Harmsworth's Girls: 
Constructing Identity in the British Popular Press, 1898-1916

by

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Abstract


While these magazines reflected some of the realities of the lives of upper-working class and lower-middle class girls at the time – including mandatory schooling and paid employment in new occupations – they also worked to create an image of the ideal girl. Negating difference in favour of a homogenous view of girlhood, this “new” girl reflected societal beliefs about girls, with editors, contributors, and advertisers acting as socializing agents. All reminded girls of their essential natures and their responsibilities to domesticity, femininity, and maternity. Girls prepared for this future by embracing consumerism for health and beauty, by supporting the nation and the empire, and by instilling habits within themselves necessary for womanhood.

At the same time, contributors also presented the image of a “new” girl that did not always conform to this largely middle-class defined ideal. The “new” girl could embrace the values of boyhood. Girls could go on adventures, pull pranks, speak their minds, and challenge authority figures. Often, the “new” girl appears mischievous, brazen, outspoken, and defiant. These qualities were encouraged and celebrated by contributors and readers rather than chastised.
The view advanced by contributors explains this contradiction. All treated adolescence as a transitional time in a girl’s life; girls could embrace the opportunities that existed for them, challenge conventions of their sex, and pursue some level of independence in thought and action. All of this, however, was only temporary. For every feature that celebrated this special time in a girl’s life there was one that reminded her that adolescence was also the time to prepare for marriage and motherhood. Adolescence was fleeting, so girls should enjoy it while it lasted.

**Keywords:**
- Britain, Victorian, Edwardian, Harmsworth, Northcliffe, press, magazines, girls, identity, socialization, body, health, beauty, advertising, war, nation, race, gender, class

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- Women’s periodicals, English
For Ian...
whose faith never waivered and whose kettle was always on.
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Introduction

In 1898 Alfred Harmsworth (1865-1922), later Lord Northcliffe (1905), a major publisher and innovator within the popular press genre in Britain, sought to tap into a new market: girls. Specifically, Harmsworth was interested in a new group of girls who were benefitting from changes in British society that increased their literacy rates and general education, their presence in the workforce, and their leisure time. The introduction of compulsory schooling in 1870, and subsequent changes to education acts that ensured mandatory education for children resulted in an increasingly literate population. Beyond basic literacy, many of the new work opportunities for girls required formal education in arithmetic, geography, handwriting, comprehension, composition, grammar, and history—all knowledge that they acquired in the new school system. As industrialization progressed and Britain moved towards mass consumerism, new opportunities opened up for girls as cashiers, shop assistants, drapery assistants, and retail clerks. While there

were a variety of reasons why this kind of work was both attractive and acceptable for girls, increased education assisted them in gaining these positions. In 1851, for example, there were 2,750 girls aged 15-24 employed as drapers; by 1901, this figure rose to 40,658. The demands of business increased the needs for clerks and the introduction of the typewriter created a further opportunity for girls to enter the business world and the civil service. In 1861, the civil service in Britain employed 118 girls aged 15-24; in 1901 this figure was 6,256. Girls entering these occupations were attractive to publishers for two key reasons: first, they tended to receive higher pay for their positions, ensuring that they had some disposable income to spend on leisure and two, their occupations tended to require fewer hours of work, with most girls receiving a day and a half off per week and many working only 8-10 hours a day.

Publishers had already been taking advantage of other key changes in British society that lent themselves to a rapid increase in the popular press. New publishing technologies made it faster and cheaper to produce for the masses and the repeal of publishing taxes, such as the Stamp Tax, made it cheaper for the public to buy printed materials. Compulsory schooling resulted in an increasingly literate population looking to spend some of their leisure time reading. Leisure, in general, boomed. As the standard of living increased in Britain, more people had a bit of surplus money with which to take part in mass culture. Music halls, seaside vacations, travelling minstrel shows, theatres, dance halls, and sporting events all offered entertainment possibilities for varied groups.


4 Webb, 53-78.

5 This data comes from the 1851 and the 1901 census. See Jordan, 80-81.

6 Ibid, 80-81.

7 Webb, 53-78.

of people. Changes in labour laws ensured many Britons at least one day off a week. The British Empire grew in importance, ushering in an age of jingoism and propaganda that sought to impart patriotism and make its subjects feel like part of the empire. This was bolstered by the need for support as Britain faced challenges to her overseas empire. Advertising became increasingly sophisticated and present as consumer culture took hold. Large department stores emerged and increasingly commodities were seen as markers of status. With industrialization well-entrenched, although threatened by the rise of Germany, manufacturers produced more and more consumer goods, resulting in a rapid expansion of the retail sector. Consumerism became the answer to the problems of life. All of this would contribute to the creation of new mass published reading material.

One of the areas of most significant growth was in adolescent publishing. By the 1880s, the first group to directly benefit from mandatory schooling had finished their education and was ready to work. Repeated changes to the child-labour laws raised the age at which children could work and diminished the number of industries where they could work. In addition, the number of hours children could work declined. This resulted in a group of children with time on their hands, as well as a group who seemed to exist outside of the previously defined categories of child and adult. Adolescence came to be

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12 Alison Adburgham, Shops and Shopkeeping, 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought her Clothes (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964, 1981); Flanders, Consuming Passions; and Thomas, Commodity Culture.
seen as a period of time in its own right, as a period of transition and preparation for adulthood, but also as a time marked by a distinctive set of experiences and culture. Men like G. Stanley Hall studied the adolescent, writing vast tomes on the specific natures and development of this in-between group. Clearly, according to publishers at the time, this group required different reading material than their younger siblings or their parents. Boys’ magazines arrived on the market, celebrating empire, adventure, nation, war, bravery, and courage. Soon, though, publishers discovered that girls were reading these magazines. Concerned about the messages girls might receive, efforts began to usher in a new kind of reading material for the adolescent girl.

Publishers directed their early efforts at solidly middle-class and, in some cases, upper-class girls. In many ways, these were modeled after their mother’s magazines, with articles on embroidery, music, prayer, home management, and infant care. Soon, however, they took on a more adolescent tone, focusing on issues important in girls’ lives while still maintaining their didactic nature and the underlying idea that adolescent girls were merely women in training. While not prevalent at newsstands, a few examples exist, with the Girls’ Own Magazine (1880-1956), published by the Religious Tract Society, the most prominent, and most often studied, of the genre. By the 1890s, this

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13 G. Stanley Hall, Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904). Hall dedicated his study to the adolescent mind and body. He was lecturing and writing on these topics as early as 1886. The two volumes of Adolescence, though, are his most comprehensive works on the subject.


would shift as well, as magazines appeared to celebrate the girl and her particular time in life. The older, more didactic function was hidden under efforts to connect with readers and share their lives. At this point, however, the main audience for such sources remained the same: middle-class and above. It would take a new publisher to truly address those below.

It was primarily Harmsworth who first sought to address girls as a new market for magazines. While Harmsworth had previously published a magazine geared towards “ladies,” called Forget-me-Not, and sought to address women as readers, more generally, The Girls' Best Friend was Harmsworth’s first foray into magazines specifically marketed to “girls.”18 Beyond the title, there are other features that identify girls as the main audience. The age of readers, as stated in letters to the editor, ranged from 15-26. Given that most of the content of the magazine was geared towards courting, not marriage, and that several features discussed work opportunities for girls that started at age 15 or 16, it is likely that the publishing team saw this as their key demographic. The predominant use of “girls,” instead of “ladies” or “women” furthers suggests that the expected readership comprised those not yet married. Despite the editor’s claim, then, that these were magazines for “all” females – young and old – clues point to a distinctive demographic being targeted.

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Girls were not an unheard of audience in the mass publishing market at this time. Harmsworth’s magazine however, reflected something new. First, the target audience was not solidly middle class. In the opening editorial, “Your Editor” declared that this was a magazine for all girls,\(^\text{19}\) but the contents suggest a magazine geared towards an emerging group of girls – those of the upper-working class and lower-middle class.\(^\text{20}\)

These girls, benefiting from changes in education, increasingly possessed skills that allowed them to enter new areas of employment and that offered the potential for upward mobility. At the same time, their families’ somewhat precarious economic existence...

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\(^\text{19}\) Editorial, *The Girls’ Best Friend*, issue 1, number 1, 1898. Despite the grandiose claims of the editorial, Harmsworth largely declared that his girls’ and women’s publications were geared towards clerks, the wives of shopkeepers, typewriters, and others who existed between poor and affluent. Ferris, 84-85.

Further, a note on citation is required. Depending on the publication and the year, the magazines shift in how they mark the issue. Early issues had no dates, only volumes and numbers. Later issues of some magazines did away with volumes and numbering, including only a date. Because of these variations, you will see variations in citation. These reflect, however, the ways that specific issues and magazines were identified.

\(^\text{20}\) During the course of my MA research, I came to identify this as the likely target class of Harmsworth. There are several reasons why I arrived at this conclusion. First, the tone of the magazine was urban, with an emphasis on city living and on new work opportunities, such as clerk. To become a clerk, as evidenced by several features and stories in the magazines, required education that often went beyond the basic education offered to the masses at this point in time. While there were some opportunities that required only the minimum, many needed more. The creation of typewriting schools and schools that taught shorthand began to flourish at this point in time. If girls wished to enter these new occupations, they often had to undertake further training and upgrading to improve and develop their skills. The average working-class girl would likely not have the funds necessary to pay for additional schooling or the time to spend delaying full time employment. This suggests, then, a girl with access to greater financial means. Second, a variety of research, as noted in my MA, shows that parents of the upper-working class and lower-middle class were most keenly aware of the need for their daughters to have skills to either be able to help support a future family or to fall back on in case of financial crisis. Lower-middle class families, for example, might have displayed the outward trappings of their class – home decoration, clothing, manners, etc. – but often faced a shaky financial existence, existing just one step above the working class. Because of the insecurity of work at the time, lower-middle class families often faced very real financial challenges. Such families were aware of this possibility for their daughters in the future. At the same time, though, language in the papers also pointed to the opportunity that these new occupations and realities offered to girls for class enhancement. Upper-working class families may have hoped for a better future for their daughters resulting from their move into respectable, feminine employment and lower-middle class families may have also seen the chance for an improved class status for their daughters. Certainly the stories and features of the magazines suggest the chance that this can happen, whether because girls move up through marriage to their social betters encountered through their employment or because the girls have greater financial security on their own or because their daughters gain the necessary cultural indoctrination in middle-class values and behaviours to be accepted as a member of that group. Further evidence to suggest that this was the target class is found when considering the empire. Girls, as we shall see in Chapter 3, were encouraged to emigrate to the colonies to accept positions as domestic servants, in particular. Chapter 3 will demonstrate that this class of girls was far more likely to gain positions abroad than solidly middle-class girls. Given the emphasis on emigration, this points to a clue in determining the class of the readers.
excluded them from full membership in the middle class. Magazines such as the Girls’ Own did not actively seek to cater to solidly middle-class girls. In addition, the price of The Girls’ Best Friend—a mere halfpenny—ensured that even readers with rather meager earnings could purchase it. Second, The Girls’ Best Friend was unique in that it delved far more into mass entertainment than existing magazines for girls. Certainly, the magazine included fictional pieces, articles, editorials, and letters to the editor, just as other girls’ magazines did, but it also published extensive articles and stories on actresses and the theatre. Such pieces provided an opportunity for the editors and contributors to present alternative role models for girls. Third, the magazine was very visual. While pictures were common in many magazines of the time, Harmsworth took careful steps to create a visually attractive product that included elaborately illustrated titles, prominent images accompanying stories, and pictures throughout the magazine. Finally, the magazine relied heavily on advertising. Advertisements are found throughout the magazines, not just on the back page or on one selected page in the publication. This provided the opportunity for dialogue between editors, contributors, and advertisers and influenced the nature of the messages the magazine sought to impart. For all of these reasons, The Girls’ Best Friend, as well as the subsequent girls’ magazines published by what would become the Amalgamated Press, deserves attention. Harmsworth, simply put, was doing something relatively new.

21 Ballaster, Beetham, Frazer, and Hebron argue that women’s magazines began to include extensive advertising in the 1880s, but it was not until the 1890s that advertisements began to appear alongside editorials. The 1890s also saw the introduction of “visually exciting” advertising. They credit Harmsworth with advancing much of this. Ballaster, Beetham, Frazer, and Hebron, 80, 82.

Harmsworth’s venture into publishing for this “new” group of girls would prove to be so successful that he would add to his titles. *The Girls’ Best Friend* began publication in 1898, becoming simply *The Girls’ Friend* in 1899 and remaining this until it ceased publication in 1931. The stories that ran in this publication were also so popular that the Amalgamated Press printed annual libraries of the serialized fiction. *The Girls’ Reader* was part of the roster of publications from 1908 to 1915, when it combined with another Harmsworth magazine, *The Girls’ Home* (1910-1915), to form *Our Girls* (1915-1919).\(^2\) The magazines, published weekly, ranged in size from 8 pages to 16 pages and in price from a halfpenny to a penny, with special issues, published in the summer and at Christmas, costing double. They were printed on varying qualities of paper, often in bright colours like green or pink. Each contained a standard set of features, from long serialized pieces of fiction and short stories, to articles on health, beauty, work, and love, although the emphasis shifted depending on the publication. They also included editorial sections, letters to the editor, contests, and advertising.

These were true popular culture endeavors. While bylines occasionally existed – often pointing to some likely fictional individual from the peerage – for the most part, no credit is given to contributors. Much of the serialized fiction was authored by those using pseudonyms, such as “Mabel St. John,” the female alias of Henry St. John Cooper (1869-1926), one of Harmsworth’s most prolific writers.\(^2\) Indeed, even the editors are not credited. It appears that Leicester, one of Harmsworth’s brothers, was likely involved in

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\(^2\) *Our Girls* then becomes *Bow Bells*, a magazine that Flora Thompson says made the rounds on a regular basis in her community. Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945).

\(^2\) Drotner, 166.
the girls’ and women’s publications, and it is certain that Hamilton Edwards edited *The Girls’ Friend* for a short period of time, but it appears that none of these details really mattered in terms of day-to-day publishing. Indeed, the only qualifier that can be determined is that the bulk of editors and contributors were male – even if some posed as female authors. There are clues that indicate this. First, editors and contributors often identify themselves as male within the text of editorials. In addition, a male face graces the headlines of many of the editorial features, offering visual reinforcement that the editor is male. Finally, we know from Harmsworth’s biographers that he did not like working with women. His first efforts at employing a female staff to produce a female magazine – the *Daily Mirror* in 1903 – appeared a failure. Blaming the women for the lack of success, Harmsworth fired all of the employees working on the *Daily Mirror*, replacing them with men. For the publisher, then, it seemed important that the main editors and contributors appeared to be men intent on publishing accessible, highly readable, entertaining, educating, and elevating material for a new group of hard working girls with social aspirations. This dissertation explores these five Harmsworth publications from 1898 to 1916.

Despite the seemingly revolutionary nature of Harmsworth’s press, very little attention has been paid to his publications for girls, or even for women. In the biographies I consulted, only Paul Ferris makes more than a cursory mention of the girls’

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25 This is suggested by Paul Ferris, 116.
27 The fact that the major contributors were male, however, deserves attention; this issue will be explored in Chapter One.
28 It would be interesting to know, though, if Harmsworth was forced to hire women again with the outbreak of the Great War.
29 Ferris, 44, 85. For more on the trend in nineteenth century publishing to not include bylines or to identify editors, see Beetham, 9.
magazines. In *Northcliffe's Legacy*, a book containing a series of articles celebrating and considering the contribution of Harmsworth to the British press, there is no discussion of his magazines for girls, although there is some on the *Daily Mirror*—his failed publication for women. Far more common are extensive examinations of Harmsworth's creation of the *Daily Mail* and his eventual takeover of *The Times*. The question becomes: why? On the one hand, this is not that surprising. Certainly the *Daily Mail* warrants considerable attention as a mass circulation newspaper that brought daily news readership to the "common" man and woman. The *Daily Mail* and *The Times* are also both newspapers that continue to exist today, so there is also a direct link between the past and the present. Similarly, there is no doubt regarding Harmsworth's role in these publications and they certainly occupied much of his time.

On the other hand, the girls' magazines were very important magazines in the Harmsworth and, as of 1901, Amalgamated Press empire. By 1905, the company, under the direction of Harmsworth, with extensive input from his brothers, most of whom held positions on the board, published six monthly and twenty-eight weekly magazines. Of the weeklies, more than a quarter were aimed at girls and women. Their financial importance to the publishing house cannot be ignored. Cecil Harmsworth, brother of Alfred, described the *Girls' Friend* as "the huge Girls' Friend." The magazines sold in the millions, drawing the attention of other publishers and financial commentators:

>The composition of the readers, those shadowy millions with their pennies and twopences, was beginning to fascinate the industry. The *Financial*

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30 Ferris, 125. Ferris further argues that Harmsworth's day to day involvement with the girls' magazines was relatively minimal. Rather, he maintained control over new publications, had the final say in the contents of the magazines, and approved of story lines and authors. While he took a hands off approach much of the time, all knew that at any moment, he could be there demanding a change or re-write. This suggests that he continued to be very aware of the contents of his magazines.

31 Cited in Ferris, 125.
News speculated on who bought the magazines: pale-faced waitresses, tired-looking shop assistants, 'sentimental typewriters'....

‘Does she make her own ill-fitting blouse? Home Fashions will give her the latest Paris model. Has she a taste for fiction? The Heartsease Library will dull her senses.’ Behind the sardonic tone of the Financial News is uneasiness: they were only silly girls and ignorant women, but their numbers were vast, their weekly pennies a small fortune. Even more than newsmagazines, the magazines were supplying the mass market that Alfred had foreseen. 32

Given their financial importance to the venture, then, as well as their ability to draw mass readership, why has there been so little attention?33 Diane Dixon represents a typical response to these kinds of sources. Classed as poor quality magazines marketed to servants and as mere commercial ventures aimed at selling beauty products and publishing love stories, she argues that they deserve little academic attention.34 Rather than adopting a negative portrayal of such reading material, other historians simply ignore them in their analyses. A host of very useful and well written books on growing up and girlhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain focus almost entirely on the middle

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32 Ferris, 125-126. It has been very difficult to arrive at a clear sense of circulation. It is certain that early on, from 1898-1900, Harmsworth had some difficulty getting news agents to carry the Girls’ Best Friend. This is suggested by weekly pleas in the magazine for girls to please demand that news agents carry the magazine. This plea, though, ends and by early 1900 Harmsworth begins to expand his roster of girls’ magazines, suggesting increasing readership. Beyond anecdotal information provided in passing by members of Harmsworth’s team, though, solid figures are hard to come by. Margaret Beetham argues that this is common of many magazines of this era, owing to “the absence of independent auditing of magazine circulations....” Attempting to discover accurate numbers is further impaired by unreliable figures offered by editors, proprietors, and advertisers all wanting to make ventures appear successful. Margaret Beetham, A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman’s Magazine, 1800-1914 (London: Routledge, 1996), 11.

33 Dawn Currie, writing from a current perspective, makes an interesting point. She says that in Britain at the end of the twentieth century, only 1.9% of the British population reads The Times. At the same time, 26% of adult women regularly read Women’s Own. In terms of academic study, though, The Times garners far more attention, highlighting the general lack of attention paid to women’s reading material. Dawn Currie, Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 22-23.

class, ignoring the lives and reading material of the lower classes.\textsuperscript{35} Even books that explore the nature and the dangers of girls and women reading address primarily the middle class.\textsuperscript{36}

This is not to suggest that no one has examined these kinds of sources. Kirsten Drotner’s 1988 study, for example, provides much information on the Harmsworth publications, making it an invaluable source. Charting shifting trends in the British popular press for children and adolescence, she does not negate the importance of magazines such as \textit{The Girls’ Best Friend}. The source, however, is not particularly analytical; instead it provides a good foundation to begin an inquiry.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, Cadogan and Craig consider magazines for the working-class and middle-class girl, but they focus solely on the fiction of the magazines. Again, they provide good background on some story elements of the Harmsworth magazines, but they do not undertake an overarching analysis that considers the magazines as a whole.\textsuperscript{38}

More recently, however, some historians have begun to consider the importance of this kind of reading material and the messages it contains. In some cases, this is selective. For example, Jane Potter’s \textit{Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print} explores the representation of war in the Harmsworth publications during the Great War. Potter looks


at the ways that the various features of the magazines – with a focus on fiction – helped to “extol the virtues of the plucky… heroine” in the face of war. She argues that these magazines were “sites of patriotic inculcation and fervour….39 Her analysis seeks to link girls and their reading to the larger causes of the nation and Harmsworth’s role in British propaganda during the war.40 In other cases, the approach is much more comprehensive. Sally Mitchell’s book, The New Girl, has been very important to my research and interpretations. Mitchell argues that between 1880 and 1915 a distinctive girls’ culture emerged in response to a variety of shifts in English society, including state-mandated education, new job opportunities, changes in economic circumstances, and child-labour laws.41 Further, Mitchell suggests that fiction, especially mass, popular fiction, was fundamental to helping create this new culture. This was built on the idea that a “new” group of girls was emerging who could not count on their mothers for advice – given the radically different nature of their lives – and on the idea that peer standards were increasingly taking prominence over adult standards amongst adolescent girls.42 Mitchell’s analysis, then, brings together publications aimed at working-class and middle-class girls, exploring the new values being put forth that reflected a different way of seeing girls, their lives, and their culture. Mitchell’s influence is apparent throughout the course of this dissertation.

Finally, equally important to my research has been Penny Tinkler’s Constructing Girlhood. Tinkler’s book examines popular magazines for English girls from 1920-1950.

40 Interestingly, the primary text on Northcliffe’s role during the war contains no mention of his magazines for women and girls. J. Lee Thompson, Politicians, the Press, and Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War, 1914-1919 (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1999).
41 Mitchell, 3.
42 Mitchell, 3, 5, 9, 18.
While the time frame of her book covers a later period than my own, reflecting the
different historical, social, and cultural context of interwar England and beyond, the
questions and issues she explores have helped inform my own work. Tinkler examines
both middle-class and working-class girls' publications for messages of socialization –
rather than as mere commercial ventures offering little substance or value. She explores
issues related to work and school, courtship and friendship, and the inculcation of
feminine ideals through mass literature. Through it all, Tinkler speaks both to the
phenomena of shared culture and communities – just as Mitchell does – but she also pays
particular attention to diversity in the texts. Where Mitchell sees contradictions to unity
that threaten to breakdown a cultural connection between girls, with eventual success,
Tinkler sees the possibility of diversity and multiplicity amongst readers, with this being
addressed by a new range of publications in the post-Great War era, something that
Mitchell foresees in her work.

This shift seems to reflect, at least in part, an increase in studies on girls'
magazines and media directed at girls, more generally, by sociologists and others.
Studies, like Duke and Kreshel’s 1998 examination of teen magazines, emphasize the
socialization message inherent in mass media sources for girls, exploring how the
magazines help females become “girls” and “women” – or at least help them to
internalize the messages and values of the society and culture in which they live.
A seminal work on the topic, Dawn Currie’s Girl Talk, examines similar ideas but in wider

44 Lisa Duke and Peggy J. Kreshel, “Negotiating Femininity: Girls in Early Adolescence Read Teen
of Teen Girls Through Teen-Magazine Fiction: The Making of a New Woman or an Old Lady?” Sex Roles,
scope, taking into consideration, too, how girls read magazines. She explores the central messages present in popular current magazines for girls, considering their links to overarching ideas about femininity and socialization, but also taking into account what girls make of these messages. While the reader feedback part is not possible for my work, Currie’s approach to magazines, including their context and messages, is one that I have utilized. Her work, however, does highlight the difficulties of utilizing reception theory to attempt to ascertain meaning. Her research shows that readers imbue texts with their own meanings, that they respond based on their own experiences, values, and ideas about the world, and that their views can also be temporarily shaped by the presence and comments of others. She speaks to a diversity of interpretation, while still noting some commonalities.45

My intention, then, in analyzing the Harmsworth girls’ magazines, is not to consider reception theory in this dissertation. I believe that it is very difficult to ascertain what those in the past thought or how they read particular material with any degree of certainty.46 To suggest otherwise is to subscribe to a psychoanalytical approach to history that emphasizes the continuity and similarity of men and women, regardless of time and place.47 Because I was not a girl at the turn of the twentieth century, I should not pretend to know how one felt or reacted at that time.48 This relates to my underlying adherence to the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu.49 Bourdieu argues that our life experiences imbue us with

45 Currie, 1999.
46 This is also stated by Ballaster, Beetham, Frazer, and Hebron, 85-86.
48 As the bulk of girls reading this kind of material would be unlikely to leave diaries, too, any hope of having an actual source is very minimal.
capital, whether cultural, social, or economic. This capital includes sets of skills, values, ideas about social stratification, and membership in groups. Further, a person’s particular capital and experiences impact how he or she sees the world. Education, shared experiences, and particular social and cultural contexts create groups of people who understand the fundamentals of existence in their respective “field.” To understand the field, to learn the rules and at least outwardly subscribe to its values, is to succeed. For me, then, this means that those raised in a different context can only adopt an outsider’s perspective of a particular field or context. While I can speak to my own reaction to reading the Amalgamated Press magazines, based on my own values, experiences, and understandings, these do not necessarily reflect those of girls at the turn of the century. The social and cultural capital of the girl readers of the magazines caused them to see the issues, ideas, and messages in their own ways. Finally, because of the range of contexts, social situations, and experiences of girls in Britain at the time, the task of attempting to reflect on how a diverse group of girls might have perceived and interpreted the magazines would result in a simplistic and ultimately superficial understanding of reception.

Instead, I can explore the ideas that others sought to impose on girls. Magazines, just like parents, schools, workplaces, society, books and other forms of media, are agents of socialization. As such, contributors in these sources seek to impart certain values,
ideas, and ideals that are reflective of larger preferences in society.\textsuperscript{50} Within the late-Victorian and Edwardian contexts, these ideas largely reflected those of the middle classes.\textsuperscript{51} Holding places of economic, social, and cultural power, middle-class men, and in some cases women, held significant sway over the values transmitted by the media and other sources.\textsuperscript{52} Elements of socialization are clearly present in the Harmsworth magazines. The editors, contributors, and advertisers in the Amalgamated Press presented a clear, although at times conflicted, image and ideal of girlhood between 1898 and 1916. At times, this reflected reality. An emphasis on work opportunities, as shown in my MA thesis, highlighted the increasing need for girls to support themselves, contribute to their families, build savings for the future, and acquire skills to fall back on should marriage not occur or life not go as planned.\textsuperscript{53} In my dissertation, this is reflected in the very real circumstances, for example, of a nation at war. My argument, however, is that while reality is certainly present in the magazines, more important was the creation of an ideal reader and an ideal girl that reflected dominant beliefs about girls and their place in society, the nation, and the empire. I linked these to four dominant themes in the magazines: girls' identity, girls' bodies, girls and the empire, and girls at war.


\textsuperscript{51} On the rise of the middle class in Britain, see Harold Perkin, \textit{Origins of Modern English Society} (London, New York, 1969).


The decision to explore these sources from 1898-1916 was not one taken lightly. 1898 marked the first year Harmsworth began to direct attention towards publishing for girls, making it appropriate place to start the dissertation. Deciding on an end date, however, was more problematic. My initial intent was to end my examination in 1914. The sources, however, showed significant continuity in themes and content beyond that date. To cut my examination off in 1914 seemed arbitrary in light of the sources. While 1918 then seemed the natural end point, context and sources suggested otherwise. In addition, I wanted to consider the ramifications of periodization and women's history. There is no doubt that the declaration of war in 1914 had an impact on women and girls. The focus of this dissertation, though, is on the ways that editors, contributors, and advertisers in girls' magazines addressed their reading public. The essential messages that they offer and gender roles that they outline do not really shift in the early years of the war, as will become apparent in subsequent chapters. There is, however, a discernable shift that begins in 1916.

With the introduction of male military conscription in January 1916, the need for female workers, specifically, and for females to step outside of their prescribed gender roles, more generally, increased substantially. In the magazines this is reflected in a shift away from the moral role girls were to play in the war to an emphasis on the practical role they needed to fill for the nation. Looking beyond the magazines, this is evidenced in the government’s final acceptance of the need for girls and women to work en masse and the development of paramilitary groups of women who would provide further support and assistance on the front lines and on the homefront.54 During the first two years of the

54 Jenny Gould, "Women's Military Services in First World War Britain," Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins
war, women fought hard for this recognition; feminists and other women directed their efforts towards pushing government officials to recognize the ability of women to work to contribute to the home front. Protests, petitions, and large marches sought to draw attention to what women could offer. Despite early registries that encouraged women to sign up to work in the agricultural and industrial sector, by 1915 many of those women had still not been utilized for the home front or for the war effort (with munitions being an obvious exception). It was not until early in 1916 that the government, and even society for that matter, was willing to accept the necessity of full integration of women. I suggest, therefore, that the long nineteenth century for women did not end until 1916.

I took a combination of approaches in examining these sources to arrive at my focus on girls' identity, including attention to the creation of an ideal girl and her place in society, girls and the empire, and girls at war. I began with contextual research which saw me consider the inception of these magazines and their publication by Alfred Harmsworth and, later, the Amalgamated Press, as well as the specific occurrences in British society in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. For the most part, though, I have let the sources lead me. I read thousands of pages from the girls' magazines, focusing on the features, editorials, articles, advertisements, and letters; I also read random short stories and serialized pieces and paid particular attention to the images. This allowed me to put together a sense of the key ideas, themes, and ideals put forth by

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35 By July 1915, 80,000 women had registered with the Board of Trade, proclaiming their readiness to work for the nation in a variety of occupations; only 8000 of those women had received posts. On July 17, 1915, in response to this, 30,000 women marched in London to demand the right to work for the war. Claire A. Culleton, *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914-1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 20-21.
the magazines. I began this work several years ago while doing my MA thesis. At that
time, I focused on two years of one particular Harmsworth magazine – *The Girls' Best
Friend* – compiling detailed lists of articles, editorials, stories, advertisements, and
images. This provided a foundation to add new information and new ideas.

Once I identified central areas of focus, I began to put together a comprehensive
understanding of what were the most prominent themes. This involved exploring the
ways such ideas were presented in the various elements of the magazines, and the ways
that the components of the magazines supported one another. For example, editorials
often encouraged the consumption of products later advertised in the magazine. Stories
relayed messages discussed at length by contributors in articles, such as purity, loyalty,
modesty, and thrift. I noted trends over time, highlighting shifts in thinking, such as the
increasing encouragement of consumerism for health and beauty needs, as well as the
acceptance of actresses as appropriate role models for girls. I linked all of this back to the
context of the time period. I then engaged with various theoretical perspectives and ideas
in an effort to further understand my sources and their messages. These include ideas
about socialization already considered, literature on women’s magazines, and lenses for
interpreting advertising.

There is extensive literature on interpreting women’s magazines. Many of these
works offer much for my analysis of girls’ magazines. I made careful use of these
sources. While they certainly helped explain some of the ideas, trends, organization, and
content of the magazines I examined, I am aware that the nature of magazine publishing
and advertising has become more sophisticated over time. Because of this, I sought to
only employ the tools used by current researchers when they clearly reflected what I saw
in the Hannsworth magazines; these included the invocation of friendship, the use of language to create a personal connection with readers, and the organization of magazines.

One of the fundamental features I noticed while reading the various Hannsworth publications for girls was the emphasis on friendship. “Friend” was part of two of the magazines’ titles; friendships were celebrated in stories and throughout the editors and contributors worked to create a bond like friendship with readers. Similarly, the magazines encouraged familiarity, both between creators and readers and between readers. To further understand the implications of this, I looked to Ellen McCracken, Janice Winship Marjorie Ferguson, and Linda McLoughlin. All argue that establishing a personal connection with readers is vital to magazine success and all speak to strategies that magazine publishers and editors use to try to create that relationship. McCracken links the invocation of friendship to consumerism, suggesting that women are more likely to purchase a magazine if it connects them to a larger world of women – to a “women’s domain.” Publishers create a sense of friendship from the cover of the magazine, with titles, visuals, and contents suggesting an intimate relationship amongst all involved. Winship, too, stresses the importance of creating a personal bond between readers and the magazine. The Harmsworth publications do this from page one. The five titles I examined for this dissertation – The Girls’ Best Friend, The Girls’ Friend, Girls’ Home, Girls’ Reader, and Our Girls – all suggest friendship, community, and a shared world.

Other features encouraged girls to become friends. One in particular also helped to inform me of readership. “Our Picture Postcard Exchange” was a regular feature in the

Girls’ Friend. It encouraged readers to seek membership in the club, offering them the opportunity to receive postcards from a variety of readers. Each week the feature published new addresses of readers seeking to receive postcards, provided updated information if members moved or were no longer interested in receiving postcards, and answered questions relating to the exchange. The names and addresses help in providing a snapshot of readers. For example, the May 15, 1909 edition indicates that readers came not only from Britain, but also from beyond, with addresses from South Africa, Gibraltar, and the United States. Other editions include readers from British Columbia, India, and Australia. Within Britain, addresses include Bristol, Manchester, Leicester, Hampstead, Belfast, Glasgow, and South Wales. Some include additional information, such as Miss M. Manson who identifies herself as an actress. All of the female readers seeking participation are designated as Miss – a trend that holds true throughout the run of the feature. Finally, there are also men on the list: Mr. D. Armistead of Rochdale was seeking postcards with coats-of-arms, while Private W. Scotter made no specific stipulations. The number of men, particularly privates, grows on the list with the outbreak of war in 1914. The picture presented, then, is one of a diverse readership.

