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More Than Midnight Feasts? : A Gastrocritical Reading of Enid Blyton's *Malory Towers*, *St. Clare's* and *The Naughtiest Girl in the School* Series

By

Rebecca Broomfield, B.A. (Hons.)

May 2022

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for M.A. Gastronomy and Food Studies, Technological University Dublin, School of Culinary Art and Food Technology.

Supervisor: Anke Klitzing

Declaration

I hereby certify that the material submitted in this thesis towards the award of the M.A. in Gastronomy and Food Studies is entirely my own work and all sources have been acknowledged. This work has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above.

Signed: ________________________

Date: ________________________

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude to all the faculty involved in the Gastronomy and Food Studies Programme at TU Dublin, for cultivating our curiosity and challenging our perspectives over the past two years, in spite of the difficulties posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular to my supervisor Anke Klitzing, thank you for your time, patience and support throughout this process, and for the knowledge that you have shared. Also, to Dr Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire for encouraging me to apply for the programme in the first place.

I am also grateful for the support of my classmates who have been a much needed beacon of light when the doubt was setting in.

Finally, a huge debt of gratitude to my family, especially my parents, who have supported me most particularly these last few months as I wrote this thesis.

Abstract

Food is fundamental to life. It is also fundamental to culture; through our production, manipulation and consumption of foodstuffs, the way in which we eat has amassed a range of rituals and rules. This suggests that food can be used to indicate more than mere biological need. Food and foodways are a common occurrence throughout literature, not least children's literature. This thesis applies gastrocriticism as a paradigm to investigate the use of food and foodways in Enid Blyton's *Malory Towers, St. Clare's* and *The Naughtiest Girl* school series. Gastrocriticism is an emerging form of literary criticism that considers the complex relationships of humans to each other and the world they inhabit through food. It adopts an interdisciplinary approach utilising work from a broad range of fields including, anthropology, sociology, history and literary.

Food is abundant in Blyton's work. This is particularly evident in her three school series. The boarding-schools becomes a home-from-home; food helps to form and cement friendships through the sharing of meals together, it may also reveal group structures, hierarchies or the social class of the characters. Food also helps to establish a specific genre through the use of tropes, conventions and food practices. These three series were written at a time of social upheaval in Britain and the world: the Second World War and subsequent period of austerity. The food and foodways displayed in the text can reveal much about the milieu in which they were written, describing both realities and fantasies that capture the zeitgeist of the era. In short, a gastrocritical approach offers a full and serious consideration of the importance of food in these works which enriches our understanding of them.

A note on format

The thesis follows the rules and standards of Irish English; however, quotations taken from sources in another variety of English (for example US American) will be kept as in the original. The referencing format follows the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed.

List of Novels in Enid Blyton's School Series

The Naughtiest Girl in the School

Blyton, Enid. *The Naughtiest Girl in the School.* 1940. London: Dean 1989.

Blyton, Enid. *The Naughtiest Girl Again.* 1942. London: Dean, 1993.

Blyton, Enid. *The Naughtiest Girl is a Monitor.* 1945. London: William Collins, 1965.

St. Clare's

Blyton, Enid. *The Twins at St. Clare's.* 1941. St. Albans: Dragon Books, 1974.

Blyton, Enid. *The O'Sullivan Twins.* 1942. London: Mammoth, 1997.

Blyton, Enid. *Summer Term at St. Clare's.* 1943. London: Dean, 1997.

Blyton, Enid. *Second Form at St. Clare's.* 1944. St. Albans: Dragon Books, 1975.

Blyton, Enid. *Claudine at St. Clare's.* 1944. London: Egmont, 2005.

Blyton, Enid. *Fifth Formers of St. Clare's.* 1945. London: Egmont, 2013.

Malory Towers

Blyton, Enid. *First Term at Malory Towers.* 1946. In *Three Great Malory Towers Stories,* 9-178. London: Armada, 1991.*

Blyton, Enid. *Second Form at Malory Towers.* 1947. In *Three Great Malory Towers Stories,* 181-337. London: Armada, 1991.*

Blyton, Enid. *Third Year at Malory Towers.* 1948. In *Three Great Malory Towers Stories,* 338-510. London: Armada, 1991.*

Blyton, Enid. *Upper Fourth at Malory Towers.* 1949. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2019. Kindle.

Blyton, Enid. *In the Fifth at Malory Towers.* 1950. St. Albans: Granada, 1983.

Blyton, Enid. *Last Term at Malory Towers.* 1951. St. Albans: Dragon Books, 1972.

* Hereafter the three individual volumes are denoted by abbreviations in footnotes (see page v); all citations refer to the page numbers in this compilation edition.

Glossary of Abbreviations

The Naughtiest Girl in the School

The Naughtiest Girl in the School	*NGTS*
The Naughtiest Girl Again	*NGA*
The Naughtiest Girl is a Monitor	*NGM*

St. Clare's

The Twins at St. Clare's	*TSC*
The O'Sullivan Twins	*TOT*
Summer Term at St. Clare's	*STSC*
Second Form at St. Clare's	*SFSC*
Claudine at St. Clare's	*CSC*
Fifth Formers of St. Clare's	*FFSC*

Malory Towers

First Term at Malory Towers	*FTMT*
Second Form at Malory Towers	*SFMT*
Third Year at Malory Towers	*TYMT*
Upper Fourth at Malory Towers	*UFMT*
In the Fifth at Malory Towers	*IFMT*
Last Term at Malory Towers	*LTMT*

These abbreviations are used in the footnotes of this thesis to indicate the corresponding titles.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The thesis will apply a gastrocritical approach to Enid Blyton's three school series, *The Naughtiest Girl in the School, St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers* (1940-1951). A gastrocritical approach provides a lens through which to observe the interactions with food and foodways throughout the texts. Gastrocriticism, as coined by American professor of French and Italian literature Ronald W. Tobin in 2002,[1] applies the multidisciplinary insights of food studies to literature. Research in children's literature has "developed little in the way of a subject-specific set of critical ideas and methodologies"[2] and thus lends itself to adapting multiple styles and lenses. Food in children's literature is a burgeoning field of study; by applying a fresh theoretical approach to these well-known texts, this thesis aims to enrich our understanding of them, by providing new insights and perspective.

This chapter will provide the justification for this thesis. It will also present its aims, objectives and identify the limitations of the study.

1.1 Definition

Food and drink abound in Blyton's novels, yet limited academic discussion exists on this subject. This thesis proposes a reading of Blyton's three school series utilising gastrocriticism, an emerging branch of literary criticism.[3] This paradigm draws on a range of interdisciplinary studies; as such this thesis utilises research from food studies, anthropology, social and cultural studies, children's literature and literary theory. Gastronomic practices can be used to "express more than mundane interaction;"[4] this approach, when applied to the primary sources, aims to provide both a richer socio-cultural and literary understanding of them.

This thesis will investigate previous academic research and critical evaluation of the literary output of Enid Blyton, in order to establish context, and Blyton's place within the canon of children's literature. By posing a series of gastrocritical questions, this study will then observe how and when food and foodways appear in the texts and how this relates to larger themes such as setting and genre, characterisation and social context.

[1] Ronald W. Tobin, "Que est-ce que la Gastro-Critique? (What is gastrocriticism?)," *Dix-Septième siècle* 4, no. 217 (2002): 621-630; see also, Ronald W. Tobin, "Thought for Food: Literature and Gastronomy," lecture, University of California Television (UCTV), 21 May 2009, https://youtu.be/76zhTYQcHyI
[2] Kimberley Reynolds, "Research and Theory: Introduction," in *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook,* ed. M. O. Grenby and Kimberley Reynolds (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011b), 124.
[3] Anke Klitzing, "New Beginnings in Reading (Irish) Literature: A Gastrocritical Look at Moore's "Home Sickness" and Tóibín's *Brooklyn"* (forthcoming 2022), 1.
[4] Anne Ajulu-Okungu, "Power and Sociality of Food and Drink in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Dottie* and *Pilgrim's Way,*" *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies* 1, no. 3-4 (2015): 132.

The primary research will not include any recontextualization of the series or additional novels to the series penned under different authorship. The texts have been re-printed numerous times since their initial publication. Every effort has been made in this study to avoid bowdlerized texts, so as to read them in their original form, however some editions of the primary texts used contain mildly updated language (such as updated currency references).

1.2 Justification

Enid Blyton has been somewhat overlooked as an author in academic scholarship, despite her considerable catalogue and continued popularity. Critical consideration of her work has often focused on a lack of literary quality,[5] or accusations of racism, sexism, and classism.[6] Although the abundance of food in Blyton's work has been noted,[7] little academic research has been conducted in the area. What has been done tends to consider it within the wider topic of food in children's literature,[8] or has focused primarily on Blyton's *Famous Five* series.[9] Research has also tended to focus on what they ate, and how much they ate, giving it an aesthetic quality rather than something fundamentally indicative of the hierarchies or mores of their social environments.

The school story genre has also been overlooked and dismissed despite its longevity and considerable history of popularity.[10] The recent addition to the genre, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), highlights the centrality of food to the boarding-school story, particularly through the lavish descriptions of school feasts and unusual sweets. The importance of food has also been observed in

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[5] See for example, Janice Dohm "Enid Blyton and Others: An American View," *Journal of Education* 87 (1955): 358-361; Colin Welch, "Dear Little Noddy: A Parent's Lament," *Encounter* 10, no.1 (1958): 18- 22; Sheila Ray, *The Blyton Phenomenon: The Controversy Surrounding the World's Most Successful Children's Writer* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1982), 201-205; Peter Hunt, "Enid Blyton as Great Literature," in *Enid Blyton: A Celebration and Reappraisal,* ed. Nicholas Tucker and Kimberley Reynolds (London: NCRL, 1997): 30-35.

[6] Bob Dixon, "The Nice, the Naughty and the Nasty: The Tiny World of Enid Blyton," *Children's Literature in Education* 15 (1974): 43-61; David Rudd, "Five Have a Gender-ful Time: Blyton, Sexism, and the Infamous Five," *Children's Literature in Education* 26, no. 3 (1995): 185-196; David Rudd, *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000).
Liesel Coetzee, "Empowering Girls? The Portrayal of Anne and George in Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* Series," *English Academy Review* 28, no.1 (2011): 85-98. https://doi.org/10.1080/10131752.2011.574006/

[7] See for example Bim Adewunmi, "I Love the Way Enid Blyton Wrote About Food," *The Guardian,* 5 May 2015 (accessed 27 April 2022). https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/may/05/loved-way-enid-blyton-wrote-food

[8] Carolyn Daniels, *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Michael Flanagan, "Cowpie, Gruel and Midnight Feasts: The Representation of Food in Popular Children's Literature," in *'Tickling the Palate': Gastronomy in Irish Literature and Culture*, ed. Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire and Eamon Maher (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 47-62.

[9] Keith Barker, "The Use of Food in Enid Blyton's Fiction," *Children's Literature in Education* (1982): 4-12; Rudd, *Mystery,* 102-108

[10] See Rosemary Auchmuty, *A World of Girls* (London: Women's Press, 1992), 15.

what is arguably the blueprint of the school story: *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857).[11] The trope of the midnight feast is also much associated with the genre,[12] compounding the importance of food as a presence within the school story.

Tigner and Carruth state that "what and with whom people eat in literature convey complex ethical positions that connect prescribed virtues to particular food practices and prohibitions."[13] By adopting a gastrocritical paradigm, new insight can be given to these popular texts and aid in their critical understanding. This can add to the body of work in both food studies and literary scholarship. This thesis will demonstrate that food in literature serves not only to illustrate its necessity, but also brings insight to character, socio-historical and cultural context, and embedded values and attitudes in the novel. Food and foodways may also place the work within a specific genre, through the use of food-related tropes or esoteric food and foodways.

As limited research has been conducted on the significance of food in Blyton's work there was only a partial body of work from which to build. Given the established links between food and the school story, Blyton's three school series were chosen. As there is no meaningful work, to this author's knowledge, on food within Blyton's school series, a broad approach has been adopted to identify key areas of interest. Given the time and scope which the Master's thesis allows, and the many complexities of the subject, this posed a challenge. Nonetheless, as literary food studies continue to develop, building upon its foundations can only prove valuable.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

Food in children's literature is a growing field of study. This thesis aims to contribute to that field by adopting a fresh approach of inquiry: gastrocriticism. By investigating how food and foodways shape *Malory Towers, St. Clare's* and *The Naughtiest Girl in the School* series by Enid Blyton, new or overlooked aspects of the texts may be unearthed which will deepen our understanding. This study aims to add to the body of academic research on Blyton, through an underused perspective. Specifically, this research aims to answer:

What can a gastrocritical reading of Enid Blyton's *The Naughtiest Girl in the School*, *St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers* series tell us about the use of food and foodways in the novels?

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[11] Suyin Olguin, "Feasting and Bonding like a Man: Tom Brown's Consumption of the Masculine Ideal," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2017). https://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue131/olguin.html
[12] See for example Anne Carey, "Cheerful World of Dorms and Midnight Feasts," *The Irish Times* 28 March 2015 (accessed 28 April 2022). https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/cheerful-world-of-dorms-and-midnight-feasts-1.2156004; Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering the School Story: Sassy Sissies and Tattling Tom-Boys* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 143-144.
[13] Amy Tigner and Allison Carruth, *Literature and Food Studies* (London: Routledge, 2018), 42.

Through the food and foodways represented in the texts, this study aims to demonstrate how they are used to indicate character, values, socio-historical and cultural context, and place the texts in the wider body of the school story genre.

Chapter Two: Enid Blyton – Life, Works, and Critical Considerations

This chapter introduces Enid Blyton, giving an overview of her life and career, paying particular attention to those details which inform her work. This is followed by a section discussing critical considerations of her work thus far.

2.1 Enid Blyton: Overview

Enid Blyton (1897-1968) is one of the most popular and prolific writers for children of all time; her output and enduring success have earned her the title of a publishing "phenomenon."[14] She has written over 700 books and 4000 short stories,[15] has been translated into over 40 languages worldwide,[16] and recent figures indicate worldwide book sales of over 600 million.[17] In 2009, she is reported to have sold over 11 million books (more than author J.K. Rowling in the same year).[18] Among Blyton's most popular works are the *Famous Five, Secret Seven,* and *Noddy* stories, alongside the three school series: *The Naughtiest Girl in the School, St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers.*

Beginning her literary career as an educational writer, Blyton expanded into a wide variety of genres which included adventure, mystery, fantasy, circus story, farm story, religious stories, fairy tales, and the school story. Owing to the variety and output of her work, Blyton catered for the child-reader from "four through to fourteen,"[19] and appealed to both sexes.

Blyton's popularity peaked during the Second World War (1939-1945) and subsequent period of austerity (1945-1951). Throughout this period, she penned some of her best-remembered titles – including all three school series. This was a particular moment in British (and world) history: the question of national identity and security was under threat. The cosy, idyllic Britain presented in her work offered readers a gateway to a world where moral integrity (albeit middle class) would prevail: Blyton "was national comfort reading."[20]

[14] Nicholas Tucker, "The Blyton Enigma," *Children's Literature in Education* 19 (1975): 191; Ray, *Phenomenon,* 3; Philip Gillet, *Reading Enid Blyton* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), chap. 1, par. 4. Kindle.
[15] Rudd, *Mystery,* 19.
[16] Reports vary. See for example "What Enid Did," *The Irish Times,* 03 September 1997 (accessed 04 May 2022). https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/what-enid-did-1.102753 ; *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Enid Blyton," last modified November 24, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Enid-Blyton
[17] Dalya Alberge, "'A Bit Pushed:' Enid Blyton Letters Reveal the Strain of Work and Motherhood," *The Guardian* 26 November 2021 (accessed 21 April 2022). https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/nov/26/a-bit-pushed-enid-blyton-letters-reveal-strain-of-work-and-motherhood/
[18] Andrew Maunder, *Enid Blyton: A Literary Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 15.
[19] George Greenfield, *Enid Blyton* (Guernsey: Sutton, 1998), 88.
[20] Lucy Mangan, *Bookworm: A Memoir of Childhood Reading* (London: Vintage, 2018), 113.

Despite her undeniable popularity a certain controversy surrounds Blyton's career. This has stemmed from adult (most famously, librarians') attitudes towards her work rather than children's responses.[21] Criticism has focused on the literary quality – such as the simple vocabulary and the formulaic qualities – of her stories, and also the values and attitudes they display.[22] Her work has been accused of being classist, racist, and sexist.[23] There were reports of her work being "banned" or rationed in some libraries across Britain in the 1960s – and further afield in New Zealand[24] – although there is some contestation that these reports were overstated by the British press.[25] Ray states that "in the early 1950s it was assumed that Blyton's work was ephemeral."[26] This has been emphatically proven untrue: with the ubiquity of her work, and its easily digestible style, she remains a household name today – across continents, despite these criticisms of her work.

2.2 Biography

Enid Mary Blyton was born on August 11th 1897, in East Dulwich, South London to Thomas Carey Blyton (1870-1920) and Theresa Mary, née Harrison (1874-1950). Shortly after her birth the family relocated to Beckenham, Kent, where two sons – Hanly and Carey – were to follow.[27] Blyton had a close relationship with her father, "a keen, self-taught naturalist," who engendered in her a love of the countryside and its flora and fauna,[28] which marked much of her career – particularly her early writings. Her father also encouraged Enid to read. Early favourites included: R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858); Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877); L. M. Alcott's *Little Women* (1878); and George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) – which was the book she "loved best as a young child."[29] As a girl, Blyton often made up stories for her brothers and composed poems; she also kept a diary throughout her childhood.[30] Blyton had a difficult relationship with her mother who would have preferred Enid be tutored in more domestic tasks such as cooking and sewing, instead of

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[21] Ray, *Phenomenon*, 5.
[22] Ray, *Phenomenon*, 201.
[23] See Dixon, "The Nice," : 43-61; David Buckingham, "The Blyton Enigma: Changing Perspectives on Children's Popular Culture," *David Buckingham* (accessed 11 February 2022), 10-12. https://davidbuckingham.net/growing-up-modern/the-blyton-enigma-changing-critical-perspectives-on-childrens-popular-culture/
[24] Maunder, *Enid Blyton*, 44.
[25] See Ray, *Phenomenon,* 8; Rudd, *Mystery*, 34.
[26] Ray, *Phenomenon*, 3.
[27] Barbara Stoney, *Enid Blyton: A Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), 15.
[28] Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 16.
[29] Gillian Baverstock, *Enid Blyton* (London: Mammoth, 2000), 17.
[30] Enid Blyton, *The Story of My Life* (1952; repr. London: Grafton, 1986), 64-65.

being out in the garden or "sitting around reading books."[31] The relationship between Blyton's parents was strained and her father left his family shortly before Enid's thirteenth birthday.[32]

Blyton attended the local St. Christopher's School for Girls as a day-pupil. She excelled at both games and lessons becoming head-girl, captain of the lacrosse team and tennis champion[33] – as well as running a small school magazine.[34] According to Blyton's autobiography *The Story of My Life* (1952) she drew on her experiences here for later inspiration.[35]

In 1918, Blyton undertook Froebel training to become a kindergarten teacher. Fredrich Froebel (1782-1852), the German pedagogue and founder of the kindergarten, is notable for his emphasis on the development of the child into a social being.[36] Froebel believed in child-oriented learning which promoted development through activities. [37] In keeping with the term kindergarten (the children's garden), Froebel encouraged an appreciation of nature, "recommending gardening and looking after animals"[38] as a means of cultivating this.

