

Constructions of the Fat Child in British Juvenile Fiction (1960-2010)

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the University's requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

June 2013

University of Worcester

ABSTRACT

This literary study is an analysis of fat child characters in British juvenile fiction, 1960 to 2010. The argument is that juvenile fiction, with growing frequency, has advanced lay psychological explanations for departures from a culturally sanctioned slender ideal. Detailing the socio-historical basis for changing literary constructions of the fat child comprises an original contribution to knowledge.

Protagonists and peripheral characters from eighty-five examples of juvenile fiction are critiqued. At the start of the period, the majority of texts associate fatness with moral failings. By the middle of the period, fatness is predominantly associated with poor emotional health. This association persists until the period's close, becoming entwined in the final decade with the increasing use of references to body fat as a means of demarcating the child's position within commodity and celebrity cultures. No text foregrounds associations between fatness and physical health problems. Transitions from one dominant construction of fatness to another are accompanied by changes in how fat characters are gendered, classed and racialised. Issues of *Jackie* magazine (1964-1994) and contemporaneous psychological abstracts are examined as contextual material.

The study concludes that discontinuities in constructions of the fat child express historically specific fears of social, economic, or political transformation in Britain. How child readers might comply with or rework literary constructions of the fat child is suggested as a topic for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professor Jean Webb, Dr Barbara Mitra and Dr Penney Upton gave excellent support as my supervisory team throughout the writing of this thesis. I am obliged to the Graduate Research School at the University of Worcester, whose administrative efforts kept my studentship running smoothly. At home, all my family provided encouragement. However I am particularly grateful to Matt, who listened to my free associations, ruminations and lamentations with loving patience. Thanks also go to my mother, for introducing me to children's books in the first place.

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THE FAT CHILD: NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Over the chapters that follow, I will analyse how differing constructions of the body are constituted, in part, through differences in terminology. This appraisal is not limited to primary texts. It includes scrutinising my own word choices: the terms I use when not engaged in textual quotation or paraphrase. I wish to clarify from the outset what assumptions govern my wording. Specifically, I wish to qualify my use of the phrase ‘the fat child’ in the title of this thesis.ⁱ

I define ‘fat,’ the adjective, as ‘possessing a relativeⁱⁱ abundance of flesh.’ The word fat may disquiet readers because it is ordinarily wielded as an insult (Kulick and Meneley 2005, 2). However I agree with Marilyn Wann’s (1998) argument that the ostensibly more polite term “overweight” naturalises socially-contingent judgements of the correctly sized body (18). Furthermore I accept her ethical point that the use of informal euphemisms, such as “big boned,” proceeds from the assumption that fatness is shameful (18). I therefore emulate Wann in resistantly using “fat” without negative intent (18).

Although the word ‘child’ does not exert the same shock value as ‘fat’, its openness to multiple meanings merits acknowledgement here. I follow the sociologist Leena Alanen (2001) in questioning definitions based on a specific age range or discrete biological stage of the life course (20). Drawing age boundaries may have material effects, as when an age of majority is declared in law, but the resultant definition of what it means to be a child remains historically specific and geographically bound. According to Alanen, people are born into a “generational structure” whereby material dependence is the basis for defining them as a “child,” and the dependee as “adult” (132-5). She refers to this process as a “generationing practice” (139). The attribution of age is a

mechanism for recurrently generationing people via relationships to institutions, such as schools and workplaces (143). People both actively participate, and are constrained to participate, in everyday generationing regimes such as play (138). However, there is no universal set of practices through which people are generationed on a daily basis. As a starting point, I therefore define ‘child’ as ‘the junior position within a generational structure.’ The relativity of this definition allows me to address, for instance, how teenagers are generationed as children in some texts, and not others.

Lastly, I am aware that fixing ‘the fat child,’ rather than ‘fat children,’ as an object for enquiry risks implying that every fat child conforms to a particular template. They do not. My word choice is based on trends in the quantitative representation of particular body types. Slim peers outnumber fat children in every example of fiction and media I cite. Indeed, the modal number of fat children per text is 1. They vary in qualitative ways across the primary material: but each fat child is usually *the sole* fat child within a given text. Referring to ‘fat children’ in the thesis title would obscure this fact. The project will nevertheless demonstrate that there is no universal construction of the fat child. Hence my title specifies that I will attend to ‘constructions,’ in the plural.

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

This study interrogates variations in how British juvenile fiction has constructed the fat child over a fifty year period.

The original rationale for the study was to improve understanding of how literary constructions of the fat child relate to media and psychological research texts. A recent tendency in fiction to focus on the fat child's emotional well-being and exclusion from commodity cultures suggested that academic psychology and juvenile media might be fruitful material for comparison. The theoretical basis for assuming that literary, psychological and media texts could illuminate each other was rooted in New Historicism. Specifically, the New Historicists Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt (2000) assert that literary and non-literary texts share a discursive context; they claim that material from non-literary disciplines can play a vital role in our interpretation of fiction (19). Accordingly I sought to contextualise literary constructions of the fat child with reference to comparable constructions of fatness in the following material: a corpus of abstracts indexed by the academic psychology database, PsycINFO; and issues of the British girls' periodical, *Jackie* magazine (1964-1993).

There were two reasons for setting 1960 as the starting point for this project. First, the sixties marked a growth in the juvenile magazines market—which *Jackie* led in sales figuresⁱⁱⁱ—with attendant implications for the construction of children's fatness as a problem to be fixed through consumer activity. Second, the sixties provided a baseline for the decade-on-decade increase of references to "childhood obesity" made by British research abstracts in the PsycINFO database. Just one abstract is indexed for the entirety of the sixties. (For comparison, 220 abstracts were indexed during the two-thousands).

By researching a fifty year period I hoped to capture how the expansion in juvenile media, and in psychological research focused on obesity, related to constructions of fatness in juvenile fiction. Incorporating material from three different disciplines comprised a methodologically experimental approach with the attendant risk that little commonality might be found between the three areas.

In practice, there were few synchronous similarities between British juvenile fiction, *Jackie* magazine and contemporaneous psychological abstracts. Although both the fiction and *Jackie* made extensive use of quasi-psychological concepts in their construction of the fat child, they did so on different timelines from each other; moreover, their usage bore little resemblance to discussions of obesity in academic psychological research. My response to this lack of common ground was to conduct a series of sustained socio-historical analyses of eighty-five fictional texts, and to draw on *Jackie* and the psychological abstracts only where it was salient to do so.

The following chapters will show that British juvenile fiction has consistently constructed children's fatness not simply as a morphological trait, but as an indication of character. The thesis has a tripartite structure to address how three main stereotypes shift in dominance over the period. In the nineteen-sixties, fatness is regularly associated with gluttony, disobedience, and excess. I refer to this as a 'moral' construction of the fat child and suggest its dominance was a conservative response to anti-authoritarian social change. In the nineteen-eighties, fatness is regularly associated with self-injurious thoughts, emotions and behaviours. I refer to this as a 'psychological' construction of the fat child and connect its rise to a political emphasis on individualism attended by attacks on the welfare state. In the two-thousands, fatness continues to be associated with self-injurious thoughts, but the child is consoled through particular consumption practices

such as the purchase of fashionable clothing. I refer to this as a ‘consumerist’ construction of the fat child and connect its emergence to Britain’s economic reliance on service industries, including retail. Detailing the socio-historical basis for these changing constructions comprises an original contribution to knowledge.

2. Relationship to Existing Work

In this précis I consider what critical approaches have previously been adopted for analysing fat in the field of literary studies; and I outline how each chapter of the current project responds to gaps in scholarship. There are some limits placed on the review. Given constraints on space I focus on those academic publications with most relevance to constructions of the fat child in British juvenile fiction. Material which addresses socio-cultural representation is prioritised here over material from the medical sciences. I treat critical studies of body image, eating, food, and thinness as relevant to my topic, but only where they explicitly address fatness as an associated concern.

British constructions of the fat child are underexplored by literary scholars. The activist Charlotte Cooper (2009) argues that academic interest in fat, particularly analysis of fat identities, fat people’s liberation, and fat people’s health, is subject to an American cultural bias (“Maybe” 333). She observes: “fat has come to be regarded as an issue sited specifically within the United States” (327). Her observation is equally applicable to literary critics’ examination of fat. In the domain of children’s literature scholarship alone, there are studies of the fat child in U.S. twentieth century series fiction (Wedwick 1998), U.S. adolescent fiction (Wedwick 2005), U.S. young adult fiction from the nineteen-seventies to the nineteen-nineties (Younger 2003), U.S. “coming of age” stories (Stinson 2009), and U.S. “issue” novels (Glessner, Hoover and Hazlett 2006). This trend is paralleled in studies of juvenile media; there are critiques of fat child characters in U.S.

ensemble films (Mosher 2005), animation from the U.S. studio Pixar (Flynn 2010), and U.S. television programmes (Pujazon-Zazik 2008). There is a need for comparable analyses with relevance to British culture: a need that my research answers.

My search for studies centred specifically on fatness yields only two publications that refer to British juvenile texts. Both were published in 2009. The first is David W. and Fiona Haslam's interdisciplinary monograph on representations of obesity in medicine, art and literature; the second is Jean Webb's essay on the fatness of boy heroes in English children's literature.

Haslam and Haslam compile a record of fat characters in fiction, including Billy Bunter (*The Magnet* 1908-1940), Piggy from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Augustus Gloop from Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) and Dudley Dursley from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007). The researchers' aim is to increase understanding of the public perception of obesity (8-11). They pursue their aim by applying current medical perspectives to descriptions of fictional people, and postulating what health problems Billy Bunter, Piggy, et al would experience if they had an embodied existence.

The following limitations apply to Haslam and Haslam's methods. They cannot capture how fiction constructs fatness in ways that diverge from biomedical understandings. Furthermore, their approach is ahistorical. Haslam and Haslam's decision to examine all texts through the lens of *contemporary* medicine erases the ways in which fat characters are historically situated. These limitations allow Haslam and Haslam to achieve their stated aims, but also produce an over-emphasis on the similarities between fat characters. I have drawn on the principles of New Historicism to avoid these limitations in my own methodological approach (as detailed in the section of

this Introduction entitled ‘Critical Framework’). Accordingly the current study is able to account for how literary stereotypes of fat children have changed over time. My attendance to historical context also brings a secondary benefit: namely, a more nuanced examination of how writers use the image of the fat child to express anxieties about social and cultural change. The health geographers Rachel Colls and Kathrin Hörschelmann (2009) have made related observations outside the realm of literary studies. They point out that the spatial, medical, and cultural regulation of people’s bodies positions children, in particular, as “markers of the social body now and in the future” (4).

With a smaller, yet more critically rigorous focus than Haslam and Haslam, Jean Webb’s essay comprises an examination of characters from the nineteenth century onwards, including Tom from Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies* (1863), Billy Bunter, Piggy, Augustus and Dudley. Webb argues that negative size stereotypes are driven by cultural associations between fat, eating, and breaches of Christian morality. She notes that the attribution of moral weaknesses to fat characters has recently given way to an international “new wave” in fiction, whereby weight loss functions as a bildungsroman (“Voracious” 120). Three books are offered as examples of this new trend: Chris Crutcher’s *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* (1993); Louis Sachar’s *Holes* (1998); and Catherine Forde’s *Fat Boy Swim* (2003). The two former novels were issued by US publishers; while *Fat Boy Swim* was written in Scotland, and published in England.

What Webb refers to as the “new wave” corresponds to my own categorisation of texts which construct fatness in psychological, rather than moral, terms. However, my analysis differs from hers in the range of material surveyed. By consulting a more

extensive range of texts and characters, I am able to build on Webb's essay in two ways. First, I show that the trend for treating weight loss as a bildungsroman begins twenty years earlier than Webb suggests (and that it is anticipated in juvenile media such as *Jackie*). Second, I look beyond white boy heroes to provide a more detailed analysis of how fatness is gendered, classed and racialised. The first chapter of this thesis, 'Fat Conscience,' will analyse how fiction constructs fatness as a moral transgression in affluent, white boys. The second chapter, 'Ripening Fat,' will elaborate how fatness is implicated in juvenile fiction's sexist, racist and classist delineations of specifically *sexual* virtue: fatness is valued and even aestheticised in white, affluent virgin girls, but reviled in parous, working class women of colour. My third chapter, 'Common Yobby Fat,' explicates how the moral construction of fatness is limited to relatively affluent child characters, and that fat, socially immobile characters are more likely to be psychopathologised. However the terms in which children's fatness is described share few similarities with contemporaneous psychology research, and instead resemble the lay advice regarding psychological well-being offered through *Jackie*'s problem pages.

Besides the work of Webb, Haslam and Haslam, a handful of studies comment on fat characters from British juvenile fiction while pursuing a related research topic. Carolyn Daniel (2006) considers both Augustus and Dudley in her book-length study of how children's fiction regulates eating practices. Daniel argues that Augustus and Dudley are depicted as overfed and infantilised by their mothers. In her view Dahl and Rowling position fat characters as "comic figures deserving of ridicule and physical punishment," who are hampered in their "quest for proper subjectivity" by motherly smothering (97-1).

Daniel deploys psychological concepts—specifically, psychoanalytic concepts—which are relevant to my argument that fatness is constructed as a marker of poor emotional health. But her conclusions do not have much applicability to characters other than Augustus and Dudley. Her comments on fatness are restricted to just two British novels from my research period; she contends this is because, relative to anorexic protagonists, fat children “are rarely featured in contemporary children’s literature” (208). Perhaps because Daniel’s research focus is on eating practices—not fatness—her study overlooks non-gluttonous fat characters such as Neville Longbottom, even though he is featured in the same *Harry Potter* series as Dudley Dursley. Augustus and Dudley are thus misleadingly positioned as the most representative fat characters of British juvenile fiction, rather than, more accurately, the best known. My thesis attends to fat characters who defy, as well as comply with, expectations of gluttony. In the fourth chapter, ‘Intransigent Fat,’ I consider how anxieties over juvenile violence are expressed through constructions of the non-gluttonous fat child. Fatness is constructed as an intransigent, pre-determined characteristic to express fears that children’s psychological characteristics are equally fixed.

Daniel is not alone in invoking Augustus and Dudley as archetypal fat characters. Their names recur across the critical literature in a web of fleeting comments. Kerry Mallan’s (2009) exploration of gender dilemmas in children’s fiction complies with this trend. She briefly refers to Augustus to argue that the “spotlight on women’s bodies has widened to capture aberrant children whose fat bodies disrupt our adult fantasies about youth” (70). Barbara Smith Chalou’s (2007) study of Heinrich Hoffman alludes to Augustus with similar brevity (39); she asks how the punishment he receives for gluttony is informed by the legacy of *Der Struwwelpeter* (1845). Elsewhere, Augustus’ fatness

surfaces in discussions of what constitutes suitable reading material for children: both Joanne Canton (1998, 80) and Jonathon Culley (1991, 60) consider the ethical implications of a children's text depicting violent punishment for greed.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Teare's (2004) essay on the representation of technology in the *Harry Potter* series includes short comments on Dudley. She suggests his portrayal reflects "current concern about obesity and inactivity," and particularly those concerns focused on children's use of technology as enabled by materialistic parents (338). The nutritionist Sharron Dalton (2004), in her guidebook for parents, teachers and social workers of "overweight children," also momentarily remarks on Dudley; she proposes that the question of why readers laugh at Dudley can open a dialogue with young people about "fat discrimination" (194).

As self-contained insights these comments have value. Yet taken together they demonstrate some curious omissions in the critical perception of fat characters. A correlate of Augustus and Dudley looming large is that the place of fat *girls* in British juvenile fiction is overlooked—as is the place of fat children who, unlike Augustus and Dudley, are neither wealthy nor white. My thesis therefore addresses a gap in scholarship by illuminating how British juvenile texts racialise, gender and class fat children.

Fat female characters' invisibility—in the secondary, rather than primary literature—is especially striking given numerous feminist scholars' efforts to critique slender ideals as a manifestation of gendered oppression. See, for instance, Kim Chernin's (1994) claim that anorexics' hatred of fat is a hatred of the female body (56-65). Similarly, Susan Bordo (1993) suggests that anorexia develops because individuals with disordered eating perceive fat as essentially "womanish" (156). Naomi Wolf (1990) states that fat is perceived throughout society as "expendable female filth" (191); she

argues that fat is classified as ugly and diseased because it is “deeply, essentially female” (232). For Sandra Lee Bartky (1990), the pursuit of slenderness is part of a larger political project in which the “female body is revealed as a task, an object in need of transformation” (40). And according to Susie Orbach (1978), messages from the fashion and diet industries that a “woman’s body is not satisfactory as it is. It must be thin” (“Fat” 17) position weight gain as a gendered act of rebellion. All these critiques share a premise: that hatred of fat is pervasive because fat is marked, biologically and socioculturally, as female.

To see so little academic acknowledgement of fat girls in juvenile fiction is therefore noteworthy. The omission may itself be a symptom of unease with girls who defy slender norms. In attempting to fill this gap in scholarship, I will be drawing on feminist theorisations of the body; specifically, I will draw on the work of Karen Barad (2007), who I will discuss in the ‘Critical Framework’ section of this introduction. Nevertheless my analysis does not reflexively incorporate the premise that fat is hated because it is female. Rather, I posit that constructions of fatness are always gendered and generationed, but in diverse ways.

The sociologist Lee Monaghan (2008), and the cultural historian Sander Gilman (2004), have sought to supplement and challenge the idea that negative constructions of fatness are limited to the female body. They do so by analysing, respectively, men’s feelings about body size and the cultural representation of male fatness. As yet there has not been a corresponding assessment of the ways feminist critics have constructed fatness as, *a priori*, an adult characteristic. The hated fat female body that Chernin, Bordo, Wolf, Bartky and Orbach discuss is always an *adult* female body, complicating how we might apply their theories to children’s fatness. Note, for instance, Bordo’s

assertion that the adolescent girl's wish to be thin expresses a fear of being "mature, sexually developed, and potentially reproductive" (155), while Chernin observes that what she sees as fat in herself is appropriate to an adult woman and merely "too large for an adolescent boy" (18). Generationing and gendering fat in this way allows Chernin to account for anxiety among "pseudo-obes[e]" adult women (35), but is less helpful for analysing the pre-pubescent fat girl and boy characters we will see in my fiction sample.

Within the context of extant children's literature criticism, Anna Krugovoy Silver (2002) has replicated feminist distinctions between thinness and fatness as pre- and post-pubescent stages of female physical development. She draws on Victorian juvenile texts to argue that nineteenth century fears of fat were entwined with fears of adult women's sexual maturity. Her reading is quite consistent with the material she selects and her research focus on anorexia; yet it raises numerous questions as to how we should interpret ambivalent constructions of the fat child, rather than positive constructions of the thin girl. She summarises: "the valuation of sexual innocence over experience inherently privileges the girl over the adult woman and, in turn, values the *body* of the girl over the *body* of the woman" (52). What might this mean for our readings of the fat child? If fat phobia comprises a devaluing of the sexually mature woman, how is the fat girl positioned? Is she also devalued, for a perceived sexual precocity? Or, by virtue of her age, is she accommodated more readily than the fat woman? What of the fat boy? Is he feminised by his fatness?

Additionally, we might ask how social tolerance of 'puppy fat' relates to the privileging of "the *body* of the girl over the *body* of the woman." This is a question I will consider in the fifth chapter, where I examine how British juvenile fiction has constructed the bulimic fat child. In a reversal of Bordo and Chernin's equation of

thinness with pre-pubescence and fat with adulthood, the novels I examine naturalise a transition from pre-pubescent ‘puppy fat’ to adult slenderness. Eating disorders are positioned as a media-driven incursion into childhood innocence. The pursuit of slenderness is constructed as a threat because it exemplifies an attempt to grow up prematurely.

Alternatives to the feminist paradigm for analysing fatness can be found within food activism, and the emergent field of Fat Studies. Both these domains theorise fatness in ways that could inform literary analysis of the fat child, but have not yet been utilised in the study of British juvenile fiction.

For the purposes of this précis, ‘food activism’ encompasses academic and popular calls for change in food production, such as Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation* (2002), Morgan Spurlock’s *Don’t Eat this Book* (2005), and Marion Nestle’s *Food Politics* (2007). Each of these texts presents childhood “obesity” as a lower class health problem caused by the unethical practices of diet and food industries (Schlosser 240; Spurlock 11; Nestle 174). Within this category I would also group Elspeth Probyn’s (2010) arguments that children should be equipped to grow their own food. Probyn distinguishes her work from the pop sociology of Schlosser and Spurlock, whom she criticises for telling “moral tales;” she claims Schlosser’s discussion of worker exploitation makes food choices a source of guilt for consumers (89). Nevertheless she implicitly shares Schlosser’s assumption that class is implicated in “obesity” and seeks to change children’s consumption patterns for health reasons (91-4).

Amy Erdman Farrell expresses concerns (2011)—concerns I echo—that food activism regularly denigrates fat people as a means of criticising industrial practices (17). She claims the effect is to reinforce feelings of shame in fat people rather than produce

industrial change (17). Instead of replicating Schlosser and Nestle in denigrating the fat body, I wish to draw attention to a related, but distinct, denigration in my sample of juvenile fiction. ‘Fat Capitalists,’ the sixth thesis chapter, examines the construction of rich, fat, male children in nineties fantasy novels. Anxieties about Britain’s movement from heavy industry to a service economy are played out upon the fat child body. While realist fiction from this period continues to associate fatness with victimhood and low social status, fantasy constructs a different stereotype. Rich fat boys are characterised as perpetually dissatisfied customers, voracious consumers of modern technology, and economically exploitative bullies of thinner, poorer, peers. I focus on novels by Eva Ibbotson (1994), Anthony Horowitz (1996) and J. K. Rowling (1997) to show how juvenile fiction, like the food activist texts above, has constructed the fat child as an economic category. However there is an important difference between food activist rhetoric and fantasy novels in terms of how fat children are socially stratified. The former casts fat children as lower class exploited dupes; the latter conflate fatness, gluttony, affluence and social greed.

Unlike food activism, the cross-disciplinary field of Fat Studies eschews the search for causes of, and solutions to, fatness. To cite Farrell, Fat Studies is directed towards “the acceptance of fat bodies and the elimination of the discrimination and shame that plague fat people’s lives” (21). Farrell points out that prior to the identification of Fat Studies as a distinctive field, individual researchers such as Hillel Schwartz (1986) were producing work which can be retrospectively seen to share the field’s aims (20). Here I will briefly elucidate how different critics have eschewed discussions of causation and cure in ways that comply with Fat Studies’ goals.

Within the nutritional sciences, clinicians such as Linda Bacon (2008) and Lucy Aphramor (2009) have sought to separate the pursuit of health from the pursuit of slenderness by promoting “Health at Every Size.” Bacon (2) and Aphramor (152) endorse intuitive eating and optimum physical activity for all body types, which they see as an ethical alternative to pressuring fat people into controlled eating regimes.

Meanwhile, historical studies such as Schwartz’s analyse the roots of fat denigration. Peter N. Stearns’ *Fat History* (2002) and Sander Gilman’s *Fat: A Cultural History* (2008) are also focused on the development of fat stigmatisation, but unlike Schwartz, both Stearns and Gilman support the biomedical construction of obesity as a health risk.

Within the domain of performance and activism, Charlotte Cooper (2010) has a radically different objective: she aims at developing a distinctively “fat culture” (“Fat Studies” 1021). Cooper rejects medical measures such as the Body Mass Index and defines “fat” as a self-chosen political identity (1021). The literary scholar Richard Klein (1996) adopts an equally contrarian position. His chosen title for the book *Eat Fat* implores readers to revel in their love of both fatty foods and bodily fat; he draws on postmodern critical theory to argue that the pursuit of slenderness as a proxy for health has no intrinsic merit (24).

Sociological approaches to Fat Studies have focused on the social positioning of the fat body. Jan Wright (2009) is interested in which political agendas are served by eradicating obesity. Wright draws on Michel Foucault’s notion of biopedagogies to claim that scientific “truths” about obesity are recontextualised in different social and cultural sites to persuade people how they should understand their bodies (5). Samantha Murray (2008) also draws on Foucault to argue that the fear of fat bodies is part of a larger

project of normalisation under the rubric of health. She seeks to explicate how liberal humanist logic underpins the notion of individual responsibility as it functions through medicine (7). While both of these approaches are persuasive they are not readily applicable to a corpus of fiction in which medical concerns scarcely feature, and in which psychological themes have only an indirect relationship to clinical practice or research literature.

The communications scholar Kathleen LeBesco (2004) conceptualises fat in ways which can be transferred more effectively to this study. In *Revolting Bodies*, LeBesco asks whether fatness might be viewed as an identity formed through stylised repetitive acts (10). She draws on Judith Butler's theorisation of gender to ask whether we can "queer" fat identities, and asserts there is no such thing as the "simply fat" (10). Her contention is that people's beliefs about whether fatness can be controlled are linked to their social ideologies. Following from this, she sees anti-fat bias as particularly characteristic of individualist cultures that emphasise autonomous goal achievement (55). Such cultures mark fat people as inadequate consumers, and as failed citizens in a consumer market economy (57).

Consistent with her argument, my fiction corpus contains numerous examples of fat characters' exclusion from the market—most of which comprise negative portrayals of clothes shopping. However over the last decade of my research period, fantasies of market *inclusion* come to the fore. The seventh chapter of this thesis, 'Celebrity Fat,' analyses how British juvenile fiction asserts that fat characters' low self-esteem and poor motivation can be corrected through a pleasurable engagement with consumer and celebrity culture. (Once again, the media is more implicated than academic psychology in juvenile fiction's construction of fatness as a self-esteem problem). I relate the

valorisation of consumerism to Britain's contemporaneous economic dependence on high private consumption.

While I do not adopt LeBesco's conceptualisation of fatness as a performed identity, my thesis shares her rejection of the "simply fat" subject. I proceed from the assumption that fatness both informs and is constructed through gendering, racialising, classing and generationing practices, and thus does not have a single, essential meaning. This thesis focuses on the meanings of, specifically, children's fatness in a fifty year period of British juvenile fiction. The concluding chapter re-states how the tendency to construct the fat child in quasi-psychological terms strengthened over the period, and speculates how constructions of the fat child might change in the future. As an area for further research, my concluding chapter suggests that how children themselves interpret and rework fat characters in fiction would be a fruitful area of enquiry. The analysis of reader responses has potential to further problematise the "simply fat" subject.

Overall, the existing scholarship made me cautious of two research pitfalls. I wished to avoid approaching literary constructions of the fat child with implicitly adult-centric theories; and I was wary of selecting primary texts which simply reflected my pre-existing assumptions as to how the fat child would be portrayed. Accordingly, I attempted an inductive study design. Instead of testing an initial hypothesis, the project would be data-driven. Having contextualised the structure of this thesis with reference to the extant research literature, I will explain my selection and refinement of primary material.

3. Building a Corpus

3.1 Selection Criteria

I sought to obtain the richest data by criterion sampling. The social researcher Michael Quinn Patton (2002) defines criterion sampling as the selection of “all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (238). For this project, the initial criterion was the linguistic or pictorial construction of a fat body by the text.

A criterion sample is not intended to be representative of the literature in its entirety. The aim of criterion sampling is to identify the most relevant examples for in depth-study. Criterion sampling is thus distinct from random sampling, which is better suited to making empirical generalisations from a small selection of examples. A random sample could tell us what body types—of any size—are typically portrayed in fiction, media, and academic psychology. A criterion sample can tell us how specifically *fat* bodies are portrayed in fiction, media, and academic psychology.

Three searches were conducted: for juvenile reading material, media texts, and academic psychology abstracts. I will detail these in turn. All searches were undertaken in September 2009 to January 2010 except where otherwise specified.

3.2 Selecting Juvenile Fiction

I used the following web-based resources to search for fiction: the British Library Catalogue; Amazon, the internet marketplace for books; and *Books for Keeps* (1980-Present), a periodical for teachers and children’s librarians which can be accessed online. The University of Worcester collections were also searched, but in person.

My definition of ‘juvenile fiction’ was an instrumental one. I did not categorise texts as juvenile by attending to their content or literary characteristics. I looked to how the text was marketed (in the case of Amazon), reviewed (in the case of *Books for*

Keeps), and archived (in the case of the British Library and the University of Worcester) under the rubric of books for children.^{iv}

Each of these resources offered specific advantages. As a holding facility the British Library has a comprehensive catalogue of juvenile fiction which could be searched by title, subject or keyword. Amazon offers digitised searches of entire texts which allowed me to identify suitable books by their content. *Books for Keeps* has a thirty year archive of children's book reviews, which again helped to identify texts by their content, but was particularly helpful for discovering relevant books that were no longer in print and thus not digitised by Amazon. Accessibility was the main advantage of the University of Worcester's children's literature collections; I was able to search texts manually from my own place of work. This also helped me to locate undigitised publications.

Initially, I did not impose any date boundaries. Nor did I impose limitations based on genre. Fantasy, as well as realist texts, were of interest. Mimetic texts were not of any additional value, because I adopted a constructionist, rather than essentialist perspective. I was also open to the possibility that fantasy's 'unreal' characteristics might allow countercultural (or conversely, regressive) constructions of the fat body to be voiced with relatively little controversy. Where more than one edition of a book was available, I regarded them as distinct texts, lest there were editorial revisions to aid reader comprehension or to reflect changing values over time. However, I prioritised the selection of first editions for my corpus, as I was most interested in their relationship to contemporaneous material at the point of being considered 'new.'

I took the search term 'fat' as a starting point, and extended my list of search terms through a snowballing technique. When synonyms for bodily fat appeared in the

texts, these were noted and included in subsequent searches. I adopted this strategy for the following reasons. I did not aim at creating an exhaustive list of search terms, which was neither practical nor necessary to identify texts worthy of study. Rather, compiling synonyms was a useful step in questioning my frames of reference. A pre-determined list may have foreclosed important differences in meaning—for instance, gendered, regional, ethnic or chronological variations.

Where an identified text was one instalment in a series, I checked other instalments for linguistic or pictorial constructions of the fat child. As an example, *The Worst Witch* (1974) has five sequels; but only one of them, *The Worst Witch Strikes Again* (1980), met the criteria for inclusion. My argument does include some references to sequels where fat characters have been written out, or have lost weight—such as Jacqueline Wilson’s *Girls* series (1998-2002)—but these references are for context rather than the main focus of my analysis.

I stopped expanding the list of search terms when my digital and manual searches stopped yielding new texts. However, I repeated the search in January 2011 lest new relevant texts (and synonyms) were available. The final list comprised the following words: *ample, beefy, big, blubbery, bloater, bonnie, bufu, bulky, buxom, chubby, chunky, corpulent, curvy, dumpy, plump, fat/fatty, flabby, fleshy, fluffy, fusby, fussock, heavy, hefty, husky, lardy, large, lumpy, mampi, obese, overweight, paunchy, piggy, plump, podgy, porky, portly, puffy, pudgy, roly-poly, rotund, rubenesque, squat, stocky, stout, sturdy, thick/thicke, tubby, voluptuous, zaftig.*

Words were not included as search terms uncritically. In some instances, synonyms for fat take on additional significance when applied to children rather than adults. What Monaghan (2008) refers to as the functional ambiguity of words such as

‘big’ and ‘large’ is amplified in constructions of children’s bodies; ‘big girl’ and ‘big boy’ may categorise age or maturity, as well as strength, height, build and weight. This very ambiguity may be the desired effect in contexts where ‘fat’ is potentially pejorative or judgemental. Such words were used in the search with an awareness of conflated meanings.

Searching for pictorial constructions of fat bodies was far more challenging than searching for linguistic constructions. The chief difficulties were operationalising what constitutes a visual image of a fat body, and then automating image searches. I wanted to identify photographs and illustrations of bodies with rounded faces, torsos, or limbs, but not to impose pre-determined measurements such as waist-to-hip ratios. Setting such a ratio could inadvertently exclude less representational, and more caricatured, illustrations, where fatness is not constructed in compliance with a biomedical distinction, but rather through the contrast of differently sized bodies within a single text. To a greater extent than the linguistic search, selecting pictorial constructions of the fat body therefore exposed my reliance on subjective judgement. That judgement is inevitably inflected by my own experience as a normatively slender woman, by my sociocultural position as a British woman of Irish and Seychelloise heritage, and by my historical location.

In practice, the search for pictorial constructions of fat bodies did not capture any additional publications. Visual images of fat bodies repeatedly appeared in conjunction with linguistic references to fat. This may reflect illustrators’ reluctance to imagine bodies as fat by default: a description of a body without size qualifiers is assumed to be a slender body, and thus drawn as such. Alternatively, the technical difficulties of searching for visual images may have limited results. None of my resources offered

digital image searches.^v A manual search for relevant visual images in codex books is less targeted and more time consuming than a computerised search for linguistic terms. Under these constraints we might expect the linguistic search to be more effective.

The overall search yielded 149 examples of picture-books, short stories and novels in the English language (see the list of Primary Texts at the end of this thesis for full references). Countries of origin included Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India; there was also one German text in English translation. I thinned the list down to books first published in Great Britain. There were methodological and pragmatic reasons for this decision. As I discussed in the 'Relationship to Existing Work' section, there are few studies focusing on British literary constructions of the fat body. A preliminary reading of the fiction identified by my search supported the idea that British and non-British constructions of the fat child have developed on different timescales. US novels, such as Paul Zindel's *The Pigman* (1968), construct fatness as a problem with emotional effects nearly twenty years before their British equivalents.

Eliminating non-British publications also aided the manageability of the project. Holding information in the British library catalogue indicated that British texts could be accessed more easily, especially in cases where a particular edition (or a range of editions for the purposes of comparison) was required. Furthermore, focusing on British texts would facilitate comparison with material from other media; it is simple enough to confirm the national circulation areas of magazines and comics, but overseas sales data is harder to obtain.

After careful consideration I made one exception to the exclusion of publications first published outside Great Britain. Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* first appeared in New York, in 1964, courtesy of Alfred A. Knopf. Given the novel's

British setting, Dahl's British upbringing and working life (Dahl *Boy* 1984), as well as the high visibility of Augustus Gloop in the existing secondary literature, I decided to include *Charlie* within my analysis. The text cited forthwith will however be the first British edition, which was published by George Allen and Unwin, at the later date of 1967.

Next, I excluded picture books from the list. There were several reasons for this decision. The majority of fat bodies featured in the picture books were anthropomorphised cats. None of the short stories or novels in the sample were concerned with anthropomorphised animals. The predominance of fat animals in picture books would constitute a research topic on its own terms, and would necessitate an analysis of constructions of the animal body, as well as constructions of the human body—including consideration of why fat animals are more regularly imbued with positive characteristics than fat humans. To address these issues as well as the thematic concerns arising from fiction for older readers would take more time than there was available.

My decision was bolstered by the recognition that the picture books showed very few changes in their constructions of fat animals over the years. Trends in how short stories and novels construct the fat child were more variable. The greater sensitivity to change shown by the novels suggested they would be more relevant to an analysis of how anxiety over 'childhood obesity' has altered literary constructions of fatness. Why texts for older readers might show greater sensitivity to these changing attitudes was itself an area of interest which I noted, and will touch upon in Chapter Five.

Having excluded picture books, I also removed childhood memoirs from the sample. Only two books belonged to this category: Nina Bawden's *Keeping Henry*

(1988), and Bill Naughton's *The Goalkeeper's Revenge* (1961). (Robert Westall's 1993 book *Falling into Glory* contains notable similarities between the biographical details of its author and the protagonist, but was retained because it is marketed and sold as a novel). The complexity of memoirs' truth claims about 'real' people, and how this influences the descriptions of 'real' bodies, again seemed a research topic unto itself.

From thence I focused more carefully on *who* was being described as fat in each text. Both incidental and main fat characters were of interest, because I wanted to investigate how seeming inconsequentiality might affect a fat character's compliance with stereotypes. Texts were not removed to achieve a particular gender, racial or class balance of characters, because I wished to explore why patterns in the gendering, racialising and classing of fat characters changed over time. I did skew the sample by removing all texts where the only allusions to fat centred on adult bodies, because I wished to keep attention on the distinctive ways children's fatness is constructed. If fat adult and fat child characters appeared in the same text, the differences between them remained an area of interest. Chapters Two and Three contain discussion of how particular fat adult characters inform constructions of the fat child.

I further limited the sample to texts where a character's fatness is either described by a third person narrator, or referred to by at least one character other than the fat child. The purpose was to separate constructions of fat children from constructions of thin children with distorted self-image. This distinction was simple to implement for the majority of texts, but there were several texts published from the late nineties onwards which positioned fatness less determinately. Jacqueline Wilson's *Girls Under Pressure* (1998) and Cathy Hopkins' *Mates, Dates and Chocolate Cheats* (2005) include refutations, as well as confirmations, from other characters that the protagonist is fat; I

decided to include both texts, because the refutations are framed as attempts at politeness and reassurance. Cathy Cassidy's *Ginger Snaps* (2008) posed a different problem: the protagonist, Ginger, perceives herself as fat, and her view is corroborated by the school bully. But in the novel's final chapters, Ginger realises that her self-image is mistaken, and that the bully is motivated by jealousy of her good looks. Although technically *Ginger Snaps* met my criteria for inclusion, the realisation Ginger is *not* fat is so central to the development of her character I excluded the text from my analysis. Finally, Sarra Manning's *Laura* (2007) explicitly draws attention to fatness as a socially constructed category. The eponymous protagonist, who is the winner of a modelling competition, is urged to slim by her new employers because she is deemed overweight by industry—though not medical—standards. I chose to include the text for analysis, because Laura is constructed as a fat character relative to others in her professional and social circle. She is not depicted as imagining herself to be fat; she is depicted as fat within one specific industrial and social context.

Finally, I set limitations on the dates of publication. I had conducted my literature searches in juvenile fiction, academic psychology and media simultaneously, in each case without date boundaries. Familiarising myself with the material produced by all three searches allowed me to set meaningful cut-off points. I selected 1960 to 2010 as the optimum date range for capturing the effects of growing psychological and media interest in the fat child. This limitation reduced the number of texts in the fiction corpus to eighty-three; however, two further eligible novels were written by Robert Muchamore in 2009 and 2010, which I incorporated when I repeated my search in 2011. The total number of texts then stood at eighty-five. Eighty-five texts is equivalent to 0.1% of the

juvenile fiction stocked by the British Library for the period 1960-2010; this indicates that the visibility of fat child characters is low in British Library stock.^{vi}

3.3 Selecting Juvenile Media

Jackie was selected as suitable contextual material after consulting the British Library's holdings of juvenile print media. My aim was to identify periodicals that spanned several decades and could therefore be used as an ongoing point of comparison with the fiction sample. It was also a necessary pre-requisite that the periodical contained rich and varied data pertaining to the fat child. Ideally, I wished to select only one periodical. Coding several decades' worth of material from just one periodical is highly time consuming; attempts to code additional periodicals could threaten the manageability of the project.

Selecting just one periodical would pose problems if I were seeking representative, rather than relevant data. As when selecting the fiction, I wished to locate material that referred specifically and in a variety of ways to the fat child. The goal was not to select periodicals that represented a balanced range of body types. The goal was not to select periodicals that were representative of *all* periodicals in their construction of children's bodies. Nor was the goal to select periodicals with an implied readership that reflected the demographic profile of the general population. The goal was to select material with rich, varied references to fat, and this goal could be met by selecting just one periodical.

The twenty longest-running juvenile publications held by the British Library all spanned at least twenty five years (see table 1). My search for academic psychology abstracts, which I was conducting simultaneously, yielded very few results until the second half of the twentieth century; those results increased steadily from the nineteen-

sixties onwards (see Section 3.4). To facilitate at least a decade of comparison between my print media and academic psychology samples, I discounted periodicals that had ceased circulating by 1970. I also discounted *Hwyl!* (1959-1989), a Welsh language comic in the list, as I am not a Welsh speaker. For each remaining publication I consulted the first volume of issues for every decade available, and noted the contexts in which fat was referred to, or in which fat people were visually presented. I used the list of linguistic search terms—and the same pictorial search criteria of rounded torsos, faces or limbs—that I had deployed in the search for juvenile fiction.

Jackie referred to fat in the widest range of contexts (see table 1). The other listed publications were solely dedicated to comic strips, and the contexts in which they referred to fat were correspondingly less varied. *The Beano* (1938-Present) is a case in point: this long-running periodical contains rich data pertaining to fat in its portrayal of the long-term character Fatty Fudge. But *The Beano*'s data is not varied. References to fat are confined to the comic strip form. By selecting *Jackie*, which included comic strips amongst its other content, my analysis could still encompass, but would not be limited to, how fatness is constructed in comic art. Although *Jackie* was not the longest-lasting periodical, with a twenty-nine year lifespan it covered a large enough period to enable the tracking of change over time. The publication's chief shortcoming was that it ceased to circulate before the current decade, making comparisons between recent juvenile fiction and media more difficult. Indeed, there is no comparable noughties magazine with the same breadth and reach—possibly because the overall fortunes of print media have declined in the twenty-first century. Accordingly my analysis of contemporary fiction pays more attention to interactive visual media such as reality television; but it remains

that, up to and including the nineteen-nineties, *Jackie* offers the best combination of longevity, rich data, and varied data on fat.

The breadth of content in *Jackie* arose from market competition in the early nineteen-sixties between comics and magazines. According to Mel Gibson (2003), *Jackie* sought to capitalise on the popularity of romance comic strips while cultivating a future readership for adult women's magazines ("The Emergence" 91). *Jackie* was launched in a deliberate attempt to extend the reach of both romance comics and women's magazines into a younger age range (90). The reach of advertisements and references to popular culture, which were previously associated with adult women's reading material rather than children's fare, was simultaneously extended downwards into juvenile media. How this influenced constructions of the fat child, if it did so at all, is a valuable line of enquiry. By setting 1960 as the lower limit for my research period, I hoped to capture the effects of this media movement towards constructing children as consumers.

By identifying a supposed girls' publication^{vii} as the richest and most varied source of references to fat, I seemingly lent support to the feminist argument I previously outlined: that, to re-quote Wolf (1990), fatness is "essentially female" and socioculturally constructed as a feminine concern. But *Jackie* refers to fatness as a female *and* as a male trait, despite the gendering of its readership; and fat children *are* present, as sources of pity, sadistic humour, or identification, in the listed comics for boys. If the contexts in which fatness appears are less varied throughout boys' print media, that trend is not straightforwardly attributable to the perceived femininity of fatness. Rather, it is informed by the cultural construction of male authority, in which women and girls are encouraged to seek advice for problems, but admissions of ignorance are considered inappropriate for men and boys. Sara Mills (1995) points out

that magazines for adult women adopt an advice-giving tone that is wholly absent from magazines for adult men (153). I suggest that a similar distinction is at play in the gendering of juvenile media. Thus, while we might detect negative size stereotypes in boys' publications—such as the characterisation of Fatty Fudge in *The Beano*—those stereotypes are not advanced as an opportunity to explicitly advise the reader. There are important distinctions between the advertorial, medical, and fashion references to fat in *Jackie*, but they all contribute to a “tone of advice” that Mills sees as characteristic of adult women's magazines (153).

Having selected *Jackie* as contextual material, I had to determine the best way of sifting its content. *Jackie* was circulated on a weekly basis throughout its twenty-nine year run. The full back catalogue comprises over 1500 issues. Initially I selected December, April and August as appropriately even-spaced points to collect data. I wished to capture any seasonal differences in how fatness was constructed—for instance, I was interested to see whether Christmas was implicated as a period of acceptable weight gain, and whether summer increased anxiety over the visibility of fatness as a purported bodily flaw. On further reflection, I thought January might offer distinctive data, despite its chronological proximity to December; my reasoning was that January was potentially a period of abstinence, particularly in relation to New Year's Resolutions. I therefore planned to select four issues from each year, taken from a week before Christmas, a week after New Year's Day, the first week in April and the first week in August. This would produce a sample of 118 issues: thirty for January, thirty for April, twenty-nine for August and twenty-nine for December. While I did not intend to limit qualitative comparisons between *Jackie* and the fiction sample to just these issues, a

core of 118 data points could be used to establish quantitative trends in *Jackie*'s construction of the fat child during my chosen months.

In practice, 114 issues were analysed. Three December issues and one August issue could not be obtained from the British Library holdings or through private sales. This introduced the need for caution when comparing quantitative trends between months.

3.4 Selecting Psychology Abstracts

I selected PsycINFO as a suitable resource for locating contextual material, because it is a key research database for clinical and research psychologists. To begin with, I also conducted searches through the PubMed database, with the intention of collating comparable medical literature. This second decision was reversed on the basis of personal expertise and relevance. I am trained to interpret psychology abstracts, because I have an undergraduate degree in Applied Psychology, and professional experience as an Assistant Psychologist. I am not similarly trained to interpret medical information. Healthcare literature intended for a general audience might have been a suitable addition to my contextual corpora, but as I grew more familiar with the juvenile fiction sample, the apparent need for medical contextual material lessened. Physical health concerns, in contrast to emotional health concerns, rarely feature in the juvenile fiction sample.

The first search I conducted of the PsycINFO database re-used the terms I had generated while locating juvenile fiction. Only 'fat,' 'obes*' and 'overweight' provided results. I resumed the snowballing technique, which added the term 'adipos*' to subsequent searches; 'adipose' and 'adiposity' were synonyms for fat and fatness that appeared in the academic psychology corpus, but not in *Jackie* or the juvenile fiction sample. 'Weight

management' and 'weight loss' were also added to the list of search terms, because they were regularly recurring in connection to the word 'fat' during the first wave of the search.

To refine the corpus of assembled abstracts, I searched for uses of the word 'child' and 'children.' Generating a list of synonyms for 'child,' again through snowballing, yielded 'infan*,' 'adolesc*,' 'paed*,' 'pedia*,' 'juven*' and 'teen.' Abstracts that did not contain one of these terms were eliminated. I then filtered abstracts according to the year of publication. I selected 1960 as a suitable starting point because just two abstracts were available for that year, only one of which was British. By tracking from 1960 onwards I would be able to capture obesity's growing presence in the psychology research literature.

Placing this date limitation on my search results produced a corpus of 5,894 abstracts. Although this represented too large a body of literature for in-depth study, I intended to process this data with the stylometrics software package, WordSmith. By measuring word frequency across all 5,894 abstracts, I would be able to discern changing trends in conceptualisations of childhood obesity across fifty years of Anglophone psychological research. For more focused study, I identified abstracts that were either affiliated with a research institution in Great Britain, or that specified a British research population. False results produced by typographical errors in PsycINFO were removed. This produced a smaller corpus of 268 abstracts. In 2011, I repeated the search to identify additional abstracts uploaded to the database in 2010. Another forty-three abstracts were added to the British corpus, giving a total of 311.

4. Interpreting the Corpus: Critical Framework

4.1 New Historicism

In the early stages of the project I adopted a New Historicist approach that drew on the work of Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt (2000). They make the following methodological assumptions. First, they assume a text is best understood through an atheoretical analysis of its singular, specific characteristics, rather than the top-down application of abstract principles (17). This approach is clearly well suited to inductive research. (There are, nevertheless, limitations to Gallagher and Greenblatt's claim to atheoretical working which I will explore later in the Introduction).

Second, Gallagher and Greenblatt assume no text is transhistorical. Any text is constituted through particular historically embedded social formations (17). Based on this assumption, textual interpretation comprises an analysis of how the given text is historically situated. This involves an acknowledgement that one's own critical work is constituted through the sociocultural formations of a particular moment: the 'history' we invoke is constructed in the present (17). By attending to these points, the anachronisms of readings such as Haslam and Haslam's (2009) are produced with less reflexivity. The assumption that all texts have historically specific meanings also brings implications for the selection of material. When choosing fiction, I attended to the dates different editions were published; the details changed, and conversely retained, in successive editions are one of the means by which continuities and discontinuities in constructions of the fat child are produced over time. I use the edition date as the basis for making associations between contemporaneous literary and non-literary texts, not the date of original publication where that differs.

It is the attendance to the historically inflected meanings of texts that has drawn scholars such as Mitzi Myers (1988) to New Historicism as a valid approach for interpreting children's literature. She argues that New Historicist interpretations clarify how children's fiction "performs cultural work, from satisfying authorial fantasies to legitimating or subverting dominant class and gender ideologies, from mediating social inequalities to propagandizing for causes" (42). Tony Watkins (1992) similarly argues that New Historicism, in common with Cultural Studies, illuminates that the stories we offer children to "shape their identities" derive their meaning from the "constraints of history" (195). My own adoption of New Historicism, however, is driven less by its suitability for juvenile fiction, than its capacity for interdisciplinary analysis.

This brings us to Gallagher and Greenblatt's third methodological assumption: literary and non-literary texts (including visual texts) share a discursive context (19). For this project, the chief appeal of New Historicism was the scope offered for incorporating non literary material within my analysis. There are some critical approaches that would have yielded different insights; for instance if I had applied a more intentionalist approach, focusing on authorship, I would have limited my attention to recurrent uses of the fat child as a motif by well known writers—for instance Jacqueline Wilson, or JK Rowling. Material drawn from media and psychology would have little role to play in such a reading. New Historicism suggested there were analytical connections to be made between juvenile fiction, *Jackie* and academic psychology that had not previously received scholarly attention.

Having laid out the three core assumptions I adopted from Gallagher and Greenblatt's work, I will detail how they shaped my methods of analysis. The first step was to group texts according to their year, and their decade, of publication. The second

step was to posit areas of similarity and difference between contemporaneous texts’ construction of fatness. My aim was to create synchronic links between the corpora of juvenile fiction, *Jackie* issues and psychology abstracts. I achieved this by comparing trends between the corpora—both qualitative, and quantitative.

4.1.1 Qualitative Features

My methods for labelling qualitative trends differed for each corpus. Novel-length fiction, magazines with a high degree of visual content, and academic abstracts differ from each other in purpose and form; I was wary of eliding the differences by deductively applying the same methods to all three corpora.

I organised texts from the juvenile fiction corpus into five sub-groups, with each one covering a single decade. Taking each sub-group in turn I then searched for patterns of imagery pertaining to the fat child. Specifically I noted which physical, behavioural, emotional, cognitive and societal characteristics were attributed to fat children (see tables 2 to 6). I categorised characters as male or female depending on the gendered pronouns used by the text. Descriptions of colouring and heritage were used to categorise characters as ‘white’ or ‘of colour.’ References to status, financial means, education and parental profession were used to note characters’ socioeconomic position, relative to other characters in the text, as either ‘higher’ or ‘lower.’ Counter-intuitively, possessing relative wealth did not always correlate with other markers of belonging to a higher socioeconomic group—particularly in texts published after 1990. I therefore noted in a separate column which fat characters were wealthy. Categorising characters in binary terms was a useful starting point when I was unfamiliar with the material; later in the project I would explore the limitations of binarising characters along gender, race and class lines.

The process of coding characters' traits allowed me to see which constructions of the fat child were visible at particular points in history. Up until the early nineteen-eighties texts focused on the moral characteristics of fat children: gluttony and sexual conduct were key concerns (see tables 2 and 3). After that point texts were more likely to portray fat children as psychologically vulnerable. The early nineteen-eighties also marked the point at which fatness ceased to be exclusively associated with wealth (see table 4), particularly in social realist texts.

It was not immediately apparent *why* associations between fat and wealth should loosen in the early eighties. To address this point I sought out contemporaneous demographic and economic data, adopting Gallagher and Greenblatt's assumption that such data would share a discursive context with my fiction sample. By consulting the National Survey for Health and Growth, which recorded primary pupils' weight between 1972 and 1994, I established that the fiction corpus did not replicate 'real-life' trends as constructed by public health professionals. By 1980 the Survey was reporting an increase in pupils' average weight, but the gains were not confined to any single socioeconomic group (Rona and Chinn 1999, 1).

I suspected that the changing construction of fatness and wealth reflected historically specific concerns about the nation's financial well-being, rather than the lived experience of fat British children. Accordingly I consulted the Bank of England (20) to establish periods of economic recession in Britain, and incorporated the dates within my tables of qualitative trends. Initially no relationship between periods of recession and constructions of the fat child was apparent (see tables 3 to 6). However, by examining unemployment figures I was able to connect the financial standing of fat child characters to

economic change. A clear correlation could be drawn between low unemployment, and the tendency for texts to associate children's fatness with wealth (see tables 2 to 6).

The data could not demonstrate directions of effect, so my interpretations were necessarily speculative. I noted that though the meanings of fat change from text to text, the corpus shows an ongoing tendency to create parallels between the fat child's physical and civic selves. This is consistent with Colls and Hörschelmann's aforementioned observation that public discourse uses children's corporeality as a marker "of the social body, now and in the future." Structural factors in unemployment, such as changes in the country's industrial activity, might also produce different constructions of the fat child body. In a period of affluence and relaxed social mores, the sixties sample constructs fat as an indicator of excess that threatens to undermine upper class moral authority; this image clearly reworks the stereotypical gluttony of fat children into a socioeconomically meaningful trait. In a period of high unemployment and extensive deindustrialisation, the eighties sample constructs fat as an indicator of being, first, surplus to societal requirements and, second, unable to move through the social hierarchy; these images rely on constructions of fat people as carriers of excess flesh who are also restricted in *physical* movement. In a period of falling unemployment driven by the move towards a service economy, the market inclusion of fat children as potential customers becomes newly important in the early twenty-first century; gluttony is again reworked, this time as material consumption. These initial suppositions would later underpin my argument in Chapters One, Three and Seven.

When I began searching *Jackie* for qualitative patterns, I adopted slightly different methods. Although unambiguously negative stereotypes of the fat child were visible in the fiction corpus, there were also many texts which swung ambivalently between praise,

tolerance and criticism of fat characters' physical and personal characteristics. This vacillation was partly enabled by the extended focus on character development novels can provide and was too complex to capture in table form; instead I attempt to address those complexities on a text-by-text basis in the chapters that follow. Categorising *Jackie*'s references to fat as either positive, negative or neutral was a comparatively simple process. *Jackie* certainly demonstrates ambivalence towards the fat child, but because *Jackie*'s references to fat are fleeting and spread across the publication's varied content, this ambivalence is largely produced through the conflicting purposes of different magazine sections (e.g. a problem page response might recommend self-acceptance, while an advertisement might extol the benefits of weight loss products). Noting which references are positive, negative or neutral provides an approximate indicator of when and how attitudes towards fat varied between different sections.

I used a combination of deductive and inductive coding to capture relevant qualitative data from *Jackie*. My deductive codes included the tone of the reference (negative, positive or neutral) and how the reference was constructed (linguistic or pictorial). My inductive codes included the presiding topic, any solutions offered for camouflaging or eradicating fat, and the type of feature the reference appeared in. References to fat adults, such as celebrity interviewees or parental figures in the comic strips, were included if there was an implication the child reader should imitate them. Furthermore, I recorded the reference if adult celebrities talked about fat in relation to desirable traits in a partner. I did so because the positioning of celebrities as fantasy objects (through, for instance, romanticised and sexualised poster imagery) simultaneously positions the implied reader as someone who aspires to be their partner. Adult celebrities' references to being fat in childhood or adolescence were also noted.

References to slimming appeared in many *Jackie* issues without any comment on the current size of the slimmer. I recorded these as a negative construction of fatness, while recognising they do not serve the same function as explicit references to fat people. Rather they construct dieting as a widespread practice relevant to all readers. In my coding table, I marked such references with the label 'slimming as normative' (see table 7).

Once the coding was complete, it was clear that *Jackie*'s constructions of the fat child showed far more continuity over time than the fiction corpus.^{viii} The majority of Jackie's references to fat were focused on creating an attractive appearance, no matter what the decade. Nevertheless, within each decade there was considerable variety in the solutions offered for eradicating or camouflaging fat: recommendations included diet, exercise, pharmaceutical interventions, clothing choices and the acquisition of confidence. Intriguingly, the first reference to confidence appears in 1971 (see table 7), some ten years before the juvenile fiction corpus begins to construct the fat child as a problem with emotional causes and solutions (see table 4). The trend towards psychological constructions of fatness in eighties fiction is therefore clearly anticipated by juvenile media as represented by *Jackie*.

When I turned to the corpus of international psychology abstracts, the construction of fatness as a confidence problem did not explicitly feature. I divided the corpus by decade, into five sub-groups, and conducted a word frequency analysis of each group using the software package WordSmith. This produced five lists of the most frequently occurring words in each decade (excluding conjunctions, pronouns, and prepositions). I surmised that abstracts from the nineteen sixties refer to fat in the context of developmental psychology, particularly amongst boys; that abstracts from the nineteen seventies and eighties refer to fat in the context of behaviour and treatment; that abstracts from the nineties refer to fat in

the context of disordered eating, particularly amongst girls; and that abstracts from the two-thousands refer to fat in the context of physical activity (see table 8). The references to confidence that recur throughout the juvenile fiction and *Jackie* corpora are not present here. For the purposes of comparison, I also conducted a word frequency analysis of material published in the nineteen fifties: I had retained this sub-group, which comprised thirty-seven abstracts, from my original search for contextual material. The results suggested that psychologists associated “psychogenic,” “psychosomatic” and “emotional” factors with children’s fatness at that time (see table 8). The attendance to “emotional” factors shares similarities with the idea that weight gain is caused by a lack of confidence, but the interval before this idea appears in the fiction and *Jackie* corpora suggests that academic and clinical constructions of the fat child exerted, at the very most, only an indirect effect upon juvenile fiction and media.

Next I directed my attention to the corpus of British abstracts, with the intention of creating more local connections between psychological research activity, juvenile fiction, and media. The number of British abstracts was too small to extrapolate meaningful decade-by-decade trends using WordSmith. I therefore coded each abstract, manually, by attending to thematic features rather than the frequency of particular words. After a preliminary reading there were three points of comparison with the fiction corpus that I wished to capture. These were the abstracts’ construction of fat as a dietary constituent as well as a physical feature; the abstracts’ construction of obesity as a disease; and the varied ways in which the abstracts generation fat bodies. Accordingly I devised three sets of codes (see tables 9 to 14). First I noted whether fat was described as a dietary or bodily substance. Second, I noted the presiding topic. I labelled topics inductively, but also reused appropriate labels I had applied to earlier abstracts, to better highlight areas of similarity

within the corpus. Third, I noted how abstracts grouped fat children into particular lifestages—prenatal, infant, prepubescent, and adolescent. I considered eliminating abstracts which did not categorise fat people into at least one of these lifestages, as by definition such abstracts were not focused on the fat child. However, just as *Jackie*'s references to slimming informed a negative construction of fatness, psychologists' references to eating fat, feeling fat, and avoiding fat could be said to inform constructions of the fat child whether or not fat child bodies are the focus. Rather than remove such abstracts all together, I applied the code 'N/A' when researchers' discussions of fat intake did not distinguish people by body size or by age. Similarly, I used the code 'N/A' when abstracts focused on people with eating disorders who imagined themselves to be fat. If an abstract primarily focused upon fat adults, but invoked childhood traits as a risk factor for adult weight gain, I used the code 'adult.' Where an abstract referred to both fat adults and fat children, I used the code 'adult' amongst the other relevant lifestage labels.

I considered coding the abstracts for tone, to simplify comparisons with *Jackie*. In the event this was unnecessary: the abstracts were characterised by an unvarying tone of detachment, whether or not the research aims were implicitly fatphobic.

The final tabulations showed the following trends. Overall, abstracts that refer to bodily fat outnumber abstracts that refer to dietary fat. Abstracts referring to bodily fat also increase at a faster rate over the whole period. There are no clear changes from decade to decade in how fat people are generationed; however fat 'prepubescents' form the largest group overall, and fat 'adolescents' comprise the second biggest group.

Comparing the qualitative features of the fiction, *Jackie* and psychological corpora yields the following similarities and differences. All three samples construct the fat child as emotionally vulnerable, albeit on different timescales. The under-confident fat child is first

visible in *Jackie* during the nineteen-seventies; the same trope appears in the fiction sample during the nineteen-eighties; and questions pertaining to the fat child's self-esteem and body image appear in the psychology corpus from the early nineties^{ix} onwards. Both the psychology and fiction corpora facilitate stereotyping on the basis of body type, although by different means. The aforementioned epidemiological abstracts typically describe *populations* of fat children, whose commonalities, rather than differences, are emphasised. In the fiction corpus, fat characters are frequently the only child of their size in a given text. Tokenistic fat characters come to represent *all* fat children because there are no other examples.

These similarities were, however, limited and differences in production, intent and readership produced widely divergent content between the three corpora. For instance, the psychological corpus distinguishes itself through an occasional focus on 'prenatal' bodies. Although all the corpora construct fat bodies as a problem to be solved, only the psychological corpus does so by invoking prenatal life. When abstracts focus on the physical health of foetuses, they construct fat intake and fat embodiment as concerns from conception onwards. We might view this as a variant on using the fat child as a marker of the social body: the researchers locate foetal bodies within a spectrum of pre-adult bodies that all function as predictors of future well-being. Yet those pre-adult bodies function as *passive* predictors, to a greater extent than we see in the fiction sample. Writers in the fiction corpus attribute wants and needs to fat child characters which are harder to attribute to a foetus. They construct the fat child body using moral and emotional terms which are only comprehensible if we assume children can actively disrupt, and react to, a wider societal hierarchy. The fiction sample does not attribute the same disruptive potential to foetal bodies, perhaps because foetuses are not similarly configured in that hierarchy.