Beyond titles and covers, it was apparent to me that the editors and contributors relied on other tools to enhance and create a personal connection with readers. Language was fundamental to this. Ferguson discusses the issue of “write-speak” in her examination of femininity and magazines. In an effort to create a link between editor and reader, in particular, words such as “you” and “your” are used extensively, simulating

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59 This is further supported by the variety of hometowns indicated in letters to the editor.
actual conversation even though the relationship is between two distant parties. Further, both Ferguson and McLoughlin argue that the language of magazines must be personal, imitate two-way conversation, and be egalitarian in nature to suggest friendship rather than coercion or blatant authority. This language is most often found in editorial sections of the magazine, where editors are most easily able to address their readers directly, although it can be found in any part of the magazine. This kind of language was present throughout the Amalgamated Press magazines. It was apparent that the editors and often the contributors, particularly those writing on beauty, health, and courtship, sought to establish a social connection with readers through the use of language. Relying on personal pronouns that invoked familiarity, shared worlds, and companionship, they built a sense of friendship and community.

Letters to the editor also served this purpose. Letters were a common feature in all of the magazines, although the number and frequency varied depending on publication. Usually, however, a half page was devoted to answering readers’ letters on a variety of problems and topics. It is entirely possible, however, that at least some of these letters were fake, written by Harmsworth’s own team of writers. Greenwall finds that most of the letters in Harmsworth’s initial publication, *Answers to Correspondents*, were faked, merely existing to set up other features and stories in the magazine. According to Ferris, Harmsworth continued this practice with his other magazines when letters were either not

62 McLoughlin, 74-79.
64 Greenwall, 37.
forthcoming or when they did not fit the overall tone of the publication.\textsuperscript{65} In my view, however, this does not really matter. They work to further create a sense of community and friendship. Readers are encouraged to identify with their fellow readers’ lives, suffering, and problems. In some cases, they might have similar problems. The very fact that these letters are present, then, acts to reaffirm that the reader is not alone, that her problems are common ones, and that friends are waiting to listen and offer advice.\textsuperscript{66} They also work to bolster the ideal image being advanced in the magazine. The letters reflect the values, ideas, and beliefs that the editor and his team believe girls should possess; the advice they offer further cements these dominant ideas. Finally, letters offer the ideal place to add in further covert advertising. A letter regarding blemishes can be linked to a particular product advertised in the magazine. For all these reasons, then, I examine letters throughout the course of the dissertation as an additional way to discover the essential messages of the magazines.

Creating an ideal reader and building a community were very important, but so was encouraging consumerism, both of the actual magazine and of the products within. I began to consider the organization of the magazines. The Harmsworth girls’ magazines all followed a similar pattern: lead serial on the cover, followed by shorter stories, with an editorial and letters to the editor usually at midpoint, followed by further articles, advertising, and stories. This suggested an “integrated communicative chain,”\textsuperscript{67} as well as an underlying message of consumerism. Lead serials appeared on the cover, for example, so that readers could quickly identify the magazine that held the next installment of a story. Once inside the magazine, though, other features took over to work to ensure that

\textsuperscript{65} Ferris, 34, 100-101.
\textsuperscript{66} Winship, 68.
\textsuperscript{67} McCracken, 46.
the reader embraced all of the aspects of the magazine. The editors of the girls’ magazines drew their readers’ attention to other stories and serials in the magazine, stating how good they were and how engaging they would be for readers. They also worked to create a personal link between readers and the protagonists of the stories, suggesting that readers would understand the plight of the characters, their situation, or find the tale completely shocking. All of this worked to sell magazines. If readers are hooked by the story, they will continue purchasing the magazines. The average serial in the girls’ magazines would run for at least twenty issues, ensuring a core of readers that lasted upwards of six months at a time. These editorial pushes could even go beyond the actual magazine in question, telling readers about stories in other magazines published by Harmsworth. Editors, however, did not simply talk about stories, but rather alerted readers to other features in the magazines. This included information about new features and new contributors, again drawing readers’ attention to potentially interesting and helpful material. By the Edwardian period, editors also began to link their editorials to advertising in the magazines. This kind of covert advertising formed part of the “integrated communication chain.” Advertorials, in which advertisements appeared as actual features in the magazine, contests, in which products advertised in the magazines are given away, and editorial endorsement, in which editors encourage readers to try certain products, all made their way into the Harmsworth magazines (as will be seen in Chapter Two).

Beyond their place in the chain of information in the magazines, I analyzed the advertisements on their own. The sheer volume of advertising in the magazines

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68 McCracken, 46, 50-51.
69 McCracken, 50-51, 57-59, 63.
necessitated a close examination of the textual and visual elements of advertisements. The importance of advertising dollars to the success of magazines at the time, too, speaks to its centrality in understanding the content and messages of the magazines. Harmsworth was aware of the power of advertising in his magazines. Despite the extensive amount of advertising in the magazines, he was very leery of advertisers, seeing them as a threat to his desire to control his magazines. Too much advertising, he argued, would have a negative impact, as advertisers sought to more forcefully direct the contents of the magazines. According to Ferris, Alfred was continually at odds with his brother Harold over advertising. Alfred recognized advertising as a necessary evil, necessary if his business was to be financially viable. While he had no issue with accepting advertising, particularly for the abundance of new products on the market, he wanted to keep advertising in check. He limited the number of advertisements that his magazines would accept, ensuring that editorials, articles, and stories would still occupy the most space. This was partly because of his concerns over circulation; he was able to argue to his readers that they got real value for their money: they got more news, more features, and more space to contribute than readers of other magazines and magazines because he kept advertising in its place. Harold, the financial director behind the Amalgamated Press, championed the cause for more and more advertising, standing in sharp contrast to Alfred’s somewhat tempered approach. Alfred, then, walked a fine line between requiring and encouraging advertising and also wanting to limit its place in the magazines to maintain full control.

70 Ferris, 86, 156.
71 Ferris, 85.
72 Indeed, when Alfred died and Harold took control of the Amalgamated Press, he removed editorials from many magazines in an effort to free up more space for advertising. Ferris, 280.
Advertising, despite Harmsworth's reservations, was extensive in the Amalgamated Press magazines for girls. This included advertisements for other Harmsworth publications, health products, beauty aids, bicycles, clothing, patterns and sewing machines, music boxes, fur coats, and assorted other items. Rather than being located on one or two pages in the magazines, editors often chose to intersperse advertising with other features in the magazines. The back cover often contained one large advertisement and one other half page in the magazine would likely have a block of smaller advertisements for a variety of products. Advertising appears on almost every page, though, in some way or another.

To explore these advertisements and their messages, I relied heavily on Richards' *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* and Loeb's *Consuming Angels*, as well as on the other works previously mentioned in relation to understanding women's magazines, more generally. Richards offers an interesting examination of the rise of commodification in Victorian society, as well as the creation of spectacle surrounding advertising and products. While much of his work was useful in my own consideration of advertising in the Amalgamated Press magazines, I particularly appreciated Richards' ideas on the patent medicine system and on advertising to adolescent girls. For the first, Richards links together ideas about progress and modernity, the nature of women, and rampant consumerism to consider the role of patent medicines in rethinking the body during the Victorian Era. In the second, emphasis on the presumed nature of adolescent girls resulted in particular marketing strategies. These reflected dominant beliefs in the malleable nature of girls, the sense of girlhood as a period of transition and preparation,

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73 Richards, 168-203.
and the increasing link between consumerism and adolescence. These ideas came to inform more than simply my look at advertising and supplemented the knowledge I gained from Loeb. In her analysis, Loeb argues that Victorian advertisements act as “historical documents” that allow us “to explore late Victorian cultural ideas.” Working to identify key themes, features, and marketing strategies, she examined hundreds of examples from the period, resulting in a list of key markers of Victorian advertising. These include fantasy, altered depictions of social reality, symbolism, “repetitive poses, dress, settings, or actions,” “evocative illustrations,” and “verbal excess.” Further, she points to the centrality of ideas about material democracy, happy consumerism, perfection, and progress. Finally, Loeb also considers the place of role models, domesticity, commercialization, industrialization, empire, nation, friendship, and consumerism in Victorian advertising. All of these became foundational interpretive lenses as I sought to make sense of the advertising I saw in the Amalgamated Press magazines.

Throughout my analysis, I repeatedly returned to what has become the central focus of this dissertation: the creation of an ideal reader based on societal beliefs about girls and on shifts in the perception of girls and their culture. Other themes were also apparent; these form underlying currents throughout ensuing chapters. Youth, increasingly seen as a period of transition, underwent redefinition during the time period in which these magazines were published. Seen as impressionable, but also distinct, advertisers, editors, publishers, and contributors all sought to market a product to the

74 Richards, 205-245.
75 Loeb, viii.
76 Loeb, ix, 6-11.
77 Loeb, 10-15.
“new” girl. Girls’ magazines, as a result of this, as well as changes in the industry, became increasingly sophisticated, employing ever more tools in an effort to ensure that their messages came across without the use of past, more didactic methods. This included more prevalent advertising and encouragement to consume. These magazines stood on the cusp of a new world for girls; seeking to advise them on how to proceed in life, they pointed to change – change that could not be fully understood by parents or other superiors who had grown up in a radically different world. Despite this emphasis on change, though, an underlying fear runs through the magazines. Girls are repeatedly reminded that some changes are only temporary, such as during wartime or even during adolescence itself. Particular experiences and contexts appear set apart from the overall trajectory of girlhood, which still sends girls towards marriage and eventual motherhood. Tensions exist in the magazines as some contributors encourage girls to hold on to the values and beliefs associated with earlier times, while others entice them with claims of modernity, progress, and the future. The goal appears to be tempered change that does not fundamentally alter the course of girls’ lives, but rather allows them to exist in a kind of netherworld between two realities. Within this place exists the opportunity to do things differently, try new things, and adopt new personas, as long as they are not permanent. This “new” girl reflects an exciting creation who helped sell magazines and products to girls between 1898 and 1916.

My exploration of this creation begins in the first chapter, entitled “Making Girls’ Culture: Girls, Identity, and the Press.” Central to the success of the Amalgamated Press’ magazines for girls was the creation of a readership. This readership needed to function as a collective. For the magazines to have wide appeal, they had to present topics,
situations, and advice that would resonate with the widest variety of girls as possible. Features and stories, for example, explored realities of girls' lives, such as work and school. At the same time, though, much of this identity was fabricated. The editors, in particular, relied on a number of techniques to ensure the creation of this collective identity. Editorials, packaging, and contexts spoke to supposed shared experiences, friendship, and paternal care and concern. In fashioning a shared world of girls, writers often moved away from the realities of girls' lives, focusing on contexts that most of their readers would have no experience with – such as boarding school. These girl-dominated places, though, allowed authors, editors, and illustrators to define and shape the new girl, including her values and characteristics. While not every girl – and indeed very few – would get to participate in these kinds of things, they could all, presumably, embrace the inherent attitudes, actions, and behaviors of the girls they saw and read about. The creation of this collective identity, however, was fraught with difficulty. The realities of girls' lives repeatedly challenged the idea of a happy, homogenous group of girls. National identity, class, and work destabilized this world of girls. The magazines worked hard to downplay these differences, focusing instead on similarities, constructed or otherwise.

In the second chapter, “Advertising to the New Girl,” I consider the implications of this collective identity for advertising, while also examining what constituted the new girls' body. Drawing on an extensive array of strategies, advertisers, contributors, and editors shaped girls' bodies and worked to push girls to view their bodies in particular ways. Authority figures, such as royalty, doctors, and satisfied consumers, provided models to emulate and testimonials on products. Images highlighted to girls the shape
their bodies should take. Health and beauty were intimately linked; no girl could be beautiful if she was not healthy and vice versa. Through it all, girls were treated as emerging women – as pliable and open to suggestion – with girlhood defined as the best time to instill life-long habits of consumption, hygiene, and health. All of this pointed to consumerism. Girls could address ailments, beauty issues, and health issues by buying products. Increasingly, these products seemed to take on magical properties related to new values being embraced within the magazines: thinness, youth, and modernity. These became linked to the ideal of the new girl.

Equally important to the creation of girls' culture and girl identity was the nation. In Chapter Three, entitled “Girls and the Empire: At Home and Abroad,” I explore the messages in the magazines regarding girls’ place in the Empire and the Nation. A tension often existed. On the one hand, contributors emphasized the role of girls in ensuring national health, racial purity, and population and in spreading and upholding national values. Related articles essentially repeated the advice given to women at this time. Short stories and images stressed this role for girls and women. On the other hand, though, advertisements, stories, articles, and editorials encouraged girls to consider a larger place for themselves in the Empire. There were different forms this role could take. Girls, might, for example, choose to experience the Empire through consumerism, purchasing products that spoke to exoticism, mysticism, and far off places. In this way, girls could bring the Empire home to them. Alternatively, girls might undertake their own colonial adventure, through emigration for marriage or work. Activities at home, such as participation in the Girl Scouts or Girl Guides, could help verse them in the needs of the Empire and, if nothing else, work to impart patriotism and the skills necessary for
colonial life. Options, then, existed. While the girl could possibly run off to the empire, the newly-married, or similarly encumbered, girl would have to be content with bringing the empire to her — whether that was through imperial fiction or through face cream.

Finally, Chapter Four, "Pretty, Plucky, and Patriotic: Girls at War," considers the impact of the Anglo-Boer conflicts and the first half of the Great War on girls' identity. Tying into the themes explored in the previous chapter, I examine the features, editorials, images, and advertisements of the Amalgamated Press magazines for messages regarding girls, nation, and war. With the nation at war, girls, particularly during the Great War, experienced a temporary shift in their role. While they contributed to the war effort in typically "feminine" ways, they also replaced men at home and experienced tragedy and harsh conditions working close to the front. Certain groups received particular attention, such as nurses, munitions' workers, and war workers, more generally, but much of the advice offered related to the specific nature and attitude of all girls. Encouraged to be "plucky" in the face of upheaval and sadness, editors, contributors, and advertisers all stressed to girls their importance to the war effort. Whether as "plucky" girls remaining steadfast in the face of danger, as vehicles of propaganda, as comforters and supporters of soldiers, as upholders of feminine virtue, as thrifty spenders, or as workers and temporary breadwinners, there was much girls could do. Always, though, writers added caveats: this was only temporary and once the conflict was over, girls could expect to return to their usual place. Writers also paid attention to some of the specific social situations that arose during war time, such as "khaki fever," courtship, relations with soldiers, and hasty marriages, offering advice to girls that stressed the importance of their purity and modesty in the face of war. Clearly, based on the issues being explored in the magazines,
girls’ attitudes towards love, sexuality, and men were changing and efforts were made to
discourage that from happening.

Whether examining girls’ identity, girls’ bodies, girls and the empire, or girls at
war, the Amalgamated Press magazines for girls acted as agents of socialization. In
creating an ideal reader and working to build a community of readers who identified with
one another, the editors and contributors of the Harmsworth magazines helped to bring
about a new vision of girls and girls’ culture. This new view constructed a much more
dynamic character than her mid-Victorian counterpart. Girls were allowed more freedom
of expression and behaviour, more opportunities for work, school, and self discovery, and
more independence. At every step, however, the fragile nature of this ideal is present.
Social conventions dictated that independent, plucky, courageous girls become domestic,
obedient wives and mothers. The change was only temporary, just as it was when girls
responded to crises in the nation and in the empire. The nature of girls, too, threatened to
breakdown the ideal. British girlhood encompassed a range of experiences, contexts,
ethnicities, languages, and classes. A single homogenous view of girlhood would not
hold up for long.
Chapter One
Making Girls’ Culture: Girls, Identity, and the Press

One of the central goals of the Harmsworth magazines was to create a sense of collective identity. In other chapters I will show that this collective identity had gender and national elements; in this chapter I explore the other ways that editors and contributors encouraged a collective sense of self, including titles, editorials, and contexts. School, for example, was one way that contributors suggested girls might connect with other girls. Work was another way. What is striking, however, is that both of these features held the inherent possibility of separation; according to the editors, girls of different classes read the Harmsworth magazines and certainly not all girls were part of the boarding school tradition, so often portrayed in the pages of the magazines. In presenting what they envisioned as collective girlhood experiences, the editors and the contributors really fashioned an image of girls’ culture and identity that they hoped their readers would adopt and that they suggested negated difference. These shared worlds could be accessed by any girl – even if in reality she would never see the inside of a boarding school or would never rise above factory worker. It is likely, then, that this led to a disconnect in some cases between a girl’s lived reality and the world of the magazines she read. Macdonald, however, argues that this is not problematic; people are more than capable of dealing with a mismatch between competing sets of ideas about the world.¹ Girls, then, were capable of delving into a world that was not their own and could be open to the idea of a shared world of girls – even if this was not the reality of their lives.

In an effort to create this shared world, editors and the contributors relied on several strategies, including carefully presenting the magazine and its contents, creating an aura of friendship, and building a personal relationship with readers based on egalitarian principles, connection, and mutual respect. Editors fashioned ideal-readers and shared contexts where girls' culture dominated and where new girls were favoured characters. They worked repeatedly to break down differences between girls, emphasizing a shared set of values, characteristics, and experiences through both textual and visual elements of the magazines. In the end, however, this shared world was doomed to crumble. Distinctions based on national identity, class, and work had a destabilizing effect on a common girls' culture and world. Ultimately, it was only for a short period of time Harmsworth and his team would be able to create the illusion of unified girlhood.

The idea of a collective identity amongst readers is apparent in the very format of the magazines. Harmsworth, as publisher, made assumptions about his audience and the kind of magazine that would be attractive to them. Each magazine is short, with most only eight pages long. *The Girls' Friend* and *The Girls' Reader* eventually became sixteen pages long, but these are still not large magazines requiring an extensive amount of time to read. The impression seems to be that the bulk of readers would not have a significant amount of time to read. This is further supported by the organization of the magazines. Each includes an abundance of different elements, from lengthy installments, and.

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of serialized fictional stories and half- to full-page feature articles, to small tidbits of information, editorials, short pieces of fiction, and advice columns. Presumably, a girl will have something to engage with in the magazine whether she has five minutes or 45 minutes. She would be able to pick up and put down the magazine several times in the course of her day, each time being able to read a piece reflective of the amount of time that she has. In organizing the magazine this way, Harmsworth appears to believe that his readers enjoy a lot of different kinds of reading on many different subjects.\(^3\) Harmsworth also assumes that his readers have some disposable income, but not a lot. Most of his magazines cost only a half-penny, with the larger, sixteen-page publications costing a full penny. Double issues of the larger magazines, published biannually, cost two pennies. There is something for everyone – even the girl earning only 15 shillings a week in her position.\(^4\) Even if such a girl could not afford to purchase her own magazine, though, Harmsworth regularly advised his readers to pass on their copies of his magazines when they were done reading them. While this surely reflected his desire to see the circulation of his publications grow it was also a way for girls without means to read his magazines.

Finally, Harmsworth also appealed to the possible aesthetic desires of his readers, publishing his magazines in colours such as pink and green, setting them apart from the cream, blue, and brown publications for boys.

\(^3\) Ferris argues that this kind of format was found in most of Harmsworth's magazines and magazines.
\(^4\) Contributors addressed rates of pay in the magazines. Cashiers and bookkeepers could expect to earn between 10-15 shillings a week, with maximum wages of 25 shillings per week. With extra training, cashiers could become bookkeepers, earning as much as 2 pounds per week. "Bookkeepers and Cashiers," *The Girls' Best Friend*, issue 7, volume 1, 53. At the post office, telegraph operators started at 10 shillings per week, rapidly rising to 14 shillings per week once they showed competency. This wage could continue to climb to 38 shillings per week. "The Post Office – Telegraph Learners," *The Girls' Best Friend*, issue 1, volume 1, 6. These kinds of features were common in the early years of the magazines. A survey of them suggests that the average girl, employed in these 'new' areas, earned approximately 15 shillings per week. This is further supported by Barbara Harrison, *Not Only the ‘Dangerous Trades’: Women’s Work and Health in Britain, 1880-1914* (London: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1996).

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Harmsworth also made assumptions about the kinds of things his readers would want to read about. His publications for girls focused on health and beauty, work, love and romance, nation and empire, and girls’ worlds. Serialized fiction often recounted tales of peril in girls’ lives as they sought to overcome obstacles to marriage and happiness. Harmsworth commissioned stories on girls at work, girls at school, girls on the stage, and girls in the colonies. Articles and advice columns offered girls advice on a plethora of topics, including using beauty products, engaging in healthy activities, dressing in the latest fashions, meeting boys, getting engaged, and finding work. All of this, too, was supported by extensive visuals in the magazines, with Harmsworth drawing on the skills of illustrators to create visual impact. Girls could look at pictures that showed them how to do their hair, how to make an apron for work, or how to make inexpensive Christmas gifts. They could identify their favourite actresses and films, learn the latest dance moves, or expand their repertoire of swimming strokes. At times, readers could even look at pictures of themselves and their friends, as editors ran beauty contests in the magazines, inviting readers to send in their photographs and miniatures for judging. This suggests that Harmsworth’s team believed that readers wanted to be involved with the publication. Readers sent pictures and miniatures, poems, songs, and letters. Editors devoted at least half a page per issue to discussing their problems and addressing their readers directly in editorials. Essentially Harmsworth created magazines that he felt reflected his readers’ lives, interests, and values. At the same time, this did not

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3 Harmsworth, of course, was not the only publisher to do this. This was a common element in women’s magazines at the time. Tinkler argues that the presentation of messages was vital if contributors and editors wished to encourage readers to see the preferred reading of the text. See Tinkler, “Women and Popular Literature,” 134-138. Harmsworth, like other publishers, sought to identify what he saw as the key interests of girls, align them with his own beliefs, and present a product that he hoped would be received as he wished.
necessarily mean that readers would flock to his publications. He needed strategies to encourage a sense of collective identity with the actual readers; he needed to build a community.

Editors and contributors encourage a sense of collective identity between readers, and between themselves and their readers, right from the very first page. Winship argues that when it comes to names, magazines generally fall into two categories: on the one hand there are those that "suggest themselves as a hybrid of the life-long friend and most favoured possession, to be clutched warmly to the bosom[,]" while on the other hand there are those that pointed to a world of women. The Harmsworth magazines actually fall into both categories. Harmsworth's earlier magazines encouraged girls to think of the magazines as their friends, with titles such as *The Girls' Best Friend* and *The Girls' Friend*. A later magazine, *The Girls' Home*, stressed the idea of a common girls' world. Similarly, *The Girls' Reader* gives the impression that the magazine contains stories and articles that all girls want to read.

One of the more prominent ways the editors and contributors sought to create shared worlds with their readers was through the invocation of friendship. The titles of the magazines under consideration here were an important part of this. Harmsworth's first magazines for girls, *The Girls' Best Friend* and *The Girls' Friend*, both suggested that readers would not only find things of interest to them in the magazines, but that they could look upon these magazines as their friends, suggesting an intimate, trustworthy relationship. Indeed, as the editor suggests in the very first issue of *The Girls' Best*

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Friend, “Every girl has a best friend – some girl who she likes better than all her other acquaintances, to whom she confides, and in return is confided in. Such friendships last very often through life, and I sincerely trust that... I shall find a good many lifelong friends.” The editor, then, appears to posit himself as the best friend in the relationship. As a friend, the editor is well placed to offer guidance and advice, stating, “I really do want every girl who reads this magazine to look upon their Editor in the light of a real friend – someone whom they can absolutely trust; someone they can rely upon to give them counsel which will be the best for them, and which will help them to make their lives happier and enjoyable.”

Establishing a personal relationship based on egalitarian principles appears fundamental to the success of magazines. While entertainment is certainly an important part, instruction and encouragement are central. Because advice is likely best heeded if the reader feels a personal connection to the magazine, its editor, and its contributors, much is done to foster a sense of intimacy between the reader and the magazine. For example, contributors regularly address the reader, speaking to “you” about “your” problems. In essence, writers simulate “two-way conversations” within the magazine in an effort to create the impression that they know you and that you know them. This use of personalizing language allows the reader to feel individually addressed by the writers of the magazine and encourages the reader to interact with and respond to what is being

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9 Editor, “Your Editor and His Girl Friends: A Preliminary Chat with Readers,” volume 1, number 1 (1898), 4.
11 Ferguson, 184-185; Winship, 66.
12 Ferguson, 184-85.
written. This voice, however, must not speak down to the reader. Instead, a spirit of egalitarianism must be fostered. In the opening editorial for the *Girls' Best Friend*, for example, the editor credits his readers with wanting more from their reading material. He writes, “I have come to the conclusion that many of the magazines at present in existence for girls and young ladies are making a great mistake. They think that all a girl wants in her magazine is a lot of mamby-pamby twaddle, a love-story, and something about hats and frocks; but surely the average girl in this country has a soul which aspires to know something of other subjects....” While one could argue that this quote suggests the editor is speaking down to the reader who is indeed looking for love stories and fashion from a magazine, on the other hand, he elevates his readership, suggesting that they want something more. Repeatedly through the same editorial he states that he understands what girls want, that he understands their world, and that he will endeavour to offer stories and features that will speak to them and their needs. This is supported when he calls on readers to send their critiques of the magazine and their suggestions for future content. While he has “lots of ideas,” he wishes the girls to consider this their magazine. The editor works to create a personal relationship with his readers based on egalitarian principles and a shared understanding of a girl’s world.

The personal relationship that is created, particularly between the editor and the reader, is likely not one that would be found in reality. It is interesting that the editor of girls’ magazines, claiming a shared context and understanding of the world, is a man.

14 Winship, 66; McLoughlin, 68.
15 Ferguson, 184-85.
17 Editor, “Your Editor and His Girl Friends: A Preliminary Chat with Readers,” volume 1, number 1 (1898), 4.
While girls would be used to paternal authority in their lives—whether directly through their fathers and male relatives or indirectly through male writers, politicians, and social commentators who espouse views of femininity—but the editor here counts himself as a friend. His readers, however, appear to applaud this. In issue 1, number 9 of the *Girls’ Best Friend*, the editor writes that he received a letter from “Friend Dolly” in St. Leonard’s seeking advice on looking for a new occupation. He quotes her as saying, “I am so glad you are not an editress, for if you were I should not write to you.” While stating in earlier issues of the magazine that he does have a female who helps him deal with particular issues, such as those dealing with beauty and fashion, he claims here that because he is a man he is best suited to offer advice to girls: “I think a man can sometimes honestly advise girls for the best; in fact, better than a woman because... he knows the other side of the question; and where it is a matter of dealing with a man and a woman, he knows the man’s side of the question and can advise the girl what best to do.” The editor offers girls something that they likely do not have in their daily life—the benefit of a male friend.

Pushing further, however, it appears that what is being offered is more complicated than friendship. While establishing a personal, trustworthy relationship is vital to this, the tone that results is different. Through the editorials and through the features that are commissioned for the magazine, the editor seeks to offer advice and guidance to readers based on his own life experience and personal beliefs. He stresses, for example, that girls might even be more comfortable coming to him with certain problems

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18 No letters, understandably so, were published that were critical of a male editor.
than going to a family member or other friend because "I am not personally biased with regard to their trouble, and am anxious to give them only the best and most useful counsel."²¹ He becomes a voice of authority – which is different than the voice of a friend – who values a relationship with his readers based on perceived mutual respect. In this way, his role is not that different from the girl’s father. By emphasizing the importance of their lives, their problems, and their opinions, through devices such as the letters-to-the-editor section, editors and contributors, in effect, affirm the importance of these very things; presumably, if they did not take their readers seriously, the editor would not devote between half and three-quarters of a page in virtually every issue to them.²² Their identity in the relationship remains fixed in his eyes: they are readers. His identity is the one that must shift to accomplish different goals and to meet different needs. As McLoughlin argues, "The writer can simultaneously be the reader’s friend, adviser and entertainer, or their identity can shift between these roles."²³ Editors and his contributors seek to act as friends, advisors, and entertainers. At the same time, they also act to construct an ideal reader and a shared world and, therefore, the relationship between the two sides is "not-symmetrical – it is always the text producer who has the authority to command the reader to do things and never the other way round..."²⁴

Part of creating personal relationships with readers means appearing to address each reader as an individual; when dealing with mass readership, however, this is very difficult. Editors and contributors “cannot possibly claim to know the identity of each individual reader, yet they often speak as though they already know the reader, their

²¹ Ibid, 4.
²² Winship, 68.
²³ McLoughlin, 69.
²⁴ McLoughlin, 74.
thoughts, attitudes, likes and dislikes. In order to do this an imaginary addressee is constructed...."\textsuperscript{25} The editorial team does not seek a friendship with each individual reader, but rather with an "ideal-reader" who "share[s] the same views, attitudes and beliefs..." as they do. \textsuperscript{26} In other words, "it is the magazines who set the terms of friendship."\textsuperscript{27}

Magazines cannot simply rely on creating a personal relationship with their readers; they must also presume to reflect the shared interests and experiences of their readers. Magazine titles begin this process: \textit{The Girls' Home} suggests a shared context and set of experiences, just as \textit{The Girls' Reader} suggests that within the pages of the magazine girls will find topics of interest to them. The general content of each magazine also suggests the supposed shared world of girls. All of the magazines emphasize health and beauty, work and school, fashion, friends, boys and romance, actresses and popular culture, nation and identification with empire, and adventure through reading. The assumption on the part of the producers of the texts and images is that these are the issues most important to all girls.\textsuperscript{28} The editor declares from the beginning that his magazines are for all of the girls and "every woman in the kingdom...."\textsuperscript{29} Diversity is ignored in favour of a shared set of life experiences and problems. In essence, then, in attempting to build readership and make personal connections with their readers, Harmsworth, his editors, and his contributors worked to fashion a shared culture for girls, with school and

\textsuperscript{25} McLoughlin, 67.
\textsuperscript{26} McLoughlin, 67, 74.
\textsuperscript{27} Winship, 68.
\textsuperscript{28} McLoughlin, 69.
\textsuperscript{29} Editor, "Your Editor and His Girl Friends: A Preliminary Chat with Readers," volume 1, number 1 (1898), 4.
The word "girl," in and of itself, is a signifier of collectivity. Exploring the language of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, Mitchell finds that so many common terms – such as "young lady" or "young person" – had class limitations. Instead, "girl is inclusive. It takes in workgirl, servant girl, factory girl, college girl or girl graduate, shopgirl, bachelor girl, girl journalist, and office girl. It includes schoolgirls as well, but she is not a child; a 'schoolgirl' in Victorian usage is probably over eleven." Girl, then, was sufficiently ambiguous to offer the opportunity for widespread adoption. Therefore, it gained special currency with the publishers, editors, and contributors of girls’ magazines, all of whom wished to see their readership grow. Within the pages of *The Girls’ Best Friend, The Girls’ Friend, The Girls’ Home, The Girls’ Reader*, and *Our Girls*, readers are always “girls,” regardless of age, occupation, or station in life. Just as editors created ideal readers in an effort to deal with mass readership, they also adopted language that was inclusive, allowing the greatest number of readers to identify with the ideas being put forth.

This is not to suggest that the term was so ambiguous that it allowed readers to define “girl” themselves; editors and contributors carefully crafted a vision of girlhood that brought together a number of features. General features of the new girl included

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30 For an exploration of the other key themes addressed by the magazines, including health and beauty, actresses, nation and empire, and fashion, please see the other chapters of this dissertation. Interestingly, too, by including both schoolgirl stories and tales of girls at work, Harmsworth overcomes some of the problems of a diverse readership. Tinkler argues that magazines catered to specific sets of girls, with some focusing on schoolgirls while others focused on girls at work. Tinkler, “Women and Popular Literature,” 140. By bringing the two together, Harmsworth ensures a larger readership, but this makes the task of creating a shared community all the more important and challenging.


32 My portrayal of the ‘new’ girl is informed by Sally Mitchell's seminal work, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*. I adopt her overarching depiction of the new girl and will utilize it to
independence, self-sufficiency, intelligence, and respectability. She also made the acquaintance of boys, seeking new ways to meet boys and gain their favour. While not brazen, they were certainly more forward than girls of previous generations. At the same time, the new girl also embraced boyishness. Writers portrayed girls as mischievous, adventurous, rebellious, active, jolly, and plucky; indeed, it even became acceptable for girls to appear untidy and careless at times. Essentially, then, these features reflected hybridity. Adopting features common to middle-class girls, such as respectability and intelligence, and melding these with working-class girl characteristics, such as self-sufficiency and independence, the editors and contributors ensured a varied audience and appeal.33 In addition, “the new girl’s popular fiction emphasizes peer standards, not adult standards....”34 What other girls thought was of more importance than what parents thought. In some ways, suggests Mitchell, this made sense. The girl at the turn of the century led a different life than her mother had and was faced with issues and problems that her mother did not face; she drew more heavily, then, on her peer group to advise her.35 Of course, this angle was also adopted by the popular press; presumably the editor of The Girls’ Best Friend, for example, had a greater understanding of what it meant to explore the new girl in the Harmsworth publications. At the same time, there are limitations to Mitchell’s work; I will explore these when I examine contradictions in the magazines that detract from a homogenous portrayal of girlhood.

33 Mitchell, 43. Vallone also notes the centrality of the ‘tomboy’ character in Disciplines of Virtue, 119-121.
34 Mitchell, 18.
35 Drotner argues that rapidly changing circumstances in late-Victorian England, including shifts in perceptions of childhood, education acts, economic changes, and changes in the status and rights of women, meant that girls in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period lived quite different lives than their mothers had. “Few late-Victorian or Edwardian mothers seem to have acted as counselors or confidantes, helping to solve their daughters’ key conflicts. Only a minority of women were able to pass on advice culled from personal experience on how to tackle problems at school, how to choose the right kind of career, or how indeed to reconcile the contrary demands of work and marriage. Most mothers raised their daughters to become good Victorian wives and mothers at a time when the Victorian ideal of domesticity was being undermined. The adolescent girl, lodged between feminine docility and intellectual independence, found her mother no model of identification, and she rarely had an elder sister or a cousin close by whom she might emulate or consult.” Drotner, 135-163. Mitchell, 9.
be a girl in 1900 than even a mother did. Whether advising her in editorials, publishing stories meant to appeal specifically to her, or offering columns reflecting her concerns, the new magazines catered to the new girl – a specific social construct of the time period.

