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'The Scar Must Remain': Memory and the First World War in the Ruth Fielding and Beverly Gray Series

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‘The Scar Must Remain’:
Memory and the First World War in the Ruth Fielding and Beverly Gray Series

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ABSTRACT

Young women coming of age during the interwar years were immersed in a rapidly expanding consumer culture that allowed them to literally buy memories. The ideas and experiences presented in girls' series books like *Ruth Fielding* and *Beverly Gray* helped shape a memory of the First World War specific to young women, while also reflecting broader societal values of the American interwar period.
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"The generation that is growing up now, even young people like us, remember little if anything about the war. We don’t realize what it actually meant to the people then," reflects a character in a popular 1936 girls’ series book.¹ Although they may not have understood the experience of the First World War, young adults were constantly urged to remember the war through popular culture media. Girls’ series books, like the one quoted above, helped shape a collective memory of the First World War during the interwar years. The appearance of a such serious topic, like the First World War, is a sharp contrast from the usual comic relief and light mysteries commonly used in girls’ series genre. The mention of the First World War, or more specifically its memory, highlights the complicated effects the First World War had on society and how that translated into popular culture. Girls’ series books from the interwar years helped shape a collective memory of the First World War that targeted young adolescent females. Yet, at the same time the books actively produced memories and reminded readers of the First World War, they also reflected the values of the post-war American society producing the memories. With their high readership, as indicated by series length and multiple publications, the books both reflected and helped shape a national memory of the war.

Keeping the memory of the destruction and horror of the war alive in young women was one way to ensure it did not happen again.

Two particular series books, the *Ruth Fielding Series*, written during the war and immediately afterwards, and the *Beverly Gray Series*, written nearly twenty years later, constructed memories and meanings of the First World War for young women. The books written during the war provided a basis for how the war was supposed to be understood by young women, while the books published after the war conceptualized the memory of that understanding. These books helped to transmit a national and collective memory to young women.

Girls’ series books present a national memory of the First World War that is limited by both age and gender. The young women who read girls’ series books came of age in a time of social and economic change. They were immersed in a rapidly expanding consumer culture which allowed them to literally buy memories. The popular culture ideas and activities they consumed helped shape personal and national memories of the war while also reflecting contemporary values of remembering and forgetting trauma. The books also facilitated the way in which young women moved through social, political and economic spaces.

As opposed to films and literature aimed at mass audiences of all ages and genders, girls' series books specifically targeted adolescent females. Girls’ series books were mass-marketed, usually produced by
such publishing giants as Grosset & Dunlap or Cupples & Leon. Most of
the plots followed a similar structure, focusing on a single girl and her
companions. Many of the most popular series consisted of ten-to-twenty
volumes, published over several decades. During these series the
characters aged, and readers followed the girl heroine through her
schooling, travels, work experience, and foray into the real world. The
heroine often started out being the same age or just slightly older than the
reader, and with the publication of a book nearly every year, the character
and the reader aged at the same rate. This created a relationship between
the reader and the series. The characters became more than one-
dimensional ideas; they started to be identifiable.

Nancy Drew is perhaps the most famous and recognizable
example, although she stopped aging rather early in her fictional career.
Her character first appeared in 1930 and quickly became a popular
cultural icon with her stories adapted into film versions later in the 1930s.
She is one of the few girls’ series characters still existing in contemporary
culture.

The Ruth Fielding series was a popular pre-cursor to Nancy Drew,
while the Beverly Gray series was a contemporary. Both series were very
popular with long publication runs of over twenty years. Ruth Fielding was
in publication from 1913 until 1934, while Beverly Gray was published
between 1934 and 1955.
The popularity of the books is expressed by the length and longevity of the series. Marginalia, inscriptions, and fan letters indicate that girls responded to the books as an extension of reality. The suggestive power of series books didn’t go unnoticed. Popular culture scholar and American Studies professor Nancy Tillman Romalov notes librarians and teachers wrote to publishing companies admonishing them for creating heroines who blurred the lines between the modern girl and traditional ideas; they saw young females as trying to emulate the stories found in the books, and behaving like fictional characters.² Quite opposite to the fearful editorial from librarians, the fan letters written to the publishers of series books praise the reality of the books. These letters suggest the fictional series accurately depicted everyday events and sentiments. By mirroring their own experiences, the books helped girls understand their role in a larger social context.

Romalov asserts that the success of the series book genre indicates “young girls were constituting themselves visible segments of society, perhaps for the first time controlling the reading powers, as well as the purchase of the books.”³ Girls did not have to buy the series books; there were other forms of entertainment available to them. By creating a


³ Romalov, 89.
niche market of girls' series, publishers tried to cater to what girls wanted to read. At the same time they were publishing girls' series, publishers also published series books targeted towards boys. Publishers, sensing a market, began fashioning bolder heroines who took advantage of twentieth century advancements like radios and airplanes and automobiles. Instead of focusing on marriage, these girls went to college, found careers, and held some sort of autonomy over their lives. Series books' subjects and ideologies needed to align with the current beliefs values by the series' readership. Otherwise, girls would look elsewhere for books reflecting their reality—including consuming boys' series books. Books targeted for girls had to remain up-to-date in order to be a viable market commodity. Girls in the early twentieth century wanted an empowering series where the heroines had moxie and where marriage and self-identification through a male character were not necessary.

Girls' series books in the interwar years provided appealing role models with easily accessible ideologies. American young women consumed these forms of popular media and, in the process, formed opinions of the First World War. Lisa Budreau in her book *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933*, refers to Charles C. Pierce's usage of the term "commercialized

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4 Romalov, 92.
Patriotism.” Pierce, who undertook the task of identifying and repatriating the bodies of the war dead, used the term to specifically reference the funeral and commemoration industries that sprung up after the First World War. Pierce referred to the funeral industries as “commercialized patriotism” asking for government regulation for what he saw as a business with the potential to be exploited for vast financial profit. In a society where there was as of yet little economic regulation, Pierce warned of the potential for money to be made off the burial of the dead.

“Commercialized Patriotism,” in terms of commemoration, however, is an interesting turn of phrase. It implies that the values of patriotism can exist on the market and can be bought and sold. Alternatively, it presumes that commemoration and memory of the war existed in a consumer market, independent of corporations and the government.

Girls' series books demonstrate these ideas of commercialized patriotism. The books published narratives capitalizing on commemoration and memories of the war. In addition, Pierce's comment suggests the memory of the war, and practices associated with it, came from third parties and not from the government. In a sense, the authors and publishers of girls' series books exploited the memory of the war in a similar manner to funeral industry.

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Beginning in the 1910s and 1920s, manufacturers started marketing towards the young consumer, not just the parent. Producers actively created a media culture meant to entice the participation of young women in a consumer society. Young women occupied a space in which they could buy series books as a way of affirming their citizenship and guiding their behavior. Consuming the books meant consuming an ideology of the First World War that included a complex mix of remembering and forgetting. Historian Meg Jacobs uses the phrase ‘pocketbook politics’ to describe the power and agency afforded to women through economic consumption. By purchasing certain objects, and the ideas they embody, women gained economic citizenship. Additionally, historian Lizabeth Cohen references the idea of the citizen consumer, where the consumption of certain products reflects the consumption of certain ideologies and nationalistic values.

