

# Brides, Department Stores, Westerns, and Scrapbooks--The Everyday Lives of Teenage Girls in the 1940s

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BRIDES, DEPARTMENT STORES, WESTERNS, AND SCRAPBOOKS—THE 'EVERYDAY  
LIVES' OF TEENAGE GIRLS IN THE 1940S

by

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Abstract  
BRIDES, DEPARTMENT STORES, WESTERNS, AND SCRAPBOOKS—THE “EVERYDAY  
LIVES” OF TEENAGE GIRLS IN THE 1940s

Carly Anger

Marquette University, 2013

This study establishes a more nuanced look at fictional teenage girls of the 1940's. With the beginning of World War II many teenage girls took on jobs that were left vacant by men. With these new jobs came the opportunity to gain financial independence. However, teenage girls, along with their mothers, were expected to leave their jobs once soldiers returned from war. Thus, there was a gap between the actual experiences of teenage girls and what they were expected to be—Rosie the Riveters who were willing to become housewives at the end of the war.

This gap between actual experiences and societal expectations has lent itself to typifying even fictional girls into either “bad girls” or “good girls.” In this project I take a deeper look at how social discourses—specifically the boom in the wedding industry, a renewed obsession with anything Western related, department store sections catered directly to teenagers, and scrapbook making—greatly affected the coming---of---process for teenage girls.

Using De Certeau's *The Practices of Everyday Lives*, I investigate how each author in my project complicates the trope of the maturation arc. In chapter one I examine how Carson McCullers, in her *The Member of the Wedding*, uses her character Frankie Addams as a didactic tool, one that forces the reader to question the impact of the maturation arc on characters. In chapter two I trace the ways in which Jean Stafford, in her *The Mountain Lion*, unleashes the potential violence that occurs when a character is not able to reach the signposts of the maturation arc. Chapter three traces the ways in which Judy Graves from Sally Benson's *Junior Miss* is able to develop the tactic of performance in order to appropriate the maturation arc. In chapter four I consider the ways in which Francine Nolan from Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is able to resist the maturation arc and take ownership over her own coming---of---age process. I conclude with an analysis of “all---girl” bands of the 1940's and their ability to cope with the strategies of the music industry and the USO.

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## Introduction: “The War Wife” and “Everyday Teenagers”

In April of 1943 Carson McCullers published a letter entitled “Love’s Not Time’s Fool” in *Mademoiselle*. The letter was signed from “a war wife” and was to her then husband Reeve McCullers. In this letter McCullers defines what it means to be a “war wife” and what obligations women have to their home and their country while their husbands or sweethearts are abroad; the author insists that though men are physically fighting women also have certain duties (166). After McCullers admits that women are not fighting in the same physical way that men are, she insists, “I, and all other women whose loved ones are fighting in this war, have a struggle also—and it is not an easy one” (166). The duties for married women, as outlined in McCullers’s letter, included being a heterosexual partner and keeping the home as orderly and secure as possible.

In this wifely role, McCullers becomes what she calls a “bulwark” against any “insidious threat that lie in wait for [her], as they [did] for all the women of men at war” specifically by keeping up contact with her husband, joining the Red Cross as a nurse’s aide, and keeping her own everyday life free of complications (166). Though she feels fear, she promises to keep her anxieties “controlled” (166) She argues, “We must assume our individual responsibilities to the limit of our capacity” (166). Doing so will help keep anxieties at bay and will help create a tidy sort of life, one that is dedicated to the work of maintaining heterosexuality and the American way of life.

McCullers, in her letter, explains, “it is useless to deny that our [romantic] love is threatened” and that “it would be foolish not to admit within ourselves that our love is endangered” (166). Also, both Carson McCullers and her husband Reeve “will have to fight to preserve it” (166). McCullers continues to argue:

We know a deep necessity to affirm life, to believe in a future of creation rather than destruction, to have faith in ourselves and in the future of mankind. Because never have the forces of destruction and hate been so intricately organized. Never has there been more need in the world for love. (165)

The letter exemplifies the fact that many United States citizens—male and female—genuinely felt that the war was an effort to secure the American way of life. The American way of life included the right to fall in love and marry a member of the opposite sex. When McCullers goes on to define “love” she defines it as “our love for each other—of the love the two of us have made together” (165---166). She also explains “you are not fighting for our own personal love, but for the rights of all human beings to love and live in a world of order and security. This is your contribution to the preservation of our love” (165). So while American soldiers were physically fighting off the advancement of Germany, they also felt they were fighting an ideological war.

In short, “war wives,” even with their partners away, must keep up the American way of life to the best of their ability. Part of keeping the household secure from “psychological casualties” was ensuring the fact that the home itself be a “bulwark” against disorder (166). Disorder was what these women’s partners had

to face abroad, but the home should be kept as tidy and neat as possible to fight this sort of turmoil abroad. To tidy up and clean the very sphere where the American way of life is played out was an act of defiance against the enemies of American soldiers and an act of patriotism for young war brides.

Interestingly, McCullers's fiction does not create the same clear role for her protagonists. Frankie Addams, the teenage girl in McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, is actually desperately trying to find her role in society. While the "war wife" is perfectly confident in her role as such, Frankie Addams seriously struggles to understand her own place in World War II American society. McCullers's letter, when compared to her work of fiction, reveals that although roles for women in the 1940's may seem clearly defined, fictional protagonists like Frankie Addams complicate the expectations set for women.

In fact, female protagonists like Frankie Addams and other characters that are examined in this dissertation, engage in what Michel de Certeau calls *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau argues that in any society there is a general population, he calls this general population "users" (xi). Consumers or "users" do not only use products, but they also use everything from language to cooking. However, the "common people" as de Certeau refers to them, do not just blindly consume (xi). Instead, to some extent, users "make innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and own rules" (485). Every day we make the dominant culture apposite to our own lives; the characters in novels are no exception, for they too can

be considered “everyday people” in that they must also appropriate their surroundings (148).

The dominant culture, for de Certeau, is created by institutionally sanctioned power dynamics. De Certeau calls these moves, created by institutions, “strategies” (36). Strategies are ideological forces, backed by institutions like shopping malls, publishing houses, hospitals, courtrooms, libraries, etc., that create and enforce cultural norms and power relations. As mass media and civil society became more pervasive through advertisements, printed propaganda, and an increased popularity in government presence on the radio, strategies began to play an even larger role in the lives of consumers or users.<sup>1</sup> Mass media played an increasing role in 1940s culture and therefore institutionalized strategies like gender role norms were expanded and often commercialized in the public sphere. McCullers’s “letter from a war bride” can be considered a “strategy” not only because it is published by an institution—*Mademoiselle*—but also because it reinforces the role of the married woman.

If every culture has its “strategies,” or the ideological forces that are shaped and sanctioned by institutions, every culture also has “tactics” (xx). Tactics are the ways in which members of any given culture use discourses. According to de Certeau, people do not simply accept strategies. Instead, by finding gaps or slips in

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<sup>1</sup> The 1940s and 1950s are considered the “golden age” of radio. Radio dramas reached their peak during the mid 1940s and with these dramas came opportunities for World War II PSA’s asking for donations to the war effort. Newsreels kept American citizens informed about the war with real war footage, created by the Office of Facts and Figures (established in 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor) that ran twice a week (Short “World War II through the Newsreels”). Additionally, between 1940 and 1944 there were sixteen fireside chats given by Roosevelt (Mankowski “The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FDR’s fireside chats”).

strategies, people use tactics in order to engage with and subtly rework the strategies that organize their lives (37).

In their everyday lives the fictional teenage girls in this project use what de Certeau calls “tactics of consumption” (xiii). Tactics of consumption are the “ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong” (xiii). In other words, “users” or “consumers” usually appropriate the dominant culture around them. Thus, everyday practices like watching movies, reading books, cooking, and even speaking are appropriated with certain tactics that benefit the user. Though common people may not continuously think about what tactics they will use in order to appropriate the consumables around them, just by the mere “*Practice of Everyday Life*,” we adapt the dominant culture for our own interests and advantages.

I argue that each novel has what I call the strategy of the maturation plot. At the end of many coming---of---age novels, the protagonist conforms to the roles of adulthood. The trope of the maturation plot is a strategy in that it establishes and disseminates the expectation that young woman will conform to the norms of adulthood. Adhering to the maturation arc requires young women to meet milestones or rites of passage. Some rites of passage like leaving certain personality traits behind in adolescence and getting married are not necessarily always harmful, but the maturation arc has the potential to also move girls from the freedom of their childhood to the potentially constrained state of womanhood. Each of the protagonists in this project has an interesting dynamic with the maturation arc.

I have identified four distinct social discourses that push the maturation arc forward. The social discourses—the bridal industry boom, the fascination with

anything Western related, new adolescent clothing departments in major stores, and scrapbook making—permeated the everyday lives of those coming of age in the 1940s and helped define the milestones of the maturation arc.<sup>2</sup> Each of these social discourses is in some way influenced by World War II propaganda and had a specific impact on teenage girls (both fictional and nonfictional). In this dissertation I will focus on the way in which teenage girls from four novels (Frankie Addams from Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, Molly Faucet from *The Mountain Lion*, Judy Graves from *Junior Miss*, and Francine Nolan from *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*) invest in their adulthoods using what de Certeau calls tactics. For example, both Frankie and Molly deny sexuality in order to avoid having to fulfill the role of homemaker; additionally Judy learns to perform her proper gender role while maintaining her authentic self. Francine on the other hand, is able to use scrapbooking as a way to envision her future. Some of these characters use these tactics to ensure an enriching adulthood, while others use these tactics just to try and survive adolescence.

Some insightful scholarship has already been done on the effect of World War II on teenage girls. World War II and its subsequent economic upturn generated social transformations that are evident in the era's coming-of-age novels and that offer rich materials to scholars. Part of what is so fascinating about the 1940s and its impact on coming-of-age novels is the widening gap between mothers and daughters and how this affected teenagers' entrance into adulthood. While married women were expected to keep house in order to act as a "bulwark" against chaos,

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<sup>2</sup> I label this preoccupation with the American West and the American Frontier, which was, of course, already settled, "western mania."

teenage girls were freer from the domestic sphere than their mothers had ever been.

Since men were off fighting in World War II there were more jobs left available not only for married women, but also for teenaged girls. That so many women joined the work force in the 1940s at the surface seems contradictory to Carson McCullers's insistence that women become guardians of the home. However, McCullers's opinion is actually reflective of a strategy that dominated the 1940s. For example, popular magazines like *Woman's Home Companion* and *Ladies Home Journal* touted young brides who kept house and staved off any conceived amount of disorder. Articles written for a similar audience as *Mademoiselle*, like *Woman's Home Companion* and *Ladies Home Journal*, advised women to support their men both at home and abroad by keeping house. For example in an article that appeared in *Ladies' Home Journal* in January of 1944 entitled, "You Can't Have a Career and Be a Good Wife" the author insists, "the young woman who is giving her best to her work can not give her husband and home all they deserve (72).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the author of the article blames men for being partially responsible for creating this "topsy-turvy arrangement" where households—either with the man at home or abroad—go into disarray because women are at work (73). The true duty for women, according to many popular magazines, was to defend the home from unruliness.

An article entitled "The Lively Art of Eating" by Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher that appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* in November of 1944 explains what the returning soldiers want at home. Fisher explains:

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<sup>3</sup> The author of this article is unknown, it is only signed as "a successful career wife."

When the men come home from war...they should see the reassurance of shelves glowing dimly, like stained glass, with the fruits of harvests put away for the future, for them and their children, in cellars or cupboards. They should see bottles of good honest wines, too, lying on their sides waiting, and the promise of beer cooling in the darkness.

(159)

Of course most people would find reassurance in having their children around them and plenty of food and alcohol to spare, but what is really striking in this excerpt is the need for neatness. The shelves should have the same tidy pattern as stained glass, even fruit must be “put away” and bottles of wine need to be laid out in a specific manner. According to this article what the returning soldier will truly appreciate is the tidy home and the certainty that the home will never enter a disorderly state. Fisher goes on to note that men do not want to see their wives “frazzled” even as they are making a meal. In short, though many women went to work outside the home during World War II, the labor of keeping house was considered a patriotic duty. The home must be the opposite of what men were exposed to at war—chaos and uncertainty.

Even those women who did work outside the home, and of course many did, were expected to release their jobs to men upon their return from the war.<sup>4</sup> Rosie the Riveter, the very symbol of the women’s rights movement of the 1940s, was

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<sup>4</sup> According to Susan Harman in her *The Home Front and Beyond* the number of women in the labor force increased by fifty percent between 1940 and 1945. Harman also points out that by 1945 women made up 35.1 percent of the civilian labor force.

aimed at young, capable women.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, even Rosie's image indicates the need for keeping house and also that labor outside the home will not be permanent. Rosie herself, in the propaganda that so many women are still inspired by, epitomizes the fact that women's place outside of the home was only considered temporary. For example, in an issue of *Newsweek* published on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943 an advertisement for Monsanto Chemicals assures the market place that once Rosie the Riveter becomes "Rosie the Housewife" they will still be producing "new comforts and conveniences for Rosie and her sisters" and "new jobs and greater opportunities for those fighting tenfold that they're backing now with their love, their work, their War Bond buying" (Tucker 338). Additionally, in the original Rosie the Riveter song, Rosie is only "working for victory" and protecting her boyfriend "Charlie" by "working overtime on the riveting machine" (Dorenkamp 292). Rosie, while presented as a powerful and capable woman, was expected, after soldiers returned, to happily transfer her long hours of work to the household.

While women were performing their patriotic role as either a housewife, a Rosie the Riveter, or as was usually the case, both, teenage girls were enjoying new economic freedoms. Teenage girls also picked up swing shifts and worked in wartime factories. In fact, according to 1940s historian and scholar, Miriam Forman---Brunell, "by 1944 there were nearly five times as many girl workers than in 1940" (36). The employment rate of teenage girls made up the "largest proportionate increase of any one group" (Forman---Brunell 36). Furthermore, while in 1940

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<sup>5</sup> The first mention of Rosie---the---Riveter that I can find is to a song written by Redd Evans and Jacob Loeb released in 1943. There are references to "yes we can" in 1942, but they have no connection with the actual character of Rosie---the---Riveter.

teenage girls made up only seven percent of people who worked in retail, by 1943 they made up 54 percent (36). This increase in teenage girls in the work force is not surprising considering that work in the domestic sphere, such as baby-sitting and cleaning houses only paid about 25 cents an hour, and teenage girls were required to be paid at least minimum wage (which was 40 cents an hour from 1941 to 1944) outside of the domestic sphere (36). Thus, there was a large exodus by teenage girls away from the domestic duties of the private sphere. Once the war began and teenage girls took jobs in factories, department stores, and soda shops finding a baby-sitter was quite difficult (37). Not only could teenage girls make more money outside of working as a caretaker, they could also gain more social freedom.

Teenagers in the 1940s had spending power that their parents did not have at their age. As Forman-Brunell points out, "girls...bought clothing, records, and magazines, while also using their wages to increase their social independence" (38). Of course, it did not take long for the consumer market to notice new purchasing trends. This new purchasing power on the part of teens was more significant than just the ability to buy new material goods; the new consumer culture of the 1940s gave teens new ways to define themselves. While older married women were expected to join the war effort through becoming either a Rosie the Riveter or a housewife devoted to acting as a bulwark against the untidy, or both, teenagers suddenly had new freedoms that their mothers could not imagine, thus making the 1940s a fascinating time for coming-of-age novels.

Literary scholarship about these new teenage girls coming of age in the 1940s can be broken into three main categories: the complications that come along

with the sexual nature of coming of age, the subsequent characterization of teenage girls as either “good girls” or “bad girls,” and the level of subversiveness in coming-of-age novels. Barbara White, 1940s girlhood scholar, has pointed out that some of these (fictional) girls on their way to womanhood tend to skirt the issue of sexuality even as they are entering into puberty (White 186). These young women know, on either a conscious or unconscious level, that once they become women they will have to conform to strict, or at least very limiting, gender roles; therefore, they are reluctant to grow up. Many protagonists are caught between wanting to develop into an adult physically—in order to enjoy the perceived rights of adulthood like moving out of their family’s home—and not wanting to take on society’s expectations for women.

Linda Christian---Smith and Christy Rishoi, scholars of 1940s coming of age novels, feel that teenage girls were so sexually repressed that femininity was limited to very simple literary types.<sup>6</sup> The protagonist is usually a “good girl” who does not have sex. The other alternative is the “bad girl” who has sex, or at least has more than one boyfriend. There is also, according to Rishoi, the “reformed wild girl” phenomenon in which a once active and perhaps even athletic girl is “tamed” into being a “good girl” by a boyfriend (87). According to many scholars, protagonists had a choice of a very few identities that they could don.

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<sup>6</sup> For Linda Christian---Smith’s account of literary types for teenage girls see her book *Becoming a Woman through Romance*. A summary of this phenomenon is on page 85. For Christy Rishoi’s account of literary types of teenage girls see her book *From Girl to Woman: American Coming of Age Narratives*. A summary of her thoughts on literary types can be found in chapter one.

Barbara White recognizes that while, in her opinion, some of these novels are not subversive enough, they do not have the same one---dimensional, “good girl” characters that exist in earlier American works. The Eliza of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and even the Beth of *Little Women* have essentially disappeared (White 85). Perhaps, in White’s opinion, we are not left with satisfactory replacements, but at least the expectation of absolute subservience and feminine perfection has dwindled.

Instead of focusing on the sexual aspects of coming age and/or the extent to which each novel subverts dominant ideologies, I explore each character’s relationship with the typical maturation plot and the social discourses that drove those plots forward. The plots of my four novels—*The Member of the Wedding*, *The Mountain Lion*, *Junior Miss*, and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*—hinge, at least in part, on four main social discourses that were made possible by the increase in mass media and consumer culture and that specifically affected teenage girls. In order to reveal a more nuanced picture of what it was like to grow up in the 1940s and avoid the somewhat constrictive conversation of reducing these novels into the categories of either subversive or conforming, I explore the ways these discourses moved the maturation plot forward and the “tactics” that my teenage protagonists are able to develop in order to appropriate these discourses.

My goal is to investigate how these social discourses permeate the lives of my representative protagonists and the ways in which these teenage girls develop tactics to appropriate these social discourses. Through an exploration into the individual ways these protagonists are able to develop tactics, I hope to shift the discussion away from a polarized view of the effects of the mass media and

consumer culture on teenage girls. Instead of focusing on the positive and/or negative effects of 1940s mass culture or on the extent to which characters resist or accept the strategies that pervade their everyday lives, in each chapter I explore the ways in which 1940s social discourses push the maturation plot forward and the tactics that protagonists—and authors—were able to develop in order to appropriate the maturation plot strategy.

In my first chapter I focus on Frankie Addams from *The Member of the Wedding* and the effects of the wedding industry boom on her attempt to graduate from adolescence into adulthood. I argue that McCullers actually uses the strategy of the maturation plot in order to question the very same structure, so while McCullers conforms to the maturation arc, she simultaneously complicates it. McCullers evokes Frankie's character change as a tactic—a tactic that teaches the reader how to question the strategy of the maturation plot. McCullers purposefully makes Frankie much less likeable once she has developed into an adult. The novel, in a sense, is actually didactic in that it teaches the reader to question the strategy of the maturation plot by transforming an interesting and endearing Frankie into a reserved and conservative character. Once Frankie becomes the member of the wedding the reader is no longer invested in her adulthood. I am specifically interested in how Carson McCullers uses the liminal state of adolescence in order to question the role of marriage during World War II. Though Frankie is actually quite frightened of living in an in between state, liminality seems to give the character the power to question the gender roles that surround her. What happens after Frankie

is no longer in between adolescence and adulthood? Does she lose the insight that this tactic allowed her?

In my second chapter I concentrate on Molly Faucet of Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* and the effects of western mania on her transition, or lack there of, into adulthood. I argue that *The Mountain Lion* is the most radical of these novels because Stafford refuses to employ the maturation plot; instead, Stafford renounces the reader's expectations for the protagonist. Of course, going out west is supposed to be a rite of passage, but instead of following this maturation process, Stafford unleashes the violence of refusing to adhere to the maturation arc. I also explore the ways in which Molly uses the tactic of language in order to appropriate western mania. Why does this tactic fail to protect Molly against the potentially constrictive nature of the maturation plot and what are the consequences of this failure?

In chapters three and four I turn toward characters that are able to successfully use tactics to cope with the maturation arc. I argue that even though Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* and Sally Benson's *Junior Miss* are very different novels—in that *Junior Miss* is actually a comedy—both novels teach the reader to prefer the “immature” protagonists. Both Frankie and Judy are more endearing and interesting before they take on the role of adults. Therefore, the reader is taught to question what the maturation arc, and the rites of passage that move the maturation plot forward, actually does to teenage protagonists. I also explore ways in which Judy Graves is able to use the tactic of performance in order to both appropriate the strategy of new department store sections and resist the maturation arc. As teenage girls acquired more economic independence, consumer

culture became aware of the fiscal advantages of marketing toward adolescents. Judy feels that she must literally and figuratively fit into preconceived notions of what her body and personality are expected to be like, however she learns how to perform, as opposed to adhere, to these expectations. How is it that Judy is able to adapt this tactic of performance in order to appropriate the strategy of teenage clothing?

