



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Copyright and use of this thesis

This thesis must be used in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Reproduction of material protected by copyright may be an infringement of copyright and copyright owners may be entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

Section 51 (2) of the Copyright Act permits an authorized officer of a university library or archives to provide a copy (by communication or otherwise) of an unpublished thesis kept in the library or archives, to a person who satisfies the authorized officer that he or she requires the reproduction for the purposes of research or study.

The Copyright Act grants the creator of a work a number of moral rights, specifically the right of attribution, the right against false attribution and the right of integrity.

You may infringe the author's moral rights if you:

- fail to acknowledge the author of this thesis if you quote sections from the work
- attribute this thesis to another author
- subject this thesis to derogatory treatment which may prejudice the author's reputation

For further information contact the University's Copyright Service.
sydney.edu.au/copyright

The New Woman in the New World:
Fin-de-Siècle Writing and Feminism in Australia

Gillian E. Sykes
School of English, Art History, Film and Media
University of Sydney
2002

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

The work in this dissertation is, to the best of my knowledge, original, except as acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Gillian Sykes

Acknowledgments

In completing this thesis, I was assisted by many people. I am extremely grateful to my supervisor Professor Elizabeth Webby for her continual support and encouragement throughout this project, and her generosity when it came to sharing her expertise. Associate Professor Adrian Mitchell, my first year supervisor, was also extremely encouraging and helpful. Colleagues who offered invaluable comments and assistance at different stages of this thesis include Anette Bremer, Dr Ian Henderson, Melinda Harvey, Donna Pooley, Ruth Walker, Dr Katherine Crawford and Dr Tiffany Urwin. Conversations early on with Dr Debra Adelaide, Dr Penny Russell and Dr Susan K. Martin were important in helping me find primary resources and develop an approach to the topic. Associate Professor Delys Bird assisted me in locating Leonie Prime's thesis.

I would not have known about Evelyn Dickinson if it were not for Jeanette Beaumont, who always spoke about her so enthusiastically when writing her book based on Louisa Macdonald's letters, *Letters from Louisa*. I would particularly like to thank Dr Rosemary Annable at the Women's College, Sydney University, for making archives available to me. In the course of researching Dickinson's life, staff at the University of London Library, the University College, London, the British Library, the Fawcett Library, Reading University Library, and the Public Records Office in London were very helpful. I am also grateful to staff at Fisher Library, Sydney University (particularly those working in the Inter-Library Loans and the Rare Books sections), the John Oxley Library, the State Library of Queensland, and the Mitchell Library, the State Library of New South Wales, for their help in researching this thesis. In the English Department at Sydney University, Lee Mashman, Pat Ricketts, Marion Flynn and Jennifer Moore have always been more than willing to assist. Staff in the Arts IT Unit have also offered valuable technical assistance.

The completion of this thesis was made possible by an Australian Postgraduate Award. To carry out research overseas, I was assisted by a Grant In Aid and a Postgraduate Research Students' Conference Grant awarded by Sydney University. I would also like to thank Alice Arnott Oppen for her generous donation to this project in the form of the William Arnott Family Award.

Over the last few years, my friends and family have been wonderfully patient and encouraging. I would particularly like to thank my mother Helen for assistance with editing and proofreading this thesis. My sister Vivienne offered useful comments on an early chapter, and my brother Andrew was always available to solve computer problems. And, of course, I could not have done this without Kees' constant faith, love and support, for which I will always be grateful.

List of Illustrations and Photographs

- Figure A** 'Provisional', cartoon, *Bulletin*, 21 December 1895, p. 10.
Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
- Figure B** 'The New Woman will wear the Breeches', cartoon, *Bulletin*,
23 February 1895, p. 14. Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
- Figure C** 'Getting into Condition', cartoon, *Bulletin*, 3 April 1897, p. 13.
Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
- Figure D** 'Melbourniana', cartoon, *Bulletin*, 17 September 1898, p. 17.
Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
- Figure E** 'How Rosie became a New Woman', cartoon, *Bulletin*, 1 June
1895, p. 14. Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
- Figure F** 'First Appearance of the Lady Cyclist in a Queensland Bush
Township', cartoon, *Bulletin*, 11 July 1896, p. 11. Fisher Library,
University of Sydney.
- Figure G** Photograph of residents at the Women's College, University of
Sydney. Maud Anderson, Louisa Macdonald, Evelyn Dickinson,
Hortense Henrietta (Etta) Montifiore, Jenny Uther, Eleanor
Madeline Whitfeld, Constance Harker. Taken by F. Lloyd Esq. in
1893. Reproduced with the permission of the Mitchell Library,
State Library of New South Wales.

Contents

Introduction

I. Defining the New Woman	p. 1
II. The New Woman Novels	p. 9
III. New Woman Scholarship	p. 20
IV. Australia and the New Woman	p. 27
V. Australian Women's Writing and the New Woman	p. 39
VI. Outline of Thesis	p. 51

Chapter One

Advanced Women, Shrieking Sisters and Revolting Wives: The New Woman and the Australian Press

I. The New Woman and the Mainstream Australian Press	p. 62
II. Reception of the 'Wicked Woman' Novels	p. 75
III. The <i>Bulletin</i> and the New Woman	p. 81
IV. The <i>Dawn</i> and the New Woman	p. 97
V. The <i>Woman's Voice</i> and the New Woman	p. 109

Chapter Two

The Australian Girl and the New Woman: Fiction and Feisty Heroines

I. The Australian Girl and the New Woman	p. 119
II. The Australian Bush Girl	p. 132
III. The Australian Girl in the City	p. 145
IV. Overseas Adventures	p. 158
V. The Career Girl	p. 171

Chapter Three

Those Wicked Women: Sexuality, Marriage and Desire

- I. The 'Sex Problem' p. 183
- II. The Failure of Marriage p. 201
- III. Sexually Rebellious New Women p. 211
- IV. Romantic Friendships and Same-Sex Desire p. 222
- V. The New Woman's Utopia p. 230

Chapter Four

Evelyn Elizabeth Dickinson: New Woman and Novelist

- I. Introducing 'Dick' p. 242
- II. A Writing Career p. 261
- III. Disobeying His Command p. 271
- IV. The New Woman Arrives in Sydney p. 278
- V. A New Type of Australian Heroine p. 286
- VI. The New Woman in the New World p. 300

Conclusion p. 303

Bibliography p. 308

Introduction

Is the nineteenth century new woman a myth, as so many people aver - a figment of the journalistic imagination, according to the *Spectator*? Is she, indeed, none other than an intensely aggravated type of the unwomanly, unlovable, unlovely, untidy, undomesticated, revolting, shrieking, man-hating shrew of all the centuries? Or is she on the other hand, verily an altogether new type of woman evolved from out the ages?

Mrs Morgan-Dockrell, 'Is the New Woman a Myth?'
Humanitarian, vol. 8, 1896, p. 340.¹

I. Defining the New Woman

In the context of feminist agitation in western countries for social and political reforms, the *fin-de-siècle* New Woman was a provocative symbol of, and catalyst for, modernity, socio-sexual transgression and change. The New Woman assumed a wide variety of forms, as the heroine of a novel or a play, a caricature in the press, a sportswoman, doctor or writer. She rode bicycles, wore trousers, smoked cigarettes, attended university, and delivered speeches on everything from 'free love' to women's suffrage. The New Woman was novel and improper, and promised an entirely new role for women. At a time of profound gender instability, or what George Gissing termed 'sexual anarchy', she was one of the most anarchic of figures.²

¹ Reprinted in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 2: The New Woman and Female Independence*, Ann Heilmann (ed), Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

² Quoted in Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, Viking/Penguin, New York, 1990, p. 3.

By virtue of her name alone, the New Woman threatened to replace the 'old' Victorian woman - the passive, feminine, and thoroughly domestic Angel in the House. In Britain, prototypes of the New Woman existed from the early Victorian period, when the all-important Woman Question emerged as a topic of debate. The Wild Woman, the Superfluous Woman, the Novissima, the Odd Woman and the Political Woman each represented new questions about women's role in Victorian society, and challenged the idea of two distinctly separate spheres for men and women. The rise of nineteenth-century British feminisms was partly responsible for the creation of these 'new' cultural types. However, there were also new economic and social factors at play. The 1851 census, for instance, revealed there were 400,000 'surplus' women³ who either could not, or would not, conform to the bourgeois ideal of the wife and mother.

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century, a period often referred to as the *fin de siècle*, that the New Woman really assumed an 'identity' of her own. The New Woman was contemporary with, and informed by, a range of other 'new' social, cultural and political discursive phenomena, such as the new socialism, the new imperialism, the new fiction and the new journalism.⁴ This period was also characterised by new discursive attempts to classify and regulate sexuality. New attempts to control racial 'purity' were manifest in the interest in eugenics and various forms of biological and environmental determinism.