No greater example of the new girl exists than Pollie Green.

Pollie Green, a fictional character whose exploits ran through the various Harmsworth magazines, embodied the new girl.36 A series of stories chronicled her life, from her time at Northrope College to her education at Cambridge, and then on to her introduction to society and later her adventures on caravan. Pollie eventually settles down and marries, causing her best friend Coosha, a black girl, to remark, "'Gen’lemen and ladies, de drime dat Bruce Hardaker hab committed dis day is dat he rob de world ob – ob Pollie Green!'"37 While Pollie has presumably been tamed by marriage and will now settle down to life as a wife, putting her mischievous ways behind her, her girlhood was coloured by adventure and an adherence to the values of the new girl.38

The "prettiest, wittiest, daintiest, and most bewitching girl in the world,"39 Pollie, seventeen, arrived at Northrope College after her father agreed to send her off to school. Described repeatedly throughout the stories as "saucy," "confident," "witty," "mischievous," and "precocious," Pollie quickly earns the respect of her peers. At the same time, though, she shocks the adults with her behaviour. She repeatedly leaves the school without permission, proclaiming that "'I’ve been used to going out and coming in..."
just as I like, all my life,'" and pays no heed to schedules: "Oh, you need never worry about me.... Always get on with your meals; don't wait for me. I drop in at any hour almost for my meals – and sometimes don't come in at all!"" She is even prone to sneaking out of her room at night (figure 1.1).

![Pollie Green from The Girls' Friend (9 November 1907)](image)

At the same time, though, Pollie's refusal to accept the routines and external authority of adults extends beyond missed meals and unapproved absences. Pollie regularly mocks the adults of Northrope College. In one instance, Miss Simms, who garners much of Pollie's disgust, arrives to class to see Pollie writing an unflattering limerick about her on the board (figure 1.2).

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40 Ibid, volume 2, number 83, 30 September 1911, 647
41 Ibid, volume 2, number 78, 26 August 1911, 633.
Sent to the headmistress’s office, Pollie is chastised for being “ill-behaved, unruly, and impertinent....”\textsuperscript{42} Worse, though, is that she is “leading younger girls into mischief.”\textsuperscript{43}

Punished, Pollie takes all of the blame herself, absolving all others in attendance of any wrongdoing, and pledging that she did not intend to behave badly. She wins the girls’ favour once again by accepting responsibility for her actions, but also for ridiculing a much-disliked authority figure.\textsuperscript{44}

This was not the only time that Pollie openly subverted the authority of a teacher at the school. Forced to attend classes with the “little girls,” Pollie comes to disapprove of the way the mistress treats her young pupils. Enraged one day as the mistress is about to

\textsuperscript{42} Mabel St. John, \textit{Pollie Green, The Girls’ Friend}, number 415, 19 October 1917, 829.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 829.
\textsuperscript{44} Mitchell argues that “loyalty to one’s own sex” is a standard feature in boys’ literature of the time. Mitchell, 141.
administer corporal punishment to one of the girls, Pollie jumps up, receiving the blow herself, wrenching the ruler out of the hands of the teacher (figure 1.3).

Pollie shows her courage, her refusal to bow to adult authority, her sense of justice, and her desire to protect the little girls who look up to her. Whether proclaiming her independence, both in thought and action, making friends with the boys from the school next door (figure 1.4), running free throughout the countryside, making friends at school, or conspiring against adult authority, Pollie reflects the many features of the new girl.45

45 For more on Pollie Green, see Mitchell, 93 and Kirsten Drotner, English Children and Their Magazines: 1751-1945 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 166.
While Pollie was embraced by readers – as attested to by numerous letters to the editor that applaud Pollie, from girls who wish to be just like her – it remains interesting that this girl who repeatedly subverted authority became a heroine of Harmsworth and the Amalgamated Press.\textsuperscript{46} Pollie was the creation of “Mabel St. John,” a pseudonym for Henry St. John Cooper, an adult male and one of Harmsworth’s most prolific writers.\textsuperscript{47} This may merely attest to the power of the commercial venture. Given that Harmsworth’s primary intent in publishing was to sell magazines, it makes sense that he would commission writers to create characters that his audience would want to read about. The popularity of Pollie Green cannot be denied; the fact, for example, that Harmsworth repeatedly re-ran the Pollie series of stories in various publications and that girls kept asking for more of Pollie, is undeniable. In a larger scale survey of Edwardian girls’

\textsuperscript{46} Mitchell argues, too, that Pollie Green was “Harmsworth’s most popular schoolgirl hero....” Mitchell, 93.
\textsuperscript{47} For more on Henry Cooper, see Cadogan and Craig, 130-133, Droitner, 166, and Mitchell, 94.
literature, for example, Mitchell finds that, “neat, clean, gentle, and obedient girls are not often likeable. When the initial description mentions a girl’s untidiness and careless dress, readers knew at once that she would be jolly, wholesome, and active.” Drotner, furthermore, argues that this kind of girl held special appeal across class lines. Girls of the middle class, the lower middle class, or the artisanal class, likely still at school, would be attracted to the story lines and the setting; working-class girls, on the other hand, would be attracted to the “subversion of discipline and authority.” This dual appeal, then, assured a wider readership and, therefore, higher sales. At the same time, though, it appears that more is going on than commercial appeal.

The Pollie Green stories tap into a larger theme present throughout the Harmsworth magazines: taming girls. The taming-of-the-shrew trope runs throughout several stories in the magazines. “Wild,” “high-spirited” girls regularly settle down with marriage and domesticity. This is the case with both Pollie and Coosha, as it is with the main characters in Gilda Brierley’s “The Taming of the Shrews or, The Girls of Glenthorn.” Writers and editors repeatedly adhere to the notion that girlhood is a time of transition. Changes in British life, including the introduction of various education acts, which saw children stay in school for longer periods of time, and industry acts, which kept children out of factories, ushered in a new reality for children. As the period of childhood grew longer and adult responsibilities arrived later, the idea of a transitionary period between childhood and adulthood emerged. While the years after the Great War and, even more so after the Second World War, would see the birth of teenage culture, the years up to the First World War also saw a growing disconnect between youth and

48 Mitchell, 131.
49 Drotner, 166.
50 This serialized story ran in The Girls' Friend in 1911.
adults. Existing in a “free space” between “child at home” and adult, the female youth came to enjoy “new ways of being, new modes of behaviour, and new attitudes that were not yet acceptable for adult women.” This suggested, then, that girls had the relative freedom to play with their identity and actions during their in-between years, as long as they understood that marriage, family, and home – “traditional” values of womanhood – awaited them at the other side.

Contributors were also careful to place such behaviour within an appropriate context. The school figured prominently in such stories; girls rarely, if ever, behaved in such a manner while living at home or while at work. In this way, schoolgirl stories acted as a way to live out dreams and desires. Indeed, “the teacher-as-authority-figure may well have been a safe substitute for a feared or disliked forewoman, employer, or parent. To imagine revenge, evasion, talking back, seizing control from the teacher – all of these fantasy confrontations serve both as a comic relief and as a psychological escape valve.”

Places of adventure, away from parental authority, school offered freedom – freedom to choose one’s own friends, to act in ways disapproved of at home, and to become more independent and self-sufficient. Going away to school, a particularly

51 Mitchell, 3. This idea of a transitional period between child and adult, as reflected in popular fiction, is echoed by Tinkler, “Women and Popular Literature,” 140. Tinkler refers to this as the “twilight zone” of girls. See also Lynne Vallone, Disciplines of Virtue: Girls’ Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 2-9; 49.
54 Mitchell, 95.
55 Mitchell, 80-81, 95. Similar arguments can be made about the place of imperial romances in boys’ reading. While most boys would not have had the opportunity to leave Britain for the wilds of Africa, such settings provided them, and men, the opportunity to engage in activities and display behaviours that were increasingly frowned upon at home. See, for example, Joseph Bristow, Empire Boys: Adventures in a
popular theme by 1907 in the Harmsworth magazines, afforded even more opportunities for girls to engage in girl culture. The emphasis, however, is clear—these experiences exist apart from reality. The vast bulk of Harmsworth’s readers would never have been able to go to boarding school; in fact only 15 to 20 percent of girls would have gone to school during their adolescence, given that most girls only received elementary education. This, then, made school a safe place for writers to imbue readers with the values of a new girls’ culture.

Work also acted as a unifier of girls’ culture. It was apparent in the pages of the magazines—owing to the plethora of articles, features, and editorials on the subject of work—that the bulk of the readers had to work for a living. These workers shared common experiences and values that editors and contributors emphasized. For example, The Girls’ Friend, in 1905, ran a weekly series entitled “Business Girl Chats.” Each week, a journalist spoke to a girl in a particular occupation. Positions ranged from waitress and typist, to photographer and nurse. Despite the different occupational titles, though, the similarities of the girls were stressed. Writers credit the girls as being hard workers. Many, like “A Waitress,” manage to work their way up from bottom positions, eventually taking on greater responsibilities and, in some cases, actually becoming managers. Others emphasize the practical knowledge that they have acquired and the skills that they possess. For some this means typing and shorthand, while for others it


57 Work was also a primary divider, as will be shown later in the chapter.

means confectionary skills and floral arranging. They point, as well, to their feminine qualities and the ways that these make them successful in their positions. "A Nurse" stresses that she has a "calm, cheerful disposition... and an untiring love for work." Finally, in this series, girls emphasize their self-sufficiency and their ability to earn a living. "The Typist" declares that she has not only learned to be a "little business woman," but also that she has learned "how to dress suitably and economically." Several, including "The Typist" and "A Stewardess," also point to the "nest eggs" that they have accumulated during their time of work; they express pride that they will be able to offer something substantial to their future husbands. Despite the differences in their job titles, contributors chose to emphasize the similarities between the girls; this has the effect of creating a collective of girl workers with similar values, goals, and experiences.

The magazines also depict the visual similarities of female workers. For fifteen weeks in 1913, The Girls' Reader ran a series of "Peeps" into "Days in the Lives of Busy Workers." Essentially a profile of "new" factory workers – those happily working in much-improved work environments, enjoying good pay – the articles featured the factories of well-known British companies, such as Huntley and Palmers, Rowntree's Chocolates, and Peak Freen and Company. The articles occasionally left the factory, exploring, for example, the Central Telephone Exchange and the Salvation Army. Throughout every context the writers emphasize the same qualities as depicted in the "Business Girl Chats." Significantly, though, this time each article is anchored by a large central image showing girls at work. The similarities are striking. Each work place is

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61 Interestingly, none of these companies are significant advertisers in the magazines. Perhaps the publishers hoped to generate additional advertising revenue by profiling certain companies; if so, this does not appear to have worked.
clean and orderly; this is also stressed by the captions of some of the pictures. At Blackfriars’ Confectionary, “cleanliness and ‘sweetness’ reign,”62 (figure 1.5) while at Rowntree’s “Clean and busy fingers [fill] dainty sachets.”63

![Figure 1.5 “Blackfriars Confectionary” from The Girls’ Reader (8 March 1913)](image)

No girl appears to be working strenuously; indeed, as the caption on the Bovril picture notes, “Girls bottling, capsuling, and packaging Bovril. Some girls can fill as many as 13,000 bottles a day without undue exertion.”64 (figure 1.6).

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64 “Days in the Lives of Busy Workers: Peep No. 3,” The Girls’ Reader, volume 2, number 60 (22 March 1913), 27.
The girls’ appearance is rather uniform, as well. All wear similar dresses and, with the exception of the girls at the Central Telephone Exchange, all wear aprons (figure 1.7). A few wear caps, but their hair is all styled the same. The pictures also suggest a female environment: only one male is present in the pictures, but he acts as judge for the girls’ recreation time. Girls work alongside girls and, in many cases, they appear to be
They appear to enjoy their work and the company that they keep, especially illustrated by the last picture of the series (figure 1.8).

The image celebrates the efforts of the Huntley and Palmers Company to create a positive working environment that encourages recreation and fun for their workers. At the same time, though, it further suggests that the girls have made close friends in their work. The article makes no mention of this type of recreation on a Saturday being required; workers, presumably, choose to attend the events, although it is possible they were an extension of Saturday morning work. The fact that the girls attend and engage in the activities seems to indicate their appreciation of their employer and their desire to spend more time with their girlfriends. One can imagine them going about their work, chatting with the girls around them about things of interest, and reveling in the all-girls’ environment – just as we can with the school. In presenting such articles and pictures, the editors and

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65 These images dominate the pages of all of the girls’ magazines under investigation in this dissertation. There is a remarkable similarity in depicting female workers, whether the girls are part of feature stories or articles or characters in fictional pieces.
contributors of the magazines present female workers as a collective group who can still identify with the female environment of the school.\textsuperscript{66}

Despite these efforts to create a collective identity for girls and an experience of girlhood, the editors and contributors were ultimately doomed to failure. “For twenty to twenty-five years, girls’ magazines and magazines had played a major role in creating a community of interest from readers who were geographically scattered.”\textsuperscript{67} These readers were not only geographically scattered; class, age, and experience were equally problematic. Mitchell argues that by 1920, a new girls’ culture emerged, one that was “less open, less fluid, [and] less promising...”\textsuperscript{68} Instead, girls’ culture became as fragmented as girls were. Tinkler argues that while underlining characteristics of feminine ideology remained in the magazines after the Great War, “representations of femininity varied according to the age and social class of the intended readership, and these variations reflected changes over time in social and economic conditions, and in reader tastes and interests.”\textsuperscript{69} Unity had come with commercial identity – largely posited through novels, magazines, and postcards – drawing this diverse and fluid group of females together under a collective, unifying, and all-encompassing identity. This unity, however, was always fabricated. Image reigned over reality and it seemed only a matter of time before it all began to fall apart, replaced by something else. In the Harmsworth

\textsuperscript{66} Unlike the schoolgirl stories, however, dissent and rebellion are not common. Girls will complain about harsh conditions, as will soon be explored, and they would stand up against significant abuse, such as the case with Maysie Kenealy in \textit{Utterly Alone} who refuses to fall prey to the advances of her employer. \textit{Utterly Alone} begins in \textit{The Girls’ Best Friend} in volume 1, number 1 (1898).

\textsuperscript{67} Mitchell, 177.

\textsuperscript{68} Mitchell, 188.

magazines between 1898 and 1916 contradictions repeatedly undermined the collective experience and identity touted by the girls’ magazines.

Geography was an important divider that threatened collective identity in the girls’ magazines. Girls’ place in the nation and in the empire worked to destabilize a collective identity. Without question, the editors and contributors of the girls’ magazines created an identity that was English as opposed to British. While the magazines recognized the presence of Welsh, Irish, and Scottish girls, often these girls were treated as oddities rather than as part of the collective. Stories about Irish girls, for example, inevitably used the Abbey as a setting, focusing on girls as nuns, distinguishing them as separate from the English in religion. Irish girls were also more likely to be depicted in heavy work, such as mining. Writers suggested that Welsh and Scottish girls were different in many ways from English girls, too, in the way they spoke and dressed and in the way they interacted with men. “Our Lazy Bachelor,” a long-standing contributor to the magazines, wrote a series of columns on the girls of Britain and of the British Empire, highlighting how they were different – always with the English girl as the point of comparison. The “Dundee girl,” for example, was “haughty,” regularly snubbing men. She is “absolutely honest in her indifference to men. She is neither inquisitive about them nor frightened of them.” Indeed, English girls who attempt to display this kind of indifference, he argues, appear as though they are “putting on airs.” The Dundee girl, in


comparison, comes off as “tantalizing” to men because of her indifference; English girls’ “coquettish” way of acting, in contrast, makes men uninterested in them. “Our Lazy Bachelor” declares, therefore, that he prefers Dundee girls to English girls.\textsuperscript{72} While this depiction may have the effect of making the Dundee reader pleased that she is more attractive to some men than the English girl, it still has the effect of drawing lines of difference between girls. Finally, as we will see further in the chapter on nation and empire, girls were no longer confined to the geographical boundaries of England or of Britain. Many girls left for the colonies, seeking work and, sometimes, husbands abroad. Stories about readers in Canada, Australia, Africa, and India served as reminders that readers had vastly different lives and experiences. While underlying values of femininity, domesticity, and marriage could seek to maintain a united sense of girlhood, the realities of national difference and of life in the British Empire could pull those bonds apart.

Time and again the realities of class distinctions also threatened to pull apart girlhood. The school, characterized so often as the place where girls could be together in a shared world, was often a site of class conflict. “Mabel St. John’s” \textit{The Outcast of Crowthorpe College}, a long-running serial in \textit{The Girls’ Home}, is one such example. Nellie Smith, a tall, slightly built girl, arrives at Crowthorpe College on scholarship from a council school. Wearing a “workhouse dress” and carrying a box with her other belongings,\textsuperscript{73} the other students quickly label her a “charity brat.”\textsuperscript{74} Reacting with horror, the higher-class girls at the school begin to rebel against Nellie’s presence. Miss Wellington-Locke remarks, “[I]t is, to me, horribly annoying and humiliating. My

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 209.
\textsuperscript{73} Mabel St. John, \textit{The Outcast of Crowthorpe College, The Girls’ Home}, volume 1, number 1 (5 March 1910), 2.
people sent me here because they understood it was select. My mother was awfully
desperate to inquire if there were the daughters of anyone in trade. I know it would be a
shock to her if she heard about this Smith creature." 75 Nellie manages to overcome the
taunts, the teasing, and the disdain of others, eventually learning the ways of those above
her and making friends at school. Her class, however, continues to set her apart.

The story ends, as is typical, with Nellie finding love. Lord John Winterbourne
pledges his love to Nellie. Their courtship, though, will be a long one. John’s family and
friends disapprove of his union to Nellie, given her lower-class standing. Because of this,
John makes the decision to leave his father’s home, his title, and his money behind in
order to be with Nellie. To gain the money necessary for marriage and a household, then,
John must go away to work for three years: “I shall have to work for a living.... I am
going to work like a nigger.” 76 Nellie offers to also work, but her parents would rather
she finish her education. John and Nellie, then, will both work hard and marry in three
years. This is the most desirable ending to the story. While Nellie had worked hard and
distinguished herself at the council school, merits a scholarship and attendance at
Crowthorpe, her presence had the possibility of destabilizing class hierarchy. As a girl in
a period of transition, Nellie’s class identity was in limbo. The girls and teachers at the
school clearly saw her as lower class, as a product of her father’s position in life, but the
possibility existed that once she began to mimic those above her she would move into
their station. The possibility of this is made apparent when Nellie falls in love with an
upper-class man. Unlike other stories, Nellie does not make the discovery that she, too, is
of upper-class birth. To have her and John marry would be to upset class hierarchies.

75 Ibid, 2.
76 Mabel St. John, The Outcast of Crowthorpe College, The Girls’ Home, volume 1, number 29 (17
September 1910), 238.
John addresses the issue by rejecting his own class, adopting Nellie’s instead. Nellie’s class identity was solidified by her impending marriage to a man who would adopt the same station as herself.\textsuperscript{77} Nellie, therefore, gained only temporary acceptance in a world that is different from her usual one; her time in the shared world is limited.\textsuperscript{78} She and John will live as hard-working, educated members of the upper-working class or, possibly, of the lower-middle class.

Divisions also resulted from work because work could also create hierarchy and stratification. Repeatedly editors and contributors drew lines between different kinds of work, further setting up barriers between girls. In the early years of the \textit{Girls’ Best Friend} and \textit{The Girls’ Friend}, the editor and contributors to the magazine regularly encouraged girls to see domestic service as a viable work option that was, in many cases, superior to other forms of work. For example, “Ivy Leaf” writes to the magazine to seek information on becoming a shop-girl in a drapery establishment as she is unhappy in her current position as a servant. The editor states:

\begin{quote}
I know a good many girls who are domestic servants who imagine that it would be much nicer to be drapery assistants, but to my mind the domestic servant has by far the better part of the bargain. It may be true that the lady shop assistant does not work so many hours as the domestic; but then, whilst she is at work, her work is much more trying and debilitating and more exhausting than that of the girl who works in a the house, and the consequence is that, after a few years of shop-life, a girl finds herself pretty well tired out, whilst the domestic is still fresh
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{77} This idea stems from Nan Enstad’s discussion of dime store novel romances at the beginning of the twentieth century. Enstad explores, primarily, the storyline – common also to the Harmsworth magazines – of the upper-class girl, unaware of her identity, functioning as a worker and later marrying a man of the nobility. She learns, along the way, that she has been upper class all along. Enstad’s comments on class, however, are equally relevant here. Nan Enstad, \textit{Ladies of Labour, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labour Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 72-73.

\textsuperscript{78} Interestingly, on occasion the story line would be reversed. In \textit{Little Miss Millions}, Barbara, the daughter of a wealthy family, is sent to a regular boarding school instead of a high-end public school. She receives a chilly reception, as the lower-class girls are not happy with her presence. Barbara, however, is eventually able to win them over with her charm, making friends and enjoying her temporary stay amongst the girls. She, too, will emerge from the experience to return to her station in life. Again, her stay is only temporary. Mabel St. John, \textit{Little Miss Millions, The Girls’ Home}, begins volume 4, number 189.
and as strong as ever.\textsuperscript{79}

Class further acts as a divider within the magazines when certain groups seek to set themselves apart from others; domestic servants, for example, carved out a place for themselves in the editorial and discussion pages, railing against their employers and the lot of the domestic servant. In "Domestic Service: Is it to be Recommended?" many readers wrote in to \textit{The Girls' Friend} to argue that it was not. Despite the various features and editorials that encouraged girls to either get into service or remain in service, these readers argued that girls should leave service. They stated that as servants they were "mere drudge[s] from morning to night," not allowed any pleasure in life from "mistresses [who] think their servants [are] mere machines."\textsuperscript{80} One writes, "Having been a servant myself for nine years, I think I have some idea of what service is like. I hate it! Service is a tie to any girl...."\textsuperscript{81} These girls find a common bond by complaining about their mistresses and their position as servants. They also further set themselves apart by being critical of those of a "superior sphere" who also work in the household and who chastise the domestic servants for complaining about their lives; in particular, they point to the children's nurse as a source of tension.\textsuperscript{82} In essence, then, the girls set their identity as domestic servants apart from other servants in the home and from their mistresses. In identifying distinct complaints about their work, they also set themselves apart from other workers.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{79} "Your Editor Chats with His Readers," \textit{The Girls' Best Friend}, volume 1, number 44 (1899), 359.
\textsuperscript{80} "Domestic Service: Is it to be Recommended?" \textit{The Girls' Friend}, volume 4, number 173 (28 February 1903), 267.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, 267.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, 267.
\textsuperscript{83} The editor appears to heed these comments. Within three months of publishing these letters, he begins to advise girls on opportunities other than domestic service that they might consider. A year later, he runs a new serialized story entitled \textit{Little White Slave}. Written by Mabel St. John, it tells the tale of Lu, a maid of all work, who faces all kinds of abuse at the hands of her mistress.
Creating a sense of collective identity was vital to the success of the Harmsworth magazines for girls. From the very first page, Harmsworth's team worked to instill a sense of shared experiences and shared values with the readers, drawing on an array of tools to build personal relationships and break down differences. This required, from the outset, a vision of the ideal reader; drawing on the shifts taking place in English society at the turn of the century, they emphasized the new world of girls, highlighting the new realities of school and work, acting as a conduit for information not readily available, they presumed, from other sources. At the same time, though, their success was relatively short lived. Despite their best efforts, it was difficult to maintain a sense of unity amongst girls. While the Harmsworth magazines had been forward-thinking in recognizing the possibilities inherent in this group, the magazines repeatedly reveal the difficulties in maintaining a sense of collective identity. Differences, in short, repeatedly appear as contradictions to the idea of a shared girls' culture. This did not stop the publisher, editors, and contributors, though, from building girls' culture through the magazines. Girls' bodies, for example, became part of the equation.
Chapter Two

Advertising to the “New Girl”

Just as the magazines worked to create an ideal, unifying image of girls’ culture, advertisers, editors, and contributors crafted an image of the ideal girl. No girl, as presented in the various Harmsworth magazines, could be beautiful if she was not healthy; it was advertising, working in conjunction with features and editorials, however, that increasingly defined what “healthy” and “beautiful” entailed. In an effort to ensure the health and beauty of girls, an increasing array of advertisers sought to sell them products based on this central idea. An examination of the advertisements that ran in the Amalgamated Press magazines for girls from 1898 to 1916 highlights an emphasis on girls’ bodies. This included advertisements for clothing and accessories, bodily tonics and preparations, and “modern” and “scientific” products necessary for the emerging woman. Their messages stressed the centrality of consumerism in girls’ lives, necessary for the acquisition of beauty, health, and happiness; second, they worked to heighten the self-consciousness of readers, pointing to likely, possible, and unlikely ailments that waited to impact girls’ health and beauty; and third, advertisers encouraged girls to accept their duty as future women and ensure life-long health and beauty through consumption.

While these overarching messages were vital in the push to sell products, advertisers in the Harmsworth publications also stressed three dominant messages regarding girls’ appearances. First, beauty and health went hand in hand, so it was essential that the girl guard both carefully; second, as the magazines moved into the twentieth century, thinness became the ideal, with advertisers frequently telling girls that they could not possibly be fat and fulfilled; and third, advertisers also placed increasing
emphasis on youth, noting that the “girl of today” was thin, active, and modern, bringing
the girl into the industrial age and encouraging her to buy scientific products. In case the
messages were not as clear as hoped, advertisers also drew on a bevy of strategies to
ensure clarity, including the use of extensive visuals, mirrors, before-and-after pictorials,
and authority figures, such as royalty, nobility, doctors, model consumers, and editors, as
well as the Queen and the testimonials of girls and women. Through all of this,
advertisers also found seemingly willing accomplices in editors and contributors to the
magazines; while messages that went against advertising continued to persist, overall, the
various parts of the magazines worked together to ensure a rather harmonious message:
consumerism was the path to health, beauty, and happiness, and the ideal girl embraced
her identity as a consumer.

Advertising was central to understandings and perceptions of beauty and health,
supporting and extending dominant messages found in advice columns, editorials, and
fashion pages. McCracken, for example, argues that editorial matter and advertisements
give “reciprocal structural support”\(^1\) to each other, for, “magazines gear editorial content
to complement the concerns of advertisers and predispose readers to the advertising
messages.”\(^2\) Furthermore, she suggests that editorials also offer support to advertising
through the “tie-in” feature, whereby editors set up an “integrative communicative chain”
that directs readers to certain advertisements and features in the magazine.\(^3\)

This kind of multi-layer approach is apparent in Amalgamated Press publications
geared towards girls. For example, in a 1910 issue of the *Girls’ Home*, the editor

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\(^1\) Ellen McCracken, *Decoding Women’s Magazines: From Mademoiselle to Ms* (New York: St. Martin’s
\(^2\) McCracken, 42.
\(^3\) McCracken, 45-45.
encourages his readers to try Oatine Toilet Soap, promising them that it “possesses many special qualities.”

The editor then suggests his readers send away for a free “dainty Toilet Case containing samples of... Oatine preparations.” On the facing page is an advertisement for Oatine, complete with the details of how to obtain your free samples.

In another example, from June 1909, the editor outlines “Why Complexions Fail” in his feature, “Just Between Ourselves.” He writes: “In those countries where cold-creams are extensively used, yellow, sallow complexions are alarmingly plentiful. Parisian beauty experts, too, condemn grease in any form as bad for the skin. Putting these two facts together, it would seem as if woman’s confidence in cold-cream has been sadly misplaced – and it is so.” Continuing, he writes, “If Nature gives a certain power, and that power is not used, she gradually withdraws it....” Those who use cold-creams, he reports, inhibit nature from using its natural oil to maintain suppleness. Instead, girls should look for a “dainty and wholesome... foaming cream” to achieve a desirable complexion. Icilma offers just the product and he encourages his readers to write to Icilma to receive free samples of their products. Not surprisingly, in the same issue, a large advertisement for Icilma Fluor Cream runs, outlining the dangers of cold creams. The language used is the same as that used in the editorial; the company reports, for example, that the use of cold cream results in faces that are, “sallow, yellow, full of blackheads, and devoid of beauty.” Further echoing the previous editorial – which

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5 Ibid, 6.
7 Ibid, 260.
8 Ibid, 260.
appears in the “communicative chain” before the advertisement – the advertisement states that, “Parisian experts have long condemned grease or oil as fatal to beauty.”

Within this example, then, a few different ends are achieved. First, the editor, already established as a figure of authority in the magazine, chooses to use part of his editorial column for the week to address what he sees as a threat to girls’ beauty. Because this advice appears on a page that also includes letters-to-the-editor from other girls seeking advice for a variety of problems, the context suggests that the editor is one who can be trusted. Second, the editor is presented as objective in granting his advice, building trust with his readers, but, at the same time, in suggesting a specific product, his editorial acts as a kind of “covert” advertisement. The editor, then, clearly aligns himself with market forces, advising girls on how to achieve external beauty, while at the same time ensuring a ready market for one of his advertisers. Finally, when readers happen upon the advertisement seven pages later, they are already versed to accept its message; the language is the same as that used by the editor – a supposedly neutral, trustworthy, authority figure – and the product is familiar. The two features work together to ensure consumption and a common message.

Advertisers in the girls’ magazines utilized additional devices to blur the lines between features and advertisements. Frequently, I would find myself reading what I

10 Ibid, 267.
11 McCracken, 50. McCracken defines covert advertising as, “a system of mutually sustaining techniques and themes that links the editorial material to purchased advertising. While varying in degree of concealment, covert advertisements always attempt in some way to mislabel or disguise themselves as non-advertising material. Because of their quantity and the variety of forms in which they appear, they interact almost continuously with the purchased advertising in the magazine” (63). She further states, “The assumed objectivity with which editors present advice or information is an additional means of disguise of the system of covert advertising. In the case of advice, the presumed impartiality of the editor’s recommendations is more serious: readers are in a more vulnerable state since often the magazine has urged them to feel inadequate so that a product may be recommended as a remedy. The advice appears to be offered in the spirit of friendship as a means of remedying real problems when, in fact, the problems are often artificially stimulated or magnified” 50-51.
assumed to be a short story or a feature article, only to discover at the end that the item was actually an advertisement for a particular product. McCracken finds that this is a common feature in women’s magazines, also serving as a form of “covert” advertising. She states, “This merging of the generic characteristics of advertisements and features blurs the traditional distinctions of the two principal categories of magazine content and it is an important additional means of covert support for the purchased advertising.”12 The Oatine Company also utilized this tactic in a 1911 issue of the Girls’ Home. The advertisement is interesting for other reasons – as shall be explored below – but it also serves to show how advertisers worked within the framework of the magazine’s features to blur the lines between feature and advertisement. Appearing as a short story, complete with an author’s name listed in the by-line, even a reader perhaps seeking to ignore reading the text of advertisements, is drawn in and encouraged to at least engage with the advertisement’s message to consume.

This push to consume, however, might not be as effective without the attempt to heighten the self-consciousness of the reader. This is not to suggest, though, that these efforts are entirely successful; we can never truly know how girls read these magazines.13 The various devices used in advertisements, however, repeatedly asked girls to consider themselves as others saw them and to question their own appearance. The use of mirrors, for example, was a powerful device encouraging girls to gaze upon themselves to see what they reflected to the world and to accurately assess their own appearance. In a 1912 advertisement for Sandow Corsets girls are told that, “A mirror is a friend and counselor

12 McCracken, 51.
13 The fact, however, that the same kinds of advertisements appear over and over again, and that the magazines were successful, suggests that readers were, in the least, not hostile to the advertisements that appeared.
who never flatters or betrays – a guide – a help – a doctor. Yes indeed, no doctor can tell you more about yourself – your condition of health – than your mirror can if you only take the trouble to consult it in the spirit of one willing to learn."14 The mirror, then, becomes a recurring motif in the pages of the girls’ magazines.

In the 27 May 1911 issue of the *Girls’ Home*, an advertisement appears for Oatine products, such as face cream and toothpaste. The advertisement – presented like a short story – includes three characters: a maid, a young mother, and a nineteen year old visitor. The young mother has recently received a parcel from the Oatine Company containing sample sizes of their various products. She begins to tell her visitor about its wonderful products and how much they have done to enhance her beauty and then exits the room to get the parcel, leaving the young girl to contemplate her own appearance: “[T]he young girl caught sight of her reflection in the mirror, and this caused her to think about her own complexion, which a few years previously had been the envy of every girl she knew, but was now rapidly fading as the result of the exposure to the grime and dirt of the City office where she laboured....”15 Returning, the mother expounds on the benefits of the products, which cleared up her blemishes, left her cheeks, “more transparent, reflecting a faint colour,” and made her teeth, “beautifully white.”16 The advertisement concludes with information on where to purchase full-size versions of the company’s products and how to obtain your own trial pack of sample-sized products for free.

Here the emphasis is on how others’ perceive the viewer, gazing upon herself in the mirror. The girl is unhappy with her change in appearance, but even more so by the fact that she is surely no longer the envy of all. Holding herself up to social standards of

16 Ibid.
beauty, the girl sees in the mirror a “commercial ideal” of the Victorian woman, encouraging her to see herself as an “ornament” that must purchase certain products in order to achieve the ideal. McClintock, in her examination of the imperial aspects of advertising, also notes the importance of the mirror for reflection. She emphasizes that the “surface and reflection” are vitally important in the exhibition of femininity, for “the mirror... renders the value of the object as an exhibit, a spectacle to be consumed, admired and displayed...” The focus, then, is on the external beauty of the viewer and the criteria that others will use to judge it, suggesting a hierarchy of beauty amongst females. In order to be admired once again, to be seen as one who possesses the “sacred resource of beauty,” the girl must immediately send away for her trial Oatine products.

