Identity Construction in the Diaries of Teenage Girls: A Study of the History and Memory of Female Adolescence, 1870–1940

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Abstract

At the conclusion of the first decade of the twentieth century, 60 percent of high school graduates were women. They were also the first generation of young women to be labeled as "adolescents" by psychologists. By 1950, the word "teenager" had not only been coined; it was part of everyday vernacular. Historians now recognize that adolescence — as a common set of ideas about how young people behave and interact with society — is a cultural construction that has changed over time. Using a combination of scholarly literature on the subject as well as primary sources to demonstrate and interpret the interplay between the exterior forces that shaped the cultural construction of adolescence and the interior forces that shaped young women's identities, this report addresses both how a collective memory of female adolescent identity arose and how individual memory operated in the context of this collective identity. Applying theories of collective memory to the individual diaries of six young women who came of age between 1870 and 1940, this analysis represents a departure from the traditional use of diaries in historical scholarship and provides a fresh approach to the analysis of collective memory.

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Identity Construction in the Diaries of Teenage Girls: A Study of the History and Memory of Female Adolescence, 1870–1940

> "I went down to the river, saw on the other side of the river in a hole in the bank, a Texas steer lying on its back alive. It had been there since yesterday morning if not longer. I saw it move, so came up to the house and got the rifle, waded the river, and shot it twice in the head." –Luna Warner, 15, March 18, 1872
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> "My darling — my darling? Well I'm just selfish enough to think that he's mine all mine. Then it's up to me to make him mine. Well any way he said he loved me to-day. Isn't that thrilling? Will I ever be the same? I hardly think so. No I guess not." –Evelyn L. Jackson, 17, June 29, 1933

At the conclusion of the first decade of the twentieth century, 60 percent of high school graduates were women.[1] They were also the first generation of young women to be labeled as "adolescents" by psychologists G. Stanley Hall and Havelock Ellis. By 1950, the word "teenager" had not only been coined; it was part of everyday vernacular. Historians now recognize that adolescence — as a common set of ideas about how young people behave and interact with society — is a cultural construction that has changed over time.[2] They identify numerous factors that paved the way for the emergence of adolescence in America: the Industrial Revolution, an overall population increase, urbanization, child protection laws and the transition of children under the age of 18 from the workplace to schools. While these factors may explain why society itself changed so dramatically between 1870 and 1940, they do not explain why American children began to behave differently as they transitioned from childhood to adulthood and why this phenomenon was so widespread as to be given a new name and rendered a cultural rite of passage.

Scholars of memory theory have long grappled with the diversity and incoherence of the

[1] Thomas D. Snyder, ed., "120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait," U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (January 1993), 30.

[2] See e.g., Bakan, Hawes, DeLuzio, and Epstein; their work is representative of the scholarship already conducted on the subject of female adolescence.

field of memory studies, particularly the problem of explaining mechanisms of change in collective memory and the transmission of memory between and among groups and individuals.[3] In this report, I will interpret the history of female adolescence as a changing collective memory and apply memory theory techniques to a selection of girls' and women's diaries in order to identify underlying mechanisms that may account for the spread of culturally constructed elements of adolescence to the lives of so many American teenagers over those years. Diaries as an object of hermeneutic inquiry convey far more than the record of events in an individual's life, providing a particularly rich text for the analysis of identity construction through the lens of collective memory theory. They may reflect the cultural and social elements of the time and place in which the diarist wrote, for example, by capturing popular vernacular and slang, referencing popular culture and current events, and evincing social norms and popular opinion. Diaries also offer evidence of the psychological content of a person's sense of self, which may come in the form of details of the diarist's decision-making process, hints about the influence of peer pressure on behavior, descriptions of fantasies and daydreams, and suggestions of the aspirations, role models, and expectations that ground and guide the construction of personal identity. In exploring the rise of female adolescence, I am interested both in the mechanics of a mass cultural shift from nineteenth-century Americans' embrace of early adulthood to twentieth-century Americans' expectations of a prolonged adolescence and in how such a cultural shift affected individual girls' and women's identities and behavior.[4] Other historians might find it

[3] Contemporaries of Maurice Halbwachs, the "widely acknowledged founding father of social memory studies," criticized him specifically for these weaknesses in his theory. Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, editors, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 139. For example, his contemporary Marc Bloch, a French historian, wrote, "How are memories passed down from generation to generation within a group? The answer obviously varies according to the group, but the question is too important to leave unanswered. Halbwachs, it seems to me, scarcely addresses this question.....How does an individual retain or recover his memories? How does a group retain or recover its memories?" Marc Bloch, "Mémoire collective, tradition et coutume. A propos d'un livre récent," in ibid., 153.

[4] I use the word "identity" to refer to a person's internal concept of self, including their values, their

useful, as I do, to view the problem of explaining the cultural construction of adolescence through the lens of memory theory. Thus, I will address both how a collective memory of female identity arose, paying particular attention to popular contemporary literature, and how individual memory operated in the context of this collective identity, that is, how individual women "learned" adolescence. This memory of adolescence corresponds to a simultaneous "forgetting" of adulthood as adolescence was enshrined in American culture. I will use a combination of scholarly literature on the subject as well as primary sources to demonstrate and interpret the interplay between the exterior forces that shaped the cultural construction of adolescence and the interior forces that shaped young women's identities.

Maurice Halbwachs's Collective Memory

American parents once expected their sons and daughters to attend school only until the legal minimum of eighth grade and soon take over the role of an adult, with a limited set of options for doing so. Sons were expected to find a trade or some other way to provide for themselves, after which they might leave their families to establish their own livelihood and family. Most daughters left their families only when they married, and in the meantime might have labored in their family's household, attended school, or earned a wage through domestic labor. My argument is that adolescence came to replace the expectation of early adulthood for teenagers of the twentieth century. In the context of memory theory, the previous notion of adulthood is a memory that has been forgotten, and adolescence is a memory that has been passed on through generations. The proliferation of products directed toward the youth demographic, which began in the 1880s and has today grown into a multibillion-dollar market, reinforces this "memory." Today's teenagers and 20-somethings might have learned what it

preferences, their understanding of their personal role in the world, and the like.

means to be a teenager from films like *The Breakfast Club, Mean Girls* and *American Pie* (it is worth it to mention that *American Pie* has been censored for viewers under the age of 17, presumably for communicating an inappropriate idea of age-appropriate behavior); from TV shows like *Saved by the Bell* and *Freaks and Geeks*; from a plethora of young adult literature, like *Harry Potter* and the Judy Blume series of novels; and from magazines like *Seventeen* and *Boys' Life* that communicate a gendered idea of adolescence to young men and women. Though they might not realize it, teenagers were not always teenagers; their self-identity rests upon a collective memory created generations ago. Maurice Halbwachs can help us understand both how adulthood could be "forgotten" by generations of adolescents and how adolescence is "remembered" past the bounds of the generation that first experienced it.

In general, Halbwachs depicts collective memory as a memory that is retained by members of a group, that is reinforced by contact with the group, and that extends only to the lifetime of the group's members. The collective memory, writes Halbwachs, "retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive. By definition it does not exceed the boundaries of this group. When a given period ceases to interest the subsequent period, the same group has not forgotten a part of its past, because, in reality, there are two successive groups, one following the other."[5] At its core, Halbwachs's collective memory theory is an attempt to explain how different collective ideas — such as the appropriate behavior of adolescents — might be held by different groups of people. Halbwachs cautions that the history of collective thought is not as clear-cut as historians make it out to be: "In reality, the continuous development of the collective memory is marked not, as is

[5] Maurice Halbwachs, "The Collective Memory," in Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, editors, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 143.

history, by clearly etched demarcations but only by irregular and uncertain boundaries."[6] Here, Halbwachs speaks to the tendency of historians to organize and categorize the past into neat, discrete periods of time. He cautions observers of the past not to be tempted to divide history into distinct generations to explain collective ideas, because in reality, ideas are communicated over time through a more subtle process of cultural remembering and forgetting. In Halbwachs's theory, groups of people can both acquire and discard collective ideas. The difference between collective remembering and forgetting

> is merely a matter of degree of complexity. The former [memories retained by groups] are always at hand because they are preserved in groups that we enter at will and collective thoughts to which we remain closely related....The latter are less accessible because the groups that carry them are more remote and intermittent in contact with us. Groups that associate frequently enable us to be in them simultaneously, whereas others have so little contact that we have neither intention nor occasion to trace their faded paths of communication.[7]

Halbwachs's theory allows for the existence of a cohort of Americans who largely shared traditional ideas of adolescence and the existence of a different generation of Americans who shed those traditional ideas and collectively established new traditions.[8] Halbwachs's theory suggests that once teenagers began to embrace a peer-centered adolescent identity, the memory of adulthood became less accessible in a self-perpetuating cycle: as the forces of industrialization moved young adults from the workplace into schools, surrounded by others their own age, teenagers began to see their identities as separate from those of adults.

An important element in Halbwachs's theory is the interplay between the individual and the group and the changes that may occur in collective and personal identity. In Halbwachs's theory, when groups change, the collective memories they hold may change, and when

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[6] Ibid., 144.

[7] Ibid., 141.

[8] David Blight's work on the establishment of the myth of the "Lost Cause" after the Civil War represents a case study in collective amnesia; see *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

individuals change, they may join new groups and acquire new ideas about their place in the group. One mechanism of change is the separation of an individual from a group. Halbwachs holds that separation from groups obstructs individuals' connections to collective memory. Family members are not always under the influence of their families. Halbwachs specifically observes that children in school are removed from the collective memory of the family. The school has its own framework of gestures and language that are "well coordinated," suppressing the thoughts and behaviors that would have meaning only in the context of the family.[9] Halbwachs asserts that "the child is not identified with his family when he is away from the latter." Attending school therefore introduces the opportunity for children to form new identities with groups whose memories are separate from, and perhaps even opposed to, the memory of the family. Indeed, Halbwachs states that within the family, individuals will succeed in expressing only those desires and memories that are congruent with and relevant to those of other family members: "either our feelings develop within the framework of our family and conform to its organization, or they cannot be shared by the other members of the family."[10] Halbwachs's observations about the division in memory between family and school for children suggest that young people who explored a new adolescent identity independent of the family may face resistance from their families. Once sequestered, adolescents reinforced their identities in each other, "forgetting" that adolescents in previous generations participated actively in the social circles of adults.

Although Halbwachs is explicit that the collective memory ceases with the lives of the group's members, adolescence is a memory reinforced at every turn by popular media, by educational institutions, and by adults, who also reinforce the memory in their own children.

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[9] Ibid., 55.
[10] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* ed. Lewis Coser (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 57.

Moreover, adolescence, once it came to define the years marked by the advent of puberty, became a stage of life through which every adult must travel, appearing to be unaffected by the succession of generations through which most collective memories are forgotten. It is now accepted as a fact of life that teenagers naturally behave like teenagers. Halbwachs accounts for this phenomenon, explaining that groups seek to sustain themselves and the ideas that they hold in collective. This group, once established, not only does not forget its self-identity through the usual mechanism of generations; it also extends the memory of its self-identity backwards through time. According to Halbwachs, "When it considers its own past, the group feels strongly that it has remained the same and becomes conscious of its identity through time. ... [T]he group, living first and foremost for its own sake, aims to perpetuate the feelings and images forming the substance of its thought."[11] Thus adolescence appears to modern-day teenagers (and ex-teenagers) to be a timeless concept, a fact of life, making its perpetuation difficult to question. As psychologist Robert Epstein writes, "When, for several generations, people have looked at an issue a certain way, it's almost impossible for them to see things differently."[12]

Halbwachs's theory of the collective memory establishes that different groups in society hold different ideas in common; that as these groups change, they may acquire or shed collective ideas; and that as individuals move among groups, the ideas they hold may change as well. Great social changes occurred between 1870 and 1940 that changed how and with whom adolescents spent most of their time, laying the groundwork for adolescents themselves and for American society as a whole to accept new ideas about adolescence.

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[11] Ibid., 146.

[12] Robert Epstein, *The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen,* Sanger, CA: Quill Driver Books/Word Dance Press (2007), 20.