Blyton was an enthusiastic teacher, receiving good reports for her work.[39] She had also begun to write in earnest, aiming mostly at adult periodicals but receiving rejection. She asserts that she was rejected some 500 times before being published.[40] Success came when several verses and stories were published in *Teachers' World* – a weekly educational newspaper – and in 1922, a small 24-page booklet of verse entitled *Child Whispers* was published; the book was well received by reviewers.[41]

In 1924 she married Major Hugh Pollock, an editor at George Newnes publishing house, where Blyton submitted work. At this point she gave up teaching and focused on her writing, as it was already generating a steady income.[42] The couple had two children, Gillian in 1931, and Imogen in 1935. Her first full-length book *The Adventures of the Wishing Chair* was published in 1937 and her first full-length adventure story *The Secret Island* was published in 1939, spawning five sequels. Pollock and Blyton divorced in 1942. Blyton was remarried the following year to Kenneth Darrell Waters, a surgeon.

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[31] Stoney, *Enid Blyton* 18.
[32] Rudd, *Mystery,* 25.
[33] Rudd, *Mystery,* 25.
[34] Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 23.
[35] See Enid Blyton, *Story of My Life*, 115-119.
[36] Rudd, *Mystery,* 29.
[37] See, Gokcen Ilhan and Emine Ahmetogu, "The Friedrich Froebel Approach," in *Recent Researches in Education,* ed. Recep Efe, Irina Koleva and Emin Atasoy (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 356-367.
[38] Rudd, *Mystery,* 30.
[39] Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 37-38.
[40] David Rudd, "From Froebel Teacher to English Disney: The Phenomenal Success of Enid Blyton," in *Popular Children's Literature in Britain,* ed. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts and M. O. Grenby (New York and London: Routledge, 2016): 250-269.
[41] See Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 47-48.
[42] Ray, *Phenomenon*,12.

It was during the 1940s and 1950s that Blyton published many of her best-loved books, including *The Famous Five, Secret Seven, Noddy* and the *Adventure* series. This was Blyton's most prolific period – in 1951 she published her record of 37 titles.[43] Her health began to fail her towards the end of the 1950s and she admitted how stretched she sometimes felt by pushing herself so hard.[44] By the 1960s she was suffering from pre-senile dementia. Darrell Waters died in 1967 and Blyton died on November 28th 1968.

2.3 Critical Considerations

Blyton was reasonably well-received and well-respected for her earlier out-put, especially as an as an educational writer.[45] The end of the Second World War saw the publication of children's literature move into a new wave of mass production as wartime paper-shortages ended. Developments in education and public libraries also signalled an increased interest in content standards in writing for children.[46] Despite the popularity of her books with children, it was at this time that adults began to view Blyton's work with disdain. Writing in 1982, Ray contended that "no author has been attacked more in the last thirty years."[47]

Early criticisms focused on literary merit and form: poor characterisation, limited vocabulary, formulaic plots, and a lack of depth being the chief culprits in this category.[48] In 1955, an article for the *Journal of Education,* by Janice Dohm, noted the "smallness and superficiality" of the world inside Blyton's books and cautioned of a resultant "closing [of] the mind and narrowing the interests of the audience."[49] This echoed the growing sentiment that reading Blyton may be "bad for you" – that it would stultify the ambition for anything more challenging, an opinion which Welch compounded by stating that Blyton's books "fail to stretch the imagination of children and enlarge their experience."[50] Welch also painted a damning portrait of what is, arguably, Blyton's most successful conception, Noddy, branding him a "querulous…humourless…snivelling, sneaking doll."[51] Nonetheless, Noddy was a highly lucrative creation, not least due to the memorable illustrations by Harmsen van der Beek, which accompanied the series. Welch owns that the *Noddy* series is enjoyed by *children* – the intended audience; his quarrel seems to be that Blyton is dead-end reading. There may be little sophistication of expression and limited use of simile or metaphor in her work, and while this renders her an easily digestible read for children, it offers little to recommend it to the traditional

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43 Ray, *Phenomenon*, 3.
44 Maunder, *Enid Blyton,* 367.
45 Rudd, *Mystery,* 31. Her work in *Teacher's World* had earned her a solid reputation.
46 Rudd, *Mystery,* 31.
47 Ray, *Phenomenon*, 5.
48 Ray, *Phenomenon*, 201-202.
49 Cited in Ernest Roe, "The Mystery of the Famous Two or Blyton and Biggles in South Australia," *The Australian Library Journal* 12, no. 3 (1963): 119. https://doi.org/10.1080/00049670.1963.10755386
50 Colin Welch, "Dear Little Noddy," *Encounter* 10, no. 1 (1958): 19.
51 Welch, "Noddy," 22.

adult literary critic (focusing on the form, language, narrative complexity etc.). But therein lies the problem, or "the paradox of children's literature"[52] – there is the implied sense of ownership by children, yet as a field it is dominated by adult gatekeepers.[53] However, Blyton famously "took no notice of critics over twelve-years of age;"[54] her books were written for children. There was also a contrasting attitude that her work could provide an excellent starting point for children to engage with reading and increase their fluency.[55] Blyton's strength, arguably, lay in proving to children "that reading can be fun."[56]

Rudd finds that Blyton's texts create a sense of space for the reader, [57] which sits at odds with earlier comments of the "narrowing effects" of her work. Throughout her stories, parents are usually removed, allowing freedom and agency for the child protagonists as the plot unfolds. This provides an easy form of wish-fulfillment which "champion[s] and empower[s] children"[58] rather than talking down to them. It has also been argued that the simple language and concrete, formulaic plots are particularly suited to the younger reader.[59] Hunt suggests that value judgements are often pre-attributed to Blyton's work, and thus they are not afforded the consideration that is taken with other more "canonical" novels (he uses *The Wind in the Willows* [1908], as an example).[60]

Both Hunt and Rudd propose that a contextual approach to Blyton's work may prove a more fruitful reading.[61] Hunt observes how "period details [in Blyton] become potent,"[62] and the pervasiveness of food in the texts serves to invoke English desires of the period.[63] This is a recurrent feature in the study at hand and will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters. While Blyton has also been criticised for the "Englishness and insularity"[64] of her work, contrarily, it is this quasi-fantastical England she creates that underpins some of the recent nostalgia surrounding her (limited) rehabilitation.[65] As Buckingham contends, "Blyton's work is reinvented through the lens of adult nostalgia as a form of cultural heritage."[66] Although her literary value may be called into question by

[52] David Rudd, "Enid Blyton and the Paradox of Children's Literature," in *Enid Blyton: A Celebration and Reappraisal*, ed. Nicholas Tucker and Kimberley Reynolds (London: NCRL, 1997a), 17.
[53] See Deborah Stevenson, "Classics and Canons," in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature,* ed. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 108.
[54] Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 164.
[55] See Ray, *Phenomenon,* 9.
[56] Mangan, *Bookworm,* 115.
[57] Rudd, "Paradox," 18.
[58] Rudd, "Paradox," 25.
[59] Nicholas Tucker, *The Book and the Child: A Psychological Literary Exploration,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 105.
[60] Peter Hunt, "How Not to Read a Children's Book," *Children's Literature in Education* 26, no. 4 (1995): 233.
[61] See Hunt, "How Not," 237; Rudd, "Paradox," 19.
[62] Hunt, "How Not," 237.
[63] Hunt, "How Not," 237.
[64] See Ray, *Phenomenon*, 7.
[65] See for example Gillet, *Reading Enid Blyton,* Preface, par. 2, and chap. 12 par. 28.
[66] Buckingham, "Changing Perspectives," 5.

critics, her popularity is enduring and while her books may not appeal to an adult audience in a literary sense, they appeal through their evocation of childhood.

Critical backlash increased steadily in the sixties, as "consistently negative discourse"[67] concerning Blyton emerged, focusing on social concerns such as sexism, racism and classism in her books.[68] Dixon probes the attitudes and ideologies he finds embedded in Blyton's work, focusing predominantly on the *Famous Five* series and characters. While he too is dismayed at the "middle-class…[and] colourless"[69] vocabulary and imagery conjured by Blyton, his chief concerns are in her portrayal of middle-class superiority, conformity and narrow gender roles. Blyton felt that morals and ethics were "intrinsic" to her work,[70] and certainly intended to exert influence over her readership. Dixon addresses what he views as the "insistence on conformity" and the equivocation of "badness" with status and appearance.[71] Dixon also criticises the clear gender stereotyping that he contends is evident in the *Famous Five,* through the domesticity of Anne (and the lack thereof in Julian and Dick). He dismisses the character George (tom-boy Georgina) as "a very bad example of castration complex or penis-envy, as described by Freud."[72]

Rudd suggests that by depicting opposing modes of female behaviour Blyton opens a discourse on sexism, and notes that without the contrast of Anne, George's behaviour would not appear half so subversive.[73] Although at first glance it may appear that Blyton's writing supports a world of heteronormativity, Coetzee maintains that this merely reflects the dominant discourses, attitudes and values of the period in which Blyton wrote.[74] Arguably, Blyton subverted traditional gender roles more powerfully than she is given credit for, often depicting female characters with a greater degree of agency than might be typical for the era.[75] In *Last Term at Malory Towers,* reference is made to the careers and higher education that the departing class are pursuing. There is no indication of marriage and domesticity in their immediate future. They may go on to run households and raise their children but there is certainly choice presented.[76]

With her immense output, her continued popularity, and the variety of genres in her oeuvre, it is somewhat surprising that there is still a reticence to acknowledge Blyton's work; especially as many "recall her books fondly."[77] The only point that may be agreed upon is that she understood her

[67] Rudd, *Mystery*, 34.
[68] Rudd, *Mystery*, 35.
[69] Dixon, "The Nice," 54
[70] In Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 149.
[71] Dixon, "The Nice," 54.
[72] Dixon, "The Nice," 53.
[73] Rudd, "Blyton, Sexism,"194.
[74] Coetzee, "Empowering Girls," 86.
[75] Coetzee, "Empowering Girls," 86.
[76] See *LTMT,* 20-22.
[77] Hunt, "Great Literature," 33.

audience and knew how to tell them a story.[78] It is of due note that she is not the only children's author who has been criticised for similar concerns. Her contemporary, Angela Brazil, the prolific writer of girls' school stories was commonly dismissed as "worthless" although extremely popular.[79] More recently Roald Dahl and J. K. Rowling (both of whom have drawn comparison with Blyton)[80] have also suffered similar criticisms, but all three share an ability to reach and speak to their audience.

2.4 Summary

Enid Blyton is undeniably one of the most successful and popular children's writers of all time. Yet she has been criticised for a lack of literary merit and outdated values and attitudes. Despite her considerable output she has been overlooked critically; nonetheless her works endure.

She began her career as a Froebel-trained teacher, but by the early 1920s was generating an income from writing. She wrote prolifically throughout her life across a broad range of genres in children's literature. Critical considerations have focused on the lack of quality in her writing. There has been a prevailing worry that Blyton might deaden ambition to read more challenging works. She has also been challenged for displaying classist, racist and sexist ideologies. Hunt has suggested that Blyton suffers from being prejudged and that to explore her work fully, it should be approached with an open mind.[81]

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[78] Rudd, *Mystery,* 155.
[79] See Ray, *Phenomenon,*16.
[80] See for example, Sian Harris, "Glorious Food? The Literary and Culinary Heritage of the *Harry Potter* Series," in *J. K. Rowling: Harry Potter,* ed. C. J. Hallett and P. J. Huey (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 20-32. Google Play Books; Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts and M. O. Grenby, eds., *Popular Children's Literature in Britain,* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016).
[81] Hunt, "How Not," 237.

Chapter Three: Theory and Approach

Chapter Three outlines the critical paradigm chosen for this thesis: gastrocriticism. Firstly, this chapter will give a brief account of the development of children's literature and its study. This will demonstrate why a gastrocritical approach may be a useful model of inquiry in this field. This chapter will also discuss the literature that has burgeoned in the field of literary food studies, and more particularly, food and children's literature with consideration to scholarship on food in Enid Blyton's work.

3.1 Children's Literature

Children's literature is difficult to classify, being by literal definition something of a paradox.[82] It is rarely produced by children. It is written, published, reviewed and most often purchased by adults: they are its gatekeepers. It encompasses a wide variety of genres and formats. Unlike other categories of literature, or rather their readers, it is a group to which we all at first inherently belong but do not remain in. In short, as author Philip Pullman underlines, "we *think* we should know what it is…[but children's literature is] rather a slippery term. It's not quite like any other category of literature."[83]

Its earliest incarnations can be traced to story-telling, often of the oral tradition, through folk and fairy tales passed from adult to child. The second pillar of its foundation is from instructional and purely educational material which was produced for children.[84] Children's literature as we recognise it today emerged around the mid-18th century, chiefly in Britain, and was committed to both the "instruction and amusement"[85] of its audience. John Newbery's *A Pretty Little Pocket Book* (1744) is often viewed as the "single point of origin;"[86] the book contained rhymes corresponding to each letter of the alphabet and came with a ball for a boy and a pin-cushion for a girl. Newbery also established a shop in London which published and sold books for children.[87] Thus he might, arguably, be credited with the inception of children's literature as a commodity, which, Grenby suggests, is a useful and "less tendentious" definition of it.[88] Newbery was an admirer of the teachings of John Locke, the English philosopher associated with the Enlightenment, who proposed the incorporation of instruction with

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[82] Rudd, "Paradox," 17.
[83] Philip Pullman, "Children's Literature without Borders," in *Daemon Voices,* ed. Simon Mason, (Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2017), 123.
[84] John Rowe Townsend, "United Kingdom: British Children's Literature an Historical Overview (Part V: National and International)," in *International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), par 3-4. https://tudublin.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/111-united-kingdom-british-childrens-literature/docview/2137953943/se-2?accountid=10594
[85] M. O. Grenby, "The Origins of Children's Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.
[86] Grenby, "Origins," 4.
[87] Townsend, "British Children's Literature," par. 1.
[88] Grenby, "Origins," 7.

pleasure for children.[89] These ideas marked a shift in the perception of the child, from a being "steeped in original sin" to one "born in innocence."[90] In 1749, Sarah Fielding's (the sister of Henry) *The Governess; or, The Little Female Academy,* was published, which is widely regarded as the first full length novel for children.[91]

Growth in the publication of children's literature increased in tandem with developments within the wider book trade. Eagleton states that in the 18th century, literature began to "[do] more than just 'embody' certain social values: it was a vital instrument for their deeper entrenchment and wider dissemination."[92] The rapidly expanding middle class needed to assimilate the tastes, values and cultural standards of the aristocracy, and literature became of vital significance to their acquisition.[93] The age of Romanticism that peaked between 1800 and 1850 was when "our own definitions of literature began to develop."[94] This saw the gradual transformation of the novel from a medium for didactic instruction to an imaginative and creative work – allowing for a more pleasure-based reading; although this trickled through to children's literature more gradually.

The early 19th century saw the re-printing of folk tales for children; they had previously fallen out of favour due to Puritanical discourses of danger and immorality.[95] This marked a distinct change in discourse on literature for children. By the late 19th century fantasy novels such as Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863), and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) had emerged signalling a sea-change in writing for children. Adventure stories, school stories and domestic dramas were all popular genres which emerged in children's literature during the 19th century,[96] evolving into the substantial and varied field that continues today. However, Grenby suggests that morality remained the central critical consideration of the children's novel until the mid-20th century, but also warns that, perhaps, this has not changed so radically as it might appear in the present day: "Precisely what the moral is may have changed but morality itself remains central."[97] This indicates the importance and potency of children's literature, as an early encounter with stories in our lifetime, in the formation of our world view. Reynolds notes, for instance, that "under the Franco Regime in Spain (1939-1975) many *traditional* forms of storytelling and writing for children were officially banned

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[89] See, Townsend, "British Children's Literature," par. 7.
[90] See Townsend, "British Children's Literature," par. 7.
[91] Beverly Lyon Clark and Lavinia Dingra Shankar, "When Women Tell Tales About School," *Studies in Popular Culture* 17, no. 1 (October 1994): 17.
[92] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction,* Anniversary ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 15.
[93] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 15.
[94] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 16.
[95] Townsend, "British Children's Literature," par. 18-19.
[96] Townsend, "British Children's Literature," par. 20-23.
[97] M. O. Grenby, "Basic Children's Literature Research Skills," in *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook,* ed. M. O. Grenby and Kimberley Reynolds (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 41.

as subversive,"[98] such was their potential and power for proliferating ideals (many of which were at odds with the Franco agenda). Drawing on its roots as an educational and didactic medium, children's literature always seeks to inform on some level, thus conveying information about the time and place in which it was written. This can be in terms of material culture, values and attitudes, or the political and socio-cultural landscape of the era.[99]

Scholarship in the field of children's literature has increased over recent decades. Although initially it was centred primarily in English-speaking countries, academic work on the subject has since become more widespread, as has its presence in universities as a taught subject.[100] The development and use of critical theory in the 1960s and 1970s also had an impact on the field. New paradigms created a re-evaluation of the "classics" and increased discourses on what was worthy of study: theory was thus essential to expanding the canon.[101] Reynolds implies that while the application of specific theory (such as Marxist, feminist, structuralist etc.) to research has certainly encouraged the growth of study in children's literature at university level, the "alliance is not always comfortable."[102] As children's literature spans a wide variety of genres and formats, Reynolds suggests that a combination of approaches with which particular "lenses" are constructed to view the material, is a valuable approach to research in the field.[103] This would suggest that gastrocriticism may offer much as an approach to children's literature.