Francine Nolan of Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is arguably the most successful character in that she is able to transform into an adult with the promise of a rewarding future. I argue that because *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn* successfully resists the maturation plot it is the most satisfying novel in this project to read for both contemporaneous reviewers and readers. In chapter four I examine Francine Nolan's strategies and tactics that are one in the same—the art of scrapbook making. Though scrapbook making was often seen as overly sentimental, Francine uses the craft of scrapbook making to both hide and reveal her internal self. Francine uses the tactic of scrapbook making in order to define her own identity. Often thought of as Betty Smith's autobiography, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* takes on certain qualities of the scrapbook itself. Using the same moves as many nonfictional teenage girls did with their own scrapbooks, Smith is able to simultaneously build and protect the identity of her own character. Why is it that this tactic is so successful for Francine? What historical influences exist that enable Francine to appropriate the strategy of scrapbook making to her own advantage?

Throughout my dissertation I argue that these authors—Carson McCullers, Jean Stafford, Sally Benson, and Betty Smith—engage the maturation plot in order to

question and/or complicate it. While McCullers and Benson use the maturation plot to highlight the banal sort of adult that these protagonists can turn into, Stafford shows what happens when the character refuses to adhere to the maturation plot. Additionally, Smith resists the maturation plot in order to create a satisfying story for readers. I also argue that examining the ways in which these characters were able to use tactics—sometimes successfully and sometimes not, depending on historical pressures surrounding these girls—reveals problems left unexplored by much mass media. I hope to prove that reading fiction helps expose the gap between what strategies like McCullers's letter tell us about our past and what tactics like those employed by my four protagonists help us to imagine about our past.

Chapter One: Longing for Adulthood: Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*

Frankie Addams of Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* (1946) is so obsessed with her brother's wedding that the Addams's family maid, Berenice, tells her, "I believe the sun has fried your brains" (McCullers 4). Frankie's cousin John Henry agrees and Frankie "almost admitted" it was true (4). After Berenice and John Henry concur on Frankie's mental state, Frankie continues to sit at the kitchen table with "her eyes half closed" and "thought about a wedding" (4). Why is it that Frankie Addams, a girl who wants very little to do with members of the opposite sex, is so preoccupied by weddings?

*The Member of the Wedding*, published in 1946 after five long years of writing, tells the story of twelve---year---old Frankie Addams and her transition from a liminal state to the concrete role of a potential 1940s housewife. The entire story occurs over three days in August and one day in the following November. Most of the novel takes place in Frankie Addams's kitchen. Frankie spends most of her long summer days with her housekeeper, Berenice, and her younger cousin, John Henry. Frankie's mother died during childbirth and though Frankie's father is still alive he is frequently physically and emotionally absent from Frankie's life.

The reader is privy to the summer that Frankie spends away from the traditional maturation arc, but before readers meet Frankie, the narrator explains that before this summer, she used to be a "member" of the world around her (164).

Furthermore, at the end of the novel Frankie returns to being a “member” of her own society. Therefore, readers see the short time of Frankie’s life after she has stopped completely adhering to the maturation arc and before she rejoins the trope. In this glimpse of Frankie’s life we see Frankie’s struggle to adhere to the expectations set by the maturation arc. In this chapter I argue that while Frankie will eventually conform to this trope, Frankie’s eventual banal attitude makes the reader question the integrity of the maturation arc.

During the first day of *The Member of the Wedding*, which also makes up the first part of the novel, Frankie invites John Henry over for dinner and a sleepover, Frankie insists that John Henry looks “scared,” but it is really Frankie that needs company. Frankie and John Henry listen as other children in the neighborhood play games outside, but Frankie will not take John Henry’s suggestion that they play with the other children. Frankie realizes that Janice, her brother’s soon to be wife, and Jarvis both begin with “Ja” and Frankie decides to change her name to “F. Jasmine Addams.” At this point in the novel F. Jasmine is determined not to return home after the wedding.

During the second day of *The Member of the Wedding*, which also makes up the second part of the novel, F. Jasmine walks around town with the confidence that she will soon belong to something, she will soon be a “member.” In fact F. Jasmine is so assertive that she walks into a bar and meets a soldier. The two make a date for that same night. F. Jasmine eventually returns home for lunch, tells Berenice about her adventures, leaving out the part about the date with the soldier, and shows

Berenice and John Henry the dress she bought for her brother's wedding. Berenice, John Henry, and F. Jasmine have a very long talk over their lunch.

In the evening of the second day F. Jasmine goes to Berenice's mother's house to get her fortune told. Afterwards she meets the soldier and goes up to his hotel room. The soldier attempts to be intimate with the protagonist, but she is able to knock him over the head with a pitcher and escape the hotel room. John Henry again spends the night at the Addams household and the next morning F. Jasmine leaves for the wedding.

The reader does not really see the wedding; rather, the ceremony occurs between chapters. In part three Frances, Mr. Addams, John Henry, and Berenice ride the bus back home. Frances tries to run away from home, but there are no trains to hop at the late hour she decides upon. Instead of wandering around town until a train comes, Frances goes to the Blue Moon, the bar where she met the soldier. There a police officer watches over her until Mr. Addams can pick her up.

*The Member of the Wedding* ends in a day in November. Frankie never speaks about the events of the wedding. John Henry has suddenly, and quite violently, died from meningitis. The Addams family no longer needs Berenice and the family cook decided to marry her friend T.T. Williams. Frankie has also met a new friend, Mary Littlejohn. Frankie sometimes thinks about John Henry, but her days are full of "radar, school, and Mary Littlejohn" (605).

Like all of the other social discourses in this project, weddings helped cement the signposts for maturation. Of course, weddings were a rite of passage before 1946; however, contemporary readers of *The Member of the Wedding* would have

been very familiar with the recent explosion in the wedding industry. During World War II the rite of passage for young brides into adulthood deeply connected with the responsibility to support the war effort via housekeeping and other domestic duties. Frankie Addams, only twelve years old in the novel, wants desperately to help the war effort through the patriotic duty that marriage promised itself to be. Frankie, though of course like all of the other teenage girls in this project, does not marry within the text; however, she does go through a transformation and eventually conforms to the rules of wifedom and homemaking that came with marriage. Frankie transforms from the liminal phase of adolescence into a young woman who is willing to accept the rules that will help her conform to the role of a married woman. That marriage in general is institutionally sanctioned and is therefore, according to Michel de Certeau in his *The Practices of Everyday Life*, a “strategy” is not surprising (36).<sup>1</sup> Marriage, like all strategies, upholds specific norms; in the case of marriage, it is gender norms that are being solidified.<sup>2</sup> Marriage in the 1940s ensured that women would work toward McCullers’s goal, as articulated in her “letter from a war bride,” of protecting the country against chaos.

What is unique about marriage in the 1940s is that the mass media greatly popularized the consumerism of weddings and actually created the beginnings of the wedding industry, thus expanding the institutional strategy of marriage. In this

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<sup>1</sup> According to Michel De Certeau “strategies” are regulations that are imposed on the public. Strategies are rule governed and institutionalized. They seek to conform people to a set of rules in order to establish economic and political stability (36). Tactics, on the other hand, are used by individuals and are always opportunistic. Tactics are ways in which to appropriate strategies to the benefit of the individual (xx).

<sup>2</sup> Economic and racial norms were also upheld by the strategy of marriage in the 1940s, however, in this chapter I focus mostly on gender.

chapter I will explore both the strategy of marriage and the tactic of liminality itself and why it fails to keep Frankie from conforming to the ideologies consistent with the social discourse of marriage in the American South. I argue that, despite McCullers's "letter from a war bride," the novel deeply questions the result of Frankie's adherence to the social discourse of marriage.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, in this chapter I argue that McCullers uses the character of Frankie as a tactic to cope with the strategy that is the maturation plot. Though the presence of the wedding industry boom certainly pushes the maturation plot forward, in that it offers Frankie a rite of passage into adulthood, Frankie herself becomes a didactic tool for McCullers. Toward the end of the novel, as Frankie develops into the kind of young woman who will be groomed for marriage, she becomes less and less likeable. At the end of the novel, the reader is nostalgic for the endearing and fascinating character of Frankie Addams; in this way McCullers teaches the reader to question the potential restrictions of the maturation arc. What kind of person does adhering to this plot line make one into? Even though McCullers employs the maturation arc, she also, through Frankie's unsavory transformation, questions it.

Part of Frankie's fascination with weddings and her subsequent transition into a young woman who is being groomed for marriage is due to the 1940s

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<sup>3</sup> That McCullers was influenced by the wedding boom industry and wanted to emphasize the role of the bride is obvious from the original titles for the novel. The original title for *The Member of the Wedding* was *The Bride and Her Brother* and then was changed to *The Bride of My Brother* before McCullers decided on *The Member of the Wedding* (Freeman 47). The previous titles make the bride the center of attention. The actual identity of the bride shifted from Frankie to the actual woman marrying her brother, but the emphasis on "bride," in a time of a booming wedding industry remains the same.

wedding boom. Throughout the 1940s an increase in the wedding industry brought the bride's responsibility to the war effort into the imaginations of many Americans. Marriage meant duty to one's household and was frequently viewed as active participation in the general bettering of America and a way in which women could enter the war effort. In fact, young women, even though they had some economic freedoms that their mothers did not have, were, according to the United States Census, getting married younger in the 1940s than in previous generations (Estimated Median Age at First Marriage).

Marriage, as women began to marry even younger, solidified the maturation plot even earlier during World War II. Since young women were marrying, according to the United States Census, at the average age of 21.5 during the 1940s, there were not too many years between the end of the teenage years and the beginning of marriage (Estimated Median Age). Certainly marriage is one essential milestone in the maturation arc; it is this institution that in the 1940s, helped define what it meant to be an adult as opposed to a teenager.

Additionally, the strategy of marriage was more consumerN driven and hence more visible in the 1940s than it had ever been previously. For example, in 1947, during the postwar economic boom, De Beers released its famous "A Diamond is Forever" campaign (Twitchell 95). Previously diamonds were not considered a typical engagement ring stone, but N.W. Ayer, head of the N.W. Ayer Advertisement Company, wanted to capitalize on the increase in the wedding industry (Twitchell 99). As soldiers returned from war and took over their jobs from the women who were working them, De Beers, and other wedding industry companies, wanted to

take advantage of newly salaried men. In a survey of men to soon pop the question conducted by the De Beers Company, men did not know how much they were supposed to spend on a diamond in order to satisfy their beloveds. Thus, “How else can you make two months salary last forever” was born (Twitchell 99). Men in the midst of this major wedding industry boom needed to be confident in how much money to spend.

That the wedding industry became more visible in the 1940s, thus playing a larger role in the imaginations of Americans, is obvious from the increase in engagement ring sales. According to Vickie Howard, expert in marriage traditions of the 1940s:

In 1946, the United States had nearly the highest marriage rate of the industrial world at 16.4 per 1,000 population, an increase of nearly 25 percent from 1942, the year that held the previous record. To take advantage of these unprecedented demographic trends, jewelers and department stores tracked marriage rates and campaigned against the commonly held belief that June was the only month for wedding promotions. By the early 1940s, engagement rings were the leading line of jewelry in most department stores, and in fact, many jewelry departments were dependent on wedding and engagement ring sales. (27)

This sudden increase in the sales of engagement rings and the wedding industry boom in general is directly associated with World War II and the newly stabilized economy. The changing economic landscape helped expand the wedding industry and the strategies associated with marriage.

Part of the strategy of marriage in the 1940s ensured that young women protect their homes and lives from disarray. McCullers herself, in a letter to her then husband published in *Mademoiselle*, promised to be a “bulwark” against chaos and to keep the home as peaceful and orderly as possible. McCullers’s “letter from a war bride” exemplifies the idea that just as the best way for men to support the war was to actually go off to battle, the only way for women to support the war was to marry and keep house. Though children could do their part by helping their mothers, the most popular way for a woman to support the war cause was through getting married and tending to her home. Of course, countless women took over men’s jobs as they left for war, but the popular magazines of the day instructed married women on how to be a part of the war effort by staying home and keeping house.

For example, in the *Woman’s Home Companion*, Alfred Toombs argues that women should not work, but rather stay at home, keep house, and raise children.<sup>4</sup> In fact if they do not, according to Toombs, “America may be on the way toward creating another lost generation” (qtd. in Walker 50). In somewhat lighter pieces like “When your Soldier Comes Home,” published in the *Ladies Home Journal* in October of 1945, women are advised to make the home as a comfortable place as possible for the incoming soldier (Walker 98).

As men planned to leave for war, women scrambled to marry their sweethearts. Some women rushed to be married in order to sanction sex, others married in order to provide stability for soldiers, and other women married for fear that they would not see their groom again. Of course, many of these women also

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<sup>4</sup> These articles were put together in Nancy Walker’s collection entitled *Shaping our Mothers’ World: American Women’s Magazines*.

married so that they too could grow up and become a part of the war effort. Only by being married and housekeeping were women, according to many popular magazines, supposed to help the war effort. Despite the countless women who worked in wartime factories, marriage simultaneously became a rite-of-passage into adulthood and a means to enter the war effort. Countless articles from the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *Good Housekeeping* instructed new brides on how to become mature young women, able to keep house and keep their husbands happy.

In *The Member of the Wedding* Frankie Addams is taken in by the wedding industry boom. Frankie truly internalizes the strategy of marriage. In other words, Frankie, like many young women in the mid-1940s, believes that if she gets married she will become an adult, an adult that can then help the war effort and make her a part of society; however, the rite of passage of heterosexual marriage actually takes away Frankie's ability to live in the liminal, perhaps less constricted, state of adolescence.

Victor Turner, author of *Forest of Symbols*, argues that within this liminal space between childhood and adulthood, adolescents actually have more freedom from what de Certeau would call "strategies" (see Turner 97). Liminality can be considered a "tactic" or a way in which teenagers, in their day-to-day lives, can appropriate the strategies that surround them. Turner explains that liminality is "a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations arise" (97). After the transition—including its liminal space—is completed and an adolescent becomes an adult, the subject must "become once more subject to

custom and law" (106). Since Frankie operates within this space of "pure possibility" she becomes a mouthpiece for those very possibilities that would otherwise be negated by social norms.

Certainly liminality is a tactic that Frankie uses that might have allowed for her to question the strategy of marriage and the roles for women associated with it. However, Frankie associates liminality with being "unjoined" and apart from the people around her. She is frightened by this liminal space and is eager to take on what she, and other young women of the era, perceived to be a role with more agency in the war effort, that of the married woman.

Thematically *The Member of the Wedding* is about, in part, a quest for identity in a liminal state and what ends that liminal state—a wedding. Many scholars like Louise Westling, Lori J. Kenschaft, and Elizabeth Freeman have argued that Frankie's search for identity, in part, is a gender based one.<sup>5</sup> Though it is true that Frankie is sometimes preoccupied with gender, she also tries to define for herself other components of her own identity. Frankie, perhaps more so than other characters in this project, is aware of, and even fears, this liminal space. The novel even begins with:

It happened that green and crazy summer when Frankie was twelve years old. This was the summer when for a long time she had not been a member. She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world. Frankie

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<sup>5</sup> Louse Westling is the author of *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens*. Lori J. Kenschaft is the author of "Homoerotics and Human Connections: Reading Carson McCullers As a Lesbian" and Elizabeth Freeman is the author of *The Wedding Complex*.

had become an unjoined person who hung around in doorways, and she was afraid. (461)

Though this section of the novel has often been quoted and analyzed, what scholars have not mentioned is that this passage indicates that at one point, before this summer in Frankie's twelfth year, she did indeed belong to a club and was in fact a joined person that did not hang around on doorways or thresholds. In Frankie's childhood she did not feel unconnected, it is only with the advent of adolescence and the knowledge that she cannot be a part of the war effort that Frankie feels "unjoined" and even frightened by this liminal state. It is adolescence, along with World War II that constantly overshadows the novel that has "unjoined" Frankie; she lives in the same house and has the same companions, the only major change in Frankie's recent life is her age and the war that she cannot join.

Frankie imagines herself as part of the war effort, but also knows that these fantasies are unrealistic.

She wanted to be a boy and go to the war as a Marine. But she could not join the war and this made her sometimes feel restless and blue. She decided to donate blood to the Red Cross...[but] the Red Cross would not take her blood. She was too young...to think about the war made her afraid. She was not afraid of Germans or bombs or Japanese. She was afraid because in the war they would not include her, and because the world seemed somehow separate from herself. (480)

Of course Frankie cannot join the war effort because her sex disallows her from joining the army and her age prevents her from her other alternative—marriage.<sup>6</sup> Frankie is desperate to become “a member of the wedding” because she senses that the wedding is her only way to become a part of the society around her. Once she decides to become “a member of the wedding” Frankie feels confident and that “she did not need to wonder and puzzle any more” for she could marry vicariously through her brother and therefore join the war effort (500).

Frankie is in the same liminal space that many young men and women were faced with. She is going through adolescence, seeing soldiers go off to war, and also seeing her brother get married, however she is too young to participate in any of these important rites of passages. Just as the young men Turner describes move from one stage of life to another so too does Frankie. Turner explores the psychoanalytical effect of symbols on adolescence that are experiencing the same liminal phase that Frankie is as she watches older members of her community marry or go off to war.

As the adolescent is transforming she is neither a child nor an adult, but is also simultaneously both. Turner discusses this liminal stage in conjunction with Arnold van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage*. Turner specifically addresses liminality in the rituals that Gennep refers to as “rites of passage” (94). Turner argues that the rites of passage rituals that adolescents experience create a liminal space. Frankie is

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Office of Medical History, a division of the United States Army Medical Department, at the beginning of the war the mandatory age that someone had to meet in order to donate blood was twenty---one. However, by the end of the war, the need for blood had increased and the mandatory age was lowered to eighteen (United States Army).

old enough to be aware that in order to be a part of the society that surrounds her she must join the war effort, but she also understands that she is too young to join in any socially accepted manner—she is in a liminal state. Of course, “a transition has different cultural properties from those of a state” (Turner 94). Also, the liminal state “is ambiguous; [the adolescent] passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state” (94). Until Frankie becomes an adult through her vicarious experience at her brother’s wedding, Frankie lives in this liminal state.

Indeed understanding Frankie’s sexual identity, as a part of this liminal stage, is essential to any complete reading of the novel. Literary theorists and scholars like Louise Westling, Lori J. Kenschaft, and Elizabeth Freeman have focused on the ambiguity of Frankie’s sexuality. They suggest that either Frankie herself is queer, that McCullers is queer, and/or that the novel should be read under the lens of queer theory. Freeman also suggests that Frankie Addams feels pressured into heterosexuality, however I suspect that Frankie’s desire for marriage is more about joining the war effort than it is about deciding on any one sexual preference. There is plenty of textual evidence to suggest that Frankie complicates heterosexual norms; however, Frankie’s status as heterosexual or homosexual is not as important as her liminal state in relation to gender. According to Turner in his discussion of adolescence, “neophytes are sometimes treated as symbolically represented as being neither male nor female” and Frankie certainly fits that role (98).

Frankie could act as an especially good mouthpiece for expressing emotions and thoughts perhaps not completely socially recognized or even accepted when

*The Member of the Wedding* was published. Many scholars have read Frankie as a lesbian, but her sexual orientation is also in a liminal space. It is Frankie's age that makes her gender and/or sexual orientation confusion permissible. John Henry, Berenice, and Frankie discuss their idea of a perfect world and Frankie insists that in a perfect world, "people could instantly change back and forth from boys to girls, whichever way they felt like and wanted" (547). Though Berenice tells John Henry and Frankie that she knows a man who fell in love with another man and turned himself into a woman in order to have a relationship with him, it is Frankie, in her liminal space, who fantasizes about being able to change genders.

To argue that Frankie is a lesbian would neglect the complexity of Frankie's liminal stage. Lori J. Kenschaft argues, convincingly, that "McCullers's characters are not, however, simply identifiable as lesbian or gay, identities that would be more culturally explainable than the shifting, neither---nor, multiplicitous desires that McCullers portrays "(231).<sup>7</sup> Kenschaft goes on to argue that it is more productive to read Frankie's character as being likened to a "more general rebellion against what it means to be a... 'woman' or 'man'" (231). Frankie exists in a liminal space where, for a short time, she does not adhere to the cultural codes of being a woman or a man.

Frankie obviously does not fit into any sort of willing heterosexual role. Her name, at least for the first part of the novel, is technically a boy's name. Even when she moves from Frankie to F. Jasmine she still uses the format of a man's name (initial and then last name). Even Frankie's title as "member of the wedding" is

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<sup>7</sup> Lori J. Kenschaft is the author of "Homoerotics and Human Connections: Reading Carson McCullers As a Lesbian."

gender neutral if not masculine in nature. Frankie's hair "had been cut like a boy's" and she wears "track shorts" instead of a dress or skirt (462). Frankie also "wanted to be a boy and go to war as a Marine" (480). In her fantasy of joining the war effort Frankie also wants to be called "Addams" and not Frances or Frankie (23). Even in the second part of the novel, when Frankie demands to be called the perhaps more feminine "F. Jasmine" Berenice suggests that she find a "a nice little white boy beau" and F. Jasmine declares that she has no clue what she would ever do with a beau and does not seem to have any interest in procuring one (533). Frankie's interest in her brother's wedding is not a heterosexual one, she simply sees it as an opportunity to enter adulthood. Adulthood for Frankie, and many other adolescents, meant being a full person, one that is able to be a part of their own society, in this case through the war effort.

