

“Not Your Mother’s Nancy Drew: A Cultural Comparison Between the
Original and Revised Texts of the First Seven Novels”

By

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Abstract

The world of Nancy Drew is not timeless, as many remember. Rather, each story is set during the time it was written and reflects the popular culture and ideal values, norms, and morals of society at that time. The *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* were first published in 1930. Beginning in 1959 the novels were “updated” and abridged, with varying levels of changes made to the stories, from minor detail changes to complete re-writes. This process created two versions of the same book, written a generation apart. Placing the novels in the history of the time period they were written in and focusing on the themes of gender roles, social class, race and ethnicity, violence, the law, and authority reveals how society changed between the 1930s and the 1950/60s.

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Nancy Drew has held a place in American culture since she was introduced in 1930. She has been the idol of many a young girl—to be inspired by and emulated. Many who have read the novels featuring her remember the character as timeless. However, much has changed since she was first introduced to the world and as the times changed, so did Nancy Drew. Written across a span of 80 plus years—spin-offs continue to be written to this day—Nancy and her world have continuously changed to fit the mold of the current societal mores and values. Each book is rooted in the time period it was written and offers a window into the popular culture of that time. A decision by the creators in 1959 allowed for the publication of two versions of the same novel, written a generation apart. These novels, specifically the first seven volumes in the series, will form the basis of this study. Comparing the two versions of the same book reveals how the idealized cultural norms, values, and biases changed between the two generations.

The series, *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories*, was the concept of Edward Stratemeyer and his Stratemeyer Syndicate, a juvenile book-creating business. The Syndicate produced many of the best known children's series of the 20th century including the *Bobbsey Twins*, *Hardy Boys*, *Tom Swift*, *Cherry Ames*, and *Nancy Drew*. A history of the Syndicate can be found in Carol Billman's *The Secrets of the Stratemeyer Syndicate* (1986). The real secret was how Stratemeyer was able to use ghost writers to churn out a huge volume of books. He would come up with the ideas and write a 3-5 page outline, which was sent to a ghost writer who would return a full manuscript and a signed rights release.¹ Following the success of the *Hardy Boys Mystery Stories*, released in 1927, Stratemeyer conceived of a female detective counterpart. He proposed several ideas to his publisher, Grosset & Dunlap, before settling on Nancy Drew in 1929,² "An

¹ Melanie Rehak, *Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2005), 25-26.

² Edward Stratemeyer to Mr. Reed of Grosset & Dunlap, 20 September 1929; Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library.

up-to-date American girl at her best, bright, clever, resourceful, and full of energy.”³ The task of creating the new series was offered to Mildred Augustine, already on staff ghost writing for the *Ruth Fielding* series since 1926.⁴ She was able to produce the first three novels, the initial “breeder set,” in a span of as many months—just as the stock market crashed.⁵

Mildred Augustine Wirt Benson (1905-2002) was the daughter of a small town doctor in Iowa. She published her first story at age thirteen and never looked back.⁶ Attending the University of Iowa for both her undergraduate and graduate work, she participated in many clubs and sports. She married shortly before she began writing Nancy Drew.⁷ Though Benson would continue to write for the Syndicate until the 1950s, she considered herself first and foremost a reporter and also wrote for various newspapers. Ultimately Benson would write 24 of the first 30 books in the series.

Nancy Drew Mystery Stories debuted in April 1930 under the pseudonym of Carolyn Keene and was an instant success. Sadly Edward Stratemeyer did not live to see it—he died less than two weeks after the publication. The Syndicate passed to his daughters, Edna Stratemeyer and Harriet Stratemeyer Adams. After first being unable to sell the business in the midst of the Depression, the sisters decided to become business women. They traded off working on the Nancy Drew series until 1942, when Edna became a silent partner.⁸

It is Harriet Adams (1892-1982) who would have the biggest impact on the series. After graduating from Wellesley in 1914 Harriet wanted to go to work for her father. However, he

³ Edward Stratemeyer, outline for *The Secret of the Old Clock*; privately held; copy provided by Jennifer Fisher.

⁴ Mildred Wirt Benson, “The Nancy I Knew,” introduction to *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1931); facsimile (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1994), [vii].

⁵ The first three novels were written between October and December 1929.

⁶ Rehak, *Girl Sleuth*, 42-43.

⁷ Mildred Augustine Wirt to Edward Stratemeyer, 16 May 1928; Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library.

⁸ Rehak, *Girl Sleuth*, 204.

would only allow her to work on manuscripts that he brought home.⁹ When her father died she was a stay-at-home wife and mother, having never actually worked for the Syndicate. Perhaps the most radical thing about Nancy Drew is the women who shaped her—they defied the stereotype of the era and became successful in the business world of men long before it was acceptable. Melanie Rehak provides the best window into the lives of these women in *Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her* (2005). Adams' and Benson's experiences and values would appear over and over again in the character they created.

The biggest changes to Nancy Drew occurred in 1959 when the Syndicate decided to overhaul the entire series, along with others. The revisions were mostly a cost-cutting measure, shortening the books from 25 to 20 chapters and by 20-30 pages. These edits coincided with a format change in 1962—gone were the dust jackets, replaced with the yellow-spine picture covers that most today associate with the series. This also provided an opportunity to streamline the series by rewriting and “updating” the stories while shortening them. Some of the books had only minor editing; others had substantial parts rewritten, but with the same general plot; and a select few were completely new stories published under the same title. The formula was kept the same: “Mystery appeared, Nancy was warned, Nancy pursued, villains attacked her [or those around her], Nancy won and deserving people benefitted.”¹⁰ Another benefit of the abridging allowed Adams to rework the stories so that they resonated with the current readership. Girls between 8 and 11 years of age had many new distractions in the 1950s. Revising the books to keep them interesting and relevant to readers ensured that the series continued to succeed.

This study will focus on the two editions of the first seven novels of the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories*. They are as follows:

⁹ Ilana Nash, *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 62.

¹⁰ James P. Jones “Nancy Drew, WASP Super Girl of the 1930s,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (1973), 710.

1. *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930, 1959)
2. *The Hidden Staircase* (1930, 1959)
3. *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930, 1960)
4. *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1930, 1961)
5. *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), *The Secret of Shadow Ranch* (1965)
6. *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931, 1961)
7. *The Clue in the Diary* (1932, 1962)

This set was chosen for several reasons. First, the manuscripts of the 1930s editions (hereafter referred to as “original texts”) were all written by Mildred Augustine Wirt. Second, Harriet Stratemeyer Adams wrote detailed outlines, severely edited, or completely wrote the manuscripts for the 1959-1960s editions (hereafter referred to as the “revised texts”). Third, the books were revised in roughly the same order and time frame as they were originally written. Fourth, all of the major recurring characters in the series are introduced. The revision process created a unique window into popular culture; two versions of the same novel now existed that revealed how cultural norms, values, and biases changed between two generations.

The original texts reveal much about American society and popular culture during the Great Depression while the revised texts do the same for post World War II society. Even though the novels were written well into the 1960s, they very much reflect 1950s culture. There is no place in the Nancy Drew books for rights movements or counter-cultures—conformity is everything. Each novel is set in the time period in which it was written and reflects the popular culture of that time. Occurrences mentioned in the books help place them in their historical period. In the first novel, *The Secret of the Old Clock*, published in 1930, one character description states that “His wife had died during the influenza epidemic following the World War [One].”¹¹ It is not specified which World War, since only one had occurred. In a book published in 1931, Carson Drew notes that “Nearly everyone I know is turning away help these

¹¹ Carolyn Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1930), 3.

days.”¹² The Great Depression created large-scale unemployment that is reflected in the Nancy Drew novels. The revised texts were updated to reflect the popular culture of the day. Nancy goes from driving a roadster in the 1930s to a convertible in the 1950s. Descriptions of clothing were updated to reflect modern styles in the texts and illustrations. The revisions also modernize the stories so that in *The Mystery at Lilac Inn*, rewritten and republished in 1961, the villains are using a mini-submarine to aid them in smuggling stolen electronics from an Army base. Such a story could not have taken place thirty years earlier because such technology was not available to citizens. Modern facsimiles of the original texts of the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* carry a Publisher’s Note which discusses how the novels have changed since their first publication and why they are important today. “[T]he modern reader may be extremely uncomfortable with the racial and social stereotyping, the roles women play in these books, or the use of phrases or situations which may conjure up some response in the modern reader that was not felt by the reader of the time.”¹³ Each book was set during the time it was written and readers of that time would have identified with the messages being presented. These comparisons between the two versions of the same novel are possible because, as shown in the following analyses, each book is solidly set in the time when it was written, reflecting the popular culture and ideal values, norms, and morals of society at that time.

Nancy Drew has been a topic of much interest and debate in her 82 years, in both the popular press and scholarly works. Most of the writings on Nancy Drew have focused on the series as literature or on trying to understand the character’s lasting popularity and influence. A Master’s thesis completed in 2003, “Discovering the Hidden World of the Nancy Drew Series: An Annotated Bibliography” (Loucy), provides 316 publications that reference the famous

¹² Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 40.

¹³ “Publisher’s Note” in Carolyn Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock*, 1930; facsimile; Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1991.

sleuth. This does not cover everything published on or related to Nancy Drew, but it is an excellent place to begin. Many works that contain a chapter on the character as part of a larger work are not included here, nor are works published after that time.

Harriet Stratemeyer Adams, in another financially driven move, decided to switch Syndicate publishers in 1979, from Grosset & Dunlap to Simon & Schuster. The ensuing lawsuit generated much press and public interest in the Syndicate as information about its “secret” practices became public.¹⁴ One result of the lawsuit was that the original author of the Nancy Drew books, Mildred Augustine Wirt Benson, was called to testify and her identity became widespread public knowledge for the first time. The University of Iowa discovered that Benson was the first woman to receive a Master’s degree from its School of Journalism. This prompted current faculty to organize a conference surrounding the character. The Nancy Drew Conference was one part of the Nancy Drew Project, held at the University of Iowa in 1993. The papers presented at this conference were later published in two works. *Rediscovering Nancy Drew* (Dyer and Romalov) contains 28 papers that were presented as part of the public portion of the conference. Papers presented at the academic segment of the conference were later published as a special edition of *The Lion and the Unicorn*.¹⁵ A transcript of the press conference given by Mildred Wirt Benson at the conference is included in the publication. Benson would later write the introductions for facsimile editions of two of the Nancy Drew novels she authored: *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* and *The Secret of Shadow Ranch*.¹⁶ This continued interest in Nancy Drew and the Stratemeyer Syndicate was among the reasons that prompted Simon & Schuster to

¹⁴ Grosset & Dunlap, Inc. v. Gulf & Western Corp., 534 F.Supp. 606, 609-10 (S.D.N.Y.1982).

¹⁵ Nancy Tillman Romalov, ed., *The Lion and the Unicorn* 18:1 (June 1994).

¹⁶ Mildred Wirt Benson, “The Nancy I Knew,” introduction to Carolyn Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn*, 1931, facsimile (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1994), [iii-x]. Mildred Wirt Benson, “More About Nancy,” introduction to Carolyn Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch*, 1931, facsimile (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1994), [iii-x].

donate the records of the Syndicate to the New York Public Library in 1993.¹⁷ Before the collection was donated, large portions were removed by the former owners of the Stratemeyer Syndicate¹⁸ and Simon & Schuster, including many of the files on the early Nancy Drew books.

Placing Nancy Drew in the larger culture requires more general histories. David Kyvig provides an excellent overview of the time between 1920 and 1940.¹⁹ Technological innovations such as the radio, home appliances, automobiles and the mass production of them combined with mass marketing created a truly mass culture for the first time in America. The next book in the *Daily Life* series, by Eugenia Kaledin, examines the era between 1940 and 1959.²⁰ This period is best defined by the changes in social attitudes shaped largely by World War II.

Gender history during the time of the Great Depression and postwar eras is the focus of two books in the *American Women in the Twentieth Century* series. Susan Ware focuses on the 1930s in *Holding Their Own*.²¹ Ware maintains that the Great Depression has had a lasting impact on American culture and her investigation of ingenious ways women were able to “make do” highlights their agency rather than possible passivity. Eugenia Kaledin focuses on the 1950s and the range of experiences of women during the decade in a second book entitled *Mothers and More*.²² Many women did not fit the stereotypes, because they needed to work outside of the home or chose to live an alternative lifestyle. Betty Friedan’s classic, *The Feminine Mystique*, also examines the social conservatism of the 1950s.²³ She explores just what the feminine

¹⁷ Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, 1832-1984 (bulk dates 1905-1984), MssCol 2903; New York Public Library, Humanities and Social Sciences Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division.

¹⁸ The Stratemeyer Syndicate was sold to Simon & Schuster following the death of Harriet Stratemeyer Adams in 1984.

¹⁹ David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940: How Americans Lived Through the “Roaring Twenties” and the Great Depression* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002).

²⁰ Eugenia Kaledin, *Daily Life in the United States, 1940-1959: Shifting Worlds* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000).

²¹ Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston, Twayne Pub., 1982).

²² Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Pub., 1984).

²³ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997).

mystique was—the glorification of femininity by praising wives and mothers and disapproval of career women—and its origins. *The Girl Sleuth* (A *Feminist Reader* according to the first edition) by Bobbie Ann Mason examines how Nancy Drew served as a model of “the conventional and the revolutionary in one compact image” and helped to inspire multiple generations of women to want and expect more from life.²⁴

The use of race in the Nancy Drew series has been a favorite topic of many essays. James Jones examines the topic in “Negro Stereotypes in Children’s Literature: The Case of Nancy Drew”²⁵ and “Nancy Drew, WASP Super Girl of the 1930s.”²⁶ African-American characters in the series are presented as the turn-of-the-century stereotypes of being dim-witted, drunk, lazy, and slow. When given the chance to show non-white characters in a positive light, the revisions instead completely erase race. Donnaræ MacCann’s “Nancy Drew and the Myth of White Supremacy” examines the first book in the series, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), and shows that the language used upholds the myth that blacks were inferior to whites intellectually, temperamentally and physically.²⁷ For an overview of the “accepted” stereotypes of African-Americans during the time, I.A. Newby’s *Jim Crow’s Defense: Anti-Negro Thought in America, 1900-1930* examines the scholarly and popularly accepted notions.²⁸ Beyond these examples, ethnicity in the novels has barely been touched upon, and when it has, the topic has focused on the novels that are set in locations other than Nancy Drew’s hometown or the surrounding area.

Another theme of the novels is law enforcement. There are few surveys of the history of law enforcement in the United States and most focus on regional or local departments. *To*

²⁴ Bobbie Ann Mason, *The Girl Sleuth* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 138.