Historian Celia Malone Kingsbury agrees with Cohen’s interpretation of the citizen consumer and dedicates a chapter in her book, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front*, to the portrayal of the First World War in girls' series. In her book, Kingsbury explains girls’ series gave young women social cues as how to behave and provided a similarly aged role model. By operating as WWI

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The books encouraged young women to emulate the social and political values portrayed in the book. In 1918's *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, for example, Ruth admonishes a group of women for not being more active in the war effort and encourages them to join the Red Cross. "I challenge every person I meet who utters such false and ridiculous stories about the Red Cross. It is an out-and-out pro-German propaganda. [...] But I want you ladies—all of you—to take the Red Cross work to heart and learn what the insignia stands for." Although issued within the narrative, this challenge to "all of you" extended beyond the fictional story indirectly addressing the book's readers. By expanding Kingsbury's focus to after the war, it is possible to view references to the First World War as belonging to a more widely supported memory transmitted by a society holding certain values.

After the First World War, girls' series books were only one of many popular culture medias that tried to depict a memory of the war. Film, art, music and literature simultaneously constructed and reflected society's memories of the war. Films such as *The Big Parade* (1925), *Wings* (1927), *Hell's Angels* (1930), and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) enjoyed popular acclaim. All four films are American, yet they depict different

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memories of the war. Quite possibly the war film that most influenced all other anti-war films, The Big Parade is notable for depicting trench warfare and the large loss of human life. Although a large part of the plot focuses on the love story between an American soldier and a French farm-girl, the consequences of the war are clearly shown through the soldier's wartime experiences and his adaptation to life after the war living with an amputated leg.10 Wings tells the story of two young men from the same hometown who vie for a young woman's attentions. They both enlist in the Air Service and see action overseas. While one young man survives the war, the other is killed by friendly fire. At the end of the film the surviving soldier receives a hero's welcome, while the war and not the unfortunate accident is blamed for the other solider's death.11 Thus, the war is portrayed as something which causes abnormal behavior and confusion and destruction. All Quiet on the Western Front and Hell's Angels, are both American films depicting the ruthlessness of the war, and both have a European setting and characters.12 The films produced on the First World War during the interwar period depicted the war as something which was horrific, senseless, and never to be repeated.

10 The Big Parade, directed by King Vidor (1925; MGM, Warner Home Video, 1992) VHS.

11 Wings, directed by William A. Wellman (1927; Paramount, 1996) VHS.

12 Hell's Angels, directed by Howard Hughes (1930; The Caddo Company, Universal Studios, 2004) DVD.
Literature, such as the novels written by American expatriates, also captured a memory of the First World War. In *This Side of Paradise*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, through the character of Amory Blaine, declares, “I'm not sure that the war itself had any great effect on either you or me—but it certainly ruined the old backgrounds, sort of killed individualism out of our generation.”¹³ This statement captures the intellectual feeling of loss after the war. “[A] new era of peace and of hope was beginning--had already begun,” wrote Frederick Lewis Allen in his popular biography on the 1920s.¹⁴ Despite the Wilson Administration's call for somber remembrance, Allen observed “the mood was not that of pious thanksgiving, but of triumphant hate.”¹⁵

In his book, *How Modernity Forgets*, sociologist Paul Connerton discusses the concept of creating collective memories as a way to forget or diminish other memories, focusing on how memory is triggered and how it is collective and shared. Connerton identifies and describes three types of memory. The first is personal memory, which is an individual's own memory from their firsthand experiences or encounters. The second type of memory is cognitive memory, where an individual recognizes

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¹⁵ Allen, 15.
meaning and memory in objects, phrases, or other cultural material. This type of memory does not require experiencing the memory provoked, but rather the experience with the object which embodies the memory. The third type is simply performance memory. Unlike the first two types of memories, nothing triggers what could be called ‘habit-memory.’ It is a learned memory that has deep societal roots.16

Marita Sturken, in *Tourists of History*, similarly references the triggers and embodiments of collective memory. She refers to this type of collective accessibility to memory as a ‘tourism of history.’ She argues that factors such as the search of the American citizen for authenticity, the importance of images and media, the practices of consumerism and the distanced proximity of the tourists or viewer to tragic events, are all part of a larger framework that facilitates the relationship society has with memory and mourning. The ways these factors combine and define the relationship of American culture with mourning and memories produces a “tourism” of memory. As a commodity, memory gives American culture a sense of innocence and detachment while still offering pieces of the original experience. Equating the consumerist aspect of tourism with a larger impulse of retail therapy allows mass media culture to easily adopt and portray specific traumatic memories in popular culture. Part of the

appeal of a consumer society is the thrill of buying something to fix or fill a
void and provide an emotional uplift; in the same sense consumption is
viewed as a way to help heal from tragedy.17

Memory is something that connects cultural, social and political
representations and experiences. But memory is also fluid. French
philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs argues that memories are
limited to a specific social group at specific point in time.18 Therefore, the
memory cultivated during the interwar years is specific to that moment and
those specific conditions. Although memory is historically specific, the
ways in which people and societies remember has enduring political and
social meanings that sometimes transcend a specific historical moment.

Carolyn Carpan historicizes girls' series books, placing them firmly
in a chronology that mirrors the social, economic and political categories
of particular historical time periods. Using this method, she categorizes
girls' series books as rising out of a Progressive Era tradition, and as
something that continues through the twenty-first century.19 Within this
framework, the Ruth Fielding series occupies the shifting space between
the Progressive reformer and the "New Woman." Ruth Fielding is college

17 Marita Sturken, Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma
City to Ground Zero (Duke University Press, 2007), 4-14.

18 Maurice Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, translated and edited by Lewis A. Coser,

19 Carolyn Carpan, Sisters, Schoolgirls, and Sleuths: Girls' Series Books in America,
(Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009), vii-xv.
educated, career driven, and financially independent. Yet, she also advocates for separate spheres between men and women. Beverly Gray is categorized by Carpan as being part of a “career woman” movement in the 1930s. What Carpan defines as a “career woman,” scholars Eve Weinbaum and Timothy Burke define as a “Modern Girl.”

According to Weinbaum, the Modern Girl is career driven, fully independent and ambitious. What marks her as different from the New Woman is her visibility. A “Modern Girl” used consumer culture as a way to claim citizenship, identifying with certain symbols as a way of purchasing ideas. In Ruth Fielding Treasure Hunting, Tom Cameron, Ruth’s friend and later her husband, is advised to become more ambitious because he is being outshone by Ruth and her friends, and urged to “show more of that independence which those modern girls themselves claim to possess.”

These changing ideas of ‘girlhood’ appear within both series books text, and within the accompanying images. The frontispiece and dust-jackets situate the young heroines within the then modern world of automobiles, bobbed hair and airplanes.

Just as girls had their own series books published during the war, so did boys. Boys series books focused on adventure, camaraderie and

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technological tinkering, whereas girls' series books were generally more varied, emphasizing adventure, careers and friendship over a life of domesticity. Some publishers developed series books such as *The Khaki Girls* or *The Khaki Boys* which were short propaganda series published to foster support for the First World War. Given the short duration of United States involvement in the war, these usually ran for three to five books. While it may have been helpful for short-term nationalistic goals, they did not nurture a long-term relationship between the book characters and the individual reader.

