). Streatfeild challenges gender binaries with Petrova's career, even more so because her success as a pilot has resulted in a young boy considering her to be a role model. After the war, Petrova works in an aeroplane factory, and Posy reveals that she is 'inventing something that is going to put the name of Fossil into the history books' (Streatfeild: 1976: 196). However, there are several indications that the Fossil sisters have earned their places in the history books long before Petrova's invention. Pauline, Petrova and Posy show how children's lives can be transformed in their journeys from poor orphans to becoming celebrity heroes if they show dedication to their careers and are prepared to make sacrifices, and their achievements could encourage future generations to pursue their dreams.

Lois Kuznets argues that 'In *Ballet Shoes* in particular, there is a freshness of approach that Streatfeild never quite achieves again' (Kuznets: 1984: 149). The Fossil sisters are hard acts to follow: none of Streatfeild's other characters is as iconic as they are, and Posy seems to represent an impossible ideal. In *Party Frock,* little is known about what Sally and Phoebe do once they finish the pageant.

Readers know that Sally has been accepted into the Linkwell Ballet School and Madame Ramasova opines ‘I think we shall make a dancer of you’ (Streatfeild: 1971: 214). This motivates Sally to perform well in the pageant and she regains self-belief after facing setbacks. Unlike the Fossil sisters though, Sally is not immediately accepted into a prestigious dance school and earns her scholarship through hard work, so Streatfeild is arguably offering poorer children realistic advice about what they can do if they wish to pursue careers on stage. It is unclear what Phoebe’s prospects are, but readers know she has ruled out dancing as a potential career: ‘I don’t like doing anything unless I do it better than other people, so I don’t dance’ (p. 112). Despite being a talented writer and actress, she is convinced that ‘nothing nice will ever happen again’ after the pageant finishes (p. 222). She is proven wrong when Selina gifts her the organdie frock and shoes, which is significant as Phoebe rarely has new clothes because of rationing and Sally’s dresses are usually too small for her by the time she has outgrown them. The frock represents new beginnings and could signal to readers that Phoebe will have exciting opportunities in the future. Phoebe is multi-talented and Streatfeild’s decision not to reveal what she will do indicates to readers that they should focus on developing several talents before settling on a potential career. Sally and Phoebe do not become established stars like the Fossil sisters but their contributions to organising a pageant during wartime and overcoming obstacles are inspiring for readers who experience hardship in achieving their ambitions.

In an essay about producing plays, Kitty Barne noted that ‘Talent has a way of cropping up in the most unexpected of places’ (Streatfeild: 1950: 183). Barne’s insight is particularly apt when examining Selina’s achievements in *Party Frock.*

Constantly feeling overshadowed by her cousins, Selina emerges as an unlikely hero throughout the novel. Nancy Huse, in her biography of Streatfeild, applauds Selina's characterisation:

> Selina's ability to wait to hold her tongue at the right moment, to consider the effects of an action on others and on a desired result, become increasingly powerful personal tools as the idea of putting on a pageant thrusts her into the work of taking on more difficult people and finally of being a stage manager for a huge panorama of English life (Huse: 1994: 86).

Selina undertakes several tasks in the pageant to ensure it runs smoothly and resolves the conflict between Philip and Phoebe over the latter's scene. She also has the responsibility of saving it altogether when a fire occurs at the Abbey. According to Colonel Day, she 'worked like a brick on the stirrup pump' (Streatfeild: 1971: 195). Philip acknowledges Selina's efforts after the pageant admitting that she is 'A person too often forgotten' and 'has been a magnificent stage manager. We would not have done it without her' (p. 221). Working on the pageant has been a worthwhile experience for Selina because she has proved to be vital in ensuring it happens and she develops assertiveness and leadership skills to prepare her for later life. There is no indication that she will work on another pageant, as she is returning home to her parents, and her dress no longer fitting indicates that she is leaving stage performance behind. Stage management is possibly a temporary hobby for Selina, but it has helped her realise that she is not defined by her party frock, and she encourages less confident girls to take on new challenges which might help them to discover new skills they were unaware they had.

Girls are not in competition with each other in *Ballet Shoes* and *Party Frock* as they all excel in different talents. In *White Boots,* Lalla and Harriet both show promise in

ice-skating which results in competitiveness and tension between the two girls. Harriet's family refer to her as 'Miss Cecilia Colledge' when she is advised to take up ice-skating. Colledge showed remarkable promise as a child, passing her bronze test with little training at the age of seven, and at eleven, she became the youngest skater to compete in the Winter Olympics. After winning the European Championship in 1937, a special correspondent in *The Observer* stated that she was 'the natural successor, as champion of the world, to the incomparable Sonja Henie' (https://www-proquest-com.hull.idm.oclc.org/historical-newspapers/when-motion-is-poetry/docview/481563980/se-2?accountid=11528). Harriet's father makes his comment in jest, but there is a suggestion that Harriet could fulfil his predictions because her skating technique improves significantly under Max Lindblom's supervision. Unlike Lalla, she enjoys working on figures: 'Once she had grasped the tracing her skates should leave on the ice she did not mind how long she went on working to get it right' (Streatfeild: 2015: 181). Lalla is resentful after Harriet passes her bronze tests and starts working towards her inter-silver: 'tests were her things and they ought to be her special days' (p. 227). The tension between the two girls shares similarities with the relationship between Cecilia Colledge and Megan Taylor. A journalist writing an obituary for Cecilia Colledge described how their rivalry was 'intense (when Cecilia beat Megan into second place for the British title in 1938, the runner-up congratulated her conqueror then promptly burst into tears), and Cecilia's mother arranged for the two girls to meet to talk away their differences' (link.gale.com/apps/doc/A177937947/STND?u=unihull&sid=summon&xid=27af92f). Like Colledge's mother, Olivia Johnson also plays peacemaker in Harriet's and Lalla's argument, assuring Lalla that if she 'would stop thinking about being a skating champion, you might find that it wasn't so important as you thought' (Streatfeild:

2015: 279). The threat to Lalla's and Harriet's friendship highlights the two sides to competitiveness in sport: it can challenge people to work harder and improve, but there is a danger of unhealthy rivalries developing. Upon being convinced that Harriet is seriously ill after their argument, Lalla learns an important lesson about the value of friendship and being gracious towards fellow competitors.

Streatfeild's notes for *White Boots* are available in the *Seven Stories* archive in Newcastle: the early version differs considerably from the final version as Harriet and Lalla are named Joanna and Rachel, and Rachel's mother is still alive and pressuring her daughter into becoming a skating champion like her father. At the end of her original version, the girls both enter the junior championships and desire to win for different reasons: 'to be junior champion to Rachel will make her mother vividly happy,' whilst Joanna would 'make the first step towards turning professional and helping the family finances.' She proposed that the final chapter would contain a 'detailed description of event. Girls tie. Joanna turns professional leaving Rachel holding position' (Streatfeild: 1951). In the final version, tutor Max Lindblom predicts that Harriet will become an Olympic Champion and anticipates that Lalla will flourish as an exhibition skater, contrasting to the original story with Rachel (Lalla) continuing her family's legacy and Joanna (Harriet) becoming a professional skater. Sonja Henie, Megan Taylor and Cecilia Colledge all turned professional after retiring from amateur skating. Writing on Colledge's transition, Streatfeild opined that:

> It must be hard for a star amateur to take the plunge and turn professional. It is a sad moment for the star and a sad moment for his or her country. But when Cecilia Colledge became professional, she must have been comforted by the picture of the service she was going to be able to give to skating…As a professional, large audiences could watch her daily, and, by watching her, learn to understand and love her art (Streatfeild: 1950: 381-2).

Despite realising she is unlikely to receive any Olympic medals, Lalla is excited about her future in skating: ‘She felt mad-doggish with gayness. A professional! She would have to learn to do all of the figures of course, but after that free skating for ever and ever, and an audience to watch her do it’ (Streatfeild: 2015: 289). Streatfeild possibly changed her original ending to emphasise the need for girls to develop their individuality instead of conforming to adult expectations. Lalla is now liberated because her reputation in skating will be based on her own unique talents instead of her father’s legacy. Harriet and Lalla feature in one of Streatfeild’s recently discovered short stories ‘Ordinary Me’ (1959). Alice Poster feels overshadowed by her siblings, is desperate to develop a talent to make her family proud and is convinced she can be a successful skater. Lalla empathises with her ‘because she had known for a long period of time when she had tried to make herself be something she could not be’ (Streatfeild: 2019: 104). Alice struggles on the ice and realises that no amount of practice will make her as accomplished as Lalla, but she commits to appearing in a skating gala. To save her from humiliation, Lalla pretends to be Alice: she performs the routine in a cat costume so she is unrecognisable, and afterwards Alice admits ‘how glad I am to be just ordinary me’ (p. 114). Authenticity is called into question again when Lalla acts her two roles as Alice and the cat convincingly, and Streatfeild seems to suggest that an exhibition skater cannot be truly authentic, as they need to act to appeal to audiences, a skill that Alice will struggle with even if she does manage to remember a simple skating routine. Through Lalla and Alice, Streatfeild shows that there are some parts even the most accomplished actresses cannot master: Lalla cannot step into the role of skating champion and Alice’s anxiety about pleasing her family would show on stage and result in her being unable to deliver a convincing performance. Whilst performing

takes place on and off the stage in Streatfeild's novels, she also emphasises the importance of girls accepting who they are so they can make the most of their abilities and live more authentically.

Conclusion

A career in performance requires preparation in Streatfeild's novels. As careers on stage and in sport were potentially temporary, girls have to consider whether they can justify pursuing their talents, and how they can benefit from the lessons if they do not acquire starring roles. Appearance is also crucial for advancing in the world of performance, particularly in the cases of Pauline and Harriet who wear appropriate clothes to disguise the fact that their families have little money. Girls are required to act before they even step on to the stage or the ice rink.

Streatfeild is particularly interested in authenticity and explores this in her portrayals of characters acting parts both on and off the stage. Roles they play can potentially complicate and add another layer to their identity. Girls constantly experiment with roles in Streatfeild's novels: some embody fictional characters or historical figures, and others work towards becoming stars in their chosen careers. The parts they play on stage can help them to develop confidence or discover more about themselves, and trying new roles enables them to decide whether a career is right for them. Streatfeild highlights the dangers of being too authentic in a part when Pauline continues to act Alice's role off the stage, whilst girls like Petrova are too authentic to be successful on stage.

Compromise is necessary if they wish to excel in their chosen careers: Posy and Pauline reluctantly appear in films to support themselves financially, although they do eventually achieve their dreams to act and dance on stage. Exploring different pastimes improves the girls' career prospects. Reluctant stage performers become heroes: Selina saves the pageant and is praised for her work as a stage manager, and Petrova serves in the Second World War. Streatfeild's portrayal of Lalla illustrates how moulding a child's identity can potentially be harmful. Performance is encouraged and sometimes it is necessary off the stage but girls need to maintain their individuality to progress in their careers, and they need to maintain some emotional distance from the parts they play on stage so they can maintain a sense of their own authenticity.

Chapter Two
'I will be a spy and know everything': The Performance of Spies in Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* and Judy Blume's *Starring Sally J Freedman as Herself*

'Little girls don't need to be adventurous' (Blume: 2001: 34).

Sally Freedman's mother echoes the sentiment shared by many conservatives in post-war America who advocated for the reestablishment of defined gender roles. Betty Friedan reflects upon this in her polemic *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), in which she observes that girls growing up in the 1950s were encouraged to aspire towards marriage and domesticity despite having more opportunities in education and employment. She notes:

> They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights – the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for (Friedan: 2021: 19-20).

By conducting interviews with women who were suburban housewives in the 1950s as part of her research for *The Feminine Mystique,* Friedan discovered that many women were dissatisfied with their domestic lifestyles. Her work undermined idealistic messages about family life that were apparent in the print media and she argued that 'We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: "I want something more than my husband and my children and my home"' (p. 39). Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* was published a year after Friedan's study, and like her contemporary, Fitzhugh questions gender stereotypes: Harriet's best friend Janie Gibbs aspires to be a scientist, whilst Simon 'Sport' Rocque takes responsibility for household chores, and Harriet is uninspired by women and girls she encounters on her spy route who appear to have no ambition. Blume's Sally Freedman also seeks to challenge post-war ideals about domesticated women and girls: her mother is reluctant to take risks, but Sally yearns for adventures and is eager to make new

discoveries. Both Harriet and Sally are adventurous little girls living in households with defined gender roles, but their options for adventure are limited: they are not sent to boarding school or carried off to fantasy worlds and they cannot escape from their parents. Instead, the girls create their own adventures through collecting information and spying on people in their local areas.

Child protagonists are frequently presented with opportunities to act as spies. They are often silent witnesses of domestic scenes when adults engage in discussions about topics children are not meant to hear, but are so engrossed in their conversation that they are oblivious to their children's presence. A famous example in literature is Maisie Farange in Henry James's *What Maisie Knew* (1897), who is frequently caught up in her parents' arguments and constantly confused about which adults she can trust. Unseen children cannot confide in adults and have to rely upon their own observing and listening skills, which can result in mistaken conclusions, but using their skills can also enable them to uncover information that could benefit other people. Through their spying activities, children are able to develop analytical skills and form their own judgements without the influence of adults. Acting the role of the spy enables them to form a private sense of self, which can help them discover more about their personalities. Thus, spying can potentially empower young and seemingly powerless girls like Harriet Welsch and Sally Freedman. Spying is also an affordable pastime: unlike Streatfeild's protagonists, Sally and Harriet do not need to make sacrifices to finance their hobby. The only equipment required is some notepaper and a pen, which gives them the potential to make a significant difference by recording their observations and gathering evidence about people. The girls also believe that spying will provide valuable experience for their desired careers as a

writer and actress: Harriet aims to collect as much information as possible to give her ideas for her first book, and Sally dreams of becoming a detective and starring in films based on her success. Spying not only makes the girls' lives more interesting, but it also offers a possible route into heroism, both as celebrity heroes and potentially saving lives or righting injustice. Becoming a spy requires girls to be proficient in several skills: they need to be careful observers and meticulously record information to help them solve mysteries or make discoveries, but they also need to be prepared to face the risks associated with spying and have strategies in place to avoid capture or limit damage if caught. This chapter examines how Harriet and Sally perform in their assigned roles as spies and whether other parts they act in school plays or games with friends equip them for their detective work. Harriet and Sally are arguably heroes in their imagination as they do not initiate significant changes through their discoveries. I consider whether imagining themselves as heroes is enough to empower them or if they are subject to ridicule and made to feel foolish.

Spies featured prominently in popular culture in the 1960s with the publication of John Le Carré's George Smiley novels (1961-2017) and Ian Fleming's James Bond series (1953-1966) being adapted for films. Fitzhugh herself was an admirer of Dorothy L. Sayers and her protagonist is named after detective Harriet Vane (Brody: 2020: 181). Spy fiction would have offered several ideas for Fitzhugh and Blume in their creations of Harriet Welsch and Sally Freedman, but there is also a possibility that they were inspired by real female secret agents who served during the Second World War. Fleming's character Vesper Lynd was rumoured to have been modelled on Polish spy Krystyna Skarbek (later Christine Granville), although *Sunday Times* journalist Alice Hutton argued that she was 'more Bond than Bond girl…Skarbek

could ride, shoot and speak many languages, and learnt smuggling routes over borders "for kicks"' (Hutton: 2019). Skarbek was one of Britain's longest-serving female secret agents during the Second World War. She worked in several different countries gathering intelligence for the British government, helping refugees, rescuing Prisoners of War, establishing communications between Resistance groups, and encouraging Italian, Polish and Russian soldiers to desert the German army. Crucially, in 1944, she secured the release of influential British secret agents Francis Cammaerts and Xan Fielding when she convinced the Gestapo officer Max Waem that Allied forces nearby would seek revenge if they executed the prisoners, and promised him protection from Resistance fighters if he granted her request.

Skarbek's bravery encouraged the British Special Operations Executive (BSOE) to recruit more women as secret agents. Established in July 1940, the BSOE's purpose was to gather intelligence to sabotage the German army and assist Resistance movements in German-occupied territories. Part of the BSOE's decision to employ more women was also influenced by the fact that young men in occupied areas were expected to work in the war industry, meaning that a male spy posing as an unemployed citizen would be more likely to arouse the enemy's suspicion. Work as a spy enabled women to acquire strong positions of influence. As Robyn Walker notes in *The Women Who Spied for Britain: Female Secret Agents of the Second World War* (2014):

> Military policy in the British, Canadian and American armed forces, made no allowances for female combatants. However, a select group of women actually did find their way to the front lines – and indeed, beyond them. These women trained with men, served with men, and in some cases, even commanded men. They assumed possibly the most dangerous position of the war – the role of secret agent (Walker: 2014: 11).

Walker's work documents the lives of eight women from contrasting backgrounds who worked as secret agents during the Second World War. Among them were Indian Princess Noor Inayat Khan who was the first female wireless operator to be sent to France, and in 2020, she became the first woman of South Asian descent to have a British blue plaque unveiled in her honour. Widow Violette Szarbo was the British first woman to be awarded the George Cross, the highest award for heroic acts not directly in the presence of the enemy. Spying was dangerous work: if they were caught, they were likely to be tortured, sent to concentration camps and face execution. Violette Szarbo, Noor Inayat Khan and Diana Rowden, three of the women who feature in Walker's work, did not survive the war. Nancy Wake and Odette Samson had more success in outwitting the enemy: the Gestapo referred to the former as 'The White Mouse' because she was impossible to catch, and the latter managed to convince prison guards that she was Winston Churchill's niece, which resulted in other agents' lives being saved. Lying and duplicity often enabled survival, but it also placed women in dangerous positions: Sonya Butt, Britain's youngest secret agent who was renowned for her beauty, regularly posed as a collaborator to find out information about the Germans, but this meant that she was at risk of being subject to violence from Resistance groups.

Harriet's and Sally's discoveries are innocuous compared to those of the real-life secret agents in the Second World War and they are arguably limited in what they can achieve given that they are children who struggle to be taken seriously. They are enthusiastic writers though, and many female secret agents had writing backgrounds: Nancy Wake and Diana Rowden worked as journalists before joining the BSOE, and Noor Inayat Khan published collections of fairy-tales in the 1930s. It

should be remembered that these women were working during unprecedented times. In an essay examining the representation of Violette Szarbo and Odette Samson in popular culture, Deirdre Osborne argues that their achievements were minimised in post-war films, which were keen to affirm traditional gender roles. She acknowledges that ‘female secret agents in the Second World War exposed the permeability of the barrier that separates femininity and masculinity’ and they ‘disturbed, (and continue to disturb) gender arrangements that participate in the myth of masculine sovereignty in militarism and soldiering,’ but ‘a seemingly cosy reinstatement to domestic contentment was socially assumed when hostilities ceased’ (Osborne: 2006). Osborne also asserts that female secret agents were ‘unsung heroines of the Second World War’ until the late twentieth century. Fitzhugh’s and Blume’s protagonists are growing up in the middle of the century when traditional gender roles were idealised in American society. Blume appears conscious of this in her representation of Sally: whilst she is determined to solve mysteries and appear on screen, it is likely that any film made about her would portray spying as a glamorous occupation and play down her achievements. Harriet’s nanny Catherine ‘Ole’ Golly offers an alternative role model to her mother and the women she encounters on her spy route, but once she leaves the family home to get married, Harriet is left with few allies to support her work. This chapter considers the extent to which Harriet and Sally are able to transcend gender binaries in a post-war patriarchal society, what purpose spying serves, and what options are available to them when their perceived cases are concluded.

Harriet the Spy and *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself* were both deemed to be controversial texts and have divided opinion amongst reviewers and critics. As Leslie Brody observes in her biography of Fitzhugh, ‘While Harriet’s nastiness delighted children, she alarmed some grown-ups who decried her as a poor example’ and regarded her as a ‘problem child, not because she was naughty and kept a notebook full of often nasty observations, but because – despite Ole Golly’s guidance – Harriet does not change’ (Brody: 2020: 185-191). Brody herself, however, argues that Harriet was ‘an entirely new and radically different version of the American girl: unnerving, unsentimental, nosy, sometimes anxious, extremely funny, rather shrewd and brutally frank’ (p. 1). Lissa Paul also suggests that Harriet is a feminist writer and attributes the novel’s success to ‘the reader’s subversive identification with Harriet’s apparent conformity and her real subversion’ (Paul: 1989: 70). Blume was accused of trivialising the Holocaust in her Sally Freedman novel. In her article ‘Mourning and Performance in Judy Blume’s *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself’* Anastasia Ulanowicz explains that Blume faced more criticism for her Holocaust references because of her novel being set in America instead of occupied Europe: ‘rather than providing its reader with a comprehensive introduction to the historical conditions in which the Holocaust took place, it instead alludes to genocide only through sporadic fantasy sequences’ (Ulanowicz: 2008: 89-90). However, Ulanowicz argues that critics have misjudged Blume:

> A closer reading may suggest that the Holocaust fantasies it envisions, far from being ‘trivial’ or ‘in poor taste,’ may in fact play a pivotal role in its subtle exposition of the ways in which individuals approach an ultimately ineffable historical event and attempt to mourn the traumatic loss it has incurred (p. 90).

Caroline Hunt supports this viewpoint in her essay ‘US Children’s Books about the World War II Period: From Isolation to Internationalism 1940-1990.’ Commenting on Blume’s novel, Hunt argues that:

> Intense childhood memories can bring out unexpected depths in even the most superficial of authors. Judy Blume's *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself,* based on her own wartime life in Florida, subordinates the usual Blume humour to a complex blend of ironies (Hunt: 1994: 202).

The above scholars have been beneficial in shaping my discussion and I continue to refer to their arguments throughout my chapter, whilst drawing upon contemporary sources relating to twentieth-century female spies. A recent issue of the *Girlhood Studies* journal 'Locating Tween Girls' has also been valuable for my analysis of Fitzhugh's and Blume's protagonists. 'Tweenhood' is defined as the period in between childhood and adolescence and encompasses girls between the ages of 7 and 12. My discussion has been aided by Melanie Kennedy's and Natalie Coulter's introductory essay to *Locating Tween Girls,* an issue of the *Girlhood Studies* journal, published in March 2018. Melanie Kennedy has published on contemporary celebrity culture, and Natalie Coulter's research focuses on the representation of children in the media and twenty-first century consumer culture. In their discussion, Kennedy and Coulter note that girlhood advocates in the 1990s were concerned that 'girls lose their sense of self as they enter adolescence' and highlight how the problem has persisted into the twenty-first century. They argue that 'the tween girl – with her contradictory status as both a future-looking symbol of idealised consumption and femininity *and* as being vulnerable and in need of protection – has become so central to these concerns' (Kennedy and Coulter: 2018: 2-3). Fitzhugh's and Blume's works were published in 1964 and 1977, but an adolescent girl losing her sense of self is arguably not a new problem. Harriet and Sally are both in the 'tweenhood' stage of their lives and struggling to relate to people around them. In this chapter, I consider whether spying helps them to establish or re-establish their identities, or if it results in their becoming more confused, and if Fitzhugh and Blume are anticipating the

problems for ‘tween’ girls that Kennedy and Coulter refer to in their essay. My discussion begins with analysis of the roles girls perform in school plays and pretend games and how this prepares them for spying. I then turn to the discoveries Harriet and Sally make when observing people, how they respond to them, what happens to the information they collect, and the consequences they face for their actions. The final part of the chapter considers life after spying for the girls and whether they regard it as a potential career or discover it will benefit them in an alternative occupation.

‘*Spies* don’t go to dancing school’: Preparation for Spying

> The formula-driven spy film promises, time and again, that no matter how daunting the hero finds his assignment, and no matter what obstacles he meets as he undertakes it, he will ultimately bring to light the conspiracy that lies beneath the clues he has amassed, securing both justice and truth once and for all (Ulanowicz: 2008: 101).

Fitzhugh’s and Blume’s novels do not include any direct references to spy films, but Harriet and Sally are both interested in solving crimes and their pretend games and stories often feature detectives. It is likely that they would have been aware of the spy formula Ulanowicz refers to, which explains why they would participate in spying in real life: Sally hopes it will help her come to terms with her past and avenge the murder of her cousin Lila, whilst Harriet spies to make sense of her present-day world. Robberies occur in Harriet’s game of ‘Town,’ but she is called away by Ole Golly before her fictional police officer has a chance to arrest the perpetrators. Her nanny informs her: ‘It’s time you began to see the world. You’re eleven years old and it’s time you saw something’ (Fitzhugh: 2016: 15). As spies are meant to uncover secrets that other people are unaware of, Ole Golly’s concern regarding Harriet’s

apparent lack of interaction with the outside world implies that Harriet needs to have more experience of observing other people before she can acquire any meaningful information. Ole Golly's interruption of the game of 'Town' is an early indication that spying might not be as straightforward as Harriet imagines: unlike her imaginary detectives, Harriet's cases will be ongoing and possibly never resolved, and she will also encounter setbacks when undertaking her investigations. In Blume's novel, Sally enacts the role of a chief inspector who solves murders in her game of Detective, and she fantasises about achieving fame by catching criminals. Her first story 'Sally Meets the Stranger' describes an encounter with an allegedly dangerous man in the Union Woods, in which she is almost captured but manages to escape and report the man to the police. The Chief Inspector is 'so impressed that he makes Sally his number one detective, specialising in strange cases,' and a film is made about Sally's achievement with her in the lead role, so Sally becomes 'not only a famous detective but also a movie star' (Blume: 2001: 14). Sally's quest to capture the man in the Union Woods does not materialise though, as she and her family move to Florida in the winter so her brother Douglas can recuperate after his illness. However, relocating to Florida does present her with an opportunity to investigate another case, as she is determined to uncover the identity of her neighbour Mr Zavodsky. Harriet's and Sally's games and stories do not necessarily provide a realistic portrayal of spying, but their familiarity with the detective genre and awareness of the challenges aspiring secret agents face potentially enables them to develop their own strategies for solving mysteries.

Sally Freedman is an admirer of fictional detective Nancy Drew and is delighted to receive two of the novels as a present from her Aunt Bette. Nancy Drew's character was created by publisher Edward Stratemeyer, and the *Nancy Drew* series were written by several authors under the pseudonym Carloyn Keene. The first *Nancy Drew* novel, *The Secret of the Old Clock,* appeared in 1930. Nancy's Drew's appeal continued throughout the twentieth century, and the franchise is still evolving today with more novels about her adventures being published. *The Nancy Drew Mysteries* have also been the subject of several academic studies. Nancy's lasting influence has been attributed to her offering a form of escapism to readers in the 1930s who were affected by the Great Depression. In her essay 'The Case of the Celebrity Sleuth: The Girl Detective as Star in the Early Nancy Drew Novels,' Jennifer Geer suggests that:

> Nancy in novels is the version of the character who entices readers by performing the role of a glamorous Hollywood star: a privileged talent who retains her small-town Midwestern roots and embodies middle-class American dreams of consumerism, individual self-assertion and popular success (Geer: 2016: 324).

Unlike Blume, Fitzhugh does not include any direct references to Nancy Drew in *Harriet the Spy,* and it is likely that she would have disapproved of the books' usage of stereotypes in their portrayals of working-class and non-white characters, as she identified as a socialist and supported civil rights campaigns. However, Harriet and Nancy share some similarities as they both come from comfortable middle-class homes, and Nancy's ability to find cases to solve when undertaking everyday activities such as shopping, could offer encouragement to girls like Harriet who long to make their lives more interesting. Recent articles in *Girlhood Studies*, part of a growing body of academic work on Nancy Drew and girl sleuths, argue that Nancy Drew provided a refreshing contrast to other girl protagonists in 1930s American texts. According to Kate Harper, 'the Nancy Drew series features a female

adolescent protagonist who is capable, level-headed and emotionally balanced' (Harper: 2011: 1), and Diana Belscamper opines that:

> Literary Nancy was a full person whose behaviour was not constrained by others' definitions of her age or sex, and she was an inspiration to her audiences of girl readers who possessed little of the agency that Nancy exhibited (Belscamper: 2008: 151).

Belscamper's argument could certainly apply to Harriet and Sally as the two girls are frustrated by their families' inability to take them seriously. Harriet is appalled when the cook suggests she goes out to play, insisting 'I do not go out to PLAY. I go out to WORK' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 42), whilst Sally's desire to be adventurous is mocked by her older brother Douglas who accuses her of being 'scared of [her] own shadow' (Blume: 2001: 34). As Belscamper suggests, Harriet and Sally are girl readers who appear to have little agency, but Nancy's accomplishments and challenging of gender stereotypes can give them encouragement to prove their doubters wrong.

Preparing for their roles as spies is not as straightforward as copying the characters from books in films though. They might provide Harriet and Sally with ideas about how to find clues to solving mysteries and catching criminals, but they also need to undertake other activities to equip them with skills to enable them to become successful secret agents. The roles the girls act in plays have little connection to spying: Harriet plays the part of an onion in the school Christmas pageant, and Sally becomes a peanut girl in the Halloween parade. Harriet's teacher instructs the class to create dances for their characters and advises them to 'feel that one morning you *woke up* as one of these vegetables' to help them to act their parts convincingly, two tasks that Harriet struggles with (Fitzhugh: 2016: 145). Mrs Welsch is sceptical about Harriet's dance, remarking that she is a 'pretty noisy onion' and opining 'That's the

clumsiest dance I ever saw' (p. 158). In her attempt to imitate an onion, Harriet has displayed characteristics that are potentially detrimental for secret agents, as inability to be discreet when spying puts them at higher risk of being caught. Here, Fitzhugh indicates that Harriet's acting of a part that does not appeal to her could benefit her development as a spy because it has exposed the weaknesses that she needs to work on. Sally also encounters obstacles in her role as the peanut girl: her mother's fingers become infected through sewing peanuts on to Sally's dress and the parade is disrupted by a storm. She proudly tells her father that she 'wasn't scared because it was an adventure' and no harm was done except 'all my peanuts got soggy and we had to throw away my whole costume' (Blume: 2001: 84). The Halloween parade episode enables Sally to realise that she is capable of the bravery professionally expected of a spy. The two girls do not necessarily acquire any useful information from the actual parts they play, but their experience of rehearsing for and performing the roles does help them to assess their suitability as secret agents by revealing what qualities they have and the skills they need to develop.

Spies are required to become different people and failure to deceive can result in their undoing. This proved to be the case for many secret agents during the Second World War: Violette Szarbo kept conversations to a minimum because her English accent could easily be detected when she spoke French, and Noor Inayat Khan risked exposing her British background by putting milk in cups of tea. Concerns were raised about Khan when she attended her security training at Beaulieu. Here, aspiring agents learned how to detect when they were being followed, knowing when they needed to relocate, and how to alter their identity. The latter proved particularly

difficult for Khan whose ‘truthful and dreamy nature made her thoughtless about security, and she had extreme difficulty concealing her personality’ (Walker: 2014: 67). Khan’s distinctive style of clothing meant that she was easily traceable by the Gestapo. In an interview with *The Guardian,* Arthur Magido, author of *Codename Madeleine: A Sufi Spy in Nazi-Occupied Paris* (2020), stated that Khan’s love of the colour blue resulted in her exposure to the enemy:

> In the autumn of 1943, with the Gestapo closing in on her, they do everything they can to save her. They take her to a hair salon and get her a whole new wardrobe -- except that everything she's chosen is blue, just like before, and the Gestapo knows that Noor's really fond of blue. That was a key factor that helped give her away. They had an idea of what she looked like physically, but blue was the radar that they picked up on (Alberge: 2020).

Fitzhugh’s Harriet shares Khan’s appreciation of the colour blue: her spying clothes consist of ‘an ancient pair of blue jeans so old that her mother had forbidden her to wear them,’ ‘an old dark blue sweatshirt which she wore at the beach house in the summer’ and ‘blue sneakers with holes over each of her little toes,’ which she rescued from the rubbish bin (Fitzhugh: 2016: 43). Her blue clothing is accompanied by a belt containing her spying tools including a flashlight, notebook, pens, a boy-scout knife, and collapsible cutlery. Harriet’s devotion to her spying ritual links to Kennedy’s and Coulter’s argument about the adolescent girl losing her sense of self, as her determination to continue wearing her old clothes suggests that she is trying to resist changes to her identity as she enters her teenage years. She feels empowered by putting on her spying clothes as she believes she is dressed appropriately for her role, but secret agents would not be advised to wear the same outfits as they could make themselves conspicuous to the enemy. This suggests that Harriet may not be able to fulfil her ambition to become an accomplished spy because she is reluctant to adapt her habits.

Sally Freedman dreams of becoming an actress and admires film stars Esther Williams and Margaret O'Brien. Esther Williams was a competitive swimmer who set several national records during the 1930s. She had been due to represent the United States in the Helsinki Summer Olympics in 1940, but was unable to compete as the games were cancelled. Like ice skater Sonja Henie, Williams found that her sporting ability attracted the interest of film producers: she starred in over thirty films between 1942 and 1963, which showcased her swimming talent. However, reviewers were often preoccupied with Williams' looks rather than her ability in the water. An obituary in the *St Louis Dispatch* remarked upon Williams' 'wholesome beauty and perfect figure,' and how the films often featured 'a flimsy plot that provided excuses to get Miss Williams into the water' (https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A332909586/STND?u=unihull&sid=summon&xid=619fd438).

Sally attempts to copy one of Williams' hairstyles on her first day at school in Florida and fantasies about starring in similar roles to her favourite actress: 'Some day she was going to swim just like her, with her hair in a coronet and a flower behind her ear' (Blume: 2001: 52). However, Blume indicates that Williams represents an impossible ideal for Sally to emulate: she can effortlessly swim underwater and dive without making a splash or smudging her lipstick, unlike Sally who 'didn't like to get her face wet in the first place' (p. 53). Despite hoping to stand out, Sally feels self-conscious when she arrives at school, as all the other girls in the class have their hair in plaits and are wearing sandals in contrast to Sally's New Jersey red loafers and white socks. She instantly feels better after discarding her socks and replacing her elaborate coronet hairstyle with simple braids. As an outsider, Sally faces hostility from her classmate Harriet Goodman who is prejudiced against girls who

stay in Florida only for the winter months. Sally's experience of school and her alterations in appearance to fit in with the other girls seem discouraging for readers, but as part of being a spy involves not drawing attention to herself, it can be argued that her transformation was necessary to prepare her for future work. Moreover, by appearing to reject Esther Williams as a role model for Sally, Blume indicates that her protagonist should aspire to do more than feature in films where her looks are celebrated more than her accomplishments.

Learning to act and pretend to be different people is essential for Harriet and Sally if they wish to become successful spies, but the girls are also encouraged to take up dancing. Harriet is appalled when she discovers that her parents are planning to send her to dance lessons: she fears it will disrupt her preparations to become a secret agent because '*Spies* don't go to dancing school' instead they 'learn languages and guerrilla fighting and everything about a country so if they're captured they'll know all the old football scores and things like that' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 82). As Leslie Brody observes, though, 'When Harriet's independence is pressured by the demands of conformity, Ole Golly helps her to resist and even subvert situations to her advantage' (Brody: 2020: 3). Harriet's nursemaid reminds her about a film they watched together about Mata Hari, a female secret agent during the First World War, who also trained as a dancer and acquired information by attending balls. The film Ole Golly refers to could be the 1931 film *Mata Hari* starring Greta Garbo, which was applauded in contemporary reviews, and aspiring secret agents like Harriet would have been inspired by Hari's story. A writer in *The New York Times* stated that:

> Like the real Mata Hari, [Garbo's character] was a woman of unusual intelligence, who while she revels in the secret service work, chooses to be her own mistress and thus generally accomplishes more than she might have done by adhering to Andriani's orders (Hall: 1932).