That the wedding is about joining the war effort and not necessarily about becoming heterosexual is obvious through Frankie's dress. Unlike Judy Graves in *Junior Miss*, when Frankie puts on her new dress, in Frankie's case for a wedding, not for a date, Frankie is not able to perform the role of a heterosexual woman. Instead of a bath and an amazing transformation into a beautiful young woman, Frankie puts her dress on for the wedding and it is all wrong. Frankie bought an "orange satin evening dress" and Berenice, who understands the social norms for what is "appropriate" for a girl Frankie's age, is mortified by the dress. When Berenice first sees the dress she "shook her head and did not comment" (539). Berenice sums up her opinion of the dress with a simple, "it don't do" (539). Berenice exclaims, "Here you got on this grown woman's evening dress. Orange satin. And that brown crust

on your elbows” and she insists that Frankie return the dress (540). Frankie, unlike Judy Graves, is not able to don the role of a poised young woman.

Interestingly, as Berenice points out, Frankie chooses a dress better suited for someone a little older. Frankie’s look would not have been questioned for a young woman out of adolescence; dresses that showed off one’s figure were common. Additionally, according to Jan Whitaker, expert in the history of consumerism, orange, as many vibrant colors, was frequently worn in the 1940’s and many women wore ribbons in their short hair (107). Frankie’s whole look itself is not out of place, but the color and dropped waist of the dress indicate a dress for an older, more sophisticated woman (Whitaker 107); Berenice expects Frankie to wear a “pink” and more youthful dress (540).

Frankie’s desire to wear such an adult dress, one that probably would not have been found even in the youth obsessed bridal department, is indicative of her longing to be a part of the adult world where she believes woman have more agency. In the 1940s even the wedding dresses were marketed toward women in or just out of adolescence. Since women were marrying so young during and directly after World War II, wedding dresses and other bridal necessities were often placed next to adolescent clothing sections (292). The bridal business, according to Whitaker, was “to a large extent a teenage market” (292). It is obvious that Frankie has no desire to be a typical, heterosexual bride; rather Frankie, with her “grown woman’s evening dress,” wants to use marriage as a way to become an adult (540). Though Frankie is willing to dress like an adult, she is not willing to accept the sexual knowledge that comes along with adulthood.

In fact, Frankie develops a tactic to deal with sexual knowledge; similar to Molly in *The Mountain Lion* Frankie refuses to acknowledge any kind of sexuality. After hanging out with some older girls Frankie laments, “They were talking nasty lies about married people. When I think of Aunt Pet and Uncle Ustace. And my own father! The nasty lies! I don’t know what kind of fool they take me for” (470). Also while a couple rents out a room in the Addams house Frankie heard “a sound in the quiet room she could not place and when she stepped over the threshold she was startled by a sight that, after a single glance, sent her running to the kitchen” (495). Frankie exclaims, “Mr. Marlowe was having a fit” (495). Though Frankie is unaware that Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe are having sexual intercourse, the word “threshold” is significant. Here Frankie crosses the threshold not only into the Marlowe’s rented room, but also into sexual knowledge. Part of Frankie’s horror is not just her concern for Mr. Marlowe’s wellbeing. When Berenice explains the situation to Frankie she knows “from the voice’s tones that there was more to it than she was told” (495). Frankie is beginning to understand sexuality, but she is also mortified by it. Clearly Frankie is not ready to join a heterosexual relationship, so she attempts to join the war effort through becoming a pseudo member of a wedding.

Though Frankie is not interested in joining the war effort in the way most young women might have been, through the bombardment of magazine articles lauding the heterosexual strategy of marriage, specifically marriage as a pathway to helping the war effort, Frankie actually has two hetero(sexual) encounters of her own. Frankie committed what she thinks of as a “secret and unknown sin with Barney Mackean” (482). After committing this “sin” Frankie daydreams about

shooting Barney “with the pistol and throwing “a knife between his eyes” (482). During the second sexual encounter the soldier convinces Frankie to enter his hotel room. Frankie is unsure about the soldier’s intentions, but once the soldier grasps her skirt she is “paralyzed with fear” (583). Once Frankie comes out of her paralysis she bites the soldier’s tongue and hits him over the head with a glass pitcher (583). Frankie flees the hotel room and her major concern is that she may have accidentally killed the soldier. Though the reader never knows the fate of the soldier, these incidents point to a horror of sexuality. Frankie does not completely grasp what sex is, but she knows enough to have a strong emotional and physical reaction to it.

Perhaps, as is the case with Molly, Frankie is hesitant to accept sexual knowledge because she is already aware of the restrictive nature of the strategy of marriage. After all, during her conversation with Berenice, the surrogate mother tells her that in order to be normal Frankie should find a nice white boyfriend. Essentially, heterosexuality and having boyfriends define what it is to be normal. Frankie seeks to avoid having to make the decision to be heterosexual and therefore sexual by joining an already existing heterosexual relationship in a nonsexual manner.

The setting of the novel itself reveals Frankie’s complicated relationship with sexuality. McCullers takes the metaphor of summer and growth and applies it to Frankie’s stage in adolescence and by doing so she effectively complicates the metaphor itself. According to Thadious Davis, literary scholar and author of “Erasing the ‘We of Me’ and Rewriting the Racial Script: Carson McCullers’s *Two Member[s] of the Wedding*” McCullers specifically sets the novel in the summer “because she

intends to explore the strangeness of a time of transition from childhood to adolescence with its concomitant explorations of sexual awakening [and] gender awareness..." (207). While Davis likens the blooming of sexual knowledge to the fecund season of summer; Frankie herself is not growing or blooming in the way that the pedestrian metaphor indicates. In fact, the summer proves to be simultaneously productive and stagnant; "In June the trees were bright dizzy green, but later the leaves darkened, and the town turned black and shrunken under the glare of the sun" (461). Clearly, sexual awakenings and physical growth are more complicated than simply blooming into one's own body. It is obvious that Frankie is made aware that entering into a heterosexual relationship will restrict some of Frankie's possibilities.

Yet Frankie has a heterosexual role model—Berenice. Frankie is the only young woman in this study without a mother, but Berenice, the Addams family cook, acts as Frankie's surrogate mother. The African-American woman is very aware of her own social restrictions and Berenice helps Frankie to understand how people are all "trapped" one way or another into their roles within society. Frankie is in a unique position as compared to the other protagonists in this project because she is explicitly taught that there are spaces to live and that some people try to live between these spaces. Berenice defines these "spaces" that most people must operate within best when she explains to Frankie that she cannot change her name, "Me is me and you is you and he is he. We each one of us somehow caught all by ourself." Berenice goes on to explain that she is "caught worse than [Frankie] is"

(567). Though Frankie understands what Berenice means, John Henry needs more explanation:

Because I'm black...because I'm colored. Everybody is caught one way or another. But they done drawn completely extra bounds around all colored people. They done squeezed us off in one corner by ourself. So we caught that firstway I was telling you, as all human beings is caught. And we caught as colored people also. (567)

No other character in this project is explicitly taught the societal rules that people, especially minorities, are consciously and unconsciously obliged to follow; however, once Frankie leaves the liminal state she is unable to empathize with Berenice. Frankie trades the tactical liminal space for what is considered normalcy—and to be normal in the American South during the 1940s, for many, is not to empathize with black people.

According to de Certeau the “lives of everyday people” are lived repetitively and unconsciously (148); what is exceptional about Berenice is that she makes strategies in place in “everyday life” visible to Frankie. Berenice realizes that strategies try to ensure that people are “stuck” within their own societal roles. She understands that all people are “caught” by what de Certeau calls strategies and that blacks are “caught” worse off than others because they can be actively discriminated against. Berenice is able to teach Frankie that strategies are not static, but rather they are dynamic and that they can affect one group of people more significantly than another.

Frankie seems to identify with Berenice's point of view on the dynamic nature of strategies and insists, "I feel like I wish I could just tear down the whole town" (568). Frankie really means she could destroy the sorts of strategies that regulate both herself and Berenice to certain roles. Frankie even insists, "it was better to be in a jail where you could bang the walls than in a jail you could not see" (600). Though most people walk through their everyday lives unaware of the strategies that surround them, Berenice both makes these strategies visible and teaches Frankie that they are dynamic in that they affect African---Americans differently from the white majority.

Even though the most constrictive of strategies can actually provide some people with opportunities for change, Berenice essentially teaches Frankie that the opportunities to use tactics in order to appropriate strategies is dependent on historical pressures like race. Historical realities, like being African---American in the 1940s in the American South can potentially make strategies more constricting, though of course they can also make the use of tactics more subversive.

Though Frankie understands that strategies affect Berenice doubly since she is both female and black, Frankie slightly disagrees with Berenice's concept of being stuck within the confines of any given strategy. Instead of being "caught" Frankie believes that everyone is actually "loose" (554). She is not worried that strategies can constrict identity, but rather that there is no reason why any single person has the identity they do. Though Frankie understands how Berenice is caught within the authoritative rules of strategies she fears there may be no central authority that controls the dynamic between strategies and tactics. Berenice concedes that people

can be “loose” but that they wander around the Earth under God’s authority, Frankie only mildly agrees with this point of view with a, “maybe so” (569). Unlike Molly, who does not live to completely understand her own point of view on ethics and existentialism, and unlike Molly’s brother Ralph, who has his belief that there is no central authority, or one absolute code of ethics cemented by Molly’s death, Frankie continues to live in a liminal space until the rite of passage of the wedding.

Berenice and Frankie both exist within liminal spaces. Berenice is the bridge between the Addams family—white and therefore privileged members of southern society—and her own black, and somewhat poor, family. She also serves as a surrogate mother for Frankie. Frankie is also caught, or loose as she thinks of it, in that she lives in between childhood and womanhood. In fact, McCullers herself uses the tactic of liminality in order to question the restrictions that are sometimes caused by marriage. As Berenice and especially Frankie are both within states of liminality they can openly question the rules, like heterosexuality and the role of a woman as a “bulwark” against chaos, that are dictated by the strategy of marriage. However, even though Berenice was able to retain some of her ability to question the strategies that surround her as an African-American and a woman, Frankie eventually leaves this stage of life and loses the tactical ability to openly question the world around her.

Turner defines this liminal space of adolescence—and its potential power—in his *Forest of Symbols*. According to Turner, disturbing masks are used to “teach neophytes to distinguish clearly between the different factors of reality, as it is conceived in their culture” (105). The masks are used to “startle” the adolescent into

thinking about aspects of their society that they took for granted as a child. During this period the adolescent's culture is reduced "into recognized components or factors" and then they go through a "recombination in fantastic or monstrous patterns and shapes" (106). After the adolescent has seen these "recombinations" he or she can then more easily recognize what is accepted within their society. As Turner points out, though this liminal state gives its subjects the ability to analyze their own culture, "this liberty has fairly narrow limits" (106). In short, they must "become once more subject to custom and law" (106). Once the neophyte recognizes what is acceptable in his or her own society then they must adhere to those societal norms.

Frankie experiences the lessons taught with masks through the freak show at the carnival. Several scholars have argued that Frankie is terrified of being considered a part of the freak show. This is certainly true as the narrator points out, "She was afraid of all the Freaks, for it seemed to her that they had looked at her in a secret way and tried to connect their eyes with hers, as though to say: we know you. She was afraid of their long Freak eyes" (477). According to Susan Stewart, the space (usually the "freak" is in a cage or on a stage) between the audience and the freak works to ensure that the viewer only feels more normal. The person gazing at the freak differentiates herself or himself from the spectacle and feels reassured that she or he is indeed "normal." As Gleeson---White argues, Frankie not only recognizes herself in the freaks, but she is also "contaminated by the closeness of the freaks' gaze" (21). In other words, unlike other people who are reassured that they do not qualify as a "freak," Frankie only feels more "freakish."

Frankie does indeed feel subject to “freakishness” and obviously fears she will belong to this group of miscreants; however, she also learns what is deemed “unacceptable” by her culture. According to Turner, neophytes in the Ndembu tribes see masks that are half men/half women in order to be able to separate the two and learn that one cannot be both. According to William James’s “law of dissociation,” “when a and b occurred together as parts of the same total object, without being discriminated, the occurrence of one of these, a, in a new combination, favors the discrimination of a, b, and x from one another” (926). Frankie is both male and female (she is oftentimes described by scholars as a tomboy and of course she has short hair and a boy’s name) and meets a freak that is overtly male and female: “This Freak was divided completely in half—the left side was a man and the right side a woman” (477). Though Frankie is within a liminal state of gender, when she sees the half man/half woman she recognizes that the two, according to her culture, must really be separated in order to be considered normal. Not only does Frankie feel like a freak, but like the neophytes in the Ndembu tribe, she also learns that to be part man and part woman is unacceptable, hence Frankie’s desperate desire to be a “Member of the Wedding” and not a “member of the Freak House” (McCullers 476).

Frankie not only learns that it is unacceptable to be both male and female, but she also learns that to be black is freakish. One of the members of the freak show is a “Wild Nigger” and fair goers can avoid the admission fee if they bring a live rat for the “Wild Nigger” to eat (476). Of course, the “Wild Nigger” is most likely a “crazy colored man from Selma” and not a “genuine Wild Nigger,” but just as Frankie learns

that it is considered “freakish” to be both man and woman, she also learns that to be black is also to be monstrous (476). From the freak show Frankie learns that to be considered “normal” one must be one gender or the other and white.

That Frankie turns to the strategy of marriage to avoid being considered a freak is also obvious when we consider Frankie’s attitude toward her height.

Frankie fears being considered a freak because of her height, but Berenice insists that getting married will stunt one’s growth. Therefore, part of the reason that Frankie joins the institution of marriage is to stunt her own physical growth and thus end her risk of becoming a “freak” or someone who is ostracized from their own community. The wedding of Frankie’s brother provided an untraditional means for Frankie to become a part of a heterosexual ceremony and relationship and to avoid being a “freak.”

Marriage meant officially leaving the liminal stage where Frankie at least had ownership of the tactic to question her own culture. The strategy of marriage also reinforced racial norms and the way that patriotism was linked to normative whiteness. This effect of the wedding is not lost on Frankie as laws banning the marriage and sex of different races were not abolished until 1967. Participating in marriage effectively ensured that Frankie was normal in that she is heterosexual and white.

There is nothing inherently “freakish” about being taller than average, or even being born a hermaphrodite, but some cultures, including Frankie’s, collectively determine that these people should be ostracized, or at the very least considered abnormal. Robert Bogdan explains, “freak is not a quality that belongs to

a person on display.<sup>8</sup> It is something we created: a perspective, a set of practices—a social construction (xi). Just as the masks of the Nbandu tribe are used to convince the neophytes in the tribe that men and women are supposed to be different, the freaks at the carnival convince Frankie that being both genders, or neither, is grounds for being ostracized. Though liminality can be a tactic used to question the strategies that surround one's everyday life, Frankie is willing to leave the state of adolescence and this questioning stage in order to avoid becoming a "freak."

Strangely, Frankie tries to leave adolescence through the very system that rejects her. When Frankie insists that she must join the couple on their honeymoon it was "like some nightmare show in which a wild girl in the audience breaks onto the stage to take upon herself an unplanned part that was never written or meant to be (590). Even though the role that Frankie hopes to play in the wedding is considered somehow unnatural and Frankie is completely rejected from this role, she still leaves her tactic of liminality behind in order to behave like a married white woman in the American South. Frankie's shift in personality—from the fascinating and endearing teenage girl who has yet to accomplish the maturation arc, to the conforming and banal "adult"—forces the reader to question the nature of the maturation plot.

Frankie, as opposed to any other character in the novel, is of course "the member of the wedding" and though it may not be in the typical manner, she too goes through this ceremony and conforms to certain racial practices. Frankie hopes that the wedding will give her the ability to join the war effort and escape the

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Bogdan is a sociologist and is the author of *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*.

perceived restrictions of adolescence, but it only brings about a change of identity for Frankie that causes her to become the subservient white bride. Before the wedding Frankie is fully aware that Berenice is stuck as a black woman living in the South. In fact Berenice and Frankie seem to have an uncanny bond in their understanding of one another. It is only directly after the wedding and then from that time on that Berenice can do nothing to please Frankie; Frankie distances herself from Berenice, and even uses a racial slur.

On the bus the ride home after the wedding Frankie is frustrated with Berenice's offer of a party in her honor and "when she thought of it she used the mean word she had never used before, nigger—for now she hated everyone and wanted only to spite and shame" (588). Though the racial slur is hurtful, what is more disturbing is Frankie's treatment of Berenice at the end of the novel. Having been "the member of the wedding" and conforming to standard southern racial practices of the 1940s Frankie all but ignores the woman who, in her adolescence, was a key component of familial life. Frankie does not show any remorse about having to leave her behind when she moves to her father's new house; she has fully identified with a society that enforces race and gender binaries.

After Frankie's transition into a "member of the wedding" she also becomes a new bride, excited to keep house. This new home, the one that Frankie is so excited to live in, of course has a laundry room and her white friend Mary Littlejohn will probably be visiting often. After the wedding Mary Littlejohn all but replaces Frankie's more socially marginal friends like Berenice, an African---American woman, and John Henry, a boy much too young to be considered a "normal" friend for

Frankie. Like any typical bride Frankie moves to a new home where she can become close friends with another white young woman, adore Michelangelo, and take pride in her laundry room.

Once Frankie becomes a “housewife” and thus is able to identify with the war effort, she becomes much less likeable. Louise Westling claims:

Frankie is less attractive at the end of the novel than she was as frightened tomboy Frankie. She has become a silly girl who no longer produces her own juvenile works of art---the shows and plays she used to write---but instead gushes sentimental nonsense about the Great Masters. The hard edge of her mind is gone, and all that is left is froth. (131)<sup>9</sup>

It is absolutely true that at the end of the novel Frankie is nowhere near as likeable as she once was. She no longer has compassion for Berenice—she not only refers to her as a “nigger,” but also dismisses her attempts at affection (159). She is also indifferent to the fact that Berenice is moving away from the family (160).

Furthermore, Frankie is shockingly cold and self---absorbed; after John Henry dies she rarely thought about [him]” (158). She is much too absorbed in her new friend Mary Littlejohn; in fact it is almost as if John Henry and Mary Littlejohn are as interchangeable for Frankie as their names suggest. However, Frankie has not become a “silly girl,” as Westling claims, instead she has conformed to societal norms and has become an adult.

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<sup>9</sup> Louise Westling is the author of *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens: The Fiction of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor*

As Frankie moves through adolescence into adulthood, she loses not only the power of liminality, but also her likeability. As Frankie becomes less endearing, the reader begins to question the strategy of the maturation plot. Margaret McDowell convincingly argues that Frankie's coldness suggests an "inevitable loss of sincerity and affectionate spontaneity as she moves from childhood to maturity" (83). Instead of the insincere Frankie who dismisses Berenice and thinks only of Michelangelo and Mary Littlejohn, the reader is nostalgic for the Frankie who loves the dear little man with his monkey and has John Henry over for sleepovers. Even the mysterious Frankie who fears her surroundings is more appealing than the Frankie who all but ignores Berenice's inevitable departure.

Once Frankie becomes a member of the wedding and no longer has the tactic of liminality at her disposal she is no longer endearing and no longer has any agency. Instead her voice is taken away from her by the banality of her admiration for Michelangelo and her new friend. In the end Frankie has less power as an adult than she did in the liminal stage between childhood and adulthood. The novel begins with Frankie on the threshold, but ends without a voice. Frankie's last words in the novel are even cut off by the doorbell announcing Mary Littlejohn's arrival and Frankie's entrance into adulthood, one void of sincerity (160).

Though this novel, unlike earlier coming-of-age novels, does not *end* with a wedding, the strategy of marriage and all of its potential for conforming a young woman to a banal adulthood and racist social practices are present. However, it is important that unlike earlier coming-of-age novels, the protagonist is much less likeable after becoming a "member of the wedding." Frankie's adherence to the

racial norms of white adults in the American South during this era brings into question the ethical nature of these norms. Frankie is certainly not likeable in her sudden inability to empathize with Berenice and her uncaring attitude toward John Henry's death.

Frankie transitions from a complex and imaginative young woman into a banal and perhaps less ethical adult. Minimally, Frankie is no longer self-aware at the end of the novel. Somehow through adhering to the maturation plot Frankie has lost valuable parts of herself. Even though McCullers adheres to the maturation arc, she uses the character of Frankie to teach the audience to question this plot line. While the maturation arc frequently leads to a certain feeling of satisfaction on the part of the reader, Frankie's transformation into adulthood is unsettling and demands that the reader question the wisdom of adhering to the maturation plot.

## Chapter Two: Molly and Martyrdom in Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion*

Ralph and Molly Faucet of Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* cannot wait to leave the only home they have ever known in order to visit their Uncle Claude on his ranch in Colorado. Even though the children are not particularly close to their Uncle Claude, after he visits the Faucets and tells Ralph and Molly about life on the ranch the two are determined to visit as soon as possible. In fact, Mrs. Faucet allows the two to travel to the Colorado ranch because Ralph and Molly "had given her no peace after Claude had left and had had tantrums whenever she suggested the alternatives of Puget Sound or Lake Tahoe" (89). Why are the protagonists of the novel so insistent that their vacation must be to Uncle Claude's ranch?

Molly and Ralph Faucet's fascination with the ranch and anything related to it is easy to understand in the context of *The Mountain Lion*'s 1947 publication. In 1947 the Howdy Doody show aired for the first time, the most popular bike for children was the Western Flyer, Gene Autry and Roy Rogers played the role of cowboys, dude ranch themed pinball machines were manufactured, and companies like Dockers advertised khakis that could be worn on dude ranches. Dude ranches sprung up all over Wyoming and Colorado that advertised "adventure." In general, the 1940s saw an upsurge in a fascination with the American West. I refer to this obsession with anything related to the American West as western mania.