3.2 Theory and Approach

3.2.1 Gastrocriticism

As suggested in the preceding section, the study of children's literature lends itself to a combination of multiple approaches. This makes it well positioned to invite research from a variety of fields.[104] Gastrocriticism is an emerging "form of literary criticism focused on human relationships with each other and to the natural world through food,"[105] rooted in the

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[98] Kimberley Reynolds, "Introduction," in *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook,* ed. M. O. Grenby and Kimberley Reynolds (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011a): 1. Own emphasis. New literature for children emerged in Spain during the Franco regime, espousing its own ideals.
[99] Reynolds, "Introduction," 1.
[100] Daniel Hahn, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, 2nd Ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 123-125.
[101] Reynolds, "Research and Theory," 123.
[102] Reynolds, "Research and Theory," 123.
[103] Reynolds, "Research and Theory," 124.
[104] Peter Hunt, "Introduction: The Expanding World of Children's Literature Studies," in *Understanding Children's Literature,* 2nd ed., ed. Peter Hunt (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), 1.
[105] Klitzing, "New Beginnings," 1.

disciplines of gastronomy and food studies, and literary studies. As such, it is shaped by scholarship from a variety of fields including psychology, anthropology, sociology, history and philosophy; combined with literary concerns such as narrative, genre, characterisation, authorship and setting.[106] Through these, a "culinary lens"[107] is constructed by which to examine the texts. Understood as such, a gastrocritical approach aims for a comprehensive understanding of the functions of food and foodways in literature: from the rhetorical and symbolic, to questions of meaning and context – such as historical, social or political.[108] In effect it considers the presence of food and foodways in the text seriously and fully. If, as Tigner and Carruth suggest, "what and with whom people eat in literature convey complex ethical positions that connect prescribed virtues to particular food practices and prohibitions,"[109] then gastrocriticism is eminently suitable as a paradigm of study to be adopted to children's literature.

3.2.2 Food and Children's Literature

Food is essential to life and thus, from early childhood, mealtimes are among the most important times of the day, forming part of the "daily texture"[110] of the child's life, through their preparation, consideration or anticipation. Food is present throughout literature from its earliest texts – such as origin myths and religious texts – but has not, until relatively recently, been the focus of literary study.

The recognition of literary food studies has stemmed in no small part from the growth of Food Studies and Gastronomy programmes since the 1990s.[111] Scholarship of food has begun to flourish, despite previously being considered too quotidian and banal for serious reflection.[112] Concurrently, literary food studies are also developing; this is perhaps unsurprising, but also somewhat overdue, considering food's presence throughout literature. The uptake in interest is demonstrated by the increased number of publications exploring this

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[106] Tigner and Carruth, *Literature and Food Studies*, 4; Anke Klitzing, ""My Palate Hung With Starlight": A Gastrocritical Reading of Seamus Heaney's Poetry," *East West Cultural Passage* 19, no. 2 (2019): 17. https://doi.org/10.2478/ewcp-2019-0010
[107] Tigner and Carruth, *Literature and Food Studies*, 8; see also, Klitzing, "Starlight,"; Anke Klitzing, ""Gilded Gravel in the Bowl": Ireland's Cuisine and Culinary Heritage in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney," *Folk Life* 59, no. 2 (2021): 103. https://doi.org/10.1080/04308778.2021.1957423
[108] Klitzing, "Gilded Gravel," 103.
[109] Tigner and Carruth, *Literature and Food Studies*, 42.
[110] Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, "Introduction," in Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard ed. *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 9.
[111] Klitzing, "New Beginnings," 2.
[112] Marion Nestle and W. Alex Macintosh, "Writing the Food Studies Movement," *Food, Culture and Society* 13, no. 2 (2010): 159-179.

connection over the past two decades.[113] In the introduction to their 2009 collection, *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature,* Keeling and Pollard posit that:

> If food is fundamental to life and a substance upon which civilisations and cultures have built themselves, then food is also fundamental to the imagination and imaginary arts. Food is fundamental to the imagination because food is fundamental to culture.[114]

This is demonstrated through our manipulation of food stuffs into all manner and variety of dishes. We are not merely concerned with nourishment but also with the creation of tasty food that is not only satisfying to our hunger but is also visually and olfactorily pleasurable. The ways in which we produce, consume and celebrate food have elaborated a range of techniques and rituals around them which have helped to shape and distinguish global cultures. Food has become "a highly condensed social fact,"[115] a sum of many intricate parts. Food acts as a signifier through shared practices or taboos. Food constitutes identity and belonging, and this becomes embedded in its representation in literature.

Food pervades children's literature: from Amy March's unfortunate pickled-limes incident in L. M. Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), to the abundant picnics and midnight feasts of Enid Blyton's substantial canon or the fantastical daily dining at Hogwarts in *Harry Potter*, it is a notable presence and force in the narrative. It drives characters forward and influences their actions in a multitude of ways, and also engages the reader. Food can symbolise cultural similarities and difference, resistance, power, or be a marker of friendship and relationships through the sharing of meals. Food engages with the reader because of its centrality to our needs. As infants, our world revolves around eating: we are stimulated by it, and it both provokes emotional responses in us and assuages them.

Discussion of food in children's literature has been somewhat sparse but is growing. As food is a "constantly recurring motif"[116] in literature written for children, there is ample scope for

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[113] Such as Daniels, *Voracious;* Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire and Eamon Maher, eds., '*Tickling the Palate': Gastronomy in Irish Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014); Charlotte Boyce and Joan Fitzpatrick, *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Gitanjali Shahani, ed., *Food and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); J. Michelle Coghlan, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Food* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[114] Keeling and Pollard, "Introduction," 5.
[115] Arjun Appadurai, "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia," *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 3 (Aug 1981): 494; see also Klitzing, "Gilded Gravel," 102.
[116] Keeling and Pollard, "Introduction," 9.

development in this field. Groundwork was laid in 1980 by Katz,[117] and has been built on by a number of authors through articles, book chapters, and monographs.[118] Although discussion centred initially on canonical texts, such as *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll or *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1850) by C. S. Lewis,[119] the growth of children's literature and popular culture as fields has led to a broader range of texts being studied, including *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) by Maurice Sendak, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) by Roald Dahl.[120]

Eating is never an isolated act; when it occurs it is encoded with "cultural messages that children have to learn."[121] These messages represent the dominant discourses and socio-cultural attitudes of the adult-world which the child must assimilate. This emphasises the didactic nature of children's literature historically, with morality embedded throughout the text. Katz notes that particularly in English children's literature tea-time is used as a measure of observing the child's adjustment to the social order.[122] In a similar vein food and foodways can also indicate perceived cultural inferiority and superiority, of either social class, nationality or ethnic origin. This can be particularly powerful and apparent in times of disruption and transition – such as war or colonialism – making texts produced during such times of added critical importance, as they may display specific ideologies and socialising message for the reader.[123]

3.2.3 Food and Enid Blyton: Critical Considerations

Blyton is memorable for her food scenes. Her characters inhabit an idyllic world where sandwiches, cakes and ginger-beer are never in short supply. Barker has addressed the use of food in Blyton, firstly observing the use of food and feeding by the mother (or mother-figure) to demonstrate good nurturing. This is exemplified in Blyton's consistent use of home-made,

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[117] See Wendy R. Katz, "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature," *Children's Literature in Education,* 11 (1980):192-199. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01130849

[118] Such as Barker, "The Use of Food": 4-12; Lynne Vallone, "'What is the meaning of all this gluttony?': Edgeworth, the Victorians, C. S. Lewis and a taste for fantasy'. *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature,* 12, no.1 (2002): 27-55; Daniels, *Voracious*; Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding eds., *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014); Michael Flanagan, "Gruel and Midnight Feasts."; Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, *Tablelands: Food in Children's Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2020).

[119] See for example Katz, "Some Uses"; Mervyn Nicholson, "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 20, no.3 (1987): 37-55.

[120] See Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, eds., *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[121] Daniels, *Voracious,* 4.

[122] Katz, "Some Uses," 193.

[123] Sarah Yoon, "'A Glutton or an Epicure': Food Acts in R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island,*" *Children's Literature in Education,* 50 (2020): 363. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-019-09385-6

wholesome British food that is regularly consumed in abundance.[124] It is also supported by depictions of unloving or "bad" mothers who withold or deny food to children.[125] Secondly, Barker believes that in creating these abundant feasts Blyton is nostalgic for her own childhood days and re-creating a remembrance of them, be it true or idealised. That the food consumed is not a true representation of what was eaten at the time may be quickly established. Much of Blyton's work coincided with food-rationing in Britain, so abundant feasts and ample fresh farm produce were not the norm. Arguably the food captures the nostalgia of Blyton's own childhood, but Daniels disagrees and suggest that Blyton's food fantasies suggests a desire for maternal love, comfort and emotional satisfaction,[126] which is an assertion borne out in the biographical details of Blyton's life. Daniels also astutely considers that perhaps the point of the food in Blyton was to be idealistic rather than realistic.[127] At a time of war and want this would become particularly potent, as would extoling the virtues of British food. The appeal of these feasts is thus not simply through vicarious gluttony but through complex socio-cultural mores.[128]

3.3 Applying the Theory

Gastrocriticism as a paradigm is still very much in its nascent stage despite being coined twenty years ago. Although the growth in scholarship surrounding literature and food is increasing – and consequently food and children's literature – the uptake in use of gastrocriticism by name has been sparse.[129] As already established, food and foodways can perform a variety of functions in the text. For example, they may embody character and identity (both communal and individual); they may create a sense of time and place, giving historical and social context to the text; they may create verisimilitude through their consumption and production; they may create both harmony and tension between characters and be used as a narrative tool to propel the plot; their representation may place the text within a specific genre; or, they may represent the author's, or societal, values – this list is not exhaustive.[130]

[124] See Barker, "The Use of Food," 8; Flanagan, "Gruel and Midnight Feasts," 53.
[125] See Rudd, *Mystery,* 104.
[126] Daniels, *Voracious,* 72.
[127] Daniels, *Voracious,* 73.
[128] Daniels, *Voracious,* 73.
[129] Anke Klitzing, "Starlight," 15-16.
[130] Klitzing, "New Beginnings," 6.

Klitzing proposes gastrocriticism as a structured approach to studying food in literature, by developing a framework of questioning with which we form our culinary lens.[131] Again, this lens is informed by multidisciplinary scholarship, taking its approach from both literary and food studies.[132] In applying a culinary lens to a series of literary concerns – such as setting, narrative, meaning, author and audience, and genre – we can apply specific questioning which will inform our interpretation of the functions and representations of food and foodways. The application of this approach was used in the Food Writing and Media module, as part of the MA Gastronomy and Food Studies at Technological University Dublin, to inform analysis on a number of texts which were studied in class.

These "gastrocritical reading questions"[133] formulate the principles of investigation which we apply to the texts. This begins with a set of general questions to create an overall impression of the text, such as: if food and foodways were not part of the text, would it be fundamentally changed? Are there instances of feasting or fasting? Of hunger, greed, appetite, gluttony, excess? Do food and foodways in the text express or embody gender, class or ethnic relationships? This is then followed by a more distinct line of inquiry. Klitzing groups the questions under categories fulfilling literary functions such as, for example, Setting – which is then examined in terms of verisimilitude and context; Narrative – considers the use of food as a plot device or in the formation of character, or as marker of identity, both individual and communal; Genre and Text – asks what role food plays (if any) in delineating the genre into which the text belongs, or if it indicates any intertextual relationship.

When assessing the three school series by Blyton, as there were fifteen primary texts, only categories which related best to the three series as a whole were chosen for deeper analysis. The prevalence of arcane foodways such as tuck, food parcels and the midnight feast placed the stories firmly within the wider school story genre. Transtextual links were established between the three series and others of the genre, and also some notable variances. The use of food and foodways to express judgement on character was also clearly apparent which led to the establishment of a chapter assessing the moral values and attitudes of the texts. Furthermore, as the writing of the series (1940-1951) coincided with the Second World War, rationing and subsequent period of austerity, the social and historical context was examined. The abundance of food in Blyton at this period is at odds with the reality but when applying

[131] Klitzing, "New Beginnings," 6-7.
[132] Tobin in Klitzing, "Starlight," 16.
[133] Anke Klitzing, "Gastrocritical Reading Questions" (unpublished manuscript, last modified 09 February 2022), Microsoft Word File.

closer questioning some interesting representations of individual, communal and national identity emerged. Also apparent was a gentle espousal of some of the rhetoric concerning food at the time.

Using this approach may offer new insight into a familiar set of texts and by applying a structured framework of critical theory we may avoid the pitfalls of nostalgia.[134] Theory, in offering a distinct focus acts as a deterrent to sentimentality that can potentially inhibit the researcher re-reading childhood texts.[135]

3.4 Summary

Historically, children's literature has had a didactic element that makes it particularly apt to contain socialising messages or ideologies. Given the diverse nature of children's literature it is also well suited to be studied from a range of disciplines. The study of food in children's literature is a burgeoning field. Gastrocriticism offers a multidisciplinary approach to literature by applying a "culinary lens."[136] By adopting a gastrocritical paradigm new insight can be given to Blyton's work and aid in its critical understanding.

[134] Reynolds, "Research and Theory," 126.
[135] Reynolds, "Research and Theory," 126.
[136] Tigner and Carruth, *Literature and Food Studies*, 8.

Chapter Four: Food and Genre – The School Story

4.1 Introduction

Blyton wrote three school series, *Malory Towers, St. Clare's* and *The Naughtiest Girl in the School,* all of which are still in print today. In 1940, when *The Naughtiest Girl in the School* was published, the school story genre was at its peak, particularly amongst girls.[137] Although the genre waned somewhat in the proliferation of titles after the 1960s,[138] recent additions to the canon such as Anne Digby's *Trebizon* series (1978-1994) and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) indicate that the appetite for school stories is demonstrably, not dead. The enduring success of Blyton's school series compounds this: further sequels to all three series have been penned under new authorship;[139] in 2019, Emma Rice staged a musical theatre production of *Malory Towers* to acclaim;[140] and in 2020 a British-Canadian production of *Malory Towers* aired on the BBC.

As already established, food plays an important role in children's literature. This is also apparent in the school story genre. As this chapter will underline, schools (both real and fictional) play not only a role in the academic education of the child but also a role in their socialisation. Food and foodways form part of that socialisation, through the sharing of tuck, taking meals together in the schools' dining-halls or through the illicit midnight feast, which has become a trope much associated with the genre. In the world of the school, food becomes a source of currency and social capital with which friendships may be formed and cemented, bonds forged and identity created.

This chapter will, firstly, set the school story genre in context. As the genre is vast and quite complex (Clark points to its "contiguous realms" and "ambiguous cases"[141]), this will begin with an over-view and general definition, outlining some of its key conventions. The genre owes much to the rise and evolution of formal education for children, not least to the British Public School system. A section is dedicated to discussing this, charting the beginnings of the boys' public school and its female equivalent, noting several of its innovators and the prevailing ethos. This will lead into a history of the school story, tracing its origins, from the embryonic stages of the genre through its hey-day to more recent additions.

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[137] Ray, *Phenomenon*, 195.
[138] Karen Manners Smith, "Harry Potter's Schooldays: J. K. Rowling and the British Boarding School Novel," in: *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays,* ed. G. L. Anatol (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2003), 71.
[139] Anne Digby (author of the *Trebizon* school series) has penned sequels to *The Naughtiest Girl* series, Pamela Cox to *St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers.*
[140] See Arifa Akbar, "Malory Towers Review – Emma Rice takes Enid Blyton to Top of the Class," *The Guardian* 25 July 2019 (accessed 23 April 2022). https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/jul/26/malory-towers-review-emma-rice-enid-blyton-passenger-shed-bristol ; Maunder, *Enid Blyton,* 426.
[141] Clark, Regendering the School Story, 3.

Secondly, once the context has been set, this chapter will apply a gastrocritical lens to examine how food helps establish Blyton's work within the school story genre. Focus will also be brought to other works within the school story genre where food has been used in a similar manner. Particular attention will be paid to recurring tropes and motifs to try to establish intertextual connections.

4.2 The School Story – An Overview

The school story is a genre of children's literature that emerged to prominence during the Victorian era, as the growth of the middle class signalled an increase in education.[142] Consequently, the emergence and popularity of the genre can be seen to rise in tandem with the development of formal education for children.[143] Although early examples of novels with a school element occur, the school story proper generally describes a text in which the main focus of the narrative and action is centred on the school;[144] principally, these stories occur in single-sex, second-level boarding-schools (university novels are generally considered another genre).[145] This has led to the formation of two sub-genres: the boys', and girls' school story - though both share many characteristics. Among these are prevalent themes of loyalty, honour, friendship, responsibility, and physical and moral courage.

Although predominantly set at boarding-schools, examples exist at day-school locations; however, this is more unusual as often it is the child's removal from the home that is a key characteristic of the story.[146] The narrative tends to focus on the students' perspectives, as they negotiate relationships with their peers and elders. As with their real-life examples, these schools are largely populated by the middle-classes and this is reflected in the embedded ethos. The schools become a "microcosm of the larger world,"[147] and the students must uphold the school values of "honour, loyalty and…team spirit," colloquially known as the school-boy/girl code.[148] (This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five). The plot usually follows the central protagonist's arrival at the school and after a period of initiation, embodying the values of their school, before taking their place in the society for which they are being prepared.[149] Sporting achievement is also a significant characteristic across both boys' and girls' sub-genres. Auchmuty notes that organised sport was a Victorian creation; team

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[142] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 56.
[143] Nancy G. Rosoff and Stephanie Spencer, *British and American School Stories 1910-1960: Fiction, Femininity and Friendship* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 15.
[144] Sheila Ray, "School Stories (Part II: Forms and Genres)," in *International Companion Encyclopaedia to Children's Literature,* ed. Peter Hunt (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), par. 1. https://tudublin.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/35-school-stories-part-ii-forms-genres/docview/2137947798/se-2?accountid=10594
[145] Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 3.
[146] Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 3.
[147] Ray, "School Stories," par. 2
[148] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 64.
[149] Elizabeth A Galway, "Reminders of Rugby in the Halls of Hogwarts: The Insidious Influence of the School Story Genre on the Works of J. K. Rowling," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 68. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/468413

sports would encourage "discipline, loyalty and determination," which encouraged their adoption at girls' schools also.[150]

The development of novel series focused on specific schools has been a feature of the genre, giving the reader a greater chance of involvement in the fictional world of the school, although numerous standalone novels exist. Weekly publications such as *Boys' Own Paper* and its opposite number, *Girls' Own Paper,* which featured serial school stories, helped develop the popularity of the genre.[151] Although examples exist in other countries, notably *Little Men* (1871) by Louisa May Alcott and *What Katy Did at School* (1873) by Susan Coolidge representing school life from an American perspective, George Orwell has contended that the school story is peculiar to England and is largely concerned with status.[152] Certainly the genre is dominated by British authors, owing perhaps to the strong tradition of the Public School, and has been accused of propagating elitist notions of class.[153]

4.3 The British Public School and the Development of Education in England

The British public school evolved from grammar schools providing clerical training alongside a basic education in the classics for boys of limited means.[154] The term "public school" first emerged around the 18th century, but it was not until the 19th century that it became a "national institution."[155] The growth of the middle class had seen an increased demand for education, which was viewed as the surest path to professional success. As the profile of these schools grew, so, too, did the requirement for residential places by fee-paying students; consequently, over time, they became the preserve of the wealthy. Among their most famous examples are Eton, Harrow, Westminster and Rugby.