The press was, as other scholars have shown, central to the naming of the New Woman. In the process of naming and identifying her in the press, the New Woman became a point of intersection - both as an object and subject - for journalistic, cultural and political discourses. Mona Caird's article 'Marriage',

³ 1851 Census of Great Britain: General Reports, cited in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (eds), Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001, p. 4. Also cited in Judith Worsnop, 'A re-evaluation of "the problem of surplus women" in 19th-century England: the case of the 1851 Census', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13, 1990, p. 22.

⁴ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997, p. 1.

published in the *Westminster Review* in 1888, was one of the New Woman's first public challenges to tradition. The 'present form of marriage', Caird argued, involved the 'degradation of womanhood' and was a 'vexatious failure'. In its place, she outlined the need for an 'ideal marriage' based on love, trust and friendship, which would enable a woman to '*possess herself* body and soul'. The 'idea of a perfectly free marriage', Caird explained, 'would imply the possibility of any form of contract being entered into between the two persons, the State and society standing aside, and recognizing the entirely private character of the transaction.'⁵ Although Caird recommended changes to the marriage institution rather than its disappearance, critics interpreted the article as a radical and dangerous proposal to abolish marriage altogether. It prompted an overwhelming public response when the London *Daily Telegraph* ran a letter column on the topic, eventually receiving 27,000 letters.

According to Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, the New Woman was officially identified for the first time in August 1893 in the English feminist journal, the *Woman's Herald*, which published the article 'The Social Standing of the New Woman'.⁶ Using the all-important capital letters, the article identified the 'New Woman' as having suddenly appeared 'on the scene of man's activities, as a sort of new creation' who demanded 'a share in the struggles, the responsibilities and the honours of the world', in which, until now, she had 'been a cipher'. The New Woman of the *Woman's Herald* was a utopian vision, or icon, of a woman who epitomised the hope and promise of future civilised society. Tusan argues that feminists invented her as a challenge to caricatures of independent, masculine and political women already circulating in the mainstream press. The feminist icon signified an attempt to create a 'respectable image for political women', by suggesting she had the best interests of Britain at heart. This womanly New Woman's interest in politics and social justice would not compete with her 'dedication to the home' but,

⁵ Mona Caird, 'Marriage', *Westminster Review*, July to December, vol. 130, 1888, pp. 197-8.

⁶ 17 August, 1893, p. 410. Quoted in Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, 'Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de-Siecle', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1998, pp. 169-70.

rather, be an 'extension of her domestic duties'.⁷ In this way, late-nineteenth-century feminists sought to reinvent women's traditionally domestic role, rather than reject it altogether.

This was not in fact the first time the term 'New Woman' appeared with capital letters in a periodical. An article in the *Westminster Review* in 1865 referred to the 'New Woman' of the sensation novels, who was 'no longer the Angel, but the Devil in the house'.⁸ There was also an interesting article entitled 'The New Womanhood', published in the Australian *Dawn* in October 1892, reprinted from the American *Woman's Journal*, that put forward a very similar feminist ideal of the New Woman to that which appeared in the *Woman's Herald*.⁹ This 1892 article, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter One, referred to the 'new [women] crusaders' who would 'speak and act' for animals, for overworked children and exploited factory girls, open colleges for girls, and secure work opportunities for other women. It too represented the New Woman as putting her traditional domestic skills to work in the public sphere.

However, despite these early assertions of the New Woman's presence, it was ultimately a debate in the mainstream press in 1894 that ensured widespread popular dissemination of the term 'New Woman'. The debate was ignited by the British novelist Sarah Grand (pseudonym for Frances McFall). Grand, already famous as the author of the bestselling three-decker novel *The Heavenly Twins*, published an article in the New York-based *North American Review* entitled 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question'.¹⁰ She employed the term 'new woman' to describe the woman who had, at last, 'proclaimed for herself

⁷ Tusan, *ibid.*

⁸ John R. de C. Wise, 'Belles Lettres', *Westminster Review*, vol. 84, 1865, p. 568. Reprinted in *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883*. vol. 3, Elisabeth K. Helsing, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder (eds), Garland, New York, 1983, p. 125. This earlier use of the term has also been noted by Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First Wave Feminism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000, p. 22.

⁹ 'The New Womanhood', *Dawn*, 4 October 1892, pp. 11-12; and Catharine Cole, *Woman's Journal: Boston*, 27 February 1892, p. 68.

¹⁰ *North American Review*, vol. 158, 1894, pp. 270-6. Quoted in Ellen Jordan, 'The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894', *Victorian Newsletter*, no. 63, Spring 1983, pp. 19-21. Reprinted in Heilmann, *Late-Victorian Marriage Question: Volume 2*, *op. cit.*

what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's Sphere'. Like Mona Caird, Grand argued that the 'Woman Question' was the 'Marriage Question', and launched a protest against the sexual double standard in marriage, whereby men's sexual licence was sanctioned, while similar sexual behaviour by women was condemned. Ellen Jordan has shown how Grand's article led the anti-feminist novelist Ouida to respond, in the May issue, that the two 'unmitigated bores' who featured in 'every page of literature written in the English tongue' were the 'Workingman' and the 'New Woman'. Both, according to Ouida, felt 'convinced that on its own especial W hangs the future of the world'.¹¹ A second and even more provocative article by Grand in the May issue of the *North American Review*, entitled 'The Man of the Moment', helped to ensure the New Woman became a familiar figure to readers of the British and American popular press.

Whilst the feminist press invented the New Woman, the mainstream press competed for ownership - not as an icon, but as a caricature. Suddenly, *Punch* had a term that could encompass the disparate elements of the feminist movement. It was used to great comic effect, with a New Woman joke appearing in all but three issues between 18 August 1894 and 27 July 1895.¹² The following year, Mrs Morgan-Dockrell commented on the enduring image of the New Woman as an 'unwomanly, unlovable, unlovely, untidy, undomesticated, revolting, shrieking, man-hating shrew'.¹³ In the mainstream press, the New Woman was commonly presented as anti-marriage and anti-motherhood, and thus rejecting her domestic, feminine and national responsibilities. On other occasions, she was caricatured as a man-hungry 'superfluous' woman, whose desire for equal access to education and the professions arose because she could not marry. She was associated with both the decadents who believed in 'free love', and the social purists who promoted

¹¹ Ouida, 'The New Woman', *North American Review*, vol. 158, 1894, pp. 610-19. Quoted in Jordan, *ibid.* Reprinted in Heilmann, *Late-Victorian Marriage Question: Volume 2*, *op. cit.*

¹² Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹³ Refer to fn. 1.

sexual abstinence. From the moment she appeared, it was evident the New Woman was a multiplicitous identity, and a rich source of caricatures.

The feminist press responded to the negative images in the mainstream press by further emphasising the New Woman's womanliness, commitment to Britain, and to the home.¹⁴ In the battle with mainstream publications, the *Woman's Herald* heroically defended its icon until 1897 when, according to Tusan, the New Woman 'faded as a contested icon in British culture'.¹⁵ Ultimately, she continues, 'the power of the mainstream press as an image maker overwhelmed feminist efforts', and the 'dystopic vision of the New Woman' achieved a longevity unmatched by the positive feminist vision.¹⁶ Tusan's useful account of the tussle for ownership of this cultural icon/caricature reveals the competing and often contradictory discourses associated with the New Woman. However, it is important to add that these different visions of the New Woman were not always neatly divided along feminist/anti-feminist, male/female lines. Feminists themselves also typically disagreed about who the New Woman was and precisely what she stood for.

Tusan's argument is also somewhat problematic in implying that the feminist vision of the New Woman was little more than a journalistic creation that, once defeated, disappeared. It was precisely the notion of the New Woman as a journalistic myth, living on a diet of 'nothing but Foolscap and Ink', which was propagated by her contemporary anti-feminist critics.¹⁷ In this way, her critics dismissed the threatening possibility that the New Woman also represented 'real' feminist reformers who posed a genuine challenge to the patriarchal foundations of Victorian society.¹⁸ However inadvertently, Tusan risks

¹⁴ This is a paraphrase of Tusan, op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁵ Tusan, op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁶ Tusan, op. cit., p. 180.