Girls' series books reflected the periods in which they were published, often incorporating contemporary themes and issues into their plot. Ruth Fielding addressed the suffrage movement, the First World War, the popularity of film, and the evolution of Hollywood and the talking pictures. Beverly Gray struggled with unemployment during the Great Depression, she attended the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, had discussions regarding post-colonization of Asia, and the possibilities and eventualities of the Second World War.

Series books such as *Beverly Gray* and *Ruth Fielding* tracked the readers' development and portrayed the changes which occurred with growing up. Their long span of publishing created a commitment between the reader and the series. The long-term relationship with a book series solidifies a connection between the reader and the character. This
connection becomes important in the transmission of ideas. If the books are just a passing fancy, then the ideas embedded within them become easier to ignore. However, if the series has already endured and created an emotional connection with the reader that was forged in recognizing normalcy, such as schooling, boys and friendships, then the other ideas and beliefs expressed in the book are more likely to be internalized. In creating First World War memory, both series are based on a recognition of normative behaviors, a shared set of values, actions and situations, which both the author, publisher and reader found desirable. The main characters, Beverly and Ruth, have already established their identities in earlier volumes of the series by going to school and creating friendships. By the time the First World War is mentioned in both series the reader has already developed an emotional attachment with the character and is more receptive to the message. Even if the events portrayed are abnormal, the books themselves are an extension of normality. Conversely, series books created just for the war effort come out of a sense of the abnormal.  

Considered one of the premiere series, Ruth Fielding set the standard for all other series regarding characters, plot scenarios and

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22 Series like *The Khaki Girls* contained less than five books. They were printed specifically because of the First World War and ceased publication once the war ended.
acceptable behaviors. The series begins with Ruth, a young orphan, going to stay with her uncle. The subsequent books detail Ruth’s evolving friendships, her years at boarding school and her first few years at college. However, her college education is interrupted by the war. Twelve books had already been published in the *Ruth Fielding* series before the plot became driven by American involvement in the First World War. Although the war is first mentioned in *Ruth Fielding in the Saddle*, three books, *Red Cross*, *On the War Front*, and *Homeward Bound* directly focused on America’s involvement in the war with scattered references to the war occurring in other books.

The three *Ruth Fielding* books operate as war propaganda. The books place value on girls who involve themselves in the war effort. When Ruth quits college to focus on her work with the Red Cross, even her ever difficult and grouchy Uncle Jabez approves of her decision. “When I told him I could study later--when the war was over--but I must work for the soldiers now, he said I was a good girl. What do you think of that?” Not content with simply encouraging her friends to join the Red Cross effort, Ruth uses her talents as an aspiring film director to reach a larger audience. As she explains to Helen she wants to make, “[a] big film called

'The Boys of the Draft,' taking a green squad right through their training


from their very first day they are in camp. Fake the French and war scenes, of course, but show the spectators just what may and will happen over there and what the Red Cross will do for the brave hearts who fight for the country."25 However even making a movie in which “the hearts of the people were stirred” isn’t enough.”26 She wants to do even more. The books describe Ruth’s desire to be helpful, and supply a critique on female involvement in the war effort: “She could, of course, offer herself to do some unimportant work in France, paying for her own transportation and expenses, and become one of that small army of women who first went over, many of whom were more ornamental, if the truth be told, than useful in the grim work that was to follow.”27 Ruth’s need to make a difference wasn’t because she desired praise or love, but she “wanted to feel that she was actually doing her all for Uncle Sam.”28 Ruth quits her normal life to serve her country, nursing soldiers and civilians back to health and even foiling several German undercover attacks. “As propaganda,” Cecila Kingsbury writes, “these novels are rousing. The image of the strong but unassuming woman, who not only takes care of herself but when necessary puts her life on the line for those she loves, tends for all

25 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, 37

26 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, 47.

27 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, 56.

28 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, 57.
women the notion that anything is possible with effort.”

The books promoted the war as it happened, showing the characters maturing from girls to women.

By 1918, American involvement in the war was heavily contested and discussed. Although President Wilson’s decision to join the war had lacked support, American propaganda had eagerly tried to stem the tide of objections. Helen, Ruth’s best friend, becomes upset at Harvard University for encouraging enlistment. She sees the war as a disgrace when Tom, her brother, enlists. She says to Ruth, “What can men be made of Ruth? [Our Father] knows Tom may be killed, and yet he cheers for him.” Helen views enlistment as a throwaway, while Ruth views it as a fight for their country and personal honor. Ruth, however, wants to be “over there” and is aghast at the lack of popular support for the war effort.

Historian Lisa Budreau states that the authority of women’s involvement in the First World War was through their “traditional status as mourner, nurturer, and sacrificial mother--and an active role they had assumed immediately after the Civil War.” The Civil War was the last major war in American memory, and the last so-called “American” war in

29 Kingsbury, 134.


32 Budreau, 87.
which many died. Budreau, along with scholar Drew Gilpin Faust suggest
the commemoration and remembrance of the Civil War laid the basis for
memories of the First World War, providing a guideline on how to bury
mass dead, erect memorials and massive tributes in their memory. Faust
asserts that the American Civil War was the United States’ version of the
First World War. Both wars had similar magnitude of dead, destruction,
and technological advances.33 There is support for Faust’s theory in Ruth
Fielding. Ruth’s Uncle Jabez compares and contrasts the two wars when
he reflects, “They talk about this war bein’ a dreadful war. Shucks! All wars
air dreadful. They won’t never have a battle over there that’ll be as bad as
the Wilderness—believe me! They may have more battles, but I went
through some of the wust a man could ever experience.”34 Uncle Jabez
was in the Grand Army of the Potomac and fought in the Battle of the
Wilderness.35 At first neutral about the idea of another war, Jabez
becomes excited when he views Ruth’s film and listens to her speak on
the honor of war. When he learns that she and Helen have signed up for
the Red Cross, he brings out his war mementos including a rifle, which he
offers to teach them how to shoot. The character of Jabez, clearly

34 Emerson, Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross, 4.
35 Emerson, Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross, 5.
demonstrates a link between the American Civil War and American involvement in the First World War.

In *Ruth Fielding at the War Front*, Ruth serves as a nurse in France, close to the front lines. The descriptions of Ruth’s experiences show a war that is both necessary in stopping German occupation, while also being otherworldly in its horror. The book remarks, “Orchards were razed; even the shade trees beside the pleasant roads had been scored with the ax and now stood gaunt and dead. Some were splintered freshly by German shells. As the light faded and the road grew dim, Ruth Fielding saw many ugly objects which marked the "frightfulness" of the usurpers. It all had a depressing effect on the girl's spirits.”

The books blame the Germans, or as the book refers to them, the “usurpers” as being responsible for all the destruction caused to the French countryside. Throughout the books, Germans are portrayed as the ultimate cause of death and destruction. When Ruth has a near-death experience with a German shell the event is described as, “With a yell like that of a lost soul—a demon from the Pit—the shell went over their heads and exploded in the grove.” By aligning the Germans and their technology as devilish and emerging from the depths of hell, the book creates an image of the war showing the horror, but also the necessity of

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37 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding at the War Front*, 44.
fighting the enemy. In this way girls’ series books also created a memory of the war, or more specifically, they created an image of the war, and a memory of the war, which consumers bought.