Laying the Groundwork: Policy, History, and Psychology

Policy

In the first three chapters of his book, *The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen,* psychologist Robert Epstein examines the creation of adolescence in the U.S, particularly the rise of protective laws and mandatory education in the late nineteenth century. He represents one scholar among many who have identified modern adolescence as a cultural construction, and his work provides a solid framework for an analysis of the legal forces that encouraged the onset of adolescence. "Adolescence," he writes, "is the creation of modern industrialization, which got into high gear in the United States between 1880 and 1920. For most of human history before the Industrial Era, young people worked side by side with adults as soon as they were able, and it was not uncommon for young people, and especially young females, to marry and establish independent households soon after puberty."[13] However, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, female reformers began to organize successfully around the issue of children's workplace welfare and states began passing laws protecting children from work. Protective laws, Epstein writes, hardly existed before the 1880s, but in 1903, Illinois passed an influential child labor law that also legislated mandatory school attendance, and by 1918, every state had passed a similar law.[14] In 1900, teenagers were as likely to work as to attend school; by 1950, roughly 10 percent of teenagers worked and more than 70 percent attended school.[15]

The numbers diverged more dramatically in following decades. An early twentieth-century increase in public high schools across the country also contributed to the teenager's new patterns of social activity. In 1910, when only 10 percent of 14- to 17-year-olds were enrolled in high school across the nation, states — especially Western agrarian states — began building

[13] Ibid., 23.
[14] Ibid., 34.
[15] Ibid., 39.

more high schools, and by 1930, enrollment had nearly reached 60 percent.[16] Mandatory education cemented the isolation of teenagers from adults and effectively rewrote the script of adolescence. Starting in elementary school, students were separated into groups defined by their common ages, restricting them somewhat from interacting with or learning from older peers. One-room schools represent an exception to this norm; as these remained integral parts of the public education system in Midwestern states until at least the 1920s, some Midwestern teenagers probably experienced adolescence differently from teens in Eastern or Western states, but only until entering high school.

The dramatic increase in secondary public school attendance from 1870 to 1940 is the most important factor behind the rise of adolescence. In 1870, just 80,000 students nationwide were enrolled in public schools in grades 9–12, and only about 2 percent of 17-year-olds in the United States held a high school diploma.[17] In 1900, those numbers had risen to 519,000 students — a little over 10 percent of 14- to 17-year-olds — and 6.4 percent of 17-year-olds graduated. Growth remained steady until 1910. But between 1910 and 1940, the numbers of students attending public high school increased dramatically, almost doubling with each decade. Interestingly, landmarks in the semantic memory of adolescence straddle this period: G. Stanley Hall introduced adolescence as a major topic in psychology in 1904, while the word "teenagers" emerged in 1944.

Child labor laws and compulsory education laws were the major force driving this change. Child labor laws regulating the work of minors were adopted by every state by 1914, while compulsory education laws, which mandated a minimum period of school attendance up to

[16] Claudia Goldin, "How America Graduated from High School: 1910 to 1960," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 4762 (1994), 2-3.

[17] The source of these numbers is Table 9, "Enrollment in regular public and private elementary and secondary schools, by grade level: 1869-70 to fall 1992," in Snyder, "120 Years of American Education," 36, and Table 19, "High school graduates, by sex and control of institution: 1869-70 to 1991-92," in ibid., 55.

a certain age (usually around fourteen) had reached every state by 1918. In 1900, teenagers were as likely to work as to attend school.[18] By 1940, more than 70 percent of high school-age students — about 6.6 million adolescents — were enrolled in public high schools and for the first time, more than half of all 17-year-olds were high school graduates. Students also began spending much more time in school with their peers over this time period. In 1870, the school year, on average, was only 132 days. By the 1930s, that number had risen to 175.[19] To sum up, by 1940, there were 6.5 million more teenagers enrolled in high school, spending a third more time with their peers, than students in 1870.

The importance of this change cannot be overstated. High school students in 1940 had a network of peers that was eighty times larger than in 1870, and students spent almost half the year in school together as opposed to one-third. These trends had the effect of creating a distinct group of adolescents whose defining trait was their age — their highly visible difference from children and adults. Moreover, they were concentrated in high schools that were themselves distinguished by the ages of the students enrolled — an entire institution centered around the unique needs of adolescents. This population was primed for the rapid growth of collective memory. Removed from the influence of their families and sequestered within a uniform system of education, adolescents formed bonds with their peers through which they developed new interests, ideas, and values of their own. In school, adolescents had the opportunity to share a common identity and to convey it individually.

History of Adolescence

Historians have studied adolescence as a social construct since at least the 1960s, and

[18] Robert Epstein, *The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen* (Sanger, CA: Quill Driver Books/Word Dance Press, 2007), 39.

[19] Snyder, "120 Years of American Education," 27.

most date it to the end of the nineteenth century. Phillipe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* was one of the first works to explore the concept of childhood as a historically and culturally contingent concept when an English translation was first published in 1962.[20] A 1969 article acknowledges that "adolescence, as we know it, was barely recognized before the end of the last century," while David Bakan asserts in a 1971 article that "the notion [of adolescence] as it is commonly understood in contemporary thought did not prevail prior to the last two decades of the nineteenth century."[21] Virtually every author credits psychologist G. Stanley Hall with the invention of adolescence to some degree, if only to point out that he established the term in the popular mind in his two-volume *Adolescence,* published in 1904.[22] Historians John Demos and Virginia Demos have shown that for much of the nineteenth century, the term "adolescence" was almost never used and the public had "only a limited degree of concern with the stage and its characteristic behaviors."[23] Establishing the concept of adolescence in semantic memory was an important development in the history and memory of adolescence, but as Joseph F. Kett points out, the absence of the term before 1900 "does not mean that ideas about adolescence did not exist or that they were of only marginal concern."[24] Kett helpfully traces eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concepts of "youth," the preferred term during that time period, and concludes that youth became distinct from childhood in the nineteenth century as religious sentiment placed more value on the innocence of childhood. Ultimately, he, too, identifies the late nineteenth century as the pivotal time period: "From the 1870s, there was a growing

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[20] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, "Adolescence as a Cultural Invention: Philippe Ariès and the Sociology of Youth," *History of the Human Sciences* 8, no. 2 (1995), 69–89.

[21] David Bakan, "Adolescence in America: From Idea to Social Fact," in "Twelve to Sixteen: Early Adolescence," special issue, *Daedalus* 100, no. 4 (Fall 1971), 919–995.

[22] Crista DeLuzio, *Female Adolescence in American Scientific Thought, 1830–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 91.

[23] John Demos and Virginia Demos, "Adolescence in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31, no. 4 (November 1969), 632.

[24] Joseph F. Kett, "Adolescence and Youth in Ninteenth-Century America," in "The History of the Family," special issue, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 2 (Autumn 1971), 285.

disposition to define youth narrowly as the years from fourteen to nineteen, and virtually all of the writers on adolescence who followed in Hall's wake equated adolescence with the teen years."[25]

Adolescence, historians generally recognize, holds a different meaning for girls than for boys throughout history. Crista DeLuzio provides an overview of the literature on female adolescence, concluding that the traditional discourse of femininity, which prescribed virtues like modesty, purity, and obedience to one's family, was at odds with the social expectations that became attached to adolescence — "independence, rebellion, and sexual experimentation." The endpoints of adolescence, too, differed according to gender; as society prepared boys for work, girls prepared for marriage.[26] In the ideal of middle-class femininity at the turn of the century, young women never left the control of their family until they entered the security of marriage. As such, girls and women who transgressed traditional gender roles by working, living alone or with men out of wedlock, partaking in leisure activities like dancing or playing cards, or otherwise engaging in heterosocial activities were a topic of concern in one form or another for middle-class and elite women and reformers throughout the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth.[27] For most of the nineteenth century, the values of traditional femininity to which society subscribed simply conflicted with the concept of adolescence as a life stage. As a result, historians like Kett have concluded that, in general, boys began to behave like teenagers earlier in history than girls did. As Kett writes, "A society which failed to provide a significant social role for women outside of marriage had difficulty envisioning girls passing through a protracted

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[25] Ibid., 292.

[26] Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: BasicBooks, 1996), 17–19.

[27] Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

period of adjustment to responsibility."[28] This heterosocial model of adolescence came later in history for girls than for boys, toward the end of the nineteenth century rather than the beginning, and the experience of adolescence differs for girls even today.

In general, historians have pointed consistently to gradual, society-wide changes that engendered the development of adolescence, yet they have identified different trends in doing so. Kett points to romanticism, increases in population and population concentration, and religious movements that emphasized conversions among boys as factors in the changing concepts of childhood and youth.[29] Demos and Demos suggest that the shift from an agricultural to an industrial society led to the emergence of adolescence by separating the work and lives of children and adults in the family structure.[30] Bakan argues that compulsory education, child labor legislation, and legal changes regarding the status of juveniles together defined adolescence as "the period of time between pubescence, a concrete biological occurrence, and the ages specified by law for compulsory education, employment, and criminal procedure."[31] Likewise, popular nonfiction author Jon Savage names youth gangs, juvenile delinquency legislation, changes in child labor and education, and mass media as characteristics of the "prehistory of youth culture."[32] Historians of adolescence have taken a macroscopic approach to the topic, and their work has rarely, if ever, addressed the question of why adolescents themselves changed or how social changes shaped individuals. For example, although Savage devoted an entire monograph to describing the "prehistory" of teenagers, his work does not address the mechanisms by which American ideas about adolescence changed. Savage establishes that repetitive news reports cemented certain ideas about adolescence, particularly about young men and delinquency, in

[28] Kett, "Adolescence and Youth," 296.
[29] Ibid., 288.
[30] Demos and Demos, "Adolescence in Historical Perspective," 636–637.
[31] Bakan, "Adolescence in America," 981.
[32] Savage, *Teenage: The Prehistory of Youth Culture*, 34–35; 64; 96–97.

popular culture, but neither Savage nor any of the other authors theorize the processes or mechanisms by which collective behaviors changed individuals' behavior. Those mechanisms may be found in memory theory.

Early Psychology of Adolescence

An account of the history of adolescence would not be complete without mentioning G. Stanley Hall, an influential American psychologist who founded the *American Journal of Psychology* and served as the first president of the American Psychological Association. Hall is frequently credited with inventing the concept of adolescence as a distinct period of life with special psychological and behavioral characteristics. Hall's most important contribution to the history of adolescence is his description of adolescent courtship as explicitly peer-centered. Adolescent courtship for the sake of pleasure, not for the purpose of marriage, would eventually become a hallmark and rite of passage for teenagers, but until then, girls in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had to reconcile their enjoyment of peer-centered courtship with traditional expectations of courtship as a means to marriage. His two-volume *Adolescence,* published in 1904, constitutes the first major work to define adolescence as a distinct period of human development marked by physical and sexual maturation, particular changes in psychology, and social behaviors unique to the life stage between the ages of 14 and 24.[33] While he dwelled on the physical and sexual maturity of both men and women, his pronouncements on common adolescent behaviors and psychology are most relevant here, especially his definition of the stages of adolescent love.[34]

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[33] Crista DeLuzio. *Female Adolescence in American Scientific Thought, 1830-1930.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (2007), 91.

[34] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence,* New York: D. Appleton and Co. (1904). I will focus on the second, fourth, and fifth stages, which address the typical course of adolescent love. Hall's first stage deals with the infatuation of

Hall's descriptions of young teenagers' clumsy and furtive courting activities appear oddly familiar to the modern reader. Boys and girls around the ages of 12 and 14, Hall wrote, begin to show an "acute interest in some person of the other sex, but it is no longer unconscious. The object of attraction is followed, but at a distance. There are gifts, no longer face to face, but secretly and perhaps anonymously....It is not called loving, but liking....Boys deny it far more readily upon occasion than girls....Showing off is perhaps the boy's chief expression of this callow calf love."[35] Hall described the coyness of the teenage girl and asserted that her apparent indifference is designed to attract more evidence of affection from the boy pursuing her. After listing a few ways in which boys try to attract girls (yodeling and walking on fences, for example), Hall wrote, "To this repertory of fascination the girl responds perhaps by ostentatiously and studiously ignoring them all....This may be aversion, but it is more likely to be due to her dim but strong instinct to prompt him to a nearer and more personal expression." Hall's teenage girl is conflicted about her feelings for boys: "No psychologist, but only her trusted confidante, and perhaps not she, can tell which it is," Hall declared. "She might upon occasion slap him and afterward fancy or wish it had been a kiss." Finally, the teenage girl's affections are fickle, and she sometimes uses jealousy or politics to manipulate his own. "She writes his name or pronounces it in secret and wonders if she likes its sound or its association with others bearing the same name, is nice to another boy to goad him on, praises before him qualities he lacks or in which others excel, or condemns freckles, light hair, or some item of attire which characterizes him, but if he shows sign of lukewarmness or diversion to another, she comes forward with some sudden and unequivocal token. The first crude impulse of coyness

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young children; his second and third stages describe, respectively, the tendency of children to be attracted to much older members of the opposite sex and the tendency of adolescents to focus more on partners closer to their age.