²⁵ James P. Jones, “Negro Stereotypes in Children’s Literature: The Case of Nancy Drew,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 40:2 (Spring 1971); 121-125.

²⁶ James P. Jones, “Nancy Drew, WASP Super Girl of the 1930s,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (1973); 707-717.

²⁷ Donnaræ MacCann, “Nancy Drew and the Myth of White Supremacy,” in Carolyn Stewart Dyer and Nancy Tillman Romalov, ed., *Rediscovering Nancy Drew* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995); 129-135.

²⁸ I.A. Newby, *Jim Crow’s Defense: Anti-Negro Thought in America, 1900-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965).

Protect and Serve: A History of Police in America was written to help fill the void in this scholarship.²⁹ In this work, Wadman and Allison argue that law enforcement has been resistant to change until faced with crisis and only then adopts the latest technologies and theories. *The Role of Police in American Society: A Documentary History* traces the evolution of crime fighting practices and ideals by focusing on period writings and court cases.³⁰ Richard Power's *G-Men: Hoover's FBI in American Popular Culture* serves as a case study on how the public perceived law enforcement during the eras under study.³¹ Beginning in the mid-1930s, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover created a mythological image of the F.B.I. that fed the public's "hopes, fears and needs." Both periods discussed in this essay cover periods of great change in law enforcement practices and the public's perception of the profession.

"Why Nancy Drew is so popular" continues to astound us. The question has been asked over and over again in scholarship and the popular press. Ilana Nash devotes an entire chapter to her in *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture*.³² The Nancy Drew of that era managed to simultaneously challenge and uphold the established social order and was thus accepted by both parents and girls. Nancy Drew was also admired in the popular press. A keyword search of the *New York Times* results in hundreds of hits.³³ Many of the articles are public opinion pieces expressing how Nancy Drew influenced the lives of so many. Others concentrate on Nancy Drew as a feminist role model. Most of the publications focus on the original texts, with little attention paid to the revisions. Many comparisons focus on a single

²⁹ Robert C. Wadman, and William Thomas Allison, *To Protect and Serve: A History of Police in America* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2004).

³⁰ Bryan Vila and Cynthia Morris, *The Role of Police in American Society: A Documentary History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

³¹ Richard Gid Powers, *G-Men: Hoover's FBI In American Popular Culture* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983).

³² Ilana Nash, "Radical Notions: Nancy Drew and her Readers: 1930-1949," in *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 29-70.

³³ Search conducted in February 2012.

aspect of a single book. This leaves open the opportunity to view the books in a new way—by placing them in their historical context and thus giving us insight into how popular culture represented the current ideologies, values, norms and biases and how they shifted over time as society changed. The themes of gender roles, social class, race and ethnicity, violence, and the law and authority will be focused on to highlight the societal changes between the eras of the Great Depression and postwar World War II.

Chapter 1: Gender Roles

In the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* every character has his or her place, and those who step outside of their place are instantly suspect. One area by which this is judged by is how they do or do not uphold established gender roles. The main recurring characters are Nancy Drew, her lawyer father Carson Drew, and the family's maid (later the motherly housekeeper) Hannah Gruen. Other characters in the series also play established gender roles. Helen Corning, Nancy's original "chum," becomes engaged in the revised text of the second book and serves as the quintessential American girl. Cousins Bess Marvin and George Fayne are introduced in *The Secret at/of Shadow Ranch* (5) and each plays an extreme aspect of the gender stereotype. And finally Ned Nickerson is introduced in *The Clue in the Diary* (7). He becomes Nancy's boyfriend, and remains so in perpetuity. Established gender identities and roles are upheld by focusing on what is acceptable and suspecting anyone who dares to go beyond—with the exception of Nancy herself.

How does a teenage girl become accepted as an amateur detective? Only the combination of Nancy Drew's specific circumstances allow her to play sleuth. She is young, wealthy, motherless and with an indulgent father in the right profession, as a lawyer. She is unmarried, and insists on remaining an amateur sleuth who aids others as needed. Her resume is neatly summed up in 1930 in her introduction in the original text of *The Secret at Shadow Ranch*:

[S]he was the only daughter of a lawyer who specialized in criminal and mystery cases. Nancy's mother had died only a few years after her birth, and the girl had assumed the management of the Drew household at an early age. She had taken a keen interest in her father's work and frequently had discussed unusual cases with him, but it was quite by accident that she became involved in a baffling mystery of her own.³⁴

³⁴ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1930), 12.

Each element is needed to make it socially acceptable for her to be outside her home, solving mysteries, both in the 1930s and later during the 1950s, though more concessions are made for postwar society.

It is through her father that Nancy Drew is introduced to mysteries. Carson Drew is a prominent criminal lawyer, former district attorney, indulgent father and role model. The original texts often state that Nancy “has been present during many interviews her father has had with noted detectives”³⁵ and that sparked her interest in mysteries. She frequently aids her father by running errands and doing simple detective work, almost as an unofficial legal aid. Through this work she has acquired the investigative and legal knowledge needed to undertake detective work. Carson Drew made sure to teach his daughter how to be self sufficient, which she often reminds him.

“It would be a tragedy to Miss Rosemary and Miss Floretta if they had to sell the place now, Dad. I want so badly to help them. They have invited me to visit them, and I’d like to do it. May I?”

“I don’t know what to say, Nancy. From what you’ve told me I am inclined to believe there may be danger in visiting the house.”

“I’ll be careful, Dad. It won’t be any worse for me to sleep in that house than it is for Rosemary and Floretta Turnbull.”

“But you’re my daughter.”

“If you had been assigned to the case you wouldn’t hesitate to stay there at night, would you?”

“No,” Carson Drew admitted reluctantly, for he saw that Nancy was neatly cornering him.

“And you’ve often said you wanted me to grow up self-reliant and brave.”

Carson Drew threw up his hands in resignation.³⁶

The traits of self-reliance and bravery are traditionally considered to be masculine. By encouraging these and other traits, Carson Drew elevated Nancy to the son he never had. Her father serves as the role model in the absence of a mother figure. “Nancy was the true daughter

³⁵ Edward Stratemeyer, outline for *The Secret of the Old Clock*, 1929; in private hands, copy courtesy of Jennifer Fisher.

³⁶ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 53.

of her father, and nothing intrigued her more than a mystery.”³⁷ Nancy also relies on her intuition, suspicions, and hunches, long considered to be female traits. However, she makes it clear that the ideal feminine image is not what she wants.

Nancy teased “You really wouldn’t want me to be sedate and prim, would you, Daddy?”
“No, I’m afraid I wouldn’t,” Mr. Drew admitted.³⁸

Blending masculine and feminine traits allows her to become a successful sleuth.

While it has been argued that Nancy “is more interested in the public sphere rather than the private or domestic one,”³⁹ all of her mysteries surround home life. The titles of the novels reveal just how domestic Nancy is: clocks and stairs are found in homes; bungalows, inns, ranches, and farms fall within the domestic sphere; and diaries are kept by women. In the original texts references are made to her directing household work while the revisions give short examples of her actually doing some housework. The first three chapters of the original text of *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* focus on Nancy’s frantic search for a new maid before an important dinner party. In the revisions food and clothing are described in detail. Throughout both versions of the texts Nancy is conscious of wearing the right outfit for the occasion. Of the seven revised texts focused on here, Nancy goes out on a date or blushes over a boy in six of them. There is never a question of her femininity.

Nancy’s strong male traits in the original texts can be linked to the fact that she has no female role model. “The Drews employed one servant, Hannah Gruen, an elderly maid of all work who had been with them for many years,” but her interaction with Nancy is strictly that of

³⁷ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 28.

³⁸ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 206.

³⁹ Sally E. Parry, “The Secret of the Feminist Heroine: The Search for Values in Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton,” in Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls’ Series* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1997), 148.

mistress and servant.⁴⁰ “With no mother around to instruct her in the social codes of ‘proper’ womanly behavior, Nancy Drew is free to literally and figuratively inherit her father’s business.”⁴¹ Her domestic training began early, when she took over the running of her father’s household as a teenager. In spite of her youth (Nancy is 16-years-old in the originals and aged to 18 years the revisions), this education has in a way allowed her to transcend adolescence and become a mini-woman—an adult in mannerisms and expectations. Nancy’s unmarried status ensured that she answered to no one except her indulgent father, whom she had wrapped around her finger.

When obstacles fall in her path or adults are unsympathetic to her needs, Nancy Drew need only evoke her father’s name and suddenly everyone jumps. By acting as his proxy, she gains more power than any teenager could conceive of. A typical scene in the 1930s involves Nancy trying to convince the police to arrest the person she’s deemed the culprit:

“If my father were here, he’d convince you all right,” Nancy said, with rising temper.

“Your father?”

“Yes, Carson Drew.”

“You don’t mean Carson Drew, the lawyer from River Heights? You’re his daughter?”

“I am.”

“Well, that’s different. What didn’t you say so at first?”

“What has that to do with the case?”

“Well, I reckon a daughter of Carson Drew knows what she’s about... I’ll take your word for it.”⁴²

Thus the respect her father has earned is immediately transferred to Nancy. In only one of the first seven volumes from the 1930s do the police not immediately stop suspecting her after learning whom she is related to, but even then it saves her from arrest. “The two agents looked at

⁴⁰ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 12.

⁴¹ Deborah L. Siegel, “Nancy Drew As New Girl Wonder: Solving It All of the 1930s,” in Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls’ Series* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1997), 175.

⁴² Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 180.

each other in perplexity. In truth, they did not know whom to believe, but the fact that Nancy was the daughter of a famous lawyer made it wise for them to act with the utmost caution.”⁴³ It is not just that Carson Drew is famous, but it is also implied that he has power. Nancy assumes this power unto herself (with her father’s permission), allowing her the capability to avoid any unpleasanties in her sleuthing and quest to bring criminals to justice.

It is not only the police who are suspicious of the young girl, but also the villains she is investigating. Often they underestimate her because she is merely a girl. “For an instant he looked at Nancy in blank amazement. ‘A girl, eh?’ he sneered... ‘Get out of my way—mind your own business!’”⁴⁴ In the revisions “girl” is substituted with “snooper.”⁴⁵ He is no longer questioning her gender identity but rather her willingness to spy on others. Other times they are astounded that it is a young girl who caught them. “‘The little wildcat! We’ll give her a double dose for this smart trick! No girl’s going to put anything over on me!’”⁴⁶ Later the same villain is again outraged, though this time he focuses on her youth. “‘Outwitted—by that snooping kid!’ Maurice Hal screamed.”⁴⁷ Everyone is in disbelief that Nancy, a young female, has solved the case.

While Nancy’s other characteristics allow her the ability to solve mysteries, it is her father’s money that ultimately gives her the opportunity. Carson Drew is wealthy enough to employ a servant to do the cooking and cleaning, thus freeing Nancy from domestic drudgery. Daddy’s money also gives her the ultimate freedom: mobility in the form of her own automobile. Nancy does not need to argue with her father over borrowing his car—an almost unheard of occurrence in the 1930s. She drives not just any car, but one described as a powerful roadster.

⁴³ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 132.

⁴⁴ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 180.

⁴⁵ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1962), 165.

⁴⁶ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1961), 166.

⁴⁷ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1961), 172.

During one mystery she “was well aware that her roadster was one of the most expensive cars in the lineup” at the scene.⁴⁸ This mobility allows Nancy to move beyond her own household—outside of her sphere—and even her own city in the course of solving cases.

Wealth also influences how Nancy views mystery solving. Following the Progressive Era standard of affluent women performing charity work for the poor, Nancy chooses to do much of the same. She later joins the female volunteerism trend of postwar society, continuing her work. What sets Nancy Drew apart from her male counterparts of the Hardy Boys is that she never accepts a monetary reward for her work. “‘Oh, I don’t want a reward,’ Nancy broke in. ‘I wanted to help. And, anyway, it was fun for me.’”⁴⁹ Instead, she will allow a token to be bestowed upon her. In the original texts she viewed these as trophies, sometimes asking for specific items to remind her of her good work. “‘Well, it may sound silly, but I would like to have the Crowley clock for my very own.’” She continues, “Truly, it was not handsome; but for her it held a peculiar appeal. She could not explain it to Allie and Grace just why she prized it, for her feelings were something she could not put into words. Certainly she was attached to it because of its suggestion of her recent adventure.”⁵⁰ On occasion Nancy would accept tokens of appreciation worth significant amounts, but never cash. To be paid for her sleuthing would label it as a vocation.

By the 1950s Nancy is less contradictory and blunt. She does not need to coax permission to visit the Turnbull mansion in the revised version of *The Hidden Staircase* since she will be accompanied by her friend, Helen Corning. The Turnbells are now close relations of Helen and Nancy is helping a family friend, rather than strangers. This also reflects how Nancy loses much of her autonomy in the revised texts. She seldom follows a clue on her own and instead takes at

⁴⁸ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 18.

⁴⁹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 208.

⁵⁰ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 208-209.

least one friend along for the ride. Nancy is now group-orientated, surrounded by others who seek to help, and protect, her. She also has acquired a mother figure. Hannah Gruen is portrayed in the revisions as the motherly housekeeper. She provides the censure and worry over Nancy's welfare and serves as an adult female Nancy can confide in. Benson best described the changes made to Nancy Drew.

I mean, the Nancy that I created is a different Nancy from what Mrs. Adams has carried on... [she] was an entirely different person; she was more cultured and she was more refined. I was probably a rough and tumble newspaper person who had to earn a living, and I was out in the world. That was my type of Nancy. Nancy was making her way in life and trying to compete and have fun. We just had two different kinds of Nancys.⁵¹

These "two Nancys" reveal the values of the women who wrote her and the ideologies during the time periods they wrote. Benson's Nancy of the original texts closely identifies with the New Woman of the turn of the century. She gloried in her new-found independent and recent recognition of equality. The Nancy Drew of the 1930s was strong willed and independent, or in her own words, "self-reliant and brave." The cultural shift in the next generation saw Nancy become more "sedate and prim," something the character was trying not to be in the previous era. She became group orientated, less likely to break the rules, and much more passive than her 1930's self. "Adam's vision of appropriate femininity echoed the adherence to conformity and docile female behavior celebrated in 1950s mass culture."⁵² The Nancy Drew of the post-World War II culture emphasized her feminine qualities. She was less independent and more deferential. While Nancy did desire to be something other than a wife or mother, she never outright expresses it. More so, she is living in the moment of her frozen 18-year-old self, never contemplating what will happen when she "grows up."

⁵¹ Testimony from *Grosset & Dunlap, Inc. v. Gulf & Western Corp* quoted in Rehak, *Girl Sleuth*, 297.

⁵² Nash, *American Sweethearts*, 33.