Within the series storyline, Ruth is hurt by an exploding shell and must be sent home before the end of the war. Although it takes another book before the war is finally resolved, for Ruth the war is over. Even at such a short distance from the event, she begins forming memories of the war and trying to situate herself in what is perceived as a changed world. Ruth reflects, "joking aside, at this time when the whole world should be so grateful and so much in earnest because of the end of a terrible war, trivial matters and trivial talk somehow seems to jar." Published in 1919, *Homeward Bound* addresses this issue of the recent past. If Ruth Fielding acts as a piece of propaganda, then the way she thinks about remembering the war is also propaganda. Just as Ruth sets an example for proper female behavior during the war, she also sets an example for proper war memory after its end.

The war story arc which began in *Ruth Fielding in the Saddle*, published in 1917, ended with *Ruth Fielding in the Great Northwest*, published in 1921, although later mentions are made of Ruth, Tom, and their friends, and the parts they played in the war. Acquaintances and

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memories of the war often appear for short sentence descriptions in later books. The post-war books focus on the difficulties of transitioning to post-war life. In *Ruth Fielding Down East*, Ruth, sent home from the war early due to an injury and exhaustion, is described as being in “a physical and mental state which made any undue excitement almost a tragedy for her.” The symptoms of Ruth’s fragile state echo complaints made by soldiers and nurses suffering from shell shock and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.40

The first introduction to remembering the war paints it as dreamt nightmare: “All of this is in the past, now. It seemed to Ruth Fielding, standing on the porch of the old farmhouse attached to the Red Mill and looking down the rutted highway, that many of the experiences during the months of war must have been dreams.” Clearly dividing the past from the present, these sentences indicate the beginning of a new post-war era. The contrast of the excitement and destruction of war with the peace and tranquility of her home makes the war seem alien and foreign. The war isn’t just foreign, it is also relegated to a dream state. Calling her memory of the war a dream devalues Ruth’s experience. A dream is


40 See William March’s *Company K* or Thomas Boyd’s *Through the Wheat* for examples of male authors writing fictional accounts First World War shell shock and PTSD.

something which is not real and whose significance fades with time. Once back in the United States, Ruth’s wartime experiences become so far removed from her renewed sense of normalcy that she has no possible way to understand the two. If the abnormal becomes the dream, then her normal life can continue undisturbed.

However, although the memory of the war becomes a dream, the book acknowledges that the war has fundamentally changed Ruth. “She was her old vigorous and cheerful self again. Yet there was a difference. There was a poise and a seriousness about the girl of Red Mill that would never again wear off. No soul that has been seared in any way by the awful flame of the Great War will ever recover from it. The scar must remain till death.”42 Although a semblance of normality can be regained, it is a different type of normal. The war changed everything. The passage also specifically notes that it was not just Ruth who was affected in this way, but everyone. Ruth remarks that, “I wish some of the boys we used to play around were with us […] most of them went to war. […] Nothing is as it used to be.”

In addition to Ruth’s war trauma, the series focuses on the difficulty Tom has transitioning back into civilian life. The books compare the experiences of Tom and Ruth stating that they both “had been though

much in the war zone calculated to make [them] more sedate and serious than a college undergraduate is supposed to be."  

Even several books after its end, the First World War continues to affect the characters’ lives. In *Ruth Fielding Treasure Hunting*, written in 1923, Ruth refuses to become engaged to Tom. “And now, with the war finished six months before and more, she began to feel strongly that there was something wrong with Tom Cameron.” When he returns from the war Tom’s countenance has changed; he is unable to hold a job and finds himself unable to move on with his life. Later Ruth reflects on the war more concisely thinking, “It was not wholly the war that changed Tom. Merely the young man’s development through the war had been away, from the sober uneventful life of a merchant.” The war had changed the way they anticipated life.

An even more startling outcome of the war is how the books perceive masculinity. The war inverts the perception of male characters. For instance, Tom goes away to war as a man, but comes back a boy. When Tom first enlists in the military he is described as "too much of a man[.]" However, when he returns from the front lines, Ruth says, “You will always be the best beloved of all boys—” “Great Scott, Ruth!” he

46 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, 82.
interrupted. "When do you think I am going to be a man?"

The war provides Ruth with greater independence, and maturity more maturity than Tom. Lisa Budreau suggests that the First World War created a new image of the traditional Republican Mother, promoting civic values and who was "anxious to participate in and support nationalist dialogue in dramatically profound ways." In *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross* Helen asks, "Is war altogether a man's game? Aren't we to have a say about it, or what the Government shall do to our brothers?" To which Ruth replies that their part in it is "to give, and give generously." Budreau cites "public support is crucial to a successful national war" because victory depends on a united whole. The support of women and how they conceptualized the war was therefore important to the effort.

At the same time, women were demonized in post-war memory and as figures entirely senseless about the experiences of the war. While the characters in *Ruth Fielding* are generally shown as sympathetic, even they are sometimes shown in a less flattering light. While working on the warfront one girl wonders, "Can a poilu love a fat girl?" An equally superficial comment is made after the war, "There were so fat few people

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48 Budreau, 97.

49 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, 65.

50 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross*, 33.
left in Europe after four years of war that everybody liked to look at me.”51
Yet this portrayal is always tempered by quick-witted, empathetic
characterizations of Ruth and others.

William March’s Company K contains fictional memoirs of 131
American marines serving in France during the First World War. Based
partially on March’s experiences during the war, and told through the male
gaze, the book portrays women as being out of touch with the war. When
arguing with her husband over the ethics of killing during war, one soldier’s
wife states, “because it is cruel and unjust to shoot defenseless men in
cold blood. It may have been done a few times, I’m not denying that, but it
isn’t typical. It couldn’t have happened often.”52 For March, the actuality of
what females understood was different from the reality. The female point
of view prescribed morals that did not exist. March also showed women
as cruel and unfeeling after the war. When describing the marriage
between a disfigured soldier and his wife, the wife exclaims, “If you touch
me, I’ll vomit.”53

Although sometimes perceived as not comprehending the
seriousness of the war, the females in Ruth Fielding are never cruel.
Helen explains away the naive comments and sometimes silly behaviors:

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51 Emerson, Ruth Fielding in the Great North West, 2.
53 March, 227.
"We have been holding in and trying to keep cheerful with the fear at our hearts that some loved one would suddenly be taken. It was not lightness of heart that made people dance and act as though rattled-pated during the war. It was an attempt to hide that awful fear in their hearts."  

No distinction is drawn between actually experiencing the war firsthand and feeling the repercussions of the war. As a global event which caused food shortages and rationing, tremendous injuries and casualties, and fear of technological warfare it affected everyone. Even if they didn’t serve, the girls who read *Ruth Fielding* were still scarred by the First World War.

*Ruth Fielding* shows two conflicting images of the memory of the recent past. The first is simply that memory is like a dream, something far removed from any identifiable experience and ethereal in nature. The second describes memory as a scar, something which becomes a part of an individual or society and alters it forever. What is forgotten is just as important as what is remembered. And in many cases they are not exclusive. Forgetting the war by calling it a dream allows the larger horror of the war to be forgotten. However, by forgetting or muddling the larger picture, the memory of the war becomes focused on the symbolic and metaphorical image of the scar. These contrasting ideas are only

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54 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding in the Great Northwest*, 68.

separated by a few pages in the book, and suggest that within the
collection of First World War memory a tension existed between
remembering the war and forgetting it.

