WOMEN AT WORK: HOUSEWIVES AND PAID WORKERS AS MOTHERS IN CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FICTION FOR CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN AT WORK: HOUSEWIVES AND PAID WORKERS AS MOTHERS IN CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FICTION FOR CHILDREN

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The purpose of this study was to examine roles of women (housewives, paid workers, and mothers) as perceived by contemporary social scientists and as perceived by the women authors of a selected group of books for children. The forty five children's books included in this study are contemporary realistic fiction published between 1964 and June, 1975 in both hardcover and paperback which include protagonists eleven to fifteen years of age who live at home with their mothers present.

Congruence in the perceptions about women's roles of contemporary social scientists and of the authors of contemporary realistic fiction for children was considered. Connections in the children's books between the work roles of the protagonists' mothers and these mothers' relationships with their children were also investigated.

There is much evidence that many contemporary social scientists perceive the housewife's role today as a diminished and unsatisfying one. Contemporary social scientists also indicate that paid employment is becoming an increasingly important option for modern women, as more and more women enter the workplace and remain there for a longer part of their worklives. And many social scientists emphasize that

there continue to be, essentially, two different labor markets for men and women; they perceive different labor markets to be one of the reasons that women as a group receive lower remuneration for their work than men do. Social scientists report some confusion and ambivalence in our society about the role of mother today, as new realities and old myths collide.

The perspectives of the women authors of the children's books included in this study do agree with the perspectives of the social scientists in some respects. In one important area, however, there is disagreement.

Most of the authors of the children's books do show the housewife role as a limited and limiting one. And they do portray several of the protagonists' mothers as ambivalent about their mothering role. They show several housewife mothers relating to their children in a hostile manner; the mothers who work for pay are generally shown in the books to have more satisfying relationships with their children.

The authors of the children's books, however, do not seem to perceive women's options in the world of paid employment in the same way that contemporary social scientists do. In the children's books the protagonists' mothers who hold paid employment are mostly shown in jobs that are more highly rewarded than are the jobs that the majority of women hold in the "real" world.

There seems to be an element of cultural lag in the children's books included in this study. While the books

do reflect the dissatisfaction with housewifery that has found articulate expression in our culture since the early 1960s, they do not reflect the constraints of today's job market upon women. Young reader's would find in these books relatively little information that would alert them to the challenges that face women who seek to find satisfying employment today.

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By

Margaret Holt Parish

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Dedicated to the members of my doctoral committee, and especially to Dr. George Sherman, its Chairman, and Dr. Stephen Judy, Dissertation Director.

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INTRODUCTION

Change is a central focus in this study. The perspectives of social scientists about changes in the roles of women, especially in the last decade, are reviewed in the first three chapters. In the last chapters I discuss the perspectives on the changing work roles of mothers as perceived by women authors of contemporary realistic fiction for children.

Two questions lie at the center of this study. In what ways are the perspectives of the social scientists and the authors of the children's books similar or dissimilar? How do the work roles of the mothers in the children's books connect with the mothers' parenting?

There has been a trend in children's literature since the early 1960s by critics as "the new realism." Authors of children's books have tended to be more honest and forthright about discussing social problems than were authors of the past. They have dealt with new themes that previously did not have a place in children's literature, as they have examined old themes with greater frankness. One would therefore expect that recent changes in the roles of women might be reflected in contemporary realistic fiction for children. This study is an effort to determine whether

such a reflection of change does indeed exist in the children's books.

First as a Children's Librarian, later as an Instructor of Children's Literature, I have followed this trend toward "new realism" with great interest, noting that in the books, parents are now shown as sometimes less than perfect (even hostile) and that children sometimes are shown looking within themselves or turning to their contemporaries for solutions to their problems. I have also noted that many young readers have been highly interested in the new kind of children's book that describes, or attempts to describe, their "real world." A few books included in this study - HARRIET THE SPY and ARE YOU THERE, GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET, for example, have become widely read "classics."

In this study I first review the work of social scientists about women as housewives, paid workers and mothers. Then I examine the writing of women authors of children's books, focusing on their portrayal of the protagonists' mothers in these roles.

It is not my assumption that either the social scientists' perspectives about women's roles or those of the authors of children's books represent an ultimate "reality." I do believe, however, that both groups are expressing contemporary values and ideas about an important question of our time: woman's place. And since one goal of contemporary realistic fiction is surely "to tell it

like it is," and since the goal of social scientists is to describe what is happening in our society, it seems to be of value to investigate fully the relationship between their views.

CHAPTER I

THE WOMAN AS A HOUSEWIFE

One of the earliest studies of the role of housewife in our culture was done during the 1950s by sociologist Helena Lopata. Unlike many social scientists writing today, Lopata did not bring a negative perspective about housewifery to her work. Nevertheless, she concluded that the housewife role in our society was both marginal and menial and that the work of the housewife lacked the defining characteristics that give legitimacy to paid employment. Lopata wrote that:

> The girl entering the role of housewife faces a completely different situation. One of the role's characteristics is that American girls do not "apply for it." There is no organized social circle which tests a candidate and then admits or rejects her on the basis of proven skills. She enters the role "sideways," as an adjunct to the role of wife, and only then does she pull a social circle around herself. In addition, the role is not easily located in the occupational social structure. Most Americans are not even sure it belongs there; it lacks the basic criteria of most jobs...[1]

Studies that have followed Lopata's have amplified some of her conclusions. At the time that this dissertation is written, a review of the literature about housewifery in SIGNS: JOURNAL OF WOMEN AND CULTURE IN OUR SOCIETY (Summer,

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[1]Helena Z. Lopata, Occupation Housewife (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 139.

1976) makes dramatically clear the shift in emphasis that scholarship about housework has undergone. While once housework was studied primarily to investigate (and justify) the division of labor between the sexes, today the emphasis is on change. Contemporary social scientists quite often come to the conclusion, in one way or another, that the housewife role, as it is presently structured in our culture, is archaic or vestigal.

Changes in the attitudes of our society toward housework during the last decade will be one topic of this section on the women as housewife. But changes in the realities of housewifery that go back to the turn of the century and, indeed, to industrialization, must be emphasized as well. The actual work that needs to be done in the home has been steadily diminishing for several decades. Even during the postwar years when the "feminine mystique" was preached, and, to some degree, practiced, women continued to move outside the home to join the workforce in ever-increasing numbers, a trend that began during World War II. Rosie the Riveter did not go home after the war, in many cases; instead she took a job (at less pay than she received in her previous blue-collar one) in the every-expanding areas of clerical or service work that needed cheap labor (women's services) during the postwar years. New realities about "woman's place" and housework did not begin with the feminists in the late 1960s. They did not begin with Betty Friedan's book in 1963 or with Simone de Beauvoir's earlier

work, THE SECOND SEX, in 1954. They have been with us for a long time. We have only begun to deal with their full implications.

Increasing participation of women in the paid workforce began during World War II and will be discussed in the chapter that follows on woman as paid worker. Decreasing needs for woman's productivity in the home go back to the Industrial Revolution and continue today. One must look to historians, demographers, economists, and sociologists for evidences of change in "woman's work" in our society. With many voices they make many of the same essential points about the past and present. (Demographers, however, are especially humble about predicting the future.)

Technology has freed women from a great deal of the demanding productive work that they did at the turn of the century. Smaller families have also reduced the workload. A woman at the turn of the century - without most of today's labor saving devices - would raise an average of six children, nurse them through childhood diseases that no longer exist in this country because of modern immunization, and die at an average age of fifty, with no time between the dual responsibilities of housework and childrearing and her own death to wonder what else might occupy her life. That same woman was of great economic importance to her family. They depended upon her for their food and often for their clothing.

Demographer Judith Blake points out that the Industrial Revolution took out of the home much of the productive work (other than parenting) that women once did there. She states that this fact creates a situation, which began in the nineteenth century, in which men are less dependent on their wives (for the goods and services they once produced), while women and children are more dependent on their husbands and fathers respectively, for the money that they earn to support the household. She believes that since the Industrial Revolution caused women and children to become an economic liability, the efforts of women to enter the workforce today can be perceived as an attempt to restore an equilibrium that was lost with industrialization. Blake writes that:

> The changes in migration, mortality and fertility that accompanied the Industrial Revolution appear to have profoundly disrupted the symmetry of the status of men and women. As a result, since the middle of the nineteenth century serious question have been raised concerning the realism, as well as the legitimacy, of a continuing attempt to prescribe one kind of position - a derived one - as being the primary status for all women.[2]

A frequently-cited study by Joann Vanek makes a related point. On the basis of data from the Federal Government on time spent by women doing housework over the last fifty years, Vanek reports that employed women today spend half as much time as unemployed women doing housework. Unemployed women spend as much time as their mothers

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[2]Judith Blake, "The Changing Status of Women in Developed Countries," Scientific American 231:3 (September, 1974), p. 137.

or their grandmothers did before them. After checking out all the variables that could explain the discrepancy, Vanek comes to the conclusion that, since the modern homemaker's contribution to the family is less clear than was that of the rural homemaker before her, i.e., since cooking, cleaning, and shopping for bargains are less clear contributions than were making butter, bread and clothing, today's homemaker finds little evidence that what she does is considered to be a contribution equal to the wage earner's. She therefore feels that the work itself must be clearly evident and acknowledged. Vanek writes that:

> Since the value of household work is not clear, non-employed women feel pressure to spend long hours at it. Time spent in work, rather than the results of the work, serves to express to the homemaker and others that an equal contribution is being made. Women who are in the labor force contribute to the family income and so do not feel the same pressure.[3]

Based on interview-data and her own observations, Betty Freidan expresses the same idea in THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE:

> 1. The more a woman is deprived of function in society at the level of her own ability, the more her house-work, wife-work, mother-work, will expand - and the more she will resist finishing her house-work, or mother-work, and being without any function at all...
>
> 2. The time required to do the housework for any given woman varies inversely with the challenge of the other work to which she is committed. Without any outside interests, a woman is virtually forced to devote her every moment to the trivia of keeping house.[4]

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[3]Joann Vanek, "Time Spent on Housework" Scientific American 231:5 (November, 1974), p. 120.

[4]Betty Freidan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell, 1963), p. 230.

Blake and Vanek both make the point that the modern woman has considerably less productive work to do in the home than her grandmother; Vanek and Freidan both make the point that the modern woman therefore begins to feel that she must justify her existence. She busies herself with a host of chores, trying to make what was once a full-time life-time job (and is now a part-time job, once children are in school) into a central occupation of all her resources. In a market economy, she is in a non-market role; she is marginal to the functioning of the society.

Sociologist Philip Slater entitles one of his chapters in THE PURSUIT OF LONELINESS, "Women and Children Last." He describes one aspect of the marginality of the modern housewife in this passage:

> There are societies in which the domestic role works, but in those societies the housewife is not isolated. She is either part of a large, extended family household, in which domestic activities are a communal effort, or participates in a tightly knit village community, or both. The idea of imprisoning each woman alone in a small, self-contained dwelling is a modern invention, dependent upon advanced technology. In Moslem societies, for example, the wife may be a prisoner, but she is at least not in solitary confinement. In our society, the housewife may move about fully, but since she has nowhere to go and is not a part of anything anyway her prison needs no walls.[5]

An economist, Robert Lekachman, writing in an earlier issue of SIGNS, takes a perspective similar to Slater's; housewives are outside - outside the market economy by which we determine what is valuable in our society. Lekachman analyzes the changes that have come to the modern army since

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[5]Philip Slater, The Pursuit of Loneliness (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 68.

it has begun to pay for the services of its soldiers, and he predicts the kinds of changes that the housewife role might undergo if it were included in our market economy (at least to the extent of counting housework as part of the Gross National Product). Lekachman makes a direct connection between lack of pay for housework and the lowly status of the occupation and those who work at it.

> Much of the interplay between home and marketplace reflects social imputations of women's inferiority in both locales. Since it is unpaid, work in the home is undervalued in capitalist societies. When women leave their homes, they are channeled to women's occupations which are also undervalued, partly because of their association with "free" domestic labor.[6]

Lekachman shows how society devalues the housewife role; Elizabeth Janeway, in MAN'S WORLD, WOMAN'S PLACE, argues that women themselves doubt the value of their role since its scope has steadily decreased.

> ...Managing a household...has declined spectacularly as a socially useful skill, even with servants almost non-existent. Nowadays one buys in shops things that were made at home only a generation or two ago, and food is processed so completely that cooking has ceased to be a necessity and become a leisure art.
>
> This decline in the economic value of woman's traditional role has, in fact, drawn a great deal of significance and reward out of it. When a household was in part a factory women were in touch with society and its demands at home almost as much as their husbands were abroad and much more than many women with jobs in business are now.[7]

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[6]Robert Lekachman, "On Economic Reality," Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Our Society, Volume I, Number 1 (Autumn, 1975), p. 99.

[7]Elizabeth Janeway, Man's World, Woman's Place (New York: Dell, 1971), p. 130.

Janeway goes on to make the point that women have not only lost much of the work that they did earlier, losing with it some of the status that was attached to it; they are almost without any objective measure of the work that they actually do.

> We cannot regain that world and even when we talk of the 'good things' it offered, we should never overlook the terrible drawbacks of narrowness, of drudgery and of frustration which it often imposed on body and spirit. But when we examine woman's role today, we must also take account of the gaps which exist there now that women at home have lost their old tie with the production of economically valuable goods, and thus lost, too, the chance of being judged by the objective standards of an outside community, no matter how small. These standards represent the reality principle.[8]

Sociologist Ann Oakley has written two books, WOMAN'S WORK and THE SOCIOLOGY OF HOUSEWORK, that result from her research study of the attitudes of British housewives toward housework. Oakley presents the limitations of housework for today's woman in this way.

> Housework contrasts with employed work in its lack of economic reward, its isolation, and the lack of social recognition accorded to the responsibilities carried on by the housewife... Enjoyment of one's past job does not augur well for contentment in the role of housewife.[9]

She shows how much housewives dislike their working conditions: the fragmentation, isolation and monotony of their situation.

Oakley goes on to show how women try to deal with the lack of external rewards and structure that is inherent in

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[8]Janeway, p. 172.

[9]Ann Oakley, The Sociology of Housework, (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 87.

the housewife role by inventing their own standards and keeping to them.

> The specificiation of standards and routines has four identifiable functions. First, it provides a means of unifying the collection of hetrogeneous tasks that make up housework; dissimilar tasks are knitted together, and some kind of coherent job structure emerges. Secondly, it serves as proof that housework is work; the spelling out of these rules to be followed places housework in the same category as other work - there are things that simply have to be done. In this sense, the definition of standards and routines can be seen as a defensive process; the housewife is defending herself against the allegation that she does nothing at all. Thirdly rule specification is a means of job enlargement, a process of elaborating housework tasks so they take up endlessly increasing amounts of time. For the full-time housewife, in particular, standards and routines thus serve to keep the "worker" employed. And lastly, the definition of rules for housework establishes a mechanism whereby the housewife can reward herself for doing it.[10]

Oakley observes that the standards that the housewife internalizes in order to make her work meaningful become a trap for her. Ironically, they become "shoulds and oughts" that make her feel guilty if she does not live up to them. "Women enter into a form of contract with themselves to be their own bosses, judges and rewardgivers. Gaining coherence and self-reward in their work, autonomy is relinquished and creativity constrained."[11] Somehow, women are thus caught in a double bind.

Kristen Amundsen, a political scientist, also writes cogently on the housewife's dilemma. Here again one finds evidence cited of the way that the housewife's role has

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[10]Oakley, p. 104.

[11]Oakley, p. 112.

changed; here again one finds comment on the anxiety that the change in the housewife role brings to the person who is trying to perform it.

> The novelty to these circumstances cannot be over-emphasized. The role of housewife and mother was central to a woman's experience and dominated all of her adult life up to this century for the very simple reason that when she was finally through with the bearing and raising of children she had precious few years to live. At the same time, housework in the past required more effort and a great deal more physical energy that it does now....
>
> Today, however, even the most dedicated housewife is apt to be plagued by doubts, by boredom, by a stifling sense of frustration in contemplating all those years ahead spent doing the same menial tasks and the unimportant busy work. She will also, if she is reasonably socially aware, be bothered by the fear of having to rely on her own resources at some time in the future. More than two-thirds of American housewives end up on the job market sooner or later in their lives - very often out of necessity and almost always without any decent preparation for their new roles.[12]

"Busy work" may be a key word in Amundsen's statement, for surely, many would argue, there are a number of modern housewives who are very busy indeed. But do they have to be? Economist John Galbraith argues that the real work of the American housewife today is consumerwork, that she does work that is essential to the functioning of our affluent society which is unacknowledged and unrewarded, indeed, disguised as a kind of enjoyment.

> The higher the standard of living - that is to say, the larger the house, the more numerous the automobiles, the more elaborate the attire, the more demanding the administration. Were women unavailable for this task, an upper limit would be set on

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[12]Kristen Amundsen, The Silenced Majority, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 14-15.

> consumption by the administrative tasks involved. At some point, it would become too time-consuming, too burdensome, as it does for the bachelor of either sex, who leads a comparatively simple existence.[13]

Galbraith believes that while women do not have a primary role within the home as producers, they do often play the role of active consumers, a role upon which our society depends to maintain its present level of conspicuous consumption. He believes that the role that American Women play is concealed from them by the fact that, in American society, there is an identification of consumption of goods and services with increasing happiness and an ignoring of the tasks and services that must be done to bring about that consumption. Galbraith concludes that:

> ...the family is both the justification and the disguise for the economic function of women. Their service in making possible the indefinite expansion, especially of affluent consumption and production, is justified, and even sanctified, as a service to the family. The service is then submerged in the concept of the household - and it is thus kept out of view. There is much, no doubt, to be said for the institution of the family. And it is not surprising that conservatives say it so much. It serves them well.[14]

Galbraith's point is surely not a minor one; buying and maintaining so many possessions is surely one of the non-productive activities that absorbs much of many housewives' time. (Paying for these things of course consumes the time of many breadwinners.) It is interesting to note

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[13]John Kenneth Galbraith, "How the Economy Hangs on Her Apron Strings," Ms. (May, 1974), p. 75.

[14]Galbraith, p. 77.

that one of the solutions sometimes offered in personal accounts to non-productive but time-consuming housework is getting rid of some of the "things" that consume energy. In a book entitled I'M RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME, BUT I'M NOT ALLOWED TO CROSS THE STREET, the author writes of her own family's successful move toward role-sharing. She begins her account like this:

> Eight years ago, my own feelings were indeed deep, but also confused. I wasn't working; I lay around for nine months and 10 days, waiting for my first fulfillment to come. I insisted that I loved being a housewife. My husband, Roger, suggested once, between my sobbings, that maybe I'd be happier if I went out and did something. What did he know? With my extraordinary sensitivity, I knew that his ego would be shattered if I brought in a buck. Besides, it would all fall into place when the baby was born.[15]

She goes on to explain how work became later on divided among her, her husband, and their five children, one of the tasks being that of taking a basket from room to room and putting in it things that were out of place. Such things that were not claimed in half an hour were given away or thrown away. Then she comments:

> The house never has a pristine look. One reason we have so much mess is that we are innundated with possessions. Possessions can become a pain in the neck. The labor of upkeep can quickly suffocate the pleasure of having them.
>
> Some things show up in the pick-up basket that no one cares enough about to take responsibility for. In the past, I would have said, in a long-suffering voice, "That beautiful thing. Tsk! Tsk! I'll do it," for I was Woman, the conserver. Now I throw it out ot give it away.[16]

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[15]Gabrielle Burton, "I'm Running Away from Home But I'm Not Allowed to Cross the Street." Chapter from book by that name printed in Ms., February, 1973, p. 73.

[16]Burton, p. 101.

It would be possible, but perhaps not practical, to end this section on the woman as housewife by quoting from other autobiographical accounts, as well as from the poems, short stories and novels of women who have written about housewifery over the last decade. The social scientists make their point about the diminished housewife role and its effects upon the housewife herself in objective tones; women who have lived the ambiguities of the role speak with more feeling, write with more meat and metaphor. UP THE SANDBOX, DIARY OF A MAD HOUSEWIFE, SMALL CHANGES, MAMA DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE, THE SUMMER BEFORE THE DARK, THE PUMPKIN EATER - the titles themselves suggest some of the struggles that lie within the books. And here are two bits of poetry that speak eloquently. The first is from a poem entitled "Unmailed Letter to My Husband" by Eve Merriam. The second is from a poem entitled "Housewife" by Susan Fromberg Schaeffer.

> Housebound, houseround, assume and resume my part,
> perfecting my grammar day by ritual day.
> Verb: to cook, to clean, to wash, to dry;
> Noun: menu, garbage, broom, cloth, closet.
>
> Bargain-hunter, purse-loser, worshiper of plastics;
> I wear the costume: it becomes my skin.
>
> My hands are always picking up and twitching straight.
> Climbing stairs, I feel as if I am falling
> gasping, grasping for free time: I tumble
> Submerged by safety pins and plastering milk.[17]
>
> Eve Merriam

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[17]Eve Merriam, "Unmailed Letter to My Husband," The Double Bed, (New York: Lippincott, 1973), p. 78.

Once I drove my car into a tree.
The bottles in the back
Burst like bombs, tubular glass beasts,
Giving up the ghost. My husband
Thought it was the road. It was.
In the rearview mirror, it curved and curled,
Longer and straighter than the road ahead,
A question of perspective, I thought then.
I watched it until it turned, and I did not.
I sucked in pain like air,
As if, I, the rib, had cracked.

* * *

So I live inside my wedding ring,
Beneath its arch,
Multiplying the tables of my days,
Rehearsing the lessons of this dish, that sleeve,
Wanting the book that no one wrote,
Loving my husband, my children, my house,
With this pain in my jaw,
Wanting to go.

Do others feel like this? Where do they go?[18]

Susan Fromberg Shaeffer

It is worthy of emphasis that it is the ideas about housewifery of contemporary social scientists that have been reviewed here. The technology of housewifery has not changed substantially in the last decade, but attitudes toward housework have changed, and the writings of contemporary social scientists reflect those changes in attitude. For whatever reason or reasons (some social scientists postulate that the people of this country needed a return to old verities after the trauma of the Second World War), we did not deal with important changes in the nature of the housewife role nor with the implications of women's increasing participation in the labor force in the 1950s. Many

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[18]Susan Fromberg Schaffer, "Housewife," The Granite Lady (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 40.

social scientists writing then reified sharply defined sex roles for husbands and wives at a time when modern technology was making such sharply differentiated roles increasingly obsolete. The age cohort of women that matured during the 1950s resolved some of the problems of empty time by joining the work force, by having several children, or by doing volunteer work. For some combination of reasons (the stimulus of the Civil Rights Movement, the pressures of Zero Population Growth etc.) our contemporary culture has begun to carefully examine, during the last decade, the diminished workload, and the diminished work identity, of the contemporary housewife. Although there is considerable divergence of opinion about what caused what, relative to the changing roles of women (Did available paid work free women from the demands of defining themselves as housewives, or did the dimished demands of housework free women to assume paid employment, or is there a third explanation, perhaps a much more complex one?) there seems considerable agreement among social scientists that the modern woman can't go home again - not to the kind of home we remember, not to stay, not for a full time lifetime - and that changes in our social and economic structure will be needed to deal with the full implications of her changed situation.

SUMMARY

One might summarize the points made in this section on the woman as housewife in this way. Both the quantity of productive work and the number of children to be raised

are considerably less for the modern woman than they were for her grandmother (at the turn of the century). Today's homemaker is, therefore, to some degree put in a defensive position. She must justify her own existence, both to herself and to the outside world. She does not do work, in many cases, that she can take seriously; nor is it taken seriously (television commercials that show her husband going into ecstasy over the way the laundry smells to the contrary) by those around her. The modern housewife must fight a sense of meaninglessness. She must also fight a sense of marginality, as a non-market worker in a market economy. High self-imposed standards (a floor one can eat from, sheets changed twice a week, gourmet cooking), increased investment in the mother role, and volunteer work are some of the strategies with which the modern woman tries to shore up her identity against the forces which wash against it and threaten to erode it. Entering the labor force so that she, too, is a part of the market economy, is another strategy for increased recognition. Consumerwork is unpaid work that the economy extracts from the housewife without labeling it as "real work."

The novels, short stories, poetry and autobiographical accounts of today's women express their dilemma. A sense of fragmentation, a fear of loss of identity, an unconfortableness with dependency, and a dread of meaninglessness emerge from the pages of a great deal of the work being written by women today. There is also a sense of having come to the end

of something and needing a new beginning without knowing precisely what or where that new beginning is.

If contemporary realistic fiction for children accurately reflects the changing realities of the housewife role as portrayed by contemporary social scientists, it will show housewives as dissatisfied with their work and their situation, for social scientists indicate that there is reason for such dissatisfaction, and the autobiographical accounts of women themselves indicate that they are increasingly critical of "woman's place" in our society.

CHAPTER II

THE WOMAN AS PAID WORKER

In the previous chapter, changes in the role of housewife were examined. Several contemporary social scientists (only a few of whom are cited here) believe that the role of housewife is considerably diminished, and that many modern housewives feel themselves diminished because their work is not considered important by those around them. One response that women have made to their changing work situation at home is to join the labor force in ever-increasing numbers. In this chapter, I will review the literature concerning women in the labor force.

This chapter establishes four facts about the woman as worker. The first is that women, especially married women, and more especially mothers, have joined the labor force in ever-increasing numbers since World War II. (One can therefore reasonably expect to find a number of protagonists' mothers in contemporary realistic fiction for children engaged in paid employment.) The second is that women are occupationally segregated into the lower-paying, lower-status occupations. (One would therefore expect that many working mothers in contemporary realistic fiction for children would be portrayed as employed in low-paid and low-

status jobs.) The third is that women's socialization for family roles and responsibilities has been tied to their lower aspirations for employment. (One might expect to find that protagonists' mother in the books included in this study have taken jobs that they can readily combine with their parenting and domestic responsibilities; one might also expect to find some evidence of role conflict for mothers who are managing "two jobs" - one at home and one in the paid labor force.) The fourth fact about the woman as worker that will be discussed in this chapter is that women's aspirations for careers and paid employment are changing; as more women enter the labor market and stay for longer periods of time, they begin to view their roles as paid workers as primary, rather than secondary ones. (If the children's books included in this study reflect this reality, they will show some of the protagonists' mother striving for success in the world of paid employment and defining themselves not only as wives and mothers, but as paid workers as well.)

WOMEN HAVE JOINED THE LABOR FORCE IN EVER-INCREASING NUMBERS SINCE WORLD WAR II

In an unpublished speech given in Cincinnati in June, 1976, Elizabeth Janeway emphasized the increasing participation of women in today's workforce. She stressed the fact that there is no reason to believe that women will not continue to enter paid employment in substantial numbers. And she pointed out the significant contributions that women's labor has made to the economic expansion that our

country experienced in the post World War II period.

> But women are here to stay. They are here in the economic system, more of them every year by actual number and by percentage, and they are staying in the labor force longer. In 1947, there were six and a half million wives who had jobs, and thirty million husbands - a ratio of about 1 to 5. Last year, the ratio was 1 to 2, or a little better - twenty million wives to 38 million husbands. Add the single, divorced or widowed women who are working, and you come up with a labor force participation figure of 37 million women for 1975.
>
> It's true that married women don't work as many years overall, or as steadily as men do - but don't think that means they're there for just a couple of years until the babies come. As long ago as 1970, the average working life for married women was 25 years, compared to 43 years for men. Single women, you might be interested to know, averaged 45 years - two years longer than men.[1]

"In 1940 as in 1900," writes historian William Chafe, "the average woman worker was young, single, and poor."[2] He goes on to point out that during World War II there was a larger increase in the female labor force than had taken place in the previous four decades combined. The point that Chafe and other emphasize does not have to do only with numbers of women; it has to do with the labor pool from which they are drawn. "From a social point of view... the most important fact about World War II was that women who went to work were married and over thirty five."[3]

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[1]Elizabeth Janeway, Unpublished address given in Cincinnati in June, 1976, entitled "On the Economic System of the Future." A xerox of her speech was supplied to be by Ms. Janeway.

[2]William Chafe, "Looking Backward in Order to Look Forward," in Women and the American Economy: A Look to the 1980s ed. by Juanita Kreps (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 12.

[3]Chafe, p. 16.

World War II brought women into the labor force, then. The ending of hostilties did not send them home again. "During the 1950s the employment of women increased at a rate four times faster than that of men and in 1960 twice as many women were on the job as in 1940. By the 1970s, 45 percent of all women over sixteen were in the labor force and there seemed little reason to doubt that the percentage would grow."[4]

The women who entered the labor force in ever-increasing numbers after World War II were wives and mothers, in many cases. (By 1970, almost two thirds of the female labor force were married women.)[5] These women combined family roles with paid employment, some of them working part time. (Three out of ten of today's workers work part-time.)[6] Many economists believe that the economic growth spurt which the United States achieved after World War II would have been impossible without the contributions of women. Carolyn Shaw Bell writes about the changing economic cycles that our country has experienced since World War II, including a long period of prosperity and a period of coinciding inflation and depression, and notes that none of these changes has reversed the trend for women to continue entering the labor force. Her point is not only that women have made a great

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[4]Chafe, p. 17.

[5]Peter Gabriel Filene, Him Her Self: Sex Roles in America (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975), p. 241.

[6]U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Division, Women's Bureau, "Twenty Facts About Women Workers," June, 1975 (revised).

contribution but that they have become an integral part of the American economy.

> ...the economic contributions of women have become more firmly embedded in national production, income, and employment than ever before.
> ...One simple, but rarely cited, conclusion, is that women were responsible for much of the growth in output which occurred over the same period when gross national product in real terms more than doubled. The volume of goods and services available to people during these years would have been far smaller without the labor services of women.[7]

It was the mothers of school-age children who first entered the labor force; the mothers of pre-school-age children have followed. Today over half of school age children have mothers in the labor force. Over one-third of children under six have mothers in the labor force.[8] The turn-of the-century pattern in which women worked until they were married and then retired from the labor force was replaced by a pattern in which women stopped work when their children were young and then returned. A new pattern moves toward an uninterrupted work history.

Demographer Valerie K. Oppenheimer comments on the trends in women's employment during this century by giving specific percentages while showing the overall shape and significance of what has been happening.

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[7]Carolyn Shaw Bell, "Economic Realities Anticipated," in Impact ERA: Limitations and Possibilities ed. by The Equal Rights Amendment Project and the California Commission on the Status of Women (Millbrook, California: Las Femmes Publishing, 1976), p. 78-79.

[8]Women's Bureau, Employment Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, "Highlights of Women's Employment and Education," May, 1975.