Nancy has been called the “WASP Super Girl” of the 1930s, though that title can very well carry into the 1950s and beyond. “WASP” refers to White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant—a term that very much applies to Nancy Drew and a standard she would judge others against. As for the “Super Girl,” it seems that there was nothing Nancy could not do. “[S]he was the type of girl who is capable of accomplishing a great many things in a comparatively short length of time. She enjoyed sports of all kinds and she found time for clubs and parties.”⁵³ It is implied in the books that Nancy had graduated high school by age 16. She displays an astonishing array of skills during the course of her sleuthing. Changing a tire, tinkering with a boat engine, giving basic first aid, citing classical Greek mathematics, having knowledge of psychology, expert driving skills, lock picking, tracking and the correct social manners—all in the course of the first volume. “‘I’d guess we’ll have to let Nancy take all the honors,’ George sighed. ‘She’s a regular whiz at it.’”⁵⁴ Nancy’s immense skill set is noted by other characters, making her seem unique in her knowledge, which expands instantaneously to fit any situation she finds herself in.

Her “superness” only becomes more extreme in the revised texts. If Nancy needs a certain skill to solve a mystery, then she has it. The list is impressive and more expansive: skin diving, horseback riding, advertising, advanced first aid. A code that defeated her in the original text of *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* is easily solved in the revision. It would be impossible for any one 18-year-old girl to have acquired all of this knowledge, but that wouldn’t make as interesting a story.

Nancy never lets emotions get in her way. While she some times admits to feeling fright and a sense of panic, she never becomes hysterical or unable to think straight, even in the most dire situations. Benson was well aware of the persona she created.

⁵³ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 12-13.

⁵⁴ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 35.

Whether lost in the woods with her friends, trapped by fire or flood, secreted in a packed box, or imprisoned in a tower or an old house, the invincible girl sleuth always kept her cool. Through it all, Nancy as I described her retained stability and common sense, delivering an unspoken message of courage and determination.⁵⁵

The most emotionally distressed she ever becomes occurs in *The Secret of the Old Clock* and during her first brush with possible death. In a chapter entitled “Left to Starve” in the original text, Nancy is locked in a closet in an unoccupied summer cottage. The language used suggests the direness of the situation and is rife with exclamation points. Nancy’s thoughts and behaviors reflect what any teenage girl might experience. “Nancy Drew was overcome with panic. A feeling of desperation came over her.” She slumps to the floor, “a dejected, crushed little figure.” “With a feeling of utter hopelessness” she thinks through what she might have done differently. “As the full significance of the situation dawned upon the girl, panic again took possession of her.” After trying to unsuccessfully pick the lock “despondence claimed Nancy she was dangerously near tears,” though she never actually cried or became hysterical. Instead she convinces herself to calmly think of an escape. She pulls down the closet rod and uses it as a lever—and impresses readers with her education. “‘Archimedes didn’t know what he was talking about when he said the world could be moved with a lever,’ Nancy murmured. ‘I’d like to see him move this door!’” Finally the hinges come loose and escape is at hand. Even though Nancy Drew comes dangerously close to losing her cool, she proves that calm reason will always win the day.⁵⁶

The same scene is kept in the revised text of *The Secret of the Old Clock*, but the danger, and thus Nancy’s emotional response, is mitigated. Divided between chapters called “A Desperate Situation” and “A Frustrating Wait,” Nancy’s adventure in the closet is cut by several

⁵⁵ Mildred Wirt Benson, “More About Nancy,” introduction to Carolyn Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch*, 1931, facsimile (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1994), [ix].

⁵⁶ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 133-137.

pages giving her less time to worry about her situation. She is still “frantic,” “despondent,” and “dangerously near tears” but quickly calms herself. “‘This will never do,’ she reprimanded herself sternly. ‘I must keep my head and try to think of some way to escape.’” It is Nancy’s superior knowledge that once again saves the day. She even adds a few extra words so that readers not as intelligent as she is know that Archimedes was an “old Greek scientist.”⁵⁷ Nancy Drew is the American Super Girl, skillfully navigating her way through society and mysteries, displaying a startling quantity of traits, never letting emotion or others get in her way, and always known as the *girl* sleuth.

Carson Drew is the ultimate father. He is “Distinguished and Handsome--A criminal lawyer – a widower – At one time was the District Attorney.”⁵⁸ His very description oozes power and influence. Most important is his willingness to indulge his daughter. “Carson Drew showers a great deal of affection on his daughter. It was his secret boast that he had taught her to think for herself and think logically. Nancy is the apple of his eye;” the son he will never have.⁵⁹ He’s willing to delegate cases to her, as he is a busy man. When she needs help, he drops everything to aid her. He heaps praise on her. “‘You did a fine piece of work, and your old Dad is proud of you.’”⁶⁰ Mr. Drew often teases his daughter about accepting her into his practice but never actually follows through on the suggestion.

“I’m beginning to think it may be wise to protect my practice by taking you in as a partner.”

Nancy smiled, highly flattered at the praise her father had bestowed upon her. “All right,” she declared eagerly. “Put out your sign. ‘Carson Drew and Daughter.’”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 110-114.

⁵⁸ “Detailed Information and Data about Carson Drew,” Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 199.

⁶¹ Keene, *The Mystery at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 203.

Father and daughter are equals in some ways. Nancy is never treated as a subordinate to her father, but rather looks up to him. The revised texts carry on this theme. Nancy relies on her father for everything she has and he allows her the money, freedom and consent to do what she wants.

Hannah Gruen was initially written into the series as a way to get Nancy Drew out of the house. A family of the Drews' status would have been expected to have a servant in the 1930s. A live-in housekeeper, or maid-of-all-work, frees Nancy from the daily drudgery of cooking and cleaning. Someone is always at the Drew house to take and relay messages about Nancy or her father's whereabouts. As a respectable widow—she's referred to as Ms. Gruen and there is never mention of a Mr. Gruen—Hannah is an appropriate chaperone for Nancy. By the 1950s she evolved to fill another void—that of motherly concern. Someone had to voice worry about the situations Nancy Drew got herself into. “At times Hannah indicates her concern for Nancy’s safety when the girl detective becomes involved in a mystery case.”⁶² Hannah is rarely ever depicted outside of the home. In many ways she is the stereotypical mother of the postwar era. It is Hannah who fulfills the feminine mystique while Nancy Drew continues to be the child, free from obligations. Even the information sheet in the Syndicate files lists her under the “Drew Home.” Just as idealized mothers had no place outside of the domestic sphere, Hannah is only an extension of that domestic sphere.

Helen Corning is first introduced as a plot device to help Nancy in her sleuthing. Described as “a slim, attractive school friend”⁶³ who is “dark-haired and petite”⁶⁴ in the revised texts. In *The Secret of the Old Clock* she provides convenient excuses for Nancy to go where the clues are. Helen pops up occasionally in other original texts when needed to move the plot along.

⁶² “Drew Home,” information sheet; box 239, folder 2, Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library.

⁶³ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 81.

⁶⁴ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1960), 1.

She plays a much larger role in the revised texts, accompanying Nancy during several mysteries. Helen also fills a new social role by reminding girls that Nancy Drew is not the norm.

“I ought to be scared,” said Helen. “Goodness only knows what’s ahead of us. But right now I’m so happy that nothing could upset me.”

“What happened?” Nancy asked as she started the car. “Did you inherit a million?”

“Something better than that,” Helen replied. “Nancy, I want to tell you a big, big secret. I’m going to be married!”⁶⁵

Helen implies that getting married makes everything all right. Betty Friedan has labeled this the feminine mystique. “Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity” by becoming wives and mothers—and nothing else.⁶⁶ Wedding planning details are scattered throughout the next several books. Helen disappears from the stories after marrying, no longer partaking in adventure, except for the rare cameo appearance and always accompanied by her now husband, Jim Archer. Marriage is identified as the end of sleuthing—something Nancy is not yet ready to give up. Before taking the trip down the isle, she accompanies Nancy Drew as she solves the mysteries in books two through four. Helen serves as a type of chaperone to Nancy, protecting her reputation, innocence and possibly her life. She steadfastly follows Nancy on her exploits, offering suggestions and acting like a moral conscience.

“You know, it could be in the cellar,” Nancy suggested.

“Well, you’re not going down there,” Helen said firmly. “That is, not without a policeman. It’s too dangerous. As for myself, I want to live to get married and not be hit over the head in the dark by that ghost, so Jim won’t have a bride!”⁶⁷

Even after being injured in the course of solving one mystery, she steadfastly stands by Nancy’s side, “I can’t desert Nancy.”⁶⁸ The buddy system serves to protect both girls from the evils of

⁶⁵ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1959), 24.

⁶⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 57-58.

⁶⁷ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1959), 166.

⁶⁸ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1961), 85.

the world, but even it is not infallible. Helen's only flaw is related to her gender. "However, Nancy never wanted to confide in her too much about mysteries, as Helen, though meaning well, was a natural born gossip and Nancy doubted her ability to keep a secret for long."⁶⁹ Helen is the epitome of femininity in the 1950s, always acting the correct way and wanting the right things.

Cousins Bess Marvin and George Fayne are introduced in the fifth book, *The Secret at/of Shadow Ranch*, and serve as Nancy Drew's bookend sidekicks for the rest of the series. Each girl possesses the extremes of Nancy's character, making her seem more "normal" and less "super." Nancy "had less dignity than Bess, who usually tried to do the proper thing at the proper moment, but considerably more dignity than George, noted for her topsy-turvy ways."⁷⁰ "These two can be seen as representing the male and female sides of Nancy's personality" in the original texts.⁷¹ Bess (at times short for Elizabeth) is the epitome of proper girlhood. "Though she lacked the dash and vivacity of her cousin, she was better looking and dressed with more care and taste."⁷² She exemplified the girly girl, adept at negotiating society, but with a fondness for sweets. Although she dislikes adventure and discomfort, it does not stop her from following Nancy Drew into all sorts of situations. Bess provides suspenseful shrieks and dire warnings about what the girls are about to do. Like Helen, Bess is the idealized woman. Through Bess, readers see just how Nancy could not do what she does without stretching things a bit.

George Fayne was originally just "George," following a fad in the 1920s of giving girls boys' names in literature.⁷³ Her masculine name exemplifies her personality. "Well, you sort of

⁶⁹ "More Detailed Data About Leading Characters in: 'The Nancy Drew Series,'" Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library.

⁷⁰ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 17.

⁷¹ Sally E. Parry, "The Secret of the Feminist Heroine: The Search for Values in Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton," in Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls' Series* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1997), 149.

⁷² Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1930), 4.

⁷³ Mildred Wirt Benson, "More About Nancy," introduction to Carolyn Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch*, 1931, facsimile (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1994), [vii].

pride yourself on being boyish, don't you? Your personality fits in with your name, you will admit' [Bess said]."⁷⁴ George often encourages Nancy in her adventures, providing outlandish plans and ideas that make Nancy's seem more plausible. Like Nancy, George too had her rough edges softened for postwar readers. By the 1950s she was explaining that her name really was short for Georgia, but George just suited her better. Described as "an attractive tomboyish girl with short dark hair,"⁷⁵ she retained her role as the group's tomboy. Her femininity is reaffirmed when she and Bess acquire boyfriends in later titles in the series (friends of Nancy Drew's boyfriend, Ned Nickerson, of course).

Ned Nickerson is introduced in *The Clue in the Diary* in the most unusual way—as a potential car thief. "[Nancy] continued to stand on the running board, for while she liked the appearance of the young man, she felt that she could not afford to take a chance in the crowd."⁷⁶ Later, watching him direct the traffic, she determines he is all right. But it is his help in the car accident she sustains in that traffic that convinces her. "Ned Nickerson indeed welcomed an opportunity to aid Nancy, for he had been attracted to her from the first. He was eager to learn who she was and where she lived. Nancy was not in the habit of giving her name to strangers but she did like this helpful young man."⁷⁷ Ned proves his worth in mystery solving by becoming entangled in the one Nancy is currently investigating. He finds a clue at the scene of a fire and rather than turn it over to the police, he calls Nancy. In the original text, he must prove his usefulness before she will go out with him. By the revisions, Nancy is more willing to take a night off from sleuthing to accompany Ned to a college dance—though she does take the

⁷⁴ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 4.

⁷⁵ Keene, *The Secret of Shadow Ranch* (1965), 1.

⁷⁶ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 17-18.

⁷⁷ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 22.

opportunity to ask some questions needed to solve the sub-plot. At the end of the book he has further opportunity to prove his worth by providing the muscle to catch the villain.

It is Ned who pursues Nancy—a reversal of the stereotype as it is *he* more than she who is interested in furthering their romance. In this case, the stereotype of allowing the boy to do the courting works in Nancy’s favor. She does not need to expend much energy on the relationship beyond deciding which dates to accept. Ned is always the one to set up the dates—except when Nancy needs an escort to a particular function during her quest to solve a mystery.

“Say,” said Ned, “I have a notion to start a diary of my own!”

“Why don’t you?” Nancy asked lightly.

She became conscious that Ned’s eyes were looking straight at her. “I will if I can fill most of the pages with entries of dates with you.”

Nancy evaded the question. “I enjoyed your help in solving the Swenson mystery. Maybe we’ll soon find another we can work on together.”⁷⁸

Thus summing up Ned’s role: to provide masculine aid when needed, entertainment between mysteries, but never be a distraction from a case.

Gender role expectations extend to those people that Nancy Drew aids. They are usually women who find themselves in dire circumstances beyond their control. “Most of the victims Nancy helps are women, and the few males are somehow stripped of their virility; they are either very elderly, partly disabled, or employed in a feminized profession like theater, music, or art.”⁷⁹ In the first seven volumes, Nancy directly aids only a few men. The Matthews brothers of *The Secret of the Old Clock* are described as elderly and are only part of a larger group of beneficiaries. Nancy focuses on helping the women of the group and has only one short interview with the brothers. In *The Bungalow Mystery* Nancy befriends orphaned Laura Pendleton. In the end Nancy discovers that Laura’s new guardian was kidnapped by a con-man who posed as the guardian to fleece Laura. After finding the true guardian, Jacob Aborn—quite

⁷⁸ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1962), 174.

⁷⁹ Nash, *American Sweethearts*, 69.

by accident—Nancy has to save them both. He is literally feeble. “It was a walk that Nancy never forgot. Time and again Jacob Aborn stumbled and would have fallen headlong had it not been for the sturdy support the girl gave him.”⁸⁰ Nancy must leave him and race after the impersonator alone.