[35] Ibid., 2:103-104.

often impels her to open scorn of what is secretly fascinating."[36] In none of Hall's descriptions do girls appear to consider the opinions of anyone other than herself or her peers in choosing whom to care about, marking an important difference from traditional models of courtship that held girls responsible for choosing men suitable to become husbands and providers.

In Hall's fourth stage of the "sentiment of love," relating to more mature teenagers, the budding young adult becomes more shy of the opposite sex. "Sex itself means other and more than before, a reserve and a new sex consciousness unfold. Modes of life, interests, and plans for the future differentiate. The boy becomes a little ashamed of girl associates and is desirous of asserting manhood, while the girl is more conscious if not more coy."[37] Hall described a traditionally gendered model of adolescence in which boys and girls isolated themselves in gendered peer groups — that is, as boys and girls matured in this model of gendered, peer-centric adolescence, they started spending more time with same-sex friends, and their flirtation with the opposite sex became more cautious. Hall seemed to view adolescence love as unserious, suggesting that adults experienced it differently: "The age of love," Hall concludes, "slowly supervenes when body and soul are mature."[38]

Hall's most important contribution to the history of female adolescence is his definition of the stages of adolescent love. Hall established attitudes and behaviors that distinguished the behavior and psychology of adolescents from that of adults, particularly for girls. His description of girls as fickle and coy departed from traditional models of youth or adolescence because they acknowledged that many girls dated for fun, not for the purpose of marriage. This is the most important difference between traditional, kin-centric adolescence and the peer-centered model of adolescence — while marriage was the logical endpoint of courtship in traditional adolescence,

[36] Ibid., 2:104-105.
[37] Ibid., 2:108.
[38] Ibid.

girls who embraced a peer-based adolescence saw courtship merely as a pleasurable activity.

Another psychologist who made important contributions to this new understanding of adolescence was Havelock Ellis. Historian Crista Deluzio points to *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, originally published in six volumes between 1897 and 1910, as another source of a more modern sexual ethos. Ellis was an English psychologist who is remembered today more for his pioneering work on homosexuality than for his theories on female adolescence. According to DeLuzio, Ellis' most important contribution to the modern concept of adolescence is his acknowledgment of girls' sexual desire, which she claims marks a break from "the older sexual order."[39] Moreover, Ellis asserted that girls faced a conflict between their budding sexual desire and the cultural requirement of feminine modesty: "Thus did Ellis's modern adolescent girl fluctuate between a 'shrinking reticence' that underscored her sexual innocence and vulnerability and a sexual precocity that at moments even surpassed the boldness and intensity of the supremely aggressive teenage boy," DeLuzio writes.[40] Ellis' vacillating teenage girl has much in common with Hall's, whose inconsistent behavior and coyness conceal wildly changing and uncertain emotions. They also share the observation that boys and girls both show a significant interest in reading starting in adolescence, and both psychologists point to studies finding that girls are more fond of fiction than boys. "Romance led," Hall reported, remarking on the popularity of romance to young lady readers.[41] But unlike Hall, Ellis speculated on fiction's effect on the adolescent identity. After describing the coming-of-age ceremonies of native ethnic groups like the Yuman Indians and the Thlinkeet Eskimos, Ellis wrote:

> At present the spiritual initiation of youths and maidens is left to the chances of some happy accident, and usually it is of a purely cerebral character....This cerebral initiation

[39] DeLuzio, *Female Adolescence,* 123.
[40] Ibid., 124.
[41] Hall, *Adolescence,* 2:474-479; Havelock Ellis, *Sex in Relation to Society,* Philadelphia: F.A. Davis and Co. (1910), 89-92; Hall, *Adolescence*, 2:478.

> commonly occurs to the youth through the medium of literature. The influence of literature in sexual education thus extends, in an incalculable degree, beyond the narrow sphere of manuals on sexual hygiene, however admirable and desirable these may be. The greater part of literature is more or less distinctly penetrated by erotic and autoerotic conceptions and impulses....The youth becomes acquainted with the imaginative representations of love before he becomes acquainted with the reality of love, so that, as Leo Berg puts it, "the way to love among civilized peoples passes through imagination.'" All literature is thus, to the adolescent soul, a part of sexual education.

Ellis' point was simple: young adults at the turn of the century found their courtship practices in literature. The preceding passage suggests that literature provided a foundation for the identities and practices of young adults entering the world of courtship for the first time. Ellis also assigns particular importance to the role of the daydream in the adolescent psyche; he sees the daydream, more common among girls than boys — Ellis puts the figures at 47 percent and 14 percent, respectively — as an auto-erotic expression of fantasy that "is, of course, fostered by sexual abstinence; hence its frequency in women."[42] In other words, women — especially those "refined and imaginative" young women who "lead a chaste life and would often be repelled by masturbation" — used day-dreams to experiment with the opposite sex. Ellis saw the adolescent identity as grounded in imagination; through daydreams and literature, adolescents used imagination to explore the possibilities of courtship — and as Hall remarked, romance was much more popular among young women than among young men. Unlike historians of adolescence, psychologists like Ellis speculated about how boys and girls acquired ideas about adolescence. His speculation suggests that popular media may have an important role to play in defining and communicating those ideas to individuals.

Two Forms of Adolescence

My study of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century diaries suggests teenage

[42] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Philadelphia: F.A. Davis and Co. (1920), 1:186.

girls learned from the example and mentoring of other girls, from romantic novels marketed to the budding demographic, and from common knowledge of courting practices that predated the advent of modern female adolescence and changed in the decades over which this new adolescence was established as the norm. In these diaries, we will see the collision of and transition between two forms of female adolescence. In the traditional, kin-based form of adolescence, young women became eligible for marriage and enter adult society upon reaching puberty. At this point, they began to speculate about and receive marriage proposals, often from older men, that they considered carefully — practicality came into play more than romance, courtships were often short in duration and expected to conclude with a proposal, and the ideal husband would provide a respectable social status and comfortable lifestyle for the rest of a woman's life. In traditional adolescence, girls' social lives were dominated by their family and older men and women, in addition to members of their peer group, until they married and started their own families.

In the modern, peer-centered version of adolescence, young women's social lives revolved around their peer groups, which were increasingly heterosocial, and leisure figured prominently in their daily life, particularly outside of the domestic sphere. High school was a rite of passage for most girls and the locus of socialization. Increasing rates of high school attendance isolated teenagers from adult society especially after 1910. Courtship centered around romance and leisure, and girls focused more on dating boys, not finding a marriageable man. The ideal husband was one who loved and adored his wife. Teenage girls like Evelyn Jackson, who recorded a diary in the 1930s, lived for their girlfriends, their favorite church and school activities, and their male suitors. They enjoyed a measure of independence from the control of their families that most girls who came before them could not — they experienced a new

collective memory of adolescence.

Girls like Evelyn Jackson focused on romance in relationships and more often formed attachments to boys from high school than to older men looking for a wife, and they focused less on marriage and more on casual dating. Is it a coincidence that we see the median age of first marriage decline from 1890 to 1920?[43] As a U.S. Census Bureau presentation points out, "Not until 1990 was the median age at first marriage at or above its 1890 value."[44] The decrease in average marital age reflects the growing tendency in society at the time to marry younger; marital age declined for both men and women at nearly identical rates from 1890 to 1920, while the three-year age gap between men and women remained steady. Women's average age rose over the following two decades to shrink the age gap by almost a year, as more Americans married peers and more women entered the workforce, until the average age at marriage for women took a steep drop from 1940 to 1950, reflecting World War II and the start of the Baby Boomer phenomenon. Overall, marriage patterns show that Americans who married in 1950 were younger and more likely to marry peers close to their age than Americans in the nineteenth century.

Even before the word "teenager" entered the cultural lexicon, Americans recognized that a collective transformation had taken place, and not everyone was happy about it. Psychologists Phyllis Blanchard and Carlyn Manasses wrote an entire book about it in 1930, entitled *New Girls for Old*, but the general public had already known for at least a decade that a change was taking place when the image of the flapper girl became a cultural icon in the 1920s.[45] To gauge when the flapper entered the collective memory, I searched *The New York Times* archives for early

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[43] "Table MS-2. Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to Present," U.S. Census Bureau, 2011. Estimated median age of first marriage declined from 22.0 for women in 1890 to 21.2 in 1920.

[44] Elliott et al, "Historical Marriage Trends from 1890-2010: A Focus on Race Differences," U.S. Census Bureau (2012), slide no. 12.

[45] Phyllis Blanchard and Carlyn Manasses. *New Girls for Old.* New York: Macaulay Co., 1930.

references to her. In the years prior to 1920, the "flapper" archetype appeared mostly in news of clothing sales or trends, as in a brief article from July 6, 1918, that predicts a surge in the popularity of the flapper style: "Men who are well posted in the trend of dry goods matters say that there is considerable of a disposition on the part of manufacturers to realize the money-making possibilities of catering to misses, especially to the type that comes under the general head of 'flapper.'"[46] By the interwar years, the flapper was not only recognizable enough to the casual reader to recognize the motif without more than a general reference, but it was also rising enough in cultural prominence to deserve special mention of its popularity in *The Times*.[47]

The first time the term "flapper" appears in print is in a March 27, 1921, article entitled "Mrs. Grundy On the Job of Reforming the Flapper." Helen Bullitt Lowry opens the article with an anecdote about a 16-year-old flapper girl nonchalantly explaining to her mother the meaning of "putting out" — kissing the boys and petting.[48] "Thus struggled this mother against the changing custom of the times, sticking her finger through the hold in the dike to guard from floods the pre-war ideals — ideals of the period when maids had the grace at least to conceal what they 'put out' from each other," Lowry wrote. "So it goes all over the country. Individuals and organizations are struggling, with their fingers plugged in the dike, to hold back the flood of new morals and ethics and dress of our Younger Generation." While Lowry locates the transition from modest maid to shameless flapper in the years of World War I, the new trends that reformers lamented — a fixation on the opposite sex, a loss of modesty around both male and female friends, "improper dancing," wearing rouge and lipstick — were not invented by the

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[46] "Paying More Attention to Misses," *New York Times*, July 6, 1918.

[47] Using the Google Books Ngram Viewer tool to search for the word "flapper" in Google's database of American texts supports these observations. The Ngram Viewer shows a steep rise in the use of the word "flapper" starting about the year 1910 and peaking in 1926. Google Books Ngram Viewer, "Flapper," https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=flapper, accessed November 17, 2017.

[48] Helen Bullitt Lowry, "Mrs. Grundy on the Job of Reforming the Flapper," *New York Times,* March 27, 1921.

flapper after World War I but were gradually adopted by teenage girls during the decades before World War I. It was only by the 1920s that this new schema of female adolescence was embraced by enough young women to merit widespread recognition (and anxiety). Clearly, by the 1920s, a new female adolescence had entered the collective American memory.

In memory theory parlance, these behaviors are known as bodily practices. Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember* contributes to the theory of the collective memory of adolescence in two important ways: by elucidating the memory theory of bodily practices and by identifying and attempting to fill gaps in Halbwachs's theory. Connerton's criticism of Halbwachs is highly instructive to this study, especially in applying Astrid Erll's memory theory concerning media and literature (see below). Connerton took no issue with the premises of Halbwachs's thought, commending him for the "exemplary lucidity" of his demonstration that individual memory is inherently social in character.[49] However, he sharply criticized Halbwachs for theorizing about the workings of collective memory without explicitly identifying the mechanisms by which it might change or spread to new members of a group. Responding to Halbwachs's assertion that a group of individuals can hold a collective memory that exists beyond the lifespan of the original group members, Connerton logically pointed out that the missing element in his theory is communication:

> "For if we are to say that a social group, whose duration exceeds that of the lifespan of any single individual, is able to 'remember' in common, it is not sufficient that the various members who compose that group at any given moment should be able to retain the mental representations relating to the past of the group. It is necessary also that the older members of the group should not neglect to transmit these representations to the younger members of the group. If we want to continue to speak, with Halbwachs, of

[49] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 37.

collective memory, we must acknowledge that much of what is being subsumed under that term refers, quite simply, to facts of communication between individuals. That the members of different social groups do in fact communicate with each other within the group in ways that are characteristic of that particular group can indeed be inferred from what Halbwachs says; but it is a matter of inference, because he leaves us with no explicit sense that social groups are made up of a system, or systems, of communication."[50]

Connerton's criticisms are highly relevant to this study: A theory of the collective memory of female adolescence must account for the communicative practices that oriented girls to the world of adolescence. Connerton's observations about the centrality of communication to the concept of collective memory provoke a number of questions when applied to our understanding of adolescence. If adolescence changed over time, how did changing social norms propagate through society? How, for example, did girls learn about new fashion and fads? More broadly, how do girls internalize the values and behaviors of adolescence? Or as Connerton asked, "Given that different groups have different memories which are particular to them, how are these collective memories passed on within the same social group from one generation to the next?"[51] The "generations" in question here consist of the generations of girls transitioning between a traditional kin-centered adolescence and the new peer-centered model of adolescence. Connerton offered concrete answers to this question in *How Societies Remember,* most significantly, for this study, his concept of bodily practices.