Harriet reluctantly agrees to attend dancing school and accepts she will need to wear 'those silly dresses' reasoning that she 'couldn't see Mata Hari in a gym suit' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 83). Like Phoebe in Streatfeild's *Party Frock,* Harriet is taking on the role of a controversial historical figure, but she is going further than her predecessor because she is attempting to follow Mata Hari's example off stage. As Mata Hari made her living as an exotic dancer and had a reputation for seducing men to extract information from them, it seems unusual that Ole Golly would consider her to be a suitable role model for the innocent Harriet. In addition, Hari failed to avoid capture and was executed in 1917 after she was found guilty of spying for Germany. Hari's alleged crimes have been debated by historians long after her death, and many have concluded that she was innocent and made a scapegoat by the French Army (Stevens: 2021: 36). Fitzhugh's reference to Hari reminds readers of the dangers of spying and indicates that her protagonist's activities will prove to be problematic when her notebook is discovered by her schoolfellows. Harriet faces minor consequences in comparison to Hari, but the latter figure provides her with an example of what she must avoid if she wishes to become a successful secret agent. As with Phoebe in Streatfeild's novel, Harriet will eventually discover that she can still admire her role model but may need to look to others for inspiration or use her own initiative.

Unlike Harriet Welsch, Sally Freedman is enthusiastic about dancing and is excited when her parents enrol her at Miss Beverly's School of Classic Ballet: 'She pictured herself in a pink net with pink satin toe slippers to match, like Margaret O'Brien in *The Unfinished Dance,* the best movie Sally had ever seen' (Blume: 2001: 144).

O'Brien was ten when she appeared in *The Unfinished Dance,* the same age as Blume's protagonist. In a 2014 review of the film, critic Nicole Armour praised O'Brien's character Meg Merlin:

> In *The Unfinished Dance,* Meg is preoccupied with adult concerns despite the fact that her inexperience and lack of guidance make them difficult for her to fully comprehend. But she's nonetheless capable of bold action, depth of feeling, and moral growth as conveyed by O'Brien's magnetic performance (Armour: 2014).

In some respects, Blume's protagonist has similar experiences to Margaret O'Brien's character in *The Unfinished Dance,* as Sally and Meg are both fixated on adults whom they perceive to be dangerous. Meg is unsettled when new dance teacher Anna La Darina arrives at the school because she believes that she presents a threat to the headteacher Ariane Bouchet, whilst Sally is convinced that her neighbour Mr Zavodsky is Adolf Hitler in disguise. Meg's attempt to sabotage one of Anna's performances has disastrous consequences: instead of switching off the lights, Meg accidentally pulls the lever for a trap door causing her dance teacher to suffer serious spinal injuries. Moreover, she discovers that she has been misguided in her admiration for her headteacher, as Ariane is more concerned about being famous than helping her students, in contrast to Anna who remains devoted to them despite not being able to dance herself. The film highlights how detrimental it can be to come to the wrong conclusions about people, and Blume's allusion to *The Unfinished Dance* indicates that Sally will need to be careful before she reveals anything about Mr Zavodsky. Gathering evidence is crucial for secret agents, but inaccurate information can cause people to experience injustice.

As Harriet and Sally do not have the opportunity to receive official training as secret agents, they are required to construct their spying identities by emulating role models

and incorporating their home and school lives into their invented fantasy worlds. Becoming a secret agent involves preparation, and Harriet and Sally both do this by playing their pretend games of 'Town' and 'Detective' and taking inspiration from fictional investigators such as Nancy Drew. Fitzhugh and Blume suggest that the girls need to do more than read books or watch films about spies to help them solve mysteries. Being able to perform is essential for spy work and the roles Harriet and Sally take on in school plays help them to identify the strengths and weaknesses that they need to work on. Dancing is potentially beneficial for spying, but both Fitzhugh and Blume suggest girls should not be too preoccupied with it when they refer to Mata Hari and Meg Merlin. To become successful secret agents, girls must employ a variety of skills and often look to unlikely sources for inspiration. My discussion will now turn to the discoveries Harriet and Sally make whilst spying, what they do with the information they acquire and how they deal with the consequences.

'Everybody's got secrets these days': Spying Discoveries and Consequences

Reflecting upon Nancy Wake's life and career in an obituary, a journalist in *The Times* noted that her life 'careered along a path that Hemingway might have sketched, from impoverished childhood to high society hostess in the south of France to decorated heroine of the French Resistance during World War II' (Vitello: 2011). Born in 1912, Wake had a difficult childhood as her family struggled financially after her father abandoned them, leaving her mother to care for six children. An adventurous child, Wake was frustrated at home because her mother was a strict Christian and her children's freedom was limited. She left her home in Sydney for New York when she was eighteen and her love of travelling inspired her

to enrol on a journalism course. Working as a journalist in the 1930s resulted in Wake's becoming more aware of political turmoil in Europe and the Nazi Party's rise to power, which inspired her to join the French Resistance movement. Harriet's and Sally's backgrounds contrast to Wake's because the girls come from comfortable homes, but they can share her frustration about lack of opportunities for adventure, and like Wake, writing provides them with potential empowerment.

Writing on *Harriet the Spy* in his essay 'Portrait of the Young Writer in Children's Fiction', Francis Molson states:

> The various notebook jottings, the bits and pieces of realistic description and sometimes brutally honest commentary which highlight her journals are the trial pieces of a developing sensibility, the preliminary stage of a young girl learning the craft of writing (Molson: 1977: 77).

Similarly, Lissa Paul argues that:

> Many of the marks of the feminist writer are visible in Harriet: she prefers a small-scale form of writing (the private notebook); she juggles her role in society (her popularity with her classmates) with her role as a writer (which demands selfishness); she is concerned with being truthful, but also discovers that necessitates lying; and she finds that domestic gossip contributes a valid form of fiction (Paul: 1989: 67).

As Molson and Paul observe, Harriet is a keen observer and believes that any discoveries she makes could prove to be significant, or possibly provide her with valuable practice for when she has to deal with a potentially serious case. She insists that she must take notes about anyone she encounters: 'I've *seen* them and I want to *remember* them' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 17). However, Fitzhugh appears to undermine her protagonist when she contemplates her future career in a journal entry:

> MAYBE WHEN I GROW UP I CAN HAVE AN OFFICE. ON THE DOOR IT CAN SAY 'HARRIET THE SPY' IN GOLD LETTERS. AND THEN IT CAN HAVE OFFICE HOURS LIKE THE DENTIST'S DOOR HAS AND UNDERNEATH. IT CAN SAY ANY

> SPY WORK UNDERTAKEN…I WONDER IF I WILL GET ANY MURDER CASES. I WOULD HAVE TO GET A GUN AND FOLLOW PEOPLE BUT I BET IT WOULD BE AT NIGHT AND I WOULDN'T BE ALLOWED OUT (Fitzhugh: 2016: 74).

Harriet expresses confidence in her ability to solve mysteries when she states that she is open to taking on a variety of cases, including dangerous ones, but she believes she is limited to working during daylight hours. Given that Harriet is imagining her life in adulthood, it seems strange that she assumes she will be prevented from venturing out at night as she would not need to obtain permission from her parents. Harriet's inability to comprehend that she will have more responsibility and freedom to make her own decisions as an adult indicates that her spying could possibly be a childish fantasy that she will eventually have to leave behind. As Molson and Paul argue, knowing more about the outside world will potentially enable Harriet to become a better writer, but with her diary entry, Fitzhugh seems to suggest that she cannot be taken seriously as a spy.

Harriet's notebook features descriptions of her classmates and people she meets on her spy route. She seeks inspiration from Ole Golly who advises her that

> THERE ARE AS MANY WAYS TO LIVE AS THERE ARE PEOPLE ON THE EARTH AND I SHOULDN'T GO ROUND WITH BLINDNESS BUT SHOULD SEE EVERY WAY I CAN. THEN I'LL KNOW WHAT WAY I WANT TO LIVE AND NOT JUST LIVE LIKE MY FAMILY (Fitzhugh: 2016: 36).

This links to Kennedy's and Coulter's argument about adolescent girls losing their sense of self: Harriet does not consider her parents to be appropriate role models and believes she can establish her identity through witnessing other people's behaviour. Fitzhugh's text includes contradictory messages: whilst she suggests that Harriet's spying is childish and her protagonist does not uncover any serious crimes, Harriet's observations of other people do help her to learn more about herself. Some

of her conclusions seem comical such as her assumption that her classmate Pinky Whitehead's mother 'MUST HAVE A TERRIBLE LIFE' because she did not purchase a tomato in the grocery store (p. 36), but in other encounters with people on the spy route, Harriet also appears to question societal ideas regarding class and gender. She has no time for the idle rich lady Mrs Plumber who rarely leaves her bed: 'IT'S JUST LIKE OLE GOLLY SAYS. RICH PEOPLE ARE BORING. SHE SAYS WHEN PEOPLE DON'T DO ANYTHING, THEY DON'T THINK ANYTHING' (p. 47). Harriet expresses fondness for the Dei Santi family and reveals that she envied their daughter Franca, but on further reflection decides that she is 'SO DULL IF I HAD TO BE HER I COULDN'T STAND MYSELF' (p. 58). Through Harriet's observations of Mrs Plumber and Franca Dei Santi, Fitzhugh makes it clear that she disapproves of idle women and pities girls who appear to lack any agency. Harriet's discoveries appear innocuous in comparison to those made by wartime secret agents or detectives who solve crimes, but her spy route does provide her with crucial information to help her establish her identity, and Fitzhugh empowers her protagonist by encouraging her to develop resourcefulness and independence.

Paul's observation is also applicable to Sally Freedman who creates her own stories based on what she hears about other people, in particular her cousin Lila, who she learns was murdered during the Holocaust. Lila features in many of Sally's stories, where she faces a different outcome: in 'Sally Saves Lila', she is rescued from the concentration camp, whilst in 'White Shoulders' she is given the task of killing Adolf Hitler. Examining Sally's identification with Lila, Anastasia Ulanowicz argues that Blume's protagonist places herself in an empowering position:

> Situating herself at once as director, star and audience, she assumes the necessary responsibility of unravelling the great and the small mysteries with which she as the self-imagined heroine is confronted (Ulanowicz: 2008: 102).

No amount of storytelling will alter Lila's fate, but Sally is convinced she can seek justice when she starts gathering evidence about her neighbour Mr Zavodsky. She is immediately suspicious of him when he offers her sweets, a sign that he is a potentially dangerous man according to her mother. Sally is convinced that he 'looked familiar somehow,' and after studying him concludes that 'With slick, dark hair and a small black moustache…he'd look a lot like…like Adolf Hitler!' (Blume: 2001: 70). Like Fitzhugh though, Blume seems to mock her protagonist when she begins working to resolve the perceived crime. Sally's first letter to Mr Zavodsky is full of strong accusations: 'I think you are a person who is wicked and evil. I think you are worse than a regular murderer or kidnapper. I think you are a person with the initials A. H.' However, once she finishes it, she hides it in a keepsake box, and decides that '[t]omorrow she might mail it' (p. 81). Here, Blume suggests that Sally does not have the attributes required of a spy because she is indecisive when she discovers new information, which could result in people being harmed. On the other hand, Sally's theory about Mr Zavodsky being Adolf Hitler in disguise is extremely fanciful: Sally has come to that conclusion through being caught up in her own story about avenging her cousin's death, linking to Maria Nikolajeva's 'immersive identification' theory. Sally's detachment from reality and preoccupation with her own fantasy indicates that she is possibly too imaginative to become a successful spy.

Sally's attraction to spying and making significant discoveries is arguably motivated by her frustration with adults for not including her in their discussions. She acquires most of her information about people through listening to people's conversations at

home and on the telephone. Eavesdropping gives Sally a sense of empowerment because it enables her to acquire knowledge other people are unaware of, and she is unrepentant when the family servant Precious Redwine reprimands her for her behaviour, insisting 'I like to know what's going on' (p. 210). On one occasion, she is convinced she can foil Mr Zavodsky's plans to commit murder when she overhears him arranging to meet his friend Simon whom she believes is 'probably one of Hitler's old cronies, from the war' (p. 210). There is only so much that Sally can deduce from telephone conversations though and Blume continually undermines Sally while she pursues her investigation. Sally treats her investigation into Mr Zavodsky as though she is in a film and attempts to undertake the roles of 'director, star and audience' as Ulanowicz describes: she directs through waiting for the opportune moment to send her letters and expose Mr Zavodsky, imagines herself as the star who is applauded for being a hero, and at the same time she perceives herself to be an audience member who has knowledge that the other characters (her family and neighbours) lack. No opportunity to catch Mr Zavodsky materialises as her mother forbids her from going out in the evening to spy on him, and the only action she can take is to write another letter warning him: 'You better not try anything funny. I'm closing in on you. This is your last chance to give yourself up' (p. 213). After encountering Simon, she writes another note revealing that she knows Mr Zavodsky's friend is 'the monster who is in charge of Dachau!' (p. 239) and concludes that Mr Zavodsky's daughter Rita is Hitler's girlfriend Eva Braun in disguise. Once again, Sally has little evidence to support her theories: her assumption about Simon is based on her witnessing him browsing a photograph album with Mr Zavodsky, and her belief about Rita is influenced by her knowledge of spies using different names to prevent people from uncovering their identity. Mr

Zavodsky dies before Sally can confront him and she is amazed by her brother's indifference to hearing about his death: 'Oh Douglas…don't you have any imagination?' (p. 259). Here, Blume subtly mocks her protagonist by implying that Sally's suppositions are based on fantasy, and she is unable to draw any meaningful conclusions as she has been too focussed on turning her 'case' into a movie for her to star in. Sally's inability to appreciate the reality of spying and how investigations do not always prove to be as straightforward as they are in films indicates that she is too naïve for proper detective work.

Combining spy work with their school and home lives proves to be problematic for Harriet and Sally, and their devotion to observing people and solving cases impacts on their relationships with their friends and families. Harriet faces her first setback when Mrs Plumber's maid finds her in the dumb waiter, which causes her to question her competence as a spy: 'SPIES – <u>SHOULD NOT GET CAUGHT</u>. THAT IS THE ONE ESSENTIAL THING ABOUT SPIES. I AM A ROTTEN SPY' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 165). Harriet does not face any serious repercussions during her encounter with Mrs Plumber, but her reflection on the experience in her notebook highlights that she is aware that spying can be dangerous and lead to catastrophic consequences if she makes a mistake. However, she is unable to appreciate that using her notebook to record information could also put her in a vulnerable position. Harriet is keen to record her observations about people as accurately as possible, and her notebook features several unflattering descriptions of her classmates, including her best friends Sport and Janie. She admits that 'SOMETIMES (she) CAN'T STAND SPORT. WITH HIS WORRYING ALL THE TIME AND FUSSING OVER HIS

FATHER,' and expresses scorn about Janie's ambition to become a scientist: 'WHO DOES JANIE GIBBS THINK SHE'S KIDDING? DOES SHE REALLY THINK SHE COULD EVER BE A SCIENTIST?' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 171-2). Harriet's friends are made aware of her opinions of them after her notebook is discovered during a game of tag and they seek revenge. Harriet's tomato sandwiches go missing, her schoolfellows ignore her, and she learns that they have formed a Spy Catcher Club where they discuss new ways to make her life difficult at school.

Harriet is unrepentant despite her setback though. She purchases a new notebook, despite being aware of the risk attached to it, and recognising that her classmates are 'OUT TO GET ME,' she insists that 'A SPY IS TRAINED FOR THIS KIND OF FIGHT. I AM READY FOR THEM' (p. 177). She is motivated to pursue more dangerous spy work in adulthood, revealing:

> WHEN I AM BIG I WILL BE A SPY. I WILL GO TO ONE COUNTRY AND I WILL FIND OUT ITS SECRETS AND THEN I WILL GO TO ANOTHER COUNTRY AND TELL THEM AND THEN FIND OUT THEIR SECRETS AND I WILL GO BACK TO THE FIRST ONE AND RAT ON THE SECOND AND I WILL GO TO THE SECOND AND RAT ON THE FIRST. I WILL BE THE BEST SPY THERE EVER WAS AND I WILL KNOW EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING (p. 184).

Harriet hopes to emulate secret agents such as Mathilde Carré, who worked as a triple agent during the Second World War and spied for both Britain and Germany. A journalist in *The Independent* noted that Carré was nicknamed 'The Cat' and was 'an "extremely dangerous" woman who had the potential to betray Britain's entire overseas spy network to the Germans' (https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A94705651/STND?u=unihull&sid=summon&xid=7671e749). Carré was arrested in 1942 when French Resistance agent Pierre de Vomécourt revealed his suspicions about her to the SOE. She showed little remorse about her

actions: during her trial, she revealed that she 'only denounced the more stupid ones' and 'I had sometimes to sacrifice men…this is just the fortune of war' (Walker: 2014: 161). Harriet displays a similar reaction in her attitudes towards her classmates, as she is not interested in making amends, and continues to antagonise them instead. She is physically violent towards those she considers to be weak such as Pinky Whitehead and Beth Ellen Hansen, torments Rachel Hennessey about her father's lack of interest in her, puts a frog in Marion Hawthorne's desk, and cuts a chunk out of Laura Peters' hair. Here, Fitzhugh has made it difficult for readers to empathise with Harriet's position, as her deliberate acts of cruelty have caused her to resemble a school bully. In some ways, she reflects upon the reality of spying, as secret agents were required to be ruthless during wartime, but Harriet is arguably fighting an unnecessary battle given that her classmates are understandably upset that she has insulted them. Moreover, she is caught once again, this time by her teacher Miss Elson, who reports her concerns about Harriet to her parents. Harriet is unconcerned by her mother's reprimands, but she partially overhears a conversation between her parents and her father insists that '[s]omething has to be done' about her (p. 231), which indicates that she will face more setbacks in her ambition to become a spy.

Harriet's mother arranges for her to have an appointment with the psychiatrist Dr Wagner, and his behaviour unnerves Harriet, as she notices that he is using a notebook to record his observations of her. She also becomes irritated during their game of Monopoly insisting, 'I bet if you didn't take so many notes, you'd play better' and demands assurance that he is not writing 'mean nasty notes' as 'Nasty ones are

pretty hard to get by with these days' (p. 238). Here, Harriet is unintentionally questioning her actions, as she knows from experience that writing uncomplimentary notes has resulted in her losing her friends, and her schoolwork is suffering because of her not paying attention in lessons. Despite being critical of Dr Wagner, Harriet feels lost when her mother confiscates her notebook: 'she couldn't spy, she couldn't take notes, she couldn't play Town, she couldn't do anything' (p. 240). However, when she is permitted to have it back, her original spy route does not have the same appeal: she gives 'ample time to each case, but there really hadn't been much going on' and realises that she is missing school (p. 252). Through Harriet's encounter with Dr Wagner and her loss of interest in her spy route, Fitzhugh indicates that Harriet's role as a spy will either change or possibly even come to an end: the people she examines no longer provide her with any mysteries to solve and she needs to find a new project to focus on.

Unlike Harriet, Sally successfully manages to conceal her spying documentation, but her secretive behaviour and preoccupation with Mr Zavodsky cause her to become detached from reality: her overactive imagination causes her to come to false conclusions and she is oblivious when placed in situations where she might experience danger or conflict. She fails to notice a jellyfish in the water because she is dancing and inventing a new story about Margaret O'Brien catching Mr Zavodsky. Sally is proud when her brother applauds her for her bravery after she is stung by the jellyfish, but her friend Andrea is dismissive: 'Brave is a matter of opinion…Everyone acts different in an emergency…Passing out isn't necessarily brave' (Blume: 2001: 150). Initially, Sally seems to regard her experience with the jellyfish as proof that

she possesses the qualities of the hero in the film she imagines, but Blume gives no suggestion that it has prepared her for encounters with dangerous criminals. In fact, her fainting indicates that she will be unsure of what action to take when she is confronted with a problem such as when her friend Shelby is injured after falling off her bicycle. Meeting Mr Zavodsky does not prevent Sally from leaving Shelby in the park while she rides home to fetch her mother. She reasons: 'I don't have time for you now, Adolf…I've got other things to worry about, like Shelby' (p. 187). Once again, Sally demonstrates her naivety because she is attempting to direct her own film plot, by assuming the alleged criminal will act when it is convenient for her to deal with him. Upon returning to the park, Sally sees no sign of her friend and assumes she has been murdered by Mr Zavodsky, only to discover that Shelby decided to cycle home. Sally's overactive imagination has caused her unnecessary anguish, but Blume also implies that her protagonist would not have the commitment required to become a spy. Her suspicions of Mr Zavodsky are misguided, but leaving her friend alone in a park with someone whom she perceives to be a dangerous criminal, indicates that that Sally does not have the confidence to protect potential victims from harm.

Sally makes little progress with gathering evidence about Mr Zavodsky, but there is a possibility her desire to become a film star might materialise when her dance teacher Miss Beverly announces that there is a competition to win a screen test in Hollywood and lunch with Margaret O'Brien. All participants are instructed to try on the ballet shoes O'Brien wore for *The Unfinished Dance,* and the person with the best fit is chosen as the winner. Sally's confidence is apparent when she is invited to try on the

ballet shoe because she feels ‘like Cinderella must have felt when it was her turn to try on the glass slipper’ and believes that it is an ideal fit because ‘She didn’t have to bend her toes or anything. Her whole foot went in easily’ (p. 199-200). Unlike Cinderella though, there is no fairy-tale ending for Sally: her foot is too narrow for O’Brien’s ballet shoes and the judge rejects her despite her pleas that she can put lamb’s wool inside it. Sally’s disappointment at the shoe-fitting ceremony foreshadows how her investigation into Mr Zavodsky will not be concluded as cases are in spy films. She is still suspicious of her neighbour after she learns that he has died from a heart attack: ‘Maybe Simon and Rita murdered him. Yes, they’d found out someone was hot on his trail and the only thing to do was kill him to protect themselves!’ (p. 258). Her family move back to New Jersey before she can pursue her case any further, and she turns her attention to the man Douglas encountered in the Union Woods. However, she abandons her theory of the man being Hitler when Douglas ridicules her: ‘Sally started laughing too. She couldn’t help it either. It *was* funny…*Hitler in Union Woods…*why would he bother to go there?’ (p. 263). Her acknowledgement that Hitler’s appearance in the Union Woods is unlikely suggests that Sally will abandon her search for him and accepts that she will never be able to avenge her cousin’s death. As Ulanowicz points out, the hero in the spy film secures ‘both justice and truth once and for all,’ but this is impossible for Blume’s protagonist. Sally cannot become the hero of a real-life spy movie because many of her questions remain unanswered, and the only way she can gain closure is to abandon her case.

Harriet and Sally do not make any significant discoveries when spying, but observing other people still gives them some empowerment. In Harriet's case, it helps her to discover more about herself and the kind of person she would like to be. Sally is frustrated in her pursuit of Mr Zavodsky, but her becoming aware of her cousin Lila's death educates her about the realities of the Holocaust, highlighting how she has matured and acquired some valuable information. Both girls face consequences for their actions: Harriet is caught and experiences hostility from her classmates, and Sally's fixation on Mr Zavodsky causes her to have an overactive imagination. Fitzhugh and Blume both undermine their characters by exposing their weaknesses and they indicate that Harriet and Sally might need to adapt in their roles as spies, or possibly consider alternative pastimes. The final part of the chapter turns to the girls' lives away from spying and the options available to them.

'NOW THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL I CAN GET SOME REAL WORK DONE': Life away from Spying

Through scrutinising people's behaviour, Harriet and Sally are both puzzled by the ways that adults act when in the company of others. Harriet is confused when she discovers that Ole Golly's date with Mr Waldenstein involves going to the cinema, as she believes her nanny is not particularly fond of films. Reflecting on this in her notebook, Harriet states: 'LIFE IS A GREAT MYSTERY. IS EVERYBODY A DIFFERENT PERSON WHEN THEY ARE WITH SOMEBODY ELSE?' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 92). In Blume's novel, Mrs Freedman orders Sally to put her paper dolls away when they have an unexpected visit from the devout Mrs Daniels:

> Sally thought it was silly of Mom to pretend that they observed the Sabbath like the Daniels. Just because Mrs Daniels wouldn't use a pair of scissors after sundown didn't mean that Sally couldn't (Blume: 2001: 66).

Ole Golly and Sally's mother are performing to win approval: Ole Golly has fallen in love with Mr Waldenstein, and Mrs Freedman aims to give the impression that she is as committed to Judaism as Mrs Daniels. Being honest proves to be problematic for the girls later in the novels though. As Lissa Paul points out, lying,

> is part of the arsenal of weapons that the successful trickster heroine uses to survive…The trickster heroine must appear conforming and obedient, while at the same time remaining true to herself, her life and her art (Paul: 1989: 70).

The only way Harriet can make amends with her classmates after they discover her notebook is to lie. In a letter, Ole Golly assures her that 'Little lies that make people feel better are not bad' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 259). After apologising to Sport and Janie, she concludes 'OLE GOLLY IS RIGHT, SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO LIE.' (p. 278) Harriet's final diary entry 'NOW THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL I CAN GET SOME REAL WORK DONE' (p. 278) is ambiguous. In one sense, Fitzhugh could be implying that Harriet will become a more accomplished secret agent now that she has accepted the necessity of lying to avoid conflict, but her declaration that she can get some 'real work' done could suggest that she is abandoning her ambition to become a spy. Like Harriet, Sally also learns of the importance of keeping some information to herself, as her inability to keep secrets causes her to experience conflict with her friends and family. Douglas warns Sally that she 'better learn how to keep secrets or you're going to wind up with no friends' when he finds out that she has informed their mother of his plans to watch *The Outlaw* at the cinema. Sally vows that she will 'learn how to keep secrets if it kills me' (Blume: 2001: 233). Harriet's and Sally's struggles with their relationships seem insignificant compared to those experienced by wartime secret agents, but their inability to lie or keep secrets

could prove to be destructive if they investigate serious cases. As Christine Granville, Odette Samson, and Mathilde Carré demonstrated, being able to lie was crucial for wartime spies to save themselves and other people. A successful secret agent requires acting talent, and Harriet and Sally will need to work on their performances: they need to conceal their identities as spies and be convincing in any roles they undertake to acquire information.

Harriet's 'real work' involves working on a school newspaper where she publishes stories about her classmates and people she encounters on her spy route. Analysing Harriet's development as a writer, Francis Molson argues:

> Harriet learns to imagine, and to recognise significant detail. But what makes Fitzhugh's portrait of the young writer especially interesting is her assertion that Harriet needs more than those skills. She also needs to establish a positive self-image and to empathise with others (Molson: 1977: 78).

Fitzhugh worked as an artist before turning to writing and her compassion for vulnerable people was apparent in her work. Leslie Brody notes: 'Observing underdogs and outsiders in action, she was drawn to faces and to cityscapes, and to a style that incorporated storytelling and allegory' (Brody: 2020: 111). Fitzhugh produced several murals depicting street life: one of her most ambitious projects was a mural of Bolognese markets, which featured eight different scenes reflecting upon everyday life and the struggles ordinary people faced. Towards the end of her novel, Fitzhugh indicates that Harriet is beginning to develop empathy as Molson describes. She experiences satisfaction when undertaking her spy route when she witnesses Mrs Dei Santi feeding starving children and discovers that the lonely old man Harrison Withers has acquired another cat after having the others removed from his home. Her newspaper articles include unflattering comments and initially appear to

resemble her diary entries, but they also show that she is sympathising with other people's positions. One article exposes how 'JACK PETERS (LAURA PETERS' FATHER) WAS STONED OUT OF HIS MIND AT THE PETERS' PARTY LAST SATURDAY NIGHT' and that 'MILLY ANDREWS (CARRIE ANDREWS' MOTHER) JUST SMILED AT HIM LIKE AN IDIOT', but she demonstrates that she considers the feelings of her friends in subsequent articles when she encourages readers to 'ASK CARRIE ANDREWS IF SHE FEELS ALL RIGHT' and 'ASK LAURA PETERS IF ALL IS WELL AT HOME' (Fitzhugh: 2016: 271). Her awareness of social issues is also prevalent in a story about her teacher Miss Elson who lives in 'A REAL RAT HOLE OF AN APARTMENT. MAYBE THE SCHOOL DOESN'T PAY HER ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE IN A GOOD PLACE' (p. 272). Here, Harriet attempts to follow Ole Golly's advice and remember that 'writing is to put love in the world, not to use against your friends' (p. 259). Instead of ridiculing people for their misfortunes, Harriet empathises with their situation and directs her criticism to those who cause them anguish. Throughout her novel, Fitzhugh shows that watching people and recording observations will not be enough for Harriet to become a successful writer, and that she needs to develop compassion and ability to imagine herself in different circumstances. Harriet has not completely given up on her spying, but she needs to adapt her approach, and use her information to raise awareness about other people's struggles. Thus, writing and spying both provide Harriet with opportunities to be heroic as long as she employs her talents productively.

It is unclear whether Sally will continue searching for cases to solve at the end of Blume's novel. She reveals in a letter to her friend Christine that she is planning to

‘inspect the FBI as I am seriously thinking about joining it’ (Blume: 2001: 260), but nothing more is revealed about Sally’s trip to Washington and whether she has formed any opinions of the FBI. As discussed previously, she appears to have given up on her search for Adolf Hitler when her brother convinces her that her assumption about the man in the Union Woods is fanciful. However, at the end of the novel, she begins writing a story entitled *Margaret O’Brien Meets the Crazy One,* which links back to her first story when she imagines herself catching the man in the Union Woods and appearing in a film made about her achievement. Sally’s return to New Jersey and revisiting her fascination with the Union Woods indicates that history is about to repeat itself and Sally will continue searching for mysteries to solve, which can be turned into films for her to star in. Blume’s ending is ambiguous, as she has mocked her protagonist throughout the novel, but Sally’s apparent determination to continue pursuing her dream is arguably empowering for readers. Sally has little success in making significant discoveries whilst spying, but she still appears to believe that she can find a case which will provide producers with a story to turn her into a famous actress.

Both Fitzhugh and Blume demonstrate that Harriet and Sally need to master the performance of lying if they wish to become successful secret agents. It is unclear whether the girls have ambitions to develop spying careers, but the two authors suggest that observing people could benefit them in alternative occupations. Harriet’s writing is strengthened by her becoming more empathetic and considering people’s stories rather than simply recording information, whereas Sally continues to retain her belief that she can star in a film if she succeeds in solving a mystery.

Conclusion

Spying gives Harriet Welsch and Sally Freedman a sense of agency, as it enables them to acquire information other people are unaware of. Fitzhugh and Blume emphasise that being secret agents involves a significant amount of work. The girls have to prepare for their roles as spies by acting different parts to help them establish their strengths and any weaknesses they need to improve upon. The two authors undermine their protagonists by highlighting how they lack many of the attributes required of secret agents, but their protagonists continue to spy despite setbacks, and they believe it will give them the experience they need to become a writer and actress. Harriet and Sally do not become celebrity heroes in the way that Streatfeild's protagonists do, and they are unable to solve any significant mysteries. They are subject to ridicule, but being heroes in their imagination still empowers them because they retain a belief that they can make a difference one day.

Chapter Three
Schoolgirls Sometimes: Performing Different Identities in Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* and Michelle Magorian's *Back Home*

After the Armistice is announced and the passage of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, Headmistress Miss Bite informs her girls that they 'will grow up in a different world…so let all of you grow up to be worthy of this trust, to take your place and play your part as your fellows have done in the course of a just and noble war' (Farmer: 2009: 158). In her speech, she applauds the women who worked in occupations traditionally associated with men, including as sailors, doctors, civil servants and drivers. Michelle Magorian's Peggy Dickinson admits that the Second World War was 'one of the best things that happened' to her as she has become more 'confident and happy' since moving to Devon and working as a mechanic and driver (Magorian: 2014: 33). Both women express enthusiasm about opportunities available to women as a result of the wars, yet girls in their care are discouraged from displaying any individuality. Miss Bite suggests that a girl has to act and play appropriate parts in order to obtain freedom. Girl protagonists discussed in the previous chapters are able to retain a certain degree of agency: girls willingly perform on stage in Streatfeild's novels, and even reluctant performers such as Petrova and Selina know that stage work is only temporary, whereas Harriet and Sally both embrace their offstage roles as spies. In Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969) and Michelle Magorian's *Back Home* (1984), though, protagonists are constantly required to perform against their will both at school and in strict patriarchal homes. This chapter examines how Charlotte Makepeace and Virginia 'Rusty' Dickinson cope with performing false identities and considers whether a girl can achieve more by adopting a different identity. Ultimately, it asks whether she

needs to resist performing and be prepared to face harsh consequences in order to initiate change.

From the 1960s, several neo-historical children's novels set during the wars were published, with the Second World War being particularly popular with children's authors. Kate Agnew and Geoff Fox argue that representation of children's experiences in the First World War differed considerably from those in novels set during the Second World War:

> While novels of the First World War examine the position of young adults performing adult tasks in wartime, many novels set during the Second World War seek to understand what happens to children and to childhood itself during wartime.
>
> A recurrent theme is the apparent powerlessness of children in wartime, their seeming inability, initially at least, to influence adult decisions, sometimes even to make their own views heard or understood (Agnew and Fox: 2002: 84).

This is apparent in Magorian's *Back Home* when Rusty's struggles to adapt to English life after living in America cause her to face prejudice both from her schoolfellows who resent her for escaping rationing during the war, and her conservative family members who wish to turn her into a subservient and domesticated young lady. Farmer's novel is more preoccupied with Charlotte's experiences than the war itself, but it features similar concerns about a child's powerlessness that Agnew and Fox refer to: Charlotte has to adjust to two different identities as herself and 1918 schoolgirl Clare, and her schoolfellows and teachers perceive her to be unfriendly or lazy because she is unable to explain her situation. Colin Manlove argues that the 1960s was a decade of displacement despite its association with increased liberal attitudes:

> The price of such liberation was loss of that sense of belonging to a wider social and political structure which had previously defined the self…what we often find in the 1960s and later fantasy, is a new search for roots through the past, through myth or even the solidity of the earth itself (Manlove: 2003: 99).

Farmer and Magorian both reflect upon this struggle to belong as neither Charlotte nor Rusty fits in at school and both find some comfort in escaping to new worlds: literally in Charlotte's case when she travels back in time, whilst Rusty fantasises about her life in America, but distancing themselves from reality also proves to be problematic and presents them with more identity issues.

Many twentieth-century fantasy writers incorporated the time-slip genre into their novels to explore the past. Notable examples include Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) and Alison Uttley's *A Traveller in Time* (1939), which was published on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War. According to Linda M. Hall, the war resulted in a change in the time-slip genre, as novels placed less emphasis on prominent historical figures:

> In the wake of the Second World War, time-slip lost this interest in matters of public moment, instead it became more personal and undertook more intimate and domestic excursions into the past of a particular family or place (Collins and Graham: 2008: 45).

Popular time-slip novels published after the war included Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952) and Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958). The protagonists both travel back to the Victorian era, but have little awareness of events taking place outside of the Clocks' or Hatty's home. Farmer's Charlotte is aware that she is living during a war when she travels back in time and experiences the hardships of rationing, but she is mainly preoccupied with gaining more insight into the life of Clare Moby, the girl she exchanges identities with.