Other advertisements emphasize the centrality of the mirror in determining one's own beauty. A 1916 advertisement for Antipon, a weight loss product, is a prime example. An overweight woman sits at her vanity, mirror in hand, and asks, “Can it really be my own self?” To further ensure that she is internalizing an accurate image of herself, a picture, taken at an earlier point in her life, is located on her right. Moving back and forth between the mirror and the picture, she is shocked at the change that has come over her. She promises to begin taking Antipon at once, just as her friends have done. Antipon, in particular, depended on the mirror frequently in its advertisements. In the 2 March 1912 issue of the Girls’ Reader, for example, two images are shown, each in mirrors. The power of the mirror is evident (figure 2.1).

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17 Loeb, 42.
20 Ferguson, 42.
In using mirrors in their advertisements, advertisers drew on a powerful tool to encourage girls to consume, not just because of the importance of meeting the expectations of others. As Loeb argues in her discussion on Victorian women and advertising, the inclusion of mirrors further suggests that a woman should be “self-absorbed and pleasure-oriented enough to delight in her own reflection.”22 Just as time is needed to reflect upon the image in the mirror, time – and money – will also be required in the quest for beauty.23 Certain products must be acquired to ensure a personal standard of beauty is met. McCracken echoes this sentiment when she writes that “some ads... utilize a negative mirror image to deter readers from not using their product.”24 The

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22 Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels, Advertising and Victorian Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 42. This is also discussed by Ferguson, 42.
23 Loeb, 42.
24 McCracken, 129.
underlying assumption, then, is that not only do such girls and women possess the time and money to invest in their beauty, but also that they would want to and that they see themselves as worthy of such attention. This is evident, then, in the Antipon ads; while the presence of the mirror suggests an outside impression, the focus, though, is on what the woman or girl sees when she looks at herself. This suggests that self-reflection and self-consideration is equally important in the Amalgamated Press magazines as focusing on how others see you. The message, regardless, is the same; presumably, if we accept the text and images of advertisements, no girl can be happy with herself if she is fat or has a poor complexion, for example, and no girl will be perceived as beautiful by others if she is overweight or has yellow, sallow skin. This clever device, then, serves a dual purpose: it encourages the girl to internalize external standards of beauty, while also working to ensure her own self-consciousness regarding her appearance and the reflection she sees in the mirror.

All of this ties in with larger issues of consumption; the underlying subtext points to the power of consumerism to address the problems of girls’ lives. As Winship so aptly states, “Through consumption – hey presto! – we have access to the good life. And by consuming such images advertisers hope we are stimulated to consume the product – our key to dreamland.”

25 This subtext is wrapped up in glamorous ideals, “promising pleasure and the acceptance and love of others if we purchase.”

26 Evidence is frequently found in the advertisements in the Harmsworth magazines to support this notion of consumerism solving one's problems. Do you have a bad complexion? “By the Daily use of PEAR’S

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26 McCracken, 37.
SOAP a soft and delicate complexion is secured.” Are you experiencing “hair poverty”? You can “grow hair and prevent the loss or deterioration of luxuriant tresses” through the use of Hairlene’s Hair Drill. Are you too stout? Trilene Reducing Tablets promise to “Cure all Fat People.” In fact, “Every Woman’s Wish Fulfilled” seems to be the underlying promise in the bulk of advertisements.

While all women were potential consumers, by the turn of the century in Britain, girls were increasingly seen as an ideal consumer group. Advertisers, in general, pointed to the power of female consumerism, with many viewing this portion of the population primarily as consumers, rather than producers, from the turn of the century through the Great War. Harmsworth also noted the importance of catering to the underutilized female advertising market. As Richards argues, women were seen as more prone to nervous disorders, more open to suggestion, more conscious of their personal appearance, and more likely to try to solve their own problems discreetly, but girls reflected a new kind of consumerism. While advertisers continued to target women, girls were seen as the new market. The held not only the characteristics of women, but also those of adolescents. Advertisers believed that adolescent girls reflected the future of a consumer vision. Drawing on Hall’s ideas of the adolescent and applying them to his own findings on advertising, Richards argues that the girl – particularly the leisured girl – was the ideal

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33 Richards, 206. All of this, argues Richards, made women more prone to the claims of ‘quacks’ and popular medicine.
consumer in the years leading up to the Great War. With “general cravings” and
“unsatisfied longings,” coupled with an “insecure sense of selfhood,” the adolescent girl
“finds refuge in... manufactured objects.” At the same time, though, her adolescent
innocence makes her “oblivious to the social forces that shape her.”34 This constant desire
for something new and this growing awareness of the self and, perhaps, the limitations of
the self, as well as a general ignorance, supposedly, of the hidden messages in
advertising, made girls a prime target for messages of consumerism.

In addition, Richards further argues that advertisers increasingly saw girls as
malleable, as “plastic.”35 Adolescence was the prime time to shape girls as both current
and future consumers; it was the ideal time to inculcate values, disciplines, and routines
that they would carry forth into their adult lives.36 McCracken echoes this, arguing that
because fashion and beauty magazines are the first that many girls read, “the cultural
continuum between advertising and editorial material... plays an especially important
role in teaching women lifelong habits of consumption.”37 This sentiment is expressed in
the pages of Harmsworth’s magazines. For example, in 1911, an advertisement for

**Sandow’s Cocoa** stressed that,

> Between the ages of twelve and twenty-one the physical and nervous
> system is taxed to the utmost by the growth and development of the body;
> and it is then the question of diet becomes supremely important. It is then,
> in fact, that the future woman is made – or marred; for inefficiency of
> nutriment has effects which are life-long in their effects. For these reasons,
> every girl reader should give her serious attention to Mr. Sandow’s
> advice.38

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34 Richards, 243.
35 Richards, 243.
36 Richards, 243.
37 McCracken, 135.
38 *Sandow’s Cocoa, The Girls’ Home*, volume 2, number 92, 2 December 1911, 751.
Similarly, in a 1912 issue of the *Girls' Reader*, the writer of “Beauty Hints for Schoolgirls” states that, “The schoolgirl age is the age in which habits of personal daintiness, of exquisite grooming, are formed.” If we take into consideration, too, the changing context of girls’ lives, the picture grows even more complete. With more and more girls heading into paid employment after their formal years of schooling were done, the possibility for more disposable income increases – something else that advertisers depend on; the message is moot if girls do not possess the resources to buy advertised products.

The message that girls should consume to achieve their innermost desires was not the only one put forth; girls were also encouraged to accept their “duty” as future women to achieve a socially-defined ideal of womanhood. After all, while adolescence was increasingly seen as a separate time in a girl’s life, characterized by a distinctive culture and set of experiences, a girl was still in training for her ultimate destiny: wife and mother. This responsibility was tied up with an overall sense of duty that pervaded women’s lives at this time. As Winship writes, “The feminine activities of cooking,

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40 Census figures support the increase in the number of girls aged 15-24 working in paid employment. Retail sector figures show, for example, that there were 6737 girls of this age group employed in 1851; in 1871 there were 18729; in 1891 there were 46413; and in 1911 there were 92321. Jordan, 69. Furthermore, if we consider the unoccupied rate for girls in this age range, we see further evidence of an upward trend in working for wages. In 1851, 43.48% of girls aged 15-24 were classed as unoccupied by the census; in 1911 this figure was 34.6. Jordan 77. It should be noted, too, that census data tended to under-report women's labour, in general, so the numbers of women and girls working might have been higher than indicated. Jane Humphries, “Women and Paid Work,” *Women’s History: Britain, 1850-1945*, ed. June Purvis (London: UCL Press Ltd., 1995): 85-103.
42 It was expected that girls would leave paid employment when they married. This is evidenced in every fictional story in the magazines, where a girl quits her job upon her marriage. Further, married women in the fiction of the magazines do not work. This ‘norm’ is also supported by the letters-to-the-editor. “Gypsy Lee” wrote to the editor of *The Girls' Best Friend* in 1898 to express her desire to work. A married woman, she had a desire to resume piano teaching as a cure for her boredom. The editor advised her to take up a hobby instead. Finally, girls were also informed that certain organizations, such as the Post Office, required their ‘retirement’ when they married. Webb, 67.
creating and looking after a home, and making oneself attractive have an uncertain status. In male terms these activities do not constitute work because they are unpaid and often done ‘for love’. They are not work because they are about being a woman." While Winship’s arguments refer to a current context of magazine readership, her arguments are equally compelling when applied to the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods. Girls, whether they accepted the message or not, were repeatedly reminded of their duties as future women, with adolescence providing the training ground for the inculcation of appropriate norms and activities to ensure their success. In a feature in a 1909 issue of the Girls' Reader, for example, girls are told that, “It is every woman’s duty to keep young-looking as long as possible, but, unfortunately, she does not always know the best way to live up to that duty.”

While an underlying current of duty and appearance pervades many advertisements in the period from 1898-1914, its presence becomes most keenly felt with the outbreak of the Great War. Just as girls were told that it was their duty to send men to war and support the efforts of the nation – a topic explored in Chapter 4 – advertisers also stressed duty to their appearance. A December 1914 advertisement for Oatine tells girls to be mindful of their appearance while the men are at war, for, “When they come back… that is the time you will want to look your best. Commence the improvement now.” To “guard your looks against trying times and changing weathers,” girls are admonished by another company that they “must use a Toilet Cream every day.” Icilma further reminds girls that they have a duty to their sweethearts: “[D]on’t disappoint your boy. Always aim

43 Winship, 54.
44 “Keep Young,” The Girls’ Reader, volume 1, number 27, 21 August 1909, 435. The issue of youthfulness will be considered further in a later section.
at looking your best...." Beauty, and the duty to maintain it, then, becomes tied into a larger context of war. Girls always have a duty to look their best and the underlying message remains the same: regardless, or perhaps especially because, of the chaos and uncertainty of wartime, buying a product is something concrete that one can, should, and must do.

Class also played a role in encouraging girls to consume. Buckley and Fawcett, in particular, address the issues of class and fashion in turn of the century Britain. They argue that the “illustrations in magazines and the increasing photographic presence of the rich and famous ‘a la mode’... created a wider public awareness of stylistic mores and encouraged the development of a culture of aspiration....” Buying the right products – increasingly available at department stores – allowed those outside of the upper class to access, in some small degree at least, the world of their social betters. These elite women, often nobility or actresses, had typically set the standard for beauty, but the growing number of media sources that followed their every move and dress change, made their activities, fashion, and beauty much more readily consumed by others. Buckley and Fawcett argue further that beauty standards and the commodification of beauty were based on this upper-class group of women and the middle-class women who sought to emulate them. Where, though, do upper-working-class and lower-middle-class girls fit into this scenario?

It is possible that at least some of these girls sought to emulate their social betters. The sheer volume of letters from girls wanting to go on to the stage to be just like their favourite actresses, for example, suggests some level of desired emulation. We cannot

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47 *Icilma, Our Girls*, volume 1, number 65, 27 May 1916, 163.
48 Buckley and Fawcett, 17.
49 Buckley and Fawcett, 17.
know, however, if the bulk of readers actually wanted to appear of a higher class. Perhaps more important, then, is that advertisers and Harmsworth perceived that girls wished to appear to be of a higher class and that the messages of advertising emphasized to girls the importance of emulation. A 1907 advertisement in the *Girls’ Friend* for *Craig, Craig, and Co.*, a clothing manufacturer in Glasgow, tells girls, “You can be dressed like a real lady for 15/-.” Further advertisements stressed how you could achieve “the look” for less. *J.H. Masters, Ltd.*, a company which sold a variety of clothing and accessories, offered readers a payment plan for furs. Stating, “Nothing gives such a rich, well-dressed appearance to a lady as a set of furs,” they further assert that a fur will “make you feel equal to the wealthiest of well-dressed women. Our easy terms place within your reach costly and high-class furs.” For only 2/6 to 3/6 per month, a set of “rich” and “splendid” furs could be yours. Finally, features in the magazines also highlighted for girls how they could dress on a budget. A two-page feature in the *Girls’ Reader* in 1912 counseled girls on “How to Dress Cheaply and Smartly,” which emphasized making ones own simple clothes out of solid materials and avoiding anything overly fussy, “ethereal or perishable.”

Further advertisements and features contained the language of consumerism, class, and emulation. An advertisement for the *Sandow Corset* in 1913 stressed that, “Practically every famous actress... has become a Sandow Figure Girl by wearing the famous Sandow Corset, and, indeed, the desire to possess this charm, elegance, and

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53 Ibid, 663.
beauty has extended to all ranks of society." To further ensure that all girls have access to this product, again, a weekly payment option was available. Even purchasing a bicycle could help end class difference. Lady Gay, the beauty editor for the Girls' Friend, encouraged girls to acquire a bicycle, assuring them that riding is not considered "mannish" and, in fact, "Lady devotees of the health-giving wheel are to be found in all classes of society, from duchess to typewriting clerk." Simply getting on a bicycle seems to create some kind of leveling effect in society. Consumerism, then, held the potential for equalization. Girls were told that purchasing the right products, dressing a particular way, and upholding certain standards of beauty could help to break down class barriers. Loeb calls this "material democracy," arguing that potentially everyone in society had access to new consumer goods. This tied further into a celebration of industrial society, which offered sufficient product to satisfy the needs of all. Indeed, as Loeb argues, accessibility was a key factor in this shift. The fact that Sandow Corsets, for example, promised "A Sandow-Girl Figure for Every Lady Reader of 'Girls' Home'" suggested that not only was this ideal figure available for all, regardless of class, but the product was also available in such abundance that there was enough to go around, highlighting the wonders of industrial society.

56 Credit in the first half of the nineteenth century was informally structured and relied in a personal relationship with the shop owner. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, as shopping districts emerged and as women began to venture further from home to do their shopping, more formal credit structures were put into place, including payment plan options for purchasing goods. For a history of consumer credit in England, see Erika Rappaport, "'A Husband and His Wives Dresses': Consumer Credit and the Debtor Family in England, 1864-1914," The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Practice, ed. Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 163-187.
58 Loeb, 7.
Beyond the overarching messages to girls to reflect carefully on their appearances, to accept their duty as future women, and to buy as part of a community of consumers, several other messages were apparent in advertising, all supporting the notion that consumerism was essential to health and beauty. Within this context three more messages emerged, each of them working in conjunction with the other features of the magazines, building a structure that ensured the entrenchment of these messages. First, no girl could be considered beautiful if she was not healthy; second, as the magazines moved into the twentieth century, thinness became the ideal, with the number of advertisements, features, and letters to the editor on slimming becoming more prominent, resulting in the message that no girl could be truly happy or beautiful if she was fat; and third, this same shift in time saw increasing emphasis on youthfulness, with youth becoming almost synonymous with modern, which brought a new silhouette that deemphasized maternity and accentuated small bodies and the features of active girlhood.

In the first years of the *Girls' Best Friend*, Harmsworth’s initial publication for girls, the editor, the contributors, and the advertisers all stipulated that health and beauty were one and the same. No girl could be truly beautiful who was not healthy. As explored in my previous work, this message saw contributors emphasize a healthy diet, moderate exercise, and scrupulous attention to hygiene. I noted at that time that there was an ongoing tension in the magazine between natural and artificial, with a recognition that the natural beauty still required work and some consumption. That tension begins to ease in the early twentieth century as an increasing array of products became available to aid

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girls in their quest for health and beauty. The shift seems to indicate clearly a move towards consumerism as a solution to health and beauty problems, rather than an emphasis on simple, clean living. While this former message continued to be made, in the face of an overwhelming number of products, often endorsed by contributors and by the editor, that message appears lost. Why did this shift take place?

Richards’ work, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, argues that through the course of the Victorian era, advertising increasingly focused on spectacle. Advertisers needed to find ways to encourage consumerism and often focused on the creation of a commodity culture that linked consumption to the nation, to the race, and to health. Early efforts to create spectacles out of Queen Victoria or out of the imperial mission in Africa, while successful, lacked an important aspect: “they did not, and could not, tell consumers how to go about making every little purchase. This task was reserved for another sort of advertiser, and it ultimately required the development of a new, microscopic form of commodity culture: the spectacle of the consumer’s body.” Patent medicine became the answer; readers of the Harmsworth magazines for girls were presented with a significant list of ailments just waiting to debilitate them and, consequently, their beauty. Virtually every aspect of their bodily health was scrutinized by advertisers seeking to sell products. Given the overall push to consume and the underlying assumption of men like Hall, who argued that adolescence was an ideal time to inculcate habits and values and that women were less likely to seek out formal help for physical ailments, it is not difficult to see why this portion of the population would be exploited by advertisers seeking to sell products. Indeed, as Richards suggests, “The

62 Richards, 169.
greatest and most fundamental truth of them all – the prime directive in the fraternity of quacks – was that the body’s needs could best be met by consuming commodities.”

The importance of patent medicine advertisements to the popular press, similarly, cannot be understated. Advertisements for patent medicines made up a full 25% of the advertising content of these sources. Further, many magazines depended on these advertisers, who essentially funded their efforts. With virtually no legislation effectively addressing the often outrageous claims made by hawkers of “cure-all” products and because budgetary needs necessitated the inclusion of this form of advertising in the popular press, few, if any, publishers actually investigated the claims made by product advertisers, ensuring that fraud was endemic. With millions of pounds at stake, in both advertising revenue and in product sales, “it was now routine business to leave no absurd promise unmade.” With magazines dependent on advertisers for revenue, editors and contributors to the girls’ magazines often supported the outlandish claims of advertisers, encouraging girls to consume such products.

Those pushing medicines, cure-alls, and tonics for girls used a growing array of tactics to ensure that their message was heard and, hopefully, internalized. An increasingly sophisticated advertising industry, informed in part by changes taking place in America, sought to understand the psychology of their subjects in order to sell more

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63 Richards, 193.
64 Loeb, 105.
65 Richards, 177. This is echoed by Loeb on page 105. For the Amalgamated Press’ dependence on advertising, see Ferris, 56, 156, 178.
66 Richards, 175.
67 Loeb, 105-107.
68 Richards, 172, 176.
69 Ferris argues that Harold Harmsworth, later Lord Rothemere and inheritor of the Amalgamated Press, was particularly open to the excesses of advertisers. Harold was always more concerned about the bottom line than Alfred; where Alfred tried to keep advertisers in check and under his power, Harold was more than happy to let whomever advertise whatever product if it meant greater revenue. Ferris, 280.
product.\(^{70}\) This, according to Richards, was imperative because “patent medicine men... could not meet the medical profession on equal ground, so they took pains to rearrange the consumer’s body and orient the commodity firmly within it.”\(^{71}\) Drawing on fear, for example, was a powerful way to encourage consumerism. Richards argues that, “For most consumers, reading a patent medicine ad was like reading a medical encyclopedia: people had no idea that there were so many things that could go wrong with their bodies.”\(^{72}\) An advertisement for *Mother Seigel’s Syrup* provides an excellent example of this. Readers were told of the importance of taking the necessary precautions to “safeguard... the general health of the system.”\(^{73}\) This involved paying attention to the liver, the kidneys, the stomach, the bowels, the blood, the heart, the skin, and “every organ of your body.”\(^{74}\) A whole host of problems awaited the girl who was not intimately aware of the constitution of her entire system, although taking *Mother Seigel’s Syrup* would stave off any attacks on health. *Dr. Cassell’s Tablets* made rather outrageous claims as well. The list of ailments it claimed to “cure” included “nervous breakdown, infant paralysis, anaemia, stomach disorder, kidney disease, palpitations, and neurasthenia.”\(^{75}\) In case the reader was unsure if *Dr. Cassell’s Tablets* could really cure her of “all derangements of the Nerve and Functional systems,”\(^{76}\) she could send away for a free trial box.

Advertisers also drew on recognized authorities to help encourage consumerism. Richards argues that, “The worst of the patent medicine advertisers... were the ones who

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\(^{70}\) Richards, 12, 187-193.  
\(^{71}\) Richards, 183.  
\(^{72}\) Richards, 187. Loeb supports this idea on page 107.  
\(^{73}\) *Mother Siegel’s Syrup, The Girls’ Friend*, volume 6, number 364, 20 October 1906, 819.  
\(^{74}\) Ibid, 819.  
\(^{75}\) *Dr. Cassell’s Tablets, The Girls’ Friend*, volume 7, number 832, 16 October 1915, 375.  
\(^{76}\) Ibid, 375.
relied most on the detailed testimonials of royalty, nobility, generals, lawyers, even doctors.... The quack columns teemed with... quotations taken out of context.”

Evidence of this is present in many of the Harmsworth magazines. Koko, for example, claimed that it, “is used in every ROYAL COURT in Europe, and is the only HAIR PREPARATION which has been honoured with SIGNED TESTIMONIALS from ROYALTY. They can be seen at any time.” This advertisement suggests that, “all consumers feel like royalty through simple acts of consumption,” while, at the same time, suggesting the royal seal of approval for the product, lending to the idea that the product is one of quality. Antipon included what it claimed was a testimonial from a French doctor, who wrote this of the weight loss product: “I must frankly say that Antipon is the only product I have ever met with for very quick, efficacious, and absolutely harmless reduction of obesity. All other things are perfectly useless, and some absolutely dangerous.” Essentially, the French doctor – Dr. Ricciardi – has just repeated the central claims made in the preceding text of the advertisement, but his air of authority, as both a doctor and as a man from Paris, lends an increased air of credibility to the product’s claims. As a final example, Fry’s Cocoa was also prone to drawing on the supposed claims of the medical profession to sell its products. An advertisement in the 7 May 1904 issue of the Girls’ Friend states that the Guy’s Hospital Gazette claims that Fry’s Cocoa, “is the most perfect form of cocoa.”

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77 Richards, 193.
78 Koko, The Girls’ Reader, volume 1, number 13, 13 May 1909, 199.
79 Loeb, 90.
80 Loeb, 86.
same product cites the _Lancet_, the preeminent medical journal of the Victorian era, and its claim that _Fry's Cocoa_ is "refreshing and nutritive."83

The kinds of testimonials given in the girls' magazines also showed a wider realm of authority figures than those identified by Richards. An advertisement for _Phatolene Tablets_ includes extensive testimony from users of the product, which promises to be, "The only safe and certain cure for obesity."84 Miss Hassett from Limerick writes that, "Your box of Phatolene Tablets has reduced my weight greatly, and I shall recommend them to my friends." Mrs. Groves of Bridgwater states, "I am so glad I tried your treatment. I am reduced 28 lb., and feel so much better now."85 The use of women and girls, consumers of the product, to testify about the abilities of the product is firmly entrenched amongst the advertisements of the girls' magazines. An advertisement for _Magneto Corsets_ that ran in a 1912 issue includes supposedly unsolicited recommendations for its product from users. Mrs. Coley of Birmingham writes, "Since wearing your Magneto Corsets I am pleased to tell you that there has been a very decided improvement in my health." Another reader claims that she "continue[s] to improve in health more every day since wearing your lovely Magneto Corsets."86

The recommendations of other girls and women seem to be equally, if not more, powerful in the context of the girls' magazines as that of established authority figures. As discussed in Chapter 1, magazines like those published by Harmsworth worked to create a community of friends in their magazines, encouraging the readers to identify with one another. Advertisements that draw heavily on testimonials from average consumers work

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84 _Phatolene Tablets, The Girls' Home_, volume 1, number 10, 30 April 1910, page number.
85 Ibid.
to cement this underlying message. Women offer a respected perspective for, as females, they are perhaps the most trusted of authorities. The use of average women and girls was still manipulative; the message was still to consume, but now to consume based on the advice of a community of fellow females. This worked to further bind together a community of readers who depended on one another, along with the encouragement of authorities.

Finally, when specific testimonials from identified consumers were not included, other advertisers still sought to give the reader a sense of the wide appeal of the product through the sheer number of consumers using the commodity. An advertisement for Harlene Hair-Drill claims that the hair tonic has shown “over 5,000,000 people how to grow vigorous hair.” Whether because of specific testimonials from girls and women using the product, or through reference to the sheer number of consumers finding success through consumption, advertisers were careful to ensure that readers and potential users of their commodities felt that they were part of a larger group of consumers. As Loeb suggests, this was essential in the push to encourage consumerism: “Although concerned with personal pleasure, the advertisement was also a central agency of the redefinition of community, to mean not so much a physical place as a shared and hedonistic experience of being a consumer.”

Advertisers increasingly utilized a new figure in order to make goods more attractive to female consumers: the actress. Sandow Corsets, for example, claimed that their corsets were “Universally worn by the Richest, Most Beautiful, and Elegant

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87 Loeb and Richards suggest that authority figures, rather than fellow consumers, were favoured by advertisers in testimonials; I found, rather, that women and girls' accounts were included more often. Loeb, 75; Richards, 193.
89 Loeb, 130.
Ladies,90 who embodied the “ideal” figure for beautiful women. The text of the advertisement claimed that the Sandow Corset was worn by leading actresses, including Miss Ellaline Terriss, Miss Phyllis Dare, and Miss Gertie Millar. Complete with photographs of the actresses, shown reflecting the ideal body form as exhibited by those wearing the Sandow Corset, the actresses proclaim their loyalty to the Sandow Corset and their desire to wear none other but it. For only sixpence per week, until the full price of the garment is paid for – a figure missing from the advertisement – buyers can be assured that they “will be able to secure the most beautiful and perfect figure it is possible to attain”91 just like those they see on the London stage.

Loeb argues that the actress was a fundamental part of “material democracy” and in the leveling aspects of consumerism because her beauty “allowed her to rise above the antitheatrical prejudice and the barriers of class.”92 This rise even saw actresses wed into the upper classes at times.93 The actress was distinguished by her “individual distinction,”94 particularly in her beauty and in her skills on the stage, but also in her ability to rise above her class standing to embrace a celebrity status that enabled her to set the tone in beauty and fashion for other women.95 As represented within the popular

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91 Ibid, ii.
92 Loeb, 99.
93 Christopher Kent, “Image and Reality: The Actress and Society,” A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 94-116 and Loeb, 95-99, 115. Kent finds that the English male nobility attended the theatre in increasing numbers at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. While actresses and nobles would often have relationships, evidenced for example in the Prince of Wales’ ongoing attentions to Lily Langtry, other men of the nobility married actresses. Kent finds that between 1884 and 1914, nineteen such marriages took place. While a relatively small number, it nonetheless suggests a shift in the perception of the leading ladies of the day, a shift that prefigures today’s context, which sees nobility and celebrity move in similar circles. None of this, however, receives any attention in the magazines.
94 Loeb, 75.
95 For a discussion of the rise of the prominence of actresses in Victorian and Edwardian society, please see Christopher Kent, “Image and Reality: The Actress and Society,” A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of
press, actresses embodied a new kind of beauty, one that was firmly linked to the sale and consumption of commodities. The actress was glamorous, combining beauty with eroticism, enhancing her form with the use of artifice, which included make-up and costumes. The actress, because of her heightened presence in Victorian and Edwardian society, her status as a "professional beauty," and her reliance on commodities to complete her look, became a powerful tool for advertisers seeking to market the look and image of this new "fashionable icon."\textsuperscript{96} By 1916, for example, readers of the Harmsworth magazines could read about their favourite actresses in weekly columns such as "Cinema Sweethearts" and "Saturday Night at the Picture Show." Not only could they discover the plot outlines and twists of their favourite shows, they could also learn more about beautiful actresses. Lillian Walker, for example, was called "Dimples" by her studio, "for was there ever a happier or more becoming face than Lillian Walker's?"\textsuperscript{97} Walker, among others, came to represent new beauty.

Experts, readers, and actresses were powerful authority figures in the girls' magazines, but the power of the editor should not be overlooked; there was an air of authority established in each magazine that served to lend greater authority to the testimonials and messages of advertising, a phenomenon Richards and Loeb do not fully recognize.\textsuperscript{98} As previously noted, the editor of each magazine took great pains to ensure that he appeared an objective authority figure; while advertisers trying to sell patent medicine products might not have had much clout, surely when the editor – a trusted

\textsuperscript{96} Buckley and Fawcett, 21.
\textsuperscript{97} "Saturday Night at the Picture Show," \textit{Our Girls}, 4 March 1916, 5.
\textsuperscript{98} Loeb recognizes the power of the press as a possible expert, noting that it had access to the latest and greatest of Victorian society, but she does not consider fully enough the authority of the editor and the editorial structure of such sources.
paternal figure with, most assuredly, only the girls’ best interests at heart – encouraged the consumption of such a product, a chain of authority was established. In this way, patent medicine advertisers were able to take advantage of the “integrative communication chain” and the “reciprocal structural support” that tied advertisements, features, and editorial content together in girls’ magazines.99 This is very evident when examining the issue of weight loss.

Weight was an ongoing topic of concern in the Amalgamated Press magazines for girls. These concerns tied into fashion and beauty, as well as health and social standards, but the issue, particularly in the early years, was one that generated some friction, with the features of the magazines not agreeing on a dominant position. In the first two years of the Girls’ Best Friend, an underlying tension emerges between supposedly opposing ideals of thinness and roundness. Up to and through 1900, however, commentators melded the two, calling for a thin waist, but also feminine rounded shoulders, arms, and legs. More features, for example, were likely to be found on how to put on flesh, rather than on how to reduce, and corset advertising was common.100 Simultaneously, contributors and the editor recognized a growing number of “plump” readers, but emphasized teaching them how to dress to their best advantage or accepting their constitution, which obviously tended towards a larger body, rather than reducing. For example, in a 1900 issue of the Girls’ Friend, a fashion feature entitled, “Hints to Stout Women,” does not call on such women to reduce, but rather to choose fashions most suited to their larger bodies. This involved ensuring a smooth fit, choosing plain styles

99 McCracken, 39, 42-45.
and colours, and avoiding stripes. In 1902, a contributor encouraged those with “plump faces” to choose “wide hats trimmed rather flat” over “anything narrow” in order to achieve the best look.

In contrast, examining the post-1902 years shows that thinness becomes the dominant position. A survey of advertisements in the Girls’ Friend results in the following figures: in 1901, there were 12 advertisements for weight loss aids in 52 issues; in 1902, there were 19 advertisements; and in 1903, there were 44 – or almost one in every issue. By 1908, the number of advertisements for weight-loss products would begin to decline, but on average, through into 1913, they appeared in at least every other issue. The sudden jump, though, in 1903, warrants further investigation. Why, seemingly suddenly, did a thinner model of English womanhood and girlhood prevail?

In 1902, Queen Victoria died, leaving the throne to her son, Edward, and his wife, Alexandra. Interestingly, Queen Victoria’s passing is not mentioned in the girls’ magazines I examined. There is nothing – no celebration of her life and rule, no note on her death, no information on her funeral. Indeed, she is rarely present at all even in the years preceding her death. The Queen, as a matronly figure – both in body and spirit – had embodied English womanhood. While powerful, having full control of a nation, she was still feminine. Despite this, girls were not encouraged to live up to the example of Victoria; the answer for this seems to lie in her physical body. Advertisers, suggests Richards, could not capitalize on Victoria’s literal body; while clearly maternal, it could not be posited as healthy, given her size. Therefore, advertisers emphasized the Queen’s

101 “Hints to Stout Women,” The Girls’ Friend, volume 1, number 43, 1 September 1900, 676.
103 Eventually, in the exploration of Alexandra, including her youth, her beauty, her maternity, and her domesticity, Victoria will also be mentioned, but usually in comparison to Alexandra.
104 Richards, 74-75; Loeb echoes this as well, 95.
link to domesticity, women, and class, suggesting that shopping could break down class 
barriers, and that all women, regardless of class, should consume.\textsuperscript{105} To push for a new 
kind of consumption required a new kind of spokesperson: “The Queen stands as an 
impressive thing that temporarily outshines the rest, but is ultimately replaceable. She is a 
commodity at the peak of her popularity, surrounded, not threatened by successors, but 
ultimately to be supplanted by a newer, more vibrant product.”\textsuperscript{106} Alexandra would be the 
new, vibrant replacement.

Queen Alexandra, former Princess of Wales, embodied health and beauty. 
Through her introduction to society, her subsequent marriage to the Prince of Wales, and 
into her reign as Edward’s consort, Alexandra “turned all heads.”\textsuperscript{107} Having “inherited 
her [mother’s] slim, exquisite figure,”\textsuperscript{108} which she dressed to perfection, Alexandra was 
known throughout Europe as, “an entrancing creature who combined a fairy-tale beauty 
with that rare and endearing quality of heart....”\textsuperscript{109} According to Battiscombe, upon 
seeing a picture of Alexandra, Edward announced that he was determined to marry her 
based on her beauty alone. When negotiations began, and Edward’s sisters were sent to 
meet with Alexandra, they reported back to the Queen that Alexandra was tall and “very 
thin,” had a beautiful complexion, had “white regular teeth,” and possessed beautiful 
facial features; in short, she was “perfect.”\textsuperscript{110} Alexandra’s loveliness only seemed to grow 
as Queen. Battiscombe, surveying the various compliments paid to Alexandra in her 
personal correspondence and in the press, finds her described as “dazzlingly beautiful,”

\textsuperscript{105} Richards, 102. 
\textsuperscript{106} Loeb, 90. 
\textsuperscript{108} Battiscombe, 5. 
\textsuperscript{109} Battiscombe, 13. 
\textsuperscript{110} Battiscombe, 21-22.
“ineffably beautiful,” and “slender, graceful, and beautiful.” Her beauty seemed to outshine all others.