Westerns celebrated many ideologies that appealed to an America that had survived World War II and was now steeped within the early years of the cold war. Western mania pursued well into the 1950s and lauded the idea of good triumphing over evil and a spirit of rugged individualism. The idea that any conflict could be reduced to cowboy versus outlaw, right versus wrong, black versus white, and that one man could return order to an otherwise lawless area would have certainly appealed to the American imagination during the chaotic time of World War II. *The Mountain Lion* was published amidst all of this western mania and is very much in the genre of the Western; however, the book has anything but a clear good wins over evil plot line.

In this chapter I argue that Stafford captures her protagonists—both Ralph and Molly—within the genre of the Western. In other words, Molly, and to some extent Ralph, do not necessarily display typical traits of characters that are included in western mania, however Stafford situates the siblings in this very specific genre. The novel shares many of the same tropes and plot lines as Westerns. The characters, like so many characters in Westerns, are “city slickers” (those not born on ranches) and are expected to learn how to ride horses and care for the ranch. Furthermore, Claude, the dude ranch cowboy, is supposed to be the teacher and has to save one of the dudes (Ralph) (107-108). At one point there is even a “rustler,” who aims to steal from the ranch (199). The original cowboy on the ranch, Ralph and Molly’s grandfather, also tells Ralph a legendary story about his own ability to decipher good from evil and of course resolve a major confrontation. Stafford ensnares Ralph and Molly in the genre of the Western in order to expose the potential violence of the maturation arc that the genre itself creates.

Western mania, like the other social discourses in this project, created its own maturation arc. Westerns especially produced their own milestones and signposts for men and women. For example, in almost any Western (film or print) the signposts of successfully coming-of-age or successful initiation into cowboy culture are, not surprisingly, physical and usually include: learning to ride horses, hunt, physically resolving disputes, and extreme self-reliance. Once the main character can accomplish these milestones he (or occasionally she) is considered an adult and part of the cowboy culture. Stafford plays with our expectations of western mania by demonstrating what happens when the milestones of this social discourse are disrupted. Through the use of her characters, Stafford forces the reader to question the maturation arc as created both within and outside of western mania. Western mania pushes both characters along on the path of the maturation arc, by setting certain key milestones. Molly, because she cannot live up to the expectations for women set by this genre, is unable to meet these signposts. Consequently, Molly's experiences reveal the constricting nature of the maturation arc.

Complicating the way that the social discourse of western mania might affect teenage girls is that these milestones only hold true for teenage girls until they become women. In other words, teenage girls in western mania fiction are encouraged to and praised for learning to ride and care for horses; however, once these teenage girls become old enough to marry, these skills must be replaced with domestic ones. This gap between what a girl is encouraged to do and what a young woman is expected to do is complex, but Molly has no desire to engage in either the expectations for girls or young women; she is not interested in horses or in becoming a domestic "war wife" as defined by Carson

McCullers. Therefore, Molly has no way of fulfilling the milestones defined by western mania.

*The Mountain Lion* ends abruptly with Molly Faucet's death at her Uncle's Colorado dude ranch. Many scholars have concentrated on Molly's fate at the hands of her brother as the pinnacle of meaning in the novel and though it is certainly an important part of the book, it is only one part of the book's connection with the western mania that swept the country in the 1940s. Instead of focusing on the likelihood or unlikelihood that Ralph's effort to kill a mountain lion was actually a successful attempt to murder his sister, I focus on the reasons why Molly is unable to survive on her uncle's ranch. Because Molly's death and Ralph's liability is so mysterious (abrupt, violent, and seemingly senseless) it is easy to reduce the meaning of the text to Ralph's (a male) ability to kill his sister in order to leave his childhood behind and become an adult. However, to diminish the novel to a "whodunnit" plot is to ignore the complicated backdrop of the novel and what it might mean for its characters. Instead of focusing on Ralph as Molly's potential murderer, I will offer a more nuanced account that takes into consideration the wider social forces, like western mania, at work.

In this chapter I argue not only that western mania was a powerful strategy, one that is partially responsible for pushing the maturation arc forward by staging rites of passage, but also that Stafford obliterates Molly's involvement with the maturation arc even as she engages with western mania. Instead, of conforming to the maturation arc (while simultaneously questioning it) like Carson McCullers in *The Member of the Wedding* or resisting the maturation arc like Betty Smith in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Stafford unleashes the violence that can occur when one refuses to accept this structure.

In this way, even though the protagonist dies, *The Mountain Lion* is the most radical of all these novels; Stafford exposes what happens when the maturation arc is not just resisted, but is completely refused.

If the maturation arc is a strategy, one that sometimes produces banal and conforming adults like Frankie Addams, *The Mountain Lion* is a novel about the violent consequences of destroying the maturation arc altogether. The novel itself is subversive in that Stafford exposes the violence that occurs when a protagonist refuses to completely follow the maturation arc; so even though Molly dies, the maturation arc is exposed as a deeply effective strategy—one that is so successful that refusing it can have violent consequences for fictional teenage girls.

Stafford constructs a literary world in which Molly cannot survive. Not only is the American West, specifically Molly's Uncle's Dude Ranch, so inhospitable to Molly that she literally cannot live, but Stafford also ensures that Molly cannot take any refuge in her family, education, or potential role models. Stafford traps Molly in a world where the protagonist has few choices. Though Molly is an individual character, set within specific literary confines, the text asks the reader to consider the wider implications of the maturation arc.

Molly's position as a martyr also makes her different from other young women who are equally as vulnerable to the gender expectations of western mania. Molly is unique because she was created in order to be an example of what can happen when a girl refuses to be initiated into the world that surrounds her. Even Stafford herself lamented, "poor old Molly, I loved her dearly and I hope she rests in peace" (Stafford 3). As Kathryn Davis points out in the afterword of the novel, this is a "story about the

impossibility of growing up and the impossibility of remaining a child” (238). That Stafford uses her character to emblemize the potential violence that can be released when protagonists refuse to adhere to the maturation arc—both within and outside of western mania—is obvious in the novel’s foreshadowing of the event; Molly was always meant to die.

Textual evidence underscores Molly’s eventual fate. For example, at the beginning of the novel the family’s cat, that Molly loves dearly, is almost killed and there are many parallels between the mountain lion that is hunted and Molly herself. At one point Ralph is not sure if Molly will be able to go to the ranch the next summer because he “think[s] maybe something is going to happen to her” (82). Additionally, Molly keeps a list of “unforgiveables” and at one point she adds her own name to the list, thus ensuring Molly cannot live, even with herself (217). At this point, Molly has completely internalized the strategy of the maturation arc and knows that she cannot achieve the milestones it defines. What separates Molly from other young women who also struggle with the coming of age process is that Molly is trapped in a literary construct where she was always meant to be Stafford’s martyr for refusing to adhere to the maturation arc.

Before eight-year-old Molly and her ten-year-old brother Ralph move to their Uncle Claude’s ranch, they live with their prim and proper mother and sisters in a Los Angeles suburb—a world away from the scenes in Westerns. Molly and Ralph are extremely close, more like twins than just siblings, however they do not get along with the rest of their genteel family. Perhaps sensing that Ralph and Molly are different from their older sisters, Mrs. Faucet’s half brother, Uncle Claude, takes the children to his ranch for a summer. The children then return for several subsequent summers and then

stay for an entire year while their older sisters and mother are touring Europe. It is during this yearlong stay on the dude ranch that Molly meets her devastating end.

Part of what makes the end of the novel so disturbing is that Molly, at first, thinks the American West can offer her freedom from the sorts of gender restrictions she experienced in her mother's home. After all, western mania was a strategy that produced hopes and promises to what de Certeau refers to as "users" or "consumers" (xi). Consumers, including Molly, buy into strategies that offer them certain guarantees (xi). Western mania offered a specific kind of freedom to users: independence from social constrictions. Cowboys—in movies—were able to escape the restrictions of society. They were able to be independent from what Huck Finn calls "sivilization" and the social norms that are associated with it. Western mania helped contribute to the myth of the cowboy—independent from any concern of the city and free to roam the wilderness at will.

Both Ralph and Molly, who, at first, excitedly enter a community less stuffy than their own home, quickly have their preconceived notions of the Wild West broken. Molly and Ralph spend months planning:

how they would defy mother's injunctions ('If there is a Shetland pony there, you may ride that if someone is with you,' she had said. A Shetland pony, indeed!) and how they would disobey Mrs. Brotherman who, through frequent letters, had promised that she would exercise the most stringent discipline to keep the children away from guns and horses. (89)

The children look forward to the freedom of the West that western mania as epitomized by western movies has offered them.

When Ralph and Molly first begin visiting Uncle Claude his housekeeper's daughter, Winifred, is a potential role model for Molly. Winifred is something of a tomboy or even a future cowgirl; she rides horses and spends most of her time on the ranch. Winifred's personality is certainly unique from any other woman's in Molly's life. Winifred does not mind getting dirty and goes hiking and hunting with her uncle. In fact, Molly's first impression of Winifred is that she is "peachy" and Molly is not exactly quick to compliment others (92).

Winifred is not unlike many female protagonists in 1940s Westerns. According to John Tuska, author of *The American West in Film*, while some heroines begin to wear pants instead of dresses in Westerns, when the women meet their future husbands they usually begin to wear dresses again. For example, in *The Desperadoes*, released in 1943, Evelyn Keyes wears pants, "but when Glenn Ford falls in love with her, she changes into a dress" (228). Winifred also makes this transformation from tomboy to a young woman with sexual appeal to men.

Winifred, despite her independent childhood, eventually becomes more like Leah and Rachel. Suddenly, after Winifred attends college for a year, she gives up riding horses, dates young men, and loses her tomboyish manner. Molly once admired Winifred for being able to read Latin and for going off to college, but when Molly praised her for her intellectual abilities "Winifred frowned and cast down her eyes as if her character had somehow been impugned" (194). Obviously, Winifred is only an independent cowgirl until she hits college age. Once this change happens, especially for Molly, Winifred is no longer representative of a potential woman who does not adapt to Western Frontier gender norms.

Ralph offers her the opportunity to become a “Winifred,” who at least has some independence until she becomes an eligible bachelorette, but when Molly denies the chance to ride horses with Winifred, Ralph, and Claude in favor of spending the afternoon writing, Ralph exclaims, “Darn you...darn you to heck. You always make up an excuse. All right for you...if you don’t come tomorrow you can’t ever come anywhere with me again” (95). At this moment Molly insists that her “literature” is more “important” than Ralph and Molly and Ralph’s maturation arc bifurcates (95). Ralph becomes a favorite of Uncle Claude and reaches the milestones of western mania like riding and caring for horses, helping with the birth of a calf and the sexual knowledge that accompanies it, and of course, hunting and Molly is left behind.

Even Ralph, who reaches many of the physical milestones—like riding and caring for horses—embedded within western mania and arguably becomes a man at the end of the novel, realizes that Claude’s ranch does hold gender restrictions. Perhaps Ralph’s anger at his sister for staying home instead of learning to ride horses stems from his own realization that Molly has very few choices on the ranch. She can become like Winifred (until Winifred must become like Rachel and Leah) or she can be like Mrs. Brotheman, who constantly cares for men and is always doing domestic duties. Ralph realizes that as a boy he has opportunities that Molly does not. For example, Ralph thinks, “it was natural for [Molly] to want to be a boy (who *wouldn’t!*) but he knew for a fact she couldn’t be (30). Ralph does not question whether it is better to be a boy (notice the lack of a question mark after “wouldn’t”) but rather insists that it must be more fun to be one.

Ralph and Molly are certainly not blind to the gender inequalities that surround them both at home and on the ranch; otherwise Ralph would not insist that being a boy is

better than being a girl. At home, for example, Ralph and Molly's mother Rose says, "first my father, then my husband, and now Mr. Kenyon. But I have my son" with such regularity that the narrator can predict that she will say it later in conversation (54). Furthermore, after the two misbehave at dinner one night Ralph is told he "may leave the room" while Molly "did not get off so lightly" and is slapped and locked in a closet (72-73). Molly is loathe to become an adult because she realizes that she will not be poised and beautiful like Leah and Rachel and also because she understands, based on her experiences both at home and on the ranch, that for the women in her world, gender inequality only deepens in adulthood. Meanwhile on the ranch, the only adult woman—Mrs. Brotherman—continually cares for the men and children on the ranch and never complains. In fact, it is because Mrs. Faucet trusts the "mild-mannered housekeeper" to keep "the children away from guns and horses" that she even allows Ralph and Molly to visit and eventually live on the ranch (89). Even the name, "Brotherman," determines a devotion to men. It is not surprising that Ralph assumes that she does not want to be a girl and in some ways he is correct—Molly rejects any kind of sexual knowledge about the differences between men and women.

The juxtaposition of two different scenes highlights the fact that Molly not only rejects any sexual knowledge, but also that it is this refusal to understand sexuality that divides Molly from Ralph's maturation arc. In other words, once Molly makes it clear that she has no interest in sexuality she also denies the maturation arc provided by western mania. First, Ralph learns to see without his glasses, but Molly's eyesight is too poor to get along without her glasses (109). Metaphorically, Ralph is able to see that he must adhere to the maturation arc in order to thrive. Although once there was a time

when “they [Ralph and Molly] took pleasure in their weakness which distinguished them from others and which served, as well as an excuse for not playing baseball or pom-pom-pull away” Ralph no longer takes comfort in his glasses (109). He understands that he must meet up to Claude’s standards (Claude is the one who suggests that he stops wearing his glasses) and accept his status as an adult. At this moment the narrator insists, “After that, everything happened” (117).

Immediately after this incident Ralph is exposed to the birth of a calf. Molly is repulsed and when Ralph tries to tell her about the calf she “stuck her fingers in her ears and screamed at him, ‘you’re a liar! You’re a dirty liar’”(118). Even the natural process of animals giving birth is disgusting and disturbing to Molly perhaps because she realizes that if she, like Ralph, learns about sexuality than she will also have to accept that she is female and therefore restricted to very few roles; thus Molly develops the tactic of denying sexuality.

The “everything” that “happen[s] refers to the rest of the novel from the point where Ralph continues on the maturation arc set up by the genre of the Western and Molly is left without any opportunities all the way to Molly’s death. “Everything that happens” is dependent on the rift between Molly and Ralph; Ralph can become initiated into cowboy culture because he can accept sexual knowledge and his role on the ranch. Molly on the other hand, after “everything happened,” aka Ralph moves forward into the milestones set by the Western, is left behind.

Since Molly had already been exposed to gender inequalities both at home and on the ranch it is not surprising that “everything happened” after this moment and that Molly refused sexual knowledge by way of a calf being born, for as long as Molly can stay a

child—naive of sexual knowledge—she is not expected to become like Leah and Rachel who are always pretty and poised, Mrs. Brotherman who is constantly caring for the men on the ranch, or more poignantly, Winifred who is only allowed to be an independent spirit until she is a young woman. Christy Rishoi, expert in coming of age novels, convincingly argues that Molly has no desire to have sexual knowledge because she has no interest in becoming an adult. Molly is not expected to have the same behavior as the other women around her because she is too young. Therefore if she remains young, and therefore void of any knowledge about sex, Molly will not have to live up to the same expectations as Leah and Rachel nor will she have to become like the women she sees on the ranch.

Just as Frankie from *The Member of the Wedding* denies sexual knowledge so that she never has to fulfill the role of a housewife, Molly tries to deny sexuality so that she never has to fulfill the gender expectations of women in western mania. Though there are certainly exceptions, most women in Westerns occupied the role of romantic prize, caretaker, brothel owner, or member of a brothel.<sup>1</sup> These roles were limited to the gender expectations of women; women were expected to care for men. In fact, according to Jane Tompkins, author of *West of Everything*, any authority on the part of a woman is usually dismissed. For example, as Tompkins points out, John Wayne's character—perhaps the most quintessential actor in western mania—is almost always impatient with women who “took longer than a sentence to speak [their] mind[s]” (58). In general, though of course

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<sup>1</sup> Key exceptions to these typical fictional roles for women do begin to appear in the 1940s, for example, *Pistol Packin' Mama* (1943), *Belle of the Yukon* (1944), and *Belle Starr's Daughter* (1947), star pioneering women. Additionally, the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame has been dedicated, since the museum's opening in June of 2001, to highlighting the independent cowgirls in both fiction and nonfiction.

there are exceptions, in western mania, women were peripheral characters without much agency. Molly however, still sees her Uncle Claude's ranch as a way to escape gender inequality; all she has to do is deny her own sexuality.

This denial is marked through Molly's repulsion by any hint of physical growth or weight gain in herself and her brother. As Gilbert and Gubar point out in their *The Madwoman in the Attic*, self-starvation in young women can be a method for forestalling maturity. In their discussion of Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley*, Gilbert and Gubar argue that anorexia nervosa "can be viewed as a protest against growing up female, since self-starvation interrupts the menstrual cycle" (391). One of the characters that Gilbert and Gubar specifically address, Caroline, "has good reason to believe that the only control she can exert is over her own body, since she is completely ineffectual at altering her intolerable lot in the world" (390). Additionally, Gilbert and Gubar point out that self-starvation is one way that pregnant women cope with the horror of becoming "enslaved to the species and reduced to a tool of the life process" (286). Though Molly is not pregnant and her lot is different from Caroline's, she still obsesses over weight for some of the same reasons.

Though the narrator claims that Molly "for the most part...was not conscious of her body" she dislikes others for being what she calls fat (177). Molly decides that she hates the Follansbees, her mother, Rachel, Leah, and Ralph because they are all fat (179). However, she goes on to admit that Ralph, Leah and Rachel are not really fat, but that "fatness did have something to do with it" (179). "If she ever got fat," thinks Molly, "or ever said anything fat, she would lock herself in a bathroom and stay there until she died" (180). She reassures herself that there are "simple ways to avoid it as well as the drastic

one of getting a tapeworm” and even though Molly is thin (even sickly from the tuberculosis she and Ralph both endured), she still “bound herself with a piece of outing flannel so tight that it gave her a pain and she had to lie on the floor to get her slippers on because she could not bend over” (181-182). She also takes great delight in imagining Ralph getting fatter while she gets “thinner and thinner until she was practically famous for it” and at that point she would drop the “fat name of Molly” and name herself after her extremely thin Aunt Clara (182).

Aunt Clara died while getting a tumor removed and “Mrs. Fawcett, in telling this, would say ‘Why, girls, it was such a big tumor that everyone thought she was in a certain condition’” (182). Molly does not completely understand what Mrs. Fawcett is referring to, but “she supposed it had something to do with all that tommyrot with which people were constantly trying to ruin her life” (182). Clearly Molly connects fatness to pregnancy and sexuality and is utterly mortified by either. If Molly denies sexuality than she can remain a child and escape the inferior status of women.

Besides denying sexuality, Molly and Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding* have another striking similarity: they both believe that they will marry their own brother. Also, both are around the same age when they come to the conclusion that this is their best tactic in order to cope with the milestone of marriage that is embedded in the maturation arc.<sup>2</sup> Even though each character recognizes the fact that, according to other people in their lives, their male sibling is superior, they both believe that being wedded to their sibling is more advantageous than entering an exogenous relationship. Marriage is

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<sup>2</sup> The characters have this unusual similarity and their creators even knew one another. However, Stafford harbored a “perhaps slightly competitive, dislike for Carson McCullers... (Hulbert 167). Despite the tension between the authors, both characters seem afraid of sexuality, or at least of the heterosexual relationships in marriage.

so engrained in the maturation arc that neither character can imagine a life without matrimony. For both characters, marrying one's brother is a tactic that they believe will prevent the necessity of becoming gendered and therefore losing the independence that they were allotted as children—too young to be expected to engage in the expectations for women. The characters would still be married, but their marriage would not be a sexual one, therefore each character could enter the adult world without having to submit to the gender expectations set for the women in their lives.

Unaware that, for Molly, developing tactics to cope with the milestones of assimilating into Western American culture is futile, she develops another way to negate the physicality of western mania—language. Part of the appeal of western mania in the 1940s was its concrete binaries: East versus West, man versus woman, city versus ranch, good versus evil. World War II caused some confusion about the concrete roles of men and women and good versus evil, but, like the cold war, western mania reinforced the simplicity of these binaries—with a few exceptions, women played the role of the caretakers and good always won over evil. Western mania appealed to a people who were living through a time when the nation was trying to reestablish these binaries.

Part of the way in which western mania ensured that good won over evil was through its emphasis on physicality; not only are most of the milestones for maturation physical, but also the plots of westerns are pushed forward mostly by actions, not words. According to Jane Tompkins, “the Western is at heart antilanguage” (50). Additionally, Westerns are “full of contrasts between people who spout words and people who act” (51). Those who act physically, either by shooting an enemy or rounding up cattle, are celebrated, while characters who rely on language and not brute force in Westerns—like

lawyers and politicians—are usually distrusted. Western mania connects heroes with the physical world; cowboys live on the land and lord over endless acres, while those who are not dependent on such physical lifestyles—like Molly—are suspicious.

Even in the children's books that partially make up the phenomenon of western mania, physicality is privileged over language. For example, Sally, in Ellsworth Collings's extremely popular book for children, *Adventures on a Dude Ranch* (1940) is bright, but is also criticized for reading too much. While Sally and her brother Tom ride a train into Denver Sally would like to finish a story with a "good description of the western country" (13). Tom is bemused with Sally because they are passing through the very country Sally is reading about. True, Sally almost misses the vista because she is reading about it, but Sally is teased for her bookishness and dependency on language over physical reality.