> ...the extent to which women have contributed to the economy outside their homes has changed considerably over the past 70 years. The change has been particularly great since 1940, when an accelerated growth in women's labor-force participation began. By 1970, 50% of American women 18-64 were in the labor force compared with 30% in 1940 and 20% in 1900....Even more impressive is the changing relationship between female labor-force participation and the family life cycle. In 1900 if the average woman worked at all during her lifetime - and not many did- it was before marriage and children; the proportion employed declined steadily with age. By 1940, the rates showed some changes in the degree of labor force participation, but the pattern by age was very similar to that of 1900. Starting in the 1940s, however, the traditional pattern was transformed. The first great departure was the entry or reentry of women past 35 into the labor force - those whose children, by and large - had reached school age. The 1950 Census shows a sharp increase over the 1940 Census in the work rates of women over 35 has persisted, so we find that in 1970 between 49% and 54% of women in the 35-59 age groups were in the labor force.
>
> A second trend, starting in the 1950s but picking up momentum since then, has been the increased labor-force participation of younger married women, including women with pre-school children....[9]

Clearly, women are working for pay more than they ever have before. The question of why women have increasingly sought paid employment warrents further discussion here. Partly, of course, women's choice of paid employment was probably connected with the decrease of available productive work that was discussed in the previous chapter. Economist T. Aldrich Finegan summarizes several reasons in this way:

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[9]Valerie K. Oppenheimer, "Demographic Influence in Female Employment and the Status of Women," in Changing Women in a Changing Society ed. by Joan Huber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 185.

> The rising labor force participation rate of married women is one of the most interesting long-run trends in the American Economy. The more important reasons for this trend include the growth in the real wages of women, the development of labor-saving innovations in the home, shifts in the occupational and industrial composition of employment, the shorter workweek, the falling birthrate (since 1960), the earlier school enrollment of children, and the rising educational attainment of women.[10]

Oppenheimer believes that particular kinds of demands in the job market (in the clerical and service sectors, for example) called for female labor in particular. "Although men and women are used interchangably in some jobs, most demand for labor has usually been sex specific.[11] Oppenheimer also states that, "the poor pay and poor advancement opportunities for most female occupations made them unattractive to men."[12] These comments are somewhat puzzling. Particular kinds of work and a particular kind of pay (low) were reserved for women. Why? The next section will explore this question.

WOMEN ARE SEGREGATED INTO THE LOWER-PAYING, LOWER-STATUS OCCUPATIONS

What has changed since World War II is that more and more women are in the workforce, especially wives and mothers. (A very recent estimate of wives' contributions

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[10]T. Aldrich Finegan, "Participation of Married Women in the Labor Force," in Sex, Discrimination, and the Division of Labor ed. by Cynthia B. Lloyd (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 52.

[11]Oppenheimer, p. 187.

[12]Oppenheimer, p. 195.

to the family income is that they contribute one-third.) What has not changed is that women continue to work in particular jobs where they are over-represented, sometimes referred to as "the female job ghetto."

What has been in the process of change over the last decade is attitudes about these dual realities. Our society has now begun to expect that women will be able to command the same incomes that men do. Partly the change in attitudes springs from the recognition of women's ever-increasing role in the labor force; partly new attitudes spring from the activities of the Women's Liberation Movement (although many social commentators see the Women's Liberation Movement as more a response to the changing situation of women than a cause of it); partly changes in attitudes spring from the recognition that women have, increasingly, the same responsibilities as breadwinners that men have. Marth Griffiths summarizes this point by saying:

> Thus, while men have been given jobs, high pay, and preferential promotion on the supposition that they are supporting wives and children, the facts show that this supposition is not true in a large number of cases. ...if the breadwinner argument is applied in fact rather than in theory, women can no longer be denied the right to the education, the jobs, the pay and the promotions which have traditionally gone to men. If women are in reality the providers, they should have the benefit of the law on their side. Nevertheless, despite recent gains, the facts are that women are still confined to low-paying jobs by virtue of their educational level, the type of career counseling they receive, and society's unwillingness to accept the real reasons why women work.
>
> Women work because of economic need, just as men do. Two-thirds of all women workers are either

> single, divorced, widowed, or separated or have husbands who earn less than $7,000 a year. Working wives employed full-time contribute almost two-fifths of their families income, and in many cases make the difference between a middle and low-income standard of living.[13]

Government charts included here reinforce Griffiths' point. They show that most women work from economic necessity and that they earn considerably less than men do. Other government data show that the wage gap between men and women is widening.

What does the working woman do? According to Economist Juanita Kreps, "the working woman is a typist, teacher, nurse, cashier or saleswoman." She goes on to elaborate her statement in this way:

> Few women participate in craft or kindred occupations; few find employment as professionals in engineering, law, or medicine. Within the industries where women do find employment, they are on the lower rungs of the occupations ladder. Despite their education, women have failed to make significant inroads into the most valuable market occupations.[14]

Kreps emphasizes that it is not necessarily the amount of education that women receive that holds them back, it is the kind of education they receive that limits their occupational possibilities.

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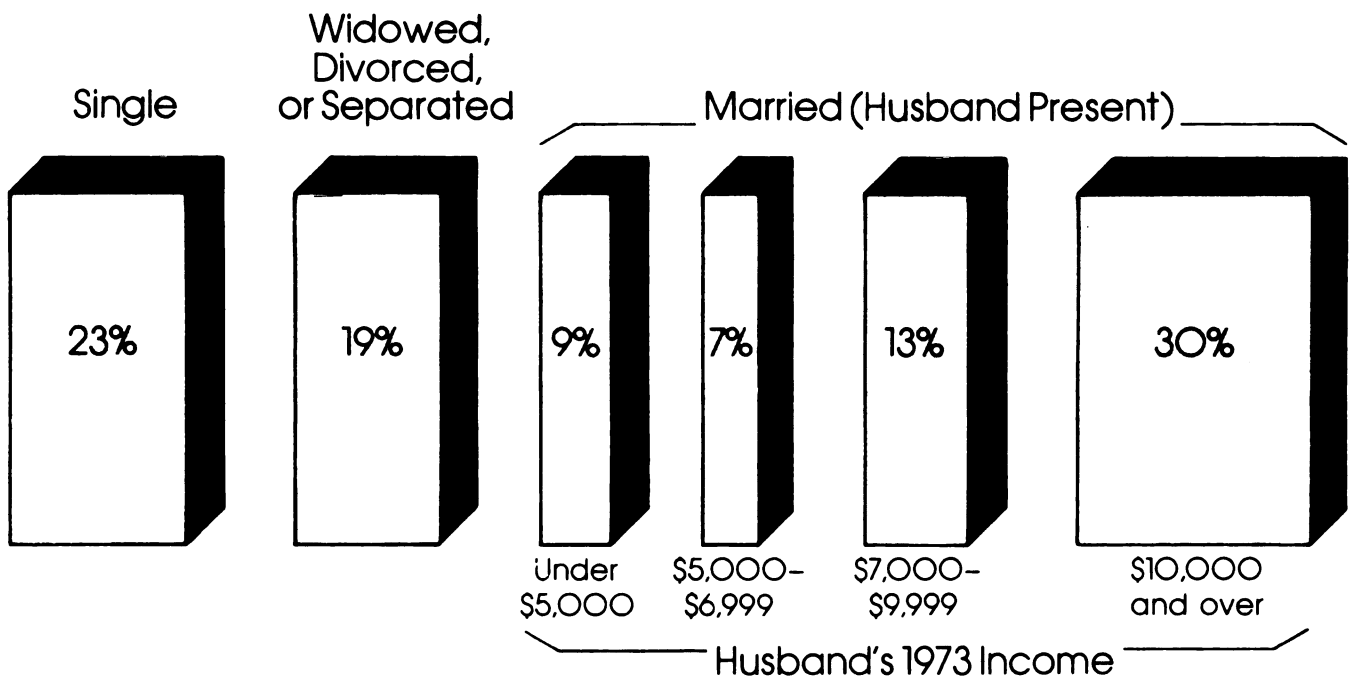
[13]Martha W. Griffiths, "Can We Still Afford Occupational Segregation?" Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Volume 1, Number 3, Part 2 (Spring, 1976), p. 8 and 9.

[14]Juanita Kreps, "Home Work, Market World and the Allocation of Time," Women and the American Economy: A Look to the 1980s (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 70.

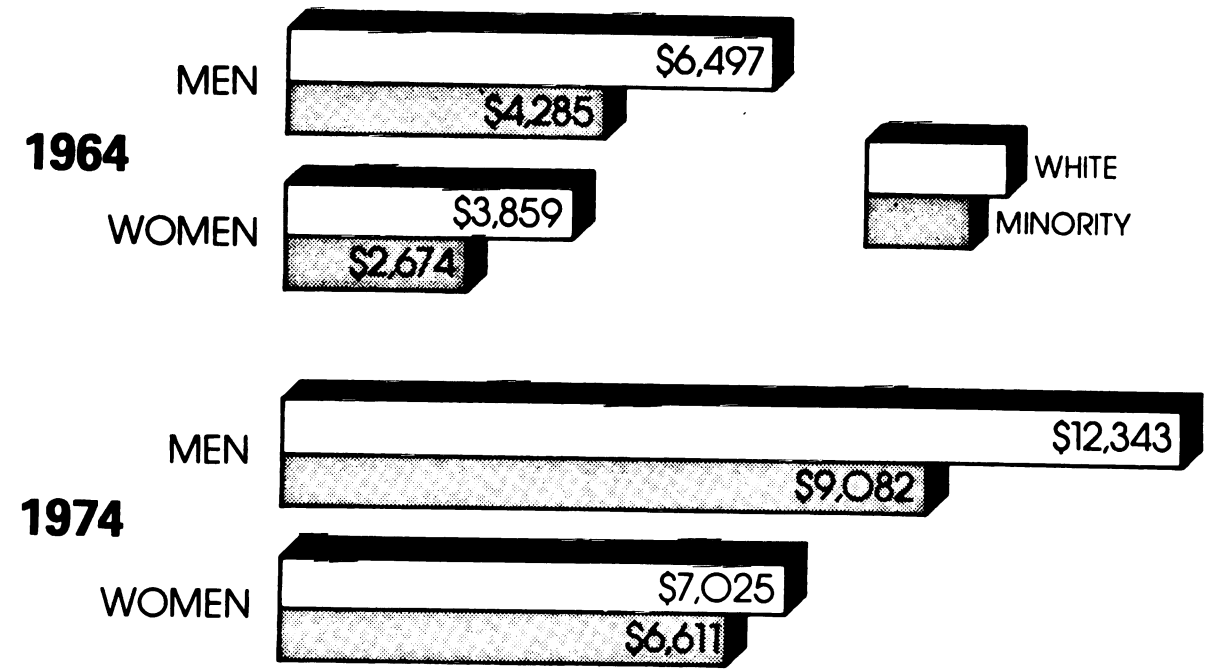
Most Women Work Because of Economic Need

(Women In The Labor Force, By Marital Status, March 1974)



Source: Prepared by the Women's Bureau, Employment Standards Administration, from data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

Fully Employed Women Continue To Earn Less Than Fully Employed Men of Either White or Minority* Races



*Includes all races other than white.

Source: Prepared by the Women's Bureau, Employment Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, from data published by the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

"We try harder and get paid less," is the slogan on a button sold at Women's Studies Conferences. A more objective way of expressing this idea would be to say that it is (at first) quite puzzling to note that women are working more than ever before, making a substantial contribution to their families' incomes and to the economic growth of the nation; yet women are at the same time earning relatively less than ever before. This phonomenon is explained in different ways by different economists. The work that women do - in almost all instances some kind of "service" work - deserves scrutiny. Economist Janet L. Norwood, after stressing the increasing percentage of women in the labor market, also emphasizes the decreasing monetary rewards that women have found there. She connects women's limited financial gains directly with the kinds of work that they do.

> ...Women still account for more than one-half of all workers in the service industries, especially in education, health, hotels, restaurants, and private households. In other industrial categories, women are still concentrated in large numbers in such subgroups as clothing manufacture and general merchandise. The BLS data show that in 1974 close to 70 percent of all sales workers and almost 78 percent of all clerical staff were women. Women represented 81 percent of all librarians; 93 percent of all nurses, diaticians, and therapists; 60 percent of all social workers, 70 percent of all elementary and secondary school teachers...Unfortunately, the female-intensive occupations and industries all tend to fall at the low end of the wage scale.[15]

And if women are over represented in some occupations (the lower-paying ones), they are under-represented in those occupations that pay relatively well, as the following chart

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[15]Janet L. Norwood, "Presentation V," Signs, Volume 1, Number 3, Part 2 (Spring, 1976), p. 278.

entitled, "Women Are Underrepresented as Managers and Skilled Craft Workers" illustrates.

Carolyn Shaw Bell succinctly summarizes the situation that has held women's wages down, even though their participation in the work force continues to increase. She and other economists describe a situation in which there have been (and continue to be) essentially two separate and unequal labor markets - one for men and one for women. Women, then, have over-competed for the jobs available to them. They have crowded into particular occupations (such as clerical or service work) where they are over-represented. Wages in these occupations have been kept low by the fact that the supply of labor far exceeds the demand.[16] To what degree women have done this by "choice," that is, because they were socialized to want to do particular kinds of work, and to what degree they have ended up in certain occupations because they were unable to enter others, is an area of some disagreement among economists and other social scientists. Bell write that:

> The primary cause of the worsening position of women workers in terms of earned income has been the influx of women into the labor force coupled with stringent occupational barriers. While wages have generally risen, the increase over the past decade for those types of employment known as "women's jobs" has fallen short of the average, simply because, with more women available, competition served to dampen the increases. Exactly the reverse took place in the occupations restricted to men, where wages rose much higher; the overall result was a widening of the earnings gap...
>
> The economist recognizes the persistent and worsening differential between earnings by sex as

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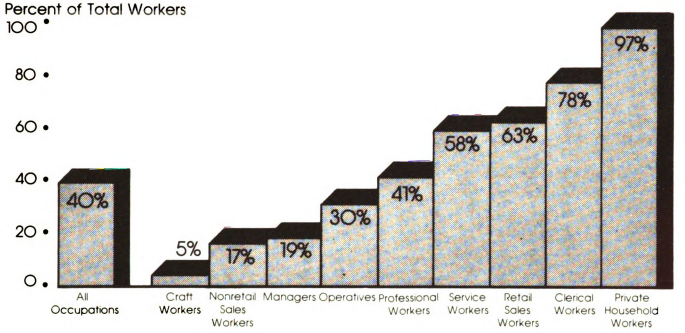
[16]Bell, p. 82-83.

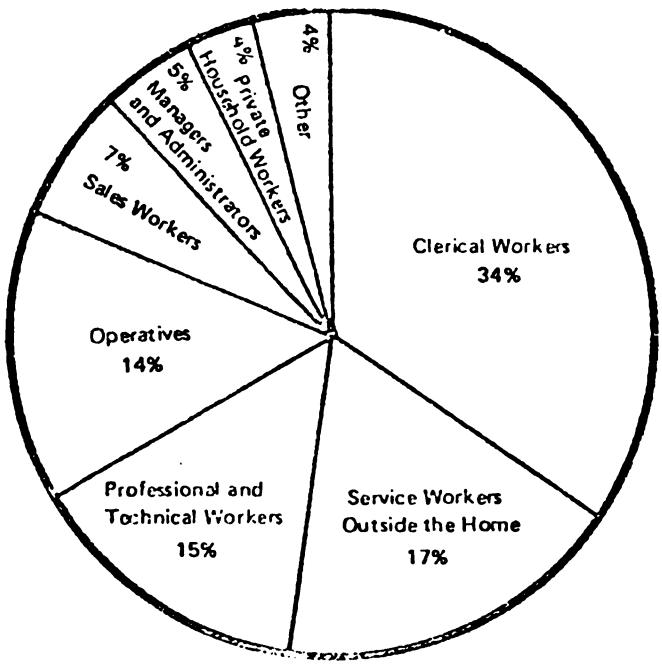
Women Are Underrepresented as Managers and Skilled Craft Workers



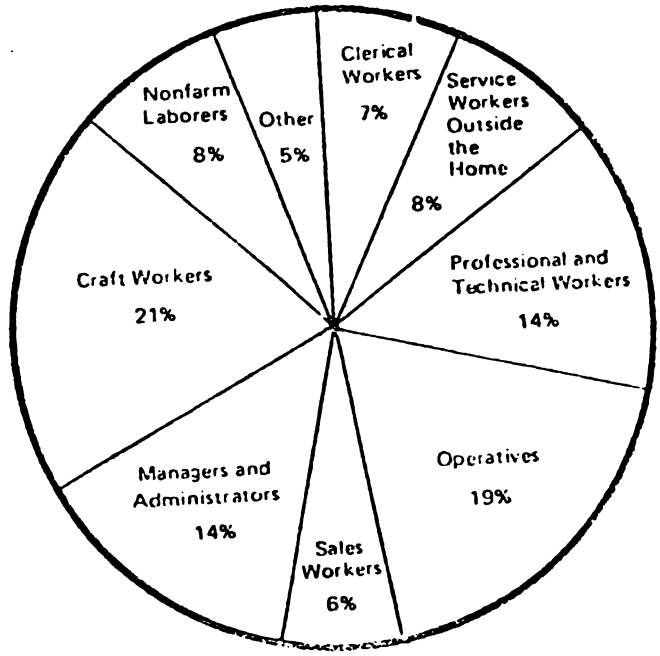
Source: Prepared by the Women's Bureau, Employment Standards Administration, from 1975 annual averages data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

> an indicator of separate markets, in which different prices can be maintained because there is little or no mobility between the two.[16]

In our everyday lives a pattern of occupational segregation is so familiar to most of us that we take for granted the realities we experience without, perhaps, constructing in our minds the pattern they fall into and its significance. We assume, for example, a world where doctors are men and nurses are women, where dentists are men and dental hygenists are women, where lawyers are men and legal secretaries are women, where pilots are men and stewardesses are women, and where administrators are men and teachers are women. The significance of the jobs being filled in this way is that, essentially, the top half of all occupations, in terms of money and status, is the world of male employment; the bottom half is the world of working women. A government chart makes evident the differences in the kinds of work that men and women do in our society.



Women



Men

"Women Workers Today," the same source from which the previous chart was taken, summarizes the situation of women's earnings in this way:

> Earnings. Among workers fully employed the year round, women's median earnings were less than three-fifths of those of men - $6,335 and $11,186, respectively, in 1973. These substantial differences may be due in part to the concentration of women in certain occupations, which could involve elements of discrimination. Earnings differentials may also reflect differences in the amount and type of training or education a worker has received, the skill level and demand for the particular occupation, the number of hours worked per week, and the lifetime work expeerience of the employee. The Council of Economic Advisors to the President estimated in 1973 that "a differential, perhaps on the order of 20 percent, between the earnings of men and women remains after adjusting for factors such as education, work experience during the year, and even lifelong work experience."[17]

These two sections on the woman as paid worker have established that women play as increasingly active part in the world of paid employment and that their concentration in particular occupations is a cause of the relatively low pay that they receive. The next section will establish a connection between women's family roles and their secondary position in the working world.

WOMEN'S SOCIALIZATION FOR FAMILY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES HAS BEEN TIED TO THEIR LOWER ASPIRATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT

The socialization of women is inextricably tied to their aspirations in the world of paid employment. Women have been socialized to expect to put their family roles

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[17]U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, "Women Workers Today," 1974 (revised).

first, to put a first priority on finding a good husband, and to expect that their deepest satisfactions will be found in their roles as wives and mothers. Women have been explicitly and implicitly taught to limit their aspirations toward achievement, lest such aspirations interfere with their realization of their affiliative goals and their performances in the domestic sphere, particularly as parents. Women have traditionally put the concerns of others before their own.

"Traditionally" is perhaps a key word here. The lifestyle for which women have been socialized - for which many girls continue to be socialized - is one that economists tell us is a vanishing one. The mother of a small, modern family needs to devote all of her energies to parenting for only a small percentage of her lifetime. Additional community responsibility for the rearing of children - the widespread availability of first-rate daycare, for example - could make total responsibility for childcare even in the early years an anachronism. Middle-aged women in our culture find themselves "out of a job" and many of them do not have the skills that would enable them to readily seek a new one. The reason that this is so is because they have focused their attentions on their work as housewife-mothers; they have not carefully examined the demands that the labor market might make of them, as men do in the formative years.

In the past, expectations connected with rigid sex-role stereotypes have influenced women to choose careers that

seemed compatible with family responsibilities, or not to seriously plan their careers at all in the belief that their "real" work would be that of wives and mothers. But many social scientists writing today predict that the dual-career family will increasingly be the model of the future. If this is the case, then socialization that rewards achievement in girls as well as boys (and correspondingly, socialization that rewards nurturance in boys as well as girls) would be a more utilitarian model than our present system - which encourages girls to concentrate on service and self-sacrifice, while boys concentrate on success in the world of money and power.[18]

There appears to be evidence that women have, in the recent past, experienced considerable conflict concerning the dual demands of mastering those attributes which are necessary in our culture for occupational success, and at the same time those which our culture has labeled as "feminine." The research of Broverman and others indicates that counselors share the general prejudices of our culture about appropriate

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[18]Substantial work has been done in the area of children's books (especially readers) and their effect of reinforcing stereotyped sex roles. See, for example, Lenore J. Weitzman et al., "Sex Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschoool Children," (paper delivered at the American Sociological Association meeting, Denver, Col., September 2, 1971) or Women on Words and Images, Dick and Jane as Victims: Sex Sterotyping in Children's Readers (Princeton, N.J.: National Association of Women Central New Jersey Chapter, 1972).

sex-typed behavior. These psychologists found in their study that there was high agreement among clinicians as to the attributes characterizing healthy adult men, healthy adult women, and healthy adults, sex unspecified, and that the attributes that the clinicians described as healthy for adult men were the same as those that they described as healthy for adults, sex unspecified, but different from those that they described as healthy for adult females. Logically, this would leave women with the choice of behaving as healthy, unfeminine adults or unhealthy but feminine women. Broverman expressed the dilemma for women in this way:

> ...Acceptance of an adjustment notion of health, then, places women in the conflictual position of having to decide whether to exhibit those positive characteristics considered desirable for men and adults, and thus have their "femininity" questioned, that is, to be deviant in terms of being a woman; or to behave in the prescribed feminine manner, accept second-class status, and possibly live a lie to boot...
>
> Thus, while American society continually emphasizes equality of opportunity and freedom of choice, social pressures toward conformity to the sex-role stereotypes tend to restrict the actual career choices open to women, and, to a lesser extent, men.[19]

Women, then, have not only set lesser career goals because they assumed they would not be the primary breadwinners and their time would be occupied primarily with domestic responsibilities. They also have set lesser career goals because they were socialized into thinking

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[19]Inge K. Broverman, Donald M. Broverman, Frank E. Clarkson, Paul S. Rosenkrantz, and Susan R. Vogal, "Sex-Role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgement of Mental Health," Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 34:1, 1970, pp. 1-7.

that the independent, assertive behavior which some occupations demand is "unfeminine."[20]

While today there is a new effort to train women for the professions, this has been the case for only a very few years. A study done by Alice Rossi in the early 1960s showed that the fear of career interference with family responsibilities stopped many women from pursuing careers in medicine and science, while a concern about femininity stopped women from pursuing careers in engineering. Parents' influences were shown to be an important factor in the career goals of their children.

> The "obstacles" women perceive concerning a choice of engineering as a career goal are thus factors operating much earlier in life than those concerning a choice of medicine or science. Parents discourage in their daughters while they encourage in their sons the interests and hobbies that precede, by many years, a choice of engineering as a career goal. A long childhood of learning "appropriate" sex role behavior militates against American girls' acquiring the interests and skills that might start them on a path leading to careers in engineering. In contrast, the barriers to a choice of medicine and science operate at a somewhat later point in the life span. These are careers they believe would conflict with feminine skills and interests.[21]

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[20]The term "lesser" as used here demands some clarification. It is used to indicate that women have traditionally chosen jobs that are less rewarding in terms of money and status than those chosen by men. It can certainly be argued that many of the occupations that women have chosen are of great value to society (teaching, for example) and that their rewards should be comensurate with their worth.

[21]Rossi, Alice, "Barriers to Career Choice," in Readings on the Psychology of Women (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) p. 77.

Philip Slater comments articulately on the kinds of limits that rigid sex-role stereotypes have set on female achievement, echoing the central point of Broverman's study; society has been structured in such a way that women have been forced to make career choices that defined them as achieving and masculine or feminine and unambitious.

> It should be emphasized, then that when we talk of "masculine" and "feminine" we are referring only to the ways in which these are customarily defined in our culture, and since sex role definitions change from time to time there is ample room for confusion. If women behave in ways that seem imitative of men, we call this masculine, but if customs change....One suddenly realizes that we have stumbled on a powerfule weapon for "keeping women in their place."[22]

Psychologist Judith Bardwick writes about how women have often coped with a kind of double bind message from society. Women, encouraged toward nurturing and affiliative behavior while at the same time aware of the rewards that society offers for "masculine" achievement, have often chosen to achieve <u>through</u> the traditional feminine role. Such women have sought a special kind of feminine "success" - success in their performance of their domestic, nurturing or affiliative roles. Such success becomes harder and harder to "earn" at a time when the housewife-mother role is steadily shrinking.

Nineteenth-century literature - reflecting a culture that idealized women and created separate spheres for the two sexes - is fraught with heroines who maginificantly

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[22]Philip Slater, <u>The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point</u> (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) p. 71.

performed (or sometimes over-performed) their feminine role. Self-sacrifice, for example, is a theme that runs through both George Eliot's life and her works. One wonders if the deaths or suicides which figure so prominently in literature by and about women is not the ultimate manifestation of triumphant selflessness. Nora, in Ibsen's The Doll's House, for example, considers suicide in order to save her husband Torvald, and is shocked to learn that his primary interest is in his career and that he has relatively little interest in saving her.

Bardwick describes a central conflict of women - and their adaptation to it - in this way:

> Conflict is the simultaneous desire to achieve a stable heterosexual relationship (and the rest of the female's traditional responsibilities and satisfactions) and to participate fully in competitive achievement and succeed. Conflict in this sense, is understandable as a vying between traditional and nontraditional roles, between affiliative and achievement motives. (Most women resolve this potential difficulty by defining affiliation as achievement.)[23]

To "define affiliation as achievement" is to invest heavily in the wife-mother role, while at the same time relinquishing claims to success in the world of paid employment. If the authors of the children's books included in this study believe this to be a useful strategy, then they will show full-time homemakers enjoying the intimacy and approval of the families for whom they have foresaken the

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[23] Judith M. Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan, "Ambivalence: the Socialization of Women" Readings on the Psychology of Women (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

world of paid employment; if they do not believe this to be a sound course to follow, they are more likely to show employed women functioning as happy wives and mothers than unemployed ones do. The children's books should indicate what some women writing today (and presumably influencing their young readers to some degree) consider to be the most likely aveneus for women's success.

It should be noted here that not only contemporary psychologists and sociologists believe that the way we have socialized women is counter-productive to their achievement, economists express this perspective as well. Elizabeth Sawhill, for example, points out that socializing women in such a way that they do not have saleable skills makes them incompetent to perform one of the jobs that society expects of a good parent - the financial support of children. Sawhill remarks that:

> Women at all economic levels continue to marry and have children on the assumption that someone else will provide for the children. About one-third of these women are going to face the prospect of divorce at some point in their lives, and an even greater proportion will be divorced among those who are least prepared to cope in terms of education and financial resources. If more young women were made aware of this risk, they might make a different set of decisions about their own education, work experience, and childbearing. They might become more aggressive about insisting on their fair share of the better-paid jobs which they have been led to believe they are not qualified for or are not welcome to enter.[24]

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[24]Isabel Sawhill, "Discrimination and Poverty Among Women Who Head Families," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Volume 1, Number 3, Part 2 (Spring, 1976), p. 211.

Women's aspirations for careers and paid employment are changing; as more women enter the labor force and stay for longer periods of time, they begin to view the role of paid worker as a primary, rather than a secondary one.

In the past, and indeed in the present, the fact that women defined themselves primarily as wives and mothers meant that they could be persuaded into the job market when they were needed, to function as "secondary workers," who would take less desirable jobs for less pay, and then return home to their "real job" when they were no longer needed. Political scientist Kristen Amundsen summarizes the way that women functioned as a "reserve labor force" in our society.

> It must be understood that the role of housewife is inextricably tied to the role of female employee. The sexual dualism on the labor market is in no small measure due to the acceptance by women of the former role as an - or the essential one. The differently structured set of opportunities offered women are defended on the basis of this ideology, at the same time that the supply of women to the job market can be more easily expanded and constricted because, presumably, women can always return to "home base." New job opportunities for women come only during periods of a tight labor market, when the pool of male labor is drying up. Women then constitute a reserve labor force, to be used if and when male employers, and not the workers themselves, find it opportune.[25]

While there appears to be ample evidence that women have, in the past, functioned as a kind of reserve labor force, to be lured to the marketplace with offers of "good"

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[25]Kisten Amundsen, The Silenced Majority (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 53.

pay, good working conditions, or appeals to patriotic duty, there begins to be a growing body of evidence that suggests that women are increasingly identifying themselves as workers as well as wives and mothers. Demographer Valerie Oppenheimer emphasized this point at a conference for businessmen and social scientists at Columbia University.

> ...if women at all stages of the family life cycle are working in every greater numbers, it is inevitable that many are going to stop viewing work as a brief interlude in a long life devoted to their families. Instead, they will start to look upon work as a possible lifetime activity, interrupted at times, perhaps, but nevertheless one of their major adult roles.
>
> Thus, it is unlikely that women will continue to be satisfied with the kinds of jobs that used to be good enough for an interim period. As long as work was of secondary importance, women's work goals remained limited and the characteristics of women's jobs that make them most unattractive to men - poor pay and poor advancement opportunities - did not cause a great deal of dissatisfaction. However, as work becomes more important to women, and to their families as well, the more irritating will become the poor pay and the lack of opportunities so typical of female jobs.[26]

Without doubt, today's high unemployment rate is partly explained by the increasing movement of women into the labor market. They do not withdraw from the labor pool any longer; they persist in their search for paid employment.

Women can be expected to be more assertive about employment opportunities in the decades to come, since they become increasingly aware that, married or not, they might still reasonably assume that they will have a life-

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[26]Valerie K. Oppenheimer, "A Sociologist's Skepticism," in Corporate Lib: Women's Challenge to Management ed. by Eli Ginzberg and Alice M. Yohalem (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1973), p. 35.

time of labor force attachment. The reality remains, however, that women still do have primary responsibility for housework, whether they are working for pay or not. Juanita Kreps remarks that:

> Throughout three quarters of a century of women's rapid movement into market activities, their responsibility for home work has changed very little. Improvements in technology and reduced family size have lowered the time necessary to manage a household, tho the amount of time necessary for such duties is by no means trivial. The social convention that it is woman's responsibility - many would say her primary responsibility - to manage and maintain the household continues to exercise a severe constraint on her choice of market activity.
>
> For many women, particularly those unable to afford the gadgetry required to increase the efficiency of household production or to reduce the costs of child care, or those who are unable to locate market work with the earnings or hours necessary to cover such costs, nonmarket obligations preclude any sort of market activity. For the woman who is able to take on market work, the paid job is an additional occupation which, when combined with home work, means that she is pursuing a "dual" career.[27]

"Dual career" takes on a new meaning here. Instead of referring to two people within one family working at paid employment, it refers to one person within the family (the woman) who holds two (or perhaps one and a half) jobs - unpaid housework and paid employment outside the home. Inevitably, some adaptions have to be made by those women who have opted to fill these two roles simultaneously.