Connerton's theory of bodily practices are instructive in connecting the individual identities of adolescent girls with the collective memory of female adolescence. Bodily practices are to Connerton a valid and invaluable object of hermeneutic inquiry; they belong to a larger

[50] Ibid., 38.
[51] Ibid., 38.

category of social memory that he calls "incorporating practices," defined as a message conveyed by means of "current bodily activity."[52] His definition of bodily practices stems from the premise that "the meaning of a social habit rests upon others' conventional expectations such that it must be interpretable as a socially legitimate (or illegitimate) performance."[53] Bodily practices may include posture, handwriting, gestures, and etiquette, among other examples. Importantly, Connerton links the individual externalization of memory — through the performance of habit memory — with the collective memory of the group: "The appropriate performance of the movements contained in the repertoire of the group...reminds the performers of systems of classification which the group holds to be important."[54] In other words, individuals performing bodily practices share a common understanding about their meaning, reflecting their membership in the group and the larger set of behaviors, values, and meanings held by the group and internalized by the "performers." Connerton regards bodily practices as exhibiting not just the external performance of habit memory but also internal adherence to social norms. This contribution to memory theory holds that physical behavior can be laden with meaning and reveal the connection between individual actions and collective identity.

The performance of female adolescence is rife with bodily practices, particularly in the rituals of courtship. Girls' use of makeup and clothing may be considered, through Connerton's lens, to be bodily practices. They may reflect the strength of individuals' connections to a traditional adolescent identity or to the newly peer-centered adolescent that would come to be called a teenager. To that end, the flapper girl of the 1920s, who notoriously wore short dresses and lipstick and fraternized with boys, is an especially vivid early symbol of the memory of female adolescence. For the anxious mother described in the *New York Times* article, the flapper

[52] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72.
[53] Ibid., 35.
[54] Ibid., 88.

girl represented a frightening vision of female adolescence — a clash between the older, traditional memory of adolescence and the new, modern memory. The bodily practice of "petting" violated the sexual norms of a previous era, and girls who dressed in the flapper style expressed their identity as part of a new generation of youth. As daughters donned new clothes and cosmetics, they clashed with their mothers over new values that emphasized the importance of heterosocial peer groups and rejected the control of the family. Such bodily practices are described in the pages of the girls' and women's diaries analyzed in the remainder of this report.

While historians now point to prominent turn-of-the-century psychologists G. Stanley Hall and Haverlock Ellis as founders of the modern discourse on adolescence, they cannot be said to have invented adolescence altogether. Hall's *Adolescence* and Ellis' *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* had a profound influence on the future of adolescence by defining the terms in which it would be discussed for decades to come. However, the adolescence they describe certainly existed before the 1890s. So if modern historians trace the discursive origins of female adolescence to Hall, who drew his conclusions from observations of teenage girls, then where did those girls learn to be teenagers? In answer, let us turn to the girls themselves.

Method

I chose to focus on diaries in this memory study because they provide a window into the teenage girl's identity that cannot be equaled by psychological studies, surveys, memoirs, or general historical accounts of adolescence. Diaries cannot fully open the door to the psyche of the teenage girl, because diarists are not entirely reliable reporters; their journals may be the home of their innermost thoughts, but not of embarrassing details.[55] Aware that others may

[55] In my observations about the role of privacy in girls' and women's diaries, I am specifically indebted to

discover their diaries, they tend not to write down personal details; nowhere in this selection of diaries, for instance, does a writer make any acknowledgment of her menstrual cycle. Testifying to the significance of such omissions in diaries, at least one diarist seems to censor herself because she suspects her privacy has been violated: in 1894, Bessie Mattern figures out that her roommate Nina has read her diary, and Bessie, vowing to be very careful from then on, makes only one more diary entry while rooming with her.

The small number of diaries analyzed in this report were selected to reflect the experiences of girls of a similar age, from different time periods between 1870 and 1940, who wrote in detail about their thoughts and feelings. My sample tends toward rural Midwestern sources and white and heterosexual authors and does not represent the diverse range of girls who have come of age in the history of the United States. However, the same hermeneutic methods may be used to analyze the diaries of girls across this time span regardless of the author's location, race, or sexual orientation, provided these factors are taken into account with sensitivity to their vital importance to an individual's identity. Female diarists and writers in general are not wholly representative of the average American woman. The diarists selected in this analysis were likely better educated and, importantly, more interested in literature, and particularly juvenile fiction, than the average person. Most studies of the history of the literary genre of juvenile fiction focus on British literature or on American greats like Mark Twain or Louisa May Alcott, but their prominence in modern-day scholarship does not correspond to their relative popularity in history. For the diarists described in the following pages, such well-known authors' classic works competed in girls' hearts and minds with the sort of "trashy novels" that Bessie Mattern shamefully confessed to adore in 1895. Authors and publishers had made a business selling

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Elizabeth Hampsten, author of *Read This Only to Yourself: The Private Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880–1910* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), whose interpretation of the significance of omissions in women's autobiographical writing was a guiding inspiration for this report.

children's books since the eighteenth century, but these books were marketed to parents, not children themselves.[56] Fiction marketed to children and young adults had its start in the publishing firm of William Lee and Charles Shepard, who discovered that children's books sold consistently even in the Civil War.[57] Their marketing strategy in the decades after the war gave rise to gendered genres of juvenile fiction; the authors they published typically wrote books either for boys or for girls. In the 1860s, however, fiction for girls sold far less well than fiction for boys, in part because the young male audience was not interested in books intended for the opposite sex, while girls were less leery of reading boys' fiction.[58] Lee and Shepard, unlike other publishers of the time, attempted to jump-start the market for a female audience and apparently succeeded; by the 1880s, their firm was no longer the largest publisher of children's books in the U.S.[59] From the 1880s to the 1920s, teenage girls had no problem finding books marketed especially to them — and as the United States embraced a collective memory of adolescence for girls as well as boys, a changing and burgeoning literary landscape arose to reinforce that identity.

The memory theory of Astrid Erll offers insight into the importance of media in the shaping of adolescents' collective memory. Erll states it plainly: "media are the interface between individual minds and what Halbwachs [refers to] as the 'collective frameworks of memory.'"[60] Erll's insight on the relationship between memory and media offers tools and concepts to analyze the link between adolescents as individuals and adolescence as a group

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[56] Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentietch Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 18.

[57] Sarah Wadsworth, "Louisa May Alcott, William T. Adams, and the Rise of Gender-Specific Series Books," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 25 (January 2001), 22. For more about juvenile fiction, see Beverly Lyon Clark, *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) and Anne Scott MacLeod, *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

[58] Wadsworth, "Louisa May Alcott," 25.

[59] Ibid., 22.

[60] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: 2011), 130.

identity, one that is culturally and historically contingent. On the collective level, media serve to construct and circulate “knowledge and versions of a common past in sociocultural contexts,” via personal memory media such as family photographs and letters; the mass media of print, radio, television, and the Internet; and sites of memory, like monuments.[61] Erll holds that individual memory, too, depends “to a significant extent” on media, like oral instruction, personal photographs, and family lore. Moreover, Erll acknowledges “the influence of mass media and its schemata on the way we code life experience.” Not coincidentally, the period 1890-1940 saw the rise of mass communication and advertising in American culture.[62] A consumer culture targeted specifically at children developed gradually over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and by the 1920s, writes historian Lisa Jacobson, advertisers had learned to exploit America’s adolescents, and specifically teenage girls, with the strategy of peer-conscious marketing.[63] From books and magazines to film, radio, and eventually television, girls who came of age in the 1940s lived in a world that was saturated with mass media, exposing them to a range of ideas and influences far more diverse than was available to girls of the 1870s.

Unsurprisingly, the medium most enjoyed by the female adolescent diarists referenced in this study is literature. Kathryn Thompson and Evelyn Jackson both list some of their favorite novels in their diaries, suggesting that reading fiction was, for them, an important cultural activity. These novels have titles like *Mary Ware’s Promised Land*, *Burning Beauty*, and *Laughing Girl* and revolve around the romantic lives of young female protagonists in the bloom of adolescence. In Erll’s theory, fiction like this is loaded with memory. Instructively, Erll devotes an entire chapter to “Literature as a Medium of Cultural Memory.” Literature for Erll —

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[61] Ibid., 113.

[62] Jacobson, *Raising Consumers*; Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[63] Jacobson, *Raising Consumers*, 127–129. Jacobson specifically links peer-conscious marketing with the rise of high school attendance rates in the 1920s and 1930s.

like other media — both shapes collective memory and reflects it. Premediation is the process by which media provides the schemata or framework used by individuals to interpret the meaning of common cultural signifiers and life events. Through premediation, collective memory is shared with individuals via existing media, which communicate ideas and expectations about future experiences, such as courtship, marriage, or school. The extent to which individuals internalize these ideas no doubt varies, and it is impossible to judge. However, it seems safe to say that when readers find a special connection to a piece of media, as some girls in this study espouse to, the connection reflects an important link between media and identity. Remediation is the recurrence or reproduction of media forms within media. Popular literature aimed at girls at the turn of the century recycled plots and tropes, including such gems as the older man attempting to seduce a clever young woman (featured in *Laughing Girl*), reinforcing the dilemma faced by adolescent girls: to conform to traditional social norms and deny temptation or to embrace transgressive norms and seek pleasure.

For the young women those analyzed in this study, one purpose of writing in a diary was to express their adolescent identity privately and work out their internal understanding of their place in society. The personal nature of such diaries in fact implies that a sort of egotism is embedded in the art of journaling: if the diary exists for its author's eyes only, what pleasure does she take from reading what she has written? Indeed, Bessie became so ashamed upon rereading her old journal entries that she destroyed some — her own diary became a record of her identity, and she did not like what she saw, so she removed it.[64] I find it likely that many diarists record primarily those thoughts, events, conflicts, and interactions that cast themselves in a flattering light — and some probably even construct their narrative, whether consciously or

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[64] Again, see Hampsten, *Read This Only to Yourself*, for more insight into the interpretation of privacy in autobiographical writing.

unconsciously, to do the same. The diary is a mirror of the self, and few people want to look in a mirror that shows them to be ugly.

Despite the unreliability of diaries in establishing objective historical fact, I find them an invaluable resource in reconstructing the emotional lives of their authors. I must acknowledge my assumption that these diarists lie only by omission; otherwise, I take their accounts of their friends and family, social lives, daily activities, and hopes, dreams, and daydreams as genuine. I read these diaries closely for hints at the identities these young women embraced and the behaviors they saw as appropriate and inappropriate for men and women. Some diarists also helpfully list the novels they most enjoy reading, so I extend my analysis also to those works to determine how they influenced their readers. After applying this method to a number of diaries written by young American women between the ages of about 14 to 22, ranging from the 1860s to the 1930s, it became clear that some of the most "modern" teenage girls had a particular love for "trashy" novels — that is, romance novels. This observation has particular implications on the roots of modern female adolescence.

To reiterate, the individual memories expressed in these diaries should not be taken as *representative* of a group memory held by other young American women. Their race, wealth, and education, as well as the location and time in which they grew up, undoubtedly had as great an influence on their identities as their friends and the books they read. However, I believe these individual memories *reflect* a larger idea of adolescence shared by other women who grew up in similar circumstances. My goal in exploring these diaries is not to use individual cases to prove the existence of a collective memory of adolescence, but to examine the role of collective memory in individual lives and observe how the collective memory of adolescence might have been communicated to individuals.