Even before the end of the war, there was already an assumption
that WWI needed to be remembered. Written by an American and
published in Boston, The Spell of Flanders by Edward Neville Vose, was a
cultural history and guide to Belgium. Published in 1915, early in the war,
it received favorable reviews by the New York Times as an excellent pre-
war travel companion, and as a wartime snapshot of what existed before
the war. In the books’ opening and closing passages, Vose stresses the
importance of place and visitation to the memory of the war. “And when
the great war is over let no American tourist omit Flanders from his or her
European itinerary,” he writes. “Even the pleasant Belgian fields, with their
bright poppies and corn flowers, have a more profound interest now that
so many of them have been stained with a deeper red than poppies ever
gave.” He acknowledges that the war will create tourism, as people
travel to see where the battles were fought to satisfy their own curiosity
and to mourn the losses. “When the war is over many thousands of
Americans and English will be eager to visit the battlefields of Flanders

56 “Books Worth Reading: The Spell of Flanders,” The New York Times, July 4, 1915,
www.proquest.com/.

and see for themselves the scenes of conflict that will forever hold a great place in human history [...] It is one of the many ironies of the war that towns like Ypres and Malines, which were rarely visited in their perfection, will, no doubt, be visited by thousands now that the clash of arms has brought them at the same moment destruction and immortal fate."58 The Spell of Flanders frames the memory of the First World War for the interwar period, suggesting a formula for later books to follow.

By the 1930s, the First World War and Armistice were several years removed, yet the memory of the war kept appearing in popular culture. The consequences of the war, from Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany, to the decisions made by the League of Nations, were prominent political and economic news. However, post-war literature did not focus on these effects. They chose instead to focus on the memory. From Ernest Hemingway’s popular novel A Farewell to Arms (1929), to the movie adaptation in 1932, and the acclaimed novel and film All Quiet On The Western Front, the memory of war focused less on the participants actual memories, and more on public values endorsing the horrors of war and the ideology of pacifism. Girls’ series books were not immune from this trend of remembrance.

It’s no coincidence that she traveled abroad in the 1930s, Beverly Gray finds herself on the fields of Belgium during Armistice Day. Like many

58 Vose, viii-xiv.
fictional series, the *Beverly Gray* combines the mundane with the extraordinary. Published in the middle of the Great Depression, the books used ploys such as wealthy friends or incredibly fortunate, albeit unlikely, events to give the reader hope for better days. For instance, Beverly just happens to have a friend who owns a boat and they just happen to sail across the ocean several times, with multiple adventures along the way. Most young adults in the 1930s were not able to travel around the world for months on end. And, mostly likely, none would have encountered jewel smugglers, thieves and kidnappers along the way. Plots like these, along with a varied cast of rotating characters, gave the books a dramatic quality: What secret was Shirley hiding from Beverly? Was Jim going to be lost at sea forever? When would Rosalind recover her lost memory? Like a soap opera, the plots often carried through multiple books.

However, the more mundane features of the book reflected and acknowledged the life of a young woman in the 1930s. Unlike her best friend who makes the choice of marrying after college and starting a family, Beverly chooses to be a career woman. She faces difficulties when obtaining a job not because she is a woman, but because jobs are in high demand. Beverly shares an apartment with between four and eight of her friends and, at least until they become successful, they work hard to make the rent. The more mundane aspects of *Beverly Gray*, the remembrances of the Depression, the acknowledgments of global unrest, especially in
China and Southeast Asia, discussions of such things as buying clothing, and fights among friends, were all recognizable and identifiable to readers of the series. Whereas the extraordinary plots drew in the reader, the mundane descriptions of daily life and worries only strengthened the relationship between the character and the reader.

As indicated by its publishing career, the *Beverly Gray* series was one of the more popular girls’ series. In addition to the characters and plots, part of the series’ popularity may have been rooted in how it differed from other series books of the time. Unlike many series books which were by several authors under one pseudonym, *Beverly Gray* had one author, Clair Blank. In a discussion of memory, it is always important to ask who disseminates that memory. While the focus is the books themselves, authorship plays an important component. Blank graduated from high school in 1933, therefore she was still a young adult when writing and publishing these novels. She attended college, and worked as a typist and secretary for many years before quitting work to marry and raise children. Unlike the character she created, Blank did not travel extensively. However, she strived to provide for herself just as the character of Beverly Gray did.59 Blank wrote to the people of her generation or just a few years younger, and for that reason the books’ message has a more genuine quality than similarly series books ghostwritten by older men and women.

59 Axe, 95-96.
Clair Blank instructs and suggests a proper way to remember the First World War, while at the same time reflecting the values young women her age held about the war.

War is portrayed as, “horrible, destroying life and limb with careless abandon that all was so needless,” but at the same time value is placed on those who visit memorials and commemoration sites, labeling them as ‘patriotic.’ The books balance the memory of a horrific war with the necessity of remembering the war in appropriate places and situations. Identifying young women as separate demographic from their parents and brothers meant providing them with specific guidance in remembering the war. The female gaze and voice of the story is also important in showing changing perceptions of girlhood. Peter Stoneley considers a preoccupation with modernity in series literature as a feature of class inter-play. Series books afforded both males and females equal opportunity to interact with modernity technology. Ruth Fielding experiences both modern transportation and modern warfare during her WWI service. Along with experiencing the shells and the trenches, Ruth gains familiarity with “the aeroplane and the motor car and with the thundering guns at the battle front, not many miles away.” The interest in modern advancements didn’t stop with the military, but extended into the minutia of daily life. Even

60 Blank, *Beverly Gray on a World Cruise*, 131-133.

61 Emerson, *Ruth Fielding at the War Front*, 4.
with an increasing number of families owning automobiles and radios, the level of decadent modernism depicted in series books, especially through the 1930s, was not the norm for most American families. However, according to Stoneley, "Physical freedom is often conditioned by an intense and almost inescapable idealized control." The consumption of modernity is also tempered by social attitudes and protest. Although gallivanting around the world in boats and planes like Beverly Gray was a luxury very few young girls could afford, reading about it was a commodity they could enjoy.

The ideology of a return to normality suggests the social value of forgetting the war. However, the isolationist sentiments and supposed carefree attitude of the 1920s embodied a memory of the war simply by being a reaction to it. Therefore, Beverly Gray finds the appropriate medium between the need to remember the war, but also the need to forget it.

The Beverly Gray series is also notable in its portrayal of current events. Unlike some other young adult series, which tended to only address current issues and trends by way of car models or fashion designs, Blank and the publishers kept the series current. This obsession with keeping the books current can be seen in Beverly Gray at the World's

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Fair, a book published specifically about the 1934 Chicago World’s Fair. Other books seem contemporary when they mention overseas conflict, or lack of it, and make passing references to world leaders or innovations. Beverly Gray at the World’s Fair places Beverly and her friends at the 1934 World’s Fair in Chicago where they visit the different exhibitions, view the midway performances, and see the sights. The World’s Fair was a fleeting event lasting only a year or two. The title and subject matter of the book are not timeless; they do not place the characters in a setting which could occur anytime or anyplace. Instead, the book places itself in a specific place and time-frame, and makes itself relevant to events occurring within popular culture at the time. Therefore, when Blank writes on the First World War and the character’s memories of it in 1936’s Beverly Gray on a World Cruise, she shows something which is current to the time. The words used and emotions expressed are not part of a continuum, but rather something specific to young people in the 1930s.