¹⁷ *Punch*, 26 May 1894, p. 252. Quoted in Jordan, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁸ This point is expanded upon by Ann L. Ardis in *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1990, pp. 10-13.

endorsing the notion that the New Woman was, in the words of Mrs Morgan-Dockrell, little more than a 'figment of the journalistic imagination'.¹⁹

On the contrary, while it is true feminists had more reason to be cautious about owning the New Woman label after its seizure by *Punch*, this figure, and the issues she represented, did not disappear. Although negative and anti-feminist images of the New Woman were dominant at times during the 1890s, opposition to them was never far away. Furthermore, long after the feminist press apparently lost the battle for ownership of its icon, increasing numbers of women dispensed with their corsets and replaced heavy, impractical skirts with divided skirts and knickerbockers. They played new sports, attended university, and entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers. Even in the face of a hostile press, and substantial opposition from conservative parliamentarians, they continued their long struggle to attain women's suffrage. The National Society for Women's Suffrage was formed in 1867, and private Bills for women's suffrage were presented with persistent regularity throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, English women achieved significant social, civil and legal reforms. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 finally made it possible for a married woman to hold property in her own name and make a will without her husband's consent.²⁰ The Infant Custody Acts of 1873 and 1886 gave mothers certain rights to appeal for custody of their minor children. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878, along with a Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women) Act of 1895, also established new grounds on which an abused wife could legally separate from her husband. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the English Parliament was slow to remove the sexual double standard underlying the original Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, which made it possible for a husband, but not

¹⁹ Refer to fn. 1.

²⁰ For a comprehensive account of legal reforms for English women, see Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989.

a wife, to divorce a spouse on the single ground of adultery. In other ways, however, feminists successfully attacked the sexual double standard. The Contagious Diseases Acts had been introduced in the 1860s to control venereal disease among the military by subjecting prostitutes to compulsory detention and examination. Josephine Butler led the sustained feminist campaign against the acts, which were finally repealed in 1886.

Women also made substantial progress in turning the educated New Woman into a reality, and creating new employment opportunities. Girton College, at Cambridge University, was founded in 1874, and became the inspiration for the term 'Girton Girl'. In 1878, women were admitted to degrees at the University of London. These new opportunities for education opened up entirely new professional opportunities, particularly for middle-class women. The register of students up to 1900 at College Hall, the women's college at the University of London, shows that medicine was one of the main subjects being studied by women students.²¹ In the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of women who entered the workforce almost doubled, from 2,832,000 in 1851, to 4,751,000 in 1901.²²

The New Woman movement was primarily grounded in the politics of middle-class feminism. Nevertheless, this was also a period when working-class women were politically active. As more women entered the workforce toward the end of the century, there was a rise in women's trade union membership and activism, culminating in the well-known match girls' strike of 1888. The formation of political groups in the 1890s, such as the Women's Industrial Council and the National Union of Women Workers, helped foreground the needs and demands of working-class women. Some of the best-known 'New

²¹ Alice M. Copping, *The Story of College Hall 1882-1972*, Newman Books, London, 1974, p. 26.

²² The number of women working in the professions (as nurses, teachers and clerks) rose from 106,000 in 1861 to 429,000 in 1901. And the number employed in domestic service almost doubled during this time. These figures are from Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public: The Women's Movement, 1850-1900*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979, reprinted 1981, p. 53. Cited in Richardson and Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Women', such as Olive Schreiner, were active in promoting the cause of women who worked for a living.

II. The New Woman Novels

One of the most significant and ongoing vehicles for *fin-de-siècle* feminist discourses on the New Woman was the so-called 'New Woman novel'. Over one hundred such novels appeared between 1883 and 1900, the majority published in London.²³ Since writers continued producing New Woman fiction after 1900, many other titles could be added to this already impressively long list.

Although it emerged a decade before the New Woman was named, Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), published under the pseudonym Ralph Iron, is often cited as the first New Woman novel. *The Story of an African Farm* investigates the basis of gender categories and protests against women's social, political and sexual inequality. The startlingly independent and outspoken heroine Lyndall rejects the Victorian ideal of womanhood when she refuses to marry her lover and the father of her child: 'I am not in so great a hurry to put my neck beneath any man's foot', she declares.²⁴ Instead, Lyndall, who says women fit their 'sphere' as a 'Chinese woman's foot fits her shoe', aspires to live an emancipated intellectual and sexual life.²⁵

The naming of the New Woman coincided with the publication of a range of novels and short stories that explored many of the same issues as Schreiner's novel. Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, published in 1893, became one of the best known for its unconventional female characters, exploration of gender inequality, the sexual double standard, and the problems of marriage. One of the 'new women' in the novel is Evadne Frayling who, like Schreiner's heroine,

²³ Ardis, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁴ Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, introduced by Dan Jacobson, Penguin, London, 1971, reprinted 1995, p. 184.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 189.

is independent, intelligent, outspoken, and refuses to passively accept her lot as a woman.²⁶ Evadne asserts:

“It seems to me that those who dare to rebel in every age are they who make life possible for those whom temperament compels to submit. It is the rebels who extend the boundary of right little by little, narrowing the confines of wrong, and crowding it out of existence”.²⁷

Evadne protests against the sexual double standard by refusing to consummate her marriage to Major Colquhoun upon learning, immediately following their wedding, of his sexual past. The devastating consequences of this double standard are shown when another character in *The Heavenly Twins*, Edith Beale - who epitomises the ‘ideal’ Angel in the House - dies, along with her children, after contracting syphilis from her husband. Grand also presents a fascinating version of the New Woman in the figure of Angelica Hamilton-Wells (one of the ‘heavenly twins’), a ‘tom-boy’ who is ‘consumed by the rage to know’.²⁸ As she grows up, Angelica is shown to be unfairly constrained by her gender. Although clearly more intelligent than her twin brother, Diavolo, Angelica is kept at home while he is sent away to receive an education.

Also in 1893, the author known as George Egerton (pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne) published the sensational collection of short stories *Keynotes*, with its colourful gallery of New Women who fish, smoke, and fearlessly talk about sex. Her second and equally sensational collection *Discords* was published the following year. While Sarah Grand tended to focus on the problems of male sexuality, Egerton showed women openly acknowledging and acting upon their own feelings of sexual desire. In terms of their content, tone and style, Egerton’s stories remain among the most modern and radical

²⁶ Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*. In three volumes, William Heinemann, London, 1893, vol. 1, p. 240.

²⁷ *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 115.

²⁸ *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 42 and vol. 1, p. 154.

examples of New Woman fiction. They also reveal the unique nature of late-nineteenth-century feminist agendas. While some stories promote the contentious idea that more sexual freedom for women was needed, others hark back to what, in today's terms, might be seen as a conservative argument that women's primary role was as mothers of 'the new race'.²⁹ Egerton elevated motherhood as a way of emphasising that a woman was not put on earth to be a man's 'chattel', but had a far more valuable role to play.³⁰ This argument enabled feminists to protest against women's sexual slavery in marriage, and stress the importance of 'voluntary motherhood'.

Hot on the heels of these works came the publication in 1894 of several other popular novels on the subject of the New Woman. Iota's three-decker *A Yellow Aster* presents another heroine, Gwen Waring, who radically departs from the Victorian ideal of the Angel in the House: 'Gwen neither evaded nor shirked conventions, she simply swept them aside'.³¹ Gwen is quintessentially new: she is intelligent, well read, speaks 'undiluted truths' and craves 'new sensations'.³² Controversially, she decides to marry not out of any sense of womanly duty or love, but as 'an experiment'.³³ At the end, however, Gwen's experience of being a mother finally enables her to become a 'full, complete, proper woman'.³⁴ Although this ending has led some critics to dismiss *A Yellow Aster* as anti-feminist, it is necessary to consider how Iota, like Egerton, was promoting a late-nineteenth-century view of motherhood as the primary source of women's difference from, and superiority to, men.

Given that the New Woman was primarily a middle-class phenomenon, it is not surprising the new fiction dealt with middle-class feminist concerns, such as women's legal and sexual inequality in marriage, and the limitations of a

²⁹ George Egerton, 'The Regeneration of Two', *Discords, Keynotes and Discords*, introduced by Martha Vicinus, Virago, London, 1983, p. 192.

³⁰ Egerton, 'A Shadow's Slant', *Keynotes*, *ibid.*, p. 145.

³¹ Iota, *A Yellow Aster*. In three volumes, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1894, vol. 2, p. 25.

³² *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 25 and p. 51.

³³ *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 52.