By examining which topics recur in the abstracts, we can see further points of contrast between the psychology, fiction and *Jackie* corpora. Epidemiological topics account for the largest proportion of abstracts; in other words, to be fat is repeatedly constructed as a physical illness with discernible risk factors, causes, and effects. Associating fat with risk informs negative constructions of the fat child body, even though—in contrast to *Jackie*—the tone adopted in the abstracts is always neutral. The construction of fat as a specifically physical health risk is largely confined to the psychology corpus. Physical health problems are rarely referred to in the fiction and *Jackie* samples, despite *Jackie* regularly extolling readers to seek medical advice before dieting. These differences limited the possibilities for including *Jackie* and the psychological abstracts in my analysis of the fictional texts.

Having outlined key qualitative trends in my primary and contextual material, I will now summarise relevant quantitative trends.

4.1.2 Quantitative Features

I sought to describe my sample of eighty-five texts as follows. First, I counted how many texts from the fiction corpus were published in particular decades. Second, I counted how many fat child characters appeared in a given decade, excluding repeat appearances. Third, I counted fat child characters of narrative consequence (that is, ‘main’ characters). The results are not naively taken as a reflection of how many books featuring fat characters were actually published in each decade. Rather they reflect how many relevant books can be currently accessed. Consistent with Gallagher and Greenblatt’s assertion, the results provide a history of fat children in fiction, but that history is constructed in the present day.

Twenty books in my sample were published during the years 1960 to 1969 inclusive. This is equivalent to 1% of the juvenile fiction stocked by the British Library for

the same period. (This percentage is higher than any other decade sampled, but only by 0.9%). A preponderance of serial fiction means that the total number of fat characters in this period, excluding serial appearances, is considerably smaller than the number of books sampled. Just eight fat characters featured in this decade, five of whom were main characters.

Seven books in my sample were published in the years 1970 to 1979. This is equivalent to 0.1% of the juvenile fiction stocked by the British Library for the same period. A total of seven fat characters featured, four of whom were main characters.

Thirteen books in my sample were published in the years 1980 to 1989. This is equivalent to 0.1% of the juvenile fiction stocked by the British Library for the same period. A total of twelve fat characters featured, ten of whom were main characters.

Twenty-two books in my sample were published in the years 1990 to 1999. This is equivalent to 0.1% of the juvenile fiction stocked by the British Library for the same period. A total of eighteen fat characters featured, seventeen of whom were main characters. This is the highest number of fat characters for any decade sampled.

Finally, twenty-two books in my sample were published in the years 2000 to 2009. This is equivalent to 0.1% of the juvenile fiction stocked by the British Library for the same period. A total of seven characters featured in this decade, all of whom were main characters. As in the sixties, a preponderance of serial fiction resulted in a surprisingly low number of fat characters once serial appearances were excluded.

To summarise, the nineties comprises a key period both in the absolute number of books to include a fat character, and the number of fat characters to appear. For the purposes of comparison I applied similar measures to the *Jackie* sample. I counted how many references to, and depictions of, fat appeared in each month and decade. To produce

three equivalently sized groups I set date ranges of 1964-73, 1974-83 and 1984-93 (see table 13). As impact in magazines may also be mediated by the amount of space dedicated to a particular topic, I also measured the area *Jackie* allocated to each reference or depiction (see table 14). Initially I planned to calculate the area in square centimetres, for precision; but this would not take into account the range of format changes *Jackie* underwent between 1964 and 1993. A square centimetre represents a far smaller proportion of the original format than the final format. I therefore recorded measurements as a proportion of the page: double page, a page and a half, a full page, three quarters of a page, half a page, a third of a page, a quarter of a page, and less than a quarter of a page.

The frequency of references to fat, whether linguistic or pictorial, and the amount of space dedicated to the topic, peaked in 1974-83 (see tables 13 and 14). During this period the average number of references to fat per issue was double what it had been in 1964-73. For some months, namely January and April, the average trebled. In all periods references to fat were usually fleeting, as reflected by the high proportion of references that comprised less than a quarter page. But the topic was allocated slightly more space in the seventies than other periods, with more than 10% of references comprising a full page or more.

By charting what proportion of references were tonally negative, neutral or positive, it was possible to see that the increase in the visibility of fat people during the seventies was predominantly critical of fatness and weight gain (see chart 1). However the chart shows that positive constructions of fatness were also at their highest in 1974-83.

The high visibility of fat in seventies issues of *Jackie* contrasts sharply with the fiction corpus from the same period. My nineteen-seventies fiction sample was the

smallest of all five periods, because books containing a fat character were particularly hard to find for this decade. But by turning to the qualitative trends in tables 2 and 3, we can see that the fat characters who did appear in the seventies fiction sample were more likely to be feminine and focused on appearance than their sixties predecessors. This qualitative change in the fiction, and the quantitative change in the *Jackie* sample, suggests that the seventies marked a new period in which the fat child was more likely to be gendered as a girl than a boy.

Finally, I turned to the psychology corpus. I applied the following measures to capture fluctuations in the fat child's visibility over time. First, I grouped abstracts by the year of publication. Chart 2 shows how many abstracts of international origin were published in each year; chart 4 shows how many abstracts affiliated with British institutions were published in each year. In both cases the number of abstracts rose sharply during the early two-thousands.

It was unclear to what extent this rise reflected an overall increase in the research literature catalogued by PsycINFO. I therefore calculated a prevalence rate for the abstracts of international origin. Chart 3 shows how many abstracts from the international corpus were published for every thousand abstracts, on any topic, listed by the PsycINFO database. As with chart 2, the data shows a clear increase in the early years of the twenty-first century. This demonstrates that the number of abstracts containing one of my search terms increased in prevalence, as well as in incidence. I did not calculate a prevalence rate for abstracts of British origin, because the sample sizes were too small.

A possible explanation for the sharp increase in prevalence and incidence may be the prioritising of childhood obesity for research funding. In Britain, government

documentation and policy—such as the House of Commons report on obesity in 2004 (House of Commons Health Committee)—indicate that the topic was one of state concern during the early twenty-first century. By comparing the fiction, media, and psychology corpora, we can speculate that such concerns had existed in the wider culture for several decades and foreshadowed, rather than arose from, intensive clinical research. The visibility of the fat child, and the association of fatness with emotional vulnerability, peaked in the fiction sample and *Jackie* long before the psychology corpus. As with the qualitative trends detailed in the previous section, these quantitative differences between the corpora limited the usefulness of *Jackie* and the psychological abstracts to my reading of the fiction.

4.2 Agential Realism

Adopting a New Historicist approach allowed me to analyse material from different disciplines, but simultaneously brought a number of frustrations. Gallagher and Greenblatt claim that literary and non-literary texts are both “fictions in the sense of things made” (31). Non-literary texts, such as anthropological anecdotes, distinguish themselves from literary texts in making “sharply different claims on the actual,” but both remain representational in Gallagher and Greenblatt’s view (31). From a New Historicist perspective, all “representation is distinct from that which it purports to exemplify” (109). These are contestable theorisations of how texts are constituted and function, which Gallagher and Greenblatt naturalise by presenting New Historicism as atheoretical. In addition to being contestable these theorisations are overly constraining, at least within the bounds of the current project. For instance, treating the construction of research participants and fictional characters as discursively equivalent in all but a claim to “the actual” seemed a potentially unethical limitation. To address these concerns—while retaining the value New Historicism

places on interdisciplinarity and historical specificity—I turned to the theoretical physicist Karen Barad (2007). In the following paragraphs I will outline her theory of Agential Realism.

Barad theorises that discursive practices are not a sequence of entities or signs, but material reconfigurings of the world that enable and constrain what constitutes meaningful statements (*Meeting* 146-8). In the same vein she seeks to problematise “representationalism,” which she defines as a “belief in the ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent” (46). Further representationalist beliefs include the tenet that representational practices have no effect on objects of investigation; and that we are able to access representations, but not the object itself (87). This perspective typically reduces effect to cause, nature to culture, and matter to language.

By contrast, Agential Realism does not presume that representational practices and their objects are ontologically separate. They comprise an ontologically entangled “phenomenon” (139). Neither representational practices nor objects pre-exist their interrelation; Barad argues that they are produced as *relata* through the process of “intra-action” (128). She introduces this neologism because the more usual term “interaction” implies that two pre-existing components encounter each other (128). Barad claims: “[j]ust as there are no words with determinate meanings lying in wait as so many candidates for an appropriate representational moment, neither are there things with determinate boundaries and properties whirling aimlessly in the void, bereft of agency, historicity, or meaning, which are only to be bestowed from the outside” (150).

This does not mean that the separateness of representational practices from their objects is illusory. Barad instead claims that the separateness of things is a temporary enactment of specific intra-actions (149). Intra-actions are not necessarily human-

dependent or intentionally enacted. Rather, ongoing reconfiguration, which Barad calls “agency,” is a feature of the world (149). The temporary creation of determinate boundaries between things is described as an “agential cut.”

In an Agential Realist account, economic-social-cultural dynamics can be understood by analysing the topology of economic, social and cultural intra-actions (“Re(con)figuring” 2001, 102). Topological features include boundaries, connectivity, interiority and exteriority (102). Research apparatuses are not passive observing instruments in this process; they are boundary-making practices through which agential cuts are made (*Meeting* 2007, 146). The boundaries between apparatus, researcher, and research object are themselves constituted through agential cuts. These Agential Realist principles can be fruitfully applied to the critical framework of the current project. Relevant topological questions include: what boundaries are enacted between the different corpora? What boundaries are enacted between myself, the apparatus and the research topic? What boundaries are enacted between particular textual constructions?

I propose, as a starting point for addressing the above questions, that the corpora are boundary-making practices. Agential cuts between adults and children are made via the specific intra-actions of each corpus. Those intra-actions are enacted between, and are constitutive of: the fiction corpus, writers and readers; the *Jackie* sample, journalists, advertisers, and consumers; the psychology abstracts, researchers, research participants and clinicians. The three corpora intra-act with each other as ‘true’ and ‘fictional’ archives. Relatedly, the boundaries between corpora, databases, archivists, and scholars (including myself) are also created through intra-actions. I am accordingly co-implicated in the making of agential cuts between research objects, repositories, and researchers.

The New Historicist account of texts invited us to see the construction of research participants and fictional children as equivalent in all but a discursive “claim” to truth—and rendered the matter of children’s bodies unknowable in the process. The Agential Realist account avoids this erasure of matter, by allowing us to see texts as particular material-discursive configurations. The fiction, media and psychology corpora are not simply making different claims about children’s bodies. They are enacting different intra-actions with children; they differently constitute, and are differently constituted by, children. As outlined in Section 4.1, there are a number of diachronic discontinuities between constructions of the fat child in the corpora which can be accounted for through cultural, social and economic change. But Agential Realism has particular explanatory power for *synchronic* differences between constructions of the fat child. Namely, we can see that different constructions of fatness, and differences in apparatus, are mutually constitutive.

The corpora do not reflect each other along a clear chronological timeline. Rather they are “diffractive.” Diffraction is a term for how waves behave when they encounter obstacles; Barad adopts the word to problematise the notion of separable objects (107). A helpful image to illustrate diffraction might be that of circles spreading on water, which in connecting mutually constitute and alter each other. Similar connectivities are enacted between the corpora, and other material-discursive practices such as measuring unemployment figures.

The diffractive image is not limited in applicability to the relationship between corpora. It also offers potential to problematise the binary categories I deployed in tables 2 to 6. Gendered, classed, racialised, generationed and sized boundaries can be seen as agential cuts, produced through boundary making practices. Like the diffracting circles, gender, class, race, generation and size connect, alter and mutually constitute each other in

a shared ontological topology. Before completing this Introduction, I wish to offer a practical demonstration of how such topologies are constituted in one character from the fiction sample.

Jacqueline Wilson's 1983 novel *Waiting for the Sky to Fall* is predominantly set in an English news agent's, the operations of which can be fruitfully analysed as a boundary making practice. The book describes the Petworthys, a family of two parents and two teenage daughters—fifteen year old Katherine, and thirteen year old Nicola. Mrs Petworthy, Katherine and Nicola all provide labour in the shop, however they receive little to no financial reimbursement at the discretion of Mr Petworthy, who acts as both familial patriarch and exploitative employer. Mrs Petworthy, Katherine and Nicola's suggestions for improving business are discounted by Mr Petworthy, on the grounds that they are imitative of the Asian business practices he pejoratively calls "paki hours" (39). Through these processes, Nicola—the fat child of interest in the text—is marked by a range of agential cuts. Her gender, race, class and age are not pre-existing vectors that intersect, or separate spatial locations. Her character intra-actively creates these identity categories, and is simultaneously gendered, racialised, classed and generationed, through the boundary making practice that is working in the shop. The variation of boundary making practices from text to text mean that Nicola's femaleness, or whiteness, or any other mark on the body made through agential cuts, will not have precisely the same meaning in the other fat characters chosen for discussion. The chapters that follow do not, therefore, show unvarying compliance with a single stereotype of the fat child. Rather they show that constructions of the fat child are diffracting and reconfiguring on an ongoing basis.

To conclude, Agential Realism appealed for two reasons. In one respect, the theory allowed me to discuss characters' multifaceted identities without suggesting identity

categories are essential or, alternatively, changeable at will: the meanings of fatness, gender, race and class depend on the specific boundary making practices of the text. In another respect, Agential Realism offered a framework for understanding how the differences between the corpora were produced. Whereas New Historicism flattened the differences between non-literary and literary texts, Agential Realism allowed for a recognition that the corpora were defined through different production processes and readerships. This recognition ruled out a comparison of fiction, *Jackie* and psychological abstracts as initially envisioned. Instead, I resolved to undertake a sequence of socio-historical analyses of selected fictional texts, drawing on *Jackie* and the psychological material only where it was relevant to do so.

MORAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FAT CHILD

Chapter One

The Nineteen-Sixties: Fat Conscience

The coming chapter explicates how the fat child is imbued with moral meaning in nineteen-sixties British juvenile fiction. I will begin by summarising how constructions of the body were changing in media for adults at this time, and detail how these changes were mimicked by *Jackie* magazine. This will form a point of contrast for the trends I identify in my British juvenile fiction sample. The analysis will then focus on the following texts: Frank Richards' *Billy Bunter...* series, which appeared in twice yearly instalments between 1960 and 1965; Enid Blyton's *The Mystery of Banshee Towers*, which was published in 1961; and Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which was first issued by a British publisher in 1967.

My argument is that Richards, Blyton and Dahl respectively construct fatness in children as a sign of amorality, of moral endangerment, and of immorality. In each case, the fat child's moral failings—particularly gluttony—are associated with the possession of material wealth. The fat child's rule-breaking offers vicarious pleasure to the implied reader, but is ultimately contained. Although the association between fatness, moral failings and wealth could lend itself to an attack on economic inequality, the effect is rather to essentialise links between greed and affluence as a fact of life; there is no challenge to the status quo from below in any of the texts. I interpret this construction of the fat child as a conservative, increasingly nostalgic, resistance to the anti-authoritarian tenor of the nineteen-sixties.

By 'anti-authoritarian tenor,' I mean a swathe of socially destabilising cultural, economic, and technological trends. Mukti Jain Campion (1995) identifies the

following constituents in what she sees as the obsolescence of nineteen-fifties social conformity and cultural homogeneity (274). The first is the development of psychodynamic theories, such as those espoused by John Bowlby, which prioritised the pursuit of personal happiness over notions of duty, self-sacrifice and lifelong commitment (274). The second is people's growing access to television. Mass media's strengthening influence fuelled a consumerism which valorised personal desires. That same influence facilitated a closer scrutiny of public authority figures, including Members of Parliament and the Royal Family, who were found morally wanting (275). The third constituent, which would not be felt fully until the start of the seventies, was popular disillusionment with a labour market that failed to deliver guaranteed employment in exchange for workers' conformity (275). Each of these factors undermined the authority of parents, politicians, the upper socioeconomic classes, and institutions such as the Church.

According to Susie Orbach (1993), constructions of the body changed correspondingly. Cultural associations between wealth and fatness were eschewed. Orbach argues that the model Jean Shrimpton, the film actor Julie Christie, and the "Jet Set" offspring of the English aristocracy heralded a new association between thinness, glamour, and freedom from social restraint (*Hunger* 53). Their slender physiques, and by extension their lifestyles, were held out to "people from all class backgrounds" as an attainable reality (54). "The very thing they exemplified," Orbach asserts, "was an individualistic break with the constraints of class society that only the privileged could express" (54).

She does not address why "people from all class backgrounds" should disassociate wealth from fatness at a time when the average Briton was enjoying new

peaks in their food consumption.^x But Barbara Ehrenreich (2002) offers one possible explanation, derived from comparable representational trends in the USA. Ehrenreich argues that attempts to reconcile consumerist values, asceticism, and democratic idealism are to blame:

[E]veryone wants to be rich, but no one wants to be a ‘fat cat.’ We might be hogging the Earth’s resources and tormenting the global working class, the affluent seem to be saying, but at least we’re not indulging the ancient human craving for fat. So the low-fat diet has been the hair shirt under the fur coat—the daily deprivation that offsets the endless greed. (13)

For my purposes, it is important to note that these new associations between thinness and wealth were only partly taken up by British juvenile texts. As I will show, British juvenile fiction continued to associate fatness with wealth for years to come—in contradistinction to *Jackie*, which contributed to the new constructions of ‘glamorous’ and ‘free’ slender bodies identified by Orbach.

Of all the *Jackie* issues sampled, those published in the nineteen-sixties contain the fewest references to fat (see chart 1). A handful of linguistic references construct fat as a neutral or negative aspect of physical appearance. The majority appear in the Beauty section, where advice on how to meet beauty standards is dispensed to young, implicitly white girls with funds for discretionary purchases. This pattern is consistent with Mills’ (1995) observation that an ‘advice-giving’ tone is central to positioning implied readers as female. Constructions of male fatness are confined to the non-interactive sections of the magazine, and focus on adults in the public eye rather than the reader.^{xi}

The fat child is visually absent from *Jackie*; there are no pictorial constructions of fat children at all, either in illustrations, or photographs. The bulk of pictorial content in

this period is split between photographic posters of celebrities, and comic strips that replicate the slender ideals identified by Orbach. Martin Barker's (1989) description of *Jackie*'s production process indicates that the replication was both direct, and enduring:

D C Thomson, publishers of *Jackie*, became dependent for much of their artwork on Spanish artists. This had effects on how the characters looked. They tended to be highly idealised, postdated copies of images from other British media. Long after Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton had left the advertising scene, their lookalikes graced the pages of *Jackie*. (153)

Lest it be unclear from Barker's comments, "idealised" slender physiques predominated in the comic strips irrespective of how characters were gendered.^{xii} Fatness was excluded from constructions of aspirant youth, rather than constructions of femininity specifically.

A very different pattern emerges in the fiction selected for this period. (Similarities between fictional and media constructions of the fat child do not appear until the seventies, and become clearest in the eighties). Throughout the fiction sampled from 1960 to 1969 inclusive, fatness is associated with comparative affluence. Where an incidental character is fat, their body size is used as a shorthand to convey their financial comfort. Where a main character is fat, this stereotype is expanded to associate fatness not only with financial comfort, but the risk of decadence.

Margaret Storey's *Pauline* (1965) contributes to the former category of incidental fat characters. The eponymous, thin protagonist is left impoverished by her father's death and becomes reliant upon her uncle to pay her school fees (12). While her uncle is not rich—he foregoes buying a car to cover Pauline's costs (13)—he and his immediate family are financially more stable than Pauline. Her vulnerable position is partly

conveyed through the association of thinness with poverty, and fatness with wealth. In particular, Pauline's "thinness", and her "pale, pointed" face, are contrasted with the "puppy fat" of her "heftier," financially stable cousin Susan (16-7).

Catherine Storr's *Marianne and Mark* (1960) also relates fatness to wealth, in the portrayal of an incidental character called Alice. She is an adolescent girl who the protagonist, Marianne, dislikes but tolerates to avoid social awkwardness. As with Susan and Pauline, there is a disparity between Alice's funds and those of the "perpetually hard up" Marianne (15). This is expressed through Alice's greater willingness to spend money on discretionary items, and her ongoing comments on Marianne's meagre pocket money: "I can't think how you manage. I spend more than that on sweets every week, and then there's the pictures, and birthday presents and books and everything" (68). Her frequent purchases of "cheap jewellery, cinema tickets, magazines" (15) manifest an ongoing need for gratification through consumer activity, which is only enabled by the substantial amounts of pocket money she receives (67). This gratification is also met through the purchase of food (15); her "perpetual chewing" and "sucking" is positioned as the reason she is "pudding-faced" and "stolid" (14). Storr thus constructs clear connections between fatness, wealth, and over-consumption.

Elizabeth Stucley's *Magnolia Buildings* (1960), which is concerned with day-to-day experiences of a working class family in a high-rise tower block, presents another incidental fat character, but to slightly different effect. Len Berners, the son of the family, is concerned when racist school bullies taunt and physically hurt a Jamaican pupil called Ruby; he insists on taking her home to his mother (23). Ruby is described as "a small, fat girl from Jamaica, very black, with woolly hair" (23), who wears "a smart check frock" with "lace on [her] petticoat" (24). The smart clothing testifies to her

respectability: she is “a nice little girl” (24). However, the likelihood she has a financially comfortable home life is treated as grounds for suspicion by Len’s father. He complains about immigration in her presence: “‘The blacks oughtn’t come over here taking up our house room,’ said Dad. ‘Why, they’re paying double rents to get flats, and our people without a roof over their heads. Why can’t they stop in their own country?’” (24).

Ruby is thus differently configured from Susan and Alice in relation to fat and wealth, because of the ways she is racialised. In all three characters, bodily fat is associated with wealth and (over-)consumption. But only in Ruby’s case is this association used by another character as part of a racist strategy to challenge her basic rights, such as living accommodation. Moreover, while Susan and Alice’s financial means allow them to exercise power over Pauline and Marianne, and this is alluded to through the stratification of their bodies, Ruby is not shown to exert similar power over her bullies, or her slender white peers more generally. Instead, through the cuts and grazes Ruby sustains, as well as the reactions of Len’s father, Stucley suggests that to be a black child is to occupy a vulnerable position irrespective of financial means.

This vulnerability is quite lacking from the white, male fat children we see in Richards’, Blyton’s and Dahl’s texts, all of whom revel in the flouting of rules. Their defiance is signalled pictorially, as well as through the narrative; Billy Bunter and Fatty are typically drawn in assertive poses, grinning, with their chests thrust forward. Yet vulnerability would become the predominant feature of fat characters by the nineteen-eighties, where it would be associated with white, working class protagonists. From my twenty-first century vantage point, Stucley’s novel seems to unobtrusively

herald a construction of fatness and vulnerability that gains prominence in the fiction sample over time.

Conversely, moral constructions of the fat child were already well-entrenched in British culture by 1960. Richards' fat child anti-hero, Billy Bunter, was devised in the nineteen-hundreds. Like the incidental fat characters described above, Bunter occupies a position of financial comfort; he is a public school boarder and the son of a stockbroker (*Billy Bunter Among the Cannibals* 1950, 7). His first introduction, in the British weekly story paper *The Magnet*, dates to 1908. He featured regularly in tales of the fictional Greyfriars school until paper shortages halted publication of *The Magnet* during the second world war (Edwards 2007, 10). Ten original books set in Greyfriars were subsequently published by Charles Skilton between 1947 and 1952; the rights were sold to Cassell, who published a further twenty-eight instalments between 1952 and 1965, thirteen of which fall within the dates for this project ("Cassell"). Richards wrote scripts for the BBC's Billy Bunter television series between 1951 and 1961, which further heightened the cultural visibility of Bunter and the moral construction of fatness he comprised.

Blyton's fat child detective, Frederick Algernon Trotteville, was also well-established by the sixties. Her 1943 novel *The Mystery of the Burnt Cottage* was the first to feature the twelve-year-old Trotteville, or "Fatty" as he was nicknamed (1). Fourteen more books followed, culminating in *The Mystery of Banshee Towers*, without substantive changes to his character. As in Richards' texts, the fat child is constructed as a relatively affluent child. Fatty is not only a boarder like Bunter, he routinely pays for his friends because he has "plenty of money" and they do not (30).

Dahl's Augustus Gloop is also affluent relative to his peers, though he lacks Fatty's generosity. There are no overt references to Augustus' social background, but we are informed that Charlie, the novel's protagonist, is too poor to purchase more than one chocolate bar a year (11), while Augustus purchases several a day (25). Augustus does not possess as lengthy a history as Bunter or Fatty, but the presentation of his fatness and greed show more continuity with foregoing didactic fiction than the child-centred, empathic constructions of fatness and vulnerability that dominate later in the century. As Chalou (2007) points out, Augustus' name, his relationship to food, and the punishment he receives for greed evoke scenarios from Heinrich Hoffmann's nineteenth century text *Struwwelpeter* (39).

It is through such continuities that Richards, Blyton and Dahl each resist the decoupling of fatness from wealth that we see in *Jackie*, and furthermore, resist the destabilising of social hierarchies that Orbach claims slenderness was beginning to exemplify. However, the three authors vary subtly in their portrayal of how order is undermined by their fat characters, and how that order is restored.

In the case of Billy Bunter, fatness signifies a reflexive greed that is amoral rather than immoral. That greed is always contained, after a period of indulgence, by the retaliatory actions of Bunter's peers or the re-assertion of authority by his school. *Bunter the Bad Lad* (1960), the first of Richards' stories to be published within my research period, follows this pattern. Coker, a fellow pupil, writes a limerick mocking his school master; Bunter uses the limerick as blackmail to coerce Coker into providing Bunter's favourite food stuffs. Bunter's desire for Coker's food is not based on need. A running joke is made of Bunter's continually requesting, and never receiving, money from his father via "postal order;" but his hunger does not stem from lack of funds relative to the

other boys. Rather his hunger implies that Bunter never considers himself to have enough. The scenario is resolved when other members of the form intervene, burn the limerick, and physically assault Bunter as punishment.

His fault comprises two, entwined transgressions. The first is his gluttony, which is obsessive and wholly immersive: “Bunter was busy. He was dealing with a dish of cream cakes. Bunter liked cream cakes. They were going down the fattest neck at Greyfriars almost like oysters. Heedless of taps at the door, Billy Bunter went on with the cream cakes” (209). The repetition of “cream cakes” emphasises Bunter’s exclusive focus on eating. His pursuit of food makes him “heedless” of any other demands on his attention. At other times in the novel, this heedlessness causes disruption to the wider school; he is always too preoccupied with food to conduct himself as the masters require. For instance, a daydream of bananas causes Bunter to answer questions wrongly in class, leading to hilarity and a loss of order amongst the other boys, which in turn provokes their master’s anger (13-16).

The second transgression is a disregard for the age hierarchies of the school. This is not easily separable from Bunter’s gluttony, because his disregard is expressed through attempts to wheedle food from older boys. Coker is “the most Fifth-Formy of the Fifth,” while Bunter is a “Lower boy” (117). Forcing an older boy to share “tuck” disrupts the school’s proper order (119). The fact of Bunter’s blackmail does not anger Coker as much as Bunter’s disregard for their differences in seniority:

He, Horace James Coker, in his own esteem a most important person, was actually at the mercy of such an inconsiderable microbe as a fat fag in the Lower Fourth Form! He stood staring at a fat figure that rolled in the

distance, his hands clenched quite convulsively: longing to stride after Bunter, and smack his fat head right and left. (94)

Coker's peers initially regard the blackmail as just deserts, on the basis that Coker is a known bully. But Bunter's prolonged disregard for his own junior standing is increasingly perceived by the rest of the school as improper. Assorted members of the fifth form decide that Bunter's behaviour "won't do" and they agree to "educate him" with physical violence (120).

The claim that they are 'educating' Bunter is a way of legitimising the satisfaction these boys—and possibly the reader—take in Bunter's beating. Putting aside for a moment the ethical dubiety of assaulting Bunter for 'educative' purposes, there is a question over the text as to whether Bunter is capable of change. Richards implies that Bunter lacks awareness of his wrong doing:

Bunter did not realise that he was a "bad lad" at all. Perhaps he did not want to realise it: and Bunter had an almost infinite capacity for believing just what he wanted to believe! No doubt Bunter had a conscience: but his fat conscience was not going to stand between him and the ample supplies of tuck in Horace Coker's study (140-1).

Bunter possesses a "fat conscience"—that is, a conscience that is little better than none. Though the above paragraph stresses Bunter's wilfulness to believe what suits him, his moral failings are also attributed to a lack of intelligence, and an inability to grasp the value of moral order. "Bunter's too fatheaded to understand that he's acting like a rascal: all he thinks of is tuck," remarks one of the fifth formers (120). Similar sentiments are restated by the narrator: "Billy Bunter's fat intellect moved in mysterious ways its

wonders to perform: and very probably he did not realize the unscrupulousness of what he was doing” (120).

Of the books published by Cassell between 1960 and 1965, a further seven end with punitive misfortunes for Bunter: *Bunter Keeps it Dark* (1960), *Billy Bunter’s Treasure Hunt* (1961), *Billy Bunter at Butlins* (1961), *Bunter the Ventriloquist* (1961), *Bunter the Caravanner* (1962), *Billy Bunter’s Bodyguard* (1962) and *Just Like Bunter* (1963). The remaining five books invert this convention: Bunter’s pursuit of food unintentionally leads to the assistance of another character, and he is rewarded. The repetition across book after book of these two structures creates the impression that neither punishment, nor praise, effects a lasting difference in Bunter’s behaviour: he can be contained, but neither he—nor the school—can be transformed. By these means, any potential he shows for disrupting the hierarchies of the school is channelled into a ritual which always ends with an affirmation of the status quo.

As early as 1939, George Orwell argued that *The Magnet* was an ideologically conservative publication because it promoted an outmoded world in which “nothing ever changes” (178). The stories Cassell published in the sixties show equally conservative tendencies. Yet this is not to say Bunter’s characterisation served unchanging ideological functions throughout his lifespan.

Webb (2009) argues that Bunter was devised in the context of early twentieth century imperialism (“Voracious” 109). Richards’ stories emphasise the moral decency of muscular, athletic characters expected to be future Empire leaders; and Bunter strengthens these associations by comprising an oppositional stereotype of the greedy and dishonest fat child (109). His characterisation stems from a “Muscular Christianity” model of heroism that was culturally central to the project of Empire (109). Yet I contend

that Bunter's fatness acquired other, historically specific meanings in successive publications without fundamental change to his character. Bunter, as a fat child, is constructed as persistently amoral, persistently gluttonous, and incapable of change: this construct is not only diametrically opposed to the Muscular Christians of 1908, but to Orbach's sixties slender youths promising freedom. The former contrast does not favour Bunter. The latter, however, may ironically position Bunter as a reassuring emblem of older moral and societal certainties.

If Bunter exemplifies a construction of the amoral fat child whose punishment offers reassurance, Blyton's Fatty exemplifies a fat child who is always on the brink of moral transgression. His portrayal owes something to Billy Bunter in arrogance, but incorporates an intelligence and bravery which is rarely attributed to fat characters in the corpus. This intelligence is usually expressed by solving a "juicy mystery" as the ring leader of an ensemble of child detectives (10). His combination of intellect and intuition—as well as his potential for moral transgression—can be fruitfully related to the tradition of "fat detectives" that Sander Gilman (*Fat Boys* 2004, 153) observes in Anglo-American literature and media for adults.

Gilman argues that fat detectives stand in contradistinction to an older bodily stereotype: the "lean and hungry" philosopher (153). He alleges the "lean and hungry" construct dates back to the Renaissance, and has its roots in the Western myth of rationality and pleasure functioning as opposites (153-4). He dates the emergence of fat detective characters to the nineteenth century discovery of myelinisation; to attendant theories that fat is needed for correct nerve function; and to the consequent association of fat with intuitive thought, acuity, and psychological nervousness (172-8). Though this construction of the fat body no longer has scientific currency, a cultural legacy remains

in literary and screen sleuths. Gilman cites numerous portrayals of the loose cannon fat detective, who is prone to stimulants and dependencies, volatility and obsession, but excels in solving mysteries by unconventional means. Gilman's examples begin with Tubby Schaumann in William Raabe's 1891 novel *Stopfkuchen*; and end with twentieth century television heroes, such as the gambling addict Fitz in Jimmy McGovern's drama *Cracker* (1993), and the alcoholic Sipowicz in Steven Bochco and David Milch's police procedural *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005).

Fatty is aligned with this tradition because his ability to solve a mystery is grounded in bodily sensation. The central enigma in *The Mystery of Banshee Towers* concerns a local tourist spot. During a visit the children think they hear a banshee wailing; Fatty is unconvinced, and becomes preoccupied with solving the true source of the sound. His conviction is intuitive, not rational. "I tell you, I Smell a Mystery!" he proclaims (86). Blyton's choice of the word "Smell," not to mention its capitalisation, emphasises that Fatty's sleuthing is an embodied process rather than a cerebral one. Fatty is shown drawing on his intuition again to make accurate predictions: "I'll eat my cap if it wails tomorrow! I'm pretty certain it has its pet day, for *some* reason or other" (87). While his suspicions are partly grounded in the rational principle that banshees do not exist, his progress is made through hunches, gut reactions and the "feeling" something is amiss (147). He professes that he doesn't have enough facts to warrant his suspicion: "I don't know what it means, but it means *some* thing! I've got to work all this out, somehow. It's certainly adding up to a mystery of some sort - but I can't for the life of me see what or why or how!" (11)

The influence of nineteenth century neuropathology on Fatty's presentation, inherited via the detective genre, is an intriguing demonstration of how psychological

concepts can surface in literature on a different timescale from academic and clinical thought. At this stage of the research period, only one relevant British academic psychology abstract is listed in the PsycINFO database: A. O. Flood's *Slimming Under Hypnosis: The Obese Adolescent* (1960). The frequency analysis of words drawn from international abstracts shows some shared trends with the fiction corpus, such as a greater focus on boys than girls. But the academic interest in "psychogenic" and "psychosomatic" causes of fat in the years immediately preceding *The Mystery of Banshee Towers*' publication have no discernible impact on the fiction at this time. The scientific influences on Fatty's characterisation are several decades old.

As intriguing as it is, the neuropathological underpinning of Fatty's character is an anomaly within the fiction sample. The only other text to reference fat detectives is Lynda Waterhouse's 1995 novel *More Bonnie Fitch*; the protagonist enjoys reading detective fiction and revels in the transgressions of a fat female sleuth. This text aside, the combination of youth and psychological nervousness may have too much potential to disturb the reader; while Fitz and Sipowicz can be envied for their willingness to defy convention, the same behaviour in a child may elicit the reader's concern—at least in texts which aim to explore an emotional interior. Blyton evades such concerns by eschewing the emotional interior and instead presenting Fatty as a source of wonder and excitement to his friends Larry, Daisy, Pip and Bets. See, for instance, the anticipation with which Pip and Bets learn that Fatty will soon be returning from a stay with his cousins:

[Pip] looked across at Bets, and she grinned at him happily. Fatty was coming back! Fatty with his wide grin, his twinkling eyes, his mad jokes - and his extraordinary habit of suddenly finding himself in the middle of

peculiar mysteries! Oh the time they had had with Fatty—the excitement—the adventures! Why was it that some people *always* found themselves in the middle of something thrilling? ‘If Fatty was cast away on a lonely desert island something extraordinary would immediately happen,’ thought Bets. (3)

Bets’ glowing account of his qualities frame him as a charismatic character. Yet it is precisely his capacity to induce “extraordinary” and “thrilling” events that suggest he is always on the brink of moral endangerment—his own and other people’s.

This is signalled by the adults’ responses to Fatty’s behaviour, which comprise funnelling his nervous intelligence into prosocial rather than criminal activity, and fearing his potential to disrupt the usual village hierarchies. The former response is strongly associated with Chief Inspector Jenks, to whom Fatty normally presents his amateur detective work. “I can only hope, Frederick Trotteville,” Jenks remarks, “that when you are grown-up, you will join the police-force and not the ranks of the burglars!” (168). Jenks suspects Fatty is capricious in his allegiances. When Fatty flatters the Inspector that the initials of his number plate, JGF, stand for “Jolly Good Fellow,” Jenks reflects: “Hm - I just wonder what *else* Fatty makes those letters stand for, when I’m *out* of favour. He’s certainly worth watching, is Master Frederick Trotteville!” (173). The novel’s final line lends Jenks’ suspicion additional credence: “You just NEVER know what old Fatty is up to!” (184). Though Fatty stays the right side of the law, the possibility of his breaking the rules is repeatedly raised in the text.

The fear of Fatty’s potential to disrupt village hierarchies is most frequently voiced by the local police man, Mr Goon, who dreads Fatty’s holidays from boarding school: “Now he was back, and something would turn up to make things uncomfortable,

Goon was sure. That fat boy was always in the middle of Peculiar Happenings of some sort!” (9). Goon views Fatty’s influence over the other villagers as a threat to his own authority—with good reason. During a particularly humiliating scene, Fatty causes a public commotion which leaves Goon flailing on the ground. Crowds assemble to mock Goon; they ignore his anger that they are “laughing at the law,” and only disperse when they are instructed to by Fatty (36).

The breakdown of order that Fatty precipitates might seem surprisingly compatible with the social disruptions that I outlined at the start of this chapter. However the ways in which Fatty is gendered, classed and racialised create a troubling scenario, whereby a white, affluent boy considers himself to be above the rules others must abide by. Fatty does not transgress the class boundaries that Orbach claims were being shaken; he depends upon them. He does not seek to traverse or dismantle social hierarchies where they offer him personal benefit. Certainly, Fatty is shown using his class status to quash criticisms of his body size and his overeating—seemingly without narratorial or authorial judgement. The criticism Fatty might attract for eating too much is deflected on to Buster, a pet dog who Fatty scolds for gaining weight:

‘Buster, stand up. Show your tubby figure—oh what a middle you’ve landed yourself with—disgraceful!’

Buster certainly had a tummy. His tail dropped when Fatty scolded him, and he went sadly into a corner and curled himself up, eyeing the chocolate biscuits sadly. (13)

Fatty’s comments may be intended as an ironic illustration of his own poor self-awareness. However the text simultaneously conveys that Fatty issues his insults from a position of power; he is not himself beholden to any other character, and is thus able to

deflect criticism of his size. Urging the dog to display himself before Fatty's friends comprises a public humiliation that Fatty is never confronted with for his own weight. Observe the following exchange between Fatty and his lower class friend Ern, who is shocked to learn Buster is slimming:

'Luvaduck—is he really?' said Ern. 'I must say he feels a bit solid-like.

You look a bit balloony too, Fatty.'

'Ern—please remember your manners,' said Fatty, in a shocked voice.

'You must *not* refer to people as "balloony." You might easily get a smack on the nose.'

'Oooh, I'm sorry, Fatty, *reeeely* sorry,' said Ern. 'Maybe I'll pick up a few good manners now I'm with you again. I seem to lose them, like, at 'ome. Er—I mean HOME.' (19)

The threat of violence is stronger because Fatty is constructed, in this paragraph, as Ern's social superior. Several features of the above paragraph create a classed dynamic: Ern's flustered response to Fatty's criticism; Ern's belief that he'll "pick up...good manners" from Fatty; the stereotypical markers of working class speech such as the word "luvaduck" and dropped *hs*. Fatty's place in this classed power dynamic prevent any sustained criticism of his body.

Blyton's attempts to undercut Bunteresque associations between fatness and stupidity also rely on Ern's admiration of Fatty as a social superior. This technique is used in a conversation about Fatty between Ern and his uncle:

'That fat boy!' he said to Ern. 'I don't trust him an inch. Never did. It's a pity he's not as stupid as he looks. Too clever by half, he is!'

‘He doesn’t look stupid, Uncle,’ said Ern, emptying some potatoes into a bowl of water to peel. ‘How could he when he’s got such marvellous brains! You should hear him talk—luvaduck, he knows pretty well everything!’ (32)

The above paragraph conflates the possession of “marvellous brains” with the use of a high status dialect and privileged access to knowledge. How one talks, or what Ern previously referred to as “good manners” (19), is instrumental to Ern’s perception of Fatty’s superiority. This in turn forecloses criticism of his fatness. To Ern’s uncle, to be fat equates to looking stupid; to Ern, to be fat is mitigated by talking impressively.

To summarise, Blyton constructs the fat child as an intuitive, nervously intelligent child, with the potential to cause social disruption; but that potential is only accommodated within the text because of his privileged class position relative to the other characters. As with Billy Bunter’s serial exploits, Fatty’s challenges to the status quo comprise a cyclical ritual, wherein resistance is always followed by compliance.

In Dahl’s fantasy novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the fat child’s disobedience must be compensated for with his eventual bodily, as well as behavioural, compliance. The novel is set in a factory owned by a reclusive chocolate maker, Willy Wonka. He offers five children a tour of his factory. Four of them misbehave with unpleasant personal consequences. Augustus is the first to be punished for his moral failings. Against explicit instructions, Augustus drinks from the factory’s molten chocolate supply. As he drinks he is sucked into a factory pipe, which permanently transforms his body into a long, narrow, tube shape. A further three children undergo bodily transformations as a result of similar transgressions. Only the fifth child, an

impoverished boy named Charlie Bucket, is rewarded for good behaviour. Wonka bestows ownership of the factory upon him, which rescues his family from penury.

Whereas Richards constructed the fat child as an amoral child, and Blyton constructed the fat child as a moral threat, Dahl constructs the fat child as wilfully immoral. As Augustus travels through the factory system of pipes, Wonka's workers—who are known as the Oompa Loompas—sing the remaining children a cautionary tale about the wages of gluttony. They sing that Augustus is “greedy, foul and infantile;” he is a “beast”, a “pig” and a “brat” who would “gorge and guzzle, feed and feast/ On everything he wanted to” (69). When Mrs Gloop expresses anxiety that Augustus will be made into fudge before he is rescued, the Oompa Loompas sing that this would be a suitable punishment for his behaviour:

He'll be quite changed from what he's been,
When he goes through the fudge machine:
Slowly, the wheels go round and round,
The cogs begin to grind and pound;
A hundred knives go slice, slice, slice;
We add some sugar, cream, and spice;
We boil him for a minute more,
Until we're absolutely sure
That all the greed and all the gall
Is boiled away for once and all. (69)

The references to grinding cogs and slicing knives evoke purgatory. The repetition of “boil”, with its associations of heat and sterilisation, suggest that Augustus is in need of purification. Augustus' sin of gluttony, “all the greed and all the gall”, is eradicated

through corporeal change. “By grace! A miracle has taken place!” the song goes on to proclaim, continuing the imagery of Christian salvation (69). Unlike the vicariously pleasurable infractions of Bunter and Fatty, Augustus’s greed will not be resumed in a cycle of resistance and compliance. The text asserts he will be stopped—indeed, transformed bodily and morally—with an appropriate punishment.

Yet the fantasy of turning Augustus into fudge gestures towards continuing the cycle elsewhere. The fat child is sacrificed, but his transformation into fudge simply makes him the object, rather than the subject, of a widespread greed that continues unabated. The text is inviting us to hate fat in precisely the way Ehrenreich claims facilitates “endless greed,” rather than prevents it.

From another perspective, the text comprises an anxious response to the destabilising trends Campion identifies: the growing tendency to prioritise personal wants over duty, the expanding reach of mass media, and the consumerism entwined with both these developments. The moral failings and punishment of the fat child are but one strand in this response. Amongst the misbehaving children in the text, one, Veruca Salt, specifically exemplifies the excesses of consumerism; her dialogue typically commences with the phrase “I want,” and her demands focus on the newest consumer good to attract her attention (28). The fate of a second misbehaving character, Mike Teevee, is used to convey authorial antipathy towards the increased influence of television. Mike has no interests besides watching television; of all the attractions at the factory, the set for shooting chocolate advertisements proves the most exciting to him (108). His eagerness to be filmed for an advert has startling effects. He is shrunk to an inch in height by Wonka’s experimental cameras (111). Here the anxiety over children’s

consumerism is implicit: Mike is diminished by his involvement in the marketing of products which do not deliver what they promise.

The scene of Augustus' disobedience transmits comparable fears. He drinks the molten chocolate in an edible room; a synthetic Eden where everything is intended, literally, for consumption (58-63). Despite resembling an outdoor scene with a river, trees, and grass underfoot, these seemingly natural phenomena are made from confectionary. Augustus is, of course, threatened with his own transformation into confectionary when he stops to eat. The attempt to express the self through consumer choice, which Campion sees as a newly pervasive feature of sixties Britain, is the source of horror here; the product Augustus consumes (confectionary) becomes constitutive of what he is (another product to be eaten).

To a greater extent than Bunter or Fatty, Augustus's body is also a site for anxieties pertaining to anti-authoritarianism and parenting. While Richards and Blyton construct the fat child as a symbol of ritualised social disruption, Dahl constructs the fat child as the product of relinquished responsibility—particularly parental responsibility. Long before Augustus is awarded any dialogue, Mrs Gloop makes a lengthy comment on his eating habits, through which she is positioned as an overly-lenient mother:

Eating is his hobby, you know. That's all he's interested in. But still, that's better than being a hooligan and shooting off zip guns and things like that in his spare time, isn't it? And what I always say is, he wouldn't go on eating like he does unless he needed nourishment, would he? It's all vitamins, anyway. What a thrill it will be for him to visit Mr Wonka's marvellous factory! We're just as proud as anything! (25)

Augustus is constructed, in this paragraph, as an entity that eats and nothing more: “[t]hat’s all he’s interested in.” His own silence contributes to a sense he is not a person of complex motivation; he is reduced to his appetite for food. By foregrounding his mother’s views, the text draws attention to her perspective on his eating practices, rather than his own, consistent with an intent to criticise her as an example of poor parenting. Words such as “but” and “anyway” lend her comments a defensive tone, as does the dubitative mood of her question “he wouldn’t go eating like he does unless he needed nourishment, would he?” She anticipates criticism of Augustus’ eating habits and preemptively denies his greediness.

Daniel (2006) has interpreted Mrs Gloop in psychoanalytic terms as a “smothering mother” who allows her child no opportunity to delineate a separate identity (98). This mistakenly implies that Mrs Gloop encourages, rather than capitulates to, Augustus’ behaviour. She is unwilling to exert any authority over him, as indicated by the affectionate terms and qualifications that pepper her admonishments. “Augustus, sweetheart, I don’t think you had better do *that*,” (63) she implores, when he stoops next to the factory pipes and commences “scooping hot melted chocolate into his mouth as fast as he could” (63). Mr Gloop is equally ineffectual; he cries out to Augustus to stop, but is slow to act, and is scarcely more urgent once Augustus is sucked into the pipe; “It’s a wonder to me,” Mr Gloop remarks, “how that pipe is big enough for him to go through it” (65).

The text implicitly constructs Augustus’s gluttony and disobedience as behavioural, rather than psychoanalytic problems. By ‘behavioural,’ I mean that Augustus’s actions have been conditioned through the Gloop’s parenting decisions (or the lack thereof).^{xiii} Dahl’s construction of gluttony as a reinforced behaviour presages

related concepts in my corpus of psychology abstracts by several years. Taking word frequency as an indicator, behavioural interventions for weight loss do not predominate in international psychological research for another decade (see table 8). Nevertheless the interactions between Augustus and his parents can be fruitfully read through a behaviourist lens.

Far from acting under the influence of a smothering mother, Augustus seemingly sees no value in doing as she or the other adults request. Nor does he expect repercussions for disobedience, even when Wonka escalates the Gloops' admonishments into sterner territory, by telling him the chocolate must not be touched (63): "'This stuff is fabulous!'" said Augustus, taking not the slightest notice of his mother or Wonka. 'Gosh, I need a bucket to drink it properly!'" (64). The narrator states that he is "lapping up the chocolate like a dog;" as dogs are especially responsive to behavioural reinforcements, the simile informs a construction of the fat child in which disobedience and gluttony are attributable to bad training. Wonka's lack of sympathy functions as a counterweight to poorly administered parental discipline. When the boy is sucked up the pipe Wonka characterises the mishap as an opportunity to learn: "Augustus has gone on a little journey, that's all. A most interesting little journey" (65). Drinking chocolate by the bucketload, the text implies, is behaviour he should have been coached out of.

Foregrounding the failures of parents is not unique to Dahl's construction of the fat child. Helen Cresswell's *The Piemakers*, which was first published in 1967—the same year that the British edition of *Charlie* was first published—contains a similar construction of the poorly disciplined, gluttonous fat boy. The incidental character Cousin Bates is "almost perfectly round, with two currants for eyes and a surprisingly small mouth for one who was eating almost as often as he was waking" (37). He shares

Augustus's taciturnity; in both cases their silence is used to imply they are vast mounds of insensate flesh, scarcely capable of complex thought (in contrast to Fatty's garrulousness, which is used to imply his great "brains"). Bates's gluttony is enabled by his father's trade in baking, and his mother's unwillingness to impose limits on his eating—which she legitimises with claims he is "a growing boy" (38).

The implication in both texts that mothers should exert more control over their children's eating co-incides with women's expanding rights in policy and legislation. For instance, 1967 was the year of both the Abortion and Family Planning Acts. We might, therefore, tentatively interpret anxiety over the fat child as a conservative strategy for reasserting women's responsibilities towards home, nurture and childcare. Although at this date there is no point of comparison in the corpus of British psychology abstracts, there is some evidence that mothers were being publicly tasked with constraining fat children's appetites. The British Medical Association produced a public information film in 1968 on the topic of "overweight" children, entitled *A Cruel Kindness*. The documentary urges mothers to restrict their children's diet and behaviour more readily, on the assumption that fatness is caused by lenient parenting. "It's a cruel kindness to let your children eat too much," the documentary concludes (Holmes).

Before progressing to an analysis of the nineteen-seventies corpus I will summarise my findings thus far. I have demonstrated that throughout the nineteen-sixties, British juvenile fiction created associations between fatness, wealth, and moral failings. This stood in contradistinction to media trends which increasingly associated slenderness with glamour and freedom from social restraint, while culturally erasing fat bodies. By considering the destabilising influences on British society at this time, I have

shown that moral constructions of the fat child dovetailed with a conservative search for reassurance in moral certainties.

Throughout the seventies, the association between wealth and fatness would continue in the school story genre, minus commentary on the fat child's moral failings. Within this category we find the "pitiable" yet "innocent" Sorley, a "fat boarder" who is the regular butt of farcical misunderstandings in Leon Garfield's 1971 historical novel *The Strange Affair of Adelaide Harris*. We also, intriguingly, find a higher number of fat girls. From the "small, round" Bunty in Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969, 24), to the ironically named Elf in Anne Digby's *First Term at Trebizon* (1978), and the "tubby" Maud Moonshine in Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch* (1974, 8), fat girls' function in school stories is to suggest diversity in a white, affluent, homosocial milieu. Their inclusion is tokenistic—there is never more than one fat girl—but they are rarely described with hostility. The power to threaten authoritarian hierarchies, so characteristic of the fat boys from sixties juvenile fiction, is absent; feminising the fat child therefore involves rendering them affable, unthreatening, and inconsequential, at least within the context of this genre. Yet moral constructions of the fat child did not disappear. Rather, they were newly located in social realist, young adult novels, where they became implicated in delineations of girls' sexual virtue. It is this trend—and the scientific, media and legislative developments that precipitated it—that I will analyse in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two

The Nineteen-Seventies: Ripening Fat

This chapter will analyse the following texts: Rumer Godden's *The Peacock Spring* (1975), Jane Gardam's *Bilgewater* (1976), and Barry Pointon's *A Song for the Disco* (1978). Whereas male characters predominated in the previous chapter, it is the adolescent girl who is of particular interest here. My argument is that the three novels display an ambivalence towards female reproductive autonomy which is partly expressed through references to bodily fat. Fatness is conflated with fertility; and the fat female body is accorded worth (or not) to delineate whose fertility is socially valued. This construction of the fat girl is informed by contemporaneous changes to Family Planning legislation in Britain.^{xiv}

The importance of fat to female fertility was a new topic of scientific interest in the seventies, led by the research of Rose Frisch and Roger Revelle (1971). They were the first to ascertain that, for girls, a spurt in the accumulation of fat is needed before the onset of menarche; they hypothesised, moreover, that a lack of body fat can cause infertility. It is thus unsurprising that at this stage of the fiction sample, fat bodies become a site for popular fears pertaining to fertility and, by extension, reproductive rights. There are two fears I will focus on here. The first is that the availability of birth control promotes sexual activity among young girls. The second is that the fertility of particular demographic groups comprises a threat to the nation.

In 1974 the Department for Health and Social Security sought to clarify, for the first time, that under-16s could ask medics for contraceptive advice without parental consent (Memorandum). Concomitantly the teenage girl assumed increasing significance in arguments against birth control. Equal attention was not lavished on teenage boys. The

historian Hera Cook (2004) uses a survey of press content to collate twentieth-century criticisms of abortion and the contraceptive pill (294). She points out that in the nineteen-sixties, critics constructed birth control as a threat to the institution of marriage which facilitated promiscuity among “unmarried women” (295). By the mid-seventies, critics were constructing birth control as “an assault on childhood” which facilitated promiscuity among “schoolgirls” (294).

Advocates for birth control countered that “population growth” must be limited (296-301). This argument shifted focus from matters of individual sexual behaviour towards matters of supposed national concern and was thus suited to a varied range of political purposes. The state’s duty to manage birth rates had been established in July 1973, when Keith Joseph—a Conservative Member of Parliament with responsibility for Social Services—incorporated Family Planning within the NHS (National Health Service Reorganisation Act). The broadening of access to birth control appears permissive, but Joseph’s rationale was antithetical to reproductive autonomy: his arguments colluded with eugenic ideology. In 1974, as Shadow Home Secretary, he asserted during a public speech that “the balance of our population, our human stock, is threatened” (Cook 310). The alleged threat came from “social classes IV and V,” the two lowest occupational strata (310). Race, as well as class, relations were sporadically implicated in support for state funded Family Planning; Cook’s press content survey reflects that “[a]nxiety about the growth of the black population in Britain strongly reinforced racist support for population control” (302).

The novels I have selected from my fiction sample show an engagement with eugenic ideologies. Fat is reviled in parous, racially-othered and /or working class female characters. Yet fat is permissible in female characters who are white, middle class and

virginal.^{xv} The latter characters comply with Anke Bernau's (2007) description of virgins as "girls on the brink of womanhood—ripening and fertile, ready to copulate and procreate. They are both young...and innocent...yet have full sexual potential" (117). That potential is closely regulated: I contend their virginity is guarded precisely because their fertility is valued. Note, too, that the adolescent virgin may function as a reassuring figure given the aforementioned anxieties around girls' promiscuity; according to Bernau, the virgin holds out promise "for *future* pleasure and productivity within the socially sanctioned institution of heterosexual marriage" (italics mine, 117).

The Peacock's adherence to this pattern is at odds with the text's ostensible sympathies. To aid clarity I will summarise the plot here. The protagonist is Una Gwithiam, a fifteen year old girl with hopes of reading mathematics at Oxford. Her mother is dead, and her father, Edward, is a British diplomat. At the start of the novel Una attends boarding school in England with her twelve-year-old half sister, Halcyon, whose own mother is estranged. Both girls are withdrawn from school and flown to Edward's residence in New Delhi. They are required as a cover. Edward wishes his mistress, a "Eurasian" (18) woman called Alix, to live with him in the guise of a governess. Una is deeply resentful that Alix cannot provide the advanced teaching she requires. Their relationship worsens when Una discovers Alix stealing from the household supply of Scotch; the whisky is intended for Alix's alcoholic mother, Mrs Lamont. The tension climaxes in Alix whipping Una. This prompts Una to seek comfort from Ravi, a young Indian poet working as their gardener. They embark on an affair which leads to pregnancy and a failed elopement. Edward arranges a termination against Una's will, but she miscarries before the procedure can take place. She returns to her English boarding school. Details of the scandal reach Halcyon's mother and consequently Halcyon is removed from Edward's care at the novel's close.

Although the plot positions Una's affair and pregnancy sympathetically, the characters are described in ways which problematically aestheticise virginal, white, middle class girlhood. I will examine three characters to demonstrate this point: Halcyon, Una, and Mrs Lamont. Mrs Lamont is an adult character, but I choose to discuss her for the following reasons. The fiction sampled from this period continues to associate childhood fat with affluence (see table 3). However, the association between adult fat and affluence is weaker than it had been a decade previously. The emergent class difference between fat women and fat girls informs the texts' eugenic imagery in ways I wish to analyse.

Of the three characters, Halcyon is presented as the most physically attractive. She is described as a "pretty" and "adorable creature" (15). In particular, her "plumpness" is favourably contrasted with Una's thinness (15). The head mistress of their boarding school observes:

Una was at the lanky stage and it would take a connoisseur to prefer her to Hal. Hal, with her small plumpness, would never be lanky and Mrs Carrington thought with a pang of Hal's dimples, the bloom of her skin, the long curls. (15)

Unusually within the fiction sample, the narrator implies Hal is pretty *because* of her plumpness—not in spite of it. The effect is partly achieved through lexical set: the reference to the "bloom" of her skin brings floral associations, while the reference to her "long" hair brings connotations of growth. Hal's plumpness is thus grouped with images of ripening that comply with Bernau's description of the idealised virgin. Consistent with this role, she is highly sheltered by the surrounding characters. Edward invests time and effort in protecting Hal's virginity by, for example, enrolling her in a convent (121). Her sister is also protective; when Hal expresses incomprehension at adult behaviour, this is valued by

Una as an attractive, but temporary, state of sexual innocence. Una remarks: “you haven’t had time to be stained” (132). Hal’s mother also participates in the cossetting of Hal by removing her from the perceived immorality of the Gwithiams’ household (251).

Is this association between plumpness, prettiness, and ripeness anomalous when contrasted with media constructions of the fat body in the same period? The *Jackie* sample contains more references to fat in the nineteen-seventies than in any other decade. The volume peaks in 1975, when, on average, three quarters of a page per issue comprise visual or linguistic references to fat. Between 1970 and 1979, the majority of references focus on how to lose what one article describes as “unwanted fat” (Issue 520 12); nevertheless, readers sporadically seek advice on how to gain weight. One reader expresses anxiety that she is “too skinny” (Issue 417 2); another asks how she might achieve fatter legs (Issue 520 18). A third complains to the Cathy and Claire problem page that she doesn’t look more like her “slightly overweight” sister; she reports “I’m so thin I disappear when I turn sideways” (Issue 450 27). Cathy and Claire advise her against a fattening diet and recommend “wearing flattering clothes which will emphasise your lack of inches” (Issue 450 27) but other issues suggest there is a market for products that facilitate weight gain. An advertisement from 1978 expounds that “Super Wate-On can help you put on pounds to help give you a more feminine figure” (Issue 744). A picture of a model carrying a beach ball is used to demonstrate that Wate-On can make one feel “healthier” and “prettier.” She is normatively slim—which might indicate a greater willingness to idealise the fat body in linguistic rather than visual texts, or imply that discussing “weight” and “pounds” is a decorous alternative to discussing sexual maturation. Either way, the purpose of the supplement is to “fill out curves on shoulders, bust, arms, legs and hips,” in a simulation of

the “ripening” Bernau alludes to. The advertisement can only be understood if one acknowledges a connection between bodily fat, sexual potential and looking “prettier.”

Hal therefore shares characteristics with at least some media constructions of the fat body. *The Peacock*—like *Jackie*—also evidences more hostile constructions of the fat body, which are typically differentiated along the axes of race, class, or parousness (and as a corollary of parousness, age). This brings us to Mrs Lamont: a kindly alcoholic frequently rendered immobile by the “bulk” of her body (25). Via comparisons with her daughter Alix, the text constructs Mrs Lamont’s weight gain as a physical decline; the narrator refers to the “daughter’s beauty in the ruins” of Mrs Lamont’s face (21), and describes how “in Mrs Lamont, Alix’s curves had turned to a mound of soft flesh” (24).

If, to use Bernau’s term, Hal’s fertility is still “potential”, then Mrs Lamont’s fertility has already been realised. Mrs Lamont and Alix provide the only example of a biological mother-child relationship in the book. Mrs Lamont is consequently the text’s most prominent parous character. While Hal’s “plumpness” is referred to in a cluster of ripening imagery, Mrs Lamont is surrounded by images of *over*-ripeness: she spends the majority of her time reclining in a dilapidated hotel amidst the smell of “decaying vegetables” and food covered with flies (25). Her living quarters in an impoverished town are “crammed with life” (25). The adjoining rooms are filled with “children crying; babies crawled in the doorway, children were everywhere” (24). The association of fat with appetite, life, and the proliferation of children is potentially appealing, partly because Mrs Lamont is “quite comfortable” with herself and her “decaying” surroundings (25). But a positive reading of Mrs Lamont’s body is hard to sustain, because the text invites you to laugh at her in grotesque scenarios like the following:

The rickshaw-man's thin legs had to pedal like fly-wheels to bring the rickshaw along, its load was so gargantuan. Mrs Lamont seemed a mountain of fat, made fatter by her cushions (129).

The rickshaw-man's exertion and "thin" physique are juxtaposed with Mrs Lamont's immobility and size to construct her as *excessively* fat. The text suggests her appetites, too, are excessive. "My God! Why am I so fat?" she asks. "Ally tells me it is my own fault—I eat too many sweet things, but what is life if you don't eat?" (129).