Teenage Girls' Diaries and the Individual Memory of Adolescence

Diary of Luna Warner: 1871-1872

Fifteen-year-old Luna Warner and her parents moved to Kansas in 1871 to homestead near modern-day Downs, Kansas, some 100 miles northwest of Manhattan. She lived in a rural community far from major cities and did not attend high school. Warner wrote nearly every day in her diary, which spans two years, recording the food she and her family ate, the game they hunted, the work they completed around the farm, the misfortunes they suffered, and the social engagements they attended. Her entry from January 8, 1872, is a typical one:

> After breakfast Louie and I started up the river with gun and revolver, stopped at Mr. Owen's to see about calves. The weeds and grass were bent down with frost. It was very beautiful. We were sopping wet. Dried ourselves by the hot open fire, then went up the river to the head of Twelve Mile Creek and ate our lunch. While we were eating a rabbit jumped up from my feet. We whistled, it stopped and Louie shot it. We went on up the creek several miles, then started back across the prairie. It was very wet and bad walking. Had another jaw in the evening.[65]

In this entry, Luna and her brother Louie trek across the Kansas prairie in the dead of winter to a neighbor's house to replace their old cow, which had strangled itself in August while hitched near a river. Their business turns to a social call as they warm themselves by the fire and, presumably, "jaw" with Mr. Owens and his wife, whom Luna says she likes "very well" three weeks later.[66] After they've dried off, they keep walking across the beautiful but sopping wet landscape. Luna dearly loves to ramble across the Kansas wilderness, as numerous entries reveal, but in this case she and her brother probably hiked through the frosted countryside not merely for pleasure but also for food. The Warner family relied on wild game to make up the bulk of their meals; accordingly, Luna devoted a great deal of her diary to recording her family's hunting

[65] Luna Warner, "The Diary of Luna Warner, A Kansas Teenager of the Early 1970's," in *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* 35 (Autumn 1969), 302.

[66] Ibid., 305.

successes and failures.

This entry contains all the hallmarks of Luna's embrace of traditional, kin-centered adolescence: a social life consisting mainly of kin and neighbors, regardless of relative age; daily farm labor that her family needed merely to survive in the harsh conditions; a personal interest in the outdoors despite the hazards and discomfort of the plains; and a matter-of-fact attitude about the difficulties of pioneer living. Notably, Luna made no mention of her own love affairs nor even suggests an interest in having them. She was not the type of adolescent described by G. Stanley Hall or Havelock Ellis. Additionally, of the books she mentioned, which she and other family members usually read aloud to one another, none are targeted at a younger audience and all are by classical authors. Warner referenced several works by Charles Dickens, *Oldtown Folks* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Virginians: A Tale of the Last Century* by William Makepeace Thackeray, and *A History of New York* by Washington Irving. Luna's life would appear utterly foreign and undesirable to teenage girls of a later era who enjoyed a more "civilized" existence; let us not forget that Luna carried a gun, and she used it on more than one occasion.[67] Certainly Hall and Ellis would not have been able to construct their theories on adolescence from observing young Luna, who lived contentedly in an adult world.

Diary of Martha Farnsworth, 1884-1885

Martha Farnsworth, who, like Luna, grew up in Kansas, represents an altogether different model of adolescence. Unlike Luna, she attended high school, which was the nexus of her social life, and she greatly preferred to spend her free time in the company of her peers, not her kin or

[67] Though to little effect. Luna's mercy killing of the bull lying on its back in the river is her most successful attempt at firing a gun. On March 27, 1871, she reports shooting and missing at both a turkey and a large animal in the dark; on June 3, she practices shooting at a neighbor's; and on August 22, she fails to hit a large rattlesnake with a revolver. She has more success with killing pests like scorpions and snakes without the use of a revolver—and also, apparently, without fear.

elders. She wrote from the age of 14 to 54, but I focus on a selection of entries from the ages of 16 to 17.[68] Almost every journal entry revolves around her love life, and the twists and turns are enough to give the reader whiplash: within a year, Martha accepted four different proposals from three different young men, and she broke three of those proposals. Her first proposal came from Jamie Carman on March 7, 1884:

> Jamie Carman walked home with me after Literary and when we got right on top of the hill, near the house, he looked down at me (for I only come to his shoulders) and says "Mattie I want to make a bargain with you."...I little dreamed, of what was coming, and replied, "alright," when he says, rather abruptly, "Will you marry me"? Well, it was so sudden and unexpected that I answered, simply, "Yes" without hardly knowing what I was saying. I wonder if that is the way everyone "gets engaged." I always thought people "made love" first, and he has never made love to me....This is my first "proposal": just think! I'm the first one, of all this crowd of school-girls and boys to be engaged, and I'm *young, too young*: just "sweet 16" and Jamie is 20....I'll have to give up my other "sweet hearts" when we get married, so I'm going to wait a long time.[69]

Viewed through the lens of traditional gender norms, Martha was clueless about marriage. In fact, Martha was caught between traditional ideas about courtship and marriage and her own conflicting desire to enjoy courtship without thinking about marriage. She accepted Jamie's proposal without a second thought and seemed to think of betrothal as an inevitable event in her and her classmates' lives. Yet even as she rejoiced in being engaged to be married, she relished the chance to wait and continued seeing other sweethearts. By March 25, she had her eye on blue-eyed 18-year-old Gene McInturff — or was it blue-eyed Will Finch, 21, who was more worthy of her affections? Even Martha could not decide. By April 14, Martha was bragging to her journal that she had "made two 'conquests' in Gene Mc & Will Finch: wonder who will come out 'best.' Gene is ahead now. Poor Jamie Carman is being forgotten I'm afraid. Well I *don't love* him anyway and never did." For all that Martha complained of the misery her

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[68] Martha Farnsworth, *Plains Woman: the Diary of Martha Farnsworth, 1882-1922*, ed. Marlene Springer and Haskell S. Springer (Indiana University Press, 1986).

[69] Ibid., 9.

romantic pursuits sometimes cause her, she certainly seemed to savor her ability to make grown men compete for her affection. Even as Martha accepted traditional ideas like the inevitability of marriage, her purpose for courting boys and men was pleasure.

A somewhat peculiar incident occurred on April 27, a day after Martha's 17th birthday, revealing naked similarities to Hall's account of juvenile courting habits: "Went to Mrs. Thompson's for milk as usual this morning and Will Finch caught me, turned me across his knee and whipped me awfully hard with the Clothesbrush, he said to make me remember my 17th birthday and I always will," Martha writes. After spending the day with her girl friends, Will accompanied her and three other young ladies to church. "[W]e made Will walk with Anna. After church Will & I took Anna home, then took a short walk around two or three blocks and then home. Will scolded because I would not walk to church with he and Anna, instead of making him walk alone with Anna: He said I knew that I was the only one of the 'bunch' that he wanted to go with. Of course I knew it, but I wanted to *tease* him."[70] These behaviors perfectly match Hall's account of adolescent flirtation: Will showed off by spanking Martha and attracting her attention, and Martha later pretended to be standoffish, earning herself a private walk with Will and an open admission that he wants to "go with" her — harkening back to the "dim but strong instinct to prompt him to a nearer and more personal expression" that Hall identified as a characteristic of adolescent girls.[71]

A month later, Martha writes Jamie to break off their engagement. In her journal, she laments seeing "poor Jamie": "he looked *wretched* and I'm sorry for him, but most too happy in my new love, to feel very sorry."[72] She is delighted to be the object of Will's affections. Waiting and hoping for Will to break off a prior engagement to another woman, she seems to have

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[70] Ibid., 12.
[71] Hall, *Adolescence* 2:103-104.
[72] Farnsworth, *Plains Woman*, 14.

trouble turning down another proposal on July 23 from Clem Bradshaw, who appears to have been one of her teachers. After a visit and a long talk, "He *proposed* to me and I told him I would not marry until I was an 'old maid' and that would be 13 years from now: he said he would wait 13 years, if he could have me in the end. I told him 'alright': he would think his chances 'slim' if he knew how much I cared for Will." Though Bradshaw, who must be several years Martha's senior, probably made Martha a serious offer, Martha, true to Hall's theory, did not share his seriousness toward love. She courted for pleasure.

Almost inexplicably, by the end of August, Martha was engaged to Jamie again, mostly, it seems, out of pity: "I could not 'hold out' against his 'pleadings' when I saw the tears streaming down his cheeks and saw his whole body trembling, for *very love* of me."[73] In subsequent entries, she expressed her regret and distress over the decision. Interestingly, Martha accounted for her fickleness by blaming her age and gender: "I wish Will had stayed here, then Jamie could not have had a chance to 'coax' me back. Oh! Well I may get over it; a girl of 17 is not expected to know *what* or *who* she wants and is excusable for most anything she does."[74] For Martha, fickle emotions were a natural part of adolescent courtship. Hardly a month later, she broke her engagement to him in another letter, and less than a year after accepting her very first proposal at age 16, she was engaged to Will.[75] It would not be her last engagement.

Martha simultaneously embraced a peer-centered social life and traditional norms about marriage. Halbwachs's observations about the impact of collective memory on individuals suggests that one reason Martha's peers had such an impact on her life is because Martha isolated herself from her family. When not courting, she spent her time with female friends as much as possible and probably occupied the remainder of her free time by writing about her

[73] Ibid., 16.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 21.

lovers in her diary. Unhappy with her father and stepmother, who did not approve of her relationship with Will, Martha's family members did not constitute an integral part of her social circle; she did not give them the chance to influence how she felt about the boys and men in her life. Martha accepted her first betrothal almost unquestioningly, speaking to her acceptance of traditional social norms that prescribed marriage as the endpoint of courtship, yet simultaneously pursued courtship simply for the pleasure of it and without a serious intention to marry the men t whom she was betrothed. She saw herself as an object of affection and enjoyed flaunting her desirability about town and in front of her friends and peers, her romantic rivals and her potential suitors — all behaviors that G. Stanley Hall described in his stages of adolescent love. While she did not mention the influence of any literature in journal entries written between 1884 and 1885, Martha's attitude toward love and even her seemingly unusual romantic experimentation are mirrored in the diary and literary interests of Isabella Maud Mayne, nee Rittenhouse.

Diary of Isabella Maud Mayne, 1880-1889

Isabella Maud Rittenhouse recorded the dramatic twists and turns of her love life over more than a decade, from the age of 16 to 30, when she married at last. Growing up in an affluent family in Cairo, Illinois, Maud lived in a larger and more urban community than Martha Farnsworth and was wealthier, better-educated, and a far more prolific writer as well, but she was no less interested in her own love affairs — and, perhaps, in her imagined love affairs. Maud exemplifies an important aspect of peer-centered adolescence: unlike girls who embraced traditional models of young womanhood, Maud did not view marriage as a necessary goal of courtship and instead viewed courtship as a pleasurable activity to enjoy in and of itself. Maud was more privileged than the other writers analyzed in this study and later pursued postsecondary

education; her family's wealth exposed her to more opportunities and more independence in her transition to adulthood than the average American girl possessed in the late nineteenth century.

Maud's saga began in 1880, when she exchanged rings with Elmer Comings, a casual sweetheart who would become her steadiest male companion for many years. At the time, however, Maud was 16 and far too interested in other men to settle down with one. In May 1881, Maud described a dilemma that already appears all too familiar: her heart was torn between two men. She wrote:

> Here on one hand is Elmer, steady, business-like, pleasant, saying he loves me better than all else. On the other, Robert, graceful, accomplished, polished and yet with a vein of seeming deep earnestness underlying it all, and he calls me "dear little sister" and says to let time show how much in earnest he is and how good he can be to win the little girl with the "big brown eyes."
> Truly, my mind was never in such a state of indecision — Mama talks eternally about how good and steady and sensible Elmer is, and yet I know how she loves Robert and how kindly she kissed him goodbye. I think how moral and kind Elmer is and then go to bed and dream of Robert calling me "Sweet little woman" and then wake up mad and wish I'd never seen a male creature in my life. I could hardly sleep for thinking. This state of indecision seems really wicked, but I don't know how to help it.[76]

Like Martha, Maud acknowledged that her irresolution was inappropriate, and like Martha, Maud also pointed out her age and gender as if to emphasize her lack of capacity to cope with such decisions: "The idea of an infant of 16 having to bother her head about lovers and such. I'll declare its horrid." It was not the first time she did so in her writing. Her language demonstrates suggests that social norms about marriage and courtship had a profound psychological impact on her adolescent identity: Maud was an "infant of 16," but society and circumstances forced her to "bother her head about lovers and such." In her autobiographical writing, Maud repeatedly agonized over a decision she was asked to make only because of traditional ideas about courtship: Should she marry men whose company enjoyed, or was it acceptable merely to enjoy

[76] Isabella Maud Rittenhouse Mayne, *Maud,* ed. Richard Lee Strout, New York: Macmillan & Co. (1939), 8.

their company without planning marriage?