The reality of women's increasingly active participation in the labor force has out-stripped both ideology and legislation in most industrialized nations. Even in Sweden, which

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[27]Juanita Kreps, "Home Work, Market Work & The Allocation of Time," in Women and the American Economy, ed by Kreps (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 68.

has shown its commitment to women's employment through such legislation as paid maternity (or paternity) leave, pay for the mother (or father) who does parentwork in the home, special programs to help women improve their job skills, and taxation of a man and a woman, married or unmarried, at the same rate (so that a working wife's income is not eaten up by being taxed at the rate of her husband's income) - even in Sweden, where there is both an ideological and legislative commitment to equality for the sexes, the evidence indicates that women still do the major share of the housework. Nancy Smith Barrett comments upon this:

> Most studies show that, even in those countries with the most advanced ideologies, working women do most of the housework. Thus, labor force participation produces a double burden. (One) study of household activity of women shows that the average woman working full-time outside the home devotes approximately 30 hours per week to housework. If one takes into account the time spent going to and from work as well as time spent on the job, this suggests that the average working woman has practically no leisure. Not only is she overworked, but the unequal distribution of household responsibilities between the spouses is likely to produce resentment and marital tension that ultimately generate unfavorable attitudes toward the wife's career within the family as a whole.
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> In none of the countries of Western Europe, the United States, or Canada has there been a radical shift in the assignment of household responsibilities by sex, even though it has been widely recognized (although officially stated only in the more progressive societies) that this must precede any serious change in the labor force status of women. This has meant that women are more often forced to interrupt their labor force activity during the peak years of child-care, take part-time work, or search for work with flexible hours.[28]

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[28]Nancy Smith Barrett "Women in Industrial Society," in Economic Independence for Women.

If women must operate on the contingency basis that Barrett suggests, if they must look for part-time work, or drop out of the labor force during the years when their children are very young, or adopt flexible work hours, they are clearly at a disadvantage competing in a labor market which is structured around the assumption that "real," that is full-time, well-paid, upwardly mobile workers, will be men, who do not often deal with the same contingencies.

Presently women are limited in the job market and in the labor force in a way that men are not. Not only the realities of the additional domestic responsibilities that marriage and maternity bring to women, but even the possibility of their marriage and/or maternity, have caused employers to view them as less potentially productive workers. One would expect to find women dealing with the implications of this situation in the children's books included in this study, for the mothers in these books have children (the protagonists) who are adolescent or pre-adolescent. Except for those who also have younger children, this means that the mothers in these children's books have, in a sense, "completed" one job - they have raised their children to a point where the children can be relatively self-sufficient. Their problem, then, might be whether they themselves can be self-sufficient. Do they have the resources to seek other employment if they wish to do so - and do they wish to do so? Or are they already gainfully employed? Because our culture has encouraged women to invest highly

in motherhood, and because that is not a job that occupies a full lifetime, one can expect that many mothers in the situation of those in the children's books included in this study will be dealing with a crisis in their own identities, as they strive to shift from defining themselves primarily in their affiliative and nurturing roles to defining themselves as paid workers.

The fact that ever-increasing numbers of women seek employment in the paid labor force undoubtedly puts new pressures on women who choose to remain at home. One might expect to find evidence of these pressures on the protagonists' mothers in the books included in this study.

Summary

This chapter has focused on four different realities about women as paid workers. Women are working in ever-increasing numbers. Most women are segregated into lower-paying, lower-status occupations. The socialization of women for family roles and responsibilities has limited their aspirations for careers and paid employment. Women's aspirations for careers and paid employment are changing; in the last decade there has been increasing cultural permission (indeed, to some extent, cultural pressure) for women to achieve in the world of paid employment.

The mothers of the protagonists in the books included in this study would have been enculturated at a time when the role of homemaker was encouraged by our society. But they reach middle age at a time when many forces combine to

make paid employment more and more desirable for women. One might reasonably expect that their attitudes toward their roles as workers, as full-time housewives or as dual career housewife-workers, would be affected by the changing realities and attitudes of our culture. How "realistic" is this contemporary realistic fiction for children? Does it reflect the conflict and confusion about the roles of women that women in our culture are experiencing? The second half of this study will focus on such questions. The next chapter is a discussion of the role of woman as mother.

CHAPTER III

THE WOMAN AS MOTHER

Just as there has been considerable change in the roles of the woman as housewife and as paid worker, with the actual productive work of the home considerably reduced by modern technology and with women entering the labor market in ever-increasing numbers, there begins to be change in our cultural realities and attitudes in regard to the role of woman as mother. This particular role is so heavily invested with emotion, however, that it is more difficult to discuss with objectivity than are the roles of housewife or paid worker.

The mother role has been romanticized for centuries, and romaticized in a particular kind of way since the Victorian era, when technology took much of woman's productive work out of the home and a stronger emphasis on the mother role was used as an explanation of woman's special status. The role has been debunked, in both non-fiction and fiction, Philip Wylie's GENERATION OF VIPERS and Philip Roth's PORTNOY'S COMPLAINT being two of the more notable examples. Most recently the mother role has been questioned by women themselves, many of whom believe that the price they pay for a kind of reverence and awe, on the

one hand, is to be labeled as "special" or "different" (or even less dependable) workers on the other, and therefore excluded from the avenues to power and occupational success that are open to men. In the very widely read earlier editions of Dr. Spock's CHILDCARE, for example, mothers were strongly discouraged from working while their children were young. Many women today insist that mothers should have the same opportunities to work that fathers do; they believe that motherhood has been used as a way to harness women to the home and keep them out of the job market.

Daycare and abortion are both highly controversial issues in contemporary society. This is surely because as a culture, we have not yet clarified what motherhood is and what is is not in our collective value system. Ambiguities and contradictions are everywhere. Motherhood is still acclaimed as perhaps the most important work there is, while at the same time there is considerable pressure on women to have smaller families because of population considerations. Women grow up with the idea that being good mothers will be the central focus of their lives; yet motherhood as a "job" can be expected to take up only a decade (or at most two) of a lifespan that now stretches into the seventies. The care of the nation's children is declared to be a high national priority; yet "welfare mothers" live and raise their children on a budget that is minimal. The conditions for raising children have changed considerably over the last few decades, as an increasingly mobile population makes the

proximity of an extended family to aid in the task more and more unlikely, yet we have not redefined our goals and our methods for achieving them in terms of the new realities that the nation's children are born into.

There seems little question that today's women receive a number of mixed messages about their roles. They must raise their children for independence and then let them go; yet they themselves are unlikely to be independent in their middle and latter years if they have invested all of their resources in motherhood. They must insure that their children are adequately supported; yet the increasing instability of the nuclear family means that an exclusive reliance on a male breadwinner is dysfunctional.

The prevailing cultural attitude still seems to be that a "good mother" does not leave her children when they are young, but that a "good mother" will leave them alone when they are older. If women are to meet both of these definitions of good mothering, they must be able to make a rapid transition in the middle years from a primarily nurturing role to a primarily independent one. Yet options are limited by the middle of a lifetime; most careers demand an investment of time and energies well before that.

Central to all the contradictions and ambiguities that I have so far discussed is the question of maternal employment. There is evidence that our cultural attitudes are undergoing change in that area. We seem to be moving from a culture in which employed mothers were on the defensive

to one in which non-employed mothers are. This is one of the many interesting points that Hoffman and Nye make in their new edition of their book WORKING MOTHERS. Hoffman and Nye also stress the need for new research that will answer some of the questions whose answers we have taken for granted in the past. They write that, "The questions still unanswered and the new ones that are arising seem to indicate that behavioral scientists should be readying their theoretical and conceptual tools for the challenges presented."[1]

In order to better understand changing realities and changing attitudes in regard to the role of mother, it seems useful to briefly examine the attitudes toward that role that existed in our culture in previous decades. In the post World War II era, when modern technology made possible a reduction of the workload for housewives, one response that these women made, as was mentioned earlier, was to have more children. A family of four became a kind of national ideal. (Paid employment and volunteer work were other alternatives that women pursued.) "Femininity" at that time, was defined by many psychologists as identical with maternity. The "real woman" wanted children (as well as a dependent status) according to many social scientists writing during that era. Only "masculine" women wanted achievement. In a book that was widely read at that time, MODERN WOMAN, THE LOST SEX, the authors, Ferinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnam, M.D., described the "feminine mother"

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[1]Lois Wladis Hoffman and F. Ivan Nye, Working Mothers (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1974), p. 232.

in this way:

> ...Having children is to her the most natural thing possible, and it would never occur to her to have any doubts about it. When she hears someone question the advisability of having children she is bewildered unless she is told of some trenchant medical reason. Then she does feel sorry for the woman deprived. If a woman does not have children, she asks ingenuously, what is everything all about for her?
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> Women with one or no children, excluding from consideration those with adverse organic conditions (present in few instances), are, with occasional exceptions, emotionally disoriented. That is to say, they are unhappy women, whatever may be their conscious testimony to the contrary.[2]

It almost goes without saying that many contemporary social scientists, as well as many modern women, would question the assumptions that underlie what was once written by Lundberg and Farnham, although their basic tenets were questioned very little at the time that their book was first published. Another book written during the same era, THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN by Helene Deutsch, is now available in paperback in two volumes. It too reflects a perspective that was not unusual during the post World War II era, one that is being challenged on many fronts in our contemporary society. Writing in 1945, Deutsch contrasted "good" and "bad" mothers in this way:

> Even psychically healthy women do not all experience motherliness in the same manner. But in the innumerable individual variations two types can be discerned: one type is the woman who awakens to a new life through her child without having the feeling of a loss. Such a woman develops her charm and beauty only after her first child is born. The

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[2] Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnam, Modern Woman, the Last Sex (New York: Universal Library, 1947), p. 319.

> other type is the woman who from the first feels a kind of depersonalization in her relation to her child. Usually such a woman has spent her affectivity on other values (eroticism, art, or masculine aspirations) or this affectivity was too poor or ambivalent originally and cannot stand a new emotional burden. The first type expands her ego through her child, the second feels restricted and impoverished.[3]

It would be unlikely that anyone writing today, of course, would question that women should invest their energies in "art or masculine aspirations" or suggest that women who choose to do so would make bad mothers. (Even more unlikely, in our post Kinsey and Masters and Johnson era, would be any suggestion that a woman should not invest her energies in the erotic. Even THE TOTAL WOMAN, a book which surely supports a kind of status quo in terms of sex roles, puts considerable emphasis on sex; it has been ridiculed by critics for the manner in which it does exactly that.) One must look to the writing about motherhood of the early post World War II era not only for contrast with the writing of today; one must also look to the romanticized tone of the earlier writing for the reason that the writing that has followed has sounded so outspoken and strident. The myth of mother as a kind of modern day martyr has elicited some strong debunking responses. In the following autobiographical account, included in Judith Bardwick's READINGS ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN, a young mother who is struggling to take care of two pre-school

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[3]Helene Deutsch, The Psychology of Women (New York: Bantam, 1973), p. 58.

children in New York City clearly shows her resentment, not only of her predicament - she has a job to do without the resources that would enable her success - but also of the way that the economic realities of her predicament are buried in sanctimonious attitudes and rhetoric.

> "...I can't take care of two children on fifteen dollars a week. Let him do it. He can have them right now."
> ..."You can't desert your children. That's against the law."
> "How can I be deserting them" I'm giving them to their father."
> "But you can't do that! You're their mother." People, especially those without children, have a way of saying "mother" that I find incredible. They manage to pronounce a halo around it..."[4]

The tone is also notable in John Holt's book ESCAPE FROM CHILDHOOD, although his emphasis, throughout his book, is more on the fact that an overemphasis on motherhood is dsyfunctional for the child than it is on the liabilities for the parent. Like many other contemporary commentators on the social scene who question the healthiness of making children the raison d'etre of one's existence, Holt seems to feel that fairly strong language is needed in order to cut through the sentimentality of previous rhetoric.[5]

> Modern childhood is an extraordinary emotional and financial burden. And as this burden has become heavier beyond anyone's wildest imaginings, parents have been told more insistently that they have a duty to love their children, and the children that they have a duty to love their parents.

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[4]Joanna Clark, "Motherhood," in Readings on the Psychology of Women ed. by Judith M. Barwick (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 130.

[5]When Holt spoke to a seminar at Michigan State University which I attended, he expressed the belief that children need adults' respect even more than they need their love.

> We lock the young and old into this extraordinarily tense and troublesome relationship, and then tell them that they have to like it, even love it, and that if they don't they are bad or wrong or sick. There is no legitimate way for parents, staggering under this burden, to admit without shame or guilt that they don't much like these young people who live in their house, worry them half to death, and soak up most of their money, or that they wish they had never had them in the first place, or that they could have had something different. The children on their part are expected to be grateful for what they did not ask for and often do not want.[6]

Even in THE FUTURE OF MOTHERHOOD, an extensively documented, scholarly book by sociologist Jessie Bernard, the tone is an outspoken one. Bernard challenges the way that motherhood has been romaticized in the past at the same time that she points out the difficulties of doing the job well for the mother of the present.

> But never until this very historical moment have women rebelled as many are now doing against the very way we institutionalize motherhood. They are daring to say that although they love children, they hate motherhood. That they object to having child care conceived as their only major activity. That they object to the isolation in which they must perform the role of mother, cut off from help, from one another, from the outside world. For the first time they are protesting the false aura of romanticism with which motherhood is endowed, keeping from young women its terrible "hidden underside" which is hardly talked about.[7]

Throughout her book, Bernard questions the "motherhood mystique" that she believes has pervaded our culture, distorting the role into a burlesque of self-sacrifice. Many of today's social scientists agree with her, and she cites a considerable amount of evidence to back up her points.

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[6]John Holt, Escape from Childhood (New York: Dutton, 1974), p. 70.

[7]Jessie Bernard, The Future of Motherhood (New York: Dial Press, 1974), p. 14.

Criticisms of unquestioned assumptions about motherhood and the ways that we are raising children can be found in many diverse sources. There is Ellen Peck's book, PRONTALISM: THE MYTH OF MOM AND APPLE PIE,[8] for example. There is an incisive satire, SHOULD CHILDREN STAY HOME WITH THEIR MOTHERS? by Hadley V. Baxendale.[9] There is a thoughtful article by Urie Bronfenbrenner ("The Origins of Alienation")[10] in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, in which he connects the increasing difficulties of our nation's children with the increasingly precarious position of women in our society. And there is the perspective of Shulamuth Firestone in THE DIALECTIC OF SEX,[11] who goes so far as to recommend extra-uterine conception in order to free women from a role that she believes has been used against them. Everything that is being written about woman's role as mother, I believe, can best be understood in two contexts. The sentimentalized perspective of the past is likely to elicit a debunking tone from those writing in the present, and the realities of motherhood today, which takes place in a context in which many previous social, financial, and psychological supports have vanished, is likely to elicit a tone of either anger or concern (depending on the situation and perspective of

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[8]Ellen Peck, Pronatalism: the Myth of Mom and Apple Pie (New York: Crowell, 1974)

[9]Hadley V. Baxendale, Are Children Neglecting Their Mothers? (Garden City, New York, 1974), p. 39.

[10]Urie Bronfenbrenner, "The Origins of Alienation," Scientific American 231:2 (1974), pp. 53-66.

[11]Shulamuth Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (New York: Bantam, 1971)

the writer).

It is against this background that one must examine what is being written about the paid employment of mothers, which, in contemporary society, is viewed in a much more positive light than it was immediately after World War II. At that time, since women's increased participation in the workforce and an increase in juvenile deliquency had coincided, it was hypothesized that the employment of mothers was a cause of juvenile deliquency. Subsequent research has proven this assumption to be false. Indeed, under certain conditions, which are discussed in detail in Hoffman and Nye's book WORKING MOTHERS, a mother's paid employment has been shown to have positive effects upon her children. In their Concluding Remarks, Hoffman and Nye enumerate some of these positive effects and suggest that we are moving toward a pattern in which it will be the nonworking mother who is an exception in our society.

> ...As the situation changes, however, and the social conditions leading to maternal employment become more compelling, the role of the nonemployed mother is likely to become subject to strain. Some of the data reported in this volume support the hypothesis that for families in certain situations - such as when the children are adolescent, or the mother is highly educated, or the mother is the sole support and economic resources are scarce - maternal employment has a positive effect....For example, ...data indicate that adolescent daughters of working mothers showed higher achievement patterns than did those of nonworking mothers, and elementary school children of full-time working mothers in a lower-class black sample showed better social adjustment on psychological tests and school records than did children of nonworking mothers... and among highly

> educated women, employment may increase martial satisfaction...employed women seem to have better health, although the casual sequence is not clear.[12]

Much of the research that is reviewed in Hoffman and Nye is directly relevant to the children's books included in this study. They report that maternal employment can have a positive effect when the children are adolescents, for example, and this is the age group of the protagonists of the forty-five children's books. They also report that maternal employment can have a positive effect when the mother is the sole support of the family, as is the case in several of these children's books. And their point about maternal employment having an especially positive effect upon adolescent daughters is directly relevant because the majority of these children's books written by women have female protagonists. One might reasonably expect that maternal employment will be fairly positively presented in the children's books included in this study.

Summary

In the first three chapters of this study I have reviewed the literature concerning the changing roles of women as housewives, paid workers, and mothers. My purpose in doing this was to establish what the "realities" of these roles are, as perceived by contemporary social scientists, so that the "realities" perceived by the authors of forty five children's books - works of contemporary realistic fiction-can be discussed against this background. I began this work with

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[12]Hoffman and Nye, p. 227.

the idea that contemporary realistic fiction often presents a negative image of the housewife and an impression that full-time housewives were often portrayed as hostile mothers in the books. An examination of the writing of contemporary social scientists has led me to believe that the housewife role is under increasingly critical scrutiny in our society, that the role of paid worker for women, including mothers, is gaining increasing approbation in our society, and that there is considerable ambivalance and confusion about the role of mother in our society, confusion and ambiviliance which is directly connected with notions of what work roles mothers ought to perform.

An investigation of how work roles connect with mothering in the children's books included in this study will indicate whether the authors' writing reflects the ideas about these roles that currently meet with some acceptance in our society. One might expect that the housewife role will be negatively presented in at least some of the books, that the role of paid worker might be positively presented (especially since the protagonists' are pre-adolescent or adolescent), and that there might be some ambiguity about the role of mother, reflecting the confusion of our society.

CHAPTER IV

EMPLOYED AND NON-EMPLOYED MOTHERS IN CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FICTION FOR CHILDREN

The previous three chapters have shown how contemporary social scientists view the roles of women as housewives, paid employees, and mothers. In this chapter the data in forty five books - contemporary realistic fiction for children - is analyzed in order to determine how the mothers' work roles, as either paid employees or housewives, relates to their roles as mothers. How have these contemporary authors treated connections between women's work roles and their roles as mothers?

Books included here have been published in paperback by American publishers since 1964. (All but two were published in hardcover first; the two books by Norma Klein were first published in Ms. magazine.) All the books included are by women authors, and the books have protagonists aged eleven to sixteen who are still living at home. Only books in which the action takes place in the home, with both mother and child present, were included. The settings are in the "here and now."

EMPLOYED MOTHERS

Three overall observations can be made about the books in which the mothers hold paid employment. The first observation is a very obvious one. In the "real world" today, more than half of the mothers of school-age children hold paid employment. The percentage has been over one half since 1969, and most of the books included in this study were published after that date. But only sixteen out of the forty five books (a little over one third) show the mothers holding paid employment. These books do not, therefore, reflect the full extent to which today's mothers are playing an active role in the labor force.

A second observation that can be made is that the jobs at which the mothers in these books are working do not accurately reflect the kinds of jobs at which most women today are working. (A socio-economic bias seems to operate here, since many of the families in the books are middle class or upper middle class.) While a little over a third of the women employed today work in clerical jobs, there is only one mother in these books shown to be employed in this kind of work. While at least 17 percent of the women employed today are working in service occupations, only two mothers are shown in the books in this kind of work. Thus only three of the books included in this study portray mothers doing the kind of work that over one-half of all women employed today are engaged in. (Three books do not give any information at all about the nature of the mothers' work.) Fourteen percent of today's employed women work as factory

operatives, and one mother in the books is so employed.

While only 15 percent of today's employed women work as professional or technical workers, and 5 percent work as managers and administrators, there are several books in which the mothers' jobs seem to fall into these higher status categories. The mother in DREAMS OF VICTORY works as a half-time kindergarten teacher. The mother in THE PHAEDRA COMPLEX is an advertising executive. The mother in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME is a photographer. The mother in STICKS AND STONES runs her own antique store. The mother in DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK edits a romance magazine. The mother in THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE is a dentist. The mother in REGGIE AND NILMA is an advertising copywriter, and the mother in KATE is a partner with her husband in running a family bookstore. It is worth noting that several of these jobs are centered in New York City; the fact that mothers are shown working in them perhaps indicates more about the experiences of the women who wrote the books than about the experiences of most women in contemporary society.

Paid employment, then, is somewhat romaticized in these books. The difficulties that women face in finding satisfying and remunerative work is given relatively little attention. But this theme is not ignored altogether.

The mother in NO EASY CIRCLE, a medical secretary who has been previously married to a highly-paid executive, does voice dissatisfaction with her work, but her primary concern seems to be with her relationships with men and, increasingly, as she matures, with her daughter. She does not seem to be

so much interested in a stronger work identity as with the opportunity not to work at all. It is clear that the factory work that the mother does in A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH is simply a means of economic survival. The texts indicate that the work the mothers do in (GEORGE), MEANING WELL, and THE NOONDAY FRIENDS (occupations not given) is not particularly satisfying. In THE NOONDAY FRIENDS the mother encourages her daughter to develop better job skills than she herself has, and in REGGIE AND NILMA, where the mother has a fairly highly-paid job as an advertising copywriter, she points out to her children that it is money that keeps them from the fate of another child in their neighborhood, who lives in neglect while his mother works as a hostess in a bar.

The third observation that can be made about the books in which the mothers hold paid employment is connected with the fact that several of the mothers are working at fairly high-status jobs. Thirteen of the sixteen books which show the mothers engaged in paid employment show positive or fairly positive ("mixed") interaction between the mothers and the protagonists. Research cited in Hoffman and Nye indicates that a mother's working is likely to enhance her relationship with her child if she likes to work - and it is surely much easier to like a job as a dentist, photographer or antique store owner than one as a secretary, factory worker, or domestic worker. One might expect, too, that employment in a fairly satisfying and high-status job would enhance the mother's sense of self-worth and put her in a

stronger position when relating to her children. She would also be in a position to buy goods and services that her absence from the home might make it helpful to purchase.

The "reality" portrayed in these books relative to the world of working women tends to be somewhat rosy. How is the "reality" of the woman who works at home as a housewife portrayed? An examination of the housewife role as presented in these books reveals some interesting contrasts to the generally positive presentation of the role of paid worker. Charts and summaries of charts that give data about working mothers in contemporary realistic fiction for children are included here. Discussion about the housewife role in the children's books and charts that give data in this area follow the information about working mothers.

SUMMARY OF DATA IN CHART I (WORKING MOTHERS: BOOKS IN WHICH THE FACT THAT THE MOTHER WORKS SEEMS TO CAUSE NO STRESS ON HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROTAGONIST)

There are ten books in which the mothers hold paid employment and in which the mothers' working does not seem to cause stress in their relationships with the protagonists.

In two of the books included in this chart, there are serious difficulties within the family, but they do not seem to be caused by the mother's working. In THE PHAEDRA COMPLEX, the mother seems to fear growing older and losing her attractiveness. She marries, leaves her work, and spends her time worrying about her new husband (a foreign correspondant) and the bond between her new husband and her adolescent

daughter. After she has a nervous breakdown she returns to work and the protagonist changes the way in which she relates to her step-father. In STICKS AND STONES the son experiences strong anxiety about his masculinity which he does not share with his mother.

Three of these mothers work part-time, which leaves them time and energy to deal with their domestic roles as well as their work roles.

One of these mothers works in a situation (helping her husband, an ex-engineer who lost his job in a recession, run a family inn) that is a logical extension of the traditional wife-mother role.

Two mothers are working when their husbands are not. In DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK, the protagonist's mother, a Ph.D. in English, edits a romance magazine to supply family income after her husband loses his job as a fund-raiser; she shows a cautious concern about her relationship with her husband while she is the breadwinner. At the end of the book her husband is re-employed, she is going to law school and the whole family takes responsibility for domestic tasks. In THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE, the mother and father seem to have a kind of role-sharing marriage. At the beginning of the book the mother works as a dentist while the father paints, cooks, and parents. After her husband leaves her work to re-locate with the family and decides that she will temporarily stay at home.

Two mothers do not seem to be working for financial

need. The mother in IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT seems to view her job dressing as a chicken for a supermarket as a kind of diversion. The chicken costume is probably symbolic, too, of the fact that the mother does not commit her considerable talents to a specific goal; she seems happy to parent, keep house, paint, and dress up once a week (surely enough to keep anyone busy). The mother's job in DREAMS OF VICTORY seems to offer her a welcome outlet for her competencies (which the text makes clear are not domestic, though her family humors her) as well as an opportunity to be at home when her daughter comes home from school. (She tells her daughter she named her Victory because she waited so long to have her.)

Two of the mothers in these books are divorced and one is single; they are all planning to re-marry. One of the mothers is separated; she is re-united with her husband at the end of the book.

Five of these mothers have only one child (the protagonist). In only one case (where the mother's workplace and home are the same) does the mother have a child younger than the protagonist.

Two of the protagonists are male; eight are female.

None of these mothers carries total responsibility for household work. Two have husbands who are willing to take equal responsibility. All have families who are willing helpers. All married mothers have good relationships with their husbands.

CHART I

WORKING MOTHERS

BOOKS IN WHICH THE FACT THAT THE MOTHER WORKS SEEMS TO CAUSE NO STRESS ON HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROTAGONIST

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S POSITION	MOTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD JOB	MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
Conford, Ellen. DREAMS OF VICTORY.	Half-time, kindergarten teacher.	Positive	Positive
Eyerly, Jeanette. THE PHADERA COMPLEX	Advertising executive.	Positive	Negative*
Hall, Lynn. STICKS AND STONES.	Runs her own antique shop.	Positive	Mixed**
Kerr, M. E. DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK.	Edits romance magazine.	Negative	Mixed***
Kerr, M. E. IF I LOVE YOU AM I TRAPPED FOREVER?	Works part-time for Welcome Wagon.	Positive	Positive
Klein, Norma. MOM, THE WOLF MAN AND ME.	Photographer.	Positive	Positive
Klein, Norma. IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT.	(Part-time) Dresses as chicken for supermarket promotion.	Positive	Positive
Sachs, Marilyn. THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE	Dentist.	Positive	Positive

CHART I (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S POSITION	MOTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD JOB	MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
Stoltz, Mary. BY THE HIGHWAY HOME.	Helps husband run family inn.	Positive	Positive
Tanner, Louise. REGGIE AND NILMA.	Advertising copywriter.	Positive	Mixed****

* Mother's fears about growing older and her re-marriage cause problems.

** Surface relationship cordial, but son has strong anxieties about his masculinity which he does not share with his mother.

*** Son has cordial relationship with mother, who he respects and cares about, but he does have a shakey sense of self-esteem. Father's unemployment, rather than mother's working, causes family strain.

**** Mother communicates well with children but has some problems with discipline. Children feel somewhat closer to their father.

CHART I (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	FINANCIAL NEED FOR MOTHER TO WORK	MOTHER MARRIED SINGLE DIVORCED	EVIDENCE OF PAID HOUSE-HOLD HELP	
Conford, Ellen. DREAMS OF VICTORY.	No	M	No	(Mother works only half-time.)
Eyerly, Jeanette. THE PHADERA COMPLEX.	Yes	D*	No	(Daughter helps.)
Hall, Lynn. STICKS AND STONES.	Yes	D**	No	(Son helps.)
Kerr, M. E. DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK.	Yes	M	Yes	(And at end of book entire family takes responsibility.)
Kerr, M. E. IF I LOVE YOU AM I TRAPPED FOREVER?	Yes	D	No.	(Mother works only part-time.)
Klein, Norma. MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME.	Yes	S***	No	(Casual Housekeeping standards.)
Klein, Norma. IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT.	No	M****	No	(Son helps with cooking.)
Sachs, Marilyn. THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE.	Yes	M	No	(Entire family helps; role-sharing marriage.)

CHART I (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	FINANCIAL NEED FOR MOTHER TO WORK	MOTHER MARRIED SINGLE DIVORCED	EVIDENCE OF PAID HOUSE-HOLD HELP
Stoltz, Mary. BY THE HIGHWAY HOME.	Yes	M	No (Housekeeping and family inn merge. Most of family helps.)
Tanner, Louise. REGGIE AND NILMA.	Yes	D	Yes

* Mother re-marries, leaves work, has nervous breakdown, returns to work.

** Mother plans to re-marry.

*** Mother plans to marry.

**** Parents are separated, but re-united at end of book.

Married mothers have positive relationships with husbands in all of these books.

CHART I (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	AGE AND SEX OF PROTAGONIST	AGES OF OTHER CHILDREN	DATE OF PUBLICATION	SETTING
Conford, Ellen. DREAMS OF VICTORY.	11, F	None	1973	Suburban
Eyerly, Jeanette. THE PHAEDRA COMPLEX.	15, F	None	1969	Suburban
Hall, Lynn. STICKS AND STONES.	15, M	None	1972	Buck Creek, Iowa
Kerr, M. E. DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK.	16, M	None	1972	New York City
Kerr, M. E. IF I LOVE YOU AM I TRAPPED FOREVER?	16, M	None	1973	Small town in NY State.
Klein, Norma. MOM, THE WOLF MAN AND ME.	11, F	None	1972	New York City
Klein, Norma. IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT	13, F	13, twin & older sib.	1973	Suburbs near New York City
Sachs, Marilyn. THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE.	11, F	14 & 16	1973	Lincoln, Nebraska, then New York City
Stolz, Mary. BY THE HIGHWAY HOME.	12, F	5? & 15?	1971	Vermont
Tanner, Louise. REGGIE AND NILMA.	14, F	17	1971	New York City

SUMMARY OF DATA IN CHART II (WORKING MOTHERS: BOOKS IN WHICH THE MOTHER'S WORK SEEMS TO CAUSE SOME STRESS ON HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROTAGONIST

There are six books in which the paid employment of the mother seems to cause some stress in her relationship with the protagonist.

In two books there are serious problems. In NO EASY CIRCLE the mother, who does not like her work and seems to need to confirm her attractiveness, seeks comfort in meaningless relationships with men and in alcohol. She seeks counseling for herself and her daughter. In A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH the protagonist becomes addicted to heroin, which is readily available in his neighborhood. Little reference to his mother's work is made in the book, but at one point she indicates that she feels over-extended, dealing with both the demands of family and factory. Overall, this mother is portrayed positively, but she does not know how to help or how to communicate with her son.

In two of these books the protagonists are somewhat resentful of the housekeeping responsibilities they must assume. In both cases they contrast their fate with that of their (badly behaved and spoiled) classmates whose parents do everything they can for them. These books are MEANING WELL and (GEORGE).