³⁴ *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 172.

woman's sphere when it came to pursuing intellectual, educational and professional needs and desires. In Mona Caird's sophisticated account of gender relations, *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), the unhappily married heroine, Hadria Fullerton, abandons her husband and children to travel to Paris and pursue her ambition to study music. Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman*, published the same year, also suggests that marriage is incompatible with a woman having a career: the heroine, Mary Erle, never marries, instead deciding to support herself as an artist and writer. Another novel included by Margaret Oliphant in the 'Anti-Marriage League'³⁵ of fiction was Ménie Muriel Dowie's *Gallia* (1895), in which the heroine is 'terrified' by the 'society of young married women' and shivers in the presence of babies.³⁶ Dowie's novel is, like many New Woman novels, infused with late-nineteenth-century ideas about eugenics, selective breeding and women's role in defending the quality of the Anglo-Saxon race. Having attended Oxford University (as a freelance student because she was not permitted to take a degree), Gallia Hamesthwaite is at a loss as to what to do next. She eventually resorts to marriage to a man she does not love, but one whom she considers an appropriate (ie. physically and hereditarily healthy) father for her children.

A Superfluous Woman (1894) by Emma Frances Brooke stands out as one of the more radical New Woman novels in terms of its analysis of the New Woman's class status. The novel presents an emancipated upper-class heroine, Jessamine Halliday, who is doubly transgressive of class and sexual boundaries when she embarks on a love affair with a lowly farm labourer, Colin Macgillvray. Although she loves Colin, Jessamine is ultimately too sensitive to the shame associated with marrying below her class. Instead, she enters a degrading marriage with the promiscuous Lord Heriot, from whom she and her children contract syphilis. Like Sarah Grand, Brooke offers a damning critique of the

³⁵ Margaret Oliphant, 'The Anti-Marriage League', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 159, 1896, pp. 135-49. Quoted by Helen Small in her introduction to Ménie Muriel Dowie, *Gallia*, Everyman edition, J. M. Dent, London, 1995, pp. xxv-xxvi. Reprinted in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 5: Literary Degenerates*, Ann Heilmann (ed), Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

sexual double standard and its consequences for the wives and children of disease-carrying men. Another New Woman novel that self-consciously drew attention to class hierarchy was Mary Augusta Ward's *Marcella* (1894), in which the intelligent and socialist heroine dedicates her life to working as a nurse and helping the poor.

The heroines of these new novels and stories played a crucial role in effectively conveying the feminist agenda(s) associated with the New Woman. The best-known heroines proved unconventional in their beliefs, actions and behaviour, and thus symbolised the possibility of change in women's position in society. Rita S. Kranidis has gone as far as to say that the New Woman heroine existed as a 'theoretical concept and as a dynamic social projection', rather than as a representation of an actual woman.³⁷

While heroines were not always overtly referred to as New Women, there were instantly recognisable markers of their newness and modernity, such as the bicycle, latchkey and knickerbockers. They read widely to educate themselves on science (medical texts) and philosophy (John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*), attended university, craved the new, and demanded knowledge that women were not supposed to have. This new heroine also tended to be physically active - horse riding, walking, travelling, cycling, shooting or fishing were among her favourite pastimes. Hence, the heroine of *A Superfluous Woman* is able to 'shoot and fish like a man'.³⁸ By demonstrating that women could be as intelligent and accomplished as men, the New Woman exposed gender inequalities and instabilities. The heroines of both *The Heavenly Twins* and *A Yellow Aster* protest against the assumption that they should be raised differently from their brothers, purely because of their gender. For Angelica Hamilton-Wells, the chance to sneak out at night wearing her brother's clothes

³⁶ Dowie, *Gallia*, *ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁷ Rita S. Kranidis, *Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of Late Victorian Feminist Novels*, Macmillan, London, 1995, p. xiv.

³⁸ Emma Frances Brooke, *A Superfluous Woman*, William Heinemann, London, 1894, p. 12.

is an opportunity to enjoy unaccustomed 'freedom from restraint'.³⁹ Similarly, in Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897), the young Beth Caldwell dresses up in boys' clothing in order to go along to a menagerie in town. Cross-dressing was one way the New Woman sought to defy gender boundaries and break out of the confines of her sphere. Another distinctive feature of the New Woman heroine was her tendency to act out of 'devotion to principle'.⁴⁰ She was typically frank and outspoken about her beliefs, particularly with regard to sexual matters.

Despite the many radical features associated with her, women writers also endeavoured to create heroines who belied the anti-feminist stereotype of the mannish, unfeminine and undesirable New Woman. Hence, even the best-known heroines were often constructed as beautiful and traditionally feminine in their appearance. As Kranidis notes, one common strategy feminist writers employed was to:

construct a revision of the traditional literary female heroine...by combining the conventional, tradition-bound figure of womanhood with the enlightened New Woman, whose object is to liberate herself and other women completely from patriarchal repression.⁴¹

In this way, writers produced heroines whom their readers could better relate to. This heroine could articulate readers' very real doubts about whether to marry and have children, and enable them to consider the alternatives, such as working to support themselves.

³⁹ Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 275.

⁴⁰ Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did*, introduced by Sarah Wintle, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 41.

⁴¹ Kranidis, op. cit., p. xiv.

Some of the most prominent Victorian male writers also wrote New Woman novels, as a number of critics have demonstrated.⁴² In 1893, George Gissing published *The Odd Women*, a novel that takes as its subject the unmarried New Women who lived and worked in the city. Grant Allen's bestselling *The Woman Who Did* (1895) presents Herminia Barton, a Girton Girl who earns her own living as a teacher and acts on her principled belief in free love by refusing to marry her lover. Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, with its famously unconventional heroine, Sue Bridehead - 'the slight, pale "bachelor" girl'⁴³ - was also published in 1896.

However, while men and women, feminists and anti-feminists, wrote, read and discussed these novels, they very quickly became closely linked to the activities and beliefs of women's rights campaigners. Women writers asserted their political agency by using fiction to directly intervene in public debates about feminism, and to explore agendas for personal, social, sexual, political and legislative change. In the words of Ella Hepworth Dixon, these novels signified 'a plea for a kind of moral and social trades-unionism among women'.⁴⁴ Then there is that well-known remark by W. T. Stead:

The Modern Woman novel is not merely a novel written by a woman, or a novel written about women, but it is a novel written by a woman about women from the standpoint of Woman.⁴⁵

⁴² For a discussion of these novels, see, for example, Ardis, op. cit., Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., Penny Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form*, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1982, Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*, Macmillan, London, 1978, Lloyd Fernando, 'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1977 and Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920*, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1979.

⁴³ A reviewer's comments, quoted by Thomas Hardy in his postscript to the 1912 edition of *Jude the Obscure*, C. S. Sisson (ed), Penguin, England, 1978, reprinted 1986, p. 42.

⁴⁴ W. T. Stead, 'The Novel of the Modern Woman', *Review of Reviews*, 10, 1894, p. 71. Quoted in Boumelha, op. cit., pp. 63-4.

⁴⁵ Stead, p. 64. Quoted in Boumelha, op. cit., p. 64.

Even though the subjects of New Woman fiction were not always new, their authors approached them with a new degree of frankness and political intent. Reviewers of these novels commonly expressed concern at their effect on girls, thus showing how aware they were of the New Woman's political power.

While not all the authors of new fiction can be described as feminists, many were impressive feminists and activists. Olive Schreiner was at the heart of radical literary, political and social circles in London.⁴⁶ Sarah Grand was a committed and active member of the suffrage movement. Writers such as Mérie Muriel Dowie lived the kind of thoroughly unconventional life associated with the New Woman heroine of fiction. Dowie smoked, had a passion for hunting and fishing, and travelled on horseback through the Carpathian mountains, wearing knickerbockers and carrying a gun 'in case she met with a wild bear'.⁴⁷ Dowie's journey was the subject of her highly successful travel narrative, *A Girl in the Karpathians* (1890).

While writers entering the New Woman debate employed a wide range of forms and genres - short stories, journalism, travel narratives, political tracts, poetry and plays - the novel was the most popular form. As Gail Cunningham points out, it was the novel that could properly investigate the 'clash between radical principles and the actualities of contemporary life', and 'present arguments for new standards of morality, new codes of behaviour, in the context of an easily recognisable social world'.⁴⁸ These novels were largely responsible for creating and consolidating a 'community of women readers' who could refer to them as 'proof of their psychological, social, and ideological difference from men'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ For an account of Schreiner's life, see Ruth Brandon, *The New Women and the Old Men: Love, Sex and the Woman Question*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1990.

⁴⁷ Helen Small, introduction to *Gallia*, op. cit., p. xxvii.

⁴⁸ Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁴⁹ Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, p. 305.