She is fat to excess; she is appetitive to excess; and the proliferation of children in her living quarters is also positioned as excessive, because Edward comments sadly that there "are too many children" in India (22). But what determines, in this context, where the line of excess is drawn? I contend that the text constructs excess along an axis of racial and national difference. During a visit to the Gwithiams' house Mrs Lamont drinks half a decanter of whisky (130-1); when Una and Hal discuss the incident later, they describe her with racially-othering metaphors that allude to her size, such as "elephant," and "half-brown" "whale" (132). The resultant dichotomy seems stark. Fat is constructed as an alluring trait in Hal, the book's most cosseted white virgin. But fat is constructed as a grotesque trait in the book's most prominent parous character: a "half-brown" woman who lives in "filth" (25) surrounded by children.

This dichotomy endures throughout the book; neither Hal nor Mrs Lamont undergo any physical change, and other characters respond to their respective appearances in a consistent way. Una appears not to comply with either position in this dichotomy, because she is constantly changing in appearance. However, the stable depiction of Hal and Mrs Lamont is what makes the meaning of Una's bodily changes explicable to the reader. Hal and Mrs Lamont thus provide parameters for reading Una's body.

At the start of the novel, Una is “lanky” relative to Hal (15). She is “fine-boned” (14); a “sheaf of bones” (31); and a “skinny-malink” (38). In a trajectory that perpetuates associations between bodily fat and fertility, she is first alerted to her pregnancy by weight gain (173), and miscarries after dysentery-related weight loss (250). Yet the changes in her appearance, though clear enough to her, are overlooked by everyone else. Friends and family are usually preoccupied with her sister: “no one looked at Una. They were too busy looking at Hal” (117). Una’s weight gain is seemingly unnoticed; her father does not realise, and even Ravi is slow to acknowledge her body has altered (160). In a text where Hal’s visible “plumpness” elicits protection and cossetting, Edward’s failure to see Una’s bodily changes can be read as an extension of his failure to recognise her fertility and protect her virginity.

In the first month of her pregnancy, Una ceases to feel like a “skinny-malink” (160) and points of comparison with Mrs Lamont begin to emerge. Relative to the undernourished travellers she encounters while eloping, Una feels “spoiled,” “fed on butter and sugar” and even “overfed” (191)—as with Mrs Lamont, her body fat is attributed to excess. Her relative fatness acts as a reminder that she is privileged in ways her fellow travellers are not, but also carries a second, implicit meaning. The child she expects is of mixed race; accordingly, like the children in Mrs Lamont’s hotel, he/she is categorised as an example of excess too. Edward argues that Una’s child will be “a half-caste bastard—another little unwanted” (245). It is in these terms that he attempts to coerce a termination.

His rationale overrides Una’s own belief that the pregnancy is “wanted” (245). Abortion is not freely chosen here as an exercise of reproductive rights; it is positioned as a racist tool for limiting female agency. This scenario resonates with the concerns of black activists, such as the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent: “The

implication of the slogan—a woman’s right to choose—has a different meaning for us” (1981, 145). Troublingly, though the termination does not go ahead, Una’s miscarriage fulfils an equivalent function in the narrative. Paul Gilroy (1987) notes that in the mid-twentieth century, Britons used the idea that “miscegenation” is “the descent of white womanhood” as the main signifier of social problems associated with race (72). Una’s “descent” is halted by her miscarriage, which allows her to be restored to her original social position as an English “schoolgirl.” Readers can thus be reassured that the possibility of her “descent” has been averted without feeling unsettled by either a coercive termination or Alix’s moral objection that abortion is a “sin” (245). The twin anxieties of the reproductive rights debate, outlined at the start of the chapter, are assuaged; the Indian population is limited, but the affluent white “schoolgirl” remains at a safe distance from abortion.

In *Bilgewater*, keeping schoolgirls away from abortion is a concern that continues to be played out on the fat body. The narrator is Marigold, a “thick-set” seventeen year old girl (11). Her father, Bill, is a housemaster at a boys’ boarding school. His pupils nickname Marigold “Bilgewater” as a pun on the phrase “Bill’s Daughter” (11). The novel comprises two strands. The first follows Bilgewater’s academic endeavours. The second details her search for “romance” (54). She develops a crush on Jack, who plays for the school rugby team; she is briefly infatuated with Terrapin, the intense son of an actor with a talent for crafting puppets; and she finally grows attached to Boakes, the son of a local vicar. With particular relevance for this study, Bilgewater’s virginity loss is thwarted by the intervention of a terrifying housekeeper—an “old fat nasty woman” (103) known as Mrs Deering, who it is implied also procures abortions for young girls (113). I intend to examine how hostility towards both eugenic targets and the sexually active schoolgirl is implicated in the differing presentation of Bilgewater and Mrs Deering as fat characters.

Despite Bilgewater's resemblance to Hal as a protected virgin, the aestheticisation of fat is more fraught here than in *The Peacock*. Unlike Hal, Bilgewater's physical appearance is not idealised: she is "ugly, quaint and square" (29). Counter-intuitively, this comprises a favourable portrayal, because the text constructs compliance with beauty standards as a sign of superficiality. Bilgewater's friend Grace offers the most notable example. Grace is primarily concerned with being "dead fashionable" and "looking good" (82). Schoolwork is of limited importance to her: she fails her O'levels, placing her two years below Bilgewater in school despite being the same age (61). Grace's preoccupation with appearance is, significantly, entwined with a sexual knowledge that baffles Bilgewater—for instance, Grace presses her to buy nightwear more enticing than viyella pyjamas, but Bilgewater is perplexed as to who might see "what you wear in bed" (77). She is a sexual naïf, and expresses similar confusion to Hal at the affairs of the people around her: "All this passion," she remarks. "I suppose I'm pretty blind. Pretty immature for my age. I never guessed" (186).

Under Grace's supervision Bilgewater temporarily capitulates to the lure of the "dead fashionable," specifically by purchasing clothes that make her look "thin" (80). Her initial sense that "I have arrived. I am normal. I am like the others" (83) is dismissed as inauthentic by those closest to her. Terrapin is disturbed when she claims to have looked a "mess" prior to Grace's intervention (86). "I liked you," he responds; "You were yourself then" (87). His comment assumes that appearance is an indication of personality, and that personality is essential and enduring; attempts to change one's appearance therefore become an act of insincerity.

In Bilgewater's case, this implies that looking a "mess," or "frog-bodied" (11), or a "lump" (66), is the truest reflection of her "academic but barmy" personality (70). A refusal

to camouflage one's appearance may be "anti-social" (83), as Grace alleges; however Bilgewater seems to perceive few gains in being sociable. Instead she tends towards imaginative reveries and scholarly diligence; she favours "long idle walks by the sea" (11) and "wandering...drowsily" in the park with her thoughts (35). She questions whether it is "worth it" (83) to meet other peoples' standards of appearance. Her perspective is rewarded in adulthood with a Cambridge degree, marriage to a man who thinks her "marvellous" (186) and a career as first woman principal of Caius College (200).

Yet what it means to look a "mess" is differently constituted in characters according to their race. Regard the following depiction of Grace's friend Beryl:

There were a few other large, older girls in that form as it happened and Grace Gathering was standing beside a curvaceous brown-skinned one called Beryl Something who had a bad reputation and didn't do much in the way of washing. She had long slit eyes. The distinguishing feature of Beryl Something was that for more years than you could count, probably from the moment she had arrived at the school there had been boys on motor bikes hanging round the school gates to take her home. (61)

Bodily fat is not validated in Beryl as it is in Bilgewater. To be "curvaceous" and "brown-skinned" is connected here with being promiscuous and slovenly. The damning focus on personal hygiene is particularly noteworthy because the ease with which Bilgewater forgets to wash is framed later in the text as an endearing eccentricity (77). While Bilgewater's fatness is compatible with, indeed indicative of, an "academic" nature, Beryl's is associated with early sexualisation. Bilgewater subsequently describes Beryl as "huge and greasy" and expresses revulsion at her "bare mid-riff" (94); no thought is spent on whether Beryl, to paraphrase Terrapin, is "being herself."

Beryl's presence is fleeting, but foreshadows the introduction of Mrs Deering, whose body comprises a similar co-construction of fat and slovenliness. Mrs Deering is Beryl's grandmother, and Terrapin's housekeeper. She can be compared, fruitfully, with Mrs Lamont. They are both mothers in texts with motherless protagonists. They both belong to interracial families.^{xvi} They are both surrounded by imagery that associates bodily fat with excess. Gardam implies that Mrs Deering, like Mrs Lamont, is fat because of an excess of appetite; for instance Bilgewater sees Mrs Deering sucking a sweet and complains that she is always eating (182). Their bodies, too, are constructed as similarly uncontrolled. Like Mrs Lamont, Mrs Deering is associated with an overflow of "filth" (Godden 25). Bilgewater remarks that after Mrs Deering's arrival "there was a sort of smell in the room of unwashed clothes. Her face had bristles on it and the creases in it very deeply and greasily marked. Her hair was greasy too" (Gardam 182). References to grease, the liquid form of fat, create the impression that Mrs Deering's physical self cannot be contained; she exudes smells and substances. Related imagery suggests her body is smothering in its fatness—Bilgewater is perturbed by the "spilling" (109), "swelling" (109), and "bulg[ing]" (111) of Mrs Deering's body. She is said to resemble "a great, stuffed draught-excluder or bolster" (101)—an image that echoes the description of Mrs Lamont's body as a "cushion" (Godden 129), not least in its suffocating overtones.

The Peacock's dichotomy of the idealised, fat, white, virgin and the reviled, fat, racially-othered mother is therefore revisited in this text, with the respective roles filled by Bilgewater and Mrs Deering. Nonetheless there are significant differences from *The Peacock* which I wish to explore. Mrs Lamont is not involved in the guarding of Hal; but Mrs Deering is instrumental in the protection of Bilgewater's virginity. Furthermore Mrs Lamont is a benevolent, if grotesque, figure, while Mrs Deering is surrounded with diabolic

imagery that suggests her intents are “wicked” (183). Tellingly, her devilry is given a racial inflection; she is compared to the Algerian witch, “Sycorax” (183). Given Bilgewater’s disparagement of Beryl’s sexual activity, it is surprising that Mrs Deering’s role in safeguarding Bilgewater’s chastity is positioned as malign. This contradiction is resolved by acknowledging that Mrs Deering does not issue warnings; rather she enacts and embodies Bilgewater’s fears pertaining to sex. Her fatness has a key function in this.

Mrs Deering appears, with uncanny prescience, before and during Bilgewater’s potential sexual encounters. She is introduced prior to Jack kissing Bilgewater at the local pier (101-104); she returns to the narrative when Bilgewater is travelling alone on a bus and fears sexual predation (108); and she returns again when Terrapin makes a sexual advance towards Bilgewater in his bedroom (155).

On the first occasion Mrs Deering gets stuck fast in the small, cramped space of a ticket booth on the pier. Her mobility is restricted by her size, and she cannot free herself. Bilgewater is a distressed observer. She is “terrified, shocked by the great person” who is “doubled up, wheezing, watching me with such a curious, animal eye, like the eye of fate” (102). The scenario has the following implications. The reference to the “eye of fate” is the first suggestion that Mrs Deering heralds a fearful future for Bilgewater. It is one incident amongst several that undermines the romance of Jack kissing Bilgewater later that evening (105); their kiss is pervaded by “a breath of uneasiness” (109). But additionally, the scenario suggests Mrs Deering embodies an outcome of sex—motherhood—that Bilgewater fears. The passage uses images that implicitly associate motherhood with being trapped. Mrs Deering’s daughter is in the booth with her, and exclaims that “Mother’s stuck” (101). The description of the tiny booth as a “mummy-case” (100) evokes both coffins and, punningly, motherhood. This image continues an association between

domesticity and death established earlier in the text, by Bilgewater wondering if her own mother struggled to tolerate a tedious homelife: “Perhaps that is why my mother upped and died. Perhaps my mother took one look at me and thought, ‘I’m bored stiff and now *this*’” (19). When the “mummy-case” fails to accommodate Mrs Deering’s fatness, the confined mother and the confined fat body are conflated. Bilgewater’s horror at the scene combines the fear of Mrs Deering’s fat with a fear of motherhood, in a way that serves to keep her virginal and will be further developed in their next meeting.

At this second meeting, Bilgewater’s disgust with Mrs Deering’s body is maintained. Bilgewater is daydreaming as she takes the bus to Jack’s home for a weekend away. The journey has caused “the keenest anxiety” for her family, who fret that she will be navigating “unknown and seedy-sounding halts” by herself (106). Bilgewater speculates how her dead mother might have broached the topic of sex—in particular, she imagines her mother issuing warnings that “some awful man might try and pick you up” (110). Mrs Deering takes the adjoining bus seat, and the sensation of her “great warm weight” (111), of “something very large and heavy...spilling and swelling all over me” (109), disturbs Bilgewater’s reverie. The ensuing conversation is peppered with intrusive and insinuating questions; Mrs Deering is thus interpolated as a substitute mother figure who falls some way short of Bilgewater’s fantasy. Instead of offering protective advice against the “awful man” who “might try and pick you up,” she assumes that Bilgewater is pregnant:

‘In trouble?’

‘Trouble?’

‘Seeing a doctor.’

‘Oh – oh no.’

‘I just wondered. You just seemed,’ she said after some time, ‘a bit worried like, it seemed to me. A bit upset.’ Into her bag went her not very clean hand again and came out holding a huge banana. ‘If you was in trouble,’ she said, ‘you just come and see me. I’m not that far from Marston Bungalow. I’m at Marston Hall. You can’t miss it. I’m Mrs Deering.’

I thought not in a million years, not for fire, flood, pestilence or famine would I go near such a person as you ever, ever, ever. (113)

Mrs Deering’s presence at the pier warns Bilgewater away from sex by evoking the constraints of motherhood; her presence on the train evokes the threat of an abortionist with dirty hands. Notwithstanding the comically Freudian symbolism of the “huge banana” this scene provides further intimations of Mrs Deering’s malevolence. Bilgewater’s apocalyptic references to “fire, flood, pestilence or famine” place Mrs Deering’s offer in a Christian context where her morality would be found wanting. Bilgewater fears motherhood; but it is abstinence—not abortion—that the text positions as the correct means of avoidance.

Mrs Deering’s third appearance coincides with the climatic point in Bilgewater’s relationship with Terrapin the puppet-maker. During a night in his room Bilgewater declares that she is “in love” with him (153). She gets into his bed, fully clothed, surprising herself with her lack of compunction; “I had always thought I had very strong views on sexual morality. I found I had nothing of the kind” (154). But as soon as Terrapin instructs her to remove her clothes, her “views” are reinstated. She refuses to undress (155). He ignores her protests, and turns out the lights against her will, calling her a “fool” (155). However, at that instant Mrs Deering starts a “tremendous knocking and thumping on the door” (155). Terrapin refuses to let her in but Bilgewater takes the opportunity to say this

intervention is “fate” (158) and successfully resists Terrapin’s further entreaties to stay (158).

Curiously, despite Terrapin’s attempted rape, it is Mrs Deering who comes to be portrayed as the villain of the piece. As soon as Mrs Deering retreats from the door, Bilgewater reflects that Terrapin “looked very endearing. Never in my life had I so loved anyone” (157). He comprises a counterpart to the protected virgin girl; the sexually avaricious boy of whom no self-control is expected, and who thus lacks culpability. Mrs Deering, on the other hand, remains a terrifying figure, as the following passage reflects:

[I] saw for the first time clearly what I had seemed to see from the corner of my eye and rejected, soon after I had arrived—Terrapin’s latest puppet. It was not yet finished but already very dreadful and good. It was different from the rest—gross, balloon-like and rubbery with a greedy, ugly, impertinent head; a head so confident and powerful that it held more horrors than anything ordinarily nasty—any devil or goblin—and it was of course Mrs Deering. She had been hanging there unfinished in the dark all the time we had been together in bed. (158-9)

Once again Mrs Deering’s body and appetites are constructed as excessive; the puppet Terrapin has modelled on her is “gross” and “greedy.” References to devils and goblins suggest that she may also be a tempter to excess. The puppet’s position overlooking the bed contextualises this temptation as, specifically, sexual. The result is a troubling moral emphasis. As the puppet-maker, Terrapin has ownership of the sexual “greed” the marionette denotes (it is significant that his creation is “unfinished,” like his sexual act). But his greed is emblemized by a fat, parous, woman’s body—not his own. Furthermore, Bilgewater is positioned as the one who must resist that greed; for the puppet has been there

since her arrival, and she initially ignored it. Rape (and in this scenario virginity loss) is thus constructed as an act victims must guard against, or be morally at fault. This is underscored by Terrapin's incredulity that Bilgewater came to see him without intending to stay; he asks, "do you honestly expect me to believe that?" (158).

To summarise, there are three different scenarios where Mrs Deering embodies Bilgewater's fears pertaining to sex. In the first she evokes the threat of motherhood; in the second she evokes the threat of abortion; and in the third, most problematically, she evokes the threat of male sexual violence. Each threat represents a possible future, or "fate," for Bilgewater if she fails to adequately safeguard her virginity. The three scenarios construct associations between fatness, fertility, and sexual excess—but only in the mature, parous, racially ambiguous body of Mrs Deering. As an affluent white virgin, Bilgewater's body is accorded greater worth. Her virginity is prized above bodily autonomy; Bilgewater is co-opted as a protector of her own virginity, and if she fails to maintain it, she is held culpable. We thus see hostility directed simultaneously towards the sexualised schoolgirl, and the eugenic targets of the day.

A Song is similarly concerned with demarcating sexual mores. However, in this text, race assumes less significance than class. Jane Slater, the daughter of an estate agent and a piano teacher, is described as a "lumpy, awkward" schoolgirl of fifteen (62). The novel focuses on the emergence of Jane's social conscience. She is politicised by local protests against the closure of a nursery, which has been earmarked for redevelopment as a disco. Jane's childhood friend, Mandy Spears, is the protest ringleader. A developing romance with Jim, a teenage boy from the local council estate, further personalises Jane's awareness of social inequality. As in *The Peacock* and *Bilgewater*, we see a dichotomy of fat bodies in the text—this time comprising Jane and Mandy's mother, Mrs Spears.

The “round-bodied” (29), “plump” (34) Mrs Spears is a cleaner and a widow. She loses her job as an indirect result of Mandy illegally daubing political slogans on walls (29). Her frustration with Mandy prompts her to confess that “sometimes, I think we’d be better off without each other” (104). Jane sympathises with Mrs Spears, who has “no one to talk to except Mandy—and now she blamed Mandy for her troubles” (104). Although Pointon describes Mandy’s protests as “necessary conflict” (14), Mandy is also portrayed as “selfish” (105); Jane muses that “Mandy fulfilled her social obligations at the expense of her own mother’s anguish” (105).

The portrayal of a hard-to-control daughter, who is in trouble with the law and disregards her mother’s entreaties, dovetails with Keith Joseph’s assertion that lower class families are a source of social disruption. Pointon does not imply, as Joseph does, that lower class fertility should be reduced; but he describes some of the institutional practices directed at that end. Jim, for instance, is prioritised for school sex education in a way that Jane is not. She is confused by his references to classes in “personal relationships”:

‘What’s that?’

‘Oh you know...’ He glanced at her.

‘What...?’ She looked away across the fields.

‘Boys and girls and that.’

‘We don’t do anything like that at our school,’ she said. (76)

Early sexual activity and childbearing are constructed by the text as a lower class trait, from which Jane has been sheltered. Jim describes her as “a bit call-me-madam” (76) because they have differing expectations of the speed at which relationships should progress. She is also slow to realise that Jim’s brother, Tony, married a girl he barely knew because of an unplanned pregnancy (78). Jane’s exchanges with Jim create a classed differential in

experiences of sex and reproduction. Assuming, as I did at the chapter's outset, that fat symbolises fertility, how is this differential manifest in the text's treatment of fat characters?

Mrs Spears is not described in the same abject terms as Mrs Lamont or Mrs Deering, but one marker of an excessive appetite remains, specifically focused on Mrs Spears' alcohol consumption—Jim remarks on her house “smelling like a brewery” (143). Desperate at the prospect of unemployment, Mrs Spears attempts to commit suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills, and the resultant scene uses imagery of dirt and smells familiar from *The Peacock* and *Bilgewater*. Jane and Jim are the first to find Mrs Spears in an unconscious state. Her body, like Mrs Deering's, seems to exceed its boundaries: a “yellow stream” of vomit on her chin (139) creates “fumes” that rise “repulsively” (139), and an “obscene odour” pervades the building. (140). Associations between fat and squalor are reified here, even though Jane's tearful reactions to the scene help position Mrs Spears as a figure of sympathy.

Unlike *The Peacock* and *Bilgewater*, *A Song* associates fat with an excess of appetite in its adolescent protagonist, as well as in parous counterparts. Mrs Slater lectures Jane that it would take a “modicum of will-power” to lose weight by eating less (25). Philip, an insensitive acquaintance who plays the drums in Jane's folk group, castigates Jane that she “shouldn't eat so much” and that she “should get more exercise” (20). Even Jim teases her, seemingly in jest, that she is a “fatty” who needs to “get some weight off” (87). These comments imply Jane is under pressure to change her physicality in ways Hal and Bilgewater are not. Bilgewater is encouraged to camouflage her bodily fat; but at no point is it suggested she needs to lose weight by eating less or exercising more. There are,

however, two means by which Jane's fatness is rendered more permissible than Mrs Spears'.

The first is the suggestion Jane's personal traits counterbalance an unattractive appearance. As with Bilgewater, it is implied that "looking a sight" (Pointon 26) is partly an effect of a "dreamy" (63) demeanour which brings compensatory advantages of its own. Jane is often "lost in dreams" (26). Her continual "absent-mindedness" (11) and tendency to fall into a "dreamy state" (8) causes her to overlook aspects of grooming—for instance she drags her hair through her breakfast marmalade (26). But her "dreaminess" encompasses a feeling for others' emotional states which borders on the telepathic. This proves particularly valuable when Mrs Spears takes her overdose: Jane experiences a premonition that prompts Mrs Spears' rescue (137). Because physically attractive characters such as Philip—who looks "like a film star" (20)—lack Jane's empathy, this text, like *Bilgewater*, implies that focusing on appearance may inhibit the development of important personal qualities.

There is a second, more significant means by which Jane's fatness is rendered permissible: a narrative epiphany brings the characters' perceptions of Jane into closer alignment with the "ripening" virgin of Bernau's description. Although Jane and Bilgewater share similarities in their tendency to daydream, Jane's visions are imbued with mysticism. At the close of *A Song*, her intensity of feeling culminates in a quasi-spiritual transformation. She sings a folk song at the disco, the effects of which are dependent on her initial, alleged plainness:

There were some smiles and glances exchanged but no movements among the crowd. They surrendered themselves to the song, staring in frank amazement at the singer: a lumpish female whom they had ridiculed a few

moments earlier, whose name some of them knew, and who, now, in their very hearing, was transfiguring herself into an angel of grace. (183)

The Christian overtones of “transfiguring”, “angel,” and “grace,” involve constructions of virtue that are not made available to the text’s other fat character, Mrs Spears. Post-transformation, Jane’s appearance resonates with Bernau’s description of the blossoming virgin. As Jane nears the end of the song, “her arms opened, curving and soft like the spring hills” and the audience gathers round her “as if in an act of consecration” (184). The story’s climax foregrounds Jane’s position as a “consecrated” virgin in compliance with a valorisation of the fat, fertile, but appropriately regulated middle class girl.

Before concluding, I wish to consider one final aspect of Jane’s characterisation that anticipates important trends in the nineteen-eighties fiction sample. Namely, the fat body and the eating habits alleged to cause it are imbued with psychological import. Both create opportunities for Jane to resist her parents’ authority, and for her parents to pillory her choices. For instance her eating habits are constructed as a transgression of gender norms which aggravates her mother; Mrs Slater complains that Jane shows the “kind of greed one expects in ten-year-old boys—not young women” (26). Similarly Jane suspects that she does not meet her father’s expectations of what a young girl should be: “Fathers ought to have pretty daughters to be proud of” (26). Moreover, Jane’s snacking habits, which leave her “full of carbohydrates,” (26), comprise an effective disruption of scheduled meals she would rather avoid (26). If Jane’s eating habits and bodily fat comprise a form of rebellion, how might this relate to the idealised virgins we have seen in *The Peacock* and *Bilgewater*? *A Song* was published in 1978, the same year as Susie Orbach’s *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. Orbach argued, from a psychoanalytic perspective, that fat is a “cover” (51) unconsciously sought by women in ambivalence towards gendered oppression; she alleges that fat may be

experienced by women as an avoidance of sex in a mass culture where images of sexuality focused on women's bodies proliferate (72). The circumstances in which Jane first resists Jim's sexual interest are therefore particularly striking. Bilgewater appears to withdraw consent in deference to "sexual morality," rather than a lack of desire (Gardam 154-5). Jane, however, is frightened and angered by Jim accelerating their physical closeness past the point of her comfort. His first attempt to hold her hand makes her feel "awkwardly bulky and heavy" (Pointon 76) and ends with Jane shouting, "I'm not used to being grabbed, if you want to know" (77). She begins to cry, repeating that he has upset her by "grabbing her" (83) and "wanting to—to—rush everything" (83). Her suspicion of him focuses, in part, on her belief that her fatness should deter his interest; "You can't see much in me" she asserts (86). Jim is perplexed by her perception of (to him) a relatively tentative gesture, and assumes she is "crackers" (86). She thus demonstrates a fear of sexual contact, and a belief that her weight should prevent sexual contact, that appears pathological to others. By such means, *A Song* interweaves the idealisation of Jane's virginity with an incipient psychological pathologising of the fat adolescent girl. This psychoanalytic construction of weight gain co-exists with, and does not supplant, the endorsements of the fat adolescent body I have already discussed, because both can be accommodated in a character to whom sex is constructed as a threat.

Orbach's arguments have little explanatory power for the other texts in my fiction sample. However recourse to quasi-psychological constructions of the fat body would take hold in a different form over the next decade. In the USA, psychological health has already assumed increasing significance in the portrayal of fat characters in children's fiction. The historian Hillel Schwartz (1986) notes that the liberalisation of attitudes towards birth control coincided with an increase in children's novels using weight loss as a symbol of

actualisation (301). Such novels include *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971), *Heads You Win Tails I Lose* (1973), *Oh, Rick* (1978) and *Dumb Old Casey is a Fat Tree* (1979), amongst others. Schwartz describes the trend as an attempt to counter “adult images of abortion” with “childlike images of rebirth” (301). The trend is contiguous with older, folkloric conflations of fatness and pregnancy which Schwartz claims were originally rooted in anatomical ignorance. He points to Victorian misunderstandings of the relationship between the stomach and the uterus; the advocacy of dyspepsia treatments as prophylactics; and fears that vigorous exercise might promote miscarriage (50-51). In Britain, the attribution of body weight to particular psychological states already had a place in media discourses. In the *Jackie* sample, such references can be fleeting, but appear across a varied range of content. One fashion feature states: “Plump girls always tend to eat more just to console themselves – it’s just a vicious circle” (Issue 485 8). Cathy and Claire, *Jackie*’s agony aunts, imply that weight loss inaugurates a new identity as well as changing the body: “every time you feel like buying some sweets,” they advise a reader seeking to lose weight, “think of the slim new you—and DON’T!” (Issue 365 10). A reader also contributes the following letter in 1975:

I was reading a letter in an old “Jackie” about a girl who said she was constantly being made fun of, and had no friends and no confidence.

I’d like to let that girl know of my experiences, to show her that she’s not alone in her unhappiness. A short while ago I felt exactly the same as she did. I was fat, had no friends, and what’s more none of the teachers liked me (they didn’t care less about those who were slow to understand.)

Well since then I’ve changed schools, and I decided I was really going to make a new start. I’ve lost a bit of weight (but I’m also determined not to be

so self-conscious about my figure), I've made sure really to make friends of people, and I've passed my 'O' levels, so I couldn't have been that slow
(Issue 624 04)

The letter writer constructs fat as symptomatic of “unhappiness;” a problem to be tackled through emotional change, such as being less “self-conscious,” as well as through weight loss.

This terminology of “confidence” and “self-consciousness” is not directly driven by clinical understandings of psychology and body weight. The sample of psychological literature from the nineteen-seventies comprises only six studies. Of those, one is a piece of zoological research, which considers maternal stress as a factor in the dietary patterns of infant shrews (D'Souza and Martin 1974); two are directed at describing “obesity” as “somatic disorders” (Crisp, Douglas *et al* 1970; Finch 1972); one discusses amphetamines for a range of diagnoses, including “obesity” (Kuhn-Gebhardt 1972); one examines the relationship between parental and child energy expenditure (Griffiths and Payne 1976); and the last considers the relationship between body type and body esteem (Hendry and Gillies 1978). Though the publication of these six studies can be seen as the very early stages of an escalating academic interest in psychological aspects of body size, there is little to suggest they are driver in media constructions of the fat body. Rather, *Jackie's* intermittent exhortations that readers should have more “confidence” allows the publication to appear to be acting in their readers' best interests. The veneer of concern is belied by the inclusion of advertisements for weight loss products and the frequent inclusion of fat bodies as a source of humour—whether in comic strips or the editorial selection of reader's letters. Anxieties about weight become grist to the mill of *Jackie's* need for advertising revenue and the weekly demand for editorial copy.

In the next chapter, I will examine how the idea of bodily fat as a “confidence” problem takes hold in my fiction sample during the nineteen-eighties. As in *Jackie*, the texts I will consider veil prejudices towards the fat body with a veneer of concern; but the motivations are peculiar to political changes in the perceived duty to children of the welfare state.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FAT CHILD

Chapter Three

The Nineteen-Eighties: Common, Yobby, Fat

This chapter asks how the effects of body stratification are interwoven with class in nineteen-eighties juvenile fiction. Although I will make tangential references to other works of fiction, the analysis will be focused on the following four texts: Phil Redmond's *Tucker and Co.* (1982), Jacqueline Wilson's *Waiting for the Sky to Fall* (1983), Ann Pilling's *The Big Pink* (1987), and Eileen Fairweather's *French Letters* (1987). My argument is that the fiction sampled from this period constructs the fat child body as a site of socioeconomic anxiety. Each text connects fears of downward social mobility to accounts of adolescent weight gain. In the process the texts position lower class fat children as objects of pity, and lay a path towards positioning them as objects of revulsion. I critically examine how contemporaneous social policy informs the construction of "common, yobby, fat" child bodies (Wilson 118), and explore why the fictional fat child's movement down the social scale goes hand-in-hand with attributing weight gain to emotional causes.

Trends in the fiction sample show persistent associations between fatness and affluence throughout the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies (see tables 2 and 3). A shift away from this association begins at the close of the seventies and is maintained for another decade (see tables 3 and 4). Biomedical texts do not appear to follow the same pattern. Although PubMed and Medline yield no examples of wide-scale monitoring of childhood obesity in Britain until the nineteen-nineties, retrospective analyses have been carried out using data originally collected for alternative purposes. The National Survey of Health and Growth was primarily intended to monitor children's nutritional status, following concerns over the discontinuation of free school milk that was initiated by the

then Conservative Government with Margaret Thatcher as Secretary of State for Education (Rona and Chinn 1999, 1). The survey was conducted from 1972 to 1994. By 1980, obesity rather than undernutrition had begun to be identified as an emergent trend in the survey data (Chinn and Rona 1987). Between 1972 and 1990, the data indicated that weight-for-height and triceps skinfold thickness in primary school age children was steadily increasing. However, cross-referencing the data with socioeconomic class revealed that “trends in obesity are not confined to particular social groups” (Rona and Chinn 41). The decisive swing from higher to lower socioeconomic groups that we see in the fiction sample does not mirror the conclusions of health literature over the same period. Yet the origins of the NSHG may be illuminating in another sense: for the use of children’s bodies as a site for concerns, substantiated or otherwise, about the welfare state, is closely entwined with constructions of the fat, white, working class child we see in the fiction sample.

Christopher Leach’s *In Apple Country* (1978) appears to be a transitional text. The narrator’s nemesis George is described as a “heavy boy” (14) who works for the local butcher. Earlier texts characterise the children of food or drink purveyors as fat through affluence or over-indulgence; Cousin Bates, whose father owns a bakehouse in *The Piemakers* (Cresswell 1967, 36-42), is a case in point. But George’s dependent status as an evacuee means his relationship to the butcher is configured somewhat differently. He is not the beneficiary of a successful family business; he is an employee who must work from economic necessity. Thus, although *In Apple Country* echoes prior associations between fatness and the ready availability of food, the text loosens associations between the availability of food and personal wealth.

Later texts in the sample take this process a step further by associating fatness with low socio-economic status specifically. By 1980, Gina Wilson’s *Cora Ravenwing* features a

narrator whose class anxiety references body type amongst other characteristics. Becky Stokes, who relocates to the country with her family, is not impoverished; her father is a textiles businessman and her mother a teacher (11). Nevertheless she compares herself unfavourably with her new friends on class grounds - in particular, with Hermione, the local rich girl whose father wears plus-fours and employs an au pair (53). Becky's weight informs her characterisation as an urban, déclassé newcomer; while Hermione is "thin", "blonde" and aspires to be the Romantic child "of nature" (10), Becky is "plump, with short black hair and a pink face" (10) and is looked down upon because her "accent ha[s] a distinct Birmingham twang" (16). When her friendships become increasingly status inflected and difficult to negotiate – most notably in her attempts to balance idolising Hermione with feelings of affection for the village outcast Cora Ravenwing – Becky's weight is described in more emotive terms. Becky modifies her earlier self-description of being "plump" to "fat", and reports that she "hates" being seen as such (22).

Published in the same year as *Cora*, Bernard Ashley's *Break in the Sun* (1980) contributes to the emergent trend with a further fat lower class character. Kenny Granger repeatedly lies about his whereabouts to escape his mother, the concrete tower block where he lives, and the bullies at his school. *Break* reconfigures stereotypical associations between fatness and stupidity to suggest deeper psychological motivations behind Kenny's behaviour. He avoids accusations of being a "fat cry-baby" by affecting insensibility when he is bullied; "he took it when he had to with a slow smile he'd practised to make them think he was thick as well as fat" (35). Like *Cora*, *Break* ostensibly constructs the fat child with greater empathy, by dwelling on the character's emotional well-being.

As I explored in the previous chapter, the co-construction of fatness, low socioeconomic status and contested emotional health was already a feature of the Cathy and

Claire problem pages during the nineteen-seventies. Significantly, the increased visibility of this co-construction in the fiction sample coincides with *Jackie* phasing out alternative constructions of the fat body. In 1979, an average of more than a page per issue in the *Jackie* sample was comprised of visual and linguistic references to fat. In 1989, the average was less than a quarter page. The difference is accounted for by a decrease in references to slimming. Additionally, there is a decrease in references to the fat body as a source of humour, typified at the start of the period by comic strips such as “The Pathetic Attempts of Leonard J. Watkins...”. What remains is the continuation of outwardly sympathetic advice pieces in the form of letters pages and fashion features. One possible explanation for the changing composition of *Jackie*’s references to fat is the increased scrutiny media texts came under for their role in the development of eating disorders; the earliest article in PsycINFO to refer to magazines in relation to eating disorders dates from October 1980 (Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, and Thompson 1980), and the first references to anorexia in the *Jackie* sample appear a little over a year later in January 1982 (Issue 940 29). By phasing out fat jokes, without taking the radical move of representing diverse body types regularly and neutrally, *Jackie* magazine plays lip-service to the assumed vulnerability of its audience. But are similar motivations at work in the fiction of the period? Each of the three fictional texts above features the fat lower class child as little more than a motif; before the end of the eighties, the fat lower class child had become a central thematic concern, accompanied by an ever-increasing emphasis on emotional well-being. Why does the co-construction of fatness, low socioeconomic status and contested emotional health become visible in the fiction sample for *this* period specifically? To begin addressing this question, I will analyse a particularly interesting example of media

convergence – “It’s All in the Mind”, the second short story in Redmond’s collection *Tucker and Co.*

Tucker is a distinctive text in at least two respects. It is the earliest example in my fiction sample to take body size as a suitable topic for issue-led fiction; and it is the only text produced as a tie-in product for a television drama. The book is the fifth in a series published by the British Broadcasting Corporation to accompany their school-set children’s programme, *Grange Hill* (1978-2008). Although there are media adaptations of other texts in the sample – the Warner Bros. productions of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) and the *Harry Potter* films (2001-2011) are amongst the most obvious – *Tucker* is the only adaptation of a pre-existing televisual text. Unlike Billy Bunter’s appearances across multiple platforms, which assume a kind of parity with each other, *Tucker* is always a secondary text to *Grange Hill*; this is reinforced by the incorporation of cast photographs on the dust jacket, cast listings on the inside flap, and references to the TV series on the cover and title page. The effect of these paratextual allusions to *Grange Hill* is that Roland Browning, the *Tucker* character of most interest to this chapter, is closely identified with the embodied performance of the child actor Erkan Mustafa. This identification is made irrespective of the reader’s familiarity with the programme, because Mustafa is named and photographed on the book for all to see.

Bearing in mind the close relationship between the programme and the book, I will briefly contextualise my analysis with reference to Roland’s onscreen development. Roland is introduced in the fifth series of *Grange Hill* as a bullied new boy (Janes 1982). His first storyline includes a referral to an educational psychologist because he is suicidally depressed. Although Roland’s depression stems from being bullied, his body size is treated as the problem; the psychologist’s primary advice is that he should lose weight (Janes and

Redmond 1982). Over the next five series Roland's storylines focus on the growth of his confidence through the acquisition of skills such as cooking. Clearly, in comparison to the characters I have examined in previous chapters, Roland is positioned as a vulnerable boy in need of help rather than punishment. But there is another, complex point of departure. Roland, in contrast to his schoolboy predecessor Billy Bunter, is lower class. He speaks with a cockney accent, and his home scenes indicate that his father is a lorry driver (Janes). In 1982 these were not wholly novel traits for a fat television character; over a decade before, the ensemble children's comedy *Here Come the Double Deckers* (Simpson 1970) had included a compulsive over-eater called Doughnut who also spoke with a Cockney accent. Nonetheless the nexus of Roland's body type and class position was unusual enough on television for the BBC to publicise the efforts they had gone to in casting the role. The actor Erkan Mustafa, a Londoner of Turkish descent, was promoted by the BBC as an authentic example of a fat working class child; for instance the *The Grange Hill Annual 1984* related how Mustafa had been recruited through an advert in *The Sun* newspaper rather than the usual casting calls (1983, 31). Mustafa has since recounted "the national press were advertising the fact that they couldn't find a fat child at stage school to appear in Grange Hill... I was like a normal school kid; I never went to stage school or belonged to an agency" ("Erkan"). His comments allude to the cultural invisibility of particular body types in the alleged absence of fat children from stage schools; but also signal that an attitudinal shift was taking place by the early eighties. *Grange Hill* does not construct fatness as the mark of the over privileged, overfed boarder typified by Gerald Champion's performance in *Billy Bunter of Greyfriar's School* (Hamilton 1952-1961). Quite the opposite: fatness is constructed as a relatively "normal" trait, where normal means attending a comprehensive day school, and reading *The Sun*.

Although *Tucker* was published within months of Mustafa's debut, "It's All in the Mind" resembles in microcosm the subsequent arc of Roland's five-year narrative. Once more, Roland is introduced as a schoolboy searching for "confidence" in a dual attempt to lose weight and defend himself from bullying (Redmond 35, 38, 40, 45, 48). His tendency to consume sweets by the bag "without even knowing it" suggests he is passive in his behaviour (43). His teacher Miss Mooney, noticing Roland is "depressed" and "miserable" (42), advises him that confidence comes from "being good at something. Having a skill or a talent" (45). Her acknowledgement that he is being bullied comes with no suggestion that the perpetrators will be punished. Roland subsequently attracts attention from a classmate – again, passively - for his absent-minded habit of making aeroplanes from chocolate wrappers. Roland learns that his plane-making is an enviable skill, and goes on to become "something of a celebrity" for his rocket designs (48.) As a direct result of his classmates' praise he starts to change his eating habits:

By half term, his whole attitude to life had changed. He had found something everyone else thought he was good at. Without realizing it, he had gradually come to feel more confident. But what pleased Roland even more, was that his desire to eat all the time had gone. (48)

By foregrounding "attitude", "confidence", and "desire", the text constructs Roland's eating as the site of contested emotional health. As a corollary, the text associates the fat child with low confidence, negative attitude and excessive desire for food.

Despite *Tucker*'s endorsement of confidence, the story's final page places sobering limitations on the impact of changing one's attitude. The concluding paragraph of "It's All in the Mind" indicates that confidence allows one to withstand life's hardships rather than solve them: the school bully resumes his harassment of Roland, in disregard of his

newfound celebrity status, prompting Roland to complain in the story's last line that "You just can't win, in this place" (49). The text thus implies that within the school environment "winning" is not possible for certain subject positions. The best Roland can hope for is to make losing more bearable – and the responsibility to do so rests solely with him, according to Miss Mooney. Roland, she states, ought not "sound so negative all the time" (45). As she is the only character approximating to a sympathetic authority figure in the story, her statement is positioned as helpful counsel, even though it fails to resonate with Roland's powerlessness. Interestingly Roland's powerlessness is maintained throughout the change of "his whole attitude." As with his compulsive sweet eating and absent-minded plane making, his reduced desire for food lacks any sense of autonomy: he grows in confidence "without realizing it." Consequently "confidence" functions, at best, as an apparently magical catalyst for change, and, at worst, as a quasi-psychological concept that asserts victims of bullying are at fault for feeling distress.

The centrality of confidence to *Tucker's* construction of the fat child is only indirectly related to academic psychological concepts. Word frequency analysis of abstracts retrieved from the PsycINFO database (see table 8) reflects that international research in the nineteen seventies and eighties constructed obesity as a problem to be understood through behavioural theories, rather than through the humanist approach a term like "confidence" would imply. Neither is the centrality of confidence to Roland's predicament mirrored in the contemporaneous psychological concerns of, specifically, British research. For the ten years preceding Tucker's publication, the PsycINFO database lists just six relevant studies conducted by UK institutions, only one of which addresses children's experiences in a school setting. That one paper focuses on the "expectations, behaviors, and social relationships" associated with different adolescent body types (Hendry and Gillies 1978,

189). The authors interpret their results by constructing a relationship between body image, self image and social success that diverges considerably from Roland's situation:

The stereotype of the "fat and sociable" individual may have some credence within the social relationships of adolescence; and it appears from the present results to provide opportunities for social rewards in terms of contact with leisure companions. This was true even though obese adolescents, especially girls, had a very low self-esteem in relation to their body (191)

If Roland is "sociable" by the story's end, that is *in spite* of rather than *because* he is fat; the "social rewards" of being fat appear to be few in *Tucker*, as they do in the majority of the fiction texts sampled.

We must search a little further back to determine Roland's relationship to psychological discourses. Though Hendry and Gillies refer to character traits such as "passivity" and difficulties with "emotional adjustment" (183), they do so in the context of summarising (predominantly American) findings from the nineteen sixties. The global trends evidenced by my word frequency table also suggests "emotional" factors were an older research preoccupation, in this case associated with psychoanalytic theories of the nineteen fifties (see table 8). From this I would suggest a non-linear association between academic and popular deployment of particular concepts. The centrality of confidence to *Tucker's* construction of the fat, white, working class child does not reflect contemporaneous psychological thinking, but seems to be produced by a particular convergence of media and fictional genres - each of which has associated confidence with fatness in different ways, at different times, in service of different strategies.

In the previous chapter I touched upon Hillel Schwartz's (1986) observation that the fat child became a widespread thematic concern in American teen fiction during the

nineteen seventies (301). The novels he cites construct the fat child as a problem with emotional causes. Schwartz attributes the trend to folkloric associations between abortion and slimming; newly disturbed American anxieties around the legalisation of abortion were “countered by childlike images of rebirth” in novels about weight loss (301). Though the circumstances that popularised this construction may have been driven by the USA’s changing legislative and social landscape, Britain’s cultural landscape felt at least some of the results. Schwartz considers twenty-one novels, many of which may have been unavailable to British readers; only two are currently held by the British Library. Yet there are additional publications which comply with the trend and were available on the British market. In 1969, Margaret Clark of Bodley Head spearheaded attempts to improve young adult fiction lists by importing realist novels from the USA and Europe (Eccleshare 2007); she began by buying Paul Zindel’s 1968 novel *The Pigman*, in which the female protagonist repeatedly expresses anxiety about her weight. The protagonist’s friend John muses that “all she needs is a little confidence” (15). Similar links are constructed in M.E. Kerr’s *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!* (1972, first published in Britain in 1973), Louise Fitzhugh’s *Nobody’s Family is Going to Change* (1974, published in Britain in 1976, 1978, 1981), Paul Danziger’s *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit* (1974, published in Britain 1986), and Judy Blume’s *Blubber* (1974, published in Britain 1980). Less than a year before *Tucker*’s first publication, *Blubber* went on sale in the UK as a paperback, harbingered by *Books for Keeps* as “essential for schools” (“Deenie” 1981) and praised for portraying “the pain of growing up” (“Blubber” 1981). *Blubber* is concerned with the bullying of Jill, the “pudgiest girl” (Blume 9) in the narrator’s class, whose victimhood, like Roland’s, is partly ascribed to passivity: her bullies report that “there are some people who just make you want to see how far you can go” (76).

In this context, books such as *Cora*, *Break* and *Tucker* shows greater contiguity with imported American “problem novels”^{xvii} than British juvenile fiction. If anything, extant British characters such as Billy Bunter and Frederick Algernon Trotter might be said to brim with self-confidence. As far as *Tucker* is concerned, the guiding principles of public service broadcasting play a part in the caesura. The BBC’s liberal values, encapsulated in their founding aim to “inform, educate and entertain” (Newby 1997, 6), would render children’s psychological well-being a more palatable goal than the punishment of greed. Certainly, by portraying an Educational Psychologist in Roland’s storyline, *Grange Hill* shows an even more explicit engagement with psychological approaches to the body than *Tucker* does. But more generally, the visibility of quasi-psychological constructs in British juvenile fiction from this *particular* time – some years after such constructs had ceased to be relevant in psychological literature – suggests an emergent need in the texts to legitimate size stereotypes as serving their targets’ best interests. To meet that need, *Tucker* appropriates an already familiar American template, as will a number of British books in the years that follow. The socio-political impetus, however, is quite different from that identified by Schwartz, because it emerges from changes in the British welfare state.

Tucker’s title, with its echo of Rudyard Kipling’s 1899 novel *Stalky & Co*, creates links to the traditional school story. Like Kipling, Redmond is concerned with adolescent misbehaviour in a school setting. Redmond’s claim to novelty is his relocation of the genre to a state comprehensive, rather than the accustomed public boarding school. Consistent with the story’s new locale, Roland is situated lower on the socioeconomic scale than his boarding forerunners. The movement down the social scale configures stereotypical traits differently. Roland has a “timid” nature (36) and, when his teacher enquires how he feels about his weight, he is unsure “how to put it into words” (44). The taciturnity that, in the

characters Fat Boarder (Garfield 1971) or Cousin Bates (Cresswell), was once used to indicate stupidity, is imbued with a psychological meaning. The sweet-guzzling that once characterised the greed of Billy Bunter, Augustus Gloop or Frederick Algernon Trotter is similarly reconfigured. Roland is also constantly eating sweets – from Mint Creams (Redmond 36) to Liquorice Torpedoes (41) – but his habit has a psychological source:

Roland had often heard about people eating because they are unhappy. The more unhappy they are, the more they eat. The more they eat, the fatter they become. The fatter they become, the more problems they have and the more unhappy they become. And so it goes on. (36)

Roland thus differs from earlier stereotypes not in behaviour, but in motivation. Herein lies the similarity between Cathy and Claire's focus on "confidence", and Phil Redmond's:

Roland shares with the implied (female) reader of *Jackie* a subject position which is pathologised with greater regularity in the wider culture than that of Billy Bunter.^{xviii} We might infer that for an affluent boy, fatness is a failure of moral duty; but in the girl or working class boy, it is a sign of emotional disturbance. This interpretation is supported by a resurgent association between affluence and moral constructions of fatness in the next decade; Eva Ibbotson's *The Secret of Platform 13* (1994) and JK Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) provide notable examples.

The movement in juvenile fiction from constructing fatness as a failure of (externally proscribed) morals to a dysfunction of (internal) well-being coincides with extensive changes to the functioning of Britain's state services. In the interests of free enterprise Thatcher's Conservative government (1979-1991) withdrew state obligations in areas such as school meal provision. Two years before the publication of *Tucker*, the 1980 Education Act removed the obligation for schools to provide children with a midday meal.

The 1944 Act, which had emphasised the role played by the Ministry of Education in the nutrition and thus the well-being of the nation's children, had been superseded by the principle of privatising school meals. *Tucker* replicates rather than critiques the resultant, contradictory anxieties over the role of the state. There are conflicting impulses in the text, according to which the school's responsibility for the child's well being is emphasised, but an individualising cause—the psychological—seeks to disconnect the child from wider social contexts. The tension between these impulses is clear in Miss Mooney's guidance. Her concern towards Roland on the one hand implicitly endorses the role of the school in protecting the vulnerable; yet, ironically, her focus on confidence strongly suggests it is Roland that needs to adapt rather than his tormentors. The tension is at its most extreme when, in Roland's "more confident moments", he realises that far from it not mattering how you "look or act" as Miss Mooney claims, there are some groups who are disproportionately targeted:

[H]e realised it wasn't just him they picked on, but anyone who was different in any way, shape or form. Four eyes; lanky; shorty; rake; stump (for a boy with only one leg); chinky; paki; wog and so on and so on.
(Redmond 35)^{xix}

Where morphology, physical able bodiedness, and race are the axes along which one is judged as a "target", the aim to become more "confident" is misguided, because it mistakenly locates the problem in the individual rather than the power structure.

In *Waiting for the Sky to Fall*, Wilson, like Redmond, constructs schooling as a means through which social stratifications may be (re)produced; however she does so through the contrasting situations, and bodies, of two sisters. Katherine Petworthy, the fifteen year old narrator, is a scholarship girl at a private school who has recently completed

O-level examinations under considerable pressure from her strict father. Nicola, her thirteen year old sister, is a pupil at a “glorified Secondary Modern” (35). The novel tracks the tensions that emerge between the two previously close sisters, as a result of Katherine’s persistent conviction she has performed poorly in her exams (a conviction that is confirmed at the novel’s climax). Part of the conflict emerges from Katherine’s obliviousness of her relatively privileged position. To deaf ears, Nicola asserts that her own meagre prospects are already mapped out, and there is little she can do to change them. The bleakness of her argument reflects prevailing economic conditions. The deregulation of the UK labour market had seen unemployment figures surpass three million between the publication of *Tucker* and *Waiting*, and figures would not fall again until April – June 1987 (Doyle 11). Crucially, the sisters’ divergent futures are linked by Wilson to their embodiment. Like their aspirational father, Katherine is “skinny” (49); Nicola, by contrast, has the physique of their reclusive mother, and is variously described by Katherine as a “great big fat lump” (65), a “great fat pig” (68) and a “Caramel bar, big and soft and sweet and oozy” (58). In this regard *Waiting* lacks the veneer of sympathy to be found in *Tucker*, *Break* and *Cora*. Because Wilson favours Katherine’s hostile tone in a first person narration, fat people are primarily referred to in abject terms.

Both Katherine and Nicola are shown to be keenly aware of class differences. In part, Katherine’s desire to succeed academically stems from her daydreams of escaping her family into a “glittering future” where she earns “a large salary as a Professor” that would allow her to buy “a redbrick Victorian villa with stained glass windows and William Morris wallpaper” (8). This fantasy provides an escape from her current circumstances where she is mocked by richer schoolmates as a “common little joke” (145). Katherine’s ambitions are driven, at least in part, by the class shame she feels when the girls at school mock her

accent and father's occupation as a newsagent. Nicola shows greater resignation to their homelife. Her intentions are modest at the start of the book; she envisages one day sharing a flat with Katherine (8). Her plans then become progressively less ambitious. When Katherine expresses concern that Nicola is damaging her future by truanting - like Roland and Kenny, to avoid bullying over her weight - Nicola responds:

By the time I'm grown up it won't be possible to have a career, not the sort you mean. It's bad enough now, all the redundancies and the recession and everything... I'll go on the dole. I'll be poor, but I'm used to that. I'll just loaf about like I do now. It's all right. It's better than school and it's probably better than work. (36).

Body type is not constructed as incidental to their world view. At points when either character wishes to distance herself from "common" behaviour, they draw on references to bodily fat, in a dual construction of associations between thinness and social aspiration, fatness and social immobility. Katherine veers between feeling protective and ashamed of her boyfriend, Richard; he, like Nicola, does not have Katherine's academic ambitions. He is content to follow in his father's footsteps by training as a printroom apprentice. Katherine reassures herself that he is "five foot ten, and big. Not really fat" (23), yet Nicola is quick to describe him as "common, yobby, fat" during an argument with her sister (118). Searching vainly and anxiously for signs that Richard's mother might be "a bit common" (175) Katherine seizes on the fact she has "a big bottom" (175). Richard himself notes that were Katherine to move in with his family, his mother would soon "fatten" Katherine (171). The expectation, and hope, for advancement through education is marked on Katherine's body as thinness, and its lack in other characters is signified through bodily fat.

More pointedly, Katherine repeatedly describes Nicola's ongoing weight gain as a sign Nicola's future will follow the same path as their mother's. Paul Ward (2004) argues that during Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister, motherhood was the site of attacks upon the welfare state. He notes, in particular, that the welfare state was held responsible for a "so-called 'dependency culture' connected to single motherhood" (38); I would add that teen motherhood and mothers' capacities to work outside the home were similarly implicated in criticisms of welfare. Katherine's verbal attacks of Nicola implicitly link fatness to motherhood and social dependency at times when she is shown, herself, to feel trapped in her circumstances. One example occurs immediately after Katherine's first meeting with Richard's "babyish" and "whiny" (73) seven year old sister Wendy; Katherine feels simultaneously insecure about her abilities with children, ambivalent towards the expectation she might one day be a mother, and jealous of the degree to which Wendy is indulged by her family. On her return home, she argues with Nicola, and feels seized with an urge to tear down the living room. Instead of acting on her impulse she begins attacking her sister's physical appearance:

[Nicola] couldn't help her clothes but she could stop stuffing herself with food so she didn't look so lumpy. She'd end up like Mum if she wasn't careful. But what about me? Would I end up like Dad, small-minded and sadistic, venting my spite on my family? Or wouldn't I have a family at all?
(80)

The syntactic juxtaposition of Nicola's growing physical resemblance to their mother, with Katherine's growing behavioural resemblance to their father, implies that physical likenesses predicts life course likenesses. In a more abstract sense, connecting the "lumpy" body to being "like Mum" while the thin Katherine speculates whether she will have a

family at all, makes a pejorative association between fatness and mothering. Five chapters later, Katherine repeats the same pattern; feeling abandoned and trapped in her own home when Richard embarks on a family holiday, she verbally attacks her sister:

She was getting fatter than ever. Her denim skirt and T-shirt were much too tight for her. She'd started tying her hair up in a scrappy sort of bun because she thought it made her look older, but it left her face too exposed. It was so large and pink and shiny, like a boiled ham. In ten years time she wouldn't be Nicola at all, she'd just be a clone of our mother. (123)

Being a "clone" of their mother means fearing the outside world and, like Roland, eating to assuage a sense of isolation. Katherine guesses that Mrs Petworthy secretly eats "at least six chocolate bars each day" (22).

Wilson, like Redmond, constructs an association between fatness and emotional disturbance that is enabled by the family's source of income; while Roland is shown the confectionary is father is paid to deliver, Mrs Petworthy eats their own shop stock. It is hinted that Katherine's mother is agoraphobic. Mrs Petworthy "would never go out unless she had an unavoidable reason" (69): what's more, it is physically difficult for her to do so. When Richard is first introduced to Mrs Petworthy, at the family-owned newsagent, she is detained by the shop's geography:

He held out his hand to her. She blinked at him, extended her great salami sausage arm to shake his hand, and then realised she couldn't reach because of the birthday card display. She gave a flustered laugh and hurried to the gap in the counter. Once there she forgot to edge herself sideways. She tried to rush it head-on and stuck fast.

We stood motionless, waiting. (61)

Mrs Petworthy thus embodies, at a literal level, the entrapment that Katherine fears for herself and projects on to Nicola. Wilson returns to these associations in her next book, *The Other Side* (1984). Alison, the protagonist, is forced to leave the dilapidated flat where she lives when her mother has a nervous breakdown. She moves in with her estranged father and his new family. The alienation Alison feels from their affluent bohemianism is partly expressed through her distress at being fatter than her step sister, Rosa, who is a precocious dancer. Alison contracts glandular fever and in her weakened state views her “red and lumpy” reflection critically, speculating that she looks like “Bertha, the mad woman” (93). This association with *Jane Eyre* (1847) is expanded upon in a later chapter: “Alison still slept in the box-room at the top of the house even though she had officially recovered from her glandular fever. Alison in the attic. Alison getting up in the middle of the night in her long, white night-gown. Loony Alison. Madness is often hereditary. Bertha’s mother was insane. Alison’s mother was insane” (Wilson *The Other* 122). Wilson picks up the motif a third time in *This Girl* (1988). Sixteen year old Coral works as a nanny in the kind of Victorian villa Katherine imagines possessing; to her employers’ disapproval, Coral befriends a teen mother from the local council estate, a “podgy” girl called Deb whose isolation leads her to “feel like jumping” (76) from the balcony of her flat. Though Coral’s identification with Deb is portrayed more positively than Katherine and Nicola’s relationship (Coral ultimately comes to see Deb as her family and moves in with her to help raise Deb’s baby), Wilson’s works in this period repeatedly link fecund fatness to social immobility, social immobility to emotional distress, and emotional distress to fecund fatness.

This is not to say that, within *Waiting*, there is no resistance to negative constructions of fatness. Richard is consistently neutral in his comments to the fatter

characters in the novel, remarking sympathetically to Mrs Petworthy that everything is “designed for the little squirts in this world” (Wilson *Waiting* 61). Moreover, the passivity that Katherine ascribes to her mother as a “big pink sofa who didn’t mind being sat on” is shown to be an illusion when Mrs Petworthy finally grows angry with Katherine’s attitude:

‘Don’t you pull that face at me, as if I was dirt under your feet,’ Mum
hissed, and she got hold of me by the shoulders with her great hands. For the
first time in my life I was really frightened of her. I felt the strength of her
hands. I’d seen her wringing wet clothes, screwing showers of water from
thick towels. I could feel the hatred in her hands, as if she wanted to twist
my neck round and round like the wet washing.(154)

However, Mrs Petworthy’s fearsomeness is conveyed with reference to her domestic duties, and is thus consistent with Katherine’s impression of her as housebound and frightening precisely because of her maternal role. The entrapment Katherine fears is partly one associated with maternity.

The nature of Katherine’s revulsion for both Nicola and Mrs Petworthy conflates a classist construction of fatness with gendered constructions that associate fat with fecundity. Because Nicola is a fat working class *girl*, rather than a boy, her social immobility is linked to the likelihood of her having children. Katherine’s fantasy of a Professor’s salary and a house with stained glass windows explicitly excludes the idea of having children: “I certainly didn’t want any children. I hated babies” (8). But Katherine anticipates that in adulthood Nicola will “succumb utterly, just like Mum” to the babies that Mrs Petworthy likes to “envelop in her massive arms” (29-30). Katherine’s horror at fat flesh regularly focuses on the sexual and the maternal. She is alarmed when Nicola dresses to reveal “mottled thighs” (123). She is even more appalled at Richard’s suggestion their

parents are still sexually active, feeling haunted by images of her mother “exploded from the corset, great globes of quivering flesh and a silly little thatch roofing her rude bit” (71). She focuses, fearfully, on the maternal characteristics of Mrs Petworthy’s fatness: she is “soft”, “huge” “unresisting” – a “great unaired feather bed of a mother” (52).

A curious subset of the abject images used by Katherine to describe the fat body comprises comparisons between flesh and food. She imagines her parents’ sexual congress as though they were “tucking into each other, nibbling a toe or two, gnawing at a crunchy shin, slaverling over a slice of juicy rump. Mum would make a gargantuan meal for Dad, but he’d be a very stringy morsel” (78). This food metaphor can be added to Katherine’s description of her mother as resembling ““the wobbly pink milk jelly we’d had at tea” (6), and her comparison of Nicola’s flesh to “ham” or “oozy” chocolate (58). The images have two noticeable effects: to objectify Nicola and Mrs Petworthy, and to implicitly reassert associations between fatness, mothering, and low socioeconomic status. Food metaphors are often a linguistic strategy for delineating othered bodies. The term *food chain*, when used as an economic metaphor, constructs outgroups on class lines (Kilgour 1998, 241); while discourses that connect meat and female bodies as the objects of masculine desire (Adams 1990) inform the objectification of women and animals. In the case of Nicola and Mrs Petworthy, older constructions of the nursing female body as consumable by the young may be informing the imagery (Bynum 1997, 133). When Katherine implies that Nicola has edible flesh, she simultaneously others her along several axes. As fat, yes; but, more specifically, as a fat, lower class, girl, inspiring fear through her incipient sexual maturity and procreativity.