Although Eton is possibly the name most synonymous with the Public School, it is Dr Thomas Arnold, Headmaster at Rugby from 1828 to 1842, who is associated with the "distinctive public school reforms of the 1830s."[156] These recognised the purpose of the schools not solely as vehicles for academic education, but as institutions of discipline, moral instruction, and the formation of character,[157] something which is reflected repeatedly in the school-story genre. It is, however, the fictional depiction of Arnold in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) that inspired much of the rhetoric

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[150] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 60.
[151] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 57-58.
[152] George Orwell, "Boys' Weeklies," *Horizon,* 1, no. 3 (1940): 5. http://friardale.co.uk/Ephemera/Newspapers/George%20Orwell_Horizon.pdf
[153] See Galway, "Reminders," 67-68.
[154] Harry G. Judge, "Review of *The English Public School: History and Society*," by Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy and David Newsome. *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1982): 514. https://doi.org/10.2307/368073
[155] Judge, "Review," 514.
[156] Judge, "Review," 515.
[157] See Judge, "Review," 515; H. C. Bradby, "Thomas Arnold's Rugby Reforms," *The Victorian Web* 16 June 2016, (accessed 25 April 2022). https://victorianweb.org/history/education/rugby/bradby.html

concerning the importance of organised sport, as this was not an actual emphasis in his ethos.[158] Judge posits that this was later implemented by Fredrick Hall, Headmaster of Rugby from 1857 to 1869.[159]

In the 19th century, girls' education was focused primarily on the domestic, with little attention to academic achievement. Attending boarding-schools was reserved for the professional and merchant classes, with upper and upper-middle class being educated at home.[160] However, in 1850, Frances Mary Buss founded North London Collegiate School, which was a fee-paying day-school offering a curriculum modelled on that of the boys' public school.[161] In 1854 Cheltenham Ladies College was founded, where, under the principalship of Dorothea Beale from 1858 until her death in 1906, became one of the most respected and renowned in Britain.[162] St. Leonards School (1877) in Scotland, Roedean (1885) and Wycombe Abbey (1896) are other notable early examples of the girls' public school.[163] These schools emulated the characteristics of the boys' public schools in both academic education and moral code,[164] and were attended by increasing numbers of middle-class girls.[165] The number of girls aged twelve to eighteen receiving secondary education climbed from 20,000 in 1897 to 185,000 in 1920.[166] Although a number of reforms and education acts were passed between 1870 and 1944, these schools remained largely the province of the middle class; however, limited scholarship places were introduced in 1907.[167] Despite the narrow world in which the girls' school story is set, the genre held a wide appeal to readers across the classes.[168]

4.4 The School Story Genre

4.4.1 Origins

The tradition of the school story is rooted in the evolution of modern English literature for children.[169] As already identified, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess; or, The Little Female Academy* (1749) is often credited with being the first full-length novel for children. It was also a precursor for the later school

[158] See for example, Heather Ellis, "Thomas Arnold, Christian Manliness and the Problem of Boyhood," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 19, no. 4 (December 2014): 426-427. https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2014.969975 ; The Rugby School website, the "About Us: History" page, (accessed 28 April 2022). https://www.rugbyschool.co.uk/about/history/
[159] Judge, "Review," 517.
[160] Ju Gosling, "The History of Girls' School Stories," *Virtual Worlds of Girls* (accessed 20 April 2022). http://www.ju90.co.uk/his.htm
[161] Gosling, "History."
[162] *Spartacus Educational*, "Dorothea Beale," (accessed 27 April 2022). https://spartacus-educational.com/Wbeale.htm
[163] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 86.
[164] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 57.
[165] Gosling, "History."
[166] Josephine Kamm, *Indicative Past: A Hundred Years of the Girls' Public Day School Trust* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1971), 113; Gosling, "History."
[167] Gosling, "History,"
[168] Rossoff and Spencer, *School Stories,* 47; Gosling, "History."
[169] Mavis Reimer, "Traditions of the School Story," in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 209.

story genre, using the school setting as a framework for the novel.[170] The novel contains "certain embryonic features" of the school story, that would later become fundamental to the genre, such as a strong sense of community identity and responsibility.[171] Reimer highlights the novel's strong moral and allegorical function,[172] which were also features of later works. Other notable early examples of stories containing a boarding-school element include *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte, and *David Copperfield* (1850) by Charles Dickens.

4.4.2 The Boys' School Story

A watershed moment occurred when in 1857, *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* by Thomas Hughes was published. The novel, based on Hughes own experience at Rugby school for boys under headmaster Dr Thomas Arnold, was an immediate success and became highly influential in launching the genre's popularity.[173] Despite that fact that almost a hundred school stories had materialised in the interim between 1749 and its publication,[174] *Tom Brown's Schooldays* paved the way for its successors and remains a cornerstone of the genre, its influence still exerted.[175] As Reimer asserts, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* became "an important source for character types, plot incidents and motifs for school stories…and arguably left an indelible mark on the generic form itself."[176] Clark finds that the novel "empowered children,"[177] and despite narratorial interjections "accommodates the child's perspective," which marked a departure in children's literature.[178] Nonetheless, the novel contained a strong moral message and didactic tone, preaching a doctrine of muscular Christianity,[179] which was fashionable at the time.

A short time later followed F. W. Farrar's *Eric; or, Little by Little* (1858), which although scorned for its sentimentality today was very popular in its time.[180] Authors such as Talbot Baines Reed and Charles Hamilton (who wrote under several pseudonyms, including Frank Richards) saw the genre reach its hey-day from the 1890s through to the inter-war years.[181] Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky & Co.*

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[170] See Hahn, *Oxford Companion*, 519.
[171] Shirley Foster and Judy Simons, *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-readings of "Classic" Stories for Girls* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 196.
[172] Mavis Reimer, "Traditions", 209.
[173] Hahn, Oxford Companion, 519.
[174] David Steege, "Harry Potter, Tom Brown, and the British School Story: Lost in Transit?", in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon,* ed. Lana A. Whited (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 141.
[175] See for example, Galway, "Reminders"; Smith, "Harry Potter's Schooldays"; Steege, "Harry Potter, Tom Brown."
[176] Reimer, "Traditions," 209.
177 Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 11.
178 Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 12.
[179] Muscular Christianity placed emphasis on patriotic duty, chivalry, self-sacrifice and discipline. There was also a strong belief in the importance of sports (especially team sports) in the formation of good moral character. Both Thomas Hughes and author Charles Kingsley were among its noted exponents.
[180] Ulrike Pesold, *The Other in the School Stories: A Phenomenon in British Children's Literature* (Leiden and Boston: Brill-Rodopi, 2017), 27.
[181] Smith, "Harry Potter's Schooldays," 71.

(1899) is seen as a standout title of the genre and "has a claim to be regarded as the only entirely successful 'serious' school story in existence."[182] Kipling's work is rather unique in being widely praised and is an example of a school story that was enjoyed by adults as much as it was by children.

4.4.3 The Girls' School Story

The girls' school story emerged and grew in tandem with the girls' public school. It was the prolific, Irish-born author L.T. Meade (1844-1914), who arguably brought the genre into fashion with *A World of Girls* (1886).[183] Meade's 250 books span several genres, but include 40 school stories such as *The Rebel of the School* (1902). Meade transformed the girls' school story portraying the schools in a desirable light that contrasted to the harsh and ascetic world of Lowood depicted in *Jane Eyre* (1847), or to the hardship and deprivation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Sara Crewe: or, What Happened at Miss Minchin's* (1887-1888).[184] Meade's stories focused on the community within the school: the friendships formed and lost, physical recreation and personal development.[185] The naughty-schoolgirl heroine became a staple of her work, though this character always maintained compatibility with "a true sense of schoolgirl honour."[186] Dawson notes that "Meade's naughty heroine is typically bold, rebellious, outspoken, adventurous, and physically active,"[187] characteristics which Blyton would recreate with Elizabeth Allen in *The Naughtiest Girl* series.

The popularity of the girls' school story was fully realised by Meade's chief successor, Angela Brazil (1868-1947), who arguably remains the name most synonymous with the girls' school genre.[188] Brazil penned some 49 novels with a school setting. Her most prolific period was between 1909 and 1926, where her average output was two school novels per annum;[189] her last novel, *The School on the Loch*, was published in 1946.

Like Meade, Brazil can be seen to establish a world that was girl-centric, filled with possibility rather than mere conformity for its protagonists. Brazil's characters are encouraged to develop "leadership qualities and political and civic responsibility through the process of student government."[190]

[182] Hahn, *Oxford Companion*, 520.
[183] Janis Dawson, "The Politics of Naughtiness in L. T. Meade's School Fiction," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* 63, no. 3 (2020): 401.
[184] This title was first serialised in *St. Nicholas* Magazine in 1887 and later published in book form in 1888. An expanded version was later published in 1905 under the title *A Little Princess*, the version which is most widely known today.
[185] Dawson, "Politics," 401.
[186] L. T. Meade, "Story Writing for Girls," *Academy and Literature*, 65 (7 November 1903): 499.
[187] Dawson, "Politics," 401.
[188] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls,* 59; Judy Simons, "Angela Brazil and the Making of the Girls' School Story," in *Popular Children's Literature in Britain,* ed. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts and M. O. Grenby (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), 164.
[189] Simons, "Angela Brazil," 168.
[190] Clark and Shankar, "When Women," 19.

Similarly to Blyton, Brazil's work gained criticism by contemporary educators, most particularly in this case for its language; specifically, the use of school-girl slang.[191]

Brazil is the first of what is recognised as the "'Big Four' authors of the girls' school story in Britain."[192] The other three authors in this set are: Elinor Brent-Dyer (1894-1969) author of *The Chalet School* series (1925-1970); Dorita Fairlie Bruce (1885-1970) author of the *Dimsie* books (1921-1941); and Elsie J. Oxenham (1880-1960) author of the *Abbey* series (1921-1941). Of these three authors, Brent-Dyer's *Chalet School* series is the most widely available today with many of its 59 titles still in print.[193]

4.4.4 Blyton and the School Story Genre

Of the three school series Blyton wrote, two are based in a single-sex boarding-school (*Malory Towers* and *St. Clare's*); *The Naughtiest Girl* is set in the progressive co-educational Whyteleafe School. Whyteleafe School is an interesting creation of Blyton's, emulating Summerhill School – founded in 1921 by A. S. Neill – in operating a system of student-led governance, where complaints and grumbles are adjudicated by peers at a weekly meeting.[194] In Whyteleafe, pocket money is shared equally between all students, tuck is shared at tea-time, and the children work in the gardens or help with the animals. Noted author Anne Fine described it as "the nearest thing to a perfect communist society."[195] Whyteleafe School is run by two headmistresses, Miss Belle and Miss Best, whose names, it may be speculated, have echoes of the earlier innovative educators Dorothea Beale and Frances Mary Buss. The story follows protagonist Elizabeth Allen, who is determined to hate school and be sent home, but gradually comes to enjoy it. Her character grows and she becomes more responsible, despite several missteps.

Blyton's publisher at Methuen suggested that she might write a more conventional girls' school story,[196] and so *St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers* came into being. St. Clare's follows twins Pat and Isabel O'Sullivan, who after initially being determined to dislike the school, soon settle in and are imbued with the school ethos. *Malory Towers* follows Darrell Rivers who, unlike Blyton's three previous protagonists, is excited to go to school. Darrell's failing is her temper, which she learns to control over her six years at the school, set on the Cornish coast.

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[191] Kathryn Hughes, "Angela Brazil: Dorm Feasts and Red Hot Pashes." *The Guardian* February 14 2015, (accessed 18 March 2022). https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/14/angela-brazil-pioneer-of-girls-boarding-school-fiction/ ; See also, Simons, "Angela Brazil," 172.
[192] Rosoff and Spencer, *School Stories,*15. However, Auchmuty includes Blyton and names it the 'Big Five' (*World of Girls,* 4), and Sheila Ray names a 'Big Three' excluding both Blyton and Brazil ("School Stories," par. 18).
[193] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 41.
[194] Gillet, *Reading Enid Blyton,* chap. 8, par. 3.
[195] Anne Fine, "Enid Blyton - Why Did We Love Her So?", in *Enid Blyton: A Celebration and Reappraisal*, ed. Nicholas Tucker and Kimberley Reynolds, (London: NCRL, 1997), 6.
[196] Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 154-155.

Blyton's work can be seen to engage many of the elements of the school story genre. She is concerned with the moral growth of her characters in each of the series. This is most convincingly demonstrated in the last of the three series, *Malory Towers*, as it follows Darrell through from her first to last term (the chronology of the other two series is more sporadic). The flaws each character possesses are slowly eroded or transformed. Darrell's temper is mastered; Alicia's scornfulness softens; even the hopeless Gwendoline's selfishness ebbs in the last two novels. In centring the series on the characters – rather than merely relying on fantastical plotlines – Blyton creates appeal through "a simple but comprehensible psychology of these characters."[197]

4.4.5 A New Phenomenon

One of the most successful iterations of the genre in recent years is the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) by J. K. Rowling. Despite the series being also rooted in the fantasy genre, Rowling follows closely in the traditions set out by Hughes in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857). The series follows the eponymous character's path through adolescence in Hogwarts, a British boarding school for young witches and wizards. The school in both works has a vital function in the formation of the hero's character. Again, Harry is a boy of moderate intellect with keen sporting ability and a surfeit of courage who navigates the typical waters of school-life. School is an awakening for both Harry and Tom: "Life outside of the school represents a state of ignorance and restriction while the boarding-school represents knowledge and experience, but the most important lessons learned are not necessarily academic ones."[198] Galway notes that despite the two works being published almost a century and a half apart, the traits of what constitutes a good citizen remains remarkably similar. That is, the illustrated importance of "bravery, physical strength, sacrifice, independence and responsibility;"[199] these values echo across the school story genre.

4.5 The School Story – Critical Responses

The school story genre generally has not enjoyed a "high literary reputation,"[200] often being marginalised within the field of children's literature.[201] However, works such as Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig's *You're a Brick Angela!* (1976) and Isabel Quigley's *The Heirs of Tom Brown* (1982) have helped establish critical consideration, although both are somewhat disparaging of the girls'

[197] Ray, *Phenomenon*, 196.
[198] Galway, "Reminders," 68.
[199] Galway, "Reminders," 69.
[200] Ray, *Phenomenon,* 195; see also, Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 9.
[201] Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 1.

school story.[202] Other notable contributions are Sheila Ray, who dedicates a chapter to Blyton's school stories in *The Blyton Phenomenon* (1982) and David Rudd, who addressed gender in the *Malory Towers* series most specifically.[203] Rosemary Auchmuty has assessed Blyton alongside Brent-Dyer, Fairlie Bruce, and Oxenham in *A World of Girls* (1992), which explored the school series penned by these authors from a feminist perspective. Interestingly, Auchmuty admits to initially not intending to include Blyton, as she is not known primarily for her school stories, and only did so given the frequent mentions and references to *Malory Towers* and *St. Clare's* when discussing her work with other women.[204] However, in the study, the differences between Blyton and her peers emerge: Auchmuty evaluates the writers under a series of chapters, each exploring common tropes of the school-girl story. While values in "The Schoolgirl Code" and "Heroines" ring as true for Blyton as the other writers, the exploration of "Training to be Wives and Mothers" shows considerable differences in approach. From a gastrocritical perspective we can observe the lack of attention that Blyton displays to the instruction of the characters in domestic science or home-making skills (such as cooking). This contrasts with most other authors of girls' school stories in the inter-war years, who (in general) included it in their work.[205] Blyton, as Auchmuty states, "simply ignores it."[206] More recently, a number of essays have traced the links between *Harry Potter* and *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and also between *Harry Potter* and Enid Blyton's schools series.[207]

4.6 Defining the Genre – Food in the School Series

Food helps establish a sense of belonging. For the student at boarding-school, the school becomes their family away from home and therefore the student must observe the rules and rituals of their new household. Firstly, this may be observed through the ritual of mealtimes, directed and provided by the school, which the student partakes of. Secondly, it may be observed through the consumption of the student's own food supply: their tuck. This is routinely shared with friends or withheld from rivals. Sharing food together creates bonds and also boundaries. The word "companion" is a derivative of the Latin words *cum* and *panis* which translates as "with bread": a companion is literally someone with whom you break bread.[208] Companionship is central to the theme in the school-story and thus, as Smith astutely observes: "Food might be the most important – almost obsessive – part of boarding-school life and stories."[209]

[202] See, Rossoff and Spencer, *School Stories,* 51.
[203] See Rudd, *Mystery,* Chapter 7.
[204] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 45.
[205] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 191.
[206] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 203.
[207] See, Galway, "Reminders"; Smith, "Harry Potter's Schooldays"; Steege, "Harry Potter, Tom Brown."
[208] Ann Alston, *The Family in English Children's Literature,* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), 109.
[209] Smith, "Harry Potter's Schooldays," 81.

4.6.1 Mealtimes

Food helps to establish structure and verisimilitude to the school-day in Blyton's series through the presence of mealtimes, which are taken communally in the dining-hall of each of the schools. Malory Towers differs somewhat as the school is comprised of four separate boarding houses – one for each of the school building's four towers – Darrell and her cohort occupy North Tower, which has its own dormitories, common room and dining-room. Although Blyton does not, in general, pay great attention to what is consumed at these meals – unless it is a special occasion, such as supper on the first evening of term, or a post-lacrosse-match tea – there is regular mention of the four meals taken throughout the day (breakfast, dinner, tea and supper). This gives structure to the day and creates a pattern around which everything else occurs.