In both (GEORGE) and KATE, the mothers do not play the traditional housewife role. Throughout (GEORGE) the protagonist (or rather the imaginary? person who lives

inside the protagonist) makes fun of his mother's domestic expertise. In KATE the protagonist acknowledges that sometimes her mother will cook gourmet dinners, and sometimes they will all eat bread and cheese (which they like).

The mothers in KATE and (GEORGE) are definitely unique individuals; they are also happy. The other mothers in this group seem not so lucky. Poverty complicates life for the characters in THE NOONDAY FRIENDS and A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH; it is possibly also a factor in MEANING WELL. The mother in NO EASY CIRCLE seems to have no sense of identify or self-esteem.

There are no strained relationships with husbands in these books. Three of the mothers have good relationships with their husbands. Of the three who are divorced, one is planning re-marriage.

CHART II

CHART II

WORKING MOTHERS

BOOKS IN WHICH THE FACT THAT THE MOTHER'S WORK SEEM TO CAUSE STRESS ON HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROTAGONIST

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S POSITION	MOTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD JOB	MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
Childress, Alice. A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH.	Factory work.	Negative.	Mixed.***
Cole, Sheila. MEANING WELL.	Not given.	Not given.	Mixed.
Konigsburg, Elaine. (GEORGE).	Not given.	Not given.	Mixed.*
Little, Jean. KATE	Helps husband run family bookstore.	Positive.	Positive.**
Naylor, Patricia. NO EASY CIRCLE.	Medical technologist.	Negative.	Negative.***
Stolz, Mary. THE NOONDAY FRIENDS.	Not given.	Negative.	Mixed.

* Some good communication here, but protagonist is somewhat resentful of his domestic chores and his mother's lack of domestic expertise.

** Protagonist knows that she must be somewhat careful with her mother when she first comes home from work tired, but the mother is shown overall to be a spirited person whose relationship with both her daughter and her husband is enhanced by her work.

*** The protagonist of A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH is one of two protagonists with employed mothers who is having serious difficulties. He is addicted to heroin. The other protagonist experiencing serious problems is in the book STICKS AND STONES. The mother in NO EASY CIRCLE is dealing with strong insecurities, but her daughter, with help, is coping effectively.

CHART II (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	FINANCIAL NEED FOR MOTHER TO WORK	MOTHER MARRIED SINGLE DIVORCED	EVIDENCE OF PAID HOUSE-HOLD HELP	
Childress, Alice. A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH.	Yes	M*	No	(Mother indicates that she feels over-extended; poverty.)
Cole, Sheila. MEANING WELL.	Yes	D?	No	(Daughter somewhat reluctantly helps.)
Konigsburg, Elaine. (GEORGE).	Yes	D	No	(Son somewhat reluctantly helps.)
Little, Jean. KATE	?	M	No	(Casual household; mother tired when she first gets home.)
Naylor, Patricia. NO EASY CIRCLE.	Yes	D	No	(Mother assuages guilt feelings with housework.)
Stolz, Mary. THE NOONDAY FRIENDS.	Yes	M	No	(Mother and protagonist both over-extended; poverty.)

Common law marriage; mother needs to get a divorce from husband who deserted her earlier.

CHART II (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	AGE AND SEX OF PROTAGONIST	AGES OF OTHER CHILDREN	DATE OF PUBLICATION	SETTING
Childress, Alice. A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH.	13, M	None	1973	Harlem?
Cole, Sheila. MEANING WELL.	11, F	None	1974	Subrurban
Konigsburg, Elaine. (GEORGE).	11, M	6?	1970	Florida
Little, Jean. KATE	11, F	*	1971	Riverside. (Small community in Canada.)
Naylor, Particia. NO EASY CIRCLE.	15, F	None	1972	Suburbs of Baltimore
Stolz, Mary. THE NOONDAY FRIENDS.	11, F	11, 3?	1965	New York City

* Older sister is married and no longer living at home.

NON-EMPLOYED MOTHERS

Books in which the protagonists' mothers are not engaged in paid employment have been separated into two groups: those in which the mother and/or her child are experiencing serious difficulties and those in which they are not.

Among the books included in this study in which the mothers are not working for pay, several families are portrayed in which the mothers and/or their children are experiencing serious problems. Data about these families is summarized in the section which follows immediately. In most instances in which the mothers and/or their children are deeply troubled, the mothers do not have outlets for growth and achievement beyond their houses and families. In most instances the text also makes it clear that they also do not have positive relationships with their husbands. Deeply dissatisfied with the limits upon their own worlds, they try to expand their horizons by pushing their children toward achievement. The children, in turn, are resentful of the "hot potato" that has been handed them! They wish to be treated as individuals in their own right rather than as projections of their mothers' pygmalionesque ambitions.

In the books in which the non-employed mothers and/or their children are not experiencing serious difficulties, a few portray families in which the traditional roles work fairly effectively, some portray traditional families in which the mother has a saving sense of humor, and some are families in which the mothers pursue their own interests in

addition to serving their homes and families. Books that portray different kinds of mothers (in terms of both attitudes and activities) will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

SUMMARY OF DATA IN CHART III (NON-EMPLOYED MOTHERS: BOOKS IN WHICH THE PROTAGONIST OR HIS/HER MOTHER IS EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DIFFICULTY

There are thirteen books in which the mothers are not working for pay and either the protagonist and/or his/her mother are experiencing serious difficulties. In most of these books the mothers over-conform to traditional feminine roles. Several project their ambitions upon their children and try to achieve through them. DEENIE; THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T; DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER; THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN; GROWING UP IN A HURRY; and THE DREAM WATCHER are books in which the mother pushes her child or children in order to have the child live out the mother's own aspirations.

In only two of the books do the mothers have interests of their own. In DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER the mother has left behind a career as concert pianist in order to be a wife and mother; when she tells her husband that she wants to give piano lessons he rejects the idea. In LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK the mother is very much interested in politics. She definitely does not over-conform to the traditional feminine wife-mother role; she rejects it entirely and takes refuge in her books, and her husband begins to care about someone else.

Almost all of the mothers in this group have strained relationships with their husbands; three are in process of divorce. In one of the books where divorce is in progress, IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD, one might assume that the relationship between mother and daughter would improve once things were straightened out. This mother plans to go back to school and develop knowledge and skills that will lead to meaningful work. She is shown as a caring parent who wants to act in her own behalf as well as her children's.

Four of the mothers have only one child; nine have more than one. Nine of the protagonists are female and four are male.

All of these books are written in a serious tone. Two of the protagonists have nervous breakdowns (THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN and THE SUMMER BEFORE). Several of the children are very much alienated and estranged (THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T; ESCAPE FROM NOWHERE; THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE; GROWING UP IN A HURRY; AND THE DREAM WATCHER). Where the child is not deeply troubled, there is a positive relationship with the father (DEENIE; I, TRISSY; LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK).

CHART III

NON-EMPLOYED MOTHERS

BOOKS IN WHICH THE PROTAGONIST OR HIS/HER MOTHER ARE EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S OUTSIDE INTEREST	NATURE OF PROBLEM
Blume, Judy. DEENIE.	No	Mother projects ambitions onto two daughters, wants the protagonist to be a model. Constantly criticizes.
Blume, Judy. IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD.	No	Mother, who married young, feels stifled; daughter feels sorrow about her parents' coming divorce. Mother plans to go back to school.
Blume, Judy. THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T.	No	Mother's concern for upward mobility and attendant pressures on son cause him to develop serious stomach problems.
Colman, Hila. DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER.	Yes	Mother has nervous breakdown as her children grow more independent and her husband opposes her returning to a career in music.
Eyerly, Jeanette. ESCAPE FROM NOWHERE.	No	Father often absent becasue of career. Mother becomes addicted to alcohol; assuages guilt with bouts of housekeeping. Daughter experiments with drugs.
Hamilton, Virginia. THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN.	No	Father absent. (Parents separated?) Mother disturbed and completely absorbed in her son, who has a nervous breakdown.

CHART III (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S OUTSIDE INTEREST	NATURE OF PROBLEM
Holland, Isabelle. THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE.	No	Mother seems to have no identity. Marries four times. Son alienated and estranged. Seeks father figure.
Lee, Mildred. THE SKATING RINK.	No	Distant and demanding father. Overworked step-mother. Son conquers insecurity and overcomes stuttering.
Madison, Winifred. GROWING UP IN A HURRY.	No/then Yes	Mother both rejects and overcontrols daugher, who becomes pregnant and has an abortion. Ambitious mother's social sphere expands through oldest daughter's marriage.
Mazer, Norma. I, TRISSY.	No	Parents divorcing. Daughter feels anger at limited and unimaginative mother and sorrow about separation from father.
Stolz, Mary. LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK.	Yes	Mother rejects wife/mother role and isolates herself in books. Text implies that mother married because it was the "thing to do." Parents divorce.
Wersba, Barbara. THE DREAM WATCHER.	No	Dissatisfied mother lives in a dream world - a plastic "House and Garden" - and directs strong hostility at both her husband and her son, who is alienated and estranged.

CHART III (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S OUTSIDE INTEREST	NATURE OF PROBLEM
Windsor, Patricia. THE SUMMER BEFORE.	No	Mother, compulsive housekeeper, nags and over-controls daughter. Daughter has nervous breakdown after leaving home with boy her own age and seeing him killed in an automobile accident.

CHART III (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	SINGLE DIVORCED MARRIED	EMPTY SHELL OR STRAINED MARRIAGE	MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
Blume, Judy. DEENIE.	M*	No?	Negative
Blume, Judy. IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD.	M	Yes	Mixed
Blume, Judy. THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T.	M	Yes	Negative
Colman, Hila. DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER.	M	Yes	Mixed
Eyerly, Jeanette. ESCAPE FROM NOWHERE.	M	Yes	Negative
Hamilton, Virginia. THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN.	M	Yes	Negative
Holland, Isabelle. THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE.	D	Plans 4th marriage.	Negative
Lee, Mildred. THE SKATING RINK.	M	Yes	Mixed
Madison, Winifred. GROWING UP IN A HURRY.	M	No?	Negative

* In process of divorce.

CHART III (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	SINGLE DIVORCED MARRIED	EMPTY SHELL OR STRAINED MARRIAGE	MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
Mazer, Norma. I, TRISSY.	M*	Yes	Negative
Stolz, Mary. LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK.	M**	Yes	Negative
Wersba, Barbara. THE DREAM WATCHER	M	Yes	Negative
Windsor, Patricia. THE SUMMER BEFORE.	M	Yes	Negative

* In process of divorce.
** Parents divorce toward end of book.

Note: There are four books in which working mother and/or their sons or daughters are experiencing serious difficulties. See footnote to Chart II.

CHART III (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	AGE AND SEX OF PROTAGONIST	AGES OF OF CHILDREN	DATE OF PUBLICATION	SETTING
Blume, Judy. IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD	11, F	None	1970	New Jersey.
Blume, Judy. DEENIE.	12, F	14	1973	Suburban New York.
Blume, Judy. THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T.	11, F	6, 14 *	1972	Suburban.
Colman, Hila. DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER	11, F	15	1973	New York City.
Eyerly, Jeanette. ESCAPE FROM NOWHERE.	16, F	* *	1969	Suburban.
Hamilton, Virginia. THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN	15, M	None	1971	New York City.
Holland, Isabelle. THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE.	13, M	11 & 15?	1972	New England.
Lee, Mildred. THE SKATING RINK.	15, M	10 & 16 ?	1969	Rural.

CHART III (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	AGE AND SEX OF PROTAGONIST	AGES OF OF CHILDREN	DATE OF PUBLICATION	SETTING
Madison, Winifred. GROWING UP IN A HURRY.	16, F	12? ***	1973	Near San Francisco.
Mazer, Norma. I, TRISSY.	11, F	6 & 14?	1971	Urban (New York?).
Stolz, Mary. LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK.	14, F	5	1972	New England town.
Wersba, Barbara. THE DREAM WATCHER.	14, M	None	1968	Suburban.
Windsor, Patricia. THE SUMMER BEFORE.	15, F.	None	1973.	Small town.

* Oldest (third) sone is not living at home. (Married)
** Older sister is not living at home. (College)
*** Oldest (third) daughter is not living at home. (College)

SUMMARY OF DATA IN CHART IV (NON-EMPLOYED MOTHERS: BOOKS IN WHICH THE PROTAGONIST OR HIS/HER MOTHER ARE NOT EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES)

There are sixteen books in which the mother is not employed and neither the protagonist nor his/her mother is experiencing serious difficulties. (In one of these, THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS, the relationship between the protagonist and her mother is strained, but the protagonist identifies with her aunt rather than her rigidly conformist mother.)

Fourteen of the mothers in these books have relatively happy marriages; two are divorced (THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS and THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU). The situation of the mothers in these two books are very different, since the mother in THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU is at the center of a family of eight children. She is a strong woman, and if she is an over-cautious one, the book shows that her life in Harlem has given her reason to be.

Four mothers have interests that extend beyond family and child. In the case of ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS, the mother creates an interest by taking on the job of coaching her son's baseball team when the demands upon her in the domestic sphere have receded and she is left without enough to do. In WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES? the mother does a considerable amount of unpaid research for her husband as an extension of her wife/mother role. Apparently she enjoys the work, and when she becomes preoccupied with it her daughter, the protagonist, takes over most of the care of the youngest

child. In HARRIET THE SPY the mother seems to be very active socially. She is shown to be a caring person, but perhaps not as bright and imaginative a person as her daughter, whose hobby is writing and whose deepest rapport is with her non-conformist nurse. The mother in ME AND FAT GLENDA is particularly interesting and unusual becuase it is her non - conformity, rather than her over-conformity, that causes occasional conflict between her and her daughter. She sketches, weaves, tie dyes, and eats raw foods with her husband, who does junk sculptures when he is not teaching anthropology. The protagonist thinks nostalgically of her aunt in Indiana who bakes apple pies.

Only four of the protagonists in the books are only children; twelve have siblings. In fourteen of the books the protagonist is either the only child or the younger child (which means that the mothers have responsibility for only pre-adolescent or adolescent children). In two of the books there are children younger than the protagonist present.

Fourteen of the protagonists are female; only two are male. A humorous tone characterizes the writing in several of these books. Only five (WE LIVED IN THE ALMONT, LOOK THROUGH MY WINDOW, THE SPIDER PLANT, THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU, AND SAM) treat the wife-mother role in a traditional family in a serious manner. In several books either the auther or the mother herself seems to view the role from a kind of humorous perspective.

CHART IV

NON-EMPLOYED MOTHERS

BOOKS IN WHICH THE PROTAGONIST OR HIS/HER MOTHER ARE NOT EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S OUTSIDE INTEREST	COMMENTS
Blume, Judy. ARE YOU THER GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET.	Yes	Mother paints.
Campbell, Hope. WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES?	Yes	Mother does research for husband's writing. Also paints and refinishes furniture. Daughter spends more time with younger sibling than she would like.
Clymer, Eleanor. WE LIVED IN THE ALMONT.	No	With little money to work with, mother spends time and energy on home.
Corcoran, Barbara. SAM.	No	Mother plays traditional role, but speaks firmly about matters in the family sphere.
Fitzhugh, Louise. HARRIET THE SPY.	Yes	Mother is active socially and protagonist has a nurse until age eleven. She goes through crisis successfully, partly because of mother's help.
Greene, Constance. LEO THE LIONESS.	No	Mother has saving sense of humor.
Greene, Constance. ISABELLE THE ITCH.	No	Protagonist is an itch, but a loveable one. Mother endures admirably.

CHART IV (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S OUTSIDE INTEREST	COMMENTS
Greene, Constance. THE GOOD-LUCK BOGIE HAT.	No	Humorous tone, as in other Greene books. Protagonist and his brother spend time eluding mother and asserting independence.
Hunter, Kristin. THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU.	No	Ghetto setting. Mother somewhat overprotective, but not without reason. Daughter's friend killed by nervious white policeman.
Kerr, M. E. THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS.	No	Mother a caricature of conventionality. Daughter models after more spirited aunt.
Konigsburg, Elaine. ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS.	Yes	Mother, seeking outlet for her energy and competence, coaches son's baseball team.
Little, Jean. LOOK THROUGH MY WINDOW.	No	Protagonist feels somewhat over-parented until mother takes on care of four more children.
Little, Jean. ONE TO GROW ON.	No	Mother somewhat unimaginative: protagonist identifies more with godmother, who is an artist.
Neville, Emily. THE SEVENTEENTH-STREET GANG.	No	Protagonist unusually independent.

CHART IV (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	MOTHER'S OUTSIDE INTEREST	COMMENTS
Perl, Lila. ME AND FAT GLENDA.	Yes	Protagonist's parents tend toward counter-culture lifestyle. Mother paints and tie-dyes; father teaches and does junk sculpture.
Speevack, Yetta. THE SPIDER PLANT.	No	Happy and traditional patriarchal family.

CHART IV (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	SINGLE DIVORCED MARRIED	EMPTY SHELL OR STRAINED MARRIAGE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
Blume, Judy. ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET.	M	No	1	Positive
Campbell, Hope. WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES?	M	No	3	Mixed
Clymer, Eleanor. WE LIVED IN THE ALMONT.	M	No	2	Mixed
Corcoran, Barbara. SAM.	M	No	2	Positive
Fitzhugh, Louise. HARRIET THE SPY.	M	No	1	Mixed
Greene, Constance. LEO THE LIONESS.	M	No	2	Positive
Greene, Constance. ISABELLE THE ITCH.	M	No	2	Mixed
Greene, Constance. THE GOOD-LUCK BOGIE HAT.	M	No	2	Mixed
Hunter, Kristin. THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU.	D	--	8	Mixed

CHART IV (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	SINGLE DIVORCED MARRIED	EMPTY SHELL OR STRAINED MARRIAGE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
Kerr, M. E. THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS.	D	--	1	Negative
Konigsburg, Elaine. ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS.	M	No	2	Positive
Little, Jean. LOOK THROUGH MY WINDOW.	M	No	5	Positive
Little, Jean. ONE TO GROW ON.	M	No	4	Mixed
Neville, Emily. THE SEVENTEENTH-STREET GANG.	M	No	1	Mixed
Perl, Lila. ME AND FAT GLENDA.	M	No	2	Mixed
Speevack, YETTA. THE SPIDER PLANT.	M	No	2	Positive

Mixed in all cases indicates that there is some conflict, but the relationship is a loving one.

CHART IV (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	AGE AND SEX OF PROTAGONIST	AGES OF OF CHILDREN	DATE OF PUBLICATION	SETTING
Blume, Judy. ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME MARGARET.	11, F	None	1970	New Jersey.
Campbell, Hope. WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES?	14, F	14, 12(?)	1968	New York City.
Clymer, Eleanor. WE LIVED IN THE ALMONT.	11, F	16 (?)	1970	Urban.
Corcoran, Barbara. SAM.	15, F	16 (?)	1967	On an island.
Fitzhugh, Louise. HARRIET THE SPY.	11, F	None	1964	New York City.
Greene, Constance. LEO THE LIONESS.	13, F	14	1970	Suburbs.
Greene, Constance. THE GOOD-LUCK BOGIE HAT.	11, M	16	1971	Suburbs.
Hunter, Kristin. THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU.	11, F	*	1968	Harlem.

* There are eight children; two are older than the protagonist.

CHART IV (continued)

AUTHOR AND TITLE	AGE AND SEX OF PROTAGONIST	AGES OF OF CHILDREN	DATE OF PUBLICATION	SETTING
Kerr, M. E. THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS.	15, F	None	1974	New England.
Konigsburg, Elaine. ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS.	11, M	18 (?)	1969	Suburban New York.
Little, Jean. LOOK THROUGH MY WINDOW.	11, F	*	1970	Riverside (small community in Canada).
Little, Jean. ONE TO GROW ON.	11, F	14,15,17, (?)	1969	Riverside.
Neville, Emily. THE SEVENTEENTH-STREET GANG.	11, F	None	1966	New York City.
Perl, Lila. ME AND FAT GLENDA.	11, F	16		Family moves from California to New York state.
Speevack, Yetta. THE SPIDER PLANT.	11, F	16	1965	New York City.

* Mother has taken temporary responsibility for four young cousins while their own mother is ill.

CHAPTER V

IMAGES OF MOTHERS IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY

A summary of data such as that presented in Chapter IV gives one kind of information about the books included in this study. A closer examination of the books that focuses upon the authors' attitudes toward the work roles of the protagonists' mothers and the authors' attitudes toward the mothers' relationship with their children yields further information. For this kind of examination the authors' tone is an important factor to consider. How do the authors <u>feel</u> about the characters (the protagonists' mothers) they have created? Do they show them as hostile, embittered women, trapped in a narrow world that limits their growth? As confident, successful women, who function as workers and as parents with happy self assurance? As serene women who perform the traditional wife/mother role both competently and confidently? As clown-like humorists, with a wry perspective on their own situation? As struggling women, who do what they can against odds that threaten to overwhelm and defeat them? Each of these questions suggest a category into which protagonists' mothers might fall. In this Chapter I will consider each of these categories in turn and discuss

the books according to these classifications: hostile housewife mothers, "new women" as mothers, happy housewife mothers, humorous housewife mothers, and struggling mothers.

HOSTILE HOUSEWIFE MOTHERS

One conclusion that emerges from the data presented in the last chapter is that there are a significant number of hostile mothers in the books included in this study and that all but two of these mothers is a full-time housewife. (Overall, the observation can be made that in these books employed mothers and hostile mother are almost two mutually exclusive groups.)

This section will consider in depth the books in which the communication between the protagonist and his or her full-time housewife mother is particularly negative. Books discussed here will be DEENIE (Blume), THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T (Blume), ESCAPE FROM NOWHERE (Eyerly), THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN (Hamilton), THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE (Holland), THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS (Kerr), GROWING UP IN A HURRY (Madison), THE DREAM WATCHER (Wersba), and THE SUMMER BEFORE (Windsor).

In almost all of these books the protagonists' mothers are shown to be pushing their children to achieve or to be people that the protagonists find it uncomfortable to be. The mothers tend to demand performance from their children. They seem to want to show them off to prove a point.

The mother of Anthony, the protagonist in Blume's THEN

AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T, wants her son to forget his old neighborhood and to be good friends with the boy next door to them in their new, affluent neighborhood. The boy next door has a swimming pool, impeccable maners, and a habit of shoplifting for fun. The protagonist develops stomach cramps as a result of the moral dilemma that his new friendship brings with it; after the problem becomes severe enough for him to be hospitalized, he talks things through with a psychiatrist.

Anthony's mother has no interests beyond her home and family; she also has a shakey sense of identity that makes her feel that the safest thing to do is to copy her next door neighbors. At the beginning of the book she gives up her employment as a saleperson in a New York City department store when her husband's invention brings the family new wealth; she is then free to concentrate on the domestic scene (spending money and achieving upward mobility) and on her children and her new grand-child.

This mother is a snob. She forces her own mother, who once cooked for the whole family, into semi-retirement with a color television set for company and replaces her with a maid, because she is afraid of what the neighbors will think. She pressures her husband to sell the truck he drove in his old business because she does not want the neighbors to see it parked in their driveway. The protagonist is uncomfortable with the changes that his mother is making in their lifestyle, and he is particularly unhappy about watching his

grandmother become increasingly lonely and withdrawn. The doctor he was taken to for his stomach cramps has suggested that he try to say something when he feels like saying it. He speaks up in defense of his grandmother, and his mother's response does not encourage him to speak up again. "Watch your mouth, Anthony!" my mother said very low, making each word sink in. "It's growing faster than the rest of you." (p. 103)

In DEENIE, also by Judy Blume, the protagonist's mother persistently pushes her daughter to become a model and makes her feel inadequate each time she fails. Eventually Deenie is "saved" from her mother's ambitions by the fact that she will have to wear a back brace during her adolescent years. There is no evidence in the book that this mother has anything to occupy her other than her home and her fantasized futures of her two daughters, one of whom she is pushing as a "beauty" and the other as a "brain." Deenie (the beauty) must help her mother with the dishes every night while her sister (the brain) concentrates on her homework.

> ...I'm never excused from helping in the kitchen. Ma usually does the washing and I dry everything and if, God forbid, I put something away that's just a teensy bit wet I never hear the end of it. My mother's very fussy about the kitchen. Well, she's fussy about the whole house. She spends hours and hours cleaning the place. (p. 37)

Deenie's mother rejects her as a person with a right to her own feelings and aspirations. Her relationship with

her father is a good deal better than her relationship with her mother. It is to him that she turns for support when she is upset.

The mother in GROWING UP IN A HURRY, like the mother in DEENIE, wants her daughter to achieve public recognition so that she can bask in the reflected glory. She feels, for some reason, that her oldest daughter (an iceskater) and her youngest daughter (a ballerina) are more talented and special than her middle daughter, the protagonist, who plays the flute. The oldest daughter seems to bask in the narcissistic spotlight that her mother has focused on her, but the youngest shows considerable anxiety about meeting her mother's expectations, while the middle daughter, the protagonist, literally shrinks in the shady spot where she lives apart from her mother's approval and affection.

In the first ten pages of the book the scene is set for what follows. The reader learns that the protagonist's mother makes very good coffee, wishes to move to the suburbs (which her husband does not want her to do), and masks hostility toward her daughter in displays of "motherly" concern about surface details of custodial care such as pure white underwear and orange juice.

> "...and orange juice too, Karen. Everyone needs orange juice," she said with unnecessary emphasis and a kind of self-righteousness. That orange juice bit Iinterpreted as an urgent need for self-assertion and that was the best she could do at the moment. The Perfect Mother role meant that I got my Vitamin C and wore pure white underwear. That done, she took a deep drag on her cigarette and fell into a peevish silence. Her day hadn't begun well. (p. 8)

Eventually the protagonist finds affection in a physical and emotional relationship with a classmate, becomes pregnant, and "grows up in a hurry" when her abortion brings her her first closeness with her mother, along with some insight into the motivating factors behind her mother's displaced ambitions. The mother's situation changes, too, in the course of the book, for her oldest daughter's engagement to a wealthy suiter brings new social connections and activities that seem to fill some of her needs for recognition. Throughout most of the book, however, the mother's attitude toward the protagonist is perhaps best summed up in this passage:

> ...She saw me as a heavy sullen force pitted against her, ignorant and immovable. And she had tried, she had, going from store to store on past occasions and going through all the fuss of sending to Boston for clothes and forever cutting out pictures from newspapers and magazines to prove some point of fashion. So maybe she cared. But she never saw me, except as some obstacle that didn't fit into her plans. It made me sad, but it was too hard to explain. (p. 83)

The protagonist in THE DREAM WATCHER comes close to a nervous breakdown, and the central character in THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN breaks down completely; both are shown to be at the mercy of highly dissatisfied and vicariously ambitious mothers.

The protagonist's mother in THE DREAMWATCHER, like the protagonists' mothers in the books so far discussed, has nothing to occupy her beyond her home and family. Her energies are divided among buying things, getting things fixed, wanting to buy more things (and nagging her husband

for them), berating her husband, berating her son, pushing her son, and overdressing for her visits to the supermarket.

> The reason she is always hysterical is obvious to me, though I couldn't explain it to her, and she wouldn't want to know anyway. The reason is this. My mother is a person who walks around being a movie star in her mind. Somebody who sweeps down a marble staircase in a gold dress with a kind of gorgeous yet weary smile on her lips and with some great guy waiting for her at the bottom. Then she comes to and sees that all she has is this five-room house in a development, and me, and my father who is certainly in no way seductive. But it's sad, because she persists in this hang-up even when we're in the A&P. What I mean is, when we go to the A&P my mother is the only person there who is dressed like she was going to Europe.... (p. 15)

The protagonist's feelings about himself, up until he encounters an understanding and eloquent old woman (the dreamwatcher) are almost uniformly negative. He describes an earlier episode in his life as follows:

> I was really upset, and eventually my mother had to take me to the doctor because I was getting this ringing in my ears. The doctor examined me and told my mother I was the first eight-year-old he had ever seen who was have a nervous breakdown, and that she had better stop all those lessons. So she stopped them, except for the piano lessons. But I don't think she ever got over the disappointment. (p. 58)

What is especially interesting about THE DREAMWATCHER is that the mother is so uniformly portrayed throughout. (She has, really, no redeeming features.) In this sense she is the arch-typal bad mother that one finds throughout literature - a kind of witch. One would need to look to folklore to find the roots of the kind of relationship presented in THE DREAMWATCHER, except that there is a new twist, as there is in all of the contemporary realistic fiction for children included in this study that show

hostile mothers. The mother goes through the motions of wishing her child well (perhaps tries to wish her child well, perhaps thinks she truly is acting in his best interests?). But her actions are just as destructive as those of the wicked stepmother toward "Cinderella." And in both folk tales such as "Cinderella" and the contemporary books considered here, the mother figure is almost completely unaware of the real strengths or "goodness" of her child. And to complete the parallel, the "Dreamwatcher" in the book by that title, is a kind of fairy godmother. She does not transform the protagonist, literally, into a prince, but she does so metaphorically. She perceives him as a kind of prince, and she treats him like one. She quotes from literature, Thoreau for example, and gives him new horizons to explore in his mind and new ways to perceive himself. In this sense she does transform him. She gives him self esteem.

The protagonist in THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN[1] is also being pushed by his mother, whose sphere of interests and activities is even more limited than that of the protagonist's mother in THE DREAMWATCHER. She, too, has only one child; besides this her husband is absent throughout the book, working across the river in New Jersey. The mother is free, therefore, to center all of her attention upon her home and her son. She is so possessive that she has an

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[1]Many aspects of The Planet of Junior Brown, a highly distinctive book which was the runner up for the Newbery Medal, are not discussed here.

asthma attack when her son brings home a friend who might threaten her dominance over him. The protagonist, shakey throughout the book, experiences complete emotional collapse by the end. The protagonist's best friend describes the protagonist's mother in this way:

> Junior Brown's mother was as out and out anxious as all the other women in the neighborhood whose husbands had gone away. Only Junior's father had a good job over in Jersey. But just like the other women, Junior's mother had all the time she needed to get her insides confused and to make the life of her favorite child over to suit herself. In Junella Brown's case, it was her only child. (p. 25)

Junior Brown is enormously overweight and enormously talented. His mother enrolls him in Weight Watchers, and Junior Brown describes their dialogue after the first meeting:

> "Anyway," Junior said, "she got started about how we ought to get out of our black world more. With Daddy gone all week, we are getting to be like hermits, is what she told me. I didn't say anything because I was hungry and I just wanted us to get on home. And then Mama took this envelope out of her pocketbook. She say to me, 'Junior, look here what I have for us. We are going out tonight.' Right then I began to sweat because in the envelope she had two tickets for a concert at the big Lincoln Center for Performing Arts. Mama say to me, 'Junior it is a modern dance concert and we are going to see.'" (p. 32)

All of the mothers in this group seem to be pushing their children, if they are already achieving, or criticizing the ones who are not achieving enough. The mother of the protagonist in MAN WITHOUT A FACE devalues her son because he is not as bright as her two children by previous marriages. This mother seems to have no real identity of her own. She concentrates her energies on running her household and on looking attractive. The plot of the book shows

this mother becoming engaged to be married for the fourth time. The text indicates that she had, in the past, taken on the interests and concerns of her current husband.