The increased popularity of war fiction for children coincided with the Women's Liberation Movement. Campaigns for equal pay at work occurred during the 1960s, the principle of which they achieved to a certain extent with the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1970, and women had more freedom of choice regarding birth control with the legalisation of abortion in 1967 and the introduction of the contraceptive pill. The 1973 Matrimonial Causes Act meant that women could terminate marriages without providing evidence of adultery or cruelty. During the 1970s and '80s, several children's novels depicting the Second World War from the Home Front were published, many of which featured confident girl protagonists who challenged oppressive male figures and inspired older female characters to remove themselves from patriarchal control. Among them were Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War* (1975), Penelope Lively's *Going Back* (1975) and Michelle Magorian's *Back Home* (1984). It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that writers of this period were drawn to the Second World War: initial optimism about new opportunities for women was short-lived, as they were expected to abandon their jobs and return to domesticity once the war ended. Fiona Collins and Judith Graham note that it is necessary for children's writers to 'balance the ideology of the time as far as women's roles in society are concerned and the view of women in the time in which he or she is writing' (Collins and Graham: 2013: 18). Bawden, Lively and Magorian seek to redeem the wrongs of the past by allowing downtrodden female characters to escape from a male-dominated atmosphere, but happiness does not come without sacrifices. As Rose-May Pham Dinh states in her essay examining wartime girlhood in Michelle Magorian's novels:

> On the one hand, the undoubted 'greatness' of Britain during the Second World War was being held up once more as a model that should inspire the new generations; on the other hand, the implications of the 'liberation' of women were severely questioned by Mrs Thatcher and like-minded Conservatives, who were quick to identify the

> decline of the 'traditional' family as a prime factor in the supposed moral collapse of society (Pham Dinh: 2008: 3).

The use of the war motif in these novels is arguably not just about righting history, but also to warn of the danger of repeating similar mistakes in the 1970s and '80s, and to stress the importance of resisting conservative opposition to campaigns for women's rights.

Charlotte Sometimes and *Back Home* are set in different eras and contrast in terms of genre with the former being a time-slip novel featuring fantasy elements whilst all of the action in the latter occurs in the domestic sphere. Charlotte and Rusty share similarities though as they are living double lives: Charlotte transforms into 1918 schoolgirl Clare, whilst Magorian's protagonist's identity is split between that of American free-spirited and independent Rusty and English schoolgirl Virginia Dickinson. Farmer and Magorian evoke the school story tradition and undercut the idealism presented in works of their predecessors including Angela Brazil, L. T. Meade and Enid Blyton. Farmer and Magorian question societal ideals regarding gender roles and the nuclear family and demonstrate how this impacts on girls who feel compelled to suppress aspects of their personalities if they wish to be accepted. Both texts have received critical attention from children's literature scholars including Colin Manlove, and Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig who opine that *Charlotte Sometimes* is 'an impressive fantasy: its elements are so cleverly structured that it appears plausible' (1985: 366. Cadogan and Craig also refer to Farmer's novel in *Women and Children First: The Fiction of Two World Wars* (1978), as does Beverly Lyon Clark in her 1984 essay 'When Women Tell Tales About School.' Kate Agnew and Geoff Fox's *Children at War: From the First World War to the Gulf* (2001) devote

some analysis to Magorian's *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1981), and Agnew's 1999 interview with Magorian provides an overview of some of the main themes in her fiction including *Back Home.* Although there are few extensive studies of Farmer's and Magorian's works, there are some exceptions including Virginie Douglas's essay '*Charlotte Sometimes* by Penelope Farmer: Between National History and Individual History, Collective Identity and Personal Identity,' (2013) which offers stimulating analysis of Charlotte's identity issues. Rose-May Pham Dimh's study 'Wartime Womanhood in Michelle Magorian's Novels for the Young' (2008) has also proved to be valuable in my analysis of *Back Home.*

My discussion focuses on how girls perform to fit societal standards whilst negotiating their own fluctuating identities. Performing to fulfil society's expectations involves adhering to gender roles. Gender has no fixed identity and performances of gender have and will continue to change over time. In my analysis, I consider the girls' performance of, or refusal to perform gender roles in relation to the eras that the novels are set. The chapter is divided into two halves: the first examines their performances as schoolgirls and the second turns to their experiences away from an educational environment. I illustrate how the role of schoolgirl involves several forms of acting: being accepted is dependent on a girl's ability to perform well academically and take an interest in games, but she also has to perform when interacting with her peers by seeking friendship with popular girls and distancing herself from those who do not embody the ethos of the school. Performance is also necessary away from school if girls wish to avoid confrontation with oppressive patriarchs, and both authors highlight the potential harm caused if girls continue to act in false roles and lose their authenticity. In the second half of the chapter, I consider whether Charlotte

and Rusty can find acceptance by resisting performance and becoming content with their own unique identities.

In addition to being aided by works of critics previously mentioned, my discussion has also been shaped by recent work of Lucinda McKnight. McKnight is an Education Lecturer at Deakin University in Melbourne who has research interests in English teaching, curriculum design and gender studies. Much of her work focuses on girls' education, including her essay 'Naughtiest Girls, Go Girls and Glitterbombs: Exploding Schoolgirl Fictions,' which was published in the *Girlhood Studies* journal in 2017, and also features in Ann M. Smith's *The Girl in The Text* (2019). McKnight argues that:

> Women readers never cease to be schoolgirls. We are always the girl in our own title, the protagonist in our own story who must act inside the oxymoron of claiming agency, despite broader contexts that deny it. We are yesterday's, today's and tomorrow's woman (girl) all at once. We can never detach ourselves from how she is represented: we are still becoming her, making her as we think, write and speak (Smith: 2019: 28).

My chapter focuses on character rather than reader experience, but McKnight's claim is applicable to Charlotte and Rusty and relevant to my analysis, as both girls are constantly creating stories by moulding their identities to suit others whilst trying to maintain a sense of self. Throughout my discussion, I refer to McKnight's essay and consider whether the two girls can successfully detach themselves from performing to meet expectations or if they still feel compelled to suppress parts of their identities.

Theatres of Education: Schoolgirls and Actresses

Isabel Quigley regards the girls' school story as '(occasionally) charming kitsch,' which became outdated after the publication of Ronald Searle's *St Trinian's* comic strip series (1946-52):

> The schools in which school stories flourished had changed, and the vintage situations, whether sensibly or nonsensically treated were no longer effective. With St Trinian's, the school story took off into pure farce and has never come down again (Quigley: 1985: 221).

Rosemary Auchmuty provides an alternative view to Quigley in *A World of Girls* (1992), in which she argues that 'School stories offer female readers positive role models to set against a reality which is often restrictive or hostile to them' (Auchmuty: 1992: 7). The school story genre was particularly popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries after the implementation of Education Acts between 1870 and 1893, which made girls' education mandatory. L. T. Meade's and Angela Brazil's novels featured challenging, but loveable schoolgirls, who learn to adapt to school life. Notable works in the twentieth century included Elsie Oxenham's *Abbey* series (1914-59), Dorita Fairlie Bruce's *Dimsie* novels (1921-1941), Elinor M. Brent-Dyer's *Chalet School* series (1925-1970), Enid Blyton's *St Clare's* (1941-45) and *Malory Towers* (1946-51) and Antonia Forrest's series about the Marlow family (1948-82). Girls in these novels grow up in male-dominated worlds, but whilst at school, they can freely pursue ambitions without facing opposition. As David Rudd points out in his work *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature:*

> Blyton has several outspoken females in her texts…Notably it is these characters that are given the more positive qualities, whereas the more conventionally 'feminine' ones are criticised for being concerned about their appearance (Rudd: 2000: 111).

Blyton's disapproval of societal ideas about femininity is certainly apparent in her *Malory Towers* books. Popular girls tend to excel in team sports and/or have mischievous qualities. Wilhelmina 'Bill' Robinson is one of the most empathetic characters in the school, and glamorous pupil Clarissa Carter prefers her friendship to beautiful, but shallow, Gwendoline's. Teachers and pupils embrace her boyish qualities and accept her wish to be referred to as 'Bill.' In contrast, conventionally feminine girls often need to learn lessons and face setbacks, particularly those who are interested in performing arts. Aspiring actress Zerelda Brass is humiliated when she auditions for Juliet's part and is informed that she has no acting talent, and prospective opera singer Mavis's career is in jeopardy when she catches bronchitis and temporarily loses her voice when she attempts to enter a singing competition. Gwendoline's lack of enthusiasm for her schoolwork and games is disapproved of, her homesickness is mocked, and she is regarded as a coward and sneak by her peers.

As Quigley observes, schooling had altered in the latter half of the twentieth century and single-sex boarding schools probably seemed old-fashioned. The number of comprehensive schools increased in the 1960s and '70s and more children attended co-educational establishments. School settings still sustained popularity despite these educational changes, however, and many authors provided insight into their protagonists' experiences at school. Brent-Dyer and Forrest were still writing in the 1960s and '70s and the Cornish setting in Anne Digby's *Trebizon* novels (1978-94) is reminiscent of Enid Blyton's Malory Towers. Writers started to combine the school story with fantasy, famous examples being Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch* (1974), Gillian Cross's *The Demon Headmaster* (1983), and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and*

the Philosopher's Stone (1997). Changes in education might have resulted in a decline in the traditional school story, but the school setting still appealed to writers, and they maintained some of the genre's characteristics whilst updating it.

Lucinda McKnight's essay highlights that the identity of a 'schoolgirl' is still relatively new:

> Schoolgirl, as a term, is an oxymoron. The negative charge between metaphoric tenor and vehicle provides the frisson that retains this trope. The word schoolboy is redundant, rarely used; school and boy go together so naturally that the adjective is unnecessary. Schoolgirl retains an element of surprise, and reminds the reader subliminally that girls did/do not always go to school (Smith: 2019: 13).

This indicates that the girls' school story genre may not be as outdated as Quigley suggests: girls in Britain did attend school before education was made compulsory, but many would have been denied the opportunity and either had to work to contribute to family finances, or their education involved developing domestic accomplishments to prepare them for marriage. Girls at Malory Towers take pride in referring to themselves as schoolgirls: Zerelda remarks that is 'fun to be a proper schoolgirl' but she can be regarded as a 'proper schoolgirl' only when she abandons her acting dream:

> 'Oh Mavis – you're just like me – reduced to being a schoolgirl and nothing else. But gee, you wouldn't believe how nice it is to belong to the others, to be just as they are, and not try to make out you're too wunnerful for words!' (Blyton: 1998: 134).

Being a schoolgirl is regarded as admirable in itself and Blyton implies that girls should be contented that they can define themselves in this way. Education is undoubtedly a privilege for these girls: in 1948, when *Third Year at Malory Towers* was published, children could leave school at 15, and in a patriarchal society, they

could not take it for granted that their parents would be happy for them to continue with their schooling. Taking this into account, being a 'schoolgirl' can enable girls to feel empowered to a certain extent. However, the term 'schoolgirl' is also very restrictive: as Zerelda points out, a girl cannot become a 'schoolgirl' simply by attending school, and she becomes a 'proper schoolgirl' when she aspires to be like other girls in her form and sacrifice her individuality. For girls in school stories, attending school is equivalent to appearing on stage or in films, and girls are compelled to act the part of the ideal schoolgirl convincingly if they wish to be accepted.

In his analysis of classic school stories, Matthew Grenby argues that 'the school features almost as a character itself, and in which children fit happily into the school, each helping to form the character of the other,' and that 'school settings clearly offer a perfect opportunity to depict children learning to balance their sense of self and of community, to mature by integrating themselves into society' (Grenby: 2008: 87-93). Learning to integrate into society involves adjusting to the ethos of the school and behaving in ways deemed appropriate for schoolgirls. Girls are also conscious of how they look in Blyton's novels, as they are expected to be smart, but not be too preoccupied with their appearances: hair is either worn short or plaited and Zerelda's attempts to copy famous film stars' make-up and hairstyles are disapproved of by her schoolmistresses and classmates. Farmer's Charlotte is excited about having her hair plaited 'which she had always wanted secretly and never been allowed, because her grandfather with whom she lived did not like girls to have their hair in plaits' (Farmer: 2009: 16). Charlotte's wish for plaits is possibly indicative of her desire to fit in with other schoolgirls by having the appropriate hairstyle. Her new

plaited hair results in her being unable to think properly because ‘Nurse Gregory had pulled her hair so tightly into its single plait, tied ribbon so tightly at top and bottom, that her scalp ached and pricked still, which made her brain seem to ache and prickle too’ (p. 17). With Charlotte’s aching brain, Farmer provides a critique of the ideals presented in Blyton’s novels: her protagonist is discouraged from standing out as an individual both in terms of her appearance and her ability to be able to form her own articulate thoughts. This is further emphasised when Emily Moby fails to realise that Charlotte has changed places with her older sister Clare. Strict regulations about dress code and behaviour have caused schoolgirls to be indistinguishable from one another.

In Magorian’s novel, Benwood House pupils are admired when they appear in their school uniform: Rusty’s mother fondly opines that she ‘looks like a proper little schoolgirl’ when they visit the Hatherley family in Devon during the school holidays (Magorian: 2014: 270). The Hatherley children are unimpressed though and observe that Rusty looks as if she has ‘walked out a girls’ storybook’ (p. 271). The reference to stories highlights how Rusty is hoping that her experiences will replicate those of girls she reads about in books, and wearing her uniform is part of her performance in creating her own school story, linking to Lucinda McKnight’s argument about how women and girl readers struggle to detach themselves from the way the schoolgirl is represented. Initially, Rusty is excited about attending boarding school, revealing that she has ‘read stories about them. Living in dormitories and finding secret passages and having midnight feasts’ (p. 45). Rusty’s classmates take an immediate dislike to her though and are resentful that she was able to live comfortably in America during the war. Tensions existed between English and American children after the war

because of contrasting lifestyles. In her autobiography *In My Own Time,* Nina Bawden observed:

> These Americans were new to war; pampered peacetime children with smooth milk-fed faces whose fledgling innocence about the kind of minor privations we were accustomed to amused, astonished and shocked us (Bawden: 1994: 72).

Rusty's classmates disapprove of her evening attire, which consists of bright clothing and white bobby socks from America: 'there are more important things here in England than dressing up. It's bad form not to look shabby. There's been a war on you know' (Magorian: 2014: 179). Like Selina Cole in Streatfeild's *Party Frock,* Rusty is expected to perform the role of a respectable wartime child and wear elaborate clothes only on special occasions. However, unlike Selina, Rusty has no plain English clothes because she has spent five years in America, and as Rusty's classmates are keen to remind her that there has been a war, it can be argued that it would be 'bad form' for her to buy new clothes when her current ones are in good condition. Benwood House pupils and teachers have different standards of frugality when it comes to their uniform: despite clothes rationing, girls are expected to conform to strict dress codes - even 'the ribbons have to be the regulation colour and width' (p. 144) – and practically all of Peggy Dickinson's clothing coupons are put towards her daughter's school clothes, meaning that she cannot afford new ones for herself. An expensive school uniform is not deemed to be too extravagant regardless of the circumstances the country is in. Like Farmer, Magorian questions ideas in previous school stories about schoolgirls' appearances. By going to significant lengths to look the part, both Charlotte and Rusty have sacrificed part of their individuality, but it has also impacted on other people: the 1918 schoolgirls cannot distinguish between Charlotte and Clare, and in Magorian's novel, it is implied that

clothing coupons could be put to better use than to pay for the Benwood House school uniform.

Traditional school stories regularly featured new girls with vices who eventually adapt to school life: at Blyton's Malory Towers, Daphne Turner, Zerelda Brass and Mavis are accepted by their peers once they cease to be conceited about their looks or talents, Darrell Rivers learns to control her temper, and reserved girls such as Sally Hope and Mary Lou become popular when they take an interest in school activities. Only Gwendoline Lacey remains unrepentant about her faults until the final novel when she receives devastating news about her father. According to Blyton, any girl can become a desirable schoolgirl if she is hard-working, shows enthusiasm for games, is respectful towards schoolfellows and avoids displays of conceit, temper, or selfishness. Farmer and Magorian both express concern about the expectations placed upon girls at school by highlighting how being a schoolgirl essentially involves performance. Rusty is eager to make a good impression and is conscious about not making the same mistakes as the new girls at Malory Towers, but she faces hostility every time she tries to communicate with her classmates. Dormitory monitor Judith Poole is unimpressed by Rusty's friendliness: 'For a new girl you talk too much…And considering the way you talk, it's a wonder you dare open your mouth at all' (p. 175). In contrast to Rusty, Charlotte is accused of being 'standoffish' by the other girls and her Headmistress Miss Bowser attacks her in class: 'I hear you are unfriendly, do not join in and take part with the other girls, and that is something we do not like in this school' (Farmer: 2009: 70). Mistresses at Malory Towers are portrayed as being right when assessing the girls' personalities: girls like Gwendoline who refuse to take part in sports are perceived to be selfish and

undesirable, whereas enthusiastic swimmers Darrell and Alicia are popular with fellow schoolgirls and teachers. Charlotte's classmates Janet and Vanessa are two girls who appear to resemble ideal schoolgirls because of their enthusiasm for games, but they are also capable of being spiteful and dishonest. Through her presentation of these characters, Farmer suggests that girls who embody the desirable traits of a schoolgirl according to Blyton's standards might not always be trustworthy. Individual schoolgirls cannot be defined by one stereotype, and those who consistently represent the ideal present in traditional stories are likely to be acting. Magorian demonstrates this in *Back Home* when adults advise Rusty to act to win favour with her classmates: her Headmistress Miss Bembridge encourages her to watch the school lacrosse matches to compensate for the order marks she receives for her use of slang and lack of punctuality, and her mother is unsympathetic when she confides in her about the girls bullying her for having an American accent. When her mother suggests that she makes an effort to lose it, Rusty is sceptical, pointing out that she would 'still be the same person, so what's the difference?' (Magorian: 2014: 260). Here, it seems as though Rusty is resigned to the fact that she will never be accepted at Benwood House: she can fit in only if she is prepared to embrace the hypocrisy and prejudices present in her schoolfellows, which her principles will never allow her to do. In her portrayal of Rusty, Magorian indicates that schoolgirls are more likely to become empathetic and open-minded if they maintain a sense of individuality, in contrast to girls who follow Judith Poole's example and unquestionably uphold Benwood House ideals.

Charlotte's situation is even more complex than Rusty's because she has to adjust to being a different person on alternate days when she travels back to 1918. In her

essay 'When Women Tell Tales about School' (1994), Beverly Lyon Clark argues that girls' schools stories are less likely to challenge school hierarchical systems than those written for boys, but they still have potential to be subversive as 'subversion need not entail pitting an individual against adult authority, as in most boys' school stories but may derive from playing off two authorities against each other.' In relation to *Charlotte Sometimes,* she argues:

> In Farmer's case, it's two different sets of school authorities, even if she doesn't fully capitalise on the potential for subversion. But a girl can gain perspective by attempting to sort through the interplay of altogether different sources of authority (Lyon Clark: 1994: 24).

Charlotte and Clare have similar personality traits: both girls care about Clare's younger sister Emily, and neither girl is particularly rebellious, although Charlotte is described as being 'less bossy' than the girl she exchanges identities with (Farmer: 2009: 48). The two girls communicate through Clare's diary, but this does not prove to be a straightforward solution. Clare urges Charlotte not to inform Emily of her transformation: 'just go on acting as if you were me, and not say anything and look after her' (p. 38). Becoming Clare is difficult though, as Charlotte is given little information about how she should act to avoid arousing Emily's suspicion: as Clare requests that Charlotte does not read earlier parts of the diary or any letters they receive from the Moby family, she has little insight into Clare's life or thoughts. The two girls confuse their teachers because they excel in different subjects at school: Clare is musically gifted in contrast to Charlotte who struggles with piano scales, but Clare forgets this when she is in Charlotte's time. The music teacher remarks to Charlotte: 'You'd almost have thought…that you had changed into different people from one lesson to the next' (p. 55). The diary provides a link between the two worlds, but it cannot be relied upon: taking on another person's identity is too

complex, and the two girls cannot alter each other's talents or avoid causing upset. Charlotte and Clare have unintentionally caused disruption in their schools: through switching between different eras, Charlotte and Clare have become unpredictable and presented problems to figures in authority. As Lyon Clark argues, Charlotte has gained more insight into school life in a different era, but she has also developed perspective about how her own identity is potentially vulnerable: there is the danger that she could become too easily interchangeable with Clare because of their similar personality traits, but she also risks exposing her secret if she acts in a way that is unusual for the role she is meant to be playing.

How girls are perceived at school is also dependent on who they choose to associate with. In Blyton's novels, each girl is anxious to have her own special friend and will often choose a girl who will help them to elevate their status amongst their peers or meet their parents' approval. This is particularly apparent with Gwendoline Lacey who shallowly chooses her friends on the basis of whether they are beautiful or from affluent backgrounds and has little concern about their personalities. Even Darrell Rivers overlooks quieter less popular girls in her form to pursue friendship with outgoing Alicia Johns, despite her tendency to be sharp-tongued and lacking in empathy towards those who are less academically gifted or confident. Eager to convince her family that she has found a special friend at school, Darrell invites Emily Lake, a girl she has barely spoken to and has little in common with, to go for lunch with her parents when they visit at half-term. Having a special friend is a crucial part of a schoolgirl's identity at Malory Towers, and if she fails to establish true friendship with another girl, she needs to find someone to act in the role. These sentiments are shared by new girl Susannah in *Charlotte Sometimes* who asks

Charlotte to be her best friend after only a few weeks of being acquainted, a request that Charlotte accepts:

> No one had ever asked her this before, and though certain she did not really want to be Susannah's best friend, she was touched and pleased by it. Nor did she know how to refuse without being unkind (p. 60).

In this exchange between Charlotte and Susannah, Farmer implies that many school friendships are artificial: Susannah might have genuine fondness for Charlotte as Emily has for Darrell, but lonely Charlotte agrees to spend time with Susannah because she is the only girl who appears interested in becoming her friend. This links to Lucinda McKnight's argument as Charlotte, a probable reader of school stories, feels compelled to model herself on fictional girls, whose identities as true schoolgirls are established once they form intimate friendships. After Darrell establishes genuine friendship with Sally Hope at Malory Towers, there is no further mention of Emily Lake, and there is no evidence that Emily is hurt by Darrell's rejection. Farmer, however, illustrates how harmful performative friendships can be when Charlotte and Clare change identities. Despite regular communication with Clare through the diary, Charlotte fails to mention that Susannah is her best friend, leaving the latter girl hurt when Clare ignores her, causing her to face hostility from the other girls. It is significant that Charlotte does not inform Clare of her friendship with Susannah: being able to acknowledge Charlotte's alleged best friend is one problem that Clare could easily fix when she visits Charlotte's school. Charlotte's forgetfulness in mentioning Susannah and the subsequent consequences illustrate how false friendships are detrimental to girls, and Farmer indicates that it is preferable for schoolgirls to focus on forming genuine friendships through time instead of accepting invitations to be a girl's 'best friend' to create a good impression.

Pupils at Benwood House are reluctant to associate with Rusty because of her inability to adjust to English life, and even those who are less prejudiced against her are concerned that forming a friendship with her will harm their reputations. The girl Rusty accompanies on her first school walk is unpopular because she earned a scholarship to Benwood House: 'They look down on me because my father doesn't have to pay any fees. They call me "Charity Girl"' but being friends with Rusty is impossible: 'You see, if I make friends with you I'll be even more unpopular' (Magorian: 2014: 221). At Blyton's Malory Towers, girls are welcomed regardless of their socio-economic background, as pupils admire Ellen Wilson for winning a scholarship and they are made to feel ashamed when they wrongly accuse her of being a thief. With the girls' treatment of the scholarship girl at Benwood House, Magorian highlights how unjust prejudices against girls from poorer backgrounds were more apparent in boarding schools than her predecessor implies. Becoming more unpopular would inevitably be Rusty's fate if she associated with the scholarship girl, particularly as the latter girl is older and friendships between girls from different forms are discouraged at Benwood House, but she is prepared to take the risk of offering companionship to a fellow outcast. Like Farmer, Magorian has attacked the falsity of intimate companionship in traditional school stories by implying that girls have little chance of forming genuine friendships because they are too concerned about what others might think. Rusty's determination to give marginalised people a chance and risk diminishing her popularity even further indicates that she is too authentic to play the role of a Benwood House schoolgirl.

Figures in authority in both novels refer to the wars to encourage girls to uphold school values. Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig note that this was apparent in many schools during the First World War:

> In many real-life schools, the war was used to promote good behaviour. It became positively un-British to step out of line. The moral pressures on schoolchildren must have been formidable, when the least transgression could be converted to a want of patriotism (Cadogan and Craig: 1978: 112).

In *Charlotte Sometimes,* Margery 'Bunty' Bunting receives a stern lecture from her Headmistress Miss Bite after encouraging the girls to imitate soldiers:

> Bunty, she said, had let the school down, let herself down and the girls she led astray, let her country down in these grave days, disgraced herself, her school, her King, her country (Farmer: 2009: 52).

Similarly, in *Back Home* when Rusty first meets her form mistress Miss Paxton, she is informed that Benwood House aims 'to produce courteous, good citizens, young women who would make good wives and mothers, who would serve their King and country to the best of their ability.' The school's strict rules 'had produced girls worthy of the school, some of whom not only played an active part in the armed services during the War, but had also been officers and leaders' (Magorian: 2014: 181). In both cases, adhering to school rules means that girls can assist their country's heroes, whilst transgression is the equivalent of betrayal. Observing school rules is part of the rehearsal for girls' final performances as eventual heroes in society. These messages leave little impression on the girls though: Bunty is unconcerned when she is made to sit on the platform as punishment, and Emily mocks Miss Bite's hyperbolic speech, remarking '[t]he way she spoke, anyone would think Bunty had been rude to God' (Farmer: 2009: 52). Miss Paxton's words mean little to Rusty who still considers America to be her home: 'She believed in Democracy and Freedom.

Everything she'd learnt in history was how kings had lived off hard-working Americans' (Magorian: 2014: 181). Patriotism is used to encourage submission, but there is no indication that girls subjected to lectures feel inspired to alter their behaviour, and Farmer and Magorian undermine the attitudes prevalent in wartime schools that Cadogan and Craig describe. Girls in previous schools have been manipulated into performing the role of the patriotic schoolgirl, but these two authors emphasise that girls need to resist this pressure through their rebellious characters. The teachers imply that girls can become their country's future heroes if they devoutly observe school doctrine, but Farmer and Magorian indicate that a girl cannot achieve her true potential as a hero if she remains unquestioning of authority and constantly doubts her own abilities. Genuine heroes have flaws as well as strengths, are confident in forming their own opinions, and make decisions based on their own judgements, meaning that the ideal schoolgirl from previous traditions cannot become one. For Farmer and Magorian, a girl can become a hero if she refuses to act the part of the perfect schoolgirl and continues to develop her individuality.

Performing the Role of Schoolmistress

When advising girls about potential careers as schoolteachers in *The Years of Grace,* author Norah Lofts observes:

> There is, though it is seldom mentioned, a kind of stigma attached to the profession. The very word 'schoolmistress' evokes in the general mind, the vision of a physically unattractive woman, unfashionably dressed, of a censorious, dictatorial nature (Streatfeild: 1950: 330).

Lucinda McKnight's observation about schoolgirls acting 'inside the oxymoron of claiming agency, despite broader contexts that deny it' is arguably applicable to teachers in traditional school stories. At Malory Towers, for example, teachers who adhere to Lofts' description tend to be more respected and feared by the girls: playing a trick on strict and 'mannish' Miss Peters is unthinkable, but smartly dressed Mademoiselle Dupont who 'was short-sighted but she would not wear glasses' (Blyton: 1998: 19) is presented as a figure of ridicule. Moreover, it is implied that she favours the conventionally pretty girls: she insists that Daphne Turner must play the principal parts in the plays despite her lack of acting talent and inability to speak fluent French. Schoolteachers have agency in the sense that they can support themselves financially and offer education to empower future generations of women, but their agency is restricted because they are required to perform by wearing appropriate plain clothing and possibly altering their personalities to encourage pupils to respect them. After observing that her Headmistress Miss Grayling has 'a very firm mouth' (p. 20), Darrell Rivers is terrified of being sent to her office as a punishment for misbehaviour. Even the most unenthusiastic girls are inspired by the headmistress's speech: 'You will get a tremendous lot out of your time at Malory Towers. See that you give a lot back!' (p. 21). Idolisation of Headmistresses is questioned in both Farmer's and Magorian's novels. Miss Bite appears comical when reprimanding Bunty, and Miss Bowser's lecture to Charlotte is also exaggerated: 'You let yourself down by this behaviour Charlotte. You let your class down, you let me down, you let your school down' (Farmer: 2009: 204). Despite overhearing her classmates Janet and Vanessa remark that 'it wouldn't hurt goody Charlotte to be given a proper ticking-off like that' (p. 71), Charlotte is more anxious about resolving her time-travelling problem and expresses little concern that she has potentially let

her school down for failing to recite the correct poem. Miss Bite and Miss Bowser are both attempting to play the role of formidable Headmistress, but Farmer disrupts their performances: utilising hyperbole does not have the desired effect on the girls receiving their lectures, as neither Bunty nor Charlotte aspires to become a model pupil. Contrasting attitudes towards Headmistresses in Blyton's and Farmer's novels are indicative of times changing: the former's novels were written in the 1940s in an era when there was more respect for authority and compulsion to behave impeccably during a war, but by 1969, when *Charlotte Sometimes* was published, attitudes had become more liberal and questioning. Thus, Farmer's girls are less convinced by their Headmistresses' acts.

In *Back Home,* Headmistress Miss Bembridge fails to leave a lasting impression on Rusty. She contrasts with Blyton's Miss Grayling who is optimistic about Zerelda Brass attending Malory Towers because she feels 'that the American would be good for English girls and that the English girls would help the American' (Blyton: 1998: 45). After demoting Zerelda to a lower form, Miss Grayling implores her, 'don't slide down any further will you? You belong to a great country, and are her only representative here. Be a good one if you can' (p. 47). Miss Bembridge is prejudiced against Rusty's inherited American identity: she expresses disdain for the American education system, disapproves of Rusty's accent, and accuses her of being 'softened by luxury' after living in America. Miss Bembridge's hostility makes Rusty more determined to assert her identity, addressing her Headmistress in 'an American accent so broad it bordered on the Deep South' (Magorian: 2014: 213). Before starting at Benwood House, Rusty was optimistic about recreating similar experiences to girls in traditional school stories, but her disillusionment with school

after the way she has been treated by her fellow pupils and teachers has resulted in her rebelling. Rusty contradicts part of McKnight's argument because she has become detached from the way schoolgirls are represented in fiction when she interacts with her Headmistress: unlike girls in Blyton's novels who dread being sent to Miss Grayling, Rusty is unconcerned about whether she impresses her Headmistress and shows no inclination to modify her behaviour or work harder in her lessons. Most pupils at Benwood House share Miss Bembridge's opinions, emphasising her questionable appointment as Headmistress. Rusty's refusal to act highlights how she is starting to become 'the protagonist in [her] own story' as McKnight describes: instead of moulding herself into an ideal schoolgirl by Benwood House standards, Rusty retains her authenticity and avoids inheriting the superiority and prejudices of her classmates. Of course, Magorian's 1984 novel demonstrates the different values of the late-twentieth century, with individuality now a quality to be appreciated and cultivated in the education of girls. Rusty's defiance of Miss Bembridge now offers some optimism that girls can retain a sense of individuality at school and indicates that other girls would flourish if they followed her example of retaining their unique characteristics. Circumstances at Benwood House are unlikely to change in the near future with Miss Bembridge in charge though, and Rusty needs to break away from that environment to resist social pressures.

Some teachers in *Charlotte Sometimes* and *Back Home,* however, are presented as sympathetic figures. In Farmer's novel, geography teacher Miss Wilkin provides a link between the two worlds, and it is apparent that the war has impacted on her significantly. In 1918, young Miss Wilkin is engaged and full of enthusiasm: 'Charlotte had seen her skip upstairs once when she thought no one was watching,

as if she had been as young as Emily' (Farmer: 2009: 44). However, her life changes when her fiancé is killed in the war and her sadness is reflected in her 'bedraggled' appearance (p. 135). In the 1950s, she attempts to recapture her youth through her clothing: 'indeed her clothes all looked to have more stuff in them than her shape now needed. She wore a black velvet ribbon in her hair,' a reminder of her bereavement during the war (p. 183). Miss Wilkin's clothing appears outdated and pupils in both schools appear to prove Lofts' point about attitudes towards schoolteachers. Girls ridicule her for her appearance, but she still has 'bright eyes like an elderly bird' and even sly Janet and Vanessa are reluctant to disrupt her classes because she 'still had some authority' (p. 183). This highlights how Miss Wilkin is caught between two conflicting worlds: the loss of her fiancé is devastating, but it has meant that she can continue with her teaching career, which would have been prohibited in the 1920s if she had married. Miss Wilkin is unable to consistently act her part as the authoritative schoolmistress: her longing for the past and guilt about carrying on with her career have possibly caused her to be unable to commit fully to teaching, and she sometimes fails to deal with disruptive girls as a result. However, Farmer champions the weaker teacher over the Headmistress by giving her human qualities and encourages readers to empathise with her. Through Miss Wilkin, Farmer also provides a message about contemporary society: married women could continue working in the 1960s but there was still pressure for them to choose between careers and children. Miss Wilkin's situation reminds readers of the progress women have made, but also emphasises that there is a possibility that there is still more to be done, and warns that the mistakes of the past could potentially be repeated if people fail to resist conservative opposition to women's rights.

In *Back Home,* history teacher Miss Bullivant has a reputation for being tough and pupils call her ‘the Bull.’ Like Farmer’s schoolgirls, pupils at Benwood House have similar perceptions of teachers that Lofts refers to. Miss Bullivant displays the ‘censorious and dictatorial’ nature associated with schoolteachers on several occasions, particularly towards Rusty, who is humiliated when she is asked to share her knowledge of the Civil War with the class and assumes her teacher is referring to the American one. When Rusty encounters Lance for the first time on a school walk, Miss Bullivant informs her she has disgraced the school by speaking to him and warns ‘One more word out of you and I’ll see that you’re expelled my girl. Benwood House doesn’t need your type’ (Magorian: 2014: 225). However, she is fairer than Miss Bembridge because she does not discriminate against Rusty because of her accent or make snide remarks about her American background. She displays anger at Rusty for flouting school rules, but her nickname ‘the Bull’ indicates that she would be tough on any girl who defied her or produced unsatisfactory history work. Miss Bullivant also demonstrates concern about Rusty’s welfare when she faints in class and overlooks Rusty’s use of slang with ‘a twinkle in her eye. Boy, she looked almost nice’ (p. 397). This contrasts to dormitory monitor Judith Poole who ruthlessly hands out order marks to Rusty when she uses the word ‘OK.’ Miss Bullivant is strict when enforcing the rules, but this episode shows that she prioritises the girls’ health over disciplining them for trivial offences. Miss Bullivant has a tough nature, but she has not entirely lived up to her nickname because she is genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of her pupils, in contrast to Miss Bembridge who is focussed on turning her pupils into respectable English ladies. Farmer and Magorian both highlight how teachers can transcend the binaries of the strict authoritarian mistress and figure of

ridicule: Miss Wilkin retains some authority despite her grief being apparent, and seemingly dictatorial Miss Bullivant realises that there is more to being a responsible teacher than relentlessly enforcing rules.