Alexandra’s beauty was important, but, so too, was the adoration of the English people for her. David Duff presents a striking portrayal of Alexandra. Born in nobility, but also relative poverty, she lived a simple life, enjoying the attentions of her doting parents and family and embracing the necessities of a frugal life in Denmark. An excellent seamstress, she had a keen eye for clothes, making most of her own dresses. This background led her to become a lady of remarkable strength and empathy, doling out thousands of pounds annually to support countless charities. A democrat at heart, she maintained close relations with her serving staff and would talk to virtually anyone. As a mother, Alexandra ensured all of her children were well loved and that they experienced the kind of childhood that she did: unfettered, boisterous, and free, doted on by a caring and forgiving mother who often took care of the children on her own without the aid of nurses and nannies. She was, in short, emblematic of British middle-class values. Frugal, honest, domestic, maternal – Alexandra was loved by Britain. According to Battiscombe, she “was certainly more popular than either her husband or her mother-in-law.” Her actual body embraced a new ideal that reflected health, youth, and vitality. While some in Europe did perceive her as “too thin for nineteenth-century taste,” by the twentieth-century and her coronation as Queen, Alexandra’s thinness was embraced; she was an ideal model for advertisers and her presence in the Girls’ Friend, for example, was far greater than that of Victoria.

111 Battiscombe, 216-217.
113 Battiscombe, 85.
114 Battiscombe, 103.
Victoria's passing was not mentioned in the *Girls' Friend*, but Alexandra's coronation certainly was. The 15 March 1902 issue of the *Girls' Friend* was dedicated to the coronation, particularly its fashionable aspects. In a feature, "Coronation Day: What Peeresses Will Wear," the author states that, "The Queen has long been famous for her perfect taste in dress, and we may be sure that on this most splendid occasion of her life, we shall have no cause to find fault with the elegance and magnificence of her attire of that of any of the ladies of her Court." Commenting on Alexandra's crown, the contributor notes that it is to be, "delicately-modeled." "The Queen's crown is to be a new one of more dainty proportions than that worn by the consorts of bygone days...." In the 14 June 1902 issue of the *Girls' Friend*, her influence is credited with "ha[ving] done a great deal towards beautifying the garb which is worn by English women." In the next issue, Lady Gay reports that, "One of the prettiest of the new fashions in the hairdressing world is the curl worn on the shoulder, and entitled the 'Coronation Curl,' or the 'Alexandra Curl.' This pretty fashion is probably revived this season on account of the style having been in vogue when Queen Alexandra was married." The influence of Alexandra over prevailing fashion and images of femininity in the *Girls' Friend*, in particular, is clear, posing a likely explanation for the new emphasis on thinness. This included a growing number of features and letters devoted to the issue of superfluous weight as well as the rapid appearance of an abundance of advertisements for weight loss products.

116 Ibid.
Features on weight loss became prominent in the post-1902 years. Advertisements aimed at curing “stoutness” appeared almost weekly in 1903 issues of the Girls’ Friend, with Trilene, W. Scott Hamilton, and G. Crosby and Co. the most prolific advertisers. A 1904 advertisement for Antipon advised girls that, “Medical men are agreed that obesity is a prolific cause of other diseases... the formation of excessive internal fat dangerously impedes the action of the vital organs...”119 In the 26 March 1910 issue of the Girls’ Home the beauty contributor, Madame Beale, further advised girls on how to “induce slimming,” encouraging her readers to enforce a strict dietary regime, eating only “eggs, vegetables, lean meats, and fruits,” ensuring that she ate only small quantities of these allowed foods.120 The beauty editor of the Girls’ Reader encouraged girls looking to lose flesh in 1908 to “pass a self-denying ordinance,” which included avoiding all flesh-causing foods, undertaking strict exercise, and getting limited sleep.121 The editor often supported these pronouncements in his response to readers’ letters. He advised “F.L.” to exercise regularly, particularly when controlling the diet has failed;122 he encouraged “Sufferer” to watch her diet, limit liquid, exercise regularly, and sleep less;123 and he advised “Anxious” to exercise, avoid fatty and starchy foods, and “bustle about a bit more.”124

Although these features emphasized ways to lose weight that did not involve consumption, the growing number of advertisements in the magazines contradicts this underlying advice; however, the picture is far more complex. In essence, the non-product

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123 Editor, The Girls’ Friend, number 80, 18 May 1901, 446.
124 Editor, The Girls’ Reader, volume 1 number 17, 12 June 1909, 260.
related ways to lose weight all emphasized “natural” methods for weight loss; a girl could watch her diet and increase her activity level and this would result in slimming. For some girls, though, it appears that these methods had been unsuccessful, causing them to write in to the editor to ask for further advice. To readers who wrote of a failure to lose weight, the editor responds to try more or to accept her figure.\footnote{Editor, The Girls' Reader, volume 3, number 106, 26 February 1911, 20. “F.L.,” letter, The Girls' Friend, 2 July 1910, 580.} The desperation in some girls’ letters, however, suggests that they were looking for something more. A “Fat Reader” claims, in a particularly poignant example, that she is “greatly distressed by her stoutness. She tells me that it has become the curse of her life, and, unless she gets some remedy for it, she almost thinks that she will be driven to do something desperate.”\footnote{“Fat Reader,” letter, The Girls' Friend, volume 4, number 170, 7 February 1903, 220.} The editor proceeds to tell her to adopt a more cheery attitude, watch her diet, and exercise more. This reader, however, appeared on the verge of something more drastic.

The editors and contributors to the girls’ magazines recognized the growing harm girls were doing to their bodies in an effort to achieve thinness. Like the author of “Beauty Secrets: How to Become Thin,” Madame Beale advised girls against the practice of drinking large quantities of vinegar or tightly lacing their corsets.\footnote{“Beauty Secrets: How to Become Thin,” The Girls’ Reader, volume 1, number 17, 13 June 1908, 135. Madame Beale, “My Lady’s Mirror, The Girls’ Home, volume 1, number 12, 21 May 1910, 94.} As early as 1901, the editor of the Girls’ Friend told of girls who drank excessive amounts of vinegar and ate vast quantities of lemons, pickles, and salt in order to become slim, highlighting, in particular, the story of Florence Burton, aged 15, who died as a result of these efforts. Criticizing these efforts, he advises girls to remember “Nature’s intentions” and to not do anything that will cause them “sickness and trouble,” and, possibly, the loss of their own
lives. If girls complained about their inability to lose weight and were willing to go to such lengths to reduce, then a market presented itself, just waiting to be exploited.

Virtually every advertisement for weight-loss products that ran in the magazines stressed that the products were not harmful; more importantly, however, many of them stated that weight loss could be achieved without having to undertake a drastic change in lifestyle. Such advertisements advised girls that they did not need to limit their diets or sweat needlessly; they only needed to purchase the right product. Antipon, for example, stressed that it was not a drug, promising to cure obesity “with rapidity and certainty... without dieting, drugs, or gymnastics.” Dr. Vincent's ensured its buyers that “Anti-Stout pills are small, harmless, and pleasant to take, and without change of diet will reduce superabundant flesh....” Phatolene Tablets promised to “cure you of stoutness without starvation, aperients, or interference with your ordinary method of living.” The emphasis here is on the innovative, modern, miraculous ability of these products to help you realize your dreams without toil. Indeed, as Antipon declared in 1904, “The first piece of advice we would give to our corpulent friends is to studiously avoid all the old-time methods of reducing weight which involve a limited, innutritious dietary, with drugging, excessive sweating, and the constant use of cathartics.” By 1909, the editor of the Girls’ Friend appears to have accepted this message, suggesting “M.D.,” a reader unable to successfully lose weight, give Antipon a try. Stating that it “reduces obesity in a gentle and natural manner, and does not call upon the patient to indulge in exhausting

130 Dr. Vincent’s, The Girls’ Home, volume 1, number 6, 9 April 1910.
132 Loeb, 7-10, 15, 103.
133 Antipon, The Girls’ Reader, volume 5, number 252, 3 September 1904, 728.
exercise, to take nauseous drugs, or to restrict her diet in any way,” the editor informs the
reader where she can obtain a bottle of Antipon, which offers a “cure for over-
stoutness.”134 While the editors and the beauty editors of these magazines would continue
to push exercise and diet as a remedy for weight loss, the growing presence of
advertisements for weight loss products, particularly Antipon, and the hearty endorsement
of the editor, suggests a plausible alternative for girls.

Advertisements for weight loss products centred on the idea of transformation.
Products for weight loss were magical; they offered the opportunity for a better life that
could include more friends, a suitor, and greater happiness. In such advertisements,
framed as confessionals, readers could outline their feelings on and their obstacles to their
weight loss. They recounted their ability to overcome their weight problems, often
pointing to a particular weight loss product that allowed them to finally be successful.
Reaching the blissful state of thinness, the transformed outlined the advantages of weight
loss, such as buying new clothes or going out more.135 Weight loss products, then, serve a
dual purpose when it comes to consumerism: on the one hand, they encourage
consumption of the actual product; on the other hand, they encourage further
consumption because, presumably, the girl who has slimmed will be able to fit into
current fashions better, will want to show them off, and will be more likely to engage in
leisure.

The testimonial was an important part of weight loss advertising, even before the
Great War.136 Perhaps the best examples of this, although all companies advertising

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135 Macdonald, 201, 205.
136 Macdonald’s work emphasizes the appearance of the confessional/testimonial model after the Second
World War, but I found evidence much earlier than this.
products for weight loss utilized these features in the magazines, come from Antipon. A prominent advertiser, Antipon successfully married visuals and text to reach the reader, ensuring that, “if you did not get the intended meaning from the visual, the textual is there to set you straight.”\textsuperscript{137} In a 1909 issue of the Girls’ Reader, Antipon ran a half page advertisement on the “Horror of Growing Fat,” complete with headlines announcing, “Why Have a Faulty Figure? Antipon Ensures Slenderness.”\textsuperscript{138} The ensuing text is dense, but the presence of a dominant image, coupled with the prominent headlines, ensures that the message is sent, even if the text is not read (figure 2.2).

![Figure 1.2 “Antipon” from The Girls’ Reader (22 May 1909)](image)

The advertisement clearly highlights the transformative nature of the product. This message is also clear in an advertisement for the same product later in 1909, where

\textsuperscript{137} McCracken, 27
\textsuperscript{138} Antipon, The Girls’ Reader, volume 1, number 14, 22 May 1909, 215.
Antipon is given as a gift from the thin to the corpulent, with the headline announcing, "What a Single Bottle of Antipon Will Do" (figure 2.3).

Finally, the link between further consumption, transformation, and weight loss is vividly apparent in a 1911 advertisement, which proclaims, "A TRANSFORMATION. From Fatness to Slenderness. THE WONDERS OF ANTIPON." "Ladies of more than ample proportions are severely handicapped at the present time, when fashionable frocks seem to be designed only to suit the slender." The transformation, presumably, will be complete when the user is able to update her look and become fashionable, showing not only the power of the product, but also the advantages its consumption will bring.

The message of the overwhelming benefits for weight loss is prominent in the Antipon advertisements. A 1910 advertisement for the product, for example, notes the problems obtaining work if one is obese. Announcing that, "Stoutness is not only a

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139 Antipon, The Girls' Reader, volume 1, number 31, 18 September 1909, page number.
Destroyer of Beauty, but is often a Serious Drawback in Business,” the reader is advised to take *Antipon* to ensure that she is not “Heavily Handicapped in the Struggle for Life.” The dominant image accompanying the text shows a larger woman discussing her future job prospects with the manager of a shop (Figure 2.4).

No work is presently available for the woman; slimming is her only option if she hopes to work in that particular shop. Beauty of form is also possible with the use of *Antipon*. As stated in a 1909 advertisement, “Just as within every plain block of Carrara marble there

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is, potentially, a beautiful statue, only awaiting the cunning hand of the sculptor to give it artistic life, so in every awkwardly over-stout human body there is, potentially, a beautiful figure, only awaiting the right means of delivering it from its fleshy prison."\textsuperscript{142} 

*Antipon* also promises happiness, stating in a 1914 advertisement that *Antipon* shows one “How to Become Slender and Happy.”\textsuperscript{143} 

Also prevalent in the advertisements is the importance of maintaining your appearance because of the watchful eyes of others, further entrenching the mirror motif and the power of the observer. A February 1911 advertisement for *Antipon* includes an image of two women – one thin and one stout – out walking in the city. The slim lady remarks that prior to using *Antipon*, “My dressmaker used to be a terror to me....”\textsuperscript{144} In another advertisement, two thin women walk behind a stout woman, with one commenting, “‘How enormously stout she is getting! Why does she not take Antipon, I wonder?’”\textsuperscript{145} An advertisement in 1912 also highlights the importance of appearance to others, this time with a class dimension (figure 2.5). 

\begin{flushright}
\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Antipon, *The Girls' Reader*, volume 1, number 18, 19 June 1909, 277.
\item Antipon, *The Girls' Reader*, volume 1, number 43, 11 December 1909, 695.
\item Antipon, *The Girls' Reader*, volume 3, number 121, 10 June 1911, 261.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
\end{flushright}
Even the shapely maid is waiting to cast judgment on the body of her superior. Finally, the makers of *Antipon* ensure the corpulent reader that humiliation awaits her in public in her current state; in a 1914 advertisement, the image shows a large woman heading out into the street, with two people – a thin woman and a young boy – taking notice of her and commenting on her appearance. The caption to the image reads, “Does your increasing stoutness evoke such derisive comments from rude passers-by that you feel afraid to leave your own gate? Then why not try Antipon?”

Advertisements for *Antipon* also brought together two prominent messages present in the advertising of the *Girls' Friend*, the *Girls' Home*, and the *Girls' Reader*:

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146 *Antipon, The Girls' Reader*, volume 1, number 24, 13 July 1912, 7.
147 *Antipon, The Girls' Reader*, volume 3, number 117, 25 April 1914, 11
thinness and youth. Macdonald argues that, "Because of the close relationship for women between appearance and identity, the signs of ageing trigger worries about loss of social value and esteem.... Historically, in western industrialized societies, old women have been characterized as witches, hags, old maids and crones...."\(^{148}\) Within the context of the magazines for girls, however, putting on excess flesh is more often interpreted as moving towards advanced age. Antipon, in 1906, proclaimed that its product could help, "Recover the Elegance of Youth."\(^{149}\) Later, in a 1909 advertisement for Antipon the text reads, "Many people, especially ladies, are positively horrified when they find their youthful slenderness rapidly changing to decided fleshiness, and no sacrifice of personal comforts or enjoyments is too hard for them to undergo in order to recover a good figure."\(^{150}\)

Often, too, features on weight loss and youth went hand in hand with advertisements for weight loss products. In the 11 May 1912 issue of the Girls’ Reader the text for an Antipon advertisement reads, "A slender, statuesque figure is one of the most fascinating beauties a woman can possess. Daintily slim, supple yet strong, graceful of pose and movement - a woman must be all this to do full justice to the exacting fashions of the day, and her greatest misfortune is to find herself growing unmistakably stout."\(^{151}\) This particular advertisement stresses that daintiness, suppleness, and grace of form do go together. These features, according to the author of "Exercises for an Awkward Age," a subsequent feature in the same issue, are best obtained in youth.

It may seem rather unnecessary to talk about adding beauty to the young girl, but despite whatever rare grace a woman may possess, either in

\(^{148}\) Macdonald, 194-195.
\(^{150}\) Antipon, The Girls’ Reader, volume 1, number 14, 22 May 1909, 215.
loveliness of face or form, however great her charm of manner and grace of carriage may be, how gladly would she not change all these if she could only hear the welcomed words applied to herself, 'How young she is!' Now, if a girl wishes to be thus described in the future years, when girlhood has passed to womanhood, she must take precautions at once to acquire grace of form and carriage, and youth will then seem to remain with her permanently. It is the girl who becomes the woman.... The young supple frame of a growing maiden often has curable faults, which, if not looked to in youth, will spoil the adult figure later on. The 'awkward' age is the age to train in grace for the years to come....

The use of common language and the placement of these features in the magazine suggest a relationship between slenderness, youth, and beauty. Other advertisements, though, were more explicit. A 1909 advertisement for Antipon stated "A woman of thirty should be in the prime of her beauty and grace; yet at that age... how many charming women are assailed by the secret dread of the first signs of obesity...?" Indeed, "The apparition of the first grey hairs gives not so poignant a pang; the thinning of locks is not so terrible. But to be is vulgarly called 'fat'! Oh!"

Many other products touted the ideal of youth and beauty and many features emphasized the overall importance of youth. Oatine repeatedly stressed the connection between youth, beauty, and its face cream products. A 1909 advertisement for the product claimed that, "The skin is a delicate organ, and must be treated carefully and scientifically if it is to look its best and retain that youthfulness of appearance so much desired by every woman." The dangers of daily life, in particular, necessitated the use of products to extend youth. Business-girls, for example, were encouraged to "retain and

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152 "Exercises for an Awkward Age," ibid, 20.
154 Ibid, 499.
155 Oatine Toilet Soap, The Girls' Reader, volume 1, number 19, 26 June 1909, back cover.
improve" their beauty and youth, which the stresses of the world would seek to take from them.156

In addition, there was some awareness in the magazine of the lengths that women would go to in order to retain the bloom of youth. A feature in a 1901 issue of the Girls' Friend, entitled, "BEAUTY FRAUDS: How Women in Search of Beauty are Victimised," claims that "there are women who will suffer any pain, and spend what are veritably fortunes, in an attempt to preserve their beauty and their youth."157 Women, the author states, are willing to undergo all kinds of horrific treatments, many of which damage the skin and the body, paying copious amounts of money in an effort to eradicate the signs of aging. The suffering, though, is endured silently: "Is it not to bring to them the beauty and bloom of youth?"158

Finally, advertisements for weight loss products, particularly those for Antipon, also stressed the link between thinness, youth, and modernity. The use of the word modern first appears in the Girls' Home in 1910 in a feature for the magazine entitled, "What is the Correct Dimension for my Waist?" The contributor argued against the practice of tight-lacing, arguing that the "modern beauty" does not possess a waist smaller than 24".159 Its use in weight loss advertisements becomes prevalent that same year. Antipon, for example, gears its message to "The Fascinating Modern Woman," who is, "happier, brighter, and more beautiful than the woman of, let us say, the mid-Victorian age."160 An advertisement for the Marmola Company's weight loss aid announces that,

156 "The Business-Girl's Beauty," The Girls' Reader, volume 1, number 2, 10 February 1912, 17.
157 "Beauty Frauds," The Girls' Friend, volume 1, number 92, 10 August 1901, 646.
158 Ibid, 646.
159 "What is the Correct Dimension for my Waist?" The Girls' Home, volume 1, number 43, 24 December 1910, 351.
160 Antipon, The Girls' Reader, volume 2, number 81, 3 September 1910, 467.
"A pretty slender figure with a graceful poise of body, is the modern cult of Fashion’s votaries. This is an age of Slimness. Stout ladies are at a disadvantage."

The best example of this partnership, however, is found in an *Antipon* advertisement that ran in the 28 September 1912 issue of the *Girls’ Reader* (figure 2.6).

![Antipon advertisement](image)

**Figure 2.6 “Antipon” from The Girls’ Reader (28 September 1912)**

The images shown exhibit a striking resemblance to Queen Victoria – the mid-Victorian woman – and to Queen Alexandra – the symbol of modern slenderness. In case the visual impact of this advertisement is not fully embraced, the text ensures the message is reinforced: “Of a surety the modern woman is attractive. Her passion for wholesome

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outdoor sports and pastimes, the healthy, active life she leads, her intelligent
apprehension of everything pertaining to hygiene – all these things make the modern
English women attractive in a supreme degree."162 There is no mention of “maternal.”

The advertisement clearly links modernity with youth, slimness, and vitality; the
“unmodern woman” is “podgy,” “clumsy,” and “awkward.”163

Exploring the connection to Alexandra, then, one notes that while Alexandra was
maternal in her relations with her children, she did not possess a maternal body. Duff
finds that Queen Victoria wrote that Alexandra was “flat as a board.” “Although the
Queen did not believe in mothers feeding their children, she was strongly in favor of an
ample bosom.”164 Alexandra’s thinness was subsequently tied into her youthfulness, with
commentators noting that she usually appeared far younger than she actually was. At the
wedding of her daughter Princess Louise in 1889, for example, guests commented that
Alexandra “looked younger than her daughter.”165 In 1913, when Alexandra was sixty-nine, “Sir Maurice de Bunsen, formerly Ambassador to Portugal and Spain, described her
looking ‘like a young girl.’”166 Alexandra’s “eternal youth” lasted until her death in
1925.167 Alexandra, then, appeared the perpetual girl, fulfilling her womanly duties as a
wife, mother, and Queen, but still holding on to her youth.

A key figure who reflects this move towards youth as the ideal is the flapper.

Flappers tend to be associated with women in the 1920s that rebelled against socio-
cultural conventions but, according to Elizabeth Ewing, the flapper preceded the Great

164 Duff, 75.
165 Duff, 172.
166 Duff, 262.
167 Duff, 289.
War and referred, initially, to a girl aged 15-18 that “wore her skirts enticingly shorter than adults of the time.”\textsuperscript{168} In addition, flappers wore their hair long, tying it back with “taffeta ribbon bows” or in long plaits.\textsuperscript{169} In fact, it was the big bow, which “flapped” when girls walked, that gave them their names. Ewing concludes that, “With her short (for the time) skirts, general sprightliness in her attire and her big bows, the flapper was the first exponent of the teenage fashions which were to dominate the scene a generation later.”\textsuperscript{170}

The flapper appears in abundance in the images of the girls’ magazines. Perhaps the most famous of the flappers was Pollie Green, the character of numerous serialized stories that ran in all of the Harmsworth publications. While Pollie embodied the spirit of the new girl, a topic covered in Chapter 1, her body figured as a visual distinguisher between the new girl and the woman. Numerous images appeared of her in the magazines (figure 2.7).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{pollie_green.png}
\caption{“Pollie Green” from \textit{The Girls’ Home} (29 August 1911)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{169} Ewing, 134.
\textsuperscript{170} Ewing, 134. According to Ferris, Harmsworth specifically targeted this group of fashionable young women. Ferris, 185.
Girls could seek to emulate the fashion of their favourite fictional character by obtaining a pattern to make the “Pollie Green Blouse, The Rage of the Spring”¹⁷¹ (figure 2.8).

![Figure 2.8 “Pollie Green Blouse” from The Girls’ Reader (6 March 1909)](image)

Indeed, Pollie Green, and girls who looked just like her, came to dominate the pages of the girls’ magazines. The flapper did not really figure prominently in advertising, but the dominant presence of the flapper in the fictional and visual elements of the magazine served to introduce and, at the same time, reinforce the centrality of youth.

The link to modernity is also apparent in the attention to technology in advertisements.¹⁷² Advertisements and features point to the wonders of innovation, invention, and “science” in their pieces. New is deemed better. Agnes Sewell promises

¹⁷² Loeb, 53
that, “It used to be a tradition that one must have descended from a stock that has enjoyed five centuries of leisure to possess a perfectly beautiful hand; but the science of modern Beauty experts has changed all that, and now it is quite possible to have white and delicate hands even if we work and occupy ourselves with our daily household duties.”

*Icilma* assures the reader that a “new invention will cleanse the hair when washing is inconvenient.” Furthermore, these advertisements note the ability of technology to unlock the secrets of true beauty. *Vegetine* proclaims that “Science has Discovered this True Secret of Skin-Beauty.” The modern, then, always appeared as something better. As Loeb argues, the emphasis was on “innovation” and “novelty,” on the “products of the industrial age.” Technology offered the possibility of miracles, argues Richards, of solving all of those problems that “traditional” or “antiquated” methods had been unable to do. A girl no longer had to deny herself the pleasures of food or sweat in excess, and she could be sure that the products she was buying were the products of science and industry, geared to make her life better, more fulfilled, and happier. Buying the product, engaging in the commodification of beauty and the female body, helped her to be seen as “modern,” as one who embraced the new and rejected the old.

Within the well-established industrial age, then, girls seemed to be the beneficiaries of a new way of approaching health and beauty. Advertisers, editors, and contributors in the magazines all highlighted to girls that beauty was within their reach; they just had to purchase the right products. In an effort to ensure that this happened, advertisers drew on an increasingly sophisticated arsenal of tactics to ensure that the girl

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176 Loeb, 7.
177 Richards, 188.
was self-conscious of her appearance, aware of the gaze of others, and attuned to her
duties as an emerging woman; image and text came together to ensure clarity of message.
In addition, advertisers drew on outside sources of authority to add greater credence to
the power of their products; girls may not trust the advertiser, but they would trust a
friend, a doctor, or the Queen. Whether it was their desire for clear skin, for a thin body,
or for a modern, youthful look, girls could rely on commodities to achieve their goals;
consumption held the key to a successful present, and a fulfilled and happy future. For
the most part, advertisers and contributors were successful in creating an image of the
ideal girl, linking this to her consumerism. They would attempt to do the same within the
context of the Empire.
Chapter Three

Girls and the Empire: At Home and Abroad

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Britain’s identity encompassed both nation and empire. As seen in Chapter 1, contributors to the Amalgamated Press emphasized a British identity for girls that focused primarily on the qualities of Englishness—an identity and culture that broke down in the face of so much contradiction. When it came to the Empire, however, editors and writers were able to present a much more consistent and cohesive idea of girls’ role. In some ways, this ideal reflected the same role perceived for women: to uphold racial purity and markers of the race. Contributors to the Harmsworth publications for girls certainly offered much advice in this area. Girls were reminded to marry good British men and to give birth to children who would carry the banner of the empire with them. They were also reminded to uphold the values of Britishness. This was the dominant message, but an underlying tension existed.

While girls were encouraged to uphold the values of the nation in the fiction and non-fictional elements of the magazines, advertisers often pointed to the need for girls to embrace their exoticism. Various advertisements used images of the exotic Orient to sell their wares, seemingly going against messages of home and whiteness. This apparent contradiction is revealing given that it points to an emerging role for girls in the empire, one that more closely mimicked the role their brothers were to experience. Girls, it seems, were being granted a place in empire that was perhaps more thrilling than giving

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1 Harmsworth was an ardent supporter of the British Empire. A financial supporter and friend of Cecil Rhodes, Harmsworth embraced the mission of the British Empire, as espoused by so many contemporaries at the time. See Paul Ferris, The House of Northcliffe: Biography of an Empire (New York: World Publishing, 1971), 75-76.
birth to future citizens, soldiers, and mothers. Tales of romance and adventure placed girls in the colonial context, using their pluck and their courage to overcome the harshness of the colonial landscape and its inhabitants. Alternatively, adventure could come in the form of work, with contributors and editors offering girls extensive information on how to emigrate to the colonies to seek work and, perhaps, even love. These new opportunities – as adventurers or workers for the empire – seemed to link the imperial experience with the traits of the new girl. She was offered a temporary space in which to experience the empire that took her out of the home and perhaps even beyond the boundaries of femininity. The Girl Scouts, and later the Girl Guides, offer one example of the evidence of this shift and the efforts of officials to harness girls’ skills and patriotism in service of the nation and empire. The emphasis, though, is on the temporary nature of this experience. While the girl could possibly run off to the empire, the newly-married, or similarly encumbered girl, would have to be content with bringing the empire to her – whether that was through imperial fiction or face cream.

Within the magazines, contributors and editors stressed that girls’ fundamental role was as mothers; this was the most important contribution they could make to the nation and to the empire. Girls were offered a temporary space in which to move about the empire, embrace girlhood, and act in ways that mimicked their brothers more than their mothers, but all expected them to settle down and marry. Fictional stories almost

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3 See Chapter 1 on girls' culture.
always end with a marriage, with the female protagonist accepting her feminine duty and relishing this new adventure in her life. Non-fictional pieces emphasized maternity, domesticity, and marriage. With the emphasis on empire, though, these depictions took on an added element, with contributors looking for models of virtuous mothers and wives of the empire.

Perhaps the best role model put forth for girl readers was Queen Alexandra. 4 "Enthroned in the heart of the nation," Alexandra was touted as the quintessential British woman. 5 Various features in the special coronation issue of The Girls' Friend, stated she was kind and considerate, unselfish, and self-sacrificing. The longest article, however, was devoted to Alexandra as mother, for, "The Queen as a mother is a model for all mothers to follow, whether queens or peeresses, or even those of the humblest degree who have never been able to keep a nursery or nurse or a servant to look after their children." 6 The author goes on to explain why Alexandra is the sort of mother needed by the British nation. Possessing a "very strong, very passionate affection for her children," the Queen refused to allow servants to raise them, preferring to attend to them, play with them, and to act as a "servant" to them herself. 7 Despite being Queen, Alexandra was quoted as saying that she was always a mother first; that was her most important contribution to the nation. 8

Of course, girls would only be truly fulfilling their national duty if they married carefully, which meant paying attention to religion and class. Writers recommended that

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4 For more on Queen Alexandra, please see Chapter 2.
7 Ibid, 521.
8 Alexandra extended this maternal role into the public sphere, supporting hospitals and nurses. For more on her charitable activities, see Georgina Battiscombe, Queen Alexandra (London: Constable and Company, 1969) and David Duff, Alexandra, Princess and Queen (London: William Collins Sons and Co., 1980).
girls not marry outside of their faith or their class; both reflected potential areas of tension that could negatively affect the couple’s ability to live peacefully.\footnote{For more on this, please see Alisa Webb, "Love and Desire," \textit{Beauty, Work, But Above All Marriage: Gender Socialization of Adolescent Girls in the Girls' Best Friend, 1898-99} (Simon Fraser University: Thesis, 2003), 79-108.} Within the context of empire, the added dimension of race became a prevalent issue, in addition to religion and class.\footnote{The subject of racial mixing dominated much colonial discourse in the western world. Please see Alison Blunt, "Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886-1925," \textit{Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers}, 24, 4 (December 1999): 421-440; Alice L. Conklin, "Redefining 'Frenchness': Citizenship, Race Regeneration, and Imperial Motherhood in France and West Africa, 1914-1940," \textit{Domesticating the Empire}, 1998: 65-83; Revathi Krishnaswamy, \textit{Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Gail Ching-Liang Low, \textit{White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism} (London: Routledge, 1996); Anne McClintock, \textit{Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context} (New York: Routledge, 1995); Jean Elisabeth Pedersen, "'Special Customs': Paternity Suits and Citizenship in France and the Colonies, 1870-1912," \textit{Domesticating the Empire}, 1998: 43-64; Mrinalini Sinha, \textit{Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century} (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995); Pamela Scully, "Rape, Race, and Colonial Culture: The Sexual Politics of Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony, South Africa," \textit{The American Historical Review}, vol. 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 335-359; Stoler, 1997; and Lora Wildenthal, \textit{German Women for Empire} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).} Editors, in particular, advised girls against marrying outside of their race. In 1910 a reader wrote to report that she is engaged to a "Jap" and, because of this, has been shunned by her family and friends. The editor sides against the girl, stating, "My own personal opinion is that an English girl ought not to marry a Jap. Nobody has a greater respect for our Eastern allies than myself; but, at the same time, I do not think it wise that the two races should be allied in any directions other than those of political policy and commerce."\footnote{Editorial, \textit{The Girls' Friend}, 29 October 1910, 4.} The issue generated response from other readers, including one girl who wrote in that she felt an Anglo-Japanese marriage was perfectly acceptable for she was in the same situation and blissfully happy. While her parents had initially disallowed the union, they eventually came around, particularly because her sweetheart was such a wonderful man. He was also very "English," being a Christian and having
been educated at English schools. The editor, in future issues, continued to argue against this type of union. The issue of mixed-race unions appeared again in a 1913 editorial of *The Girls’ Friend*, this time concerning an “Indian.” The editor writes,

On the way to business my friend ‘Perplexed’ passes a man whose dark complexion proclaims him an Indian. Now, she has an idea that this man would much like to speak to her, and as ‘Perplexed’ would much like to speak to him, she inquires how an introduction between them could be arranged. I am sure I do not know, and, in view of the young gentleman’s race, I do not consider that such an introduction would be at all desirable. An English girl should take an interest in an Englishman.

Repeatedly, when issues of racial difference arise in the letters to the editor, the editors warn against such unions, directing the girls to find nice English boys to marry instead.

Interestingly, the magazines did present mixed marriages in stories; in every case, however, the story involved an English man marrying a racial other. Sometimes the stories had happy endings. In *A Bride For Canada*, by Evelyn Yates, “Diamond Heart,” a “young Red Indian girl,” marries an Englishman. This “noble savage” was “an amazing vision.... The girl’s expression was the strangest thing about her. A natural fierceness, bred of generations of Indian ancestors, was softened and subdued by the wonderful sweetness of a small, tender, mobile mouth.” Her new husband finds,

[H]is beautiful little Indian wife was really settling down in the most heart-whole way to English life. Later on, perhaps, they would one day go back to the prairies and the mountains for a holiday. But with the present Diamond Heart was quite content. She had given up her own tribe for the Palefaces, she had married a Paleface, and she was rapidly developing into a Paleface herself.

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14 This advice extended to men from other European nations as well. Editors advised against marrying French and German men, too. See Webb, “Love and Desire.”
16 Ibid, volume 3, number 143, 11 November 1911, 629.
The idea that English culture was stronger than colonial culture and that men were stronger than women is prevalent here. Because of his white race and masculinity, her husband is able to help her overcome her nativeness. The unions, however, were not always happy. While in Canada a “Paleface” might find love with an “Indian,” in other colonial contexts this was not the case. Women in India, according to the magazines, could pose significant problems. In Her Lover in India, Trixie falls in love with soldier Brian. After they became engaged, Brian received orders that he must go to India for a year. Trixie promises to remain true to him and to await his return, but Brian begins a “clandestine friendship” with a beautiful “Hindoo” princess named Ranee. Ranee and Brian carry on for the year that he is away, but once his term is up, he pledges to leave Ranee behind and return to Trixie. Ranee, who has held Brian under some kind of spell, is infuriated; she proceeds to poison Brian to keep him from leaving her. Brian survives his brush with death, returns to England, and confesses his transgression to Trixie; she forgives her true love and the two plan for their wedding day.