The protagonist's mother in THE SUMMER BEFORE is described as a highly unimaginative and conventional person who stifles her daughter and lives in a world of uninterrupted domestic detail. The protagonist, recovering from a nervous breakdown, describes her mother's relationship to their house in this way:

> My furniture is indifferent to me. It only responds to my mother's touch. It waits for her to come in twice a week to polish and dust with lemon-smelling wax. My sheets are taut on the bed and when they are freshly laundered they pin me down like a straitjacket. On my desk I have a blue blotter without any blots. My desk drawers are barren... (p. 14)

If the protagonist's mother's relationship with her house is a happy one, the reverse is true of her relationship with the protagonist. The mother's relationship with her daughter is described as anxious and fretful:

> ...My mother nags a lot, especially on the days when she forgets herself and treates me like the daughter from the "old days." She'll get on a kick in the morning and it could last all day long. For instance:
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> "I don't know what I'm going to do with you anymore, you just don't cooperate around here. I mean, I'd like to see a little participation around the house, like your picking up that junk you left on porch. Who's supposed to pick it up, I want to know? Do you expect me to run around picking up after you? I can only do so much and no more. (p. 15)

The protagonist in THE SUMMER BEFORE experiences her mother as someone who invests much concern and energy in housework and domestic detail and as someone who seems to vacilate between anxiety and antagonism in her attitude

toward her daughter. Her attitude toward her husband does not seem to be truly positive either, but the two parents seem to colloborate in not facing up to the emptiness of the relationship or lack of relationship that exists between them.

While in the two Blume books discussed earlier, DEENIE and THEN AGAIN MAYBE I WON'T, the fathers are not presented negatively, and they seem to relate to both their children and their wives in a positive manner, their influence is markedly less than that of the mothers; to at least some degree their work pulls their interest away from the family circle, while there is nothing to distract their wives from a compulsive concentration on the domestic scene. The fathers in THE SUMMER BEFORE THE DARK and GROWING UP IN A HURRY seem to also play a secondary role, while the father in THE DREAMWATCHER seems to be literally driven to drink by his spouse's demands, and the father in THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN, for whatever reason or reasons, remains in New Jersey where his work is.

In ESCAPE FROM NOWHERE the mother seems to feel abandoned by her husband, whose increasing work responsibilities bring the family more of his money and less of his time. This mother, like all the mothers discussed so far, has no interests outside of her home and her family, and like all of the other mothers discussed so far, she seems to have strong needs (mostly for companionship) that are not being met, but this mother is unlike all of the mothers so

far discussed in that she is not pushing her daughter to achieve. Instead she is pushing herself to be the ideal wife-mother, feeling that she has failed, and then pushing herself once again. The daughter, in this undistinctive and quite melodramatic book, feels abandoned herself and experiments with drugs. Here she describes the mother who she feels unable to help:

> "I'm going to clean the house today," my mother said virtuously.
>
> I smiled to myself. My mother's words fit the pattern. She always cleaned the house as penance after she'd been drinking.
>
> I'm going to clean the house and then I'm going to make a rhubarb pie for your father. I got some rhubarb at the store yesterday that must have been hot-house grown, but it is beautiful. Your father told me last night he's sure to be home in time for dinner. (p. 94)

There is some mixed data on the protagonist's mother in I, TRISSY. Again, the mother is shown as having no interest outside of the domestic scene, but at the same time the descriptions of the mother by her very angry daughter indicate that the protagonist is dissatisfied with her mother's domestic performance. Divorce is in progress, and the mother-daughter antagonism and hostility seems to be mutual. Trissy, the protagonist, writes a memo in which she gives advice to her mother:

> Last, but NOT least. Visit Steffi Jones' mother. Her mother is a REAL mother. She is pretty, sweet, and loving. She bakes homemade cakes, smells good, and knows how to make EVERYBODY feel good. When you visit Mrs. Jones, watch EVERYTHING she does. Practice acting like Mrs. Jones. Remember Mr. Jones is living with Mrs. Jones and Steffi and her little sister Bea.

The text makes it clear, however, that the real problem is not that Trissy's mother makes box cakes. The problems are, rather, that Trissy is losing the closeness of a father she cares about, and that her mother tends to be a quite limited and unimaginative woman, with a decided lack of skills in the area of inter-personal relationships. She does not help Trissy with her confused feelings; instead she tells her daughter that she has no right to her feelings. The mother-daughter relationship does improve somewhat at the end of the book, and the reader learns that Trissy's mother plans to re-marry, a resolution of problems which occurs rather frequently in the books included in this study.

It is interesting to note here that while the mother in ESCAPE FROM NOWHERE tried to live a kind of sterotypic verson of the wife-mother role, seeming to have a kind of naive belief that if she just did what she was supposed to everything would come out all right, it is the daughter in I, TRISSY, who seems to be looking for a romanticized version of maternity and domesticity. (It can, of course, be hypothesized that they might watch the same television programs and the same advertisements.)

The author of THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS shows the protagonist's mother as a caricature of conventional domesticity. While anxious fifteen year old Brenda Belle worries about taking the depilatory off her upper lip before it takes the skin off, her unknowing mother lectures to her about being a lady.

> "Men laugh at funny women," my mother said, but they rarely fall in love with them. A man likes a serious woman, a quiet woman." (p. 15)

Brenda Belle's mother makes it clear to her daughter that the only thing that matters in life is marrying and having a child. Her own life revolves around her home, her daughter, and the television set. She worries about her daughter's taking her aunt, an independent and spirited woman, as a role model.

> "Brenda Belle," she said, sitting on the edge of my bed and folding her hands in her lap, "your Aunt Faith was very much like you when she was young. She was very busy being the smart alack, slapping her knees when she laughed, getting to her feet in company to mimic some one - she just never thought very much about how she looked to the opposite sex... I'm afraid she missed out on the important things in life. She married too late, and old Doc Hendricks never gave her a child. I don't want that to happen to you dear." My mother always said a man gave a woman a child, as though the woman had no part in its conception.
>
> I felt like asking my mother about her own marriage to my father. I doubt very much that it would go down in history as one of the more successful undertakings between two people. My mother seldom spoke well of my father; she seldom spoke of him at all. (p. 48)

Later in the text, the message is even more explicit: "...if I didn't have you, Brenda Belle, I'd consider myself a failure." (p. 50)

The mother's message is mixed, however; while she pushes domesticity and maternity, she shrinks from even the mention of sex, as did the protagonist's mother in THE SUMMER BEFORE.

> "...Are you sure you remember everything that happened?"
>
> "Mother," I said, "we didn't have sex. I'd

have remembered that."
"Don't say that, Brenda Belle!"
"What? Don't say what?"
"S-e-x," my mother said. (p. 66)

An idea that is presented in RELATIVE CREATURES,[2] by Francois Bach, a book about life and literature in the Victorian Era, seems relevant to these books. Basch point out that "spinsters" (the word did not originally have a pejorative connotation) are often stereotyped or carcicatured in the works of Dickens and his contemporaries. She connects the treatment of single women in the literature of the Victorian period with the fact that such women were "redundant" or "superfluous" in their society. Male migration from the England that Basch writes about had left a surplus of women; they had their choice of being wife-mothers if they were lucky enough to marry well (or at all), impoverished governesses of indeterminate status in often unfriendly households, working women whose health and lives were threatened by the conditions and hours of their work in mills, mines, and factories, or prostitutes. One might conjecture that there is some similarity between the situation of unmarried women in the nineteenth century and women in our own time who have reached middle years, raised their children to adolescence, and invested all their hopes and aspirations in their homes and domestic roles. In their

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[2]Basch, Francoise. RELATIVE CREATURES. (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 269.

own way, such modern women are presented in the books just discussed as also "redundant." The roles that our society has had to offer these women are no longer open to them. If they continue to try to function as sex objects, with obsessive interest in their appearances and attractiveness, they appear ridiculous, as does the mother in THE DREAM WATCHER. If they try to hang on to the mother role that they invested highly in when their children were young, they become stifling "moms" who will not let go enough to allow their children the hazards and fulfillments of maturity (as in THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN). If they continue to center large amounts of time and energy on their homes, their work becomes ritualized and empty of meaning (as in THE SUMMER BEFORE). They still have three decades or so of life ahead of them but they are, as an old folk expression puts it "all dressed up with no place to go."

The full-time housewife mothers in the books discussed here are, in many cases, caricatured. They are treated as "redundant women" in need of new goals, new roles, and new horizons to make their lives meaningful and satisfying, as perhaps they once were.

In the next section there will be discussion of "The New Woman as Mother." The books included there will contrast sharply with the books that have just been discussed.

"NEW WOMEN" AS MOTHERS

Who, or what, is the "new woman?" She is some one whose identity does not rest entirely in her role of wife-mother, who is also defined by her own activities, which sometimes include paid employment. She is rooted in American fiction at least as far back as the early Twentieth century; some writers trace her as far back as Zenobia in Hawthorne's THE BOSTONIANS.[3]

A few of the mothers in the books included in this study seem to be, to a greater or lesser degree, "new women." They have strong interests of their own, they act somewhat independently, and their relationships with their adolescent or pre-adolescent children tend to be more positive than negative. These mothers will be discussed in some detail in this section.

The most notable example of the "new woman" in these works of contemporary realistic fiction for children is the mother in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME by Norma Klein. This mother is a woman of independence, competence, courage, and candor.

But is MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME realism or fantasy? There is evidence of almost no conflict in it. The protagonist's mother lives a happy, productive life, somewhat indifferent to housekeeping standards as well as some of

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[3]See June Sochen, The New Woman: Feminism in Greenwich Village, 1910-1920. (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), or see the chapter entitled "The New Woman" in Judith Fryer, The Faces of Eve (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

the other conventional norms of our society. She is employed as a photographer, work which she obviously enjoys very much. She has an almost ideal relationship with Brett, her eleven year old daughter, who was born out of wedlock. When a problem arises between them, it seems to be dealt with easily and quickly. "Mom's" work, for example, means that she sleeps at irregular hours, and Brett feels uncomfortable when she brings home a friend and finds Mom in her pajamas in the middle of the day.

> I felt funny then. I guess I wanted her to be like Andrew's mother, who is always dressed up and greets us at the door with sandwiches and cookies. So I said she was sick and when Andrew went home, I told Mom she shouldn't just be in pajamas at three in the afternoon. The good thing about Mom is you can tell her these things. She never gets mad, but she doesn't always do them either. But after that, she tried sleeping in her blue jeans and shirt so that, even if she was just getting up, my friends wouldn't know. I thought this was okay, even though not that many mothers wear blue jeans either. (p. 17)

Mom has supportive friends and family, even though there is some evidence of friction with her own mother, the protagonist's grandmother, who is portrayed as a rather literal and unimaginative person who wants her daughter to get married and who is quite unsympathetic with her strong work identity.

> Grandma was mad because she didn't think Mom should be going away when Grandpa was going to have his operation.
> "Oh Mother," Mom was saying, "you know I can't see him for five days, anyway, if he's in Intensive Care."
> "What is something happens?" Grandma said.
> "If something happens, you'll call me and I'll come right home. You have my number."

> Then there was a pause, probably Grandma sighing, and then Grandma said, "I just don't know, Deborah...all this obsession with career..."
> Mom was getting mad, as she often does when she talks with Grandma. "If it weren't for my work, I'd die!"
> "That's just what I mean," Grandma said.

While there is some caricaturing of the hostile housewife mother in THE DREAMWATCHER, there is a reverse exageration, to some degree, in the treatment of "Mom" in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME. Mom is certainly not the old-fashioned image of mother (exemplified by Andrew's mother in the text) who cooks and cleans and serves milk and cookies. She is not at all like the mother in THE DREAMWATCHER, a mother whose destructive qualities are so strongly drawn as to amost make her into the true archtype of the bad mother, the Witch. Mom seems to be totally caring and almost totally free - free anyway, to be productive, autonomous, and creative. The almost total lack of conflict in her relationship with her daughter (there's no real problem integrating parenting and work, for example) seems somewhat unrealistic. "Mom" is a reverse caricature.

And "Mom" does, it should perhaps be noted, marry at the end of the book. In spite of the great emphasis put on her independence, the usual novelistic question (who shall she marry?) is resolved in the usual way - or <u>almost</u> the usual way. For while "Mom" is an unusually spirited woman, the "wolf man" (a bachelor with a wolf hound) is an unusually caring and compassionate man, and the text indicates that the protagonist's mother will continue with

her work. What is resolved here, then, is not exactly the same problem that Jane Austen resolves. "Mom" does not need to - and does not marry for money; she marries because she needs to be caring and cared about, consistent with the image of "the new woman." "Mom's" new husband is not an economic "catch"; he is a schoolteacher of modest means. "Mom" does not gain, as women marrying in the novelistic tradition that began with Richardson and reached its height in Austen once married, for wealth, status, and a role or an identity.[4] Her own economic success leaves her free to marry a person rather than a position. Still, the absence of conflict in this book places it in a special category: realistic fantasy - or perhaps, fantastic realism.

The mother in (GEORGE) be Elaine Konigsburg, is a more believable character than the mother in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME. The complexity of this book warrents its discussion in some depth. There are repeated references to the protagonist's mother's lack of housekeeping skills throughout the book. She is much more interested in either doing the crossword puzzle or explaining a facet of science to her son, Benjamin, than she is in doing the dishes. Still, unlike the mother in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME, she does not reject the housewife role outright; she goes through the motions of domesticity, while the text makes it clear that her real interests lie

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[4]See the chapter on "Money, the Job and Little Women: Female Realism" in Ellen Moers, Literary Women (New York: Doubleday, 1976). This is a distinctive book - perhaps the best one in print about women writers.

elsewhere - in ideas and in relationships with people.

That the protagonist's mother is relatively unenthusiastic about housekeeping, that she enjoys relating to her son, and that Benjamin is an unusual but happy child are themes that are repeated alternately throughout this complex and sophisticated book.

> Ben was a happy boy. Most people who knew him didn't realize that he was until his happiness collapsed. They confused happiness with gaity, but happiness isn't always loud and bright and crowded. Happiness ripens like a watermelon, sweet and rosy on the inside with only a thin layer altogether free of small dark pits. And like a watermelon, the whole can be covered with a plain dark rind. Though Benjamin was wrapped in quiet, though Benjamin was shy, he was happy... (p. 10)

The title of the book is not "Benjamin", but (GEORGE), and any real understanding of it depends upon an understanding of who, or what, "George" really is. The evidence in the book is both substantial and consistent. The author does <u>not</u> intend to present George as a pathological phenomenon. (Indeed, one way that the author shows the literal unimaginativeness of some of the adults in the book, most notably Benjamin's stepmother, Marilyn, is by showing such characters as unable to grasp the real significance of George.)

Literally, George is a "concentric twin" who Benjamin believes lives inside him. Metaphorically, he can be expressed in many ways, for George <u>is</u> a metaphor, not an illness. He is the boy in Andersen's tale who saw that the emporer had no clothes, or the kitchen maid in Andersen's THE NIGHINGALE, who could hear the bird singing when all of the court

could not. He is the part of the human being that remains unsocialized enough to perceive basic truths even when the world insists that the truths are not there. George, in terms of transactional analysis, is the "child" within human beings who remains spontaneous and creative when the "adult" has grown up in the ways of the world. George is what Postman and Weingartner describe in TEACHING AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY[5] as a "crap detector." George cannot be fooled. George is unconcerned with what others perceive him to be; he is concerned with his own being and knowing and growth.

George gets Benjamin into trouble, the annotation on the back of the books tells the reader. But why? Because he will not let Benjamin sell out on his convictions in order to win the approval of others. George is concerned with a wholeness. He wants Benjamin not to become a narrow specialist who does not enjoy the process as well as the product of learning and becoming.

> George was convinced that people ought to enjoy the pursuit of knowing as well as the knowing, and there he was saddled inside Ben, who was galloping into the field of science, straight for the stable, not allowing George to smell the flowers along the way. (p. 24)

It is significant that Benjamin's mother comes to understand George, while his more conventional and unimaginative stepmother does not. Charlotte Carr is shown as a caring parent, but also one who makes mistakes and is willing

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[5]Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Teaching As a Subversion Activity (New York: Dell, 1969).

to admit them. Benjamin is unfairly accused of taking equipment from the science laboratory, and his mother later apologizes to him becuase she first believed the accusation without checking it out with him. "Mrs. Carr shook her head, dropped her hands from Ben's shoulders, and said softly, "I sure get a D minus in motherhood today." (p. 64)

Benjamin's mother is shown as a fairly complex and not always consistent character; that character is, however, some one who is dramatically untalented in the domestic sphere, someone with her own intellectual interests that she sneaks in somewhat apologetically when she "should" be doing housework, and someone who is quite caring as a parent, and fairly skilled at communication as well.

In (GEORGE) one finds a bright and understanding mother, a loudmouthed second son, a literal psychiatrist, a role-playing and unintelligent stepmother, a science teacher turned suiter (who will be Benjamin's new father), a precocious first son, who is the protagonist, and George himself, a voice within Benjamin who speaks for the value and integrity of the intuitive and spontaneous against the socialized, the calculated, and the controlled.

Like the protagonists' mothers in the two books already discussed, the mother in ME AND FAT GLENDA is no conventional housekeeper. Like the other two mothers, she has a good relationship with her child, the protagonist. But just as there is some evidence of mother-child conflict in (GEORGE) because of the mother's "tumble dry house" and

the domestic responsibilities that Benjamin has, there is some evidence in ME AND FAT GLENDA that the mother's unusual lifestyle runs counter to some of her daughter's wishes. The protagonist explains why she cooks her own meals in the following passage:

> I guess I should explain about the alphbetburgers. It was an idea Toby and I had cooked up. Since Inez and Drew (Mom and Pop) had come off their Mexican-food-kick - which was mostly guacamole, a a sloshy avocado mash, and refried beans - they were in a raw food kick and that was really rough. Raw mushrooms, raw cauliflower, raw zucchini and - worst of all - raw fish!
>
> . . .
>
> So what with all that, and some of the other sickening food kicks they'd been on, I'd gotten hit with doing most of the cooking for Toby and me for a couple of years now. (p. 4)

While "Inez" is not engaged in paid employment, as were the mothers in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME and (GEORGE), she is thoroughly involved in a round of interesting activities, some of them in the domestic realm, where she operates on her own terms and from her own value system. Most of her activities are artistic ones, and for her, setting up a household means primarily setting up a place to work.

> Inez was setting up her harpsichord in the dining room. The living room floor was full of those big pots she used for batiking and linen-dyeing and such. There was a den off the living room, and I could see Inez' and Drew's bedrolls and a couple of knapsacks dumped in there. I guess that's where they had decided they would sleep. My air matress was probably upstairs in one of the bedrooms. At least, I hope that was where it was. (My family never slept in beds because they were too clumsy and heavy to lug around.) (p. 46)

There is affection in the protagonist's tone when she

speaks of "Inez" or "mom", but there is also some nostalgia in her tone when she speaks of her more conventional aunt in Ohio, "all sunshiney smiles, milk and fresh doughnuts every afternoon after school, and roast chicken with mashed potatoes and gravy on Sunday." (p. 9) Her mother is not "all sunshiney smiles"; she is a caring parent and wife, but she refuses to worry about "what the neighbors think", and she is determined to preserve her own identity and integrity.

Still, in ME AND FAT GLENDA as in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME and in (GEORGE), there is evidence in at least three areas that the mother is functioning as a good parent.

1) There is evidence of clear, warm and substantial communication.

2) None of these mothers is overly-intrusive in her child's life, but when the child is feeling real discomfort or pain, the mother recognizes it and tries to help him/her cope.

3) There is evidence of good parenting in the books not only in the process but in the product. Brett, in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME is a candid, independent, and secure child. Benjamin in (GEORGE) shows real integrity, ingenuity, and independence by the way that he resolves a crisis at the end of the books, and the protagonist of ME AND FAT GLENDA, with her mother's encouragement and support, has the strength of character to stand by a friend and do what she believes is right, even if it costs her popularity with her peer group.

Overall, the mother in ME AND FAT GLENDA comes across as some one who is satisfied with her own life, her creative projects, and her relationship with her husband and children. On a surface level, she does not seem to serve as a role model for her daughter, but on a more fundamental level, she is exactly that.

In KATE as in (GEORGE) and ME AND FAT GLENDA, there is some evidence that the protagonist sometimes wishes her mother were closer to the conventional ideal (or stereotype) of mother, but most of the evidence clearly presents a loving, caring relationship between mother and daughter, one that is rooted in a fair degree of independence for each of them.

> Also, we've gone our own separate ways since I was a baby and she hired somebody to look after me and went to work with Dad. We're both used to being independent, and she likes it as much as I do.
>
> She does love me though. And I love her. In our own ways. It is not the way Emily and her mother love each other but I wouldn't switch. I used to think I would when I was younger, but now, though I like Mrs. Blair, I wouldn't want to belong to her. She wants to know too much about what's going on inside you. Emily doesn't mind sharing. I would. (p. 30)

The mother in KATE is a unique and spirited personality. She shares her husband's love of books and ideas and mostly takes more interest in their work together in the family bookstore than in cooking or housekeeping. She does real cooking when she wants to; the family eats more simple meals (or the protagonist sometimes cooks) when she doesn't.

At one point the protagonist speculates on what kind of meal might await her at home:

> If she'd started supper, that is. There was a good chance she had become involved in something else and forgotten all about us. On the other hand, every so often, without warning, she goes in for a cooking orgy. Herbs and all. When April cooks, she likes you to eat it promptly. "A woman of extremes," Dad calls her.
>
> He sounds despairing but actually he's proud of her. They are great believers in freedom, even when it is downright inconvenient. As Mother says, "There's always lots of bread and cheese." It is

> fortunate that all of us are fond of bread and cheese." (p. 86)

As in the other three books so far discussed, the protagonist feels free to speak out if she is dissatisfied (although she is also aware that her mother can have "a short fuse"). She can count on her parents to respond to her as a person, to really hear what she has to say and take it into account. Preceding the following conversation, the protagonist's parents have had a small disagreement, and the mother shifts attention to her daughter.

> "Well, what exciting things happened in school today?" Mother asked brightly.
>
> I was mad. She wasn't even looking at me, for crying out loud!
>
> "The building burned down. The principal ran off with his secretary. Seventy kids were caught smoking marajuana in the schoolyard at noon. Anything else you'd like to know?"
>
> Mother sucked in a deep breath, smacked both hands down hard on the table, started to tower her full five feet four - and fell back, laughing. "Oh Kate, I'm sorry, " she gasped. "Honestly I am. Tell us...did did something exciting happen? This time, I promise, I'm listening."
>
> Mother isn't hard to forgive sometimes. (p. 32)

Here again is a mother who can make a mistake, admit it, and get things back on the right track. Nor surprisingly, her daughter shows the same kind of flexibility. Overall, there is substantial evidence that the relationship between herself and her mother is satisying to the protagonist.

In THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE, the protagonist's mother (a dentist) shows real commitment to her children, her husband, and her work, but only incidental involvement in the domestic sphere, where she is described as not

particularly skilled. Until he wins a prize for his art and a teaching appointment in New York City, it is the protagonist's father who does most of the cooking and who takes a major portion of the responsibility for parenting. (He makes rice pudding when one of his children is sick.) The protagonist's grandmother, who is critical of her son-in-law, has this conversation with her granddaughter about the roles of her parents.

> "No, Grandma. Daddy never loses his temper, but Mom does lots of times."
> "She never did when she was a girl," said my Grandmother. "But then I guess she had no reason to. She must really be exhausted by the end of the day. Right, Mary Rose?"
> "No, Grandma. Everybody pitches in to do the housework and the shopping on Saturdays. And Mom never does the cooking. Nobody can stand it when she does the cooking. Sometimes I cook - I'm not too bad, but most of the time my dad cooks and bakes because he's the best. If Mom makes dinner, it generally comes out of cans or it's those frozen TV dinners. You know- she's been cooking since we got here so you can see what I mean." (p. 57)

The protagonist's grandmother is unconvinced. She tells her granddaughter that it is unnatural to have a man in the kitchen and that he should be out making money instead.

The protagonist, however, is happy with things the way they are. Her parents have a sound relationship with each other and with their children. Their affection for their daughter is made evident in the text in a conversation which she overhears.

> My father laughed too. "I guess not, How can anybody worry about Mary Rose?"
> "I do worry about the way she keeps sneaking around listening in to things you say when you don't know she's there. I wish I could break her of that. It's gotten worse since we came here,

> and I just don't understand what makes her do it."
> "Well," said my father, "she has to have something wrong with her, doesn't she?"
> "I guess so," my mother said. "She is really a darling, isn't she?" (p. 77)

The next two books to be discussed, in which the protagonists' mothers are also "new women", differ in two ways from the books already covered. There is more evidence of conflict between the protagonists and their mothers, and there is a stronger emphasis upon the work identity of the mothers.

The protagonist's mother in DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK seems to become a "new woman" in the course of the book. In the beginning, she is an underemployed Ph.D. in English who is supporting the family by editing a romance magazine because her husband has lost his job as a fund raiser. She is rather protective of her husband's ego and the stability of their marriage and seems to emphasize intellect over emotion in her communications with her son, the protagonist, as evidenced by this quotation:

> As an artist, Tucker was what his mother called "a depressing Bosch." The first time she had called him that, he has asked her why. She had answered, "Bosch, as in Hieronymus Bosch. Look it up." His mother was a great researcher on every subject, but she never did anyone else's research for him. (p. 10)

Tucker, the protagonist, is a character of some sensitivity and understanding, who befriends a cat in need of a home and a girl in need of empathy. The library is his haven. "Tucker loved wrecked faces, sad smiles, and soft tones, and the libraries of New York abounded in them." (p. 11)

Almost all of the characters in the book struggle for growth throughout, and three of those who make it are Tucker, his father, and his mother. Tucker's father eventually takes a job (after a business venture has failed) at half his previous salary, stating his intention to work his way back up again. He invites Tucker to help him cook dinner, since his wife is working late, and answers his son's questions about his recent decision in this scene.

> His father opened a package of chopped steak and dumped it into a bowl. "Tucker," he said, "to make anything work, from a meatloaf to a marriage, there are two things you <u>have</u> to do. Forgive and continue."
> "I'll try to remember that," Tucker said.
> "It's worth remembering, son..." (p. 134)

Tucker's father also lets him know that there will be no more cleaning lady, that his mother will make an announcement at dinner that night, and that everyone will take over cooking and housekeeping jobs.

> "You're actually going to eat what I cook?" Tucker said.
> "You're going to eat it, too," his father said. "so bone up." (p. 136)

The announcement that Tucker's mother makes is that she is beginning law school, which gives Tucker a lot to think about. He tells the girl he has become close to:

> "...I didn't even have any idea my mother had any ambition to be anything but my mother. She took this temporary job when my father was fired and I thought she couldn't wait to get back to just being my mother again. What she really couldn't wait to do was <u>stop</u> being just a mother. She wants to be something more important."
> "I know," Natalia said. "That's neat."
> "It is neat," Tucker said. "because she's been stuck being just my mother for fifteen years.

> I suppose that was important when I was little, but what good would it do her in three more years when I go to college?" (p. 157)

Here is a new kind of happy ending - one that only has new roots in the literature about women. It is not a new marriage, but a new career, that is the resolution of the problem for the protagonist's mother, and the author leads one to believe that all of the mother's relationships will profit from her new identity.

The mother in REGGIE AND NILMA, like the mother in DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK, is a kind of "new woman" who has some conflict with her children, in whom, we are told, she has taken an increasing interest as they have gotten older. This mother is intelligent, resourceful, and articulate - and she can see all sides of an argument so well that she sometimes has difficulty with her children's discipline. The protagonist admits openly to liking her father better.

This mother is a single parent with a strong work identity. Like the other mothers in the books discussed in this section, she devotes relatively little of her energies to the domestic scene. The author let us know that she has paid help, at the same time making an interesting social comment about this. The protagonist and her brother are not neglected because their mother has the resources to provide for their care. The son of the woman that the protagonist's mother hires is the loser. He loses throughout his childhood the attentions of the mother that the more affluent children gain.

This is a book where the problem of women and money

(their almost universal lack of it) is faced squarely; it is a repeated theme throughout. In the following quotation, for example, we learn that money is something that the protagonist's mother must give attention to. She is not poor, but she is much less affluent that she was during her marriage, and the real economic problems of the majority of single parents - which are not dealt with realistically in most of the other books included in this study - emerge here, in spirit, if not in fact.

> After the divorce, Mom went back to work as an advertising copywriter. The trips to Europe stopped. We moved into an apartment and Nilma came in once or twice a week instead of full time. Mom looked worried all the time and was very upset because, though Tony got a full scholarship to private school, I only got $700 off, and they were always threatening to cancel that because of my lousy marks. (p. 9)

The economics of being a woman with responsibility for a child is also illustrated through the contrast of The Cat Woman and her child with the protagonist's mother. The Cat Woman is shown as someone who once overconformed to stereotyped sex roles and now cannot cope with her new reality.

> I still have a vague memory of the big parties the Cat Woman used to throw when Mr. Untermeyer was still around. There was a silver punch bowl and a huge spreading Christmas tree with everyone's presents done up in Dennison's wrappings, and the Cat Woman in a hostess gown explaining how she got the corkscrew effect with the ribbons by passing a vegetable knife over them - so that even an expert would think it had been done by Bloomingdale's Gift Wrapping Department. (p. 60)

and,

> Everything seemed to fall apart for the Cat Woman at the same moment. She got rid of the maid who took care of Norman after his French governess, Mamselle, left. She took a job as greeter in a restaurant called Chuky's Television Bar. Hardly in keeping, Mom said, with her self-image as a "chatelaine" (whatever that might be). (p. 53)

None of this is lost on the protagonist's mother in REGGIE AND NILMA. She is a realist with a highly developed social awareness - and a social conscience that her children get tired of hearing from. She looks very sad and tired when she hears about the increasingly neglected condition of the Cat Woman's son, and she tries to explain her feelings to her children. To her daughter she says,

> "She has to make a living. She hasn't any training," said Mom. "My God, Kim, whatever you do in school, learn a profession."
>
> * * *
>
> "I said you better learn a profession, Kim," said Mom. "You better learn to sew and cook and change lightbulbs and read the small print in insurance policies. When you grow up, there won't be anyone to come in in a pinch and pull things together...One way or another, we are all fighting back the jungle. It's a full-time job and whether you succeed or not is mostly a matter of luck." (p. 68)

In this book marriage is not offered as a resolution of problems. The protagonist's mother declares that she has no intention of marrying again, and her resolution is emphasized in this passage.

> Daddy and Mom were fortunately on pretty good terms. Mom's mythical philosopher - and she quotes him a lot - has always said, "You marry the same mistake twice." On meeting Dad's second wife, Mom reported, "Why, she's just a younger version of me." (p. 43)

While it is evident that the protagonist's mother loves her children, and they, her, she is equally unromantic on the subject of motherhood, as evidenced by this passage.