Remembering also includes a component of forgetting. One way of relegating memory to a place where it can be both equally remembered and forgotten is what scholars call ‘place memory.’ One type of place memory is the memorial. A memorial gives a physical space and shape to memory, but by choosing how that place is built certain parts of the memory are either remembered or forgotten, brushed to the side. Memorials have the ability to sanitize a memory. In the case of war
memorials, they do not necessarily show how people died, the blood and
gore, nor do they suggest underlying motivations for conflict or honor the
living. The war dead are remembered while those who served are not.
They are built as a warning so that others do not forget, but at the same
time they suggest an acceptance of forgetting to lessen the consequences
and pain. Place memory inscribes the memory of an event on a certain
locale. This can take the shape of memorials meant to commemorate
events.

_Beverly Gray on a World Cruise_ demonstrates a fictional retelling
of place memory. While visiting Paris, one of Beverly's friends decides to
visit the fields in Belgium. “Day after tomorrow is Armistice Day,” Roger
said. “I am flying to Belgium, I want to see Flanders Field.” Roger, in this
scene, directly equates both a physical place, Flanders Fields, and a
commemorative event, Armistice Day, as the time and place to properly
mourn.

In America, Memorial Day emerged out of the Civil War as a way to
remember the war dead of all conflicts. Similarly, Armistice Day was
designated as a specific holiday to commemorate American participation
in the First World War. Even from the very beginning, however, Armistice

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63 Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (New York: Cambridge University Press,
2009), Kindle, Retrieved from amazon.com, Part 2:Types of Memory Place, Chapter 3,
Section i.

64 Blank, _Beverly Gray on a World Cruise_, 109.
Day in the United States was tied to the idea of consumption. Celebratory parades, sporting events, and balls highlighted Armistice Day as a commercial holiday, instead of a day for somber remembrance. An editorial comment in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1920 rebukes the American celebration of the Armistice. “Over there they have two minutes of silence, while here we have five minutes of racket,” the commenter says, pointing out that the difference is, “in England it is a solemn tribute to the dead who died in the war, while in this country we merely try to celebrate the end of the war.”

For most newspapers of the time, however, Armistice Day was news fit to print. Newspapers reflected how Armistice Day was celebrated, and provided guidelines for how it should be observed. *The Wilkes Barre Times Leader* in November of 1921 discussed the “parade idea” as a central part of celebrating Armistice Day. One memorable 1922 celebration included decorated cars, a circus, a football game, and an evening dance. Although most celebrations weren’t quite as intense, across the country celebrations often included parades, brief services, and evening balls. “The parade in the morning was an impressive one," stated one local Rhode Island newspaper in a common refrain.

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The same way Beverly and her friends use their consumer powers to forget the war, the commercialization of Armistice Day created new ways of remembering the past.

However, in *Beverly Gray on a World Cruise* the characters are in Paris in the days leading up to Armistice Day when Roger expresses an interest in visiting Flanders Fields. France was a major player in the First World War and experienced devastating loss. The memory of the war was still very prominent there. However, by explicitly stating the travel distance from Paris to Belgium, the book structures a memory of the war. By making the characters travel to properly remember the dead, the book creates an idea that the place where they currently are, Paris, has completely healed and ‘forgotten’ the memory. Paris, as the capital and largest metropolitan area in France, was a major site of production for ammunition and other supplies for the soldiers. After the war, many veterans settled in Paris. Ignoring the Parisian connection to WWI

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suggests France has moved on and is engaged in a type of forgetting, where the impact of the war is remembered elsewhere.

Series books also play into the genre of resort fiction. Resort fiction is when a book's characters travel to an exotic locale. Series books existed "both inside and outside wealth, offering a vicarious luxury to the reader while establishing the boundaries of the leisure class."\(^{69}\) Characters are permitted to utilize modernity and technology normally above their social class, but only as a way to confirm traditional values.\(^{70}\) In this way both the characters and the reader become involved in learning and playing out a code which is constantly performed and re-invented. In \textit{Beverly Gray on a World Cruise}, the place of leisure is France, and by extension Flanders Fields. The private airplane chartered to take Beverly and her friends to Flanders Fields is balanced by more traditional values of commemoration and mourning. The values consumed by the characters and read in the sojourn are ones of memorialization and remembrance of the war. Just as they can visit that place, they can just as easily leave. It provides a place to move through, a medium in their lives from which they can remember, and move on from. This sentiment is echoed within the book, after Roger and several other characters agree to visit Flanders Fields on Armistice Day: "After Flanders Field I want to go to Switzerland

\(^{69}\) Stoneley, 95.

\(^{70}\) Stoneley, 103.
for some ski jumping!” Lenora persisted [7]. The act of remembering is important, but it should not, and does not, take away from daily life and events. As WWI became more distant remembering it became less central to the series. However, acknowledging the war and staying vigilant remained important, although it didn’t take precedence over modern amusements.

Lenora’s statement also implies what Frederick Lewis Allen described as “a whole generation [...] infected by the eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die spirit [...] [They] craved the anodymes of speed, excitement and passion.” [72] Some historians challenge Allen’s assertion that all young adults in the interwar years wanted was “a good time.” [73] They argue that referring to the decade as “The Roaring Twenties,” “The Jazz Age,” or “The Lost Generation” transmits a view of the decade which may not have been popular or widely acknowledged at the time. [74]

However, the existence of the stereotypical view of the Jazz Age in these period texts suggest that the image is somewhat credible. Additionally, Only Yesterday and This Side of Paradise are texts which have remained in American culture and memory. While sometimes challenged by

71 Blank, Beverly Gray on a World Cruise, 110.

72 Allen, 81-82.

73 Allen, 82.

historians, the idea of the 1920s as disillusioned and opalescent gains some credibility through its visibility in period texts.

F. Scott Fitzgerald describes a similar feeling in This Side of Paradise, where one character describes a well-admired young female: “Oh, she’s average--smokes sometimes, drinks punch, frequently kissed--Oh, yes--common knowledge--one of the effects of the war, you know.” Both Allen and Fitzgerald document the same type of change that Lenora exhibits. Allen notes the craving for a fast-paced lifestyle, one which seems to value distractions, constant change and excitement. Indubitably, this type of response would make it easier to forget or cycle past uncomfortable events or memories. Fitzgerald’s fictional documentation of the post-First World War Era directly addresses, perhaps with flippant sarcasm, the way in which the war changed daily behavior. Even if the phrase “one of the effects of the war, you know” is sarcastic, indicating that the war can be used as an excuse rather than an actual reason, it still implies some sort of larger societal understanding that the war changed the behavior of the younger generation. Additionally, the behavior described--the smoking, drinking, kissing--suggests a young adult, specifically a young adult female, who is preoccupied with adventure and amusement. The emphasis should be on gaiety, not morbidity.

75 Fitzgerald, 156.
By visiting Flanders Fields, Beverly and her friends become examples of ideal American behavior. It is a citizen’s duty to remember. The books imply patriotic citizenship through the value placed on the visit.⁷⁶ Beverly and her friends are described as “four American patriots [who] wanted to see the scenes where years before had taken place some of the heroism and horror of the First World War.” The group leaves Paris despite the fact that their other friends are staying behind and going shopping.⁷⁷ Beverly and her friends want to honor the heroes, but don't shy away from the horror. By taking part in the performance of remembering they become ‘American patriots,’ suggesting that their identity and citizenship is very closely tied to the act of remembering.