As well as being notable for their overtly political/feminist content, the New Woman novels often dramatically revised Victorian narrative style and structure. Of course, the themes of unhappy marriages, drunken and abusive husbands, adultery, bigamy, deserted wives, and wives who fled their husbands, were already familiar to readers of earlier Victorian novels. For decades, Charles Edward Mudie had sanctioned the inclusion of such fiction in his library, but on the proviso it have an edifying purpose and uplifting ending.⁵⁰ *The Story of a Modern Woman* self-consciously draws attention to these restrictions when the heroine, Mary Erle, who has written a three-decker novel, is informed by her editor that she will need to alter the ending, which depicts a man making love to his friend's wife: "I can't print that sort of thing in my paper. The public won't stand for it," the editor explains. He adds that her novel "[m]ust be fit to go into every parsonage in England", and that the public "like happy endings".⁵¹ With notable irony, Dixon does not present her own heroine as happily married at the end. Instead, Mary Erle is shown to be disillusioned by the reality of men's willingness to have extra-marital affairs.

The New Woman novels did not promise happy or optimistic endings, nor pretend to be appropriate reading material for the entire family. While the typical Victorian love story ended in marriage, the New Woman novels often began with marriage - and an unhappy one at that - or presented heroines who never married. They attacked, or at least questioned, previously inviolable Victorian sentiments about marriage, motherhood, the family, and the sexually passive woman. 'Ibscenity' was the term used by anti-feminists to refer to novels inspired by Nora's dramatic act of slamming the door on her husband and children. Concomitantly, these novels broadened Victorian assumptions about women, and the traditional Victorian heroine, by arguing for women's

⁵⁰ For an account of Mudie's role in the production of nineteenth-century novels, see Guinevere L. Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel*, David & Charles/Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1970.

⁵¹ Ella Hepworth Dixon, *The Story of a Modern Woman*, William Heinemann, London, 1894, pp. 181-3.

equal right to suffrage, higher education, careers, and financial and sexual independence.

The new novels' frank treatment of sexual relations between men and women caused them to be dubbed 'sex novels'. The authors of New Woman novels understood that sexual reforms were central in the feminist project of personal, social and legislative change. They knew that, unlike men, Victorian women's social roles were primarily defined in terms of their sexual status, as mothers, wives, fallen women and prostitutes. The most notorious novels, such as *The Story of an African Farm*, presented heroines who challenged the sexual double standard by demanding the same sexual independence enjoyed by men. Others, such as *A Yellow Aster*, exposed the extent to which women were conditioned to deny their own sexual needs. The newly married Gwen Waring protests against the lack of autonomy she has over her own body: 'my body belongs to Humphrey Strange, as sure as any horse in his stable does'.⁵² George Egerton's story 'Virgin Soil' is even more explicit, with a young wife describing marriage as a 'legal prostitution, a nightly degradation, a hateful yoke'.⁵³ Egerton's story argues for women's need to be better informed about sex before entering marriage. The unhappily married woman blames her mother for having reared her:

"...a fool, an idiot, ignorant of everything I ought to have known, everything that concerned me and the life I was bound to lead as a wife; my physical needs, my coming passion, the very meaning of my sex, my wifhood and motherhood to follow. You gave me not one weapon in my hand to defend myself against the possible attacks of man at his worst."⁵⁴

⁵² *A Yellow Aster*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 184.

⁵³ Egerton, 'Virgin Soil', *Discords*, op. cit., p. 155.

⁵⁴ Egerton, 'Virgin Soil', *Discords*, op. cit., p. 157.

Sarah Grand's novels *The Heavenly Twins* and *The Beth Book* took the emphasis away from women's sexuality and concentrated on exposing the problems caused by male sexuality (venereal disease, fallen women, prostitution and illegitimate children). Hence, Evadne, in *The Heavenly Twins*, chooses sexual abstinence as a form of ideological protest against the problems caused by patriarchy. In *The Beth Book*, the heroine is confronted by the hypocrisy of the double standard when she discovers her husband, a doctor, works in one of the notorious Lock Hospitals, where prostitutes were detained for medical examination. To make matters worse, he moves his own mistress into the same house he shares with Beth.

The New Woman fiction occupied an uneasy place in late-nineteenth-century literary culture. Its association with sexual matters undoubtedly contributed to its commercial success - Egerton's *Keynotes*, for instance, sold over 6,000 copies in its first year and was translated into seven languages⁵⁵ - as well as to the demise of the three-decker novel.⁵⁶ Publishers like Heinemann, with the Pioneer series, and John Lane, with the Keynote series, went out of their way to identify these new novels with the sexually (and commercially) explosive New Woman Question. However, the success of the New Woman fiction was a double-edged sword in the sense that, while the market for women's writing was greater than ever, women authors were more vulnerable to exploitation as 'cultural commodities'.⁵⁷ Rita Kranidis argues, for example, that the need to boost circulation rates resulted in extensive editorial intervention, especially when it came to serialised novels.⁵⁸

Furthermore, the popular status of New Woman novels - their association with mass culture - made women writers vulnerable to marginalisation within 'high' literary culture. The proliferation of women writers, and their large female

⁵⁵ Rosie Miles, 'George Egerton, Bitextuality and Cultural (Re)Production in the 1890s', *Women's Writing*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1996, p. 243.

⁵⁶ See Griest, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Kranidis, op. cit., p. 50.

⁵⁸ Kranidis, op. cit., p. 50.

audience, contributed to growing fears about the feminisation of literature, and of Victorian culture generally. In 1895, Edmund Gosse complained that the 'combined prestige of the best poets, historians, critics and philosophers of the country' did not 'weigh in the balance against a single novel by the New Woman'.⁵⁹ His additional comment that 'the books so hastily praised are not less hastily forgotten' suggested the new fiction was ephemera, and not of lasting literary merit.⁶⁰ George Moore complained that men had ceased to read novels.⁶¹ Moore was among a number of well-known male writers who aimed to create a school of 'new' and 'serious' realism that would deal with the 'economic and sexual realities of life', and challenge the idea of novels as pure entertainment.⁶² As Jane Eldridge Miller suggests, this masculinist attempt to de-feminise literature 'backfired' to a large extent, when women authors of New Woman fiction also began to realistically present sexual relationships between men and women.⁶³ (Although it is important to note that writers such as George Egerton and Olive Schreiner, whose fiction was more stylistically unconventional, were also affiliated with the late-nineteenth-century aesthetic movement.) The link between the new feminism and the new realism made it even more imperative for masculinists and anti-feminists to distinguish between men and women's writing, and between serious literature and popular fiction, often to the detriment of women writers' status within literary culture.

III. New Woman Scholarship

As vehicles for women writers, particularly, to put forward feminist visions of social, personal, political and legislative change, and explore new and different forms of writing, the New Woman novels occupy an important place in literary,

⁵⁹ Edmund Gosse, 'The Decay of the Literary Taste', *North American Review*, 161, 1895, p. 116. Quoted in Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 177.

⁶⁰ Gosse, *ibid.*, p. 115. Quoted in Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 177.

⁶¹ George Moore, *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals*, 1885, reprinted Harvester, Brighton, 1985, p. 22. Quoted in Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 178.

⁶² Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 179.

cultural and political histories of the *fin de siècle*. Nevertheless, for much of the twentieth century they remained buried in libraries. In 1987, Gerd Bjørhovde observed that, according to traditional literary histories, the 'decades following the death of George Eliot in 1880 seem curiously empty of women writers'.⁶⁴ It is as if there were a gap, Bjørhovde continued, between Eliot and early-twentieth-century modernist women.

Bjørhovde's comment is partly explained by the fact that, although 1970s scholars had already gone some way toward rescuing Grand, Caird, Schreiner and others from a lengthy period of obscurity, they tended to reinforce late-nineteenth-century criticism of the new novels as being aesthetically inferior purpose novels. In *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977), Elaine Showalter argues that the women writers of the 1890s had a 'highly developed sense of belonging to a sisterhood of women writers' which their literary predecessors did not, and thus represented a turning-point in the female tradition.⁶⁵ However, Showalter also criticises the authors of the new feminist fiction for their failure to develop sufficiently as artists.⁶⁶ She concludes that the feminist writers had 'but one story to tell, and exhausted themselves in its narration'.⁶⁷

The first book-length studies of the New Woman fiction, published around the same time, upheld the view (again common among late-nineteenth-century critics) that they offered a certain historical and sociological interest, but little in the way of literary value. Lloyd Fernando's *'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel* (1977), Gail Cunningham's *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (1978)

⁶³ Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*, Virago, London, 1994, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Gerd Bjørhovde, *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel, 1880-1900*, Norwegian University Press, Oslo, 1987, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, expanded edition, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999, p. 182.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 215. In her own defence, Showalter points out, in the introduction to the 1999 edition, that when she was writing *A Literature of Their Own*, most of the women writers of the 1890s were still 'completely unknown', p. xxvii-xxviii.

and Patricia Stubbs's *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920* (1979), all focus primarily on the canonical male writers, George Meredith, George Gissing, George Moore and Thomas Hardy, thus demonstrating these critics' lack of interest in women novelists from the same period. Cunningham's study has one chapter that concentrates on women authors of New Woman novels. However she includes these writers in the category of the 'minor New Woman novelists', who were 'less talented' and 'produced nothing of lasting literary merit.'⁶⁸ Where they served an important function, she proposes, was in helping to break through the 'constricting bounds of conventional reticence' and thus clear the way for 'better novelists' to write new fiction.⁶⁹ These early critics failed to question the basis on which the work of 1890s women novelists was devalued, rendered inferior, and excluded from literary histories for close to a hundred years.