More significantly, perhaps, is the sense of community which is imbued through the act of sharing meals. The dining-hall is the place where the students come together, eat and discuss the day's events. The dining-halls in Blyton's schools are always described as convivial places with much conversation taking place. They are also particularly useful at the start of term for creating an air of comradery amongst the students as they regroup at the start of the term. Pat and Isabel O'Sullivan identify this as they return to St. Clare's for their third term:

> It was fun to sit down at supper-time again and hear the familiar chatter going on, fun to take big thick slices of bread and spread it with potted meat or jam. Fun to drink the milky cocoa and yell for the sugar. Everything was so jolly and the twins loved it all.[210]

Blyton captures the clamour and cheerful bustle of the school meal. This presents a happy, secure and unified atmosphere at the school. The supper on the first evening back at school re-initiates them into school life and "restore[s] loosened bonds of kinship."[211]

This is exemplified in *The Naughtiest Girl in the School*, as Elizabeth joins her fellow students in the dining-hall for her first meal. The whole school eats together – boys and girls alike – and as it is the first day of term they are told to sit anywhere they like. Hungrily tucking into "beef, carrots, dumplings, onions and potatoes"[212] the atmosphere is one of licence:

> As it was the first day the children were allowed to talk as they pleased, and there was such a noise as they told one another what they had done in the holidays.[213]

Similarly to Whyteleafe, St. Clare's does not operate a "house system" so the whole school also dines together in a large dining-hall (or dining-room, Blyton uses the terms interchangeably). In both St.

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[210] *STSC,* 13-14.
[211] Claude Fischler, "Commensality, Society and Culture," *Social Science Information* 50, no. 3-4 (2011): 533.
[212] *NGTS*, 21.
[213] *NGTS*, 22.

Clare's and Malory Towers hierarchy is demonstrated through the six school forms. Each form has their own dining table which denotes their place in the hierarchy of the school in a clear way:

> They went down into the big dining-room to supper. Sally absent-mindedly walked towards the fourth-form table and Darrell pulled her back.
> "Idiot! Do you want to sit with those kids?" she hissed. *"Here's* the fifth-form table!"[214]

Equally, the Great Hall in *Harry Potter* is used most potently on the first evening of term to welcome the students on their return to school, but also to establish hierarchy and structure in the school. The students are sorted into four houses; this designates the dining table they will sit at. Once the sub-communities of the school have been established, a feast commences which seals the initiation into both school and house, and the cementing of bonds begins.

Not only does the dining-hall serve to establish sub-sets within the school community but it also introduces new characters. Alston asserts that "the dinner table is where the children are taught manners, are civilised and socialised."[215] This extends to the school dinner table where new students are initiated into school culture and customs. Some pass the test and are readily accepted; others such as new girl Maureen Little at Malory Towers, do not observe expected table etiquette and hierarchy - talking out-of-turn before they have bonded with their peers, and established their place in the community:

> Maureen didn't give herself a chance! "I must be friendly!" she said to herself. "I must keep my own end up, I must im*press* these girls!"
> So she chattered away in a light airy voice and didn't seem to realize that new girls should be seen and not heard! It was only when the others very pointedly began to talk to one another, turning away from her until she found no one was listening to her, that she stopped.[216]

Thus, mealtimes act as a means to regulate behaviour and establish order. Those attempting to break those boundaries will be compelled to conform.

4.6.2 Midnight Feasts

One of the most common uses of food as a plot device is through the midnight feast. This is typically a late night picnic that takes place in the dorm, but on occasion, another room in the school or even outside by the swimming pool, as occurs in both *Claudine at St. Clare's* and *Upper Fourth at Malory Towers.* The midnight feast is particularly prevalent in the *St. Clare's* series; it occurs in all but one of

[214] *IFMT*, 17. Emphasis in original.
[215] Alston, *The Family,* 125.
[216] *IFMT,* 19. Emphasis in original.

the texts. The format is usually the same throughout all the series: a student will have a birthday or receive a food parcel from a relative and decide to host a midnight feast. The invitation list will be drawn up. Sometimes this involves the whole form and there is no exclusion; more commonly an unpopular student will be excluded – but find out about the feast anyway and plan to sabotage it.

The build-up to the feast is marked by the accumulation and storage of eatables. The bill of fare is usually: condensed milk, sardines, pineapple, chocolate, ginger-beer and birthday cake. Clark observes that in the girls' school story food for the midnight feast is typically obtained legally (from their own tuck supply), while in the boys' story they might "steal fruit from the pantry or the Head's orchard."[217]

Whereas the meals in the text that are provided by the school are used to support an environment and atmosphere of security, the midnight feast acts as vehicle for the students to assert their own agency and express their individuality. The midnight feast takes place outside of the prescribed mealtimes, and at a time when the students are forbidden to be out of bed. Thus, the feast becomes a transgressive act where the students have the opportunity to push the boundaries and break with conforms of school routine. This is established in an amusing way through the odd combinations of food which they try:

> They ate everything. Carlotta even ate sardines and pineapple together. Alison tried prawns dipped in ginger-beer, which Pat and Isabel said were "simply super," but they made her feel sick taken that way. However, the others didn't mind, and mixed all the food together with surprising results.
>
> "Nobody would dream that sardines pressed into ginger-bread cake would taste so nice," said Janet. "My brother told me that and I didn't believe him. But it's true."[218]

The midnight feast allows the girls a safe environment in which to experiment with the boundaries of their social and cultural norms, before returning to the prescribed routine. It also highlights their adolescent identity, which is all about discovery. Food becomes a "safe expression of desire;"[219] the midnight feast provides a brief lapse into personal desires. It is imperative that they return to the prescribed eating habits the next day, as Lukanuski cautions: "Without such regulations the community would fall victim to its individual appetites. Once members of the community were pursuing their own desires, the community would disintegrate."[220] Loyalty to their school identity, and adherence to its expectations will ultimately be shown to take precedence.

If there are consequences to the feast they are usually mild. Often simply the over-indulgence of the feast has a negative effect on the girls which is seen as punishment in itself:

[217] Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 18.
[218] *SFSC,* 120.
[219] Robert Hemmings, A Taste of Nostalgia: Children's Books from the Golden Age – Carroll, Grahame and Milne, cited in Keeling and Pollard, Tablelands, 53.
[220] Mary Lukanuski, "A Place at the Counter: The Onus of Oneness," in *Eating Culture*, ed. Ron Scapp and Brian Seitz (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 113.

> "There's no need to punish girls for having a midnight feast, because the feelings they get the next day are punishment enough!"[221]

Punishments meted out for midnight feasting tend to be light – usually the removal of privileges to visit the local village (and consequently the tea/sweet-shop) for a period of time. The staff, especially Matron (who is the main nurturing character in the texts), understand that the feasts are a rite of passage for the students and not something that need to be treated in a serious light.

This is echoed in Miss Theobald's response, in *Claudine at St. Clare's,* when she is awakened in the night to learn that the girls have been out of bed from the substitute Matron (a character presented without the maternal warmth and character of the usual matron):

> "A midnight feast, I suppose? I thought you had come to report something really serious! Couldn't this have waited till the morning, Matron?"[222]

Flanagan suggests that the use of sweet foods in a forbidden context makes the food's "erotic function more overt."[223] Certainly there is a sensuality and desire expressed in the food consumed:

> The girls set to work to eat all the good things, giggling at nothing. It was so exciting to be cooped up in the little music-room, gobbling all sorts of goodies when everyone else was fast asleep.
> "Oh Susan – you've spilt peach-juice all over my toes," giggled Janet."
> "Lick it off then," said Susan. "I bet you can't!"
> Janet was very supple. She at once tried to reach her foot up to her mouth to lick off the juice from her bare pink toes.[224]

Although the midnight feast is transgressive, it is usually depicted as a desirable occurrence in Blyton's school story. However, Elinor Brent-Dyer used it as a cautionary tale "to illustrate the consequences of greed," in her sole example of a midnight feast in *The Chalet School* series.[225]

Agency is also asserted over who is included or excluded from the midnight feast, this generally being the plot point which creates the most tension and leads to the most serious trouble. In *Upper Fourth at Malory Towers,* Head-girl of the form Darrell's failure to regulate who attends the midnight feast leads to two girls from a younger form and two girls from another boarding house attending (mixing between houses after bedtime is strictly forbidden). This lapse of judgement and a resultant loss of temper after one of the girls from the younger form, June, threatens to reveal the feast's occurrence to the housemistress Miss Potts, leads to Darrell's removal as head of her form. This demonstrates that

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[221] *TSC,* 65.
[222] *CSC,* 135.
[223] Flanagan, "Gruel and Midnight Feasts," 58.
[224] *TOT,* 36.
[225] Helen McClelland, *Behind the Chalet School,* (1981; London: Bettany Press, 1996), 174; Flanagan, "Gruel and Midnight Feasts," 58.

within the sphere of Malory Towers she cannot be a good leader and give in to her own whims or the whims of her peers.

The trope of the midnight feast has been a stronger feature of the girls' genre than the boys'.[226] Clark notes an early manifestation in *The Little Governess* (1749), in which "young ladies quarrel over a treat of apples."[227] The midnight feast is certainly prevalent in Blyton's work, especially in *St. Clare's*; both *Malory Towers* and *The Naughtiest Girl* only portray one apiece (although others are alluded to, but not depicted). It also was a feature in the work of Meade, Brazil, and Frank Richards. A more recent series, Anne Digby's *Trebizon* (1978-1994), does not make use of it in its traditional sense, but Trebizon as a comparatively modern girls' school is depicted with more liberal rules and a greater sense of freedom. Consequently, the midnight feast is a less-necessary vehicle for self-expression.

However, the enduring appeal of the school feast is still evident, so much so that it became an integral part of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, although in a different context. While some feasting illicit or otherwise takes place in the dormitories of Hogwarts School, where the books are largely set, much of the feasting occurs in the Great Hall and is regulated by the school.

4.6.3 Tuck and Food Parcels

Food acts as a form of social capital for the students at the school; friendships are formed and cemented through the giving and sharing of tuck. This is a trope that has been demonstrated across the genre from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) to *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), both texts from which comparisons with Blyton can be drawn. Characters may earn the respect and good opinion of their peers through the sharing of food, or their censure through not doing so. Harry Potter purchases an assortment of treats from the food trolley on his first train journey to Hogwarts, which he shares with Ronald Weasley, whom he has just met. Having never had money or companions with whom to share before, Harry is introduced to the pleasure of commensality with friends, in return gaining insight and information to the new and unfamiliar wizarding-world he finds himself in.[228]

Similarly, Tom Brown's purchase of sausages from the Rugby tuck-shop for some of his fellow students increases his enjoyment of the food and helps to establish their good opinion of him. This occurs after a football match on Tom's first day, where he has performed successfully in his role as goalkeeper. Tom has commenced school mid-way through the term, and his peers are low on funds; Tom by comparison has a purse full of money. By augmenting their supper that evening with the purchase of sausages, the occasion is transformed into a feast and new bonds are formed:

[226] Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 108.
[227] Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, 108.
[228] J. K. Rowling*, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, 20th Anniversary ed. (1997; repr., London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 107 -110.

> Festive cups of tea were filled and emptied, and Tom imparted of the sausages in small bits to many neighbours, and thought he had never tasted such good potatoes or seen such jolly boys. They on their parts waived all ceremony and pegged away at the sausages and potatoes, and remembering Tom's performance in goal, voted East's new crony a brick.[229]

In Blyton, the sovereign importance of sharing is impressed upon the reader in *The Naughtiest Girl in The School* when Elizabeth learns that the contents of her tuck-box should be laid on the tea-table on the first evening for everyone to partake of. Unlike Tom or Harry, initially Elizabeth is adamant that she will not share her food with anyone:

> "I'm not going to share," said Elizabeth, remembering that she hadn't been horrid or naughty for some time. "I shall eat them all myself."
>
> There was a horrified silence. The five girls stared at Elizabeth as if they couldn't believe their ears. Not share her cakes or sweets? Whatever sort of girl was this?[230]

Her intent is expressed to the rest of her tea table by Nora, the monitor, but with the added caveat that no-one ought to share with her in return. Elizabeth sees several items more appetising than her own and begins to regret her decision:

> Elizabeth watched the others munching the chocolate cake, which looked and smelt marvellous, and longed for a piece.[231]

She also realises that she cannot possibly consume all of her tuck on her own before it will go stale; her selfish actions have othered her and isolated her from the rest of her peers. She regrets her actions quickly and tries to make amends by offering her cake, which is refused by all. When her birthday occurs several chapters later and she receives a cake from home she makes sure that each student gets a slice, serving herself last. Not only is she learning to conform to the standards of the school but she is learning the importance of sharing what she has with her peers as a way to gain favour; in the same vein as her intertextual counterparts, Tom and Harry, she also gains enjoyment from the act of sharing.

The tuck-parcels that are occasionally received from home are a common occurrence throughout the genre. The package received from home by Katy and Clover Carr, at Christmastime in *What Katy Did at School* (1873), is an early and notable example. It becomes a symbol for familial love and care being "an example of what papas and mammas could accomplish when they were the right sort, and wanted to make schoolgirls happy."[232] They most frequently occur in Blyton's work when someone is

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[229] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857; E. B. Pubs, 2009), 76. Kindle.
[230] *NGTS,* 26.
[231] *NGTS*, 32.
[232] Susan Coolidge, *What Katy Did at School* (1873; London: Bloomsbury, 1994), 166.

celebrating a birthday, but their most potent use is by demonstration of their absence. In *The Naughtiest Girl in the School,* Joan Townsend feels this very keenly in the advent of her birthday:

> "There's nothing much the matter," said Joan, wiping her eyes. "It's only that – I don't think my mother and father love me – and I do love them *so* very much. You see – they hardly ever write to me – and they never come to see me at half-term – and it's my birthday this term, and everyone knows it – and I shan't get a present from them or a birthday cake or anything- I know I shan't. And it makes me feel so dreadful."[233]

Daniels has indicated how sweet foods, particularly, are used in Western culture to symbolise maternal love, belonging, security.[234] For Joan, it is her mother from whom she feels most particularly isolated and unloved. Elizabeth, who is friends with Joan, sends her a cake for her birthday, pretending that it is from Joan's mother. This demonstrates the love from Joan's new school-based family, and marks Elizabeth's growth in learning to care for and nurture others. Although Joan later learns the truth about the cake, the incident, after a few twists and turns, has a happy ending by resolving the tension between Joan and her mother and restoring those primal bonds of love.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has traced the roots of the school story from its early incarnations through its development into a fully-fledged genre, with two popular sub-genres. The school story genre emerged in tandem with the growth of educational facilities for both boys and girls. Increased education and literacy brought a wider readership which helped launch its popularity. The publication of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was a watershed moment in its evolution and it has remained a blueprint for the genre ever since. Food plays a key role in shaping the genre. This is demonstrated by the rituals of dining in the school and also through the use of tropes such as the midnight feast, and through the sharing of tuck and the receiving of food parcels. This is very evident in Blyton's work, but also establishes links throughout the genre.

[233] *NGTS*, 70. Emphasis in original.
[234] Daniels, *Voracious,* 10.

Chapter Five: Characterisation, Values and Attitudes

This chapter explores how food and foodways are used to establish and embody character in the texts. In doing this it will also examine the embedded values and attitudes. This uncovers a discourse of Englishness which permeates the texts. Building on what has been understood thus far, intertextual links are established.

5.1 Honour, Loyalty and Playing the Game: The School Code

A period may be defined by its prevailing ethos and moralities as much as its artefacts,[235] and as such Blyton reflects some of the values of the time in which she wrote. Although a number of these have been held up as criticisms of Blyton's work, they are not unique to her or her writing – arguably being the typical "values and attitudes of the middle-classes prevalent in the 1930s."[236] A teacher by profession, Blyton was an educator as well as a novelist, and the tone of her work, by her own admission, was to inform as well as entertain:

> My public, bless them, feel in my books a sense of security, an anchor, a sure knowledge that right is right, and that such things as courage and kindness deserve to be emulated. Naturally the morals or ethics are *intrinsic* to the story – and therein lies their true power.[237]

Her books have a clear message of the triumph of right over wrong, with little ambiguity or nuance generally given to her adult "bad characters" and villains. Her flawed child characters are usually given more chance of redemption – either within the narrative or off-page – with the flaw in their character usually being attributed to the parent.

Throughout her three school series the prevailing message is one of growth of character. This is set above academic achievement and more transient qualities such as beauty ("typically feminine" characters are often maligned for being such). This is outlined in the *Malory Towers* series, through Miss Grayling's welcoming speech to new students:

> "One day you will leave school and go out into the world as young women. You should take with you eager minds, kind hearts, … a will to help … and a willingness to accept responsibility and show yourselves as women to be loved and trusted. All these things you will be able to learn at Malory Towers – if you *will.* I do not count our successes those who have won scholarships and passed exams, though these are good things to do.

[235] Gillet, *Reading Enid Blyton,* chap. 2 par. 7.
[236] Ray, *Phenomenon*, 201.
[237] Quoted in Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 149. Emphasis in original.

> I count our successes those who learn to be good-hearted and kind, sensible and trustable, good, sound women the world can lean on."[238]

This speech is recounted in full in three of the titles (and part-mentioned in two more);[239] such is its importance to the school ethos. It mirrors Squire Brown's hope for Tom to become "a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman,"[240] in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857). The headmistress of St. Clare's, Miss Theobald, expresses a similar sentiment, as do Miss Belle and Miss Best, the heads of Whyteleafe – although their speeches are delivered less precisely. The ideology Blyton espouses here is essentially what was known as the schoolgirl code. This was a modification of the schoolboy code: a "moral code based on honour, loyalty and playing the game."[241] This reflects the prevalence and importance of sport in the schools (both boys' and girls'). Sport was a definite virtue for Blyton, and she often harshly criticised her characters who did not enjoy it or participate in it, such as Jo Jones in *Malory Towers*; Alma Pudden in *St. Clare's*; and Kathleen Peters in *The Naughtiest Girl*. This work-hard, play-hard ethic that permeates the three series is repeatedly reflected through the food that is eaten.

As established in Chapter Four, mealtimes play an important role in the school day. Although there are many instances of eating, this is usually governed by want rather than need. The students, though often professing to be "so *hungry*,"[242] are usually depicted so after exertion or school activity – such as lacrosse, swimming, horse-riding – and have therefore earned the right to their appetite, which in this context is never held up as a negative by Blyton. It is also worth noting that throughout the text it is (largely) wholesome British fare that is consumed (within regular and scheduled mealtimes at least). The focus is on stews, beef, sausages, traditional puddings, and vegetables. Often, if there are sweet items, these are in the form of homemade cakes and jams. At Whyteleafe School, vegetables are grown in the school gardens, and milk comes from their own dairy-cows. Consuming these national and traditional foods, prepared at the school, is consuming culture.[243] The students' appetite is thus constructed in a positive manner. They may eat heartily: firstly, they have earned it through physical endeavour (for the good of the school); secondly, their appetite reflects their sense of identity which in representing the school (or nation) is represented positively.