In *Charlotte Sometimes* and *Back Home,* Farmer and Magorian both show that the term 'schoolgirl' is not as straightforward as its definition implies. Charlotte and Rusty initially try to create their own stories and assume their experiences will be similar to those of characters in books but discover that becoming an ideal schoolgirl involves acting several different parts. Looking the part of the schoolgirl is crucial: girls are required to be smart, but not have elaborate clothing or hairstyles. Popularity depends on how girls perform through participation in school activities and who they choose as their friends. Farmer and Magorian question the authority of Headmistresses whilst endorsing teachers who are ridiculed or unfairly perceived by their pupils. The two authors emphasise how being a schoolgirl is essentially an act that girls must resist performing to maintain their individuality. Being away from school is still problematic for Charlotte and Rusty though, as they are still expected to perform different roles to fit other people's expectations of them.

<u>Playing Parts Outside of School</u>

In addition to exposing how girls are compelled to act at school, Farmer and Magorian also show how this is prevalent in traditional nuclear families. In *The Family in English Children's Literature,* Ann Alston examines the representation of family life in children's fiction from 1800 to the late 1980s. She argues that despite increased rights for women in the twentieth century, 'the pressure to conform to the

stereotype of the ideal mother was perhaps no less than it had been during the nineteenth century' (Alston: 2008: 22), and that 'Adults cling to the notion of the perfect family promulgated by society and there seems to be little chance that adults will present their children with anything that contradicts this illusion' (p. 26). Matthew Grenby also observes that '[e]ven the books about non-traditional families that appear in the later twentieth century generally take the nuclear family as the ideal to which children should and do aspire' (Grenby: 2008: 139). Farmer and Magorian appear to acknowledge the societal nostalgia for traditional family units, but instead of idealising the nuclear family, they continually question it through their portrayals of gender roles. The Chisel Brown and Dickinson households feature dominant patriarchs and female characters are compelled to perform to satisfy them: women and girls are expected to act as dutiful wives and mothers and are discouraged from having any independence. The two authors' representations of nuclear families warn readers about the dangers of nostalgia, but also indicate that there is potential for improvement if women and girls resist performing.

Mr Chisel Brown immediately attempts to impose his authority upon Charlotte and Emily when they arrive at Flintlock Lodge, insisting that they refer to him by his full name when they address him, and when they fail to do so he remarks 'Young ladies these days, Hunnish manners seemingly' (Farmer: 2009: 87). Comparing the girls to German soldiers indicates that he regards them as enemies to fear, highlighting how he does not have as much power over them as he perceives. Emily in particular is unafraid to challenge him and makes it clear she is mocking him when bidding him goodnight: 'Good *night* Mr Chisel Brown' almost with a curtsey. 'Good *night* Mrs Chisel Brown. Good *night* Miss Agnes Chisel Brown. Good *night* cat. Good *night*

dog' (p. 99). Emily delivers the required lines, but she refuses to act her part convincingly to satisfy her host. Through Emily's defiance, Farmer implies that the nuclear family is essentially a performance with assigned roles, which can easily be disrupted if one person is reluctant to cooperate. Mr Chisel Brown relies upon the girls' fear of him when exerting control over them, but as Emily is not afraid of him and does not pretend to be, his authority is undermined. Charlotte's and Emily's stay with the Chisel Browns ends when they are caught attending a victory parade and the Headmistress decides they cannot be trusted in lodgings. Mr Chisel Brown attempts to frighten the girls once more in his final lecture when he 'regained his puffed-out look, listing to them every one of their misdeeds, both those they knew about…and others Charlotte had been unaware of committing such as leaving his newspaper untidily folded' (p. 166). Mr Chisel Brown's not telling Charlotte of her alleged faults exposes his fragile authority, as it suggests that he assumed she would continue to disobey him. Farmer shows that traditional nuclear families with established gender roles can potentially be harmful, but she also offers readers a sense of optimism with Charlotte's and Emily's resistance to Mr Chisel Brown. He takes his dominance for granted, but their inability or refusal to act in roles as dutiful adopted daughters results in his own performance as the dominant father figure being disrupted because he is unable to respond to their rebellion.

Newly confident Peggy Dickinson frequently experiences conflict with her traditionalist husband and mother-in-law. As Rose-May Pham Dinh observes:

> Just as free-spirited, Americanized Rusty is expected to turn back into demure, well-behaved Virginia, Peggy, the ace car-mechanic who '[…] can make a vehicle run on almost nothing but elastic bands' is meant to revert to being 'impractical,' 'helpless' Margaret, the submissive wife that husband and mother-in-law order about and treat

> like a child who, symbolically, does not have a key to the front door of the family house (Pham-Dimh: 2008).

Instead of expressing pride in his wife's work in the Women's Voluntary Service, Roger Dickinson is horrified to discover that she no longer has a conventionally feminine appearance because she has cut her hair short and wears trousers. He feels humiliated on a family trip when their car breaks down and their four-year-old son Charlie insists that Peggy can mend it: 'that's what mummies do. They're the ones that fix cars' (Magorian: 2014: 332). By demonstrating his lack of awareness of gender boundaries, Charlie unintentionally undermines Mr Dickinson's authority. His insecure position is emphasised further on their journey home when he orders the children to stop singing in the car: 'I am quite capable of driving the car in any conditions. The reason is clear. It is because I say so and that is that' (p. 336). Unnerved by his wife's superiority in car mechanics, Mr Dickinson attempts to re-establish his authority by insisting that his orders are followed without question. The family excursion scene highlights how Peggy was suited to her part as the submissive wife before the war, but the role is no longer appropriate for her when she becomes empowered through acquiring new skills. Roger's inability to adjust to changes in his wife's personality emphasises that she needs to escape from her marriage or be resigned to constantly acting to retain his approval.

Roger also expects his daughter to alter her identity: he disapproves of her American clothes, prohibits the use of words he considers to be 'slang,' and forbids her from associating with any men or boys outside of the family. After informing him that she prefers to be referred to as 'Rusty', Mr Dickinson insists: 'I shall continue to call you Virginia. After all, that is what we christened you' (p. 302). Rusty's father is attempting to direct her in a new role as an English young lady by suppressing any

association she has with her American family. He acknowledges the need for his daughter to be educated, but does not share his wife's ambition for her to attend university: 'when she's finished at school, she'll do a good cookery course and if she's fortunate, she'll make a good marriage' (p. 354). For Mr Dickinson, education is a necessity to prepare girls for their roles as future wives and mothers. Magorian highlights how traditional nuclear families cannot necessarily be idealised through her portrayal of Rusty's and her father's difficult relationship, suggesting that the family's wellbeing would be better if he had not returned home. According to Cadogan and Craig, the lack of necessity for a father was a common theme in neo-historical children's war fiction:

> 'There is no need for endings to be invariably happy (in neo-historical children's war fiction): missing relatives are not always alive off-stage. Father does not have to appear on the last page to restore the family's fortunes' (Cadogan and Craig: 1978: 270).

This is apparent in Magorian's conclusion to *Back Home.* Rusty's eventual expulsion from Benwood House is followed by the breakdown of her parents' marriage. Peggy has an opportunity for a fresh start in Devon to live in the house her friend Beattie bequeathed to her in her will. Significantly, the will stipulates that the house must not be sold to a man in any circumstances, and in the event of Peggy's death she 'must pass it on to a younger female of her own choosing' (p. 266), enabling Rusty and Peggy to build a future free from patriarchal oppression. Rusty shares the sentiments of children described by Alston and Grenby: she attempts to persuade her father to join them in Devon despite his threat to 'cut her off without a penny' (p. 437) when she rejects his offer to send her to a strict convent school, and continues to hope that he will visit her during the school holidays. Magorian's wishes differ from those of her protagonist and Rusty's younger brother who hopes for a reunion between Peggy and the American G. I. Harvey Lindon. The disappearance of men in Magorian's

novel indicates that women need to learn to survive without them before they can have relationships based on equality.

Charlotte and Rusty both struggle to fit in to prescribed roles at home and school, but they have opportunities to play parts they are potentially more suited to. As Viriginie Douglas observes, Charlotte is ‘particularly gifted for identification’ because she ‘shows extraordinary empathy allowing her to identify herself with others’ (Douglas: 2013). Douglas argues that:

> Charlotte appears to be the embodiment of the ideal reader, capable both of letting herself be carried away by a story and of learning from it, and offers a mise en abyme of the young extradiegetic reader who, by identifying with Charlotte, becomes himself the beneficiary of a transmission (Douglas: 2013).

As Charlotte knows little about Clare, she has to rely upon her empathy to enable her to play her part convincingly. Charlotte has a close relationship with her younger sister Emma which motivates her to look after Emily: when Emily is reprimanded for being in bed after the bell Charlotte ‘found herself automatically defending [her], just as she had always defended her own sister Emma at home’ (Farmer: 2009: 8). Emily frequently refers to Charlotte as ‘Clare’ even when she discovers the truth about her because the two girls have similar qualities. However, as the two girls continue to form a close relationship, Emily realises that Charlotte is different from her sister, and Charlotte struggles to satisfy Emily. One key example of this is when the Chisel Browns hire a medium to contact their dead son Arthur: Emily pressures Charlotte to let her attend the séance, but afterwards expresses regret and informs Charlotte that she is ‘not a bit like [Clare]. Clare wouldn’t have let me attend the séance last night. She’s much too honourable, she’s much too stern. I wish you hadn’t let me either’ (p. 137). Initially, Emily is excited about having a slightly more adventurous older sister,

but at the same time, she is disappointed that Charlotte does not have the same authority over her as Clare. Charlotte's ability to identify with Clare can only be successful to a certain extent because the differences between the two girls continue to become more apparent as Charlotte attempts to fit the role. Similarities between the names Charlotte and Clare, and Emma and Emily cause the girls to become interchangeable. Charlotte and Emily need each other to begin with because they are yearning for sisterly companionship, but once they realise that Clare and Emma cannot be replaced, the two girls must concentrate on their own lives and leave the other person behind.

Charlotte does not just become immersed in Clare's story when she travels back in time. Her capacity for empathy is apparent when she learns about Arthur Chisel Brown's death through fighting in the war and finds that she can relate to Miss Agnes Chisel Brown, whom she considers to be 'a bit like Clare, and a bit like herself, with a naughty younger brother instead of a sister to keep in order' (p. 111). Charlotte's identification with Miss Agnes and sympathy with Arthur's plight cause her to temporarily turn into the Chisel Browns' daughter while sleeping and she is unable to distinguish the difference between dreams and reality. She ponders 'Suppose I did go back in time for a little while and it really was Arthur whispering?' (p. 144), and she is frightened about the prospect of being stuck in 1918 and turning into Miss Agnes, linking to Maria Nikolajeva's theory regarding 'immersive identification' as Charlotte is 'unable to assess [Miss Agnes's] state of mind from [her] own.' Charlotte's experiences have not resulted from excessive reading and identifying with literary characters, but her intense preoccupation with the Chisel Browns' stories has proved to be problematic because her inability to detach herself from them has

resulted in her losing her sense of self. Charlotte's ability to travel through time means that she can learn from the different historical eras she visits, but it is also necessary for her to avoid associating her experiences with those of the individuals she encounters. Through excessive immersion in stories and inability to remember that the era she lives in has passed, Charlotte is potentially in danger of continually having a fluctuating identity and having to resort to playing new roles. Farmer indicates that it is important to learn from history to avoid repeating past mistakes, but in her portrayal of Charlotte, she suggests that people must engage with it productively and recognise the differences and separate themselves from individuals.

Charlotte's approach to historical figures changes when she returns to board at school and anticipates her permanent departure back to the present day. This is evident in her interaction with isolated schoolgirl Elsie Brand, who is distrusted because she has a German father. Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig observe that:

> In retrospective fiction, the crashed Germans are never menacing: their function is usually to provide a rudimentary tolerance for individual members of the enemy, to indicate that the other side is equally vulnerable and pathetic, to show the enmity between the nations is not a clear-cut and absolute matter (Cadogan and Craig: 1978: 257).

Tess Cosslett supports this view, stating that 'the time-slip narrative offers an openness to "other" histories rather than the nationalistic search for roots' (Cosslett: 2002: 244). Coming from a peacetime era, Charlotte has more confidence to challenge the girls' prejudices against Elsie: she rejects Bunty's theory that Elsie is a German spy and rebukes Emily when she mocks Elsie's appearance. She stands up for Elsie when the girls refer to her as a coward for expressing reluctance to fetch her ribbon from the roof: 'Elsie isn't a coward. She isn't. You'll do it, won't you Elsie,

walk out there? And I'll come with you and keep you company' (Farmer: 2009: 173). Being on the roof gives Charlotte a sense of power and confidence, emotions that she is unable to experience in her 1950s school or the Chisel Browns' household. By demonstrating bravery, Charlotte also shows that there is a clear distinction between herself and Clare: Emily reveals that her sister would 'have stood up for Elsie. She might have got very angry. But she wouldn't have done anything suddenly like that. Clare doesn't do things suddenly. Sometimes I get awfully cross with her for being so cautious' (p. 175). As she identifies with Clare and Miss Agnes, Charlotte also empathises with Elsie because she can relate to her experiences of feeling lonely and ostracised at school, but crucially, she does not contemplate the prospect of turning into Elsie. Instead, the episode with Elsie enables her to separate herself from Clare because she realises that she has the capability to be impulsive and brave in contrast to the hesitant 1918 schoolgirl. Through acting on her own instincts, rather than putting on a convincing performance as Clare, Charlotte demonstrates that she will be able to cope with the challenges of her present-day school. Playing different parts is problematic when Charlotte loses any sense of her identity, but when she shows ability to empathise but remains detached as she does with Elsie, she gains confidence by discovering more about her own unique qualities.

Magorian's Rusty does not literally change into people as Charlotte does, but she has difficulties defining her identity: 'Maybe she was two people: Virginia and Rusty. The Virginia part would float around in long gowns like Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* and the Rusty side would disappear into the woods with Skeet' (Magorian: 2014: 73). Both aspects of her personality are embraced by her family and friends in America, but her English family and schoolfellows expect her to become a

completely new person. Rusty experiences hostility for wearing luxurious clothing during wartime and her mother disapproves of her participating in activities that are deemed 'unladylike.' Mrs Dickinson Senior requests her granddaughter dress up when she entertains her friends so they 'can see what a young lady you've become' (p. 360). Rusty's elaborate clothes are the equivalent of a costume to help her put on a performance for her grandmother's friends, but she is unable to wear them on her own terms without facing opposition, further highlighting how her agency is restricted at home. To a certain extent, Rusty can relive her experiences in the woods with her adopted brother Skeet when she befriends fellow evacuee Lance from the nearby boys' school. The two children form an equal relationship and Rusty teaches Lance how to light fires to help him avoid brutal beatings from the prefects. Their friendship is only temporary, though, because Lance adapts to boarding school life and feels he can no longer associate with Rusty because of his classmates' attitudes towards girls. Despite his insistence that boys and girls are different, Rusty argues that he shares similarities with her own schoolfellows: 'You sound just like the girls at my school, cooing and spilling goo over a game' (p. 401). Rusty is included in Lance's rehearsals for his integration into school life, but once he passes his audition, she is expected to remain offstage. Unlike Lance, Rusty cannot let go of the personality she established in America and mould herself into the reserved English young lady her family and teachers desire her to be. Magorian empowers her protagonist by contrasting her bravery and authenticity with Lance's weakness in submitting to his friends' demands and indicates that Rusty will eventually benefit through refusing to participate in the performance of prejudiced boarding school life at Benwood House.

In an afterword to her interview with Michelle Magorian, Kate Agnew argues: ‘For all of Michelle’s heroes and heroines, happiness demands a high price. They not only have to work hard, but must make sacrifices in order to achieve happiness eventually’ (Agnew: 1999: 53). Rusty refers to herself as a ‘pioneer’ when she builds her ‘Cabin in the Woods,’ indicating that she was inspired by Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* series (1932-43) which was based on Wilder’s childhood experiences in the 1870s and ‘80s. This links to Lucinda McKnight’s observation about girls becoming protagonists in their own stories: Rusty cannot model herself on the schoolgirl, so she attempts to place herself in a pioneering family story. Rusty can relate to Laura: both girls have been uprooted and the relationship between Laura’s parents is reminiscent of that of Hannah and Bruno Omsk. However, Rusty has adopted an ‘immature readerly position’ as described by Maria Nikolajeva, as she naively assumes her pioneering journey will be straightforward. She attempts to run away from school and reunite with her American family but has second thoughts on her train journey to Exeter. Rusty recollects how ‘when she accidentally called them mom and pop, they would gently remind her that her real mom and pop were missing her and loved her,’ and wonders ‘if perhaps they’d want her back at all. Without her, they’d be a real family again’ (Magorian: 2014: 408). Charlotte and Rusty both place themselves inside family stories with the Mobys and Omsks, but both eventually accept that they will always be outsiders in the family, who were playing parts until normality resumed. Rusty’s arrival in Devon evokes another memory, this time of meeting her mother for the first time in five years ‘and she knew then that she just had to have a talk with her, explain everything’ (p. 409). Rusty’s longing to speak to Peggy on the phone foreshadows how the relationship between mother and daughter will be stronger once they are separated from the father. Both characters

accept each other's differences when they move to Devon: Peggy still addresses Rusty as 'Virginia' and Rusty occasionally refers to America as 'back home,' but her mother acknowledges that she will 'always be half American' (p. 440). This supports Agnew's point as Rusty and Peggy have built a good relationship through compromise: Rusty can still hold on to her memories of the Omsk family and America, but is positive about her life in England, whilst Peggy accepts that Rusty is not the same girl from five years ago and appreciates the differences between English and American lifestyles now that she is no longer insecure about where her daughter's affections lie. For Rusty, achieving happiness involves defying oppressive figures such as her father and girls at Benwood House, but she also needs to resist performing in the stories she creates about the Omsks and accept reality.

Charlotte and Rusty are aware that they need to leave their pasts behind but they still carry aspects of it with them into their new settings. In Farmer's novel, an older Emily writes to Charlotte, but indicates that this will be their last communication: 'I could not face you seeing me. I'm quite plump and grey now. To me it feels extraordinary that I should be old enough to be your grandmother having once been your younger sister' (Farmer: 2009: 197). Meeting Clare is also impossible, as she dies during the Spanish flu pandemic. Charlotte retains a temporary connection with the Moby family through Emily's daughter Sarah Reynolds, who is a prefect at the school, but Sarah cannot share Charlotte's grief about Clare because 'to Sarah, it was all just history' (p. 190). Sarah's lack of emotion about her aunt's death and inability to relate to Charlotte highlights how her link with the Moby family will continue to weaken through time. As it is Sarah's last term at school, Charlotte needs to form a genuine friendship with a girl of her own age. It is possible she might

establish this with her dorm-mate Elizabeth, the only person at the school to notice that Clare has been transported from the past. Elizabeth reveals that she had been fond of Clare, but ‘seemed so much less grief-stricken than Charlotte had been’ after finding out about Clare’s death, admitting, ‘Yes, I do mind. It makes me want to cry. But it’s so long ago. It’s all over’ (p. 191). Like Sarah, Elizabeth remains detached from history, and her recognition of the differences between Charlotte and Clare shows that she is attentive and could help Charlotte to establish her identity in school. Charlotte realises she ‘could never entirely escape from being Clare…What happened to her would go on mattering, just as what had happened in the war itself would go on mattering, for ever’ (p. 198). However, her pleasure in having an individual looking chest-of-drawers emphasises that she is starting to assert her own personality. Retaining her memory of being Clare is important because it provides a reminder for her about nostalgia for her past: whilst she enjoyed spending time with Emily, she is troubled by other girls not noticing her change in identity. Through changing places with Clare, her identity has become so fragile that she could easily be mistaken for somebody else or disappear completely without anyone noticing. Confronting the past and taking on a new role was necessary for Charlotte’s journey of self-discovery, but once she learns about her own qualities, she is equipped for reality and must leave Clare behind.

Rusty has more opportunities to pursue her talents when she moves to Devon. Upon discovering the Cabin in the Woods, Peggy is impressed with Rusty’s carpentry skills and ability to mend furniture:

> Peggy was shattered. She had no idea that her daughter was so talented. She had honestly believed she was doing her best for her by making her give up art and gymnastics, in order to take extra Latin, French and maths, for she saw university as

> the only alternative to the cooking course her husband had planned for her (Magorian: 2014: 424).

Nightly outings to the Cabin mean that Rusty has to forfeit her place at Benwood House, but they have also resulted in her mother appreciating her abilities. Rules are relaxed at her new day school in Devon and she has more flexibility about the subjects she chooses to study. Rusty also witnesses an alternative form of family life with the Hatherleys who challenge gender conventions: the eldest daughter Beth regularly helps on the school farm and has ambitions to become a farmer once she finishes, whilst her brother Harry is a committed pacifist who questions societal perceptions about bravery, and also encourages Rusty to review her own attitudes about people who choose not to fight. By introducing Rusty to different viewpoints and alternative forms of schooling, Magorian shows that her protagonist can flourish in an environment that encourages individuality. Rusty still retains painful memories of her experiences with the unfriendly girls at Benwood House, but she demonstrates that she has learned from them at the end of the novel. She perseveres with her hostile classmate to whom the others struggle to relate after she finds out about her parents' divorce by inviting her on a trip to the woods. The final chapter ends with her introducing herself and asking the girl for her name, indicating that a new friendship is about to form. Rusty empathises with the girl and does not wish for her to be excluded in the same way she was at Benwood House. Her previous school required her to perform a role that did not suit her, and it is debatable how much Rusty can resist performing when she takes on a role as a unifying figure in her new school. However, as it encourages freedom of thought, she has the potential to be more in control of her performance.

Once outside of school, Charlotte and Rusty are still expected to perform when they are placed in conventional family settings. Farmer and Magorian critique the nuclear family by highlighting that it is a performance that can be disrupted if characters do not conform to assigned gender roles. Both girls experience playing different parts: Charlotte literally transforms into different people through dreams and travelling through time, whereas Rusty fantasises about her American past and identifies as a pioneer. Recreating roles from the past results in complications: Charlotte is in danger of losing any sense of self and Rusty's idealism prevents her from accepting that she cannot go back to her old life. While exploring the past enables girls to discover more about their own identities, it also increases their confidence when they return to reality.

Conclusion

The schoolgirl, the submissive daughter, the girl from the past, and the pioneering girl are all potential roles in Farmer's and Magorian's novels. Neither Charlotte nor Rusty can act the former two parts convincingly, although Charlotte is offered hope at school once she returns and forms a friendship with Elizabeth. The 1918 schoolgirl and the pioneer are potentially more appealing parts for Charlotte and Rusty: they are easier for them to play as they can relate to their characters' experiences, but attempting to model themselves on them causes them to neglect their own identities. Through gradually rejecting these roles, Farmer and Magorian emphasise the importance of girls asserting their own personalities and initiating change.

Chapter Four
'I know a lot about heroes, because of my book': performing through chaos and confusion in *A Long Way from Verona* and *Fire and Hemlock*

'Curiouser and curiouser' remarks Lewis Carroll's Alice as she becomes significantly taller after consuming some cake she finds down the rabbit-hole (Carroll: 2009: 16). This is a particularly apt way to describe the experiences of Jane Gardam's Jessica Vye in *A Long Way from Verona* (1971) and Diana Wynne Jones's Polly Whittacker in *Fire and Hemlock* (1984). In *Female Adolescents: Psychoanalytic Reflections in Literature,* Katherine Dalsimer argues that during adolescence 'self-disparagement and grandiosity often coexist or fluctuate rapidly, creating a strange, Alice-in-Wonderland sense of confusion and discontinuity' (Dalsimer: 1986: 8). Andrea Schwenke Wyile concurs with Dalsimer in her thesis focusing on first-person narration in Bernice Thurman Hunter's *That Scatterbrain Booky* (1981), Jean Fritz's *Homesick: My Own Story* (1982) and Gardam's *A Long Way from Verona.* Writing on Gardam's novel, she observes that 'Jessica's narrative is marked by this Alice-in-Wonderland sense of confusion' that Dalsimer refers to (Wyile: 1996: 93), and it could be argued that it is also apparent in *Fire and Hemlock.* Jessica's and Polly's situations are more complicated than Alice's though, as there is no separation between their fantasy and daily lives. The two girls are frequently caught up in situations which seem farcical and sometimes dangerous, and have difficulty ascertaining whether what they are experiencing is real or part of their imagination, whilst they continue with the everyday concerns of school, home lives and relationships.

A Long Way from Verona and *Fire and Hemlock* feature the most complex forms of performance and heroism in this thesis. Like girl protagonists discussed in previous

chapters, Polly and Jessica are creative and engage in acting and storytelling, both on and off the stage. However, the roles are more straightforward for Streatfeild's, Fitzhugh's and Blume's protagonists. Streatfeild's girls act their parts on stage, are conscious of their roles as celebrity heroes off the stage, and are aware of what they need to do to maintain this image. Harriet Welsch and Sally Freedman know that they are acting the parts of detectives when they attempt to uncover mysteries about people they encounter. Charlotte Makepeace and Rusty Dickinson's roles are more complicated as they are compelled to perform parts of ideal schoolgirls and dutiful daughters, whilst being preoccupied with past worlds, and Rusty faces harsh consequences for failing to perform when she is expelled from Benwood House. Gardam's and Jones's protagonists also fluctuate between different roles to reconcile their daily lives with fantastical events they experience, which results in confusion about their identities and their memories becoming fragmented. Taking this into account, it is debatable how much these girls can be empowered through performance, as their inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality indicates that they are not entirely in control of their actions and are potentially performing against their will. This chapter examines how Gardam and Jones deal with the turbulence of the adolescent girl's life and considers how successfully Jessica and Polly can achieve their heroic dreams amid confusion and chaotic events, and whether performing and adapting to different roles highlights the girls' resilience, or if it results in their agency being taken away.

Gardam's and Jones's novels have generated a variety of critical responses. *A Long Way from Verona* features in Mary Cadogan's and Patricia Craig's analysis of girls'

stories in *You're a Brick Angela!* (1985). They applaud Gardam's portrayal of the adolescent girl:

> Jane Gardam's Jessica Vye is articulate and perceptive: she has a very strong sense of her own oddity, but suffers from all the frustrations and enthusiasms of the normal intelligent thirteen-year-old; and her evocative piecemeal existence is recreated with subtlety (Cadogan and Craig: 1985: 365).

Nicholas Tucker is also complimentary towards Gardam in his article 'Depressive Stories for Children', where he opines that *A Long Way from Verona* provides an apt representation of '[t]he galvanising, almost intoxicating effect that depressive literature can sometimes have upon sensitive readers at a certain age' (Tucker: 2006: 204). Andrea Schwenke Wyile devotes an entire chapter to *A Long Way from Verona* in her doctoral thesis 'Engaging in First Person Narration' (1996), in which she focuses on Jessica's growth as a writer whilst she deals with the struggles of adolescent life and growing up during wartime. The first extensive study of Jones's works *Diana Wynne Jones: An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom* edited by Teya Rosenberg, Martha P. Hixon and Sharon M. Scapple, appeared in 2002. It features two essays which focus on *Fire and Hemlock*: 'The Importance of Being Nowhere: Narrative Conventions and Their Interplay in *Fire and Hemlock* by Hixon and '*Fire and Hemlock: A Text as Spellcoat* by Akiko Yamazaki. Farah Mendlesohn's *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's Literature and the Fantastic Tradition* (2005) provides substantial analysis of Jones's use of metafiction in *Fire and Hemlock* and how Polly becomes a hero through reading books and creating her own story. Kimberley Reynolds's essay 'All for Love: The Relationship Between Love Stories and Reading as a Cultural Activity' (2015) also considers the value of Polly's reading in Jones's novel. René Fleischbein praises Jones's characterisation of her protagonist in her

journal article ‘New Hero: Metafictive Female Heroism in *Fire and Hemlock* (2010), arguing that:

> Diana Wynne Jones offers an example of a true female literary hero…and thus provides young readers with a blueprint for becoming voiced and active subjects rather than objects of their own narratives (Fleischbein: 2010: 233).

Polly Whittacker is included in Apolline Nicola Lucyk’s thesis ‘”A Personal Odyssey:” Contrapuntal Heroism in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones’ (2014), which suggests that Jones’s heroes

> all possess multiple identities or selves, and they must accept and embrace all of these selves in order to be heroic…if characters do the opposite – deny or oppress aspects of their identities – they become the villains rather than the heroes (Lucyk: 2014: 4-5).

This chapter will engage with these scholars’ discussions of *A Long Way from Verona* and *Fire and Hemlock,* whilst also referring to Jones’s 1989 essay ‘The Heroic Ideal - A Personal Odyssey’ to determine how successfully Jessica and Polly can adhere to her heroic definition whilst they are continually placed in chaotic situations.

A Long Way from Verona and *Fire and Hemlock* are complicated texts which incorporate multiple genres: they are coming-of-age stories which are interwoven with fantasy elements and intertextuality. Mendlesohn states that Jones is ‘both a fiction writer and a critic’ and that ‘her fiction can be viewed as a sustained metafictional critical response to the fantastic’ (Mendlesohn: 2005: xiii). She outlines four types of fantasy in her introduction: the portal quest fantasy, which involves travelling to another world; immersive fantasy, where magic is constantly apparent in the everyday world; intrusive fantasy where magic causes disruption in the ordinary world ‘and the story arc usually involves a negotiation with or a defeat of the fantastic’; and liminal fantasies which ‘maintain their sense of the fantastic through

equipoise, irony and a dependency on the knowingness of the reader and the understandings and conventions of the genre' (p. xxxii). Mendlesohn argues that *Fire and Hemlock* is difficult to categorise but suggests that it is close to resembling a liminal fantasy. Liminal fantasies incorporate the ideas of philosopher Tzvetan Todorov, whose works had significant influence upon several academic disciplines including literary theory and popular culture. He argued that liminal fantasies are 'works which resolve into the impossible' and the uncanny where 'events are explainable, but shocking or unnerving' (xiv). This is apparent in *Fire and Hemlock:* fantasy intrudes into Polly's life, and it has an indirect effect on the people she interacts with daily, but they cannot relate to her experiences as they are unaware of any abnormal occurrences. Logical explanations are frequently offered for Polly's dilemmas: for example, she considers the possibility that Mr Leroy is pursuing her because he knows she has stolen one of his pictures rather than because he intends to commit an act of evil. Tom Lynn is one person Polly feels she can confide in, but as he is frequently away, she is left isolated, and Jones constantly encourages her readers to question whether Polly's interpretation of events has been manipulated by her imagination. *A Long Way from Verona* is not classed as a fantasy novel, but some of the principles of liminal fantasy could still apply to Gardam's work. Jessica's friends and teachers accuse her of exaggerating when she recalls encounters with eccentric strangers or reveals how she was caught up in a farcical situation. Fantasy plays a significant role in Polly's and Jessica's lives, but other characters are oblivious to it, and it is difficult to determine whether this is because the girls are more perceptive, or whether the stories they create cause them to be misguided in their beliefs about what is real.

Whilst attempting to establish the differences between fantasy and reality, Jessica and Polly continue to pursue creative passions. Writing is important to both girls and they long to receive praise and recognition for their work. Wyile describes Gardam's novel as 'a portrait of the young artist' which

> incorporates the classic elements of the Künstlerroman. Jessica's narrative blends two vital parts of her growth: one is her growth as an individual and the psychological process of her adolescent individuation and the other is her discovery of her voice as a writer (Wylie: 1996: 96).

The Künstlerroman is a sub-genre of the bildungsroman, which focuses on the protagonist's progression from childhood to adulthood. Different stages of the protagonist's life are explored in the Künstlerroman novel, but it is primarily concerned with the artist's growth and development. Wyile observes that 'the tension between the inner and the outer self are fundamental to the artist novel' (p. 97), and that the 'artist's withdrawal from relations with others usually results from a nearly complete preoccupation with the work of art itself' (p. 99). Jessica's and Polly's difficult relationships with friends and family are not entirely a result of their pursuing artistic ambitions: they are mainly isolated because of confusing events, and struggle to explain what has happened to them. Attempts to confide in other people prove to be unsuccessful: Jessica's memories contrast to those of her friends and Polly's mother accuses her of making up stories when she reveals Tom Lynn has been sending her books. Their recollections of chaotic events are often dismissed, and other characters suggest that their reading has caused them to have overactive imaginations. Jessica and Polly are avid readers: *A Long Way from Verona* and *Fire and Hemlock* feature several references to literary texts including myths, children's classics, Victorian and Edwardian novels, and William Shakespeare's plays. The books they read play an important role in shaping the girls' identities as creative

heroes: they enable them to develop their writing, but also equip them for dealing with any perceived obstacles they encounter.

This chapter begins by examining Polly's and Jessica's creativity. I consider the books they read, what they choose to write about, and how their stories help them in their heroic roles. Jessica's and Polly's experiences with turbulent events are the focus of the following section and I consider how they respond and whether there are any roles they can assume to confront the conflicts they face. The final part of the chapter analyses how the girls reconcile their daily lives and relationships with the confusion they endure. In this chapter I address how the girls become creative heroes through exploring new roles and consider whether performing through chaos gives them a sense of control, or if creativity has disempowered them because it has caused their identities to become fragile.

'You are a writer beyond all possible doubt': Reading, Creating Stories and 'being things'

Jessica and Polly both experience a turning point in their creative lives at the beginning of the novels. Jessica reveals that she 'is not quite normal having had a violent experience at the age of nine' (Gardam: 2009: 3). This turns out to be her encounter with author Arnold Hanger, who praises her writing ability and declares that she is 'a writer beyond all possible doubt' (p. 9). Jessica admits to being creative from an early age, but had given no thought to becoming a writer and was an unenthusiastic reader until she hears Hanger read from his books:

> He had a lovely voice and he had brought a lot of books with him…He kept on – book after book after book that I'd never even heard of, poems and stories and conversations and bits of plays in all different voices. And I sat so still I couldn't get up off the floor when it was over, I was so stiff (p. 5).

The way Jessica describes her experience of being captivated by Hanger's reading indicates that he has cast a spell on her which has altered her personality. Polly also undergoes a change in identity after meeting Thomas Lynn when she becomes caught up in a funeral at Hunsdon House. To stop Tom from questioning her about her reasons for being at the funeral, Polly informs him that she likes 'being things…Making things up like heroes with other people, then being them' (Jones: 2000: 27). Initially, Polly struggles with her storytelling as she normally relies on her friend Nina to make threats and pressure her into inventing exciting games. As Tom is a more patient listener, Polly finds that her 'invention went dead on her. She could only think of the ordinary things' (p. 28). After deciding that she and Tom are heroes-in-disguise who work in a hardware shop at Stow-on-the-Water, she becomes more confident about her story: 'Pretending was like that. Things seemed to make themselves up, once you got going' (p. 29). Ordinary things have proven to be beneficial for Polly because she has more belief in her story. As René Fleischbein points out, Polly can now begin her heroic journey because 'The hero narrative gives [her] a code by which to conduct herself and many of her actions are directed by this coded narrative' (Fleischbein: 2010: 239). Jessica's and Polly's creativity has been further ignited by their encounters with Arnold Hanger and Tom Lynn, but the girls' apparent alterations in personality highlight how the influences of these men could potentially disrupt their lives, as their intense dedication to reading and creating stories could result in their being detached from reality.