Yet, Sally and Molly do not share the same fate. Despite Sally's interest in language, Sally is anxious to learn Spanish and the meanings of cowboy lingo like "pulling leather" and "Crowhopping," the character also takes on physical challenges (65).<sup>3</sup> Time and time again Sally overcomes her anxiety about horses, riding fast, branding calves, fly fishing, and even hunting (82, 152, 157, 109). Instead of relying on her command over language, Sally, unlike Molly, is able to become more like Winifred. Sally is actually determined to become a cowgirl. Additionally, at the end of *Adventures on a Dude Ranch*, Sally explains to her mother that her brother Tom will be going back to the Dude Ranch as a hired cowboy. Similar to Winifred, Sally chooses to spend her time

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<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, even the words that Sally learns are about physical activities; "pulling leather" refers to a disqualification from a bronc ride when the rider accidentally uses his free hand to touch the saddle and "crowhopping" refers to the action of an animal who jumps instead of bucks.

on the ranch as a cowgirl, but also like Winifred, as Sally ages she succumbs to the fact that the physical work of the dude ranch is better left to men.

Molly, instead of dedicating herself to becoming a cowgirl, is absolutely certain that she will be a writer—a career that is dependent on the mastery of language. She tries to use language as a tactic in order to cope with the strategy that is western mania. Not only does Molly use language as an excuse from having to learn to ride horses, she also takes refuge in her own writing. Molly goes to Garland Peak to be “undisturbed at her writing” (206). The narrator calls the small glen that she always writes in her “studio” and “as if planned for her” there is a “big flat rock” that Molly uses as a desk; furthermore, the area is “surrounded so densely by trees and chokecherry that they were almost like walls” (206). However, as Molly is fated to face an early death, even Garland Peak cannot provide her with respite; after all, this is also where Molly dies.

Part of the reason why Molly’s use of language proves futile is because she chooses the very tactic that is utterly distrusted by those around her. Molly’s potential vocation is the opposite of what is respected in the western mania. Molly wants to be a writer, a wordsmith, and language is deeply distrusted in the Western. Furthermore, “the Western’s attack on language is wholesale and unrelenting, as if language were somehow tainted in its very being” (51). Molly, surrounded by the strategy of western mania, is even more vulnerable to the distrust of language because she is a woman.

The use of language is always under suspicion in Westerns; however, it is even more deeply distrusted when used by a woman. Men in Westerns, including Uncle Claude, create their own worlds based on physicality. Thus, after Molly shares her poem “Gravel” with Ralph he tells Uncle Claude that he thinks “Molly’s going crazy” (140).

Uncle Claude's response—"I've always did think that the folks that wrote poems are bughouse but harmless"—also underscores a distrust for people who appreciate language (82). The poem itself, "Gravel, gravel on the ground/Lying there so safe and sound/Why is it you look so dead? /Is it because you have no head?" is indicative of both Molly's fate and the failure of language as a tactic (31).<sup>4</sup> According to Forrest G. Robinson, literary scholar, it is because the gravel has no head that it is safe and sound (Robinson 67). Later, Molly actually becomes the gravel; directly after Molly dies the narrator refers to her as Ralph's "dead sister with [a] ruined head" (230). The only way that Molly can become "safe and sound" is to no longer have the ability to think, speak, or use language.

Physicality, and with it of course sexuality, makes up the entirety of the cowboy's reality and especially within Stafford's literary construct, there is no room for people like Molly who not only deny sexuality, but also value language over physicality. According to Jane Tompkins, in reference to the *Western Red River*, released just one year after *The Mountain Lion*, "sex joins...with blood and death and a cold wind blowing as the only true reality, extinguishing the authority of women and their words" (61). Furthermore, "language is relative and is meant for women, while cowboys grunt, grumble, and take action" (61). Molly's tactics of denying sexuality and using language in order to find autonomy are both unsuccessful in the American West first because Molly can not deny the physicality of coming of age forever—she must be considered either a man or a woman in order to exist—and second because physicality is valued over all else in the American West.

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<sup>4</sup> This poem was actually written by Stafford herself in her childhood (Robinson 66).

Additionally, unlike other female protagonists in this project, Molly has almost no female role models. For better or worse, Francine has her mother and her aunt Sissy, Judy has role models in the popular media, and Frankie has Berenice. Molly's two older sisters have little to do with her, and her mother only begrudgingly shows her affection once in the novel. Also Molly is often called "the brains in the family" but "Mrs. Fawcett was not interested in brains" and "she thought this a handicap rather than otherwise" (143). Role models Leah and Rachel, and to some extent Winifred, only teach Molly that to be accepted one must be attractive.

Nor does the promise of college offer Molly a promising future. Molly's mother does insist, "I should like *one* of my daughters to be a college woman, and the other two give me no hope—they write of nothing but beaux" (124). Even though Molly's mother seems to appreciate intelligence and higher education, she proclaims this desire in front of other people she would like to impress and she certainly favors Leah and Rachel over Molly (in fact she seems to value her other two daughters over Molly *because* they think about potential beaux over books). Her mother also frequently reminds Molly that "there [are] other things in the world besides books" (144). Molly's mother does not understand her intelligence and fails to be an appropriate role model for her daughter.

Molly is able to develop what De Certeau calls tactics—futile as they eventually prove to be within Stafford's literary construct—to deal with living in the American West; however, she is utterly unable to appropriate even her physical location into her own identity (xx). De Certeau's theory about appropriating the area where one lives assumes that people have the authority to project their own memories and meanings onto their surroundings. However, Molly, perhaps because she has no future on the ranch or

elsewhere, is unable to make such authoritative moves. Molly does, in fact, physically walk around the ranch; she hikes through the grounds and even has her own special place for reading and writing. Yet Molly is unable to attach any memories or meaning to the physical places surrounding her.<sup>5</sup> Molly is unable to create an individualized experience with her physical surroundings in part because the American West, according to the narrator in *The Mountain Lion*, is monotonous.

The American West, sprawling and open as it might have been, offers its protagonists very little diversity in the novel. For example, as Molly and Ralph take the train to their Uncle Claude's ranch the scenery that they come across does not reflect the great limitless American West that they envisioned. Instead "all of the towns look the same" and "undernourished dogs meandered about the streets" (88). Also, "there seemed to be no trees in any of the towns" (88). Even when the two arrive on the ranch the landscape seems "beyond their compassing and they had already begun to withdraw" (88). The West is depicted as so depressing, desolate, and at times overwhelming that Molly cannot appropriate her surroundings or place meaning on the landscape. It is not just the physicality of the American West, as seen through Ralph and Molly's eyes, which prevents Molly from appropriating her surroundings like other everyday people or consumers. According to De Certeau, making one's surroundings meaningful is much like a speech act in that one appropriates language as they speak in the same way that one appropriates the city as they walk through it. According to De Certeau:

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<sup>5</sup> It is true that Molly has what her narrator calls a "studio," however Garland Peak is also where Molly meets her brutal death.

The act of walking is to [one's surroundings] what the speech act is to language or to statements uttered...it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language). (98)

De Certeau continues with this comparison between walking through one's physical habitat and the speech act by defining "walking as a space of enunciation" (98).

However, this comparison assumes that the speaker has the right to the speech act; sadly, Molly has no such authority.

Perhaps Molly, even though she does write, has internalized the perspectives of Ralph and Claude that she does not have the authority to perform a speech act; Molly's writing is never validated. Again, her poem "Gravel" and a letter Molly writes to her cousin make Ralph believe she is crazy and Claude dismisses anyone who writes poetry as "bughouse" (82). Furthermore, even though Molly momentarily "admire[d] her ballad "The Fierce Mexican" for "several week" she "turned upon it finally with such loathing that she tore it up into tiny little pieces and tried for forget it, but she could not" (207). She also began a detective novel called *The Mystery of the Portland Vase*, but "the novel was not successful because it was too short" (207). Molly tries to write, but she is so indoctrinated with the fact that she has no authority to do so that all of her attempts fail.

Since language, especially language used by women, is always under suspicion in the Western, Molly is unable to appropriate her surroundings, not only because her surroundings are desolate, but also because she does not have the power to transform the dude ranch into her own systems of memory and meaning. There is never any space for

Molly and as a teenage girl she cannot create her own; essentially Molly is unable to exist.

It is not surprising then that Stafford refuses to adhere to the maturation arc and unleashes the subsequent brutality on her protagonist. *The Mountain Lion* is a story about what can happen when the maturation arc is completely rejected; Molly, who is not able to become like Leah, Rachel, and even Winifred, cannot possibly find her own space within Stafford's constrictive literary construct, nor can she go through the typical milestones expected of a teenage girl. Stafford refuses to satisfy our desire for closure and instead uses Molly as a martyr to illustrate what can happen when the maturation arc is utterly forgone. Just as McCullers uses Francine's transition into a banal adulthood to force readers to question the nature of the maturation arc, Stafford uses Molly to force readers to consider the potential violence this trope can cause.

### Chapter Three: Judy Graves Takes the Stage: Performance in Sally Benson's *Junior Miss*

When the satirical series *Junior Miss* debuted in *The New Yorker* on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1939 the main character—a young Judy Graves—is looking for a new coat.<sup>1</sup> Judy has physically outgrown the coats in the children's section of the department store, but she is too young to shop in what we now call the junior's section; Judy's older sister Lois fears that coats in the Junior Miss section will not be age appropriate for Judy. The section of the department store where Miss Graves will find her new coat determines her next stage in life; however, the reader knows that Junior Miss must refer to Judy since she is the central character of the story. Therefore, this will be a story about both Judy's transformation from the children's section to the Junior Miss section—also known as adolescence—and the ways in which Judy develops tactics to cope with the strategy of consumer culture as emblemized by the department store.

The *Junior Miss* series itself was certainly well read and it turned into an entire *Junior Miss* industry. The story was first serialized in the *New Yorker* between 1939 and 1941; when the series was published as a novel in May of 1941 the prolific Sally Benson had her first bestseller (Nash 126). *Junior Miss* became a Broadway hit and ran from November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1941 to July 24<sup>th</sup> of 1943 (Nash 118).<sup>2</sup> The series was so popular it

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the *Junior Miss* discussed is the complete collection of the series published after the serialization was concluded. The series came out in novel format due to the overwhelming success of the series. Of course, *Junior Miss* is also a play and a film and those genres will be indicated. The stories as serialized in *The New Yorker* will also be indicated.

<sup>2</sup> *Junior Miss* was such a huge hit on Broadway that seven days after it premiered, the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed, *Life Magazine* had no time to change their story and

became a film in 1945 and it ran off and on as a radio program from March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1942 to July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1954 (Nash 116).<sup>3</sup>

Like the wedding industry boom and western mania, the department store helped construct significant milestones for teenage girls. The department store also participates in the commoditization of the maturation arc by solidifying categories for family life. In fact, according to Jan Whitaker, expert in the history of department stores, the department store is partially responsible for setting certain milestones for growth and development (Whitaker 275). For example, one graduates into adolescence when she is able to fit into Junior Miss clothing; when young women married, most department stores offered specific rooms where wedding dresses could be privately showed to brides-to-be. Furthermore, when women were in a “delicate condition” it was department store employees to bring maternity clothing to women in private rooms (36). For preadolescents department stores did not just mark rites of passage, they actually helped determine them. After all, one is not ready to become an adolescent, until she can physically fit into the Junior Miss section. Department stores were, and still are, partially responsible for pushing women through certain stages in life and for determining how each stage of life should be physically represented. At the very least, they seem to outwardly help people slip from one stage of life to another and they reinforce what these stages should be—they emphasize the playfulness of childhood and the properness of

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instead of a front cover dedicated to Pearl Harbor, readers saw the smiling face of Patricia Peardon who played the role of Judy Graves (Nash 119).

<sup>3</sup> Even the popular candy Junior Mints owes its name to *Junior Miss*. During the 1949 CBS Broadcast of *Junior Miss* James Welch came up with and marketed the candy (Nash 119).

adulthood. The department store is a strategy, one that determines both when one should wear different styles of clothing and what these different styles should reflect about class. As such it reinforces the maturation plot.

The Junior Miss section did more than just clothe adolescents; it commodified teenagers in a new way. In 1937 Strawbridge & Clothier launched the first Junior Miss clothing section (Whitaker 279). This was the first clothing line for adolescents. Though previously college age students had specific locations in department stores, younger adolescent boys and girls did not. Adolescents wore adult clothes that were made in adolescent sizes (Whitaker 274). That the department store was a powerful and multifaceted strategy, one that helped define what was expected for teenagers, is obvious from the specific ways department stores marketed toward teenage girls.

Though department stores had been catering toward college students since the 1920s, the marketing toward adolescence of the 1930s and 1940s was slightly different. Teenagers in the 1930s and early 1940s could join clubs, enter contests, and participate in fashion shows all hosted by specific department stores (Whitaker 288). These clubs preyed on the insecurities of adolescence; a department store club would probably not appeal to a sophisticated co-ed, but a young woman, just beginning to develop, would be more likely to purchase clothes in order to be a part of this new stage of life. In other words, adolescence was not something one developed into naturally, it had to be donned with the right piece of clothing.

Young women were not the only ones intrigued by this new department store section; mothers were involved in deciding what was appropriate for their young adults. In the mid-1940s *Parents Magazine*, advertised makeup for teenage girls; parents were

assured that their daughters would look appropriate in lipsticks named “classroom pink” (Whitaker 280). Department stores even held classes for young girls that taught them how to apply this makeup, but of course, these classes took into account the teenage girl’s reputation. Mothers would not object to their daughters taking classes on makeup as long as the classes advocated “light application” and a more natural look (Whitaker 289). Other parent friendly classes included lessons on posture (with the tip “Don’t Slump”) and walking (with the tip “Don’t let your stomach lead you down the street) (Whitaker 290). Part of the reason the Junior Miss department was created was that families were concerned about how their daughters represented them, both physically and economically. Families invested in their teenage daughter’s clothes, cosmetics, and behavior as emblems of their own upward mobility.

The department store as a strategy was quite successful. Graduating into the Junior Miss department meant that teenagers were expected to properly represent their families as middle to upper class. This anxiety on the part of the family ensured that parents and teenagers alike spent more time and money at department stores. The *Junior Miss* series, named after the department section by the same name, both depicts and questions the ways young women were supposed to represent their family’s upward social mobility.

Judy Graves’s value to adults along with other comical female protagonists of the 1930s and early 1940s is dependent on her physicality and eventual ability to successfully perform both socioeconomic status and gender. These markers of success indicate that the young woman can properly represent the family as an upwardly mobile one. The readers know very little about Judy as a character at the end of the story. Her only

development, besides her increased ability to perform class and gender, is physical. However, it is her physicality and performance that eventually leads to her acceptance in her family. Audiences generally accepted Judy as a typical comic character of the very late 1930s and early 1940s and with Judy's status as a comical character came certain expectations for the end of the collection. Other characters in 1940s coming of age novels, who are perhaps a little less comical, but like Judy have a sense of autonomy and sometimes get into mischief, end up conforming, at least outwardly, to ideals about womanhood. For example, L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* series (1908-1939) begins with a driven and perspicacious young woman, but the series ends with Anne's desire to nourish others, including a husband and children. Later comedies like *Meet Corliss Archer* (broadcasted from 1943 to 1956) and *A Date with Judy* (broadcasted from 1941 to 1950) end in the reformation of the main characters. Though both Judy- from *A Date with Judy*- and Corliss from *Meet Corliss Archer* begin the series as autonomous, and sometimes subversive characters, they end the series with a newly found sense of femininity, one that, for Judy of *Junior Miss*, is performed.

Judy, because she is a natural actress, learns how to perform the role that the department store dictates for adolescents—that of the proper young woman. Though Judy is greatly lauded for this performance, it is still mainly an act. The reader misses the Judy who did not conform to the gender roles of adulthood, however, unlike Frankie of *The Member of the Wedding*, Judy performs, instead of aspires, to her new prim and proper demeanor. The strategy of the department store pushes the maturation arc forward because it teaches Judy about the gender and class role she is supposed to perform;

however, the satire of the series, combined with how unlikeable Judy becomes at the end of the novel, indicate a distrust of the maturation plot

Though Judy does outwardly conform to her family's idea of femininity (as exemplified through Lois), Judy's performance, which makes up the last story in the series and the last chapter of the collection, does not negate her endearing personality throughout the series. Readers and reviewers want to remember the young Judy, not the transformed Judy. In fact, Judy's awkwardness and lack of self-awareness is sweet and almost nostalgic. Though one reviewer deeply dislikes Judy, most celebrate Judy, not Judy's transformation. Additionally, a book about Judy's poised older sister Lois would not be possible. What kind of amusing scrapes could a girl who completely fulfills the expectations of the department store get into? Lois is certainly not the endearing character, in fact she is fairly forgettable and is rarely mentioned by reviewers.

Though in some ways Judy is rejected until she can be more feminine, the nostalgia for Judy's character is not for the Judy of the last few pages of the collection, instead it is for the Judy of the majority of the novel—unselfconscious and autonomous. Her inability to fit into adolescent clothing was sweet and endearing, but once she fits into the mold she is no longer her autonomous self. In this way the novel both depicts and questions the maturation plot. Readers of *Junior Miss*, even if they were not conscious of Benson's ambivalence toward the maturation plot, would certainly be aware of the serial's satirical nature.

Even though Benson herself was surprised at the success of *Junior Miss* and was not too proud of the work, the satirical nature of the series made it a perfect fit for *The*

*New Yorker*.<sup>4</sup> The series' publication in *The New Yorker* makes it more likely that the reader would pick up on the satirical nature of *Junior Miss*. The narrator in the series makes her relationship with Judy clear; she finds humor in Judy's little scrapes, while she criticizes Judy's family for being too poised. In fact, when looked at in conjunction with the advertisements and columns in *The New Yorker*, the satirical nature of the series is even more obvious. *Junior Miss* ran along side countless advertisements for beauty products. Some of the reoccurring ads in *The New Yorker* from 1939-1941 were for Saks Fifth Avenue, Elizabeth Arden, many different kinds of perfume that were almost all from Paris, teeth whitening products, Hermes, and Macys. One reoccurring advertisement for crème Simon featured a young woman, who looks to be about sixteen years old. Another advertisement for hand lotion begins with "youth, youth, youth." On May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1939 one face lotion advertised, "YOUTH now we may have it, now we may keep it, year after joyful year." In the same issue there was an advertisement that featured "brilliant women with brilliant hands." In the same year treatments by Dorothy Gray promised a new and improved chin; "a young chin is a proud chin." Obviously the obsession to appear clean-faced and youthful was strong from 1939-1941, the same time that *Junior Miss* was serialized.

These advertisements, many times running directly parallel to the text of the series itself, reveal the narrator's candid opinion on being so obsessed with youth and cleanliness. Many of these advertisements, especially the ones for soap, reveal anxieties about appearing to be a member of the lower class. Judy, who takes the advertisements

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<sup>4</sup> In an interview with Robert van Gelder of *The New York Times* Benson claims, "I hadn't cared any too much for Judy Graves." Benson even "wanted to drop Judy" from her short story writing career. In this same interview, Benson insists that she is shocked by the series' success.

very seriously, reveals the series' humorous, and yet honest, nature. Judy considers her hands "brown and stubby" and she incessantly scrubs her hands with soap (72).

Furthermore, she makes lists of when/how she will groom herself, and these lists often include popular complexion soaps that were sold in department stores at the time (72).

The narrator sarcastically remarks, "remembering the none too subtle insinuations of the advertisements in the magazine, she grew cold with the thought of how her former carelessness might have ruined her life" (72). Judy is caught in thinking that if she has "brown and stubby" hands that reflect a lower socioeconomic status or less than perfect feet, her life will certainly be ruined (72). Here Judy reflects the anxieties shared by her parents about her appearance. Judy is supposed to look clean and presentable at all times so as not to embarrass her family by indicating that she is not a member of the upwardly mobile middle to upper class. However, it is also obvious that the narrator is critical of such anxieties.

Judy not only frets about cleanliness, she also actively participates in a contest similar to the ones hosted by department stores and advertised through magazines. Judy's application to this contest reveals even more of the satirical nature of the series and the narrator's active criticism of using one's daughter as a badge for economic success. In the contest the contestant must explain why he or she (usually she) likes Ivory Soap in twenty-five words or less and send in his or her essay along with the top of a box of Ivory Soap (73). The winner supposedly receives twenty-five hundred dollars. Ivory had many of these contests throughout the 1930s and even into the early 1940s. Most, if not all, of the advertisements for the contest are gendered. They almost always show a woman washing her face, a woman caring for a child, or a woman washing the dishes—and of

course it is almost always a woman (MacDonald). In a 1935 advertisement for the soap flakes one woman scolds her son because he is too young to “realize how a girl feels about her hands.” She goes on to insist, “This little bride isn’t going to cry her eyes out because dish-washing gets her hands red and rough” (MacDonald). Indeed. Other Ivory Soap ads from 1939 to 1941 (the years *Junior Miss* was serialized) use slim models to convince readers to take care of their fabrics with the product, still others use children to humiliate young women into taking care of their hands with Ivory Soap (Macdonald).