This echoes the hearty British food in the earlier *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and is a trope we see continued in the *Harry Potter* series, where the food again remains predominantly British. Daniels suggests that the coding of food in this way "harks back to the notion of

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[238] *FTMT*, 33.
[239] In full in *FTMT, UFMT, LTMT*; in part in *SFMT* and *TYMT*.
[240] T. Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, 47.
[241] Auchmuty, *A World of Girls*, 57.
[242] *LTMT,* 22. Emphasis in original.
[243] Alston, *The Family,* 119.

naturalness."[244] Wholesome, local (national) food cannot taint; it evokes a sense of belonging and the maternal – a secure and comforting source of nourishment. Also, commensality at school meals and through sharing tuck alleviates the fear of gluttony. As Xu maintains:

> Sharing food plays a central role in the formation of social groupings. In many cultures eating alone is an uncomfortable if not a shameful act. Solitary eating is often associated with loneliness, unpopularity, social isolation.[245]

Students are rarely criticised for their appetite: the combination of fresh air, physical activity, friendship and British fare protect against vice and ensure health. However, students who do not conform within the bounds of middle-class manners and mores (the schoolgirl/boy code) are often demonstrated to have negative eating habits which manifest as undesirable character traits.

5.2 Character, Consumption, and Commensality

The manifestation of negative habits as character traits is depicted in *The Naughtiest Girl Again*. Kathleen Peters, a new-girl, is described as "tiresome…[and] always grumbling about something."[246] She spends all of her weekly pocket-money on sweets – which she never shares with anyone else. Kathleen is described in unsympathetic and negative terms as plain, spotty and quarrelsome, and is pitted against the other new-girl of the form, Jenny, who is very popular with her classmates – Kathleen is not. Kathleen overhears Jenny mimicking her in an unflattering and cruel way, and in turn tries to turn their form against Jenny by pointing out how greedy she is as mealtimes:

> "It makes me sick to see the way that greedy Jenny eats," [Kathleen] said to Belinda, after tea the next day. "Honestly, she ate seven pieces of bread-and-butter, and three buns, beside an enormous piece of birthday-cake that Harriet gave her."
> Belinda said nothing, but Elizabeth overheard and flared up at once in defence of Jenny.
> "That's a mean thing to say, Kathleen!" she said. "Jenny isn't greedy! She's always terribly hungry at meal-times – well, I am too, I must say – but I've never seen Jenny gobbling just for the sake of eating, or taking more than her fair share if there wasn't enough for everyone. What about you and your sweets? You're greedy over them – why you never offer anyone any!"[247]

Jenny is hungry, but this occurs within the approved frame of mealtimes and so conforms to the social order. Her appetite is not problematic; she is active and participates in school-life and eating is part of the social fabric of school-life. It is not a singular and selfish activity, unlike Kathleen's sweet-eating

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[244] Daniels, *Voracious*, 94.
[245] Weying Xu, *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 3.
[246] *NGA*, 48.
[247] *NGA,* 53.

– which we understand she spends all her money on and does not share. This seems to manifest in her personal appearance: Kathleen is described as plain and spotty with greasy hair, a crude physical manifestation of her greed. The transformation of Kathleen as a character begins with her rejection of her previous greedy behaviour at the advice of Head Boy and Girl, William and Rita. They point out that Jenny is popular because "she is kind and generous and happy;"[248] they encourage Kathleen to eat less sweets and take more opportunities to exercise outside. Incidentally, this conversation ends with the three sharing cocoa and biscuits together – this act is justified through its commensality. As Kathleen sits and enjoys the food and drink with them, she smiles and the dimple in her cheek appears, signifying a positive physical trait and the commencement of her transformation.

Commensality, defined literally, means "eating at the same table" – or in broader terms, the sharing food (and drink) together.[249] This is essentially a socio-cultural expression, highlighting relationships and the cultural rules of eating, adding social value and dynamics to each instance.[250] Eating, by its nature, is an individual, selfish act: "What a single individual eats can under no circumstances be eaten by another."[251] Fischler opines that this is where the "common meal" (or the act of sharing food) works its magic[252] – transforming selfishness into community. This is typified throughout the three series through both mealtimes and midnight feasts, but is accentuated especially in Whyteleafe School through the rituals and importance surrounding the sharing of tuck.

Kathleen's transformation is highlighted the next morning at the breakfast-table. Elizabeth arrives, having been out horse-riding with Robert, and declares herself so hungry that she "could eat twenty sausages and twelve eggs,"[253] Kathleen "[passes] the toast towards Elizabeth"[254] and is subsequently invited to come horse-riding with them the next morning. Later, looking in the mirror she gives herself a pep talk:

> "No more sweets for you! No more greediness! … Smile and be nice."[255]

Again, the dimple appears furthering the evidence of transformation and assimilation. From herein, Kathleen is presented as a likeable and popular character who participates fully in school-life, assisting in the garden and also going horse-riding with the others and in *The Naughtiest Girl is a Monitor* is described as "rosy-cheeked and dimpled."[256]

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[248] *NGA,* 115.
[249] Fischler, "Commensality," 529; see also Gillian Crowther, *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 158.
[250] Crowther, *Eating Culture*, 158.
[251] George Simmel, "The sociology of the meal?", in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings,* ed. David Patrick Frisby and Mike Featherstone (1910; repr., London: Sage, 1997), 130; See also Fischler, "Commensality," 531.
[252] Fischler, "Commensality," 531.
[253] *NGA*, 120.
[254] *NGA,* 120.
[255] *NGA*, 123.
[256] *NGM*, 17.

5.3 Gluttony and Isolation

This contrasts somewhat with the *Fifth Formers of St. Clare's* character of Alma Pudden, whose character in both name and traits is even more clearly defined through food. She is portrayed as being constantly hungry; this is described in terms of nature rather than appetite. Food and her craving for it is Alma's driving force:

> Her continual craving for food made her find excuses for the wrong things she wanted to do.[257]

Alma does not control her eating and thus does not operate within the prescribed norms; her character and behaviour are assessed only in terms of this one trait:

> "[Alma will] be simply beastly to me now," [Pauline] said. "I suppose she spied after me and saw where I went. What's the matter with her? She's so terribly fat and pasty-looking." "Just over-eating, I should think," said Carlotta."[258]

Carlotta's assessment of Alma is corroborated by other students, teachers and even by Alma herself. Mam'zelle, the French teacher, notes: "this girl is always eating … always she chews something, always she eats [sic]."[259] Eating evacuates Alma's subjectivity, much as it does to characters Augustus Gloop and Violet Beauregard in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964).[260] Just as Augustus embodies chocolate and Violet embodies chewing-gum,[261] Alma embodies a pudding and is described, rather cruelly, thus:

> Alma Pudden had a most unfortunate name. It would not have mattered a bit if she hadn't been so like a suet pudding to look at, but she was. Her school tunic always looked like a sack tied round in the middle. Her eyes were almost hidden in her round, pasty face.[262]

Alma is covetous and secretive with her food, she steals food that has been hidden in a cupboard, intended for the second form's midnight feast:

> Alma, alone in her study, planned to take some biscuits and some chocolate – perhaps she might even take a tin of sardines, as there were now five or six of them. She could open them when she was alone in her own study.[263]

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[257] *FFSC,* 121.
[258] *FFSC,* 119.
[259] *FFSC*, 164-165.
[260] Caroline Keyser, "Guilty Pleasures in Children's Literature," in *Cambridge Companion to Literature and Food,* ed. J. Michelle Coghlan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 154.
[261] Keyser, "Guilty Pleasures,"154.
[262] *FFSC*, 17.
[263] *FFSC,* 123.

Alma's eating has become an individual activity and her isolation is both compounded and highlighted through her attitude to food. Although she pilfers a variety of foods from the cupboard, it is predominantly sweet foods, and the craving which most consumes her is for a tin of pineapple. The conflation between sweet food and love, comfort and security has been observed by Daniels;[264] these are the elements which are lacking from Alma's (school) life (unlike many of the other students, we are given little background information on her). Incidentally, or not, the pineapple is also a symbol of hospitality and friendship, and although it is only the tinned variety in the text, it is interesting as Alma's craving for it is very specific and mentioned with detail on two occasions.[265] The gluttonous individual does not serve or further the communal (school) identity and ethos and is isolated from it. Unlike Kathleen, Alma does not get her chance for redemption within the novel – although we are explained (dismissively) at a later part in the text that Alma's greed and constant hunger are related to a glandular problem that will be "put right [by a]…sort of marvellous operation"[266] – giving some hope for her character at a later stage.

5.4 Middle-Class Mores

The British middle class had grown in size over the preceding two centuries, but its social position had strengthened considerably in the aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918) due to the diminished power of the Edwardian aristocracy. By the 1930s, Humble suggests, the upper class had been somewhat "relegated" from public life, with manners and codes of conduct being passed to the influences of the middle class.[267] They became the dominant class in wealth and power, replacing the upper class in "social, political and economic significance."[268]

Owing to their settings in fee-paying boarding schools, and the mention of servants, cooks and gardeners in the family homes,[269] we may ascertain that the schools of Whyteleafe, St. Clare's and Malory Towers are populated, predominantly, by (upper) middle-class students. This is further delineated by the occasional presence of upper-class, working-class and *nouveau-riche* characters who upset the balance, and whose behaviours do not emulate that of their peers. Contrary to Woods assertion that "the children adopt a superior attitude, not only to the crooks, but also to the cooks of the world,"[270] it is often students coming from a particularly wealthy or privileged situation, who are

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[264] Daniels, *Voracious,* 10.
[265] See *FFSC,* 135, 149.
[266] *FFSC,* 191.
[267] Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity and Bohemianism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 61
[268] Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow*, 70.
[269] For example, in *The Twins at St. Clare's,* Pat refers to "the maids bedrooms at home." (*TSC,*6); in *The Naughtiest Girl is a Monitor,* we learn of "Mrs. Jenks, the rather fierce cook," (*TNGM,*11) of the Allen household; and in *Last Term at Malory Towers,* the Rivers' are delayed leaving on the journey back to school as Felicity has disappeared "to say good-bye to the gardener" (*LTMT,* 6).
[270] Michael Woods, "The Blyton Line: A Psychologists View" (1969). Quoted in Stoney, *Enid Blyton,* 217.

most roundly critiqued or made fun of. For example, in *Claudine at St. Clare's*, we are introduced to new-girl, the Honourable Angela Favorleigh:

> "Oh," said Alison, "Pat, Isabel, Bobby, Hilary – this is the Honourable Angela Favorleigh."
> The Honourable Angela bent her head a little as if she was bowing to her subjects. Bobby grinned.[271]

Angela is immediately presented unfavourably and as a source of comedy for her manner; she is quickly branded "a snob."[272] She is certainly of the upper class, claiming to have a third cousin who is a prince. Two of the other new-girls are related to members of staff: the eponymous Claudine is Mam'zelle's niece, and Eileen is the daughter if the temporary matron who is posted at St. Clare's this term. It is implied that they are both here on subsidised fees. It is also indicated that Eileen has a working-class background as Angela alludes to her dropping of the letter H (which would be indicative of the stereotypical speech of the lower-classes at the time). Angela feels both girls are beneath her and when Claudine brings "a fine big cake with her and share[s] it generously around,"[273] Angela refuses a slice and encourages her only real friend, Alison, to do the same. Both girls also refuse any sweets or food offerings from Eileen.

At half-term, an exhibition of sports and crafts is hosted at St. Clare's for the students' parents, along with a special tea for the occasion. Angela's mother, Pamela, arrives and although she is "attractive and exquisite" in appearance,[274] complains loudly about everything:

> She complained of so many things, and her voice was unfortunately harsh and too loud! … She found fault with the cup of tea that Angela brought her. "What terrible tea! They might at least provide China tea. You know I can't drink Indian tea, Angela."
> She complained of the cake she took. "Awfully dry," she said. "I can hardly eat it."
> "Leave it then," said Angela's father. And to Angela's horror her mother dropped the cake on the ground, where it could be trodden underfoot. The sharp eyes of the girls noted all these things, and Angela began to feel rather uncomfortable.[275]

Pamela considers St. Clare's a "second-rate" school;[276] she had intended to send her daughter to High Towers (a more exclusive boarding-school), but Angela's father favoured St. Clare's. Pamela's displeasure in the school is evident and her behaviour induces the disgust and anger of both the students and the other parents, including Alison's mother – who refuses an invitation for Alison to

[271] *CSC*, 7.
[272] *CSC,* 11.
[273] *CSC*, 22.
[274] *CSC,* 81.
[275] *CSC,* 81.
[276] *CSC,* 84.

stay with the Favorleigh's during the summer, owing to Pamela's "insolent remarks."[277] Pamela distinguishes herself from the other parents, but through her attitude rather than her beauty or elegance. Her behaviour does not conform to the correct code of conduct as dictated by the (prevalent) middle class. Her refusal of the Indian tea could perhaps be construed as unpatriotic – India being part of the British Empire at that time. China also represents the old, traditional bastion of tea production whereas India represents the new Imperial endeavour thus further delineating the divide between the upper and middle classes; the old world and the new. Katz has commented on the use of tea-time to establish states of "harmony or disharmony" in English children's literature.[278] This scene between Angela and her mother demonstrates the gulf between them. It is Angela's mother who behaves in a petulant and child-like way. She is eschewing all the values and virtues of St. Clare's, and by proxy English values, while Angela begins to absorb them.

Incidentally, the kitchen-staff and cooks are spoken of as allies of the students in both Malory Towers and St. Clare's, assisting the girls in their midnight feasts by providing lemonade in *Upper Fourth at Malory Towers,* and supplying a frying-pan for cooking sausages in *The O'Sullivan Twins.* In the latter, the students have asked the scullery-maid, Gladys, for the loan of the frying-pan as "she's a good sport and won't tell."[279] However, an unpopular second-form girl named Erica, who has been excluded from the feast and wishes to get the others into trouble by discovering the day and location of the feast, spies Gladys as she is on her way to deliver the frying-pan:

> "Whatever are you hiding under your apron, Gladys?" said Erica, with the high and mighty air that the servants so much disliked. Gladys tossed her neat little head.
> "Nothing to do you with you, miss," she answered pertly. Erica was angry. She pulled Gladys's apron aside and saw the pan.[280]

Although Erica speaks in a superior manner, this is not behaviour that is applauded or supported. Throughout the rest of the text Erica is shown to petty, mean and of weak character. She ends up leaving the school – though not before seeing the error of her ways – and although it is too late for her to change her reputation at St. Clare's, she is given the chance for redemption elsewhere.

5.5 Class and Cultural Capital

The importance and prevalent position of the middle class and their values in Blyton's world is reiterated in *Last Term at Malory Towers* through the representation of the character of Josephine Jones (Jo), whose story forms a major narrative arc. Jo, we learn through Miss Grayling, has been

[277] *CSC,* 86.
[278] Katz, "Some Uses," 193.
[279] *TOT,* 26.
[280] *TOT,* 30.

taken on as "an experiment,"[281] but does not really fit. This is never explained in absolute terms to us as readers, but Blyton paints a general picture from the first chapter onwards of a family who might be pejoratively termed *nouveau riche.* This is stereotypically depicted through displays of excess and loud, vulgar behaviour.

At the start of term Mr. Jones loudly, tells his daughter if she wants "any extra food, just let us know."[282] Throughout the text it is made explicit that Jo always has plenty of food sent to her. This in itself is not inherently bad – as previously stated, many of the students throughout the series receive food parcels from caring relatives. The manner in which Mr. Jones articulates this to his daughter is met with disgust by Darrell and Sally; his whole persona is described as "awfully fat"[283] and "loud-voiced;"[284] he drives an American car irresponsibly; and encourages his daughter "not to stand any nonsense from the mistresses."[285] This is contrasted with Darrell's father, Mr. River's, "clear-confident voice"[286] and steady, dependable driving.

There is a distinct delineation between the established middle class, who are the gatekeepers of this society, and the Jones family who despite their wealth are clearly shown to not belong. Although they have economic capital, they are lacking in what Bourdieu terms, cultural capital.[287] Cultural capital may be defined as the "skills, knowledge, and behaviours that one can tap into to demonstrate cultural competence."[288] In sending Jo to Malory Towers the Jones family are attempting to assimilate into their new social sphere. But while financially Jo's parents may support her education, their behaviour inhibits her advancement. This is borne out in Bourdieu's treatise on cultural capital as he observes the academic success of children from differing social classes. Academic ability and investment in education notwithstanding, Bourdieu argues that neither of these consider the "domestic transmission of cultural capital,"[289] whereby families that are educated offer their children a distinct advantage by being better equipped to promote improvement. This marks the importance of the *habitus*, which is the learned preferences and dispositions, embedded through upbringing, by which one navigates the social world.[290]

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[281] *LTMT*, 96.
[282] *LTMT*, 9.
[283] *LTMT*, 8.
[284] *LTMT*, 9.
[285] *LTMT*, 9.
[286] *LTMT*, 10
[287] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 15-29.
[288] Nicki Lisa Cole, "What Is Cultural Capital? Do I Have It? - An Overview of the Concept," *ThoughtCo.* 23 September 2019 (accessed 25 April 2022). https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-cultural-capital-do-i-have-it-3026374#:~:text=Cultural%20capital%20is%20the%20accumulation,coauthored%20by%20Jean%2DClaude%20Passeron
[289] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 17.
[290] Jason D Edgerton and Lance W. Roberts, "Cultural Capital or Habitus? Bourdieu and Beyond in the Explanation of Enduring Educational Inequality," *Theory and Research in Education* 12, no. 2 (July 2014): 195.

Bourdieu contends that cultural capital may exist in three forms: the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalised state.[291] Embodied cultural capital is what the Jones' fail to possess; it is assimilation of tradition, culture and mores, developed from birth and shaping the worldview of the individual. Bourdieu argues that while embodied cultural capital is not transferrable it may be acquired through time spent on self-improvement and the acquisition of knowledge;[292] much as the middle-classes had previously ousted the aristocracy in terms of social dominance over the previous century.

Institutionalised cultural capital is "a certificate of cultural competence"[293] which is awarded from an institution – such as an academic or professional qualification, that in turn endows social status. Jo's parents seem to thwart her chances of achieving this.