The impact of social norms on Maud's ideas about courtship is plain. Maud frequently referenced the influence of public opinion when writing about the her feelings for the boys she courted and her decisions about how she would conduct herself with them. Only about a year after describing her conflicted feelings about Elmer and Mark, on the day of her high school graduation in June 1882, Maud informed Elmer of a new resolution she had made: "I'm not to attend any place of amusement with the same gentleman more than twice in succession." Elmer, who wanted to marry her, was unhappy about her decision, but Maud wrote that she remained firm and they parted on friendly terms. We need not do any guessing at her motivation; Maud spelled out the situation in her writing: "I don't think it a good plan for a child of seventeen, to go exclusively with one person. I don't want people to say 'She's engaged to Elmer Comings' and they are already saying it.... Not that my feelings toward my boy have changed in the least, but of-course the more he takes me, the less the other boys will."[77] Quite plainly, Maud, like Martha, wanted to have her cake and eat it too — to hold the affections of one man while nurturing the admiration of others. She was torn between traditional courtship and peer-centered courtship.

Unlike Martha, however, Maud did not see engagement as a boost to her social status and did not make decisions about whom to spend her time with based on his prospects as a future husband. While she professed to love Elmer truly, she also wanted to keep her options open, so she maintained a private agreement with him that they will marry one day. The difference in attitude between Maud and Martha might be accounted for by Maud's superior social status and her love of her parents; Maud would probably face considerable disapproval from her parents and the community if it was known she was engaged to marry Elmer but still entertained other

[77] Ibid., 110.

boys. Maud's ruminations about the opinions of her friends and neighbors speak to the impact that social norms regarding marriage and courtship had on young women and their sense of self. Calling herself a "child of seventeen," Maud was torn between traditional ideas about marriage as the natural goal of courtship and the endpoint of female adolescence.

Within a month, she changed her mind about marrying Elmer. On July 2, 1882, she reminisced about her past love, Robert, and confessed that she read their old love letters the day before. What she loved most about Elmer was his abstinence from drinking and chewing or smoking tobacco, a trait that Robert did not possess. Nevertheless, it seems Elmer's purity alone was not enough for Maud, who languished in guilt over her hypocrisy.

> I feel convinced now as I never did before that I never loved but one person with the real lover love, and that person I would not marry for worlds. Still knowing that I do not love Elmer with the love I gave my "bright, beautiful one — bonny Rob" I would not dare marry him. For years I have prayed night and morning, "God make me love Elmer." Yesterday after reading those dear old letters, smelling the sweet violets and drinking in greedily every line and feature of the poor little cracked picture so long tied up in black, I cried so bitterly, and then dared to pray, "Oh heavenly Father if I can't love Elmer, bring my boy back to me, make him noble and pure and upright." Then I felt wicked, wicked, and said over and over, "I wouldn't see him for worlds." Oh, what shall I do, shall I do! If I tell Elmer it will break my heart to see his disappointment and grief, if I don't tell him I shall feel a base hypocrite. Hearts are the most unmanageable things! I wish I hadn't any. Wish I'd never seen a boy. And Elmer is so good.[78]

Though Maud was, for all intents and purposes, engaged to Elmer at this point, she still fantasized about Robert, for whom she apparently felt passionate love. She dared even to pray for it. If Martha fulfilled G. Stanley Hall's archetype of a girl in the throes of a juvenile love, Maud fulfills Ellis's archetype of the chaste woman daydreaming of an unchaste love. It is a recurring theme, both in Maud's own words and in the novels she reads. Yet, the next spring, she was daydreaming of her marriage to Elmer.

> Elmer's letter took me by storm. I must unblushingly confess I am loving him outrageously hard....In tonight's letter he makes a pretty bold venture. Just hear: "It seems

[78] Ibid., 115.

> to me there is no time so joyous and lovely as the Spring time to be married in," asking my opinion of Florida, Mexico, Cuba as a Spring-time bridal trip, wants me to think of it and let it be, too, not so *very* many Springs away. Dear Elmer. I've been building all sorts of air-castles on the moon-y porch this evening.[79]

To make a long story short, Maud did not marry Elmer. She spent her days writing letters, writing in her diary, and painting in her studio, and she also attended Women's Christian Temperance Union meetings and productions at the local opera house frequently, even taking the stage herself from time to time. She began attending the St. Louis School of Fine Arts in October 1884. In June 1885, she broke off her engagement to Elmer to begin courting a Mr. Ned Hough. In September, Ned formally proposed to her in a letter. But Elmer, who did not give up on her during those months, proved rather persuasive.

On a September day when her mind was most uncertain, Elmer took her to a WCTU meeting and then to the post office, where they found a love letter addressed to her from Ned. Maud wrote that in reaction, "Elmer was calm and tall and dignified. He did [not] seem just the same Elmer to me, but a new, a polished, a commanding Elmer. He told me in a few clear emphatic words that he was glad the letter had come since he knew it must come, that he believed I loved not Mr Hough but himself. I felt like a tired child, lost and tearful, who is suddenly pointed to the right path. It rested me. I made no murmur but let him have it all his own way."[80] In a twist worthy of any romance novel, Elmer asked Maud's father for his consent to their marriage on the same day that her father receives a letter from Ned Hough containing the same request. Her father agreed — but first he warned her that "an engagement, a contract of marriage is a solemn thing, and if I once became engaged to Elmer there must be no more fickleness."[81] It seemed they were truly to be married — in a few years, anyway.

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[79] Ibid., 190.
[80] Ibid., 357.
[81] Ibid., 358.

But it was not to be. In 1888, Maud learned that Elmer's business is in trouble. Gradually she learned of Elmer's and his brother's fraud and tax evasion. She felt utterly betrayed. They ended their engagement and their relationship; in fact, Elmer left the country, though Maud wrote in December that she bitterly suspected he was running from the government.[82] In 1889, she met the man who would, five years later, become her husband.

Maud's prolonged girlhood and fixation on her romantic life undoubtedly would not have been so pronounced if she were not born to such a wealthy family. She had the luxury of waiting to decide whom she would marry and in the meantime pursued a fine arts education and participated in upper-class women's activist causes, as upper-class women were expected to do. While enjoying a peer-centered lifestyle, Maud's family had a strong influence on her decisions about courtship and encouraged her to choose a good husband. Yet her taste in literature suggests popular culture also shaped her preferences about courtship.

The published version of her diary includes two lists of books, one recorded at the end of her second volume of diaries, probably in 1882 when Maud was 17 or 18, and one recorded at the end of her fifth volume.[83] She read these books in '88 and '89, when she was 24 and 25 years old. But before listing any books in her diary, she made a pertinent New Year's resolution on Jan. 1, 1882: "To read no novels — only histories, or standard works, till after I graduate."[84] She also resolved not to read the St. Louis Globe-Democrat all year, not to attend public entertainment until graduating, and "to try to talk sense, be entertaining, and never sit around like a stick at any little gathering." These resolutions suggest, first, that she wished to avoid distractions — especially fiction — until she graduated at the end of the term, and second, that she wished to appear more erudite. For the most part, Maud's list suggests she preferred works

[82] Ibid., 424.
[83] Ibid., 192; ibid., 472.
[84] Ibid., 48.

by primarily English and Scottish authors who enjoyed a respectable reputation in the United States, including William Black, Anthony Trollope, Anna Harriette Leonowens, and Rhoda Broughton of Wales, as well as by such respected American authors as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Washington Irving, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Yet she also recorded reading a few less reputable novels; one, from her 1882 list, is *The Wooing o't,* by Mrs. Alexander (a pseudonym for Annie French Hector). Others from her later list include *The Story of Margaret Kent: A Novel*, by Ellen Olney Kirk, and *An Echo of Passion* by George Parsons Lathrop. Applying Astrid Erll's memory theory to these texts reveals links between American social norms about courtship and Maud's internalization of such norms.

The following passage from *The Wooing o't* proves revealing. It concerns an interaction between the protagonist, Maggie, and her unrefined cousin and probable husband John. Significantly not mentioned is a Mr. Trafford, who has caught young Maggie's eye of late. As John departs for a long absence, Maggie reflects.

> "God bless you, Mag!"—half a dozen hasty kisses, and [John] was gone. "What a wicked heartless girl I am," thought Maggie, "to be so very glad he is gone. He, who is perhaps the only one in the world who really cares for me! But I cannot help it. It would kill me to live with John, even if I had never seen"—even in her thoughts she stopped short.[85]

The thought would have ended with "Mr. Trafford" if Maggie did not halt her daydream in its tracks. The similarity between Maggie's guilt over John and Maud's guilt over Elmer is all too obvious. Did Maud read novels like this throughout her childhood and schoolgirl days, influencing her romantic daydreams and fickle affairs of the heart? Or did she choose to read novels like these because she identified with their protagonists? One way or the other, books such as these had the power to reinforce her identity, her approach to courtship, and her propensity for daydreams. As a medium of memory, these books communicated ideas about the

[85] Annie French Hector, *The Wooing o't*, London: Richard Bentley & Son (1873), 260.

behavior and psychology of girls and courtship that were commonly held in society, impacting the way she coded her life experiences.

Two striking examples of protagonists who indulge in forbidden daydreams come from her later list. In *The Story of Margaret Kent*, Mrs. Margaret Kent, whose husband Robert disappeared to South America six years ago to make his fortune and had not been heard from in more than a year, falls slowly in forbidden love with Dr. Alex Walton, who she believes is engaged to a Miss Elinor Devereux. The plot thickens when she realizes Dr. Walton believes her a widow, yet she allows him to kiss her and to imagine her as his wife: "And I was not a widow," Mrs. Kent reflects when alone with her housekeeper:

> "I knew that I was a married woman,—I had known it all the time. I had not attempted to delude myself. I had simply listened to the voice of the charmer who had talked about my being free. I had got used to not thinking of Robert as a necessary part of my life. And my mind had travelled on—a woman's mind is a lively one and does not stop at a trifle—had travelled on pas the slight barrier of a husband, through the arid deserts of a trial for divorce, into the paradise of a happy second marriage."[86]

And when Dr. Walton discovers she is not a widow, he proposes to Miss Devereux on the very same day that Robert Kent returns, penniless, from South America to burden his wife with his presence for the first time in six years. The tale has a happy ending despite these plot twists; at the conclusion of the novel, Robert is dead and Dr. Walton promises never to leave Margaret's side.

In the second example, *An Echo of Passion,* Mr. Benjamin Fenn believes himself to be very much in love with his wife Ethel until he meets the comely widow Mrs. Anice Eulow. Though tormented by guilt, he nevertheless grows closer to her, until he gets the opportunity to escort Mrs. Eulow on a trip to Boston.

> Fenn took a peculiar and, as he thought, innocent pleasure in the idle fancy that he might be running away with this beautiful woman seated beside him...as long as he was not

[86] Citation needed.

> really running away with her, what harm could it do to pretend to himself that he was?
> ...
> When at last they were snugly bestowed in the train, absorbed in each other and talking in low tones, other persons in the car, he was conscious, might take them for lovers. This fanciful recreation, however, had a curious effect. When they arrived in Boston, and he had put her into a carriage to go to her friend's and was walking away by himself, he found that under this thin mask of imaginary elopement his brain had automatically prepared a complete plan for flight with Anice, which now presented itself in all its details.[87]

His infatuation causes Anice great agony. Twice he proposes they run away together, and twice she refuses him. In the very last pages of the book, mere minutes after Anice's second rejection, he discovers that his wife has been in an accident. He confesses to her what she has suspected, and saintlike, she forgives him: "I will believe in you," she says, and "put[s] her hand upon his head, with a touch so simple and gentle that it was the best of benedictions."[88]

In both of these novels, the protagonists engage in dangerous daydreams that lead them to carry on illicit affairs. It cannot be a coincidence that Maud took a liking to these novels. This literature was geared especially to her, an upper-class woman who seeks the education of a lady but still reads for pleasure, not merely erudition. More than once, Maud wrote in her diary about her fantasies of other men, especially Robert, and in the case of Mr. Hough, her speculation led to the (temporary) end of her long relationship with Elmer. I can draw no clear-cut conclusions about the relation between Maud's adolescent identity and her enjoyment of these novels, but that there is a relation is beyond a doubt. That Maud read novels like these and that we see clear similarities between her thoughts and actions and those of Maggie, Mrs. Kent, and even Mr. Fenn suggests that as cultural portrayals of adolescence became accessible to young women, they began to connect their own identities to a larger collective memory of adolescent identity.