The protagonist of Ann Pilling’s *The Big Pink* is also othered along several axes – as fat, lower class, and northern English – though in terms less abject than those used to

describe Nicola Petworthy. Like *Tucker*, *The Big* is in dialogue with the traditional school story. Twelve year old Angela, who is nicknamed “the Big Pink” because of her size, leaves her home in a “smoky mill town” (19) near Manchester when her parents depart for Pakistan as medical volunteers. Instead of accompanying them, she is sent to stay *gratis* at a southern boarding school called The Moat, where her aunt works as head teacher. Despite her parents’ Christian mission and references to being brave “for England” (125), Ann’s fatness is not primarily constructed as a moral failure, in the manner characteristic of the 1960s school stories I have examined. The novel is mostly concerned with her negotiation of being bullied, and as in *Tucker*, the value of confidence is repeatedly referred to.

Once again, the fat protagonist’s differences are marked in terms of class. These references are made at regular intervals throughout the early section of the novel: on the first page, we are informed that Angela has come to the school from “Darnley Comprehensive” (7); she remarks with cynicism that her aunt “seemed rather interested in money, especially in people who had plenty of it” (11); when Sophie calls a cleaning lady “disgusting”, Angela points out that without her “you’d be scraping your own plate” (31); and she is criticised by Sophie for her “awful flat accent” (35) and her “peculiar, common” (26) way of speaking. Despite the public school setting, social mobility is explicitly related to educational opportunity, as it is in *Waiting*. On Angela’s first day, Sophie, the bullies’ ringleader, informs her that many of the school’s students are cramming before transfer to selective schools. Angela expresses confusion:

“I thought the eleven plus had been scrapped,” she said warily. “I thought everything was comprehensive now.”

“Not here, duckie, you’re in the Home Counties. They’re fighting like grim death over our local grammar school.” (26)

Where *The Big* differs from *Waiting* is in the suggestion that the education system not only passively fails girls such as Nicola Petworthy, but that it is open to active exploitation by those with the power to manipulate it. Home Counties' parents who can fund cramming are able to calibrate the combination of fee-paying and free selective education to their best advantage.

As in the other texts sampled from this period, body type is implicitly related to class. Angela is the only pupil at The Moat to be described as fat. She reminisces that at Darnley Comprehensive, her body size did not isolate her; though "everyone had called her fat", she was not the only pupil of her size, and "fatties like them tended to stick together" (8). By contrast, Sophie, who self identifies as "rich" (25), is "tall and slim" (23). Similarly Angela's aunt, who married into money, is described as "skinny" and "bony" (13); while Angela's relatively impoverished mother is "a bit overweight" (19).

Angela's weight, like Roland's, is explicitly connected to underconfidence, which locates the responsibility for feelings of marginalisation in the individual rather than the wider social group; but the intra-action of Angela's gender and size means that the improvement of her appearance, rather than her skills, is constructed as confidence-building. Her aunt muses, for instance, that "something pretty to wear at the weekends would have given her a bit of confidence" (14). Depressingly, "being good at something. Having a skill or a talent" (Redmond 45) does not improve Angela's confidence as it does Roland's. Rather, Angela is shown to resent her talent for singing, both because it attracts attention when "she didn't want to be looked at" (Pilling 17), and because she believes it makes her fatter. "Why had she ever taken up singing?" she asks herself, while being measured for a custom uniform; "Opera singers always had thick waists, and every song she practiced was bound to make it worse" (18). To the extent that Angela is constructed as

a vulnerable child, her mother is criticised by her aunt for failing to train her in the correct femininity: “her mother should be helping her to keep her weight down, and she should have found the money for a new outfit too” (14). This construction of Angela as vulnerable does not address *where* the money could be found; nor does it encompass, later in the novel, holding Angela’s bullies to account. The attempts of the teaching staff to improve Angela’s confidence instead focus on correcting her acculturation. Angela is encouraged to become comfortable with being looked at, as befits her gender role.

This acculturation takes the form of staff members pressuring Angela into participating on stage at the school musical. Her strong sense that “when you were fat the last thing you wanted was to be stared at in public” (52) is overridden by her teachers when, against her volition, she is made to dance publicly in an ill-fitting costume (126). This experience, described as an “enormous struggle” (127), is an intermediary step towards her willing participation in the end of term concert. She sings a duet, for which she is awarded a school prize. Like *Tucker*’s ambiguous coda to Roland’s new found confidence, *The Big* ends with ambivalence on Angela’s part towards her winnings: “She still wasn’t sure about it, not even now... it might be because of the singing, but if that was true it was the laugh of the century” (154). Thus, as in *Tucker*, confidence as an alleged cure for the emotionally distressed, fat child appears to have its limitations. The cure is not completely discredited, however. Rather, Angela’s reported thoughts indicate that the school have failed to administer it correctly. She reflects that her attempts to diet have been unsuccessful, leaving her five pounds heavier than she was to begin with, because “eating and not eating was all to do with your mind, she knew that now. She was unhappy here, she suffered, and so she ate more. She just couldn’t fight the flab in an atmosphere like the Moat’s, under the eagle eye of Skinny Aunt Pat” (117). Her parents, unannounced, return from Pakistan and collect

her from the school concert with the news she must leave The Moat. Their destination is unspecified; it is implied they will return to Darnley, with the accompanying message that Angela's dual failure to assimilate through gaining confidence and losing weight relegates her indefinitely to her old social position.

If *Tucker*, *Waiting* and *The Big* all express resignation to the perceived permanence of class structures, Eileen Fairweather's *French Letters* affects a more radical approach – albeit in a light tone. *French Letters* is an epistolary novel. The protagonist, Maxine, is a fourteen year old Londoner who lives in “the last of the council houses before the private ones begin” (15). She makes a bet with her best friend on who will be the first to get a boyfriend. She sets her sights on her French penfriend, Jean. Most of the novel's intended comedy arises from her efforts to get him to England, and, once he arrives, her rapid disillusionment with his snobbery. At the novel's close she does find a boyfriend, in the form a neighbour she was previously friends with. Alongside this main plot the majority of Maxine's comic tribulations are rooted in, first, her attempts to find paying work and, second, her attempts to find affordable clothes that fit. These subplots inform a construction of fatness which is closely engaged with economic considerations.

Fairweather, like Jacqueline Wilson, constructs body type as a predictor of future occupational opportunities, although she adopts a more tongue-in-cheek manner. In a letter to her best friend Maxine cites areas which are typically thought of as discriminating on the grounds of appearance: “I'm sure you've got a good chance of starring in Top of the Pops by the end of the year. You are only eight stone” (52). However, Fairweather takes the association between body type and economic value a step further. At the novel's opening Maxine argues that the odds of the bet are not in her favour because she is “fatter” than her friend (3); she negotiates the stakes by, implicitly, placing a market value on their bodies.

In the negotiation of gambling odds, Maxine's fatness is ameliorated in part by her height: "Two-to-one on you winning, three-to-one to me, seems fair enough now that you remind me that at five feet seven I am three inches taller than you"(4). This reading provides a context for Maxine's repetition of an older cliché, "pretty girls often pick plain or fat girls for their best friends. That's so that when they're out together the boys notice the pretty one more (58)". Fatness is constructed as physically unattractive, and physical attractiveness is constructed as subject to supply and demand; if a normatively thin girl's value is enhanced by keeping company with a fat girl, the fat girl is also, it is implied, worse off for there being slender alternatives.

As in *Tucker, Waiting* and *The Big*, *French Letters* attributes fatness to emotional causes. Maxine refers to comfort eating in her question: "When you've been starving for love as long as I have, who counts calories?" (49). Tonally her comment is suggestive of play with the clichés of girls' magazines, and its intended humour depends on the reader's recognition of comparable media tropes. As a novel issued by an overtly feminist imprint (*French Letters* was published by Livewire, the imprint for teenage girls begun by the Women's Press), the text strategically normalises fatness and dieting as everygirl qualities, in opposition to slender ideals. Maxine, for instance, believes questions like "are you on a diet" and "is your bust big too" are representative of girls' conversations (13).

Unfortunately this normalising strategy essentialises links between femininity, fatness and dieting in problematic ways; and Fairweather's attempts to mock mass media constructions of the body are occasionally undermined by crossing the line into mocking Maxine. At one point, to avoid sending a photo of herself to Jean, Maxine encourages an attractive friend to pose for a picture she can send instead. Paradoxically, she then spends considerable time changing her friend's appearance to minimise the differences between them. She inverts the

usual advice dispensed by teen magazines in an effort to make the bluff convincing:

“You’ve got cheek bones and I haven’t so don’t wear any blusher. If you puff your cheeks out a bit, that will be even better” (27). Her efforts highlight the constructed nature of consumerist solutions for the fat body – the idea, for instance, that you can buy blusher to slim the face is undercut by the reverse contortions Maxine’s friend must go through – but at the same time the implied reader is encouraged to laugh at Maxine for trying, and failing, to comply with the constructed ideal. The same conflicts underpin Fairweather’s parody of mass-produced romantic fiction in the scene of Jean’s arrival:

It was just like a scene from one of those pink Romance books. “*The look he gave me was scorching. His eyes flickered over me, up and down, up and down, as he inspected me from head to foot. He couldn’t take his eyes off me. I could see he was smitten. I felt so chic in my new clothes. They had arrived only that morning. I hadn’t been sure that the green and white trousers and orange lurex top were the right combination, but now I felt more sure than I had felt of anything in my life. Beneath Jean’s gaze I felt ravishing. In his hand lay a photograph. As he looked from it to me and back again his lip curled in a way that was devastatingly manly, devastatingly French. Obviously he couldn’t believe his luck that we had met in the flesh, and our dream had become reality. At last I silently nodded ‘yes’ to his question. A look almost of pain crossed his face. Then, manfully, he fought back his desire and gently kissed me twice on each cheek, in the fashion of his country.*” (91)

Jean’s attempts to reconcile Maxine’s appearance with the falsified photograph, and his expression of pain, signal to the reader that he is disgusted by her. Because she reads his

reaction as desire, she becomes the butt of the joke: we are led to laugh at her belief she is the romantic heroine. But the most problematic aspect of Maxine's portrayal in this section is that we are led to laugh at circumstances the text has already constructed as beyond Maxine's control. Namely, small financial means and an indifferent market circumscribe any attempt to disguise her fatness with flattering clothing and make-up. The clothes she is mocked for wearing have been saved for and hard won. Nevertheless, shortly after the above passage, Jean suggests Maxine's new clothing makes her look like a prostitute (93). The reader is led to take his assessment as accurate, for she receives similar responses from other characters, including the station porter and the landlady of Jean's bed and breakfast (93); all three situations are positioned as humorous scenarios, at Maxine's expense.

Maxine's endeavour to appear chic is undermined both by her lack of money and a market that caters poorly to her size. In the same year as *French's* publication, 1987, *Jackie* would run a feature on clothing for different sizes (Fig. 6) which is striking for its inclusion of differently sized bodies. The shock of the image derives from its rarity within the sample. Consistent with fat people's invisibility from *Jackie's* photoshoots, *French Letters* suggests that fashion catering to fatter people is hard to come by: finding a size 14 dress is cause for note (61). Clothes consistently pose problems for Maxine, both in cost and in embodiment. She notes that "I haven't got another jacket to wear since my boobs bust the zip on Sue's black plastic one" (80), and struggles to find clothing in her budget. Though school is still a site of (re)producing identities, it does not assume any responsibility in advancing, rather than maintaining Maxine's current social status; it provides an additional expense, for Maxine's increasing weight is not well catered for in affordable school wear. Her mother saves tips from her job in a chip shop, with a view to replacing school clothes that Maxine has outgrown. Their shopping trip ends in mortification for Maxine when there

is not enough to stretch to a school skirt, and the shop assistant asserts their lower class status by asking “will Madam be paying by *voucher*?” (7).

Part of Maxine’s indignation stems from the assistant’s assumption her parents “were so dead poor [they] were on the dole” (7). Until she learns “the hard way that getting a job is just as hard as the Labour Party says it is” (36), Maxine expresses disdain for unemployed people, with echoes of the class shame expressed by Katherine Petworthy. Early in the book she expresses annoyance that her father’s job as a busdriver gives her few opportunities to meet eligible men: buses, she states, are only useful for meeting “the unemployed” (3). This disdain is shown to be on shaky grounds. Maxine learns she can only obtain work on exploitative wages, capping perfume bottles (65) and babysitting at a rate of a few pence an hour (67). She eventually secures regular work as a supermarket cleaner, though again the terms are exploitative: “It’s strictly illegal seeing as I’m under age” (117). At the novel’s close, Maxine is becoming politicised by her negligible rights as an employee. She begins to write the return address of her letters as “A Working Class Area of London” (116), and joins her father on a demonstration against Thatcher’s cuts to London Transport (117).

Her radicalisation makes a strong contrast with the resignation of both Roland Browning and Nicola Petworthy; but her new consciousness is confined to her class identity. She does not gain comparable political insights into her slimming practices. *French* is imbued with anxieties regarding the welfare state, played out upon the fat child body, to the same degree as *Tucker* and *Waiting*. At the time *Waiting* had been published, it was still possible for *Jackie* to meaningfully stereotype school dinners as “slimy tapioca”, “lumpy potatoes” and “stringy old stew” (“The Incredible Bulk” *Jackie Annual* 1983). By 1987, these food stuffs (which actually appear balanced nutritionally) are entirely absent

from the school *French* is set in. While Maxine attempts to lose weight she is tormented by Michelle, a class mate: “She got everyone laughing at me. All through break they kept saying, ‘Come on Fatso, have a sweet!’ Then in the canteen they bought yummy things like ice cream and chips and ate them in front of me, licking their lips” (56). The reference to the “canteen” indicates that school food is now driven by market concerns, rather than the health and welfare concerns of the 1944 School Act.

In this chapter I have examined the different ways in which fiction of the nineteen-eighties reconfigures fatness as a marker of lower socio-economic groups. This downward movement appears symptomatic of anxieties related to the changing role of the welfare state in people’s lives and may be seen as an incipient stage in pathologising the fat child. Over the nineteen nineties, fear of social immobility recedes, but a related set of anxieties becomes associated with the fat child body: the breakdown of community and the loss of adult authority. It is these anxieties I will explore in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

The Nineteen-Nineties: Intransigent Fat

This chapter examines the centrality of victimhood to constructions of the fat child in nineteen-nineties juvenile fiction. My analysis will focus on the following three texts: Lynda Waterhouses's *Bonnie Fitch* (1993); Jan Needle's *The Bully* (1993); and Andrew Matthews' *Stiks and Stoans* (1999). The eighties fiction sample associates fatness with vulnerability; the nineties fiction sample deepens this association by the following means.

First, relative to the novels discussed in Chapter Three, *Bonnie*, *The Bully*, and *Stiks* amplify the emotional and physical dangers fat characters face from their peers. Second, fatness is constructed on determinist lines as an immutable characteristic. This immutability is matched by the characters' difficulties in changing either their life circumstances or their emotional trajectories (at least through individual effort). Third, adult characters are positioned as sharing culpability in the victimisation of fat children. We have already seen how *Tucker and Co* (1982) positions Miss Mooney's response to Roland's bullying as benevolently *laissez-faire*; the three texts I discuss here are more critical of adult indifference. I contend this third trend expresses a loss of faith in both community and adult supervision of children. I connect this loss of faith to the societal impact of deindustrialisation.

Bonnie is the most optimistic of the three texts, in that the child characters compensate for adult impotence through their own collective action. The text is unusual within the corpus for treating bullying as a systemic problem that can only be solved by the community, rather than by changing the individual traits of the victim. Waterhouse begins by detailing the microaggressive actions the protagonist is subjected to on a day-to-day basis. This microaggression is predominantly enacted by adults, which provides a context

for their ineffectuality in addressing her bullies. I will commence my analysis by examining these small, but cumulatively harmful, actions.

The narrator is Bonnie, a “fat girl” in her third year of secondary school (1). At the novel’s opening she describes herself as a “giant fattie” of “epic proportions” (1), before relating her size to the way she is treated by her elders: “You can’t imagine what it’s like being the fat girl. You learn to accept humiliation early on” (1). Unlike the characters I examined in the previous chapter, Bonnie is initially “humiliated” by adults who couch their antipathy to fat in expressions of concern. In particular, adults’ attempts to be “tactful” (1, 3) pose a conundrum for Bonnie: she realises their “tact” makes it harder for her to refute the underlying negative response to her appearance. She offers examples, for instance, of how being fat means that in “junior school you are the one who is tactfully given the job of doing the readings for the Nativity play, while Julie Toye gets to play Mary. Julie Toye [...] is small, skinny, snub-nosed and cute” (1). Bonnie repeats her discomfort with “tact” when she goes on to describe how she and her mother interact: “I hate it when my mother tries to be tactful. I cringe every time she tells me that I have lovely hair. If I hear her use the word puppy fat once more I’ll scream and scream and scream” (3). “Tactful” comments convey to Bonnie that she does not comply with the speaker’s beauty standards. The text thus constructs “tact” as contiguous with, but less honest than, more direct attacks on Bonnie’s appearance. Bonnie comments of her brother Clint that “at least [he is] honest when he calls me a beached whale;” moreover, she finds his willingness to voice his view of her easier to respond to in kind. “I can react to that by drawing attention to the bum fluff on his face,” she remarks (3).

Although Bonnie’s fatness is foregrounded in the first few pages of the text, her weight is not subsequently positioned as a problem in quite the same way as the texts I

examined from the eighties sample. *Bonnie* endorses confidence-building for its own sake, but does not advance confidence as the solution to victimisation. Indeed, Bonnie establishes her claim to confidence in the very first chapter, when she breaks contact with her former friend, the manipulative Julie. A classmate encourages her to adopt a more assertive demeanour:

My face was aching with the effort of trying not to cry when Lindsay came up. “Bonnie, I’ve just been reading one of my mum’s books, *Towards the Warrior Woman*, and it says that if you walk down the middle of a corridor rather than hedging round the edges, then it makes you more powerful. Shall we try it?”

“I’ll try anything once.” We linked arms and marched down the corridor.

(10-11)

Their performance of power makes the school more tolerable for them, but it does not prevent Bonnie from being bullied. The remainder of the text follows her growing confidence as an Agony Aunt for the school newspaper, in tandem with the intensification of the bullying she receives. The text thus moves away from the stereotype of attributing bullying to the victim’s confidence levels.

It is the responses of people around Bonnie—rather than her fatness, behaviour, or attitude per se—that the text positions as a problem. For instance, Bonnie complains “it drives me crazy when people assume I must eat Desperate Dan-sized portions just because I’m not a size eight” (19). She is depicted eating high fat foods, and states that “I feel safe if I’m eating” (46); but she does so without the authorial judgement that accompanies, say, Roland eating sweets in *Tucker*. Her consumption of cakes and biscuits is rendered neutral because she is matched, snack for snack, by her slender friend Lindsay (36). Bonnie

compares Mrs Fitch's attempts to prevent her eating biscuits with the strict vegetarianism of Lindsay's mother; this association helps to mark the policing of eating habits as a policing of the child (daughterly) body, rather than as, uniquely, a policing of the fat body (36).

In these respects Bonnie's attitude towards her body diverges considerably from the dominant construction of the nineteen-eighties. Although, like Maxine, Bonnie gets tired of "singing along with all those skinny types" on Top of the Pops (9) and "the horrible reality" that clothes are rarely sold in her size (55), she channels this frustration into satire—by, for instance, writing a fictional story for the school newspaper called "Fat Girls Just Want to Have Fun" about a fat pop group called the Bunnies (4-9). She daydreams of one day featuring in the Sunday supplements at her "Victorian home in North London where I would write my famous books, such as "The Fat Woman's Guide to Health, Wealth and Happiness" and my blockbusting novels, "Fatwoman and Robin" and "Never Say Diet"" (7). This context of challenging the everyday assumption that she should lose weight means that, when Bonnie experiences bullying, the basis for holding the victim accountable is already undermined.

The bullying begins when Bonnie's former friend Julie propagates rumours that Bonnie eats "plates of mushy peas for breakfast" and steals food (14). Julie progresses, with her boyfriend Danny, to emblazoning pavements with the words "Bonnie Fitch is a big-headed fart" (16); Danny also shouts terms of abuse, such as "Fat Ugly Cow," when he sees Bonnie in public (15). Next Julie falsely accuses Bonnie of facilitating plagiarism, placing Bonnie at risk of suspension (85). A third aggressor, Kelly, subjects Bonnie to verbal threats and spits on her jacket, as well as blackening her brother Clint's eye (89). It is in the role of Agony Aunt that Bonnie realises Kelly is also verbally and physically bullying other vulnerable children (25)—in particular, a girl called Ann, who is "new to the town and

speaks in a funny accent” (30). This means that, as in *Tucker*, fatness is constructed as a marker of difference from the norm, alongside traits such as coming from a different geographical area. Here, however, there is no pressure on the victim of bullying to change. Rather, bullying is constructed as a process which depends on the collusion of a large number of people; and accordingly, change is sought within the group.

Bonnie devises a scheme whereby bullied pupils are accompanied by older children at break times, in a protective capacity; she suggests holding a disco to raise funds for the scheme and meets resistance from students who claim “bullying is part of school” (91). The exchange emphasises that passive collusion, as well as active victimisation, is part of the problem. Her anger positions passive students as culpable for their refusal to act:

I boiled over. “I have put up with being called an ugly fat cow for weeks by Julie. She got away with it. Next she tries to blame me for her stealing and cheating. Why not? I’m only a fat ugly cow that she doesn’t like very much? I’ve seen my brother get threatened and bashed. Too ashamed to tell a teacher. I’ve watched one girl and her so-called friends make someone’s life so miserable that they’d rather bunk than face the unpleasantness. And I’m not talking about the odd name-calling or practical joke, I’m talking about spitting, harassing and hitting. If we don’t do anything then we are as bad.” My voice was all cracked and wobbly.

“There are teachers,” Lindsay quietly suggested.

I snorted. “Most of the time they’re too busy running from lesson to lesson. When can you talk to them? At lunch-times they are at meetings. Besides, they don’t see the whole picture like we do.” (91-2)

Note that the “we” she refers to here asserts a collective identity between the school pupils that is not shared by the teachers who are “too busy running from lesson to lesson.” The expectation of change is placed upon peers. The statement that teachers cannot “see the whole picture” implies that the pupils necessarily have greater insight into their own interactions than adults, which enables them to take appropriate action.

Superficially, this approach appears to empower children, by placing the onus on them to keep each other safe. But it also forms part of a portrayal in which adults have failed to fulfil their responsibilities towards children. For instance Bonnie remarks that Ann’s problems have gone undetected because her teacher, Miss Wilton, is naive and gullible; when a fellow student asks why Miss Wilton hasn’t challenged Ann’s regular truanting, Bonnie replies, “She probably hasn’t noticed yet, or else she believes Ann’s excuse that an alien has kidnapped her and needs her body for medical research on Mondays and Fridays” (29).

Teachers are characterised as “pretty useless” (32), and the impersonal infrastructure of secondary school is shown to facilitate their uselessness. When Kelly tips live maggots into a girl’s hair, the deed goes unpunished because the supply teacher on duty doesn’t know the pupils’ names (62). The incident undermines the pupils’ faith in their teachers’ authority and discourages them from intervening because they are not sure they will be protected; one observer claims that “it was so obvious who had done it, that if the teacher couldn’t work it out then he wasn’t going to put his neck on the line” (62). By the time their own teacher does act, her response is inadequate; the text reserves particular criticism for her purportedly empathetic approach to discipline. The students arrange a petition to request Kelly’s transfer to a different class, and Miss Wilton suggests that they

“do a role-play about bullying instead” (95). The petitioner claims “That’s rubbish. This class has had enough of the real thing never mind role-play” (95).

Despite Bonnie’s scepticism of the teachers’ ability to achieve change, the pupils are necessarily dependent on adults’ willingness to protect them before the situation improves. The pressure the children apply is effective, but the head mistress’s decision to transfer Kelly to another form still has final sway (95-6). Adults’ inadequacies therefore have a meaningful impact upon the effective management of bullying.

The exclusion of teachers from “seeing the whole picture” bespeaks an anxiety in this period regarding the abilities of adults to supervise and protect children effectively; that anxiety that is only increased in Needle’s *The Bully*. This realist novel for young adults depicts the mistreatment of Simon, a “fat, ill-dressed and somehow useless” adolescent boy of unspecified age (11). He is pilloried by teachers and pupils alike as a “lump” (5). The mistreatment commences with name-calling and progresses to physical harm over the course of the novel. His tormenters are three middle class schoolmates, named Anna, Rebekkah and David, who use Simon’s lower socioeconomic status to discredit him in the eyes of teachers, and to convince their parents that they are the victims of *his* bullying. At the book’s climax, he is lured to a ledge on a cliff and pelted with stones (120-2). He falls, breaking two of his limbs and sustaining other injuries (127). Though Anna, Rebekkah and David are penitent when Simon is hospitalised, the head teacher continues to downplay the bullying in their favour. In *Bonnie*, adults are merely incompetent; in *The Bully*, class prejudice prevents adults acting on the behalf of disadvantaged children.

Simon—like Roland, Nicola, Angela, and Maxine—is working class. This is indicated in the book’s opening description of his surroundings. He lives in an estate of “tacky, scruffy streets” and spends much of his leisure time in the nearby derelict chalk pit,

which he reaches “by a dusty access track that had no houses on it, only piles of rubbish and an abandoned car” (3). Unlike most of his neighbours, he attends a state school in the “‘better’ part of town” (3); but this peculiarity of local catchment areas further marks him out as a misfit. He is aware that his classmates have uniforms in “smarter nick” than his own and that they are driven to school in “[t]he sort of car that he could only dream of” (3).

The school’s location in an affluent area does not bestow any educational advantages on Simon. Quite the opposite. The school’s headmistress, Mrs Stacey, differentiates her treatment of children on the basis of their backgrounds, because she “doesn’t like the working classes getting out of hand” (41). Her attitude, in combination with the snobbery of his classmates’ parents, enables Simon’s exploitation. Anna and David Royal are the children of a lawyer; they are also the first generation in their family to attend a state school (7). Mrs Royal and Rebekkah’s mother, Mrs Tanner, express classist fears that their children will be bullied by “rough” boys (35). “It’s very prevalent these days, it’s almost an epidemic,” Mrs Royal frets (35). The text’s structure initially inveigles the reader into sharing this class-based suspicion of Simon; for the story opens not with Anna’s bullying of Simon, but instead with Simon’s fantasies of attacking her (1). In his “very small, and very cluttered” home (1), he contemplates which weapon he could use to give her a “nasty poke” (2). Our initial introduction to Simon therefore complies quite closely with the “rough” boys Mrs Royle will subsequently criticise. It is not until the end of the first chapter that the reader is informed Simon feels “fear” (8) in the face of Anna’s aggression; only then does it become clear his fantasies are retaliatory.

The readiness of parents and teachers to pigeonhole Simon as just this kind of “rough” boy lends a sense of entitlement to Anna and David’s bullying, as the following exchange between them demonstrates:

“[T]hey couldn’t blame us anyway, could they?” he said. “Not over Spassie Simon?”

It came to Anna that her brother must be right. No one would disbelieve them on the say so of a nasty, dirty boy like that. She felt a stab of anger at him.

“He’s a nuisance,” she said. (18)

Their sense of immunity is well-founded. When the deputy head, Louise Shaw, begins to suspect that Simon has been unfairly maligned by Anna, it is class prejudice that prevents her responding effectively. Her colleague, Brian, articulates her predicament:

“I was just going to say,” she said, “that if Simon’s not a bully—”

“Then Anna Royle is,” he finished for her. “That’s the conundrum, isn’t it? And the problem.” (33)

The difficulty of accusing a “nice” (6) middle class girl like Anna of bullying means that Louise does not take any further action until Simon is physically injured.

This class dynamic is familiar from the texts I discussed in Chapter Three. There is, however, an important point of departure, which relates to the use of quasi-psychological concepts. It is implied that not only is Simon a fat, working class boy; he is a fat, working class boy with learning difficulties. The other children nickname him “Simple Simon” (130) or “spastic” (13). His teacher Louise observes:

She suddenly realised that he was not quite right, this boy. Standing before her with his head bent forward, he still managed to look clumsy, as if he might fall over. He did fall over quite a lot, in fact, he was quite famous for it. He was slow at reading, too. And writing, and arithmetic. (13)

In the eighties fiction sample, we saw that older stereotypical traits of the fat child—such as eating too much, being clumsy, or affecting stupidity—were imbued with psychological meanings. A progression of this practice is evident in the above quotation. Simon’s characteristics are not attributed to emotional distress as Roland’s, Angela’s and Maxine’s are; rather, they are pathologised. His “slow” thinking and physical clumsiness are treated as signs that he is “not quite right.” The stereotypical traits of the fat child are thus counterpoised against an ablist construction of what it means to be normal. Disability need not be constructed as pathology, any more than associations between fatness and disability need be pejorative (as we shall see when I examine Paul Magrs’ *Twin Freaks* (2007) in Chapter Seven); but the euphemism “not quite right” has both judgemental and pathologising overtones. If Simon is “not quite right,” there must, logically, be something “wrong” with him. Troublingly, the text constructs Louise’s description as an accurate one. Needle’s use of the verb “realised” suggests that Louise has uncovered a truth rather than expressed an opinion. In fact, Louise’s ambivalence towards Simon’s “wrongness” is central to the text’s attempt at explicating how bullies prosper.

Simon’s bullies evade serious punishment, and Louise is positioned as the text’s mouthpiece in explaining why. She is portrayed as the only character willing to admit to feelings everyone else denies: “We’re all prejudiced, Brian,” she tells a colleague. “Maybe we’ve got to examine our prejudices for what they are” (131). Her ambivalence towards Simon is positioned as a truthful reflection of prejudices everyone holds but is reluctant to admit to; she asks Brian,

The kids pick up their attitudes from us, don’t they? Which of the teachers cares for Simple Simon? Which of us actually likes him?...I’m being honest,

aren't I? How can we blame the kids for bullying when we feel just the same? It's horrible, Brian. I hate myself for even thinking it. (130)

The repeated use of the first person plural asks the reader, as well as Brian, to empathise with Louise's ambivalence. It also contributes to a noticeably pessimistic narrative. No action follows Louise's admission of prejudice. Far from it; Simon's bullies acknowledge to themselves that they "got off pretty lightly" (132) and Simon continues to be friendless. The most that Louise hopes for is "trying to make everybody recognise that even kids like Simon have their worth" (131). By using the qualifier "even", the text perpetuates the idea that Simon's worth is always *in spite of* being a fat, working class child with learning difficulties. There is no attempt to challenge the perception of his characteristics as repellent.

The text's pathologising of fat stereotypes, evident in Simon's portrayal, is accompanied by a striking pattern of animal imagery that essentialises associations between fatness and victimhood. The first example occurs when Simon is awarded the role of Pet Monitor, and Louise instructs him that the gerbils in his care must be protected from the school cat:

Cats are cats and gerbils and gerbils. They don't think, they're not human beings, they live on instinct. If Diggory gets eaten by Butch it wouldn't be Butch's fault, do you understand? It would be yours, for leaving off the lid. Not Butch's, not anybody else's, yours. Okay? (28)

Notwithstanding the exclusion of "human beings" from "living on instinct", the above description acts as a metaphor for Louise's perspective on the bullying of Simon. Anna, David, and Rebekkah act "on instinct" in their treatment of Simon, and if they are successful in mistreating him, the "fault" lies with the teachers responsible for his care. By

casting the children as, respectively, two different species—“cats are cats and gerbils are gerbils”—the image implies that their differences are essential and cannot be transgressed. You are born one or the other, and act accordingly through no “fault” of your own.

Disturbingly, the above animal analogy quickly segues into a rationale for *not* protecting Simon at all. In the immediately following pages, Brian comments: “Well...you know how cruel kids can be. They’re like animals in some ways, aren’t they?” He draws a second animal comparison to illustrate his point:

Let me put it this way. My aunt had a goose once that was born deformed.

Its wings were back to front, it fell over if it tried to fly. She was quite fond of it, she kept it separate and fed it the best scraps. But as soon as she put it out among the flock of them, they attacked it unmercifully. She had to kill it in the end, before the others did. Her method was much quicker than death by pecking. (31)

Although the “aunt’s” action is positioned as a kindness, it is noteworthy that she simply finishes the job begun by the stronger geese: she does not constrain them, nor remove their victim. The paragraph thus aligns the teachers, for whom Brian’s aunt acts as a proxy, with the bullies. What’s more, though Louise initially argues it is the teachers’ responsibility to protect Simon from the “instincts” of other children, Brian implies that they must act against their true feelings to do so; he continues to say of the children, “I just mean they’re realistic, that’s all. They don’t pull their punches or pretend, like adults, they respond completely truthfully” (31). His references to children’s aggressive behaviour as “realistic” and “truthful” bestows a validity upon the characteristics they share with non-human animals; the characteristics adults allegedly *don’t* share with non-human animals comprise, conversely, an effort to pull punches or “pretend.” Through this naturalistic fallacy, the text

constructs the victimisation of a fat, disabled, working class child as an authentic act. Anna, David and Rebekkah act “completely truthfully” in their response to Simon; Brian suggests that if he or Louise intervenes, it will comprise a pretence.

To summarise, the text offers us two possible explanations for the way Anna, David and Rebekkah behave. Louise attributes the bullying to socialisation: the children “pick up” their attitudes from adults. She also, contradictorily, concedes to Brian’s assertion that children act “truthfully:” the children’s aggression towards Simon is a biological instinct which they have not yet been socialised to conceal. (The former explanation is more consistent with the bullies’ use of their higher social position to discredit Simon. Their strategy is knowingly reliant upon their parents’ and teachers’ prejudices). Where the explanations are similar is in alleging a collective responsibility for Simon’s predicament—which in both cases, is only ever acknowledged; never acted upon. Instead the text promotes a fatalistic stance via Louise’s denial that the bullies could feasibly be punished:

“What would you have done?” said Louise. “Kicked them out? So that they could go and bully weaklings at another school? Kicked Simon out, so that he could go on being battered without you having to think about it? Given them all a hundred press-ups every morning? The truth is, it’s a vicious circle. Simon’s the sort of kid who’s going to attract bullies wherever he goes, but it suits us to deny it. He’s like your crippled goose, do you remember?” (130)

There is a tension between the leading questions in this paragraph, and the responsibility the text has already attributed to adults at the school. Ignoring bullying is presented as the only available option; and in the process, adults are constructed as powerless. There is no acknowledgement that institutional practices, including disciplinary methods which

overlook violent incidents if the perpetrator has status, could be the very means by which children “pick up” attitudes. In this respect the text only superficially endorses a collective avowal of responsibility for the most vulnerable members of our society. Simon’s low position in the “pecking” order (31) is presented as an unchangeable and unavoidable “truth.”

Needle’s comparison between school bullying and the behaviour of non-human animals has a counterpart, to some extent, in psychological scholarship. PsycINFO lists fifty-three publications concerned with bullying which were produced before 1993. Of these, four relate to aggression in non-human species; specifically, four are concerned with the role of aggression in forming dominance hierarchies (Maslow 1936; Maslow 1940; Boreman and Price 1972; Tilson *et al* 1988), and one applies evolutionary theory to conflict strategies in non-human animals (Gale and Eaves 1975). Just three papers examine bullying amongst humans as an expression of social dominance: two use populations of school age children (Björkqvist, Ekman and Lagerspetz 1982; Shapiro, Baumeister and Kessler 1991), and the third seeks to describe the characteristics of sales people (Buzzotta and Lefton 1981). Needle’s interest in school bullying as an expression of a social “pecking” order is thus present in psychological research prior to *The Bully*’s publication as a marginal topic. The text’s fatalism, however, is *not* characteristic of psychological understandings of bullying in this period. Among the fifty-three publications listed by PsycINFO, twenty are focused particularly on the bullying of children, and were produced in the decade preceding *The Bully*’s first edition (i.e. in the years 1983-1992 inclusive). Half of those publications include an explicit reference to devising interventions in their abstracts, while the rest are limited to descriptions of different aspects of bullying without comment on how such

knowledge might inform practice: but none suggest that teachers are powerless, and their efforts a pretence, as *The Bully* seems to imply.

The unwillingness of teachers to intervene in bullying is familiar from the novels I discussed in the last chapter. Yet it is striking that while characters such as Roland, or Angela, are expected to improve their situations through their own efforts, no similar demand is made of Simon. *The Bully* contains no suggestion that Simon might himself initiate change—either emotionally, through the development of the all-important “confidence;” physically, through weight loss; or politically, through the formation of class and other group identifications with similarly situated people. This contributes to the sense that the roles played out by the children are permanent.

Once again, this comprises a divergence from contemporaneous psychological approaches, at least with regard to the possibility of physical change. By turning to the word frequency lists generated from my global sample (see table 8), we can see that “treatment” is included within the twenty most recurrent items, for every decade sampled. In so far as “treatments” are devised for people believed to be “not quite right,” the psychological corpus shares certain assumptions with *The Bully*. But questions of what “treatments” are effective are, implicitly, questions of whether and how change might be wrought in the body or mind. The recurrence of the term “treatment” in the psychological corpus creates an ongoing engagement with attempts to change the fat body—irrespective of whether those attempts are, or can be, successful—that is entirely absent from *The Bully*. In particular, a closer examination of the abstracts produced by British institutions over the nineteen-nineties shows a growing tendency to regard the fat body as an external marker of disordered eating which should be “treated” as a problem with behavioural and sociocultural roots. I will give greater attention to the relationship constructed between

fatness and eating disorders in my next chapter, but I raise it here for the following reason. Simon's fatness is not attributed to his eating. In a break from the portrayals of the eighties, no cause, and no remedy, is advanced for his fatness. This position is potentially a radical one, because it removes the expectation that the fat child should lose weight solely to fit in, by dieting or any other means; but that potential cannot be realised as long as the fat child body is simultaneously constructed as "not quite right."

So why, at this particular stage of the fiction sample, should Simon's fatness be positioned as simultaneously "not quite right", and as a permanent characteristic? Relatedly: why should the bullying of a fat character be constructed as an unavoidable and inevitable expression of social dominance? What purpose does the text's determinism serve?

Partially, *The Bully*'s determinism comprises the next development in constructing the fat child body as a site for socioeconomic concerns. In the sample of eighties juvenile texts, associations were made between body type, aspiration and confidence, with the effect of depoliticising and individualising the causes of social immobility. Read within the same web of associations, *The Bully* continues to mark fat, working class, child bodies as socially immobile—but constructs social inequalities as unsolvable. Simon is not encouraged to pursue weight loss, because changing one's place within the power structure—by any means, but in this case specifically by individual effort—is portrayed as futile. Simon is born to his role, and must remain there.

Britain's economic malaise helps to contextualise the text's pessimism. In 1993 the country's employment figures were only just starting to recover after a prolonged period of downturn (see table 5). Male-dominated industries, such as manufacturing, had been particularly badly hit by the recessions of the nineteen-eighties and early nineties (Doyle 3).

Employment figures rose steadily after 1993, but the percentage of working age men in employment never returned to its pre-1979 level (2). Conversely, the percentage of working age women who were employed was higher in the nineties than any other decade of the twentieth century, excluding wartime (2). This information both accounts for the intractability of power structures that we see in the text, and dovetails with the text's gender dynamic too: for the ringleader of Simon's bullying is, against stereotype, a middle class girl.

Interconnections between economic malaise, children's bodies, and adults' complicity in children's violence were assuming additional potency in 1993. The murder of James Bulger took place in February, six months before *The Bully* first appeared on the shelves. Blake Morrison (1997) subsequently published an account of the trial, entitled *If*. James was two years old when Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, both boys of ten, abducted him from a Liverpool shopping centre; they tortured and killed him (21). Thirty-eight adults allowed the three children to proceed down the street, despite seeing the older boys hitting James (68). Within this scenario, Morrison suggests, Robert and Jon were victims as well as perpetrators; a moral ambivalence typical of many children escalated into active violence because societal safeguards were lacking. He relates the adults' inaction to a loss of communal feeling originating in economic change. "Fraternity is an important notion in the north, or used to be, in the days of industry and trade unions. An area like this would have considered itself a brotherhood, a community," he remarks (73). He posits that the adults who failed to stop Robert and Jon were not necessarily apathetic—but frightened and uncertain. Morrison contrasts the communal ideal of mutual trust, unlocked doors and neighbourliness with the post-industrial landscape:

A ten-foot wire mesh fence sealing off the railway; backyards topped with broken glass; barbed wire coiled around each climbable post; burglar alarms and guard dogs; dog shit and cartons and dented drinks cans; dead quiet; no one in the streets. Not neighbourliness, but Neighbourhood Watch. Not brotherhood, but the *stumm*, useless, unpreventing cameras of Big Brother.

NYE BEVAN IS DEAD it says on a wall just up the road. (73)

This dereliction resembles the run-down estate Simon must navigate in *The Bully*. Yet Needle's text appears to participate in, rather than resist, the marginalisation of lower class boys as an object of fear—and that marginalisation is partly achieved through the construction of Simon's fat body.

While Needle was not directly responding to the Bulger case^{xx}—the trial did not start until November 1st—his portrayal of Simon pre-empts a construction of the fat, lower class child that was seemingly invoked at the trial. Morrison claims that Robert Thompson and Jon Venables found it harder to gain the jury's sympathy because they were fat:

It does them no good, in here, looking overweight. It feeds bad thoughts: that they're not to put out by what happened, that they're happy with their lot. Fatness: a measure of contentment, or slobbery (you don't get happy anorexics, you don't get thin slobs) (34)

It is interesting to see a mirror, here, for Simon's presumed guilt. The fat, lower class boy is read as a perpetrator, rather than a victim, by default. Troublingly, Louise's resignation at the end of *The Bully* naturalises antipathy towards the fat lower class child, even though—unlike Robert and Jon—Simon is not a perpetrator at all.

While *Bonnie* and *The Bully* are focused on adult failings in public spaces and institutions, such as schools and streets, Andrew Matthews' *Stiks and Stoans* attends to

specifically parental shortcomings. The text depicts the bullying of a thirteen year old girl, Ella Hickie, by a group of local boys. Matthews uses a close third person narration to follow Liam, a new boy to the area who—through insecurity and a desire to deflect trouble—ingratiates himself with the bullying ringleader, Billy Pickett. Their bond develops because both boys feel their family life is lacking: their fathers are absent, and their mothers inattentive. Together they progress from verbally abusing Ella to harassing her family by making prank calls and graffitiiing her home. Finally Ella's leg is broken as an indirect result of the harassment. Liam is filled with remorse; he apologises to Ella, and at her request reads the diary she has kept of her experiences. The novel concludes with Liam confessing his role in the bullying to their teacher.

The aforementioned shift in the gendering of Britain's workforce reverberates through this text. Ella's vulnerability is partly constructed through the precarious employment prospects of her father, while Liam's anger at his mother is constructed as a response to her absorption in a developing career. Like Simon, Ella is fat, working class, and perceived as having "special needs" (9). Her father has an unspecified council job at the start of the novel, but is given his "cards", which feeds his own fears of being "on the scrap heap" and creates tension at home (124). Liam, relative to Ella, is well off; his mother is an ambitious woman in a corporate role who spends considerable amounts of money on Liam through competitiveness with his estranged father. This takes the form of, for instance, buying Liam expensive clothing to show "she was the one who cared most about him" (53).

These contrasting financial situations inform Ella's characterisation as a vulnerable girl, but are not used to complicate reader's responses in quite the same way we observed in *The Bully*. In a reversal of Needle's technique of initially encouraging us to see Simon as

the perpetrator of violence rather than the victim, *Sticks* is structured out of chronological sequence to allow us to see Ella at her most defenceless. The novel prioritises Ella's perspective at the start of the novel by opening with one of her diary extracts. The reader's sympathy is elicited by Ella's emphasis on the injustice of the bullying, in a passage intended to replicate the misspellings typical of a person with dyslexia (or as Ella refers to it, "dys" 26): "I doant no why people corl me names. I wish they woudent. I wish thay woud leave me aloan. I nevre doen nothing to them. I nevre doen nothing to none" (2). She describes how Billy calls her "Thickie" in a play on her name, and hints that the medical and educational categories intended to help her have a stigma attached which the school does not address adequately: "They reackon Im thick. But Im not thick. I'm a bit slow liek the docter says. I didnt wont to goe in no special neads class but I got put in their anywae." (1)

As with Simon, Ella's fatness is constructed as an immutable characteristic. But again Matthews presents this trait with less hostility than Needle. Instead of suggesting that fat is innately repellent, as Needle does, the meaning of Ella's fatness changes as the text progresses. A variety of perspectives are quoted on Ella's fatness, including that of medical clinicians, and those who care about her:

I can't help it. The doctor says it is glandular. Like I got all things inside of me what make me fat. Nana used to say, Who wants to be thin and miserable? It's better to be fat and jolly. But I'm not jolly. I wish I was thin like them models in the pictures on posters. I wish I didn't have glandular.

(72-3)

By referring to Ella's fatness as "glandular", the text distances Ella from responsibility—or blame—for her physicality. At the same time the text positions her weight as resistant to

personal efforts to change the body. Her profession to “glandular” weight gain is lent legitimacy because it is accredited to a doctor. Including “Nana’s” opinion, that it is “better to be fat and jolly,” provides a further alternative way of reading Ella’s body. Although each of these perspectives shows an engagement with size stereotypes, the availability of different views of Ella’s body means that the determinism of Needle’s text is less evident here.

The constancy of Ella’s fatness, combined with its multiplicity of meaning, serves a narrative function. Liam’s changing responses to her body comprise a barometer of his willingness to empathise. At their first meeting he pejoratively views her as “dumpy, overweight” (33). At his least empathetic, he sees Ella’s fat as an enduringly resilient substance, that can regain its former shape no matter what violence may be inflicted upon it. His descriptions of her reference the media he consumes; we are told that “in his mind, Ella Thickie was just a cartoon character” (46), and that, when Liam plays video games, he imagines his victim is “cartoon Ella Thickie, staring in disbelief as jets of blood pumped out of her wounds” (58). Once the bullying is extended to the rest of Ella’s family, they too are objectified by his references to mass entertainment:

Liam laughed. The Thickies were brilliant: they were a cartoon series, a set of recurring characters in a TV comedy, like the *Fast Show*. They did incredibly stupid things without realising that they were stupid. You could blow them up, drop ten-ton weights on their heads and they’d pop back into shape every time (131)

Liam is thus constructed, at least in this middle phase of his responses to Ella, as desensitised by his enjoyment of video games and televisual slapstick. However exposure to media violence is not positioned as the sole cause of Liam’s hostility towards the Hickies

as fat people. His willingness to victimise Ella stems from a desire to conform. He hears his friends' jokes about her appearance, and responds in kind. "Look at the backside on that," Billy urges. "Looks like two pit bulls fighting in a sack, doesn't it?" (45). "Know why she never goes swimming?" Liam responds. "She's afraid of being harpooned" (46). The use of the ungendered pronoun "that" and the whale metaphor demonstrates the boys' intention to dehumanise Ella. By asserting their power over her, they forge a bond with each other and compensate for a lack of emotional support at home; Liam notes that he "didn't want to go home yet, he wanted to stay with Billy, stacking joke on joke until the pile overbalanced" (47).

His eventual recognition that "some jokes weren't funny—they were a way of turning people into things" is accompanied by a rapprochement with his mother, a willingness to risk becoming Billy's target for victimisation, and a readiness to read Ella's fatness differently (145-6). He begins to look at her anew: "She was nothing like the other Ella, the one who'd been in his head. Now he saw greeny-grey eyes, dreamy-looking. She was quite pretty in a plump, freckly sort of way" (4). Through the presentation of Liam's emotional development, Ella's fatness is thus constructed as materially unchanging yet open to different readings.

The characters' motivations are equally open to different readings. Ella speculates that her bullies are innately predisposed towards aggression: "Some people say it's like how you're brung up. Like it's your parents not learning you properly. But I think some people are born with bad inside them, and it comes out no matter what their parents do" (100). Her sentiments are at odds with the effort Liam makes in conforming to the other boys' expectations. Matthews, like Needle, is concerned with deterministic 'pecking orders'—but instead of constructing attacks on the vulnerable as a biological inevitability, *Sticks* implies

that the determinants are social. In *The Bully*, Louise concludes that the attacks on Simon are an expression of natural instincts. In *Sticks*, Liam and Billy attack Ella to shore up their own unstable position in a social hierarchy.

Like Needle, Matthews explores these relationships through animal metaphors; however Matthews does so with greater ambiguity, because he shows that characters in the higher ranks of the ‘pecking order’ fear their loss of position. Ella, and the rest of her family, are only the most obvious analogues for a defenceless animal. Associates are created between fatness, immobility and animality in descriptions such as the following:

When Liam made eye contact with her she blushed, wheeled around and lumbered away, shifting her weight from leg to leg as if she were pacing the deck of a ship caught in a heavy swell. There was something sad about her. Liam could tell that she was depressed from the sag of her shoulders and the way her head was lowered in a permanent cringe (33)

Ella lumbers, shifts, paces, sags, and cringes: these words that construct her fat body as a “sad” body. They also implicitly evoke a captive animal. Matthews incorporates another, more explicit animal metaphor towards the end of the book. When the bullies graffiti Ella’s house, and hide in the bushes to shout taunts at her father as he discovers the paint, a direct comparison is drawn between his response and that of prey: “His eyes were bewildered, like the eyes of an animal in a snare, not understanding where the pain was coming from, or why it couldn’t move” (139).

Matthews shows a further difference from Needle in implying that any pleasure the bullies take from tormenting others is maladaptive, rather than an inevitable instinct. Witness, for instance, Ella’s comments on a poster of a seal she has seen at school. She muses on why a vulnerable animal might be abused:

In school they put up this picture of a baby seal. The baby seal is white and furry, and it's got big eyes, and it makes you want to pick it up and cuddle it. But these men come with like bats and they hit the baby seals over the head. I don't know how they can do that. I couldn't. I couldn't be cruel to no little baby seal. They must have something wrong with them, like in their minds. It's worse than having dys, 'cos in dys you get like your letters mixed up, but them men with bats got their feelings mixed up. (87)

Unlike the “crippled goose” analogy, this metaphor—in which the seal represents Ella, and the men with “feelings mixed up” represent her bullies—does not use a naturalistic fallacy to suggest that aggression towards the physically weak is inevitable. Rather, bullying is attributed to an emotional problem located in the perpetrator; it is the outward expression of “something wrong” in the mind.

The emphasis of Matthews' animal metaphors differs from Needle's. While dominance hierarchies feature in the text—see, for instance, Liam's recognition that “In Billy's group, Bing was below Liam” (83)—they do not comprise a stable structure in which bullies and victims will always occupy the same role. Rather, it is the possibility of change, namely fear of losing status, that motivates the bullies. Liam, for instance, ingratiate himself with Billy because he recognises his newness to the area makes him liable to stand out. Before he leaves for his first day at school, it is his own appearance in the mirror—not Ella's appearance—that is reminiscent of a defenceless creature: “He had the eyes of a small, furry animal about to enter an environment where everything ate small, furry animals” (12).

To the extent that Liam and Billy can maintain their dominance relative to Ella, it is because they are more adept at performance. The text presents bullying as entwined with a

social dynamic in which any difference from a purported norm is cause for suspicion. The children who successfully avoid bullying, and those most likely to perpetrate it, are highly conscious of how they appear to others. Difference exists, but must be obscured; Liam notes that the first child he meets at the school, a boy called Harry who claims to be picked on because of his unusual leisure interests, is actually picked on because he fails to *conceal* his interests or, indeed, any of his personal traits: “Liam realised Harry didn’t get grief because he kept seahorses, he got grief because he was Harry” (18). On the one hand, this phrase implies that, like Simon, Harry is a born victim, and victimhood is a germane characteristic. On the other, it implies that to avoid “grief,” one cannot be oneself.

For characters in whom difference is constructed as an embodied trait—as with Ella’s fatness—this performance becomes more complex. Ella’s “glandular” fat is not amenable to the same disguises that Liam uses to appear “neutral.” Billy and Liam’s friend Des, who is “tall and gangly, with milk-chocolate brown skin and fleecy black hair,” (29) faces a similar predicament; he cannot pretend to be white. Instead, in a strategy that Ella never masters, he feigns indifference rather than neutrality; the narrator states that “[h]e told jokes about West Indians and himself, putting himself down for being black before anyone else did” (29).

Billy and Liam’s performances serve a different function from the attempts of Rebekkah, Anna and David to play on adults’ expectations of them being nice, middle class children. The boys are presented as placing undue emphasis on peer approval because support at home is lacking. Liam puts considerable effort into a performance of conformity and averageness; for instance, he conceals his skill during video games in deference to Billy (35). Similarly, he selects clothes which will help him blend into the crowd. For his first social meeting with Billy, outside of school, he contrives to appear as “neutral” as possible

(54). We are told he “examined himself in the mirror and saw that he’d do. If he passed himself in the street, he wouldn’t look twice” (54). His efforts afford some protection against becoming a victim of bullying himself, because “Billy knew that Liam was putting on an act for his benefit and felt flattered” (23). More generally, the boys do not enjoy bullying other children so much as *enact enjoyment* in a show of solidarity with each other: “They laughed raucously to show each other they’d got it” (31). Liam takes for granted that Billy is equally concerned with performing a role. Billy mimics his teachers to undermine their authority, prompting Liam to speculate “that Billy practiced impersonations on his own, and didn’t show them to anybody until he had them off perfect” (25). Thus, although Billy is the ringleader, he is not immune from the vulnerabilities that keep his accomplices cowed.

Both Liam and Billy adopt these defences as part of a macho performance that the text attributes to poor fathering. All of the bullies are affected by their father being absent, or abusive:

“My dad’s a lorry driver. Least he was when I last saw him, six months ago.”

“I don’t know who my dad is,” Des said cheerfully.

Liam said, “What’s your dad, Bing?”

Bing’s eyes flared. He spoke through clenched teeth. “A bastard.” (41)

Indeed, the first episode of bullying Liam witnesses is an attempt to cheer Bing up after he is beaten by his father. Laughing at Ella allows Bing to regain a sense of control: “Bing cracked up and doubled over. Something he needed to get rid of was coming out in his laugh” (46). If Needle constructs the victimisation of the fat child as the result of a

biological instinct to dominate that exists in all people, Matthews constructs it as an impotent response to familial dysfunction.

Women are positioned, by the text, as an inadequate support for the boys. Liam is frustrated with his mother when he confides his fears of not fitting in: “Mum gave him one of her eyes-closed smiles, dealing with the problem the way she usually dealt with a problem—by pretending it didn’t exist” (13). In particular, he resents her career-mindedness, seeing it as both a distraction from his care and a contributing factor in the divorce:

She’d seen a chance to suck up to her new boss by working late to show how keen she was. Mum had always done that. It had been one of the things that she and Dad used to row about. Once in a while Dad would complain that it wasn’t right for Liam to be left at a friend’s house, or with a childminder, and Mum would tell him that she had a career to think about, and if he was so worried about Liam why didn’t he come home early for a change. (28).

His mother is allocated the majority of the blame in this scenario; the row is said to be about her “working late,” rather than his father not coming “home early for a change.” The debate over childcare is experienced by Liam as a personal rejection from both parents: “Liam wondered why they’d had him, when he was such an inconvenience to them” (28).

This informs Liam’s bullying. Contradictorily, the breakdown of a regressively gendered nuclear family unit is held responsible for the boys’ investment in a highly restrictive understanding of heterosexual masculinity. The boys overcompensate for their absent or inadequate fathers by aping aggressive young men; Liam refers to this behaviour as acting like a “Lad,” or “playing dressing-up with his personality, seeing what it felt like to be in with the Bad Boys” (101). In Liam’s case, this also involves a rejection of his

mother's class-inflected perception of respectability; he notes "Mum definitely wouldn't approve of Billy; Liam needed to do something that Mum wouldn't approve of" (120).

In keeping with their profession to be "lads," the boys' bullying behaviour comprises a policing of other children's gender roles. They mock Ella's body because it does not comply with either their idea of femininity, or their idea of physical attractiveness:

Billy did Ella. He seemed to swell up. He held out his arms and stamped his feet like a Sumo wrestler. "Come on, big boy!" he said in a deep, slow voice. "I'm all woman and I'm all yours!" (46)

Billy's impersonation constructs the fat body as a queer body. Ella's fatness is the basis of the comparison to Sumo wrestling, a sport whose professional proponents are all male (Kietlinksi 139). Billy's adoption of a "deep, slow" voice reinforces this masculinisation of Ella on the one hand, but on the other, also parodies a sultry feminine voice; the target of his parody is the idea a fat girl could allure them. The phrase "all woman" is deployed ironically—the phrase makes associations between fatness and female secondary sexual characteristics which might, in other contexts, be an intended compliment; but because the boys respond to the phrase with derision, it implies the boys view Ella as deluded in thinking of herself as attractive. Furthermore the qualifier "all" has connotations of excess; it is used to reinforce that Ella is *too* fat, *too* sexual. In the latter case, to be too sexual also comprises any expectation of being desired, which is positioned as outrageous delusion in a fat girl. These assumptions are shared, less explicitly, by members of their school. Ella observes of the girls in her class that, "They don't want me around, all fat and slow. They only want pretty girls, clever like them, who wear lots of make-up and that, and talk about boys all the time" (111).

Although Ella's fatness is instrumental in this example, the boys' sexism and homophobia are extended to other characters as part of the bullies' performance as "lads" and are, moreover, a way of keeping each other's behaviour in check. One of the labels that Liam fears most is "Mummy's Boy" (14); when Liam indicates that his mother expects certain standards of behaviour from him, Billy remarks "You want to knock that on the head right away" (109) and "You want to get her properly trained, mate" (32). Similarly, when Liam befriends a boy called Ben with whom he shares an interest in music, Billy tries to undermine the relationship by suggesting, through another impersonation, that Ben is effeminate: "Billy cocked a hip, stuck a hand on it, swept back invisible long hair and said, 'All that matters to me is my music!'" (108). He follows his performance with the comment, "I reckon he's a bit of a shirtlifter on the quiet" (108). Liam's response is to deny liking Ben in the knowledge that similar homophobic comments could be levelled at him; when he finally admits to their friendship, Billy taunts him: "Have a good time with Ben Toilet. Kissy-kissy, sweetheart!" (147).

As in *Bonnie*, the victimisation of the fat child is thus constructed as analogous to the victimisation of any child who departs from group norms. *Stiks* includes acting like a "shirtlifter," as Billy accuses Ben, or having "brown skin," like Des, within those departures. However, where *Bonnie* asserts that victimisation can be countered through collective action, *Stiks* locates the need for change in family structures. Problematically, one of the catalysts for Liam's realisation that he need not act out the aggressive role he has adopted, is the comparison he makes between his own family and Ben's; unlike Billy, Bing, Des, and Liam himself, Ben belongs to a nuclear family, in which his mother is the primary caregiver—and the role of each family member is presented as a comfortable one that requires no pretence. While in their company, Liam reflects that "nobody pretended

anything”, and that they show “the way a home ought to be” (148). While *The Bully* naturalises antipathy towards the fat child, *Stiks* naturalises the nuclear family as a source of stability and guidance for children. Gendered changes in the workforce are, conversely, cast as the social determinant of familial breakdown and aggression in confused young boys.

To conclude, *Bonnie*, *The Bully* and *Stiks* represent a break from the fiction of the eighties sample by associating intransigent fatness in children with either an inability, or an unwillingness, to change one’s circumstances through individual effort. I have demonstrated how this construct of the fat child is related to anxieties over the loss of adult authority. In the next chapter, my focus will remain on the nineteen-nineties. I will analyse how eating disorders in fat characters are constructed as a media-driven phenomenon that threatens childhood innocence. Equally, eating disorders are constructed as journeys of psychological reinvention. While intransigent fat is associated with an unchanging self, the pursuit of weight loss is associated with transformation of the psychological interior.

Chapter Five

The Nineteen-Nineties: Puppy Fat

This chapter examines the relationship of fat characters to eating disorders in nineteen-nineties juvenile fiction. I will analyse the following texts: Jacqueline Roy's *Fat Chance* (1994), Angela Jariwala's *Fatty Rati* (1997) and Jacqueline Wilson's *Girls Under Pressure* (1998). Roy, Jariwala and Wilson perpetuate the focus on psychological well-being that I observed in the nineteen-eighties fiction sample. However, they show a change in emphasis. While they contribute to the trend of describing fat bodies in psychological terms, they also pathologise the pursuit of weight loss. Their protagonists are fat, adolescent girls who develop eating disorders following familial, peer, and media pressure to lose weight. Eating disorders are constructed as an attempt to socially conform (which, for characters with immigrant parents, includes attempts to culturally assimilate). At the same time bodily fat is constructed as essentially childlike. Demands to lose weight are thus positioned as the symptom of a wider, societal erosion of childhood.

Eating disorders were a thematic concern in Anglophone juvenile fiction well before the nineties, particularly in US fiction. Imported novels addressing anorexia nervosa include Steven Levenkron's *The Best Little Girl in the World*, which was published in the USA in 1978 and was re-published in the UK by Puffin Plus in 1987; Deborah Hautzig's *Second Star to the Right*, which was simultaneously published in the USA and UK by Greenwillow in 1981; and Susan Terris's *Nell's Quilt*, which was published in the USA in 1981 and republished in the UK by Virago Upstarts in 1988. In these novels normatively slender characters develop disordered eating. They do so as a consequence of distorted body image; or alternatively, as an attempt to wield control in one of the few arenas available to them. No doubt such texts paved the way for Roy, Jariwala and Wilson to

incorporate disordered eating in their work, but they differ in at least one significant respect. The protagonists of *Fat*, *Fatty* and *Girls* do not have a distorted perception of themselves. Rather, they develop disordered eating as a direct result of others' hostility towards their fatness.