Nancy, Bess and George travel to the latter two’s uncle’s ranch in Arizona in *The Secret at Shadow Ranch*. The mystery of the original text takes place in proximity to the ranch, but does not directly involve it. A new mystery is solved in the revised text, now *The Secret of Shadow Ranch*, and is about the ranch itself which someone is trying to sabotage. Nancy is not helping some strange man, but rather “family,” which mitigates the blow to the men involved. “Nancy, I think you should call us Aunt Bet and Uncle Ed. After all, you’ll be one of our family.”⁸¹ “Uncle Ed” is too busy actually running the ranch to follow all the clues. Nancy never interferes with the ranch as she follows the clues, which keep turning up in the house—a domestic space.

The subplot of both versions of *Shadow Ranch* involves another relative of Bess and George, Robert Ross Regor. He had deserted his family under mysterious circumstances several years before. “‘Some day father will come back and then everything will be right again’ [Alice Regor said].”⁸² Nancy is able to figure out that he was knocked out and lost his memory in the original text and was kidnapped in the middle of a bank robbery in the revised text. However it still does not absolve Mr. Regor of the fact that he left his family uncared for.

The seventh novel, *The Clue in the Diary*, also focuses on a man who cannot support his family. Joseph “Joe” Swenson is a Swedish immigrant, university educated and an inventor who cannot keep food on his family’s table. When he becomes entangled in a case of arson and possible murder, it is Nancy who must figure out what actually happened and keep him from

⁸⁰ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 150.

⁸¹ Keene, *The Secret of Shadow Ranch* (1965), 28.

⁸² Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 55.

jail—an event that would render his family absolutely destitute and alone. All of the men Nancy Drew aids are unable to maintain their masculinity as depicted by society and must thus rely on a young female to rescue them from situations, often of their own creation.

Masculinity in the 1930s and 1950s was very much tied to how well the man of the house could provide for his family. During the Great Depression a man's worth was evaluated by whether he kept his family in their home with food on the table. The feminine mystique of the post-war era of the 1950s decreed that women's place is only in the home and thus the husband needed to be able to support his family with only his income. While these were the ideals for the eras being studied, they did not represent the majority of the population. Minorities, the poor, single parents, and many others were simply unable to achieve the cultural ideals. Perhaps this is what drove some men to abandon their families during the Great Depression, though the sentiment applies to other eras as well. "Perhaps [men] thought an abandoned family would be more likely to receive assistance, or perhaps they simply could not cope with the pressure to provide when that was proving impossible."⁸³ Men are the doers in American society and their masculinity is tied to how well they do. To be out done or rescued by a young girl challenged everything masculinity was believed to stand for.

Most of the villains Nancy Drew faces are men. A few women make appearances, but they never work alone and are almost always the wife or sister of the male ringleader. In the original texts only three women emerge as villains: Mary Mason in *The Mystery at Lilac Inn*, Martha Frank in *The Secret at Shadow Ranch*, and Yvonne Wong in *The Secret of Red Gate Farm*. Mary Mason's very actions vilify her more than her brother. Their gang kidnaps Nancy

⁸³ David Kyving, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940: How Americans Lived Through the "Roaring Twenties" and the Great Depression* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 228.

Drew and takes her with them on their escape down river in the middle of a storm. The boat strikes something and begins to sink.

Bud glanced back and saw Nancy lying on the floor where she had been flung at the time of the collision. "How about it?" he demanded of his sister. "Shall we cut her loose?"

He groped in his pocket for a knife, but Mary grasped his hand roughly.

"Don't be a fool!"

"But we can't let her drown!"

"Who's to know? The boat will sink before anyone can get to her."

"But—"

"If we set her free she'll tell everything she knows, and that will mean our finish. Come along before it's too late!"

Bud closed the door of the cabin, and Nancy Drew was left to her fate.

It is Mary who is more willing to leave Nancy to die. By representing an extreme, Mary is portrayed as a worse villain and person than the others.

In the revisions, Mary Mason (now an alias for Gay Moreau) and Yvonne Wong return to harass Nancy Drew in the same ways while Martha Frank has been replaced with a new plot. Several of the male villains have acquired wives who aid them in their swindles. The con-man in *The Bungalow Mystery* now has a wife who provides legitimacy to the situation. The wife is immediately described as an unpleasant person who gets Nancy's suspicions up. The villain in *The Clue in the Diary*, Felix Raybolt, had a wife in the original text, but she was described as being ignorant of his dealings. In the revision she is very much a part and is not above playing on gender role stereotypes to advance their plans.

"Therefore, Mr. Raybolt must be alive" [Nancy stated].

"Then where is he?" Mrs. Raybolt demanded.

"No one knows." Nancy looked directly at the woman. "Unless *you* do," she added disarmingly.

Mrs. Raybolt gave a startled quiver. Then she sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands. The others in the room looked at one another. Was the answer going to be yes or no?

Nancy had a strong hunch that it should be yes, but that as soon as Mrs. Raybolt recovered from the shock of Nancy's unexpected question, she would say

no. Finally the woman raised her head. She did not have the look of a grief-stricken widow. Instead, she glared balefully at Nancy.

“This girl is crazy,” she said. “Another one of those meddling teen-agers. Why doesn’t she stay out of other people’s business? Of course I haven’t heard from Felix. How could I? He’s dead! I tell you he’s dead!” Mrs. Raybolt’s voice had risen to a high pitch.⁸⁴

Mrs. Raybolt uses her emotions to manipulate the people around her, eliciting their sympathetic feelings. Nancy is not fooled by this display and even looks at it disapprovingly.

Not all wives of villains are also crooks. Nancy meets a strange woman several times in *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* who urges her to stay away from the mysterious “nature culture” next door. Each time the woman, who claims to be a member of the cult, is subverting its rules. “[A]s I said before, there are things I can’t explain. The leaders of the Colony will be very angry with me if they find I have left the camp even for a few hours.”⁸⁵ She even tries to warn Nancy. “‘No, I’ll not drag you into it,’ the woman responded. ‘You don’t know what you’d be getting into if you helped me. Why, if they even learn you’ve aided me in mailing this letter—’ Nancy saw the woman shudder...She realized the woman was trying to warn her of danger.”⁸⁶ When Nancy, Bess, and George are captured by the cult—now revealed to be a counterfeiting ring—in the course of their spying, it is revealed that the woman is “the wife of Maurice Hale and had been led into wrong-doing against her will. She had hated the life she had been forced to lead, but had evidently been unable to escape from it.”⁸⁷ She speaks out against their treatment once, but is obviously terrorized by her husband.

“Oh, Maurice, please don’t be too harsh with the girls,” a timid voice pleaded. “They didn’t mean to do any harm.”...

“Didn’t mean any harm?” the leader drawled sarcastically. “Oh, no, of course not. They only wanted to land us all in jail! Not that you care! If I had known

⁸⁴ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1962), 131.

⁸⁵ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 147.

⁸⁶ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 147-148.

⁸⁷ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 183.

what an old whiner you were, I'd never have married you! Now mind your own business and let me attend to this affair!"

...Frightened by the words of her husband, the woman moved into the far corner of the room. For one brief moment, Nancy had hoped that she might intercede in their behalf, but now she realized that the woman dared not say more.⁸⁸

She does not have enough courage to leave her husband—the only course of action available to her, since a wife cannot turn state's evidence against her husband. In the end, Nancy thinks highly enough of her actions to request that her sentence be mitigated. "“Oh, don't arrest her," Nancy pleaded. 'She isn't like the rest. She tried to save us but they wouldn't listen to her... She doesn't deserve a prison term,' Nancy insisted. 'Her husband forced her to live the life she did.'"⁸⁹ Nancy's interest in Mrs. Hale reveals the pity she has for women who lack courage and for those forced to live under the rule of a husband. It reinforces her own decision to remain an independent female.

Gender identities and roles are a major focus of the Nancy Drew books. Nancy herself is described as having both male and female traits. She straddles the established gender roles of each era, but never actually steps beyond them. Her femininity and thus gender are never called into question. The Nancy Drew of the original texts embodies the New Woman ideal of the early twentieth century in her independence both inside the home and outside in the public sphere. She was strong willed and independent, or in her own words, "self-reliant and brave."⁹⁰ In the revisions her character had been toned down, emphasizing her femininity and making her less likely to upset the more rigidly defined gender balance of the post-World War II era. She became less independent and more deferential. Nancy could now be described as "sedate and prim,"⁹¹ something the character was trying not to be in the previous era. While Nancy Drew does not

⁸⁸ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 183.

⁸⁹ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 193-194.

⁹⁰ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 53.

⁹¹ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 206.

follow the idealized “feminine mystique” many of the other characters in the novels do, reinforcing its prominence in society. Helen Corning is one such character. She becomes much more important in the revised texts as Nancy comes to need a companion. Helen also serves to remind girls that becoming engaged is what really matters, as the mystery will soon be solved, but the husband one keeps forever.

Cousins Bess and George fill the void Helen leaves (when she presumably marries). The two girls represent the extremes of Nancy Drew’s character and serve to make the latter seem less extraordinary. Bess is the embodiment of womanhood while George is the group’s tomboy. Both show that Nancy can only be Nancy by pushing at the limits of some gender identities while maintaining others. The two cousins become less extreme versions of Nancy by the time of the revisions. Bess is less timid and her weight issues and love of sweets has become a running gag. George is less masculine, though still a tomboy, as exemplified by the changes in her name—from “George” to “it’s short for Georgia.” Both Bess and George represent the limits of what is allowed by the established female identity in each era.

Hannah Gruen also evolves with the decades, becoming more important in the later novels. In the original texts of the 1930s she is simply the maid-of-all-work whose presence frees Nancy from the home. She is the symbol of the Drews’ wealth and prosperity. As time passes and attitudes towards gender and social class changes, it becomes acceptable, if not necessary, for Hannah to become one of the family. Thus she is able by the 1950s to fill the role of substitute mother. Out of all of the reoccurring female characters in the series, it is Hannah who best exemplifies the dominant narrative of the feminine mystique. She is the stand-in maternal figure of the Drew family. Rarely is she depicted outside of the home. Hannah had become in the postwar era an extension of the domestic sphere.

Victims and villains can easily be identified by how they portray certain gendered roles. Those characters who step outside of the prescribed gender stereotypes or try to manipulate them are instantly suspect. Masculinity is used as an indicator of who is suspect and who is to be pitied and aided. All of the men that Nancy Drew aids have in some way had their masculinity called into question, either due to their age or their actions. Since the men have been eviscerated, Nancy never crosses into their sphere. In the revised texts women especially are guilty of exploiting gendered expectations to their advantage by using their emotions to try and distract Nancy, the police and others. This blatant exhibit of emotion is looked at disapprovingly by Nancy, who herself rarely displays emotion. The societal defined gender roles are rigid. Nancy Drew is able to walk the line because she never actually crosses it. Those who do are to be suspected or pitied.

Chapter 2: Class, Race and Ethnicity

Nancy Drew is not a Robin Hood type, helping poor unfortunates. Her original mission was to uphold the status quo. Even when Nancy does help people of a lower class, she never elevates them to her level. The farmers in *The Secret of the Old Clock* and *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* do not immediately sell their farms and live the high life of the city. Rather they use their new-found wealth to make sure that they remain self-sufficient and the picture of the hardy farmer. Other mysteries involve Nancy returning stolen items to their rightful owners, elevating them or ensuring their correct place in society. Most importantly, the language used to describe those that Nancy Drew aids implies that they are “deserving.” Appearances and mannerisms play a large role in how she evaluates who is deserving and who is not as well as who is a victim and who is a villain. “Lower-class people tend to either be docile, like Millie Burden in *The Mystery of Red Gate Farm* who knows her place in the world and accepts it, or angry and prone to criminal activity.”⁹² Evaluating peoples’ appearance and behavior by their social class allows Nancy to immediately spot who to aid and who to oppose.

The Drew family of the 1930s is best described as upper-middle class, if not outright wealthy. They employ only one servant but have two automobiles, and neither is described as an inexpensive Model T, bought on credit. “Carson Drew finds it necessary to maintain a certain social position, and accordingly Nancy was frequently called upon to entertain noted professional men.”⁹³ Following the model of the Progressive Era, Nancy, as a wealthy woman, seeks to help poor unfortunates. It is her version of charity work. She has a “generous clothing

⁹² Sally E. Parry, “The Secret of the Feminist Heroine: The Search for Values in Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton,” in Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls’ Series* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1997), 153.

⁹³ “Detailed Information and Data About Nancy Drew Herself,” box 239, folder 2, Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library.

allowance” and never needs to ask her father for money as he is always willing to dole it out to her. By the 1950s the Drews’ circumstances have changed. They still have a great deal of money, but no longer identify with the upper echelon of River Heights society. Instead the Drew family has become a part of the growing middle class; their home could be found in many American suburbs.

Hannah Gruen best exemplifies the changes in social class that occur between the 1930s and 1950s. The original text of *The Secret of the Old Clock* illustrates Hannah’s place in the Drew household during the 1930s: “The Drews employed one servant, Hannah Gruen, an elderly maid of all work who had been with them for many years.”⁹⁴ In the space of a generation Hannah is elevated from maid to domestic stand-in for homemaker and mother. “[T]he pleasant, slightly plump woman...was Hannah Gruen, housekeeper for the Drews, who had helped rear Nancy since the death of the girl’s own mother many years before.”⁹⁵ Few in postwar America employed “servants” and almost never a white woman. Making her a part of the family elevates Hannah’s social position while also down playing that of the Drew family.

The first mystery Nancy Drew tackles involves a possible second will that names deserving heirs. The opening line of the original text of *The Secret of the Old Clock* sets the tone: ““It would be a shame if all that money went to the Tophams! They will fly higher than ever!””⁹⁶ The Mr. Richard Topham family is described as nouveau riche, flashy, arrogant snobs, undeserving of even more money. Mr. Topham is identified as a speculator on the stock market. Though the novel was written before the market crash on October 29, 1929, many readers would

⁹⁴ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 12.

⁹⁵ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 13.

⁹⁶ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 1.

still have agree with Nancy's sentiments toward the family.⁹⁷ The Stratemeyer Syndicate instructions to the author, Mildren Wirt Benson, were to make the differences in social class readily apparent to the readers. "In reading over the plot, you will, I am sure, see the advantage of bringing out the disagreeable points of the Topham family and especially the daughters and also the advantage of stressing old Abigail's poverty and then her sickness and also the poverty of the Horner girls. All these things will increase interest in what Nancy is trying to do."⁹⁸ Abigail Rowen and the Horner sisters had been among a group of friends and relatives promised money by Josiah Crowley before he died. In his final years he lived with the Topham family, distant cousins, who influenced him to leave them all of his money. Crowley seemed to have regretted this, as it was well know in the town of River Heights that "They treated him like a prince until he made his will in their favor and then they acted as though he were dirt under their feet."⁹⁹ When the Horner girls do receive money from the second will, they immediately put it into their farm, turning it into a high class chicken farm. "But the thing that pleased [Nancy] the most was the realization that Allie and Grace were happy in their work."¹⁰⁰ Abigail Rowen uses the money to ensure aid in her final years. The Tomphams are reduced to circumstances fitting them. "'They're practically in bankruptcy. Richard Topham has been losing on the stock market of late... They are moving into a small house this week, and from now on they'll not be able to carry themselves so high.'"¹⁰¹ By solving the mystery, Nancy does not elevate any of the beneficiaries to the class of the Drew family, but rather removes them as a possible burden to society and gives the antagonistic Tompham family their just do.