Interestingly, when Judy applies for the contest she does not do so as herself. Judy is confident that her application “scored a hundred on all three” of the criteria for the contest: “sincerity, originality of thought, and conciseness” (67). However, Judy blatantly lies about her identity; she claims, “I use Ivory Soap Flakes because as a bride I find them indispensable for my priceless lace wedding veil...” (66-67). For inspiration Judy washes her bloomers in ivory soap. “The elastic at the top [of the bloomers] had been stretched to the breaking point so often around Judy’s solid waste that there was no spring left in it” (66). Yet, in Judy’s letter she maintains that she uses the soap for her “priceless wedding veil, an heirloom” and her “dainty handmade silk bloomers” (67). Even though it is the influence of contests like these—often held by department stores—that push Judy through the maturation plot into her performance of the poised young woman, Benson uses the tactic of satire to point out the ridiculousness of these strategies.

Judy’s misunderstanding of the ads also indicates an authentic questioning of Judy’s tacit responsibility to represent her family’s economic wellbeing. After all, Judy’s body and skin are the very definition of youthful, they belong to a preteen, but they are not at all desirable. The irony is that Judy is the definition of youth, but she is also

awkward, and until the end of the novel, no amount of ivory soap will make Judy more appealing to her family as a symbol of socioeconomic wellbeing. Amidst all of the ads for beauty products that made you look more youthful was Judy's awkward, yet adolescent, presence. Judy tries these products, but for the most part they do not work. So what is the point of these products? They do not seem to work for Judy and if they could somehow make one's skin and body younger, would that mean they would have rough skin and a round stomach like Judy? The dynamic between *The New Yorker*, its audience, and the ads the magazine contained helped form the plot of *Junior Miss* and also reveals just how strong an influence the department store and its advertisements had on adolescent girls like Judy Graves.

That the department store pushed the maturation plot forward and taught Judy the role she was supposed to perform is obvious even in the character of the sales personnel. The "salesgirl" in the Junior Miss Department has her part in transmitting the strategy of the department store; "Her face lit up when she saw Lois" (21). However, when Mrs. Graves explains that she needs a new coat for her other daughter, Judy, the salesgirl only "vaguely" responds with an "oh yes" (21). When Judy expresses disappointment she smile[s] tolerantly and says, "now if it were for this young lady [Lois]..." (23). Not only does the department store and its practices of sizing make no space for Judy, but so too do the people who represent the department's practices. Sales people at department stores were sometimes conveyers of the strategy itself; Judy is pressured into performing the role of the kind of girl who represents upward mobility.

Part of what the strategy that is the department store determined was appropriate body type. Department stores ensured that women would strive to be slender and

contained. Since wearing department store clothing signified middle to upper class status and since popular clothing of this era truly favored thin figures, to appear slender was also to appear wealthy and educated. Hence, the Graves family is consistently anxious about Judy's uncontained body.

It is no surprise that the clothes Judy wears are not flattering on her body. The dresses that were sold in department stores, dresses marketed to upper-class women, were made for thin bodies. Though dresses did come in larger sizes, the dresses themselves were made to highlight the thinness of the waist. Certainly these dresses were cut to flatter slender women. That Wallis Simpson declared "you can never be too rich or too thin" comes as no surprise when examining department store clothing from this era.<sup>5</sup> Thinness was directly associated with upper-class women and part of the anxiety about Judy's heavysset body is related to the way she represents her family's socioeconomic status.

Thus, Lois, Judy's older sister, who fits perfectly into Junior Miss clothing, is the ideal emblem of the Graves's socioeconomic status. If Judy is dismissed because of her awkward and heavysset body, Lois is celebrated due to her slenderness. Lois is just fifteen, but the people around her, especially her family, often laud her body. Her walk is "neat," her stockings are "slim," her clothes are always "suitable" and she is never awkward like other girls her own age or younger (57, 113, 162). Though her father, mother, salesgirls, etc. respect Lois because of her adult like body, her hips are praised as "childish" (12). In fact, "when she walked, she took short, prim steps and her skirt swung from side to side from her slender, childish hips" (12). Even Mr. Graves thinks fondly of

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<sup>5</sup> That Wallis Simpson was the first woman to say this is apocryphal, however she is usually accredited with the famous quote.

the way Lois carries her body (57). Lois's body is always described as prim and proper, but Judy's body is earthy and uncontained.

Judy's uncontained body is constantly being compared to Lois's asexual body. While Lois has "childish hips," Judy is reprimanded for looking pregnant. Mr. Graves thinks disparagingly about the way Judy "bounces" when she walks (58). Judy is taught not to look too sexy or voluptuous. When Lois tucks in her sweater Lois exclaims, "even if one has the figure for it, it isn't smart to tuck one's sweater in this year" and Mrs. Graves scolds, "I don't want to have to speak to you about your sweater again...take it out and leave it out" (63). The family shares an anxiety about the appearance of Judy's body and she is taught to constrain her body so as to appear prim, poised, and most importantly, class conscious.

Anxiety regarding Judy's weight, uncontained body, and appetite are so pervasive throughout the novel that one or two examples will suffice for the twenty or so references to Judy's apparently large body. Lois compares her sister to P.K. or Powerful Katrinka.<sup>6</sup> The Powerful Katrinka had valuable qualities as a physically strong, capable woman who was actually stronger than the men around her. These qualities are ignored by both of the young women and looking like "P.K" is definitely meant as an insult as Mrs. Graves scolds Lois for teasing her sister (19). For Judy, Lois, and Mrs. Graves the advantages of

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<sup>6</sup> The Powerful Katrinka was a comic strip that probably debuted in 1908 in the *Chicago Post*, but it was syndicated and even rereleased between 1934 and 1940 (Eckhardt). There was also a film starring Wilna Hervey at six feet, three inches and about 300 pounds. In both the comic strip and the film the Powerful Katrinka is a woman who does not know her own strength and oftentimes has more physical prowess than the men around her (Eckardt). Men often time stand around the character looking at her in awe and disbelief (Eckardt).

being physically strong are not worth having to look unfeminine or uncontained; physical strength is under appreciated, only delicacy has value.

Judy Graves is a part of a long line of female protagonists who are consistently described as being unfortunate in their need to eat. Jokes about Judy's ongoing hunger and body are present in the series, the play, and the film; however, though other comic characters like Corliss Archer from *Meet Corliss Archer*, and even more serious characters like Anne of *Anne of Green Gables*, are consistently demeaned because they have what is considered an unladylike appetite, it is the people in Judy's life that degrade her who are brought into question. For example, Mr. Graves, instead of enjoying his daughter's company on a day out, tells Judy, "Too bad Lois couldn't come" and the narrator ensures the reader, "he was remembering the neat way Lois walked" (57). Mr. Graves is too obsessed with comparing Judy's unconstrained body with Lois's poised one to even enjoy their time together. So while department stores emphasized the importance of remaining slender in order to reflect the family's socioeconomic status, Sally Benson uses satire to criticize the strategy of the department store.

The very nature of this strategy—one that is in many ways constricting for young men and women—lends itself to a more subversive tactic. Judy, faced with the domineering strategy of the department store, teaches herself how to perform what the department store demands. It is not a coincidence then that Benson places Judy Graves in a performance so soon before the end of the series. Just days before the protagonist's "transformation" Judy stars in a school play. Judy's perfect imitation of the drunkard in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* earns her quite a bit of notoriety. Mr. Graves's friend even "clapped [him] on the shoulders and exclaimed, 'best thing I ever saw, the act your

daughter put on! Reminded me of you Harry'” (173). If Judy can imitate her father so perfectly, then certainly Judy can enact the role of the poised young woman.

Judy does indeed act out the role that the department store deems appropriate; she stars as the successful embodiment of her family's socioeconomic status. Throughout the series all of Judy's movements are described as lumbering, but when she greets her first date, she holds out her hand, says “good evening” and insists that she “loves to dance” though not just a few days earlier she swore she would not (214). Mr. Graves's reaction to Judy's transformation underscores the performative aspect of Judy's newly found gendered sense of self. He exclaims, “she sold him down the river. Sold him down the river, by God! His voice was rich with pride and satisfaction. By God, if she didn't” (214).

Mr. Graves's exclamation deserves specific attention. The saying is reminiscent of slavery in the United States. A slave in the Northern slave states could be sold further south down the Mississippi River into even harsher conditions. Alternatively, a runaway slave, if caught, could be sold back into slavery. Therefore, the adage in the context of *Junior Miss* has a note of betrayal and deception. Mr. Graves is obviously happy that Judy can now act as an emblem for his families' socioeconomic status; however, he is aware that Judy is actually tricking her date. Essentially, the phrase indicates that Judy is sending her date to a place where he is fooled into thinking she has become the poised young woman. These words—the last in the series—highlight the tactic of performance that Judy has developed in the face of the restrictive strategy of the department store.

Even though Benson engages the strategy of the maturation arc—Judy learns to perform what is expected of her—the author still uses Judy to force the audience to

question this strategy. Though Judy's family is more accepting of her after her performance, the Judy throughout the novel is much more likeable than the character that Judy performs. The character's brief production as a poised and elegant young woman does not negate the majority of the serialization. Despite its ending, for most of the series Judy is blissfully unaware of gender and class constrictions and feels no need to act the part of a poised young woman. Judy speaks loudly when she gets excited, energetically rides a neighbor boy's bike, eats voraciously throughout the novel, and even steals the show as a drunken butler in her school's rendition of *The Tempest*. After all, if Judy can act the part of a drunken butler, why not a poised young woman?

That Benson questions the nature of the department store strategy is reflected not only in Judy's clever tactic of performance, but also in Judy's relationship with the narrator and other characters. While Judy is quite likable, other characters that tease her are not. The narrator does not celebrate Judy's sister, mother, or their attitudes about Judy. Though she is certainly the paragon of representing the upper class, Lois seems stuffy and she is certainly not endearing. Her perfection is not as relatable as Judy's imperfections and since there is no need to sympathize with Lois, the reader is not as invested in her character. Mrs. Graves's constant nagging at Judy only makes Judy a more sympathetic character and Mrs. Graves, with her public air of indifference, is all too proper and boring.

That Benson's *Junior Miss*, as serialized in *The New Yorker*, truly questions the maturation plot is also obvious when the series is taken out of the *New Yorker* and made into a movie. Until it was made into a novel, the *Junior Miss* series was exclusively enjoyed by *The New Yorker* readers; however, the movie reached a much broader

audience. Adults and children alike went to see the *Junior Miss* movie. As *Junior Miss* became more commodified, the more subversive aspects of Judy's character disappear. Any dissident qualities that Judy has in the series, like her ability to perform as opposed to adhere to the strategy of the department store, are skimmed off and given to Fluffy. Fluffy is a friend of Judy's in the series, but she has minimal importance; however, in the movie Fluffy has a major role. Fluffy's new status as a bobby-soxer (she was not one in the series) makes her an easy target; in other words, it is easy to ignore Fluffy's rebelliousness, rebelliousness that used to belong to Judy Graves, because she is a caricature of a nonconformist. The satirical nature and the subversiveness of *Junior Miss* as serialized in *The New Yorker* is lost when it becomes a part of mass culture; this shift is most obvious when we look at the new character of the bobby-soxer.

The bobby-soxers, including Fluffy, developed ingenious ways of dealing with the standards set by department stores. The strategy of the department store limited clothing to conservative, tightly fitting dresses that favored a slim figure, but some teenage girls used their own creativity to transform department store clothing into their individual sense of style. Mixing clothing from the men's department with clothing from the Junior Miss Department and altering department store clothing in general became a new important tactic for teenage girls (Whitaker 279).

Partially because they stood out from other teenage girls, the bobby-soxers were an easy target for criticism. According to Miriam Forman-Brunell, popular culture expert and author of *Babysitter: An American History*:

The upwardly mobile middle-class...hoped that teenage girls would practice domestic skills and develop maternal sensibilities according to the

conservative postwar gender ideology; they harbored fears about reckless delinquents who messed up the household instead of maintaining it. (69)

These “delinquents” are bobby-soxers like Fluffy, young women who used their own tactics to appropriate the limited options they saw in the department store. Bobby-soxers refused to wear the restrictive dresses popular in the 1940s and early 1950s; instead, they dealt with the strategy of the department store—with its attempts to normalize an upper-class style—by altering clothes to their own preferences. The bobby-soxer love for style and their disregard for representing themselves as members of the upper-class was frequently looked upon as a threat to the very values of the upper class.

The department store, as purveyor of acceptable proper clothing for the upwardly mobile class, did not necessarily recognize the bobby-soxer fashion as an acceptable one. Department stores rarely, if ever, advertised bobby-soxer clothing; advertisements for the Junior Miss section were for prim and proper dresses fit for the well-to-do upwardly mobile class. Most likely the bobby-soxer fashion was not encouraged by department stores (in ads or displays) because in some ways the bobby-soxer look indicated what some middle to upper middle class members perceived as blue collar.

Fluffy is emblematic of this anxiety of looking working-class; while Judy does not look elegant until the last few minutes of the movie, she also does not dress like Fluffy. Fluffy, unlike Judy, is symbolic of tensions between both the upper and working classes and the generation gap between children and parents. While many working parents tried to appear upwardly mobile, and also tried to make sure that their children were a badge of this upward mobility, bobby-soxers turned to the working class for inspiration. According to Brunell:

Just as adult suburbanites cast aside their working-class past in their movement upward into the middle class, teenage girls incorporated the music, fashions, dance, vernacular speech, values, attitudes (e.g., defiance, spontaneity), and other aspects of lower class cultural practices into their own teen culture. (73)

Fluffy fits perfectly into this description. Unlike Judy, Fluffy does wear bobby-soxer garb. Fluffy is a typical bobby-soxer, she catches all the latest movies, wears her socks rolled down to her ankles with saddle shoes, and blatantly talks back to adults. Once she even tells Judy to tell her mother that she is too drunk to talk to her on the phone. Not surprisingly, the movie begins with Judy as an inconvenience; a resident of the apartment building where the Graves's reside slips on Judy's roller skate. Even this incident is blamed on Fluffy's influence. Apparently Fluffy's bobby-soxer manners are so influential that she can be held responsible for Judy's forgetfulness. Fluffy appears in the collection of stories as well, but she is nowhere near as rebellious, instead she is a mere nuisance.

All of Judy's subversiveness—her ability to perform, the fact that she is much more endearing before she performs the role of the proper young woman—is transferred to Fluffy and made much more simplistic. Though Fluffy lives in Judy's building and has a similar socioeconomic background, the movie constantly criticizes Fluffy for her rebellious attitude. At one point in the movie, Judy and Fluffy scathingly mock Lois as “charming Lois,” but when Fluffy goes too far, Judy rolls her eyes along with her sister. Additionally, Judy agrees with Lois that Fluffy is trying to be a femme fatale for wearing dark nail polish. It is obvious that Fluffy is truly an easy target for the silliness of subversive teenage girls in that she is not even needed for the plot of the movie. Fluffy

could have been a major component in Judy's scheming, but she never once helps Judy. Her role only serves the purpose of demonstrating the ridiculousness of a girl who does not act as a badge for her family's socioeconomic status.

It is also Judy to "grow up" at the end of the movie. The last time we see Fluffy she is still behaving as a rebellious bobby-soxer while Judy is transformed into a proper young woman easily accepted by her family. Essentially, Judy leaves any inclination to be a nonconforming bobby-soxer behind so that she can conform to the type of woman that is appreciated by her family. The movie depicts the rebellious nature of the bobby-soxer as a phase, one that should be left behind in order to become an adult, and being an adult for Judy means conforming to a certain image of womanhood and class.

That the movie contains one rebellious character who could easily be dismissed as "just a bobby-soxer" highlights the subversive nature of the *Junior Miss* series as published in *The New Yorker*. In the *Junior Miss* series, though Benson adheres to the maturation plot, the fact that Judy is much more likeable before the end of the series teaches the reader to question the maturation arc. Furthermore, the fact that Judy performs her final transformation indicates the possibility that Judy will retain some of her endearing characteristics.

#### Chapter Four: Francine's Scrapbook, Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is one of the most beloved novels in American literature and has been translated into sixteen different languages. It is just as cherished now as when it was published in 1943; the novel has sold at least 2.5 million copies to date (Weidman).<sup>1</sup> Contemporary reviews of the novel are almost all glowing. Orville Prescott of *The New York Times* declared the novel “the great American epic of upward progress toward education, freedom, self-respect, and accomplishment” (Prescott). In April of 1944 *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* was the best selling novel in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Detroit, St. Louis, New Orleans, and San Francisco (“The Best Selling Books”). In fact, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is the only one of the novels in this project to make the *New York Times* Bestsellers (Lee). The novel is still a mainstay in any young adult literature library or bookstore section. Why is it that this novel, of all the coming-of-age novels written in the 1940s, was and is so satisfying to readers?

In this chapter I argue that the novel's success can be attributed to the fact that Betty Smith enables Francine Nolan to tell her own story; Smith, like Sally Benson, resists the maturation arc by using her character as a tool in order to question this strategy. That Francine is able to take authority over her own story is obvious when compared with the more conservative film version of the novel. In the novel, Francine

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<sup>1</sup> That the novel is immensely popular is obvious in its parody starring Bugs Bunny—*A Hare Grows in Manhattan* (1947).

Nolan refuses to conform to the societal expectations around her and fights for her own education. Though Francine does meet some milestones in the novel—like graduation and sharing a first kiss—she resists the maturation arc by taking ownership over her own decisions and her own story. When adhered to unquestioningly the maturation arc can produce banal adults like Frankie Addams from *The Member of the Wedding* and when the trope is completely neglected, there can be tragic consequences; however, because Francine resists the maturation arc, she has autonomy that other characters in 1940s coming-of-age novels do not.

Even though Benson's *Junior Miss* is probably closest to the novel on the spectrum from popular literature to the more literary, it is impossible to imagine Judy Graves telling her own story. Additionally, while Frankie Addams conforms to the maturation arc and becomes less likeable and Molly finds it absolutely impossible to become an adult, Francine, through her resistance to the maturation arc, is able to find her own voice. One of the reasons that Francine has conventional authority over her own story is because *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* leaves little room between the character of Francine and the author. In fact, the novel was frequently read as Betty Smith's autobiography. Meyer Berger, reviewer for *The New York Times*, emphasized the autobiographical quality of the novel:

The publishers choose to call the book a novel, yet it is hardly that....this is rather a stringing together of memory's beads and the workmanship is extraordinarily good. This is autobiography. Above all, it is a faithful picture of a part of Brooklyn that was mostly slums and misery. (BR4)

Additionally, Bosley Crowler, reviewer for *The New York Times*, said the novel is written with “genuine feeling” and was “plainly torn from [Betty Smith’s] own heart” and Diana Trilling, famous literary critic who did not particularly like the novel said, “Miss Smith was born in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, but even without knowing this fact we could guess that the story was autobiographical” (157). The novel does indeed read as an autobiography, one told from the perspective of a teenage girl. Perhaps *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is the most satisfying novel to read in this project because Francine Nolan represents Betty Smith as a teenaged girl and therefore the character is able to tell her own story. The novel was not only praised for reading as an autobiography, but it was also lauded for its realism. An anonymous reviewer from *The New Yorker* called the novel “a welcome relief from the latter-day fashion of writing about slum folk as if they were all brutalized morons” (*New York Times*). Prescott compared the novel, to Smith’s credit, to James T. Farrell’s sociological report about slum life in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> The realism in the novel adds to its autonomy; Francine seems to be telling her own authentic story.

Part of what makes Francine seem so autonomous is not only the autobiographical point of view and realism, but also the specific style of the novel. In this chapter I argue that *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* actually takes on the style of a scrapbook. While Judy Graves of *Junior Miss* quickly abandons her scrapbook and jumps deeply into the world of consumer culture, it is assumed, even though the reader rarely has insight into what

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<sup>2</sup> Diana Trilling actually insisted that this comparison of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* to James Ferrell’s nonfiction reports on slum life in Chicago, made her very “sad” both for the condition of fiction reviewing and for Mr. Farrell.

Francine collects, that the protagonist maintains a scrapbook throughout the novel.<sup>3</sup> Judy Graves, the only other character in this project to keep a scrapbook, decides that scrapbooks are not functional and replaces her efforts with a devotion to consumer culture. Perhaps Francine's status as a member of the working class ensures that she devotes energies not to consumer culture, but to her own artistic creation.

It is no surprise that Francine in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, set in the early 1900s, but published in 1943, keeps a scrapbook. What is more surprising is that the novel itself reads as one. Many contemporaneous reviewers have commented that the novel is episodic—it tends to be organized by the telling of one event to the telling of another event.<sup>4</sup> Other contemporaneous reviewers, even those who wrote mostly positive reviews, criticized the book for being too sentimental, as scrapbooks often are. Though *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* might, at times, fall into the trap of being overly sentimental, I argue, with the help of reader-response theory, that the novel's scrapbook format enables Francine to be autonomous and to resist the maturation arc strategy by giving her the ability to imagine different worlds, engage in active, participatory reading, and create morals that are guideposts, but not absolutes.

In this chapter I employ the theories of Wolfgang Iser, reader-response theorist and German literary scholar, to support my argument that the scrapbook style of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* allows Francine to read the world around her in dynamic ways.

According to Iser the text does not truly exist without the phenomenon of it being

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<sup>3</sup> Very late in the novel Francine keeps a memento from a date with a soldier. The narrator insists, "she treasured the program in her scrapbook" (410). The reader can only assume that Francine has kept a scrapbook throughout the novel.