Remembrance and American citizenship was a much discussed topic during the interwar period as monuments were constructed and the dead buried. The January 1934 edition of *The National Geographic Magazine* published an article titled “Our National War Memorials in Europe” written by John J. Pershing, General of the Armies of the United States, and the chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission. General Pershing’s article, accompanied by colored photographs, highlighted the rebuilding effort in Europe, and the construction of

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⁷⁶ The American Battle Monuments Commission maintains several WWI sites in Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. One site in Belgium is officially named 'Flanders Field American Cemetery and Memorial'. It is a 6.2 acre site with a small chapel and at least 368 white crosses. Presumably, this is the site visited by Beverly and her friends.

⁷⁷ Blank, *Beverly Gray on a World Cruise*, 110.
memorials.\textsuperscript{78} Colored images show tourists, male and female, visiting the monuments, and standing in front of white crosses or marble plaques. The article was written directly to appease the Gold Star Mothers, an organization comprised of mothers and widows of war casualties. The organization achieved a public presence and received attention throughout the 1920s and 1930s due to their pleas for the documentation and burial of each solider. Although directed toward the Gold Star Mothers, the article focuses on young people visiting the memorials. Moreover, the appearance of war memorials in a popular print magazine like \textit{National Geographic} demonstrates that they was an important topic in post-war America.

Collective memory is something which can be internalized in popular culture. The poem "In Flanders Fields" quickly became a literary and popular identifier. The poem came to represent those who had died in the conflict and described how their memory would live on. In \textit{The Great War and Modern Memory}, Paul Fussel writes that the poem alone is one of the reasons why the poppy became a symbol of what Fussel calls "forgetful-remembrance." \textsuperscript{79} Its appearance in the Beverly Gray, therefore, is appropriate.


One of the enduring and memorable aspects of “In Flanders Fields” is the way McCrae employs the rhetoric of a voice speaking from the grave. The poem bridges a gap between the living and the dead, and the fact that Flanders Fields is where Beverly, Roger, and their friends visit on Armistice Day meaningful for this reason. Flanders Fields is not a specific place, but rather symbolizes the battlefields in Belgium. Within a collective, almost global memory, the name and place of Flanders Fields are associated with remembering the dead. When Beverly and her friends arrive they, “found there were many others who desired to see Flanders Fields on this day especially. The ceremony at eleven o’clock was simple and heartwarming. Afterward they walked slowly and thoughtfully, viewing with mingled emotions the Stars and Stripes flying in the breeze over the resting place of so many soldiers.”

The ceremony was a performance of memory, the place was a commemoration of that memory. Going through those motions, Beverly and her fellow tourists performed an act of remembrance. The performance of memory was another way in which it solidified certain values, remembering some and forgetting others. The observance of Armistice Day, and the remembrance ceremony, are important in how the book commemorates the First World War. The book

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80 Fussel, 4.
81 Blank, Beverly Gray on a World Cruise, 132.
82 Connerton, How Modernity Forgets, Kindle, Retrieved from amazon.com, Part 2: Types of Memory Place, Chapter 1, Section ii.
makes clear and strong references to the poem, relying on its imagery. Beverly herself quotes several lines: “In Flanders Field the poppies blow/ Between the crosses row on row.” Using such a popular poem, and mentioning recognizable symbols like poppies and crosses, the book taps into a collective memory of the war. Memory can be tied to a place, but it can also be consumed through cultural markers, such as a holiday or a poem. By consuming certain cultural markers, Beverly Gray suggests young adults can become “American patriots,” implying that identity and citizenship are very closely tied to the way people remember.

Although the book appeals to the masses to remember the war, it also focuses on the individual. Roger, the young man who had first expressed an interest in visiting Flanders Fields, reveals his personal reasoning for wanting to remember:

“I have a brother here,” Roger murmured, and they understood why he wanted to come.
Shirley looked at him in surprise “I never knew you had a brother in the World War.”
Roger nodded. “I was three when he ran off and joined the army. He was just seventeen but he said he was older.”
Shirley read the inscription on a simple white cross before which they had stopped, “Here lies in honored glory an American soldier, George Garrett.” She slipped her arm within Roger’s and they stood silent for a long while.

83 Blank, Beverly Gray on a World Cruise, 132.
84 Blank, Beverly Gray on a World Cruise, 132.
In this sense, the war becomes personal both for the characters in the book and for the reader. Many of the readers of Beverly Gray on a World Cruise would have been old enough to have older siblings, parents, or other relatives who fought in the war. Therefore, the story of Roger's brother gains credibility. Shirley's surprise also indicates a new normalcy of everyday life. Instead of acknowledging the war, there existed a reluctance to discuss the war. Frederick Lewis Allen corroborates this sentiment when he observes there was, "growing apathy of millions of Americans toward anything which reminded them of the war. They were fast becoming sick and tired of the whole European mess. They wanted to be done with it."\textsuperscript{85} The death of his brother in the First World War was something Roger hadn't even discussed with the young woman who was his fiancée. The lack of communication suggests a wish to forget or partially ignore the war. Mentioning George Garrett by name and situating him as Roger's brother serves another purpose. In a war where many of the soldiers and casualties were European, referencing an American casualty gives the United States a voice in the war and tragedy.

Published in 1936, Beverly Gray on a World Cruise addresses the fears wrought by the First World War.

\textsuperscript{85} Allen, 27.
A bugle sounded faintly in the breeze. Beverly looked at the scene before her and wondered why anything like this had come to pass. War was horrible, destroying life and limb with careless abandon that all was so needless.

“And some people want war today,” she said aloud, shivering in spite of herself. “Why?”

“As long as there are nations struggling for power and world supremacy there will be war,” Jim said. “The generation that is growing up now, even young people like us, remember little if anything about the war. We don’t realize what it actually meant to the people then.”

Beverly’s questioning and Jim’s reply provide answers as to why they visited the memorial service, but also why the book’s author and publisher felt it was important to include the scene in the book.

Participating in the memory of the war is important because it reminds future generations of the death and futility it caused. The suggestion of place memorials, of a certain poem commemorating the dead, all act as guidelines for how young women should remember the war.

Girls' series paralleled real life experiences at the time. In the summer of 1929, several months before the great stock market crash and the official beginning of the Great Depression, Gladys Ryan traveled aboard and kept a detailed travel diary of her experiences. Her diary shows that she participated in acts of remembering that closely resemble what takes place in the Beverly Gray books. Ryan’s insights show how the actions and emotions referenced in Beverly Gray translated in actual experience.

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86 Blank, Beverly Gray on a World Cruise, 133.
There are one or two girls Ryan appears to have traveled with, but throughout the course of her travels, companions are gained or lost in various cities. Her age is never stated, but she appears to be in her late teens or early twenties. While in Europe she receives marriage announcements from several of her friends, and makes notes of her own chances (or lack thereof) regarding marriage. She also records her own behaviors of drinking, dancing, and flirting with males. From a gendered and social perspective it is interesting to note that in addition to these “modern” behaviors, she lists, “a refined lady” and a “divorced couple,” as the traveling companions she meets onboard.

It is Ryan’s first journey aboard, and the first place where she “sets foot on foreign soil” is French Algeria. Leaving Algeria, Ryan continues her travels and visits several countries on the European continent, including Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, Switzerland and France.