Heroic Readers

Part of becoming a creative hero for Polly and Jessica involves extensive reading and either taking inspiration from characters they read about in books or knowing which examples they need to avoid following. In 'The Heroic Ideal', Jones reveals that she 'was saddened to find that as an eldest child and a *girl* I was banned from heroism entirely' (Jones: 2012: 1304). During childhood, Jones had little access to books apart from ones her parents used for teaching. Children's books were deemed inappropriate, and Jones did not discover them until adulthood when she read to her own children. Nevertheless, she was still an avid reader despite being restricted and she became 'an expert in heroes' (p. 1295) through reading Greek myths, Arthurian legends, the works of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, and *The Arabian Nights.* She discovered that the number of female heroes was limited in the literature she read: 'it seemed to me that the women were a mess. All over the world they were either goaded into taking vengeance, like Medea, or Brunhilde in my grandmother's book, or they are passive like Hero or Andromeda or Christiana' (p. 1350). Scheherazade and Britomart provided her with some optimism, but she felt that the heroic ideal was more apparent in children's books because

> children do, by nature, status and instinct, live more in the heroic mode than the rest of humankind. They naturally have the right, naïve, straightforward approach. And in every playground there are actual giants to be overcome and the moral issues are usually clearer than they are, say in politics (p. 1392).

However, Jones still felt that girl heroes were scarce in children's books before the 1970s: 'Children were then – and still are to some extent – rather *too* inward with the heroic tradition that heroes are male and females are either wimps or bad' (p. 1403). According to Jones, few female characters can provide inspiration for Jessica and Polly to assist them on their heroic journeys, and it is necessary for them to read widely as they are unlikely to find a clear answer in one book.

Intertextuality is prominent in Gardam's and Jones's texts, and their protagonists have comprehensive and contrasting reading lists. Polly's first Christmas present from Tom is a package of children's classics including L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* (1900), Edith Nesbit's *The Treasure Seekers* (1899), John Masefield's *The Box of Delights* (1935) and C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). Joan Aiken's *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (1962) is the first book Polly chooses to read from the parcel, and the plot in Aiken's novel features similarities with what Polly will later experience in her own heroic journey. Bonnie Green has to find a way to thwart her evil governess Letitia Slighcarp's plans to steal her father's fortune. She is also required to protect her vulnerable cousin Sylvia when she succumbs to illness as a result of cruel treatment at Mrs Brisket's orphanage, whilst Polly has to defeat Laurel and save Tom from harm. The reference to Aiken's protagonist also highlights how Polly will need to undertake other roles: Bonnie and Sylvia disguise themselves in rags on their journey to Aunt Jane's house, so they avoid being sent back to the orphanage and can track down Mr Willoughby's lawyer. Bonnie adheres to the heroic code of honour that Jones refers to which 'requires [heroes] to come to the aid of the weak or incompetent and the oppressed when nobody else will' (p. 1314). However, Aiken's novel is referenced only once in *Fire and Hemlock,* and Polly reveals that her favourite book is *Henrietta's House* by Elizabeth Goudge (1942). Her enthusiasm about the book causes her to make spelling mistakes in her letter to Tom: 'My v favrit though is Henrietta's House…The peple in it do lik hero bisnis only they invent a hous and in the end it is reely trew' (Jones: 2000: 100). She insists that Tan Coul, the character she creates for Tom, must have adventures in caves like those in Goudge's novel. The reference to Henrietta's stories coming true foreshadows how the places and characters Polly

and Tom invent will materialise, but Polly's lapses in spelling due to her excitement about the book could indicate that she might become distracted and not be able to make rational decisions when faced with chaos.

Gardam's novel features references to children's authors when Jessica attends the Fanshawe-Smithes' party, but she is unenthusiastic when other children try to engage her in conversation about them. She dismisses 'all those pathetic adventures' in Arthur Ransome's novels, and claims she has never read works by Edith Nesbit or Mary Louisa Molesworth: 'I've never heard of them I'm afraid. I don't really care for children's books' (Gardam: 2009: 123-4). However, she appears to have come across several girl protagonists through her reading and is critical of the way they are presented. When choosing an outfit for the party, she reveals that she did not recall ever being concerned with clothes 'unless of course it was plays' and tells readers that they 'don't want to believe all they read in books about young girls' (p. 110). She also indicates that she is familiar with boarding school stories when she interacts with Magdalena Fanshawe-Smithe and her schoolfriends, and she makes her dislike of them clear in a letter to her friend Florence Bone:

> They're so conceited and they've done nothing. The school's apparently in the wilds and they've never been in an air raid. There's no cinema and they've never been to a public library. They never go out of the school except to Church on Sundays like Jane Eyre or something. They're like something out of the Girl's Own P (p. 131).

Unlike Polly, Jessica cannot find inspiration from children's books: the adventure and fantasy stories seem irrelevant to her everyday world, whereas novels set in the domestic sphere provide an unrealistic representation of girlhood, or, in the case of boarding school stories, discourage individuality. She has more success with her reading after forming a friendship with English mistress Miss Philemon, who sends her books when she is absent from school through illness. Jessica enjoys W.

Somerset Maugham's novel *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), which follows the story of Charles Strickland, 'a man who decided to give up his whole life and paint pictures in the South Seas. He left his dull old wife and his children and everything' (p. 79). She opines that 'the hero sounds a very interesting man' (p. 79-80). Jessica admires Maugham's protagonist because he defies social conventions to pursue his artistic passion, and he provides a contrast to the compliant girls from children's books that she despises. However, he is problematic because of his treatment of his wife and children, and he is also an unrealistic role model for Jessica, as it would be more difficult for a woman to rebel against societal rules without consequences. Gardam's allusion to *The Moon and Sixpence* highlights how Jessica is immersed in her artistic dream: she does not physically leave her life behind in the way that Strickland does, but her creativity causes her to become detached from reality, which affects her relationships with her family and friends.

Apolline Nicola Lucyk's argument about heroes needing to accept their multiple identities to be successful is applicable to Polly and Jessica. Heroes encounter obstacles, uncover shocking information, and are required to make difficult decisions. As Gardam's and Jones's protagonists are aspiring creative heroes, it is necessary for them to read books that they struggle with in order to learn more about themselves. As Fleischbein observes when discussing *Fire and Hemlock,*

> The books [Tom] sends her and those that she reads on her own are the basis for the structure of the hero epic that Polly must live, but not a model that can be slavishly followed…all the books Polly read and the stories she wrote and told throughout the years have contributed to her identity. Thus, Polly pushes further towards resuming and completing the narrative that allows her to be the hero (Fleischbein: 2010: 241-3).

Polly is disappointed when Tom sends her a book of fairy tales as part of her Christmas present and is unconvinced that they will provide her with any inspiration

to help her become heroic. Tom urges her to read them, insisting that ‘Only thin, weak thinkers despise fairy stories. Each one has a true, strange fact hidden in it, you know, which you can find if you look’ (Jones: 2000: 171). Polly attempts to find this true fact when she reads the Norwegian fairy tale *East of the Sun and West of the Moon,* the story of a peasant girl who marries a white bear who is a prince in disguise. She ignores his warning not to look at him at night when he resumes human form, which means that he is now obliged to submit to his wicked stepmother’s demands and marry a troll princess. Polly is unimpressed with the protagonist despite her eventually rescuing her lover: ‘The girl had only herself to blame for her troubles. She was told not to do a thing and she did. And she cried so much. Polly despised her’ (p. 179). Jones’s reference to *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* shows Tom is correct in his assumption about fairy tales containing ‘true facts.’ Polly shares similarities with the girl as she frequently gets into trouble for ignoring warnings, as she continues to see Tom despite Morton Leroy’s threats, which results in their being caught up in dangerous situations. However, her rejection of the girl as a role model indicates that she will make a mistake which will complicate her heroic journey. She complies when Laurel convinces her that Tom has a terminal illness and urges her to forget about him, which causes her memories about him to become fragmented. Polly’s not following the girl’s example on this occasion and obeying an order places Tom in more danger of being captured by Laurel. Polly has found the moral in *East of the Sun and West of the Moon,* but her failure to question it could potentially result in her downfall. By alluding to fairy tales, and Polly’s experience with *East of the Sun and West of the Moon,* Jones highlights how reading books that seem unappealing is an obstacle a creative hero must

overcome: Polly needs to confront and challenge the ‘true facts’ in the fairy tales to help her shape her writing and establish her role as a hero.

In Gardam’s novel, Jessica is determined to challenge herself with her reading and vows to read all of the books in the English Classics section in her local public library: ‘I felt that since I was a writer beyond all possible doubt, I ought at some time to go through the works of other writers’ (Gardam: 2009: 212). The task takes longer to complete than she realises:

> if you want to become one of the English Classics, it’s a good idea to be up in the top half of the alphabet…It’s rather depressing really and you don’t feel you’re making much progress when after a month you’re just past the Brontës – and when you see how many Dickens’s are coming (p. 213).

Jessica’s heroic quest involves reading as many books as possible, but her concern with the quantity and her conclusion that having a surname starting with a letter at the beginning of the alphabet indicates that she is possibly not learning anything through her reading to assist her with her creativity. Readers are given little insight into Jessica’s opinions on the books until she reads Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895). She is moved by the novel, but also troubled that ‘anyone who knew that he was a writer beyond all possible doubt should have not one glimmer, not one faintest trace of happiness in him’ (p. 214). A library assistant expresses concern about Jessica’s reading it and insists that it must be withdrawn from the shelves: ‘We can’t have you reading Thomas Hardy – we’ll be getting you all depressed’ (p. 215). Nicholas Tucker suggests that the library assistant’s reaction is indicative of societal attitudes regarding emotions and how ‘20th-century British culture had generally subscribed to the notion of the right or perhaps even the duty to be happy, especially during childhood’ (Tucker: 2006: 204). The library assistant

feels compelled to protect Jessica, but Tucker argues that this is unnecessary. He opines that:

> Gardam is describing how a bookish teenager comes to relish the way that familiar, more or less optimistic conventions common in literature she had read up to that moment are then so comprehensively flouted in Hardy's sombre novel. Jessica's sense of heightened interest is quite understandable, having at last encountered a novel that insists on finishing on a note of such general pessimism (p. 204-5).

By including *Jude the Obscure* on Jessica's reading list, Gardam seems to imply that Jessica needs to read texts which confront a range of issues and evoke different emotions to present her with more options when she pursues her writing career. Jude's failure to acquire happiness leaves an impression on Jessica and she continually repeats the line 'BECAUSE IT NEVER DOES' in her head after the book is confiscated, which reflects upon her own frustration about her writing being dismissed by teachers. At this point, it is only herself and Arnold Hanger who believe that she is 'a writer beyond all possible doubt.' Despite the library assistant's concerns though, Jessica is able to realise that 'good things take place' when she wins a poetry competition and receives praise from her family (Gardam: 2009: 243). Like Polly Whittacker, Jessica encounters a character she considers to be problematic: in some ways she can relate to Hardy's Jude because she continually experiences disappointment, albeit in a less extreme manner, and through reading about him, she is able to form a deeper understanding of herself and how she wishes to approach her life and writing.

Creating Heroic Stories

Polly and Jessica are empowered in situations where they can utilise their creative skills either through writing or acting. Many scholars of Jones's work agree that creativity enables Polly to develop confidence, an attribute she lacked whilst being dominated by her friend Nina. Farah Mendlesohn states that *Fire and Hemlock*

> is about Polly's decision to train to be a hero and how she models her actions on the heroes she reads about. Ironically (or not) this means she plays out her heroism in public, which is, of course also what heroes do. They might not ask for acclaim, but performance is, as Jones points out, 'part of the heroic ideal' (Mendlesohn: 2005: 29).

René Fleischbein concurs with this view, arguing that:

> Because her fictional hero self is assertive and brave, these traits begin to seep into Polly's real life personality as she uses her voice, imagination and intellect to create the narrative…The hero narrative gives Polly a code by which to conduct herself, and many of her actions are directed by this coded narrative (Fleischbein: 2010: 236-9).

Polly begins her heroic training after her first meeting with Tom. She participates in sport to increase her strength and energy levels. One of her first tasks as a trainee hero is to confront the school bully Mira Anderton, an 'act of true heroism – as great as that of Beowulf in his old age,' according to Jones (Jones: 2012: 1395). She is unrepentant when summoned to the Headmistress, explaining that she is 'training to be a hero' and that 'the adrenaline has to flow' (Jones: 2000: 104). The hero's role has helped Polly acquire more agency, but Jones indicates that her protagonist is acting out a role that does not come naturally to her. After her altercation with Mira Anderton, Polly 'decided that she had perhaps been training a bit too hard' (p. 107), and when analysing her memories, she realises that she 'even forgot hero business existed' (p. 130). She is knowledgeable about the heroic powers that the members of Tom's band, The Dumas Quartet, possess: Tom is Tan Coul who has the gift of immortality, Samuel Rensky becomes Tan Hanivar and is known for shape-shifting, Tan Thare is Ed Davies's alter-ego and he has the ability to make music play from the sky, and Ann Abrahams is Tan Audel, a hero who has an impeccable memory. However, she has little idea of her own gift until Tom reveals that she has a talent for 'Knowing things', which is 'a surprising discovery' for Polly (p. 232). As Mendlesohn and Fleischbein point out, Polly is putting on a performance and adhering to her heroic code, but she struggles to act her role convincingly, and by not giving her

character a gift in the story, she indicates that she still lacks confidence in her ability as a hero. On both occasions, Polly demonstrates that she is gifted in writing a hero's narrative, but she needs to work on empowering herself without the assistance of Tom.

Polly frequently exchanges letters with Tom and is excited when she sends him her story about the Obah Cypt. She is inspired to write this story after reading J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-1955), and 'it was clear to her that the Obah Cypt was really a ring which was very dangerous and had to be destroyed. Hero did this, with great courage' (p. 185). Polly has empowered her character by allowing her to be responsible for saving people from a deadly curse, but her sense of agency is tempered when she receives feedback from Tom. He insists that the Obah Cypt is 'not a ring. You stole that from Tolkien. Use your own ideas' (p. 185), and that she 'used to have much better ideas on your own' (p. 186). As Maria Nikolajeva points out 'by identifying entirely with the fiction we are reading, we lose our own identity and subjectivity' (Arizpe and Smith: 2015: 11). Reading widely is necessary for Polly's development as a writer and a hero but reading Tolkien's work appears to have taken away her own sense of imagination, emphasising Fleischbein's point about how no book represents 'a model that can be slavishly followed' for Polly's heroic journey (Fleischbein: 2010: 241). Polly's loss of creativity indicates that she could potentially be in danger of losing her identity, and this is apparent when she continues to receive parcels of books from Tom under various names: 'all Polly seemed to be able to do in return was to ring up the robot machine in London and tell it "Um. Er. Polly. Um. Thanks"' (Jones: 2000: 187). Her lack of ability to form coherent thoughts when addressing Tom suggests that Polly has possibly started to

become consumed by the books she reads, which could cause her to make mistakes in her own heroic journey. Reading is important for Polly's development, but Jones's reference to Tolkien implies that Polly needs to establish a separation between the books she reads and what she chooses to write about. To become a hero, Polly needs to retain her sense of self and focus on creating her own unique story, which will give her the agency to resolve any problems she encounters.

Gardam's use of first-person narration in *A Long Way from Verona* highlights how Jessica has ideas about the identity of her character in the story she creates for her readers. Like the heroes in Polly's story, Jessica has unique qualities that cause her to stand out from other people. At the beginning of the novel, she lists some important facts about herself:

1. I am not quite normal.
2. I am not very popular.
3. I am able to tell what people are thinking.
   And I might add
4. I am terribly bad at keeping quiet when I have something on my mind because
5. I ABSOLUTELY ALWAYS AND INVARIABLY TELL THE TRUTH (Gardam: 2009: 12).

Whilst not using the term 'hero', Jessica indicates that she has attributes to become one. Jones's essay appears to support this point when she opines that:

> Your average hero starts out with some accident of birth, parentage or person which sets him apart from the rest and often, indeed, causes him to be held in contempt…Nevertheless he sets out to do a deed which no one else dares to do at which others have horribly failed (Jones: 2012: 1342-1344).

Jessica is not anticipating going on similar quests to the mythical and Medieval male heroes that Jones refers to, but she believes that she shares characteristics with them: her insistence that she is unpopular suggests that she is 'held in contempt' because of her refusal to conform, and she considers her perceived ability to read minds as her heroic gift. In her analysis of Gardam's novel in relation to the

Künstlerroman narrative, Andrea Schwenke Wyile notes that ‘the tension between the self and society and the tension between the inner and outer self are fundamental to the artist novel’ (Wyile: 1996: 97). For Jessica, the tension mainly occurs at school, as like Rusty Dickinson, her frank observations regarding lessons or rules land her in trouble with the teachers. She is summoned to the Headmistress’s office to discuss her behaviour after she accumulates several order marks. Like Polly Whittacker, she is unrepentant when she is reprimanded: she is unable to promise Miss LaBouche that she will ‘try to behave like a gentlewoman’ as she ‘can’t be a gentlewoman because my father doesn’t believe in it’, and refuses to apologise for sharing chips with her friends on the train as she ‘can’t see why we can’t eat chips when term’s actually over’ (Gardam: 2009: 55-6). Here, Jessica is taking on a heroic role by standing up to authority, but it is debatable whether her school is as oppressive as she considers it to be, as the Headmistress appears to be unaware of her own rules. Miss LaBouche gives Jessica a conduct mark after her outburst and does not realise that it is her second one, meaning that she has the right to expel her, though Jessica is sceptical about whether this is true: ‘Nobody had ever really known anyone who had *had* three order marks in one day, and then a conduct mark so it was all guesswork’ (p. 56). This links to Dalsimer’s argument about the ‘Alice-in-Wonderland sense of confusion and discontinuity’ in the young adult novel. Jessica’s challenging Miss LaBouche shares parallels with Alice’s standing up to the Queen of Hearts’ authoritarian regime, but neither girl is under serious threat. Jessica is not living in a dream like Alice, but her determination to rebel against authority and take on a heroic role in her own story has possibly caused her perception of reality to become distorted.

Scholars have disputed Jessica's reliability as a narrator. Barbara Wall suggests that Gardam's protagonist is 'too interested in herself and her status as writer to care much about whom she is addressing' (Wyile: 1996: 96). Wyile supports this view arguing that:

> Jessica's commentaries on characters and setting are an active part of representation of herself as narrator, in terms of how she sees things, yet the process of representation is complicated by Jessica's occasional reassessment of a comment or admission that it didn't really happen like that, or a dreamlike quality to the sequence that makes the implied reader unsure whether Jessica is narrating her imaginings or her real life experiences (Wyile: 1996: 107).

Form teacher Miss Dobbs appears to have this impression of Jessica when she reads her essay 'The Best Day of the Summer Holidays.' She is unimpressed that Jessica has written forty-seven pages about her experience in Elsie Meeney's teashop: 'It isn't even as if you were telling a story – you were trying to make a story when there was no story. It was an ESSAY I asked for. I'm afraid what you gave me looked awfully like a lie' (Gardam: 2009: 40). She also advises Jessica '[w]hen you have written something that you think is really good, destroy it…If you don't you will feel terribly ashamed of it afterwards' (p. 40). Miss Dobbs's criticism casts doubt upon Jessica's attributes of being truthful and 'a writer beyond all possible doubt.' Jessica shows no incentive to change her writing though: she reveals that she 'adored' her essay and questions her teacher's taste when revealing her opinions about Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861). She argues that it is 'an awful long book and it's dead boring and *he* was jolly pleased with himself if anyone was' (p. 41). Unlike Polly, Jessica shows no inclination to copy the work of writers who have been recommended to her and remains determined to persist with her own ideas. Nevertheless, her confrontation with Miss Dobbs and the following episode with Miss Philemon does have the 'dreamlike quality' that Wyile describes. Jessica recalls being carried out of class and falling into the shoe bags in the gym where she

becomes consumed by misery: ‘Goodness knows how long I cried but after what seemed like ages I realised I was making a terrible noise’ (p. 42), which is reminiscent of Alice’s falling down the rabbit-hole and almost drowning in a pool of her own tears. She continues in this manner until Miss Philemon appears and offers her advice about her setback. The English teacher assures her that ‘People do make mistakes. Think of the poor critics who mocked Keats and Wordsworth and Coleridge’, but also opines that ‘[i]t doesn’t do writers much harm to suffer…Usually it is praise that does them harm’ (p. 45). Miss Philemon undermines Miss Dobbs by suggesting that she has made a mistake to doubt Jessica’s writing ability and sincerity, whilst also implying that criticism will enhance her writing and make her more motivated to succeed whereas praise could cause her to become complacent. She acknowledges that poet John Clare could be considered an exception to her rule, as he suffered with severe depression, but ‘even he had great compensations. He watched the glory of God, you know…Usually if a poet’s good he doesn’t break his heart’ (p. 45). Here, Miss Philemon suggests that experiencing hardship can also benefit a writer, possibly because it enables them to find something to focus on in their work. Heroes are also required to experience anguish. In 1992, Diana Wynne Jones delivered a lecture about heroes in Australia, in which she argues that the hero is

> expected to struggle on two fronts, externally with an actual evil, and internally with his/her own doubts and shortcomings. The hero, out there as scapegoat, has to do the suffering for everyone (Jones: 2012: 2269).

Jessica regards herself as a potential creative hero who demonstrates bravery when defying teachers, but heroes need to be prepared to suffer the consequences of their rebellion and accept that they will be misunderstood, something Jessica struggles with when Miss Dobbs accuses her of lying. On the other hand, Jessica’s encounter

with Miss Philemon does support Wyile's argument, as it does not seem plausible that a teacher in a 1940s school would question the authority of one of her colleagues in front of a pupil. This causes readers to question whether Jessica is, in fact, exaggerating her experiences to give her character in her story more heroic qualities and make her seem more interesting. These episodes at school highlight how Jessica will continue to experience conflict when dealing with chaotic events and trying to establish herself as a writer, but whether this conflict is external or internal is difficult to ascertain.

New Heroes, Where Now?

Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker shape their identities as creative heroes through reading and writing. Gardam and Jones indicate that it is important for the girls to read widely and be prepared to read texts which do not inspire them, so they are aware of which role models they wish to follow and which to reject. They cannot rely on one particular text to provide them with all of the answers, and both authors emphasise that the girls still need to be cautious when reading and maintain a separation between the characters they encounter in books written by other people and those they create themselves. Jessica and Polly create heroic identities for themselves through their writing, which provides inspiration for them when they encounter problems, but being preoccupied with their heroic characters can result in their being unable to distinguish between their imagination and reality. The chapter will now focus on the chaotic events in Gardam's and Jones's novels and consider whether the alter-egos Polly and Jessica create for themselves are enough to help them deal with turbulence, or if they need to adapt and play other roles.

‘I forgot everything that happened then that afternoon’: Chaotic Events or Imagination?

When discussing *Fire and Hemlock* in her lecture about heroes, Diana Wynne Jones reminisced about her goddaughter who had a heroic spirit when she was younger, but her personality altered when she became a teenager. She argued that:

> As a teenager or young adult, your emotions may be at an even higher pitch, but the onset of the additional emotions to do with sex sort of scramble the other feelings and you become a rather frantic muddle for a while. This is when people need a hero to follow…a hero gives you the sense of this something other and better, so that you can keep your head above the frantic muddle (Jones: 2012: 2344).

Polly and Jessica are teenage girls who persevere with their heroism, but they are also in danger of becoming ‘frantic muddles’ themselves when they attempt to deal with turbulent events and establish what they need to do to complete their heroic quests. In ‘A Personal Odyssey’, Jones suggests that being creative is not enough for Polly to become a hero once she enters her teenage years:

> As she grows older and recognises the complexity of life, the naïve make-believe becomes more and more marginal, so that as she searches for her ideal in a new form, she takes on a whole new series of heroic roles. She is Gerda in ‘The Snow Queen’, Snow White, Britomart, St George, Pierrot, Pandora, Andromeda and Janet from ‘Tam Lin’ and many more in a sort of overlapping succession (p. 1449-1451).

Polly and Jessica cannot rely upon their own stories to help them to navigate turbulent events, and the range of protagonists Jones lists highlights how heroes need to adapt to different roles to be successful, and possibly sometimes attempt to imitate characters with contrasting personalities to their own. In *Fire and Hemlock* and *A Long Way from Verona,* girls need to act to become a hero, but acting could cause uncertainty about their identities, and potentially contribute to the ‘frantic muddle’ they experience in their minds. Thus, Polly and Jessica face an additional challenge when establishing themselves as heroes, as they need to navigate their own confusion whilst undertaking their tasks.

Jessica realises that her tendency to be outspoken will not be tolerated in her school environment. After her meeting with Miss LaBouche, she lists all the possible occupations where her behaviour would be accepted, including those of teacher, parson and political leader, and eventually concludes ‘If I wasn’t a writer beyond all possible doubt, perhaps the thing to be would be an actress’ (Gardam: 2009: 57). She pictures herself on stage

> dressed in black from head to foot, so sharp and definite it was like a vision. I was holding a dagger and light flashed outside brightening a stained glass window at the back like Elsie Meeney’s (p. 57).

Jessica’s envisioning herself in the role of a fighter preparing for battle foreshadows her encounter with the Italian Prisoner of War in the sea wood. As she ponders how her play would be performed on stage, Jessica recalls seeing *Rebecca, The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Maria Walewska* at the cinema, three films where the protagonists navigate dangerous situations: the unnamed protagonist in *Rebecca* discovers that she is married to a murderer, Percy Blakeney rescues French aristocrats from the guillotine during the revolution, and Marie Walewska becomes Napoleon’s mistress so she can persuade him to support Polish independence from Prussia. However, Gardam’s reference to William Shakespeare’s farcical comedy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1605) suggests that Jessica’s actual experience will not be as precarious as she imagines it to be. Jessica reveals that she did not enjoy reading the play in class, but feels it could be improved if it were acted on stage and that the wood ‘could potentially be made to look marvellous if you had some green’ (p. 58). Her vision of this stage setting materialises when she discovers she is in the sea wood and believes that she is experiencing her own midsummer night’s dream as she has no recollection of how she got there: ‘I must be half asleep…It must be being up late or something’ (p. 58-9). Her concern about facing further trouble at school for taking

a forbidden route is abated when she finds brightly coloured dahlias, which causes her to forget ‘everything that had happened that afternoon. I forgot myself, my feelings, my fears’ because she is ‘filled with a sort of sudden overpowering joy and love’ (p. 59). The idyllic scene is disrupted though when she witnesses a man with a knife attempting to destroy the flowers. Jessica demonstrates heroic qualities when she orders him to stop, as she has no weapon herself. Gardam, however, undermines Jessica’s heroism because she suggests that she is unable to appreciate the seriousness of the situation she was in. Jessica struggles to feel afraid despite learning that he is an escaped prisoner and admits to being flattered when he compliments her: ‘“You very preety,” he had said. Oh heavens, how awful! But oh heavens, how lovely too!’ (p. 62). Here, she shares similarities with Daphne du Maurier’s Mrs de Winter, as her delight at being admired has altered her perception of the man. In this episode, Gardam exposes Jessica’s potential vulnerability as a hero, because she suggests that she is easily manipulated by flattery, meaning that she is unable to come to rational conclusions. Alternatively, Jessica’s entering a dreamlike state when she enters the wood indicates that she is still fantasising about being an actress and performing in her own play, and is possibly embellishing her experiences for dramatic effect. Gardam encourages her protagonist to take inspiration from a range of films and plays when it is relevant for her situation, but she must also retain distance from her performance to become a believable hero.

In her article ‘The Halloween Worms’, Jones revealed that ‘what I write in my books and think I have made up has a creepy way of coming true’ (Jones: 2012: 1049). Her novel *Witch Week* (1982) includes a scene where one of the girls is given a seafood

cocktail for a starter which has the appearance of 'worms in custard' (p. 1070). After the book's publication, Jones spent the night in a school which shared similarities with the one she had written about. Arriving at the school was 'just like the start of the creepiest horror story you ever read,' (p. 1085) and 'the first thing we were given to eat was a bowl of yellow stuff with little, pink, wriggly things floating in it. Worms in custard!' (p. 1095). Polly Whittacker's experiences are similar to those of her creator: the hardware shop in Stow-on-the Water where Thomas Piper/Tan Coul (Tom) and Hero (Polly) meet is a genuine place, and Edna and Leslie are real people, although they contrast to the fictional characters Tom and Polly invent. Initially, Tom is mistaken for Mr Piper when he appears in the shop, as according to Edna, he has 'just his walk' and she 'just can't get over how like him you are' (Jones: 2000: 124-6). Polly is disturbed by their close resemblance and she begins to question her own judgement: 'she thought she would have been happier herself if Mr Piper had been there and she could prove there were definitely two of them' (p. 127). The stories materialising are a result of the curse Laurel places upon Tom: everything he makes up comes true and he and Polly have to assume different identities when communicating to prevent them from being spied on. One of the aliases Polly uses is that of Pierrot, named after the character she plays in the Drama Society pantomime. This is a role that Polly relishes: her teacher is impressed by her ability in gymnastics and Pierrot's story of unrequited love between him and Columbine mirrors that of her own disappointment about Tom's attachment to Mary Fields, enabling her to play her part convincingly. In addition to sharing some of Pierrot's attributes, the role is also transformative for Polly: during rehearsals, it becomes 'strange and circus-like' (p. 190), and when performing on the night, 'she had a sudden sense that she was part of a transparent charmed pattern in which everything had to go in the one right way

because that was the only way it *could* go' (p. 199). Tom is full of praise for Polly's performance, opining that the play was 'sheer magic, mostly because of you' (p. 200). Playing Pierrot gives Polly confidence and the references to magic and charms indicate that she has the attributes to become a hero. Her empowerment is short-lived though when she realises that Mary Fields has accompanied Tom to her performance. She is dissatisfied when Mary praises her athletic and acting talents - 'there were other things she could do, better than those' (p. 200) - and is self-conscious when Tom queries why she referred to herself as Pierrot in the letter. Like her character, Polly becomes, or perceives herself to become, a figure of ridicule who struggles to be taken seriously. Pierrot's role provides an opportunity for Polly to showcase her talents, but it also exposes her insecurities, and it is debatable whether it gives her the required agency to perform her heroic duties. As Apolline Nicola Lucyk points out though, heroes do need to accept all aspects of their identities including the characteristics they dislike, so it can be argued that it was necessary for Polly to play Pierrot's part to make her aware of her vulnerability.

Polly's contrasting feelings of empowerment and dejection when playing Pierrot are indicative of her confusion when she encounters chaos and attempts to establish whether an event is real or in her imagination. Her adventures begin at Hunsdon House where she meets Tom and he gives her a picture to take home entitled 'Fire and Hemlock.' In an interview published in *Reflection,* Jones revealed that she also owned a photograph called 'Fire and Hemlock', which provided inspiration for her novel. The scene depicted was a 'night-time picture of some straw bales burning behind a whole row of hemlock heads', and Jones noted that:

> the weird thing about it is that sometimes you look at it and you think there are people in there, and sometimes you look at it and you know there aren't, and it really

> does seem to change all the time. I thought when I'd written the book that maybe the people would vanish for good, but they haven't (Jones: 2012: 4736).

The novel opens with nineteen-year-old Polly studying her 'Fire and Hemlock' painting and recalling her childhood memories of it:

> Dark figures seemed to materialise out of its dark centre – strong running dark figures – always at least four of them, racing to beat out the flames of the foreground. There had been times when you could see the figures quite clearly. Other times, they had been shrouded in the rising smoke. There had even been a horse in it sometimes. Not now (Jones: 2000: 11).

Initially, Polly's inability to see the people in the picture is linked to her becoming older and losing her imagination: 'The penalty of being grown up was that you saw things like this photograph as they really were' (p. 12). However, she is troubled when she attempts to read her *Heroes* book: 'half the stories she thought she remembered reading in this book were not there…Why should she suddenly have memories that did not seem to correspond with the facts?' (p. 13). Polly is convinced that she had done 'something dreadful' and decides: 'It's no good. I'll have to go back in time before it all started, or didn't start and get in from that end' (p. 14). Martha P. Hixon discusses the significance of paintings in *Fire and Hemlock* in her essay 'The Importance of Being Nowhere.' She observes that the six paintings Polly and Tom take from Hunsdon House

> influence Polly and Tom's story because they are touched by magic, some of them – the ones that remain in Polly or Tom's control – by the magic that Polly and Tom work together, and some – those reclaimed by Morton and Laurel – by the Leroys (Rosenberg: 2002: 103).

Polly and Tom find inspiration for their stories from the pictures: Tom's horse bears resemblance to the one in the picture of the Chinese horse, and the violinists become the heroes. These pictures remain in Polly's and Tom's possession, but it is debatable whether they remain entirely in their control, as it is evident that Laurel or Morton have used their magic to disrupt their story. When becoming lost in Bristol

after Tom’s rehearsal with the Dumas Quartet, Polly experiences a ‘feeling of pure nightmare’, which seems to be justified when she notices that

> the pattering rubbish was slowly piling upon itself, floating slowly and deliberately into a nightmare shape…Plastic cups, peanut packets, leaves and old wrappers were winding upwards, putting themselves in place as a huge bearlike shape (Jones: 2000: 238).

This ‘creature of rubbish’ chases Polly and Tom back to his car, and he injures his fellow band member Samuel Rensky when he attempts to drive through it. Polly is convinced that this is ‘the meanest trick yet of Mr Leroy’s’ (p. 242), but her memories of her outing in Bristol become confused after she develops flu, and ‘the only parts that were real to Polly were Sam Rensky sliding off the car bonnet and terrible worry because of the way Mr Lynn shouted at Mr Leroy’ (p. 244). Her inability to remember being attacked by ‘the creature of rubbish’ causes the reader to question whether the incident occurred, or if there was a rational explanation and not necessarily because of Mr Leroy’s performing a curse: it is windy when Polly and Tom visit Bristol, so it would not be unusual for rubbish to escape from bins and travel through the city. However, she does retain some clear memories about her time in Bristol: ‘the time in the green cloakroom watching the quartet play never seemed to be touched by doubt’ (p. 243). Polly remembers things that can be easily explained but struggles to form coherent thoughts about anything that appears out of the ordinary, and it is difficult to determine whether she imagined the ‘creature of rubbish’ in Bristol after becoming caught up in her story, or if her memory has been manipulated by the Leroys. Jones complicates her narrative by offering logical explanations for the apparently chaotic events that Polly witnesses: she implies that being rational could be detrimental to a hero, as it could result in their overlooking something crucial, but allowing the imagination to take over could cause them to make false conclusions.

Thus, Polly's heroic quest involves a constant battle with her mind in addition to the evil forces that attempt to harm her and Tom.

Struggles with one's mind are also apparent in Gardam's *A Long Way from Verona.* Jessica's 'Alice-in-Wonderland sense of confusion and discontinuity' is particularly evident in the episode at Elsie Meeney's teashop, which is reminiscent of Alice's experience at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Jessica insists that she and her friends will be able to have an afternoon tea despite the war and rationing: 'If there's still teashops there's still teas' and refuses to leave when the staff inform her they are closed, pointing out that 'there's a clean table-cloth laid over there with reserved on it' (Gardam: 2009: 15-16). Just as Alice dismisses claims that there is 'no room' at the party, Jessica refuses to be intimidated by the unfriendly atmosphere at Elsie Meeney's teashop. Like her predecessor, she also causes disruption by knocking teapots and plants over. After a disappointing tea of rum balls that taste as though 'they were made out of the soil of the plant pot' (p. 18), the four girls encounter Mrs Hopkins, the woman who has reserved the table and ordered a substantial afternoon tea. She is delighted to meet Jessica and her friends, whom she describes as 'Little English Juliets' and pays for their shilling teas to 'repay [them] for being what you are' (p. 23). The reference to William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* directly links to the title of Gardam's novel and Jessica's later attempt to read the play. Her being compared to Juliet is both confusing and troubling for the reader, given Juliet's fate at the end. Jessica's decision to give up on reading it highlights how she does not share Mrs Hopkins's idealism about Shakespeare's character and has resisted being cast into the role. Her interpretation of the event contrasts to that of other people: as discussed previously, her form tutor reprimands her for writing a 'story' instead of the

essay she requested, and her friends are indifferent when they discover that Mrs Hopkins owns the art shop. Florence admits to remembering her: 'But I don't see what you're so excited about. The trouble with you, Jessica…is that you are all feelings. Why don't you use your head?' (p. 225). This indicates that the episode in the teashop was not as chaotic as Jessica believed it to be. Andrea Schwenke Wyile opines that:

> Jessica's problem as an individual and as an aspiring artist, is that she is thirteen and suffering through the tribulations and exhilarations of early to middle adolescence, which are further accentuated by the experiences of wartime (Wyile: 2009: 96).