⁹⁷ The manuscript for *The Secret of the Old Clock* was received by the Stratemeyer Syndicate on November 8, 1929 (Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, NYPL). Richard Topham's professions was identified in the outline written at least a month before that (privately held).

⁹⁸ Edward Stratemeyer to Mrs. A. A. Wirt, 3 October 1929; Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library.

⁹⁹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 207.

¹⁰¹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 205.

The 1950s were hailed as a time of prosperity where a burgeoning middle class could afford anything (thanks to credit). This is reflected in the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* with the elimination of class boundaries. Characters are no longer in desperate poverty. Partly this is due to new government programs. Abigail Rowen (now a widow instead of a spinster) still has only \$5 to her name when Nancy first meets her, but she is quick to point out that that is only until her next pension check arrives.¹⁰² Allison Hoover (formerly Allie Horner) no longer aspires to be a chicken farmer. Instead she has a singing ability and uses her inheritance to fund lessons. The Tophams are still described as social upstarts, but it is their behavior rather than how they got their money that is the focus.

Nancy also has or makes friends of her own social class who find themselves in need of her help. These heiresses, or rather their guardians, are swindled out of their fortunes. In *The Bungalow Mystery* Nancy Drew meets Laura Pendleton after the latter saves Nancy and Helen from drowning during a storm. Laura, “a tall, slender girl, with delicately molded features and tragic brown eyes,” has been recently orphaned and is living at a hotel, awaiting the arrival of her guardian, a school friend of her mother’s whom she has never met.¹⁰³ The man’s behavior makes him immediately suspect to Nancy.

She had taken an instant dislike to Jacob Aborn, although she realized that she had no reason for her feeling. He seemed kind enough to Laura, and apparently deeply interested in her welfare. Yet at times his eyes had a hard, almost cruel, glint as he gazed upon her. Nancy was ashamed of her suspicion, yet she could not help but wonder if the man’s affection for his ward was genuine.¹⁰⁴

Nancy Drew’s first suspicions are always correct. She meets Laura again as the girl is running away from her guardian and takes the girl home with her. Laura’s complaints against the man are all class based.

¹⁰² Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 73.

¹⁰³ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 21.

¹⁰⁴ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 37.

“Jacob Aborn is so dictatorial and mean,” Laura began...“Oh, the bungalow is alright...But, Nancy, would you believe it? He doesn’t keep a single servant.”

“He didn’t expect you to do the work?”

“He did, Nancy.” And the bungalow has nine rooms, too. I hadn’t been there an hour when he told me to get busy.”

“How mean! Why, you’re not strong enough to do hard work,” Nancy protested. “I thought your mother left an ample allowance for your needs.”

“I thought the same, but it seems I was mistaken...Oh, you have no idea how I’ve suffered the last few days, Nancy. Jacob Aborn has been so hateful to me. He won’t give me any spending money, and he says I’m not to have any more money for clothes...And he’s been trying to force me to turn over Mother’s jewels to him...He said he intended to put them in a safe place, but I didn’t believe him, I feel sure he expected to sell them.”¹⁰⁵

Every demand Aborn makes can be justified if Laura is not as rich as she thought. Housework must indeed seem hard work to one who has never had to lift a finger before. Not keeping a servant does not make one a villain. The same is true for withholding spending and clothing money. Yet each thing raises a flag to Nancy about how an upper-class man should behave and that the expectations of a girl of the same class should be met. Does not her own father provide all for her? It is only after spying on the man that Nancy learns for sure that he is planning to make a getaway with Laura’s inheritance.

Laura Pendleton is still an heiress in the revision of *The Bungalow Mystery*. Her new guardians, Jacob Aborn and wife, are no longer evaluated on the lifestyle they provide. It is now strictly their behaviors and actions that are judged. “Nancy was puzzled. The Aborns’ behavior was unusual and thoughtless, she felt.”¹⁰⁶ Mrs. Aborn especially comes under censure from Nancy. This stand-in for a mother seems to fall short of expectations. “Nancy was confused by the woman’s seemingly dual personalities. She could be crude as on the evening before, or sweet as she appeared now. Perhaps, at heart, she meant well. Nancy hoped so for Laura’s sake, but a

¹⁰⁵ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 64-66.

¹⁰⁶ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1960), 23.

strange feeling of distrust persisted.”¹⁰⁷ Laura is locked in her room and over hears the Aborns discussing taking her jewels before she runs away. Her case seems much more legitimate this way to readers of the 1950s.

Nancy Drew judges the people she meets by their appearances and manners. When visiting Arizona, she meets Martha Frank and her young charge. “Presently they came to a dilapidated shack which was set back in the woods...” The door was opened by “an old woman with wispy gray hair and sharp, black eyes.”¹⁰⁸ The young girl living with her, Lucy Brown is described as almost angelic. “Though dressed in the ugliest rags imaginable, the child was unusually pretty; she had almost perfect features and her curly golden hair would have been lovely had it been properly washed.”¹⁰⁹ Nancy is drawn to the child immediately due to her appearance. “[I]t seemed a pity that such an attractive child must live in such wretched circumstances.”¹¹⁰ Based on no other evidence than such an attractive girl could not live in poverty, Nancy sets out to unravel how the two are related. “[Nancy] felt certain that Lucy Brown came of far better stock than squatter quality. What could be the tie that bound her to Martha? Obviously, they had no affection for each other and the child had appeared actually to fear the old woman.”¹¹¹ When visiting Lucy alone one day, Nancy is shown a trunk full of expensive toddler’s clothes and jewelry. She concludes that they must have once belonged to Lucy and Martha Frank had to have come by the child dishonestly. With some help from her father, Nancy learns that Lucy might have been kidnapped. “[I]t seems probable that her kidnappers would have destroyed all evidence pertaining to her identity... Of course, they may

¹⁰⁷ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1960), 32-33.

¹⁰⁸ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 46.

¹⁰⁹ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 48.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 53.

have been too stupid to think of that,' [Nancy said]."¹¹² Until she went snooping, Nancy's suspicions rested on the fact that she believed Lucy to be "better stock" than Martha Frank. She judged their appearances, actions, and behaviors against the rigid social hierarchy of the day and found Martha to be lacking and Lucy to be exceptional. The only explanation for Lucy must therefore be that she did not belong in that environment. That Martha would be "too stupid" to destroy the evidence of her crime only reinforces the stereotypes of differing social classes of the day.

Mary Mason

Appearances are everything to the Nancy of the original texts. It is not just how persons look that influences Nancy Drew, but also their homes. Descriptions of residences are common in the series, for both the victims and the villains, and highlight their best and worst qualities. "The value system inherent in the Drew books is nicely summed up by one of the most prevalent images in the series: the great house now in decay and overgrown by unruly shrubs and weeds. It is part of Nancy's role as detective to restore the fine old house to its former glory and its rightful owners."¹¹³

Rosemary directed her to The Mansion, which was located in an isolated spot on the outskirts of Cliffwood. Through the tall oak and maple trees which partially hid the house from the road, Nancy Drew caught her first glimpse of the place. She was a little startled, for with its two large turrets at the front, the Turnbull residence was not unlike a ruined castle.

It was a large, massive structure, built of white stone which, with the passing of the decades, had blackened and crumbled. Undoubtedly, in years gone by it had deserved the title of "mansion," but now it could boast little of its old glory. With the ebb of the Turnbull fortune, the house had fallen into decay.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1931), 174.

¹¹³ Carol Billman, *The Secret of the Stratemeyer Syndicate: Nancy Drew, The Hardy Boys, and the Million Dollar Fiction Factory* (New York: The Ungar Publishing Co., 1986), 114.

¹¹⁴ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 41-42.

While Nancy Drew does not help restore The Mansion to its former glory, she does ensure that it will remain in the family and out of the hands of the villain. Just as Nancy could spot a diamond in the rough, she was also able to note who was putting on airs.

Nancy Drew paused in front of the Topham residence on Highland Boulevard. She surveyed the structure with distaste.

The house was a large, pretentious affair of nondescript type. It was set back from the street and seemed to look down rather aloofly upon the surrounding homes. Even a casual glance at the lawn revealed that it has been “landscaped” with a vengeance. In an effort to “do it in proper style,” Mrs. Topham had crowded the yard with sundials, benches, bird houses, and statues.

“Such a lack of taste!” Nancy thought.¹¹⁵

The descriptions of domestic situations did not stop at the front door. The interiors of homes were also commented upon as a way to evaluate the occupants.

The room in which Nancy found herself was even more bizarre than she had anticipated. Expensive oriental rugs clashed with window draperies of a different hue. The walls were heavy with paintings which were entirely out of place in such a small room, and period furniture had been added indiscriminately.

But Nancy Drew was not interested in Mrs. Topham’s lack of taste.¹¹⁶

Nancy might not have been interested in Mrs. Topham’s taste, or lack of it, but she did note it and use it as judgment. Peoples’ homes served as extensions of themselves, giving Nancy another piece of evidence to render judgment by.

Socioeconomic class is not the only boundary that Nancy Drew is protecting in the original texts. Racial and ethnic minorities are also instantly suspected. There are three African-American characters in the first seven novels and they only appear in the original texts. The first, Jeff Tucker, has been much commented upon, simply because of how outlandish the character is. Various minorities also make appearances, and almost always as villains. The only exception is the Swensons in *The Clue in the Diary*. This Swedish family is a better fit with white mainstream society—the “WASPS”—and shares many of the same values as Nancy Drew. Mildred August

¹¹⁵ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 95.

¹¹⁶ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 96.

Wirt Benson is up front about that fact that “In my style of writing, nearly all shacks were run down and villains could usually be identified by their crude manners or penetrating eyes.”¹¹⁷ The bad guys can instantaneously be spotted by Nancy Drew because they look different from her.

Difference was to be feared. America placed new limits on the immigration of certain ethnic groups with the 1921 National Origins Act. Within America, “nativist—rigid defenders of the power of long-present groups and traditional culture—became preoccupied by a sense of threat to their security and the need to keep close watch over immigrants, African Americans, Jews” and others who threatened to upset the established power structure.¹¹⁸ The culture they sought to uphold was that of White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants (WASPs). If one appeared or behaved differently, then that person was to be treated with suspicion and scorn.

Jeff Tucker is the caretaker of the Topham’s summer cottage in *The Secret of the Old Clock*. Nancy learns that the clue she needs has been sent there. Upon arriving she finds the cottage in the middle of being burglarized and is locked in a closet. She is just escaping when Jeff Tucker appears. “She stood face to face with Jeff Tucker, the colored caretaker employed by the Tophams. The robbers had led her to believe that they had harmed the fellow, and Nancy was glad to see him well and happy—albeit a little too happy, for Jeff Tucker plainly had had a bit too much to drink.”¹¹⁹ He is quick to point out that it’s not his fault the cottage was robbed. “I’s just a plain culled man with a wife and seven chillum a-dependin’ on me.”¹²⁰ Jeff Tucker’s language is a jarring dialect popularized by the jolly black minstrel character of vaudeville acts. Modern readers (of the 1930s) would have been familiar with the characterization through the

¹¹⁷ Mildred Wirt Benson, “More About Nancy,” introduction to Carolyn Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch*, 1931, facsimile (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1994), [vi].

¹¹⁸ Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States*, 9.

¹¹⁹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 139.

¹²⁰ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 140.

Amos 'n' Andy radio show, which began broadcasting in 1929. When asked his whereabouts during the robbery Jeff Tucker goes into a long winded spiel.

“It ain’t such an excitin’ life, Miss, and while I’d done sowed all mah wild oats, I still sows a little rye now and den.”

“Yes, Jeff—I can smell it on your breath right now...”

“You cain’t blame me, Miss,” he protested. “*He* give it to me.”

“Who is this ‘he’?”

“Why, dat white man who drives up in de big see-dan. He sees me out thah and knows how lonesome and useless I feels, so he says: ‘Jeff, hop in. I know a place where!’ So in I hops. Course I locked up dis heah house and de bahn and see dat everything was safe.”¹²¹

Nancy rolls her eyes and questions just how “safe” he left the house. She grills him about clocks in the house, learning the one she seeks is missing. Upon finding that Jeff could help identify the robbers, she decides to take him with her to the police, since there is no telephone in the cottage.

“Bettah slow down now, Miss,” Jeff cautioned. “De marshal of dis town is mighty persnickitty about how folks act. He’s run me in mo’n once.”

“For speeding?”

“No, just fo’ enjoyin’ myself.”

“Then I supposed you can tell me where the jail is.”

“Deed I can, Miss. I suah can! Fact is, dis is my favorite jail.”¹²²

Jeff Tucker portrays every negative stereotype there is of African-Americans. He is a drunk, uneducated, lazy, and a constant nuisance to the neighborhood and the law. His masculinity is called into question by his drinking habits and inability to support such a large family by being completely self-centered. Nancy’s reaction to the character alternates between amusement, much like one witnessing the antics of a child, and complete frustration because of his inability to act like a rational adult.

In *The Hidden Staircase*, Nathan Gombet and his housekeeper, “A colored woman who looks as though she were an ogre,”¹²³ causes problems for the Drew family and the elderly Turnbull sisters. From the start, readers are led to dislike Gombet.

¹²¹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 141-142.

¹²² Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 147-148.

He was unusually tall and thin with spindling legs which gave him the appearance of a towering scarecrow. The illusion was heightened by his clothing, which was ill-fitting and several seasons out of style. Nancy could not help but notice several grease spots on the man's clothing. However, it was not the man's clothing or miserly appearance which repulsed her, but rather his unpleasant face. He had sharp, piercing eyes which seemed to bore into her.¹²⁴

Gombet pushes his way into the Drew Home when Nancy is there alone. He insults Carson Drew's integrity by insisting that the man bought his land for "a ridiculously low figure" on behalf of a railroad company. He even believes he can take advantage of the fact that Nancy is a young girl and search Mr. Drew's study for the papers he seeks. "Nancy knew she must act quickly, for she saw the man was beside himself with rage. Unless she handed over the papers he demanded, she did not doubt but that he would attempt to do her bodily injury."¹²⁵ Only the threat of telephoning the police gets him to leave. Nathan Gombet plays the Jewish stereotype of being obsessed by money. "“Oh, I wouldn't go so far as to say he's crazy, Nancy; but he's money mad. It's an obsession with him that someone is trying to cheat him out of something. He went nearly daffy when the bridge went up [on the land he sold]. He even threatened he'd blow it up if they didn't pay his price' [a friend tells Nancy]."¹²⁶ Blowing up a railroad bridge is a reminder of anarchy, something still to be feared after the Red Scare of the 1910s-1920s.