> Mrs. Sheets has grandchildren and has been away from childbearing for so long that Mom says it's hard for her to capture the true horror. (p. 16)

DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACKS and REGGIE AND NILMA make it evident that the "new woman" is not always portrayed in the books included in this study as some one who can parent completely without problems. Such women and their children, however, <u>are</u> shown to be considerably more healthy than were the mothers and children in the books included in the previous section, "Hostile Housewife Mothers."

But still another pattern emerges from the books included in this study. There are books in which the traditional housewife role seems to work for both the protagonists' mothers and for their children. These books will be discussed in the next section.

<u>HAPPY HOUSEWIFE MOTHERS</u>

It is not surprising that some of the books included in this study present a reasonably happy image of conventional motherhood, the kind of image that often characterized children's books in the past. Six of the books included in this section present such an image; in one additional book there is some evidence of conflict.

In THE SPIDER PLANT the mother shows real pride in the home that she and her family have created since their move to New York City from Puerto Rico. She also shows herself

to a loving and caring parent, as does the protagonist's father.

> Papa himself, was happy too, now that he had his family with him. And so was Mama. She was happy mostly because her family was happy, Carmen thought. For many times Mama talked of the good days in Puerto Rico. She remembered the flowers and picnics at the beach and the garden where they often sat in the evenings. (p. 20)

There is little money in the protagonist's family, but there is a great deal of caring about the feelings of others. During a disagreement with her brother, a beloved plant of the protagonist (Carmen) is knocked from the table.

> "Come Carmen. Come to the table. Supper is ready."
> Carmen didn't feel like eating. But Papa had called, and she knew that in the Santos house when Papa called she must obey.
> "Look Carmen," said Papa, when she came to the table," only the pot is broken. The plant is still good. Put your plant in the little rooster sugar bowl. Mama says you like it."
> After supper, Mama watched as Carmen put some of the broken pieces of the flowerpot at the bottom of the sugar bowl...
> ...
> Papa's face grew serious. "Our family was like your plant, Carmen. We lost our home in Puerto Rico but not our courage and strength. Our family is still whole." (p. 35)

Throughout the book there are references to domestic chores, such as this one.

> Mama and Carmen cleared the table, washed the dishes, dried them, and put them into the closet. While Mama scrubbed the sink, Carmen swept the kitchen floor... (p. 44)

A traditional housewife-mother and a traditional patriarchal family are positively portrayed in THE SPIDER PLANT. The parents are willing to give both direction and correction to their children; the children, who must learn

the ways of a new culture, are willing to accept their parents' help. It is the father's word that is final.

> While Mama and Carmen were washing the dishes, Papa paced the floor restlessly and Pedro stormed about his room. Carmen cried, her tears making the kitchen misty. When the dishes were put away, Papa called Pedro out.
>
> When Pedro appeared, Papa said in a calmer voice, "Since you did not commit a crime, you do not have to be ashamed. We must find a way to break through. We will not run away."
>
> That was that, Carmen knew. Papa had made a decision, and he would not change.... (p. 104)

In WE LIVED IN THE ALMONT there is also evidence of a caring mother who works hard at domestic tasks. She works hard to keep a clean and orderly home for her family, who have just settled, at the beginning of the book, in a larger, nicer apartment in a building in which the protagonist's father is the janitor.

> ...The very first day after we moved in, after Pop drank his coffee and went out, Mama said to me, Now we are going to get this place clean and I mean clean.
>
> She started cleaning the kitchen. Boy did she scrape grease off that stove! I scrubbed the bathroom. I even enjoyed it. I scrubbed the tub and the sink and polished the faucets...
>
> We had a good time working together, because it was worthwhile. When we got through it looked like something. Mama washed the floors and waxed them... (p. 10-11)

When the protagonist makes friends with some one from a much wealthier home, her mother is sometimes impatient with her new interests. Mostly, however, she tries to be supportive. Overall, her tone is human, warm but sometimes puzzled at her daughter's behavior. The protagonist's new friend thinks the protagonist is lucky to have a mother who is home all the time, as this passage demonstrates.

> We walked into the house, our faced all red from the cold, and it was nice and warm in there. My mother was in the kitchen fixing supper.
>
> She called, For goodness sake, where were you? I almost called the police!
>
> Sharon laughed and said, My, that smells good!
>
> So Mama said, You want to stay for supper? Call up your mother and ask her. But Sharon had to go home because her aunt was coming.

The protagonist worries about giving her new friend a Christmas present, and her mother replies in such a common sense manner that the protagonist feels misunderstood. But it turns out her mother does understand what she is feeling.

> I went to my room, and just as I was going to bed, Mama came in and said, Here, You can get something nice with this. And she gave me five dollars. (p. 51)

The setting of SAM by Barbara Concoran, is a little unusual. The family is isolated on an island. The father is older than the mother and it is his somewhat misanthropic attitudes that have dictated their life style. The protagonist's parents are introduced early in the book in this way.

> Their mother, small and pretty, held out a plate of cookies. Their father, a Coke bottle in his hand, stood apart from the group. His boots were muddy from the meadow where his sheep grazed.

The protagonist's mother is referred to throughout the book as Babe; her husband is referred to as Albert, and the protagonist as Sam.

> Sam and Albert faced each other across the blue formica table in Babe's immaculate kitchen. (p. 32)

It almost seems at some points in the book as if the protagonist does more communicating with her father than her mother, with the mother plugged in primarily to a serving,

caring domestic role.

> "Thanks anyway for having a serious talk with me," Sam said.
> He smiled. "Courtesy of the house." Babe appeared in the doorway, sleepy, with her hair hanging loosely over her shoulders. "Will you wild Indians go to bed?"
> "We had to discuss things," Sam said.
> Babe got out the dishcloth and wiped up a few crumbs from the tabletop.

But although the protagonist's mother often plays a comforting role or a domestic one, she also has a "take charge" facet to her personality when action is needed.

> Babe went into the kitchen and made cocoa for Sam and herself. They sat at the table to drink it. The clock that looked like a blue willowware plate said four-thirty.
> "It's much too late," Babe said. "On a day like this, the dark comes fast. If Everett isn't back by the time we finish the cocoa, we're all going to look for him." (p. 48)

Babe is able to perceive her daughter's needs (one of them is owning a dog) and she speaks up in her behalf.

> Babe glanced at her. "After we do the dishes, she said, "your father and I will come out and watch you and the dog."
> "Will we, indeed," Albert said. "Mark, eat your lettuce."
> "Yes." Babe gave her husband a decisive little nod. "It's only fair."
> Albert carved another piece of beef before he answered. "Very well," he said finally. (p. 79)

The protagonist's mother in BY THE HIGHWAY HOME is dealing with the loss of her son in the Vietnam War and loss of her husband's job as an engineer because of recession. Many of the references to her early in the book show her expressing sorrow or giving support to her husband. The text makes it clear that her role is auxilary to his. They move their family to Vermont to help run an old family inn,

with the father helping with handyman kind of work and the mother helping with work in the domestic realm. As the stresses upon the protagonist's mother lessen, there is warmth and understanding in the exchanges between her and her daughter.

> Mrs. Reed yawned. You know Cats-something just occurred to me. You don't chew your hair anymore."
> "I know."
> The last time had been at that motel. where she'd gone to sleep with a hunk of the stuff in her mouth. "How do parents put up with children?"
> "And how do children put up with parents?"
> Catty smiled dreamily. What a lovely day it had been, and tomorrow would be better. "Mom, do you think I've changed, sort of? I mean, aside from hair chewing. Giving <u>that</u> up. Have I changed. Grown some?"
> "A great deal. Your father and I have both noticed." (p. 166)

In LOOK THROUGH MY WINDOW by Jean Little (who also wrote KATE and ONE TO GROW ON), there is considerable evidence that the mother is somewhat underemployed at the beginning of the book. She has only one child or her own. But when a crisis precipitates her taking responsibility for four more children, she begins to thrive. Here are passages which illustrate these statements. They are taken from the beginning of the book, when the crisis situation has taken the protagonist's mother out of the house unexpectedly and she has responsibility for only one child.

> ...Mother always took time to explain. Often she explained things Emily already understood perfectly ... (4)

> She, Emily Blair, was alone. Utterly, entirely alone! And she was going to be alone for at least two hours.
> Nobody was here to tell her to clean up the clutter in her room or start her homework or set

> the table for supper...
> Why, she could do nothing! If she chose, she could just sit and stare into space - for two hours! Nobody would even offer her a penny for her thoughts. (p. 7)

The author makes it clear that the protagonist is feeling at the beginning of the book as if she has a little too much mothering and not quite enough privacy. This theme is re-inforced when the family moves to a large house and the protagonist asks for a room by herself on the top floor.

> "I won't be in your way up here," she promised.
> "But Emily, you never had been in our way," her mother said.
> "Maybe we've been in her way sometimes." Dat had hit on a truth Emily herself had barely glimpsed. "In all her life Emily's never been farther from us that the other side of the wall. And poets are supposed to live in garrets, Elizabeth." (p. 28)

The responsibility for four more children and a large house makes the protagonist's mother manifestly happy, even though she has to work very hard and sometimes grumbles about it a bit.

> "How has Deborah kept from having TB long ago?" Mother asked them. "I don't expect to survive the first week."
> Emily burst out laughing.
> "Emily Blair, have your no heart?" her mother cried.
> Emily simply shook her head. Whatever her mother said - in spite of the gerbil and the huge house and the children and the rain and the ghost - Emily knew in that instant ther her mother was enjoying herslef. (p. 46)

At the end of the book, when it is becoming time for the four children to return to their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Blair decide to have another baby.

All of the mothers so far discussed in this section seem happy and satisfied in the traditional housewife role; for none of them is there evidence of outside interests. Each seems to have enough to challenge her within her own household. The mother in ARE YOU THERE GOD, IT'S ME, MARGARET, however, has another facet to her personality. She is not only the mother of one child, and a homemaker who is reasonably involved in her domestic responsibilities, (her interests in performing well there heighten when her own parents come to visit), she is also a painter. There are a number of references to her painting throughout the book. In the following conversation with her friend's mother for example, the protagonist, Margaret, is quite sure that her mother will not be seeking activities and diversions in their new neighborhood; she seems certain that her mother will pursue her own interest.

> ...Please tell your mother I'm looking forward to meeting her. We've got a Mockingbird Lane Bowling Team and a bridge game every other Thursday afternoon and a..."
>
> "Oh, I don't think my mother knows how to bowl and she wouldn't be interested in bridge. She paints most of the day," I explained.
>
> "She paints?" Mrs. Wheeler asked.
>
> "Yes."
>
> "How interesting. What does she paint?"
>
> "Mostly pictures of fruits and vegetables. Sometimes flowers too."
>
> "Mrs. Wheeler laughed. "Oh, you mean pictures! I thought you meant walls!..." (p. 10)

There is no evidence in the text that anyone makes Margaret's mother's painting seriously; still it is evident that that is how she chooses to structure a good deal of her time.

> My mother was in a hurry to drive me from the square dance because she was in middle of a new painting. It was a picture of a lot of different fruits in honor of Thanksgiving. My mother gives away a whole bunch of pictures every Christmas. My father thinks they wind up in other people's attics. (p. 68)

Two motifs that play a part in ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME MARGARET warrent comment of discussion here. The first motif is that of the devaluation of the housewife or her work by her husband (in a relationship that is, overall, shown to be relatively positive one). Margaret's father not only does not take his wife's painting seriously, he does not expect that anyone else will either. And he says so. The second motif is that of painterly mothers.

There are six painterly mothers in the books included in this study (three of them mothers of protagonists), and they can be explained in at least two ways. The first is that so many of the books included in this study are set in New York City. One might suspect that painting and painters are more a part of the lives of authors who live in New York City than they would be for people who live in other places. This might explain not only why the protagonists' mothers paint in ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME MARGARET; IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT; and ME AND FAT GLENDA, and the protagonists' friends' mothers in IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT and WE LIVED IN THE ALMONT; and the protagonist's godmother in ONE TO GROW ON; it might also explain why the fathers of the protagonists in two books (THE NOONDAY FRIENDS and THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE) paint as well.

But there is another explanation that is rather intr-

guiging; it is actually another way of linking the experiences of the authors with the circumstances of their characters.

In LITERARY WOMEN, Ellen Moers comments on the fact that Madame de Stael, and others after her, substituted another, more conspicuous, talent for writing, when giving the characters in their books an art to practice. Moers cites several specific examples, including this one about Virginia Woolf who in TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

> made Lily Briscoe...a painter rather than a novelist, painting being probably the most popular of the mysteries that novelists have always used as substitutes for their own; and women novelists have done so from the beginning.[6]

Might the authors - all women - of the children's books included in this study be (consciously or unconsciously) following an age-old literary tradition of women novelists? If so, when they are saying something about painterly mothers, they might in some cases be saying something about themselves - artists in another medium. Might it be the author of ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME MARGARET who would rather paint than join the bowling league or the bridge group of her new suburban neighborhood? There is probably no way to be really sure.

An artist image of woman is also important in Jean Little's book, ONE TO GROW ON. Here it is the protagonist's godmother who is an artist. Although the protagonist is part of a happy but rather hectic family of five, it is her artist godmother, rather than her mother, that she feels closest to. Her mother is often, she feels, unavailable to her, because

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[6]Moers, p. 185.

her mother is buried in a welter of domestic detail. The protagonist seems to feel that her mother does not listen.

> Janie wanted to stamp her foot. It was always like this, trying to talk to Mother. She was harder to catch than a deisel locomotive. Now she was plugging in the coffeepot, turning on the tap and running the dishwasher, getting out Dad's grapefruit, pouring juice for Rob and Elaine, getting Tim a square of toast....
>
> "Stephanie Jane Chishold," her mother said, rounding on her suddenly and speaking in a voice edged with irritation to match Janie's own, "why must you stand right in the middle of the floor? You couldn't be more in the way if you tried."
>
> "If you ever listened to me you'd know!" Janie exploded. "I've been trying to tell you something for hours. I've tried at least five times - but you never hear one word."
>
> "You've tried once. Maybe twice, Janie. And it hasn't been 'hours'. You've been out here for only ten minutes all told." (p. 2)

This passage seems to capture the essence of the mother-child dynamic in ONE TO GROW ON, and while the mother is obviously busy with her domestic responsibilities, and she is probably literally correct about the number of times that her daughter has tried to get her attention, there seems to be a kind of metaphorical truth in her daughter's assertion that she never listens. The mother is insisting on dealing with facts in this passage. She is refusing to deal with feelings. Her "mothering" at this point in the book anyway, puts a higher premium on custodial care than on communication.

The mother in this book is portrayed in a fairly sympathetic manner. Overall, her feelings toward her children seem to be quite positive. But it is her daughter's godmother, an artist, who communicates with her on a meaningful level. In the following two passages the communications of the protagonist's mother and godmother are contrasted.

> Janie trailed into the house. "How was school?" Mother asked. Janie scowled. Every day, every single solitary day, her mother asked the same question in the same words.
>
> "Okay, I guess," Janie returned.
>
> Her mother sighed as if she, too, were tired of their daily exchanges. But she went on... (p. 42)

* * *

> Tilly did not ask: "How was the island?" She took one look at Janie's rapt face and simply said, "As wonderful as that." (p. 57)

The contrast between mother figures here is especially interesting in light of the kinds of mothers presented in two other books by the same author, included in this study. In KATE, for example, the protagonist has to compete with her mother's full-time work in the family bookstore for her attention, yet she is happy with the nature of their relationship. Her mother seems to be more available to her than is the mother in ONE TO GROW ON, who is home all the time. And in LOOK THROUGH MY WINDOW the protagonist is saved from an over-abundance of attention by the fact that her mother takes on responsibility for four more children.

In some of the books included in this study, then, housewife mothers are portrayed as women who are happy in their roles. But mothers are portrayed in still another way in some of the books included in this study. A wry humor characterizes their attitude toward their roles.

HUMOROUS HOUSEWIFE MOTHERS

In some of the books included in this study, the treatment of the housewife role is humorous. (Contemporary realistic fiction for children does not have to be serious or stark, although it very often is.) In this section, I will discuss books in which the authors present the housewife role in a humorous tone and a tongue-in cheek manner. These books show housewife-mothers trying to win at what they perceive (at some level) to be a losing game. ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS perhaps represents this kind of book best.

The protagonist's mother in ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS is surely a traditional housewife at the beginning of the book; by the end she has discovered new arenas for action, and, at that point she is, perhaps, in her own way, a "new woman."

This is the way the protagonist's mother is described at the beginning of ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS.

> Up until October of last year, my mother had two hobbies: major league baseball and my brother, Spencer. Spencer was her great year-round activity and baseball was seasonal. Don't get the idea that I was neglected because I wasn't. It's just that Spencer is a lot older than I, and mother had a lot more years to specialize in him. Actually, she raised us like two only children. Especially Spencer. (p. 3)

The protagonist's mother finds that she is not getting enough recognition for her skill and efficiency on the domestic front. (She is an excellent cook.) Her older son, Spencer, tells her she should be more willing to change; she should put raisons in her stuffed cabbage. Her husband encourages her to find new activities.

> Dad who was very busy at the time - Dad being an accountant and being that he was starting some big new accounts - told Mother to be thankful that Spencer was not a hippie; he still wore socks. He advised her to wait a few months for this phase to pass, see a psychiatrist, or get some new interests. (p. 4)

The protagonist himself describes his mother's behavior at the beginning of the book in this way:

> Some days it seemed as if the only conversation I had with my mother was be-lated. Like "Eat now, Moshe, or you'll be late for school." Or "Get dressed or you'll be late for syagogue." Once she even said to me, "Mark, go wash your hair now, or you'll be late for combing." I still haven't figured that one out. Last year there was so much be-lated conversation in our house that you could call it nagging. (p. 8)

The protagonist's mother decides to take action and expand her horrizons; she decides to manage her younger son's Little League baseball team. Following her decision there is much evidence that things deteriorate in the culinary department; canned soups appear, desserts vanish, but her son, despite occasional reservations about the situation, is still proud of what she can do.

> During this time, our days of stuffed cabbage and roast chicken were over and up until the night of the tomato soup, I felt that it was going to be worth it. (p. 20)

> All that my mother's trying to become a manager meant to me so far was canned tomato soup, doing dishes, and a good night kiss. (p. 24)

The protagonist still has some opportunities to savor his mother's delicious meals. Many times, however, he and his dad are on their own. (It is noteworthy that neither of them makes an effort to learn to cook.) Meantime, the protagonist's mother manages the team with good humor and

moxie, and everyone around her helps her do it. She puts the same energy and enthusiasm into her new activity that she once put into managing her home, and she describes her goals in this way:

> Except how can a team learn to win and lose gracefully when all they do is lose? Then they lose something else, too. Their fight they lose; that's where the hurt comes in....I want to do something much harder than teaching them how to win and lose gracefully. I want to teach them to care. (p. 73)[7]

The text makes it clear that the protagonist's mother is some one who likes to do something - and to know that she has done it well. But in spite of the forcefulness of her personality she has enough sensitivity to allow her children some privacy of their own. She respects the right of her younger son to hide Playboy under his mattress, just as she once respected the right of her older son to keep his "secret" post cards in his bureau drawer.

Overall, the mother that emerges from the pages of ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS is a mother who won't give up. She has the need to achieve, and she has the drive to do it. She has the respect of her son and his team-mates, and, eventually, she has a winning team.

> We worked like something beautiful on the field. Mother would meet with us before each game and tell what she planned to do; she met with us after

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[7]This reference to winning and losing is interesting in the overall context of Konigsburg's treatment of housewifery. The mother is (GEORGE), for example, is criticized (by her son) for her lack of domestic skills. The mother in ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS is criticized (midly, by her husband) because she is too much involved with them. The message for the modern housewife in Konigsburg's work? It's hard to know when you're winning.

> the game to tell us what we had done wrong. She wasn't gentle; neither was Spencer. They were sure of themselves, and it got results. We won our second game and our third. And then we lost our fourth game to the Elks, and we felt rotten. Mother had wanted that, too. She and Spencer analyzed and scolded and made us work harder, and we won again. (p. 96)

There is surely more than one way to interpret the treatment of the housewife role in ABOUT THE B'NAI BAGELS. Some commentators might feel that the mother is simply finding a new way to expand the mother role, to fill in the time that diminished household demands has left empty. But I don't think so. The protagonist's mother is an intrepid woman. She has crossed traditional stereotyped sex-role lines to find her new occupation. Nothing stops her. Konigsburg's treatment of the housewife role is never straight.[8]

In all of Constance Greene's books included in this study the tone regarding housewifery is humorous.[9] ISABELLE THE ITCH is surely the most notable in this respect. Both the housewife and, especially, the mother role, offer Isabelle's mother considerable challenge, as the text makes manifest throughout. When Isabelle's mother takes her to

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[8]Konigsburg's THE MIXED UP FILES OF MRS. BASILE E. FRANKWEILER was not included in this study because the action does not take place at home; the protagonist runs away from home because she is tired of taking the dishes out of the dishwasher, setting the table, and fighting with her brothers over which television channel to watch. She stays away until she can go back "different."

[9]One of Greene's books that is available in paperback is not included here. In THE UNMAKING OF RABBIT the mother lives apart from her son. She rejects both the housewife and mother roles, leaving her own mother to parent her son. In this book, the author's sympathies are clearly with the son, and the mother is portrayed as superficial and self-centered.

the doctor and asks for help, Isabelle herself has a request to make:

> "Doctor, I was reading a story in the paper about how they give horses pills to make them run faster," Isabelle said. "I'm saving up for a pair of track shoes, but in case I don't have enough money before field day, I was wondering if you have any pill samples that would make me run faster."
>
> Isabelle's mother said, "You see, doctor? I'm really not making anything up. She has a natural flair for things like that. What should I do?"
>
> "I would suggest a trip around the world," the doctor said. "But if that's beyond you, just hang in there. If you ever channel your ideas and your energy, Isabelle, who knows what might develop?" (pp. 21-22)

Much of the time the protagonist's mother can match her daughter's energy with her own wry humor; only occasionally is she buffaloed. In this scene for example, she holds her own.

> "Can I have a slumber party, Mom?" Isabelle asked. Her mother shuddered. "Sometime," she said.
>
> "How about tomorrow night?"
>
> "Daddy and I are going out to dinner tomorrow night."
>
> "That'd be O.K. Then you wouldn't complain about all the noise."
>
> Her mother just looked at her.
>
> Isabelle pulled her spelling paper out of her pocket.
>
> "I got a D in spelling today," she announced.
>
> "Not bad," her mother said. "She who is on bottom rung of the ladder can only go up."
>
> "That's what you think," Isabel said, smiling. "I got an F yesterday."
>
> "You're gaining," her mother said. (p. 27)

It is not only Isabel herself but the household in general that Isabel's mother must reckon with. Her husband bakes bread, but theirs is not exactly a role-sharing marriage, as the following passage suggests:

> ...The kitchen and everything in it was covered with a fine dusting of floor, like a light snow. Isabelle ate her breakfast standing up, shuffling, tapping. She was getting better at it.
>
> "That's what I like about you, perpetual motion," her mother said. "You'll clean up? she said doubtfully to Isabelle's father.
>
> "Don't I always? You won't even know I've been here," he said. I don't think you realize how lucky you are to have a husband who bakes bread," he said in a hurt tone of voice.
>
> "I think I do," Isabelle's mother said quietly. (pp. 100-101)

The picture of the protagonist's mother that emerges from the pages of the book is one of a woman beseiged on all sides, who nevertheless endures. It is THE EGG AND I all over again. "Some days," (Isabel's mother says) "I'm too old to be a mother and today's one of them" (p. 48)

The same wry tone is present in Greene's LEO THE LIONESS, even though the protagonist is a considerably more tractable personality than Isabelle. Here again is a mother engaged in holding her own against the rigors of parenthood, the hazards of housekeeping, and the onslaught of middle age. Overall she is supportive of her daughter, who is feeling some of the insecurities that adolescence can bring.

> I really like my mother, although she and I aren't hitting it off too well lately. We used to get on very well together and once in a while would have a conversation that, if anyone overheard it, they would probably think we were friends and not relatives at all. But recently we seem to snap at each other quite a bit. I have heard about the change of life but I don't think she is going through that because she is only thirty-eight. A well-preserved thirty-eight, as she would be only too glad to tell you. (p. 25)

Cast in the traditional wife-mother role, with a husband who occasionally "tunes out", the protagonist's mother in LEO THE LIONESS nevertheless maintains her good humor and defends her dignity, at the same time meeting her responsibilities head-on.

> My mother had to find out who was chaperoning the dance, what time it started, what time it was over, all like that. Nina said, Well, if they didn't trust her, she could handle herself, and a whole bunch of other baloney which my mother ignored. She called Mrs. Forbes and, with the phony voice she uses on people she doesn't like, said she thought it was such a lovely idea, giving Charlotte a dance, and was there anything she could do, etc.
>
> "They're having it catered," Nina said in an icy tone when my mother hung up. That was supposed to make my mother feel like a peasant, but it is very hard to make my mother feel like a peasant. Like impossible.
>
> "How swish," she said. "Tell me all about it. Don't miss a thing." (p. 62)

Responsible about setting limits, positive about giving support, this mother still shows occasional signs of battle fatigue. A young reader might easily like her without necessarily wanting to grow up to be like her.

> "I'm not up to today," my mother said. ...
>
> * * *
>
> ...There are times when my mother feels like giving up. She says "I give up" quite frequently. I think this was one of those times. (p. 114)

The same kind of Greene humor characterizes THE GOOD LUCK BOGIE HAT, although in this book we learn more about the protagonist and his brother and less about the mother. Like the mother in ISABELLE THE ITCH, this mother is not a scrupulous housekeeper, as this passage illustrates:

> "Excitement always made Charlie hungry. He tiptoed downstairs, eased the refrigerator door open, and leaned into the crisp and frigid air. If his mother wasn't asleep she would yell, "shut the refrigerator!" She could hear the door open even if she was running the cacuum cleaner.
>
> Not much there. A roast for tomorrow, some eggs, a couple of covered dishes that probably had green fuzz covering whatever lay underneath. His mother was an expert on growing green fuzz on things. His father called it her green thumb. (pp. 41-42)

A good deal of the action in THE GOOD LUCK BOGIE HAT centers around the protagonist and his older brother dodging their mother so that she won't put them to work doing domestic chores, or avoiding her in order to assert their independence. The following passage is representative:

> He put the Bogie hat on. Let's cut out before Mom gives us a bon voyage party," he said. He tilted the hat over one eye.
>
> They tiptoed through the kitchen and ran into the garage and almost had it made. Then their mother popped out the back door.
>
> "Boys," she yelled so that the whole neighborhood could hear, "don't forget seat belts."
>
> "Don't worry, Mom, we're all set," Ben said, backing out the drive.
>
> She didn't trust them. She had to come over to the car, peer in, and test the belts to make sure they were fastened properly. Then came the worst part. They hoped nobody was watching. She stood wringing her hands and shouting instructions as they pulled out of the driveway and into the wasteland of Huckleberry Drive, which was where they lived. (p. 60)

The humorous presentation of the mothers in all three Greene books is similar, but each of the mothers is slightly different. The mother in LEO THE LIONESS is treated the most sympathetically; there is considerable warmth in her relationship with her younger daughter, the protagonist. In ISABELLE THE ITCH the mother parents a singularly challenging child,

and she endures, if not heroinically[10] at least unhysterically. In the GOOD LUCK BOGIE HAT the mother herself, rather than her situation, is the subject of the humor. Her sons find her protectiveness inappropriate and her requests inconvenient; here again, perhaps, is the redundant woman.

Ambivalance about the housewife role perhaps best characterizes these books in which the tone is humorous; that ambivilance is stated succinctly in Norma Klein's IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT, where the protagonist's mother is shown as neither fish nor fowl, neither "Susie Homemaker" nor "new woman." The protagonist's mother in Klein's MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME was a "new woman.") This rather lengthy quotation exemplifies how the protagonist views her mother's situation.

> I have this theory about mothers, I mean, you could say what do I know, being only fourteen, but I think kids of fourteen are quite mature today. Anyway, be that as it may, my theory is this. There are two types of mothers. One, the most common type around here, is the type I mentioned before - the tweed slacks, golf-playing type. That type usually has four kids and is quite a good cook (or has a housekeeper who is quite a good cook), and has a certain kind of house....
>
> Then there's Mother Number Two who would be like Marsha Peterman's mother who is a computer programmer and goes to work every day and is kind of perky and odd and doesn't care how the house looks and has one or at most two children. Personally, I don't think it matters much which type a mother is, but she should decide which she is...The trouble with Mom, in my opinion, is that basically she's Type Two, but she isn't really because she never had a job. Yet she isn't really Type One because first of all, she just isn't, and secondly, she is a lousy housekeeper, doesn't believe in servants and isn't, when you come right down to it, such a hot cook. (p. 22)

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[10] See Moers' Literary Women for her rationale for the noun, "heroinism."

In this passage the protagonist tells the reader that her mother is neither a mother who invests her energies in paid employment nor a mother who busies herself with the domestic activities involved in raising several children. (These categories roughly deliniate the two ways that modern Post World War II women have chosen to invest their time. Being Wonder Woman - super successful at both career and family responsibilities - was a third alternative for those women with an over-abundance of energy.) In a sense, the protagonist's mother is a kind of marginal woman, caught in the transition. However her husband or children might view her situation, it must be noted, she herself believes that she is happy.

The protagonist's mother in IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT is an artist - but not an artist who takes her work very seriously; she dabbles. And once a week - surely it is symbolic - she dresses as a chicken as part of a supermarket promotion.

> Dad was not happy about Mom being a chicken on Mondays. I must say I can see his point. He said - and I quote - it was yet another example of her frittering away her time and energy on outlets that were trivial not to say nutty. (p. 40)

The protagonist expresses the same perspective in describing these activities of her mother.

> The other thing about Mom is that she doesn't really do that much. But she's an extremely talented person. Like, for example: When we used to live in New York and Oliver and I shared a room, Mom once painted our whole room - walls, ceiling, everything - with this great mural of all kinds of wild beasts, not scarey but very sweet and funny looking. We loved it...

> Or like this dollhouse Dad once made me - Mom made these fanatastic, really beautiful things for it. I mean, like, she gets carried away on things like that and will spend all afternoon making some great couch for the dollhouse. But it never adds up. (p. 20)

It "adds up" if one considers the options open to such a woman as the protagonist's mother - and also if one considers (as her daughter, apparently does not) that a woman who has managed to achieve meaningful communication and fairly solid relationships with her three children and her husband has achieved some kind of success. During the book, the protagonist's father is apparently confronting a crisis about the meaning of his own life. He leaves home, and his wife non-judgementally (and without much comment) supports his right to seek his own answers in his own way (in much the same way that the husband in DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK supports his wife's growth). They are re-united at the end of the book.

Personal relationships are perhaps the top priority for the protagonist's mother in IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT. This may be true for the protagonist's mother in DREAMS OF VICTORY by Ellen Conford as well.

This mother is not much skilled in the domestic area either; her real capabilities seem to find expression in her half-time job as kindergarten teacher and in her roles of mother and wife. But her family humors her.