Marriage was not the only context where authors and contributors considered racial mixing; mixed-race friendships also appeared in the serials. The most prominent one was between Pollie Green and Coosha. Running at alternate times in The Girls’ Friend, The Girls’ Home, and The Girls’ Reader, “Mabel St. John’s” various stories

17 Her Lover in India, The Girls’ Reader, volume 2, number 72, begins 2 July 1910.
18 Stoler argues that such relations in the colonies were quite common and that colonial officials either encouraged fraternizing with the locals or, at least, turned a blind eye to such activities. Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable,” 347-351. Could this be why Trixie so readily accepts Brian back, or is it because her chances at marriage were so slim that she was willing to forgive him? Alternatively, would backing out on the impending marriage cause harm to her social status?
19 ‘Mabel St. John’ was the female alias for Henry St. John Cooper. Cooper was one of Harmsworth’s favourite writers, publishing extensively in the Amalgamated Press’ girl and boy publications. His specialty was schoolgirl and schoolboy tales. See Drotner, 166.
about Pollie Green dominated the magazines up to the Great War. Exploring the
ascribed characteristics of each girl and their relationship highlights the perceived
differences between the races – in this case between “white” and “black.” Equally
revealing are the accompanying illustrations; even if one chose not to read the stories, the
images presented alongside the text set up a racial dichotomy that is difficult to miss.

While Pollie was mischievous, extremely confident, and very independent, she
was also, it seems, the quintessential white, English girl. The “prettiest, Wittiest, daintiest,
and most bewitching girl in the world,” Pollie possessed a halo of blond hair. Her
beauty was rivaled by none at Nunthorpe College, where she was a student. Her
appearance stood in stark contrast to Coosha. Arriving in December 1911, Coosha had
been sent by General Burgum from Ethiopia, in hopes that she would be “tamed” and
educated. She and Pollie strike up an immediate relationship, with Pollie taking the
animal-like Coosha under her wing. All noted the contrast in appearance: “It was an
extraordinary contrast, these two sitting side by side…. Pollie, with her delicately rose-

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20 The first Pollie Green story, Pollie Green, by Mabel St. John, began in The Girls’ Friend in 1907. Later
stories included Pollie Green at Cambridge, Pollie Green at Twenty-One, Pollie Green In Society, Pollie
Green’s Party, and Coosha and Company. Essentially, the stories followed the adventures and
development of Pollie Green from girlhood through marriage. I also discuss Pollie Green in Chapters 1 and
2. Not only did Pollie embrace a black girl as her best friend, she also epitomized the ‘new girl’.

21 For more on dichotomies of black and white in fiction, see Joseph Bristow, Empire Boys: Adventures in a
Man's World (London: Unwin Hyman, 1991), Gail Ching-Liang Low, White Skins/Black Masks:
Imperialism and Juvenile Literature, ed. Jeffrey Richards (Manchester: Manchester University Press,
1989), 72-106; and John Springhall, “‘Healthy Magazines for Manly Boys’: Imperialism and Race in the
Harmsworths' Halfpenny Boys' Magazines of the 1890s and 1900s,” Imperialism and Juvenile Literature.
For the construction of racial difference in English elementary school readers, see Stephen Heathorn, “‘Let
us Remember that We, Too, are English’: Construction of Citizenship and National Identity in English
convincingly outlines the characteristics of race depicted in school readers that were read by millions of
British school children. These characteristics are echoed in the fiction of the girls’ magazines and the boys’
magazines aimed at the working-class and lower-middle class reader.

22 Mabel St. John, Pollie Green, The Girls’ Home, volume 2, number 77, 19 August 1911, 627. The story
first ran 1907-1908 in The Girls’ Friend.

23 Ibid, volume 2, number 93, 9 December 1911.
tinged complexion, her bright golden hair, a picture of English loveliness; and Coosha, with her black skin and woolly hair, wonderful teeth and big eyes.  

The girls’ images, whether separate or together, expand on the textual depictions. Pollie appeared often in advertisements for the various stories depicting her adventures (figure 3.1).

Her beauty is without question. Surrounded by wavy, abundant hair, pulled back into the flapper bow, her features are clear. If we accept the pronouncements of the beauty editor for The Girls’ Home, Pollie’s hair endowed her with certain characteristics. “Beautiful golden hair is rarely seen on persons of a gross nature. Its owner loves fine arts and possesses exquisite sensibilities. As a rule, smooth, fine, softly waving hair betokens gentleness, quietness, neatness.” Her large eyes are welcoming, seeming to look straight

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24 Ibid, 758.
25 “What Colour is Your Hair?” The Girls’ Home, volume 1, number 5, 2 April 1910, 40.
at you while, at the same time, appearing to gaze off beyond you. Her exquisite lips are bow-like in appearance, and her white hands, raised next to her face, draw attention to them. Dressed impeccably, she sends her love to all of her readers, encouraging them to join her on her adventures. She appears independent, yet feminine.

Coosha, on the other hand, with her bowed head appears subservient (figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.2 “Coosha” from The Girls’ Home (24 October 1911)](image)

The large hat covering the bulk of her curly, black hair seems to further hide her, casting a shadow over her already dark features. Her hair, according to The Girls’ Home beauty editor, also said much about her. Coarse and thick black hair meant that the possessor
was more prone to "industry than mental power." Additionally, having curly hair meant that Coosha had less power to govern others or herself. Other features suggest her "nature." Her eyes gaze off to the side, not directly engaging with the viewer, but rather suggesting a possible shiftiness. Her skin is so dark that it is difficult to determine some of her features, and her finger, pointed at her cheek, seems to almost blend into the darkness. The brightest part of her features are the whites of eyes and her teeth; her large mouth and lips part to show an obvious row of large, white teeth. Her bone structure, too, seems more pronounced than Pollie's. Coosha's nose is prominent, rather than dainty, and her cheekbones are clearly defined. While she is clothed, the jewelry and large accessories, such as the sunflower on her hat, set her apart from Pollie's dainty bows and small accessories. These images reflect dominant trends in depicting peoples from Africa during this period of time.

Their relationship was built upon a solid narrative, with Pollie as the agent of civilization and Coosha the savage. Within this narrative, the author, St. John, draws on a familiar trope: parent and child. When Coosha, angry at being brought to the school, throws an ink pot at the headmistress's head and proceeds to yell "Ya-hoo" repeatedly in the office, it is Pollie who is finally able to calm her. Offering her sweets, Pollie coos at

26 Ibid, 40.
27 Ibid, 40.
29 On the parent-child trope see de Groot, 97-98
Coosha, speaking to her as if a child in soothing tones.\textsuperscript{30} The child-like nature of Coosha is also apparent in an image from the early run of the story (figure 3.3).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image3.3}
\caption{“Pollie Green and Coosha” from \textit{The Girls' Friend} (28 December 1907)}
\end{figure}

Here, Pollie takes Coosha’s hand, leading her away like an errant child. Coosha appears much younger than seventeen-year old Pollie. Her short skirt, mannerisms, and general appearance suggest that she is quite young. Her age, however, is not given in the story. She is repeatedly referred to as “child,” although this angers her. Interestingly, too, Coosha quickly grows. In a later image from the same story, after which not much time has passed, Coosha is clearly as tall as the other girls at the school (figure 3.4).

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 757.
suggesting that earlier pictures of her played up her child-like nature, but as she began to adapt to civilized life, her physical form reflected this.

![Figure 3.4 “Pollie Green and Coosha” from *The Girls’ Friend* (15 February 1908)](image)

Pollie made it her personal mission to engage with and help Coosha. The two went everywhere together, prompting Ann, another girl in the school, to sing:

Pollie had a little nig.,  
It’s hair was black as ink,  
And everywhere that Pollie went,  
That nig. was sure to slink.\(^{31}\)

Ultimately, the relationship is deemed a positive one; Coosha stays with Pollie throughout all of Pollie’s life adventures and, owing to the constant diligence of Pollie, Coosha is eventually civilized, although never entirely.\(^{32}\) While Coosha’s clothes change and she learns social conventions, her marks of savagery remain: her dark skin, woolly

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\(^{31}\) Ibid, 758.

\(^{32}\) de Groot argues that nineteenth and early-twentieth century experts deemed differences between men and women and between races essential and entirely natural, meaning that while changes could take place, the basic nature of a person could never be completely altered. Coosha is able, to some extent, to embrace Englishness and English girlhood, but she will always be ‘other’. Interestingly, this same argument was made about working-class women in the context of emigration. See below.
hair, and diction continue to mark her as other. Coosha also repeatedly shows her “savagery,” particularly in times of stress. She often hoots and hollers, defies social rules, sits on the floor instead of in chairs, and eats odd things, like lip salve (figure 4.5).

Figure 3.5 “Coosha” from *The Girls’ Home* (9 December 1911)

Her speech, too, continues to set her apart from civilized society. In *Pollie Green at Cambridge* a now largely civilized Coosha, as evidenced by the image on the cover (figure 3.6), still continues to speak in a way that defines her as other.

33 Contemporary discourse debated the ability of colonized others to become full citizens. Several sources already indicated, including Campt, Conklin, Low, McClintock, Pederson, Sinha, and Stoler, discuss this issue. The arguments frequently became those of blood strength— which blood— native or European— would prevail? Repeatedly, though, particularly into the twentieth century, eugenicists, commentators, imperialists, and others argued that full integration into the European community was not possible.
While sitting in the motorcar waiting to leave, she states, "What's dat ting for? Dat ting dat you going to pull? Ho, yo' bery fine driver. I don't tink! Golly! Why don't yo' make de ting move?" Coosha's inability to be fully assimilated into British society reflects, then, larger beliefs about the success of British imperialism to civilize the natives.

The depiction of racial difference extended beyond the fiction of the magazine and into advertisements. There, rather than an emphasis on Africans and Indians, the emphasis was on the exotic orient, with *Icilma*, a line of beauty products, being the most likely to draw on the exotic east in its advertisements. There are three central ideas:

35 Other stories did depict women who were not Black or Indian, although less frequently. For example, *Zola Lee the Gipsy*, by Zilpah, ran in *The Girls' Reader* in 1909; *Romany Ruth, A Romance of Gypsy Life*, by Mabel St. John. ran in *The Girls' Friend* in 1907; and *A Turkish Beauty*, by Norman Napier, ran in *The Girls' Friend* in 1908.
36 While Said's *Orientalism* is obviously the benchmark when considering depictions of the east, see also Auerbach; de Groot, Dana S. Hale, "French Images of Race on Product Trademarks during the Third
inherent in these depictions. First, the images draw on exotic women to sell products; second, the landscapes where the products are derived from are presented as “mysterious” and “secret;” and third, the products reflect attempts to bring the empire home by depicting racialized others on standard products.\(^{37}\) In each case, though, the images are in effect sanitized by their links to the domestic, suggesting themes and contexts that are “different and exotic” but also “familiar and domestic.”\(^{38}\)

*Icilma* regularly used images of “exotic” women and landscapes to induce British women to purchase their products. Two typical renderings emerge: one, the veiled woman (figures 3.7 – 3.9) and two, the non-descript other woman who exists in a tropical paradise (figures 3.10 and 3.11).

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\(^{37}\) Andrew Thompson argues that while companies took advantage of imperialism to sell their products, there was not a concerted effort to link empire to commodities until the 1920s, spearheaded by the Empire Marketing Board. Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2003), 45. Despite this, there can be no denying the efforts of key advertisers to present the case that purchasing their products was a way to support the nation and the empire before the 1920s.

The veiled woman, argues de Groot, served to depict the Orient. Linked to harems and entertainment, the veiled woman embodied desirability, sexuality, and intimacy. At the same time, though, her veiled status also suggested that she was subservient, different, and subordinate.\textsuperscript{39} She was, then, the image of other femininity for the east. While the veiled woman seemed to embody sensuality and exoticism, any woman depicted from beyond the western world could fulfill the same role. The non-veiled woman, for example, not only invites the viewer’s gaze, but also engagement in the world of the Orient. In figure 3.11, the woman points to a lush paradise, encouraging you to take in the wonders that she and her world offer.\textsuperscript{40} Not only are these landscapes lush paradises, they are also full of mystery and enchantment. \textit{Icilma} is so effective and special because it uses water from a secret Algerian spring, from which flows natural, tonic waters waiting to soothe the skin.

\textsuperscript{39} Auerbach, 1-3, 5, and 9, and de Groot, 105.
\textsuperscript{40} Auerbach, 5, and de Groot, 104-105.
Every girl and woman in Britain, it seems, could bring a little piece of the empire home with them. While they may not be able to travel to the colonies, they could still take advantage of what it had to offer through the purchase of commodities. Both empire and the commodities of empire are being sold.\textsuperscript{41} Girls are encouraged to accept the east as an exotic and mysterious place, but also its importance to the empire. Repeatedly the advertisements remind girls that \textit{Icilm\textregistered} is the secret to true beauty; no other product will do. As it depends on access to Algerian spring water, empire is necessary.\textsuperscript{42} The presumption of advertisers also appears to be that girls and women \textit{want} to embrace their inner exoticism. Doing so would both embrace and reject notions of respectable English femininity. On the one hand, the role of exotic women and the role of English women in relation to men were not all that different. Both were based on an assumption of inequality and both desired obedience, devotion, service, nurturing, and loyalty from the subordinate party, whether exotic other or gendered other.\textsuperscript{43} On the other hand, English women were not supposed to be overtly sexual, but were to rather focus on domesticity and maternity. The eastern woman, alternatively, became a site where European men could play out their sexual fantasies because they did not look to her for home and children. In bringing this ideal home from the empire, emblazoned on commodities for women, de Groot suggests this had an impact on notions of sexuality, acting as a kind of erotica that presented sexual imagery reflective of male sexual desires.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} Auerbach, 4, Hale, 131, and McClintock, 207-210.
\textsuperscript{42} The message here appears rather general, then, when we consider the fact that Algeria was part of the French Empire. Would readers have been aware of this fact? Did it matter? It seems that it was more important to emphasize ‘empire’ in this context, rather than the specifically British empire.
\textsuperscript{43} de Groot, 95-98.
\textsuperscript{44} de Groot, 106-107.
Two possible explanations may account for Icilma advertisers thinking girls would be drawn to these products within this context. Girls may have feared the loss of sexual power and control over men when men went to the colonies. As shown earlier, Brian was incapable of refusing the advances of the exotic Ranee, even though he had a devoted, loyal, domestic fiancé waiting at home for him. If Trixie truly wanted to hold on to Brian, she may have to embrace part of what drew him to Ranee. It is also possible that the makers of Icilma believed that girls felt slighted in their chances at adventure abroad.

It was far more likely for men to experience the exotic world of the colonies. Buying a product of the empire allowed British girls to feel that they were part of the empire, while also giving them a taste of the exotic world beyond. For those who were prepared to leave the comforts of home, though, emigration was waiting to open up their world.

Emigration was a common theme in the girls’ magazines. Fictional stories, in particular, repeatedly included emigration as a main narrative – especially to Canada. The editor of The Girls’ Reader stated, “Experience has taught me that ‘Emigration’ serials are much appreciated by my friends, and the number of inquiries on the subject of Canada as a field for feminine enterprise leaves me no doubt as to the wisdom of the policy of selecting the great Dominion as the scene of the narrative....” He selected several such stories, including The Girl Emigrants, by Evelyn Yates, published in The

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Girls' Reader in 1909. It told the tale of Meg who emigrated to Canada to join her sweetheart. 47 Another of Yates' stories, A Bride For Canada, concerns the emigration of Meg Darling, who responds to an advertisement to go and work in Canada, but ends up as a mail-order bride to a rough and cruel man who believes that he has bought her and she is now his. She makes friends with a variety of settlers and is eventually rescued from her horrible "husband" and reunited with her true love, also an immigrant. 48 Finally, a series of short stories ran in The Girls' Home at the beginning of 1910 on "Girls of the Empire," recounting tales of love for girls who had left England for the dominions and colonies.

These stories included "Fay of Australia" and "A Canadian Girl," with others telling tales of girls in South Africa and on the border of Assam. 49 All of these stories, whether long, serialized pieces or short stories contained in one issue, explore the themes of emigration, love, and empire. The familiar narratives of girls' fiction remain – separation from sweetheart, personal trauma and conflict, triumph and marriage – but these now take place in a colonial setting. As Barbara Bush argues, these new "'Empire Romances... confirmed the superior 'Anglo-Saxon' identities and evoked confident female emigrants enjoying the adventure and freedom of Empire and the promise of a husband, but free from the taint of moral or racial corruption." 50

For readers of the magazines, however, the empire offered more than just a setting for love stories. Letters to the editor abound, with girls frequently requesting information on how to emigrate. "Elsie" and her female friend were determined to go to Canada, for

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47 Evelyn Yates, The Girl Emigrants, The Girls' Reader, volume 1, number 1 (new series), 27 February 1909. Meg is accompanied to Canada by her "chum" Tessie. Traveling alone, the girls find themselves "alone in a strange country," unsure of what has happened to Bob, Meg's sweetheart. The ensuing tale is one of adventure as the girls try to determine what fate has befallen Bob.


50 Barbara Bush, 87. See also Julia Bush, "'The Right Sort of Woman,'" 387.
they believed “that country offers more opportunities than can possibly be secured here.” The editor remarks that many British girls are going to Canada, but cautions that they must have a “thorough knowledge of housekeeping and domestic work” in order to be successful in their desires. Indeed, colonial officials deemed those willing to undertake general domestic service in the colonies and dominions as the most desirable group of emigrants, owing to the extensive demand for such women in the empire. If they possessed such skills, they should see Miss Lefroy at the British Women’s Emigration Society. Other letters came from girls wishing to leave England for New Zealand, Australia, South America, and South Africa. Generally, the editors were supportive of such endeavours, provided the girls possessed the necessary skills.

Miss Lefroy – Grace Lefroy – figured prominently and positively in The Girls’ Friend’s editor’s advice to readers. “This lady is the official of a society which interests itself in the welfare of ladies going abroad to our colonies and dependencies, and any of my readers who wish for information regarding emigration cannot do better than write to Miss Lefroy.” Not only did he regularly advise girls to address their correspondence and questions regarding emigration to her, he also consulted with her on articles, quoting her as needed regarding the necessary qualifications of potential emigrants. As a middle-class, young, single woman, Lefroy was a prominent member of the British Women’s Emigration Association (BWEA). The honorary secretary for the association, Lefroy was responsible for interviewing candidates for emigration, welcoming accepted candidates

52 Julia Bush, “The Right Sort of Woman,” 390; Chilton, 67, 72-76, 124; Kranidis, 31-32; and Hammerton, 159
53 Ibid, 444.
upon their arrival at the BWEA hostel in London where they were to stay while they awaited departure, and for corresponding with emigrants and ensuring that their loans were repaid. Given her position, Lefroy had considerable influence over who was accepted to emigrate. Her personal beliefs, which stressed the importance and benefits of empire and the special place of women in society, held sway over whom she deemed respectable and desirable when it came to emigration. The contributions on emigration in girls’ magazines echoed her ideas, as well as those of other prominent middle-class emigrators. They outlined the requirements to apply for emigration, which included an “employer’s testimonial of character,” a medical certificate, and three letters of reference attesting to the girl’s character, one of which had to come from a clergy member. Once the girl’s respectability was confirmed, the next task was to ensure that she had the appropriate skills for successful integration in the colony or dominion of choice.

In 1903, *The Girls’ Friend* ran a series of articles on emigration, highlighting what kinds of workers and girls were needed in the empire. Repeatedly, whether girls

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55 Chilton, 31, 101. Emigration to certain colonies was subsidized by emigration societies, but a certain percentage of the fare had to be repaid through wages earned in the colonies. For more on the BWEA, see Julia Bush, “The Right Sort of Woman.”

56 Chilton, 26. It was very common for female ‘emigrators’ to ensure that only ‘quality’ applicants were permitted to emigrate. For more on middle-class female emigrators and their role in securing positions for working-class and middle-class women, see Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (New York: Leicester University Press, 2000; Julia Bush, “‘The Right Sort of Woman’: Female Emigrators and Emigration to the British Empire, 1891-1910,” *Women’s History Review*, 3:3 (1994), 385-409; Chilton, *Agents of Empire*; Hammerton, “Gender and Migration;” Kranidis, *The Victorian Spinster and Colonial Emigration*; and Midgely, “Bringing the Empire Home.”

57 “For Girls Who Think of Emigration,” *The Girls’ Friend*, 27 May 1911, 492. At the same time, though, many female emigrators felt that their efforts could never be entirely successful owing to the inherent nature of working-class females. While every effort could be made to ensure that they helped a virtuous girl, untainted by previous transgressions, emigrate, the perceived danger remained that these women may slide into morally unacceptable behaviour. This suggests, then, that organizations like the BWEA and women like Grace Lefroy likely took their roles very seriously, doing everything in their power to ensure that solid, respectable girls were sponsored for emigration. Chilton, 72-73. This argument is also found in Julia Bush, “The Right Sort of Woman,” 396-7.

58 Interestingly, one of the endeavours that the emigration societies became involved in was providing training for girls who lacked the necessary skills and experience in domestic service. The author of “Free Passages to South Africa,” notes that girls can gain these skills at training schools for only 15s. For more on domestic service training schools for emigrants, see Julia Bush, “The Right Sort of Woman,” 392.
were interested in settling in Africa, Canada, Natal, or Australia, the contributors advised girls that only "good, all-round, practical girls" were desired. The "bright, willing, adaptable girl," who possessed a sweet and willing nature, as well as experience and competency in a range of domestic tasks, was the most likely to find employment. The very nature of the work abroad required such adaptability and willingness. Contributors reported that in some cases work was harder, owing to fewer servants, and that conditions could be harsher. In Australia, for example, girls were told that most households only have one servant and that Australian mistresses keep very close watch on the activities of their servants, ensuring quality work at all times. Girls arriving in Natal were encouraged to take whatever domestic opportunity they were presented with, owing to the use of more general domestics and the lower chances of finding employment. In South Africa, homes were entirely practical instead of pretty, water was scarce, disease was present, and "home comforts" were decidedly absent. Overall, though, girls learned that if they were prepared to work hard, numerous opportunities existed for domestic servants in the empire and the chance of them finding happy, respectable, well-paying situations was very high.

59 "Free Passages to South Africa for Girls," The Girls' Reader, volume 4, number 184, 16 May 1903, 453.
60 "Canada for Ladies," The Girls' Reader, volume 4, number 185, 23 May 1903, 469.
64 "Women in South Africa," The Girls' Friend, volume 1, number 22, 7 April 1900, 349.
65 Hammerton argues, for example, that English-born female servants in the colonies enjoyed greater mobility and bargaining power, owing to scarcity value. Hammerton, 165. The bulk of the features on emigration stressed the need for domestic servants in the colonies. Some indicated a need for other female labour, such as clerks, dressmakers, and telegraph operators, but most said that this kind of employee was not needed. General domestic servants and, in some colonies, farm servants had the greatest opportunity of finding work. Chilton finds the same in her exploration of women's work in the colonies. Chilton, 75. Kranidis argues, too, that this fact made it very difficult for educated, middle-class women to emigrate, for they did not possess the desired skills. Kranidis, 31.
Despite the dominance of “Empire Romances” in the magazines, then, work was deemed the best reason to travel abroad. Repeatedly contributors and editors reminded girls that work and service, not love, were the goals of emigration. In “Free Passages to South Africa for Girls,” the unnamed author interviews a woman from the Women’s Emigration Department who states, “We do not send girls out to Africa for the purpose of getting married, but to place them as helps in good homes.”\textsuperscript{66} The editor echoed this in 1911. “Twenty-One” writes that she is an orphan seeking emigration to Canada. She hopes to write to available young men there, “gaining the friendship of a man already settled in Canada”\textsuperscript{67} and thereby acquiring passage. The editor admonishes her to not do anything so foolish:

It might be a pleasant thought for a girl that, when she arrives in the new land, there she will at once be greeted by a colonist who, by his letters, has proved some interest in her. But then, plenty of men might write pleasant letters, but none could guarantee that in every case their senders were of desirable character. Obviously, for a girl to rely upon a man she has never seen is foolish, and such a course is fraught with disappointment and, perhaps, danger.\textsuperscript{68}

Instead, he directs her to Miss Lefroy, whom he assures “Twenty-One” will be able to find her a suitable working situation that will allow her to safely travel and settle there. Then, “‘Twenty One,’ if she is a good and sensible young woman, may be quite certain that, once she is settled in Canada, it will not be long ere she attracts the interest of some hard-working, straight forward colonist.”\textsuperscript{69} This outcome seemed highly likely. In “Canada for Ladies” the writer immediately tells readers that Canada is particularly in need of females because, “at the last census there was shown to be an excess of 150,000

\textsuperscript{66} “Free Passages to South Africa for Girls,” \textit{The Girls’ Reader}, volume 4, number 184, 16 May 1903, 453. In Bush and others this quote is attributed to Grace Lerroy.

\textsuperscript{67} “Twenty-One,” letter to the editor, \textit{The Girls’ Reader}, volume 3, number 149, 23 December 1911, 716.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, 716.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, 716.
males over females in the colony.” While love was not to be the primary goal for girls emigrating to the colonies, then, they were still assured that their chances of finding a husband were not diminished by work in the empire; indeed, their chances might be even greater.

The underlying assumption, however, was that girls would marry. Chilton, in her examination of the publications and personal correspondence of middle-class female emigrants, finds that, “The emigrants were explicit about the fact that the migration of single British women of the right sort was about transforming ‘frontier’ spaces; about colonizing and reforming the ‘uncivilized’ inhabitants of the empire’s relatively unsettled regions.” Candidates worthy of emigration would not only meet the extensive demand for English-born and trained servants in the colonies, but would also help with England’s civilizing mission: “if carefully selected, such women would do a great service to the empire both as domestic servants and, later, as the wives and mothers of loyal colonial citizens.” This is supported by the presence of many “Empire Romances” in the pages of the magazines; girls need not worry that leaving England would harm their chances at marriage. Rather, their destined lives as wives and mothers were imbued with greater importance; not only were they satisfying their natural, national duty, they were fulfilling an imperial role as well. Much was invested, then, in ensuring that the right sorts of women were permitted to emigrate; the future of the empire was at stake.

70 “Canada for Ladies,” *The Girls’ Friend*, volume 4, number 185, 23 May 1903, 469. It is interesting that Canada, in this context, is declared a colony of Britain, given the fact that Canada became an independent, self-governing dominion in 1867, although the monarchical link between the two nations remained. 71 Chilton, 11. 72 Chilton, 72-73. 73 For more on colonial motherhood and marriage, see Julia Bush, “The Right Sort of Woman,” 390.
Despite the overwhelmingly positive depiction of emigration and colonial life, however, dangers were presented as a possibility when it came to leaving the safety of England. Contributors and editors offered stern cautions to girls traveling abroad, encouraging them to rely on officials and common sense when determining the best course of action:

And now just a word of warning to girls going abroad. Before you start be perfectly satisfied that the people you are going to are thoroughly respectable, and also that they are in a satisfactory position and quite able to carry out any promises they have made with regard to your serving under them. Be very, very careful about making confidence to strangers, and don't be too trusting. The world, especially that wider world beyond our island shores, contains a very large number of individuals, both male and female, who live by their wits and what they extract (some people might say rob) from the unsuspecting and the friendless. So be careful, girls, who you entrust with your friendship. If ever you find yourself in a difficulty, go to a Government official – don't rely upon outsiders. And, finally, don't take for gospel truth everything you are told – turn it over quietly in your own mind before deciding whether to believe it or not. They also recommended that girls seek opportunities from respected institutions, like the BWEA, or their current employers rather than answering random advertisements for female workers in newsmagazines and on posters. This, they argued, could have serious consequences, for "There are a lot of rogues about, and any English girl who lightly accepts an appointment abroad without due and exhaustive inquiry is likely to rue her action very soon." One woman commented that it would be better to stay in England than to proceed to emigrate without adequate protection from an organization that could ensure that girls would find safe and suitable employment. In fact, the BWEA pledged to

74 Editor, "Just Between Ourselves," The Girls' Friend, volume 4, number 189, 20 June 1903, 532.
75 Editor, "Just Between Ourselves," The Girls' Reader, volume 1, number 49, 22 January 1910, 789. Bush, Chilton, Hammerton, and Kranidis all comment on the efforts taken by emigrators after 1860 to ensure the safe passage of girls and women to the colonies.
secure positions for girls and monitor their passage and first month of employment to ensure that the girls were healthy, safe, and happy. 

Contributors and editors presented South Africa, in particular, as offering greater dangers than other colonies. Given long-standing colonial conflict and the racial dynamic— with fears over "Black Peril"— in South Africa, it is not surprising that editors and contributors primarily discouraged girls from traveling to there. Girls, however, frequently sought information on just that place, particularly between 1900 and 1903. "Dissatisfied" was only a "working-girl" but hoped to go to South Africa. "Four Birmingham Girls" and "Anxious," writing on behalf of herself and three female friends, all wished to move to South Africa. Letters of this nature appeared week after week in the pages of The Girls' Friend. The editor always replied negatively. In 1901 he wrote:

I do not think that at present it would be advisable for women to go to

76 "Free Passages to South Africa for Girls," The Girls' Reader, volume 4, number 184, 16 May 1903, 453. Chilton's examination of Lefroy finds that she continued to correspond with thousands of emigrants long after this first month ended.
77 This is also supported by the fact that in the various articles and editorials on emigration, the bulk of work being done by female emigrant's is in support of girls traveling to South Africa. Indeed, many articles state that there are no subsidized fares for girls wishing to emigrate elsewhere during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. While this is certainly tied up in efforts to anglicize and domesticate the colony in South Africa, it is also tied into concerns about girls' safety; by 1903, Canada and Australia, popular sites for emigration, were seen as largely safe for female emigrants. This is discussed in Hammerton and Chilton.
78 On 'Black Peril' in South Africa, see Julia Bush, "The Right Sort of Woman," 398-99; Tina Campt, Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 36-37, 54-55; and Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable,": The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures," 352-355. More generally, fears of Black Peril were also linked to overarching fears of Anglo-Saxon degeneration. See Tina Campt, Other Germans; Domesticating the Empire; Ching-Liang Low, particularly 13-35; Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather; Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable,"; and Widenthal, German Women for Empire. It is likely that girls sought to go to South Africa during the years of the second Anglo-Boer war owing to the excitement of that locale. As explored in the next chapter of this dissertation, South Africa was romanticized by various writers during the years of colonial warfare and women's roles, particularly as nurses, received much attention. By 1903, though, when the war was concluded, colonial officials sought to domesticate the colony by ensuring greater gender balance and sufficient English influence. See Hammerton, 173-175 and John M. Mackenzie, Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 161.
South Africa. The present disturbed condition of affairs is much against prospects of work, and, therefore, I should hesitate to recommend any girl who is a complete stranger to the country to emigrate to South Africa. Still, affairs must settle down in time, and then the prospects of employment for females will greatly improve. 82

In September of the same year, he advised “Dissatisfied” to consider another colony to emigrate to, given the ongoing war. 83 Early in 1903, the editor warned that South Africa remained unsettled and was therefore “a somewhat unsuitable place for young ladies to emigrate....” 84

The message, though, was mixed. In 1900, for instance, while letters to the editor on the subject of emigration to South Africa met with a negative reaction, an article ran that told girls of the amazing opportunities to be found there. Girls could make a significant sum of money for domestic work, particularly because “the supply of really trustworthy servants is considerably below the demand....” 85 The shortage of servants meant that “residents have in consequence to content themselves with the very inadequate services of coloured women, whose rooted antipathy to cleanliness in any shape or form would shock anyone of less primitive habits than a Boer.” 86 This mixed message once again highlights the importance of women to the imperial mission. “Coloured women” could not be expected to introduce or maintain proper levels of cleanliness; British women were necessary to continue the civilizing mission through the introduction of British hygiene. 87 British settlers in South Africa required the assistance of competent, knowledgeable British servants. The fact remained, though, that South Africa in 1900

82 Editor, “They Want to Go to Africa,” The Girls’ Friend, number 84, 15 July 1901.
83 Editor, “She Wants to Go to South Africa,” The Girls’ Friend, number 96, 7 September 1901.
84 Editor, The Girls’ Friend, volume 4, number 181, 25 April 1903, 405. Please note that variations in citation – i.e. whether volume and issue numbers are included – is owing to inconsistencies in publishing details on the various papers, as noted in the Introduction, footnote 19
85 “Women in South Africa,” The Girls’ Friend, volume 1, number 22, 7 April 1900, 349.
86 Ibid, 349.
87 Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather.
was unstable and in conflict, owing to ongoing war and tension. Sending girls into that context meant possibly exposing them to danger. When girls asked directly they were told not to go, but the magazine still included articles that pointed to the high demand for servants in the region.