The Jones attempt to display objectified cultural capital, which is demonstrated through the possession of material goods used symbolically to confer status. Their endeavours are ostentatious and of poor choice – such as their American car, which is construed as vulgar despite being impressive. Mrs. Jones "dripped with diamonds"[294] at the half-term open day at Malory Towers, attracting "astonished glances and a few sly smiles."[295] Blyton portrays their economic capital as misapplied in an attempt to gain admiration.

Jo does not fare any better and is outcast by the rest of her year, despite sharing her plentiful sweets and cakes with others. Although sharing is generally portrayed as positive trait, one by which friendships are formed and cemented, this is not the case for Jo:

> "I don't know why you're so mean to me," said Jo, looking pathetic. "Don't I share my sweets and cakes and everything with you? Didn't I tell you I'd just got five pounds from my aunt to spend on a birthday feast? You know we'll have a jolly good time on my money. Don't I always…"
> "Be quiet," said Felicity, crossly. "Don't we *all* share our things with one another? You're not the only one!"
> "Yes, but I get so many *more* things," said Jo. "Look at that enormous cake I had last week – it lasted our table two days. And look at …"
> "Don't keep pushing your riches down our throats!" said June, exasperated. " And keep your cakes and sweets to yourself in future. I don't want any. You keep on and on reminding us of them. Eat them all yourself!"[296]

https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878514530231; See also, Pierre Bourdieu, "Habitus," in *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, ed. Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 27-34.
[291] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 18.
[292] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 18.
[293] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 20.
[294] *LTMT*, 90.
[295] *LTMT*, 90.
[296] *LTMT,* 74-75. Emphasis in original.

The only friendship that Jo can purchase through her plentiful supply of food is a first former named Deirdre, who has an absentee father and a neglectful aunt. Thus, lacking in any strong moral compass, she is easily swayed by Jo's generosity. Jo also lacks the necessary school-spirit to deem her worthy – she does not enjoy any physical exercise, least of all swimming and is prone to being pushed unsuspectingly into the pool. A dislike of physical exercise is used by Blyton as a suspicious trait throughout the three series, with this often being exemplified in a distaste for swimming. Jo also has a blasé attitude to money, carelessly losing five pounds sent by her aunt to supply the planned birthday feast. The combination of these factors and the ostentatious and vulgar behaviour of her parents, particularly her father, mean that the other girls in her form have no wish to share in her food or associate with her. Through June's refusal of Jo's food, she is removing herself from association or taint. Through Deirdre's continued acceptance of Jo's sweets and cakes she remains under her influence: the result is that the two girls are involved in a serious breach of rules after which they run away and consequently Jo is expelled. Deirdre is allowed to remain in the hope that outside of Jo's influence she will improve.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the prevailing middle-class ideology that permeated Blyton's school series. This is exemplified in Miss Grayling's welcoming speech to new students at Malory Towers. The value of participating fully in school life through activities is reflected through the licence given in the consumption of food by those who do. A lack of school spirit and isolated eating habits is often indicated through the representation of character. Commensality alleviates the danger of gluttony, and the importance of sharing with others is stressed. Sharing does not always guarantee good character. Adherence to the middle-class mores of society is a necessity; it is easier for students from established middle-class backgrounds to have acquired these behaviours and manners. However, often it is students from the wealthier classes such as the upper class or the *nouveau riche* who are most distinctly othered by the students. This demonstrates Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital as a complex acquisition that cannot merely be purchased.

Chapter Six: Social Context

This chapter will explore the how social and cultural events have shaped Blyton's school series. It will outline some of the major changes to food production and consumption of the period and reflect how discourses of the time have permeated the texts.

6.1 Setting the Scene

The period in which Blyton wrote her three school series (1940-1951) coincides with a time of austerity in Britain – and much of the world – due to the Second World War (1939-1945) and its aftereffects. Although food rationing did not commence in Britain until 1940, it did not end with the war and remained in place until 1954, when the last controls were lifted. While Blyton makes no direct reference to the war throughout the series, its effects are alluded to in the opening chapter of *The Twins at St. Clare's,* when Mrs. O'Sullivan states to her daughters that "nowadays we have to learn to live much more simply."[297] If this was indeed the case, there is little reflection of this in the *amount* of food which permeates the texts. As others have noted, the food mentioned in Blyton does not seem to represent what would have been the material reality for many of the readers.[298] Nonetheless, the expression of food and foodways in the texts both illuminates and is illuminated by the socio-historical context, as this chapter will illustrate.

6.2 The Pre-War and Inter-War Years

To understand how rationing affected wartime Britain, it will be necessary to provide a backdrop to illustrate the changes and developments in the production and consumption of food in Britain in the preceding period.

The 19th century was a period of great transition in British history. Industrialisation had led to a rapid increase in urbanisation, as rural labourers moved to town in search of jobs. This transition meant that people were no longer self-sufficient in terms of food, relying on producers rather than their own produce to feed themselves.[299] Concurrently, the population of Britain was increasing rapidly – between 1851 and 1914 the population of Wales and England doubled from 17,900,000 to 36,000,000.[300] The loss of land to urbanisation and the growing population had put pressure on British agriculture to feed its people. Food now had to "travel, last longer and feed more people."[301] Thus,

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[297] *TSC*, 7.
[298] See for example Barker, "Food in Enid Blyton," 9-10; Michael Flanagan, "Gruel and Midnight Feasts," 55.
[299] Lindsay Middleton, "'No One Wishes to Say that You are to Live on Preserved Meats': Canning and Disruptive Food Narratives in Nineteenth Century Food Narratives" (paper, Dublin Gastronomy Symposium: Food and Disruption, Dublin, May 29 2020), 144. https://doi.org/10.21427/q3y6-r175
[300] John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Food in England From 1815 to the Present Day*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), 186. Kindle.
[301] Middleton, "No One Wishes," 144.

industry and technology became an integral and necessary part of the British food supply and the food manufacturing industry grew.[302]

Global food production was also increasing; advances in transportation, such as the North American Railway, saw the rise of cheap imports of wheat, which soon dominated the British market.[303] Techniques such as canning and refrigeration also ensured that produce could be transported over long distances. This, coupled with lower costs to food from a free trade policy, "firmly established" Britain's dependency on imports for its food supply.[304]

The emergence of convenience foods brought a widespread availability of packaged, bottled and canned provisions. Products such as baking powder and self-raising flour made baking a simpler process; custard powder, gravy-mix, dried soup, cans of fruit and vegetables and tins of condensed milk materialised. The latter of these was a convenient and widely used alternative to fresh milk in the days before widespread refrigeration; although refrigeration was in use from the 1880s, it was initially dominated by commercial use.[305] Johnston suggests that "in 1956 only 8 per cent of households possessed a refrigerator," with this rising to 83 per cent by 1973.[306] Margarine was invented in 1869 and quickly adopted by the working-class, being cheaper than butter.[307] However, combined with the use of condensed milk, this had a negative effect on the diet, both lacking in vital vitamins.[308]

Breakfast cereals were imported from the US which added a new option to the breakfast-table – their popularity lead Kellogg's to open a factory in Manchester in 1938. Nescafé launched its instant coffee in 1932, resulting in more widespread accessibility for the average consumer. In confectionary, names such as Fry, Rowntree and Cadbury were leaders in the field, as production of chocolate, sweets and biscuits and grew;[309] however, increase in the consumption of sugar (particularly prevalent in the lower classes) did not indicate growing nutritional health.[310] Although canned products were initially viewed with scepticism due to poisoning scares,[311] the First World War (1914-1918) led to their more widespread acceptance, and a subsequent increase in manufacture and import led to a decrease in prices.[312] By the 1930s, canned foods were widely used across the population and comprised of a

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[302] Colin Spencer, *British Food: An Extraordinary Thousand Years of History* (London: Grub Street, 2004), 284.
[303] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 186.
[304] Burnett, *Plenty and Want,* 191.
[305] James P. Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating: Food, Drink and the Daily Diet in Britain Since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 9.
[306] Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating*, 61-62.
[307] Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating*, 46.
[308] Lizzie Collingham, *The Hungry Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017), 234.
[309] Spencer, *British Food,* 284.
[310] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 463.
[311] See Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating,* 54; Middleton, "No One Wishes," 145-146.
[312] Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating*, 56-57.

variety of different products – from asparagus to baked beans with pork[313] – although the majority of these were still imported.[314]

The advances of this period had seen food manufacturing mushroom into a global activity.[315] This gave way to a more varied diet, predominantly in the inter-war period and, with the rise of the average wage and subsequent increase in spending-power, led to the increased demands of the consumer – particularly regarding quality and availability of supplies.[316] A phase of competition ensued with domestic produce now competing with global imports. Products once sourced nationally were increasingly supplied from further afield, such as, beef imports from Argentina, lamb and butter from New Zealand, and eggs, bacon and butter from Denmark.[317]

6.3 Rationing and Austerity 1940-1954

6.3.1 A Move Towards Nationalism

At the outset of the Second World War, Britain relied heavily on imports to sustain itself – drawing primarily on resources from around the Empire to support its needs.[318] In 1939, Britain was importing a substantial amount of its food, being only 30 per cent self-sufficient; changes to British agricultural policy became of paramount importance.[319] Furthermore, the only food product of which Britain was entirely self-sufficient was liquid milk.[320] Imports of wheat from Canada had sustained the production of bread in Britain, with further grain imported for use as livestock fodder. Despite the dominance of livestock in British agriculture, it produced less than half of the meat it consumed.[321] Even items such as cheese and eggs had been imported in substantial amounts. Consequently, ensuring the food supply and sustaining a healthy population became "germane to the war effort."[322] Although the Empire played an important role in sustaining Britain during the war, improved food security through the "expansion of home produced foods" needed to be achieved.[323] Edgerton asserts that a "move from internationalism … towards nationalism was particularly evident in the

[313] Spencer, *British Food,* 305.
[314] Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating*, 57.
[315] Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating*, 18.
[316] Burnett, *Plenty and Want,* 423-424.
[317] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 420
[318] Collingham, *Hungry Empire,* 254.
[319] Spencer, *British Food,* 313.
[320] Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 90.
[321] Collingham, *Hungry Empire,* 254.
[322] M. E. Barker and J. D. Burridge, "Nutrition Claims in British Women's Magazines from 1940 to 1955," *Journal of Human and Nutritional Dietetics* 27, no. 2, (2014): 117. https://doi.org/10.1111/jhn.12075
[323] Barker and Burridge, "Nutrition Claims," 122.

case of food"[324] during this period.[325] With the move towards greater national food production, and feeding as part of the war effort, food took on a deeper patriotic value:

> The very meaning of food was dramatically changed. Where people's choice of food had previously involved issues of tradition and habit, social status and style, it was now hedged with questions of patriotism and morality, the subject of a continual barrage of propaganda.[326]

With both food, and national security posing a prominent concern of the period, the concept of identity took on new power. As Fischler states: "The question of identity arises only when identity is disturbed."[327] More than ever food imbued a patriotic element, which is arguably embedded in Blyton's work.

6.3.2 Food as Morale

David Rudd has observed the importance of the social context, and most potently, "a discourse of Englishness" which permeates the *Famous Five* series;[328] the same may be argued for the school series. As already stressed, food is important in the creation of communal identity:

> A bell rang. "Dinner!" yelled Belinda. "I'm starving. Rotten breakfasts we get here!"
> "Rotten!" agreed everyone. They had all eaten big plates of porridge and milk, scrambled eggs, and toast and marmalade, but it was always agreed that the food was "rotten" – unless, of course, an outsider dared to criticize the food, and then it suddenly became "too wizard for words."[329]

This conversation demonstrates a very clear patriotism and sense of community; the school becomes a microcosmic representation of England. The students putting on a united front in the face of adversity, even if inwardly they express doubt or discontent. This reflects the attitude of making do and getting by that was a discourse of Britain during rationing.[330]

Barthes has argued food's symbolic function as national culture and identity; ordinary food transcends its primal utility and becomes a motif for societal values.[331] For Barthes, wine becomes a symbol of

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[324] David Edgerton, "War, Reconstruction and the Nationalization of Britain," *Past and Present* 6 (2011): 36.
[325] Edgerton, "War," 36.
[326] Nicola Humble*, Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 83.
[327] Claude Fischler, "Food, Self and Identity," *Social Science Information* 27 (1988): 281.
[328] Rudd, *Mystery,* 89.
[329] *TYMT,* 372.
[330] See for example, Humble, *Culinary Pleasures,* 81-111.
[331] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Noonday Press, 1992).

French patriotism;[332] the English are known to the French as *les ros-boeuf* (the roast-beefs).[333] Cozzi has commented that the "image of the well-fed Englishman weaned on beef…[is] an integral part of British identity."[334] The plain and traditional fare of British cuisine is arguably as recognisable as any of its more esteemed counterparts. As already identified, the food throughout Blyton's school series typifies British cooking; when viewed in light of the social milieu this takes on new meaning.

The school dinner – which is served at midday – most frequently named and discussed is stew; it appears in all three series. On two occasions it is clearly presented in a patriotic light, becoming a motif for England (or Britain). In both instances this is portrayed through the eyes of a foreigner: namely, French Mam'zelle in *Second Form at St. Clare's*; and a new American student Zerelda Brass, in *Third Year at Malory Towers.* In each case, both characters extol the virtues of the food (and thus English ideals). Zerelda, is feeling downcast having been made to change the arrangement of her hair and remove her make-up:

> But she soon cheered up when she saw the steaming dishes of stew surrounded with all kinds of vegetables. Gee, she liked these English meals. They were – no, not wunnerful [*sic*] – what was the word the others used- yes, they were wizard![335]

The treatment of Zerelda in the text emphasises a growing concern for the infiltration of American culture on British life.[336] Although Zerelda is given many sympathetic traits such as being "generous and kind,"[337] and shown to have a good sense of humour as she withstands any mocking cheerfully, she is depicted as being too grown-up in her appearance and too concerned with the movie stars she tries to emulate. In the post-war period there was a prevailing feeling that life was easier in America (they did not experience the same period of austerity). When Zerelda arrives at Malory Towers she struggles to find her place and is positioned as inferior to the established Malory Tower's girls, despite looking and behaving older. Partaking of meals with her fellow students draws Zerelda into a new community. Fischler illustrates the importance of food in the creation of both individual and collective identity; as we incorporate food we incorporate the identity of its producers and their values, becoming part of that collective.[338] Thus, Zerelda is imbibing both the values of Malory Towers and the wider British principles – which buoy her downcast mood.

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[332] Barthes, *Mythologies,* 58.
[333] See for example Fischler, "Food, Self and Identity," 280.
[334] Annette Cozzi, "Men and Menus: Dickens and the Rise of the 'Ordinary' English Gentleman," in *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning,* ed. Kathleen Lebesco and Peter Naccarato (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 14.
[335] *TYMT*, 373.
[336] Rudd, *Mystery,* 90.
[337] *TYMT,* 377.
[338] Claude Fischler, "Food, Self, Identity," 279.

That food could buoy spirits and lift morale was a key facet of the war effort and British fare was at the heart of this. For Mam'zelle her plate of stew represents her assimilation into the British way of life:

> "At first," said Mam'zelle conversationally, taking up her knife and fork, "at first when I came to England I did not like this stew of yours! But now – ah, it is wonderful!"[339]

Similarly, the students at Whyteleafe School in *The Naughtiest Girl Again* are "glad to smell a good stew and see the carrots and onions floating in it!"[340] Onions were an item that were in limited supply during the war, so there is perhaps an extra grain of truth in this statement. Onions were not widely grown in Britain and many attempts to grow them in allotments failed. There are incidents of onions being raffled and given as presents such was the lament of their absence.[341]

6.3.3 Want and Plenty

Initially, Winston Churchill was reluctant to introduce rationing as he did not want to impinge on the freedom of the public. But due to the volatility of the British supply chain it became a necessity.[342] Petrol was the first item to be rationed in 1939, but food rationing did not commence until 1940. The premise of the food rationing system was that staple items such as bread, potatoes and fresh vegetables would not be limited and that their prices would be kept low in order for the population to be able to meet its calorie requirements.[343] Rationing thus began with supplies that *could* be guaranteed to people in order to ensure that everyone received their fair share. Sugar, bacon, ham and butter were the first items to be rationed with tea following suit later in the same year. In March of 1941, jam and marmalade entered the list followed by cheese in May and eggs in June, closing the year with the rationing of milk in November. The following year, 1942, saw the rationing of sweets. Bread was not rationed until after the war had ended in 1946, when a worldwide cereal crisis impacted supply and production; this lasted for two years.[344]

The Lend-Lease agreement brokered with the US government in 1941 helped to ease pressure on the British food supply. American agriculture and food production was prospering during this period and as their mainland was not under attack, they were better positioned and equipped to continue to produce without the same level of disruption faced in Europe.[345] Many of the items received from the US were of insufficient quantities to distribute evenly among the British public so a points system was

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339 *SFSC*, 149.
340 *TNGA*, 13.
341 Collingham, *The Taste of War,* 390-391.
342 Collingham, *The Taste of War,* 361.
343 Barker and Burridge, "Nutrition Claims," 118.
344 Barker and Burridge, "Nutrition Claims," 118.
345 Collingham, *The Taste of War,* 76-80.

devised. This was a new form of rationing whereby people could spend points on items of their choice. Whereas rationing was fixed, the points system added an element of personal selection to the imposed limits. Items included in this system were canned meat and fish; dried fruit; condensed milk; golden syrup and biscuits. The initial allocation at the start of the scheme was sixteen points per person, per month.[346]

6.3.3.1 Sweets and Treats

It is interesting to note that the items listed as part of the points system feature regularly in the school series, especially when there is a midnight feast planned. Sardines, Nestlé milk (condensed milk), biscuits and golden syrup are all mentioned as treats in the texts. To the modern-day reader these items may seem arcane items for a feast but to the contemporary reader they would have been luxuries. The "points systems" was one of the successes of the British food rationing;[347] it allowed an element of choice back into the British public's diets and gave small relief from government control. Similarly, the midnight feasts are a way of asserting agency and choice in the regulated lives of the students in the texts.

It has been suggested that Blyton does not goad her readers with "unobtainable luxuries."[348] While there is truth in this, these luxuries were certainly limited. As already stated, sugar was one of the first items to be rationed, with sweets following in 1942. Cakes and sweets are very prominent in both *St. Clare's* and *The Naughtiest Girl.* The cake which Kathleen contributes to the midnight feast in *The Twins at St. Clare's* is particularly extravagant:

> The most lavish contribution was Kathleen's! She brought a really most marvellous cake with almond icing all over it, and pink and yellow sugar roses on the top. Every one exclaimed over it![349]

In 1940, the Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, had declared a prohibition on the use of sugar in the decoration of cakes. This produced the phenomenon of the cardboard wedding cake – hollow cardboard covers were created to place over a smaller cake, the cardboard being decorated in mock royal icing.[350] Blyton published *The Twins at St. Clare's* in 1941, so the description arguably does serve to titillate.