Florence Bone contrasts to Jessica because she is a rational thinker, and the visit to Elsie Meeney's does not have the same impact on her because there are logical explanations for why going out for afternoon tea was not straightforward for them. Expecting to have a luxurious tea during wartime with rationing was optimistic and Jessica's failure to appreciate this would possibly irritate the staff in the teashop. Jessica suggests that Mrs Hopkins was 'a sort of witch' in her essay for Miss Dobbs (p. 40), but her friends merely regard her as a slightly eccentric woman who paid for their tea. Wyile's argument about Jessica's experiences being accentuated by wartime is apparent with the episode at Elsie Meeney's because the war seems to result in her feelings becoming more intense and possibly causing her to exaggerate her experiences. Gardam's title, *A Long Way from Verona,* highlights how her protagonist is far from resembling a 'little Juliet', but also implies that she is detached from reality, a characteristic she appears to share with Mrs Hopkins. Mrs Hopkins is misguided in her admiration for Juliet's character, and Jessica's contrasting perceptions to those of her friends indicate that she is living in an imagined world.

Writing on Jones's work, Charles Butler argues that 'magic often seems to involve rhetorical power and psychological manipulation', that it is 'primarily a metaphor for happenings that, are in fact, completely this worldly', and also 'operates metonymically to put the reader in touch with all that is uncanny and inexplicable in life' (Rosenberg: 2002: 72-76). Psychological manipulation is arguably apparent in *A Long Way from Verona:* the wartime setting in Gardam's novel means that there are potentially rational explanations to unsettling events, but this still does not prevent Jessica's observations being in conflict with those of people around her. This causes confusion for the reader as they do not know whether Jessica is sensationalising her experiences, if her memory has been compromised through trauma, or if she does indeed have a heroic gift to spot things that other people fail to notice. Her life is in danger when she accompanies Christian Fanshawe-Smithe to Dunedin Street to be educated about poor people's living conditions. Shortly after he declares that the place is 'hell', that he wants to 'knock it all down', and that 'it must be destroyed', Jessica and Christian witness 'a great avalanche of falling brick' and 'the world disappeared to yellow dust' (Gardam: 2009: 159). Butler's argument is applicable here: air-raids were a regular occurrence during the war and the one on Dunedin Street happening after Christian's expressing his desire for the street to be destroyed is likely to be coincidental, but Gardam's depiction of his putting his hands up to the sky gives him the appearance of a conjuror working magic. Jessica recalls meeting a woman with no legs and a man from Peterborough talking about zip fasteners. However, Christian has no memories of these people, despite his parents apparently agreeing to give them a present to thank them for looking after their son during the raid. He is elusive when Jessica attempts to question him about what he can remember, and she assumes he is reluctant to talk about it because he blames

himself. On this occasion, Jessica demonstrates that she is capable of rational thought when she assures Christian: ‘You didn’t cause it. All you did was put your hands in the air’ (p. 207), and rebukes him when he admits that ‘[s]ome very fine thinkers have been interested in spiritualism’. She argues ‘You can’t look at things straight, Christian Fanshawe-Smithe.[s] You don’t examine the facts. You don’t use your head’ (p. 208), an ironic statement, given that Jessica is often accused of similar flaws when she describes her chaotic experiences. In addition, Jessica was being fanciful herself on this occasion too as it had not occurred to Christian to consider that he was responsible for the bomb until she mentioned it. In this passage, Gardam indicates that Jessica needs clarity about why Christian’s memories of the air-raid differ from hers. Her attempt to reassure him that he did not cause the bomb is possibly Jessica’s trying to convince herself that her memories were real, and not illusions brought on by the head injury she received after being hit by a flying Alsatian ornament. From Jessica’s point of view, Christian’s blaming himself would explain why he would try to suppress any memories of the event, and she can be assured that her memory has not been compromised. Her ability to remember is not her only concern, as she also doubts her gift of reading minds when she realises that she cannot use it on her schoolfriend Cissie Comberbach: ‘I began to wonder if it was a gift at all and if I haven’t imagined the whole thing’ (p. 200). The evidence for this is clear in her final exchange with Christian: her mind-reading attempt proves to be inaccurate, and she cannot determine whether her memories were real or imagined. Gardam subtly incorporates magical elements into her novel by indicating that the air-raid has removed Jessica’s heroic gift, but this ‘magic’ can be dismissed as it can be argued that her protagonist believes that mind readers exist only in the books she reads. In wartime settings, explanations can be found for

inexplicable occurrences and the boundaries between reality and imagination become blurred, as people have different perceptions of events, meaning that it is difficult for Jessica to establish the truth. Thus, her realisation that she cannot always form accurate impressions of what people are thinking shows that she needs to learn to make sense of her own psychological state before she can move forward in her heroic journey.

In *Fire and Hemlock,* Polly also becomes involved in a dangerous situation that impacts on her memory when she and Tom attend Middleton Fair. Their experience in the Castle of Horrors is equivalent to characters in a horror film when they are attacked by suits of armour and Tom is injured by an iron portcullis falling from the roof. Polly demonstrates heroic strength when she pulls the grating off Tom and guides them out of the castle, but her heroism is undermined by her fragmented memory: 'things happened so fast that her memory simply had it as a clanking blue-lit whirl' (Jones: 2000: 288). In contrast to the episode with the 'creature of rubbish', other people do appear to notice something is amiss, as there are 'angry and frightened' crowds, and Mary Fields opines that they should 'sue the fair for negligence' (p. 293), highlighting that the event was not a result of Polly's overactive imagination. At the same time, Jones does offer a logical explanation for the magical elements, which causes the reader to wonder whether Polly is just imagining that Mr Leroy put a curse on the Castle of Horrors, and that the catastrophe occurred because the castle had not been built properly. Polly is sceptical about this, as all evidence of the accident disappears: 'she looked round to find the place where she had forced a way out of the Castle of Horrors and saw only a smooth painted plywood wall, with no sign of a loose panel' (p. 293). She seeks answers from Mr

Leroy's son Seb, demanding to know why his father is spying on Tom, but he fails to give her a convincing explanation and suggests she ask Tom herself. Polly is unconvinced that Tom will provide her with answers and attempts to find clues from *Tales from Nowhere,* a collection of short stories written by the Dumas Quartet, but discovers that 'there was not the least thing in the book anywhere' to help her' (p. 299). She is particularly unimpressed with 'Two-Timer', the story 'about the man who altered his past and ended up with double memories,' but this tale is reflective of how Polly herself feels throughout the novel when trying to establish what happened in her past. Apolline Nicola Lucyk argues that:

> By using memory as the basis of Polly's two separate identities, Jones suggests that while a person's identity is fragmented and disjointed, to make sense of it and use it effectively, one must make some sort of coherent whole from it, just as people compile narratives from fragmented memories…Through this narrative choice, Jones ties together her treatment of identity with her treatment of memory, suggesting that in her novels, a person's identity is fragmented just as humans are (Lucyk: 2014: 29).

Polly's memories become increasingly disjointed when she follows Seb's advice and asks Tom for information. She has no recollection of any conversation, but she does not see him for another four years and is convinced that she has caused him to disappear from her life. Her mother dismisses Tom as one of Polly's 'Mr Nobodies' and insists that Polly has 'rotted [her] mind with reading books. You can't take a realistic view of life like I do. You can't see the world as it is any longer', causing Polly to question whether Tom existed in the first place. Having an imaginary friend is 'a likely thing for a lonely child to do. Particularly if that child was not happy and knew her parents were going to get divorced' (Jones: 2000: 313). As Lucyk points out though, Polly has two sides to her identity, and she can uncover the truth only if she reconciles her everyday memories with the character she creates for herself through writing and reading stories. Polly's clearest memories are of Tom sending her books: 'She remembered reading those books, all of them, vividly, and what was

more, she had gone on remembering them even through the plain four years when her memories ran single again' (p. 316). Polly's grandmother struggles to remember Tom, but advises Polly to go back to her books to help her recall her memories and determine what she needs to do to solve her problem: 'If a book set you off, a book may help again when you've fetched it out of you' (p. 320). By providing oppositional figures in Ivy and Granny, Jones encourages readers to question the rational: dismissing Tom as part of her imagination as Ivy suggests is not deemed to be beneficial to Polly, whereas being open to the possibility of fantasy will potentially equip her with the knowledge she needs to recover her memories and identity. Heroes need to be prepared for chaotic and inexplicable events, and Polly needs to allow turbulence back into her life so she can complete her quest.

Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker become caught up in several chaotic events and the contrasting perceptions of other characters cause them to question whether what they experience is real or in their imagination. A significant part of their heroic journeys involves battling with their minds and learning to make sense of their identities, a task they must accomplish before they can perform any acts of heroism. They also need to reconcile their daily lives with their fantasy worlds. The final part of this chapter will examine how the girls do this and considers what they achieve when they reach the end of their heroic quests.

'For me, the only way to win was to lose': Reconciling Daily Lives with Chaos

Whilst Jessica and Polly face turbulent events, they are also required to continue negotiating the daily realities of their home and school lives. Their heroic quests are

complicated by relationship issues with their friends and families, and it is debatable whether they can establish their status as heroes in the long-term. The girls are not presented with any opportunities for heroism at home, and defined gender roles suggest that it would be discouraged. Jessica's father is a respected vicar, but the church congregation consider her mother to be 'a bit of a joke' who struggles to keep up with domestic chores: 'you can overhear them saying things like "I don't think she's had them bedrooms out in a twelvemonth" and "You should see her back kitchen"' (Gardam: 2009: 86). Initially, Jessica's mother's not conforming to societal standards about domesticity could be regarded as empowering, but she encourages Jessica to pursue activities associated with femininity. She calls Jessica 'a silly girl when she dismisses her suggestion to take up sewing: 'You could make such pretty things for yourself if you could sew', and admits that her own inability to sew is because she 'was a silly girl too' (p. 87-88). Sewing is seen as beneficial because it will enable Jessica to make herself more attractive and prepare herself for her role as a future wife and mother. Polly's background contrasts to Jessica's as her parents are separated and they enter relationships with new partners. However, as Elizabeth O'Reilly points out, Jones's work acknowledges 'the break-up of the traditional nuclear family, but one senses an undertone of disapproval' (O'Reilly: 2007: 75). In *Fire and Hemlock,* mother figures are deemed to be responsible for unrest at home. Ivy is emotionally abusive towards Polly when she accuses her of ruining her relationship with David Bragge. She is jealous when David compliments Polly and blames her daughter for her partner's behaviour: 'You've destroyed my happiness with David. You've made him secretive too', and insists that Polly must live with her father in Bristol as Ivy believes it is her 'only chance of mending things with David' (Jones: 2000: 212). Polly's father Reg is as culpable as Ivy in neglecting his

daughter, but he is often presented with a convenient explanation for his behaviour. Polly is convinced that her mother is entirely to blame for her parents' divorce – 'You're horrible! You're hard! You're unforgiving! He *wants* to come back and you won't let him!' (p. 144) - and she tries to find excuses for his being unable to appreciate that she has come to live with him permanently: 'Ivy had written to Dad but in her stony mood she did not always say things completely' (p. 221). Polly's stay in Bristol is also complicated by Reg's girlfriend Joanna, and Polly wonders whether her father has even told Joanna that Polly might be staying with them long-term: 'He had simply hoped, or made himself believe, that Joanna would take to Polly. And Joanna hadn't' (p. 223). Jones challenges the conventional nuclear family unit, but Polly seems to attribute the blame for being stranded in an unfamiliar city to the two mother figures who neglect their duties towards their children, whilst excusing her father's behaviour. Moreover, Polly appears believe that her ambition to become a hero would be thwarted by marriage. She expresses relief when the apple skin Granny gives her does not reveal any initials of her potential husband: '"You see, I'm not going to marry," Polly said, secure in the knowledge that she would be a hero instead' (p. 138), implying that Polly would find it difficult to combine heroism with family life. Heroism is a career for both Polly and Jessica, but Gardam and Jones indicate that it is incompatible with domesticity, and their protagonists will potentially be required to make tough choices if they wish to succeed.

Despite having heroic ambitions and appearing to reject traditional gender roles, Polly and Jessica still face social pressures to be attractive and find boyfriends. Jessica is determined to wear her Nativity costume at Mrs Fanshawe-Smithe's party instead of the viyella frock her mother suggests: 'I am not afraid of these people…I

will not be like them because it's easier for them. I don't care if they laugh. I will look beautiful, I will, I will' (Gardam: 2009: 128). However, she changes her mind when Mrs Fanshawe-Smithe offers to lend her one of her daughters' dresses, admitting that she had come prepared with a viyella 'just in case it wasn't fancy dress' (p. 129). Similarly, in *Fire and Hemlock,* Polly becomes conscious about her looks when Tom invites her on a day trip: she discovers that her only suitable dress is too small and 'the wild tails of her hair were not quite grey but they were drab somehow and rather like snakes' (Jones: 2000: 100). She undergoes a change in appearance when Ivy washes and combs her hair: 'Her head ached worse than it had done with two black eyes. But she was rewarded by having a cloud of silver-fair crackly hair, as clean as it was bright,' and vows to keep it in good condition as she can understand 'why Mr Lynn had called it lovely now' (p. 112). Unlike potential spies, Harriet Welsch and Sally Freedman, Polly and Jessica are not altering their appearances to disguise their true identities. They do so because they are subject to adolescent pressures and feel compelled to perform to fit in with their peers or impress others, and their preoccupation with what people think could potentially undermine their heroism. On the other hand, Jones stresses the importance of heroes having some vulnerabilities, stating that 'faults make the heroes human, and people can say "Oh, he/she is not unlike me"' (Jones: 2012: 2202). It could be argued then, that Gardam and Jones are offering adolescent girls hope, as Jessica and Polly still remain determined to pursue their heroic ambitions, but at the same time, are not presented as being unattainable role models because they experience the same pressures as ordinary girls. In Gardam's and Jones's novels, it seems as though part of being a girl hero involves demonstrating vulnerability, and Jessica and Polly face constant battles to regain their agency.

This is apparent when the two girls form relationships with Christian Fanshawe-Smith and Sebastian Leroy. There is a power imbalance in both relationships because of the age differences, and both boys have ulterior motives for associating with Jessica and Polly. As Alice Mills observes though, male characters in Jones's novel consider Polly to be a powerful figure: 'In *Fire and Hemlock,* Sebastian and Polly's beloved Thomas dread the thought of becoming the ageless Laurel's next consort, and both see Polly as their potential saviour' (Anatol: 2003: 12). In Gardam's text, Christian also considers Jessica to be useful for furthering his political ambitions, as he admires Reverend Vye's writing and hopes he can become acquainted with him. In some respects, the girls are in powerful positions in their relationships because the boys regard them as heroic figures: Seb and Tom are confident Polly can save them, whereas Christian feels Jessica can help him with his cause. Nevertheless, Jessica and Polly are aware that they are being used, and both authors indicate that they will eventually need to remove themselves from their relationships to reclaim their agency. Jessica reluctantly includes a chapter about her introduction to Christian and his rejecting of her when he encounters her father because 'it tells you quite a lot about Christian and how I felt when I got home' (Gardam: 2009: 147). In Jones's novel, Polly becomes engaged to Seb after he 'cajoled, bullied and pleaded with her,' highlighting how she feels compelled to perform against her will and struggles to break free from a relationship with someone she does not care for (Jones: 2000: 317). By stressing that the girls need to distance themselves from Christian and Seb, Gardam and Jones imply that being taken advantage of is another obstacle that a girl needs to overcome so she can maintain her heroic status and avoid becoming disempowered.

Tom initially seems to support Polly in her heroic journey by sending her books which enable her to shape her identity, but as Kimberley Reynolds points out, these texts ‘have been chosen to cultivate the heroic qualities he needs his future love to possess, for unbeknownst to her, Polly must play Janet to his Tam Lin and save him from the deadly clutches of the Faerie Queene’ (Arizpe and Smith: 2015: 32). The ballads of Tam Lin and Thomas the Rhymer provide Polly with the clues she needs to help her save Tom: the first Tom is saved by Janet who prevents him from being carried to fairyland by clinging on to him, and in the latter tale, the Faerie Queene gifts Tom with the ability to always tell the truth. Tam Lin’s story appeals to Polly and she hopes that ‘she could manage to do what Janet had done, but she was very much afraid it would not be quite like that,’ as ‘it was not Tam Lin but Thomas the Rhymer whom Thomas Lynn most resembled. He had been turned out too, also with a gift…Anything he made up would prove to be true, and then come back to hit him’ (Jones: 2000: 354). Tom’s story does not completely align with either of the protagonists in the Scottish ballads and Polly realises that playing the part of Janet will not guarantee her a happy ending with Tom. René Fleischbein argues that Polly becomes empowered when she remembers Tom and the stories they created together. She observes that:

> Unlike many heroines, Polly’s agency is not re-established because she is awakened by a man. Rather than wait for Prince Charming to rescue her or wake her with a kiss, Polly draws on her own intellect and linguistic prowess to wake herself, as it were. When she remembers her story, she recalls what it was like to be heroic and adventurous, rather than needing approval from others (Fleischbein: 2010: 246).

Polly does indeed use her ‘linguistic prowess’ to uncover how Laurel sacrifices a man every nine years to preserve her life, and she knows she must use her initiative to create another story to enable her to save Tom. However, the fact that she relies upon Tom for agency is problematic, and her acceptance that her experience will

differ from Janet's indicates that she will need to let go of him to complete her heroic quest. Polly takes on Janet's role when she accompanies Tom to Hunsdon House on the night he is due to be sacrificed, but she realises that 'the only way to win is to lose' (p. 384). In order to prevent Tom from being killed by the horse, Polly has to reject him: 'You took me as a child to save your own skin…We've nothing in common anyway, and I've got a career to come too…I never want to see you again!' (p. 386-7). Jones makes it clear that Polly is acting, and in her exchange with Tom afterwards she is compelled to continue distancing herself from him: 'or it would all be to do again. To love someone enough to let them go, you had to let them go forever or you did not love them that much' (p. 392). Critics have argued that Jones empowers Polly in the conclusion of her novel because it enables her to continue creating her own story. Farah Mendlesohn asserts that:

> The ending of *Fire and Hemlock* is a complex restatement of ideals in which Polly gives up her image of herself as Tom's white knight. This is both a revision of the construction of the hero and a revision of the tales she has read: simply copying their endings is not enough – she needs to synthesise and revision them (Mendlesohn: 2005: xxii).

In addition, Fleischbein notes:

> At the conclusion of *Fire and Hemlock,* Polly is not the shy girl she was at the beginning of the novel, nor is she in the dormant state that many female protagonists fall into. Polly has full control of herself…Polly is now playing her best role, the one she created herself (Fleischbein: 2010: 243-4).

The ending of Jones's novel is ambiguous: initially it seems as though Polly is resigned to letting go of Tom, but she also suggests that they might find a way to outwit Laurel and form a relationship. Polly claims 'For you, the only way to behave well was to behave badly. For me, the only way to win was to lose. You weren't to know me and I wasn't to remember you' (Jones: 2000: 393). This indicates that there is potential for them to develop a new story and characters that Polly and Tom will have full control over. It is debatable how empowering it can be for Polly to relinquish

her heroic ideals though: she is no longer pressured to adhere to specific roles and can become a hero on her own terms, but the possibility of a relationship between Polly and Tom could indicate that she is required to make a choice between love and heroism. Moreover, Polly and Tom's becoming a couple could make readers uncomfortable, given the age difference and the fact that he used her in the first place. Jones possibly felt uncomfortable about this herself and this could explain why she left the ending of *Fire and Hemlock* open to interpretation. Polly has successfully performed her role as a hero in the course of the novel, but whether she can be a hero in the long-term or if the heroic part is equivalent of one in a school play that she will eventually give up playing, is difficult to discern.

In Gardam's novel, Jessica faces fewer problems than Polly when letting go of her potential lover, as she resolves never to see Christian again after the episode in Dunedin Street. As Andrea Schwenke Wyile observes:

> The role of The Boy in Jessica's development as an artist is important because it marks her individuation from her father as a writer in her own right. Her rejection of Christian, who is interested in her in large part because of who her father is, and her successful poem about The Maniac as a result of her catastrophic date with Christian, mark Jessica's independence as an individual and as an artist (Wyile: 1996: 104).

Like Polly, Jessica is empowered when a stranger praises her storytelling ability, as her belief that she is 'a writer beyond all possible doubt' was formed when she encountered Arnold Hanger, but she questions her ability upon discovering Hanger's own writing. Jessica decides that one of his novels is 'the most awful, ghastly book I had ever read in my life…worse than *The Cloister and the Hearth,*' and concludes that she cannot have any writing talent: 'I wished with all my heart that nobody had ever put it into my head that I was a writer. Because it wasn't so' (Gardam: 2009: 216-8). Jessica has doubts about her poem before she discovers Hanger's writing.

She composes *The Maniac* after the air-raid in Dunedin Street and is initially confident, deciding that ‘There was nothing in it I wanted to change’ (p. 177), but when discussing it with Miss Philemon, she admits that she is ‘worried because it came as a sort of dream’ (p. 195). Miss Philemon is doubtful that Jessica will be successful but promises her that she will enter the poem into the competition if she considers it to be suitable. Jessica proves herself and her doubters wrong when she wins the competition and she is treated like a hero at school: ‘All the staff kept coming up and saying “Jolly well done Jessica,” “Can I see a copy now Jessica?” “We’ll all be ordering *The Times* tomorrow Jessica.” It was a very queer feeling’ (p. 222). Jessica has completed her heroic quest by having some writing published but fails to take satisfaction from it: instead of celebrating her success, she is convinced that a mistake has been made and is overwhelmed by the praise. Her composing the poem immediately after receiving a head injury in Dunedin Street and her inability to remember the writing process highlights how she was not entirely in control. On this occasion, Jessica has arguably become an accidental hero, and it causes the reader to question whether she will continue to have success with her writing or if her competition win is an exception. She decides to donate her cheque to the family in Dunedin Street but is thwarted when she has no money to buy a ticket to Shields East and the train guard informs her that the area had to be evacuated. Jessica has been denied the opportunity to perform an act of heroism, but also still has no clarity about whether her memories of Dunedin Street are genuine or imagined. Gardam indicates that Jessica has succeeded in detaching herself from Arnold Hanger at the end of the novel. His telegram praising her poem does not cause her to doubt her writing ability and instead she ‘just felt filled with love, knowing that good things do take place’ (p. 242). This optimism indicates that there could still be opportunities for

Jessica to be heroic in the future now that she is less likely to allow a man to influence her performance as a writer. However, the unanswered questions about the chaotic events at Elsie Meeney's, the sea wood and Dunedin Street suggest that Jessica still needs to regain some control of her agency before she can complete her heroic journey. By not solving these mysteries, Gardam implies that her protagonist needs chaotic events to recur so she can continue to pursue her heroism.

Conclusion

Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker become heroes in the stories they create and undertake several roles to help them develop their identities and establish their heroic statuses. Gardam and Jones highlight the importance of heroes being imaginative and creative when solving problems, but also warn of the dangers of becoming lost in a story and being unable to discern the difference between fantasy and reality. The texts feature several disorientated dreamlike sequences which are baffling for both the reader and the girl hero. Jessica's and Polly's memories become fragmented through performing different roles and experiencing turbulent events, and much of their heroic journey involves battling with their own minds. In some ways, Gardam and Jones offer readers hope by showing that Polly and Jessica still experience the same social pressures as other adolescent girls and manage to overcome them to achieve their heroic goals. The extent to which they become accomplished heroes is debatable though: Polly saves Tom from Laurel, but has to compromise on her heroic ideals, whilst Jessica has a poem published, but has no recollection of the writing process. The conclusions to the novels are ambiguous, and it is difficult to determine whether a girl can permanently be heroic, or if the hero is yet another part that the girls temporarily play until their quest is complete.

Chapter Five
'Anything's possible if you've got enough nerve': Performance, Magic and Saving the World in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

> 'Just because it's taken *you* three years to notice, Ron, doesn't mean no one *else* has spotted I'm a girl' (Rowling: 2000: 349).

Ron Weasley's noticing that his friend Hermione Granger, is in fact, a girl might seem comical to readers and provide light relief to compensate for growing unrest in the Wizarding World, but it is also indicative of how girls appear still to be constrained by gender binaries in the twenty-first century. Unlike Diana Wynne Jones's Polly Whittacker, Hermione does not believe that she will eventually be required to make a choice between heroism and romance. The final novel in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series was published in 2007, over seventy years after Noel Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes.* Prospects for women and girls improved significantly over the course of the twentieth century, and the 1990s and 2000s became known as the era of 'girl power' which celebrated female self-reliance. However, Rowling's work is similar to that of her predecessor as the *Harry Potter* novels feature conflicting messages about performance: having magical talents is empowering and enables girls to demonstrate heroism, but at the same time, it is deemed necessary for survival. Double lives are a recurrent theme in the focal texts discussed in this thesis, which all link to the *Harry Potter* series. Rowling's novels feature the fascination with celebrity and the discovery of performance-related talent that is apparent in Streatfeild's work. Girls act as spies and disguise their identities to find out information like Harriet Welsch and Sally Freedman, and in some cases, they transform into a different person as Charlotte Makepeace does in Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes.* Hermione shares similarities with Polly Whittacker and Jane Gardam's Jessica Vye, as her heroic journey involves being an avid reader and finding answers to problems in books. There are several different layers of

performance in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series: Hogwarts students constantly rehearse magic in their lessons to prepare for performances in later life, but they are also constantly required to act. Acting can involve taking on another person's identity when they take Polyjuice Potion, but Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley also have to perform when they lead double lives and attempt to conceal their secrets, whilst keeping up with their magical education and dealing with the pressures of adolescent life. This chapter primarily focuses on Hermione's performance, with occasional discussion of Ginny Weasley and Luna Lovegood, and considers Rowling's female characters in relation to the Girl Power movement. In my analysis, I contemplate whether tracing Hermione's performance enables us to form new interpretations of Rowling's representation of gender roles in the *Harry Potter* series.

The Girl Power movement rose to prominence in the 1990s after the formation of feminist punk rock groups known as 'Riot Grrrls', whose songs questioned societal attitudes to gender and class, whilst also celebrating female empowerment. Several television shows featuring heroic girls appeared in the 1990s and early 2000s including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Xena, the Warrior Princess* (1995-2001), *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003), and *The Powerpuff Girls* (1998-2005). Girl group Spice Girls' catchy songs with messages about the importance of female friendship appealed to adolescent girls, and also highlighted that girls who were interested in clothes and make-up could still be empowered. Increased representation of strong and independent women in popular culture indicated that feminism was accessible to everyone. As Katherine Allocco observes:

> In the 1990s, role models demonstrated how fun-filled and exciting being a girl could be and they encouraged girls to look to pop stars, celebrities, fictional characters of film and television as the new heroes, but these girls were still aware of their gender identity (Allocco: 2011: 120).

Rowling embraces these messages regarding girl power in her *Harry Potter* series: Hermione combines dressing up for the Yule Ball with her activism and mystery-solving, beautiful Fleur Delacour is chosen to represent her school in the prestigious Triwizard tournament, and highly regarded Auror Nymphadora Tonks takes pride in altering her hair colour whilst battling with Voldemort's Death Eaters.

Despite its popularity and empowering message, scholars examining the Girl Power movement have argued that it is problematic. In her essay 'Power Feminism: Girl Power and the Commercial Politics of Change' (2004), Rebecca C. Hains considers how messages about 'girl power' appeared on products marketed for girls, and opines that:

> Girl Power feminism can be stripped of its meaning, appropriated and reworked as a vehicle to reinforce dominant ideology – as a tool of the patriarchy that divides feminists in hopes of conquering the movement (Hains: 2004: 101).

Hains also notes that the representation of girl heroes on television offered a limited form of feminism, as the majority were white, middle-class and heterosexual. Katherine Allocco is also critical of the Girl Power movement in her essay 'Putting the Grail Back into Girl Power: How a Girl Saved Camelot and Why it Matters' (2011). She examines the portrayal of Kayley in the 1998 film *Quest for Camelot,* which tells the story of a young girl who becomes a Knight after saving King Arthur's life and restoring order in Camelot. Allocco argues that many girl heroes in film and television were often reduced to stereotypes:

> It is rare to find an intelligent female hero – especially a female warrior hero – whose character escapes being reduced to that of either a weak girl or a virilized warrior even during the 1990s – an age that produced many wonderful women and girl heroes (Allocco: 2011: 114).

According to Allocco, Kayley provides a refreshing contrast to previous girl heroes because she ‘does not fall into the traps of gender stereotyping’ (p. 114), mostly opts for using her intelligence rather than violence to defeat the villain Sir Ruber, and is

> celebrated for her great accomplishments not because anyone thought she was someone else and not because her achievements were made astounding in spite of the handicap of being a girl with all the constraints that social norms regarding femininity bring with it (Allocco: 2011: 128).

Hermione’s intelligence is crucial in the *Harry Potter* series: she does not always have a starring role in battles or quests, but she equips her friends with the skills they need to solve mysteries or defeat evil forces by teaching them how to perform the appropriate spell or brew the correct potion. Unlike Kayley, Hermione does transform into different people occasionally, but her limited acting skills mean that she cannot rely upon Polyjuice Potion too often. Like Streatfeild’s Petrova Fossil, there is no suitable role for Hermione other than that of herself, and she arguably achieves more when she does not attempt to imitate another person. Comparing Hermione with Emma Woodhouse, one of Rowling’s favourite literary characters, Beatrice Groves argues that:

> Both Hermione and Emma are authentically themselves and do not shrink from doing things that will displease their friends…Hermione, like Emma, grows up and learns to understand her own heart while also recognising her faults, and her growth is one of the most interesting character struggles of the series (Groves: 2017: 107).

Hermione embodies the ethos of the Girl Power movement throughout the series by excelling in roles that are suited to her personality: she is an exceptional student, an activist who stands up to injustice, and a participant in battles. Through Hermione, Rowling shows that there is more than one way for a girl to be a hero. However, problematic aspects of the Girl Power movement are still apparent in the *Harry Potter* series. Hains argued that 1990s television shows featuring empowered girls were still ‘generally eschewing clear engagement with feminist issues’ and also

suggested that they included a warning about feminism, implying ‘that feminists should adopt normatively feminine behaviour to mitigate the threat of their empowerment’ (Hains: 2004: 90-101). Being her authentic self is also difficult for Hermione: being outspoken causes her to become unpopular, her campaign for house elf rights is ridiculed, and her Muggle-born status means she is an outsider and faces prejudice in the Wizarding World. Rowling’s hero has agency, but the constant warnings suggest that she might have to compromise on her ideals, like her contemporaries in the Girl Power era. My discussion does not compare Hermione with the protagonists of 1990s television shows and films, but I engage with Hains’ and Allocco’s arguments about the Girl Power movement, and consider the extent to which Hermione resists succumbing to gender binaries, and whether Rowling continues to draw upon the stereotypes that Allocco refers to.

Representation of gender roles in the *Harry Potter* series has generated stimulating discussion amongst critics with contrasting opinions. Some of the first contributions to the topic appeared in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives of a Literary Phenomenon* (2002), which was the first full-length academic study of Rowling’s works. Farah Mendlesohn is critical of Hermione’s portrayal stating that she is portrayed as ‘the bossy know-it-all girl’, who is ‘thus doomed to be disliked by her peers,’ and ‘can be liked only by association or when she chooses to conform and will never be permitted to be anything other than a second-in-command’ (Whited: 2004: 174). Eliza Dresang offers an alternative view of Rowling’s character, arguing that she ‘is a strong, intelligent, thoughtful, compassionate female’, who desires to ‘become her own agent as well as a catalyst for social change’ (p. 242), although she also suggests that ‘The social structure of the magical world as it relates to

gender is closer to reality than it is to a vision of a better world – at least through the end of book four' (p. 238). Ximena Gallardo-C and C. Jason Smith concur with Dresang, opining that '[w]hile the novels do not actively critique gender stereotyping, the narrative does challenge standard constructions of gender and gender roles in several ways' (Anatol: 2003: 191). Kimberley Reynolds shares Mendlesohn's view regarding gender in the *Harry Potter* books stating that it 'perpetuates some very traditional power dynamics and attitudes,' although she does acknowledge that 'Rowling increases the extent to which key female characters such as Hermione Granger come out of the school and library and into the thick of the fighting' (Reynolds: 2012: 81). Options for what a girl can do once she leaves Hogwarts do appear to be limited though. As Reynolds notes, 'all the most powerful characters in the book are male, and the most powerful female, Dolores Umbridge, is as powerful as any wicked fairy from the Grimms' tales' (p. 81). Roslyn Weaver and Kimberley McMahon-Coleman question arguments about gender stereotyping in the *Harry Potter* series when they praise Rowling's depiction of motherhood: 'Rather than being confined to stereotypes doomed to perform one role only, Rowling's characters therefore represent a broad range of choices women can make in the maternal role' (Hallett and Huey: 2012: 158). This implies that a girl could potentially combine heroism and family life in the magical world if she chooses to. A full-length analysis of Hermione's character, *Hermione Granger Saves the World: Essays on the Feminist Heroine of Hogwarts,* edited by Christopher Bell appeared in 2013. Contributors discussed Hermione's different roles as a scholar, an activist and a warrior in the *Harry Potter* series. William V. Thompson argues that Hermione enables Rowling's work to evolve 'from conventional fantasy into a series that both challenges normative assumptions about the genre and finds a fuller expression of

female power and female agency' (Bell: 2013: 3538). Seth Lerer argues that Hermione is responsible for

> directing the theatre of her boys. Whether inspiring Harry to seek a new plan to win a contest or cheering him on at Quidditch, she is the mistress of the house. At times, Harry seems as much Hermione's creation as Rowling's (Lerer: 2009: 251).

I consider these critics' differing interpretations of Hermione in this chapter and mainly focus on the final four books in the *Harry Potter* series.

Hermione contrasts to previous girl heroes analysed in this thesis: as she is not the main protagonist in the novels, readers rarely see her perform on her own or have access to her innermost thoughts, although she does display initiative and pursue her own projects against the advice of her friends. The first part of the chapter draws upon Lerer's argument about Hermione's role as the director of mystery-solving and activism campaigns. I also examine the use of Polyjuice Potion and consider whether Hermione is a better actress or producer. My discussion then turns to double lives with Hermione's use of the time-turner, Ginny's experience with Tom Riddle's diary, and the formation of secret societies, and how they reconcile their secrets with their everyday lives at Hogwarts. The final section analyses girls performing heroic acts in battle and what comes after heroism in the magical world. In my analysis, I contemplate whether Hermione's struggles to act alone or be the star in the performance place limitations upon her heroic journey, or if Rowling reinvents the skills associated with heroism by placing her character in the director's role.

‘I’ve learnt all our set books off by heart of course’ (Rowling: 1997: 79). Hermione, the Reader, Director, and Activist Hero.