By 1903 this message was far less contradictory, marking a turning point in advising girls regarding emigration to South Africa.\(^88\) While the editor of *The Girls' Friend* told his readers that South Africa remained "unsuitable," he added a caveat: unless they have solid situations to go to.\(^89\) Indeed, by mid-1903 contributors offered columns on the demand for female workers in South Africa and incentives for travel, in conjunction with encouragement and information for girls writing to the magazines seeking to emigrate. Less than a month after suggesting girls not travel to South Africa, the editor reported on "Free Passages to South Africa for Girls." He stated that the South African Expansion Committee was prepared to offer free passage for girls willing to go into domestic service in Africa and encouraged girls to accept the offer, directing readers to the specifics found in the article below the editorial. The article outlined the benefits of service in Africa, the need for servants, and the necessary skills for those wishing to emigrate.\(^90\) In accepting such positions, girls would serve the nation, much in the same way that mothers did. Leaving the metropole for the colonies, though, was not the only way to embrace the imperial mission. There was still much that girls could do at home to help the nation and the empire and display their Britishness.

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\(^88\) This shift reflects an increasing demand for white settlement and for white domestic labour in the colony following the success of the British in 1902. See Julia Bush, "The Right Sort of Woman," 386, 387.

\(^89\) Ibid, 405.

\(^90\) "Free Passages to South Africa for Girls," *The Girls' Reader*, volume 4, number 184, 16 May 1903, 453. The passages were not, in actual fact, free. Girls' travel was subsidized by various organizations and government offices, but a certain portion of that passage had to be paid back. In the case of South Africa, domestic servants who emigrated were expected to repay £12 of their passage cost in monthly payments of £1.
One way that girls might be encouraged to embrace their Britishness and train to be useful members of the British nation was through the Girl Guides. Robert Baden-Powell – Boer War soldier and founder of the Boy Scouts – began the Girl Guides in response to the demands of girls. At a scout rally in 1909, Baden-Powell was shocked when confronted by a large group of girls who had embraced the scouting movement and started their own patrols. They asked to be considered full-fledged members of the scouting movement. Surprised, Baden-Powell, enlisting the help of his sister Agnes, set to work developing the Girl Guides, an organization that moved away from the practices of the Boy Scouts, feminizing the venture for girls. Flower emblems replaced animal mascots as the markers of troops, daring adventures were replaced by “home training,” and the emphasis shifted away from exploration and games towards feminine pursuits designed to educate future women. This included attention to character development, helpfulness towards others, and attention to health and hygiene. At the same time, the movement still focused on the empire. Just as Baden-Powell intended to train his Boy Scouts for military service in the name of home and empire, he also intended girls to be trained for service. According to Warren, Baden-Powell desired to “train mothers for home responsibilities in England and within the Empire through the practical skills of nursing, cookery and ambulance work.” Also working to inculcate the appropriate

patriotism in girls, he further hoped that the training the guides received would have three objectives: “enabling women to play their part in home defence in the event of an invasion, preparing women for the practical responsibilities of life in the colonies, and increasing the work opportunities for women without sacrificing their ‘womanliness.’”

Several girls balked at this shift. As Proctor finds, prior to the formalization of scouting for girls in the Girl Guide organization, girls had taken it upon themselves to begin Girl Scout troops. Because they were driven by the desires of girls, they reflected their wants. Without adult leaders, the girls were free to follow the agenda they decided on. When forming their own troops, girls adhered to principles of the nation that embraced masculinity and boyhood. In their activities – outdoor adventure, games, and physical pursuits that they often undertook in their brothers’ uniforms, getting dirty and covering great distances – they were “preparing to meet the same challenges of manly, military, active, and honorable life.” Once Baden-Powell set out to formalize guiding for girls, including the formation of troops directed by adults, scouting lost some of its appeal for the 6,000 girls who had begun their own troops.

The Girl Scouts – not the Girl Guides – were a prominent feature in The Girls’ Friend, particularly in 1909, largely owing to the very public presence of the new movement. The editor and contributors embraced the first version of the movement,

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94 Proctor, 245 and Warren, 245.
95 Proctor, 243-245.
97 Mitchell, 122-123.
rather than Baden-Powell’s reformed organization. This is vividly apparent in *The Girl Scouts*, by Evelyn Yates, a long-running serial that began in July 1909. In this story two adolescent girls, Mollie and Virginia, come to live with their aunt and uncle because their father has gone off to work for the empire in India. The aunt and uncle, so pleased that two quiet girls are on their way to bring them joy, are shocked when two girl scouts appear. “The two figures came straight on, winging towards him with long, steady strides – a couple of straight-backed, eager-looking young girls clad in khaki shifts and soft felt ‘cowboy’ hats, and each carrying a pole, from which fluttered a little business-looking pennant.” Except for their facial features and “their long plaits of rich, bright golden hair,” their figures “might have been those of a pair of handsome boys” (figure 3.12).100

![Figure 3.12 “The Girl Scouts” from *The Girls’ Friend* (17 July 1909)](image)

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100 Ibid, 346.
The aunt and uncle are dismayed by the girls. who insist on wearing their uniforms everywhere, removing all feminine touches from their rooms. and eating simple fare. Not only that, they are gone for extended periods of time, out running through the countryside, breeching ditches. and getting into all kinds of adventures. They also succeed in starting their own Scout troop. initiating neighbourhood girls into their group during late-night ceremonies in the woods. Throughout it all, the girls see themselves as patriotic members of the empire, raising the Union Jack at all of their meetings and wherever they go (figure 3.13).

![Image: The Girls Scouts](image)

Figure 3.13 “The Girls Scouts” from The Girls’ Friend (24 July 1909)

Their activities certainly depict them embracing the masculine model of scouting and of training for the empire.\(^\text{101}\)

\(^{101}\) Of course, this is all only temporary. As is the case in all adolescent female fiction in the magazines at this time, the girls are allowed a temporary period of time to be ‘boys’. They all, however, eventually settle down and marry. Girl Scout Captain Mollie meets and falls in love with a boy in the area and the story ends with their marriage. Happy to settle down and accept a new chapter in her life, she embraces domesticity and home, leaving her fellow Scouts to carry on without her. For more on this, see Chapter One.
From 1909 to 1911 a significant influx of letters to the editor sought information on scouting. The editor's responses to these letters do show some influence of the newly minted Girl Guide movement. By October 1909, the editor is able to direct girls to Miss D. Bland in Upper Norwood for information on troops in their area. Alternatively, he encouraged girls to contact the captain of their local Boy Scout troop to ask for information.\textsuperscript{102} By 1910, the influence of domesticity is present. The editor advises "A.A." on how to get information on becoming a scout, offering all the necessary particulars. He adds, too, that "the girl scout is expected to give particular attention to the subject of nursing and other work for which women are particularly adapted."\textsuperscript{103} While the editor and readers continue to use the label "Scout" instead of "Guide" the subtle shift in language highlights the move to domesticate the girls' organization.

By the outbreak of war in 1914, the magazines' shift is complete. In "Women in a Great Emergency," the author notes that "Girls of the Empire" have been well-trained to serve their nation in a time of crisis.\textsuperscript{104} As Girl Guides, "the first object in life of these 'Empire' girls is to be generally useful to their country in times of both peace and war, and now their usefulness has been well proven."\textsuperscript{105} Trained to care for soldiers, to bandage wounds, to cook, and to clean, "The women of England are ready to help their wounded countrymen to the last breath."\textsuperscript{106} The "Girls of the Empire," trained by the Girl Guides, had become the "Women of the Empire." Having embraced their domesticity,
feminine virtue, and natural skills, they would be able to offer much; their place was clearly defined.107

Girls' role in the empire was a complicated one, highlighting contradictory beliefs and assumptions. On the one hand, girls were encouraged to accept their destined roles as wives and mothers, fulfilling the dictates of imperial motherhood and ensuring a steady supply of soldiers and mothers, both necessary to the continuation of the empire and the race. On the other hand, girls were increasingly offered other ways to display their Britishness and to contribute to the empire. These contributions could be found at home, such as buying commodities that supported the ideas of empire and ensuring racial purity, or in the empire, as workers in the colonies and the dominions and as the mothers of future loyal colonialists. Girls were also perpetuators of racial stereotypes; whether purchasing products or embracing the qualities of white, English girlhood, they helped to maintain a sense of British superiority over the other races of the empire. Finally, girls also showed that their abilities and patriotism could be harnessed for empire expansion as well as national crisis. Whether as Girl Scouts or Girl Guides, they embraced the nation and the empire. As will be shown in the next chapter, the role that they were to play during both colonial and world war highlighted how much they had to offer.

107 For more on the importance of guiding to early organization efforts on the homefront, see Warren, 245. Attempts to go against this ideal of feminine contribution to the nation shocked many. The organization of paramilitary groups by 1917, for example, resulted in an outcry from officials and civilians. As long as girls and women contributed to the nation through their femininity, all was fine. On female paramilitary organizations in the Great War see Jenny Gould, “Women’s Military Services in First World War Britain,” Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars, ed. Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 114-125; Janet Lee, War Girl: The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry in the First World War (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Diana Shaw, “The Forgotten Army of Women: The Overseas Service of Queen Mary’s Army Auxiliary Corps with the British Forces, 1917-1921,” Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced, ed. Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 365-379; and Janet S. K. Watson, Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 114-118
Chapter Four

Plucky, Pretty, and Patriotic: Girls at War

During wartime the British popular press fulfilled an important purpose. Whether during the Anglo-Boer conflicts of the late-nineteenth century or during the first year-and-a-half of the Great War, magazines contained cultural expressions of war and of everyday life during war. Editors and contributors worked to inculcate and re-assert values and morals during a time of chaos. They also worked to build support for the nation and its efforts. Indeed, the Amalgamated Press championed the cause of both wars. During the Boer conflict Harmsworth remarked that the war "[w]as a beautiful episode that unified the British[,]" contributing to national order and greatness.¹ During the Great War, the Amalgamated Press magazines mounted vigorous campaigns to ensure loyalty to the nation, full cooperation with the war effort, and survival of the nation.² British men and women, as manifestations of Britishness, had to at least appear to support the nation and its goals during times of conflict.

Girls were part of this national understanding and identity. Their patriotism and ability to uphold national values were important to the success of the nation. At the same time, the magazines offered advice on how girls might contribute, in a more concrete sense, to the war effort. Contributors carefully advised girls on how to fulfill their national duty during wartime, offering some variety but largely emphasizing the supportive role of girls. Whether as "plucky" girls remaining steadfast in the face of danger, as vehicles of propaganda, as comforters and supporters of soldiers, as upholders

² Ferris, 196.
of feminine virtue, as thrifty spenders, or as workers and temporary breadwinners, there was much girls could do to help with the war effort.

Contributors to the magazines often stressed the importance of strength of character and perseverance for girls, highlighting non-fictional and fictional accounts of girls who overcame great odds. Within the context of the nation, however, these traits took on new impetus and importance with “plucky” becoming one of the key ways writers characterized girls in the face of war. During the Second Anglo-Boer War, for example, the Girls’ Friend ran a piece on plucky women at war. The contributor noted the pluck of the mother of Captain Weldon. Engaged in the conflict, Captain Weldon had rushed into open fire when one of his comrades fell; he was subsequently shot dead. His mother, we are told, had sensed that something was wrong. Upon receiving the news that her son was dead, although she was sad, she was very proud that he had served his country; this, according to the author, displayed the woman’s pluck. The writer also stressed the pluck of Miss Harris, postmistress of Lady Grey, a town in South Africa. Miss Harris, “a fearless, independent woman, with a very strong and sympathetic personality,” refused to allow the Boers to take over her Post Office. While the article does not go into detail on how she was able to accomplish this feat, it celebrates her pluck.

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3 Paul Fussell defines plucky as “cheerfully brave,” arguing that boys’ literature, including colonial and military fictions, gave readers a language of war and personal sacrifice. These words, like plucky, I found, were adopted in the girls’ magazines as well. See Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 21-22. Examples of pluck abound through the pages of the magazines and girls were repeatedly reminded to be cheerfully brave. As an additional example, on 5 September 1914, a contributor to The Girls’ Friend advised girls to keep their letters to the front cheery: “Our soldiers and sailors need to be kept in good heart just now. Gloomy news from home will only serve to depress them.” “With Women at Home,” The Girls’ Friend, number 774, 5 September 1914, 316.

4 Ibid, 100.

5 “A Woman’s Pluck,” The Girls’ Friend, volume 1, number 9, 23 December 1899, 100.
“pluck” in fighting off the enemy, stating that “there is now talk of conferring the Distinguished Service Order upon this brave lady.”

The Boers, as stated by the contributors to the magazine, presented a very real threat because of their racial characteristics. Contributors informed girls of “Boer Cruelty to Women,” telling stories such as that of a lady fleeing Johannesburg with her child. Waiting at the train station with her very sick child, she offered a Boer two sovereigns to find the child some water; the Boer took the money and fled and the child subsequently died. A further article, published early in 1900, outlined the characteristics of the Boers, adding to the image of them as dangerous. Ignorant, cunning, and treacherous, Boers, argued the writer, were tyrants engaged in the sale of black child labour, denying rights to those they sought to overtake and forcing them to pay taxes. “Shaggy of beard, dirty of skin, slow and unready of speech...” the Boer lived in a “squalid dwelling” with his numerous children, suggesting heightened sexuality or at least the inability to control his urges, and engaging in thievery, corruption, and bribery. These Boers, characterized solely as male, posed a threat to British women living in Africa, and the article acted as a warning to be wary of contact with them.

The language about the supposed threat of the Boers is interesting. The Boers were “white” and technically Europeans; therefore, they were “racially” similar to the British they were fighting. This fact, argues Anne Summers, actually saw the French and the Germans sympathize with the Boers. The argument, then, that the Boers were a

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6 Ibid, 100.
7 For more on race and the empire, please see Chapter 3.
10 Unfortunately, despite writers discussing the Boers, illustrators did not include any images.
threat, seems to be more ethnically motivated, but the magazines used the language of race. Given the existence of concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer wars, it is apparent that there were racial and ethnic tensions between the British and the Boers and that these tensions overrode any European-ness that the Boers possessed; this allowed the Boers to be cast as a racial enemy at home in the British popular press.  

At the same time, while girls were made aware of the threat posed by the Boers to their safety, popular opinion held that British women and girls were safe from sexual attack by the Boers. In previous colonial conflicts British officials assumed that non-white rivals would resort more readily to rape and slaughter of females than white rivals would. Boer combatants, as white men, were seemingly more civilized than this and although "not formally bound by the Geneva Convention, could be expected to abide by its terms." So, while Boers were still characterized as racially inferior and different from the British, allowing women to be in South Africa during the conflict did not place them at heightened sexual risk. While prejudices certainly existed against allowing women volunteers to participate in the Anglo-Boer conflicts, officials still felt relatively confident that they would not be exposing volunteers to sexual danger by allowing them to either remain in South Africa or to travel there.  

During the Great War this tenuous acceptance of sexual safety when Europeans were the main combatants was shattered by reports of German atrocities in Belgium. The additional threat of invasion only heightened fears and served to help mobilize the nation

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12 Summers, 215-216. The issues of race in the context of the British empire are more fully explored in Chapter 3 in this dissertation.
13 Summers, 215.
14 Summers, 215-216.
against the enemy.\textsuperscript{15} Stories about Boer cruelty focused on girls and women residing in Africa; those at home in Britain were considered safe. Concerns about invasion during the Great War, amid stories of alleged atrocities in Belgium, however, re-emphasized the importance of pluck and courage as important characteristics for all girls to possess, whether at home or on the front.\textsuperscript{16} Germans, as characters in the fictional elements of the magazines, are always portrayed as invaders who pose a threat to England and to women. For example, in “The War Maids” a young nurse caring for injured soldiers is captured by the Germans. The German captain tells her:

“\textit{You clever English},” he said with a sneer. “\textit{They are flying! Ah, soon this little island will be a part of Germany! There will be no England!}” Then he turned on the sick ferociously. “\textit{We will teach you to cry, ‘Hoch der Kaiser!’}” he said. “\textit{You shall be German subjects, all of you, and this clever girl as well.... You think it amusing, perhaps, to be shot - hein? Then you shall see what it feels like at dawn. We will come for you before we march to finish what we have begun - the stamping out of your little army that dares to raise its head against our great nation! It is for us to civilise the world....}”\textsuperscript{17}

Standing defiantly against the invading German who seeks to harm her and her patients and take over the nation she loves so dearly, she musters all of her pluck to rise against

\textsuperscript{15} Ferris, in \textit{The House of Northcliffe}, argues that Harmsworth had an almost irrational fear of invasion and viewed Germany’s rise with much caution. Chastised at points by his fellow publishers for his fear mongering, Harmsworth felt vindicated when Britain went to war with Germany. For many, Harmsworth had foreseen German aggression and their potential threat to Britain early on. For more on how both sides in the war used reports of atrocities for mobilization of the nation and dehumanization of the enemy, see John Horne and Alan Kramer, \textit{German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).


\textsuperscript{17} “\textit{The War Maids},” \textit{The Girls’ Home}, volume 5, number 244, 31 October 1914, 285.
him and using her wits is able to stave off his efforts at harm. In the end she manages to protect not only her own body but also the bodies of the male soldiers in her care.

Girls, then, were basically encouraged to do whatever was necessary to protect their bodies and selves while the men were away at war, for in such situations “[their] masculine behaviour does not compromise [their] essential femininity.”

Protecting herself, displaying pluck, and even overcoming the enemy were fine activities within the context of war because girls’ essential femininity would eventually shine through. This is particularly evident in the fiction of the magazines. The story of “Emma Brown: The Girl Who Beat the Kaiser” is a striking example of this. Emma, a proud, patriotic, working-class girl serving at the front as a nurse, is taken captive by the German Kaiser. She uses her wits and her pluck to triumph over him. Waving the flag of Britain, she stands as emblematic of all that Britain holds dear – despite her seemingly masculine behaviour (figure 4.1).

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This is all forgotten, however, because “As with other heroines, Emma is conquered by love without losing all of her strength of character. She simply must channel it into the woman’s part – as her readers must also do.” Emma, then, is temporarily allowed to display manly virtues so long as she is eventually tamed by love and marriage, taking her place as a “proper” woman.

Despite the preponderance of plucky, courageous girls in direct contact with the enemy in the fiction of the magazines, the overwhelming message is that girls should act in supporting roles rather than seek to openly engage in, or even see, the conflict. Girls could best fulfill their patriotic, sacrificing roles as supporters of men and the nation.

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20 Potter, 81

21 This same phenomenon is observed in other examples in the magazines. Boisterous girls at school are tamed by marriage, just as members of the Girl Scouts are. See chapter 1 on girls’ culture.
Whether encouraging men to go to the front, offering comfort to men, remaining true to their womanly natures, spending frugally, or stepping in at home to fill in once men were gone, there was much girls could do to show their support.

Perhaps the most famous example of girls and women encouraging their men to go to war is the white feather campaign. Evidence of this campaign is found in The Girls' Home by October 1914. In a series of stories entitled "The Girls They've Left Behind," emphasizing to girls that their first act in war is to let their men go to war rather than seeking to convince them to stay home, we meet Violet Dalrymple:

Pretty little Violet Dalrymple, eager to find some means of serving her country, had joined with half a dozen other girls in a campaign to present a white feather to every able-bodied young man they met who had not joined either the Navy or the Army.

The idea of men shirking their national duty and women's duty to convince them to go is also found in an October 1914 issue of The Girls' Friend. The author of "Is Your Sweetheart Shirking?" writes, "It is the duty of every girl whose lover is neither a soldier, sailor, nor territorial, to demand of him why he isn't." Although certain situations existed where able-bodied men should remain home, such as if they were the sole support for invalid parents, if no such conditions existed, he should be at the front. His sweetheart must advise him that she disapproves of him not enlisting:

Nay, more, if he persists in his shirking, she should have no hesitation in

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24 Unknown, "Is Your Sweetheart Shirking?" The Girls' Friend, number 779, 10 October 1914, 396.
breaking off the engagement. She will not be losing much, for a young man (who provided, of course, physical or other reasons do not debar him) declines to answer his country’s call at such a critical time can hardly be worth having as a husband.²⁵

Indeed, girls were viewed as particularly important to the campaign. As Gullace discovered, social commentators noted that more often than not it was “flappers” and young girls who participated in the campaign to encourage men to enlist.²⁶

Girls, then, were encouraged to be brave, unselfish, and sacrificing in an effort to encourage their sweethearts to go off to war, while also being prepared to be more forceful should he “shirk” his duty to Britain.²⁷ Until conscription was introduced in 1916, public campaigns such as this relied heavily on an appeal to patriotism. This patriotism essentially linked masculinity to military service.²⁸ Gullace, in her extensive examination of the white feather campaign, finds that girls’ and women’s role was mainly as both “conscience” and “reward.”²⁹ Women and girls, in encouraging men to fulfill their manly duty, publicly “defined the parameters of male citizenship.”³⁰ The man who did not willingly enlist faced social ostracism by women and girls. Many, argues Gullace, refused to be seen in public with a man out of uniform. Only the “soldier hero [was] a romantic ideal worthy of love;”³¹ all others would be denied such rewards. Playing on gendered understandings of the role and nature of females and males, female

²⁵ Ibid, 396.
²⁶ Gullace, “White Feathers,” 179. For a discussion on flappers, see the Chapter 1 in this dissertation on girls’ culture and the new girl.
²⁷ Culleton, 11-12.
²⁹ Ibid, 183.
³⁰ Ibid, 183.
campaigners openly demonstrated their importance to the state and to the war effort; utilizing their sexuality, they encouraged enlistment. 

Girls could also draw on their naturally caring natures to offer comfort to soldiers. Contributors, for example, encouraged girls to send parcels to their loved ones at the front. Socks, handkerchiefs, needlework kits, writing materials, and magazines were all desirable items and girls could do much to send some "comforts" of home to men at the front. During the Anglo-Boer conflicts, such comforts also included head coverings, clothes, blankets, tobacco, and matches. Contributors also encouraged girls during both conflicts to send tokens and gifts, such as small, homemade objects to remind soldiers of loved ones back home. Others, too, took the opportunity to suggest girls purchase certain products to send to the front, showing the power of advertisers to encourage consumption even during times of national stress. The Pears Company, in particular, used the war to encourage readers to buy their products, specifically for men at the front. Telling girls that Pears is a "helpful and comforting influence to the gallant boy," and that, "For Her Boy at the Front! Only the BEST is good enough!" they linked girls comforting support of men to their product. The editor of The Girls' Friend also used the war to his advantage, advising girls that soldiers at the front would write to him telling him how much they enjoy receiving The Girls' Friend at the front, "for one cannot realise what a

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32 Gullace, 183 and Culleton, 12. Interestingly, while female sexuality was used in early campaigns to encourage men to enlist, later female sexuality came under fire as officials became concerned about possible loose morals among women at home; this topic will be explored in greater detail later in the chapter.


34 "Things Which My Readers Can Send to Their Friends at the Front," The Girls' Reader, volume 1, number 12, 27 January 1900, 179.


treat it is to get a book or magazine to read during a lull in the firing. It is a pleasant reminder of the dear homeland, as well as a pleasure to the receiver.\textsuperscript{37}

Most contributors and advertisers imbued such activities with sentimentality and patriotic purpose, emphasizing what girls could send to ones they loved, but others, particularly during the Great War, stressed the practicality of such activities and added a bit of realism. "In war," one contributor told the readers, "there is a great wastage, not only of human life, but of men's personal belongings."\textsuperscript{38} Personal items were often lost during advances or retreats and, depending on where the men were stationed, even because of the weather. Sending such items from home, then, served a practical purpose. The same contributor reminded girls, too, that they should be aware of the possibility that by the time said items arrive the intended recipient may no longer be alive:

I do not mean to put unhappy thoughts into your heads, but when sending private parcels you must face the possibility of the recipient having been killed before it reaches him, or of their being no chance of his getting the parcel for ever so long. Therefore, write on the parcel, 'If undeliverable, please open and distribute contents.' In this way you will make sure of doing somebody a good turn.\textsuperscript{39}

Not only, then, could girls aid the men in their lives by sending tokens and personal items from home, they could also have a positive impact on other men, including their intended's comrades – even if they did not know them. Whether the parcel reached the intended man or not, the girl would still be doing her bit for the war effort and the brave men serving at the front.

\textsuperscript{37} Editorial, \textit{The Girls' Friend}, 24 July 1915, 164. Winter also notes the importance of references to home. He argues that British popular culture imbued home with much sentimentality. Sending magazines to men on the front perpetuated this idea and reminded them what they were fighting for (332-334).
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 20.
Sending parcels and mementoes of home was one thing; offering companionship to random soldiers was quite another. Contributors clearly articulated the platonic nature of such comforting efforts, consistently reminding girls to maintain their virtue and to not act rashly. Their advice also emphasized the need to hold on to pre-war etiquette. For example, in "Our Girls' Parliament: Should Girls Write to Unknown Soldiers?" the vast majority of letters on the subject state no. While a "cheery letter" to an unknown Tommy at the front might comfort him and please him, the risks associated with such an activity were too great. The soldier might get the wrong idea about the girl’s intentions and, given their distance, she would be unable to rectify this. Girls should remember, too, warn others, that just because a man has a uniform on does not mean he is without fault. “M.A.” of Liverpool writes:

The fact that a man is wearing the King’s uniform does not alter his natural characteristics, and his weaknesses and vanities are there just as always. A girl should know a man a considerable time, and also be fairly intimate with him, before she starts to favour him with her correspondence.

Writers, therefore, admonish girls to remember that they should adhere to the same guidelines in their personal correspondence as they do in their day-to-day lives. Parental consent and formal introductions, even in time of war, are still essential.

There is a recognition, too, that some girls may take letter writing too far, using it as an opportunity to flirt or to seek out love. “M.M” of Aberdeenshire feels that,

To receive a letter from a breezy, jolly girl, with a keen sense of humour and sound commonsense must surely cheer the lucky soldier who

42 Ibid, 519.
receives it. However, some girls will persist in being sentimental, and instead of being appreciated by the soldier it is apt to provide amusement for him and his friends.43

The overly sentimental nature of some girls can only lead to trouble, heartache, and regret: "Thoughts put into black and white, without serious consideration, have a nasty knack of confronting the writer...."44 Instead, "Do all you can for the brave lads at the front, by all means, but let it be done through the authorized channels, and confine the correspondence to those ‘Tommies’ of your own and your family’s acquaintances."45

Comfort, though, could include maintaining a relationship with a soldier sweetheart. Despite concerns about what their men might do while off in a foreign land serving the country, contributors and editors repeatedly advised girls to lay aside their fears and remain steadfast in their love. "F.F." was concerned that her sweetheart, serving at the front, would not continue to love her. Owing to an excess amount of hair growth on her top lip – which she had been unable to successfully remove – she felt she was not sufficiently pretty and worried that her sweetheart would find another while away. The editor advised her that, "[A] trifle of this sort will make no difference in her sweetheart’s affection."46 "F.F." should remain constant in her love. "Doreen" is also advised to remain true to her love. Lonely now that her sweetheart is away, she writes to ask if it is alright for her to seek friendship with another man to help her preserve "her courage until her sweetheart returns."47 While the editor cautiously permits a friendship to emerge, he warns "Doreen" that she must be very careful for her "charms and many virtues" might make her friend fall in love with her. Plus, if her sweetheart is the jealous type, her

43 Ibid, 519.
44 Ibid, 519.
contact with another man could cause "unpleasantness and misunderstanding." The editor then suggests that "Doreen" would likely be better served keeping company with other women during this time, keeping her thoughts firmly with her sweetheart and praying for "his quick and safe return." 

This advice – to remain true to sweethearts – had a dual purpose. On the one hand, it ensured sexual control of girls during a time of seeming abandon; on the other hand, it served a national purpose. Woollacott, in her exploration of "khaki fever" and wartime concerns over girls’ sexuality, finds that social commentators, politicians, and local authorities were particularly concerned about adolescent girls. Seen as "nuisances" who were a "danger to themselves," authorities admonished girls who spent their time following soldiers and seeking to meet them. Concerns over VD and its contemporary connection with female sexual immorality, led to concerns about soldier health and the impact that VD might have on the war effort. Formal efforts, such as women’s policing and the continual strengthening of the Defense of the Realm Act, sought to control girls, but popular print sources, like the Harmsworth magazines, were likely also very important in curbing sexual impulses. While we can debate how much control and power print sources actually had over girls, the repeated message to maintain ones virtue, adhere to pre-war strictures of etiquette and morality, and avoid overt socializing with unknown soldiers surely reflects larger social concerns about girls’ behaviour during wartime. It likely also reflects the belief that readers were open to the message, or at least aware of

48 Ibid, 148.  
49 Ibid, 148.  
such behaviour. Indeed, the magazines repeatedly argued that wartime would actually "weed out all... silly flirtations" rather than encourage them. Contributions advised girls that "genuine and deep affections" only "shone the braver" in times of trial; why would they want to trivialize love with fleeting relationships? Ensuring steadfast, committed relationships, then, could help to ensure sexual morality and national health during the war effort.

The third way that girls could support the war effort was by embracing their special natures as females. In "Our Girls' Parliament," an ongoing feature in Our Girls, readers were asked to submit ideas on what they could do to support the war. Many emphasized characteristics that girls should continue to exhibit, often returning to notions of pluck: "By not grumbling and grunting," but rather by being "patient with everything and everybody," cheering those bereaved and remaining optimistic, girls would contribute to the nation. Within the column, reader "G.B." from Hull writes that girls should, "live to help others by our unselfishness, and seek to build up our characters, so that our brave brothers may realise that we are worthy to be called their sisters on their return home after the war." By sending their men off to war, supplying them with comforts while they are away, and remaining true to their womanly virtues girls would go far in supporting the war effort.

Advertisers also encouraged girls to embrace and exhibit their feminine nature for the war. While with the outbreak of war in 1914 advertising initially decreased, by 1915 it was on the rise again, with some advertisers using the war and women's role within it.

55 Ibid, 687.
to encourage consumption. An advertisement for *Icilma* in April 1915 emphasized that it was “British-made,” suggesting that using the product was somehow tied to the nation (figure 4.2).

![Three Famous British-Made Toilet Preparations](image)

**Figure 4.2 “Icilma” from The Girls’ Friend (5 June 1915)**

Girls were further advised to “Guard Your Looks” in a November advertisement from the same year. The image shows two British soldiers standing on guard, with *Icilma* Cream flanking their post (figure 4.3).

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56 Woollacott notes that war threw the economy into turmoil. With many focused on financial security, spending on consumer goods trailed off and workers in related trades lost their jobs. By mid-1915 these sectors were recovering (23). Evidence of this is found in the return to relatively extensive advertising in the girls’ magazines.


Indeed, Icilma was the primary advertiser to emphasize the link between the war, success, and girls. Advising “Keep Your Youthful Looks,” a 1916 advertisement for the product claimed,

Just because you are a busy war worker – just because he is fighting or training or working, the daily use of a really good toilet cream is of the utmost importance if you are to keep your youthful looks. But, now particularly, you must be quite sure to get the economical all-British Toilet Cream – ICILMA CREAM.59

A September advertisement clearly places the munition worker as the central person to benefit from Icilma (figure 4.4).

Declaring it the “War Worker’s Toilet Cream,” the advertisement prominently displays a well-groomed girl engaged in factory work. Her small, dainty, white hands work the machinery, her hair artfully pulled up into a cap as her curls peek out. She retains her femininity while engaging in important work. The text supplements the visual, declaring that “All ‘on war work’… are advised to use Icilma….” In October of the same year, a further advertisement reads, “To work – and to work hard – is the motto of all British

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60 Icilma, The Girls’ Friend, number 879, 9 September 1916, back cover.
women to-day. Yet he will want and expect you to ‘look your best’ on his return from trench, ship, camp, or factory.”

Lurking within these advertisements is an emphasis on frugality. The idea of frugality had been present before the war. Contributors recognized that their readers did not possess the means to be careless with money. The emphasis, however, was on personal thrift and modesty when it came to expenditures. During the war, frugality took on a national tone and messages of thrift were far more prevalent. While it would be important for girls to look their best, particularly upon the return of the men from war, they must be frugal in their efforts because of the realities of war time. The same October 1916 advertisement for *Icilma* noted above also told girls that the product was “so very economical.” Fry’s Cocoa was the best cocoa to choose because it offered, “The Maximum Economy at the Minimum of Cost.” Perhaps the greatest emphasis on frugality, though, was found in the fashion pages. While frugality was often an underlying message in the magazine, given the economic status of the bulk of its readers, during the war frugality took on new importance:

Just now there are many important things to think about besides our clothes, and although no girl must let herself be untidy or carelessly dressed, still she can give up part of her dress allowance to the pressing need for all sorts of things required at naval and military hospitals.

Throughout the period of 1914 through 1916, contributors emphasized to girls that their money would best be spent on helping the nation; collecting money for the Red Cross, buying War Loans, and contributing funds towards widow’s relief funds were better ways

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64 “How to Dress Cheaply and Smartly,” *The Girls’ Reader*, volume 3, number 139, 26 September 1914, 17.
to spend extra money than fashion. Numerous tips, then, were offered on how to dress frugally. Girls might renovate existing clothing, using scraps of material left over from projects, make their own clothes and accessories whenever possible, and work towards insuring practicality over fancy.\(^6^5\)

Further underlying the push for frugality was likely concern over the seemingly excessive amount girls working were spending on clothing. While wages did not initially increase, by mid-1915 most female workers, whether in munitions or other industries, were enjoying substantially higher wages.\(^6^6\) Girls, as a result, tended to buy more clothes of a better quality. While some commentators were pleased with their choices of tailored, smart outfits, neat appearances, and coordinated accessories, others were not. "[O]ther commentators were stridently critical of what they saw as working-class women’s extravagance and aspirations to dress as though of a superior class."\(^6^7\) While such criticisms had often been leveled against girls’ dress and spending habits in the pre-war years, these voices took on greater urgency during the war. Prior to the war, middle-class observers declared that such “displays” of “finery” were linked to vanity, immorality, and sexuality.\(^6^8\) These ideas continued into the war years, but mixed with the new reality of a wartime economy, the death of first thousands, and then hundreds of thousands, of men, and the growing rate of casualties, girls’ fashion spending came to be seen as something more than an expression of their vanity. To spend excessively and to don the latest fashions suggested that girls were not being frugal, but also, more importantly, that they

\(^6^5\) See, for example, “How to Dress Cheaply and Smartly,” a regular feature that ran in *The Girls’ Friend* throughout the war.