While early critics were primarily concerned with the subject matter of New Woman novels, later critics began to pay more attention to their style and form. Gerd Bjørhovde's *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880-1900* was one of the first sympathetic studies of New Woman novels by women. Challenging the earlier critical perception of these writers as 'artistic failures', Bjørhovde emphasises their proto-modernist affiliations, describing them as 'pioneers' who were 'consciously trying out new things'.⁷⁰ Bjørhovde proposes that while these novelists' 'rebellion was partly directed against social and political authority', it was 'also partly a literary one'. Women writers were all too aware of the nexus between the 'conventional novel' and the 'conventional female role', and sought to replace the old form of novel with one that better reflected the lives of women. In *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (1992), Lyn Pykett also concentrates on women writers as a way of exploring the gendered nature of 1890s New Woman novels. Pykett argues that, like women's sensation novels of the 1860s,

⁶⁸ Cunningham, op. cit., p. 19.

⁶⁹ Cunningham, op. cit., p. 79.

⁷⁰ Bjørhovde, op. cit., pp. 13-17.

these novels represent a form of *'écriture féminine'*: that is, in both types of fiction, women writers were attempting to 'find a form' in which to 'represent and articulate women's experience'.⁷¹

In *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (1990), Ann Ardis also questions the earlier critical reception of the New Woman writing. Ardis specifically makes a case for including the New Woman fiction of the 1880s and 1890s in genealogies of modernism, arguing that it anticipated the 'reappraisal of realism we usually credit to early-twentieth-century writers'. As evidence of their modernity, Ardis points to the way these novels challenge the "'natural" inevitability of the marriage plot', shatter the Victorian concept of character/identity as 'seamless' or 'unified', and present female characters who dismantle the convention of omniscient narration by asserting their 'autonomy from a male narrator'. She also emphasises the political self-consciousness of the New Woman novels - 'their authors choose *not* to view art as a sphere of cultural activity separate from the realm of politics and history' - and the 'threatening' nature of its commercial success to the late-nineteenth-century critical establishment. Ardis suggests the New Woman novels were devalued and marginalised by 'conservative critics' who sought to depoliticise 'Literature', and valorise the kind of 'formalist aesthetic' associated with high modernism.⁷²

Lyn Pykett and Jane Eldridge Miller are among others who have pursued the New Woman's associations with modernism. In *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (1995), Pykett argues that the late-nineteenth-century anxieties about gender, surrounding cultural figures such as the New Woman and the decadent, 'were central to the production of modernist, as indeed of all forms of early twentieth-century fiction in

⁷¹ Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 5-6.

⁷² Ardis, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

England'.⁷³ Jane Eldridge Miller, in *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*, specifically focuses on the 'modernism of content' in Edwardian novels about women and feminism, which can be considered an antecedent stage to the 'more familiar, canonized modernism of form'. Miller argues that, like 1890s writers, Edwardian writers challenged traditional assumptions about gender and marriage in a way that caused them to 'reshape narrative form'.⁷⁴

Together, Ardis, Pykett, Bjørhovde and Miller have contributed substantially to our understanding of the literary, historical and cultural significance of the New Woman writers. They demonstrate the role played by turn-of-the-century women writers in the history of modernity and modernism, by showing that much of the New Woman writing was, indeed, 'modern' in terms of its style and subject. In particular, the work of writers like George Egerton, Olive Schreiner and, to a lesser extent, Sarah Grand reveals the links between the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century *avant garde* movements. Their use of dream sequences, fragmented narratives, multi-narrative perspectives, open endings and ambiguity suggests the kind of textual self-consciousness and challenge to literary conventions associated with twentieth-century modernism.

At the same time, the emphasis on the New Woman's affiliations with modernism narrows the focus unnecessarily to non-realist or more authentically 'feminine' forms of writing. This approach risks overlooking the wide and varied range of New Woman writing, much of which, as has already been pointed out, could also be included in the category of new realism.⁷⁵ More recently, several critics have questioned the usefulness of applying the term 'modernism' to New Woman fiction. In *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (2000), Ann Heilmann declares her reluctance to apply 'a

⁷³ Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*, Edward Arnold, London, 1995, p. 13.

⁷⁴ Miller, *Rebel Women*, op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁵ A similar point is made by Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 181.

label compromised by elitist, conservative and firmly masculinist cultural politics to the socially inclusive, iconoclastic and fervently feminist framework within which these writers located themselves'.⁷⁶ While Heilmann ignores the often elitist values of the New Woman writers - values which made them anything but 'socially inclusive' - her point that the aims and intentions of the New Woman novelists differed from those of later modernist writers is important. As Jane Eldridge Miller herself also makes clear, the impulse behind turn-of-the-century writers' formal innovations was quite different from the self-conscious literary experimentation of the later modernists. Although turn-of-the-century women writers saw themselves as modern in their intention to dismantle traditional Victorian beliefs about women, femininity and even the novel itself, they were not unified by a commitment to experimenting with literary form.⁷⁷ Nor were they unified by an interest in producing non-realist forms of writing.

Many studies of the New Woman fiction have also unduly narrowed the focus to issues of sexuality. Gail Cunningham states, for instance, that the 'crucial factor was, inevitably, sex', as feminists sought to formulate a 'new code of behaviour and sexual ethics'.⁷⁸ Certainly, the New Woman overtly challenged Victorian sexual mores. In *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1990), Elaine Showalter demonstrates the centrality of the New Woman during a period which saw the laws governing 'sexual identity and behaviour' appear to break down.⁷⁹ Many New Woman writers recognised the fundamental need to address women's sexual roles and status in Victorian society, before other reforms were possible. Yet, the result of modern critical studies over-emphasising the New Woman's association with sexuality is potentially to downplay the range of other issues of significance to late-nineteenth-century feminists. However inadvertently, this again risks emulating the practices of the New Woman's earliest enemies, who branded her fiction 'erotomania' in an

⁷⁶ Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

⁷⁷ Miller, *Rebel Women*, op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁸ Cunningham, op. cit., p. 2.

effort to discredit her: as Heilmann notes, this became 'the most damaging personal accusation levelled against female New Woman writers'.⁸⁰ As discussion of the New Woman increasingly came under the rubric of sexuality, the multifarious issues that she represented - dress reform, suffrage, higher education, access to the professions - could be conveniently forgotten.

More recently, scholars have attempted to move away from 'reductive' or 'monolithic' readings of the New Woman fiction, emphasising, instead, its diversity of styles and approaches.⁸¹ The editors of a recent collection of essays, *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (2001), suggest the question is not 'who was the New Woman' but, rather, 'who *were* the New Women?'⁸² The recent critical trend toward single-author studies of New Woman writers has further highlighted the differences between authors.⁸³ Mona Caird and Sarah Grand, for instance, used their fiction to put forward sometimes competing ideas about women's social and biological roles. Many other women writers, while not necessarily as well known, offer different perspectives again on who the New Woman was and what she stood for.

In the last decade, scholars have also further investigated the different cultural contexts in which the New Women emerged. Two collections of essays published in 1996 - *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, and a special edition of the journal *Women's Writing* - firmly placed the New Woman in the context of the many different aspects of *fin-de-siècle* culture.⁸⁴ Sally Ledger's *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle*, published in 1997, concentrated on the New Woman's relationship to the new socialism, the new imperialism,

⁷⁹ Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, op. cit., p. 3.

⁸⁰ Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, op. cit., p. 51.

⁸¹ These words were used by Richardson and Willis in their introduction to *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, op. cit., p. 12.

⁸² Richardson and Willis, op. cit., p. 12.

⁸³ See, for example, Teresa Mangum, *Married, Middlebrow and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, USA, 1998, and Carolyn Burdett, *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender, Empire*, Palgrave, Hampshire, 2001.