These links between fatness and disordered eating have a clear counterpart in the foregoing psychological literature. The tendency to refer to fat in the context of "eating disorders" was present in the seventies, as one of the six British papers from that decade describes "obesity" as a "somatic disorder" alongside conditions such as anorexia (Finch). But this tendency strengthened over time, both within and beyond Britain's boundaries. My frequency analysis of international papers shows the word "disorder" appears in the twenty most frequent items for the first time in the nineteen-nineties (see table 8). Turning to abstracts from UK institutions, over the ten years preceding *Fat Chance*'s publication—that is, the years 1984 to 1993 inclusive—the term 'fat' is as frequently used in discussion of eating disorders as in discussion of *being* fat (see tables 11 and 12). Seven out of nineteen abstracts relate their research topic to "obesity" or "overweight" and either "anorexia," "bulimia" or "eating disorder" (Koelling 1984; Crisp 1988; Martin 1989; Kent, Lacey and McCluskey 1992; Johnson-Sabine *et al* 1988; Patton *et al* 1990; Hill 1993). An additional four use only the terms "overweight" or "obesity" (Edwards *et al* 1984; Anholm 1986; McCrea and Summerfield 1988; Wright 1987). A further four refer to "anorexia," "bulimia" or "eating disorder" (Patton 1988; Bhadrinath 1990; Button 1990; Parry-Jones and Parry-Jones 1991). Associations between the fat body and disordered eating are created in two ways. On the one hand, being fat is constructed as an *outcome* of disordered eating. For instance obesity is positioned as the outward manifestation of behaviours that lie on a spectrum with disordered eating (Patton). On the other hand, being fat is constructed as a

risk for developing disordered eating; for example obesity is listed as a factor in abnormal eating attitudes (Johnson-Sabine *et al*).

Roy, Jariwala and Wilson engage with both constructs. But *Fat, Fatty* and *Girls* also share continuities with literary texts that construct the transformation of fat to thin bodies in less pathologised terms. I particularly wish to note one marginal, but highly relevant trope that appears in three texts from the fiction corpus. These three texts construct weight loss as the incidental effect of progressing from pre-pubescence to physical and emotional maturity. The first of these, Diana Wynne Jones's fantasy novel *Fire and Hemlock* (1984), constructs weight loss as a natural part of adolescent bodily change. At ten years of age the protagonist, Polly, befriends Nina, "a big, fat, girl with short, frizzy hair, glasses, and a loud giggle" (7). As they enter their teens Nina transforms seemingly without effort: "Nina had come back to school with a figure. It seemed to have grown overnight—or, at least, over Christmas. All the plumpness which had hitherto been all over Nina had somehow settled into new and more appropriate places, and then dwindled, to make a most attractive shape. Nina looked good, and knew it" (175).

Robert Westall's *Falling into Glory* (1993) includes a similar progression from infancy to adulthood via weight loss. Robbie, the narrator, recounts that he was "truly enormous" as a young child during the second world war. He attributes this to his mother's worries he would be affected by rationing: "By hook or by crook, by charm at the butcher's and friends at the grocer's, and often by going hungry herself, she fed me up like a prize pig" (12). He also describes his own characteristics as a "biddable and greedy child", who, on entering grammar school, would be called a "fat slug" by his classmates (12). Despite the references to greed, he loses weight in his teens without the suggestion he has changed his eating habits. Instead his weight loss is constructed as the normal process of adolescent

bodily change: “All my fat secretly turned into heavy bone and heavier muscle. I didn’t notice it myself at first” (14). The reconfiguring of “fat” as “brute strength” (14) is a catalyst for adult women reciprocating his sexual desire.

A related construction of the fat child appears in William Mayne’s historical novel, *Drift* (1985). Here weight loss is constructed as an outward sign of acquiring adult responsibilities, rather than the attainment of specifically sexual knowledge. Tawena, the North American Indian girl from whose perspective half the story is told, is initially described as a girl with “a fatty face” with “brown eyes deep in the fat” (7). Her expedition to find a live bear comprises a rite of passage from which she returns “thin” and without her “fat cheeks” (155).

By the early nineties this cultural construction of maturing through weight loss would become conflated with the construction of eating disorders, at least in the domains of news and entertainment media. Andrew Morton’s book *Diana: Her True Story* (1992) was instrumental to the conflation. The disclosure therein of Princess Diana’s experiences with bulimia (62) had both clinical and cultural reverberations. A study of bulimia diagnoses, in which the annual incidence rates of anorexia nervosa and bulimia were calculated from the UK’s General Practice Research Database, testifies to the clinical impact. While rates of anorexia were stable from 1988 to 2000, the early 1990s witnessed a marked increase in primary care incidence of bulimia for women aged 10-39 years which would fall again in 1996. The researchers suggest that identification with Princess Diana, between the announcement of her eating disorder and her death in 1997, may have prompted patients to seek help for long standing cases of bulimia that had previously been concealed through shame (Currin, Schmidt, Treasure and Jick 2005). The raised profile of bulimia may account for why the protagonists of *Fat*, *Fatty* and *Girls* are the first characters in the

corpus to induce vomiting as a method of weight control. With equal pertinence for this study, the news and entertainment reports of Princess Diana's bulimia set a precedent for the novel's treatment of eating disorders as a rite of passage.

Paula Saukko (2006) argues that media coverage of famous women's eating disorders is historically specific in its construction of the female healthy self (152). Whereas, in the seventies, reporters discussed the singer Karen Carpenter's anorexia as the result of her falling victim to mass culture, in the nineties, coverage of Diana's bulimia emphasised that she was a "flexible, self-transforming woman, having graduated from virgin princess to outspoken divorcée" (152). Though fears of falling victim to mass culture are also present in the nineties fiction corpus, I contend that associations between "bulimia", "self-transformation" and the progression from young naïf to experienced adult, play a key part in *Fat*, *Fatty* and *Girls*.

Beginning with *Fat*, I will briefly summarise the plot to aid the clarity of my discussion. The main character is Tessa, an eleven year old Black British girl (5). The early chapters focus on Tessa's acute consciousness of being fat, in a variety of scenarios: on a shopping trip with her mother, Joy; as a bridesmaid at her sister's wedding; as the victim of bullying at school; and as the tormentor of her nominal friend, Jasper. The novel's middle section explores the basis of her relationship with Jasper, who, though he is thin, feels similarly isolated by their peers. Both he and Tessa are of Jamaican descent (23), and are regularly the target of racist taunts. Tessa's dislike of her own body fat is grouped with her consciousness that her African-Caribbean hair and flat nose do not comply with what she sees as the "proper" appearance of her Barbie dolls and the white girls at school (101). The final third of the book concerns Tessa's successful attempt to lose weight at a slimming club. Although her new thinness brings rewards including freedom of movement, choice of

clothing and social approval, her dieting practices become the source of tension with friends and family, who expect and encourage her to eat as they do. She begins to spend time with Lucy, a fellow member of the slimming club, rather than Jasper, and to mimic her in vomiting after eating. It is not until Lucy is hospitalised and force fed that Tessa repairs her friendship with Jasper and ceases, in the book's final chapter, to pursue weight loss.

Crucially, from the novel's first chapter, Tessa's disdain for her "shape" is entwined with a disdain for the idea of "puppy fat" (8). Her reported thoughts include the sarcastic comment "she was the biggest puppy anyone had ever seen" (8). The text proceeds to deepen this association of disdain for fat with disdain for childhood, and to link the pathological pursuit of weight loss with the pursuit of an adult femininity. The first hints of this association are conveyed through Tessa's responses to her mother, Joy. Despite Tessa's wish to be perceived as physically attractive, she resents the remarks Joy makes about the need to have a "pretty figure" (7). Joy's preoccupation with thinness strikes Tessa as unhealthy in itself:

She was starting to think that her mother might be anorexic or something.

She'd read about it in a magazine; it was this illness where you couldn't stop slimming and no matter how thin you got, you still thought you were fat.

Only you were supposed to get it when you were a kid, not when you were coming up to forty. (7)

This paragraph categorises anorexia as an illness you get as "a kid." Yet it simultaneously implies that a media preoccupation with the adolescent female body overlooks how the characteristics of anorexia might resemble normative concerns about weight loss among adult women.

The fatness that Tessa wishes to lose carries multiple meanings, which in combination queer age boundaries. She feels conspicuous because “no one else her age could even come close to filling a bra, but she was flowing out of one” (9), and she speculates whether “people would think she was pregnant” (14) because of the way her stomach protrudes. To the extent that her fatness is constructed as prematurely aging her, Tessa faces the same social pressure to seek slenderness that her mother, an adult woman, is under; Tessa becomes a type of honorary adult woman because of her “pregnant” belly. But on the other hand, her fatness is characterised as “puppy fat” (8), bodily fat which is understood to be temporal, innately childish, and perhaps most important of all, *resolved without intervention*. Tessa’s strategies for camouflaging her bodily fat are constructed, by Joy’s responses at least, as unsuitable in their adulthood. For instance Tessa’s resistance to wearing “bright colours” (5)—despite the belief they would “set off her dark complexion” (6)—is rooted in her belief black is slimming. Joy protests that “[y]oung girls don’t wear black. It makes them look old before their time” (9). Her statement constructs Tessa’s efforts to camouflage her weight as age-inappropriate. Even though Joy wishes Tessa were thinner, her protest against Tessa being “old before her time” assumes that preoccupation with weight is an adult concern—something adult women do unless they “let themselves go” (7)—*not* something characteristic of, in Tessa’s phrase, “when you were a kid.”

From Joy’s behaviour, Tessa surmises that the pursuit of slenderness is necessary to acquire a comfortable, secure, and heteronormative adulthood:

[Joy] thought being thin was the most important thing in the whole world, that it mattered more than being good or happy or brave or anything. And maybe she was right, because whoever heard of anyone marrying anybody

else because they were good. You liked people and went out with people and then married them because of the way they looked, everyone knew that. (22)

En route to marriagability, Tessa conceptualises losing weight as a search for male approval via physical modifications and consumer behaviour. She sees her body fat as an obstacle to social acceptance, and wishes to be thin enough to wear the kind of clothes that could “get her whistles from the boys in her class at school” (6). As is consistent with her parents’ high income professions in medicine (31) and pharmacy (32), Tessa does not see money as the primary barrier to achieving this fashionable appearance. Here she differs from lower class characters, such as *French Letter*’s Maxine, who express frustration with the high cost of clothing that fits. Rather, Tessa muses that “it didn’t matter how much she spent, everything she bought would look ugly as it clung to her ever-ballooning shape” (8).

Tessa’s social opportunities are not however solely dictated by her body size. As I will show, her unpopularity has a partial basis in the racism of her class mates, as well as in their hostility towards her as a fat person. The urge to enter adult life, expressed by her attempts at weight loss, therefore becomes entwined with an assimilationist desire to blend in amongst her white peers. Tessa suggests that the racism at her school is covert; this is conveyed by her conversations with the head teacher, Mrs Tynan, whose “hair could have been described as woolly too” and whose “skin was at least as dark as Tessa’s own” (60). Mrs Tynan asks Tessa if she is having problems with people making “racist remarks” (83). Tessa responds that “some of them think it, but they don’t say it” (83). When “remarks” *are* voiced, it is amongst a morass of comments about personal appearance including weight that allows people to overlook the racist intent if they so choose.

The taunting of Tessa by a classmate called Sonia provides an example. Sonia begins by referring to Tessa as “old fat guts”, “all lumpy like a great old sofa” (76). Like

Tessa, she goes on to frame fatness as a failure of femininity and a barrier to attracting male attention; Tessa's retaliatory comment that she is cleverer than Sonia is met with the response: "You can get ten out of ten all you like, but nobody will ever fall in love with you or think you're special" (77). Tessa can never be "special", because, in Sonia's understanding, black girls can never be as pretty as white girls. "At least I've got fair hair," Sonia goads; "not that stupid wool that you've got on your head" (77). Finally she combines her hostility towards Tessa's blackness and fatness in one comment, by ridiculing her "fat brown knees" before asking "What's it like to be so gross and disgusting, eh? You must be the ugliest girl in the whole school" (78). By moving between remarks about Tessa's fatness, racial characteristics, and "ugliness", Sonia manages to disrupt potential group identifications that might form along just one of these axes. Tessa observes that Martin, another black pupil at the school, "thinks that when people say things about hair and that, they don't mean him, they only mean Jasper and me" (84). He can participate in the vilification of Tessa as a fat, rather than as a black, girl and so, as Mrs Tynan notes, "pretend things like that aren't being said" (84).

The ensuing physical fight between Tessa and Sonia is understood by Mrs Tynan to be the fault of both girls; she instructs each of them to write an essay on "why intolerance—whether it's on the grounds of size or shape or colour or intellect—is wrong" (82). This statement is positioned as well-intentioned counsel, because she is subsequently kind to Tessa; for instance she encourages Tessa to make the most of being "bright, outgoing and articulate" (84). But the punishment creates a false equivalence. Calling Sonia "stupid" does not undermine the privileges that come with being "fair" and slender, nor does the insult have the same power as calling Tessa "gross and disgusting" because she is fat and black (77). Academic achievement is not valued by Sonia or the others in their class; as

Tessa points out, “no one liked clever kids anyhow” (27). Consequently Tessa finds that when she attempts to rebuff insults in kind, “all her jibes at Sonia turned out like compliments” (25).

Presented with the alleged equivalence of “size or shape or colour or intellect” as targets for “intolerance,” Tessa focuses on changing the trait the text constructs as most mutable: her weight. Accordingly, when Mrs Tynan asks Tessa why she has so few friends, Tessa focuses on this rather than any other characteristic; “it was because she was fat” (84). Similarly, as Tessa muses one night on her collection of Barbie and Cindy dolls, she concludes she might one day resemble them in slenderness if not in colouring. Initially she observes that, “blue-eyed and pale skinned, they showed Tessa exactly what she wasn’t. Sometimes she resented them for it, but mostly she felt a wistful kind of envy. If only she had such long, slim legs, and neat little feet and long hair” (101). The dolls’ appearance is associated with those of the thin white girls at school, when Tess reflects that “Sonia looked like a Barbie. She was pretty and slim” (101). Noting her racial difference from the dolls causes conflicted feelings:

Tessa felt guilty for wishing she had different hair because she knew she ought to be proud of what she was, and of being black. But Cindy and Barbie were perfect, and Cindy and Barbie were mostly white, or dark skinned with long hair and pointed noses, not flat noses like the one Tessa had. (101)

At this stage of the novel, Tessa does not feel the same ambivalence towards, specifically, her fatness. The belief she should be “proud of what she was” is not made in connection to her weight; rather the reverse. She looks forward to a time when her “puppy fat” might be lost. Internally she debates whether her friend Jasper could ever be in love with her: “*you’re*

too fat, said a voice inside her head. But I could be beautiful, Tessa answered herself. I'm not really ugly, I'm not always going to be like this" (103).

It is significant that Lucy, the friend who leads Tessa to develop disordered eating habits, is also a character of colour. At their first meeting Lucy explains:

I wanted to lose weight because all my life I have been too fat. Chinese people are usually so slim and I didn't want to be different. Now people don't stare at me so much when I go out with my friends" (126).

Lucy does not want to seem different from the Chinese people with whom she shares an identity, by departing from a cultural stereotype of the appropriate body for a Chinese person to have. Equally her comment contains the meaning of not wishing to be *too* different from a white, slender ideal. Reducing her weight means that she is not subjected to white people's othering stares "so much." they may continue to stare at her as a Chinese person, but not because of her weight.

The positioning of deliberate weight loss as both an attempt at assimilation and an attempt to leave childhood behind is strengthened by Tessa's ambivalence towards the character Jasper. As a black character described as "young for his age" (159), he mirrors the parts of Tessa she is trying to reject in herself. She relays the hostile treatment she receives onto Jasper, because he exemplifies the parts of herself that other people attack: "every time she laughed at him the fact that the rest of the class was laughing at her was made a little easier to bear. It meant she wasn't the only victim; there was someone else as miserable as she was" (23). More pointedly, it is said that "she didn't even have to come up with ideas for baiting old Jasper, she only had to remember the nasty things that had been done to her" (24).

Though she treats Jasper cruelly the text emphasises that she identifies with him. She is plagued with nightmares wherein Jasper seems to feel the same emotions as herself. The lines between their respective victimisation are blurred as she dreams she has been cast into hell for her behaviour: “‘You are being punished for your cruelty to Jasper Woodrow,’ the demons howled and Tessa saw him leaning over the pit, tears streaming down his face, but his were tears of pain, not laughter, he was hurting as much as she was” (43).

In her waking life, Tessa’s hostility alternates with a sympathy based on their shared identifications. They are together when they see a racist slogan painted on a fence: “NO BLACKS HERE” (56). The discomfort they both feel on reading it evokes a feeling in Tessa of wanting to “protect” (56) Jasper because “they were in the same boat. They didn’t fit, not in any way. Their skins were black, and she was too fat, and he was too wimpy and thin.^{xxi} Nobody liked them, so maybe they should like each other” (56). Jasper’s reported thoughts reinforce the importance of this shared identification. They attend a performance of African dance, and the narrator describes how the performance makes the children “feel proud” (68).

Although the text treats being “fat” as a subject position that does not “fit” in the children’s school and local community any more than being “black” does, Jasper and Tessa’s sense of pride rarely accommodates body size as it does racial identity. Pride in fatness is only accommodated within child-like pursuits. Fatness is partially endorsed as an alternative, underdog identity, through which one might develop empathy for other children who don’t “fit.” Tessa and Jasper fantasise, for instance, that they could found “the Society for People Everybody Hates”—with membership encompassing “wimps,” “fat girls,” “kids with glasses,” “kids with acne,” “Black kids,” “Jewish kids,” “Kids with runny noses,” “cross-eyed kids” and “smelly kids” (64). They devise two society rules: “Being nice, and

eating half a pound of chocolate ever day. Otherwise, you might lose your acne and your fat and people might get to like you” (65). Tessa sees this as a specifically childish fantasy which mortifies as well as pleases her; “It was kind of embarrassing. Only little kids had clubs” (91).

In their club rules, weight loss functions as a departure not only from the club, but from childhood. The text frequently deploys imagery that presents the pursuit of weight loss as an escape. Tessa is explicitly shown comparing her dieting to the geography of physical travel. She reflects that “she wanted to be in another place in much the same way as she wanted to be in another body. Going away was a dream, like being thin and beautiful” (138). She daydreams, with Jasper, of visiting Jamaica, where “their ancestors had lived” (138), and follows the journey she would take on a map. Their escape to Jamaica becomes synonymous with reaching adulthood; Jasper stares at the map, “willing himself to get tough” and speculating “he’d be grown up in another six years and he’d get away from everyone and everything” (185).

This strand of imagery casts both weight loss and the return to a country where their “ancestors” lived as a fantasy of belonging. The pursuit of being “thin and beautiful” is directly associated with the geographical pursuit of “another place” (138) and with the perceived independence of being “grown up.” While the fantasy constructs black identity as a source of pride, the fat body is not accorded the same potential. Tessa’s dream is to return to the place of her ancestors, but also to be “thin” rather than accepted for her fatness.

The emphasis on weight loss as a route to change is at its strongest when Tessa first decides to diet. The catalyst for her decision is the appearance of a slender woman on the television who her father admires:

Tessa looked down at her knees. They bulged out in front of her in just the way Sonia had described them on the day of the fight. Maybe if she'd looked more like the woman on the TV screen, her dad wouldn't have gone to live somewhere else, and would be home all the time, not just for visits on Christmas and Easter. And maybe she'd have more friends, and maybe things would be easier, happier, more fun. Maybe she wouldn't need to belong to a Misfits Club with Jasper. (93)

In this paragraph we see, summarised, a range of triggers for Tessa's attempts to lose weight: the taunting of her peers, media representation, stressful changes at home, and a wish to lessen her identification as a "misfit" alongside Jasper as a childish, black friend.

Prior to this point, Tessa eats often and lingeringly. She dwells on the sensory aspects of food—she imagines chips "melting hotly in her mouth" (12) while shopping with her mother; and during her sister's wedding service, ignores the sermon to daydream about "how the chicken vol-au-vents would taste and whether she could prevent people noticing how much she ate" (15). Continuing the trend in nineteen-eighties fiction for imbuing the fat child's eating habits with emotional resonance, she eats more when she is distressed: "the more fed up with herself she felt, the more she ate, and so it went on, a vicious circle that she couldn't break" (97). The comfort derived from eating is partially conveyed through a dwelling on the sensory qualities of food. For instance, a secretly eaten chocolate bar "filled her mouth so sweetly, it was like all the warm, nice things in the world mixed up and made into something you could eat. If happiness could be turned into something you could see and touch, it would be a chocolate bar" (17). By attributing Tessa's fatness to a changeable behaviour (eating), the text raises the possibility of Tessa changing her physical and emotional self through the modification of her diet. Tessa's body is modifiable—unlike

Bonnie, Simon and Ella in Chapter Four, for whom the unchanging fat body represents an inability to change life circumstances through individual effort.

Jasper perceives Tessa's desire to lose weight as a sign of her outgrowing him. "He felt really young all the time, and he especially felt young when he was with Tessa, because she knew so much about things. 'Don't go on a diet,' Jasper said. He didn't know why, but the thought of Tessa getting thin scared him" (119). Once she succeeds in losing weight, his fears are realised:

Her arms were thinner too, and her face was less round and childish. Tessa was looking like she was thirteen or more. They entered a tunnel with a sudden rush, and Jasper saw his reflection gleaming strongly in the darkened window. He still looked nine. (149)

Tessa's growing closeness to Lucy, which intensifies as they both lose weight, also positions Jasper as a childish outsider—even though Lucy is still in primary school (167). The pursuit of weight loss is associated with a growing interest in the accoutrements of adult, or at least adolescent, femininity, rather than the more child-orientated activities Jasper considers "fun" (169).

This distinction is made during a shopping trip made by Tessa, Lucy, and Jasper together. Jasper feels alienated when, instead of browsing the record shops as he used to with Tessa, the girls choose to visit the perfume counter of a department store. "It seemed to go on for ages, and Jasper didn't see how they could tell one scent from another by then. He wandered over to the men's range and tried to get interested in some aftershave, but the assistant looked at him as if he was the biggest joke ever" (167). His attempts to inject some youthful levity into proceedings, by donning a yellow floppy hat on display in the same shop, attracts an assistant's ire. She warns "[t]his isn't a playground for children"

(169). Tessa and Lucy, in their perfume sniffing as in their weight loss, are thus juxtaposed against him as striving for adulthood. Furthermore, partaking in adult consumerism, by purchasing perfume, is enabled by the self-perception that one's body "fits" amongst those of the other customers. "I wouldn't have dared to do that if I'd still been fat," Tessa remarks.

Jasper's recognition that Tessa's pursuit of slenderness is an attempt to grow up more quickly is shared by his mother, Mrs Woodrow. She constructs the pressure to diet as a threat to childhood:

Eleven, twelve, it's still too young. There's so much pressure on kids these days, it isn't right. Maybe she was a little plump. People are different shapes. Variety is interesting. We don't all look the same, the good Lord made us different. You know it makes me so mad. All this television: slim this, fit that, be this, do that. Why should women have to be like sticks, eh? (173)

By the end of the paragraph she has moved from discussing "pressure on kids" to "women." This is because aspiring to "stick" like proportions is framed as the concern of adults, even where the speaker adopts an oppositional stance to changing what "the good Lord made."

Tessa's views are eventually brought into compliance with those of Jasper and Mrs Woodrow. The catalyst is Lucy's hospitalisation for life-endangering weight loss. Under pressure from her parents, Tessa agrees to visit her (206). Tessa is disconcerted that the disordered eating can lead to physical ill health. In particular, she is concerned that she will succumb to physical health problems herself:

Lucy had taught her the most wonderful trick. On days when you just had to eat a cream bun or a Mars bar, you could make everything right by sticking

your fingers down your throat and being sick. It was called having your cake and eating it, and it was the best idea ever. Or at least, she'd thought it was.

But what if it made you ill? (208)

Seeing Lucy forces Tessa into an admission which constructs the unchanged body as an authentic body, one that is true to the essence of personality; "when I was fat I was a real, living, breathing person. At least I knew how I felt about things, and at least I was really me. I don't feel like me any more, I feel like... I don't know. Like I'm what other people want" (211). Authenticity is, in turn, related to a childhood state of innocence. On leaving Lucy, the shock of realising the threat to her own physical health prompts Tessa to become nostalgic for the child-like interests she shared with Jasper:

She remembered the fun she and Jasper used to have when they visited her dad. And she remembered all the games they'd played and the things they'd shared that no one else would ever know about. She missed him. How could she miss stupid old Jasper? He was just a kid, he hadn't grown up at all, probably never would. But maybe that was it. He wasn't grown up, so he didn't pretend about anything. (214)

Tessa abandons her dieting at precisely the point she embraces being "just a kid", in the form of her friendship with Jasper. Weight loss is constructed as an adult concern, entwined with the "pretence" of adult interactions. The book finishes with her being reunited with Jasper—when she arrives at his flat she sees him "standing by the window rolling an old Corgi car across the ledge. He looked about six years old and he made Tessa smile" (218)—whereupon they share a cake baked by Jasper's mother. "Tessa reached for the largest piece, and began to eat it with her old enthusiasm" (220). The text therefore finishes

with her return to a cosy world of childhood: one in which she is happy to play games with her friend, and to eat without the adult preoccupation of weight loss.

The difficulty with this ending is that the structure of the text means resultant weight gain need not be addressed. At the story's resolution, the protagonist remains thin, despite the overt messages of the importance of accepting oneself and the authenticity of being fat. This upholds the associations between newly acquired knowledge and the slender form. The text attempts to have its own cake, and eat it, by arguing against body prejudice while only showing the protagonist as happy when she is no longer dieting but still thin. In this sense *Fat* avoids alienating readers who are themselves ambivalent or hostile towards the fat body; but the resultant message is at best confusing, and at worst, hypocritical.

This is a trait shared by *Fatty*, which tracks a similar progression from the fat body to the thin body via the development of bulimia. The novel's protagonist is a sixteen year old girl (5) of Gujarati descent (72), named Rati Rana. The daughter of "an accountant with a large firm" (49), she is initially described as a "real fatty" whose lifelong ambition has been "to eat all she could with the minimum of fuss" (5). Rati's feelings about her body are presented in conjunction with an uncertainty over who she wants to be, which is expressed through educational and career indecision. After she achieves low marks in her GCSEs, her parents encourage her to pursue retakes with a view to subsequently applying to university like her siblings. She has difficulty in conveying her ambivalence towards resits and the strength of her wish to do "something different" (27). The narrator attributes this difficulty in asserting herself to feeling "fat and useless" rather than "thin and confident" (27). Associations between the search for an adult working identity, confidence and slenderness are thus created by the text. Rati eventually commences a vocational course at a nearby sixth form college, in an attempt to "rewrite her very boring life story" (33). Following her

enrolment she develops an infatuation with a Sikh boy named Harnaik who also attends the college; the belief that she “would have to lose at least three stone before she got a little recognition from a guy like him” (54) is one factor in her decision to diet. Although she succeeds in getting his attention the pressure to stay slim prompts her to take laxatives (145) and induce vomiting (151). Adam, a friend of her brother’s, guesses that she is maintaining her weight loss by vomiting and he intervenes by emphasising the physical danger she has placed herself under (168). Once she has confided in Adam, Rati returns to her original pattern of eating (169), and rejects Harnaik (172).

Rati is the eldest of the protagonists presented in this chapter; and accordingly, her fatness is not constructed as a characteristic of the child body to the same degree as Tessa’s. However Rati’s fatness is presented as a trait that she has possessed since infancy. The opening pages emphasise that her “blissful life of scoffing-dom” in school was countered by insults from the other children for being “so fat” (6). The pursuit of weight loss, conversely, is connected with her entry into adult life as signified by the completion of her schooling. Rati sees academic success as “essential for her future” and relates her poor performance at school to her body size: “Gradually, Rati linked the exam results with the fatness. She had spent so much time worrying about food and boys that she hadn’t concentrated on her education” (12). Deciding what one wants to be is repeatedly associated with confidence, and confidence with slenderness. Rati’s sister asks “have you decided what you want to be at last?” The question causes Rati to feel “stupid and embarrassed in front of her mega intelligent sister who had a firm control on her life. If Rati wasn’t so fat, one thinks, perhaps she’d be just as confident too” (23).

Rati’s fatness is attributed to overeating, and her eating is presented as a deferral of adulthood. She longs “to drown her sorrows in a two litre tub of chocolate ice-cream” while

her mother asks her difficult questions about her future: “Do you want to be a teacher? A doctor? A lawyer?” (12). The image of “drowning her sorrows” reconfigures a typically adult response (the drinking of alcohol) in the more child-like activity of eating “chocolate ice-cream.” Her eating is also one of the means by which the text racialises her character. A fondness for “chips, pizzas, crisps and doughnuts” (40), as well as Indian foods such as the “cumin dokra” (65) made by her mother and the “ras malai” dessert offered by her friend (110), is eschewed in her attempts to lose weight. The rejection of both western and eastern foods frames Rati’s diet as the act of a British Asian girl.

As with Tessa, the pressure upon Rati to be slender and to comply with adult, heteronormative femininity is entwined with pressure to culturally assimilate. The insults Rati receives typically target her weight and her race together. This intra-action is presented as having an amplifying effect. Terms of abuse such as “Fatty Paki!” and “Fatty Rati and chapatti!” (6) show hostility towards her as a specifically fat, Gujarati girl. Rati notes that the Asian boys she knows also insult her for her weight, by calling “Hey, Moti! Oi, Jadhi!” (20), the “Asian equivalent to ‘Tubby’ and ‘Fatty’” (20); but Rati perceives them as less threatening because “at the end of the day, all the Asians at Red Fox went home to a background no different than her own” (20). That the text attributes more power to her white assailants does not mean that it attributes more power to racist insults, however; Rati claims “that the abuse she received for her huge size was a millions (sic) times worse than the racist insults” (93).

The text gestures towards, then undermines, a stereotype of greater body acceptance within Indian communities. Rati’s friend Deepti assures her she will have a better time at sixth form because “most of the people there are Asian. I tell you, they will accept you as you are. You won’t ever be called Paki or Wog again when you’re there and I’m almost

sure that they won't make comments about your size. Indians aren't like that, man" (47). Similarly, Mrs Rana's insistence that Rati's fatness is acceptable because Rati "just need[s] more food" (14) is constructed by the text as an "Indian" trait—the narrator states, "God bless the Indian mothers for coming up with this line of reasoning" (14). But the text goes on to suggest that Rati does not fully comply with Gujarati beauty standards. Like Lucy, Rati departs from the normative physique in her community; she envies that her friend Deepti "was small, slim and gorgeous, a common factor with most Gujarati girls. Rati didn't look like a typical Guju as she wasn't the petite stereotype like her pal" (36).

The successful pursuit of thinness pursued, by Rati, as a compensatory act for her racial identity. She defers challenging the racism she hears at school until she can move closer to the critics' perception of "attractiveness" by losing weight. For instance, during a class discussion at her sixth form concerning what defines racial abuse, Rati finds herself withdrawing:

How Rati wished that she were confident enough to join in with the discussion, view her ideas and share her experience—negligible as it was—with everyone. Perhaps one day, when her waist was wasp like and her cheekbones were visible, people would find her attractive enough to listen to her. (98)

Her musings are only partially borne out by her weight loss. The success she achieves in attracting Harnaik once she is thin is also racially inflected. Her weight loss is successful as a compensatory act because she has "lovely creamy" (36) skin, and the "fair" colouring (72) considered by her friends to be more typical of a "pukki Punjabi" than a Gujarati girl (72). The positive effects last only as long as the illusion she is Punjabi. Post weight loss, Harnaik's receptiveness to her appearance is based on her light colouring (140). He is

disconcerted that she fails to understand his address to her in Punjabi and he clarifies “You look Punjabi actually. I would never have guessed that you weren’t” (140). Although they will subsequently date, he keeps their relationship private because of his disappointment that she is Gujarati and his anxiety that she will regain weight.

Again in an echo of Tessa’s portrayal, the pressure upon Rati to slim is increased by consumer messages that adult social acceptance, including attracting a partner, involves particular consumer behaviours. Rati is distressed by shopping trips in which the idealised consumer is constructed by the clothes on offer as a thin consumer. Rati’s “generous proportions were too much to fit into the latest skimpy number” (36). She recognises that shop assistants judge her by “begrudgingly eyeing her up and down before tutting” (37). Rati’s wish to be “trendy” produces a reluctance to be identified with fat consumers because the fat body is constructed as ipso facto unfashionable by the market. She purchases clothing that is a “bit of a squeeze” from “a trendy shop” rather than patronize “the out-sized store, in the unfashionable side of town” (37).

The pressure to be a thin consumer is intensified by the mass media. While Tessa is spurred to diet by the bikini clad women on her television screen, Rati is susceptible to the construction of the body as project in a publication called *Teeny Queen* (8). The magazine gives Rati a problematic sense of “being sisters in the same struggle” with other readers who feel their appearance is inadequate; dissatisfaction with one’s physical self is thus constructed by the magazine as a normative part of femininity.

It is this magazine which on the one hand provides Rati’s first diet regime—“The Bottomless Plan” (33)—and on the other, cautions girls that to diet is a dangerously compulsive activity:

Opening her new magazine, she turned to the article on “Dieting Disasters.”

There were several stories where girls of Rati’s age or thereabouts had slimmed down to their desired weight but found they couldn’t stop dieting.

There were incidents of starvation, vomiting and taking laxatives. Rati read on about laxative abuse (132).

This ostensibly cautionary feature in the magazine contributes to the scrutiny of female bodies under the guise of providing a warning. Rati is aware of and dismisses its overt function; she treats the feature as an instruction guide, just as she treats the diet plans that appear on the magazine’s other pages: “the article had intrigued Rati and she couldn’t stop thinking about it for the rest of the day” (132). She relies on laxatives to eat what she wants through the Christmas period, taking “a couple of tablets after every meal and every mince pie or chocolate” (154). A habit forms which will last into the following term: “Just as a safety device, she decided to buy some more on the day she returned to Rosemary College” (154).

Alongside her laxative abuse, Rati tries to offset eating more than she thinks she should by inducing vomiting (150). She first makes herself vomit at her sister’s engagement party, when she overhears a guest “mumbling something in Swahili that sounded like Lipo Suction” (151). Her behaviour is noticed by Adam, a nineteen year old white friend who is already in the world of work as the employee of an insurance firm (149). He guesses how she is losing weight and elicits a promise that she will stop her laxative use:

Look, maybe what I say may not mean anything but promise yourself you’ll never take any more, again! You don’t need to slim down any more, just be careful with what you eat. By that I mean eat healthily, don’t starve yourself,

nothing's worth being deprived of the one luxury everyone in Tony Blair's Britain can just about afford! (168)

One of the difficulties of this paragraph is that by giving Rati's current body type approval—she doesn't "need to slim down any more"—the text introduces a conflict. Rati has not reached her *current* slenderness by efforts to "eat healthily," and moreover, a narrative structure that places Adam's interest in her after her weight gain suggests her initial belief she would have to lose weight to receive male attention was correct. Not unlike the *Teeny Queen* warnings that function as incentives to particular weight loss behaviours, the text itself sends a mixed message. The novel closes with Adam and Rati going out to eat "some chocolate cakes with loads of cream poured over it" (173-4). As in *Fat*, the protagonist renews her love of food while still embodying a slender physique. Gustatory indulgence is tolerable provided the body is thin.

Adam's critical role in Rati's recovery is an ambiguous development in the racial and cultural conflicts that are threaded through the book. On the subject of Adam's intervention in Rati's dieting, his positioning as a white man, and their embryonic romance, Jean Webb (2009) offers two possible readings: "One could argue that it still smacks of a kind of social imperialism, or alternatively that Jariwala is suggesting a way forward in the continuing making of postcolonial multi-cultural Britain" ("Fat"). It seems to me that that the racial differences constructed between Adam and Rati are integral to Rati's self-acceptance, as the following description demonstrates:

She turned and looked at him and noticed his blue eyes were like the colour of Lord Krishna. He had nice eyes, different from Harnaik's dark and smouldering gaze but just as attractive. As she watched him, she began to

forget that he was white, seeing through his skin colour and seeing Adam as a person in his own right. Now why couldn't she do that with herself? (169)

To some extent this paragraph queers the cultural distinctions between them; she regards the blue eyes that might otherwise mark him as a white man (and thus different) as a shared similarity with one of the deities she worships. But the paragraph also attempts to *erase* difference. The relationship she forms with Adam is constructed as an awareness of an inner person, who can be appreciated separately from the body. Her willingness to “see through his skin colour” is paralleled by her willingness to “see through” those aspects of her own appearance that depart from a slender feminine norm. The idea of “seeing through” differences—rather than Adam’s trite advice that laxatives are dangerous—can be seen as the catalyst that halts Rati’s pursuit of weight loss.

Although Rati’s experiences as a fat girl are inseparable from her experiences as a Gujarati girl, the trajectory of her weight loss closely resembles Tessa’s (and will be replicated again by the white protagonist of *Girls*). The three novels in combination construct the pressure to lose weight as a cross-cultural problem for girls. This is consistent with *Fatty*’s assertion that “deep down inside, everyone is the same” (49). Unlike the fat, racially othered female characters I discussed in the novels of Chapter Two, Tessa and Rati are placed at the centre of these texts; their perspective is privileged by the narrative. *Fatty* was published by Mantra as one of an “exciting series which explores the confidence and conflicts of young Asians in today’s Britain. For the first time fiction with British Asian teenagers in central roles defying the stereotypes!” ([190]). Relating tales of weight loss is one way of placing black and asian female characters in a “central role.” The pressure to lose weight becomes the site of shared similarity between teenage girls, irrespective of nuances in how fatness is racialised. Hence, in *Girls*, the dieting behaviours of the young,

white protagonist are identical to those undertaken by Tessa and Rati (even though the combination of pressures is different).

Girls is the second book in a series of four that tracks the competitive friendship of three girls—Ellie, Magda and Nadine. In the first instalment, *Girls in Love* (1998), Ellie is introduced as a “round” girl of thirteen with a talent for art (15). Although Ellie castigates herself for being “fat” (15), this view is not initially corroborated by the other characters, and as such Ellie’s descriptions of her body are constructed as the result of distorted body image. It is primarily in the second instalment of the series that Ellie’s view of herself as fat is affirmed by other characters in the narrative.

Although I will be focusing on the second novel, I wish to briefly make some comments on Ellie’s changing status as a “round” character throughout the series. The criticism she receives in the second novel is not framed as a response to her gaining additional weight: she does not get any fatter. Rather, her body is constructed as newly open to scrutiny because she is no longer considered a child. The criticism of her body is also contested by other characters with refutations that she is fat at all. As I will discuss in Chapter Seven, disagreements over a character’s fatness will become more common in the two-thousands fiction sample. I contend the resultant ambiguity over characters’ body size is strategic. Authors can explore insecurities surrounding body fat, without alienating readers who may be hostile towards an unambiguously fat protagonist. This effects a more complex cultural erasure of fat children than would be achieved by simply excluding any reference to fat. The trend of ambiguously fat characters follows a period of similar obfuscation in the *Jackie* sample. Before the magazine’s final withdrawal from the market in 1993, *Jackie* also participated in constructing fatness as a contestable trait. The coding table begins to include references to “feeling fat,” rather than to *being* fat or overweight, in

1991 (see table 7). Comments on fat in the problem page fixate on isolated areas of the body, such as the legs; or on tangentially related blemishes, such as stretch marks or cellulite, rather than being fat as such. This exemplifies the media promotion of what Kim Chernin refers to as “pseudo-obesity” (35). My own impression is that constructions of the unambiguously fat child are marginalised at this point in the *Jackie* sample, while fear of fat continues to be stoked in a normatively slender implied reader. Almost a decade later, a similar pattern will characterise references to fat in the teen chick lit fiction from my corpus.

Of the four books in Wilson’s series, I will be attending to *Girls Under Pressure* because it renders Ellie’s fatness with least ambiguity. The novel commences with Nadine’s desire to take part in a magazine modelling competition at their local shopping centre. In the queue for entrants, Ellie, who is already uncomfortable, overhears a stranger remark, “Surely she doesn’t think she could make it as a model? She’s far too fat!” (19). The insult triggers Ellie’s attempts to lose weight by alternately starving, bingeing, and inducing vomiting (42). She also self-harms in the form of pinching and hitting her stomach (104). Her stepmother, Anna, realises that Ellie is making herself sick after eating and confronts her with the accusation she has bulimia (155). In the chapters that follow, Anna, Ellie’s father, and Magda all posit quasi-psychological explanations for Ellie’s new preoccupation with food and weight. Ellie finally drops her attempts to lose weight when she visits a former friend, Zoe, who has been hospitalised with an eating disorder (192). As in *Fat*, the anorexic friend is used as a cautionary example to ward girls away from dieting. The pressures that originally led Ellie to diet—hostility towards the fat body—are not satisfactorily addressed; instead Ellie’s behaviour is constructed by this ending as an individual obsession that can be thwarted by exposure to a frightening outcome.

As with *Fat*, the drive towards weight loss is accompanied by a drive towards appearing adult, which is partially expressed through the protagonist's consumerism. Ellie and her friends first learn of the modelling competition because Ellie is determined to purchase all of her Christmas presents at the mall: in previous years, she has always made rather than purchased gifts, but she fears that this tradition is infantile. "I think I've grown out of that stage now," she claims (8), and recalls that the previous year, her friends' subdued responses to her home-made gifts made her feel the same age as her four-year-old brother (9). The shopping trip itself vacillates between the friends' delight in children's material culture and an adolescent interest in cultivating a physically attractive appearance. Thus the girls debate whether they can afford "new Chanel nail polish" (12) or, in Ellie's case, a jacket to replace the "boring boring boring old coat that doesn't do a thing for me. It makes me look dumpier than ever" (13). But their youth is emphasised by Ellie wondering if she wants plasticine as her gift from Nadine, and by Magda's insistence that they coo over a teddy bear display at the centre of the Mall (14); Magda proclaims "me want to see the teddies!" in a conscious performance of a petulant, pouting child (15). This assemblage of images emphasises the characters' negotiation of child and adolescent identities via consumer behaviour, and provides a context for Ellie's response to her subsequent humiliation at the modelling competition.

Initially, Ellie's friends mistake the teenagers in the competition queue for people waiting to see the Father Christmas, and speculate that "they're a bit old for Father Christmas, aren't they?" (15). The confusion helps continue the imagery of negotiating age-related identities, and initiates the transition from defining your adolescence through your purchasing decisions, to defining your adolescence through commoditizing the body itself. Ellie's humiliation in the queue—when a stranger corroborates Ellie's belief she is "too fat,

too fat, too fat” (19)—results in a new consciousness of the body’s market value as denoted by narrowly defined beauty standards. Ellie’s perception of Nadine’s body is wholly altered when she applies this new standard: “I’ve known Nadine most of my life. She’s more like my sister than my friend. I’ve never really looked at her. I look at her now[...] She’s so tall, with her slender neck and beautiful hands and long long legs. And she’s so thin. Model-girl thin” (19). Ellie’s “jealousy” (34) of the way Nadine’s slender adolescent form complies with the “model-girl” body equates to a “jealousy” of a market value accorded to the body (34).

Not only is the fat body constructed as useless to the market, it is poorly catered to by the market. Immediately after the competition, the three girls visit a clothes shop in the same mall, where Ellie is unable to purchase the same teen fashions as her friends. “It’s agony. I’m surrounded by skimpy little garments, skirts that would barely fit round one of my thighs, halter tops I’d have to wear as bangles” (24). Magda tries to refute Ellie’s poor self image by giving her a t-shirt illustrated with “the famous statue Venus de Milo gorging chocolates. She’s armless, so she’s being fed by little fat flying cherubs. She’s got a speech bubble above her head saying ‘I’m the most beautiful woman in the world and I’m size sixteen—so eat up, babe!’” (130). Here the fat body is constructed as beautiful by an aesthetic ideal which references high art rather than celebrity culture. The message, while supportive, does not challenge the idea that worth derives from compliance with a beauty standard (no matter how that beauty standard might be defined). That message, furthermore, is endorsed through another act of consumerism: the purchasing of clothing.

The relationship between consumerism and identity further informs the text’s construction of fatness and weight loss. In the privacy of her room, Ellie draws a self-portrait with a slim body, and her attendant commentary constructs the body as just another

garment to be changed: “I want to change *now*. If only I could unzip myself from chin to crotch and step out of my old self, sparkingly slim” (29). Later she will repeat a similar fantasy: “I’ll wake up and I’ll get out of bed and pull off my nightie and then I’ll peel off all my extra pounds too and there I’ll be, new little skinny Ellie” (45).

Significantly, Ellie claims that clothing did not exclude her from complying with the idealised expectations of the child body when she “was a little kid” (27)—being “plump” or “a bit chubby” was still compatible with a socioculturally approved appearance (27). “I *felt* cute. Maybe I even *was* cute in my dungarees and stripy T-shirts and bright boots to match the ribbons. I was cuddly, that was all. I was definitely cute, with my happy hairstyle and big dark eyes and dimples” (27). To this extent, fatness is tolerated and even praised in the child body. Ellie recollects that, as children, she envied Nadine’s long hair, but not her body size; “I knew that I was quite a fat little girl and Nadine a thin one—but it didn’t really bother me then” (95). Thus, when, immediately after this recognition, Ellie proclaims, “It’s really weird—the me *then* won’t match up with the me *now*. I wish I could still be the old Ellie” (95), her dieting practices are diametrically opposed to a child-like Ellie at ease with her fatness.

This diametric opposition is strengthened because her friend Zoe’s preoccupation with slimness is cast as an adult concern. The exclusive focus Zoe must apply to controlling her body and her dietary intake leaves no room for the interests she permitted herself as a child. For instance, Ellie asks Zoe whether she ever paints for pleasure any more, knowing that art was once an interest they shared. Zoe rejects their friendship, and the activities they once participated in, as a childish alternative to her current obsession with perfecting the body: “‘I don’t really have time for that sort of stuff nowadays,’ she says, as if I’m a toddler wondering why she won’t do finger-painting with me” (83).

While Ellie feels newly conscious of a fat body that never “bothered” her as a child, Zoe distances herself both from child-like behaviour, and the child-like body. For both Ellie and Zoe, eating is central to the management of these feelings. Ellie’s fatness is attributed to eating for emotional reasons—a trait shared with Tessa and Rati, but not with Simon or Ella in the previous chapter. Though the pre-pubescent Ellie was comfortable with her fatness, her *eating* is still positioned as a symptom of psychological distress for which her mother’s death was the trigger: “Everything changed. I changed too. I felt empty all the time so I couldn’t stop eating: doughnuts and stick buns and chocolate and toffees. The sourer I felt inside the more I had to stuff myself with sweets. So I got much fatter” (27).

The text constructs a psychological cause for the fat body; but also presents fatness as a precursor to psychological problems, partly because Wilson presents male sexual attention as integral to female psychological well-being at the same time as positing fat as innately unattractive to men. Like Alison, in Wilson’s earlier book *The Other Side* (1984), Ellie conflates fatness, mental instability and undesirability to men. While reading *Jane Eyre* for school Ellie surmises that Mr Rochester “doesn’t want Bertha because she’s fat. And mad. But maybe she only went mad because Rochester didn’t fancy her any more when she started getting fat” (Wilson *Girls Under Pressure* 35). This association between being “fat” and “mad” is rapidly extended to Ellie’s self-perception, during the first instance that she binges and vomits: “I catch sight of myself in the shiny kettle and I can’t believe what I look like. Total crazy woman” (41). She suspects that, were her step mother to learn of her binges, she would see her as a “mad revolting loony” (45).

References to going “mad” place the fatness of Ellie’s body and her binging behaviours on a continuum with Zoe’s successful attempts to starve herself (75). Zoe is obsessed with her dietary intake and her schedule of exercise—specifically swimming,

during which activity Ellie sees that Zoe has “lost so much weight” that “her arms and legs look as if they’re about to snap” (76). Their morphologies and eating behaviours are different, but are constructed as opposites on a shared spectrum. Zoe’s thinness is primarily presented as disturbing because there is “nothing desirable about her gaunt body,” just as Ellie’s fatness is criticised primarily for being physically unattractive (76). Similarly Zoe’s thinness, like Ellie’s fatness, is constructed as both the result of, and the precipitator of, psychological problems. “She’s not thin and beautiful,” Ellie states. “She’s thin and sad. Thin and mad” (77).

The text is ambivalent towards the role of family dynamics in Ellie’s attitudes towards her body and towards food. Her step-mother blames herself, stating “It’s all my fault” (160) and extrapolating that Ellie is acting out otherwise unexpressed feelings about her dead mother. “I think it’s partly symbolic. Ellie and I have got closer recently and this is worrying for her. She must feel she’s being disloyal to her mother’s memory. So she rejects my food. It’s a way of rejecting all my nurturing and care” (160). But Ellie entirely rejects this idea; she claims Anna’s interpretation is “so *wrong*” and states “it’s not anything to do with Anna” (161). Ellie’s perspective is consistent with the triggers that cause her to start dieting; namely, pejorative comments about the fat body, rather than Anna’s role as the family’s provider of food. This is underscored not only by the original criticism voiced in the competition queue, but by Ellie’s attempts to eat at the next meal after Anna blames herself; her four year old brother, Eggs, tells her she is “still f-a-t even if she *is* on this stupid diet,” prompting Ellie to wonder, “How can I relax and say, ‘OK folks, drama over, I’ll eat normally now?’” (163). It is not only Anna who recourses to what Ellie terms “the psychological tack” (174). Magda suggests that Ellie is responding to a lack of male sexual interest, stating “you maybe haven’t had *enough* attention so you’re starving yourself to

death to get everyone to take notice of you” (174). Despite initial scorn of “psychological claptrap” (160), Ellie’s father also begins to worry that he has caused Ellie emotional harm, after reading that girls with eating disorders have “horrible abusing fathers” (176); he asks her, “Would you say I was very authoritarian? You couldn’t possibly, could you? I mean, I’m usually quite a hip sort of Dad, right? I don’t boss you around that much do I?” She dismisses her father’s worries as “daft” (176). The impression created is thus of family and friends well-versed in quasi-psychological terminology who frame Ellie’s pursuit of weight loss as pathological.

Ellie’s decision to drop her pursuit of weight loss is prompted by Zoe’s hospitalisation, in a sequence of events that mirror Tessa’s realisation that Lucy is seriously ill. Ellie is shocked and surprised to learn that Zoe’s physical health has been endangered to the point of risking heart failure; she claims to have known that Zoe was “anorexic”, while exclaiming “But it’s not an illness!” (189). Her acceptance that the pursuit of weight loss is, in the text’s own terms, an “illness”, is forced by the environment she visits Zoe in, and Zoe’s descriptions of her own body. She watches the other patients, and momentarily feels “grotesquely fat and lumbering in their ethereal presence” (192). Yet compliance with beauty standards is reinvoked as the means by which the anorexic body is positioned as abnormal; Ellie’s thoughts are disturbed by the arrival of a nurse, “with shiny bobbed hair and a curvy waist” (192). Ellie immediately adjusts her view of the patients:

I see them clearly. I see their thin lank hair, their pale spotty skin, their shrunk cheeks, their sad stick limbs, the skeletal inward curve of their hips, the ugly spikiness of their elbows, their hunched posture. I see the full haunted horror of their illness (192)

Ellie accordingly begins to view her dieting as on a continuum with the “illness” Zoe is diagnosed with. Zoe echoes the self-harming actions Ellie has inflicted on herself earlier in the text: “‘I’m getting so fat.’ She clenches her fist and punches her own poor concave stomach” (194). Once Ellie returns home, she eats a meal without confrontation, having recognised that “I still feel fat, even though I’ve lost weight, I’d still like to be really thin. But I don’t want to be sick. I don’t want to starve” (196). The text draws to a close with her submitting a “powerful” self-portrait to her art teacher (204); thus showing a renewed interest in the activity she previously feared Zoe had spurned as the “finger-painting” of “toddlers.”

Finishing, as *Fat* and *Fatty* did, at a point when the protagonist is thin but returning to her previous eating habits suggests that fatness can only be accommodated by these texts as a transitional state. However, the pursuit of weight loss is also only accommodated within certain terms: it is endured only in adult characters, or in characters aspiring—perhaps prematurely—to adulthood. A counterpoised trend in this period’s fantasy fiction demonstrates an urge to balance ambivalence towards the fat body with ambivalence towards the child who pursues weight loss. A subset of texts for younger readers characterises fat children as unhappy social misfits; they conform and achieve happiness through weight loss, but do not diet. Instead they benefit from supernatural aids. Anne Fine’s *The Angel of Nitshill Road* (1992), a slim tome marketed as “a read aloud book” in the original edition, belongs to this category. The text replicates the construction of the fat child as a victim—“plump” Penny (7) is tormented, alongside the majority of her classmates, by a “big bully” known as Barry Hunter (17) until a visiting angel intervenes (17), eventually leading to Penny’s loss of weight (78). Toby Forward’s *Pie Magic* (1995) features a character, Bertie, who believes “[n]o one likes me because I’m fat” (25), and

accordingly takes a magical potion to make him weightless (28-9). Clare Bevan's *Roz and Cromarty* (1992) details the attempts of a talking cat to mentor his "fatso," friendless owner into fitness and happiness (7). Mark Haddon's *The Real Porky Phillips* (1994), which in the original edition is marketed to "young readers" on the back cover, delivers a variation on this pattern. The protagonist does *not* lose weight; rather, the eponymous "Porky", a boy formally known as Martin, develops from feeling "fat", "wobbly" and trying to be "invisible" (4) towards feeling "confident" and "gutsy" (58) after a supernatural experience in which he sees his double leading a life at greater ease with his weight. The only text in the corpus to explicitly present a dieting pre-pubescent character does so from a comedic, highly critical stance. Ros Asquith's *Keep Fat Class* (1998) foregrounds a girl nicknamed Eclair, whose mother pressures her to joining a slimming club in preparation for a wedding. Eclair is happy with her size and plots to avoid both the slimming club and the loss of any weight. The story ends with her mother expressing remorse for the pressure she exerted, and agreeing that Eclair is best at the size she is.

To conclude, this chapter has shown that ambivalence towards fat is counterbalanced by ambivalence towards intentional weight loss in the nineties juvenile fiction sample. Across the texts I have examined, fatness is constructed as an essential feature of the child body. Growing awareness of eating disorders overlays this construction. Consequently intentional weight loss in children is regarded with suspicion as an attempt to grow up too quickly. Throughout this chapter I have touched upon consumer behaviour as an arena for child characters' aspiration to adult identities. Over the final section of this thesis, I will interrogate the growing dominance of consumerist constructions of the fat child—first in juvenile fantasy texts, and then in adolescent chick lit novels.

CONSUMERIST CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FAT CHILD

Chapter Six

The Nineteen-Nineties: Fat Capitalists

This chapter will focus on a selection of fantasy novels: Eva Ibbotson's *The Secret of Platform 13* (1994), Anthony Horowitz's *The Switch* (1996), and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997). Unlike the realist texts discussed in Chapter Five, each of these books presents fat children as bullies, not victims. I contend that the fantasy setting allows the writers to articulate hostility towards fat people, safely protected by the defence the world they show is not 'real.' All three texts hark back to the portrayal of Augustus Gloop by constructing the fat body as a sign of moral failings. Yet the material acquisitiveness that was covertly associated with Augustus's gluttony has a much larger part to play in the nineties sample. Ibbotson, Horowitz and Rowling each use white, affluent, fat boys as emblems of over-consumption and, relatedly, of capitalist exploitation.

Fat girls do not fulfil the same function within the corpus of fantasy fiction from this period. Only one fantasy novel from the nineties, Malorie Blackman's *Trust Me* (1992), features a fat girl; there is also a science-fiction novel from this decade, Susan Price's *The Sterkarm Handshake* (1998), which has a fat female protagonist. In both books, speculative scenarios enable the writers to challenge size stereotypes. The anxieties around fat girls developing eating disorders that I discussed in the last chapter, not to mention the tendency in the nineties' *Jackie* sample to construct normatively slender girls' bodies as fat, are approached from a different angle by Blackman and Price. *Trust Me* is a paranormal story wherein the heroine becomes a vampire. Heather, who narrates the story, is a seventeen year old black girl with "Sasquatch feet" and an "*a la Rubens* figure" (10). Following her transformation she is astonished at how "strong and alert" she feels – "I ran faster, jumped

higher, knew I was stronger” (129). Although the supernatural pretext positions the active, fat child as outside the norm, the text still offers a rare example of black, fat, female embodiment as a source of physical joy rather than disgust.

Price addresses size stereotypes with still more explicitness. This time-travel novel is set in two different centuries, the twenty-first and the sixteenth. The protagonist, Andrea, is disconcerted by people’s differing responses to her body when she moves into the past:

She couldn’t get used to being admired and complimented. Back in the 21st she was ‘Big Fat Andy,’ and had learned to expect that men would look straight past her. But what the 21st called ‘big and fat,’ the Sterkarms called ‘bonny.’ Tall as she was, full-fleshed, broad-beamed, bosomy, thunder-thighed—the eyes of the Sterkarm men lit up. (27)

Price’s construction of the youthful fat female body is appearance-focused; by presenting beauty standards as historically specific, she draws attention to the socially constructed meanings of beauty and of fatness.

The Secret, *The Switch*, and *Harry* draw on a different representational tradition from *Trust* and *The Sterkarm*. That tradition differs again from the vulnerable lower class fat children of *The Bully* or *Sticks*, as well as the fat girls pressured to grow up too quickly in *Fat*, *Fatty*, and *Girls*. Ibbotson, Horowitz, and Rowling construct the fat boy as the putative boss of an exploited, thin, male character. They thus construct the fat boy as a variant of the fat capitalist man familiar from British satirical cartoons. Caricatures of fat, besuited businessmen are a staple of British anti-capitalist satire; see, for instance, Cooper’s (2012) concerns that the Occupy London movement use “fat capitalist stereotyping” in their political literature, and that political cartoonists for national newspapers, such as Steve Bell and Martin Rowson, regularly associate fat with capitalist greed (“Stereotyping”). Though

these cartoons express contemporary political concerns, they consciously draw on a nineteenth century aesthetic. Nick Dyrenfurth and Marian Quartly argue (2007), from an Australian perspective, that images of the “Fat Man” were key to nineteenth century class mobilisation. Dyrenfurth and Quartly contend that the Biblical condemnation of gluttony was carried into civic condemnations of abused power, via equations of fatness with social greed. They summarise the Fat Man’s early development in Britain, from eighteenth century “stock figures of fat master and skinny servant,” to nineteenth century cartoons in *London Punch* which pictured “fat employers dominating workshops of skeletal employees” (34). The symbolism of fat employers and thin employees acquired additional potency in the late nineteenth century as employment relationships became increasingly abstract: “Workers and bosses often no longer knew each other—they lived separately and the owner was increasingly physically invisible. This material distance opened a space for more sinister representations” (34).

Given the decline in manufacturing that I discussed in Chapter Four, and the loss of community feeling in areas which were formerly bound through heavy industry and unionised labour, I speculate that the construction of the fat boy in nineteen-nineties fantasy comprises a renewed reaction to the anonymity of worker relations. The nineteen-nineties were a period of increasing casualisation in employment (Heery and Salmon 2000). The casualisation of labour has clear implications for knowing one’s employer and one’s colleagues.

Insecure employment flourished within a context of service sector growth. Between 1992 and 1997, which comprised a period of economic recovery after prolonged malaise, 80% of the rise in employment was generated by service industries (Julius and Butler 1998, 338). Those services included physical drudgery—such as cleaning or maintenance work—

but also retail sales, call centre operations, and knowledge- or information-based white collar work. I extrapolate from J. R. Bryson, P. W. Daniels and Barney Warf (2004) that the economic shift from manufacturing to services corresponded with an increase in emotional labour, and an increase in the use of information technology which would spatially reconfigure workplaces (15). Client-facing employees were expected to honour the customer as king, by meeting the emotional needs of strangers. Desk-bound employees found themselves communicating over vast geographical distances, rather than with colleagues, clients, and management in material proximity. The trends of insecure working conditions, an increase in emotional labour, and the technological atomisation of society, form three abstract foci for anxiety which Ibbotson, Horowitz and Rowling symbolise with the fat child. The characters I am about to examine are presented as exploitative employers, as voracious yet perpetually dissatisfied customers, and as compulsive acquirers of advanced technological goods. Presenting the fat child as an exploitative employer or dissatisfied customer perpetuates the long-entrenched equation of fat with social greed. Presenting the fat child as overly engaged with modern technology makes use of relatively recent stereotypical associations between weight gain, sedentary lifestyles and technological engagement.

In *The Secret*, the thin child's economic role relative to the fat child is one of domestic servitude. I will briefly summarise the plot. The thirteenth platform of King's Cross station is a portal to a magical dimension that opens every nine years. A baby prince is inadvertently left in our world, and his parents are unable to retrieve him before the portal's closure. Nine years later the King and Queen dispatch rescuers, but a case of mistaken identity means that the rescue team try to bring back a spoilt, aggressive little boy

called Raymond Trottle. The true prince is Raymond's put upon servant Ben, who is a kind and neglected child in the mould of Cinderella.