\(^6^7\) Woollacott, *On Her*, 129.

were benefiting from the war and the deaths of men. In light of emerging criticisms leveled against women by some men home on leave, girls’ seeming gaiety in fashion would not help their cause. The voices of fashion writers and editors in the girls’ magazines might have desired to stave off such social criticism of their readers by encouraging frugality and simplicity – both values subscribed to by middle-class women during the war. Instead, many girls used their increased pay to “assert their own cultural identity,” threatening the social and cultural order and, during a time of war, presumably the nation.

Finally, one of the greatest ways that girls could contribute to the war effort was by taking on work that would both allow a man the freedom to enlist and help to keep the nation running during a time of conflict. This push is most apparent beginning in 1915. In a contemporary account of challenges faced during the initial months of the war, Abbot argues that a small-scale depression in 1914 and early 1915 had a negative impact on industries that primarily employed women. Initially, too, many were not prepared to see women enter full-scale wartime work or to radically change the nature of their

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69 Presumably, too, there was less choice with what to buy. As manufacturers expended further effort on ensuring the soldiers were clothed, for example, there was less time and materials that could be devoted to fashion. At the same time, fashion did not stop with the outbreak of war; the evidence of military-inspired clothing, for example, is apparent in the fashion pages of the Harmsworth magazines. Woollacott further argues that girls took advantage of higher wartime wages to purchase items that suggested their social mobility. Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, 128-132.

70 For more on reaction to women by some men, please see Grayzel, 1999; Gullace, 2002; and Kent, 1993.

71 Eschewing modesty in dress and reveling in ‘finery’, for example, meant girls were behaving like prostitutes (Woollacott, On Her, 131).

72 Woollacott, On Her, 132.

employment. Early efforts to get women working focused on support services for the war, such as making uniforms, and on organizing relief efforts for women suddenly without work. The emergence of a wartime registry for women workers late in 1914, with a great surge of registrants in early 1915, showed the government the reserve of female labour that was waiting to work. 74 This is echoed in more current sources. Braybon argues that prior to 1915 girls and women were not commonly “substituted” for men in industry or business. 75 Woollacott finds that even the great employer of women and girls during the war – munitions – was not a significant source of employment until mid-1915. 76 Indeed, the push for women to enter new occupations becomes most forceful early in 1916 with the introduction of conscription and with mounting casualties. 77 This is reflected in a discernable shift in the Amalgamated Press magazines; while the supportive, nurturing capacity of girls was still encouraged, contributors emphasized more forcefully the importance of girls entering new areas of work to support the war effort.

In “Our Girls’ Parliament” readers stated that girls should be prepared to take on whatever work was necessary if it freed a man for service. 78 The editor of The Girls’ Friend writes, “‘Girl Reader’ and her sisters are filled with a proper and patriotic desire to do something, no matter how humble, for their country in these momentous times.

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75 Braybon, 45. Braybon further argues that trade unions expressed reluctance to fully integrate women into the workforce out of concerns for dilution – that the perceived skill level of a job would be diminished because women were doing it or because the task had been broken down into even smaller tasks to allow the greater presence of female workers. Concerns existed, then, over what this would mean when men returned home.
76 Woollacott, 24.
77 Braybon, 46-47.
Therefore, they ask whether there is any work they can take up which would release a man of fighting age to enlist...”

The editor then advises the girls that,

[W]omen are now being employed in many directions hitherto restricted to male labour. The railway and tram services, provision shops, telegraph service, etc., are offering places to women, and from all accounts those already employed are giving entire satisfaction. Therefore, by dint of a little energetic inquiry, my friends should not experience much difficulty in obtaining a suitable post vacated by a man who has answered the call of his country.

Girls and women, argued contributors to the magazine, were required to take up vacated positions because otherwise the nation would suffer. Women, stated one contributor, were necessary to “keep the home going,” advising that they should take up agricultural, clerical, factory, and all manner of work as the new, although temporary, “breadwinners.” Girls and women, it is apparent, took up these opportunities in droves.

Braybon argues that 1915 and 1916 saw the greatest increase in the number of women working, with approximately 1,200,000 more women working than in 1914. While many of these women entered munitions work, “The war also stimulated a vast expansion of the numbers of women working in the civil service; in banking, finance, commerce, and other businesses as clerks, typists, and secretaries; and in retailing, both as shop assistants and in warehouses.” Indeed, numerous sources note men’s shock when home on leave at seeing women in a variety of occupations.

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80 Ibid, 132.
82 Braybon, 46-48. Braybon further adds that these were the most significant years of increase; between April 1917 and April 1918, the female workforce only increased by a further 300,000. Braybon, 48.
83 Woollacott, 26.
84 This is possibly also linked to changes in fashion. Various cartoons from Punch during this time pointed to the seeming absurdity of women in pant-like outfits, or women in ‘men’s’ clothing. The sources I examined, though, emphasized the changing nature of women’s work rather than changes in their fashion.
Opportunities for girls were numerous, offering better pay, but not always healthy working conditions. Certain industries, in particular, required large numbers of female employees. The *Auto-Knitter Hosiery Company*, for example, advertised frequently in *The Girls' Home*, promising girls £1 per week to help the company meet the huge demand for knitted goods created by the war. Overtime pay was also available and no experience was necessary. In addition, any discussion of war work and what girls could do to help inevitably mentioned munitions. Again, higher pay often made these opportunities quite attractive. While pay still did not often match men's, in general British women enjoyed higher wages as a result of their wartime work. Downs finds, for example, that British women tended to embrace the new opportunities, particularly in munitions and engineering, for they offered not only a break from the norm and a chance to prove their abilities, but also higher wages. At the same time, the war also provided girls the opportunity to move into white-collar occupations at an even faster rate than prior to the war, as noted above by Woollacott.

This, however, raised another issue: the possibility of girls abandoning present employment with hopes of better pay elsewhere. Not everyone, advised readers and contributors, could just leave their present employment to become munitions workers, tram conductors, or nurses; typists, shop girls, and regular clerks were still required to

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85 Watson, 136 and Woollacott, *On Her*, 113-124. See also Thom for an overview of wage increases.
86 *Auto-Knitter Hosiery Company, The Girls' Home*, volume 5, number 255, 16 January 1915, 379. Culleton finds that weekly bonuses, piece-rate additions, and overtime opportunities were numerous during the war years (20).
87 Downs, in her introduction, argues that while wartime work created opportunities for female workers, this did not lead to economic equality. Work places were reorganized, particularly in 1915, to accommodate the influx of women workers, often ensuring that women were not doing the exact same job as a man, but rather a slightly modified task that was meant to take into consideration women's particular natures. See also Culleton, 20. Wartime work held other advantages besides relatively good pay. Participants, finds Culleton, felt a sense of achievement and patriotism as they contributed to the national war effort (20, 32).
88 Downs, 78.
Concerns were also raised over the “exodus” of servants into war work. Watson finds that, depending on the contemporary source in question, between 100,000 and 400,000 domestic servants left their positions for new opportunities between 1914 and 1918. Their employers complained that the girls were selfish; recognizing that war time industrial employment offered greater pay than they could (or would) offer, they complained about the girls lack of loyalty. Arguing that personal indebtedness to long-time employers should have induced girls to stay, they accused the girls of hurting the nation. By not staying in service, girls left ladies without sufficient help to run their homes. Ladies would now have to take up domestic work, keeping them from doing their bit for the war by organizing canteens and engaging in other volunteer work. “Sticking to your own particular calling” could be just as important.

Many of these new opportunities were also dangerous. Munitions work especially exposed girls to hazardous working conditions and toxic chemicals. TNT poisoning, black powder poisoning, and chemical ingestion were all common and “an unknowable number of women workers died in industrial accidents.” Little, if anything, was done to protect girls and women in these factories. On occasion, Culleton finds, girls were given gloves and masks or encouraged to drink copious quantities of milk and/or cocoa – both believed to counter the effects of chemical exposure and ingestion – while others rotated shifts in an effort to give them fourteen days off from TNT exposure, hoping this would

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89 Woollacott argues that there was a vast expansion of women workers needed in these industries as well. Woollacott, On Her, 26.
90 Watson, 141.
91 Watson, 141. We should not ignore the other features of wartime work that attracted domestic servants. These included liberation from domestic drudgery and isolation and the possibility for friendship and community (Ouditt and Woollacott).
93 Culleton, 76.
help. Overwhelmingly, though, officials and factory managers told girls little of the dangers associated with their work and did very little to safeguard their health. Girls' usual health issues included "Skin complaints, vision problems, incontinence, constipation, [and] cramping." Other reported symptoms included those associated with excessive exposure to TNT, such as yellow skin and "ginger" hair. The Harmsworth magazines, however, make no mention of the dangers girls faced by entering munitions, or any other wartime work. Service to the nation is repeatedly emphasized instead, with girls and women, according to Downs, accepting these burdens and sacrifices as essential to the war effort.

There is one place in the magazines, though, that does point to the extensive nature of physical ailments experienced by girls doing war work: advertising. In Chapter Two I considered the role of "quack" medicine in girls' lives, illustrating how advertisers created messages that specifically sought to encourage self-consciousness and concern in girls over their health, beauty, and bodies. The litany of complaints that was included in advertising was overwhelming. During the war, the ailments listed shifts, subtly including those health issues most often linked to war work, such as "biliousness" and nervous disorders – both of which were added to advertisements for Dr. Cassell's Tablets. Braybon, Culleton, and Woollacott argue that companies sought to profit from women's war work and the health issues it caused. In general, advertisements for health tonics, health aids, and general purpose pills meant to aid in the promotion of health for all

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94 Culleton, 79-81.
95 By late in 1916, though, the Ministry of Munitions recognized the necessity of protecting female workers from TNT poisoning. Their efforts led to a significant decline in deaths (Woollacott, On Her, 82-83).
96 Culleton, 78.
97 Braybon, 114, 140; Culleton, 83.
98 Downs, 78.
100 Braybon, 163-64; Culleton, 82-83; and Woollacott, On Her, 82.
bodily systems dominated the Harmsworth magazines. Examples include Dr. William’s Pink Pills, Beecham’s Pills, and even non-medicinal products such as Rowntree’s Cocoa, all of which pledged general restoration of health and the body. Other products were aimed specifically at addressing the hair and skin problems that could result from wartime work. Particular products included Hairlene’s Hair Drill, which promised to restore hair’s luster and colour, and Icilma, which promised to deal with yellow, sallow skin.101 These companies advertised extensively during the war years in the Harmsworth magazines. Importantly, though, the advertisers rarely make mention of war work, although their knowledge of the dangers seems implicit given the shift in emphasis and the list of ailments that they propose to treat.

Despite the encouragement for girls to take up the work of men during the war, there was still much debate about the nature of this work and whether girls were truly capable of performing it. A special discussion on this topic in “Our Girls’ Parliament” on 1 January 1916 decided that there were still things girls simply could not, and should not, do.102 While Airdrie Pender stressed that given the current work of girls it would be impossible to argue that they were incapable of performing the tasks of men, others were still quick to highlight places where women would struggle. C.S. Elswick of Newcastle felt that women would be ideal for “lighter” work, such as driving and clerical work, but that heavy work, like blacksmithing, was still beyond the abilities of girls.103 The

101 Braybon, 163-164; Culleton, 83.
102 “Our Girls’ Parliament: Can Girls Do Men’s Work?” Our Girls, number 144, 1 January 1916, 703. While this article takes me into 1916 and is dated a mere 5 days before the introduction of conscription, these magazines went to press a full three weeks before they arrived on newsstands; in addition, because the “Our Girls’ Parliament” requested reader feedback and input, the call for topics typically went out at least a month before the actual article appeared.
103 Ibid, 703.
emphasis, too, regardless of the type of work girls stepped into, was that it was only temporary:

It is splendid to know that girls can and will undertake such duties at the present time – when most of our men are soldiers – if they are willing to resume their ordinary duties after the war. The constant strain on their nerves and strength might after a time prove too much for the average girl’s constitution. Also much work might make them dissatisfied with home duties, which would be a calamity, for when these brave men return they will want to find their womenfolk as they left them. The girl who has relieved a man to serve his country is playing a noble part, and has the admiration of all; but let her tell herself that it is ‘for the duration of the war only.’

This extensive quote stands in sharp contrast to a smaller, more supportive one, supplied by D.H. of Enfield, who happily stated, “I think a number of menfolk were greatly surprised to find what girls could do when put to the test.” The overarching message appears to be that while girls should feel proud of their contributions to the nation and to the war effort, they should not forget their feminine natures. They should be prepared to return home and to previous occupations as soon as the war was over; indeed, it would be essential for them to do so.

Interestingly while the contributors to the magazines repeatedly reminded girls that their primary role was supportive and their place at home, they also recognized that some girls were simply incapable of staying home waiting for news. These girls were offered an opportunity to be plucky, patriotic, and sacrificing closer to the front as

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104 S. Candida, Ibid, 703.
106 As Braybon further explains, these conditions were essentially decreed by unions in Britain before they would allow full scale mobilization of female workers into formerly male occupations and positions.
nurses. Fictional elements of the magazines enforced the idea that nursing was patriotic. The tag line for Grace Lindsay’s “Miss Nightingale,” published in 1914, states, 

A story of the Great War and a Great Love; of a brave and beautiful English girl’s emulation of the noble example of Florence Nightingale, whereby she won, from the gallant soldiers of Britain, France, and Belgium, the name indicated in the title, and how she gained their everlasting love and gratitude by her heroic devotion to the sick and wounded.

Connie, in “Good-Bye Little Girl, Good-Bye,” is in love with a young private in the British army who is called to the front when war is declared in 1914. Left behind pining for the man she loves, Connie takes work in a millinery shop and engages in supportive activities at home. Soon, though, desperate for Private Dick and unhappy with simply waiting at home, she enlists in the Red Cross as a nurse and is sent to the front. She remarks, “I have offered my services to my country, and they have been accepted. I have signed on as a nurse, and I am leaving for the front to-morrow!” Depictions such as this offered girls an alternative to staying behind in Britain and the editors of the magazines were happy to provide their readers with information on how to become a war nurse. In the 15 May 1915 issue of the Girls’ Friend, for example, the editor, commenting on the abundance of letters he received on how to become a nurse, outlined the specifics, advising girls on whom to contact in order to go abroad.


108 Grace Lindsay, “Miss Nightingale,” The Girls’ Friend, number 775, 12 September 1914, page number?


110 Editorial, The Girls’ Friend, number 810, 15 May 1915, 4. The standards required of nurses fluctuated significantly depending on time and place. Vicinus argues, for example, that at the end of the nineteenth century “Virtually every form and length of training was available; with no state examination, minimum standards, or outside controls anyone could start a training school.” Vicinus, 103.
The commentary and stories about war nurses, however, was far less evident in the coverage of the Great War than it was during the Anglo-Boer War. During the years of imperial war in Africa, contributors and editors were far more focused on the issue of nurses than during the 1914-1918 conflict. Regular features such as “A Day in the Life of a War Nurse,” “A Week at the Front,” and “Tommy’s Angels” brought much attention to the life of British nurses working in Africa.111 The work was “no child’s play” and “no menial work,” for it was both dangerous and difficult.112 Although hospitals were set up fairly far back from the front, advancing armies could quickly overwhelm the efforts of nurses and doctors to move their patients. Within this hostile environment, though, British nurses proved themselves to be “the kindest and most tender-hearted attendants to the sick in the world....”113 As a “gallant little band of Red Cross nurses,”114 they illustrated the “true” relationship between man and woman. Caring for the sick and wounded, packing and moving camp and hospitals, preparing food and tea, and bringing cheer to the men at the front, these women acted as “ministering angels... aid[ing] their husbands and fathers and brothers in the work of protecting our Empire today.”115 The image of morally-sound, patriotically-driven, well-educated volunteers heading across the ocean to soothe men prevailed.116

Within the context of the Boer War, too, the romantic nature of nursing was far more prevalent than during the Great War. Mrs. Albert Browne’s series of short stories,
titled "Romances of the War," emphasized the romantic setting of war abroad and the women incapable of staying behind while their sweethearts went off to fight, choosing instead to follow as nurses.117 Other series of short stories, such as "Under the Red Cross: Tales of Army Nursing Sisters," echoed these ideas, illustrating nurses healing "wounds and hearts" at the front. This element of romance, though, is perhaps best illustrated by a contribution to the 2 March 1900 issue of The Girls' Friend. The writer notes that "There is a certain element of romance..." in the war for those serving at the front.118 The war, the writer claims, offers the ideal opportunity for love for, "Could man imagine a more suitable wife and helpmeet [sic] than the unselfish, good-hearted nurse, who could not seem to do too much to make her patients forget their sufferings?"119 Indeed, within the "romantic" context of war it seems that many nurses were finding love, as is suggested by the fact that the weekly column "The Experiences of an Army Nurse" increasingly tells the stories of nurses who have found love while caring for the fallen. While this romantic element is present during the Great War in the magazines, far more common is the romantic nature of the sacrificing, suffering girl left behind at home to await news from the front, with romance coming with the tearful reunion at home at war's end.120

Part of this difference can be attributed to the history of the development of nursing as a profession in Britain. During the years of the various Anglo-Boer conflicts, nursing was increasingly seen as a calling by middle- and upper-class female reformers seeking to revolutionize the profession. Following the example of Florence Nightingale,

117 The series ran in The Girls' Friend from 1899 through 1900.
118 "Hospital Love Matches: Nurses Who Marry Their Patients," The Girls' Friend, volume 1, number 17, 2 March 1900, 261.
119 Ibid, 261.
120 See, for example, "With the Women at Home: A Real War Romance," The Girls' Friend, number 791, 2 January 1915, 596.
these women sought to recreate the image of the nurse. Identified with working-class women and menial labour through much of the nineteenth century, reformers pushed for an identification of nursing with domesticity, respectability, and middle-class femininity. This tied in with larger trends in middle-class philanthropy and with the lingering influence of religion and religious orders. Selfless, sacrificing “sisters,” argued the reformers, were needed to care for the sick and the wounded. The Anglo-Boer wars, argues Summers, provided an ideal opportunity for the new nursing sisters to display their abilities and to justify their right to participate in national efforts as caregivers of the sick and injured. Often paying their own way and the cost of their uniforms, and often accepting no pay for their work, these women were largely responsible for creating a romanticized view of nursing that linked patriotism to women’s natural abilities.

Nurses’ involvement in the imperial conflicts, however, essentially paved the way for a re-imagination of wartime nursing. Women’s experiences during the Boer War showed the “true” nature of living and working conditions in war. Pre-accepted ideas about women began to give way as nurses willingly slept in tents, ate relatively coarse fare, and lived without servants and other “lady” essentials. Nurses also faced danger. Although they were not allowed to be employed anywhere near the front, boundaries between front and base became blurred. Field hospitals, set far back from the fighting, faced attacks from guerilla fighters. Trains frequently came under attack and entire cities

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121 Vicinus, 86, 96.
122 Summers, 9.
123 Vicinus, 89.
124 Vicinus, 90, 112.
125 Summers, 6.
126 Summers, 212-215.
came under siege. The realities of war, then, seemed more suited to the supposedly heartier constitutions of working-class women, offering a place for lower-class women within the re-imagining of nursing.

It also became immediately apparent during the colonial conflicts that trained nurses – many of whom came from the ranks of the lower orders – were infinitely more prepared and better trained to deal with the care of sick and injured soldiers. Upper- and middle-class women who made their way to Africa to caress foreheads and soothe men under the guise of feminine natural ability often found themselves under the direction of their social inferiors. Indeed, as Summers notes, social commentators in Britain lamented the shortage of skilled female nurses in Africa, stating that fewer deaths would have occurred had there been more nurses. This understanding allowed nurses to push for the professionalization of their field – a task that was ongoing when the Great War began in 1914. The “new” nurse who went off to war in 1914 embraced a re-imagined identity. A shift took place, moving from a primarily romantic view of nursing that reflected natural feminine ability and a calling to a view that included skill, training, practical application, and service – with elements of femininity and a dash of romance still included. The nurses of the Great War owed a significant debt to the nurses of the Boer War in paving the way for a new view of nursing. A new structure emerged that brought paid military nurses together with volunteers; paid military nurses came to supervise the work of women in Volunteer Aid Detachments who acted as auxiliaries during

127 Summers, 211.
128 Summers, 205, 208.
conflict. This, argues Vicinus, helped to overcome years of “snobbery” in the nursing community that had repeatedly emphasized class over training and skill.

This shift in the perception of nurses resulted in a significant difference in how contributors and illustrators depicted nurses during the Great War. The most striking change is that there are far fewer nurses depicted. During the years of the Boer conflicts, stories appeared weekly that championed the cause of the British nurse aiding the soldiers against the Boers. Romantic images showed nurses locked in embrace with soldiers, or lingering over them as they tended to the men’s bodies. Features informed readers what nurses did all day and celebrated the sacrifices such women made to serve their nation.

During the Great War, there are not a significant number of stories with war as their theme. Yes, some exist, but not in the same numbers as they did in the earlier conflict. Prominent examples, such as “Miss Nightingale” and “Emma Brown,” stand out as exceptions rather than norms. Far more common during the war years are stories about nuns and actresses, than about nurses. This, in part, seems to reflect a general tendency in the papers to initially downplay the war. An advertisement in the *Girls’ Reader* in August 1914 states, “For a change from the War news try a volume of the ‘Girls’ Friend 3d. Library.’”

At the same time, it also seems to point to the new status of nurses as workers, rather than as sacrificing angels. Nurses in the Great War stories were celebrated more for their pluck and courage in the face of enemy attack than they were for their nursing skills. It is possible that with the professionalization of nursing, fewer continued to see nursing as a romantic endeavour.

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129 Summers, 282. See also Lee, 2005.
130 Vicinus, 97.
The image of nursing during the Great War also pointed to something different, again helping to de-romanticize the role of the nurse. During the Boer conflicts more men died from disease than from injuries sustained in battle.\footnote{Summers, 203} This allowed nurses to distance themselves from the battlefield and their role in helping to keep the war effort going. This was not the case in 1914. The realities of the first full-scale industrial war, complete with millions of dead or injured men, did not have the same romantic sense that men with feverish brows and whole bodies had during the Boer Wars.

There appears, then, to also be a greater understanding of the costs of war and the significant sacrifices being made in the Great War. This is not to suggest that the Boer War was less important, but rather that the nature of the Great War was different, causing people to reflect differently on the impact of the first industrial war. While several examples of this exist, the most poignant one comes in a long-time feature of \textit{The Girls' Friend}: “Our Lazy Bachelor.” A series of columns written by a bachelor about women, during the early years of the war, the writer devoted many of his columns to exploring the issues of men and women and the war.\footnote{The ‘OLB’ was a regular contributor to \textit{The Girls' Friend}. Often his articles explored the differences between girls in different parts of Britain or between girls engaged in different kinds of occupations. The editor repeatedly commented that the ‘OLB’ served to offer a further male perspective to girls.} In one, “Far-Off Loved Ones,” he begins by discussing a conversation he had with a long-time friend who was desperate for information on her sweetheart serving at the front, pleading to know how long the war would last. Our “OLB,” as he was dubbed, declared, “I am still convinced that the old saying holds good, and that it is the woman who pays most dearly for war, not the man.”\footnote{Our Lazy Bachelor, “The Far-Off Loved Ones,” \textit{The Girls' Friend}, 28 November 1914, 507. This idea is also emphasized by the editors of the magazines. For example, see Editorial, \textit{The Girls' Friend}, number 773, 29 August 1914, 300: “In truth, when nations fight, it is the women and children who suffer most.”} Even in the early months of the war, he begins to recognize what may be lost; if,
for example, 50,000 men are lost in the war, then “England will not be the same until fifty thousand babies have been born to replace the country’s loss of citizenship.”

Mothers, he argues, will suffer most, for it is they who raise men from babies and then send them forth to face more bullets. This, he argues, is the greatest loss: “We talk of the cost of war as a million pounds a day.... It is naught. It is only money. What is that to the girl who has lost her lover, or the mother who has lost her son?” The overwhelming sense here is that women and girls, as mothers and future mothers, carry the burden of war; it is their sons who face the enemy and who are mowed down and it is women who must address death rates by giving birth to more babies who may then face further war. Unfortunately, “The fight must be fought, the awful sacrifice made. They know it.” In the end, though, they can rest assured that the war will end and they can hope that their loved ones will return.

Many girls and citizens likely clung to this hope during the war years; contributors to the magazines certainly encouraged them to do so. Harmsworth’s magazines did not concern themselves with the day to day events of the war; they left that to the dailies. Instead, they underpinned the ideological concerns and features of the war. Working to maintain a sense of patriotism, of “King and Country,” and of women’s roles, their purpose during the war was socio-cultural. In re-asserting pre-war gender values, values of empire, and values of nation, they sought to bring some stability during a time of chaos and social disorder. Within this new environment, contributors essentially encouraged girls to hold on to “old” ways and not get caught up in the changes all around.

135 Ibid, 507.
136 Ibid, 507.
138 Ibid, 507.
them. While there was certainly a place for them in the war effort – as encouragers, comforters, consumers, and workers – their central task was to remain “girls.” Temporary alternatives were available and important, but as bearers of a gendered nation, girls were reminded to stand as stoic examples of what men were fighting for and to prepare for their roles as mothers to restock the nation.
Conclusion

Between 1898 and 1916, the publisher, editors, contributors, and advertisers in *The Girls' Best Friend, The Girls' Friend, The Girls' Home, The Girls' Reader, and Our Girls* worked together to appeal to the 'new' girl. Features, editorials, stories, advertisements, and letters-to-the-editor formed part of a communication chain that sought to emphasize certain values and characteristics of the new girl. This was, in part, reflective of some new ideas, contexts, and realities in late-Victorian and Edwardian England that had an impact on the lives of girls, including schooling and work, as well as a new understanding of adolescence as a distinctive period of time. A new group of girls did emerge during this period of time that seemed to stand apart from girls of previous generations. They entered new kinds of occupations in great numbers; they enjoyed the benefits of mandatory schooling; and they participated in a consumer economy that encouraged the consumption of commodities and participation in leisure. They appeared a new market for publishers like Harmsworth. At the same time, though, the new girl was ultimately a creation. Emphasizing community, homogeneity, and shared experiences over individualism and diversity, contributors actively worked to shape an ideal reader and define the new girl, including her culture, her characteristics, and her values.

The new girl embraced consumerism, purchasing innovative, modern, and exotic products that aided her health and beauty – two things that had to be addressed in tandem. At the same time, product testimonials served to not only advise girls on the quality and strength of certain commodities, but also to show her connection to a wider community of girls, women, and Britain. Models to emulate existed everywhere, from Queen Alexandra and other members of the royalty, to actresses, friends, and family members.
Advertisers encouraged girls to embrace youth, with personal appearance most accurately reflecting this. The new girl distinguished herself in appearance, with her hair gently flapping behind her in a big bow and her skirts sitting just above her ankles, casting a youthful silhouette. Adding to this was the emphasis placed on thinness. The new girl’s body was dainty and slender, rather than round and maternal. Advertisers further warned girls to be on guard for attacks against their bodies, offering up a plethora of products to improve their overall health or deal with specific ailments that may have had a negative impact on their bodies or on their beauty. Advertisers, contributors, and editors repeatedly encouraged girls to look inward and outwards – to consider their own reflections on their selves but also how others viewed them. Consumerism was the key to addressing any problems – real or imagined – with happiness and transformation the result.

The new girl also supported her nation and her empire, taking on a variety of roles in each. While underlying currents existed that stressed to girls their destiny as wives and mothers, and the national function these roles served, girls were offered more opportunities than this to participate in empire. They could purchase products that spoke to the mysterious and exotic nature of the east; they could read stories of far away lands and adventure; or they could join the Girl Scouts or Girl Guides to participate as a “Girl of the Empire.” If she had the means and the drive to do so, she could embrace adventure and go abroad, emigrating to the colonies or the dominions in search of work and love. The new girl was given a number of opportunities to show her patriotism and support the national cause – with some of these chances allowing her to step outside of prescribed gender roles and norms. In each case, though, her essential ‘nature’ was protected under a
veil of domesticity and feminine virtue; womanhood would bring an end to any challenge posed by adolescent activities and values.

Pretty, plucky, and patriotic, the new girl also had a significant role to play during times of national conflict. As supporters of the nation, they could encourage men to go to war, chastise those who stayed behind, and pine for those at the front. Displaying their essential, feminine natures, they could do much to support the war effort, from sewing bandages and uniforms and caring for the injured, to sending the comforts of home to men at the front. Others could step in to fill the vacancies left in a variety of occupations as more and more men went off to war. They could exercise thrift, using their savings to financially contribute to organizations attempting to help those affected by the war, and spending their new, higher wages in a frugal manner that supported the nation. For girls not content to stay at home, their supportive role could go abroad, with opportunities for girls to work as nurses during times of conflict. Again, any shift in their role was only temporary. Essentially, editors and contributors reminded girls of their feminine natures and responsibilities, working to re-assert values and morals during a time of chaos.

Reminded repeatedly that adolescence was a period of transition, the new girl was encouraged to embrace opportunities – whether at work, school, or home or in the community, nation, or empire – and to celebrate this special time in her life. Adolescence was also a time to prepare, to instill habits and values that would carry girls into womanhood. Always lurking, then, was the caveat: these were only temporary states of existence. The freedom and independence that seemed to go hand in hand with this time in her life was fleeting. Every story of girls who take on the world, pull pranks, speak
their minds, or flirt with boys ends with the girl’s marriage and rejection of specifically adolescent values.

The creation of an ideal girl and reader fit well with overarching desires for successful publications, profit, and consumerism. With a central focus, all parties on Harmsworth’s team and all advertisers could work towards a common goal. To further this goal, they relied on an increasing array of techniques to woo and secure readers. From titles and illustrations, to topics and language, contributors created a shared world based on a set of values, behaviours, and beliefs. Emphasizing friendship and the personal connection between editor and reader, as well as between reader and reader, they sought to remove the didactic, authoritarian, and sometimes impersonal features of earlier publishing efforts. These magazines, they hoped, would become treasured possessions and close friends of their readers. This held the potential for a greater acceptance of the messages contained within. Advice from friends was personal, helpful, and well-received. It spoke to shared understandings and experiences and to an overall spirit of egalitarianism. This spirit could be used to encourage certain values, to sell products, and to push girls to accept a view of themselves and their world that fit with prevailing social conventions.

The ideal, in short, was fabricated. While elements of reality certainly informed and reflected this ideal, the idea of a singular vision of girlhood and of a homogenous group of girls throughout Britain could not hold up for long. The sheer diversity reflected by class, ethnicity, geography, conditions of work, family life, and education, among others, could not be encompassed by one central figure – even a figure as popular and forceful as Pollie Green. Penny Tinkler argues that in the post-Great War period,
magazine publishers were forced to rethink their audience and their content to more accurately reflect a range of experiences of girlhood. It was no longer sufficient to think that age alone, for example, was enough to draw girls together. Magazines in the interwar period became increasingly specialized and the idea that all girls could happily read the same magazine waned.¹ This rethinking began to occur even during the years of the Great War. Partly owing to difficulties in securing paper and to the realities of a wartime economy, but also due to shifting ideas about magazines and audience, the Amalgamated Press magazines for girls underwent changes during the war. Only The Girls’ Friend would remain as before the war. The Girls’ Home and The Girls’ Reader were eliminated, replaced by Our Girls in 1915. By 1916, then, Harmsworth was only publishing two magazines for girls; in 1918, publication of Our Girls would also cease, leaving only The Girls’ Friend.

Attention to these sources is vital if we are to increase our understanding of the lives of girls during this period of time and of the forces that worked to shape girls into women. They cannot be ignored as mere ‘rags’ or ‘dreadfuls’ that offer nothing significant to historians today. As Ross McKibbin argues, these kinds of periodicals are the closest thing that England had to a universal literature for juveniles.² In addition, our picture of socialization is not complete if we ignore the mass media in the past. Extensive studies exist on education and literature, for example, which discuss the role of teachers, curriculum, and books in shaping young minds. At present, there is no doubt that the media also plays a significant role in shaping the people that we have become; I argue that the same consideration must be given to the past.

¹ Tinkler, 1995.
This work, in conjunction with my previous writing on this subject, presents an extensive overview and analysis of magazines only recently begun to be considered by historians. Further, it provides a good introduction to those wishing to consider the current state of publishing for adolescents. When I began this work, I was convinced that the teen magazine was born in the post-WWII era, along with the idea of the teenager. It has been enlightening to discover that the teen magazine was actually born in the nineteenth century. The Harmsworth magazines for girls are early examples of the magazines that I read growing up, containing similar features, messages, and contradictions. In the end, the image of the ideal girl would have to grow in an effort to encompass more girls but really, the essential characteristics and virtues remain with us today. The socio-cultural work done by the Amalgamated Press magazines in carving out a world for girls, shaping a distinct culture, and embracing adolescence as a unique and special time continues to this day. Having this kind of historical perspective on the roots of publishing for girls can only help in aiding those considering the current context of girls’ magazines. In addition, it offers another piece of the picture in understanding the messages that girls’ received, and the ways that they received them, in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. It is not sufficient to explore family, home, school, and work when considering how girls learned to become women. Mass media, born at the end of the nineteenth century, had a significant role to play in passing along social conventions and working to inculcate values in girls.
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