⁸⁴ *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, Lyn Pykett (ed), Longman, London, 1996; and *Women's Writing at the fin de siècle*, *Women's Writing*, Sally Ledger (ed), vol. 3, no. 3, 1996.

lesbianism and the city. Other scholars, such as Rita Kranidis, have focused on the literary marketplace within which women writers worked.⁸⁵ Kate Flint's research into the reading practices of the women who read the New Woman novels also represents an important contribution to scholarship in this field.⁸⁶

IV. Australia and the New Woman

To date, scholarship has largely concentrated on the New Woman's emergence in Britain and, to a lesser extent, Europe, America and Canada. In comparison, little has been written about this cultural and literary phenomenon in Australia. Critics have considered aspects of the New Woman in Australia, such as her appearance in the press⁸⁷ and her emergence in the work and lives of individual women writers.⁸⁸ Some have also written more broadly about her

⁸⁵ Kranidis, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ Flint, *op. cit.*

⁸⁷ See, for instance, Penny Russell, 'Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 13, 1994, pp. 31-51; John Docker, *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991; and Farley Kelly, *The 'Woman Question' in Melbourne 1880-1914*, PhD thesis, Faculty of Education, Monash University, 1982, esp. ch. 3; Sylvia Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox: A Strange Case of Authorship*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1987, esp. p. 201. While not specifically on the subject of the New Woman, Deborah Campbell writes about the press reception of Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* in "'A Doll's House": The Colonial Response', *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends: Essays in Australian Cultural History*, Susan Dermody, John Docker and Drusilla Modjeska (eds), Kibble Books, Malmsbury, Vic, 1982, pp. 192-210.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Jill Roe, "'The Scope of Women's Thought is Necessarily Less": The Case of Ada Cambridge', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1972, pp. 388-403; Leonie N. Prime, *The New Woman and the Australian Girl: Cultural Narratives of Identity 1885-1915*, MPhil thesis, Department of English, University of Western Australia, 1998; Robert Dixon, 'The New Woman and the Coming Man: Gender and genre in the "lost-race" romance', *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 14; Margaret Harris, 'The Writing of Tasma, The Work of Jessie Couvreur', *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, Debra Adelaide (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 12; Audrey Tate, *Ada Cambridge: Her Life and Work 1844-1926*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1991; Damien Barlow, "'My Little Ghost-Slave": The Queer Lives of Rosa Praed', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1996, pp. 344-52; Kay Ferres, 'Rewriting Desire: Rosa Praed, Theosophy, and the Sex Problem', *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*, Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 12; Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s - 1930s*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995, esp. ch. 4; Patricia Clarke, *Tasma: The Life of Jessie Couvreur*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1994. Although she rejects the New Woman label to describe Tasma's novel, Rowena Mohr discusses female characters in light of the New Woman movement in 'The Vampire's Kiss: Gender, Desire and Power in *Dracula* and *The Penance of Portia James*', *Australasian Victorian Studies*, vol. 4, 1998, pp. 80-7. Also see Cecily Devereux, 'New Woman, New World: Maternal Feminism and the New Imperialism in the

significance in late-nineteenth-century Australian culture.⁸⁹ However, there seem to have been few extensive studies of the New Woman in the Australian context, apart from Leonie Prime's valuable masters thesis *The New Woman and the Australian Girl: Cultural Narratives of Identity 1885-1915*, completed at the University of Western Australia in 1998, and Farley Kelly's chapter 'The New Woman Evolves 1894-96' as part of her PhD thesis, *The 'Woman Question' in Melbourne 1880-1914*, completed at Monash University in 1982.

The relatively small amount of attention paid to the New Woman in Australia is curious given her significant presence in the *fin-de-siècle* Australian cultural landscape. One critic who has demonstrated the centrality of this figure in 1890s Australia, John Docker, describes the New Woman as a 'pacesetter of the age', responsible for 'changing the public face of society and cultural representation forever'.⁹⁰ The images that proliferated in the Australian popular press, of the New Woman riding her bicycle, wearing trousers, smoking cigarettes and berating men, testify to her influence. At the beginning of 1896, the *Melbourne Punch* went so far as to declare that Australia's mothers and grandmothers were being entirely 'replaced by the "New Woman"'.⁹¹

There were other visible signs of the New Woman's influence in the Australian colonies. As occurred overseas, this modern image of womanhood helped to radically revise traditional ideas about femininity and ladylike behaviour. The Safety bicycle was introduced to Australia in the late 1880s, and women rushed to join in the new cycling craze.⁹² The bicycle gave them an unprecedented

White Settler Colonies', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 22, issue 2, 1999, pp. 175-84; Susan Magarey, 'History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996, pp. 96-110; and Susan Pfisterer, 'Cultural Anxiety and the New Woman Playwright: Mrs E. S. Haviland's *On Wheels*', *Australasian Drama Studies* 27, October 1995, pp. 143-50.

⁸⁹ See again Docker, *Nervous Nineties*, op. cit., and Magarey, 'History', ibid.

⁹⁰ Docker, *Nervous Nineties*, op. cit., p. 235.

⁹¹ 9 January 1896, p. 21.

⁹² The Safety bicycle was developed in England in 1885 and replaced the Ordinary bicycle (Penny-farthing). It became commercially available in Melbourne in 1889. The pneumatic tyre, which had been invented by John Dunlop in 1888, was probably imported to Australia in 1889,

degree of mobility and independence, as well as providing them with enjoyment, exercise, and more control over their bodies.⁹³ They formed their own cycling clubs and embarked on long trips together. By the late 1890s, a dozen cycling journals had emerged in Australia and 200,000 people were estimated to have bought bicycles. Although, at a cost of twenty or thirty pounds, new bicycles were initially very expensive, cheaper second-hand ones were widely available by the end of the decade. Penny Russell demonstrates that the importation of bicycles to New South Wales rose dramatically during the period of the New Woman's emergence. In 1894, there were 670 bicycles imported, in 1895 there were 1,135, and by 1896 the number had risen to 6,160.⁹⁴ Cycling on the modern bicycle was a popular demonstration of the New Woman's newly discovered confidence and mobility in public places.⁹⁵

The cycling craze also accelerated the trend toward a more 'rational' form of dress for Australian women. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of Australian women joined the protest against clothing that was restrictive, impractical, and that contributed to their oppression. Western women frequently compared the practice of tight lacing to the Chinese practice of women's foot binding. The American feminist Amelia Bloomer became famous throughout Britain and the colonies when she tried to introduce a new form of dress for women, comprising long pantaloons and shorter skirts. While few women in Australia were fully prepared to embrace the bloomerism movement, unconventional women like the English-born feminist Caroline Dexter, promoted divided skirts and the abolition of corsets in Melbourne in the 1860s.⁹⁶ Two decades later, the suffragist, Henrietta Dugdale, became known for condemning the corset and wearing a divided skirt, while another suffragist and health reformer, Brettana Smyth, also expressed her disdain for

and was fitted to commercial machines in 1890. See the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, vol. 3, 6th edn, Australian Geographic Pty Ltd, Terrey Hills, NSW, 1996, p. 961.

⁹³ See Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 1990, ch. 6.

⁹⁴ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁹⁵ This is a paraphrase of Ledger, *The New Woman*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

the corset. Women who lived in the Australian bush often found the Victorian fashions imported from Britain impractical, and adopted more comfortable clothing as a matter of necessity rather than principle.⁹⁷

Women cyclists often found that their bulky and long skirts proved hazardous when riding. While the introduction of skirt guards on bicycles considerably improved their safety, there was still a need for a more practical style of dress. The new cycling costumes for women comprised a tailored, double-breasted bodice, a man's style of hat, stiff-collared shirts and ties.⁹⁸ To avoid the problem of skirts being caught in the wheels, many women chose to wear divided skirts and baggy knickerbockers, or 'bloomers'. Another option was a slightly shorter skirt. During the 1890s, more tailored and practical costumes were not just adopted for the purposes of cycling, but were considered suitable for a range of outdoor activities including walking and playing tennis. The new interest in women's physical health and fitness (and their suitability as mothers of the race) assisted the cause of women's dress reform, especially the push to abolish tight lacing. However, the tendency among women to assume a more masculine style of dress still met with conservative opposition, and in 1895 the Melbourne Cycling Tourists' Club banned its 'lady' members from wearing rational dress.⁹⁹ Indeed, the large majority of late-nineteenth-century women were not prepared to embrace dress reform and risk being labelled unfeminine or unladylike. Prominent feminists like Rose Scott went out of their way to dress conventionally and 'respectably'.

⁹⁶ J. S. Ryan, 'Caroline Dexter', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1851-1890*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1972, vol. 4, pp. 64-5.

⁹⁷ See Margaret Maynard, "'A Great Deal Too Good for the Bush": Women and the Experience of Dress in Queensland', *On the Edge: Women's Experiences of Queensland*, Gail Reekie (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, ch. 4.