At the beginning of her Hogwarts career, Hermione Granger is not interested in partaking in any role apart from that of the model student and accomplished witch, a performance in which she excels when her display of magical knowledge and ability to cast spells earns her several points for Gryffindor house. Like Pauline Fossil though, Hermione is warned about the dangers of becoming too arrogant: instead of expressing admiration for her abilities, other Hogwarts students are reluctant to associate with her because they regard her as ‘a bossy-know-it-all’, although they respect her more when she forms a friendship with Harry Potter, which supports Mendlesohn’s argument about Hermione being liked only by association. However, Hermione’s humbling is counteracted by her discovery of other hidden talents, which become more apparent as Rowling’s series progresses.

From Performing Magic to Transformation

Hermione is dismissive of her ‘[b]ooks and cleverness’ at the end of *Philosopher’s Stone,* insisting that ‘[t]here are more important things – friendship and bravery’ (Rowling: 1997: 208). Hermione underestimates herself with this statement, as her reading is crucial for her friends’ and her own survival, but she also does not seem to appreciate that there is more to her magical achievement than being an avid reader. Endless studying of books does not guarantee that Hogwarts students will become accomplished witches and wizards, as Hermione discovers in her first year when no amount of reading will teach her how to fly a broomstick. However, this is also the case with all their lessons: reciting words and waving a magic wand do not mean that the student will be able to perform the spell successfully. Li Cornfield considers use of language in Rowling’s series in relation to philosopher J. L. Austin’s Speech

Act Theory, which states that ‘certain types of language have the power to enact certain types of events’ (Bell: 2013: 2444). She argues that ‘We may consider spell-casting performative in the sense that spells are indeed linguistic performances which bring about real world transformations’ (p. 2551). Magic is an artistic talent, and like the aspiring actresses and dancers in Streatfeild’s novels, Rowling’s witches and wizards need to be convincing in their performance. Correct enunciation and being able to focus is crucial for performing spells and Hermione’s self-discipline means that she rarely makes a mistake. In addition to ensuring that her schoolfellows have written the correct answers for their homework, she also becomes a director to help them improve their magical performances. On many occasions, Hermione’s direction is potentially life-saving, as is apparent when she assists Harry in preparing for the first task in the Triwizard Tournament by teaching him the Summoning Charm, which he uses to obtain his Firebolt when battling with a Hungarian Horntail dragon. Harry struggles in his first rehearsal because he is too preoccupied with the upcoming event: ‘A filthy great dragon keeps popping up in my head for some reason’ (Rowling: 2000: 302). Harry’s failed attempts at the charm are a result of his imagining of a future scenario rather than focusing on the current task, and he requires Hermione’s presence to remind him about the importance of concentration. After he masters the spell, she assures him that he will be able to summon his Firebolt: ‘Just as long as you concentrate really, really hard on it, it’ll come Harry’ (p. 303). Hermione’s detachment from imagined scenarios and her ability to fully concentrate on the spell she recites emphasise how she is also a master of performance as well as directing, and is appropriately equipped for situations when she needs to act under pressure.

During her sixth year at Hogwarts, Hermione makes a significant achievement when she becomes the first student to successfully perform a silent spell: ‘ten minutes into the lesson Hermione managed to repel Neville’s muttered Jelly-Legs jinx without uttering a single word’ (Rowling: 2005: 170). Learning these skills serves as a rehearsal for Harry’s, Ron’s, and Hermione’s final performance initiating Voldemort’s downfall. Silent spells are beneficial because ‘Your advocacy has no kind of warning about what you’re about to perform…which gives you a spilt second advantage’ but they also require ‘concentration and mind power’ (p. 170) if they are to be executed properly. Hermione demonstrates her possession of these attributes when the trio are caught by the Snatchers and she silently casts a Stinging Jinx on Harry to disguise his identity. Critics have accused Rowling of undermining Hermione’s performance by exposing her weaknesses in the language used to describe her. In her analysis of the first four books, Eliza Dresang argued that:

> Rowling allows Hermione to lose sight of her own strength and revert to stereotypic behaviour, and she facilitates this by employing gender-related stereotypic words to Hermione’s behaviour again and again. Repeatedly, Rowling has Hermione ‘shriek’, ‘squeak’, ‘wail’ and ‘whimper,’ verbs never applied to the male characters in the book…The language that constructs the roles played by Harry and Ron is much calmer, more reasoned, despite the fact that Hermione is the problem solver (Whited: 2002: 223).

On this occasion, though, Rowling emphasises Hermione’s capability to perform when facing an unexpected and dangerous situation. In addition, the Stinging Jinx causes Harry significant discomfort: ‘He could feel his face swelling rapidly under his hands…his fingers, tight, swollen and puffy as though he had suffered some violent allergic reaction’ (Rowling: 2007: 362). Hermione impulsively enacts a spell that she knows will cause her friend pain in order to protect him, highlighting how she possesses considerable emotional strength, and because of her ability to perform it silently, the Death Eaters are unaware that Harry’s identity has altered. Hermione’s disguising of Harry does not alleviate the danger as she, Harry and Ron are taken to

Malfoy Manor and she is forced to endure Bellatrix Lestrange's torture. However, her performance of the spell is still potentially life-saving, as the residents at Malfoy Manor are reluctant to hand Harry over to Voldemort because they do not wish to risk antagonising him if they are mistaken, which gives Harry and Ron time to plan an escape. Hermione still manages to perform despite being in agony when Bellatrix accuses her of stealing items from her vault at Gringotts: 'We've never been inside your vault…it isn't the real sword! It's a copy, just a copy!' (Rowling: 2007: 378). She is telling the truth about never being inside Bellatrix's vault but being able to lie about Gryffindor's sword is crucial for the next part of their mission, as the three friends are convinced that one of the Horcruxes is in Bellatrix's possession. Hermione plays several key roles in this performance: she directs the quest by disguising Harry's identity and increasing their chances of escaping imprisonment and possibly death, and she manages to act and come up with her own story about the sword of Gryffindor when undergoing torture. In this episode, Rowling demonstrates how Hermione is a versatile hero who can undertake a variety of performance-related roles that are necessary for her own and others' survival.

The emphasis on the importance of Hermione's presence as a director is apparent when she and Harry become familiar with Beedle the Bard's *Tale of the Three Brothers.* Despite being a dedicated scholar, Hermione had never read Beedle's fairy-tales until Albus Dumbledore bequeathed her a copy of *Tales of Beedle the Bard* in his will, possibly because she was sceptical that any form of fictional writing would assist her with her magical education. Hermione is dismissive of anything she deems imaginative in earlier novels: she decides to give up Divination lessons because their homework involves making false predictions, and she has little

patience with Luna Lovegood's belief in Crumple-Horned Snorkacks. *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* does not teach Hermione any new spells or provide any clues about how to destroy Horcruxes, but there is a message in the *Tale of the Three Brothers* that she needs to interpret if the trio are to progress with their mission. As Beatrice Groves argues:

> *Harry Potter* pairs Hermione's love of reading with her intellect, her ability to read between the lines. Hermione is always darting off to the library and her love of books symbolises her ability to correctly guess the meaning of things…Hermione's ability to help [Harry] see through his glasses symbolises the way she helps both him and the reader to understand what is happening (Groves: 2017: 23-4).

The *Tale of the Three Brothers* tells the story of three men who are each given an object to help them evade death: the eldest brother chooses the unbeatable Elder Wand, the second asks Death for the ability to bring others back to life and is given a Resurrection Stone, and the youngest is presented with an Invisibility Cloak to stop Death from pursuing him until he was ready to leave his earthly life. Hermione opines that 'it's obvious which gift is best, which one you'd choose - ', but Harry and Ron disagree with her choice of the cloak. Ron insists that 'you wouldn't need to be invisible if you had the wand' and Harry is tempted by the prospect of resurrecting his loved ones with the stone, emphasising that the boys need Hermione's guidance and direction (Rowling: 2007: 336-7). Hermione's identifying with the third brother who accepts the inevitability of death indicates that she will ensure that Harry will do the right thing in his quest to defeat Lord Voldemort. When he becomes preoccupied with the Hallows and loses focus on the Horcruxes, convinced that Dumbledore has left him with another puzzle to solve, Hermione insists: 'Harry, this isn't a game, this isn't practice! This is the real thing, and Dumbledore left you very clear instructions, find the Horcruxes!' (p. 351). Harry later becomes the owner of the Hallows: the Invisibility Cloak had been in his possession since his first year at Hogwarts, the

Resurrection Stone is hidden inside the Golden Snitch Dumbledore bequeathed to him, and he acquires the Elder Wand after disarming its previous owner Draco Malfoy. Upon meeting Dumbledore after Voldemort casts a Killing Curse on him, Harry learns that his Headmaster had 'counted on Miss Granger to slow you up Harry. I was afraid that your hot head might dominate your good heart' and was concerned that the temptation of the Hallows would result in his seeking them out for the wrong reasons (p. 577). Harry is the worthy owner of the Hallows because Hermione has kept him focused on the original task Dumbledore set and he is no longer tempted to seek immortality or recall people from the dead. Hermione successfully deciphers the warning message about temptation in *The Tale of the Three Brothers,* and she directs Harry's journey by encouraging him to remain in the role of the youngest brother and make use of the Invisibility Cloak that he already possesses instead of seeking more magical objects. One book alone will not help her to complete her quest and she does not attempt to occupy fictional roles to the same extent as previous girl heroes discussed in this thesis, but she knows which parts of *The Tale of the Three Brothers* to accept or reject, enabling her to create her own story with Harry as the main protagonist.

Whilst Hermione does not attempt to imitate fictional characters or act in school plays, there are occasions when she is required to take on another character's identity to obtain information. Wizards and witches transform into other people by using Polyjuice Potion. Hermione brews her first Polyjuice Potion in her second year when she, Harry and Ron disguise themselves as Slytherins to interrogate Draco Malfoy about the Chamber of Secrets. She successfully brews the potion, but her achievement is undermined when she discovers that she has used a cat hair instead

of Millicent Bulstrode's, and she is unable to participate in the conversation. However, Harry's and Ron's disguising as Crabbe and Goyle turns out to be a futile operation as they are incorrect about Malfoy's being Slytherin's heir, so Hermione has not been denied the opportunity of making a significant discovery. Polyjuice Potion proves vital for their mission in *Deathly Hallows* and Hermione transforms into several people: she takes part in the Battle of the Seven Potters to ensure Harry is transported to the Burrow safely, and she obtains two Horcruxes by disguising herself as Ministry of Magic employee Mafalda Hopkirk and Death Eater Bellatrix Lestrange. The latter role is the most challenging character for Hermione to play. Christine Klingbel argues that Bellatrix potentially provides a warning to Hermione. In her analysis, she notes:

> In some ways, Bellatrix is Hermione's opposite. While Hermione is logical and responsible, Bellatrix is insane and impulsive. However, as a devotional follower of the Dark Lord's orders, she embodies Hermione's mania for following rules and thus, can be read as a cautionary tale of what can happen when one doesn't think for themselves or question authority (Bell: 2013: 168).

Hermione and Bellatrix have contrasting personalities, but they do occupy similar roles on either side of the Wizarding War: Bellatrix is Voldemort's most devoted supporter and Hermione is arguably Harry's most loyal follower, as unlike Ron, she never abandons him. Both characters are also prepared to sacrifice relationships with their families. Bellatrix is unrepentant about killing her cousin Sirius Black and has no sympathy for her sister Narcissa when she is concerned about Draco's safety – 'If I had sons, I would be glad to give them up to the service of the Dark Lord!' (Rowling: 2005: 39) – and Hermione modifies her parents' memories so they have no recollection of ever having a daughter. However, Hermione's actions are motivated by a desire to protect her loved ones, whereas Bellatrix does not have the capability to love anyone or show any empathy. In addition, remaining loyal to Harry does not mean that Hermione never questions his ideas, as is apparent when she

encourages him to focus on the Horcruxes instead of the Hallows. Hermione does display the ‘mania for following rules’ that Klingbel describes in her first year at Hogwarts, but her attitude changes when she realises that rule-breaking is sometimes necessary for preventing crime or righting injustice, and she does not need to meet Bellatrix before she appreciates the dangers of refusing to question authority. Bellatrix is submissive to her male leader, whilst Hermione embodies the characteristics of the Girl Power movement by displaying independent thought and taking on a leadership role.

Hermione’s contrast to Bellatrix is highlighted when she transforms into her so she can access her Gringotts vault and obtain Helga Hufflepuff’s cup. Hermione physically resembles Bellatrix after taking the potion, but as with Charlotte Makepeace in Farmer’s novel, she is still required to put on a convincing performance to avoid arousing suspicion. Harry warns her that she is ‘[t]oo polite…You need to treat people like they’re scum’ when she interacts with people in Diagon Alley and she is unable to hide her emotion when she witnesses homeless Muggle-born witches and wizards mourning their lost children (Rowling: 2007: 423-4). Like Farmer’s Charlotte, Hermione faces uncomfortable questions which risk her being exposed as an imposter when she fails to recognise Death Eaters and has to explain how she has managed to visit Diagon Alley when the residents of Malfoy Manor are under house arrest. Her performance as Bellatrix comes to an end before she can complete her task, as she resumes her own identity when entering the Gringotts vault. It is once she becomes herself again, however, that Hermione excels: as the trio are being attacked by hot metal objects, she manages to perform the Levicorpus Jinx to help Harry obtain the Horcrux, limits the number of injuries

they sustain with the Impervious Charm, and engineers their escape on the dragon with the Defodio Spell. This links to Allocco's argument about Kayley's being 'celebrated for her great accomplishments', as Rowling emphasises that Hermione is more empowered when she does not pretend to be another person. Nevertheless, whilst Hermione is in no danger of following Bellatrix's example of never questioning her master, Rowling does seem to draw upon stereotypes about childless and powerful women in her portrayal of Bellatrix. Her dedication to Voldemort causes her to lose her beauty and she contrasts to her two sisters Andromeda and Narcissa who are both portrayed as being beautiful and appear to embody traditionally feminine ideals: Andromeda is proficient in 'householdy sort of spells' (Rowling: 2003: 53) and Narcissa is a devoted wife and mother. Bellatrix's role is unsuitable for Hermione because of their contrasting personalities, but Rowling also seems to indicate that pursuing alternatives to domesticity could compromise her femininity and being herself might not always be an option.

Hermione at Centre Stage in the Activist's Role

Examining magic in the works of Roald Dahl, Anne Fine, Diana Wynne Jones, and J. K. Rowling, Elizabeth O'Reilly observes that '[m]agic and imaginative thinking enables the blossoming of the true self – the self which makes use of all parts of the mind and has at least some power to resist oppressive external forces' (O'Reilly: 2005: 277). Whilst becoming an accomplished witch at Hogwarts, Hermione also develops a social conscience through acquiring more knowledge about prejudices in the Wizarding World. As a Muggle-born witch, she is susceptible to prejudice at Hogwarts, and she becomes aware of this in her second year when Draco Malfoy uses the term 'Mudblood' to insult her. Hermione is initially unaware of the

significance of Malfoy's remark, although she 'could tell it was really rude of course' (Rowling: 1998: 89), and instead of questioning her right to learn magic, she is motivated to challenge inequality. After Muggle-born students are targeted by Slytherin's monster, Hermione is determined to catch the culprit and risk expulsion by making Polyjuice Potion: '*I* think threatening Muggle-borns is far worse than brewing up a difficult potion' (p. 125). Hermione's becoming more aware of her vulnerability in the magical world indicates that she is acquiring another role in the *Harry Potter* series. In addition to being the most gifted student in her year, Hermione also becomes an activist for social reform, reflecting O'Reilly's argument about her developing her true identity, and finding ways to use the power she acquires through learning to fight oppression.

In her article in *Girlhood Studies*, 'Hopeful, Harmless and Heroic: Figuring the Girl Activist as Global Saviour, Jessica K. Taft examines the increased publicity of girl activists in the twenty-first century including education advocate Malala Yousafzei, gun control supporter Emma González, and climate change campaigner Greta Thunberg. She argues that the mid-2000s marked a turning point in the Girl Power movement, as it 'no longer just indexed a girl's ability to be upwardly mobile, self-made and confident, but also her power to solve local and global social problems.' This was emphasised by Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan's 2004 speech, in which he opined: 'When it comes to solving the problems of the world, I believe in Girl Power' (Taft: 2020: 4). In the *Harry Potter* series, Harry is the Chosen One to defeat Lord Voldemort, but even with Voldemort's downfall, there is still work to be done to reduce inequality in the magical world, and Rowling indicates that it is Hermione who will initiate this. Since childhood, Rowling has been an admirer of

author and activist Jessica Mitford, and it is possible that she provided inspiration for Hermione's character. Revealing in a review of *Decca: The Letters of Jessica Mitford,* Rowling states that Jessica had been her 'heroine [since] she was 14 years old' (Rowling: 2006). The Mitfords were one of the most notorious aristocratic families in the twentieth century, which included controversial figures in Unity and Diana, who were both supporters of Adolf Hitler. Jessica rejected her family's right-wing ideals and advocated for social justice: at the age of 19, she left home with her cousin Esmond Romilly to support the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and she campaigned for civil rights in America in the 1950s and '60s. In her memoir *Hons and Rebels* (1960), Jessica recalls her developing interest in left-wing politics through reading socialist pamphlets:

> I discovered that human nature was not, as I had always supposed, a fixed and unalterable quantity, that wars are not caused by a natural urge in men to fight, that ownership of land and factories is not necessarily the reward of greater wisdom and energy (Mitford: 2007: 66).

In her fourth year at Hogwarts, Hermione is horrified when she discovers that unpaid house-elves are working at Hogwarts and vows to secure them more rights. She forms the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, informing Harry and Ron that its objectives are:

> to secure house-elves fair wages and working conditions. Our long-term aims include changing the law about non-wand use, and trying to get an elf in the Department for Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures because they're shockingly under-represented (Rowling: 2000: 198).

Being an activist presents a new challenge to Hermione because she cannot rely upon any books to provide her with guidance. Even Bathilda Bagshot's *Hogwarts: A History,* a book Hermione often relies upon, features no mention of house-elves in the castle. Through her extensive reading, she learns that house-elves have been enslaved for centuries, but no witch or wizard has advocated for change or challenged how elves are treated. As there are no records of previous campaigns to

give Hermione ideas, she is required to create a completely new role for herself. This links to Taft's argument about changing discourse surrounding Girl Power in the twenty-first century, as Hermione's being the first person to challenge attitudes towards house-elves indicates that she could be the person who brings significant change to the social hierarchy in the magical world. Hermione's advocacy for more representation of house-elves in the Ministry of Magic also anticipates campaigns for more diversity in workplaces in the twenty-first century, with firms keen to employ more women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

On the other hand, Taft also argues that individual girl activists appeal to people in power because they do not perceive them to be threats. She opines that:

> The girl activist saviour is defined by her unique combination of hopefulness, harmlessness, and heroism. Through these mutually constituting elements, the figure of the girl activist functions to symbolically resolve public anxieties about the future…Figuring the girl activist as harmless contains her politics and keeps the specter of revolutions, uprisings or a radical transformation of power relations at bay (Taft: 2020: 3-4).

Hermione's advocating for house-elf rights shares parallels with campaigns in the nineteenth century to end the slave trade, and Rowling indicates that she will face similar struggles to her predecessors when she is met with opposition from people she assumes would support her. She attempts to direct Harry and Ron in her campaign but neither of them is prepared to embrace their roles as Secretary and Treasurer. They reluctantly pay for S.P.E.W badges 'but they had done it to keep her quiet', whilst 'Some people, like Neville, had paid up just to stop Hermione glowering at them' (Rowling: 2000: 210). Hermione seems to fit Taft's description of the harmless girl activist: she might be able to pressure people into joining her movement, but persuading her schoolfellows to buy a badge will not enable her to achieve significant change if they do not share her passion for the cause. Rivka

Temima Kellner argues that Hermione's struggles with her campaign are indicative of an ambivalence towards feminism on Rowling's part:

> Hermione at this stage in her life is having a hard time expressing the difficulties that come with being female in the modern world and expresses her frustration through the advocacy of the house-elf cause. Rowling's ambivalence comes through here. Hermione takes the house-elf cause seriously, but Rowling does not take Hermione seriously (Kellner: 2010: 378).

Hermione is constantly undermined when she raises the issue of house-elf rights: the Weasley family insist that she is wasting her time because house-elves enjoy serving witches and wizards, echoing the sentiments of supporters of slavery in nineteenth century America. Although Harry is more empathetic when he learns about house-elves being subject to cruelty, he is reluctant to campaign for social change. Hermione displays careful organisation and dedication to her cause by creating badges and using notebooks to keep records of her members, but her hard work produces few results: Harry notices that his and Ron's names are 'at the top of the very short list' and he tries to persuade her to abandon her work (Rowling: 2000: 280). This supports Kellner's argument about Hermione's not being taken seriously by her creator, as it seems as though Hermione can act as a director and be in a leadership role when helping Harry, but she is mocked when pursuing her own ambitions.

Brycchan Carey provides an alternative view to Kellner, arguing that 'young people are implicitly invited to follow Hermione's lead, unpopular though it might initially seem to be, and take political action against prejudice' (Anatol: 2003: 114). Rowling does indicate that Hermione's opinions about house-elves are valid in *Order of the Phoenix* when Kreacher seeks revenge on Sirius after he treats him harshly. Kreacher prompts Harry to go to the Department of Mysteries to find Sirius when he

experiences a vision of his godfather being tortured by Voldemort. Harry later learns that Kreacher had betrayed him by informing the Malfoys of his whereabouts and had also lied about his master not being at home, meaning that he has put his friends in unnecessary danger and led Sirius to his death. Harry acknowledges that 'Hermione kept telling us to be nice to him' when confiding in Dumbledore (Rowling: 2003: 733), and his Headmaster expresses support for Hermione's position: 'We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward' (p. 735). Dumbledore is the most respected wizard in the magical world and his endorsement of Hermione's view offers an indication that she is starting to progress with her campaign for house-elf rights, although it could be a while before she achieves anything significant. As Kellner observes, Hermione is the first person in the magical world to directly challenge the treatment of house-elves, and it is arguably inevitable that she would meet with opposition to begin with. Witches and wizards, like elves, have been conditioned naturally to accept the hierarchy in magical society. Hermione's lack of progress is not necessarily an indication that Rowling fails to take her seriously, but is possibly a realistic representation of how it can take a while for society to embrace new ideas. Campaigning for house-elf rights is a long-term heroic goal for Hermione, which she cannot complete by the end of her Hogwarts schooldays, but her determination has enabled more progress to be made in creating a better world. This is proven when Harry inherits Kreacher and follows Hermione's advice to demonstrate kindness towards him, giving the house-elf an incentive to help them find the Horcruxes and defeat Voldemort. Through Hermione's persistence in constantly questioning magical authority, Rowling emphasises the importance of upholding beliefs even if they appear to have little support from other people.

Being an activist is an ideal role for Hermione: she has the potential to excel in it because she does not have to pretend to be somebody else when demonstrating her passion for securing rights for vulnerable magical beings. However, Rowling also indicates that Hermione is possibly meddling in something she does not completely understand. Marcus Schulzke argues that Hermione's campaign for house-elf rights is 'the closest thing most of the book's readers will have to a battle against evil' and that:

> Any political challenges will likely be more nuanced than a war against an evil villain; they will require a greater capacity to see issues from multiple perspectives and to struggle in finding solutions (Hallett and Huey: 2012: 120).

Considering multiple perspectives is something Hermione struggles with: she claims that house-elves enjoy their work because they are 'uneducated and brainwashed', because, like slaves, they are denied an education and conditioned to believe that their purpose is to serve their owners without questioning them (Rowling: 2000: 211). However, she is demonstrating naivety with this statement, as there are occasions when house-elves defy their owners, as is the case with both Dobby and Kreacher. When she is unable to persuade the house-elves to support her campaign, she resorts to deception by attempting to liberate them herself: house-elves are granted freedom if their masters give them clothes and Hermione hides woolly hats under piles of rubbish in the hope that they will accidentally touch them. By doing this, she is taking advantage of the house-elves' perceived vulnerability and she is denying them the agency she wishes them to have. Her initiative is ineffective: she is convinced she has successfully set several house-elves free when the hats disappear from the Gryffindor Common Room, because Harry 'had not the heart to tell her that Dobby was taking all the things' (Rowling: 2003: 399). Hermione is keen

to occupy the starring role in her cause, but Rowling indicates that she needs to focus on listening to those she claims to advocate for if she wishes to fight injustice. As Schulzke notes, Hermione is not involved in a direct battle between good and evil, and Hermione herself could be regarded as both a heroic and meddling figure by present and future house-elves. To a certain extent, Rowling endorses Hermione's views, but she also encourages readers to question her misguided methods in achieving her aims, highlighting that this aspect of her heroic journey will involve many mistakes and setbacks. Hermione will never be able to find a straightforward solution in a book and needs to use her own creativity to enhance her cause, whilst also remembering to amplify the voices of those she cares about instead of trying to act the hero on her own.

Hermione is empowered in the director's role on several occasions when she teaches Harry and Ron complicated spells and takes action that potentially saves lives when she assists Harry with the Triwizard Tournament tasks. She also has beneficial performance-related skills, as her success at performing spells is because of her ability to concentrate and believe in what she is doing. Pretending to be a different person is something Hermione struggles with, as is apparent when she attempts to imitate Bellatrix Lestrange. She finds an ideal role in the activist, but Rowling suggests that she needs to do more work on her performance in this role if she wishes to be successful. The chapter will now turn to how girls lead double lives and conceal secrets at Hogwarts whilst also dealing with adolescent pressures.

‘Silly little girl, am I? Oh, I’ll get her back for this’: Adolescent Battles with Studies, Relationships and Bullies.

Rita Skeeter refers to Hermione as a ‘silly little girl’ when she challenges her about her vindictive stories about Harry Potter and Rubeus Hagrid in the *Daily Prophet,* an assumption that Hermione is determined to disprove (Rowling: 2000: 392). Hermione’s vow to avenge Rita Skeeter’s underestimation of her is arguably not a unique incident in Rowling’s series, as female characters often feel compelled to prove that they are not ‘silly little girls.’ Efforts to fight Lord Voldemort and improve equality in the magical world are complicated by everyday pressures of school and teenage life: students pursue academic ambitions, become conscious of their looks, deal with the anguish of unrequited love, and they continually face bullying figures who undermine them, concerns which they often attempt to reconcile in secret. Hermione and Ginny are never depicted alone, and readers do not have access to their innermost thoughts as they do with Harry, and to a certain extent, Draco, but both girls lead multiple lives whilst they are at Hogwarts. As they cope with adolescent difficulties and contribute to defeating evil forces, the two girls also conceal secrets of their own.

In her thesis examining storytelling girls in twentieth-century literature, Sonia Snelling argues that girls in school stories were offered limited opportunities to explore their identities. She states that the genre’s

> focus on groups of girls rather than a single protagonist, the emphasis on organised games and physical activities and the jovial insistence on the pleasures of girlhood within a secure environment rather than on the process and problems of growing up…mean that quests for identity or an examination between the self and the world are not the main concerns of the genre (Snelling: 2010: 14).

As discussed in a previous chapter, Farmer and Magorian challenge the conventions of the school story and critique discouragement of individuality by allowing their protagonists to explore their identity both inside and outside of school. Rowling's series is primarily concerned with Harry's quest to defeat Lord Voldemort, but exploration of identity is apparent in her depictions of Hermione and Ginny. Magic causes the 'secure environment' of the school to be disrupted, as girl characters can make use of enchantments and magical objects to find answers to their adolescent problems and learn more about themselves.

Enchanted Objects and Double Lives

In her first years at Hogwarts, Hermione is eager to pursue every aspect of magical learning offered at the school and signs up to undertake every class in her third year. As there are not enough hours in the week for her to attend all her lessons, Hermione is gifted with a Time Turner to assist her with her studies. Owning a Time Tuner involves significant responsibility, and it is difficult for a witch or wizard to obtain one because of the potential for them to abuse their power. Professor McGonagall 'had to write all sorts of letters to the Ministry of Magic', assuring them that Hermione 'was a model student' and 'would never use it for anything except my studies' (Rowling: 1999: 289). Like Charlotte Makepeace, Hermione's life is complicated by going back in time: she does not have to become a different person in this instance, but she puts herself at risk every time she travels into the past. Professor McGonagall informs her that 'awful things have happened when witches and wizards have meddled with time…loads of them ended up killing their past or future selves by mistake!' (p. 292). In Farmer's novel, Charlotte can use a diary to communicate with Clare to assist her in her performance, but Hermione is

completely isolated, because she is unable to tell her friends, and remembering her whereabouts in the previous hour is vital to ensure she is not discovered. The Time Turner enhances Hermione's magical learning and potentially enables her to learn more skills to assist her with heroic quests, but she also has to deliver a convincing performance both to conceal her secret and to keep herself safe. Hermione not only has to excel at magic, but also needs to continually be the producer of her own stories in order to survive.

Farah Mendlesohn argues that the Time Turner 'proves to be an opportunity to humiliate [Hermione] and emphasise her inability to be "sensible" rather than excessive' (Whited: 2002: 168). Whilst Hermione can travel into the past to attend lessons, she is still limited in the time she can spend on her studying, which results in her becoming overworked. On one occasion, she is absent from Charms and Harry and Ron find that she has fallen asleep while reading her Arithmancy book. Ron's observation that she is 'trying to do too much' (Rowling: 1999: 218) emphasises Mendlesohn's point, as it is evident that Hermione is struggling with her workload. Hermione's behaviour also confuses her friends: Harry cannot understand how she missed the Charms class because she 'was with [them] until [they] were right outside the classroom' and she has to find an explanation for her sudden disappearance. She attributes it to being wound up by Draco Malfoy, which seems unconvincing, given that Hermione has never let other students hinder her studying before. Like Lalla Moore in Streatfeild's *White Boots,* Hermione appears to have outgrown her strength, both in terms of her work and the storytelling and acting skills required to use the Time Turner. Hermione's rare absence from a class and her desperation in forming stories to conceal her secret indicate that her time-travelling

will soon end, as it involves a level of performance that is impossible to sustain in the long-term.

Eliza Dresang offers an alternative view to Mendlesohn's by suggesting that the Time Turner does not necessarily serve to humiliate Hermione and instead enables her to make a valuable discovery about 'how to reconcile her love of learning with the limitations of life' (Whited: 2002: 222). Hermione gives the Time Turner back to Professor McGonagall at the end of her third year, confessing to Harry and Ron that she 'can't stand another year like this one. That Time-Turner, it was driving me mad…Without Muggle Studies and Divination, I'll be able to have a normal timetable again' (Rowling: 2000: 314). This relates to Mendlesohn's point to a certain extent, as Hermione appears to have been humbled in her attempt to stand out from other students. However, it is debatable how much Hermione would learn in Muggle Studies and Divination: she already has knowledge of the non-magical world as she is a Muggle-born witch, and Divination teacher Professor Trelawney's abilities as a clairvoyant and teacher are questionable. Here, Rowling has not undermined Hermione but demonstrated her ability to make wise decisions that will benefit her learning and wellbeing. As Dresang observes, Hermione is made aware of the 'limitations of life' through using the Time-Turner and Rowling highlights how Hermione's constant requirement to act to conceal her secret and avoid encountering her past self is detrimental to her mental health and could prevent her from feeling fulfilled if she is continually living in a performance. Whilst performance is vital for survival on several occasions in the *Harry Potter* series, the episode with the Time-Turner highlights the dangers of excessive performance and living double lives. If Hermione wishes to become a successful hero, she needs to be selective

about when she utilises her performance-related skills rather than performing for the sake of it. Attending lessons where she does not learn anything results in her putting energy into an unnecessary performance, she has less time to be herself, and it could mean that she is unable to perform in situations where it is necessary to save herself or others. Dispensing with the Time-Turner empowers Hermione because she can concentrate more on school subjects which are valuable for her, but she also has more time to explore her own identity and pursue causes that she is passionate about.

Despite experiencing difficulties in managing her workload, Hermione passes every subject, emphasising that the Time-Turner has not served to humiliate her. Tara Foster opines that it 'highlights her academic and intellectual accomplishments and how much the wizarding community benefits from those accomplishments', and 'also provides her with an opportunity for greater self-knowledge and personal growth' (Bell: 2013: 111). People do not just benefit from Hermione's magical knowledge when she uses the Time-Turner, as it enables her to save two innocent lives. Hagrid's Hippogriff Buckbeak faces execution when he is deemed dangerous after attacking Draco Malfoy in a Care of Magical Creatures class, even though he was provoked. As Hermione battles with her congested timetable and workload, she also dedicates time to assisting Hagrid with his case. Despite her finding 'some really good stuff' (Rowling: 1999: 202), she and Hagrid are unable to convince the Committee of Buckbeak's innocence and he is sentenced to death. The trio also discover that the Ministry of Magic have made a mistake about Sirius Black: they believe him to be the notorious supporter of Lord Voldemort who murdered thirteen people and betrayed Harry's parents, but the person responsible for these crimes, is

in fact, Peter Pettigrew, who has been disguising himself as a rat. Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge refuses to believe their story and insists that Sirius will receive the Dementor's Kiss, a fate deemed worse than death because it involves removing a person's soul. The only way Hermione and Harry can save Buckbeak and Sirius is to use the Time Turner: they untie Buckbeak and fly him up to the West Tower to rescue Sirius. Rowling highlights how Hermione's presence is essential for the mission when Harry is tempted to capture Pettigrew, and she has to remind him that they are 'breaking one of the most important wizarding laws!' and being seen by only their past selves and Hagrid is not an option: 'what do you think you'd do if you saw yourself bursting into Hagrid's house?' (p. 292). Hermione is conscious that she has already broken her promise to Professor McGonagall about using the Time-Turner for studying only, and she appreciates that she and Harry need to prioritise the heroic acts they perform. Breaking rules to save innocent lives can be justified but seeking revenge and bringing criminals to justice will have to wait. By acting as a directive hero and keeping Harry focussed on the task, Hermione is responsible for saving three lives in this episode, as Buckbeak and Sirius are able to escape and she ensures that Harry does not make a dangerous decision. The Time-Turner equips Hermione with the 'self-knowledge and personal growth' that Foster describes, and it enables her to become an effective hero in addition to temporarily assisting her with her magical education. Her decision to return it at the end of the year indicates that she no longer needs it, as she has developed the skill of prioritising and can now continue with her heroic journey.

Hermione is tested when using the Time-Turner, but she remains in control of her enchanted object and is not in danger of losing her agency. Ginny Weasley also puts

her trust in a magical item when she is in her first year at Hogwarts. Infatuated with Harry Potter and teased by her brothers, Ginny reveals all of her insecurities in a mysterious diary she finds inside one of her school books, and is delighted when another person, Tom, replies to her and appears to be sympathetic. However, Tom Riddle's diary is one of Voldemort's Horcruxes, which he uses to take advantage of her vulnerability. He manipulates her into opening the Chamber of Secrets and unleashing a Basilisk upon Muggle-born students. Ginny's memory becomes fragmented when she reveals in her diary that:

> There are rooster feathers all over my robes and I don't know how they got there. Dear Tom, I can't remember what I did on the night of Halloween, but a cat was attacked and I've got paint all down my front…There was another attack today and I don't know where I was. Tom what am I going to do? I think I'm going mad…I think I'm the one attacking everyone Tom! (Rowling: 1998: 229).