<sup>4</sup> Meyer Berger of the New York Times and Diana Trilling of *The Nation* suggest that the novel is strung together by smaller stories; Berger compliments this style while Trilling is less convinced.

read. The reader creates meaning from the text and this interpretation holds a different meaning, both dependent and independent of the text. For Iser any literary text is composed of two poles, the “artistic and the esthetic” (Iser 50). The artistic pole represents the text itself while the esthetic text refers to the individual’s reading of that text; literary interpretation exists between these two poles. The coming together of these two poles is a dynamic process that can never be repeated twice, even by the same person. An “arena” is created where both the author of the piece and the reader of the piece participate in a game of the imagination” (Iser 51). A boring piece of literature, or one that is not considered literary by Iser is one that does not leave room for the reader to imagine. If the text is overly didactic, or impedes on the reader’s ability to interpret for him or herself, the text is simply not interesting. In this chapter I argue that Francine is able to “read” the “text” that surrounds her life in a dynamic process that gives her authority over her own story. Francine, using the scrapbook style that makes up what can almost be considered an autobiography, is the “reader” and interpreter of her own life story.

In this chapter I also argue that while scrapbooks can be a restrictive strategy they also provide the opportunity for subversive tactics. Scrapbooks, like the other social discourses in this project, helped solidify certain milestones for the coming of age process. On the one hand, scrapbooks can be considered what De Certeau would call a strategy because they have the potential to reinforce cultural norms and power relations. For example, according to Susan Tucker, historian and popular culture expert, printed scrapbooks, as opposed to homemade scrapbooks, sometimes came with titles that were usually about either romance, classmates,

and/or academia in general—labels like these dictated what was supposed to be held important by young women (Tucker 2). Young women who filled in information under these labels solidified the fact that they too held both romance and academia as significant. In some ways, print scrapbooks controlled not only what was supposed to be held as central to a young girl's experience, they also helped to reinforce memory. Women looking back on their girlhood would certainly be likely to remember the events that they entered into their scrapbook and these important events and topics were dictated by labels—labels both created by and solidified by cultural norms and power relations.

On the other hand, scrapbooks can also be used as a tactic. As seen through Tucker's study of scrapbooks, many girls either poked fun at these labels, ignored them all together, and/or conformed to the labels while maintaining their own sense of identity. Whether individual teenage girls consistently aligned their "scraps" with the labels dictated by the publishing company or if they were consistently more rebellious and even went to the extent as to make fun of the labels, one aspect of scrapbook making is unwavering—scrapbooks simultaneously reveal and hide the scrapbooker's true self.

Francine's scrapbook—*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*—is no exception. This constant push and pull between the private, more authentic self and the public, more affected self, reveals the fact that Francine, through this format, was able to both manage her own subjectivity while fitting into existing cultural norms. As E. W. Gurley, the author of the popular *Scrap--Books and How to Make Them*, admits:

I have almost as much reluctance in showing some of my scrap---books as I would in permitting others to read my private diary; for the contents of these books, though written by authors unknown to me, and written for the public, are yet such true interpretations of my own feelings, that they show the secret history and aspirations of my soul.

(17)

As a novel written in the style of a scrapbook, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is also both private and public. The reader is able to see both Francine's private ambivalence to the social norms around her and the ways in which she publicly copes with these social norms.

Francine was certainly a part of a long generation of women to keep scrapbooks; throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century generations of people, usually young women, expressed themselves through scrapbooks. According to Tucker, scrapbooks are "too humble to be collage (and thus are not afforded the status of art) [and] too revealing to rest beside the family bible on the parlor table" (1). Scrapbooks are simultaneously public and private and simultaneously conforming (strategic) and authentic (tactical). The women who made these scrapbooks of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century "act[ed] with some agency, to show in their choice of printed and visual objects both the false self and a partially revealed, more authentic self" (2). Also, "Scrapbook making reinforced reading the self into acceptable but also personalized images and words provided by popular culture" (5). In other words the women who made these scrapbooks were conscious of putting together a visual image of their own

identity. The creation, while it reflects the woman's identity, also reflects the social norms of the era in which the scrapbooks were created. The scrapbook format that we can see in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* reveals Francine's constant struggle between adhering to the social norms of her day and her independent thoughts and behaviors; the scrapbook is simultaneously a strategy and a tactic, one that allows Francine to resist the maturation arc by building her own authority.

Though for the most part, labels dictated what should be held as important for teenage girls, sometimes the labels themselves allowed young women like Francine to imagine a different future. Part of the reason that Francine believes in the power of education to pull her out of poverty is her ability to imagine different worlds in general. Some scrapbooks were aspirational; they not only had pictures of young women in college clothing with books and sometimes mortarboards, they also presented these young women as neat, tidy, and attractive (Tucker 3). Obviously scrapbooks showed the ideal of college. The illustrations in scrapbooks for college-aged women were prim and proper and provided young women like Francine the ability to imagine another world, even if it was an idealized one. This imagining of the world of college is even more powerful for Francine because she does not know anyone to have attended college and has never visited one.

Furthermore, Francine's actual academic environment is quite unlike the appealing pictures of college education in scrapbooks. Her first school is a mean and cruel place, especially before Francine's Aunt Sissy uses her sexuality to improve Francine's conditions. Education in the early 1900's consisted mainly of memorization and corporal punishment was an accepted practice. Classrooms were full as there was a

burst in immigration after the depression of the 1890s. In Francine's particular classroom, students that appear to have more money are treated better; they sit in the front of the class and the teacher pays more attention to them (Smith 76). Any classism that existed in the homogenously poor neighborhood was exacerbated in the neighborhood school; one day Francine even urinated herself in class because the teacher refused to acknowledge her presence. Despite the fact that Francine's actual academic environment does not always encourage growth, she still clings to the idea that education, as idealized in scrapbooks, will provide her with a better life.

Francine's faith in education is dependent on the ability to, what Iser calls, "ideate" (*The Act of Reading* 137). Just as readers can fill in the "suspensions of connectability" in text, Francine can read the world around her and even if there are inconsistencies, she is able to produce meaning and even imagine what her own future will be (*The Act of Reading* 195). Francine performs what Iser calls "consistency-building" through her use of scrapbooking (17). For example, even though scrapbooks were full of almost unrealistic images of the ideal of college life, Francine could still imagine herself within academia.

Scrapbooks also would have prepared Francine for the passage between her family in Brooklyn and her new life at college—the University of Michigan.<sup>5</sup> According to Tucker, "The focus of the scrapbooks...was the girl growing away from her biological family and her formation, with other girls, of another type of community" (9). Scrapbooks represented the transition from the domestic sphere to the public sphere and eased the transition out of the family home and into either college or matrimony. Though

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<sup>5</sup> Betty Smith also attended and graduated from the University of Michigan.

the scrapbooks for college girls, “showed young women within a frame that made for sweetness, tidiness, and only the smallest experiment with a newfound freedom” at least scrapbooks made it clear that some young women in the early 1900s, were indeed off to college (9).

At the end of the novel Francine too is beginning to separate herself from her familiar roots. She too will soon be a coed living with other college girls. The last episode of the novel, which could clearly be within Gurley’s topic of the “sentimental,” is Francine saying goodbye to her home, her brother, and her former self. Though Francine might have “closed the window” on her former self, the scrapbook helped provide transitions for girls from a familial life to one of college days (Smith 493). Scrapbooks published between 1900 and 1940 like “Alma mater Days” and “The College Girl’s Record” helped form a future in education as they allow Francine to imagine a different world, one that was oddly void of men (Tucker 8-9).

Even though there is usually room for romantic dates with men and pages for potential beaux in scrapbooks men as authority figures are usually absent. Though the absence of fatherhood in scrapbooks and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* should not be celebrated necessarily, Francine’s familial relationships, along with the general undermined authority of fathers in scrapbooks, allow Francine to imagine a world where women can be independently successful. Francine is not alone in having an absent father; in the eighty---two scrapbooks studied by Tucker, fathers are mentioned only eight times (15). Of course, some of this absence within scrapbooks is because scrapbooks illustrate the transitions not only from childhood to adulthood, but also from the private sphere of home to the public sphere of society.

However, the absence of fathers, and for the most part parents in general, helped teenage girls express their individual identities and imagine a world where they could act independently.

Francine is also able to imagine a world where her life, unlike her mother's, does not need to be solely dedicated to labor and marriage. Like the scrapbooks themselves, Francine is fairly evenly balanced between her sense of sexuality and romance and her devotion to education. Scrapbooks usually had headlines dedicated to both education and romance. In the early 1900s scrapbooks that marked the end of college lauded the potential for marriage. For example, a young woman graduating from Barnard in 1905 included articles entitled "A Sighting of Brides at Barnard," "Cupid's Class," "Married Already," and "12 Girls" (17). However, the Dodd Mead 1910 edition of "My Commencement" is a little more academic. It includes the headings, "faculty," "commencement exercises," "essays and orations," "speeches," "prizes," and "social events" (6). The headings in commencement scrapbooks seem to be just as dedicated to education as to romance. Francine too dedicates her energies evenly between education and romance.

Scrapbook making not only enabled Francine to envision a different world for herself including the future in education and the potentially powerful roles of women, it also changed the way that Francine read text. Scrapbooks, and those that taught young girls how to make them, encouraged extracting morals from novels and life experiences. Many educators in the late 1800s and early 1900s encouraged young women to make scrapbooks for this very reason; such a practice was thought

to have created a “focused learning” (Gurley 10). Gurley insists that scrapbooks would keep young women away from “gossipy reading” (10---11). Instead of reading for pleasure and for the supposed “gossipy” nature of some novels, young girls would look for the moral of the story and put it into their scrapbook; in this way scrapbooks were a strategy—one that insured that young woman would conform to the values of their educators and surrounding culture (10---11). Francine too seeks the edifying nature of her life events; however, she uses the scrapbook as a tactic in order to appropriate life lessons, not to simply accept morality as absolute.

Certainly Frances is able to take away more than just scandal and romance from the novels that she reads. The not---so---friendly librarian that Francine visits weekly provides her with novels by Marie Corelli, George Barr McCutcheon, and of course Louisa May Alcott (Smith 11). Though we do not know which particular novel by Marie Corelli Francine is exposed to, Corelli’s most read book is *A Romance of Two Worlds*, published in 1886. The novel creates a liminal space between evolution and creationism; it is often thought to have inspired new age thinking (Galvan 85). Through *A Romance of Two Worlds* Frances is exposed to a famous and prolific female writer with the ability to imagine a different world.

Furthermore, *A Romance of Two Worlds* frames the protagonist as a “pioneer” who makes her way to heaven (Corelli 50). She is obviously worthy of seeing Jesus Christ, but rarely uses gendered language like “He.” Instead the most important being in the narrator’s journey is her (gender neutral) “guardian angel” or “guide” (Corelli 51). Spiritual beings that she meets in heaven are carefully referred to as “it” so that no gender differentiations exist (see page 51). Spiritual beings on the

narrator's journey refer to her as "sister spirit" indicating the importance of her femininity while insisting on her equality (Corelli 50). Even the language of this novel is inspirational for Francine. Women are equally as valued, and unlike many other religious themed works that she may have been exposed to, gender is not important in this book. Through Corelli, Francine is exposed to an imaginative space where women can be considered "pioneer[s]" into the unknown (50).

Interestingly, George McCutcheon's novels are also set in an entirely fictional world. The Graustark series, which Francine reads at least a few books in, has extremely independent and intrepid female characters. In *The Prince of Graustark* the prince refuses to marry based on financial or even political gain, he is more interested in a woman named Maud who, though it would not fiscally benefit him to marry, has the same radical point-of-view about marriage (McCutcheon 119). In sum, in regards to both the male and female roles in marriage the Prince insists, "Loveless marriages make old men and women of youths and maidens" (McCutcheon 121). One of the novel's main themes is the advantage of a companionate marriage over marriages of economical gain. The series can be seen as a cautionary tale against marrying for the wrong reasons. It may not be solely due to the influence of this novel, but Francine never plans to escape poverty through a man. Francine can *actively* read these novels and apply the importance of female agency into her own life.

Francine has what Iser refers to as a "wandering viewpoint" in that she has a presence within the text she reads (*Act of Reading* 114). Francine partakes in a dynamic process that entangles the reader with the text or for Francine both the text

and the events of her own life. Since Francine is able to fill in the gaps between what is actually happening and what the text may offer her in the future, she moves in and out of what literally might be happening in terms of events or plots and gains perspective on what can possibly happen; this makes reading text more like experiencing something in reality and also creates opportunities for Francine to take authority over own life events.

Perhaps we can actually see this dynamic take place in Francine's reading of Marie Corelli and George McCutcheon. Francine's life is utterly different from the characters that she reads about. However, sitting in her own physical "room" Francine is able to create what Iser calls the "arena" between text and imagination ("The Reading Process" 52). Francine, like any reader, has agency not *over*, but *with*, the text and her interpretation of the text becomes her own new text. This new text makes the "other worlds beside the world she had been born into" seem more attainable; for if she can imagine herself in the world of the celestial and the royal, then she can actively think of herself in a world where women have more opportunities (Smith 84).

That Francine is an active participatory reader is obvious in the ways Francine observes the culture that surrounds her. For example, Francine's experience with her neighbor Joanna seems as if it should teach Francine about the dangers of premarital sex, but Francine actually solidifies her own ideologies. Becoming an active reader of the world around her allows Francine to form her own set of morals as guideposts. Joanna proudly walks her newborn around the neighborhood only to meet with the disdain and violence of other women. Joanna's child is "illegitimate," but Francine notices that the baby is "clean and dainty" more

so than the children of the women who verbally and physically attack Joanna (Smith 73). After facing verbal ridicule and insults like “whore” from a pack of neighborhood women, Joanna guesses, apparently correctly, about the sex lives of her interrogators (73). Joanna tells one of the more vocal women that her husband probably spits on her after they are done having sex (74). This is a poignant lesson for Francine that marriages that are forced are usually unhappy. The women actually throw stones at Joanna, consequently injuring the baby. Francine witnesses this entire scene and though her mother does not understand her own significance when she says, “remember Joanna,” Francine certainly does learn from this experience (Smith 111).

“Remember Joanna” might be the perfect quote for a scrapbook because it comes with meaning, but that meaning is somewhat shrouded. According to Tucker, “the scrapbook’s montage was a way of making partially revealed statements about the guarded journey between girlhood and adulthood” (19). Francine is truly making this journey through montages and we are only able to see part of her story. Francine trusts her mother when she tells Francine that Joanna should be a lesson to Francine, but she struggles to find the message she is supposed to understand. Was Joanna not supposed to be proud of her beautiful baby? Was she not supposed to be friends with someone like Joanna who was friendly with everyone? Should she have convinced the young man to marry her? Francine does not come to any concrete decisions about what message she was supposed to have learned, but the message itself, “remember Joanna,” partially reveals Francine’s authentic self; Francine does not automatically conform to the lesson that her mother strategically intended.

The next episode, or entrance into the scrapbook that constitutes *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, connects the pain of becoming aware of the potential for human cruelty and Francine's first menstrual period. Francine experiences waves of pain that are so painful she thinks, "if they [don't] stop, [I'll] have to die—{I'll] have to die" (74). Once the cramps became "fainter and there was a longer time between each one" ...she began to think (74). The narrator insists, "she was now getting her lesson from Joanna but it was not the kind of lesson her mother meant." (75). The reader is left to connect these pieces of scraps or experiences and create meaning from their connection. It is not just Francine's period that marks her entrance into the early stages of adulthood, rather for Francine becoming a young woman also means resisting the maturation arc by going through the pains of emotional growth and separation from the ideologies of other women in her neighborhood. The two episodes, "remember Joanna" and Francine's period, connect what it means to grow up both physically and emotionally. From this moment on, Francine knows that she will never share the same belief system as many of the women in her neighborhood because she is an active reader of the world around her.

Though scrapbooks offer headings and pictures that represent what society asserted was correct for girls (friends, classmates, accomplishments, future dreams of education) young women also thought independently. Francine is no exception, she too thinks deeply about the world around her; as we can see from the Joanna incident Francine spends a lot of time thinking about morality and justice. Francine, like many scrapbook makers, not only extracts morals from the world around her as educators hoped scrapbook makers would do, but she uses those morals as

guideposts, not absolutes. Though society and publishers may dictate the headings, Francine is willing to question their value. The fact that Francine does not blindly conform to moral absolutes is obvious in her admiration of her Aunt Sissy.

Throughout the novel Aunt Sissy is a controversial character who owns her sexuality and uses it to her advantage. Willingly and happily married at the age of fourteen Sissy is gregarious and illiterate, the complete opposite of her future niece. Sissy is considered a “bad girl” mostly because she enjoys sex and is not afraid to have several lovers. Sissy, like her sisters, is made of “thin invisible steel” and though Frances knows that Sissy is a “bad girl” she loves her aunt fiercely (Smith 66).

Francine’s teacher ignores the poverty---ridden students so Francine was once forced to wet herself during class. Sissy returns to the school and reprimands the teacher. While she is scolding the teacher she looks outside and notices a handsome police officer. She claims the man is her husband, leans out the window and hits on the passing cop. Sissy has a lot of sex appeal and the officer reacts by blowing a kiss. The teacher is afraid that Francine may not be the kind of girl (poor) that she once thought and never neglects her again.

Though Sissy never received any kind of formal education, she immediately determines what the problem is at the school and fixes it, the only way she knows how, by using her sexuality to produce change. Due to Francine’s ability to see morals not as absolutes, but as guideposts, Francine does not acquire Sissy’s propensity to solve problems through her sex appeal, but she does learn about sexuality from Sissy. Because Francine learns from her scrapbook making she can

envision a future different than Sissy's and yet still learn from her aunt's experiences.

In fact, through comparing the character of Sissy in the novel to the character in the film (released on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1945) it becomes even more obvious that Francine has a "wandering viewpoint" and is thus able to create her own story (Iser 114). In the novel, the reader trusts that Francine will not completely dismiss Sissy nor will she emulate her aunt; instead the reader realizes that Francine can make her own decisions about the character; however, in the film Francine cannot be trusted with such a sexual role model. In the novel Sissy lies to her subsequent husbands, telling them that she is divorced from her first husband when in reality she simply left him and remarried; in the novel Sissy is technically guilty of bigamy. However, in the film Sissy's first husband dies before she ever marries again. Perhaps because the audience cannot see into Francine's head and understand the ways that Francine extracts the constructive side to Sissy's behavior without having to emulate her promiscuity, Sissy's sexuality is much more conservative in the film than it is in the novel.<sup>6</sup>

The plot change regarding Sissy was actually mandated by the PCA (Production Code Administration). In fact, the organization warned director Elia

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<sup>6</sup> The more progressive character of Sissy in the novel even led to a lawsuit. Smith was sued for defamation of character; a distant relative claimed that Sissy was based on her life (Yow 235). The case was settled out of court, but obviously Sissy's actions were considered contentious enough to cause a lawsuit. Sissy's behavior in the novel could be considered damaging to one's reputation, but the Sissy of the film was much more subdued.

Kazan that Sissy's behavior needed to be met with a sterner reaction.<sup>7</sup> Though Sissy's laissez faire attitude regarding marriage and sex remained, Sissy still cannot marry another man until her first husband dies.<sup>8</sup>

The film also leaves out a lot of interesting and perhaps controversial scenes that helped Francine tell her own authentic story. The most somber moments of the novel, like when Francine is molested and when she sees a corpse-like victim of consumption, are omitted. Perhaps since the movie does not expose Francine's ability to absorb the culture that surrounds her with thought and care, the character is considered too young to face such atrocities.

Since the novel is a combination of the public and private, the reader is privy to intimate knowledge of Francine's life through her story/scrapbook. *New York Times* writer Bosley Crowther claims in his March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945 review of the movie that, "if some of the ripe descriptive detail of the original is missing, that is due to the time limitations of the picture" (Crowther 25). Of course, what is left in and out of a film can be due to time restraints, but the editing out of selected parts is still a conscious choice. The editing choices about what to leave in and what to omit, due to a time constraint, are significant decisions that reveal meaningful differences between the genre of scrapbook/novel and the film.

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<sup>7</sup> Reviewer Bosley Crowther noticed that Sissy's lascivious character is down played and even opines, "the family's 'problem' is obviously hedged by the scripts abbreviations and the usual Hay's---office restraints..."(25). The Hay's---office refers to censorship by the Hays Code.

<sup>8</sup> Actually in the original script Sissy's behavior may be even more lascivious than in the final screenplay. In the MPAA/PCA file there are references to the original script, but the script itself is not extant in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library (Walsh).

The viewer of the movie also does not see Francine's sexual maturation; only readers of Francine's scrapbook are able to note this progression. Since Francine is forever the same age in the film, all the viewer sees of her sexuality is a potential date at the end of the movie. Garner portrays Francine as confused and suspicious over the invitation, while Sissy and Katie exchange knowing glances. The Francine of the novel is certainly not naive to Lee's advances and is not offended, as Peggy Anne Garner seems to be when asked out on a date, at the prospect of entering into a relationship with a man. Instead of knowing glances, in the novel Katie offers candid advice about sexual relationships (464).

The relationship between *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and its cinematic counterpart is similar to the dynamic between the *Junior Miss* series and the movie based on it in that the *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* movie is much less subversive than the novel. The movie *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* stays fairly close to the text of the novel, however, Francine no longer has the same ability to tell her own story. Since the movie is more "public" than the scrapbook that is *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, in that many people gathered to watch the movie at one time and experienced it simultaneously, the movie reads less like a scrapbook than the novel. Some of the subtleties of Francine's progression into adulthood are lost, while some scenes in the novel were considered so uncomfortable for public audiences that they were simply omitted. Though the movie was met with rave reviews, the nuanced position of the reader, as one who is privy to Francine's private life and thoughts, is lost.