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[346] Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*, 86.
[347] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 481.
[348] Flanagan, "Gruel and Midnight Feasts," 56; see also Josh Sutton, "Why the Famous Five had the Perfect Austerity Diet," *The Guardian* 18 April 2012 (accessed 27 April 2022). https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/apr/18/famous-five-perfect-austerity-diet
[349] *TSC*, 57.
[350] Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*, 96.

Sweets were rationed in Britain until 1953. The ration for children was 7oz (200g) per week, to everyone over 5 years of age, which would yield one or two sweets a day.[351] More problematic was their procurement, as often, they were in short supply due to sugar shortages. The absence of sugar in the diet provoked unbearable cravings for some.[352] The students of Whyteleafe spend much time talking about the purchase of sweets:

> The children were all talking about the sweet-shop, which they all loved, and where they all spent money each week.
> "I think those boiled sweets are the best bargain," said Jenny.
> "Oh no – those clear gums last much the longest," said Belinda.
> "Not if you chew them," said Harry. "I bet if you sucked a boiled sweet properly, right to the end without crunching it up, and after that sucked a clear gum without chewing at all, there wouldn't be much to choose between them."[353]

This conversation continues as the virtues of chocolate peppermints are thrown into the ring. There is a potent presence of sweets throughout this particular text. While it has been posited that this reflects the need for security and maternal love, this may also illuminate the lack of availability in the period and reflect the concerns of the child about purchasing the best value sweets in a time when they would have to make do.

6.3.3.2 Fact or Fantasy

Blyton has been accused of not representing the period accurately,[354] considering the acute shortages of many food items. This is borne out in recollections from lived experiences during the period, chronicled by Ysenda Maxtone Graham in *Terms and Conditions: Life in Girls' Boarding Schools 1939-1979* (2016). That food was seen as a necessity, not pleasure seems evident from the food produced and provided:

> To make food delicious would have gone against the grain of these establishments. It would have encouraged sensuality, self-indulgence and fussiness.[355]

According to one of Grahams' interviewees, Rita Skinner – a pupil of Roedean School – food preparation often fell to a local woman who was both untrained and uninterested in her task which was reflected in the cooking.[356] Stews and puddings were the order of the day but they were not relished as the meals Blyton recounts; meat was often of poor quality and the food lacking flavour.

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[351] *The Woolworth Museum* "Sweets, Rationing and World War II" (accessed 27 April 2022). https://www.woolworthsmuseum.co.uk/pnmrationing.html
[352] Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 13.
[353] *NGM,* 34.
[354] See for example Barker, "Food in Enid Blyton," 10.
[355] Ysenda Maxtone Graham, *Terms and Conditions: Life in Girls' Boarding-Schools 1939-1979* (London: Abacus, 2016), 161.
[356] Graham, *Terms and Conditions*, 163.

However, this was not universal; some of the stories related recounted positive memories of inventive and considered cooking, despite rationing. Catherine Freeman, who attended the Assumption Convent in Herefordshire, recalls the French nuns there (it was a French Order) growing spinach, foraging fruit, creating homemade jams and cooking with care, producing delicious food despite rations.[357] Midnight feasts, not merely a genre trope according to Graham, became a necessary part of school life; not only to augment the diet, but as a reaction to the strict authority at many of the schools. Through indulging in clandestine feasts, the girls were able to assert an element of independent choice and control back over their heavily structured lives.[358]

None of this is displayed in the schools Blyton wrote. Her characters sit down to four meals a day – breakfast, dinner, tea and supper. Despite the prevalence of margarine during the period, it is never mentioned in any of the texts; butter is always used:

> They all sat down to an enormous tea, demolishing bread and butter and honey and the four chocolate cakes in no time.[359]

Butter was indicative of the wealthier classes: Spencer notes that in the 1930s "only the poor ate margarine while only the rich had marmalade…[and] tended to have a cooked breakfast."[360] A cooked breakfast is noted in both *The Naughtiest Girl* and *Malory Towers* with scrambled eggs, boiled eggs, bacon and sausages appearing.[361] There is no mention of a cooked breakfast in St. Clare's and only toast and marmalade are ever served.

Aside from stew, dinner is rarely mentioned in detail. But on the occasions it is reflects the British fare that has been identified as prevalent:

> Dinner was to be sausages and mashed potatoes, with treacle pudding to follow, a very favourite meal.[362]

Sausages also appear at supper-time in Whyteleafe School:

> There was a special supper that night for the winning team! Hot sausages appeared on the table, two each for one of the team. How delighted they were![363]

At time Blyton wrote these books British sausage meat was usually mixed with other fillers such as breadcrumbs, but tinned American sausage meat was available through the Lend-Lease scheme and represented one of the best value items on the points system, as it contained pure meat.[364]

[357] Graham, *Terms and Conditions*, 165.
[358] Graham, *Terms and Conditions*, 169.
[359] *SFMT,* 240.
[360] Spencer, *British Food,* 306.
[361] *NGTS,* 131, 138; *NGA,* 120; *TYMT,* 372.
[362] *TSC,* 67.
[363] *NGA,* 146.

We also ascertain that students may supplement their tea, not only through tuck such as cakes and potted meat, but also through the provision of eggs or honey from home:

> "Have some of my honey," said Maureen, eagerly. "We keep our own bees, you know – and we always have *such* a lot of honey. We have hens, too. So we have plenty of eggs. I brought some back with me."[365]

This was a common practice in actual boarding-schools, with parents who had farms or kept hens sending parcels to supplement their children's diets.[366] Eggs had been brought under ministry control in 1941, due to fluctuations in supply, but people could augment this with their own supplies. During the war there were reports of flat-dwellers experimenting with keeping hens in "cages suspended outside their windows" such was the need to supplement the diet.[367] This was further compounded when Professor J. C. Drummond, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Food, promoted the use of dehydrated products, such as egg,[368] which though appreciated, as it increased availability, initially proved difficult to cook with.[369] This all stressed the escalating importance of being able to supplement rations.

6.3.4 "Digging For Victory"

A high proportion of agricultural land in the country was used primarily as pasture for livestock; arable land usage was considerably more limited. With high imports of grain for animal fodder, this was not an efficient use of land; a policy of growing wheat and importing meat would make more sense.[370] The "Ploughing-Up" campaign saw the conversion of pastureland into use for crops. Emphasis was also placed on producing crops with a higher yield per acreage, such as the potato, which would maximise numbers being fed.[371] Fresh vegetables were not rationed and there was an energetic campaign of promoting their virtues. The "Dig for Victory" campaign saw allotments and small vegetable patches spring up in great numbers around the country. There were even cartoon characters named Doctor Carrot "the children's best friend" and Potato Pete "the energy food" drawn up to rally the nation.[372] Due to shortages of previous staples many "mock" and ersatz foods appeared during this time. Carrot could, apparently, substitute apricot to produce a flan;[373] parsnips flavoured

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[364] Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*, 86.
[365] *IFMT,* 44.
[366] See Graham, *Terms and Conditions*, 162.
[367] Humble*,* *Culinary Pleasures*, 85.
[368] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 477.
[369] Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*, 86.
[370] Collingham, *Hungry Empire,* 254.
[371] See J. J. MacGregor, "Britain's Wartime Food Policy," *Journal of Farm Economics* 25, no. 2 (May, 1943): 392. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1231707
[372] Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 391.
[373] Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*, 87.

with banana essence were served in sandwiches to children.[374] Another dish, the "Woolton Pie" - a bland, root vegetable and pastry replacement for a meatier alternative - is not fondly remembered.[375]

In Whyteleafe school, the garden is a central part of school-life for those who wish. John Terry is the head-gardener and Elizabeth becomes his chief assistant. The garden grows a variety of vegetables for the school including, beans, peas and lettuce. Many of the other students help out as well, and it is emphasised how important the work is to the school in producing the vegetables:

> There was a great deal to do in the garden that term. There always was in the spring term. There was a good deal of digging to finish, and many things to plant. The children, under John's direction, sowed rows and rows of broad beans.
> "Oh dear, *must* we sow so many thousands, John?" groaned small Peter, standing up to straighten his back.
> "Well, the whole school likes broad beans," said John. "It's nice to grow what people like."[376]

While this reflects Blyton's training as a Froebel teacher, it also establishes a link to the "Dig for Victory" campaign. St. Clare's also has a "big kitchen garden full of fresh vegetables,"[377] although it is not an integral part of the text like it is in *The Naughtiest Girl*.

The frequency and variety of jams mentioned throughout the three series (strawberry, plum, blackcurrant, blackberry) reflects the culture of the time. Jam was rationed, consequently producing homemade jam increased. On Elizabeth's first evening in Whyteleafe:

> Tea was laid in the dining-room. The long tables were spread with white cloths, and plates with big slices of brown bread and butter were set all the way down. There were some large plain cakes here and there, and some big pots of plum jam.[378]

Jam-making was part of national campaign to reduce food waste and utilise all available produce. Booklets were printed and distributed giving instruction and advice on its production. Due to sugar rationing an extra allowance was given at harvest-time in order for people to maximise what they could preserve.[379] In 1940 a grant was given to the Women's Institute to purchase sugar for jam; they

[374] Barker, "Use of Food," 10.
[375] See Tom Spicer, "Eat, Drink and be Merry for Tomorrow We Die: British Food Situation and Public Reaction During WWII," *EIU Historia,* 13 (2004) https://www.eiu.edu/historia/Spicer.pdf ; Humble, *Culinary Pleasures,* 92.
[376] *NGM,* 50.
[377] *CSC*, 2.
[378] *TNGA*, 31.
[379] Spencer, *British Food,* 316.

set up preservation centres around the country, operated by volunteers all aiming to maximise the output and minimise the waste of the fruit-yield.[380]

6.3.5 War-time Socialism

Although, at the outset of war, it was a Conservative-led British government in power a war-time socialism prevailed in the country. Rationing became a great leveller of some of the divide between the classes. A sense of justice and fairness to share equally was part of Food Minister Lord Woolton's philosophy on rationing; no differentiation was made in the allocation of rations among adults (including armed forces) according to class, gender or war-effort contribution.[381] Woolton did this for the good of "the morale of the civilian population."[382] This reflects the ethos of Whyteleafe school where there is repeated emphasis on the equal sharing of food and money. Although this reflects aspects of Blyton's Froebel training and the model of the progressive school, it may also contain traces of rhetoric that, when viewed through the social context, reflects the mood in the country.

6.4 Summary

Blyton wrote her three school stories through a time of domestic and international upheaval. Although her stories depict food that is typical of the period, the abundance with which they appear is not. What is demonstrated is that Blyton was aware of the rhetoric surrounding food during the war effort and promotes the growth and consumption of homemade foods. She also maintains a cheerful attitude throughout in her outlook towards food. When viewed in the social context this appears to be a gentle espousal of government values. This, arguably, is most evident in Whyteleafe school where the repeated emphasis on sharing, growing and community efforts becomes a microcosm for Britain.

[380] "A History of Jam and Preserves," *Freshways.co.uk* 4 January 2021 (accessed 20 April 2022). https://www.freshways.co.uk/a-history-of-jam-and-preserves/
[381] Collingham, *The Taste of War,* 361.
[382] Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 361.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Further Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

This thesis has applied a gastrocritical approach to the three school series, *The Naughtiest Girl in the School, St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers* by Enid Blyton to explore the importance of food and foodways in the texts.

Enid Blyton was a prominent children's writer who, despite her incredible output and widespread popularity, has remained comparatively ignored in terms of serious academic consideration. Blyton has also been a controversial figure due to some of the outdated values and attitudes embedded in her work.[383] Nonetheless her popularity endures, as is evident through the continued high sales of her work.

Food is abundant throughout Blyton's work, yet it is an under-studied topic. This reflects the fact that literary food studies is a burgeoning field and, owing to Blyton's marginalisation in the field of children's literature, interest may take time to grow. Blyton's use of hearty, typical British foods *has* been addressed, as has the relative abundance with which they appear.[384] This is of particular significance because of Blyton's prolific output during the period of rationing and austerity.

Gastrocriticism is an emerging interdisciplinary form of literary theory. Drawing on scholarship from a range of fields a "culinary lens"[385] is constructed through which the texts are studied. Klitzing proposes a structured framework of inquiry through the utilisation of gastrocritical reading questions,[386] which offer a systematic approach to the texts. By focusing on specific literary concerns, such as narrative, setting or characterisation, a full and serious consideration of the texts as represented through food and foodways can be gained. This approach is particularly useful for children's literature, being a broad branch of literature, as it lends itself to a wide variety of fields.

The school story has a history which is rooted in the earliest traditions of modern literature for children. Its watershed moment may be traced to the publication of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), which provided a blueprint for the genre, and as has been established, is still influential today. Many of the conventions of the school story such as, honour, loyalty and sporting endeavour are firmly inaugurated in the narrative. The girls' school story emerged shortly after with authors such as Angela Brazil cementing the girls' sub-genre. Although the school story has never enjoyed a strong literary reputation, the genre continued to be popular until after the war. The recent addition of the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) to the canon has sparked renewed interest in the genre.

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383 Ray, *Phenomenon*, 201.
384 See Barker, "The Use of Food."
385 Tigner and Carruth, *Food and Literature,* 8.
386 Klitzing, "Gastrocritical Reading Questions."

Food is an important feature of the school story. The dining-hall forms an important part of school life, aiding in the forming of friendship through commensality. Each school-term commences with a shared meal, re-establishing bonds after holidays spent apart. It also establishes hierarchy through division. In Malory Towers, the students are divided into four houses, each with their own dining-hall which serves to stratify the school into smaller sub-communities.

Midnight feasts are an important and well-known feature of the school story, especially associated with the girls' school story. They occur regularly in Blyton's work, especially *St. Clare's*, acting as expressions of agency and desire. The students can step outside of the restrictions of their daily routine and often explore unorthodox flavour combinations.

The sharing of food with others is repeatedly emphasised, especially in *The Naughtiest Girl*, where egalitarian living is fundamental to the school. Characters who do not share are depicted in negative terms. The receiving of food parcels from home is an important demonstration of familial love and acceptance.

Food and foodways are used to depict character and the values and attitudes embedded in texts. Students who participate actively in school life and adhere to the social conventions are free to consume food enthusiastically and without fear of gluttony. The isolated individual is depicted in negative terms, often these manifest as physical traits. While characters such as Kathleen in *The Naughtiest Girl Again* are given the chance for redemption in the text, others, such as Alma in *Fifth Formers of St. Clare's* whose hunger is displayed as her master, are left with an ambiguous chance of redemption.

Social class becomes a facet of acceptance with the established middle class upholding the conventions at the school. This is displayed through their interactions with food. Angela Favourleigh's mother, despite her social position, eschews the middle-class norms and is scorned. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as "skills, knowledge, and behaviours that one can tap into to demonstrate cultural competence,"[387] was applied to the Jones family in *Malory Towers,* whose wealth does not bring them advantage. Although Jo Jones can provide plenty of tuck to share, she lacks embodied cultural capital and is unable to successfully navigate the sphere of the boarding-school.

These texts were written during a period of food rationing and austerity in Britain which lasted from 1940-1954. At the outset of war, Britain was heavily reliant on imports to support its diet. The war saw a move towards greater nationalisation of food production.[388] Food is used to reflect the patriotic rhetoric that became attached to food during the war.[389] The girls at Malory Towers may grumble about the food amongst themselves but put on a united front of positivity.

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[387] Cole, "Cultural Capital."
[388] See Edgerton, "War," 36.
[389] Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*, 83.

The food described in the series is often overtly British and becomes a motif for British values. Stew is portrayed as a representation of British values which although unfamiliar to a foreigner consumer, such as Zerelda and Mam'zelle, starts to appeal over time. As they consume the food they consume culture and values,[390] and thus are assimilated more fully into both school and country.

The years of rationing meant that many foods were in short supply. The presence of sweet items throughout Blyton's work may serve as a form of fantasy and wish fulfilment that was especially powerful for the contemporaneous reader. The Lend-Lease agreement between the US and Britain restored a degree of choice and agency to the British diet through the points ration system. The items offered on the points system often feature at the midnight feasts. This reiterates the connection between agency and the midnight feast established in Chapter Four, as the confluence of agency in both the real and fictional world was established.

The war years saw changes in British agricultural and food policy aimed at decreasing dependency on food imports.[391] The "Dig for Victory" campaign is conceivably represented in *The Naughtiest Girl*: the students at Whyteleafe School tend the garden there, growing vegetables for the school's consumption. This reflects the national rhetoric of producing your own food. The ethos of Whyteleafe School, based on equality between the students, aligns with the values of Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food, whose philosophy for food-rationing was based on an equal share for all.[392]

A gastrocritical reading of the three series signals a new way to appreciate them. By demonstrating the manifold functions of food and foodways, awareness is brought to the texts' settings and genre, and nuance and depth are added to the characterisations. Food and foodways also illuminate the social context in which the titles were written. Gastrocriticism can thus be recognised as a productive and adaptable paradigm that, by fully and seriously considering the presence of food, offers an innovative way to read literature.

7.2 Further Recommendations

As little academic work has been undertaken on the use of food in Blyton's work, there was little indication of areas of interest to build upon. This proved challenging at times but the research revealed several areas that might prove expedient for further study. Given the time and scope that the Master's thesis allowed coupled with the broad nature of this study, encompassing three series, there is room for more detailed analysis in any of the main topics covered. This could comprise of a gastrocritical reading which focused on an individual school series, such as *The Naughtiest Girl in the School*, in order to be able to give greater depth. As the three series are predominantly populated by women, there is room for a gastrocritical reading combined with a feminist perspective to establish

[390] Alston, *The Family*, 119.
[391] Spencer, *British Food,* 313.
[392] Collingham, *The Taste of War,* 361.

how women are represented through food and foodways in texts. The thesis also observed a number of links between the Blyton series and several other titles in the genre, notably *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) and the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007); the links established would indicate that there is room here for further study to investigate how each uses food in terms of genre tropes such as feasting, or embedded values, and characterisation. I would also suggest that from a literary perspective there is opportunity to explore the connection between these canonical texts beyond the gastrocritical lens. Finally, as the literary output of Blyton is vast and filled with food, there is huge scope for a gastrocritical reading of much of her work.