Like Polly Whittacker in *Fire and Hemlock,* Ginny senses that she has done something destructive against her will, but struggles to establish what has happened and does not know how she can put it right. She attempts to dispose of the diary when she becomes suspicious of it but is horrified when she realises that it is Harry's possession and breaks into the Gryffindor boys' dormitory to reclaim it. Ginny endangers her own life and Harry's through communication with the diary. She is unable to resist Riddle's demands to write a farewell on the wall and meet him in the Chamber of Secrets because 'there isn't enough life left in her: she put too much into the diary, into me', and Riddle successfully leads Harry to the chamber: 'after everything she had told me about you, I knew you would go to any lengths to solve the mystery – particularly if one of your best friends was attacked' (p. 231). Ginny's efforts to stop Harry from suffering her fate with the diary and attempting to evade capture indicate that she does have the capacity for heroism, but her naivety in trusting Tom Riddle has resulted in her losing her agency. After she is rescued by Harry and reunited with her parents, Mr Weasley expresses surprise that she

ignored his advice to '[n]ever trust anything that can think for itself *if you can't see where it keeps its brain'* (p. 243), which suggests that Ginny is capable of demonstrating caution, but her desperation to confide in somebody about Harry has impacted upon her judgement. Initially, Rowling seems to revert to gender stereotypes by positioning Ginny in the damsel-in-distress role, but the episode with Riddle's diary also seems to warn girls that worshipping boys could cause them to lose confidence in themselves. Hermione's Time-Turner temporarily enables her to explore her love of learning until she discovers her true interests, but Ginny cannot rely upon an enchanted object to offer her a solution to her adolescent problems. Riddle's diary has disempowered her, and Rowling suggests that she needs to work upon rebuilding her agency and develop heroic qualities before she can focus on love and relationships.

Relationships and Gender Issues

The ability to love is regarded as one of the greatest attributes a person can possess in the *Harry Potter* books, as it enables characters to resist or triumph over evil: Harry is protected from Voldemort by his mother Lily's love for him, and his capacity for love and willingness to sacrifice himself proves crucial when defeating his nemesis. Love is also a complicated problem and cannot be easily solved by magic: it is possible to brew the love potion Amortentia, but it cannot alter a person's feelings in the long-term, as is apparent when Merope Gaunt decides to stop using it to seduce Tom Riddle Senior. No form of magic will produce genuine affection, and Rowling indicates that it is no coincidence that Voldemort has no ability to love after being conceived through Amortentia. The danger of love potions emphasises that witches and wizards should aspire to obtain love through being their authentic

selves, but for girls at Hogwarts this can be difficult as they are still subject to gender pressures. Girls are valued for their magical ability and study the same subjects as boys, but they are still conscious of their appearances and concerned about boys' approval of them, meaning that they are required to engage in non-magical forms of performance.

Examining Harry's and Ginny's relationship, Beatrice Groves observes that:

> *Harry Potter* attempts a degree of equality and reciprocity in the relationship between Harry and Ginny, and, as in *Romeo and Juliet,* this is first hinted at through the inversion of the traditional poetic blazon (in which the woman is blazoned by the man) (Groves: 2017: 125).

Poetic blazons were popular with Elizabethan poets, who compared a woman's physical characteristics with beautiful objects. Ginny uses this technique to get Harry's attention when she sends him a Valentine's card in her first year:

> His eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad,
> His hair is as dark as a blackboard.
> I wish he was mine, he's really divine,
> The hero who conquered the Dark Lord (Rowling: 1998: 178).

Ginny's choices of a 'fresh pickled toad' and a 'blackboard' to describe Harry's eyes and hair seem unusual, as they do not seem flattering, and Rowling seems to suggest that writing the poem has not come naturally to her. Her attempt at creativity is unproductive, as Harry is embarrassed by her efforts to impress him, and she is subject to more teasing from her brothers. Ginny demonstrates confidence in revealing her feelings for Harry, but her desperation to be liked by him causes her to perform and attempt to be somebody she is not. Her behaviour alters when Harry visits the Weasleys over the summer: 'You don't know how weird it is for her to be this shy. She never shuts up normally' (p. 35). On both occasions, Ginny is suppressing her personality to no avail, indicating that she needs to resist performing and concentrate on being herself if she wishes to form healthy relationships. This is

apparent when Harry takes more interest in Ginny when she starts to assert herself more and focus less on him:

> Hermione told me to get on with life, maybe go out with some other people, relax a bit around you, because I never used to talk if you were in the room, remember? And she thought you might take a bit more notice if I was a bit more – myself (Rowling: 2005: 603).

Ginny becomes more confident to challenge Harry in *Order of the Phoenix* when he dismisses her offer of advice when he fears he has been possessed by Voldemort: ‘Well, that was a bit stupid of you…seeing as you don’t know anyone but me who’s been possessed by You-Know-Who and I can tell you how it feels’ (Rowling: 2003: 442), and she insists on accompanying Harry to the Department of Mysteries to rescue Sirius. This highlights the ‘equality and reciprocity’ that Groves describes, as Ginny is no longer performing the role of Harry’s devoted and unquestioning admirer. As Groves argues, Ginny’s poetic blazon provides an early indication that she is capable of demonstrating agency, but it is ineffective because she is attempting to be assertive through acting a part. Ginny is empowered through Hermione’s direction because she develops the confidence to showcase her true personality and is unafraid of any potential conflict with Harry. However, Hermione’s advice that Ginny ‘maybe go out with some other people’ contradicts the argument that she should focus on being herself, as this could potentially require Ginny to put on a performance. Like Polly Whittacker, Ginny has several potential suitors and enters into relationships with boys she has no feelings for whilst she waits for Harry to show interest. She feels compelled to accompany Neville Longbottom to the Yule Ball as she fears she will have no partner and be unable to attend, and she dates Ravenclaw student Michael Corner and fellow Gryffindor Dean Thomas. She differs from Jones’s protagonist in the sense that she does not struggle to free herself from unsatisfactory relationships: she breaks up with Michael when they argue about a

Quidditch match and finishes with Dean because of his patronising behaviour towards her, in contrast to Polly who finds herself manipulated into an engagement to Sebastian Leroy. Her relationships with Michael and Dean enable her to establish her assertive personality and distract her from Harry, but it is arguably problematic that she needs boyfriends to accomplish these things. Through Ginny, Rowling stresses the importance of girls being their authentic selves, but it is also evident that she still employs some form of non-magical performance before Harry notices her.

Judgement on how girls look is apparent in *Goblet of Fire* when students try to find partners for the Yule Ball. Hermione undergoes a transformation when she arrives with Viktor Krum:

> She didn't look like Hermione at all. She had done something with her hair, it was no longer bushy, but sleek and shiny, and twisted up into an elegant knot at the back of her head. She was wearing robes made of a floaty periwinkle-blue material, and she was holding herself differently somehow – or maybe it was merely the absence of the twenty or so books she usually had slung over her back (Rowling: 2000: 360).

This appears to support Farah Mendlesohn's argument about Hermione being 'liked only by association or when she chooses to conform' as she seems to have succumbed to pressure to make herself attractive. Hermione's improved posture being attributed to 'the absence of the twenty or so books she usually had slung over her back' also reflects upon Hains' claim about girl heroes being encouraged to 'adopt normatively feminine behaviour to mitigate the threat of their empowerment', as it indicates that beauty is incompatible with intelligence. Ron's astonishment at Hermione's being a girl reflects upon Allocco's point about how some Girl Power heroines' 'achievements were made astounding in spite of the handicap of being a girl' because he seems to suggest that it is unusual for a girl to be as gifted and intelligent as Hermione. On the other hand, as Tara Foster points out:

> Hermione shows no inclination to abandon her academic achievements and intellectualism in order to fit in or to attract boys, as do many girls when they enter adolescence, nor do her achievements bring about any particular backlash (Bell: 2013: 113).

It is, in fact, Hermione's intellectualism which attracts boys in the first place. Neville Longbottom is drawn to her because 'she's always been really nice, helping him out with work and stuff' (Rowling: 2000: 348), and Viktor Krum develops an interest in her when he sees her studying: 'he'd been coming up to the library every day to try and talk to me, but he hadn't been able to pluck up the courage' (p. 367). Ron is made to look foolish for his failure to appreciate Hermione and his shallowness in deciding to 'take the best-looking girl who'll have [him], even if she's completely horrible' (p. 344), as he discovers he does not enjoy Padma Patil's company. Hermione does not permanently alter her looks after the Yule Ball, as she decides that using 'liberal amounts of Sleekeazy's Hair Potion' is 'way too much bother to do every day' (p. 377). By choosing to change her appearance only when it is convenient for her, Hermione embodies the ethos of Girl Power, because she is not interested in continually performing to satisfy others and is more concerned about people admiring her for her inner qualities. Rowling does not take away Hermione's agency when she dresses up for the Yule Ball because she does it on her own terms, highlighting how she is the director or her own performance, and thus remains in control.

Dealing with Bullying and Oppressive Forces

Rowling concurs with Jones's sentiments about standing up to the school bully being 'an act of true heroism', as like Polly Whittacker, Hermione's heroic journey involves defeating bullies to prepare her for the final performance in her battle against evil forces. Polly and Hermione are both admired for asserting themselves against Mira Anderton and Draco Malfoy when they witness them bullying their friends. Hermione also has to deal with intimidating adult figures within Hogwarts, who are more difficult to confront directly, and she is required to utilise subtle methods to challenge their authority.

Hermione expresses surprise when Harry is unaware of his celebrity status in the magical world: 'Goodness, didn't you know, I'd have found out everything I could if it was me' (Rowling: 1997: 79). Her encounter with Rita Skeeter in her fourth year at Hogwarts highlights how fame can potentially cause damage, as what is written about a person is not always accurate. Hermione attempts to challenge Skeeter's lies directly when she questions Harry about Hagrid: 'You horrible woman…you don't care do you, anything for a story, and anyone will do' (Rowling: 2000: 391). Her outburst causes her to be vilified in the popular media. Initially, she is referred to as Harry Potter's 'stunningly pretty' girlfriend (p. 276), but then becomes 'a plain but ambitious girl', who 'seems to have a taste for famous wizards that Harry alone cannot satisfy' and she is accused of making love potions to retain Harry's and Krum's affections (p. 444). The article results in her receiving insulting letters from anonymous *Witch Weekly* readers with threats to curse her, and Mrs Weasley makes her disapproval known when she sends Harry and Ron dragon-sized Easter

eggs, but Hermione's 'was smaller than a chicken's egg' (p. 476). Despite her setback, Hermione does manage to prove to Rita Skeeter that she is not the 'silly little girl' that she seems. Examining Hermione's struggles with Rita Skeeter and Dolores Umbridge, Leslee Friedman opines:

> Hermione manages to defeat Skeeter because, whereas Skeeter's interaction with text involves aggressive manipulation and exploitation, Hermione's model incorporates receptiveness and constructive creativity (Anatol: 2009: 3054).

Through closely scrutinising Skeeter's article, Hermione realises that she has been listening to her conversations with Krum whilst being invisible. After doing some research in the library, she learns that Skeeter is an unregistered Animagus and has been disguising herself as a beetle to gather information for her stories. Hermione manages to capture the journalist in the hospital wing: 'Look very closely and you'll notice the markings around her antennae are exactly like those foul glasses she wears' (Rowling: 2000: 631). She also threatens to expose the journalist's secret if she fails to 'keep her quill to herself for a whole year. See if she can break the habit of writing horrible lies about people' (p. 632). Here, Hermione has employed 'constructive creativity' as Friedman describes, and the control she establishes over Rita Skeeter highlights how she is able to limit the journalist's capacity for misinformation and lies. By challenging Skeeter subtly, Hermione once again demonstrates her strengths as a directive hero.

Hermione's experience in direction is essential when Ministry of Magic official Dolores Umbridge is employed as the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts. The Ministry are in denial about Voldemort's return and Umbridge deems it unnecessary to teach the students any practical defensive magic. Any rebellion results in harsh punishment, as Harry discovers in detention when he is made to

write ‘I must not tell lies’ in his own blood for challenging her views. Hogwarts students need to find alternative ways to resist her authority and equip themselves to defeat evil. The students rebel against Umbridge by forming Dumbledore’s Army and learning defensive magic in secret. Tracy L. Bealer argues that:

> The significance of *Order of the Phoenix’s* story arc is to suggest that in learning to resist Umbridge, the students and in particular Harry himself, are also learning how to successfully fight Voldemort (Anatol: 2009: 2735).

Hermione plays a significant part in the resistance operation: it is she who encourages Harry to be the group’s teacher, persuading him that he is in the best position to do it because of his encounters with Voldemort, and she is responsible for maintaining its security. Her use of the Protean charm on the fake Galleons reveals the date of each meeting to the members, and she urges all students present at the first meeting to sign a roll of parchment, ‘just so we know who was here. But I also think…that we ought to agree not to shout about what we are doing. So, if you sign, you’re agreeing not to tell Umbridge or anyone else what we’re up to’ (Rowling: 2003: 309). Despite jinxing the piece of parchment, Hermione is unable to prevent them from being betrayed, as reluctant member Marietta Edgecombe confesses to Umbridge when she fears that her mother will lose her job at the Ministry. However, Hermione does manage to initiate Umbridge’s removal from Hogwarts. After she and other members of Dumbledore’s Army are caught trying to use the Floo Network in Umbridge’s office, Hermione demonstrates acting ability when she feigns tears and invents a story about a weapon Dumbledore has created to use against the Ministry and agrees to show it to the teacher. When Umbridge insists that Slytherins accompany her, Hermione acquiesces with a compelling speech:

> ‘Fine…let them see it. I hope they use it on you! In fact, I wish you’d invite loads of people to come and see! Th-that would serve you right – oh, I’d love it if the wh-whole school knew where it was, and how to u-use it, and then if you annoy any of them they’ll be able to s-sort you out!’ (p. 660).

This prompts Umbridge to change her mind and she allows Harry and Hermione to lead her into the Forbidden Forest where she is attacked by centaurs after she insults them. She is suspended from Hogwarts after several Ministry of Magic officials encounter Voldemort at the Department of Mysteries. Hermione manages to save herself and others by putting on a convincing performance. As Bealer notes, resisting Umbridge prepares Hogwarts students for battles with Death Eaters and equips Harry for facing Voldemort. Being part of Dumbledore's Army also enhances Hermione's performance-related skills because she becomes more confident about inventing stories in the event of being caught, which is essential in encounters with Voldemort's supporters. Hermione directs the resistance against Umbridge whilst also developing her acting skills, highlighting how she can perform when it is necessary for achieving her heroic aims.

Hermione's and Ginny's lives are complicated by everyday adolescent pressures of studying, difficult relationships, and adult bullies within the school. They lead double lives when they use enchanted objects to explore their problems, which results in detrimental consequences: Ginny nearly dies when she becomes possessed by Lord Voldemort through Riddle's diary, and Hermione becomes overworked despite the Time Turner's enabling her to attend extra lessons. Concerns about high achievement and unrequited love almost result in the girls' undoing and Rowling indicates that girls should not engage in performance to deal with adolescent problems. This is apparent in her portrayal of relationships: Hermione attracts boys because of her intelligence, and Ginny is more appealing to Harry when she stops suppressing her personality, although she does appear to perform when she pursues relationships with other boys. Deception is vital when dealing with bullying figures,

such as when Hermione subtly outwits Rita Skeeter and directs the resistance operation against Dolores Umbridge, and her experiences of challenging them equip her for her confrontations with Death Eaters. In her portrayals of girls leading double lives and battling adolescent difficulties, Rowling stresses that performance should be utilised only at times when it saves lives and not as a way for girls to solve their own personal issues. The final part of the chapter will examine girls performing in battle and what opportunities are available to them after the Wizarding War.

‘We’re all still here..we’re still fighting. Come on now’: Girls in Battle and Afterwards.

> ‘That Weasley girl! What’s so special about her?’
> ‘A lot of boys like her…Even you think she’s good-looking, don’t you Blaise, and we all know how hard you are to please!’ (Rowling: 2005: 143).

Draco Malfoy’s and Pansy Parkinson’s discussion about Horace Slughorn’s elite Slug Club reflects upon Allocco’s point about the rarity of an intelligent girl hero whose ‘character escapes being reduced to that of a weak girl or virilized warrior’ (Allocco: 2011: 114). Their perceptions of Ginny are arguably not necessarily just linked to prejudice against her for being a Weasley or Gryffindor, as Malfoy can find logical explanations for why Slughorn favours Gryffindors Cormac McLaggen and Harry Potter, as McLaggen’s uncle holds an influential position at the Ministry of Magic and Harry is the Chosen One to defeat Lord Voldemort. Ginny’s ordeal in the Chamber of Secrets and needing to be rescued by Harry seems to have earned her the reputation of being a weak girl, and Slughorn’s being interested in her despite her lack of prestigious social connections, can only be attributed to her looks, according to the Slytherins. However, it is evident that Rowling is mocking gender binaries through Pansy’s and Draco’s conversation, as Ginny is one of the few people selected because of her magical talent. Slughorn witnesses her performing

‘the most marvellous Bat-Bogey Hex’ on the train to Hogwarts (Rowling: 2007: 139), the same spell she has used on Draco Malfoy to help them escape Umbridge’s office in the previous year. Ginny’s confidence to use the Bat-Bogey Hex without fear of consequences indicates that she has the potential to become an accomplished dueller and also has the ability to cast other vital spells to defeat her opponents.

Girls are not discouraged from fighting when necessary: they are required to take Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons at Hogwarts, and when Voldemort’s Death Eaters invade the school, Professor McGonagall opines that if any students ‘who are over age wish to stay and fight…they ought to be given a chance’ (p. 483). Rowling’s novels feature several powerful female figures who seek to defeat evil. One of these characters is Auror Nymphadora Tonks, who is regarded as an important figure in the Order of the Phoenix: according to Sirius, ‘having Aurors on our side is a huge advantage’ and she can act as a spy because she works for the Ministry of Magic (Rowling: 2003: 90). Being a Metamorphmagus is beneficial for Tonks because it enables her to disguise her appearance without needing to brew a complicated Polyjuice Potion. Ximena Gallardo C. and C. Jason Smith note that Tonks ‘serves as a role model for Harry’ (Anatol: 2009: 1459) because he has ambitions to become an Auror, whilst continuing with her career after becoming a mother and rejecting ‘the cultural imperative that certain classes of persons – mothers, children, the elderly – must be hidden away from danger while others (usually men) fight’ (1469-70). Despite recently giving birth, Tonks insists on participating at the Battle of Hogwarts because she ‘couldn’t stand not knowing’ whether her husband was alive or dead and shows determination in helping him to fight Death Eaters (Rowling: 2007: 502-3). Hermione and Ginny admire Tonks and also demonstrate adeptness at duelling.

Hermione successfully casts Stunning Spells and Shielding Charms on several occasions at the Department of Mysteries, and severely injures Death Eater and werewolf Fenrir Greyback when she witnesses his attempting to take advantage of an injured Lavender Brown: 'with a deafening blast of her wand Fenrir Greyback was thrown backwards' (Rowling: 2007: 519). Despite her mother's forbidding her to fight, Ginny fires jinxes at Death Eaters when she is confined to the Room of Requirement and she joins Hermione and Luna in their duel with Bellatrix Lestrange once she is able to escape. Harry has the starring role in the battle as he is the person to defeat Voldemort, but it is evident that girls are not limited to being behind the scenes. In addition to fighting, Hermione continues to direct their mission when she reminds Ron that they need to focus on destroying the Horcruxes before he can avenge his brother Fred's death: 'Ron, we're the only ones who can end it! Please – Ron – we need the snake, we've got to kill the snake!' (p. 514). Despite showing similar attributes to Tonks in battle and their awareness that combining a prestigious career with family life is possible neither Hermione nor Ginny express interest in pursuing careers as Aurors themselves. Gallardo and Smith argue that Tonks is presented as being 'a good Auror and a good mother who makes the ultimate sacrifice: she takes positive action to help save the world and thereby saves her son' (Anatol: 2009: 1472-3), but her death arguably indicates that she is an exceptional role model whose example would be difficult to follow in the long-term. On the other hand, it could be argued that Rowling's decision for Teddy Lupin to become a Metamorphmagus like his mother, just as Harry inherits Lily's eyes also offers readers a message about the importance of remembering women's heroic contributions to history. Teddy Lupin and Harry Potter embodying aspects of their mothers ensures that their heroism will never be forgotten.

Tonks is not the only mother who is involved with the fighting, and two of the most crucial actions at the Battle of Hogwarts are performed by mothers. Alexandra Hildago observes that:

> Being a housewife and a doting mother does not preclude a woman from being fierce when such behaviour is needed. Voldemort and Bellatrix, the two deadliest villains in the story, are defeated by mothers fighting to protect their children (Bell: 2013: 75).

This is apparent when Molly Weasley kills Bellatrix Lestrange after she witnesses her attempting to murder Ginny: 'NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH…You – will – never – touch – our – children – again!' (Rowling: 2007: 589-90). Domesticated and loving Molly has shown that her magical abilities are unlimited when it comes to protecting her children, as she masters the difficult task of successfully delivering a Killing Curse, something which requires a convincing performance. As Bellatrix points out to Harry, when he tries to inflict the Cruciatus Curse on her, 'you need to mean them…You really need to want to cause pain' (Rowling: 2003: 715). Narcissa Malfoy contrasts with Molly because she is married to a Death Eater and appears to embrace Voldemort's ideals regarding pure-blood supremacy, although she never takes the Dark Mark herself and she does not approve of Draco being involved in the Dark Arts. She and Molly both share the characteristic of being devoted to their families though, and it is Narcissa's determination to protect Draco that saves Harry's life. As Beatrice Groves observes, Narcissa 'might be named after Narcissus, but it is Echo whom she finally reflects' and she 'flowers under the influence of love' (Groves: 2017: 33-4). Unlike her sister Bellatrix, Narcissa does not constantly use Unforgiveable Curses: the only times she uses violence or threatens it are when she perceives her son to be in danger. When Bellatrix tries to prevent her from persuading Severus Snape to make an Unbreakable Vow to complete Voldemort's task to kill Dumbledore if Draco fails, Narcissa warns her sister that 'There is nothing

[she] wouldn't do any more' to protect Draco (Rowling: 2005: 27). This includes betraying Voldemort: despite being able 'to feel the steady pounding of life against [Harry's] ribs', she informs onlookers that he is dead as she 'no longer cared whether Voldemort won' and her priority is to rescue Draco (Rowling: 2007: 581-2). Like Molly, Narcissa delivers a believable performance to save both her child and another young wizard. By having a mother save her main protagonist, Rowling provides a fitting end to her series. Rowling destabilises gender binaries by showing that women who appear to conform to traditional roles are also capable of being heroic, and Molly's and Narcissa's abilities to perform under pressure result in peace being restored in the magical world.

Female characters perform acts of heroism during conflicts, but Rowling is presented with a challenge of what to do with the girl hero once the war is over. She provides a conventional ending with the marriages between Ginny and Harry and Hermione and Ron, which as Gallardo and Smith observe 'has unfortunate repercussions for the otherwise subtly transgressive nature of the series, as it suggests that the real quest for the main characters was to restore the traditional nuclear family' (Anatol: 2009: 1653). This is particularly apparent in Ginny's case, as readers are aware that she has been infatuated with Harry Potter since the age of ten. Their children are also named after family members or close friends, indicating that a new cycle of performance could begin again. This is emphasised in the epilogue as the children depart for their first year at Hogwarts, when Ron expresses pride in their daughter Rose's magical ability after encountering Draco and his son Scorpius: 'Make sure you beat him in every test, Rosie. Thank God you inherited your mother's brains' (Rowling: 2007: 605). The ending is ambiguous in terms of revealing whether

Hermione and Ginny pursued careers after Hogwarts, although it is revealed in the 2016 play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* that Hermione becomes Minister for Magic and Ginny works as a sports correspondent for *The Daily Prophet.* However, it is evident that the two women are either required to compromise or struggle to combine their careers with motherhood. Ginny's career as a professional Quidditch player ends when she starts a family with Harry, whilst Hermione admits that 'Ron says he thinks I see more of my secretary Ethel…Do you think there's a point where we made a choice – parent of the year – or Ministry official of the year?' (Rowling: 2016: 33). This is reminiscent of her third year at Hogwarts when her use of the Time Turner causes her to become overworked, indicating that she is once again 'trying to do too much.' The conclusion of Rowling's series suggests that there has been progression for women and girls, as mothers are not required to choose between their careers and family, but through Hermione's and Ginny's difficulties and Tonks's death, she highlights that the conflict between heroism and family life continues to persist. Thus, Rowling appears to concur with Kay Waddilove's view about motherhood continuing to be 'the unfinished business of feminism' in the twenty-first century (Waddilove: 2020: 16).

Hermione and Ginny demonstrate similar qualities to male characters when they participate in battles, and Nymphadora Tonks, Molly Weasley and Narcissa Malfoy all play key roles during the wizarding war. The war ending seems to present Rowling with a problem of what to do with the girl hero once the war ends, and the epilogue indicates that traditional gender roles are assumed once Hermione and Ginny marry as there is no mention of their careers, though Rowling does offer more clarity on this in interviews and the play *Cursed Child.* However, there is a

suggestion that Hermione is trying to perform too many roles when she reveals that she is struggling to combine her career with motherhood, a problem that could potentially persist for future generations of witches.

Conclusion

Rowling's *Harry Potter* series features a wide range of performance-related talents. Hermione becomes a director for Harry and Ron, a role she continues into adulthood when she acquires the position of Minister for Magic. Girls lead double lives while coping with adolescent issues or to pursue more knowledge, and they are constantly required to act to retain their secrets. Rowling suggests that performance is necessary for obtaining information or defeating evil, but she also stresses that it should be utilised sparingly. Girls are discouraged from performing when they pursue their own ambitions, as is apparent with Hermione's house elf campaign and her use of the Time Turner. Women and girls perform heroic roles in battle, but there is an issue over what opportunities they realistically have once peace is restored. Hermione and Ginny are not required to choose between their career and family, but Ginny has to compromise, and Hermione reveals that she is struggling to manage with all her responsibilities. Rowling shows that women and girls can be heroic and initiate change, but they are still restricted in their heroism, a possible reflection on everyday reality for women in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

Seth Lerer's assertion that 'girls are always on the stage' is apparent in the focal texts examined in this thesis. Girl protagonists literally perform on the theatrical or sporting stage, but are also figuratively on stage when performing whilst interacting with others as they negotiate double lives and attempt to conceal secrets. The selected texts feature three layers of performance. They participate in performance-related activities such as acting, dance, writing, sport, and magic. Girls are compelled to act multiple parts as a result of being forced into leading double lives, and they are unable to escape from performing conventionally feminine roles as many girls in these texts are preoccupied with their looks and long for romantic relationships. These texts encompass several forms of heroism, from girls becoming celebrity heroes in Noel Streatfeild's novels, to girls saving lives in Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock* and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Performing aids but also complicates a girl's heroic journey and the protagonist's agency is tested further in each novel, as girls are increasingly forced into roles they are unprepared for, are often compelled to perform against their will, and are in danger when they lose control in their performances.

Performance: Empowerment and Being Chosen

Girls are empowered when they discover that they have a creative, theatrical or sporting talent, and the authors imply that the girl has been chosen to complete a heroic task through performance that will benefit other people. The Fossil sisters are chosen to attend Madame Fidolia's academy to provide them with the training to help them earn money for their families when they are old enough. Selina Cole discovers her hidden talents in stage management when the Andrews children produce a

pageant to give her an occasion to wear the lavish dress and shoes she receives as a gift. Charlotte Makepeace is selected to go back in time and enact Clare Moby's part, an experience that is impossible to explain as she has no familial connection with the Moby family and she is not the first girl to sleep in Clare's bed since she left the school. Polly Whittacker and Jessica Vye are deemed promising writers by Thomas Lynn and Arnold Hanger, which inspires them to embark on inventing their own heroic identities and stories. Muggle-born Hermione Granger discovers she is a witch and becomes the most accomplished student in her year despite having no prior knowledge of the magical world before she arrives at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. All these girls are disadvantaged in some way. Streatfeild's protagonists achieve stardom after being in poverty, Charlotte compensates for being marginalised at school by going back in time, Polly and Jessica initially lack confidence in their creative abilities but gradually construct their own heroic identities through reading and writing, and Hermione experiences prejudice in the magical world because of her Muggle-born status, but remains motivated to learn and stand up for injustice demonstrated towards other vulnerable groups. Jones's argument that 'heroes go into action when the odds are against them' is applicable to these protagonists, and it can be argued that they can offer hope to girl readers who feel isolated or misunderstood and encourage them to believe that they could be chosen to do something extraordinary one day.

Becoming a hero in these texts does, however, seem to be dependent on whether a girl is chosen, as girls who select themselves to pursue a heroic journey often find that their actions backfire on them. Sally and Phoebe Andrews are humbled when they attempt to showcase their dancing and writing talents in the pageant. Harriet

Welsch and Sally Freedman do not make any significant discoveries when they assume spying identities, and they struggle to be taken seriously by their friends and families. Rusty Dickinson's attempts to be heroic and stand out from prejudiced girls at Benwood House are met with opposition, and no amount of challenging her father will encourage him to alter his views about gender roles or accept her American identity. Even girls who are chosen to pursue heroic journeys are undermined if they attempt to engage in their own projects, as Hermione discovers when she has limited success with her campaign for the liberation of house-elves. Some girls resist the obligations assigned them. Emily Moby and Rusty Dickinson rebel against the school rules that are put in place to equip them to become their country's heroes. Ultimately, it is difficult for a girl to follow her own heroic path in the long-term as is apparent when Emily reveals in a letter to Charlotte that she is married and has children, despite being against the idea when she was younger, indicating that she probably succumbed to social pressures. Lalla Moore and Rusty Dickinson successfully resist performing to suit a narrative despite potential consequences: Lalla opts to pursue a career in free skating instead of trying to become an ice-skating champion like her father, whereas Rusty's expulsion from Benwood House for refusing to adhere to school rules, actually proves to be beneficial for her because she no longer has to suppress her personality, and it results in her forming a stronger relationship with her mother. Ultimately though, a girl's success as a hero in these focal texts does seem to be dependent on whether she has been chosen and whether she performs the heroic tasks assigned to her. The ridicule girls face when they attempt to select themselves or develop the heroic role allocated to them by taking on other responsibilities indicates that a girl will struggle to be a hero on her own terms. In this respect, performance offers girls limited opportunities for heroism, because it

appears to be encouraged only if it is used to benefit others or fulfil the required heroic tasks.

Performance: Setbacks and Dangers

Talented girls are warned about the dangers of becoming too arrogant about their abilities. This is apparent in Streatfeild's novels when Pauline Fossil temporarily loses her role as Alice in Wonderland when she refuses to follow instructions in the theatre and Lalla Moore fails her silver test through complacency. Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker also face criticism for their writing: the former is accused of telling untruths in her essay about the school holidays and the latter is rebuked for her lack of original ideas. The authors appear to encourage performance, but also place emphasis on the importance of girls being part of collective action rather than focusing on acquiring a starring role, as Sally, Selina and Phoebe discover in *Party Frock* when they play minor roles on stage in their charity pageant. Pauline also reluctantly accepts an acting role in a film to pay for her sister Posy's ballet tuition. Harriet Welsch has more success with her writing when she becomes editor of the school magazine, using her responsibility to raise awareness about social issues and encourage her classmates to treat each other more compassionately. Hermione also becomes increasingly less concerned about standing out at Hogwarts when she decides to stop using the Time-Turner and excels in the director's role when solving mysteries and participating in battles.

It is evident that performance is necessary on many occasions in these texts from Petrova Fossil's reluctantly taking on the role of Mytyl in Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* out of obligation towards her Russian counterparts to Hermione's learning

the art of deception to defeat Lord Voldemort. Failure to perform in roles girls are either allocated or assign themselves causes problems, and the consequences of not performing convincingly become more detrimental through each book. Unconvincing actresses in Streatfeild's novels risk losing their parts, but also fail to be engaged at all if they are unable to perform their roles as young celebrities off stage, as Winifred discovers when she turns up for an audition in unsuitable clothing. Girls risk having their secrets exposed if they forget about the part they are supposed to be playing. Harriet Welsch's spying identity is uncovered when she leaves her notebook on the field, resulting in her facing hostility from her classmates when they read what she has written about them. In Polly Whittacker's and Hermione Granger's cases, failure to act could place themselves and others in danger: Polly is compelled to lie about her feelings for Tom to break Laurel's spell, and Hermione disguises herself as Bellatrix Lestrange to obtain one of the Horcruxes. On the other hand, the authors also suggest that performance can be problematic if girls become too involved with the character they play, reflecting Maria Nikolajeva's theory of 'immersive identification.' This is apparent when Pauline Fossil is unable to separate her role as Alice from her life off the stage. Charlotte Makepeace is obligated to perform to avoid confrontation, but her strong ability to empathise with people's stories causes her to lose awareness of her own identity. Jessica Vye and Polly Whittacker demonstrate agency when they create their own heroic stories, but this agency is threatened when their memories become fragmented, and they struggle to distinguish between fantasy and reality. These authors suggest that a girl's heroic journey will be disrupted if she fails to perform, but it can also be hindered if she becomes too immersed in her performance. If a girl wishes to be a successful hero, it seems as though she has to act her part

convincingly, but also remember that she is acting at the same time so she retains her sense of self, something which potentially could prove to be difficult if she continually takes on new roles through pursuing heroic quests.

The Girl Hero: A Temporary Role?

The issue of what to do with a girl hero once her heroic journey is complete presents a problem for many of these writers. Girls have a chance to be heroic in certain circumstances, but opportunities for heroism appear to be more limited for women, as is apparent when examining the conclusions of these texts. Streatfeild's Fossil sisters have successful careers in acting, aviation, and dance, and become role models for future pupils at Madame Fidolia's Dance Academy. However, it is unclear whether there will be similar outcomes for girl protagonists in her future novels, and it is confirmed in the final 'Shoe' novel *Apple Bough* that no pupil has enjoyed the same success as Posy Fossil, suggesting that she represents an impossible ideal to aspire towards. Moreover, the Fossil sisters' successes could be attributed to their remaining unmarried and being able to devote the time to their careers. Women's opportunities in work and education increased during the twentieth century, changes which Jones and Rowling acknowledge in their novels where women are either in powerful positions or combining their careers with family life. Nevertheless, they still imply that heroism could be complicated by marriage: Polly believes that she has to choose between being a hero and a wife, Hermione reveals that she is having problems managing her workload at the Ministry of Magic whilst raising children, and Ginny abandons her Quidditch career to start a family with Harry. In addition, heroic girls are still susceptible to adolescent pressures: they are compelled to be aesthetically pleasing and alter aspects of their personalities to appeal to desired

boyfriends. In some respects, the girls' ability to be heroic despite these pressures is empowering for girl readers, but their performing to conform to feminine stereotypes also indicates that the girl's heroic role is temporary, and she will return to domesticity once her task is complete. Thus, the term 'girl hero' carries significance in these texts because it stresses that the hero has not forgotten her 'true' role in society, and that being a 'hero' is an identity that she will find difficult to sustain in the long-term.

Girls in these texts demonstrate heroism through different modes of performance both on and off stage. The novels feature contradictory messages regarding performance, and it is debatable how much agency it realistically offers the girl hero. In one sense, it is empowering for a girl to discover she has a talent and has been chosen to exhibit it, but girls are undermined if they attempt to volunteer themselves for heroic acts. Performance is necessary for completing heroic journeys, but it can also prove to be dangerous if girls become too focussed on the parts they act. Authors reflect upon social changes for women and girls in their texts, but the increased testing of the protagonist in each book and the problem of what to do with the girl at the end highlights how there are still barriers for the girl hero to overcome.

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