That the movie does not show more controversy in terms of its characterizations and plot indicates that the Francine of the novel has much more

authority to tell her own story. The Francine of the novel can be trusted with sensitive topics because she has the ability to think critically about the culture she lives in. The scrapbook style in which *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is written instills Francine with the ability to resist the maturation arc; she decides what parts of her identity she exposes to the outside world, she is able to actively read the world around her, and she has authority over her own future. Smith's novel is the most satisfying to read in this project because Francine, with her "wandering viewpoint," can truly tell her own story and decide her own future.

### Conclusion: “All-Girl” Bands and the Maturation Arc

Throughout this study fictional girls have shown that literature exposes a more nuanced picture of our past than the study of history as seen through the mass media. Though Carson McCullers may have publicly claimed that women should perform the duties of a “war wife” including being a “bulwark” against chaos, her fiction actually demonstrates the way that “everyday people” appropriated the kinds of standards that the mass media broadcasted. Reading fiction gives us a more nuanced picture of our past.

It is also obvious that fictional girls do not emerge in a vacuum; their narratives overlap with the life-stories of historical girls and women who wrestled with many of the same discourses. Certainly, limiting the study of history to only fictional characters narrows our historical view; however, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of history when we combine the study of fictional and real, “everyday” lives. Fictional girls and women are no more or less affected by the strategies and expectations set for them by the mass media. These strategies had just as great an impact on the maturation process of nonfictional teenage girls and women than on fictional characters.

The study of the maturation plot and the strategies that move it forward is not limited to fiction; studying the ways in which the maturation plot unfolds, both within and outside of fiction, helps us to understand the ways in which everyday people developed tactics to cope with the strategies that surrounded them. The maturation plot is particularly revealing because it exposes the ways in which teenagers—who by the very nature of their age exist in a liminal space—become cognizant of the need to appropriate

strategies and develop tactics. This time in anyone's life is wrought with decisions about how to cope with expectations communicated through the mass media and thus reveals not only what strategies existed, but also the complex ways in which people are forced to negotiate autonomy and public expectations. In my conclusion I turn to nonfiction accounts of the maturation arc in order to demonstrate the ways in which both history and literature can inform our understanding of the past.

In my conclusion, instead of focusing on the ways scholarship tends to depict teenage girls, as either "good girls" or "bad girls," I explore the ways in which members of popular "All-girl bands" used tactics to cope with both the maturation arc they were expected to adhere to and the USO based music industry that helped define and support expectations for young women.<sup>1</sup> My goal is to reveal how useful the study of the maturation arc, both in fiction and nonfiction, is in exposing a more colorful look at history. I chose all-girl bands for the study of this conclusion because just like the fictional teenagers in this project, these young women were graduating from a time when they had more freedoms granted to them because of their age to a time in which heavy expectations were set upon them. Furthermore, these teenage girls are similar to Judy Graves of *Junior Miss* and Francine of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* because they use constricting strategies—set by the USO—to develop subversive tactics.

All-girl bands, in that their members were certainly young and socioeconomically and racially diverse, epitomized tensions between traditional expectations for teenage

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<sup>1</sup> I decided to put the term "all---girl" bands in quotation marks to remind readers that while band members were young, many of them were just teenagers, the terms itself can be pejorative in nature. Certainly men's bands were not called "all---boy bands." Furthermore, the fact that these band members were all women should not be more important than the fact that they were all talented musicians.

girls, so often represented in the mass media, and the real lives of “everyday people.”<sup>2</sup> In my conclusion I focus on just a few of the hundreds of all-girl bands that played during the 1940s; a brief study of the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, Ada Leonard’s All-American Girl Orchestra, and the Prairie View Coeds demonstrates the ways in which the analysis of the maturation arc, and the strategies that are intertwined within it, reveal a more inclusive historical perspective.

Despite expectations that young women should be keeping house, in the 1940s, with men off at war all-girl bands, took the place of male led bands. All-girl bands like the African-American International Sweethearts of Rhythm and the ostentatiously all white Cabaret Kit Kat Band gained more popularity in the 1940s, though, of course, women had been playing jazz and swing throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Though many books on swing place the 1930s at the end of the swing era, this is mostly because male swing bands split up as young men were sent to fight in World War II. In reality, all-girl bands were still swinging well into the 1940s.

Often times music historians neglect all-girl bands like these and focus on Benny Goodman and other male performers or groups. According to Sherrie Tucker, author of *Swing Shift* and expert in the history of women and music:

All-woman bands seldom appear in dominant discourse, and their existence is therefore denied, first-hand reports notwithstanding. Or, in texts where one or two of the hundreds of all-woman bands are permitted

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, many of the members of all-girl bands were truly young. Many young women enrolled in these bands at the age of eighteen and some were as young as seventeen; some had just graduated high school and had played an instrument throughout their school days. When magazines reviewed these bands they often listed all of the members who were unmarried, and these lists were typically much longer than the list of those who were married (Tucker 267).

a type of existence, they are written about in isolation, as if each was a novelty, a gimmick, a dancing dog in the field of real music. (4)

The negligence of “all-girl bands” is not all that surprising considering the roles that were expected for women. Perhaps these young women went unnoticed or ignored because in some ways they were outcasts; these women were certainly not the “war wives” that Carson McCullers defined in her published letter. Instead of staying home to be a “bulwark against chaos,” women in all-girl bands performed on stage and even toured the country and the world.

Members of all-girl bands, much like the protagonists in this project, had a dynamic relationship with the maturation arc. Since many of these young women were recent high school graduates, touring the country with an all-girl band sometimes meant postponing marriage. So while many high school graduates might either be planning for marriage, attending college, or working, these women were following different paths.<sup>3</sup> How did these young women, with such unique experiences, cope with the strategy of the maturation arc? How did the music industry solidify expectations for these all-girl band members and how did they appropriate the expectations set by this social discourse?

Just as social discourses like the wedding industry, western mania, department stores, and scrapbook-making created strategies and expectations for everyday people, so

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<sup>3</sup> The average age of marriage in the 1940s was 21.5 (“Estimated Median Age”). Additionally, of the approximately half a million students attending college in the 1940s about half were women (this will change drastically in 1949 when the percentage of female college students drops to thirty percent (*120 Years of American Education: A Portrait* Figure 7). The employment rate of teenage girls and young women was the largest proportionate increase in any one group of people in the 1940s (Forman---Brunell 36). Of course, many bands, especially the Prairie View Coeds were actually college bands, however, the members’ dedication to the band meant a unique college experience.

too did the music industry establish practices that defined the roles that women could, and could, not play. After all, the music industry and the USO (together with the mass media) governed these women by determining how the women were supposed to look, enforcing Jim Crow laws, and hiring administrative assistants to the bands. Just the language of “all-girl” bands speaks volumes. Teenagers and young woman were allowed to play music, but only under the guise of “girls.”

The young musicians in all-girl bands had many of the same expectations placed upon them as the characters in this dissertation. For example, just as Judy Graves of *Junior Miss* is not taken seriously by her family until her final transformation, these teenage girls and young women were not accepted by the music industry unless they could fit into certain molds. White or black, at home or on the road, band members were under consistent pressure to look youthful and proper. Unless musicians could accomplish this look they were not allowed to perform.

Certainly, the requirement to fit into a certain mold for the music industry was nothing new even in the 1940s; however, what made expectations for all-girl bands of the 1940s unique was the USO. Working directly for the USO and performing for World War II soldiers both domestically and abroad meant not only having to look youthful, but also having to project images of wholesomeness that reminded soldiers of their sweethearts back home—or matched with the idealization of their loved one—but should also look glamorous enough to distract soldiers from their sometimes mundane duties (62). Furthermore, many of these all-girl bands toured throughout the United States, including the South where Jim Crow laws were strongly enforced.

That young female jazz musicians were expected to look youthful and create the perfect mixture of sweet and sexy is obvious in everything from band names to band application requirements. Some of the names of bands actually highlight the wholesomeness of the all-American girl image. Band names like “youngest all-girl band,” “Sub-Debs,” “Prairie View Co-Eds,” and “Ada Leonard’s All American-Girl Orchestra” conjure a schoolgirl morality (62). Women who looked like they fit the descriptions of these band names were also more likely to get hired. As Tucker points out, in the August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944 want ads in *Down Beat Magazine*, one of the most famous and historic publications dedicated to jazz, female band applicants were strongly urged and sometimes required to send in a photograph; women were not hired on talent alone (36). Furthermore, once hired, women were required to wear gowns, gowns that sometimes made playing instruments very difficult. For example, at the Golden State Theatre in San Francisco in March of 1944 the Ada Leonard and the All-American Girl Orchestra were dressed in pink long dresses with puffy sleeves. The dresses were perfectly appropriate for the time, but they also were low cut and the straps of instruments would reportedly dig into the musician’s necks (61). The dresses were also impractical for catching trains and hauling instruments (61). Though many young women were starting to wear more practical clothing, these professional musicians were still expected to look glamorous, young, and appropriate yet sexy.

Walking the line between Victorian sentimentality and sexy sultress was not just about band names and clothing. Members of all-girl bands had to know how to balance this image with the expectations of soldiers (275). Occasionally, USO band members were mistaken for women providing other services to GI’s. One band member, Janie

Sager, eventually got fed up with the sexual advances of soldiers and told a few, “Look I don’t make my living on my back. If I did, I wouldn’t be playing the trumpet” (276).

Probably some women enjoyed the perhaps loosened parameters about premarital sex, but part of the band’s responsibility was to constantly protect themselves against soldiers, some of whom assumed these professional musicians were expected to entertain in other ways.

Perhaps part of the reason that the USO demanded this combination of sexy and glamorous with an “American Sweetheart” image is because the band members were supposed to remind soldiers of their sweethearts at home. GIs saw band members as “reminders of and even substitutes for their girls back home, as a reward for fighting the war, [and/or] embodiments of what they were fighting for” (229). The USO, in their *Guide to Foxhole Circuit*, even encouraged this attitude by directing band members to dress during performances like “girls back home on an important Saturday night” (230). Additionally, because the music industry and the USO demanded a younger look, bands that existed throughout the 1940s frequently replaced perfectly talented and capable older members for younger ones (287). Women in the bands who were not teenage girls (as some of the girls were just out of college) went to great lengths to look younger (287).

The USO was also responsible for ensuring that all-girl band members looked the part in other ways; band members were forced to appear as the majority race of the band. In a sense, the USO was responsible for upholding Jim Crow laws; the USO had to ensure that their musicians adhered to these sometimes regional and sometimes confusing rules (Tucker 137). Jim Crow laws were more readily enforced in the South

and white women frequently passed as black and vice-versa so that bands could travel together (137).

Jim Crow laws were probably the most challenging of all the strategies forced upon all-girl bands. While traveling with white women, African-American band members like Clora Bryant and Doris Jarrett of the Prairie View Coeds were consistently “hounded” by “white police and citizens who saw them as corrupting white womanhood” (Tucker 137). The bass player for Eddie Durham’s band had to physically hide a fellow band member because black and white women could not travel together (137). African-American women could not even stay at hotels, so even if they were not caught traveling with white women, they still could not lodge with them, unless of course, they could pass for Caucasian; plenty of African-American musicians had to pass as white just to travel to their next performance (137). African-American bands and bands with both African-American and white musicians were under even more scrutiny than all-white, all-girl bands.

Furthermore, musician’s unions used economic strategies to make band members and their leaders feel less welcome in what was supposed to be a “man’s world.” For example, not only did both the audience and the musician’s union feel women should look picture perfect for performances, but they also did not take the musicians themselves and their demands very seriously (259). The USO sometimes demanded that they pay the booking agent as opposed to directly paying the band, which would have been more expensive. Ada Leonard, for example, demanded that the USO pay her all-girl band directly and that she be able to hire her own manager (259). The musician’s union and

representatives from the USO refused these and other demands thus insisting that all-girl bands were not serious or even permanent musicians (260).

On the other hand, the label all-girl band might have also given these young women the tactics they needed to deal with the maturation arc. Because they were not viewed as more mature women they, like Frankie from Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, were able to occupy a liminal state, one in which—at least for a time—did not include an inevitable march toward marriage. Certainly, some of these young women enjoyed being married, but many were single and either remained so or gained life experience before their wedding day. Being in an all-girl band and therefore considered by the public to be a youthful all-American sweetheart gave these women license to evade the adulthood responsibilities of keeping house and becoming what McCullers called a “bulwark against chaos.” Because they were just “girls” these musicians could take the time to travel, become educated, gain financial independence, and express themselves in unique ways.

Traveling was truly a benefit for these women and they used it to appropriate the expectations set upon them by the USO and the music industry in general. Despite the many challenges of travel, young musicians were exposed to a way-of-life that did not include solely supporting one's soldier. Certainly, romance, on the women's own terms, was sometimes welcomed and enjoyed, however these young women, some of them just out of high school and not yet married, were able to see other alternatives to becoming Carson McCullers's ideal “war wife.” Sometimes traveling, despite its very real hardships, saved young women not only from the expectations that they stay at home to be a “bulwark against chaos” but also gave them opportunities to escape unpleasant and

sometimes dangerous situations at home. According to Tucker, “many women used the opportunity to travel in industrious and creative ways to improve their lives” (67). Many young women, with the opportunity to be away from the expectations that came with keeping house, seized the sheer independence that comes with travel.

According to the personal experiences that members of all-girl bands shared with Tucker, this travel for these young women was quite unlike Molly’s experiences in *The Mountain Lion*. Unlike Molly, band members like Violet Wilson were able to find significance in their surroundings. Perhaps because these band members were able to remain in a liminal state for a longer period of time and were not expected to marry until later in life, they had the authority, unlike Molly, to make meaning out of travel.

Additionally, travel, for some of these musicians, created a different sense of patriotism than did marriage. In other words, while McCullers’s sense of patriotism, as expressed in her letter from a “war wife,” essentially consisted of marrying and keeping house, all-girl band members, through travel, were able to find a more complex sense of patriotism. For example, Wilson gained a new sense of citizenship that was not based on common images of white women working with the war effort. Wilson insists:

I wouldn’t have given anything for that experience I had out on the road. I learned how to be a better person, a better citizen, and if more children were let loose nowadays and traveled around, the United States today would be a better place. Because you really learn that camaraderie among other human beings and other races. It learns you how to be with one another. And that’s what the United State really needs. I truly mean it. ‘Cause it really learns you how to live together and be what these United

States stand for. Supposed to be the land of the free. Freedom for everyone. (68)

There is nothing particularly striking about Wilson's observations, yet her sense of patriotism is more nuanced than the type of patriotism defined by McCullers. In fact, members of all-girl bands experienced many unexpected advantages from the war effort that could not be defined by wartime propaganda and went largely ignored by the general public.

Some of these women also gained a new financial independence. Members of all-girl bands made their own salary and for African-American women in particular this meant the ability to attend college. Helen Cole, daughter of a widowed domestic worker and member of the Prairie View Coeds explains, "the band was the only way that I had of trying to put myself through school" (110). Clora Bryant, also a member of the Prairie View Coeds, was able to attend college with her brother's help and the money that she made on weekends and during the summer performing with the band (111). Additionally, in 1945 the Prairie View Coeds offered four scholarships to girls who had been accepted to Prairie View College (129). Even though some of these women did not go on to be professional musicians, many of them were able to use their positions in all-girl bands to change their futures.

Not only did all-girl bands take advantage of travel and financial opportunities, but they also used their new sense of independence and a captive audience to subversively play with traditional blues lyrics. Just as Francine of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* was able to use scrapbooks in order to simultaneously conform and subvert the gender expectations that surrounded her, these women were able to challenge tradition

through lyrics. Scrapbooks and blues songs are actually similar in that both have specific parameters; scrapbooks have headings that teenage girls could choose to adhere to or not and blues songs have traditional lyrics that can always be manipulated. Perhaps because both Francine and these musicians both operated within the confines of an already established tradition, they were able to successfully express themselves.

African-American members of all-girl bands were especially willing to use lyrics to subvert race and gender expectations. For example, the traditional blues lyrics, “I ain’t good looking, and I don’t have waist-length hair” took on new significance as African-American all-girl bands like the International Sweethearts of Rhythm started to compete for performances with Caucasian all-girl bands like Ada Leonard’s All-American Girl Band.<sup>4</sup> Suddenly, the lyrics “I don’t have waist-length hair” was not simply about being attractive or not, it was about ownership of one’s African-American roots (172).

Just as Carson McCullers was able to use her character Frankie in order to interrogate whiteness and the meaning of adulthood in the American South these musicians were able to question the value of appearing white. The fact that a few members of the band were actually white and passing as black further complicates the meaning of the lyrics. The musicians were actually able to publicly, yet subtly ask their audience what whiteness really meant.

These musicians, perhaps because like Frankie they were thought of as teenagers and therefore operated within a liminal state, were also able to question sexuality.

Individual African-American women like Ernestine “Tiny” Davis who played trumpet

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<sup>4</sup> With a few exceptions like the almost entirely African-American Prairie College Coeds, most all-girl bands were actually made up of women passing for either black or white, however many all-girl bands were perceived as either all white or all black.

and sang for The International Sweethearts of Rhythm, occasionally changed the lyrics in “Jump Children” from “I may be small/Don’t worry ‘bout sugar/’Cause I got it by the ton” to “I may be big” etc. and her humorous nickname may have added more meaning to the lyrics, “I’m a Queen-sized mama/with a king-sized appetite” (International Sweethearts of Rhythm).<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Davis’s outward status as a lesbian and her open relationship with International Sweethearts of Rhythm drummer, Ruby Lucas, perhaps added more meaning to the band’s famous rendition of this same song.<sup>6</sup>

Mostly, young woman met the strategies produced by the music industry with the same tactic as Judy Graves of *Junior Miss*—performance. Like Frankie of *The Member of the Wedding*, as long as these teenage girls appeared girlish and even domestic, they could use their own youthful femininity as a shelter under which they could behave as they wished. As with Judy Graves female musicians were expected to doll up for performances, but privately some members of bands like Miss Leonard “basked in sloppiness” (282). She traveled in “frumpy” clothes and read Popeye comics (282). If fans stopped by to see Leonard the other band members would have to deter them (282). In short, “glamour was a product to be sold during work hours only” (282). Though it had to be sold, at least it was sold on the women’s own terms.

Furthermore, to cope with the fact that playing music, especially the horns and drums, was not considered “feminine” (like singing) all-girl bands hired young women to play more “feminine” instruments like the harp and piano (230). Additionally, young

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<sup>5</sup> Ernestine “Tiny” Davis was not tiny in physique or demeanor (Bergman).

<sup>6</sup> Reportedly, Davis and Ruby did not attempt to hide their relationship. The two even opened a bar, “Tiny and Ruby’s Gay Spot” in Chicago in the early 1950s. The bar, like so many African---American owned businesses in the area, shut down in 1958, when the Dan Ryan Expressway, which split neighborhoods apart, was built (“A Woman with Serious Swing”).

women, especially those in the famous “Hours of Charm” with Phil Spitalny wore billowing dresses and “fluttered” with their instruments in order to become arguably the most commercially famous all-girl band of the 1940s (70-71). Though restricting strategies determined that young women would have to be perfectly girlish while perfectly sexy, women simply performed these roles in order to gain the benefits of doing what they were most passionate about—being professional musicians.

Along with this general performance of femininity young musicians adopted another similar tactic—they claimed that they were “different” from men. Though many individual interviews and testimonies about touring around the country and even the world reveal that these musicians regretted this attitude, young women were willing to publicly reassure their audiences that they were doing something “intrinsically feminine” (82). Members of Phil Spitalny’s Hours of Charm were especially willing to perform under the guise that they were well, charming, and therefore different kinds of musicians than men. Even the biographies of the women in programs for the performance made the women seem essentially different from men. The biographies also made these young women sound as if they had just fallen upon music by accident. For example, in the biographies for musicians Jeanne Phillip and Vernell Wells the young women are described as “the girl next door in your own home town” and there is an emphasis on their love of “sewing,” “cooking,” “collecting big stuffed dolls,” and “baking” (82). Indeed, previous performances and long hours of work are not mentioned in these biographies. Clearly, Jeanne Phillip, Vernell Wells and other talented musicians in and out of Phil Spitalny’s Hour of Charm were unhappy about these representations; in an interview with Sharon Tucker, Wells admits (regarding her biography), “I wasn’t too

pleased with mine” (82). Yet they cultivated and publicly adhered to this brand of femininity in order to perform as professional musicians. The rewards for developing this tactic of seeming different than male musicians ensured that women could continue to perform, travel, and earn money.

That women were successful in appropriating the strategies set by the music industry and the USO is obvious not only in the advantages they gained through travel and making money, but also by the increase in the quality of life for those on tour. For example, in the mid 1940s Ada Leonard was finally able to improve the traveling conditions for her band members (283). The military camps started offering better food and bands in general began to travel more by plane than by bus (283). Many young women decided that they wanted to keep playing even after the war was over and men had returned home from battle.

After the war ended, many members of bands formed their own bands and kept on playing. Some members like Thelma Lewis and Vi Wilson were able to make the transition into rock n’ roll and performed publicly while others made music their career by teaching it to others. Also, the USO-Camp Shows were not meant to outlast World War II, but many of the members of all-girls bands entertained troops who were stationed all over the world even after the war was over. Other members entertained troops during the Korean War (326).

These musicians, through developing tactics to cope with the expectations of the USO and the general expectations for women to become “war wives,” were able to resist the maturation arc and define their own milestones. Additionally, though all-girl bands of the 1940s have perhaps not received their due recognition, these young women left an

impression on an entire generation of young female musicians and this contribution cannot be measured by references in history books.

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