Ben sleeps in a "windowless cupboard" in the servants' quarters, and though he attends school, he must spend the remainder of his time "working for his keep" (47). His services are primarily used by Raymond; Ben reflects that "[m]opping up after Raymond was something he had been doing for as long as he could remember" (74). The boys' respective sizes are indicative of a power imbalance between them. To the rescuers eyes, Ben is "too thin;" they interpret his body size as evidence he is neglected and overworked (43). Raymond, meanwhile, is "extremely fat" (49) and wholly unappreciative of Ben's labour. He demonstrates his power over Ben by restricting him to certain quarters of the building, and by dismissing him with the statement "I don't need you" when his services are no longer required (68).

From his introduction onwards, Raymond's fatness is emphasised, as is his greed. He first features complaining of a stomach ache in an attempt to avoid school. His mother attends to him:

She put a finger on Raymond's stomach and the finger vanished because
Raymond was extremely fat.

"Where does it hurt, my pettikins? Which bit?"

"Everywhere," screeched Raymond. "All over!"

Since Raymond had eaten an entire box of chocolates the night before this
was not surprising, but Mrs Trottle looked worried. (49)

The image of Mrs Trottle's "vanished" finger suggests Raymond's fat sucks everything into it. Unlike the vulnerable fat figures of the nineteen-eighties fiction sample, Raymond is a frightening figure able to absorb—or consume—all that surrounds him. Accordingly his

eating habits are positioned as excessive: he feels pain because he “had eaten an entire box of chocolates the night before.” The adjective “entire” constructs his action as extreme, and hence greedy. In fact he seems extreme in every aspect. He “screeches” rather than speaks, and he hurts “everywhere,” rather than in the “bit” of his body his mother seeks to identify. The juxtaposition of Mrs Trotter’s term of endearment, “pettikins,” with the narrator’s description of Raymond’s physicality, constructs his body as a source of intended humour and disgust. The suffix “-kin” is a diminution, implying that Raymond is her ‘little pet;’ this provides a contrast with the narrator’s description of Raymond as “extremely fat.”

His association with the fat caricatures of British cartoons is emphasised by his attire. Raymond wears child-sized business suits: he attends restaurants “dressed to kill in a new silk shirt and spotty bow tie” (134). Reference is made to his “flashy shoes” (58) and, at bed time, he is said to be “bulging out of his yellow silk pyjamas” (68). His clothing contributes to the impression he is cosseted. Silk is an expensive, tactile fabric, evocative of luxury. It is not, however, strongly associated with children’s clothing. His outfits are unchildlike, making his unpleasant behaviours—which might otherwise be mitigated by his youth—still less sympathetic.

Raymond does not limit his unpleasantness to people in his family’s employ. He also personifies the difficult customer, particularly during his aforementioned restaurant visit. Counter-intuitively Raymond is a picky eater. The narrative function of his picky eating, which is seemingly at odds with excessive consumption, is to demonstrate his hostility to people in service roles:

“I’ll have shrimps in mayonnaise,” said Raymond, “and then I’ll have roast pork with crackling and Yorkshire pudding and-”

“I’m afraid the Yorkshire pudding comes with the roast beef, sir,” said the waitress. “With the pork you get apple sauce and redcurrent jelly.”

“I don’t like apple sauce,” whined Raymond. “It’s all squishy and gooey. I want Yorkshire pudding. I *want* it.” (52)

His resistance is positioned as selfish. What Raymond “wants” is all-important. By defying the menu he at once displays a lack of gratitude and an ignorance of good taste: the narrator states that “anyone who knows anything about food knows that Yorkshire pudding belongs to beef and not to pork” (55). Once the shrimps arrive, Raymond complains that “[t]hey’re the wrong ones. I want the bigger ones” (55). The process is repeated once more when he is offered roast potatoes, only for him to retort, “I want chips. Roast potatoes are boring... I want *chips*. This is supposed to be my treat and it isn’t a treat if I can’t have chips” (57). Finally, during dessert, he rejects a “marvellous” Knickerbocker Glory: “‘It hasn’t got an umbrella on top,’ he wailed. ‘I always have a plastic umbrella on top’” (57). Raymond is not, in these demands, gluttonous; he is, rather, impossible to satisfy, always intent on some elusive alternative. The waitress who serves him responds with deference and apologies despite Raymond’s unreasonableness.

Raymond’s experiences of technological mediation offer a further arena for constructing the fat child as a dissatisfied, demanding child. He refers to his television viewing often, with a narratorial implication that his technological engagement has dulled his sensitivity to the wonders of daily existence. As the rescuers attempt to entice him through the portal with a taste of the magic he might see there, he reveals his lack of wonderment by claiming “I’ve seen that on the telly” (83). Raymond repeats this sentiment as the rescuers invite mermaids, banshees and magicians to entertain him. When the performers deviate from the conjurers he has seen onscreen, he complains that they have

omitted his favourite tricks: “There’s always people sawn in half when there’s magic on the telly” (85).

His attachment to the television is one component in a broader attachment to electronic entertainments. When he learns, from the rescuers, that the King and Queen live in a magical land by the sea, he asks “is there a pier with slot machines and an amusement arcade?” (68). Their response in the negative disappoints him. He declines their invitation, claiming, “I’d miss my telly and my computer games and my Scaletic set” (73). His engagement with these technologies is presented as a failure of the imagination. In this regard, *The Secret* can be described, as Lucie Armitt says of the Harry Potter series, as a nostalgic text that meets “the appetite for antidotes to the machine age” (152).

Ibbotson thus constructs the fat child as a tyrannical boss and an over-demanding customer, who is over-reliant on modern technological devices. Each of these traits is accommodated by the attitudes of his parents, and therefore simultaneously conceptualised as the result of parenting failure. Mr Trottle is guilty of passive collusion, while Mrs Trottle is a more active participant in Raymond’s bad behaviour. The difference in their attitudes is alluded to in Mrs Trottle’s reported thoughts when she dines with Raymond: “as she leant forward to wipe the dribble of cream from his chin, Mrs Trottle thought there wasn’t a better looking boy in the world. Her husband said she spoiled him, but Mr Trottle didn’t understand Raymond. The boy was sensitive. He *felt* things” (134). This passage positions Mr Trottle’s perspective as the correct one. The incompatibility of “the dribble of cream” on Raymond’s chin, with Mrs Trottle’s belief that “there wasn’t a better looking boy in the world,” casts a halo of doubt over her reported thoughts. The italicising of “*felt*,” moreover, subtly discredits her perspective by lending the statement a hyperbolic tone. Yet Mr Trottle, who is described as a banker who “spent his days lending money to people who had too

much of it and refusing to lend it to people who needed it" (11), is not exempt from blame. Despite his recognition that Raymond is obnoxious, Mr Trottle is complicit in Mrs Trottle's indulgence of their son: he "never argued with his wife" (50), and hides his passivity behind a job that keeps him perpetually "in a hurry" (50).

The portrayal of Mrs Trottle's willingness to accommodate Raymond is reminiscent of Mrs Gloop's capitulation to Augustus some thirty years before. Raymond is, if anything, even more of a horror than Augustus. He might feasibly be considered an amalgamation of the faults that Dahl distributed over several characters. His repeated cry of "I want" in the restaurant evokes another voracious customer, Veruca Salt; while his perpetual television watching has an obvious point of comparison in Mike Teevee. Despite this obvious literary precedent the behaviourist reading I provided in Chapter One is less applicable here. *The Secret* implicitly shares a biological determinist slant with contemporaneous realist texts such as *The Bully*.

As a story of mistaken identity, *The Secret* asks to what extent Raymond has been born unpleasant, and to what extent his unpleasantness is acquired. The portrayal of deficiencies in the Trotbles' parenting is contiguous with the loss of faith in adult authority I examined in Chapter Four. But there are hints, mirrored by references to body type, that Raymond's faults are inherited, not nurtured. For instance the royal rescue team, still harbouring the false impression that Raymond is their lost prince, are shown to be mistaken in the following assumption: "Even if Mrs Trottle had spoilt Raymond a little, there would be time to put that right when he came to the Island. When children behave badly it is nearly always the fault of those who bring them up" (54). This conjecture is undermined by the way characters respond to Ben and Raymond. While *The Bully* constructed the fat child's *vulnerability* as a matter of biological destiny, here the fat child's *moral* failings are

presented as equally pre-determined. Goodness and badness are presented as innate, inherited qualities. The rescuers reflect that “Ben had helped them from the first moment they had seen him cleaning shoes in the basement of Trottle Towers; he had seemed at once to belong to them” (152). The combination of industry, helpfulness and humility strikes them as identifiably *theirs*. The heritability of personal traits is mirrored by the heritability of the children’s physical traits. When Ben arrives at the island, despite the King and Queen having been told that Raymond is their child, they recognise on sight that a mistake has been made: as soon as they see Ben, the “watchers heard the same words repeated again and again. ‘My son! My son! My *son!*’” (179). By contrast, Raymond strongly resembles Mrs Trottle; “they both had the same fat faces, the same podgy noses, the same round, pale eyes” (55).

It is when Raymond is first brought to see the King and Queen, that the parallel grotesqueries of his behaviour and appearance are most amplified. Raymond is abducted and carried to the Royal couple in a sack:

With a single snip, the King cut the string, unwound it, loosened the top of the sack. The Queen helped him ease it over the boy’s shoulders. Then with a sudden slurp like a grub coming out of an egg, the wriggling figure of Raymond Trottle fell out on the sand.

He wasn’t just wriggling; he was yelling, he was howling, he was kicking.

Snot ran from his nose as he tried to fight off the Queen’s gentle hands.

(177).

The comparison to a “grub” plays on the curves of Raymond’s form. His emergence from the sack, as though from an egg, brings with it associations of birth. The “snip” of the “string” evokes the cutting of the cord, and there is also effluvia, rather too vividly evoked

by the reference of the “snot” that “ran from his nose.” His “wriggling”, his “yelling”, his “howling” and “kicking” evoke the struggles of a smaller infant – but coming, as they do, at the close of the novel, the reader is more likely to see his behaviour as typical for his character. In combination with the way this scene parodies a birth, we are led to think that Raymond was *born* fatly grub-like and badly behaved. By contrast, Ben seems weightless: when he is finally reunited with his parents, “[h]e ran like the wind, scarcely touching the ground” (179).

Anthony Horowitz’s *The Switch* eschews biological determinism by presenting the physical and moral transformation of a fat character. However, like *The Secret*, this text constructs the fat, affluent child as an economic beneficiary of thin, poor children’s exploitation. The protagonist, who is a wealthy boarding school pupil named Tad Spencer, swaps bodies by supernatural means with Bob, a young glue-sniffer who works at the local fair. Possessing a different body, and a different societal vantage, allows Tad to see the basis of his family wealth more clearly. He learns that his father’s lucrative cosmetics business is built on unethical experiments with children in care.

Strikingly, it is not until the eighth out of seventeen chapters that Tad realises he is fat. Prior to that point his body size is alluded to but not made explicit. The first description of Tad’s appearance focuses on the fit of his clothing: “Thomas Arnold David—Tad for short—was thirteen years old, dressed in grey trousers that were a little too tight for him” (13). His physical self-awareness develops in parallel with awareness of his social privileges. At the novel’s outset, he is equally oblivious to his fatness and to the advantages of his social position.

His eating habits and relaxed attitude towards wealth are foregrounded during his introduction. A chauffeur drives him home from boarding school in a “white Rolls Royce”

(13). Throughout the journey Tad throws chocolate wrappers from the window (13). His action denotes greed and poor citizenship; but unlike Raymond, Tad is not presented as either essentially selfish or stupid. He whiles away the journey reading “My 100 Favourite Equations” as well as eating “cherry marzipan chocolate” (13). The text will go on to position Tad’s selfishness as an enculturated, class-inflected sense of entitlement, rather than an inherited failing. He is “a boy who had everything. And he was used to having everything. He expected it” (22)

Consistent with this statement, the luxury of Tad’s home is emphasised when the Rolls Royce draws near its destination:

Beyond the gates, a long drive stretched out for almost half a mile between lawns that had been rolled perfectly flat. Two swans circled on a glistening pond, watching the Rolls as it continued forward. It passed a rose garden, a vegetable garden, a croquet lawn, a tennis court and a heated swimming pool. At last it stopped in front of the fantastic pile that was Snatchmore Hall, home of the Spencer Family. (14)

In naming the house “Snatchmore”, Horowitz implies that the Spencers are greedy. Their wealth is conveyed both through the opulence and the size of their estate. Snatchmore is not their only property; Tad contemplates a summer spent at the “country house in Suffolk”, the “villa in the South of France, the penthouse in New York and the mews house in Knightsbridge, just round the corner from Harrods” (18). Tad’s personal possessions are equally indicative of their wealth—and show the same engagement with modern technology that Raymond exhibited. His bedroom contains a “four poster bed,” “two computers and fourteen shelves of computer games,” a “portable television plugged into his

own video recorder and satellite system,” a “butterfly collection,” a “stereo and interactive CD system,” a “tank of rare tropical fish”, and “nine wardrobes” of clothing (18).

The smooth running of the Spencers’ homes is ensured by a team of domestic staff. Tad does not actively demean his servants, as Raymond does; but he takes no interest in their lives and never questions their role in ensuring his comfort. For instance, when he enters his bedroom he drops his jacket on the floor knowing that “Mrs O’Blimey, the Irish housekeeper” will pick it up later. Tad’s parents pander to his sense of entitlement by over-compensating him for everyday tasks. For instance he is given a solid gold Rolex for tidying his own room when the housekeeper is ill (18). He experiences inequalities in his favour as a fact of life. Accordingly he believes “two pairs of socks and a Mars bar” are an appropriate donation to a children’s charity without any sign of malice (20).

Despite Tad’s life of unthinking comfort the text constructs the fat child as a discontented child. Horowitz implies that Tad has a distorted sense of personal grievance. When Tad’s father, Sir Hubert, delivers a rare interdiction by forbidding visits to a local theme park, Tad sees the decision as restrictive:

‘Why can’t I go to the theme park? Why can’t I do what I want to do?’

Suddenly Snatchmore Hall seemed like a prison to him. His parents, his great wealth, his school and his surroundings were just the shackles that bound him and he wanted none of it.

‘I wish I was somebody else,’ he muttered to himself (23)

He believes he is unreasonably constrained when moderate restrictions are placed upon him, and mistakenly identifies the possession of wealth with curtailed liberty.

The above wish acts as the supernatural catalyst in swapping bodies with Bob (24). Tad recognises his fatness only when he sees his body from this external perspective. After

a period of living and working with Bob's parents, he is coerced into assisting a thief called Finn and finds himself wanted in connection with a murder (74). He tries to return to Snatchmore and is confronted with Bob in Tad's body—"a short, fat, dark-haired boy in a ginger-and-brown checked suit" (80). As with Raymond, associations are created between the fat, affluent child and the caricature of fat capitalists by references to clothing; suits are more usually a class-inflected marker of power among adults. Tad's new perception of this fatness coincides with a new perception of his former arrogance: "Tad watched him with a sense of wonderment. His first thought was how fat this boy was, how arrogant he looked with his puffed-out cheeks and slicked back hair. But then he remembered that he was actually looking at himself!" (82).

Despite the self-awareness Tad has acquired through the body-swap, he is desperate to revert to his former embodiment. He is motivated by the poor treatment he has received from Bob's parents and Finn. Yet Bob is not similarly motivated; he points out that Tad is not entitled to receive everything "just given to you on a plate" (88). Bob recounts that he himself had no possessions before the swap:

And do you know what made it worse? All around me, in the newspapers,
on the TV, in the shops, I saw all the things I could never, ever have.
Computer games and hi-fi. Smart clothes. TVs and videos. I'd never have
them—not in my whole life—just because of who I was... (88)

The text thus constructs consumerism, notably the consumption of electronic goods, as both manifestation and driver of social inequalities which are marked upon the body. The fat, exploiting boy, in opposition to the thin, exploited boy, is associated with material acquisitiveness.

The theme of who benefits, and who is disadvantaged by, consumerism and the corollary of a profit motive is further explored when Tad, still in Bob's body and taken for a delinquent child, is dispatched to a purported charity for children in distress (94). It is there that Tad discovers his father has been using vulnerable children as experimental subjects for cosmetic testing (111). The chemicals in the cosmetics cause pain, illness and death amongst the children. Tad narrowly escapes becoming a test subject before making a further discovery. His father's business obtains raw materials through the violent intimidation of Brazilian tribes (120).

Tad's increasing moral disgust with his family is accompanied by disgust with his former fat embodiment, because he sees fat as an emblem of his family's greed. This parallel is emphasised on the next occasion Tad sees his real body, still possessed by Bob:

Once again Tad had the strange sensation of realising that he was looking at himself but this time he felt only disgust. The boy on the bed resembled nothing so much as a huge jelly-fish. His arms and legs were splayed out and his silk pyjamas had slipped down to reveal a great, swollen belly. Rolls of fat bulged underneath the pyjamas and as the boy breathed and moved—but in different directions. Bob Snarby had fallen asleep with his mouth wide open and there was a bead of saliva caught between his upper and lower lip which quivered each time he snored.

'Is this really me?' Tad muttered. 'Was this me?' (125)

Tad's body is dehumanised by the comparison to a "jelly fish." The fat body is constructed as an uncontrolled body—it is "swollen" and moves "in different directions." Tad's moral recognition that his wealth is rooted in exploitative practice, happens in parallel with an alienation from his fat self. By progressing from the present to the past tense in asking

whether the body he watches “is”, or “was,” himself, Tad expresses a change in his self-image which involves first a recognition, then a rejection of fat embodiment. He explains his change in perspective to Bob:

‘You probably won’t believe me, but I don’t want to switch back any more.’

Even Tad was surprised by what he had just said. It was as if he’d only just realised it himself. But now he saw the boy he had been; a great, spoiled ball of flab in an expensive suit. He remembered how his parents had earned the money that had turned him into that. And he knew that it was true. He could never go back. (133)

Tad attributes his fatness to his parents’ wealth: their “money that had turned him into that.” His horror at their unethical behaviour is thus associated with his horror at the fat body which, dressed in an “expensive suit,” again evokes caricatures of fat business men.

It is as a “scrawny, fair haired boy” that Tad confronts his father over the business’s violent and unethical practice. The reference to his scrawniness underscores his new identification with the parties exploited by Sir Hubert’s company. Seeking to understand the deaths their family has caused for monetary gain, Tad asks his father: “Didn’t you have enough?” (151). Sir Hubert argues that there is “no such thing as enough” and exclaims “[t]hat’s what capitalism is all about!” (153). As Tad’s fatness is positioned as a product of Sir Hubert’s wealth, the text constructs the fat child as a symbol of capitalism’s moral failings.

This symbolism is extended when Tad and Bob finally regain their former bodies. Both boys are taken into care—because Bob’s parents run away, and Tad’s parents are arrested for their crimes (158). Over the following months Tad loses weight, which leads

Bob to remark “[y]ou aren’t so fat anymore” (159). Tad’s new thinness is a bodily signifier that his economic position, and his moral outlook, have changed.

In *Harry* we see a third juxtaposition of a cosseted, fat, and materially wealthy boy with a neglected, thin and impoverished boy. The novel is the first in a series of seven to relate the adventures of Harry Potter, who is orphaned as a baby by an evil wizard. He is reluctantly raised by his aunt and uncle, Petunia and Vernon Dursley. Each book tracks his development as a pupil at Hogwarts, a secret boarding school for wizards, but he continues to live with the Dursleys during holidays. It is Dudley Dursley, Harry’s cousin, who is of particular interest here. He acts as a spoiled foil to Harry’s initial humility, and this contrast is conveyed through their very different bodies,

Dudley is not the only fat boy in the text. A pupil in Harry’s year at Hogwarts, named Neville Longbottom, is also described as “fat” (148). Neville’s characterisation integrates a number of the tropes I have discussed in previous chapters—in the first book he is a vulnerable, bullied boy, but over the course of the series he comes to resemble the decent, reliable (and more usually female) fat boarders that peppered seventies’ school stories. Dudley does not fit into the same school story mould. His mistreatment of Harry is firmly located within the structures of home, family, and domestic labour.

The mistreatment takes place within a classed context. The Dursleys consider their social status to be higher than that of the Potters—Petunia, for instance, asserts superiority over her sister by claiming the Potters gave Harry a “nasty, common” first name (11). Moreover the Dursleys consider themselves to be financially comfortable: Vernon works as “the director of a firm called Grunnings” and the narrator states that the “Dursleys had everything they wanted” (8). It is implied that from a young age, Dudley emulates his

father's material greed. Vernon responds with laughter to Dudley's tantrum over receiving too few birthday presents; "Little tyke wants his money's worth, just like his father" (21).

The relationship between Dudley and Harry is therefore one of financial inequality. More than that, Harry is expected to contribute his labour to the household. Not only is this requirement not made of Dudley, but Dudley is the most direct recipient of Harry's hard work. Their early characterisation strongly resembles that of Raymond and Ben in *The Secret*. The economic relationship between Harry and Dudley is not formally recognised as one of master and servant, but the Dursleys appear to tolerate Harry only in so far as he does their bidding—at least initially. Once Harry's magic powers develop, the Dursleys increasingly accommodate him through fear. Prior to that point Harry's life is characterised by household chores—such as the preparation of Dudley's breakfast (19)—for which he receives minimally adequate board and food. Like Ben, Harry is a Cinderella figure; at night he is confined to the cupboard under the stairs, amongst the spiders, despite being a family member (19).

The power imbalance between the two boys is conveyed through their respective sizes. At the age of ten, Dudley is a boy with "a large, pink face, not much neck, small, watery blue eyes and thick, blond hair that lay smoothly on his thick, fat head" (21). Rowling explicitly contrasts Dudley's fatness with Harry's slighter form in the context of their differing material circumstances: "Harry had always been small and skinny for his age. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was because all he had to wear were old clothes of Dudley's and Dudley was about four times bigger than he was" (27). Harry's slightness is also attributed to the inadequacies of his living quarters: his growth is stunted because he sleeps beneath the stairs (20). Meanwhile, Dudley has a second bedroom in which to store his many toys and games (20).

In common with the technophobic portrayals of Raymond and Tad, the text focuses on Dudley's accumulation of electronic toys and games particularly. His acquisitiveness of modern technological goods is entwined with a destructive impulse. He directs violence at his possessions, and at rivals for his possessions. The text suggests that, for Dudley, ownership encompasses the freedom to break property at will. Harry observes of Dudley's room that:

Nearly everything in here was broken. The month old cine-camera was lying on top of a small, working tank Dudley had once driven over next door's dog; in the corner was Dudley's first-ever television set, which he'd put his foot through when his favourite programme had been cancelled; there was a large birdcage which had once held a parrot that Dudley had swapped at school for a real air-rifle, which was up on a shelf with the end all bent because Dudley had sat on it. Other shelves were full of books. They were the only things in the room that looked as though they'd never been touched.

(32)

These breakages position Dudley, like Raymond, as a voracious but always discontented consumer. Nothing he owns is valued for long; in as little time as a month after purchase, he ignores, breaks, or exchanges his possessions. The debris also conveys a movement from stereotypical associations between fatness and clumsiness, towards associations between fatness and violence. Dudley vents his rage on inanimate objects, inflicts pain on the neighbours' dog, and barter his own pet for a weapon.

The exemption of Dudley's books from violent attention suggests that, like Raymond or Mike Teevee, Dudley prefers visual to literary entertainment. Dudley's preference is re-emphasised when a subsequent car journey deprives him of visual

diversions. He considers the experience to be one of the worst of his life, because he “was hungry, he’d missed five television programmes he’d wanted to see and he’d never gone so long without blowing up an alien on his computer” (35). Via Dudley’s complaints Rowling creates associations between fatness, television viewing, computer games, and the enjoyment of violence. These associations comply with size stereotypes of sedentary behaviour causing weight gain, but do so in a specifically technophobic way. Reading books is, after all, equally sedentary and can involve vicarious enjoyment of violent incidents. Rowling’s hostility towards television and computers bespeaks a fear that to engage with modern technologies is to risk desensitisation. Equally, hostility towards technological advancement functions as a proxy for anti-consumerist feeling. Although the production and purchase of books is a commercial concern, sales of electronic goods are driven to a greater extent by aesthetic and functional obsolescence. The expectation that electronic goods must be rapidly replaced for status and practical reasons informs their presence here as a symbol of consumerism in excess.

Dudley’s financial ability to partake in this throwaway consumerism, his greed, and his fatness, function in opposition to Harry’s material poverty, moral superiority and slowness of figure. Harry does not benefit from the Dursleys’ material means; on his birthday, he is given “a coat-hanger and a pair of Uncle Vernon’s old socks” (36). On the occasions that Dudley is treated to “adventure parks, hamburger bars or the cinema”, Harry is left in the care of a woman whose “whole house smelled of cabbage” (22). As Dudley is rewarded for his aggression with food and material goods, Harry is arbitrarily punished despite no wrong doing by confinement in the cupboard and the denial of meals (26).

Harry’s mistreatment is central to Dudley’s enjoyment of his own privileges. Dudley not only wants more than his fair share, he wishes to deny others what he receives.

When it appears that Harry may have to accompany them to the zoo for Dudley's birthday outing, Dudley attempts to manipulate his parents into leaving him behind. "Dudley began to cry loudly. In fact, he wasn't really crying, it had been years since he'd really cried, but he knew that if he screwed up his face and wailed, his mother would give him anything he wanted" (22). His mother's rush to embrace and reassure him causes Dudley to give Harry "a nasty grin through the gap in his mother's arms" (22).

Mistreatment is also constructed as integral to Harry's own developing moral sense. The circumstances of his parents' death mean he is a celebrity amongst wizards, but not in the everyday world; and the text presents his everyday life of hardship as essential to maintaining a sense of virtuous humility. The wizard Dumbledore, head of Hogwarts school, justifies leaving the infant Harry in the Dursleys' care as follows: "It would be enough to turn any boy's head. Famous before he can walk and talk! Famous for something he won't even remember! Can't you see how much better off he'll be, growing up away from all that until he's ready to take it?" (16). Being impoverished and mistreated is thus valorised as a means of building character, and Dumbledore's decision to leave Harry with the Dursleys is positioned as wise rather than negligent. Although Dudley is essential to the development of Harry's virtuous identity, he is not positioned as similarly insightful. Rather, the fat child functions as a convenient whipping boy for an implied reader led to sympathise with Harry and to respect Dumbledore.

Harry is structured similarly to *The Secret* in that the fat child is eventually punished for his greed, his entitlement, and his acquisitiveness. While Raymond endures a humiliating abduction, Dudley suffers bodily transformation at the hands of Harry and his wizard friends (a point I will return to in detail momentarily). The abstract sources of societal anxiety I outlined at the start of this chapter are concretised in the figure of the fat

child who becomes a focal point for revenge fantasies. Yet Ibbotson and Rowling present the suffering of Raymond and Dudley with a slightly different emphasis. In Dudley's case, the fat child is made to suffer for his parents' failings, as well as his own. For instance, when the term at Hogwarts' is due to start, a giant chaperone known as Hagrid tries to collect Harry from the Dursleys' guardianship (39-48). Vernon expresses disdain for Dumbledore and his comments elicit an angry response from Hagrid:

He brought the umbrella swishing down through the air to point at Dudley—there was a flash of violet light, a sound like a firecracker, a sharp squeal and next second, Dudley was dancing on the spot with his hands clasped over his fat bottom, howling in pain. When he turned his back on them, Harry saw a curly pig's tail poking through a hole in his trousers (48).

Although the misdemeanour is Vernon's, it is Dudley who experiences pain strong enough to make him "howl" and who is made to undergo a physical transformation which will only be resolved through surgical intervention. (Although the curling pig tail, none too subtly, re-emphasises Dudley's own moral failings too, through the wider cultural association between pigs and greed).

Just as the punishment for Vernon's actions is meted out to Dudley, Dudley fears Harry as a consequence of Hagrid's actions. Dudley ceases to treat Harry as a "punching-bag" because he is "so scared of Harry he wouldn't stay in the same room" (66). His fear endures throughout Harry's absence at school and is still in evidence the following summer, when he appears "terrified at the very sight of Harry" (223). Yet Harry has not physically harmed his cousin. Certainly Harry relies on Dudley's ignorance of the rules prohibiting magic during school holidays to "have a lot of fun" with the implicit threat of further spells (223)—but the only retributive action comes from Hagrid.

The second novel in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), ostensibly replicates the dynamic established at the beginning of the previous book; Dudley is a spoilt, fat boy, and Harry a mistreated Cinderella figure. This dynamic maintains sympathy for Harry as an underdog, but problematically avoids the narrative consequences of the violence committed on Dudley's body by magical means, which would necessarily position Harry as the more powerful of the two boys. Dudley's fear of being alone with Harry is neither fully realised nor abandoned in this sequel, but instead invoked sporadically, enabling Dudley to taunt Harry and thus be threatened with the punishment of further magic. A more just target for Harry's threats, yet one who doesn't come into the firing line, is his Uncle Vernon, who, on eventually learning that Harry is not allowed to use magic outside of school, locks Harry into his room with the intention of preventing his return to Hogwarts (22).

The parallels between Dudley and Harry—each is judged in relation to a more powerful, male adult—will later yield to parallels between their positioning as abused children. Unlike *The Secret* or *The Switch*, *Harry* would be followed by a total of six sequels, extending the series well into the first decade of the twenty-first century. Rowling's construction of the fat child changed over the course of the series, moving away from the portrayal of Dudley as a putative boss who always “wants his money's worth” towards emphasising Vernon and Petunia's poor parenting.

It is not surprising that the fat capitalist caricature became a less salient feature of the series over time. As I will discuss more closely in the next chapter, the availability of credit increased in the early two-thousands, which seemingly lessened cultural hostility towards rich employers, consumerism and technological alienation. In place of fat capitalist imagery, Rowling begins instead to construct Dudley's fatness as, first, a target for state

intervention via schools and medical facilities; and, second, as the outcome of parental abuse.

See, for instance, the opening chapters of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), wherein Dudley is forced to restrict his dietary intake:

No matter how much Aunt Petunia wailed that Dudley was big-boned, and that his poundage was really puppy-fat, and that he was a growing boy who needed plenty of food, the fact remained that the school outfitters didn't stock knickerbockers big enough for him any more. The school nurse had seen what Aunt Petunia's eyes—so sharp when it came to spotting fingerprints on her gleaming walls, and in observing the comings and goings of the neighbours—simply refused to see: that, far from needing extra nourishment, Dudley had reached roughly the size and weight of a young killer whale (30).

The intervention of medical and educational professionals is positioned as an unsuccessful corrective to the Dursleys' poor parenting. Petunia responds by placing Dudley *and* Harry on a diet, but restricting Harry's food to a greater extent "to keep up Dudley's morale" (30). The impression that Dudley's greed extends to ensuring others do not receive their fair share is thus upheld to a limited extent; and continues to be upheld in the subsequent instalment, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), in which Dudley has acquired a boxer's physique and joined a local gang of boys who enjoy "vandalising the play park" (8).

We see a more emphatic change in the construction of Dudley's fatness with *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005). Unlike *The Secret*, *The Switch*, or Rowling's preceding novels, this text decisively constructs the fat child as a victim, rather than a

perpetrator, of abuse. The mouthpiece for this construction is Dumbledore. He criticises the Dursleys for their attitude towards both Harry and Dudley: “You have never treated Harry as your son. He has known nothing but neglect and often cruelty at your hands. The best that can be said is that he has at least escaped the appalling damage you have inflicted upon the unfortunate boy sitting between you.” (57) The judgement confuses Dudley, who responds by “frowning slightly, as though he was still trying to work out when he had ever been mistreated” (58).

Rowling’s shift to constructing the fat child as a “damage[d]” child is especially interesting because of an attendant change in the way Dudley is classed and generationed. He increasingly resembles the feared “rough boys” invoked by *The Bully*. Rather than the spoiled pre-pubescent son of a company director who feels entitled to Harry’s labour, Dudley is by now an adolescent gang-member nicknamed “Big D,” feared throughout the neighbourhood for throwing stones at cars and children (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* 17).

The same change is rendered visually in the Warner Brothers’ film adaptations via Dudley’s clothing. In the film *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (2001), Dudley wears either his boarding school uniform—complete with boater—or a suit and bow tie. Four sequels later, he is costumed in streetwear with a heavy gold chain (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* 2007). The films, and the books they are based upon, relinquish fat capitalist imagery and begin incorporating fat ‘chav’ imagery. For these purposes I borrow John Preston’s (2007) definition of ‘chav:’ “a term of abuse which identifies a subject with excessive consumption of items such as Burberry baseball caps, fast food and cheap jewellery with no taste, little education and anti-social behaviour patterns” (35). The

‘chav’ is vilified for showing insufficient deference to their supposed social superiors, for consuming too obviously, for consuming without “taste,” and doing so without apology.

Though ‘chav’ is a pejorative name for council housing tenants it can also denote wealthy individuals who disdain, to paraphrase Ehrenreich, the hair shirt beneath their fur coat.^{xxii} ‘Chav’ is an insult that discriminates on the basis of social status and consumer behaviour, rather than financial means per se.^{xxiii} In the case of the *Harry Potter* series, this ambiguity allows Rowling to move from the fat capitalist stereotype to the fat ‘chav’ stereotype without causing dissonance for the reader: both stereotypes can be united through the image of consuming to excess.^{xxiv} Yet the stereotypes retain distinctive features. Once Dudley ceases to resemble a spoiled rich boy with economic power over Harry, and begins to resemble a locally feared yet low status vandal, his behaviour and physique are newly attributed to parental “damage.” The *Harry Potter* series therefore upholds the wider pattern in the corpus: fatness is pathologised when it is associated with downward or stagnant social mobility.

Yet Dudley’s progression from fat capitalist to damaged ‘chav’ is unusual within the corpus for connecting two stereotypes that are rarely seen together. While the former stereotype is typical of the nineties fantasy sample, the latter stereotype can be fruitfully viewed as a distortion of the fat, lower class, unhappy boys who pepper realist two-thousands fiction. The division between genres suggests to me that there are two key strategies in the corpus for legitimising negative size stereotypes: one is the denial of intended verisimilitude (in fantasy); and the other is the profession of concern (in realist fiction). I will briefly summarise three examples of realist fiction from this period which present the fat child as a subject of concern. All three examples also communicate anxieties

about the atomising societal effects of technology and consumerism, but do so to a lesser extent than the nineties fantasy sample.

Catherine Forde's *Fat Boy Swim* (2003), Kevin Brooks' thriller *Kissing the Rain* (2004) and Robert Muchamore's *CHERUB* series of spy novels (2004-10) are among the realist texts to focus on lower class boys. Each example features a fat, male protagonist. All three protagonists are shown regularly engaging with contemporary technology, in the form of television viewing, video gaming and internet usage, to the alleged detriment of their well-being. All three protagonists are also presented as over-eaters. In these respects they are very similar to the protagonists I examined in fantasy fiction. Yet the realist protagonists belong to the fragmented, post-industrial communities I described in Chapter Four and, relatedly, function as intended objects for pity and concern. Moreover, the realist texts from this period continue the trend I identified in Chapter Three of constructing fatness as a psychological problem.

The protagonist of *Fat Boy* is a fourteen year old boy called Jimmy. Although there are no explicit references to his parents' incomes or working identities, he lives in a row of tenements (81) and his mother's resistance to "rabbit food" (68) is positioned as a marker of being lower class. Jimmy's eating and television watching are presented as part of an unhealthy emotional cycle. His response to feeling "wretched" is to "plug the Hungry Hole" and retreat from the outside world: "[a]rmed with a six-pack of crisps, a giant Yorkie and a packet of chocolate digestives, Jimmy thudded down on the settee in front of the telly. He made sure three cans of Irn Bru were lined up within hands reach" (48). His sports coach, a Catholic priest nicknamed GI Joe, views Jimmy's feelings of isolation—and more problematically, Jimmy's fatness—through the lens of children's rights. GI Joe compares Jimmy's situation unfavourably to the orphaned children of a South African mission:

“You’re the saddest, most miserable sod I think I’ve ever come across in my life. Sadder in your own way than my wee souls in South Africa” (69). The priest justifies the pressure placed upon Jimmy to lose weight as the only way to respect Jimmy’s human dignity; Joe lectures the boy that “every kid deserves a decent childhood. By right. Health. Education. Nutrition. Love. By right” (55).

The narrator of *Kissing* is a fifteen year old boy named Moo Nelson (27). Moo describes himself as “FAT” (3), a word he repeatedly capitalises for emphasis. Bullies target him at school for his weight (30). His size is constructed as a problem with emotional causes and is associated with his socioeconomic status. Moo’s father “got caught screwing the welfare” (27), forcing their relocation to a new area; “the STRAIN of moving and starting a new school” changed Moo’s eating habits and he “started getting FAT” (30). The impression of a monotonous life is created through Moo referring to his eating and television habits in list form: “sandwiches, *Coronation Street*, Pop Tarts, *EastEnders*, hot chocolate, a lawyer thing on ITV, one of them boring thrillers with that Irish woman who used to be the woman who cut up dead bodies for the cops...” (24). As with Jimmy, Moo’s eating is constructed as part of an emotional cycle; he claims that “[y]ou feel bad cos you’re FAT, so you eat to make yourself feel better, which makes you get FATTER, which makes you feel badder, so you eat some more to make yourself better” (93). This cycle is, in turn, constructed as the outcome of subsisting on welfare payments: “we do all right. I mean, we ain’t loaded or nothing, but we ain’t exactly starving, neither. Well, we’re *starving*, but not in that kinda way. We ain’t starving cos we’re poor-and-ain’t-eaten-for-a-week, we’re just starving cos we’re FAT and HUNGRY and we WANT SOME MORE” (105). Over-consuming food and material goods, Moo implies, reflects a metaphorical hunger for individual gratification in the absence of community- or work-based identities.

Muchamore's first novel in the CHERUB series, *The Recruit* (2004), introduces an eleven year old boy called James Choke (3). His mother runs a "shoplifting empire" from their flat (7), which keeps him in a supply of consumer goods that would rival Raymond, Tad or Dudley's collection:

He had a PC, an MP3 player, Nokia mobile, widescreen TV and DVD player, Nokia mobile, widescreen TV and DVD recorder in his room. He never looked after any of it. If something broke he got another one. He had eight pairs of Nike trainers. A top-line skateboard. A £600 racing bike.

When his bedroom was in a mess it looked like a bomb had gone off in Toys R Us.

James had all this because Gwen Choke was a thief. (7)

Whereas the disposable consumption of electronic goods signified greed and technological desensitisation in the fantasy fiction sample, here it signifies James' existence outside—or exclusion from—the legal economy. He is cavalier about breakages and replacements because he has no stake in either production or purchase of the items.

His trajectory in *The Recruit* comprises an integration into the world of work: he is offered the opportunity to train as a spy. The opportunity means he can eventually fulfil the social edict to "work really hard to earn" one's property (321). Possessing the means and the willingness to work is marked on the body in terms of weight gains and losses. James is targeted for bullying at school because his mother, Gwen, is "huge" (2)—and the implied cause is her eating habits and isolation in the flat. She fences stolen goods over a mobile phone "from her armchair while she watched daytime soaps and stuffed chocolates and pizza" (7). In the second instalment of the series, *Class A* (2004), James' own weight gain is connected to an abdication of his proper working duties in favour of his mother's

tendency to eat compulsively and absorb television: “the past four weeks he’d skipped fitness training. He’d spent his days messing on the beach and his nights watching DVD marathons while stuffing his face with popcorn and chocolate” (16). His weight gain is simultaneously constructed as a socio-psychological problem which can only be countered with the correct motivation—namely, a sense of having a productive role in his community. James eventually concludes that “there would always be mornings when he woke up and didn’t want to get out of bed for two hours’ combat training, or a brain-numbing double history lesson. But when he pulled on his uniform and walked down to breakfast, he knew most other kids looked at him with respect” (287). The opposition of the fat, unproductive, liminal body to the thinner, productive, community-situated body is re-invoked in last novel of the series. James leaves his spy-training school at 18; his release from that structure prompts a period of hedonism and temporary weight gain (*Shadow Wave* 2010, 330). The opposition gains additional force because “fat” is regularly as an insult for children and adults alike throughout the series (*Maximum Security* 2005, 178; *The Killing* 2005, 22; *Divine Madness* 2006, 187; *Man Vs Beast* 2006, 203; *The Fall* 2007, 156; *Mad Dogs* 2007, 123; *The Sleepwalker* 2008, 224; *The General* 2008, 49; *Brigands M. C.* 2009, 246).

During the early two-thousands, when *Fat Boy*, *Kissing* and *The Recruit* were first published, the perception of ‘obesity’ as a social justice issue was gaining ground in British policy. At an international level, the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child had enshrined the right to “adequate nutritious food” in 1989. A little later, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, all four countries of the United Kingdom identified “childhood obesity” as a public policy concern (HM Treasury 2004, 13; DHSSPS 2005, 37; Scottish Government 2010, 14; Public Health Observatory for Wales 2009, 14). Although the right to “adequate nutritious food” is not the same as a right to be thin, this distinction is

not clearly maintained in British policy. The *Report on Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Scotland 1999-2007* is one example of government documentation that moves without qualification between measures to improve children's food and measures to minimise 'obesity' (Scottish Executive 2007, 115). Setting goals to eradicate obesity, rather than improve nutrition, shifts attention away from state and industry obligations and towards individuals' bodily conformity and personal behaviour. The psychological construction of 'obesity' would subsequently play a part in that process.

Political concerns appear to have predated, rather than responded to, British psychology research pertaining to 'obesity.' My frequency chart of psychological studies shows a leap in British research outputs halfway through this decade; from 2004 there is a sharp rise in the number of eligible abstracts indexed by PsycINFO (see chart 1). Similarly, clinical guidance incorporates psychotherapeutic approaches to eradicating 'childhood obesity' from the middle of the decade onwards. In 2006, national guidelines for clinicians in England and Wales elucidated "behavioural interventions" for achieving weight loss in children; dietary, surgical and pharmacological measures were also outlined, but recommended only in conjunction with behavioural techniques (NICE 16-57). Guidance for clinicians in Scotland followed suit in 2010 (SIGN 2010, 43). Anti-obesity documentation also began to advocate psychotherapeutic approaches for managing the experience of social marginalisation in the middle of the decade. As an example, the 2004 House of Commons Health Committee Report includes recommendations for helping "obese children" cope with victimisation (75).

Notwithstanding the explicit intent to improve children's health, such interventions implicitly placed an onus on fat children to physically conform and to accept responsibility

for others' discrimination. Human geographers Bethan Evans and Rachel Colls (2010) argue that the House of Commons Report blames victims, not perpetrators, for bullying:

[T]he report implies that the stigma associated with fatness, and the associated mental health problems and prejudices faced by those who are labelled or who consider themselves fat, is the fault of the individual themselves. It does this, for example, through suggesting that the solution to school-based bullying of fat children may be to support those children to lose weight and to deal with this stigma (rather than challenge those doing the bullying.) (124)

The report implies that fatness, rather than social intolerance of fat, causes fatphobic harassment; and that the bullied child's distress is therefore a secondary consequence of being fat. By advocating psychotherapeutic interventions for weight loss and the management of harassment, public policy constructs children's fatness as both the outcome and cause of aberrant psychology. It is striking that the victim-blaming identified by Evans and Colls is also clearly present in the nineteen-eighties corpus of juvenile fiction, lending further evidence that there are asynchronous similarities between constructions of the fat child in fiction, media, academic psychology, and policy.

To summarise, in this chapter I have analysed a selection of fantasy novels from the nineteen-nineties. I have related the prevailing socioeconomic conditions to the texts' construction of the fat child as a tyrannical employer, a discontented consumer and a voracious acquirer of technological goods. For the purposes of comparison, I have contrasted this consumer construction of fatness with realist fiction's continued interest in psychological themes.

In the next chapter, I will demonstrate that the majority of fiction drawn from 2000 to 2010 foregrounds consumerist, rather than psychological, constructions of the fat child. The focus will be on fat female characters in teen chick-lit. Unlike Raymond, Tad, and Dudley, fat girls in the fiction corpus are not criticised for their consumerism. Instead, teen chick lit endorses defining the self through consumer behaviour. I will analyse how celebrity culture, and the growing availability of credit, are implicated in consumerist validations of the fat child body.

Chapter Seven

The Two-Thousands: Celebrity Fat

This chapter discusses how teen fiction constructs the fat, female adolescent body in the early years of the twenty-first century. In the last chapter, I discussed the anti-consumerist leanings of nineties fantasy. My argument is that hostility towards consumerism lessened in the two-thousands, as access to credit and new trade arrangements led to a seemingly more affordable high street. The simultaneous success of ‘reality’ television programmes testified to a popular engagement with the idea any person could attain instant celebrity, irrespective of background or ability. These trends are manifest in my juvenile fiction corpus as follows. The four juvenile novels I will be discussing are Cherry Whytock’s *Angel: Disasters, Diets, and D-Cups* (2003), Cathy Hopkins’ *Mates, Dates and Chocolate Treats* (2005), Paul Magrs’ *Twin Freaks* (2007) and Sarra Manning’s *Laura* (2007). Whytock and Hopkins endorse the pleasures of consumerism, particularly clothes shopping, as a means of assuaging fears of bodily imperfection. Magrs and Manning show more ambivalence towards consumerism, but nevertheless are sympathetic in their portrayal of fat characters who aspire to a celebrity lifestyle. Unlike Raymond, Tad, and Dudley, none of the fat characters in these texts are criticised for their material acquisitiveness.

Twin is a mild satire of television talent shows. *Angel*, *Mates* and *Laura* are all examples of ‘chick-lit’ series fiction. By incorporating concerns about fatness, these texts comply with conventions that structure chick-lit for adults. Alison Umminger (2006) argues that the fat female body is a central concern for the chick-lit genre; she considers anxieties about weight to be at least equivalent in importance to romantic storylines, and asserts that the search for a partner may be “entirely secondary to the ongoing battle chick-lit’s

heroines are engaging with themselves—particularly with regard to weight” (240). I define ‘chick-lit’ in accordance with the following remarks by Joanna Webb Johnson (2006). In her view the genre typically tries “to affirm flawed women, acknowledge insecurities involving physical attributes, and give lessons in negotiating relationships (usually by showing the wrong way first). With backdrops of fashion and shopping, these novels embrace, or at least acknowledge, the power of consumer culture” (142).

Britain was entering an economic boom in 2003 when the earliest of the four novels, *Angel*, was published. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development stated that “private consumption” was the prime driver of growth in 2003-2004 (OECD 10). Within the same report they attributed private consumption to mortgage equity withdrawals—that is, consumers were using property as collateral to borrow at a low rate of interest (44). The trigger was the increasing availability of flexible mortgages. According to Beverley A. Searle and Susan J. Smith (2010), when the government deregulated financial services in the eighties and nineties, mortgage lending became increasingly competitive; by the early two-thousands, innovation in flexible mortgage offers was at its peak (340).

Unsecured consumer borrowing also rose in this period. The UK’s total credit card debt increased by 76% between 2000 and 2005, from £32bn to £56.3bn (Talbot 2005). The retail industry benefitted from the boom in credit: retail sales increased year on year until 2009 (ONS 47). Although the retail workforce did not expand between 2003 and the end of my research period (CBI), Odul Bozkurt and Irena Grugulis (2011) observe that the retail sector was regularly cited in public debates as a leading area of job growth (Chapter One, Section 2, Paragraph 1). Bozkurt and Grugulis suggest the misperception arose from the retail industry’s health relative to manufacturing (Paragraph 1). I would add that changes in the regulation of international trade contributed both to the diminution of British

manufacturing and the affordability of high street shopping in Britain. For instance the expiration of the Multi Fibre Arrangement in 2005 led to an increase in imported garments from China; the availability of cheap off-shore labour allowed clothing retailers to slash prices with less impact on their profit margins.^{xxv} The two-thousands were therefore a period in which using credit to fund discretionary purchases became more common, shopping seemed cheap, and spending appeared to aid job creation. Small wonder that at this point in the corpus, several texts resist the hostile conflation of fatness, greed, and consumerism that I discussed in the previous chapter.

Noughties popular culture participated in the valorisation of shopping with a slew of ‘make-over’ television shows, such as *Changing Rooms* (1997-2004), *Ground Force* (1998-2002), *What Not to Wear* (2002-2007) and *How to Look Good Naked* (2006-2010). The subject matter of these purportedly factual programmes was the transformation of people’s homes, bodies and emotional well-being through the purchase of particular household goods, clothes, and make-up. The role of celebrities, to the extent that they featured, was to inspire imitative consumption. However in keeping with falling high street prices, such programmes promoted inexpensive, throw-away consumerism rather than large financial outlays.

Meanwhile interactive ‘reality’ formats such as *Big Brother* (2000) and *Popstars* (2002) commoditized the contestants: viewers voted on premium rate telephone lines for the continued inclusion of participants who they wanted to watch on screen, and whose merchandise they were willing to purchase. More insidiously, *Big Brother* and *Popstars* perpetuated the fallacy that fame, adulation, and attendant riches are within any person’s reach. Chris Rojek (2001) refers to the winners of such fleeting media attention as “celetoids” (20); he views the pursuit of transitory fame as an attempt to fill gaps in culture

caused by “the decline of organized religion and community” (150). With regard to my fiction corpus, we see the following attendant changes in constructions of the fat child. The eighties tendency to associate fat with a lack of confidence, and the nineties tendency to associate fat with excess consumption, are reconfigured: consumerism and public affirmation are constructed as the means of imbuing the fat child with confidence. In *Mates* and *Laura*, weight loss is the price of that affirmation. In *Twin* and *Angel*, the protagonists resist pressure to lose weight.

Before demonstrating how these trends are manifest in *Angel*, which is the earliest of the four novels, I will briefly outline the plot and discuss some ambiguities in the protagonist’s presentation as a fat child. Angelica Cookson Potts is a fourteen year old girl (2). Her father is a barrister (4), and her mother is a model who enjoys entertaining a “vast circle of ‘terribly close’ luvvie friends” (1). The family live in affluent Knightsbridge (8), and their household includes the teenage son of a family friend, George, whose parents live abroad; as well as two domestic staff, Flossie and Diggory (7). Angelica spends most of her time with her friends, Minnie, Portia and Mercedes. They collectively plan a school fashion show, for which Angelica arranges the catering, and the others design or model clothes (27).

There are inconsistencies in the text’s portrayal of Angelica as fat, which I suspect are partly generated through an unwillingness to visually represent fat people. The book’s illustrations portray Angelica as normatively slender. The caricatured drawing style renders her mother and friends as disproportionately thin for their height, making Angelica appear fatter by comparison; but the pictures still do not tally with the written description that Angelica is “a great, big, wallop whale with a wobble rating of about a million” (3), nor with her taking a size 16 in clothing (78). British clothing sizes are not

standardised, but a degree of variation notwithstanding, size 16 clothing falls within the remit of retailers such as Evans who market their stock as “plus size” (“Evans”).^{xxvi} The mismatch between Angelica’s appearance in the illustrations and in the written text could serve the purpose of widening the potential range of readers who identify with Angelica’s insecurities. Fatphobic and/or thin weight-conscious readers are able to identify with Angelica through selective reading. (This strategy does, of course, come at the expense of fatter readers seeing themselves visually represented in fiction).

Angelica’s fatness is attributed to two different causes: normative adolescent bodily changes, and eating fatty foods. With regard to the former, Angel describes her fatness as a recent characteristic, which developed at the age of twelve:

I went to bed all innocent and sweet with my teddy bear and my picture of Brad Pitt, as you do, and suddenly during the night, BOOM!—bosoms. Not those nice, well-shaped, pert little numbers that I had hoped for, but HUMUNGOUS, great barrage balloons that started under my arms and seemed to end somewhere near my navel... Then the rest of my body decided it wanted to match my boobs, and there I was... (2)

Her account inverts the trope I discussed in Chapter Five, whereby weight *loss* occurs at puberty without intervention as a bodily sign of maturation. This is because *Angel* is aligned with a different genre; it is rooted in the conventions of chick-lit for adults. The influence of adult chick-lit texts *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996) is partly felt in the construction of bodily fat as an adult female concern. Angelica is still shown, however, to construct her fatness as temporary in a defensive response to her mother’s disapproval: “there are some wobbly bits, but they are only puppy fat and will disappear when I stop being a puppy” (46).

Note that Angelica's lifestage is partly positioned as adolescent through the reference to Brad Pitt. Taking a picture of a celebrity to bed here comprises an "innocent and sweet" gesture, which the phrase "as you do" implies is common; infatuations with celebrities are thus constructed as a normative experience for twelve year old girls. Mentioning Brad Pitt by name also, however, forms part of a larger pattern in which specific celebrities are deployed to convey the protagonist's fantasy life. Nineties texts such as *Fat*, *Fatty* and *Girls* depict mass media as a source of pressure upon young, fat girls. The two-thousands sample focuses more on how the media can accommodate fat people—albeit in a limited range of roles—and provide a pleasurable source of fantasy. In the case of *Angel*, the text engages with mass media through the creation of characters such as Mrs Potts who derive their income from media and performance; but the text also engages with mass media through intertextual references to pop culture and real-life celebrities such as Brad Pitt.

The text goes on to construct associations between Angelica's body size and a valorisation of celebrity lifestyles. Her interest in food preparation—which her fatness is partially attributed to—is linked with a wish for fame: she aspires to be "a famous foodie, cooking for celebrities" (4). Aspiring to a celebrity lifestyle is a method of escapism that, in Angelica's case, is entwined with her food preparation and emotional eating habits:

It's so comforting to open the fridge door and see all those mouth-watering yummys, just waiting to be nibbled. And I love nothing more than watching Jamie Oliver, naked Chef, with his big smile and his spiky hair, making fantastic meals to share with his beautiful friends. Food never ignores you or makes you feel guilty or raises its eyebrows at you or argues with you. It just makes you feel warm and full and happy. (18)

Eating to feel “warm and full and happy” is comparable to the emotional eating of the protagonists from the eighties and nineties samples, and Angelica will later note that starting her diet marks the first time after a stressful experience that she hasn’t “eaten food to comfort [her]self” (84). Yet the book does not frame these feelings as necessarily dysfunctional. Angelica’s slender friends eat as much as she does—for instance Portia polishes off four brownies in a single sitting (74).

For Angelica, making food, eating food, having beautiful friends, and feeling happy are closely connected to her infatuation with Jamie Oliver. Her infatuation is partly romantic, but also rooted in an aspirational desire to possess his lifestyle:

Ever since I first saw Mr J. Oliver, Naked Chef extraordinaire on the telly, I KNEW I had to *be* him. Well, not be him exactly as he’s a bloke (be STILL my beating heart) but I knew I wanted to do just what he does—COOK. I just love it (and him) and I can’t think of anything more wonderful than making yumptious scrumptious “pukka” food for people and watching them eat it. (35)

The context for Angelica aspiring to be a chef can be found in British programming trends of the early two-thousands. ‘Make-over’ television programmes increasingly sought to legitimate some tastes and not others via the practices of food preparation. Bob Ashley, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones and Ben Taylor (2004) cite the example of *Jamie’s Kitchen* from 2002, which “hybridized the cookery programme, docu-soap and ‘reality’ talent show” by documenting Jamie Oliver’s attempts to train fifteen teenagers as chefs (62). Consumption practices were delineated in the programme along classed lines, with part of the purpose being to “make-over” the tastes of “working class would-be chefs whose favourite foods included chips, pizza and baked beans” in favour of “those of Jamie, and by

implication the viewer, for tempura oysters, speciality Italian breads and steak poached in red wine” (62).

Read in this context, Angelica’s love for food is not framed as emotional dependence and gluttony—as it is for Roland and his eighties counterparts. Rather, Angelica’s love for food is an aesthetic and affective appreciation determined by her status and class. It is permissible to be fat, and it is permissible to eat high fat foods, provided they are the *right kind* of food. *Angel* is interspersed with recipes for readers to try, and they are a far cry from the “working class” processed foods that Ashley refers to—they include, for instance, “Tiny Choux Pastry Puffs with Cream Cheese Filling” (Whytock 20), “Stupendously Delicious Crispy Potatoes” (49), and “Spirit-Lifting, Yummy Homemade Fudge” (147).

This is not to say the text never raises the question of whether Angelica should lose weight:

I busy myself imagining I am a world-famous cook, who has a truly posh restaurant and TV shows on several channels. (Obviously I would have to be sure that the camera never shot me from behind—although, who knows? By then maybe I’ll have made radical Life Changes and be paper thin with a wobble rating of zero...)” (39).

Clearly Angelica’s desire to be a television chef comes into conflict with her awareness that she does not comply with beauty standards propagated by the media. But her daydream of being “paper thin” is framed as a personal, possibly unfounded insecurity, rather than a manifestation of internalised societal pressure to lose weight. Subsequently George asks her if she has considered modelling, and her response is framed as defensive rather than a rational reaction to the narrowly defined beauty standards set by modelling industry: “I’ll

look just gorgeous wobbling down the catwalk” (40). Her attempts to be comfortable with looking fat are integral to her character development; and her willingness to undertake fashion modelling, as she does at the novel’s climax, is positioned as confirmation of her self-acceptance. There is no suggestion that Angelica’s feelings about her weight may be a reaction to wider societal hostility towards fat.

Certainly all the characters Angelica interacts with are nonplussed by her dieting attempts. En route to self-acceptance Angelica’s develops a crush on a sixth former called Adam and embarks on a cabbage weight loss diet in the belief that “if I was about two stone lighter he would realise that I’m the girl of his dreams” (76). The decision meets considerable resistance from friends and family. Her friends assert “you wouldn’t be you if you got all skinny” and conflate her current body size with her willingness to make food: “you’re gorgeous as you are and what we all do if you stopped making scrummy food for us?” (77). Flossie is resistant because she associates attempts to lose weight with girls “stopping eating and going anorexic and making themselves sick” (77). Mr Potts announces they should start a “Flab is Fab” campaign instead (81). Even Angelica’s mother, who corroborates Angelica’s view of herself as fat, advises Angelica against losing weight: “Some people simply *should* be bigger. I know I say things to you about potatoes and galumphing, but most of the time I’m not even thinking about what I’m saying—it’s just a habit I’ve got into. Sometimes I even imagine it’s funny—just a tease. Dahling, please don’t do this cranky diet” (84). The diet itself is a failure: Angelica suffers from flatulence for its duration and does not lose any weight (86-88).

In the wake of abandoning the diet, Angelica decides to attend exercise classes at the local gym, but without the intention to lose weight. She learns that she is a “natural” at kickboxing, in part because “being a giant heffalump is a real advantage” when putting her

weight behind kicks (114). It is significant, however, that part of the motivation for selecting kickboxing—alongside yoga—is that, unlike the other classes on offer, she is not required to wear lycra (113). The wish to camouflage her bodily fat persists despite the affirmations of her body she receives from her family, her friends and her kickboxing instructor.

Angelica begins to strive not for the eradication of fat, but for disguises that bring her into closer alignment with socially and media sanctioned beauty standards. She attempts to camouflage or, alternatively, de-accentuate her fat through her clothing choices. After she abandons her diet, an extended sequence follows in which she and her friends try on different outfits with the intention of enhancing their appearance, “diet or no diet” (92):

We’ve got the shoes, belts, earrings, glitter bits, and fishnet tights at one end of the bed and at the other end there are posh tops, trashy tops, slinky tops, and sparkly tops. Next to those we have tiny skirts, much bigger skirts (mine, natch) long skirts, skin-tight jeans, baggy jeans, jeans with sparkly seams. Then there are smart trousers, semi-smart trousers, and trousers it would be smarter not to wear. It looks like a fabulous, in-your-dreams jumble sale and I haven’t even mentioned the cosmetics yet! (92)

The girls are similarly situated in relation to the seemingly wide choice of clothing they can choose from. They are also similarly situated in experiencing insecurities about their appearance, and hoping that the correct clothing will detract from their flaws. Mercedes wishes to draw attention away from her braces, which she describes as “half a ton of metal” in her mouth (96). Portia stuffs her bra with toilet paper in the belief her breasts are too small (94). Angelica tries to conceal her fatness by donning a t-shirt studded with diamante lettering: “I wouldn’t normally want anything to draw attention to the Danger Zone, but

when I try it on I have to admit that the sparkle sort of camouflages the out-of-control wobbly bits” (94). Her anxieties about fat are grouped with the insecurities of her friends, and thus normalised as part and parcel of adolescent girlhood. Clothing choices are positioned as the solution to such anxieties.

This message is underscored when a participant in the school fashion show falls ill with chicken pox, meaning that Angelica has to take her place as a model (137). Angelica is appalled, specifically at the thought of her fatness being visible to the audience because she fears the outfit imposed upon her will not adequately camouflage her body shape:

All those people looking at me...all my wobbly bits on display. I can't do it!
Everything will show in that dress. I'll look like a whale. A whale with
beads and sequins! I'll probably burst the seams and bits of me will come
squodging out like sausage meat. (137).

The anticipation of being on display distresses and preoccupies her to such an extent it interferes with her normal routines – “even my Wednesday evening yoga class doesn't help. When we do the ‘visualise yourself walking along a beach’ bit, all I can see is my big, wobbly, out-of-control body falling out of that dress as I shuffle down the catwalk” (139). Being looked at is constructed as a demand to which Angelica has no alternative. Eventually she cries under the pressure, and seeks advice from her mother.