Gladys Ryan offers a surprising amount of insight on the places she visited. While in Munich she visits the tomb of the Unknown Soldier specifically dedicated to the First World War, and gives her opinion of post-war German culture. In Prague she also visits a tomb of the Unknown Soldier and notes a “chapel containing flags of all countries (except China, Russia, Austria and Germany).” Additionally, in various cities she visits monuments dedicated to President Wilson.
The diary’s usefulness is in Ryan’s observations, behaviors and experiences. It portrays the social, political and gender changes as they appeared in the interwar period. Her language closely mirrors Beverly’s thoughts and wording when she reflects, “The war monument showing the names of 14000 soldiers from Munich who died. It made me sad to be confronted with such vivid examples of the futility of war. How silly it is! [...] I have a peculiar feeling when I think a few years ago we couldn’t have been here in Germany—it seems like forbidden ground. But why should it be forbidden—are people always going to hate each other can’t there be evolution with out evolution taking a murderous role?” 87

The diary of Gladys Ryan supports the claims of shared values and remembrances contained in *Ruth Fielding* and *Beverly Gray*. Ryan reflects on the war in language that closely echoes the thoughts and phrases articulated by Beverly on the fields in Belgium.

Young women, both within fiction and real-life should visited memorial sites, read the poetry, observed Armistice Day and remembered the dead. *Beverly Gray* reminds her readers of the importance of remembering the war by remembering the dead. Instead of remembering the soldiers just for their heroics, young women must remember that nothing was achieved by the war. Written when conflict in Europe and

throughout the globe seemed very possible, Clair Blank and her publishers take what could be seen as an isolationist or pacifist view of the First World War. Young women needed to remember the war; they needed to remember the destruction it caused, and be wary of it reoccurring.

Much the same way Lenora was easily distracted by the promise of something better earlier in the chapter when she expresses the desire to go ski jumping after visiting Flanders Fields, the somber scene quickly shifts. Once the soliloquy has been given and the dead remembered, the memory of the war once again is compartmentalized into the physical space. “Shall we go?” Roger asked. “We will have to hurry if we want to go back on our plane.” The act of remembering and then leaving the site freezes and stores that memory. The place holds the memory, and once the individual leaves the designated area they don’t have to remember the war and its effects because there is a proper place that is already doing that.

Just because the memory can be isolated to a specific place and revived when needed, does not mean that the memory doesn’t linger. Isolationism had been popular in America before the war. It was one of the principles Woodrow Wilson had been re-elected on. His promise to keep America out of the First World War had proved a failure, and the decision

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88 Blank, *Beverly Gray on a World Cruise*, 133.
to be involved haunted the rest of his presidency. Frederick Lewis Allan captures the sentiment of isolationism when he observes, “The tension of the war was relaxing, the bubble of idealism pricked. As the first weeks of peace slipped away, it began to appear doubtful whether the United States was quite as ready as Woodrow Wilson had thought to assist in the establishment of democracy throughout the world.” 89 The isolationist feeling remained strong through the 1920s and 1930s. The perceived failure of the First World War made the United States wary to enter another armed conflict. The rise of Fascism in Germany and Italy, Communism in Russia, and the Spanish Civil War lead to the perception that the Great War, the War to End All Wars, had been a failure. As a result, the United States embraced an isolationist rhetoric and desired to disengage from Europe’s problems. Therefore, the memory of the First World War directly impacted the isolationism of the United States. That stance lasted until American entry into the Second World War, at which point all of America’s allies had already joined the fight.

In 1940, the characters of Beverly Gray once again engage with the First World War. This time, the effects and memories of WWI are referenced against the current war in Europe and the possibility—or lack thereof—of American involvement. These scenes have a strong isolationist

89 Allen, 19.
approach, and paint a picture of an America that rejects any involvement in another war.

When *Beverly Gray's Romance* was published in 1941, America still had not entered the Second World War. However, although America technically was not directly involved in armed combat, American media took notice of events overseas. Newspapers carried information on the give-and-take maneuvers going on across the ocean, and Edward R. Murrow broadcasted live from London during Blitz. These overseas events were even noticed and commented upon in popular culture media. In *Beverly Gray*, the character of Terry Cartwright, who the gang met while on their European adventures and who accompanied Beverly and her friends back to the United States, informs them that he must return to his home country of England. "[Y]ou see, while you have been up here the war across the ocean has become much more serious. I've quit my job and I'm going home to see if I can help a little." When his friends question his choice, he explains, "My country is at war [...] I feel the same as I would if this country were involved. I-I just have to go." In this instance, very clear lines are drawn regarding the nationality of the subject. As a British citizen, he has a duty to his country, but the others, as Americans, are exempt from it. The phrasing of "if this country were involved"

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suggests a black-white divide between the European countries involved in
the conflict and America, which is not involved.

The progression of the scene also suggests an eagerness on the
part of the book's characters—and perhaps a lesson to American readers
—on forgetting the ongoing conflict and memories which it embodies of
the First World War. The scene directly following Terry's goodbye party is
explained as follows: “Then there was the uproar of the departure, finding
a taxi, shaking hands and kisses from all the girls. The four bound for the
airport departed amid much hilarity and then the group that was left behind
separated for their different tasks of the day.”91 Much like Lenora diverted
attention from the serious memory of the First World War to the more
amusing possibility of skiing in the early book, here the shift is easily made
between there, being Europe, and here, being America. The events in
Europe aren't a concern as long as they don't affect daily American life.
The isolation and remembrance of memory of the First World War led to
simultaneously remembering and forgetting the memory. The war was
remembered when convenient, but easily be packed away.

By 1946, at the end of the Second World War, the memory of war in
girls' series books was quite different. Mentions of WWI diminished, and
WWII is presented in a very different way. Instead of focusing on the
memory of the war, or even using consumption as a way to mask memory,

the memories of the First World War simply vanished. In 1946’s *Beverly Gray’s Journey* there is no mention of WWI or WWII, despite the fact that it is entirely set in Britain. Instead, mentions of the Second World War occur only within the United States. This is a direct opposition to previous books, where locale required memorialization, and suggests that the societal perception surrounding WWII was more accepting and exuberant than that of the First World War.

The young women who read girls’ series books such as *Ruth Fielding* and *Beverly Gray* came of age in a time of social, economic and consumer change. They were immersed in a rapidly expanding consumer culture which allowed them to literally buy memories. Girls’ series books helped shape a memory of the First World War which was specific to the interwar years. The interwar memory of the First World War existed without any influence or knowledge of the Second World War, and was not tainted by knowledge of what was to come. Although the books were targeted towards young women, they reflected and supported the same societal values placed on the memory of the First World War. The war needed to be remembered appropriately. Certain aspects of the war needed to be forgotten by adopting an attitude focused on amusement and consumer pleasures, while in other cases the war needed to be remembered through the utilization of appropriate places and symbols.

The reflection of First World War memory in popular media targeted
towards young women also suggests a rising awareness in global and political issues. The popular culture ideas and activities consumed by young women helped shape personal and national memories of the war, while also reflecting contemporary values of remembering and forgetting trauma. The young women reading these books fell within a specific age range. They would either not remember, or barely remember the war. This means that there was a very thin generational gap, allowing these young women to feel removed from the war, while also actively participating in its memory. Readers of Beverly Gray and Ruth Fielding grew up. These young women carried with them thoughts and memories of the First World War as they became the generation of women who actively participated on the Home Front during the Second World War.
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