Maud does not embody the modern, peer-centered form of adolescence. Her family

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[87] George Parsons Lathrop, *An Echo of Passion,* Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. (1882), 174-175.
[88] Ibid., 226.

remains an important part of her social life and she participates in adult society to a much greater degree than Martha Farnsworth, though less so than Luna Warner. However, she did embrace some aspects of peer-centered adolescence, preferring to spend her time thinking and writing of her romantic prospects and indulging in daydreams about them, and courting for the pleasure of romance, not for the practicality of marriage. The following diaries will depart even further from traditional adolescence.

Diary of Bessie Mattern, 1893-1895

Bessie Mattern, a middle-class girl writing in Pennsylvania, kept a diary from 1892 to 1910, but I am concerned mostly with the years of 1893 to 1895, from the ages of about 14 to 16, when Bessie wrote most openly about her life at West Chester Normal School. Bessie came of age in a more urban environment than Martha and was less affluent than Maud. Bessie was certainly not as boy-crazy as Maud or Martha, but an analysis of her journal yields some interesting observations about the relation between diaries and identity.

Entries up to 1895 show a pronounced interest (though not obsession) in boys. On October 23, 1892, two months into her first term at school, she observed that "There are some real nice boys here at school."[89] On December 4, she wrote about a peculiar kind of ritual that other girls practiced to predict their future marriage prospects:

> Annie Funk told me to take seven slips of paper and write a boy's name on each one of five of them. On the remaining two I was to write, "Old Maid" on one, and "Stranger" on the other. Each morning I must take a slip out of the envelope (O Yes, I forgot to say that, the piece of wedding cake and the slips of paper are put in an envelope.) This morning I pulled out the slip with "Old Maid" on it. I was so glad that I felt like jumping out of the window.

By June 1893, she has a crush on a Mr. Walter Greenwood, a fellow student probably very close

[89] Bessie Mattern, *Bessie Mattern Diary, 1892-1910*, Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press (2002), 2V

to her age. “No more nearer to an introduction to Mr. Greenwood,” she writes on June 20.[90] Two days later, she writes:

> I went out walking the evening with Debbie and saw Mr. Greenwood. He passed me on the street. I like him very well yet. Here is an extract of a poem I wrote on him, — “If only he would take my hand, And say I love you too Won’t you join our little land Of two, if you will go? I do not know what I would say. I would only nod my head. I will be as true to him as day, Until I am quite dead.”

Bessie must have thought about Mr. Greenwood a great deal to compose a poem about him, even though they have not yet been introduced — evidence of her adolescent daydreams and speculation on romantic prospects. Unlike Maud and Martha, Bessie seemed to confide her infatuations to her girlfriends, writing on June 24: “Lottie Brown told Angie Jamison that there was a girl stuck on Walter Greenwood, but would not tell her the girl’s name. So Miss Jamison told Mr. Greenwood and he said that she should tell the girl that he wasn’t stuck on her. Of course he don’t know who the girl is and that is a comfort. I don’t like him as much as I used too.” By this point, Lottie and Debbie both probably knew about Walter.

By July, when she leaves school for summer vacation, she has nicknamed him “Ter,” short for Walter. “Just think,” she writes on July 10, 1893, “I have never seen ‘Ter’ for nearly a week. I miss his face. Lottie Brown wrote me a lengthy letter and gave me a description of a talk between her and him. It is very interesting.” At this time, Bessie still had not been introduced to Mr. Greenwood; seeing his face was the only thing she could possibly miss, although she had already given him a nickname as though they were fast friends. She relied on Lottie’s account of a conversation to learn more about him, evidence that Lottie was trying to help Bessie get closer to the object of her infatuation. Bessie did not write again until September, after returning to school. Her September 11 entry was the last mention of her crush on Walter, and her last entry until the next year. “I was out walking with Debbie this evening and saw ‘Ter’ often,” she says.

[90] Ibid., 6R.

Immediately before that September 11, 1893, entry, she wrote about her new roommate Nina. It seems Nina said something to her about her diary in September: “She had a strange dream this summer about you, my diary. I won’t tell it as it would take too long.” This statement takes on extra significance in light of Bessie’s next diary entry, dated February 10, 1894.

> I haven’t written in here for so long. So many things have happened since last I wrote. I met G— early in the term. I have talked to him several times since. I don’t care for him at all. When I read over the part of my diary which precedes this, I feel tempted to tear it out. Indeed my temptation overcame me one day last summer and I tore three or four worthless pages out. I hope no one ever reads this for it is so silly and the things said are of the past and should be forgotten....Nina and I toe the mark pretty well this year. I have to be very careful what I put in here because Nina has read some of it. I found out by my own observation and a lie told by her.

This passage reveals three important points. First, Bessie’s infatuation with Walter Greenwood ("G—” is a veiled reference to him) ended as soon as they became familiar with each other. Second, she removed some pages from her diary, calling the relevant entries “silly.” Third, she discovered that Nina read her diary, and she vowed to be more cautious from then on. Accordingly, she made only one more comparatively bland entry while living with Nina. So why did Bessie tear out those pages the summer before? Without the relevant entries to suggest an explanation, the only one that remains is that Bessie, in rereading her diary, was ashamed of her own silliness. Again, the act suggests that Bessie, in reflecting upon her own diary, disliked what she saw; she did not want to be the person that her diary indicated she was, so she removed the most embarrassing entries to communicate a more likable self-image. The observation speaks to the value of diaries as a reflection of personal identity.

Interestingly, the character of her diary changed completely after her February 10 entry; she wrote nothing that indicates she thinks about boys at all from that point on. However, in June 1895, her junior year of high school, she confessed to a love of “trashy” literature: “Last winter, I started to read trashy novels. I wrote to Lottie B. and told her how I enjoyed them, etc. and

received a letter from her telling me of the books she read, — Shakespeare's, George Eliot's, etc. I concluded that if I kept on, soon I would not have a desire at all for good books, so I got Daniel Deronda out of the library and in two weeks had read both volumes." Though she never alluded to any titles, it is likely that these "trashy novels" referred to popular contemporary romantic fiction — the kind that Maud occasionally enjoyed, and the kind that the remaining two diarists devoured. Such novels encouraged girls to dwell in the pleasures of romance and thus represented a departure from traditional ideas about women and courtship. That Bessie felt ashamed of a love of romance novels suggests she accepted the influence of social norms that censured women and girls for indulging in the pleasure of courtship.

Diary of Kathryn Iris "Billie" Thompson, 1912-1920

Kathryn Iris Thompson, who calls herself Billie in her diary, grew up in the small, rural town of Alma, Kansas, and began keeping a diary in 1912, at the age of 15. She likely attended the two-room schoolhouse in Alma until eighth grade, then graduated to the town's small high school. She wrote regularly in 1912 but far less often in following years; most of her entries concerned her daily activities and outings with friends. From the very first sentence of her first entry, her diary establishes the influence of the books she read on her behavior and decisions, as well as the importance of her personal privacy: "I have just finished reading 'Rebecca Mary' and it gave me a inspiration. It was to start a diary. This will be only for my eyes alone and I hope that if anyone ever reads this they will be very sorry after wards because I might write some thing which might hurt them."[91]

If Billie had anything to hide from her family, it was probably her private feelings about

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[91] Kathryn Iris Thompson, personal diary, obtained through Dr. Sue Zschoche, Kansas State University.

boys. She likely did not record any details that she would not want her mother reading, and the details she does include appear innocuous. From 1912 to 1920, from the ages of 15 to 23, Billie revealed little more than who escorted her home at night and who gave her which Christmas gifts, but these glimpses into her love life are telling. September 1912 was the first time she references her forays into courtship: "Leo [Horne] brought me home. It was the first time in all my life that he brought me clear home by himself." He brought her home the next night, too, and a few nights later. It does not appear that Leo went much further in his pursuit of Billie; although he gave her a handkerchief for Christmas in 1912, his name does not appear again in her diary. Billie probably mentioned him because he was one of the first boys to show any interest in courting her.

Billie recorded little about her life between 1913 and1914, not even writing down what gifts she received in 1913, but we can guess she gained some more courtship experience in that time period. Besides the handkerchief Leo gave her in 1912, she received gifts only from female friends and relatives. By 1914, however, she had started receiving gifts from male relatives, a Mr. Henderson, and someone named Irving Sage. From the few details we have on Irving, we can assume he played an important role in Billie's life at the time. On Dec. 13, 1914, she cryptically wrote, "Who would have ever supposed that a certain young man had nerve. Well any way he has. I am really glad about it. As usual I was up to Sage's today. The fun — well we always do [have fun]. It sure is grand indeed." We may never know what it is that Irving had the nerve to do, but considering the apparently significant amount of time they had already spent together, it is possible he gave her her first kiss or took some other step to advance their flirtation. She provided only one other detail about Mr. Sage, but it is juicy: the gift he gave her that Christmas was a cross and chain. Tellingly, the next man to get her a necklace for Christmas

(that we know of) was her future husband Arthur Meseke, who gave her pearls in 1920. Yet if she had a crush for Irving Sage in December, she had a crush on a different boy in January. In an entry dated January 8, 1915, she daydreamed about a boy named Elmo, whom she might have met while spending Christmas vacation in Arkansas City and Wellington, Kansas.

> I wonder that Elmo is doing now. Bless his old sweet heart. He sure is grand....Every one in this world is queer to my notion but Elmo is all right for me. He sure did love & hug me tight. No wonder I miss him so much now for I have "no one to love me or kiss me good night." "No one to love me and call me pet names, Oh I am so lonesome I feel I shall die for I am lonely tonight."

It is the only emotional entry about a boy that her journal contains, and she never mentioned Elmo again. The next time she talked about boys is the last. On January 15, 1917, a year and a half after Billie graduated high school, she wrote, "This winter is so different from that of last year. I go more and enjoy myself. I am learning to dance. Some time I will be ashamed to admit this I know but now while I am young and care free. There is so many [who] go that I hate to refuse. I went with Max Mock several times but I like A.S. better."

Though Billie wrote far more about the girls in her life than the boys, her comparatively few entries about boys take on greater significance when we consider her ardent love for romance novels. If we were to assume that her diary truly represents her feelings about men, we might conclude that she sees far greater value in female friendship than in dating — but her taste in fiction suggests romance was her favorite subject. On March 31, 1913, Billie took a trip to Topeka with one of her best friends. She brought along a novel, *Mary Ware's Promised Land*, part of a series of books by Annie Fellows Johnston, writing, "I just wish I could read them always. I believe I grow more like Mary every day." On January 15, 1915, Billie listed 21 of her favorite books; three are authored by Johnston, and the rest appear to be books of the same genre. Astrid Erll's media theory suggests these books may reveal links between Billie's sense of

personal identity, the protagonists she loved, and social norms surrounding courtship. So who was Mary Ware? What drew Billie to her character? Was she portrayed as a moral person? Did she write in a diary and spend time with her girl friends? Did she date boys? And if Billie identifies with the character, what does her love of *Mary Ware's Promised Land* say about Billie?

The first few pages alone provide some insight into the source of Billie's admiration: the book opens with an illustration of a girl dressed in a traveling coat, seated on a stool with her hand jauntily perched on her hip, saying confidently to an older man, "I don't want to be just an old maid sister in someone else's home."[92] Mary Ware belongs to a family that has done a great deal of traveling (these travels are probably the subject of other Mary Ware titles by Johnston), but most of the book takes place at their home in Lone-Rock, Arizona. Johnston portrays Mary Ware as a girl absorbed in thoughts of boys and men; when an unsuitable boy named Pink shows interest in her, she "felt a little shiver run through her. She didn't want him to care like *that!* It was perfectly thrilling to feel that she had aroused a deep regard in any one's heart, but why, oh, *why* did it have to be some one who fell so short of her standard of what a true prince must measure up to?"[93] Mary's true prince is a man named Phil Tremont, whom she met on one of her family's previous trips. In one scene, Mary is baking cookies and daydreaming about Phil:

> She stood gazing out of the window at the back fence, half buried in the drifted snow. What she saw was not the old fence, however. She was gazing back into a sunny April morning in the hills of Texas. She was standing by a kitchen window there, also, but that one was open, and looked out upon a meadow of blue-bonnets, as blue as the sea. And outside, looking in at her, with his arms crossed on the window-sill, was Phil.... She had so many mortifying remembrances of times when he had caught her looking her very worst....It would have been most soul-satisfying to her could she have known that Phil thought of her oftenest as he had last seen her, standing at the gate in a white and pink dress, fresh as a spring blossom, her sweet sincere eyes looking gravely into his....