I hear myself telling Mother that I feel like a fat ugly freak and that all my
friends are tiny and beautiful and look as if they've stepped out of glossy
magazines... that I'm only really any good at cooking and that I was so
happy to be doing the food for the Fashion Show, but that now they're
MAKING me model this teeny-weeny dress and that I'll look like a vast
blob and make her even more ashamed of me than she is already. (144)

The pressure to look as though one has “stepped out of glossy magazines” is not interrogated, but accepted by both Angelica and her mother as a trial she must undergo, against her own inclinations. Her mother’s solution is, in fact, a consumerist one—to purchase more effective camouflage for Angelica’s body. She offers to take Angelica bra-shopping, stating “Once you’ve got the right underpinnings, everything else will fall into place” (144). This solution is, moreover, accepted in clear contradistinction to dieting—Angelica agrees to her mother’s proposal after eating “as much ice cream as is sensible” (145). Angelica sees the shopping trip as a bonding opportunity (similar to her friends’ bonding over perceived flaws) as well as to effect a change in her appearance. “It used to be Flossie who chose my smocked dresses and OshKosh dungarees and now here is my own mother offering to come and choose underpinnings. Well, that’s better than a smack in the eye with a wet fish, isn’t it?” (146). She will say, subsequently, that they felt they had “been ‘bonded’ by bra straps” (154).

Mrs Potts takes her daughter to Harrods’ lingerie department, where Angelica is measured and spends three pages, with illustrations, trying on a range of underwear (150-3). Having tried on three bras, Angelica is amazed by the difference the third makes to her body: “All those bits of me that escaped and flolloped around my old bra are safely and snugly tucked in and nothing is flolloping at *all*” (153). A pair of underpants “with a control panel” are endowed with similarly transformative properties:

I pull them on over my Marks & Spencer sensible, draft-free, thick white numbers, and find that the control panel does something *magical* to my not-quite-as-flat-as-it-might-be stomach. Even over the big white pants, these knickers are BRILLIANT! They skim and slim and make me feel just DIVINE (153)

It is significant that new clothes are endowed with “magical” properties that can instil a feeling of divinity in the wearer. The supernatural remedies for weight loss that I summarised in Chapter Five—which expressed ambivalence towards fatness *and* towards dieting—are supplanted here by clothing purchases.

By these means, the text creates a space for the fat, female, adolescent body in so far as the desire for self-acceptance can fuel compensatory consumer activity. The text also, as I suggested at the outset of this chapter, suggests the fat body can be validated through public adulation. Equipped with her new camouflage Angelica is resigned to but still ill at ease with taking part in the fashion show: she copes with her dread by placing “the whole horrible episode” in “a different mindzone” (157). But on the night itself, the effect of her reflection is revelatory: “this person looks tall and glam and is wearing an astonishing dress” (160). She steps out onto the catwalk, and stuns the assembled spectators: “Why is nobody talking or eating or moving or doing anything but staring? Even Mother looks as if she’s seen a ghost” (162). She receives a “ROAR of applause” when a schoolboy kisses her; he proclaims, “Eat your heart out, Sophie Dahl” (162-3).

We might see this scene as an echo of Jane’s transfiguration in *A Song*; but whereas Jane’s performance, and the audience’s adulation, was framed as a quasi-religious experience with a spiritual cause and spiritual effects, Angelica’s transformation is a triumph of consumerism. Through the correct purchases and selection of clothing, Angelica’s body is brought into compliance with a celebrity-sanctioned model form: that of Sophie Dahl.

Mates is similarly preoccupied with the pleasures of a celebrity culture in which anyone could theoretically acquire fame. The text offers a contradictory portrayal of the media’s influence on body image. Hopkins is initially critical of media effects on young

girls' perception of themselves. But the heroine, Izzie, is shown experiencing low self-esteem until a successful television appearance reassures her that she is attractive. Once again, the public adulation of a supportive audience is the means by which girls' bodies are validated.

Mates is the tenth out of sixteen novels in a series. Each book is narrated by one of four friends: Izzie, Nesta, Lucy, and TJ. This instalment is narrated by fifteen year old Izzie. Like Angelica, she appears to be financially comfortable. Her father works as a university lecturer (60); and though her family do not have live-in domestic help, as the Potts do, they are able to afford a cleaner (1). In a further indication of her social milieu, at the novel's outset she is recently returned from a Florentine holiday (4).

Izzie's narrative arc comprises judging her own fatness, changing her body, and receiving praise for eventual compliance with a media-endorsed beauty standard. Slender, celebrity forms are the implicit basis for comparison at every stage of this story, beginning with Izzie's initial concern that she is fat. Izzie fears that she has gained weight by eating more than she usually does on her trip to Italy, and her self-evaluation takes celebrities' appearances as a frame of reference: "I took a long look at myself in the mirror. Back, front, sideways. Yuck. It's too horrible. Flab, flab, flabby. People used to say I looked like Alanis Morissette with my dark hair and tall, slim shape but not any longer, I thought as I pulled in my tummy as far as it would go. The only celebrity I resemble now is Miss Piggy" (3).

Yet while constructing the media as a negative influence on girls' self image, *Mates* colludes in the cultural erasure of fat bodies by showing some reluctance to portray an unambiguously fat protagonist. The focus on *feeling* rather than *being* fat that I observed in the nineties *Jackie* issues appears to have been replicated here. Although *Mates*, *Dates*, and

Chocolate Cheats meets the minimum requirements for inclusion in my corpus, the portrayal of Izzie as fat contains some inconsistencies, not unlike those discussed in relation to Angelica. When Izzie first expresses her anxiety that she has gained weight, two of her friends rush to reassure her that there is “no way” she “looks fat” (14), implying that she is imagining things. We could interpret this as what the anthropologist Mimi Nichter (2000) calls “fat talk” (52). Based on three years of interviews with US school girls, Nichter concluded that normatively slender teenage girls regularly claim to be fat to obtain reassurance, to demonstrate that one pays attention to one’s appearance, and to pre-empt criticism when eating fattening foods (52). In the same study, girls who Nichter considered to be “significantly overweight” did not participate in “fat talk,” because to do so would only “call attention to their problem” (52). Bringing this to bear on our interpretation would lead us to conclude Izzie is not fat. She seeks reassurance about her body and receives it, in the manner of normatively slim girls rather than fat girls.

Alternatively, Hopkins’ intention may be to construct adolescent girlhood as a period for sifting mixed sociocultural messages—because Izzie does receive *some* corroboration, albeit inconsistent, that she is fat. Nesta asserts that “no one around here is telling the truth” about Izzie’s weight gain (14): the other girls’ reluctance to corroborate Izzie’s view of herself as fat is thus framed as sensitivity, rather than, necessarily, genuine disagreement. Nesta subsequently modifies her opinion to say that Izzie is “not fat. You are curvy;” Izzie suspects this is a form of strategic ambiguity, or “just a polite way of saying fat” (14), a view rather supported by Nesta’s vacillation. The picture is muddled further by references to Izzie’s clothing size. Post weight-gain, Izzie takes a size 14 (65). To my mind, this is within the realms of the normatively slender, but the text does not consistently position it as such. For instance, Izzie is too large to shop in the same outlets as her friends;

on one shopping trip, “the snooty assistant” informs her that they don’t stock “larger sizes” (66). The text thus constructs Izzie’s body as a fat body via references to the teen clothing market, while keeping her clothes size at the very border of normative slenderness.

Like Angelica, Izzie’s anxieties about her weight lead her to diet. At first she simply skips meals; she then finds herself preoccupied with thoughts of food because she is hungry, and binges (15-16). Tormented by thoughts of “baked potatoes with lashings of butter, slices of toast and peanut butter, chocolate cake and blueberry muffins” she rises from her bed at night to eat “a huge chunk of wholemeal bread with peanut butter and damson jam, two cookies and a piece of marzipan covered cake” (16). Again like Angelica, Izzie eats for emotional reasons. When she learns that a holiday romance has no chance of developing because the boy has a girlfriend at home, her first response is to eat: “I don’t care any more, I thought as I headed for the kitchen. Need chocolate. And need it now” (41).

Negative media influences are invoked again when Izzie re-asserts her intention to lose weight. She intensifies her pursuit of slenderness because she is offered the chance to appear on television. Nesta’s father, a producer, seeks participants for a new factual programme called *Teen Talk* (20). Izzie concedes she would be interested in taking part, but is privately beset by concerns about her appearance:

...in my head I’d gone into a panic. I’d read somewhere that the television camera adds ten pounds to your weight. Ten plus the five at Christmas plus the three from the Italian trip. That’s eighteen pounds. Oh god. I’d look enormous. But on the other hand, I’d really love to do it. (20)

The media’s exclusion of fat performers—previously alluded to in, for instance, Erkan Mustafa’s statement that stage schools don’t have fat pupils—is revisited in this text, where

it is a barrier to Izzie's participation in an activity she would "love to do". Izzie suspects that she can be accommodated on television only as a "token fat person" (21).

Unfortunately, the text does not pose a rigorous challenge to fat people's cultural invisibility. The text is entirely focused on Izzie's individual transformation of the self: she must acquire greater confidence, modify her body through weight loss, or camouflage those traits which do not comply with societal beauty standards.

Ironically, both *Mates* and *Angel* adopt a tokenistic approach towards the inclusion of fat child characters. In each case, the protagonist resembles her father in being fat (Hopkins 60, Whytock 81), but is the only adolescent female character to possess this trait. Both books deploy a similarly tokenistic approach to the physical characteristics of the protagonists' friends. Each character is constructed as a physical 'type'—as though to offer, in true consumerist fashion, a range of pre-set options from which the implied reader can choose a point of identification. Portia (Whytock 11) and TJ (Hopkins 68) are both characters with straight-up-and-down figures. Minnie (Whytock 11) and Lucy (Hopkins 68) are both short, although they differ in that Minnie is also described as "curvy" (11). Mercedes (Whytock 9) and Nesta (Hopkins 5) are both mixed race characters who are described as "exotic" in appearance, amongst an otherwise white array of characters. Although both texts frame exoticism as an attractive attribute, describing black characters as "exotic" simply reifies whiteness as the norm. Moreover, because fatness, a lack of curves, and shortness are all constructed as sources of anxiety for the characters, being black is problematically grouped with a range of supposed physical flaws.

Both texts construct bodily dissatisfaction as constitutive of gender and life stage; to worry about one's appearance is part of being a 'normal' teenage girl. No character shows more than one departure from a slender, white, tall and curvy feminine bodily ideal,

indicating that both texts are only superficially inclusive. Crucially, just as each purported flaw is specific to one character within each text, the solutions advanced for those flaws are always individualised. If Izzie is unhappy that she is fat, *Mates* suggests, that is because she lacks confidence or because she needs to lose weight; not because there are systemic power imbalances that privilege thinner girls. TJ tells Izzie that she recently watched “a programme about body image on telly” which covered “the top ten things that make a naked body attractive and sexy” (Hopkins 66). The number one consideration is “confidence. All the experts said the same. Whatever shape or size, if you’re confident, it is a million times more attractive than trying to hide your body or make excuses for some of it” (67). This message, which is seemingly an endorsement of self-acceptance, does not address that Izzie’s anxiety is a rational response to a fatphobic society.

What’s more, the message is not consistently delivered. Self-acceptance is at odds with the advice Izzie receives elsewhere in the text. For example, her mother is supportive of Izzie’s attempts to lose weight, and reserves criticism solely for the method Izzie has chosen. Instead Izzie is told to follow a “programme of healthy eating and the weight will be off in a few months” (43). This is positioned as sensible counsel but is still directed at changing the body. As such it is fundamentally at odds with accepting the body one already has. Similarly, TJ’s assurance that all Izzie needs is confidence is swiftly followed by the contradictory offer of advice on losing weight: “‘if you want to lose a few pounds,’ said TJ, ‘exercise. That will burn off a few calories’” (70). The rapid movement between assuring Izzie she simply needs to develop confidence, and suggesting how she can lose weight, replicates the contradictory messages of the *Jackie* problem page from the nineteen-seventies onwards.

It is in fact to magazines that Izzie turns for further advice on weight loss. She sets out with a clear intention to emulate the women she sees in magazines. Her primary interest is not in the images of professional models, but of girls who she believes have been in the same situation as herself:

I took a detour to the local newsagent's on the way home and spent a good chunk of my pocket money on magazines. I knew exactly what I was looking for. Ones that said anything like, 'Lose ten pounds in ten easy steps' with a picture of a skinny girl holding up her old ginormous pair of trousers to show how she'd shrunk ten sizes (21).

Izzie's faith in girls who appear to share her experience is contiguous with a suspicion of celebrities which Angelica lacked. Whereas Angelica saw personages such as Jamie Oliver as figures to aspire to, Izzie is simultaneously entranced and alienated by celebrities, particularly those who feature in the food programming Angelica so enjoyed. Izzie is overwhelmed by the foodstuffs that are paraded on her screen with the endorsement of various television personalities:

Channel One: Superchef Delia concocting something delicious with raspberries, ricotta cheese and cream. Argh.

Change channels.

Channel Two: Nigella, the Domestic Goddess making ice cream out of Mars bars. Mmmmm. I felt my mouth water.

Change channels.

Channel Three: Jamie Oliver and some other celeb chef making lasagne with garlic and herbs in record time. It looked so good, I could almost smell it

(56)

Food comprises a consumer luxury associated with a particular celebrity chef's brand. The ubiquity of food as a site for exercising consumer decisions—whether that be in the ingredients one buys, or the cookery programme one watches—is positioned as a contributor to Izzie's inability to adhere to a diet. "The world is conspiring against me," she reflects. "It's no wonder I'm as fat as a pig" (58).

The psychology corpus from this decade contains three abstracts which discuss food marketing, however the type of aspirational cooking shows Izzie feels "conspire" against her do not feature (Matthews 2008; Halford *et al* 2004; Halford *et al* 2008). Two abstracts in the corpus discuss television-watching, but as a sedentary activity, rather than an activity which may impact upon fat children's self-perception or attitudes towards food (Gorely *et al* 2004; Parsons, Power and Manor 2005). Yet some shared assumptions can be detected between my samples of juvenile fiction and psychology abstracts at this time. The two largest areas of research interest are intervention and stigmatisation. A tension between these two areas is at work in *Mates*, where societal pressures are acknowledged but responded to by changing the individual body rather than challenging the basis of such strictures. Indeed *Mates* ultimately colludes in constructing an idealised, slender, celebrity form as a suitable aspiration for young girls.

The text constructs the televisual parade of luxury foods, and the magazine crash diet, as a binarised approach to eating which Izzie must reject for her own well-being. She fails in the attempt to lose weight by, for instance, eating cabbage or drinking slimmers' shakes; she loses weight only when she joins a slimming group on the advice of her doctor (141). But she does not resolve her anxieties about her weight until she appears on television, in a narrative development that sits uneasily with the earlier portrayal of Izzie's dissatisfaction stemming from the mass media.

Izzie attends the televised debate, and discovers the producers need to fill a space in their schedule. She is invited to sing a song she has authored herself, about starving African children (146-7). As she is ushered backstage into a “white washed room” with an “enormous bunch of flowers, Evian water and bowl of fruit arranged on a low coffee table”, she muses that “[t]his must be how it is when you really are a celebrity guest” (150). She is extremely ill-at-ease with the clothing she is given to wear, believing it to be too revealing—she proclaims “Ohmigod. It’s too tight. My boobs!” (152)—but is pressured into performing by the assurances of the production assistant and a sense that she “barely had time to think” (151). The assistant instructs her to “act confident” (152), while simultaneously modifying Izzie’s appearance, in an echo of TJ’s earlier contradictory advice.

The catalyst in Izzie’s self-perception is the audience’s greeting. They call out to her as she steps on stage (154), and she reflects: “It was a dream come true. A moment I’d fantasised about so many times in front of the mirror at home” (154). The reference to performing in front of the mirror is significant, because Izzie’s pleasure in the gig does not derive simply from adrenaline or the sense of singing well: it derives from affirmation of her appearance. Once the song is over, Lucy tells her “I couldn’t believe it was really you up there. You looked so confident” before segueing into complimenting her clothing: “‘And you looked so good,’ said Lucy. ‘I couldn’t have picked a better outfit for you myself’”(154).

The coda to Izzie’s performance perpetuates the same strand of contradictory messages. Izzie reiterates that bodily anxiety is normative for teenage girls: “I know that no one’s ever happy; if not with their legs, it’s their tum or their hair or their bum” (165). This knowledge does not produce any challenge to the structures and institutions that encourage

girls' dissatisfaction with themselves; she continues to attend her Weight Winners class. Izzie claims she is "looking forward to going out partying it and not feeling like I have to hide myself away at home, my life on hold, waiting until I'm skinny" (165)—and the text doesn't acknowledge the irony that "waiting" until she's "skinny" is precisely what she is currently doing. She reconfigures her pursuit of weight loss as a demonstration of self-worth, rather than an attempt to comply with others' demands on her appearance: "I feel now that I'm doing it for me—to feel good, not to fit in with what I think some boy wants."

This is undermined by the final page of the novel, when Izzie receives a barrage of fan mail from viewers of her television performance. The letters are addressed to "the most beautiful girl in the world," amongst other glowing epithets, and the praise she receives for her appearance makes her feel "[p]retty darned blooming amazing" (167). She promises her friends she will never again bother them with complaints that she is a "great fat ugly lump" (167). The validation from her audience, if not "some boy," is instrumental to silencing her anxieties. Whether "confidence" would be sufficient to elicit fan mail without her weight loss is left unanswered.

Over the course of the text, then, Izzie is shown to find her own body wanting in comparison to the celebrities she admires; to modify her body with the express intention of appearing in the public eye herself; to bring her body into compliance with the standards set by a television production company, including capitulation to the producers' choice of clothing; and to feel at ease in her body when she receives public approval through her television appearance. In summary, *Mates* pays lip service to societal anxiety regarding fad diets in magazines and television's promotion of food as a marker of status; but the text valorises an entwined pursuit of fame and slenderness.

This valorisation is accompanied by a pro-consumerist tenor. While the fantasy texts of the nineties were actively hostile towards material acquisitiveness, capitalist exploitation and classed inequalities, *Mates* is primarily concerned with alleviating consumers' guilt. The text countenances that, as Ehrenreich (2002) says, the pursuit of slenderness is a hair shirt beneath the fur coat; but quickly reasserts the status quo. Watching a television programme about "a country in Africa that had been suffering from a drought" (142) causes Izzie to feel "guilty" (142) and "selfish" (143) for her preoccupation with weight loss. Her mother responds as follows:

Oh Izzie, you mustn't beat yourself up just because you were trying to lose a bit of weight. I know there are so many things that aren't right in the world but you're a fifteen-year-old girl and living in our society, you have different pressures on you. It's perfectly natural that you want to look your best. (142)

This paragraph contains a contradiction: that Izzie's attitude towards her body is at once the result of societal "pressures" and "perfectly natural." The normalisation of Izzie's feelings also rapidly segues into a justification for pursuing individual desires without compunction; Izzie's mother goes on to say: "[r]ich people who seem to have it all still experience loss, disappointment, illness, death of loved ones. Life can be a roller coaster for all of us. You have to reach out and grab the good times" (144).

This attempt to depoliticise individual concerns is characteristic of the series in general—in, for instance, *Mates*, *Dates and Pulling Power*, Nesta defends her lack of interest in history by saying: "I'll never be into heavy stuff like politics or war. I'll never be into reading literary-type books with clever words that only brainboxes understand. But I've realised that it doesn't matter. There's room for everyone and that includes people who are lightweight, in fact there are times people want lightweight" (168). Most

problematically, *Mates* tries to solve the problem of why we don't "all live together and share our resources" (143) without relinquishing privileges that come with wealth. Izzie's mother advises her, if she feels guilty, to "make donations", or "do charity events to raise money" and, most strikingly, claims it is "fab" that wealthy people can "give their name to a project and suddenly everyone wants to be a part of it just because a celebrity has become involved" (143). This attempt to appear moral whilst benefiting from inequality has a parallel in the book's construction of Izzie's weight loss. She asks "does it really matter if my bum is slightly too big" (145) from a position of having already lost considerable weight; and although the text has stressed the need for "confidence," Izzie only achieves that when her newly slender self is endorsed by favourable audience reactions to her appearance on *Teen Talk*.

Laura concludes with a similar exchange of weight loss for public adulation, but the text adopts a more cynical tone than *Mates* does. The books are marketed at different age ranges—*Mates* is promoted by Picadilly as a book for readers "11 plus" ("Cathy Hopkins") while Hodder label the back cover of *Laura* with the warning "not suitable for younger readers." Cynicism may be one of the means by which age differences in the implied readership are constituted. However it is also worth noting that by 2007, when both *Laura* and the similarly cynical *Twin* were published, the 'reality' television trend was no longer novel. The trend was sufficiently established for viewers to recognise that few participants enjoyed lasting benefits.

Laura begins, and ends, with the protagonist appearing in a televised talent content called *Make Me a Model*. Laura is a seventeen year old (57) schoolgirl from the wealthy^{xxvii} Mancunian suburb of Didsbury (239). At the novel's outset, *Make Me a Model* award Laura a modelling contract, even though her fellow competitors perceive her as "a fat cow" (3).

She re-locates from the family home to take up her contract with a London-based agency, and swiftly learns that her new employers also view her as fat. Her booker, Heidi, tells her she is “at least twenty pounds overweight” (35). Heidi elaborates that “the camera puts on at least ten pounds. You seem to gain a lot of weight in your face” (35). Laura’s own stance, that she is “within the acceptable weight ratio” for her height, is dismissed: she is “not in the acceptable weight ratio for a model” (50). The obfuscation of whether or not Angel and Izzie are fat is repeated with Laura, but is knowingly presented as the product of harmful industrial norms. When Laura returns home for a visit, she meets incredulity from her boyfriend and parents, who state that she is “not fat” (82) but is rather “skin and bone” (93). Her former school friends are more equivocal. “Laura’s slim but she isn’t celebrity slim,” one of them remarks. “Celebrity slim is like about fifteen pounds lighter than normal slim” (111).

Far from being “celebrity slim,” Laura might be described as ‘celebrity fat.’ Her physique is constructed as fat by the industrial definitions of her modelling agency. Heidi asserts that Laura must lose weight to get modelling work because the clothing used for catwalk and magazine shoots never exceeds a Size 8 (35). Although Laura initially resists Heidi’s instructions to diet, a series of humiliations leads Laura to accept she cannot progress in her career without becoming “celebrity slim.” For instance at an audition she rips an under-sized jacket with her “back fat” (77). Although Heidi cites the smallness of models’ clothing as an unchangeable fact which Laura must accept if she is to have the fame she desires, the text implicitly advances two causes for the industrial demand that models be “celebrity thin.” The first is the fashion industry’s institutionalised sexism. The second is a profit-motivated pandering to societal fatphobia.

With regard to the former, Heidi is blasé when Laura is sexually harassed by a photographer. During a photo shoot he criticises Laura's breast size, offers to find her pornographic work, physically molests her, and complains that her fatness increases his workload (57). "She's too fat," he states. "Bloody great, I'm going to have to spend hours retouching this" (57). Negative constructions of her fatness are therefore presented as one aspect of a multi-faceted gendered attack.

With regard to the fashion industry's profit motives, Laura's slenderness is seen as essential to inspiring imitative consumerism. Her fat must be camouflaged—not, as Angel's was, through the direct purchase of body-sculpting garments; but through the manipulation of photographic images which are intended to sell clothes and make-up to third parties.

Laura is a more overtly bleak text than either *Angel* or *Mates* because the protagonist pursues slenderness as the acceptable cost of public adulation, despite the sexism and humiliation she experiences in the fashion industry. Laura fears that the alternative to losing weight is "having to slink back to Manchester with the words 'abject failure' tattooed across her forehead" (149). In other words, she fears the confirmation that she is a celetoid rather than the beneficiary of lasting fame. She wants fame as a means of obtaining personal affirmation and material luxuries; her modelling contract is a social gateway to

... a never-ending stream of the foxiest members of boy-kind all ready with appreciative smiles and offers to buy her drinks and take her out to dinner.

Laura could feel her market value going through the roof. It was like a domino effect: more and more guys moving in on her, until she found herself perched on a banquette with an adoring audience of men in designer

jeans and trainers laughing at her jokes and offering to get her backstage passes to any band that she might want to see.

There was always a glass in her hand, always full to the brim, because as soon as she drained the contents, it was filled up again with as little regard for £200 bottles of champagne than if they'd been tap water. (159)

Significantly, the reader is not invited to criticise Laura's distress at abandoning this lifestyle. The scene painted is a seductive one; there is no limit to the boys who will buy her dinner, to the bands she might see, or to the champagne she might drink. If we are not asked to criticise her, it is because she does not occupy a position of power within the scene. Her "market value" inheres in her appearance, and is intrinsically dependent on external approval.

Consequently Laura differs from fat, acquisitive, economically powerfully characters such as Raymond, Tad, and Dudley. Whereas the fat boys of nineties fiction were punished for acquisitiveness, Laura, as a fat teenage girl, is positioned as the victim of consumerism. The text is anti-consumerist in so far as Laura's pursuit of weight loss—and of fame—is negatively framed as a commoditization of the body. Her boyfriend, Tom, complains that her modelling acquaintances discuss "their bodies all the time, like, like they don't even belong to them. They're just this collection of parts to be auctioned off to the highest bidder" (198). But the text allocates blame to the fashion industry, rather than to Laura as an individual.

The attempt to criticise the fashion industry while uncritically depicting Laura's pleasure in material consumption creates contradictions within the text. On the one hand, the pressure to lose weight is attributed to a combination of sexism and profit motives; on the other, Laura's successful weight loss has precisely the effect she wants. She is able to

extend her fame by winning a £1,000,000 contract to endorse designer perfume (289), and returns to the new series of *Make Me a Model* as a special guest (298). She is, as before, rewarded with public adoration:

Applause. And it was all for her. Because she had symmetrical features and when the products were piled on and the lighting was good, she stopped being a pretty girl from Manchester and was transformed into a beautiful dream. Somebody that only existed in the moment.

That was fine. As long as when the moment passed, and the photos faded into blurry, yellowed images, she was still the same Laura that she used to be. (298)

The artifice of the “products” and the “lighting” perpetuate the text’s earlier cynicism about the glamour of celebrity lifestyles. So does the expectation that Laura’s fame is only *temporarily* extended: one day the photos will fade, and there is no guarantee that Laura will be any more willing to resign herself to who “she used to be” when that time comes. Yet the phrase “it was all for her” constructs the applause as a satisfactory reward for her weight loss. Though Laura has apparently gained a greater insight into the illusions of fame, she still wants and attains fame. The text ultimately upholds the myth that anyone, with the requisite effort, can achieve a celebrity lifestyle.

Twin is similarly engaged with this myth, but differs from *Laura* in foregrounding a relatively impoverished fat character. Though the UK economy was still booming in 2007, there were signs of consumption cleavages forming along classed and generationed lines. The OECD survey of that year noted that unemployment among unskilled school leavers was creeping up despite an otherwise healthy labour market (9). The same survey contains implicit indicators of who could and couldn’t benefit from the rise in mortgage equity that

helped fuel private consumption. The OECD recommended mortgage equity release products as a suitable means of supplementing older people's incomes in retirement (55); yet they also noted the declining "affordability" of housing (120), a trend which I would argue was most relevant to those on the lowest incomes. It is against this backdrop of consumption cleavages that *Twin* follows the fortunes of a working class fat girl trying to succeed as a singer. The consumerism that pervades *Angel* and *Mates* is framed differently in Magrs' text—as a source of frustration, envy and exclusion.

The novel suggests that reality television programmes include fat people as a source of intended comedy and ersatz sympathy. Capitulating to performing like a "freak" appears, to the protagonist, to be one of few ways of obtaining the affluent lifestyle her family aspires to. *Twin* focuses on two girls' search for success in television talent contests under the pressure of a domineering mother. Helen, the narrator, is a "plump and short and dark-haired" girl of twelve (13). Her mother states Helen is "officially a dwarf" (13). As such Helen represents the only character in the whole corpus with a physical disability. Helen's sister, Eunice, is "tall and slender" and "pretty" (13). Both girls audition as singers for a programme called Star Turn (2). Neither girl is selected; although Helen sings "beautifully", her appearance is considered unmarketable, while Eunice fails on the basis of her voice (24). Recognising that the dominant narrative in talent contests is "overcoming adversity" (75), their mother's boyfriend Eric suggests that the girls impersonate conjoined twins to simultaneously capitalise on the sympathies of the audience and combine what the judges perceive as strengths—Helen's voice, and Eunice's appearance (77).

The novel's paratext implicitly references contemporaneous reality programming. The cover strapline is "We are the Freaky Girls"—a pun on the chorus of the *Cheeky Song* (*We Are the Cheeky Girls*), a novelty track which reached number two in the official UK

singles chart (“2002 Top 40 Official UK Singles Archive”) after being performed on the televised talent contest *Popstars: The Rivals* in 2002. Changing “cheeky” to “freaky” foreshadows the novel’s portrayal of reality programmes as an arena in which particular characteristics are overtly framed as personal tragedies, and covertly framed as a “freaky” spectacle. Eric comments that televised talent shows are “like the circus” (52) in their foregrounding of “freaky” acts. Performers are objectified while audience responses veer between the two poles of schadenfraude and ersatz sympathy: for instance, a fat tightrope walker might be urged to “[f]all off the rope” (52) by viewers at home one minute, but the act of falling itself elicits support (54).

The glamour alluded to by the novel’s cover image—a pair of microphones, at different heights in a reference to Helen and Eunice’s dissimilar physiques, stand on a starlit stage—is immediately offset by Helen’s opening lines. She begins the story by taking an oppositional stance to the fame reality programmes promise: “I really don’t want to be here.” (2). The text goes on to imply that materialism and aspiration have become entwined in wider society to a harmful degree, so that Helen’s wish to be a “travel agent, and work in the town centre” (7) is not valued for the underlying altruism to “help [people] to have a lovely holiday” or the intellectual curiosity Helen takes in travel (58). Instead her career aspirations are viewed as a “mundane” (59) and even “weird” (6) ambition by her family. Her mother fantasises that one day “we’ll be driven everywhere! We’ll be flown about the place in a helicopter! We’ll live in a huge palace in the countryside and we’ll keep everyone waiting!” (5). Helen’s lack of interest in this fantasy meets with incredulity: “She doesn’t care one jot! What’s wrong with her? What’s the matter with her?” (6).

The search for fame is “boring” (14) to Helen, who no longer considers it “a normal way to carry on” (14). The vicarious fame sought by her mother is not one that readily accommodates Helen as a fat girl with a disability. Helen relays to her mother the judges’ opinion that “to get on in their world, you have to look exactly right. And I don’t” (24). The only alternative to looking “exactly right” is to pursue success by being “freaky.” Eunice’s insults that Helen resembles a “midget” or a “troll” who looks “squished” are reframed by their mother as a potential “gimmick” to stand out in a competitive field. “Everyone needs a gimmick in showbiz!” she proclaims (13). Helen’s increasing awareness that, regardless of her own self-regard, the “freaky” performer might be the only role she is permitted, informs her ambivalence towards success as a singer. After a successful, impromptu performance at a car boot sale, she reflects on a suggestion from Eunice that people see her as entertaining because of her physicality, rather than her singing talent:

A performing freak? I hadn’t thought of that. Is that what the crowd had seen? Me, doing all my stomping and dancing and jitterbugging about on that table-top and singing my heart out. Getting them to wave their arms in the air along with me, and sing along with the chorus. Is that what they had seen? A performing midget? A circus act? (43)

By presenting Helen’s reflections as a series of questions, Magrs suggests she is incredulous, and he thus conveys the breadth of the gap between Helen’s self image and the way the audience sees her.

Unusually within the corpus, Helen does not internalise these criticisms, whether they are targeted at her fatness or her dwarfism. She is irritated by unfavourable comparisons with her sister’s slender appearance (12), but recognises Eunice is jealous of her singing voice and sees this as compensation (14). Equally unusually, the text attributes

fatness to overeating without affirming stereotypes of weight gain as emotionally maladaptive and immoral. When Helen's mother lectures her not to eat "fattening muck" because "you don't want to be a fat dwarf" (29), Helen takes the comments as a sign that her mother is temporarily under stress (30). She continues to eat regardless, without guilt (30). The lack of judgement extends to the novel's other main fat character, Eric. Helen admires the frankness with which he discusses his body size, particularly when her mother attempts to suggest he has a "glandular disorder" (48). Eric contradicts her: "I'm fat because I order in food every night. See that banquet for four on the menu? Well, I can eat a whole banquet for four in one go" (48). When Helen asks if he ever feels "ill" (49), and her mother suggests he should feel "guilty", he rubs his stomach in a gesture of acceptance we might diametrically oppose to the punching characters such as *Girls'* Ellie or *Fatty's* Rati inflict upon themselves (49). He clarifies: "I love Chinese food! I love Italian food! I love all food, actually. Why should I feel guilty or sick?" (49).

The response made by Helen's mother exemplifies precisely the damaging associations made between size and emotional health that I have discussed in previous chapters. She is "disgusted" (49) by Eric's attitude to food and weight, but disguises her disgust as concern by citing his emotional well-being: "Mam said thoughtfully: 'I think he must be a very sad, damaged person really.' She started stuffing rubbish into the bin. 'All that grinning isn't natural. He's nervous, isn't he?'" (49). Helen resists this reading of Eric's motivations, and the implications for her own fatness, by responding: "I think he's great!" (50).

A parallel between the construction of fat as an emotional problem, and the construction of physical disability as an emotional problem, is drawn in the novel's following chapter. When Helen is pushed in the school corridor by a classmate (55)—a

repeated occurrence, because people overlook her size (24)—she responds by thumping them (55). The deputy head locates the source of Helen’s aggression in her disability *per se*, rather than in the poor treatment she receives as a dwarf. “‘Helen gets herself overwrought sometimes,’ the deputy head fretted to Eunice. ‘As a result of her... condition’” (56). His view is quite at odds with Helen’s own self image—she feels not “overwrought”, but “tough” and “fierce” (56). She responds sarcastically, “That’s charming!... Yeah, maybe he’s right. Maybe I’ll have to thump a few more kids just to help me get over the trauma” (56).

Helen’s mother, and the deputy head, both associate emotional distress with bodies that by a dominant social standard don’t “look exactly right.” They forestall accusations of prejudice by presenting a concerned demeanour. Beneath that demeanour they are ill-at-ease with fatness and with disability. The text extends the entwining of discomfort and feigned sympathy to encompass the more prurient relationship viewers in the story have with reality programming. Attempts to simultaneously read Helen’s fat, disabled body as not “right” in appearance, as a “gimmick”, and as a source of “trauma”, thus become emblematic of a wider societal tendency to only accommodate particular bodies as either pitiable or “freaky” entertainment. Eric argues that Helen’s series of failures in talent shows is because she falls between the two acceptable roles countenanced by the mass media—she doesn’t “look right”, but nor does she elicit sympathy:

The audience at home has to feel sorry for you! “Ah, look at her! She’s tone deaf and she’s got ears like a great big elephant! Let’s phone in and vote for her!” “Oh, that poor boy. He looks like a dolphin. Let’s text our vote in for him!” Don’t you see? Sympathy is the new big thing! You have to stir their

heartstrings! That's how you really shine, girls! That's how you really get to succeed! (75-76)

The allusion to tone deafness is the only attribute he cites which is not a morphological characteristic. He also points out that previous winners have included a girl with one eye, a girl with no eyebrows, and a boy with “a huge head and no nose” (75). It is the body that elicits sympathy—but only if it is presented as an “exotic” source of personal trauma (76). Helen's self-regard doesn't fit the bill: to be what Eric calls “a heart-warming spectacle” she must amplify her “freakish” qualities (75). The text positions his interpretation of people's responses to reality programming as the correct one, because the girls are both successful in their ruse to impersonate conjoined twins, and in their attempt to be shortlisted. “Oh you poor brave darlings,” the judge says after their first performance. “How you must have suffered! How terrible your conjoined lives must have been!” (118).

The judge's fawning is counterbalanced by the hostility Helen and Eunice receive from their fellow contestants, a range of “girls with flinty, hostile eyes, standing there with their doting dads and grandmas, pushing mums and aunties” who Helen hears “muttering and commenting and mothering on” (122-123). The comments target Helen's appearance in particular: ““A monkey in a catsuit!’ ‘They should be in a circus, or a freak show!’” (124). The insidious nature of the televised talent show, *Twin* suggests, is that it encourages divisive attitudes between people who share socioeconomic disadvantages. There is the suggestion that the allure of talent shows is a promise of escape from financial hardship; Helen lives in a seemingly comfortable terrace on a “pretty quiet” estate, but their “showbiz fund” is primarily comprised of the takings from car boot sales (31), and their mother is angered when Eunice orders a takeaway pizza because they “can't afford” it (29). Helen's

mother voices her feelings thusly: “I just wish *we* could win through. Just once. I wish we could win just anything” (25).

The search for an escape through instant fame, however, does not seek to eschew the causes of inequality at the root. As a solution to financial hardship, the talent show is particularly problematic because the majority—indeed all but one contestant—must fail; as Helen’s mother observes, “They make it seem so easy. So possible. It just isn’t fair” (23). The competitiveness such conditions encourage in participants goes hand in hand with a desire to surpass the fortunes of the others taking part and to look down on them from a position of material wealth. Helen is lectured by her mother in the queue for one show: “There’ll be no more standing about on the pavement when you’ve made it. There’ll be none of this queueing up with all these untalented drongos then! When you’ve made it—you and Eunice—we’ll be driven everywhere! We’ll be flown about the palace in a helicopter! We’ll live in a huge palace in the countryside and we’ll keep everyone waiting!” (5). Once Helen and Eunice are on the receiving end of this hostility, it informs the adversity—as stigmatised “conjoined twins”—that give talent shows their emotional interest.

The centrality of “triumph over adversity” to Magrs’ portrayal of televised talent contests takes a cue from the popularity of Gareth Gates, a 2002 runner-up in the television programme *Pop Idol* who spoke with a stammer. Simon Cowell (2003), one of the *Pop Idol* judges, claims in his memoir that Gates’ speech impediment was a significant factor in garnering popular votes. “He looked good, he had a great recording voice and, of course, his stammer made you root for him,” Cowell recollects (170). But note that a normatively attractive appearance, or looking “good”, was still a criterion for success—a point further underscored by Cowell’s statement that he “dreamed of finding the modern day equivalent

of David Cassidy” (156). Note also that the roster of *Pop Idol* and *Popstars* winners did not include any people with visible physical disabilities, and there were no contestants with facial disfigurements of the kind Magrs lists.

This places Magrs’ references to physical disability in a troubling context. He deploys such references as a satiric exaggeration of the “triumph over adversity” stories germane to televised talent contests. For his satire to be effective, we are invited to assume that having one eye, or no nose, is an outlandish, fantastical, condition which is only invoked for Magrs’ rhetorical purpose, rather than a genuine disability. His approach becomes additionally problematic because Helen and Eunice are shown to *fake* a disability. Helen’s own dwarfism notwithstanding, their impersonation of conjoined twins aligns with what Susan Wendell (1996) calls the “myth of control” (93). She argues that “the essence of the myth of control is the belief that it is possible, by means of human actions, to have the bodies we want to prevent illness, disability, and death” (93-94). Although her focus is on the pervasiveness of this myth in medical and psychoanalytic approaches to disability, I would add it can also be applied to cultural representations of disability as a feigned condition.

Eric’s suggestion that Helen’s fatness and dwarfism are insufficiently “exotic” to comprise a “gimmick” constructs the fat body as relatively “normal” (76). Such a construction is consistent with Eric and Helen’s own ease with themselves, and also resists, at the expense of people with more marginalised disabilities, reading the fat body as a source of “trauma.” Intriguingly, this directly conflicts with Cowell’s account of the *Pop Idol* contestants’ barriers to success, in which fat bodies are emphatically categorised as targets for criticism and sympathy. He recollects that one participant, named Susanne, “went through a hell of a lot. She was bullied at school for being fat. She then enters the

toughest talent contest in the world and makes the final five and at one point is a leading contender to win the competition. She then has to face the bullies again” (305). He also claims that body size was a source of contention between himself and one of the other judges, Pete Waterman, in selecting a “huge” (136) contestant named Rik Waller; he states that Rik “made Pete go mental because he didn’t think a fat person could be a Pop Idol” (138). Michelle McManus, the *Pop Idol* winner in 2003 who received “a lot of stick in the press about her weight” (297), is similarly referred to as a source of controversy between judges: “[i]f Michelle fails to become a breakout artist, Pete will have been proved right in the sense that it could be said that Michelle won partly on a sympathy vote” (303).

Cowell presents the fat body as a site of dramatic conflict. He suggests that the fat body is accommodated in the public eye as a target for “bullies” or on a “sympathy vote.” Magrs transposes these alternatives to his novel in connection with physical disability with two noteworthy effects. First, he creates an association between the fat body (in Cowell’s account, a suitable adversity over which to triumph) and the disabled body (in Magrs’ account, the adversity over which to triumph). But Magrs implies the association is a continuum, upon which fat is relatively “normal”—and insufficiently “freaky” for the “circus” of reality television. He accordingly resists constructing the fat body as “freakish” by pointing to other marginalised bodies.

Helen’s acceptance of herself as fat girl, and a dwarf, is the driving impetus of the text. Like Angela, in *The Big Pink* (1987), Helen is under pressure to become comfortable with being looked at. Consequently, when she is photographed for a glossy magazine because of her participation in the programme, it is presented as an affirming experience: “I looked fantastic in that photo. Me! Dwarfish, squished-looking me, on the cover of a gossipy celebrity magazine” (Magrs 180). The text scarcely acknowledges that her

realisation has been enabled by appropriating the “freakishness” of a condition she has not herself experienced. The only acknowledgement, within the text, that Helen and Eunice have acted immorally is voiced by Eric’s mother, Marlene, who is angered by their “lying through their teeth and saying they’ve got something wrong with them that isn’t true” (158). However the argument comprises a temporary obstacle; Marlene capitulates, on the basis of realising “you have to be hard as nails to get on in this game” (193). Accordingly the most explicit statement of dissent is neutralised.

Similarly, Helen’s decision to perform solo forms the book’s climax has no moral dimension. Helen is forced to decide whether she should sing alone because a fellow contestant, in an act of sabotage, spikes Eunice’s drink leaving her unable to participate (213). Her quandary is whether or not she can “bravely” face the audience by herself (217). She progresses from her original aspiration of becoming a travel agent, towards accepting the allure of celebrity (217). This is encapsulated in the final paragraphs, where she recalls her original ambitions, and dismisses them:

But I want to be a travel agent. With a smart blouse and a computer, and brochures. Talking about beaches and places to stay. Isn’t that what I really want?

Not Diva Wars. Not all this showbiz stuff...

But now the music is starting. The bassline is thumping through the stage and right through my body. Here comes the melody. Here comes my cue. I have a real gift for singing. I know that, and I know I have to do this. Right now.

No tricks this time. No lies or gimmicks.

Just me and my voice. In the limelight. (217-8)

As a denouement these paragraphs fulfil a similar function to the closing chapter of *Laura*. Anxieties about the ill-effects of celebrity and consumer culture are sacrificed in favour of fantasies that the underdog can achieve celebrity through effort and talent.

To summarise, all four texts show varying degrees of ambivalence towards consumerism, and a parallel ambivalence as to how the fat child body can be accommodated or eradicated by consumer culture. Pro-consumerist constructions of the fat child are informed by the perception that a high level of private consumption in Britain is desirable, attainable and beneficial to the economy. Fatness can be camouflaged with appropriate consumer goods, eradicated to enable participation in private consumption, or be commoditized as a source of entertainment. The limited inclusion of anti-consumerist themes in the texts—particularly in *Laura*, *Twin*, and to a markedly lesser extent *Mates*—either expresses older suspicions of media effects on body image, or articulates discomfort with the commoditization of young girls' bodies.

CONCLUSION

In these final pages, I will summarise the differences and commonalities between fat child characters in the fiction corpus; suggest how literary constructions of the fat child might develop in the near future; summarise the differences and commonalities between the corpora; state how the original rationale for the study has been addressed; and propose questions for further research.

The preceding chapters show that texts in the fiction sample vary considerably in how they construct the fat child. In fiction of the nineteen-sixties, greedy, white, affluent fat boys predominate. In the seventies, sexually virtuous, white, affluent girls are foregrounded. In the eighties, emotionally vulnerable, white fat children with limited social mobility are typical. In the nineties, constructions of the fat child diversify, to include: non-gluttonous, socially deprived white boys and girls with learning difficulties; adolescent girls, including girls of colour, with eating disorders; and, in the realms of fantasy fiction, more greedy, white, affluent boys. Finally, in the two-thousands, white, materially acquisitive fat children who aspire to celebrity lifestyles predominate. Exceptions to the general trends exist in every decade; but it is possible to synthesise the analytical connections I have made throughout this thesis, by attending to two areas of commonality.

The first is ontological and epistemic. Whatever the year of publication, the majority of texts in the fiction corpus invite us to read fatness as an indicator of the child's personality. This invitation rests on a dualist split, in which mind and body are presumed to be separate but reflective of each other. Texts which do not invite us to read fatness as an indicator of personality—such as *Bonnie Fitch*, or *Keep Fat Club*—are outliers which concomitantly resist size stereotypes.

The second area of commonality is thematic. Although a varied range of traits are attributed to fat child characters over the fifty year period, I have demonstrated repeatedly that the construction of children's fatness expresses fears of social and economic change in Britain. Simply put, the fat child is consistently constructed as an emblem of the nation's well-being. We could, accordingly, make the following prediction as to how the fat child might develop over the next few years in British juvenile fiction. From the nineteen-sixties onwards, high unemployment has correlated with the construction of fatness as a lower class trait amongst boys and girls. We can therefore reasonably expect this association to be revived, and to intensify, during the job scarcity caused by current global recession, before lessening again if the jobs market expands.

The original rationale for this study was to improve understanding of how literary constructions of the fat child relate to psychological research and media texts. This rationale was revised. The fiction sample resembles *Jackie* magazine in only some constructions of the fat child. To be specific, quasi-psychological constructions which associate emotional vulnerability with fatness are visible in *Jackie* from the nineteen-seventies onwards, and in the fiction from the nineteen-eighties onwards. Counter-intuitively, questions pertaining to the fat child's self-esteem and body image do not appear in the psychology corpus until the early nineties. Although there are areas of similarity between the fiction and psychology corpora—such as a preoccupation with disordered eating in the nineties—the psychology corpus is characterised by epidemiological constructions of fatness which scarcely feature in the fiction sample. I concluded that fiction, *Jackie* and psychological abstracts resemble each other only when doing so allows them to fulfil a given text's purpose. Possible purposes include encouraging children's repeat purchase of the magazine; expressing anxieties about cultural, social or economic

change through the symbolism of children's bodies; and studying children as patients and research participants. This reading assumes the corpora are, in Barad's terms, entangled with the people and practices that produce or use them. *Jackie* and the psychological abstracts therefore contributed less to the project than originally envisioned; I responded by conducting socio-historical analyses of constructions of the fat child in my corpus of fictional texts.

There are several potential areas for research following on from this project. Reception was excluded from this study at an early stage, because the initial research aim was to tease out the relationship between literary, media and psychology texts, which have very different audiences and implied readers. The next fruitful area for research is therefore to ask: how do child readers engage with, react to, and rework with constructions of the fat child? How is the fat child constructed in texts that children themselves create? For this project, selecting *Jackie* as contextual material reflected the importance of print media in the latter half of the twentieth century. Future research might ask questions of online and social media; these are purportedly more interactive forms that might offer a useful counterpoint for thinking about how children are influenced by, and influence, constructions of fatness.

As the cut-off for this project was 2010, it is unsurprising that the construction of the fat child in the juvenile fiction corpus shows no engagement with a global recession which was still in its early stages. Whether future constructions of fatness will indeed show continuity with the foregoing years of negative stereotyping—or enact a radical break—remains to be seen.

NOTES

ⁱ Throughout the thesis I will use single inverted commas for emphasis or to indicate the constructed nature of familiar terms. Double inverted commas are reserved for direct quotation.

ⁱⁱ Flesh may be abundant relative to a cultural ideal, to the average for a population, or to the subject's former and future physiques, amongst other referents. Conceptualising fatness as relative allows me to address how comparisons of characters' appearance are integral to constructions of the fat child in fiction. The definition is also helpful for discussing how children in *Jackie* magazine's illustrations and photographs may appear fat or not depending on surrounding visual imagery. The definition does not preclude discussion of how psychological literature constructs fatness through absolute measures such as the Body Mass Index. Rather, it helps account for cases where abstracts construct measurement as a point of contention between researchers and research participants. See, for instance, the comment from a recent paper that "parents typically fail to recognise obesity in their children and adolescents" (Reilly 2010, 205).

ⁱⁱⁱ Angela McRobbie (1991) refers to *Jackie* as the "biggest selling teen magazine" of the sixties and seventies (81). She cites average weekly sales figures of 350,000 in 1964, the year of its launch; and 605,947 in 1976, at the time she conducted her analysis. According to Audit Bureau of Circulation figures quoted by the magazine enthusiasts' website Magforum, by 1988 *Jackie* had slipped from poll position but remained the third biggest weekly title for teens with average sales of 192,976 per issue. ("Teen Magazines" 2012). Further historic data is not publicly available from the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

^{iv} Young adult or adolescent fiction is included within this rubric. Amazon has a "Children's Books" department which sells novels described as "Young Adult" in the product

information. There is no “Young Adult Books” department. The British Library lists “Children’s Stories,” “Young Adult Fiction,” “Juvenile Literature” and “Juvenile Fiction” as genre labels in their catalogue, but does not apply these labels exclusively of each other. *Books for Keeps* reviews “Young Adult” novels but is sold primarily as a “Children’s Book Magazine.” Each of these resources therefore constructs ‘young adulthood’ as a subset of ‘childhood.’ However, because the remaining subset of younger readers are not referred to with a separate title, which texts are denoted in general by ‘Children’s Fiction’ is rendered ambiguous. Accordingly I favour ‘Juvenile Fiction’ as an all-encompassing general term for texts constructed as ‘Children’s Fiction,’ ‘Young Adult Fiction,’ or both. Where individual texts are constructed as specifically for ‘children’ or ‘young adults’—for instance through publishers’ statements in the paratext—I refer to them as such.

^v Since the selection stage of this project, Google, the internet search engine, has introduced the facility to upload photographic or illustrative files and search for visually similar images on public websites. A similar facility in library catalogues would present opportunities for snowball sampling images of fat bodies in texts; this is possibly an area of investigation for the future.

^{vi} Note that although the percentage is small, the low proportion of texts sampled does not indicate a methodological weakness or a failure to select a representative number of books. Rather, the small percentage is a logical consequence of the tight focus on relevant texts that criterion sampling provides.

^{vii} This study will not be focusing on readers’ responses, but I qualify *Jackie* as a ‘supposed’ girls magazine because the gendering of its implied readership does not necessarily match the gendering of its actual readership. Mel Gibson’s (2002) research into womens’ memories of childhood comic reading highlights some of the ambiguities. Her interviewees indicate that

reading particular publications could comprise a gendered passing strategy rather than an enjoyed leisure activity; that parental and peer edicts influenced which publications children could obtain and openly read; and that children of different genders did illicitly read each others' comics and magazines (7-8).

^{viii} Production history is beyond the scope of this thesis, however one possible explanation for *Jackie*'s consistency may be continuity of editorship and tight editorial control. The magazine did not consistently credit editorial staff, but the comics scholar Martin Barker (1989) counted eight editors in his 1989 study of Jackie's romance stories (194). Between 1964 and 1989, the fiction corpus features twenty authors. In light of this disparity, we might expect constructions of fatness to be more variable in the fiction sample.

^{ix} While body image appears as a research interest in the eighties psychology corpus, it does so solely in relation to "normal British adolescent girls" who "felt too fat" – see Wardle and Beales (1986).

^x Britain imposed food rations during the Second World War which remained effective until 1954. Following this period of austerity, the intake per person of beef and mutton rapidly overtook pre-war levels, and reached a peak by the mid nineteen-sixties. Intakes of wheaten bread, potatoes, eggs, and full-fat milk also steadily increased into the nineteen-seventies. For a more detailed summary, see Peter Scholliers (2007).

^{xi} As these references were limited to adult bodies, I did not include them in my coding table. Suitable examples can be seen in issue 135 (1966), where Barry Fantoni professes in an interview that he hopes never to be "afflicted" with weight gain (23); and issue 222 (1968), in which a gossip columnist refers to Oliver Reed's self-consciousness over his body size (15).

^{xii} Fat is however utilised in the generation of characters. Double chins and large bellies signify humdrum middle age. Relevant examples can be seen in issues 83 and 155 of *Jackie*,

where fat characters include, respectively, a careworn mother (14) and a disgruntled department store Santa (20).

^{xiii} For a fuller account of behavioural theories, see B. F. Skinner (1957).

^{xiv} My focus on “Britain” requires qualification. The United Kingdom’s constituent countries are not always subject to the same changes in law and policy. As England and Wales form a single jurisdiction they are both subject to what is termed “English” law. Scotland and Northern Ireland each have separate legal systems. The protagonists in this particular fiction sample are identified as English; furthermore, England is the only constituent country of the UK to feature. To aid clarity, I will thus only refer to “English” law unless otherwise specified. Despite this pragmatic decision, I believe legal and policy variations across the UK are implicitly relevant to the ambivalent way my chosen texts construct female reproductive autonomy. Certainly, the variation indicates not all British women benefitted from legislation at the same time, or to the same degree. For instance, the Abortion Act 1967 allowed legal terminations in England, Wales and Scotland; but to this day abortion remains a crime in Northern Ireland, punishable with imprisonment. From 1967 local authorities were empowered, under English law, to advise single women on abortion and the contraceptive pill; this was the case in Scottish law until 1968.

^{xv} In *The Peacock*, *Bilgewater*, and *A Song*, virginity is heteronormatively constructed, by which I mean the female characters refer to partnered sexual activity in the context of their relationships with men. This is not to say that women’s desire for other women is absent. *Bilgewater*’s eponymous protagonist develops an infatuation with her friend Grace, but she is at pains to dismiss the idea she is a lesbian; she asserts “I am not like that. I have a very good balance of hormones all distributed in the right places” (54). In *The Peacock*, the protagonist’s sister initially idolises their governess as a “new love” (48) but this admiration

is surpassed by her interest in a young rajah. Same sex desire is acknowledged but not given equivalence with heterosexual desire; certainly, sexual acts (rather than feelings) are only referred to in connection with the latter.

^{xvi} Gardam's descriptions of Mrs Deering focus on her size, and her Yorkshire accent. There are no explicit references to race, nor does Gardam make implicitly racialised references to skin, hair and eye colour, as she does in the majority of the book's character descriptions. I am therefore reluctant to read Mrs Deering unambiguously as either white or—as Gardam describes Beryl—"brown-skinned." Her racial ambiguity, and her relationship to Beryl, are both sufficient grounds for considering whether her portrayal is engaged with racist fears of population growth.

^{xvii} I follow Sheila Egoff's (1980) definition of the problem novel here: fiction that relates a social or personal problem usually by means of a first person narrative, told from the child's perspective, in an urban setting (356-69).

^{xviii} For a summary of some of the ways gender and class inflected psychiatric practice in Britain throughout the twentieth century, see Joan Busfield (2004).

^{xix} Note that in this comparison, difference is constructed in terms of additive categories: though Roland is fat, his race is not mentioned, and by default it is thus implied he is white British. In the television programme, where Roland is shown at home, his ethnicity does not appear to be informed by Mustafa's own Turkish heritage. The scarcity of non-white fat characters in the fiction sample may be ascribed to this additive construction, in which difference is regarded as a singular departure from normativity, and more than one axis of difference becomes an excessive departure from the norm.

^{xx} Amongst the writers who would later respond to James Bulger's murder were Anne Fine; her 1996 novel *The Tulip Touch* explored the question of whether it is possible to be born evil

through her portrayal of a juvenile arsonist. For adult readers, Pat Barker addressed similar questions in *Another World* (1998) and *Border Crossing* (2001). Needle's text differs from these in, chiefly, normalising the perpetrator's antipathy towards their victim, rather than constructing the perpetrator as an object of concern.

^{xxi} Note that this inversion of body type as a source of dislike has its counterpart in the psychological literature. A contemporaneous British abstract, published in 1993, summarised the results of one survey: "For boys, lower self-esteem was associated both with thinness and being perceived as too thin . For girls, lower self-esteem was more associated with fatness" (Pierce and Wardle). Although thinness is not my main interest here, the focus on the policing of bodies as a problem that specifically affects girls may have meant that the meaning of thinness amongst male characters in literature has been overlooked.

^{xxii} A 2006 feature in the British national newspaper the *Daily Mail*, entitled "The Chav Rich List," equates rich 'chavs' to "the ultimate in nouveaux riches." They list a number of millionaire performers and sports people among "the celebrities taste forgot," including David and Victoria Beckham, Jade Goody, Charlotte Church, and Jesse Wallace (Pearlman 2006).

^{xxiii} For an example, see Andrew Parker and Samantha A Lyle's (2008) interviews with British school pupils regarding "chav culture" (262). The researchers noted that "respondents were unable to easily locate chav culture in relation to social class," with the role of financial means contributing to their confusion (265). One interviewee comments that to be a chav is "not really anything to do with money 'cos like some chav stuff is, like, really expensive" (265).

^{xxiv} I would add that the ambiguity as to whether 'chav' can refer to a wealthy person serves additional functions in general usage. First, blurring the lines between the consumer

behaviour of rich and poor people facilitates the classist strategy of attributing poverty to bad financial management or prior profligacy. Second, the possibility of levelling the insult at *some* wealthy individuals enhances plausible deniability that the term is a classist one.

^{xxv} The British environmental journalist Lucy Siegle (2011) provides a specific example of how the Multi-Fibre Arrangement's dissolution affected the UK garment market. She discusses China's production of cashmere knitwear, and how the removal of trade barriers contributed to the high availability of cheap cashmere in Britain (Chapter 8, Section 2, Paragraph 4).

^{xxvi} It is also true that Size 16 usually denotes fatness in the chick-lit genre. Laura Frater (2009) notes that few main characters in chick-lit novels exceed Size 16, which she concludes is "the maximum socially permitted size of a fat character" (237). Her observation lacks clarity in that she refers to novels from different countries without noting international differences in clothes sizing, but is testimony that the genre's construction of clothes sizing, regardless of empirical differences in measurements, would mark a person who takes size 16 as fat.

^{xxvii} There are no in-text references to Didsbury's image as an affluent area. However, Didsbury's desirability is reflected in the South Manchester Reporter dubbing the suburb the "stockbroker belt" in 2002 ("£1m").

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APPENDIX 1: TABLES

Table 1 Periodicals Spanning a Minimum of Twenty-Five Years Held by the British Library (as at October 2009).

Title	Dates Held	Life Span in Years	Life Span in Years Post 1970	Where is fat referred to/visually depicted?
The Children's Paper	1855-1925	70	0	-
Comic Cuts	1890-1953	63	0	-
Beano	1950-2010	60	40	Comic Strips
Dandy	1950-2007	57	37	Comic Strips
The Children's Newspaper	1919-1965	46	0	-
The Rainbow	1914-1956	42	0	-
Family Star	1934-1974	40	4	Comic Strips
Hwyl!	1959-1989	40	19	-
Buster	1960-1999	39	29	Comic Strips
The Topper	1952-1990	38	20	Comic Strips
Young Soldier	1959-1996	37	26	Comic Strips
The Champion	1922-1955	33	0	-
Victor	1961-1992	31	21	Comic Strips
Funny Cuts	1890-1920	30	0	-
Pictorial Comic-Life	1898-1928	30	0	-
The Playbox	1925-1955	30	0	-
Jackie	1964-1993	29	19	Fashion Features Advertisements Medical Advice Reader's Letters Comic Strips Photo-stories
Mother's Help	1878-1905	27	0	-
Merry and Bright	1910-1935	25	0	-
TV Comic	1951-1976	25	6	Comic Strips

Table 2 Characteristics Attributed to the Fat Child by Juvenile Texts 1960-1969

Year	Title of Text	Characteristics Attributed to Fat Children by the Text	How is the Character Gendered, Racialised and Classed?	Percentage of Civilian Population Unemployed in the UK
1960	Bunter Keeps it Dark. Bunter the Bad Lad. Marianne and Mark. Magnolia Buildings.	Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony Wealth, Gluttony	M, W, HSE M, W, HSE F, W, HSE F, C, HSE	1.4
1961	The Mystery of Banshee Towers. Billy Bunter at Butlin's. Bunter the Ventriloquist.	Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity	M, W, HSE M, W, HSE M, W, HSE	1.2
1962	Billy Bunter's Bodyguard. Bunter the Caravanner.	Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity	M, W, HSE M, W, HSE	1.7
1963	Just Like Bunter. Big Chief Bunter.	Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity	M, W, HSE M, W, HSE	2
1964	Bunter the Stowaway. Thanks to Bunter. Billy Bunter the Hiker.	Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity	M, W, HSE M, W, HSE M, W, HSE	1.4
1965	Bunter the Sportsman. Bunter's Last Fling. Pauline.	Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony, Anti-Heroic Masculinity Wealth, Gluttony	M, W, HSE M, W, HSE F, W, HSE	1.2
1966	--	--	--	1.1
1967	The Piemakers. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.	Wealth, Gluttony, Stupidity Wealth, Gluttony, Stupidity	M, W, HSE M, W, HSE	2
1968	--	--	--	2.1
1969	Charlotte Sometimes.	Wealth, Gluttony, Affability	F, W, HSE	2

M/F = Male/Female, W/OC = White/Of Colour, HSE/LSE = Higher Socioeconomic Group/Lower Socioeconomic Group

Source: Bank of England, "Economic Stimulus in the Current and Previous Recessions," *Inflation Report February 2009*, 20-21, Web, 8 October 2012. European Commission, "1998 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines 66," *European Economy*, 1998, 68-9.