Nathan Gombet is willing to use the relationship between Carson and Nancy Drew to his advantage. Meeting Mr. Drew at the train station as he arrives home from a business trip, he tells a tale of Nancy being injured in an automobile accident in front of his house and that she is convalescing there. Allowing Gombet to take him to her, Carson Drew follows the man upstairs. "Things had happened so rapidly since he had left the train at Cliffwood station that he could scarcely think logically. The fear that Nancy had been injured had driven everything else from

¹²³ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 123.

¹²⁴ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 2-3.

¹²⁵ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 8.

¹²⁶ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 19.

his mind. Now he realized that all unwittingly he had walked into a trap.”¹²⁷ Gombet is willing to use a father’s love for his daughter against a man. More than his greed, this trait makes him an even greater villain.

The Drew family is not the only ones Nathan Gombet is willing to terrorize in his quest for money. After finding a hidden passageway that links his house with the one next door, he plays “ghost” in an attempt to frighten the elderly Turnbull sisters into selling at a low price. He uses the passage way to steal from the sisters as well. “‘It was a cowardly trick—to try to cheat two women,’ Carson Drew observed.”¹²⁸ Every move Gombet makes elicits outrage from readers, who cannot help but cheer when the man is brought to justice by Nancy (and the police).

Women too suffer from the ideology that different is immediately suspect. Yvonne Wong first appears in *The Secret at Red Gate Farm* as a sales girl. “A dark-complexioned young woman of foreign appearance who wore a vivid Chinese costume and yet obviously was not a full-blooded Chinese woman, came forward. Her smile, as she led them toward the perfume counter was extremely forced, and she spoke with a distinct accent.”¹²⁹ She is exotic and different. When Yvonne Wong hesitates and tries to dissuade Bess from buying a particular bottle of perfume, she instantly becomes an object of distrust. Her appearance is cited as the reason behind this.

“You’d think she would want to sell the perfume” [Bess said].

“Yes,” Nancy agreed with a troubled frown, “she acted rather queerly about it.”

“Snippy,” George added. “I didn’t like her looks. She was too flashy or something.”¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 111.

¹²⁸ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 198.

¹²⁹ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 4.

¹³⁰ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 7.

Nancy and her new found friend, Millie Burd, a white girl, discover that the French-Chinese woman was given preference in a new position. To make Millie feel better, Nancy attacks Yvonne's character, reassuring Millie that she didn't want that job anyway. "It wasn't your fault that you didn't get the position," Nancy insisted. "Why, this girl Yvonne Wong isn't in your class at all. She's cheap and loud. There's simply no accounting for tastes, that's all."¹³¹ While her race is not directly identified as to why she is "cheap and loud" it is implied through Nancy's continued use of Yvonne's full name, emphasizing the foreignness of her surname. Later Nancy and her friends are reading a newspaper and come across Yvonne Wong's name linked to a criminal organization. "It doesn't surprise me to learn that Yvonne was mixed up in some underhanded affair," Bess remarked. "I didn't like her appearance from the first!"¹³² Nancy's intellectual powers were reassured as "She had guessed from the beginning that Yvonne Wong was a suspicious character."¹³³ When Nancy, Bess, George, and Millie are captured by the criminals Wong is working with, the latter shows no remorse over doing harm to other women. "Yvonne Wong heartlessly proposed that the girls be tied up and left prisoners in the cave."¹³⁴ Not only is her foreignness a cause for criminality, but it also upsets the established gender roles.

Race and ethnicity play a large role in who Nancy Drew hires as a temporary maid when Hannah Gruen is called away suddenly in the original text of *The Mystery at Lilac Inn*. The language used to describe each prospective applicant is reflective of the stereotypes of the 1930s. Nancy first interviews a "colored woman," who is also referred to in the passage as a "Negress." "[A] more unlikely housekeeper Nancy had ever seen. She was dirty and slovenly in appearance

¹³¹ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 57.

¹³² Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 84.

¹³³ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 175.

¹³⁴ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 184.

and had an unpleasant way of shuffling her feet when she walked.”¹³⁵ Like Jeff Tucker in an earlier novel, African-Americans are almost expected to not care about their own appearance. Next “‘the agency sent me an Irish woman... She was the most unreasonable housekeeper I ever interviewed’ [Nancy complained to her father].”¹³⁶ Nancy does not explain why this applicant does not pass muster, though simply because she was Irish could be a small part. The “Irish Need Not Apply” signs of the late 19th century were still apart of collective memory. “‘I called another agency and they sent me a Scotch lassie. She looked promising, but I found she hadn’t had a particle of experience and knew little about cooking’ [Nancy complained].”¹³⁷ Scottish is almost English, but the “lassie” could still not stand up to the expectations Nancy Drew set. The next applicant, Mary Mason, is described as “a tall, wiry, dark-complexioned girl who...had piercing eyes and started at Nancy almost impudently.”¹³⁸ Nancy is immediately suspicious of the girl, criticizing in her thoughts everything from her “dirty pocketbook” to the way she seemed to be interested in looking around the Drew home. After learning that Carson Drew is a lawyer, the maid chose to withdraw her application. Finally Nancy finds her ideal housekeeper. “Mrs. Sadie Carter, an elderly woman who suited her in every way. Mrs. Carter was near in appearance and thoroughly experienced. Her references were of the best and her demands not at all unreasonable.”¹³⁹ The name suggests a white Anglo-Saxon woman and her age would imply experience. The order that Nancy interviewed the potential housekeepers reflects the historical trend in servants. African-American slaves were replaced by Irish and other western European

¹³⁵ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1930), 16.

¹³⁶ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1930), 17.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1930), 18.

¹³⁹ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1930), 24-25.

women in the early 19th century. However, the preference always remained for a servant that looked and sounded liked the employer.¹⁴⁰

The revision process of the 1950s and 1960s provided an opportunity to portray minorities in a positive light; an opportunity Harriet Stratemeyer Adams did not take. Instead the characters of contention are simply altered or altogether removed. This too fit into postwar mentality. Readers living in suburban America were unlikely to encounter African-Americans or other minorities in their day-to-day lives. It would have been alien to many of them whose families had fled the conflict of inner-cities for the quiet life in the suburbs. The burgeoning Civil Rights Movement would have seemed distant when viewed on the family's television.

Jeff Tucker is still the caretaker of the Tophams summer house in *The Secret of the Old Clock*. In the revised edition he is described to Nancy as ““the tallest, skinniest man I’ve ever seen outside a circus.””¹⁴¹ When she meets him, Nancy notes that he is “a very tall, thin, elderly man.”¹⁴² He still speaks in dialect, but is no longer a drunk.

Jeff Tucker seemed embarrassed as he began to speak. “I was plain hornswoggled by those critters, Miss Drew. They pulled up here in a movin’ van, and told me I’d better get after some trespassers they’d seen nearby. So,” the elderly man went on with a sigh, “I believed ‘em. One of the men went with me down to the lake and lock me in a shed. I just got out.” He shook his head sadly. “And all this time they was robbin’ the place. Guess I’ll be fired.”¹⁴³

His only fault seems to be lack of intelligence. Though his race is never mentioned, the illustration several pages later clearly depicts a humble white man standing behind Nancy as she relates the tale to the police.¹⁴⁴ Unlike the Jeff Tucker of the original text, Nancy has some respect and sympathy for this man. She calls him “Mr. Tucker” rather than by his first name.

¹⁴⁰ Jennifer Pustz, *Voices From the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants' Lives at Historic House Museums* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 60.

¹⁴¹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 94.

¹⁴² Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 116.

¹⁴³ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 117.

¹⁴⁴ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 121.

After tracking down the thieves Nancy even sticks up for him. “‘There *is* one favor you might do me,’ said Nancy. ‘Ask your chief to put in a good word for the caretaker, Jeff Tucker, to the Tophams. Perhaps he won’t lose his job.’”¹⁴⁵ The Jeff Tucker of the revisions is a poor, uneducated, elderly white man who falls into Nancy’s “deserving” poor category.

African-American characters were simply written out of the revisions, removing any chance to redeem the stereotypes. Instead race became invisible, ignored as though the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement did not exist.¹⁴⁶ For the intended audience of the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* (white, middle class, girls) the movement was taking place outside of their suburban sprawl and thus outside of their world. Removing the characters rather than creating positive depictions erased any possible unintended racial tension within the stories. The old guard led by Adams would not have stood for the black minstrel character of Jeff Tucker in the original texts to be placed on the same level as a poor, yet still deserving, white man.

Ethnicity was also virtually erased in the revised texts. Nathan Gombet was changed to Nathan Gomber, removing any hint of anti-Semitism, which might have caused an outcry after the horrors of the Holocaust. His black housekeeper is gone as well, replaced by a gang of men. Conformity is key in the revised texts. Villains are still described as “dark and beady eyed” to differentiate them from Nancy and her “WASP” friends. However, major identifying characteristics are removed, so readers can no longer pin-point a criminal’s race or ethnicity. Difference is still suspect, but America as a whole is depicted as much more homogenous society.

¹⁴⁵ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 141.

¹⁴⁶ Eugenia Kaledin, *Daily Life in the United States, 1940-1959: Shifting Worlds* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 103.

Chapter 3: Violence, The Law and Authority

During the course of each book Nancy Drew must deal with the uglier side of mystery solving, often as she wraps up the case and personally tracks or confronts the villains. In the course of her sleuthing she finds herself in many desperate situations. The level and type of violence changed between the original and revised texts. Each time Nancy emerges victorious, some times on her own, but often with help.

The level of violence in the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* is astounding. Nancy Drew does not make it through a single mystery unscathed. Rocks are thrown through windows; she is run off the road; left to starve or drown; knocked unconscious; kidnapped; left dire warnings, and more. Yet these attacks never leave any lasting effects on her or her companions. Perhaps this is the greatest evidence of her “superness.”

In the first seven volumes of the original texts Nancy is knocked unconscious three times. Each time she feels momentarily disorientated, but recovers quickly.

Before Nancy Drew could turn, the butt of a revolver crashed down upon her head. With a low moan of pain, she sagged to the floor and lay still.

How long she remained unconscious, she did not know, but when at last she opened her eyes she found herself stretched out on the cold floor of the cellar. She was bewildered and for a minute could not account for the splitting pain in her head...

Nancy became aware that someone was standing over her, but objects whirled before her eyes and she could not distinguish the face...

He reached over, and, catching her by the arm, jerked her roughly to her feet. Nancy was so weak that she nearly fell.¹⁴⁷

Nancy recovers quickly and finds a way to keep from being tied up too tightly, already plotting her escape. She never suffers more than momentary effects of being knocked out and certainly

¹⁴⁷ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 134-135.

never the known effects of a concussion such as being sick. Her mind is never damaged and continues to work in overdrive.

There are things worse than being knocked unconscious in the series, though it is rarely ever explicitly stated. In three of the seven original texts Nancy (and sometimes others along side) is left for dead. It is always a passive action on the part of the villains. In only one book is it acknowledged that the act would be murder. “‘Murder? Who said anything about murder? What a harsh word! I’ll just leave you and your friend here and go away. If anything happens—’ Dowd shrugged his shoulders indifferently.”¹⁴⁸ The villain’s response neatly sums up the recurring action. Murder is a harsh word, and one the Stratemeyer Syndicate would refrain from using again. Each time it is Nancy (and company) being left to starve to death. “‘Now you can starve for all I care!’ the man laughed harshly”¹⁴⁹ after locking Nancy in a closet in *The Secret of the Old Clock*. The ringleader in *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* is more explicit in his plans, though he never gets the chance to carry them out.

“We’ll have to get them out of here,” he said. “They’ll be missed and a search party might visit this cave. How about the shack at the river? It’s in such a desolate spot no one would think of looking there until after—”

He did not finish the sentence, but from the sinister expression on his face Nancy and her friends guessed his meaning. He intended to lock them up in an isolated cabin and leave them without means of sustenance! In that way, their lips would be sealed.¹⁵⁰

The villains trail off before actually stating what harm their action would cause. Only once is the actual outcome of the villains’ actions stated; every other time it is implied—left to starve (or drown)...and thus die.

If anything, the violence in the revised books increases. The attacks against Nancy and her friends are more dire and alarming and more numerous—yet the girl never stops trying to

¹⁴⁸ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 137.

¹⁴⁹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 132.

¹⁵⁰ Keene, *The Secret of Red Gate Farm* (1931), 184.

solve a case because of the danger. In the later books, Nancy and those around her are still attacked and left for dead, but it is the way that they are attacked that is more shocking. *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* highlights the explosion of violence in the revised texts—literally. “They had hardly started when the trio was startled by a loud *boo-oo-m!* It seemed to come from the direction of the cottages!”¹⁵¹ After putting out the fire, the police were immediately called to investigate—not Nancy. “Finally Lieutenant Brice announced, ‘I’ve found fragments of what I am positive *was* a time bomb...’”¹⁵² If Nancy or anyone else had been in the cottage when the bomb went off, it would have meant certain death—something the villains would have known when the bomb was planted and set to go off in the middle of the night. Of all of the attacks on Nancy Drew, this one is the most premeditated.

Explosives are used in another revised text as well. The explosion of the Raybolt’s mansion in the original text of *The Clue in the Diary* is deemed an accident—a gas leak ignited by lighting a cigar. Felix Raybolt takes the opportunity to go into hiding from the enemies he has made by swindling people. In the revision Raybolt has stored explosives in his basement and plans to blow his house up and make it look like he died in the blast, thus escaping from his enemies. It is one thing for a villain to take an opportunity that presents itself and quite another to plan out the violence and to plan to blame someone else.

Death is always the ultimate threat in the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories*. There is never anything worse that could happen to a character, though it seems being reduced to poverty comes close in the original texts. There is never mention of sexual violence, and neither Nancy nor any of the other characters ever express discomfort about being alone in the company of scoundrels. The revision process noted the threat and went further to remove even the opportunity for sexual

¹⁵¹ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1961), 77.