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[92] Annie Fellows Johnston, *Mary Ware's Promised Land,* Boston: The Page Company (1912). The illustration is by John Goss.

[93] Ibid., 101.

Unsurprisingly, she burns the cookies. This passage, which depicts Mary as an object of male attention, is especially characteristic of Johnston's writing.[94] Martha, who so loves to be loved, might also have found great joy in the character of Mary Ware if she had had the opportunity to read Johnston's work.

Apparently daydreams are quite important to Mary. Much later in the book, Mary has taken a job in faraway Riverville as a secretary for a Mrs. Blythe, who calls her downstairs one day to greet a gentleman visitor. Mary Ware reflects:

> Time had been when she would have pictured an imaginary suitor waiting for her below, for it had been one of her pastimes when she was a child to manufacture such mythical personages by the score. What they were like depended on what she had just been reading. If fairy-tales, then it was a blond-haired prince who came to her on bended knee to kiss her hand and beg her to fly with him upon his coal-black steed to his castle. If she had been dipping into some forbidden novel like Lady Agatha's Career, then the fond suppliant was a haughty duke whom she spurned at first, but graciously accepted afterward. Through many a day-dream, slender lads and swarthy knights in armor, dauntless Sir Galahad's and wicked St. Elmos had sued for her favor in turn, with long and fervent speeches....She had quit dreaming of such things since she came to Riverville. Romance had little place in the hard, sad world with which her work brought her in contact. So no such fancies passed through her mind now as she went down the stairs....[95]

This passage is rather incredible when we begin to analyze the influence it might have had on 15-year-old Billie Thompson. Here, Johnston describes the influence that fictional romances had on her fictional protagonist's own adolescent personality — Mary's daydreams of romance were lifted directly from whatever novel she had finished recently, a poignant example of Erll's concept of remediation. The passage's conclusion might have been rather discouraging to Billie, who herself felt that she lived in a hard, sad world.[96] But little does Mary Ware know, her gentleman caller is Phil Tremont, who came to ask her to be his wife. Thus, the passage could

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[94] Dennis Duffy, "Four colonels, two of them small, with six arms among them: The ideal, American world of Annie Fellows Johnston's 'Little Colonel' series," Canadian Review of American Studies 24: 2 (1994), 1-22.

[95] Johnston, *Mary Ware's Promised Land*, 273-274.

[96] Thompson, personal diary, Oct. 20, 1914: "18 yr. ago today I came into this dark world of sin. Life has not been a bit easy for me. Sorrow and disappointment have lined my path."

only have encouraged Billie, even in the small town of Alma, Kansas, to imagine such romance in her life. Her diary contains no evidence of such daydreams, but, aware that anyone could read her diary, Billie probably kept those fantasies confined to her own mind.

Billie is our most modern teenager to date. Like Bessie, she spends most of her time with girls from her class. Boys are important to her, and so are books about boys. She is interested in dating; marriage proposals, however, seem far from her mind. But what is most remarkable about Billie is her interaction with literature about adolescent girls; she keeps a diary, for instance, because she loves a book about a girl who keeps a diary, and even compares herself directly a fictional character — who acknowledges literature's heavy influence on her own life! It is no stretch to conclude that she saw Mary Ware as a model of adolescent girlhood, and that other girls might have done the same. But there is no lipstick or necking in Billie's diary. For that, we look to Evelyn L. Jackson.

Diary of Evelyn L. Jackson, 1933

Evelyn L. Jackson, whose diary spans only a year, is exceptional to this study of adolescence in many respects. As a teenager attending high school in the urban community of Morrisville, New Jersey, in the 1930s, Evelyn knew all about necking, cosmetics, and the other bodily practices that became characteristic of American teenagers. The collective memory of peer-based adolescence was already entrenched in Evelyn's world. Evelyn, the only African American diarist included in this study, lived in a time when automobiles were no longer a luxury, trains could take people anywhere, and people were more likely to call each other on the telephone than to correspond through letters. She is also the first diarist we have examined who could have been influenced by cinema during her formative years, though I have refrained from

an analysis of the films she sees. Truly, Evelyn is the first diarist who would recognize herself in the modern-day teenage girl.

Evelyn's diary begins with several references to her "darling": "My darling was up. He is suppose to go Cuba. I have a huge problem," she wrote on January 4, 1933;[97] less than a week later: "My darling called up. You know I thought he would be in Cuba by now. Gee I was glad."[98] A month later, it appears he has left; Evelyn wrote of missing him on February 8. Most of her diary entries from this period concern her involvement with the Baptist Church's choir and prayer meetings and include a mention of her female friends, especially her best friend Clara, and the boys they spent time with. She adopted a uniquely informal style in her journal, often using slang and writing as though she is speaking to an inquisitive listener. While Maud and Bessie both sometimes addressed their journals as though they were a sentient object, Evelyn had her own style. Her February 24 entry provides a good example: "Well did we have fun. Where? Oh don't be naughty! Our M. W. played the Newark A. C. basket-ball team. It was very good. Jack was unusually sweet to-nite. Can he sing? And how. Brownie is ducky."[99]

Besides a few positive mentions of Jack, Evelyn did not write much about boys again until April, when she began spending more time with a boy named Jojo. On April 16, Jojo accompanied her to church. "He wanted a date with me but I was otherwise engaged," Evelyn says. Her social life was rather quiet for a few days, then Evelyn writes on April 20, "I putted my pride away on the shelf and called Jojo up. He had tried to get me on the telephone twice. He's coming Friday...."[100] By June, she called him her darling — and openly admitted how much she enjoyed kissing him. "Jojo and I went to see *International House*," she writes on June 20. "It was

[97] Evelyn L. Jackson, *Diary, 1933,* Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press (2002), 6V.
[98] Ibid., 10R.
[99] Ibid., 32R.
[100] Ibid., 60R.

good. And Jojo? Oh boy he's just — oh wonderful. And listen when he kisses you — Its heaven on earth and bliss beyond compare."[101] At the end of June, she rejoices that Jojo returns her affection:

> My darling — my darling? Well I'm just selfish enough to think that he's mine all mine. Then it's up to me to make him mine. Well any way he said he loved me to-day. Isn't that thrilling? Will I ever be the same? I hardly think so. No I guess not.[102]

The last proof we need of her status as a modern teenager comes in a short May entry: "It simply poured and poured and I didn't go any where during the day. I just sat around and read and read after doing a little work for awhile. Oh yes I did go down and buy a lip-stick."[103] The bodily practices of kissing and wearing lipstick were, in Evelyn's life and among her peers, accepted as normal teenage behavior.

Like several of our other diarists, Evelyn frequently mentioned the books she read, and they are almost all romance novels that emphasize their female protagonists' role as an object of male attention. In *Burning Beauty* by Temple Bailey, for instance, a young man named Anthony defies his mother's wishes to pursue beautiful Virginia:

> Anthony, careless for the first time in his life of his mother's disapproval, was saying to Virginia, "I've got to see you again."
> "Have you?"
> "Yes. When?"
> Virginia had a sudden sense of excitement. She was not sure that she wanted him. She was not even certain that he attracted her. Yet to let him come to her would be an answer to his mother's arrogance. He should come to her shabby old house and be glad to do it![104]

But her favorite book was *Laughing Girl,* by Robert William Chambers. On April 17, when Evelyn had just started seeing Jojo, she wrote that she's "not doing a thing but reading *Laughing*

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[101] Ibid., 90V.
[102] Ibid., 190R.
[103] Ibid., 68R.
[104] Temple Bailey, *Burning Beauty*, in The Deseret News, January 20, 1931.

Girl. It's a very good novel."[105] The plot of *Laughing Girl* is itself more than a little laughable: two duchesses of island duchies that no longer exist enter the household of Michael O'Ryan, who has inherited an inn in Schindlewald. The duchesses disguise themselves as servants in order to foil the plots of the Turkish and Greek rulers who claimed the islands as their own and who all conveniently turn up as guests at Michael's inn. The "Laughing Girl" is a postcard of a beautiful woman that Michael picked up during his travels, and one of his new "servants," Thusis, bears an uncanny resemblance to her. Intrigue and romance abound. Halfway through the book, Thusis, to whom Michael has made his attraction quite clear, lectures Michael on the differences between "making love" and courting.

> "To court a woman is to be polite, empressé, always ready to serve her, always quick with some stately compliment, some pretty conceit, some bon-mot to please her, some trifle of wit, of gossip." She cast a deliciously wicked look at me. "I have no doubt, Michael, that you could, without effort, measure up to the standard of a faultless courtier....If you'd be content to do so."
> That was too much for me. I stepped toward her and slipped my arm around her pliant waist. She laughed, resisted, flushed, then lost her color and clutched my hand at her waist with her own, striking to unloosen it.
> "Don't do that, Michael," she said, breathing unevenly.
> "I love you, Thusis—"
> "I don't wish to listen—"
> "I'm madly in love with you—"
> "Michael!"
> "What?"
> "*Are* you trying to kiss me?"
> That is what I was trying to do. She twisted herself free and stepped aside; and I saw the rapid pulse in her white throat and the irregular flutter of her bosom.[106]

In *The Laughing Girl*, as in works by Annie Fellows Johnston, the female protagonist is portrayed primarily as the object of the male protagonist's affections. But unlike other works we have examined, *The Laughing Girl* is about more than daydreams. A current of sexual tension runs throughout the relatively steamy novel, as in the passage above; only 40 pages in, for

[105] Jackson, *Diary, 1933,* 58V.
[106] Robert William Chambers, *The Laughing Girl,* New York: A.L. Burt Company (1918), 178.

example, Michael corners Thusis in the cramped cellar and threatens to kiss her. It is no surprise that we see such enthusiasm in Evelyn for kissing her “darling”: whether novels like these inspired her views on romance or whether her views on romance inspired her love of novels like these, she found something in the protagonists of *The Laughing Girl* and *Burning Beauty* with which she identified.

In her diary, Evelyn writes almost exclusively about the books she read, the movies she saw, the friends she spent time with, the church and school activities she is involved with, and her dates with Jojo. Her adolescent identity shares many aspects in common with the women who came before her. Like Martha, Evelyn delights in being the object of her sweetheart’s affection. Like Maud, when she has a lover, he occupies most of her time and attention. Like Bessie, she spends most of her time with girl friends her own age. And like Billie, she shamelessly consumes trashy romance novels. But more than any of them, Evelyn represents a new form of adolescence — the modern teenager.

Conclusion

The diary of a teenage girl is a sacred object. In the pages of a diary, girls and women may record the inner thoughts and feelings whose expression has so long been suppressed, censured, and censored in American society. Kathryn Iris “Billie” Thompson wrote that her diary could only be read with her express permission — yet she also wrote, “It is my wish that who ever reads this book may get some good from it. Although it may never be found.” While she implied that future readers would violate her privacy by perusing her diary, she also hoped they would have a good reason for doing so.

What reason do we have to read girls’ and women’s diaries? Most historians read diaries

to recover details of the life of a significant individual or to locate testimony of significant historical events. The diaries reviewed in this report served three unconventional purposes: to trace the evolution of female adolescent identity; to elucidate the role of collective memory in the construction of identity; and to identify mechanisms for the transmission of memory between groups and individuals. Comparing the diaries of girls from different time periods reveals a stark contrast between the traditional, kin-centered model of female adolescence that Luna Warner embodied and the modern, peer-centered life that girls like Kathryn Thompson and Evelyn Jackson enjoyed. A close reading of the diaries of young women reveals links between the way young women thought about their personal identity and the social and cultural tropes available to them via vehicles of collective memory such as fiction, advertising, and other forms of mass media. Thus, the methods applied to the interpretation of these diaries are of particular use to memory scholars searching for tools to analyze the connection between individuals and the collective memory of groups.

Using a combination of scholarly literature on the subject as well as primary sources to demonstrate and interpret the interplay between the exterior forces that shaped the cultural construction of adolescence and the interior forces that shaped young women's identities, this report has addressed both how a collective memory of female adolescent identity arose and how individual memory operated in the context of this collective identity. Applying the memory theory of Maurice Halbwachs, Astrid Erll, and Paul Connerton to individual diaries of young women who came of age between 1870 and 1940, this analysis represents a departure from the traditional use of diaries in historical scholarship and provides a fresh approach to the analysis of collective memory.

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