> My mother was in the kitchen rolling out a pie crust when I got home. My mother is a kindergarten teacher and makes the world's worst pies. But every once in a while she decides to do something old-fashioned and motherly like in the TV commercials, so she bakes pies. Then my father and I have to eat the pies and say they're delicious, and then she goes

and makes more pies because we like pies so much. (p. 11)

The protagonist's mother tells her she named her Victory because she waited so long to have her, and because she knew that her daughter would accomplish great things. (The daughter has a number of interesting fantasies of success, including one as an astronaut.) The mother-daughter relationship is a warm one.

> "I got six votes!" I cried. "Six votes, out of twenty-six kids in the class. You know what that means?"
> "That means," my mother said calmly, "that you feel rotten, and you think nobody likes you."
> "I hate it when you understand me all the time," I said sulkily. My mother tried to hide a smile, but she couldn't, and then it even sounded funny to me, and I started to giggle.
> She grinned back at me and began lifting the pie crust into the baking dish. But the crust would not come off the pastry board in one piece, so she had to sort of scrape it off and then press it into the pie plate in little lumps. (p. 13)

If the protagonist's mother in DREAMS OF VICTORY is an unaccomplished cook, her family does not seem to care. She herself seems to be responding to media messages that tell her what a <u>real</u> mother acts like. But her other side keeps emerging, as this dialogue between her husband and her daughter's friends at a local fair makes evident.

> "Did you win that for Mrs. Banneker?" Spider asked.
> "No, Mrs. Banneker won that for herself," my father said. "You know where they give you this big hammer and you have to hit this thing and ring the bell, to test your strength?"
> "You did that?" Judy said, staring at my mother.
> "She certainly did," my father said. "Look at the muscles on that woman."
> "My mother, who is very thin and hasn't a muscle to speak of, just smiled sweetly.

> "It has nothing to do with muscles," she said. "It's all in your wrists. Just a matter of the right angle of striking. Anyone can do it, if you know how to swing a hammer."
> "Wow, said Judy, impressed.
> "I said the same thing myself," my father remarked. (p. 52)

Here again, is ambivalence - a mother with her own abilities of various kinds still thinks she must bake pies. More evidence perhaps of a women-in-transition motif in these books.

Ambivalance comes through, also in Hope Campbell's WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES?

Again in WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES the tone is a humorous one; the author makes it clear that this is a book to be read "just for fun." Like many of the other books included in this study, this is not distinctive literature. (I believe that the books by Konigsburg, Hamilton, Fitzhugh, and Childress are.) Unlike some of the mothers in the books in this study (most notably those in the section on "Hostile Housewives") this mother is shown as too busy rather than not busy enough. Because of her many demanding roles (wife; mother of three, including a pre-schooler; housekeeper; researcher for her husband's television programs; interior decorator for her own home by inclination and when she has the time) this mother seems too involved in her many pursuits to meet some of her daughter's needs for direction, although she is neither insensitive nor uncaring. Early in the text some of her activities are described as, "proofreading, painting, or refinishing furniture." (p. 11) Each time her

husband begins work on a new television program, she becomes totally absorbed in doing the research for it; housekeeping and parenting are abandoned, and her older daughter, the protagonist, takes up the slack (not without some resentment). When her research is complete she throws herself into her housekeeping with enormous energy and impressive results. There is evidence in the text that it is not only her interaction with her older daughter that sometimes loses out to her busy schedule; her own interests suffer as well. The protagonist thinks about this at one point in the book.

> Her parents said that life was too short to do what they didn't want to do. But what were they really doing? Her father wanted to write novels, and instead he wrote TV scripts that didn't even sell. Once in a blue moon he'd get a contract to do a historical special. And her mother wanted to paint, and instead she had to proofread and help her husband with research. (p. 20)

The following passage illustrates the energetic pace of the protagonist's mother in the domestic arena when she has finished working on a television special.

> The first thing Suzie noticed when she stepped inside the apartment was the smell of air freshener. Then she noticed traces of amonia and cleanser and wax. The hall was clared; the Con Ed flag was gone; the floor was shiny. In the living room the windows were clean, the couches had been rearranged, and she almost tripped over a chair that had been moved... Her mother was in slacks on her knees by the windows, waxing the floor next to the rug. Her father was reading a newspaper...
>
> "You're all done!" Suzie heaved a great sigh of relief.

An interesting issue is brought into focus by WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES? Mothers in the books included in this study are, in many cases, looked down at by their families if they invest energies <u>only</u> in the housewife role; they

are to some degree perceived as under-achievers. If however, their energies are invested outside the domestic arena, there is sometimes marked dissatisfaction in their children about the fact that they must pitch in and help with the housework. A central dilemma of the modern housewife is caught right there, I think. She can be patronized but accepted (for being "only a housewife") or she can be grumbled at for asking others to help with what has been culturally defined as "woman's (actually mother's) work."

Another book that is written in a humorous tone is Louise Fitzhugh's classic HARRIET THE SPY. Harriet's nurse, Ole Golly, is actually the mother figure in a good part of the book, but there is good deal of information about Harriet's mother, too.

The protagonist's mother in HARRIET THE SPY is shown as a caring parent, who can help to unsnarl the interpersonal tangles that Harriet gets herself into. But she is also shown to be not as imaginative as Harriet's nurse, Ole Golly, nor indeed as imaginative as her own daughter, the protagonist. Harriets's mother is never hostile - on the contrary, she is quite tactful - but she cannot communicate with her daughter in the same way that Ole Golly does. On pages 100 to 102 there is a long conversation between Harriet and her mother about falling in love, as Harriet's mother dresses to go out to dinner. (Harriet is interested in this subject because she has discovered that there is some one who Ole Golly cares for.) These lines are included in the dialogue:

> Mrs. Welsh didn't seem to be listening very hard. (p. 100)

and

> My mother, thought Harriet, doesn't think about other people much. (p. 102)

It is clear from the context of this second quotation that Harriet does not mean that her mother is self-centered; she means rather that her mother is not intellectually curious. In this passage and others there is evidence that Harriet's mother <u>does</u> take an interest in her daughter and does communicate with her in a warm manner. She simply does not communicate in the highly perceptive way that Harriet has grown accustomed to from her interactions with Ole Golly.

When Harriet is having trouble with her homework, her mother loses herself in the math assignment and tells Harriet that math was her favorite subject in school.

> Well there you are, thought Harriet. Ole Golly would not have said that. Ole Golly always said, "Math is for them that only wants to count everything. It's them that wants to know <u>what</u> they're counting that matters." (p. 140)

Overall, the protagonist does have some reservations about her mother. But while Harriet may be able to deal with <u>ideas</u> in a way that her mother does <u>not</u>, her mother seems to be more capable of dealing with <u>feelings</u>.

> "Harriet?" Her mother was waiting for an answer.
> "I think I feel sick again. I think I'll go to bed."
> "Now darling, you're not sick. Just think about it a minute. How did you feel?"

> Harriet burst into tears. She ran to her mother and cried very hard. "I felt awful," was all she could say. Her mother hugged her and kissed her a lot. The more she hugged her the better Harriet felt. She was still being hugged when her father came home. He hugged her too, even though he didn't know what it was all about. After that they all had dinner and Harriet went to bed. (p. 199)

Harriet's mother is never shown doing housework, per se. She is gone a fair amount of the time, and the text refers to her playing bridge, shopping, and having her hair done. There is also evidence that she and her husband have a fairly active social life. The text also shows, however, that Harriet's mother has the ultimate responsibility for the functioning of their household, even though the family does have both a cook and a maid.

When Harriet's mother tells her that she must stop writing in her notebook so much and attend to her schoolwork, the following conversation - about what <u>is</u> and what <u>isn't</u> work follows:

> "I'm afraid that you're only going to be able to play with the notebook after school, but not during school hours."
> "I'm not <u>playing</u>. Who says I'm <u>playing</u>? I'm WORKING!"
> "Look, dear, at the moment you're in school so your work is school. Just like your father works at the office, you work at school. School work is is your work."
> "What do <u>you</u> do?"
> "A lot of unseen, unappreciated things. That's not the point." (p. 233)

The fact that Harriet's mother does not take her own time really seriously is perhaps connected with the fact that she can't understand how important to Harriet is the way that she spends <u>hers</u>.

More of Fitzhugh's perspective on mothers and family relationships is evident in her newest book, NOBODY'S FAMILY IS GOING TO CHANGE. This book was published too late to become under the time limit for books included in this study. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that its characters include a "yes dear" mother, a daughter who want to be a lawyer like her father, a son who wants to be a dancer like his uncle, and a (stereotyped?) male chauvinist father who will have no part of the aspirations of either of his children.

The humorous housewife mothers in the books included in this study are all living in reasonably comfortable middle class circumstances. Unlike the mothers in the books considered in the next section - Struggling Mothers - they are not overtly confronting circumstances, either financial or psychological, that threaten to destroy them. But the humorous housewife mothers are to some degree struggling, too. They are struggling to bring grace and meaning to their traditional roles, and there is evidence in the books that each of them is experiencing some difficulty in doing this.

STRUGGLING MOTHERS

In several of the books included in this study, the protagonists' mothers are shown to be struggling - struggling for a new identity in some cases, struggling for financial survival in others. The first group of books to be considered in this section will be that in which the mothers are struggling

against financial hardship; their struggles often directly and adversely affect their relationships with their children.

In A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH, for example, the protagonist's mother is shown to be a caring mother. But a number of factors complicate her relationship with her son. There is, first of all, her son's rivalry with his stepfather; Benjamin had grown accustomed in his early years, to having his mother's attention all to himself, and he resents his mother's closeness to a father-figure, even a supportive and caring one. There is also the crowded apartment where the protagonist, his mother, stepfather, and his senile grandmother live. And there is the ghetto neighborhood and the protagonist lives in, where drugs are readily available and where drug experimentation is a way of proving courage and "cool." Part of the reason why Benjie, the thirteen year old protagonist, becomes addicted to heroin is clearly its easy availability and its acceptance by his peer group.

Underlying most of the factors which cause problems for Benjie and his family is the problem of money. Neither Benjie's stepfather nor his mother has the skills or the opportunity to work at something which will bring in more than a survival income. His mother's job is factory work; his stepfather is a janitor. Second jobs for both are referred to in the book. Money is one of the largest factors which keeps the family locked into a desparate situation - one from which there seems to be little hope of their breaking free.

Benjie and his mother seem to be locked into a pattern in which each, without intending to, raises the anxiety level of the other. Their crowded living conditions and their neighborhood, where crime and drugs are common, exacerbate their difficulties. Benjie describes one unsuccessful attempt to give up drug use in this way:

> One day I went the whole day long with nothin cept a couple-a joints and a taste-a wine. I felt kinda strange, but I went the day and the night too. I went it, Jack! Comes mornin, and I'm pullin myself together to go it some more. My mother started in. "Why you do draggy?" she say. When I don't answer and tryin to show my respeck by iggin her, she keep it up. "I hope you not takin somethin you should not have." She say it real nasty, and slammin the frying pan down on the stove, signifyin; then she bang the dishes on the table so hard it's a wonder they didn't smash to bits.
>
> All that kinda action is bad for my nerves. Fact is, alla my family is nervous. My grandmother is nervouser than anybody... (p. 12)

At another point in the text, Benjie describes conflict between himself and his stepfather, then his stepfather and his grandmother, and then his mother's intervention:

> Then Mama say, "Butler is not really gonna hit him! You and Benjie are both evil-minded." Grandma went to slammin dishes, and Mama and Butler start to quarrelin bout me. I get up and went over to Tiger's place. Sometimes it's better to fix yourself up than to mess with other people." (p. 13)

Benjie's mother wants to help him. She wants to talk with him; she doesn't know exactly how to go about it. She speaks for herself (the story is told from several perspectives) in these words:

> I wish I knew how to talk with Benjie. I feel shy or ashamed when I want to speak my real feelins. Be fine to tell him that something nice can happen to <u>him</u> in life, something like how it is with me and Butler. One day I almost said it, after goin

> over the words in my mind, "Benjie, the greatest thing in the world is to love someone and they love you too." But when I opened my mouth I said, "Benjie, Brush the crumbs off your jacket." (p. 54)

A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH is a sophisticated book which makes a number of social comments in a succinct, concrete way. At the end of the book Benjie's stepfather is waiting for him, as he had promised he would, in front of the drug center. The reader is left in doubt about whether Benjie will come or not. There is the suggestion that he has become re-addicted.

> The wind is blowing colder now, but if I go in- he might get this far, then lose courage. Come on, Benjie, I believe in you...Benjie, don't hold back, come on, I'm waiting for you...hurry up, I'm waitin boy...I'm waitin right here...It's nation time... I'm waitin for you... (p. 127)

The struggle against the threats of poverty and the hazards of a ghetto neighborhood are also an important motif in THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU. The protagonist's mother puts limits upon the growth of her children; she discourages them from taking risks. Her older son, who works in the post office, wants to be a printer, but his mother discourages his risking the income he has - which supports the family of eight children - for the uncertainities of a new career. She holds back the protagonist in a similar manner.

> Momma wouldn't understand Louretta's wanting to go to college because she'd never gone and didn't believe anyone should try to rise too high. "I never went beyond eighth grade, but I'm smart enough to raise all of you," was what Mamma always said whenever any of them tried to show off. Even her big brother William, who usually sided with Louretta, said college was only necessary for boys... (p. 10)

Both the protagonist and her older brother resist the limitations that their mother puts on them.

> "Momma," William said, waving his cigarette excitedly, "I wish you'd try to see it my way just once. I went to night school for two years to become a printer. If I don't get the press soon I'll forget everything I've learned. I don't want to let all that training go to waste."
>
> "Well, I never wanted you to go to night school in the first place. You have a good job already. What did you need to go to school for?"
>
> That was the essence of Momma's philosophy, Louretta thought: Be safe, hold on to what you have, don't reach out for anything bigger or better, or the world, the white world, will punish you. Stay in your place, even if it's a miserable corner, and hang on to what you have. Something must have frightened Momma terribly when she was growing up down South to make her so scared, Louretta thought. (p. 25)

The text makes it clear that the protagonist's mother is a scrupulous housekeeper and a much-appreciated cook. She is also involved in her community in her own way (different from her children's); she is active in church affairs. When the protagonist tries to persuade her to chaperone at a dance at a new community center which the protagonist is organizing, the conversation goes like this;

> "Maybe. I'll see," Momma said, meaning that she would forget all about it, and went back to clearing the table. "Right now I got more important things to worry about. Jerutha Jackson is coming by tonight with the coin gleaners she collected for the Ladies' Aid Fund. We have to count up all the money so we can report on it in church tomorrow. Now you clear out of here and let me get this kitchen cleaned up before she gets here. That woman cleans like dirt is the devil, and I don't want her talking about me behind my back."
>
> Smiling a little, because nobody could possibly find fault with Momma's housekeeping, but feeling defeated, Louretta went into the stuffy little living room... (p. 91)

The protagonist's mother <u>does</u> chaperone at the dance;

it turns from festivity to tragedy when one of the protagonist's friends is shot by a nervous policeman. Ultimately the author shows the reader not only the reality of the mother's fears that hold back her family; she also shows the reader some of the social forces that cause and reinforce those same fears.

Poverty is also an important factor in THE SKATING RINK. The protagonist's stepmother works hard to keep a home going for the protagonist, his two brothers and his stepsister. His stepmother has little to work with, and the protagonist feels a considerable amount of empathy for her, even though he makes it clear that he would rather that she not take his side and defend him against his father and brothers. (He has had a problem with stuttering ever since early childhood, when he saw his own mother drown.)

The protagonist wishes that his father were not so critical and withdrawn, as evidenced by this passage where he describes his earlier nightmares.

> ...Though he was mute in the nightmare he would yell loud enough, actually, to bring his stepmother, stumbling and bleary-eyed with sleep, to his bedside. Even then Tuck knew it was a woman's job to sooth a frightened child in the night. But he'd always wished anyway that his father would wake and come to him. Even if he was angry at having his rest disturbed. If he would come, just once, and maybe touch Tuck and say, "There now" or "It was just a bad old dream" - or anything at all. But he never did. It was always Ida. And before her, Tuck's Aunt Cleo, Myron's widowed sister who kept house for him till he married Ida. (p. 14)

As the protagonist's stepmother mends his clothes, the protagonist mulls over his reservations about her protectiveness.

> Tuck felt a twinge of the old guilt at his failure to appreciate his stepmother's taking up for him. He had always felt that she shared the belief of those who thought him not quite right in the head. It made him prefer his father's rage and his brothers' taunting. Even as a child, he'd never been able to meet her feeble attempts at mothering halfway. He looked at her, though, bent over his pants. He looked at her rounded back, her limp tags of hair, her eyes squinted at the stiches because she needed new glasses that cost money. (p. 26)

Through his own achievements, the protagonist of THE SKATING RINK is able to develop a new sense of self-esteem. He overcomes his stutter, and he gives his father some of his new-earned money to buy a badly-need stove for his stepmother. Money is an important factor in THE SKATING RINK, just as it was in A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH and THE SOUL BROTHERS AND SISTER LOU.

THE NOONDAY FRIENDS begins with the same realistic problem, (money) but ends with what is perhaps an unrealistic Horatio Alger solution. The protagonist's father is an artist who has difficulty holding a more conventional kind of job to support his family. The protagonist's mother works (we don't know at what) but makes little money. The protagonist must take over the care of her younger brother every day when she comes home from school, which leaves her little time for play and friendship. And she is humiliated by the fact that she receives free lunches at school because of her family's financial straits. An economic theme runs throughout THE NOONDAY FRIENDS. If the protagonist's mother is not out of the house working, she is at home mending clothes and trying to stretch their limited dollars.

> Mrs. Davis looked at the coat and pondered. If she let down the hem and sleeves, wouldn't it do for one more season? Then she wondered why she put it as a question. It would have to do for one more season. One thing, anyway. Jim wouldn't complain. Boys his age didn't care what they wore so long as no one scolded them when they tore it. Franny was another matter. Franny was a girl, and girls wanted - needed - pretty things to wear. Franny had a skirt - too short - a dress, a sweater, and two blouses to see her through the school year. And then there were shoes - (p. 38)

Mrs. Davis discusses her limited job options with her daughter, although she is some one who is often rather silent.

> "I feel," she began slowly, "as if - as if if there were so many things I might have done, might have understood, except that I didn't get a chance in time to understand them. When I came from Ireland fifteen years ago, I was what you call an unskilled worker. And that's what I still am."

She tells her family about one of her fantasies, about the kind of work she sometimes wishes she could do.

> "Oh -" she smiled at them. "Well, take the stars. I look at the stars sometimes and I think to myself, I could have been an astronomer. Yes, really. I would like to understand about the stars, but I'd have to have learned so much else first..."
>
> She'd had a faraway look in her eyes as she spoke, and now all at once she seemed to return to this room and these listeners, and she laughed.
>
> "Nobody must get confused by this, you know. I wouldn't trade what I have for a skyful of stars. All of you - you're what I want. It's just that..." She turned out her hands helplessly.
>
> "You'd like to have both," Jimmy said.
>
> "Yes," she answered softly. "It would have been good to have both..." (pp. 81-82)

The protagonist is bothered by the cold silence that develops between her father and her mother when there are problems with money. She turns to her mother for reassurance and receives it. But the protagonist must accept the

fact that her mother is over-extended; her mother has only so much that she can give, worried as she is about their economic survival.

> There was that touch of sterness, of hardness, in her mother's voice that warned Franny not to go on with her questions, her demands. Yet Mrs. Davis's words were still gentle, and she kissed her daughter's cheek lovingly.
>
> Franny pushed back her hair and moved out of her mother's arms, knowing she'd gotten, for now, all the help that was possible. It wasn't enough, but still it had helped. (p. 108)

THE NOONDAY FRIENDS is resolved a bit too neatly in the end, with the artist father having his true talent recognized. Still, the book does show rather effectively how lack of money can strain family relationships - and how lack of job skills leads to lack of money.

In THE NOONDAY FRIENDS the protagonist envies a classmate who seems to have everything; the same thing happens in MEANING WELL. In a sense, poverty is relative; both girls are in contact with peers who do not have either domestic responsibilities or restricted incomes as they do.

Their own situations seem bleaker by comparison with those of their more affluent classmates. The protagonist of MEANING WELL describes "the most popular girl in the class" in this way:

> ...Susan had all sorts of important things Lisa didn't have. Susan had a mother and a father who lived together. She had a sister and a dog, and she had even been promised a horse. Lisa and her mother lived alone. Susan's mother always had milk and cookies[11] waiting for her when she came home

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[11]The sterotyped "milk and cookies" also appears in SAM and in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME - but there it might be tongue-in cheek. In ME AND FAT GLENDA, it's milk and fresh doughnuts.

> from school and she took Susan places. Lisa's mother worked hard and came home crabby. But Susan's mother was crabby sometimes too. One time Susan said she wished her mother would go to work and stop bothering her all the time. Lisa had to help around the house. Susan didn't have to do anything but keep her room neat. (p. 13)

The fact that a working mother can be tired and somewhat crabby handling the responsibilities of paid employment and home is not glossed over in MEANING WELL. The protagonist describes what it is like when her mother comes home to find that she has neglected to do the work that is expected of her.

> "Lisa," her mother called from the kitchen as she opened the door. "Come in here. I'm angry with you. You know you are supposed to straighten up the breakfast dishes before I get home from work. What do you think I do all day, sit and gossip on the telephone like Mrs. Rankin? I work, and I work hard to support us. All you care about is Susan. It's Susan this Susan that. There isn't anything you wouldn't do for Susan. You don't care about anyone else, do you? Lisa tried not to listen. She carried out the garbage. She knew that her mother was tired and in a few minutes everything would be back to normal. (p. 20)

The protagonist's mother in MEANING WELL is a caring parent who sets meaningful limits for her daughter; she is also a parent who is somewhat tired and harassed. Lack of enough money, in this book as in the other four discussed here, causes some strain in the inter-relationship between the protagonist and her mother.

For protagonists' mothers in some of the other books included in this study, the struggle is not so much an economic one as a struggle to define their identities. These mothers are dealing with change - change in their own lives and goals that is perhaps just as major as the change

that adolescents often deal with in the process of growing up. Indeed, it may be a kind of growing up that the mothers in the next group of books to be considered are engaged in.

In DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER the eleven year old protagonist describes the crisis that her mother experiences as she confronts the fact that she is growing older, that her children - an adolescent and a pre-adolescent - will be needing her less and less, and that there is no way to go back and recover the career as a concert pianist that she abandoned when she became a wife and mother. The protagonist resists adopting the interests in music that her mother wants to encourage in her. When she is given a record player for her birthday, her mother tells her that she hopes she will buy "good" records to play, but the protagonist rebels.

> I'm going to buy the wildest, most far-out records I can find. Sometimes I hate music. Mom was a concert pianist, before I was born, and Didi wants to be a singer (fat chance), and they're always at the piano. They scream if I interrupt them, even if it's something important like needing to know a history date, or getting a splinter out of my finger. They say, "Can't you wait until we're finished?" Mom acts like it's her career, not Didi's. She gets so excited when Didi's practicing a new song. Sometimes Mom makes me feel sad.
>
> She gets so sentimental when Didi plays in the school band, and she talks about her concert days with a quivery look that makes me feel lumpy in my throat. (p. 7)

The protagonist is puzzled by her mother's feelings and behavior. She can't understand why her mother could not have had both children and a career. Although she realizes that there is tension between her mother and father, she is unprepared for the open disagreement between them that eventually erupts.

> Anyway, Mom said at dinner that she wanted to get a job. You should have seen Dad's face. As if she said she was going to Africa. "You have a perfectly good job here in this house," he said. "Bringing up two girls and taking care of the house and me."
>
> Mom made a face. "That's not what I mean. I mean something for myself. The girls are growing up. I thought I could do something with my music."
>
> Dad was horrified. "You can't go back to playing concerts - practicing every day, going on the road. That's out."
>
> She stared. "It wouldn't be so terrible. But I wasn't thinking of that. I'm probably too old to start all over again in that direction. But I could give lessons. I think I'd like that. I like working with young people."
>
> Dad looked disgusted. "That's for a spinster schoolteacher. I don't want my wife giving piano lessons. We don't need the money - it would be demeaning."
>
> "Demeaning to who?" Mom was furious. "You don't think it's demeaning to me, a concert pianist, to be a household drudge all these years? To have to ask you for every cent I have to spend?" (p. 37)

As is evident from the previous quotations, DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER is heavily propagandistic; it is unlikely that anyone would classify it as distinctive literature. Yet it does focus on a real problem for mothers of maturing children and for the children themselves. The protagonist's mother is fighting against becoming a "redundant woman." She sees more options behind her than before her. When she is blocked in her efforts to grow, she has a nervous breakdown.

Like DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER, THE PHAEDRA COMPLEX is somewhat melodramatic and lacking in credibility. Here again, the protagonist's mother has a nervous breakdown. (In "real life" might not both of these women have been put on tranquilizers?) An awareness of growing older also plays a part in this mothers anxieties; several strands are

interwoven around this theme.

At the beginning of the book, the protagonist's mother in THE PHAEDRA COMPLEX is a successful career woman who has been divorced since her daughter was very young. The protagonist describes their situation in this way.

> Each time my mother had switched from from one advertising agency to another one, we had moved to a bigger apartment in a better neighborhood, with me going to a better private school, like Miss Ivory's. The apartment where we'd lived since my mother had taken the big leap and gone with Fortune and Mason - they'd even made her a vice-president - was the nicest of all. (p. 13)

The family's lifestyle changes abruptly, however, when the protagonist's mother decides to marry a foreign correspondant whom she has known for some time. She uses these words to tell her daughter about the coming marriage.

> ...Michael has asked me to marry him. I've known him for a long time...I'm going to. Lately...I can't explain...I...I need someone. I need him very much." (p. 21)

After the marriage, which the protagonist has trouble accepting, the protagonist's mother is happier - at first. Meals became a good deal more elaborate, in honor of the new stepfather's more educated palate.

But storm clouds gather. Because the protagonist's mother leaves her job, she has a good deal of time to worry about her new husband when he is on dangerous assignments. And she worries, too, about the bond that is growing between her new husband and her fifteen year old daughter. After she has a nervous breakdown, she returns to her old job. (One wonders if it is realistic that she can get it back so easily.) And the protagonist, advised by a counselor to

call her new stepfather "father," begins to redefine the way she relates to him. This book, and the other book by the same author included in this study, are perhaps the two least believable ones. The characters never come to life; what they seem to resemble most are the characters in Romance magazines.

In THE PHAEDRA COMPLEX and in DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER the mothers seem to have half of what they want. In DIARY OF A FRANTIC KID SISTER, the mother has what is - to some degree - a happy family, but she wants meaningful work as well. In THE PHAEDRA COMPLEX, the mother has a career that is satisfying, but she wants a husband, too, and more warmth and stability at home. The fact that it can be difficult for a woman in our society to have <u>both</u> is underlined by the books. The mother in NO EASY CIRCLE has neither - and she has the same anxieties about growing older. Her daughter describes her negative feelings about her work in this way.

> Mother was still sleeping, so I left a note taped to the refrigerator. She always said that NIH (National Institutes of Health) took all her energy and that medical secretaries were the drones of the medical profession. And so she slept away all the ailments she had contracted and self-dignosed during the week... (p. 32)

Of all the mothers in the books included in this study (excluding the overly hostile ones), the mother in NO EASY CIRCLE seems to be coping least effectively. Her communications with her daughter are as ineffectual as her efforts to bring meaning to her own life. Her daughter is unable to look to her for either direction or support.

> ...Whenever I'd ask Mother to look at my drawings and tell me what she thought, she'd say, "Shelley, you know I don't know a thing about art. They look great to me, honey, but if they aren't, you can always get a job painting china in a dime store or something." I mean, she really knew how to boost my morale. (p. 50)

The only way that the mother in NO EASY CIRCLE knows of to reach out to her daughter is to cook something for her, and food does not do much to help solve their problems. Eventually the mother seeks counseling for herself and her daughter. In the following passage the protagonist describes her mother's guilty homemaking efforts.

> "you didn't have to," I said, knowing she felt guilty about how much she was going out these days. "I can always fry an egg."
> "But I wanted to do it, darling." She gave me a quick hug as she passed. She had a cottage cheese salad all done up fancy with maraschino cherries on top, and a cold plate of salami and cheese slices alternately arranged and cut in attractive pieces. I mean, when she's feeling guilty, she really works.
> She went to her second appointment with Dr. Lothrop looking like a hostess in a night club with black stockings and a slinky dress. (p. 80)

There is some evidence that the struggles of the protagonist's mother in IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD may be temporary ones. She seems to be seeking new goals for herself - more education and then meaningful work - after her divorce has taken place. But the process of the divorce itself puts strains on all members of the family that are vividly portrayed in the book. The following passage captures the kind of conflict that erupts between the protagonist's parents.

> My mother's temper is getting worse. Last week she baked a cake. When she served it my father said, "That's not mocha icing, is it?" And my mother told him, "Yes, it is." So Daddy said, "You know I can't stand mocha. Why didn't you make chocolate?' And Mom said, "Because I'm sick of chocolate, that's why!"
>
> I love desert and by then my mouth was really watering. I wished they would hurry and stop talking about it so I could start eating.
>
> But my father said, "I'll have to scrape off the icing."
>
> Mom looked right at Daddy and told him, "Don't do me any favors!" Then she picked up that beautiful cake, held it high over her head, and dropped it. It smashed at my father's feet... (p. 4)

The protagonist carries a host of doubts and insecurities around with her after she learns of her parents' plans for divorce, her mother helps her try to understand. In the following passage the protagonist asks her mother if it is her cooking that is the problem between her and the protagonist's father.

> "Well...does it have to do with the way you cook, then?"
>
> "Oh, Karen!"
>
> "Daddy's always saying you should try more recipies."
>
> "But people don't get divorced over those things. You're all mixed up, aren't you?"
>
> "I don't know," I said. "I guess I am."
>
> "Mom sat down next to me and took my hand. "I wish it was easier for you to understand. Daddy and I just don't enjoy being together. We don't love each other any more. We love you and Amy and Jeff just the same, but not each other." (p. 68)

But the protagonist <u>is</u> confused, and so are her younger sister and older brother. Their mother's announcement that she plans to go to school and look for a job baffles them; her further explanation only makes them angry.

"I don't know what kind of job I'm going to get," Mom said. "That's why I'm going back to school. To take a course in typing and shorthand. I've signed up for an evening course at Seton Hall too. In English literature. The semester's half over, but I can still learn a lot."

"English literature!" Jeff said. "Why?"

"Because I only had one year of college before I had you when I was just twenty," she told Jeff. She finished eating her salad. Then she said, "I think I might like to get my degree. I never really had a chance to find out what I might be able to do."

"Well, don't let me stop you!" Jeff said. I can always go and live with Dad."

My mother's face turned very red. "Did he tell you that?"

"He said any time I want to I can stay there." Jeff stood up. "At least he's not sorry he had us!" He clomped out of the kitchen and slammed the front door.

Mom pushed her chair away from the table. "Jeff is wrong," she told me and Amy. "You know I'm glad to have you."