¹⁵² Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1961), 86.

violence. Villains acquire wives who act as a type of chaperone, as in *The Bungalow Mystery*. Laura Pendleton is no longer alone with her “guardian” Jacob Aborn. Instead his wife is always present. Nancy is no longer home alone when Nathan Gomber forces his way into the Drew home demanding to see Mr. Drew’s papers in *The Hidden Staircase*. Hannah is present as well and helps to serve as a deterrent to violence. At times even female villains serve as a sort of chaperone, giving the impression that they would not stand to see any sexual violence committed against one of their sex while they stand by—though they are quite willing to leave Nancy for dead. In a way this upholds the message that pure innocence is the highest ideal and to fall from that pedestal would be no less traumatic than actual death.

Firearms became a symbol of the violence of the prohibition gangster era. Studying who has them, and who doesn’t, and when in the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* reveals much about perceptions of violence. Nancy herself carries a gun in two of the original texts and even fires it once. When Carson Drew is called out of town during one of Nancy’s cases, he makes sure she does not go unprotected.

Carson Drew crossed the room and paused in front of his desk. Unlocking the drawer he took out a shiny object and handed it to his daughter.

“Your revolver, Dad!”

“Yes, I want you to take it with you.”

“But I sha’n’t need it.”

“I hope not. But it pays to be prepared.”¹⁵³

Nancy faithfully carried the revolver, but never found a use for it. The next instance of her use of a gun could be found in any western of the time. Nancy, Bess, George and a cousin are out on a hike in the wilds of Arizona when they realize they are being stalked by a big cat. “Cautiously, the four girls moved forward, Nancy Drew in the lead with her revolver held ready for instant

¹⁵³ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 55.

use.”¹⁵⁴ The girls try to scare the animal away and despite the probability that the mountain lion would not attack four grown girls at once, Nancy springs to the defense.

At the same moment Nancy caught a glimpse of the prowling lynx. Taking aim, she fired.

The bullet struck the animal in the shoulder. It snarled and turned, ready to spring.

Her heart in her throat, for she realized that she must not fail, Nancy fired once more.

As the bullet found its mark, there was a terrible crashing and smashing in the underbrush, and then all was quiet.

“I must have got him,” Nancy cried excitedly.¹⁵⁵

Nancy never owns a gun herself and never draws on a person, setting herself apart from the villains who have no such qualms.

In the original texts, five volumes feature villains with guns and two have shootouts. The first occurs between the police and a group of robbers they are attempting to capture in *The Secret of the Old Clock*.

Then as the van pulled over to the side of the road, the police car drove alongside.

“Halt!” came the order.

The van did not stop...

“Halt!” rang out the warning cry a second time. “Halt or we’ll fire!”

There was a sharp crack of a revolver as the robbers fired the first shot.

The marshal and his deputies answered with a quick volley. One of the shots found its mark—the front tire. The van swerved in the road, and as the two side wheels went off into a steep ditch, toppled over.

In an instant the marshal and his men were out of the police car and had covered the three robbers.¹⁵⁶

This scene could have occurred in any of the gangster movies of the era, though in this case the police did not fire first. The second shootout took place in *The Bungalow Mystery* as Nancy and Carson Drew raced after the villain in separate cars.

¹⁵⁴ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1932), 79.

¹⁵⁵ Keene, *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* (1932), 81.

¹⁵⁶ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 170-171.

Keeping close behind her father's automobile, Nancy kept her eyes on the red tail light. Stumpy, becoming aware that he was being followed, made a sudden burst of speed, and the distance between the cars was increasing.

"Oh, he's getting away," Laura cried anxiously.

"He'll not escape!" Nancy returned grimly. "Dad is speeding up, too!"

"She, too, increased the speed of her roadster to keep in the race. And what a race it was!...

Just then a shot rang out.

Caron Drew had fired as a warning for Stumpy to halt. Instead of stopping, he answered in kind.

There came a vivid flash of fire from his car, and an instant report. Stumpy had not shot into the air. A bullet whizzed dangerously close to the windshield of the brown sedan.

"Keep back, Nancy!" Carson Drew shouted.

The warning was lost in the roar of the wind. On and on the three cars raced. Stumpy gained ground, and then lost it again. Carson Drew approached nearer and nearer. He would soon be within gun range, and this time he intended to shoot at the automobile tires and force Stumpy to halt.¹⁵⁷

Before Carson Drew lowers himself to the level of a villain by shooting at someone, the three cars come to a curve. Stumpy, being too busy eluding the Drews and shooting at them, does not see it until it is too late and goes off the side of the cliff. Being the good people that they are, the Drews rescue Stumpy from the fiery wreck of his car at the risk of their own lives. Nancy even makes sure to save the money he was escaping with, ensuring that Laura will not be left destitute.

Nancy Drew never carries a gun in the revisions. The running gun battles are gone as are most of the scenes of villains waving guns around as a threat. The only people who carry firearms are the police. The only exception is in the revised text of *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* when an old man shows up at the scene of an explosion toting a revolutionary war musket—something only good as a club or museum piece. The police are established as the legitimate authority by the postwar period and thus the only group who can carry weapons.

¹⁵⁷ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 177-178.

Nancy's relationship with the police and the law they are sworn to uphold is tenuous at best in the 1930s. In many cases Nancy chooses the moral righteousness defined by her value system over the legal right of others, which usually results in her circumventing the established authority. For Nancy, the ends justify the means when investigating a case. If a person is deemed innocent by her, then they need to be protected, even if that is from the police. If a person is guilty, then s/he does not deserve to be protected by the laws they are breaking. The books lagged behind popular sentiments concerning the police. By the postwar era, Nancy was working with rather than opposed to the official authority. This allowed Nancy more power than she had previously, though it is controlled by an all-male cast.

This is illustrated through Nancy's complacency in breaking and entering other people's homes and vehicles. Nancy commits an act of breaking and entering in five of the first seven original texts and trespasses in the other two. A few times she is called out on her violations but never by anyone in authority (they never seem to realize her habits). Each time she would not have learned a crucial piece of information without breaking the law. "It was tantalizing to be so close and yet not to be able to learn a thing she wanted to know. Frantically, she glanced about. She must find a way to enter the house!"¹⁵⁸ The incidents are so central to her sleuthing that they are used as the cover image on two of the novels, *The Bungalow Mystery* and *The Mystery at Lilac Inn*, and included as internal illustrations in five other books. "'I'll get in through a window' she thought" before locating one open and easily accessed—by climbing a trellis.¹⁵⁹ Windows often serve as her entrance to villains' homes.

Cautiously, she tried the window. At first it offered stubborn resistance, but as she applied more strength it slowly gave, accompanied by an alarming creak.

"I'll be caught if I don't watch out," Nancy thought... "Here goes!" Nancy decided rashly.

¹⁵⁸ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1930), 142.

¹⁵⁹ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 95.

She swung herself through the opening and was about to lower herself to the floor of the storeroom when she thought of her shoes. They were soaking wet as well as muddy. If she walked across the floor, she would leave a trail.

“No use to court disaster,” she chuckled.¹⁶⁰

Nancy is very aware that what she is doing is wrong and could have dire consequences—she just does not care. Following the clue, solving the mystery, bringing the culprits to justice, and saving the victim is all that matters.

Such blatant breaking of the law goes against the morals that Nancy stands for in postwar society. Each instance of her breaking and entering is made legal or erased. In *The Secret of the Old Clock* she finds the summer cottage standing open with evidence that it has been robbed strewn about. She runs into the closet since it offers the only hiding place. In *The Hidden Staircase* the house is conveniently not legally occupied when Nancy wants to go looking around.

“I’d like to do some sleuthing in that old mansion.”

“You’re not going to break in?” Helen asked, horrified.

Her friend smiled. “No, Helen, I’m not going to evade the law. I’ll go to the realtor who is handling the property and ask him to show me the place.”¹⁶¹

Thirty years earlier Nancy had no qualms about evading the law to enter that particular house, even leading the police in with her. The list continues, but each circumstance is mitigated. Nancy received permission to enter one house from a victim and another she is forced to enter after being kidnapped. She no longer walked right into the house of Martha Frank in *The Secret at Shadow Ranch* because the story had been changed, removing the original plot and characters. The revisions ensured that everything Nancy Drew does is on the up and up.

In the original texts the police receive the same disregard as the law. They are often viewed as bullies, unable to handle the cases assigned to them. In two instances Nancy must step

¹⁶⁰ Keene, *The Bungalow Mystery* (1930), 143-144.

¹⁶¹ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 143.

in and solve the case for them because they have targeted the wrong person. Other times she does not involve the authorities until the very last minute, needing them only to perform the ritual arrest. Continuously Nancy Drew proves herself smarter than the police.

In *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* and *The Clue in the Diary* Nancy competes with the police to solve the mystery first. She takes on the first case at the request of the victim because the police are not making any headway. “‘The case is a little too big for the police,’ Mr. Drew observed with a smile.”¹⁶² Nancy’s biggest fear is that the police will focus all of their attention on someone who is innocent just to solve the crime. “‘You know how some police officers are, Bess—always willing to jump to conclusions if they can close up a troublesome case.’”¹⁶³ In the second mystery she is once again working against the police, trying to prove the innocence of the man they are accusing. The tactics used by the police appall her. “‘Her father had told her how prisoners were sometimes treated. They were given the ‘third degree,’ a merciless grilling which not infrequently caused the victims to confess to crimes they had not committed.’”¹⁶⁴ Nancy fears that if the police resort to such tactics and come out with a confession, it will undermine her investigation. “‘She knew from past experience that the authorities sometimes blundered, and this time the blunder was apt to be embarrassing for her.’”¹⁶⁵ Finding the correct crook after the police have fingered the wrong person embarrasses the police, not Nancy. By staying one step ahead of the police and solving the case first, Nancy is able to prove her superiority.

The police themselves act like bullies at times, abusing their power. Most often they are not actually given names, but when they are, the names are often silly or sound Irish. Many times the police interfere in Nancy’s investigation. She, of course, arrives at the scene first and gently

¹⁶² Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1930), 105.

¹⁶³ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 51.

¹⁶⁴ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 139.

¹⁶⁵ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 120.

questions a possible widow. Then the police arrive. “Nancy and her friends were brushed aside by the pompous officers who took the woman in charge and bombarded her with questions of their own... The four were disgusted at the high-handed manner in which the officers were handling the case.”¹⁶⁶ The overbearing tactics used by officers are noted by Nancy Drew with abhorrence. At times these tactics are even directed at Nancy when she becomes entangled in a case. “The two men were Ed Baxter and Lem Daffil, noted for the high-handed way they rushed people to jail upon the slightest pretext.”¹⁶⁷ Nancy and company even consider trying to out run the officers—after all Nancy Drew does have the better car.

“For two cents I’d step on the gas and try to get away!” Nancy fumed.
“I shouldn’t advise it,” George said uneasily. “Lem Daffil is aching to shoot off that big revolver of his! He’d love to pepper our tires and make a great show so he could get his name in the paper again!”¹⁶⁸

It is only the threat of violence—from the police!—that keeps Nancy from willingly breaking the law. It is clear that the two are not on the same side and are at times competing over who is “right.”

When Nancy solves the mystery first, she often has a difficult time getting the police to act on her information. Usually a mention of her father’s name, and later as her reputation is established, her own name, goads them into action. ““The sheriff may be stupid enough to refuse to arrest him unless he finds *evidence* on the place,’ she thought, in disgust.”¹⁶⁹ Her word might not be enough. Nancy Drew of course always follows the police to witness the arrest. At times she even needs to direct them in how to do their jobs.

[T]he three watched the sheriff with misgiving. They saw him walk up to the back door and knock. When there was no response, he knocked again. He tried the door, but it was locked. Then he peeped in at the kitchen window.

¹⁶⁶ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 97-98.

¹⁶⁷ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 147.

¹⁶⁸ Keene, *The Clue in the Diary* (1932), 149.

¹⁶⁹ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 181.

“No one at home,” he muttered in disgust, turning away.

Nancy could stand it no longer. Springing from the roadster, she ran towards the sheriff.

“You can’t expect Nathan Gombet to welcome you with open arms after all the noise you made coming up the drive,” she cried. “He’d be more apt to welcome you with buckshot! He’s probably watching now from an upstairs window. We’d all make good targets!”

The sheriff glanced anxiously upward and stepped closer to the house.

“It’s pretty serious business to go breaking into a man’s house,” he said, somewhat crestfallen...

“I’ll assume the responsibility,” Nancy said shortly.¹⁷⁰

There is no need for a warrant when Nancy Drew is willing to continue her breaking and entering habit. She has knowledge of the interior layout of the house from her earlier break-in and leads several men in through the cellar window. When that way is blocked by the housekeeper with a sawed-off shotgun, Nancy comes up with a different plan. She leads two officers through a secret passageway that connects the two houses. In the end it is her intelligence that results in the arrest, making the sheriff look like a bumbling fool.

Nancy was not alone in her feeling of superiority over the established authorities during the 1930s. The popular genre of mystery and private detective radio programs often featured the lead running circles around the police as they solved the mystery. Movies of the era made heroes out of the gangsters and bank robbers, thus making their opponents—the police—the villains.

A shift was occurring however during this time in how the public perceived law enforcement. J. Edgar Hoover was one of the driving forces being it in his quest to legitimize the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.). Hoover, director of the F.B.I., led a publicity campaign in the popular media to show his G-Men as the heroes of the day. As the public began to view the government and its police as the legitimate authorities, they also transferred that respect to state and local law enforcement.¹⁷¹ While this shift “in public perception of police as feeble-minded

¹⁷⁰ Keene, *The Hidden Staircase* (1930), 182-183.

¹⁷¹ Powers, *G-Men: Hoover’s FBI In American Popular Culture*, 207.

bullies to professional public servants”¹⁷² is not reflected in the original texts of the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* being studied, it was completed by the postwar era. Thus Nancy Drew’s relationship with the police during the 1950s is a polar opposite from what it was during the 1930s. She is now working along side, and at times, for them.

Nancy Drew is on a first name basis with River Heights Police Chief McGinnis who by the 1950s is a new character in these editions. When she needs information that only the police have access to, such as running a license plate number or seeing if a person has a criminal record, Nancy simply calls the chief of police. “Nancy instinctively noted the license number of the car. On impulse she went to a phone booth and dialed her friend Chief McGinnis of the River Heights Police Department.”¹⁷³ Likewise, when the Drew home is burglarized, Chief McGinnis personally investigates. “Nancy hugged the pleasant-faced woman [Hannah], who said that Police Chief McGinnis had stopped at the house to investigate the burglary.”¹⁷⁴ This personal relationship works to Nancy’s advantage when she needs information or another powerful ally when investigating a mystery.