Table 3 Characteristics Attributed to the Fat Child by Juvenile Texts 1970-1979

Year	Title of Text	Characteristics Attributed to Fat Children by the Text	How is the Character Gendered, Racialised and Classed?	Percentage of Civilian Population Unemployed in the UK
1970	--	--	--	2.2
1971	The Strange Affair of Adelaide Harris.	Wealth, Gluttony, Stupidity	M, W, LSE	2.7
1972	--	--	--	3.1
1973	--	--	--	2.2
1974	The Worst Witch.	Wealth, Affability	F, W, HSE	2
1975	The Peacock Spring.	Wealth, Beauty, Fertility, Feminine Sexual Virtue	F, W, HSE	3.2
1976	Bilgewater.	Wealth, Intelligence, Fertility, Feminine Sexual Virtue	F, W, HSE; F, OC, LSE	4.8
1977	--	--	--	5.1
1978	First Term at Trebizon. In Apple Country. A Song for the Disco.	Wealth Gluttony Wealth, Feminine Sexual Virtue	F, W, HSE M, W, LSE F, W, HSE	5
1979	--	--	--	4.6

Period of Economic Recession

Source: Bank of England, "Economic Stimulus in the Current and Previous Recessions," *Inflation Report February 2009*, 20-21, Web, 8 October 2012.
European Commission, "1998 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines 66," *European Economy*, 1998, 68-9.

Table 4 Characteristics Attributed to the Fat Child by Juvenile Texts 1980-1989

Year	Title of Text	Characteristics Attributed to Fat Children by the Text	How is the Character Gendered, Racialised and Classed?	Percentage of Civilian Population Unemployed in the UK
1980	The Worst Witch Strikes Again. Cora Ravenwing. Break in the Sun.	Wealth, Affability Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem Emotional Eating, Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem	F, W, HSE F, W LSE M, W, LSE	5.6
1981	--	--	--	8.9
1982	Tucker and Co.	Emotional Eating, Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem	M, W, LSE	10.3
1983	The Witches. Waiting for the Sky to Fall.	Wealth, Gluttony Emotional Eating, Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem, Fertile	M, W, HSE F, W, LSE	11.1
1984	The Other Side.	Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem	F, W, LSE	11.1
1985	Fire and Hemlock. Drift.	Gluttony, Pre-Pubescence Gluttony, Pre-Pubescence	F, W, HSE F, OC, LSE	11.5
1986	--	--	--	11.5
1987	French Letters. The Big Pink.	Emotional Eating, Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem Emotional Eating, Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem	F, W, LSE F, W, LSE	10.6
1988	Matilda. This Girl.	Gluttony Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self-Esteem	M, W, HSE F, W, LSE	8.7
1989	--	--	--	7.3

Source: Bank of England, "Economic Stimulus in the Current and Previous Recessions," *Inflation Report February 2009*, 20-21, Web, 8 October 2012.
European Commission, "1998 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines 66," *European Economy*, 1998, 68-9.

Table 5 Characteristics Attributed to Fat Child Characters by Texts in the Juvenile Fiction Corpus 1990-1999

Year	Title of Text	Characteristics Attributed to Fat Children by the Text	How is the Character Gendered, Racialised and Classed?	Percentage of Civilian Population Unemployed in the UK
1990	--	--	--	7
1991	Roz and Cromarty.	Pre-pubescence, Low Self Esteem, Supernatural Solution	F, W, HSE	8.8
1992	Trust Me.	Fertility, Positive Self Regard	F, OC, HSE	10.1
	The Angel of Nitshill Road.	Pre-pubescence, Low Self Esteem, Supernatural Solution	F, W, HSE	
1993	The Bully.	Lack of Social Mobility, Deterministic Aetiology, Learning Difficulties	M, W, LSE	10.4
	Bonnie Fitch.	Deterministic Aetiology, Positive Self Regard	F, W, HSE	
	Falling into Glory.	Pre-pubescence	M, W, LSE	
1994	The Real Porky Philips.	Pre-pubescence, Low Self Esteem, Supernatural Solution	M, W, HSE	9.6
	The Secret of Platform 13.	Wealth, Gluttony, Acquisitiveness, Economically Exploitative	M, W, HSE	
	Fat Chance.	Emotional Eating, Disordered Eating, Low Self Esteem, Excluded from Market	F, OC, HSE	
1995	Pie Magic.	Pre-pubescence, Low Self Esteem, Supernatural Solution	M, W, LSE	8.7
	More Bonnie Fitch.	Deterministic Aetiology, Positive Self Regard	F, W, HSE	
1996	The Switch.	Wealth, Gluttony, Acquisitiveness, Economically Exploitative	M, W, HSE	8.2
1997	Keep Fat Class.	Pre-pubescence, Positive Self Regard	F, W, HSE	7
	Fatty Rati.	Emotional Eating, Disordered Eating, Low Self Esteem, Excluded from Market	F, OC, HSE	
	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.	Wealth, Gluttony, Acquisitiveness, Economically Exploitative	M, W, HSE	
1998	The Sterkarm Handshake.	Positive Self Regard, Beauty	F, W, HSE	6.3
	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.	Wealth, Gluttony, Acquisitiveness, Economically Exploitative	M, W, HSE	
	Girls in Love.	Emotional Eating, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	
	Girls Under Pressure.	Emotional Eating, Disordered Eating, Low Self Esteem, Excluded from Market	F, W, HSE	
1999	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.	Wealth, Gluttony, Acquisitiveness, Economically Exploitative	M, W, HSE	6.2
	Stiks and Stoans.	Lack of Social Mobility, Deterministic Aetiology, Learning Difficulties	F, W, LSE	
	Girls Out Late.	Emotional Eating, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	

Source: Bank of England, "Economic Stimulus in the Current and Previous Recessions," *Inflation Report February 2009*, 20-21, Web, 8 October 2012. European Commission, "1998 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines 66," *European Economy*, 1998, 68-9. European Commission, *European Economy Special Report 3*, 2005, 134.

Table 6 Characteristics Attributed to the Fat Child by Juvenile Texts 2000-2008

Year	Title of Text	Characteristics Attributed to Fat Children by the Text	How is the Character Gendered, Racialised and Classed?	Percentage of Civilian Population Unemployed in the UK
2000	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.	Wealth, Gluttony, Acquisitiveness, Economically Exploitative	M, W, HSE	5.4
2001	--	--	--	5
2002	Girls in Tears.	Emotional Eating, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	5.1
2003	Fat Boy Swim.	Emotional Eating, Lack of Social Mobility, Low Self Esteem	M, W, LSE	4.9
	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	Wealth, Gluttony, Acquisitiveness, Economically Exploitative	M, W, HSE	
	Disasters, Diets & D-Cups.	Wealth, Acquisitiveness, Included within Market, Aspiration to Celebrity, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	
	Haggis Horrors and Heavenly Bodies.	Wealth, Acquisitiveness, Included within Market, Aspiration to Celebrity, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	
2004	Kissing the Rain.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods, Low Self Esteem	M, W, LSE	4.7
	The Recruit.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	
	Class A.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	
	Secrets, Suspicions and Sun-kissed Beaches.	Wealth, Acquisitiveness, Included within Market, Aspiration to Celebrity, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	
2005	Mates, Dates and Chocolate Cheats.	Wealth, Acquisitiveness, Included within Market, Aspiration to Celebrity, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	4.8
	Maximum Security.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	
	The Killing.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	
2006	Man Vs Beast.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	5.4
	Divine Madness.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	
2007	Twin Freaks.	Social Stagnation, Aspiration to Celebrity, Positive Self Regard	F, W, LSE	5.3
	Laura.	Wealth, Acquisitiveness, Included within Market, Aspiration to Celebrity, Low Self Esteem	F, W, HSE	
	Mad Dogs.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	
	The Fall.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	
2008	The General.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	5.6
	The Sleepwalker.	Lack of Social Mobility, Acquisitiveness, Chooses Low Status Foods	M, W, LSE	

Source: Bank of England, "Economic Stimulus in the Current and Previous Recessions," *Inflation Report February 2009*, 20-21, Web, 8 October 2012. European Commission, *European Economy Special Report 3*, 2005, 134. European Commission, *Labour Market and Wage Developments 2008: European Economy* 8, 2009, 323. European Commission, *Labour Market Developments in Europe, 2011: European Economy, 2011*, 150.

Data was collected in 2009. Two texts, Robert Muchamore's *Brigands* M.C. (2009) and *Shadow Wave* (2010), were published subsequently.

Table 7 References to Fat in Jackie, According to Issue Number and Month 1964-1993

Issue	Date	Page	Code 1 (Tone of Reference)	Code 2 (Form of Construction)	Code 3 (Presiding Topic)	Code 4 (Means of Eradicating/ Camouflaging Fat)	Code 5 (Type of feature)	Proportion of the Page
1	January 11th 1964	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
13	April 4th 1964	22	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	None Given	Comedic Piece - "From the Boys' Point of View: Knock Out Birds"	Less than 1/4
30	August 1st 1964	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
50	December 19th 1964	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
52	January 2nd 1965	10	Neutral	Linguistic	Appearance	None Given	Beauty Letters	Less than 1/4
65	April 3 rd 1965	07	Negative	Linguistic	Control of the Body	None Given	Beauty Letters	Less than 1/4
83	August 7 th 1965	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
102	December 18th 1965	16	Positive	Linguistic	Appearance	None Given	Beauty Letters	Less than 1/4
104	January 1st 1966	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
117	April 2nd 1966	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
135	August 6 th 1966	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
155	December 24th 1966	02	Negative	Linguistic	Eating. Slimming as normative.	Diet	Readers' Letters	Less than 1/4
155	December 24th 1966	07	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance (male)	None Given	Comedic piece - "Pete's Christmas Shorts"	Less than 1/4
157	January 7th 1967	19	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Underwear	Fashion piece - "This is Your Undercover Agent."	1/2 page
169	April 1st 1967	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
187	August 5th 1967	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
207	December 23rd 1967	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
209	January 6th 1968	18	Negative	Linguistic	Sexual desirability	Diet	Beauty Letters	Less than 1/4
222	April 6th 1968	07	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Exercise	Beauty Letters	Less than 1/4
239	August 3rd 1968	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
259	December 21st 1968	09	Neutral	Linguistic	Sexual desirability	None Given	Interview - "Face to Face with George Best"	Less than 1/4
261	January 4 th 1969	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
274	April 5th 1969	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
291	August 2nd 1969	<---ISSUE UNA VAILABLE--->						
311	December 20th 1969	<---ISSUE UNA VAILABLE--->						

Issue	Date	Page	Code 1 (Tone of Reference)	Code 2 (Form of Construction)	Code 3 (Presiding Topic)	Code 4 (Means of Eradicating/ Camouflaging Fat)	Code 5 (Type of feature)	Proportion of the Page
313	January 3rd 1970	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
326	April 4th 1970	24	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	None Given	"A Reader's True Experience"	Less than 1/4
343	August 1st 1970	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
363	December 19th 1970	13	Neutral	Pictorial	Young Child.	None Given	Illustration to a reprint of Oscar Wilde's The Selfish Giant	Less than 1/4
365	January 2nd 1971	07	Positive	Linguistic	Interviewee wants to gain weight in the New Year	None Given	"On the Spot Interviews" - Vox Pop	Less than 1/4
365	January 2nd 1971	09	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance - people associate having big feet with being "large and lumpy."	None Given	"The Problem No One Talks About." Feature on having big feet.	Less than 1/4
365	January 2nd 1971	10	Negative	Linguistic	Moral - reader being greedy	Dietary; clothing; medical advice	Cathy and Claire problem page.	Less than 1/4
378	April 4th 1971	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
396	August 7th 1971	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
416	December 18th 1971	18	Neutral	Linguistic	The difficulty of buying clothes (problem located with supplier not individual)	Buying from a list of specialist shops	"Fashion Queries" section.	1/4 page
416	December 18th 1971	23	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Confidence	Comedic piece.	1/2 page

417	January 1st 1972	02	Positive	Linguistic	Trying to gain weight (self perception as too skinny)	None Given	Letters page.	Less than 1/4
430	April 1st 1972	14	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet, activity	A Jackie Guide to Slimming	3/4 page
430	April 1st 1972	22	Neutral	Linguistic	Associated with infancy. Reference to a toddler's "chubby legs."	None Given	Fiction	Less than 1/4
448	August 5th 1972	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative - reference to reader's mother checking Jackie for diet advice	None Given	Letters page	Less than 1/4
448	August 5th 1972	02	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Make up that slims the face	Beauty advice feature	Less than 1/4
448	August 5th 1972	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Lacing a corset	Piece of historical fiction 'The Pride of the South'	Less than 1/4
468	December 23rd 1972	24	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet	Christmas Quiz	Less than 1/4
470	January 6th 1973	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
483	April 7 th 1973	31	Negative	Linguistic	Medical	Diet	Advice page	Less than 1/4
500	August 4th 1973	06	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Make up for slimming the cheeks	Beauty Box advice feature	Less than 1/4
520	December 22nd 1973	11	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet, activity	A-Z of love and life	Less than 1/4
520	December 22nd 1973	12	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance - "unwanted fat" around the "bottom and the waist"	Dancing	Feature entitled "A-Z of love and life."	Less than 1/4
520	December 22nd 1973	18	Positive	Linguistic	Reader wants fatter legs	None Given	Fashion queries section. Clothing suggestions made	Less than 1/4
520	December 22nd 1973	23	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Dancing	Girls of the Past historical series - how the Elizabethan girl kept slim	Less than 1/4
522	January 5th 1974	10	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Slimming discs	Advert for Harley St	1/2 page
522	January 5th 1974	11	Negative	Linguistic	Fat as unattractive and unhealthy	Diet, activity	Jackie Guide to Love and Life	Less than 1/4
522	January 5th 1974	14	Neutral	Linguistic	Reference to a "round" male character	None Given	Fiction	Less than 1/4
522	January 5th 1974	31	Negative	Linguistic	Quitting smoking - reader worries she will get fat	Will power	Cathy and Claire problem page	Less than 1/4

535	April 6th 1974	07	Negative	Linguistic	Fat treated as a source of humour - attributed to overeating.	None Given	Jackie Quiz.	Less than 1/4
535	April 6th 1974	08	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	None Given	On the spot interviews	Less than 1/4
535	April 6th 1974	12	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Confidence	The Night of the School Disco - Short Story.	Less than 1/4
535	April 6th 1974	Unpaginated	Negative	Linguistic	Health and appearance	Exercise	Beauty Box special	Double page
552	August 3rd 1974	19	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance - how a "tubby subject" should be arranged in photographs	Correct posing	A Jackie Guide to Supersnaps	Less than 1/4
552	August 3rd 1974	31	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance. Reader is worried she is "too fat" to go to the end of school dance.	Diet and being less sensitive.	Cathy and Claire problem page.	Less than 1/4
552	August 3rd 1974	18	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative; reader asks whether she should take slimming tablets on her friend's recommendation because cutting down food hasn't helped her lose weight.	Diet.	Dear Doctor advice page	Less than 1/4
552	August 3rd 1974	20	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet plan.	Seven Slimming Days to Xmas.	1/2 page
574	January 4 th 1975	29	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Cut out sugar.	"20 Ways to Improve Yourself in 1975"	Less than 1/4
587	April 5 th 1975	04	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Eat less	Your letters page.	Less than 1/4
587	April 5th 1975	05	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance, fashion	Clothing choices, eating less, hairstyle, make up	Beauty Box "Playing the Fool". Clothing choices and eating less; hairstyle; and makeup. (Different body types are considered in terms of their problems)	Full page

604	August 2nd 1975	04	Neutral	Linguistic	Finances	None Given	Reader's letters	Less than 1/4
604	August 2nd 1975	04	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Clothing	Reader's letters	Less than 1/4
604	August 2nd 1975	09	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance, emotions, sexual promiscuity	Peer support; diet	Fiction	1 1/2 pages
604	August 2nd 1975	20	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance and Health	Diet	Advice	1/2 page
624	December 20th 1975	04	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance, emotions, health	Exercise	Readers' letters	Less than 1/4
626	January 3rd 1976	10	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance, fashion	Clothing	Reader's true story	Less than 1/4
639	April 3rd 1976	01	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative, seasonal.	None Given	Strapline on the front cover.	Less than 1/4
639	April 3rd 1976	02	Negative	Linguistic	Fashion - slimming for spring/bikinis	Diet	Editor's letter. Slimming for spring/bikinis	Less than 1/4
639	April 3rd 1976	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative.	Hula hooping.	"Week Spot: Something Nice or Silly for You to Do Every Day" (comedic).	Less than 1/4
639	April 3rd 1976	04	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Diet	"A Matter of Fat!" An interview with Alison, a former "fatty" (she works but it is unclear whether she is an adult now, whether she was fat as a child, etc).	Full page
639	April 3rd 1976	14	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance. Slimming as normative	Health farm	"Pop Gossip: What a Weight to Go!" Gossip column. Celebrity Barbara Dickson quoted on her weight.	Less than 1/4
639	April 3rd 1976	24	Negative	Linguistic	Limmits slimming biscuits. Slimming as normative.	Biscuit meal replacement food.	Advertisement	Double page
657	August 7th 1976	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--

676	December 18th 1976	11	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Throw a slimming party	"20 ways to Throw a Party" (humorous emergency kit series)	Less than 1/4
676	December 18th 1976	18	Positive	Linguistic	Appearance	None Given	On the spot interviews - vox popped interviewee says he would like to kiss the "nice and cuddly" receptionist at his workplace	Less than 1/4
676	December 18th 1976	19	Negative	Linguistic	Health information and recipes	Diet	"Party Tricks: Don't Be a Christmas Pudding!" Advice feature	1/4 page
678	January 1st 1977	01	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	New Year's Resolution to lose weight	Feature on resolutions	Less than 1/4
678	January 1st 1977	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet	Recipe	Less than 1/4
678	January 1st 1977	06	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Diet and exercise	Feature about diet and exercise	Less than 1/4
678	January 1st 1977	20	Negative	Linguistic	Fat people not being "careful" enough about their weight	None Given	Interviews w/readers	Less than 1/4
678	January 1st 1977	21	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	None Given	Fiction	Less than 1/4
691	April 2nd 1977	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
709	August 6th 1977	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
729	December 24th 1977	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
731	January 7th 1978	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative; not sticking to diets	Diet	Editor's letter	Less than 1/4
731	January 7th 1978	05	Negative	Linguistic	Reader discusses how people react to her as a fat girl. Addressed as a medical problem.	Diet	"Dear Doctor" advice page	Less than 1/4
731	January 7th 1978	11	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance; greed	Diet	Feature - "Are you a Super Saint or a Super Sinner?"	Less than 1/4
731	January 7th 1978	23	Positive	Linguistic	Girl says she would like to gain weight in the New Year.	None Given	On the Spot Interviews (vox pops)	Less than 1/4

743	April 1st 1978	26	Neutral	Pictorial	An amorous French fat girl is the source of intended humour	None Given	Comic strip (pic)	Less than 1/4
761	August 5th 1978	03	Positive	Linguistic	Evans' suitability for "what's loosely termed a 'big girl.'" Includes picture of fat girl in a summer dress suggestively licking an ice cream	Clothing	"Built for Fun!" Small advertorial promoting Evans.	Less than 1/4
761	August 5th 1978	05	Negative	Linguistic	What to wear if your legs are too thick	Clothing choices to camouflage the "problem" area	"What's Your Problem?" (Beauty tips).	Less than 1/4
781	December 23rd 1978	<---ISSUE UNAVAILABLE--->						
783	January 6th 1979	05	Negative	Linguistic	Letter writer concerned about her appearance	Getting a good haircut and smelling nice	Cathy and Claire special.	Less than 1/4
783	January 6th 1979	06	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Making a resolution	"Have a Happy 1979" Plan to beat the blues in the year ahead	Less than 1/4
796	April 7th 1979	02	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance - slimming for spring/bikinis	Diet	Ed's letter.	Less than 1/4
796	April 7th 1979	02	Negative	Linguistic	How what you eat relates to your appearance, behaviour, health	Exercise and a medically approved diet	"Are you what you eat?" quiz.	3/4 page
796	April 7th 1979	19	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative; calorie counting for health and appearance	Diet	Your special Jackie Calorie Chart	Full page
813	August 4th 1979	04	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	None Given	"Water Wondergirl" - Interview with Sharon Davies	3/4 page
813	August 4th 1979	30	Negative	Linguistic	Girls who are "sloppy about their figures"	None Given	Interview with Dirk Benedict, where he discusses what sort of girl he likes	Less than 1/4
833	December 22nd 1979	02	Neutral	Linguistic	Reader complains that shops should cater for "bigger" girls	Clothing	Readers' letters	Less than 1/4
833	December 22nd 1979	12	Neutral	Pictorial	Photograph of a fat girl	None Given	"I was so ashamed" - a piece about a girl worried she was pregnant	Double page

Issue	Date	Page	Code 1 (Tone of Reference)	Code 2 (Form of Construction)	Code 3 (Presiding Topic)	Code 4 (Means of Eradicating/ Camouflaging Fat)	Code 5 (Type of feature)	Proportion of the Page
835	January 5th 1980	10	Negative	Linguistic	Apperance	Ballet	Interview with Liz Crowther.	Less than 1/4
835	January 5th 1980	14	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet	"Boy Talk" regular column.	Less than 1/4
835	January 5th 1980	16	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative; how to look thinner	Diet, clothing	Jackie Plan of Action.	Less than 1/4
848	April 5th 1980	02	Negative	Linguistic	Fat as a source of humour	None Given	Letters Page ("Fill 'er up")	Less than 1/4
865	August 2nd 1980	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet	Editor's letter	Less than 1/4
885	December 20th 1980	<---ISSUE UNAVAILABLE--->						
887	January 3rd 1981	02	Negative	Linguistic	Reader's uniform doesn't fit. Fat as a source of humour	Clothes	Reader's letter	Less than 1/4
900	April 4th 1981	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
917	August 1st 1981	12	Negative	Linguistic	Fat is unattractive	"Health" farm	Interviews with readers	Less than 1/4
917	August 1st 1981	25	Positive	Linguistic	Character wants to put on weight around the bust	Exercise	Fiction	Less than 1/4
917	August 1st 1981	04	Negative	Linguistic	Reader writes about looking fat	Diet	Cathy and Claire advice	Less than 1/4
937	December 19th 1981	23	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Exercises, diet, make up	"Christmas Cheer Up."	Less than 1/4

939	January 2nd 1982	07	Negative	Linguistic	Losing weight in the new year. Fat is used as a source of resistant humour, but weight gain is due to lack of willpower.	Resolving to lose weight	New Years Resolution feature	Less than 1/4
939	January 2nd 1982	29	Negative	Linguistic	Reader associates being fat with being sexually eager	Keeping conscience clear	Cathy and Claire Advice	Less than 1/4
952	April 3rd 1982	09	Negative	Linguistic	What to wear if you're fatter	Avoid mini skirts	Fashion feature	Less than 1/4
970	August 7th 1982	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Eating only with chopsticks as a great way to diet	Comedic regular piece - "Week Spot"	Less than 1/4
970	August 7th 1982	02	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Generic "slimming aids"	Editorial - editor refers to a colleague's diet	Less than 1/4
989	December 18th 1982	13	Negative	Linguistic	Self-perception as fat	Follow a sensible diet from the doctor if you want to lose weight.	Real life experience about a girl's eating disorder developing after she began to believe she was "fat."	Full page.
991	January 1st 1983	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1004	April 2nd 1983	02	Negative	Linguistic	How easter might disrupt your diet. Slimming as normative.	Diet	"Sweet talkin." A letter from a dieting reader who is distraught that Easter will disrupt her slimming.	Less than 1/4
1004	April 2nd 1983	02	Negative	Pictorial	Accompanying illustration to the above piece shows a fat girl eating a carrot.	Diet	"Sweet talkin." A letter from a dieting reader who is distraught that Easter will disrupt her slimming.	Less than 1/4
1004	April 2nd 1983	28	Positive	Linguistic	Putting weight on for a desirable appearance	Tablets	Advertisement for "Weight On"	Less than 1/4
1002	August 6th 1983	11	Negative	Linguistic	Cellulite	Exercise, diet, massage with a loofah	"Just for Kicks" (Beauty tips)	Less than 1/4
1042	December 24th 1983	11	Negative	Linguistic	Models mention fat girls envying slimmer girls for their appearance	Diet	"Tips from the Top!" Beauty tips from models.	Less than 1/4

1044	January 7th 1984	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1057	April 7th 1984	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1074	August 4th 1984	11	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Weight lifting	Feature "Weight for it! Shape Up and Slim Down - the heavy handed way!"	Full page
1094	December 22nd 1984	13	Negative	Linguistic	Do's and don'ts for weight gain over Christmas	Diet, resistance	"A Slob's Guide to Surviving Christmas" Comedic list	Less than 1/4
1094	December 22nd 1984	14	Negative	Linguistic	Losing puppy fat	Aging	"Hot Gossip" Gossip column. Comments from Kim Wilde on losing her body fat.	Less than 1/4
1096	January 5th 1985	06	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative.	Changing what you eat and exercising	Feature on New Year Resolutions. Includes resolution to do something about the size of one's "hips and bottom."	Less than 1/4
1109	April 6th 1985	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1126	August 3rd 1985	13	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet	Beauty Alpha Book	Less than 1/4
1146	December 21st 1985	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1148	January 4th 1986	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1161	April 5th 1986	02	Negative	Linguistic	Clothing - several layers will not hide "bulges" of fat	Exercise, growing own vegetables for salad, jogging	"Spring Fever" - feature on looking good for spring	Less than 1/4
1161	April 5th 1986	04	Neutral	Pictorial	A drawing of a fat girl writing a letter	None Given	Cartoon	Less than 1/4
1161	April 5th 1986	04	Neutral	Pictorial	A drawing of a fat girl watching a fat woman throw rubbish on the ground	None Given	Cartoon	Less than 1/4
1161	April 5th 1986	08	Neutral	Pictorial	A drawing of a girlfriend and boyfriend contemplating marriage (both fat)	None Given	Cartoon	Less than 1/4
1161	April 5th 1986	31	Negative	Linguistic	Reader wants to know if she is fat based on their given weight. On previous diets she has "gone too far."	None Given	Cathy and Claire Problem Page. Suggest reader goes to the doctor with her mother. Mentions the possibility of anorexia	Less than 1/4
1161	April 5th 1986	33	Neutral	Pictorial	A drawing of a fat girl eating breakfast in bed	None Given	Cartoon	Less than 1/4

1178	August 2nd 1986	02	Negative	Linguistic	Reader treats fat as a source of comedy and associates fatness with being greedy (eating)	None Given	Chatback - Readers' Letters	Less than 1/4
1178	August 2nd 1986	10	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative. Reader seeks advice on slimming	Diet and exercise	Cathy and Claire.	Less than 1/4
1178	August 2nd 1986	26	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Comparing yourself to less feminine celebrities e.g. Madonna for not shaving under her arms	"Hot Gossip" Criticism of celebrities' bodies to make you feel better about your own	Less than 1/4
1198	December 20th 1986	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1200	January 3rd 1987	24	Neutral	Pictorial	A drawing of a fat girl eating a sundae	None Given	Illustration accompanying a recipe.	Less than 1/4
1214	April 4th 1987	16	Negative	Linguistic	How to lose weight	Enrol in a health farm for a year; Look slimmer by standing next to an East German shot putter	Comedic "Guide to Health and Beauty."	Less than 1/4
1214	April 4th 1987	26	Neutral	Pictorial	A drawing of a fat boy and girl eating cake	None Given	Illustration for a recipe	Less than 1/4
1230	August 1st 1987	17	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	Diet	Chatback - Readers' Letters	Less than 1/4
1250	December 19th 1987	39	Negative	Linguistic	A "fat lad" falls over for comedic effect	None Given	Fiction	Less than 1/4
1252	January 2nd 1988	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1265	April 2nd 1988	27	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	None Given	Readers' Letters - reference to being on a diet.	Less than 1/4
1283	August 6th 1988	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1303	December 24th 1988	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--

1305	January 7th 1989	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1317	April 1st 1989	15	Negative	Linguistic	References to a girl who is "not exactly Yasmin LeBon," criticised for her "shape" and the size of her "backside."	None Given	Fiction – peer support; diet. Stereotype partly resisted because the fat girl is a successful romantic rival.	Double page
1317	April 1st 1989	19	Negative	Linguistic	Hormonal water retention	Dietary changes e.g. drinking herbal tea	Feature on periods, including a section on monthly weight gain	Less than 1/4
1335	August 5 th 1989	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1355	December 23rd 1989	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--

Issue	Date	Page	Code 1 (Tone of Reference)	Code 2 (Form of Construction)	Code 3 (Presiding Topic)	Code 4 (Means of Eradicating/ Camouflaging Fat)	Code 5 (Type of feature)	Proportion of the Page
1357	January 6th 1990	30	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance. Reader believes the size of her breasts makes her look "fat" but dieting has not helped.	Clothing (a well fitting bra)and waiting for peers to physically catch up.	Problem page advice.	Less than 1/4
1370	April 7th 1990	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1387	August 4th 1990	07	Negative	Linguistic	Bullying	None Given	An interview with Jamie J Morgan in which he says he regrets bullying/hitting a former classmate for being fat	Less than 1/4
1407	December 22nd 1990	26	Negative	Linguistic	Interpersonal relationships. Reader believes she has no friends and has never had a boyfriend because she is fat.	Ask girls in her class for weight loss tips, and seek medical advice	Problem page advice	Less than 1/4
1409	January 5th 1991	04	Positive	Linguistic	Possible to be fat and confident, not a "wallflower"	None Given	An interview with Claudia Patrice about making one's own clothes	1/3 page
1409	January 5th 1991	04	Negative	Linguistic	Fat doesn't suit mainstream fashions	None Given	An interview with Claudia Patrice about making one's own clothes	1/3 page
1409	January 5th 1991	26	Negative	Linguistic	Anorexia Nervosa	None Given	Problem page advice that advocates peer support and contacting Anorexia Anon	Less than 1/4
1409	January 5th 1991	27	Negative	Linguistic	Whether weight gain indicates pregnancy	Seek a medical	Problem page advice	Less than 1/4

1422	April 6th 1991	06	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	None Given	Feature on when you should lie (e.g. your friend's wearing a dress that might get her called fatty in the street)	Less than 1/4
1422	April 6th 1991	07	Negative	Linguistic	Fat as an intended source of humour	None Given	Competition questions for free sanitary towels: "Which of these shows you've got a really good chum? A: One who tells everyone about the time you snogged Fat Fred with mayonnaise on your chin"	Less than 1/4
1422	April 6th 1991	30	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Clothing; diet; cutting out smoking; exercise; using cold water from the shower alternately with hot water; massage	"The Bottom Line" piece including comments on stretch marks and cellulite.	Double page
1422	April 6th 1991	38	Negative	Linguistic	Health	Reduce sugar	"Food Frenzy" Piece on diet.	Less than 1/4
1439	August 3rd 1991	30	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance and Health	Diet, make up, exercise.	"Long Hot Summer" - piece on how not to be a couch potato during the summer holidays.	Double page

1459	December 21st 1991	10	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Personality counts for more; but if you're not happy, talk to doctor; diet. Losing weight will be a "boost to the confidence"	Talk it Over Problem Page. "Weight Worry" - 12 year old reader thinks she puts boys off because she is quite fat, and not slim and attractive.	Less than 1/4
1459	December 21st 1991	37	Negative	Linguistic	"Feeling" fat	Long wintry walks and exercise in the New Year	"What a Cracker - 10 Cracking Ways Not to be a Christmas Pudding!" All different aspects of appearance, plus "feeling like a fat pig" because of eating a lot.	Less than 1/4
1461	January 4th 1992	02	Negative	Linguistic	"Feeling" fat	Exercise	Free offer of work out videos "if you're feeling just a little bit porky after all that festive feasting"	Less than 1/4
1461	January 4th 1992	27	Negative	Linguistic	"Feeling" fat	Diet, going to the library to get books on fitness, talking to PE or HE teacher, or failing that the doctor.	Talk it Over Problem Page. "I Need to Diet". Advice is that the reader is not overweight based on her given measurements, but if she's unhappy with her looks, she needs to lose half a stone to see the benefit.	Less than 1/4

1461	January 4th 1992	34	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as Normative. Appearance and exercise	Different types of exercise are detailed e.g. Gymnastics, cycling, sprinting, and their different effects on your appearance, e.g. on your hair or skin	"Working it out" piece on fitness that stresses burning calories and firming muscles "even if you're the ideal weight which gives your body a better overall shape and tone".	Double page
1461	January 4th 1992	38	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance, fashion and "feeling" fat	None Given	Short story "Dream Boy"	Less than 1/4
1474	April 4th 1992	34	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	None Given	"Girls Get Tough" - piece on boys they find unattractive.	Less than 1/4
1491	August 1st 1992	26	Negative	Linguistic	Appearance	Diet (changing your eating routine) combined with regular exercise will make her look slimmer and feel better	Talk it Over Problem Page "Big Ideas". Reader knows she is "too fat" (gives measurements) but says she can never stick to a diet because she loves food and eating and loses her will power. Advisor agrees she is overweight.	Less than 1/4
1491	August 1st 1992	27	Negative	Linguistic	Slimming as normative	None Given	Talk it Over Problem Page. "Bikini Blues." Reader wants to diet because of visible stretch marks so she can look good in a bikini. Advisor says dieting won't remove stretch marks, but may prevent more from appearing.	Less than 1/4

1491	August 1st 1992	27	Negative	Linguistic	Control of the Body	Speak to PE teacher for moves to specifically tone this area	Talk it Over Problem Page. "Tummy Trouble." Reader says she has flab on her tummy and wants to get figure in shape (gives measurements). Advisor says she is not overweight and that she should concentrate on exercise rather than strict dieting.	Less than 1/4
1511	December 19th 1992	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1513	January 2nd 1993	--	No Reference Made	--	--	--	--	--
1526	April 3rd 1993	29	Negative	Linguistic	Control of the Body	Work out videos, or asking about step classes at the local sports centre	Talk it Over Problem Page "Shaping Up" Reader says her legs are "fat" and her dad says they look like tree trunks so she needs some advice on what foods to eat and what the best exercises are to get them back into shape.	Less than 1/4

Table 8 Most Frequently Used Words (Excluding Conjunctions, Pronouns and Prepositions) in the Sample of 5931 Abstracts Selected from PsycINFO, 1950-2009

1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009
OBESITY	OBESITY	WEIGHT	WEIGHT	CHILDREN	OBESITY
CHILDREN	OBESE	OBESE	OBESITY	EATING	CHILDREN
OBESE	CHILDREN	OBESITY	CHILDREN	OBESITY	WEIGHT
CHILD	CHILD	SS	SS	WEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT
PSYCHOGENIC	WEIGHT	CHILDREN	OBESE	BODY	BODY
FACTORS	BODY	BEHAVIOR	TREATMENT	SS	EATING
CASES	JOURNAL	TREATMENT	EATING	HEALTH	PHYSICAL
CHILDHOOD	DEVELOPMENT	GROUP	BODY	FAT	ACTIVITY
EMOTIONAL	MENTAL	BODY	BEHAVIOR	GIRLS	BMI
JOURNAL	OVERWEIGHT	JOURNAL	FAMILY	OBESE	ADOLESCENTS
PSYCHOSOMATIC	FAT	LEARNING	CHILDREN	ADOLESCENTS	CHILDHOOD
TREATMENT	AGE	CHILD	BEHAVIORAL	YRS	FOOD
ASPECTS	BOYS	AGE	YRS	DISORDER	RISK
PART	LOW	CONTROL	OVERWEIGHT	BEHAVIOR	AGE
PROBLEMS	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	JOURNAL	PHYSICAL	YEARS
SEXUAL	GROWTH	NORMAL	CHILDHOOD	TREATMENT	HEALTH
ADOLESCENT	TREATMENT	INFORMATION	CONTROL	STUDY	SCHOOL
CLINICAL	PERSON	ADOLESCENT	SOCIAL	JOURNAL	ASSOCIATED
CONTROL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	ADOLESCENTS	HEALTH	ADOLESCENT	FACTORS
EATING	STUDIES	FOOD	RESULTS	CHILD	ADOLESCENT

NB: This table reflects trends in abstracts published across thirty-three different countries, including Britain. British abstracts comprise too small a corpus for stylometrics software to detect decade-by-decade trends.

No data from 2010 has been included. Frequency analyses were conducted as a formative exercise in the first year of the study (2009) and were not subsequently revised.

The corpus of abstracts from 1950-1959 has been included here solely for the purposes of comparison and does not otherwise inform the study.

Table 9 Defining Features of Abstracts in the Psychology Corpus, 1960-1969

Year	First Author of the Text	Is the fat referred to dietary or bodily?	What is the focus of the abstract?	How are fat/overweight/obese participants generationed?
1960	Flood	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Adolescent.

Table 10 Defining Features of Abstracts in the Psychology Corpus, 1970-1979

Year	First Author of the Text	Is the fat referred to dietary or bodily?	What is the focus of the abstract?	How are fat/overweight/obese participants generationed?
1970	Crisp	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
1972	Finch	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Kuhn-Gebhardt	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
1974	D'Souza	Dietary.	Non-human behaviour/diets.	Non-human infant.
1976	Griffiths	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adult and Pre-pubescent.
1978	Hendry	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.

Table 11 Defining Features of Abstracts in the Psychology Corpus, 1980-1989

Year	First Author of the Text	Is the fat referred to dietary or bodily?	What is the focus of the abstract?	How are fat/overweight/obese participants generationed?
1980	Wright	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Infant.
1982	Drewett	Dietary.	Breast milk composition.	N/A.
	Sahakian	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	Young	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adult and adolescent.
1983	Squire	Dietary.	General nutrition.	N/A.
1984	Koelling	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Infant, pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Edwards	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	Metcalf	Bodily.	Non-human behaviour/diets.	Non-human adult.
1986	Anholm	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Adult.
	Wardle	Bodily.	Body image.	N/A.
1987	Wright	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Infant.
1988	Crisp	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.
	McCrea	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Adult.
	Johnson-Sabine	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.
	Patton	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Adolescent.
1989	Martin	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Adolescent.

Table 12 Defining Features of Abstracts in the Psychology Corpus, 1990-1999

Year	First Author of the Text	Is the fat referred to dietary or bodily?	What is the focus of the abstract?	How are fat/overweight/obese participants generationed?
1990	Bhadrinath Patton Button	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily.	Eating disorders. Eating disorders. Body image.	Adolescent. Adolescent. N/A.
1991	Parry-Jones	Dietary.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
1992	Kent	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Pre-pubescent.
1993	Hill Pierce	Bodily. Bodily.	Body image. Self-esteem.	N/A. Pre-pubescent.
1994	Waller Wiles	Bodily. Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Pregnancy.	Pre-pubescent. N/A.
1995	Raats	Dietary.	Milk composition.	N/A.
1996	Button Pierce Bryant-Waugh Conner Hartley	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Dietary.	Self-esteem. Self-esteem. Eating disorders. Dietary behaviours. Eating disorders.	N/A. Pre-pubescent. N/A. Adolescent. N/A.
1997	Warwick Coulson Yoshida Yuill Baluch Pierce Furnham	Dietary. Dietary. Dietary. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily.	General nutrition. General nutrition. Breast milk composition. Perception of other people's size. Perception of other people's size. Perception of other people's size. Perception of other people's size.	N/A. N/A. N/A. Pre-pubescent. Adult. Pre-pubescent. N/A.
1998	Fairburn Leach Holland Stafford Hartley Schmidt	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Dietary. Dietary.	Eating disorders. Weight loss treatment. Eating disorders. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Eating disorders. Eating disorders.	Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adolescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adolescent. N/A. N/A.
1999	Matthews Crisp Champion Roberts Drewett Parker	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Smoking. Body image. Dieting behaviours. Infant development. Eating disorders.	Infant, pre-pubescent, adolescent and adult. Adolescent. N/A. N/A. Infant. Pre-pubescent.

Table 13 Defining Features of Abstracts in the Psychology Corpus, 2000-2010

Year	First Author of the Text	Is the fat referred to dietary or bodily?	What is the focus of the abstract?	How are fat/overweight/obese participants generationed?
2000	Lawson Noble Thane	Bodily. Dietary. Dietary.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. General nutrition. General nutrition.	Pre-pubescent. N/A. N/A.
2001	Bissett Pine Sahota Wardle	Dietary. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily.	General nutrition. Perception of other people's size. Prevention of weight gain. Prevention of weight gain.	N/A. Adult. Pre-pubescent. Adult.
2002	Burrows Duncan Holland Ingledew Sweeting Truby Wardle Watkins	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily.	Self-esteem. Body image. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Body image. Body image. Body image. Body image. Eating disorders.	Pre-pubescent. N/A. N/A. Adolescent. Adolescent. N/A. Pre-pubescent and adolescent. N/A.
2003	Bhugra Campbell Degun-Mather Eves Fairburn Okasha Rogers Sands Simon Umeh van Hanswijck de J Walker Wardle Warren	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Dietary. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Dietary. Dietary. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily.	Eating disorders. Prevention of weight gain. Eating disorders. General nutrition. Eating disorders. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Body image. General nutrition. General nutrition. Weight loss treatment. Weight loss treatment. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Prevention of weight gain.	N/A. Infant. N/A. Adolescent. Pre-pubescent. Adult. Infant, pre-pubescent and adolescent. Pre-pubescent. Adolescent. N/A. Adult. Adolescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent.

2004	Dring	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Dubinsky	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Duncan	Bodily.	Body image.	Adolescent.
	Ebrahaim	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adult.
	Efstathiou	Dietary.	General nutrition.	N/A.
	Evans	Bodily.	Critical obesity literature.	Pre-pubescent.
	Gorely	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Infant, pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Greenhalgh	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Halford	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Holmes	Bodily.	Child and adolescent psychiatry.	Pre-pubescent.
	James	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.
	Nicholls	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Pre-pubescent.
	Sutton	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.
	Viner	Bodily.	Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in adults.	Pre-pubescent.
	Wardle	Bodily.	Perception of other people's size.	N/A.
	Wardle	Bodily.	Body image.	N/A.
2005	Albon	Bodily.	Literature review.	Pre-pubescent.
	Barker	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Bhui	Bodily.	Cultural influences on health.	Adolescent.
	Biddle	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Brunstrom	Dietary.	Dieting behaviours.	Adolescent and adult.
	Buckroyd	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Adult.
	Carnell	Bodily.	Perception of other people's size.	Pre-pubescent.
	Cecil	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Chadwick	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	Clarke	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Pre-pubescent.
	Edmunds	Bodily.	Parental experience of health professionals.	Pre-pubescent.
	Farooqi	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Farrow	Bodily.	Breastfeeding.	Infant.
	Fell	Bodily.	Non-human responses to antipsychotics.	N/A.
	Guha	Bodily.	Book review.	Pre-pubescent.
	Halford	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.
	Haslam	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Hill	Bodily.	Self-esteem.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	James	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.

2005 contd.	Jefferey	Bodily.	Parental perception of children's weight.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Knight	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	Infant.
	Lawlor	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adult.
	Lawlor	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.
	Livingstone	Bodily.	Food advertising.	Pre-pubescent.
	Parsons	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent, adolescent and adult.
	Prentice	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	Prenatal.
	Reilly	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Shultis	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Tareen	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Turner	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.
	Viner	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Vögele	Bodily.	Body image.	Pre-pubescent.
	Wells	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Infant and pre-pubescent.
2006	Allender	Bodily.	Physical activity.	N/A.
	Backett-Milburn	Bodily.	Parental perception of children's weight.	Adolescent.
	Binnie	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Pre-pubescent.
	Cecil	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.
	Chandola	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent and adult.
	Crisp	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Crisp	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Duncan	Bodily.	Body image.	Adolescent.
	Ekelund	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Adolescent.
	Gillison	Bodily.	Factors in behaviour change.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Gould	Dietary.	General nutrition.	N/A.
	Hall	Bodily.	Children's health.	Pre-pubescent.
	Halliwell	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Hayes	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	N/A.
	Hughes	Bodily.	Parental perception of children's weight.	Pre-pubescent.
	Jackson-Leach	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Jago	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	James	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Kirk	Bodily.	Critical obesity literature.	Pre-pubescent.
	Lawlor	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	N/A.

2006 contd.	Livingstone	Bodily.	Food advertising.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Lobstein	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	McCarthy	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	McDermott	Bodily.	Food advertising.	Pre-pubescent.
	Mutunga	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.
	Ness	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Odent	Dietary.	Pregnancy.	N/A.
	Ogden	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Pryke	Bodily.	General nutrition.	Pre-pubescent.
	Rao	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Reilly	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.
	Routh	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Pre-pubescent.
	Tsiotra	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Viner	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Viner	Bodily.	Body image.	Adolescent.
	Wardle	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.
	Wardle	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.
	Wills	Bodily.	Perception of own and other people's size.	Adolescent.
2007	Armitage	Bodily.	General nutrition.	Adolescent.
	Batty	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adult.
	Batty	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adult.
	Biddle	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Carnell	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Pre-pubescent.
	Cole	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Prenatal, infant and Pre-pubescent.
	Davidson	Bodily.	Literature review.	Pre-pubescent.
	Drewett	Bodily.	Nutritional psychology.	Pre-pubescent.
	Emmett	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Pre-pubescent.
	Gateley	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	Gatenby	Dietary.	General nutrition.	N/A.
	Hampson	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Adolescent.
	Hughes	Bodily.	Quality of life.	Pre-pubescent.
	Jauniaux	Bodily.	Pregnancy.	N/A.
	Khunti	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	King	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.

2007 contd.	Lobstein	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Lobstein	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent, adolescent and adult.
	Markland	Bodily.	Body image.	Adolescent.
	Marsh	Bodily.	Body image.	Pre-pubescent.
	Marshall	Bodily.	General nutrition.	Pre-pubescent.
	Micali	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Newns	Bodily.	Book review.	Pre-pubescent.
	Pausova	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	Adolescent.
	Penny	Bodily.	Perception of other people's size.	Pre-pubescent.
	Sabin	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	Saunders	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	N/A.
	Stevenson	Bodily.	General nutrition.	Adolescent.
	Stratton	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Sünram-Lea	Bodily.	Book review.	Pre-pubescent.
	Swami	Bodily.	Perception of other people's size.	Adult.
	Throsby	Bodily.	Perception of own size.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
2008	Wells	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Young	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	N/A.
	Biddle	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Cappuccio	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Cork	Bodily.	Social marketing.	Pre-pubescent.
	Curtis	Bodily.	Critical obesity literature.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Daley	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Adolescent.
	Dodd	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Duncan	Bodily.	Physical activity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Ells	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Pre-pubescent.
	Farrow	Bodily.	Nutritional psychology.	Pre-pubescent.
	Gale	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	N/A.
	Gately	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Gow	Dietary.	Post-natal depression.	N/A.
	Gray	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Adolescent.
	Hadfield	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Halford	Bodily.	Food advertising.	Pre-pubescent.
	Hardman	Bodily.	Physical activity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Haworth	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.

2008 contd.	Haycraft	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Home	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Pre-pubescent.
	Horne	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Hughes	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Jago	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Leigh-Hunt	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Levine	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Pre-pubescent.
	Lorenc	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Malson	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	N/A.
	Matthews	Bodily.	Food advertising.	Pre-pubescent.
	McVittie	Bodily.	Parental perception of children.	Pre-pubescent.
	Pearce	Bodily.	Methodology development.	Pre-pubescent.
	Rees	Dietary.	General nutrition.	N/A.
	Sloan	Bodily.	Infant development.	Infant.
	Smith	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Adolescent.
	Thomas	Bodily.	Physical activity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Von Hinke Kessler	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Wells	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent, adolescent and adult.
	Zanker	Bodily.	Eating disorders.	Pre-pubescent.
2009	Baig	Bodily.	Physical activity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Chapman	Bodily.	Parental management of children's diet.	Pre-pubescent.
	Duncan	Bodily.	Body image.	Pre-pubescent.
	Fox	Bodily.	Body image.	Pre-pubescent.
	Gueorguiev	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Harvey	Bodily.	Risk factors for fatigue.	Adult.
	Hill	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	McCullough	Bodily.	Perception of own size.	Pre-pubescent.
	McLure	Bodily.	Physical activity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Mindlin	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Murphy	Bodily.	Physical activity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Musingarimi	Bodily.	State interventions.	Pre-pubescent.
	Semmler	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Stewart	Bodily.	Book review.	Pre-pubescent.
	Stewart	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	Stewart	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Thøgersen-Ntouma	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Adolescent.

2009 contd.	Thomas Van den Eynde Walker Wardle Watkins Watt Webber	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Dietary. Bodily.	Psychosis. Eating disorders. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Genetic factors in weight gain. Eating disorders. Physical activity. Dietary behaviours.	Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adolescent. Pre-pubescent and adolescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent. N/A. Pre-pubescent.
2010*	Barlow Blundell Bochukova Boyle Chan Coppack Corder Corley Devi Edwards Elovainio Emerson Farooqi Fenton Font Ford Griffiths Hester Inglis Jennings Jones Jones Keenan Kerr Kipping Kopelman Kopelman	Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily. Bodily.	Parental perception of feeding their children. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Genetic factors in weight gain. Physical activity. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Perception of activity levels. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. General nutrition. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Obesity as a factor in depression. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Genetic factors in weight gain. Body image. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Weight loss treatment. Self-esteem. Weight loss treatment. Prevention of weight gain. Bowel health. Descriptive epidemiology of obesity. Eating disorders. Critical obesity literature. Dietary behaviours. Prevention of weight gain. Professional ignorance/awareness of nutrition. Eating disorders.	Infant and Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adult. Pre-pubescent and adult. Adolescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adult. Pre-pubescent. Adult. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adult. Adolescent. N/A. Adolescent. Pre-pubescent and adolescent. Adolescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adult. Pre-pubescent. Infant. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent. Pre-pubescent and adult. Pre-pubescent and adult.

2010	Kyrou	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
contd.	Lara	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Montgomery	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Ogba	Bodily.	Food packaging.	Pre-pubescent.
	Peters	Bodily.	Perception of other people's size.	Pre-pubescent.
	Pinto	Bodily.	Book review.	Pre-pubescent.
	Preston	Bodily.	Food advertising.	Pre-pubescent.
	Rayner	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Reilly	Bodily.	Literature review.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Reilly	Bodily.	Diagnosis of obesity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Rudolf	Bodily.	Prevention of weight gain.	Infant.
	Sacher	Bodily.	Weight loss treatment.	Pre-pubescent.
	Schwartz	Dietary.	Food advertising.	N/A.
	Stamatakis	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Swami	Bodily.	Perception of other people's size.	Adult.
	Tailor	Bodily.	Descriptive epidemiology of obesity.	Pre-pubescent and adolescent.
	Thompson	Bodily.	Physical activity.	Pre-pubescent.
	Trayhurn	Bodily.	Functions of white adipose tissue.	Pre-pubescent and adult.
	Walters	Bodily.	Genetic factors in weight gain.	N/A.

*Data added in January 2011.

Table 13 Frequency, and Average Number per Issue, of References to Fat in the Jackie Sample

	Number of Issues Consulted	<i>Number of Linguistic References to Fat</i>	<i>Number of Pictorial Depictions of Fat</i>	<i>Number of References to Slimming (without Reference to Current Size)</i>	Total Number of References and Depictions	Average Number of References and Depictions per Issue	Median	Mode	Range	Variance	Standard Deviation
1964- 1973	January	10	7	0	7	0.70	0.5	0	3	0.81	0.90
	April	10	6	0	7	0.70	1	1	1	0.41	0.64
	August	9	2	0	4	0.44	0	0	2	0.91	0.96
	December	9	7	1	12	1.33	1	1	2	1.33	1.15
	TOTAL	38	22	1	7	0.79	1	0	3	0.96	0.98
1974- 1983	January	10	14	0	9	2.30	2	1	3	2.41	1.55
	April	10	10	2	10	2.20	2	2	5	3.16	1.78
	August	10	13	0	4	1.70	2	2	4	1.41	1.19
	December	8	7	1	3	1.38	1	1	2	0.73	0.86
	TOTAL	38	44	3	26	1.92	2	1	5	2.13	1.46
1984- 1993	January	10	9	1	1	1.10	0.5	0	4	2.29	1.51
	April	10	11	5	1	1.70	1	0	4	3.41	1.85
	August	9	6	0	4	1.11	1	1	2	1.21	1.10
	December	9	6	0	0	0.67	0	0	2	0.67	0.82
	TOTAL	38	32	6	6	1.16	1	0	4	2.08	1.44
All Years	January	30	30	1	10	1.37	1	0	4	2.30	1.52
	April	30	27	7	12	1.53	1	1	5	2.72	1.68
	August	28	21	0	10	1.11	1	0	2	1.45	1.23
	December	26	20	2	7	1.12	1	1	2	1.03	1.01
	TOTAL	114	98	10	39	1.29	1	0	5	1.94	1.39

Table 14 Area Comprised by References to Fat in the Jackie Sample

		Number of References Comprising a Given Area of the Page								
		Number of Issues Consulted	Less than 1/4 Page	1/4 Page	1/3 Page	1/2 Page	3/4 Page	Full Page	1 1/2 Page	Double Page
1964-1973	January	10	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	April	10	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	August	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	December	9	11	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	38	27	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
1974-1983	January	10	22	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	April	10	15	0	1	0	1	3	0	2
	August	10	14	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
	December	8	7	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
	TOTAL	38	58	1	1	3	2	4	1	3
1984-1993	January	10	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
	April	10	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	August	9	8	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	December	9	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	38	37	0	2	0	0	1	0	4
All Years	January	30	36	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
	April	30	36	0	1	0	2	3	0	4
	August	28	26	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
	December	26	24	1	0	2	0	1	0	1
	TOTAL	114	122	1	3	5	3	5	1	7

APPENDIX 2: CHARTS

Chart 1 Total Number of Negative, Neutral, and Positive References to or Depictions of Fat in the Jackie Sample, by Decade

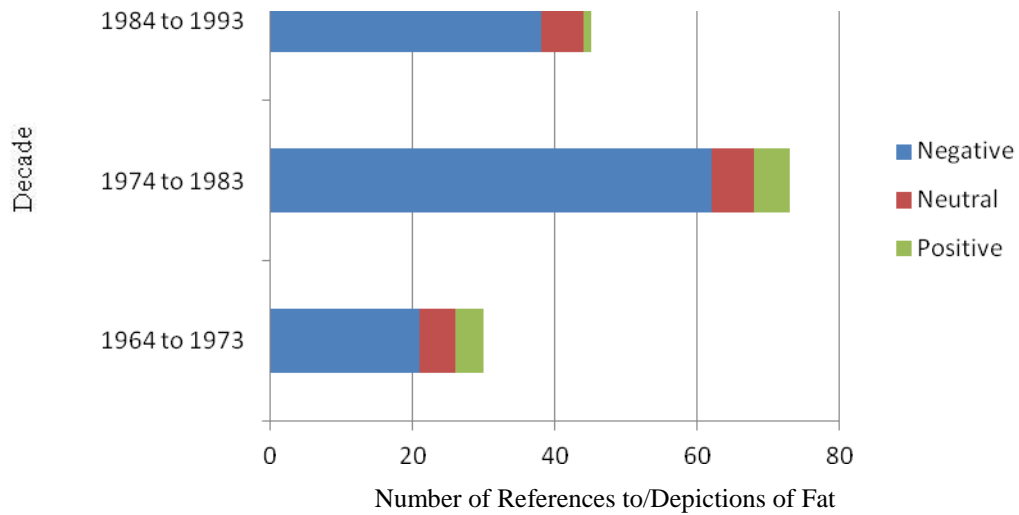


Chart 2 Yearly Incidence of Abstracts (from Any Country) that Contain a Relevant Search Term in the PsycINFO Database

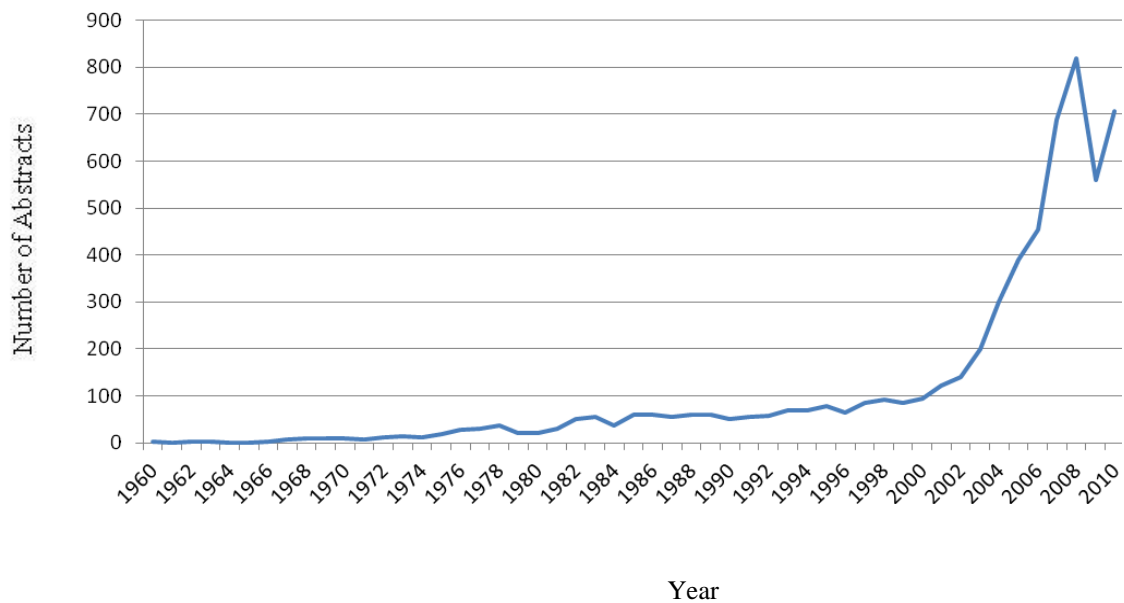


Chart 3 Yearly Prevalence of Abstracts Containing a Relevant Search Term in the PsycINFO Database
(Expressed as a Rate Per Thousand)

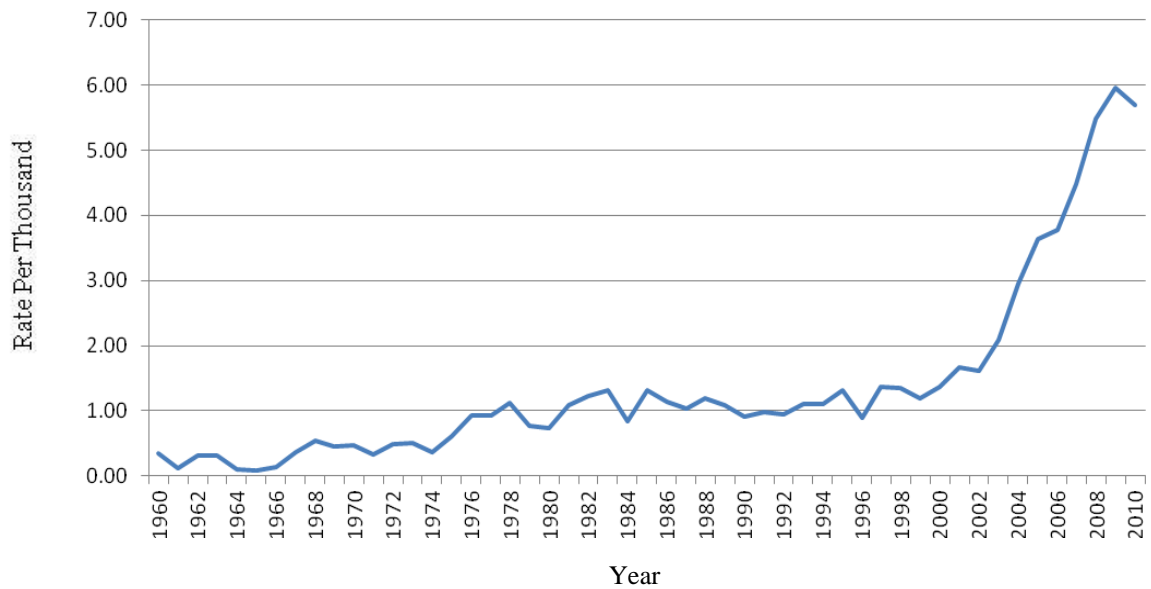


Chart 4 Yearly Incidence of Abstracts (Affiliated with a British Institution) Containing a Relevant Search Term in the PsycINFO database