Maybe you are and maybe you're not. Who can tell anymore?" (p. 80)

In many of the books included in this study, the changing identity of the protagonists' mothers is a significant motif. Three more books that have not been discussed in depth warrent mention here. In STICKS AND STONES the protagonist's mother is almost completely unaware of her son's crisis - partly because of the new relationship that she herself is absorbed in establishing in the wake of her divorce from the protagonist's father. In IF I LOVE YOU AM I TRAPPED FOREVER? the protagonist is amazed to hear his mother tell his grandfather that his own father - who had diserted them when he was an infant - was the only man she'd ever loved. At the end of the book the protagonist's experiences and observations have caused him to look at love

from a number of different perspectives. His mother (an unusually, indeed almost unbelievably, supportive character), is less aware of the changes in her son than she would otherwise be, because she herself is absorbed in a new relationship. And then there is LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP, a book which is significantly different in perspective from any of the other books included in this study. In this book the mother herself does not precipitate the crisis, and in this book she under-conforms, rather than over-conforms, to the stereotyped role of wife-mother. Her constant absorption in books and her isolation from her family, results in the end of her marriage and her husband's subsequent re-marriage.

CHAPTER VI

CHARACTER FOILS: FAIRY GODMOTHERS AND CARICATURES

As discussion in Chapter V of the books included in this study perhaps made evident, the situations of many of the protagonists' mothers are not shown to be enviable ones. The authors of a few of the books have portrayed mothers who function comfortably within the traditional wife-mother role, but the books in which this is true are a minority. In most of the books the authors have shown the protagonists' mothers dealing with their situations from postures of hostility or defensive humor, or else overtly struggling for either financial or psychological survival. In some of the books the authors have portrayed happy mothers who have found meaning for their existence in work, either paid or unpaid, outside the traditional homemaker role.

Explicitly or implicitly, the authors of most of the books included in this study have questioned the intrinsic satisfactions of the traditional wife-mother role in our culture at this time. One way that they have made their perspective most evident is in their use of constrasting mother figures. Drawing on a literary tradition in which authors of the past have contrasted two very different women, showing one to advantage and one to disadvantage,

the authors of the books included in this study have made meaningful use of character foils to express their doubts about the traditional wife-mother role. Wherever two mothers are contrasted, the one who conforms less to a stereotyped feminine sex role is treated more positively. This pattern is true of every book included in this study except one (LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK).

FAIRY GODMOTHERS

Mother figures are contrasted in a number of the books included in this study. This is done in two ways. Either the protagonist's mother is portrayed sympathetically, with another mother figure negatively portrayed as a caricature, or the protagonist's mother is portrayed unsympathetically, with another mother figure, a fairy godmother kind of person, included in the book for contrast.

THE DREAM WATCHER is an outstanding example of a book that includes constrasting mother figures. While the protagonist's mother is shown as a compulsive consumer who overdresses to go to the supermarket, an old, old woman in the book, dressed in shabby but elegant velvet and quoting Shakespere and and Thoreau, is portrayed as a caring and sympathetic "fairy godmother." The protagonist's mother worries that he will not turn out to be everything she expects of him, and that he will therefore disgrace her; Mrs. Woodfin accepts him as he is and offers him new ideas and emotional support.

> Mrs. Woodfin was staring at me. "Mr. Scully," she said. "I am eighty years old, and when a person reaches that age, formalities are unnecessary. Why are you so unhappy?"
>
> This kind of embarrassed me. "How do you mean?"
>
> "You told me yesterday that you were contemplating suicide. This worries and astounds me. I find it unreasonable."
>
> "How do you mean," I said again.
>
> "You are a highly attractive young man with everything to live for. Suicide is out of the question." (p. 47)

A grandmotherly "fairy godmother" also plays a prominent part in ISABELLE THE ITCH. While Isabelle's mother valiently tries to endure and wait for her daughter to go into a new phase (a stance for which few adult readers would probably judge her harshly),[1] Mrs. Stern, an energetic older woman who Isabelle meets when she takes over her brother's paper route, treates her with equanimity and respect. Isabelle is an enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. Stern's latest painting and redecorating projects; Mrs. Stern listens to Isabelle's ideas and feelings and shares her own.

> "Life isn't easy," Isabelle told Mrs. Stern next day. She held the marshmellows in her cocoa down with the spoon until they got slippery and bobbed to the surface.
>
> "Sometimes it's hard, sometimes easy, sometimes in between. If it was always one way, things would be dull, don't you think?" Mrs. Stern replied. "Variety's the thing. Something wrong?"
>
> "I got the lowest mark in the class in a spelling test," Isabelle said.
>
> "Did you mind that?"
>
> "A little."

---

[1]What parent, for example, could plead innocent of ever uttering this line of Isabelle's mother's: "You're going to miss the bus if you don't hurry...And if you do miss it, I'm not going to drive you." (p. 87)

> Isabelle skimmed the marshmellow off the cocoa. "A bunch of kids had a slumber party and they didn't invite me.
>
> Mrs. Stern looked at her without saying anything.
>
> "I minded that more than the spelling test," Isabelle said.
>
> "Of course." The way Mrs. Stern said that made Isabelle feel better. (p. 81)

In the passages just quoted, Mrs. Woodfin and Mrs. Stern sound a bit like therapists; the "fairy godmother" figures in NO EASY CIRCLE and THE SUMMER BEFORE are exactly that.

What impresses the protagonist of NO EASY CIRCLE the most about her counselor when she first meets her is her ugliness. After she knows Mrs. Klopman better, the protagonist no longer cares how the women who is helping her looks.

> ...I took the bus to Bethesda and went straight to Mrs. Klopman, the Toad Lady, not by choice, but because there wasn't anybody else.
>
> Her door was half open, and she had her back to me, typing.
>
> "Mrs. Klopman?"
>
> She turned around. She looked even uglier than she did the first time I'd seen her.
>
> "Shelley, isn't it? The girl with the pretty orange hat?" She was smiling. "Come on in. It's good to see you."
>
> I came in quickly and closed the door, collapsing in one of her red leather chairs. I was not going to bawl.
>
> She came around the desk and sat down in the chair opposite me, under one of her Gauguin prints. "You seem to have something on your mind," she said finally, waiting. (p. 88)

While Shelley cannot emulate her mother, who is working at a job that she hates and paying obsessive attention to her appearance, she finds a role model in Mrs. Klopman. A similarly strong contrast deliniates the

differences between the protagonist's mother and her therapist in THE SUMMER BEFORE, as evidenced by this passage in which the protagonist compares her therapist and her mother.

> On Tuesdays and Fridays at three-thirty I go to see Dr. Kovalick. She wears her hair in a braid that circles the top of her head. She looks very old-fashioned in an interesting way. She isn't young, I can tell by the lines in her face, but her hair is bright red without any gray in it. It's the kind red that must be real, it's too crazy a color to be dyed. Old-fashioned as she looks, Dr. Kovalick is a lot more with it than my mother is. My mother can look pretty young, especially when she puts on a pair of jeans. She looks much much younger than Dr. Kovalick but on the inside she's got ideas that are even older than my grandmother. Most of my mother's ideas come from the Dark Ages. (p. 17)

In the four books that have been discussed there are four women who contrast rather sharply with the protagonists' mothers. Two are grandmother figures and two are therapists. It is perhaps relevant to consider briefly the psychological and literary significance of alternative mother figures such as these.

In folklore there is, of course, a long tradition of the fairy godmother; Cinderella's fairy godmother may be the most well-known. In "Cinderella" the fairy godmother supplies to the heroine the support and guidance that the hostile step-mother is unwilling to give. The (often old, sometimes eccentric) "woman who wishes the hero or heroine well" recurs again and again, not only in folklore but also in fantasy.

In George Macdonald's fantasy THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN, for example, the "old woman who wishes the protagonist well" is not only a grandmother figure; she is, in a timeless kind of reality, the heroine's great, great grandmother, whose silver ball glows in a distant part of the castle and guides the heroine back to safety when she is in danger. In these works of contemporary realistic fiction, then, we find a kind of godmother/grandmother figure that is an important motif in folklore and children's fantasy.[2]

In three other books included in this study there are "fairy godmothers" or alternate mother figures who are spunky and imaginative; they do not perceive things in the same literal way that the protagonists' mothers do.

The alternate mother figure in ONE TO GROW ON is literally the protagonist's godmother, an artist who has a special rapport with her imaginative godchild. In the following passage, the protagonist is telling her godmother what is troubling her, and she discovers that, in the telling, she is coming to a new understanding of what concerns her. Her godmother gives her direction, but not advice.

> She thought she had done, but then, surprising herself as much as Tillie, she discovered much more to tell. She was always in the wrong at home

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[2]The godmother/grandmother motif might be worthy of investigation in a separate paper. It might also be interesting to compare grandmother figures with princesses. One could investigate the question, for example, of whether it it is usually true that grandmother figures have to do something, while "princesses" merely are something in literature.

> and she did not know why. Mother, Dad, Rob and Elaine all though Lisa was so wonderful. And Lisa was wonderful. Janie still thought so - most of the time. But...but...
>
> "It's the lies she tells, "she added miserably. "I know I tell lies too. But Lisa's...I shouldn't mind Lisa's doing it when I do. I never mean to lie, Tilly. It just seems to happen before I know I'm going to. Lisa's, though, seem different somehow. Worse. But that's awful. Maybe she can't help it either."
>
> Tilly put her banana peels away carefully before answering.
>
> "It's such a tangle, Janie," she said at last. You're going to have to work it out for yourself. But you should perhaps think about two things..." (p. 60)

Tillie has a strong identity of her own, and she encourages her goddaughter to have one, too. The same is true of the almost indescribable Ole Golly in HARRIET THE SPY.

The protagonist of HARRIET THE SPY is definitely one of the intrepid heroines of juvenile literature. Ole Golly's (her nurse's) influence upon her is surely one of the reasons why this is so. Ole Golly encourages Harriet's intellectual curiosity and independence, and she is able to help Harriet do what her parents expect of her by putting the problem in terms that the protagonist can accept. The following conversation takes place, for example, after Harriet has been told by her mother that she must go to dancing school and Harriet has employed all the strategies of resistence that she can think of. She is sent from the table and Ole Golly is called to wash her mouth out with soap.

> She went into her room and waited. Ole Golly came in a few minutes later.
>
> "Well, now, what is this about dancing school?" she asked amiably.

"I'm not going," Harriet said meekly. There was something that made her feel ridiculous when she shouted at Ole Golly. Maybe because she never got the feeling with Ole Golly that she got with her parents that they never heard anything.

"Why not?" Ole Golly asked sensibly.

Harriet thought for a minute. The other reasons weren't really it. It was that the thought of being in dancing school made her feel undignified. Finally she had it. "Spies don't go to dancing school," she said triumphantly.

"Oh, but they do," said Ole Golly... (p. 86)

Since Harriet is eleven years old, past the age for a nurse, she must lose Ole Golly and move into a new stage of maturity. When she has trouble making the transition, Ole Golly writes her a "no more nonsense" letter.

Another thing. If you're missing me I want you to know that I'm not missing you. Gone is gone. I never miss anything or anyone because it all becomes a lovely memory. I guard my memories and love them, but I don't get in them and lie down. You can even make stories from yours, but remember, they don't come back. Just think how awful it would be if they did. You don't need me now. You're eleven years old which is old enough to get busy growing up to be the person you want to be. (p. 276)

In THE SON OF SOME ONE FAMOUS it is the protagonist's aunt who she admires and emulates. Pushed into self-conciousness by her mother's stereotyped ideas about femininity, she talks through her confusion with her mother's more independent sister. She explains that she agreed to go steady in order to please her mother.

"I thought it would make mother happy," I said.

"I know," my aunt said, "but you can't see the world through your mother's glasses. You'll just see a distortion."

"She really does have a distorted viewpoint!" I said emphatically.

"No, I didn't mean that," my aunt said. She sees things her way, and that's right for her. "It's like a prescription for eyeglasses. You can't use someone else's."

"But there has to be a right way to look at things!" I said.

> "There simply isn't one way, Brenda Belle. The right way is what you grow to learn is right for you. All your life you'll find people who differ with you, who don't see things as you do. From time to time you'll change your way of seeing things, too." (p. 114)

The women in all seven books discussed in this section contrast with the protagonists' mothers; they also share some traits with each other. None of the "fairy godmother" figures is described as beautiful; either they are ugly or their appearances are not mentioned at all. All of the alternative mother figures are empathetic, but they tend to be non-directive, letting the protagonists think things out for themselves. Each of these women is fully alive, interested in her own activities and the world around her. As character foils, they contrast with the protagonists mothers in their involvement with living and growing and in their ability to provide wisdom and support.

CARICATURES

THE DREAMWATCHER seemed like the obvious book to begin with in discussing "fairy godmothers" in the books included in this study, for in it the contrast between the two mother figures is very great; the protagonist's mother is so unremittingly hostile as to seem a caricature. It strains credibility to read of a person who is <u>that</u> hostile <u>all</u> the time. MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME is the logical book to begin with in discussing the mirror image of the "fairy godmother" phenomenom, for mom is a kind of reverse caricature. In

MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME and the other books that will be discussed in this section, the protagonists' mothers themselves are presented quite positively; there are other mother figures in the books, however, that serve as foils. Clearly they are included in the books for contrast, to show what a good mother is not like.

While "Mom" in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME is rather casual about her appearance, as well as her housekeeping, the mother of the protagonist's best friend "has a whole room just for putting on makeup...It's almost like our science lab at school - there are so many bottle and jars and brushes." (p. 52) The protagonist's mother and her best friend's mother are concretely contrasted in the following passage:

> Evelyn's mother was going out on a date, as usual. She was in the bedroom doing her hair. Evelyn's mother is one of these people who always looks nice. Even in the morning, when she comes out to make breakfast, she wears this robe with flowers and has her hair brushed. Sort of the opposite of people in my family. I once asked Evelyn if her mother ever looked bad, like when she was sick and she said no. Even when her mother is sick, she said, she puts on all her make-up and fixes her hair. She says it makes her feel better. Mom thinks that's crazy. That's one thing she doesn't like about Evelyn's mother and I guess Evelyn's mother thinks Mom is sort of a slob, which is true in a way... (p. 52)

In MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME not only the personalities, but also the fates, of the protagonist's mother and that of her best friend's mother are sharply contrasted. "Mom" marries the wolf man, presumably to live happily ever after; Evelyn's mother is jilted by the man she is dating, and she

attempts suicide, then comes home from the hospital to live as she has before.

In (GEORGE) the contrast is between the protagonist's mother and his stepmother. The protagonist's mother has a warm heart and a rather sloppy house. The following passage describes her well. (In the passage (GEORGE) refers to a person that the protagonist believes lives inside him.)

> After the groceries were unpacked George said, "You better get something in the oven before Betty Anti-Crocker comes home, or we won't eat until midnight. Can you imagine what she'd do to a meal at midnight? Her regular cooking is one of the black arts." Thus, George had a few words to describe Mrs. Carr in the kitchen. Few, and all of them unkind.
>
> But even George liked it when Mrs. Carr was around. She was what she was without apology. She read good books, laughed a lot, and relied on Ben to find her nylon stockings when she misplaced them, which was often. (p. 31)

Marilyn, the protagonist's stepmother, is a paradigm of domestic virtue. She is described in the text in this way:

> ...Mrs. Carr knew about germs, but she did not believe in them the way that Marilyn, the second Mrs. Carr, did. Marilyn was a home economics major and regularly waged germ warfare. In Marilyn's house the milk cartons were put away so promptly that they never sweated, and the mayonnaise was treated like some hopelessly insane relative that was never allowed out. Ben was certain that Marilyn Carr would call the riot squad if she ever looked inside Charlotte Carr's refrigerator. Nothing was covered, and only things that made puddles were laid level. (p. 41)

Marilyn is not portrayed as some one who has very good judgement when it comes to human beings. When Benjamin goes

to stay at her house over Christmas vacation (presumably it is his father's house, too, although his father never makes an appearance in the book), Benjamin is engaged in a moral conflict, and he talks to himself at night in an effort to resolve it. Marilyn diagnoses her stepson as schizophrenic - on the basis of a psychology course she had taken during her sophomore year of college - shares this information with him, and then sends him home by airplane to his mother so that her own infant daughter will not be subjected to his unhealthy influence. (Seldom has the modern mania for amateur child psychology - literal, unimaginative and presumptuous - been as well satirized.)

Benjamin's mother waits for him anxiously at the airport, looks him over, and makes the only critical statement that she expresses in the whole book, "You know, Ben, I think that Marilyn is just possibly the world's most terrific jackass." (p. 87)

It is Dinky Hocker's mother in DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK who is negatively portrayed. The mother of the protagonist is shown to have faults, but nothing to equal the hypocrisy and hostility of Mrs. Hocker. The author presents Mrs. Hocker's work as a volunteer with unequivical distaste: "Mrs. Hocker was a do-gooder. She was lately concentrating on young people who used to be drug addicts." (p. 21)

The essence of Mrs. Hocker's personality, the conventional, beneficient exterior, the controlling, angry,

clenched-teeth interior, is well-dramatized in a Christmas scene in the book that is too long to quote here. Mrs. Hocker exercises every bit of her will and wile to force her daughter, her niece and the protagonist to act out her idea of a happy family Christmas; she is anxious to be doing just the right things when the carolers arrive. But everything backfires, and the lines she delivers to her daughter are distinctly out of character for the part she wants to play. "Mrs. Hocker's temper snapped at them. 'You're not better than you think you are at all, Dinky! You're exactly like that Knight boy! Detestable! Detestable!'" (p. 120)

The title of the book comes from an incident near its end. When Mrs. Hocker is honored with a dinner and an award for her work with drug addicts, her daughter spends her time spraying her own message around the neighborhood with phosphorescent paint, "Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack." (She doesn't, of course.)

ME AND FAT GLENDA is similar to DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK in that the protagonists' best friends in both are very much overweight (as was the protagonist in THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN)[3] and their mothers maintain a self-conscious

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[3]The figure that contrasts with the protagonist's mother in THE PLANET OF JUNIOR BROWN is quite interesting. He is the school janitor, a former teacher who has dropped out of a system he found difficult to work with. He tutors the protagonist and his best friend, finding the boiler room a better place to teach than the classroom.

posture of goodwill that masks a strong undercurrent of anger which sometimes breaks through to the surface. In ME AND FAT GLENDA, Glenda's mother is contrasted with the protagonist's mother when she comes to the door to bring them a pot of stew and welcome them to their new neighborhood. (Inez is the protagonist's mother.)

> Inez was dressed pretty much as she had been on moving day, in old black leotards (these even had holes at the knee) and a loose, short sleeveless smock of hand-dyed cotton in green, orange, and purple. Just for comparison, there was Mrs. Waite standing at the bottom of the stairs with her short honey-blonde hair frozen into stiffly sprayed waves and curlicues, and wearing a bulging strawberry-pink afternoon dress, nylon stockings, and tight shoes the color of vanilla ice cream. I hung back near the top of the stairs expecting that there just had to be an explosion when these two met. (p. 68)

A description of outward appearance is also used in REGGIE AND NILMA to communicate the essence of the "Cat Woman's" personality. (The Cat Woman is the mother of a child who lives in the protagonist's neighborhood; she plays the wife-mother role elaborately and self-consciously until her divorce. Afterward she falls apart.) Here the "Cat Woman's" "two personalities" are described.

> Mom said the Cat Woman had two personalities - Marcel Marceau and Phyllis Diller. The Marcel Marceau look was when she was got up for a date and had spent a couple of hours putting on her eye liner and false lashes. She dressed in dramatic colors like aqua and bright red and could hardly lift her arms for the costume jewelry. When she went out as Phyllis Diller to the supermarket, she hardly bothered to comb her hair. Her hair was black but it must have originally been another color, because when she didn't put on the eye makeup she didn't seem to have any brows or lashes at all. (p. 53)

The Cat Woman goes from over-protective mother to the reverse image of neglecting parent in the course of the book. At the beginning the protagonist remembers how she read THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD out loud (so everyone could hear) to her son while standing in line at the bank. At the end, her son is eating cat food alone in a filthy town house.

Grandmother figures are not always positively portrayed in the books included in this study. In THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE the character who serves as a foil for the protagonist's mother is her grandmother. While the mother is independent and sensitive about others' feelings, the grandmother is very conventional and also very tactless. The protagonist's grandmother is mostly identified by her dogmatism and prejudices.

> My grandmother was always saying things that made my mother mad. My mom would explain to Ray, Manny and me that we should try to see things in perspective. She said Grandma's generation had many prejudices that our generation was free of, and that the best thing was to try not to argue with her.
>
> But my mom argued. She and my grandmother argued over lots of things... (p. 43)

Even more narrowly conventional is the protagonist's grandmother in ARE YOU THERE GOD" IT'S ME MARGARET. She and her husband were so opposed to their daughter's mixed-faith marriage that they had no contact with her for years. (Margaret's other grandmother is more the "fairy godmother" kind, who knits her sweaters and takes her to concerts.) In MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME the protagonist's grandmother is also somewhat caricatured, although she is by no means as

unsympathetically portrayed as the grandmothers in THE TRUTH ABOUT MARY ROSE and ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME MARGARET. The grandmother in MOM THE WOLF MAN AND ME is, however, shown to be much more conventional and unimaginative than her independent daughter or her zany psychiatrist husband.[4]

Five stereotyped sex roles that women have played in our culture are caricatured through the use of contrasting mother figures in the books discussed in this chapter. These roles are "the super mother," the do-good volunteer, the zealous housewife, the sex object, and the compulsive consumer. Positively portrayed mothers or mother figures tend to be independent, cheerful, casual, and unconcerned about their own appearances or those of their houses. Negatively portrayed mothers or mother figures tend to be self-conscious about their houses and their appearances, very conventional in their beliefs - and very angry. The authors of these books clearly put a premium on the capacity for change in these women. Those who are open and flexible are treated sympathetically; those who are rigidly conformist are caricatured. Since these books have been written at a time when there has been a great deal of change occuring in the status of women, the value that the authors attach to adaptability is perhaps not surprising. As the rules of the game change, one might expect a woman who is still playing by the old ones to behave inappropriately.

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[4]This psychiatrist, plus the ones in THEN AGAIN MAYBE I WON'T, THE SUMMER BEFORE and HARRIET THE SPY are all portrayed quite positively. There is also a therapist in NO EASY CIRCLE. All of these serve as resources that supplement parental limitations.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Two observations can be made about the work roles of mothers in the children's books included in this study. The first is that housewifery is often shown to be unsatisfying and unrewarded work. The second is that paid employment is often shown to be a satisfying and rewarding avenue for achievement and growth. In this chapter I will discuss each of these work roles of protagonists' mothers, and I will connect the perspectives of the women authors of the children's books included in this study with the perspectives of the social scientists that I reviewed in Chapters I through III.

One will find little rationale or support in the forty-five children's books included in this study for the traditional role of housewife in our society. One will find instead mostly questions and critical perspectives.

Some women are shown by the authors of these books to be "boxed in" by their housewife roles, their lives so constrained that they feel great anger, their futures so limited that their only recourse seems to be live through their children. The section entitled, "Hostile Housewife

Mothers," discusses mother figures such as these.

One will find other women in the children's books included here who have transcended or rejected the role of housewife. They look to their work (in a few cases unpaid) for meaning, and they look, in some cases, to their relationships with their husbands or future husbands for warmth, affiliation, and emotional support. They relate warmly to their children, but they do not see their children and their homes as their only sources of satisfaction. (They are not vampiresque, as are the mothers in the books included in the section entitled, "Hostile Housewife Mothers.") Such women are discussed in the section entitled, "New Women as Mothers."

Some of the women authors of the books included in this study portray mothers who seem to "endure" the traditional role. These mothers seem to meet their families' demands that they function essentially as "cryptoservants" (John Galbraith's term) with a determination to remain healthy and cheerful in spite of their situation. They seem to insist upon their own dignity and importance. Voices around them may send them messages that they do not matter - that what they do is of little importance, or that they are not very good at it anyway; they block out what they are hearing and go on. The section entitled "Humorous Housewife Mothers" discusses the books that portray mothers such as these.

Some of the mothers in the books included in this study are shown as struggling for survival or for change. A few, without the financial resources that they need to do the job

really well, persevere in their efforts to be good parents. They fight to survive economically. Other mothers feel trapped on a road of diminishing emotional possibility that goes nowhere. They struggle to find new avenues on which they can move ahead, new identities that will bring them recognition. They fight for emotional survival. Mothers engaged in such struggles, on one front or another, are discussed in the section entitled, "Struggling Housewife Mothers."

And some of the mothers in the books included in this study are portrayed as reasonably satisfied with the housewife role. They find meaning and purpose in their activities, as well as recognition of the value of their work and their role from those closest to them. Mothers such as these are discussed in the section entitled, "Happy Housewife Mothers."

Taken as a group, these books would not encourage young readers to invest heavily in the housewife role. (The authors do not portray the position of today's housewives/mothers as enviable ones.) Instead, the books would perhaps caution young readers about the implications of a totally uncritical acceptance of the housewife role. Not only the authors' portrayal of the protagonists' mothers, but also the authors' use of character foils (discussed in Chapter VII) communicates a negative perspective about women's conforming to stereotyped sex roles. In several of the children's books, contrasting mother figures are presented, and in almost every case, the mother figure who overconforms to stereotyped sex roles is caricatured, while the mother figure who is independent and involved with her own interests is portrayed quite positively.

There is little encouragement here for mindless self-sacrifice in the housewife/mother role. Martyrs are shown as harpies, and doormats are shown as clowns. By comparison and contrast, the authors make it evident that there are some qualities they value, and others they do not, in mother figures or alternative mother figures. Baking a good apple pie is not shown as a particularly valuable trait (several mothers are shown not to be very good cooks anyway) but ability to communicate is shown to be a valuable trait. Good mothers are not necessarily good servants in these books; rather they are people who, because they have their own identities and interests, have something to offer in interaction with others, including their children. It should be noted that good servants are not necessarily good mothers either. Rarely is a mother held up before the reader's eyes as an admirable character because of her competence in performing domestic tasks. Such work is often taken for granted or even denigrated by those around her. Mothers in these children's books may be criticized if they do housework badly; they are not praised if they do it well.

Do the "realities" presented in these children's books jibe with the "realities" perceived by contempory social scientists who consistently show housewifery as an unrewarded and unappreciated role? Much of the evidence cited in Chapter I would suggest the answer to this question is "yes." There seems to be a fairly good fit between the perspective about housewifery of many contemporary social scientists and the authors of the children's books included in this

study.

Does the work of contemporary social scientists indicate that employed mothers do a more effective job of parenting than unemployed ones? Some research suggests that under certain conditions this is true. (See the chapter on The Woman as Paid Worker.) The "conditions" happen to be congruent with the situations of many of the mothers in the children's books: having adolescent, female children, for example. It is then, perhaps not so surprising that many of the working mothers were shown in the books as having good relationships with their children.

On the other hand, many of the scholars writing about motherhood today raise more questions than they supply answers. There appears to be some uncertainty and ambivalence about the institution of motherhood in our contemporary culture. Some of this uncertainty is reflected in the children's books included in this study. Many of the mothers are shown to be searching for answers; the fact that several of them seek outside professional help is one indication of this. In HARRIET THE SPY; NO EASY CIRCLE: THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T; THE SUMMER BEFORE; THE DREAMWATCHER; and (GEORGE) the protagonists all talk with therapists at some point in the books. But there is an implicit message in the children's books, taken as a group, that more independent women might parent better than more "traditional" ones. How much does this reflect the authors' biases? How much does it reflect a "reality" of our culture?

The working mothers in the children's books included in this study seem to be an especially privileged group. The mothers who are shown as engaged in paid employment often seem to do work that gives a focus and meaning to their lives, and to parent in a caring and competent manner. Role conflict arising from the dual demands of working both at home and in the marketplace is minimized. And few mothers in the books are engaged in the kind of low-status, low-paid work that most women spend their working lives doing in today's labor market. Perhaps the books reflect not the way it <u>is</u> for women in the working world today, but the way women wish it <u>were</u>. Many women today are surely focusing their hopes on paid work; all of the statistics in the chapter, "The Woman as Worker" attest to the fact that women, even those with young children, are going to work in ever-increasing numbers.

But still another perspective on the working mothers in the children's books might be useful. Even allowing for the fact that the books show few mothers working, and at better jobs, than would be true in the "real" world today, they <u>do</u> show working mothers with stronger senses of self-esteem than non-working ones - and so does recent research reported in "Psychology Today" at the time that this is written (September, 1976). Myra Marx Ferree reports that:

> ...many housewives have an uncertain idea of what their occupation requires, and how well or poorly they are doing it. Of my interviewees, only one woman in 14 (17 percent) said she was extremely good at taking care of a home, and over half of

> these full time housewives felt they were not very good at it. Many of the employed wives also felt incompetent as homemakers (67 percent) but their jobs gave them another source of self-esteem and feelings of achievement. Not one of the women with paid jobs said she was not very good at her job...[1]

While it is quite possible that these are "real world" subtlties about housewifery that these "realistic" children's books do not capture, and while it is possible that there are "real world" role conflicts for working mothers that are not adequately reflected here, it is evident that these books do not make manifest the significant difficulties that women today face in trying to find places for themselves om a highly competitive labor market. In the children's books included in this study, jobs seem to be there for the asking. That women today are often disadvantaged by inadequate career preparation, by dual responsibilities at home and at work, by discrimination in the marketplace, and by a non-expanding job market is not reflected in these books. Protagonists' mothers are often shown "locked in" to a world of unsatisfying domestic detail, but they are very seldom shown "locked out" of the world of paid employment, where, today, increasing numbers of women compete for the same jobs, bringing about both lower pay for "women's work" and a scarcity of it as well.

Contemporary social scientists seem to acknowledge the problem of the "trapped housewife" - and the authors of these children's books implicitly and explicitly acknowledge

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[1]Myra Marx Ferree, "The Confused American Housewife," Psychology Today," Volume X, Number II (September, 1976), p. 78.

that problem, too. Many economists, increasingly, seem to acknowledge that women have a secondary status in the job market, but that problem is given almost no attention in the children's books considered here. The authors of the children's books seem to suggest that women who choose paid employment over the work of the traditional housewife will meet with little resistance in finding it. They seem to suggest that women's only problems in finding satisfying employment lie within their own households or within themselves.

To some degree, it seems as if the children's books included in this study show a cultural lag. They do portray the dissatisfaction with the housewife role that has been prominent in the media of our culture since the early 1960s. They do not reflect the dissatisfactions with the opportunities that the world of paid employment has to offer women that have only begun to emerge into public consciousness. As more and more women define themselves as paid workers, rather than through their affiliative roles as wife-mothers, the awareness that "woman's place" in the labor market today has great limitations, just as "woman's place" in the home does, will probably increase. The books included in this study will not encourage young readers to become housewives, but they will not offer them solid information about the realities of the world of work and the opportunities that it presently offers women either.

The role of woman as dissatisfied housewife has been

portrayed here in juvenile literature, and extensively, of course, in adult literature as well. The role of woman as paid worker has only begun to be explored. One would expect the literature of the next decades to give it increasing attention, as women cease to be defined by their derived statuses and begin to be defined in terms of their own actions and identities. One might expect that this will be a significant theme to pursue in examining both adult and juvenile literature of the future.

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