In the revised text of *The Secret at Red Gate Farm* Nancy finds herself not only working for the local police, but for the Secret Service as well, when tracking down a group of counterfeiters. After overhearing a suspicious telephone conversation, Nancy copies part of a strange code that the man dictated. After breaking part of it, she turns it over to the police. It seems that this was the lynch pin in the case, and now Nancy is an official investigator. “‘I have some news, Nancy,’ the officer [Chief McGinnis] said. ‘It’s discouraging. Nothing on the code or the missing men.’ Then he chuckled, ‘We need another clue from you.’”¹⁷⁵ When she

¹⁷² Robert C. Wadman and William Thomas Allison, *To Protect and Serve: A History of Police in America* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2004), xii.

¹⁷³ Keene, *The Secret at Red Gate Farm* (1961), 51.

¹⁷⁴ Keene, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* (1961), 25.

¹⁷⁵ Keene, *The Secret at Red Gate Farm* (1961), 86-87.

unexpectedly runs into some Secret Service Agents and is accused of passing a fake bill, it is her own name that now saves her. “‘So you’re the young detective Chief McGinnis mentioned in his reports to us,’ one of the [Secret Service] agents said admiringly. ‘What you’ve done so far is really astounding. Chief McGinnis didn’t mention you by name. He probably figured you would prefer him not to.’”¹⁷⁶ It is not just that Nancy is aiding the authorities, now she is receiving credit for it. Adhering to her feminine modesty, she does try to keep her name out of it. The same occurs when she declines to be interviewed for the newspapers and only testifies in court when necessary. She retains this modesty even when praised from the upper echelons.

Just then Secret Service Agent Horton came over to Nancy’s group and extended his hand to her. “Miss Drew,” he said earnestly, “I want to thank you for your work which has resulted in the solution of one of the most baffling cases of counterfeiting the United States Government has ever had. How did you do it?”

Nancy blushed at the praise. “It was sort of a chain reaction, I guess,” the young sleuth replied, and told of the various circumstances that had led to tonight’s adventure.¹⁷⁷

Nancy Drew had done it again, this time solving a case that baffled even the federal government authorities. While she is working with the police this time, it is still her information and sleuthing that locates the criminals and brings them to justice.

Perhaps the best example of the changes that occurred between the two eras in attitudes towards the law and those that uphold it appears in the two editions of *The Secret of the Old Clock*. The plot is the same in both versions: Nancy has tracked down the robbers of the Topham’s summer cottage and steals back the Crowley clock, containing the needed clue to solve the mystery. She then goes for the police, leading them to the robbers. Upon their capture, there is not enough room in the single police car for the criminals and the officers.

There was no room left for the marshal.

“Are you going back through town?” he asked Nancy.

¹⁷⁶ Keene, *The Secret at Red Gate Farm* (1961), 117-118.

¹⁷⁷ Keene, *The Secret at Red Gate Farm* (1961), 174.

“Yes, it’s right on my way to River Heights,” she responded without a thought as to the purpose of the question.

“Then if you don’t mind I’ll ride back with you. There isn’t room in the police car.”

“Why—why, of course,” Nancy stammered.

At once she thought of the clock which she had left on the seat of the roadster. What if the marshal should discover it?...

“Just—a—minute,” Nancy Drew stammered as she darted toward the roadster, blocking the marshal’s path. “There’s a package in the seat. I’ll put it in the back.”

Hastily, she picked up the clock which was covered with a blanket...Before the man would offer to do it for her, she had carried the clock to the rear of the car. Lifting the cover, she placed it on the floor.¹⁷⁸

Later Nancy Drew breathes a sigh of relief over her situation. “‘That was a narrow escape,’ she laughed, as she drove away. ‘It might not have gone so well with me had the marshal discovered stolen goods in my car. It certainly wouldn’t have been easy to explain how I came by that clock.’”¹⁷⁹ Nancy knows that she is in the wrong, but she does not care. Her morals dictate that she is doing the correct thing. This sentiment makes an about-face in the revisions. Nancy handles the same scene quite differently in the 1950s.

Officer Cowen, a strapping, husky man, turned to Nancy. “I’ll ride with you,” he said. “You’re going past headquarters on the main road?”

“It’s on my way to River Heights,” she responded.

“Then the station is on your route. You can drop me off if you will.”

“Why—why, of course,” Nancy stammered. “I’ll be glad to.”

At once she thought of the Crowley clock. What if Officer Cowen should not accept her explanation as to why she had helped herself to the heirloom and its strange contents? If this happened, her progress in solving the mystery might receive a serious setback!

Nancy braced herself. “I’ll just have to ‘fess up,” she said to herself, “and take the consequences!”

...By this time she and the trooper had reached her car. “Would you like me to drive?” he asked.

“Why—er—yes, if you wish,” Nancy replied. “But first I want to show you something,” she added, as he opened the door for her. “I have some stolen property here.”

“What!”

¹⁷⁸ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 175-176.

¹⁷⁹ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), 177.

Quickly Nancy explained that she had taken the responsibility of trying to learn whether or not the van held the stolen furniture. “I recognized a few of the pieces, and possibly this clock which the Tophams told me about. I took that out to examine it. Then I never had a chance to get it back without being caught. I’m sure the Tophams will identify the old clock as their property.”

Nancy’s explanation seemed to satisfy the officer.¹⁸⁰

Nancy still fibs a bit when explaining just why she has stolen property, but the fact is that she confesses when she does not necessarily have to. She even allows someone else to drive her car, a sign of respect. The changes made to this one scene prove that her morals and values have now aligned with those of the police.

The teenage girl sleuth has managed to acquire the respect and admiration even of the authorities by the postwar era. Nancy’s values and morals now align with those who are responsible for upholding the laws, removing the competition between them over mystery solving. She receives the same acknowledgement when working with the police as when she worked against them, but only within certain boundaries, ensuring that the feminine conformity of the era was upheld.

¹⁸⁰ Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1959), 143-145.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Nancy Drew and her world are not as timeless as nostalgia suggests. Each book is rooted in the time period it was written, either the 1930s or the 1950s, and reveals much about the popular culture of the time, as well as the idealized norms, values, and morals. When America was first introduced to Nancy Drew in 1930 she stood as a warrior for her class and gender. Those who appeared physically different from Nancy were to be suspected or ridiculed. The law and those sworn to uphold it were not respected. The revision process beginning in 1959 rounded off the rough edges of Nancy's personality and her actions. Reference to social class and race were completely removed. By the 1950s Nancy Drew was working along side, if not for, the authorities. She followed all laws.

The lead character of the series, Nancy Drew, straddles the line of established gender roles in both editions of the novels. She is everything a proper female is decreed to be, yet she also exhibits many masculine qualities such as self-reliance and bravery. The latter are necessary for her to be a successful sleuth and an allowance is given for each. Nancy is independent because she grew up motherless and took over household management at a young age. She moves beyond her own home, as allowed by her father's wealth, which provides her with a housekeeper to do the domestic work and an automobile to facilitate her mobility. His name and the influence inferred by it as a famous lawyer and former district attorney, protects Nancy and gives her more power than any ordinary teenage girl could have acquired. Nancy has almost super human levels of knowledge and skills that allow her to successfully make sense of clues that stump even the federal authorities. She is super in her ability to navigate the established gender roles, never calling into question her own femininity while still maintaining a degree of masculinity. The revision process of the 1950s-60s toned down Nancy's independence while

giving her more rigid gender roles to judge others by. Now Nancy is almost always accompanied during her mystery solving by friends; she has lost much of her autonomy. These companions serve as a type of chaperone and cultural sounding board as Nancy evaluates which clues to follow and how to go about doing so. Nancy Drew remains the American Super Girl, skillfully navigating her way through society and mysteries, displaying a startling quantity of traits, never letting emotion or others get in her way, and always known as the *girl* sleuth.

Helen Corning is Nancy's first friend introduced in the books. In the original texts she makes small appearances, often to give Nancy the clue or opportunity she needs. By the 1950s Helen was rewritten to play a much larger role in the series. She is the reminder to readers that Nancy Drew is not the norm. Rather it is Helen, now with a ring on her finger, who embodies the idealized female role during the era. Her dreams revolve around her pending wedding and marriage and everything that will follow. She disappears from the stories after the fourth book, presumably having gotten married. It is a reminder to Nancy Drew and her readers that married women should seek no role outside of their home, as idealized by the "feminine mystique."

Hannah Gruen, the Drews' housekeeper, is altered in much the same way as Helen Corning. Mrs. Gruen is described as the maid-of-all-work in the original texts. Her sole function is to perform the needed domestic tasks, under Nancy Drew's supervision, freeing the latter from them. The revisions portray Hannah as the motherly housekeeper, filling an altogether different void in the household. Hannah is the person in the Drew family (and she is described as being part of the family) who fulfills the feminine mystique of the era. Rarely is she depicted outside of the home. Hannah has been the embodiment of the domestic sphere as the stand-in mother.

Helen's role as Nancy Drew's sidekick is quickly filled by cousins Bess Marvin and George Fayne. Each embodies an extreme characteristic of Nancy's. For Bess, it is her

femininity. She is the ultimate girly-girl, constantly conscious of her own appearance and mannerisms. Bess shows readers that Nancy could not be a successful sleuth without bending the gender boundaries a bit. It is George's character who represents the extreme masculinity that can be found in a female, as reflected in her very name. Her suggestions for how to follow clues or catch the villains are so outlandish that they make Nancy's seem quite reasonable. George also serves as a contrast to show how feminine Nancy Drew is.

The revisions make the cousins' characteristics less extreme. Like Nancy, both have become more domestic in the postwar era, following the standards dictated by the culture of conformity. Bess is still concerned about her appearance, especially her weight. It became almost a running gag to tease Bess about her love of sweets and desire to never skip a meal. George, now softened as a nickname for Georgia, retains some masculine elements as the group's self-defined tomboy. She is no longer blunt and gangling as described in the original texts. The cousins provide the group companionship and safety needed to comply with the established ideals of the era.

Nancy further cements her true femininity when she acquires a boyfriend in book seven. Ned Nickerson is handsome and smart. He immediately offers to aid Nancy in her favorite hobby of mystery solving. In a reversal of the dating stereotypes of both eras, it is Ned who pursues Nancy. This suits her just fine as Ned expends all of the energy setting up dates, leaving Nancy free to choose the outings that best fit between her forays of sleuthing. In the 1950/60s versions Nancy is much more likely to take a night off from mystery solving to go on a date. Ned's primary role in the series is to add entertainment to Nancy's life, provide masculine aid when needed, but never to be a distraction.

Those who dare to stray beyond the established gender boundaries become instantly suspect; objects of scorn, and assumed to have a criminal inclination. For example, Mary Mason in *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* shows no solidarity with her gender. By suggesting and thus following through with the act of leaving Nancy to die she is revealed to be more villainous than her male accomplices.

Social class provides another set of boundaries for Nancy Drew to judge others against. The “deserving” poor are aided while those who are less so resort to criminal activity to get what they want. Nancy can easily distinguish between these two groups of people based on their appearance and mannerism. She will aid those she finds to be deserving, but preserve the social hierarchy while doing so. Farmers are never elevated to her level while heiresses are treated as friends. The revised texts describe a much different society. Nancy is no longer at the top, instead being portrayed as solidly, perhaps upper, middle class. She no longer judges others on stereotypes set by their socioeconomic status. The desperate poor no longer exist for Nancy Drew to save. Society in America changed during the Great Depression and ideas about who deserved aid were replaced with general aid for all.

Those who appear physically different from Nancy and her friends are also evaluated by the same set of values that Nancy Drew and company uphold for themselves. Different was to be feared insisted Nativists of the early 20th century. Nancy, all the while claiming not to, judges people on her first impression of them, often based on their appearance. Clothing and behavior are taken into account when judging an individual’s integrity. Those who are found lacking, according to Nancy’s value system, are suspicious, and her suspicions always prove to be correct.

Characters of other races are always depicted in a negative light in the original texts. Jeff Tucker, the cottage caretaker in *The Secret of the Old Clock*, is portrayed in the jolly minstrel stereotype, complete with drunkenness and exaggerated dialect. Nancy Drew alternates between amusement and exasperation when dealing with him. Ethnically identified characters are also more harshly portrayed and judged. Yovonne Wong in *The Secret at Red Gate Farm* is found to be suspicious because of her foreign appearance and name. It somehow makes her “flashy” and thus prone to criminality. When she is revealed to be a member of a counterfeiting ring, Nancy’s initial suspicions are confirmed. Other characters are also judged on their appearance and how they conduct themselves. Nathan Gombet in *The Hidden Staircase* is depicted in the negative stereotype of a Jewish man obsessed with money. He will do anything to gain more wealth, including using a father’s love for his daughter against him and frightening elderly women.

This manner of judging others is carried into the revised texts, but many of the characteristics are not. There are no more African-American characters in the books. They simply disappear. Religious intolerance suffers the same fate when the villain in *The Hidden Staircase* has his name altered, removing the negative Jewish stereotype associated with it. Rather than address these areas of contention in society, Harriett Adams and the Stratemeyer Syndicate chose to ignore their existence. The books are free from the raging social conflicts of the 1960s, portraying society as homogenous and very white.

There is an act of violence in each novel involving Nancy Drew and some of her companions. Often they have been knocked unconscious, kidnapped, and left to die. Each time Nancy manages an escape, though not always on her own. She was more likely to save herself in the original text while in the revisions Nancy often was saved by others. She never suffers any long-term effects from the violence committed against her. There is never a threat of sexual

violence in the novels. The revision process removed instances where that the threat could even be perceived. However, the level and types of violence actually increased in the revised texts. The best example of this is when a time bomb was planted in the cottage where Nancy and a friend were staying in during the *Mystery at Lilac Inn*. Both girls left the building in the middle of the night for other reasons before the bomb detonated, saving their lives. This increase in violence towards a girl who chose to live outside of the realms of the feminine mystique served as a warning to readers. The world is a dangerous place, and to work outside of the home one could face this extreme violence.

The law and those sworn to uphold it are viewed as objects of contempt in the 1930s. Though Carson Drew is a lawyer, he and his daughter see the police as getting in the way of the law. Nancy takes this a step further and sees laws as only needing to be followed to in order protect those who are “deserving.” She herself regularly breaks the law by speeding, impeding police investigations, and breaking into villains’ homes. A shift away from the mentality of moral over legal righteousness was taking place even as the original texts were being written. By the time of the revisions, the two standards had aligned. Nancy is no longer in direct competition with the system, but considered to be a part of it.

The Nancy of the 1950s was easier for middle-class readers to relate to; she could easily live down the street. Unlike the Nancy Drew of the 1930s, whose lifestyle was almost completely unattainable in the midst of the Great Depression, this Nancy provided a place to escape to for girls dealing with the harsh realities of the depression. Throughout both editions of the books Nancy Drew serves as a role model for her readers, depicting how girls should and should not act and how they should view the world around them as decreed by the popular culture of their time.

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