⁹⁸ For an account of the changes in Australian women's clothing at the turn of the century, see Elizabeth Scandrett, *Breeches & Bustles: An Illustrated History of Clothes Worn in Australia, 1788-1914*, Pioneer Design Studio, Lilydale, Vic, 1978, esp. pp. 118-41; Margaret Maynard, *Fashioned from Penury: Dress as Cultural Practice in Colonial Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994. Also see Barbara Caine, 'Fashion', *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, Barbara Caine (ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 417-8.

⁹⁹ Maynard, *ibid.*, p. 90.

Turn-of-the-century Australian feminism had many links with international feminist movements, and Australian feminists shared many of the same social and political goals as British and American feminists. It is not surprising, therefore, that, as in these other countries, the New Woman came to symbolise, for many Australian feminists, the push for new legal and civil rights, educational and professional opportunities, and new changes in sexual morality.

Like English feminists, Australian feminists succeeded in achieving significant legal and social reforms for married women in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In 1870, Victoria became the first colony to introduce legislation that allowed married women to own personal property. New South Wales introduced similar legislation in 1879, Western Australia in 1882, and South Australia in 1883. Although the acts tended to give the wife rights over particular types of property, they did not immediately change her status as *feme covert* (coverture). In New South Wales, for example, it was not until the 1893 Married Women's Property Act was passed that a married woman was finally granted legal rights over her separate property as if she were a *feme sole*.¹⁰⁰ This finally empowered a woman to enter into contracts, make wills and take action to defend her property without her husband's consent.

There were also significant reforms in divorce legislation in Australia, some of which were in advance of English reforms. In 1881, the NSW Matrimonial Causes Act Amendment Act was passed, allowing equal access to divorce on the grounds of 'simple adultery': not until 1923 would England and Wales have similar legislation.¹⁰¹ By 1892, New South Wales also had a new Divorce Amendment and Extension Act which allowed women access to divorce for desertion and cruelty. Two years earlier, Victoria had passed similar legislation.

¹⁰⁰ John Mackinolty, 'The Married Women's Property Act', in *Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law 1788-1979*, Judy Mackinolty and Heather Radi (eds), Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, ch. 6, p. 74.

¹⁰¹ Hilary Golder, 'An exercise in unnecessary chivalry: The NSW Matrimonial Causes Act Amendment Act of 1881', in *Pursuit of Justice*, *ibid.*, ch. 4.

However, when it came to winning the right to custody of their own children, Australian women had longer to wait than English women. In NSW, it was not until 1916 that a mother was granted the right of being the natural guardian of her children after their father's death.¹⁰²

Australian women also fought for new professional and educational opportunities. New secondary schools were established, such as the Presbyterian Ladies' College in Melbourne, which could better prepare girls for university. The University of Adelaide was established in 1874, and women students were admitted to classes from the beginning. Women students were also admitted to matriculation at Melbourne University, and to all courses except medicine in 1879. In 1887, the Faculty of Medicine finally agreed to accept female students. (Australia's first woman doctor, Constance Stone, was actually turned down by Melbourne University's medical school and forced to gain her qualifications in America and England). These pioneer university students helped to open the doors to a range of previously unavailable professions.

More Australian women entered the workforce in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1891, over 40 per cent of all NSW women between the ages of 15 and 24 were in employment. Approximately two thirds of the women in NSW who were categorised as 'professional' were teachers and governesses, with nurses making up most of the remainder.¹⁰³ The main form of employment for working-class Australian women continued to be domestic service, but increasing numbers were also entering the factories. Although women in factories laboured long hours for low wages, they often had more freedom than in domestic service. In Victoria, the number of women employed in industry

¹⁰² Heather Radi, 'Whose Child? Custody of Children in NSW 1854-1934', *In Pursuit of Justice*, *ibid.*, ch. 11.

¹⁰³ Some information comes from J. E. Cobb, *The Women's Movement in New South Wales 1880-1914*, MA thesis, University of New England, 1967, p. 120. Cited in Ann Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia*, Allen Lane, London, 1975, p. 309. Information also comes from Jeanette Beaumont and W. Vere Hole. *Letters from Louisa: A*

rose from 2,630 in 1871 to 10,786 in 1891. In NSW in 1886, one in seven factory workers was female and by 1907 it was one in three.¹⁰⁴ More women were also finding white-collar jobs as postal workers, telegraphists and clerical workers.

As in England, middle-class Australian feminists often neglected the needs of working-class women. Here too, however, there were still those who dedicated their lives to advocating the needs and rights of working women. In 1901, Annie and Belle Golding, their sister Kate Dwyer, and Nellie Martel formed the Women's Progressive Association, a suffrage group that was oriented toward labour reforms.¹⁰⁵ Annie, a teacher, was politically committed to Labor and to improving women's educational, legal and domestic conditions. Belle led a group of female workers from the 'sweating shops' to Parliament House to protest against appalling work conditions. In 1900, she also became the first female inspector appointed under the Early Closing Act. Their married sister Kate co-founded the Women Workers' Union in the 1890s to represent home workers and factory workers in the fight for minimum wages and improved working conditions. In Queensland, the English-born suffragist Emma Miller, who worked as a shirtmaker, co-founded the Female Workers Union in 1890 and gave evidence the following year to a royal commission investigating workplace conditions.¹⁰⁶ And in South Australia, Mary Lee founded the Working Women's Trades Union for clothing trade workers, and represented them at the Trades and Labor Council. In 1888, Lee told the inaugural meeting of the Women's Suffrage League of South Australia that the women of the colony were 'no shrieking sisterhood'. Rather, they 'simply asked a modicum of power to assist in obtaining what are the rights of women'.¹⁰⁷

woman's view of the 1890s, based on the letters of Louisa Macdonald, first principal of the Women's College, University of Sydney, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, p. 101.

¹⁰⁴ These figures come from T. A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, Oxford, 1918, p. 1587. Cited in Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1975, reprinted 1980, p. 60.

¹⁰⁵ Janette Joy Prichard and Emma Grahame, 'Annie Golding', Prichard, 'Belle Golding' and Prichard, 'Kate Dwyer' in Caine, *Australian Feminism*, op. cit., pp. 427-8 and p. 410.

¹⁰⁶ Prichard, 'Emma Miller', *Australian Feminism*, op. cit., pp. 457-8.

¹⁰⁷ Prichard, 'Mary Lee', *Australian Feminism*, op. cit., pp. 448-9.

The New Woman's demand for a new sexual morality for married women, particularly, was also at the centre of the Australian feminist campaign for reform. Throughout the 1890s, the subjects of the sexual double standard, 'enforced motherhood', sexual violence and rape, the spread of venereal disease, the age of consent and the situation of prostitutes were vigorously debated in both the mainstream and feminist press. As in England, the vast majority of Australian feminists promoted a vision of women as morally and sexually pure, and thus superior to sexually animalistic men. Rose Scott stated:

To the highest type of man the highest consummation of love is the indulgence of an animal passion. To a woman, physical manifestations...deteriorate rather than enhance the beauty and spirituality of love. The gulf between them is bridged by women's self-sacrifice and man's self indulgence - but for how long? Man's selfish animalism is driving women in the opposite direction and these unsympathetic relations have more to do with conjugal misery than anything else.¹⁰⁸

Feminists like Scott considered that the answer to the problems of marriage, prostitution, the spread of venereal disease and unwanted motherhood was for men to restrain themselves sexually. They generally did not challenge the traditional bourgeois image of 'respectable' women as sexually passive, but instead focused on male sexuality and its attendant problems. They certainly did challenge the conventional idea that it was men's conjugal right to have sex with their wives, and also endorsed a range of new social purity reforms, such as the Bill introduced to the NSW Legislative Assembly in 1890 to raise the age of consent. Like English feminists, many Australian feminists also believed that

¹⁰⁸ Rose Scott, Untitled notes on 'Men's Animalism' (undated notebook entry), *Scott Family Papers*, MSS.38/22/2, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. Quoted in Judith Allen, "'Our deeply degraded sex" and "The animal in man": Rose Scott, Feminism and Sexuality 1890-1925', *Australian Feminist Studies*, nos. 7 & 8, 1988, p. 68.

motherhood was women's primary role, and the source of their superiority to men, and considered sex necessary only for reproductive purposes.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which occupied a prominent place in promoting Australian women's suffrage, represented one of the most significant endorsements of social purity feminism. Formed in Australia during the 1880s, the WCTU agitated for an end to male drinking, gambling, and violence against women and children, and the need for women to have control over their own bodies (ie. the right to reject unwanted intercourse and practise 'voluntary motherhood'). The temperance feminists were all too aware of the link between men's lack of restraint when it came to alcohol and sex, and the detrimental effects on women and children. These feminists fought to improve the psychological, physical and social condition of women.

Feminists in Australia also contributed to public debates on how to deal with the spread of contagious diseases and the situation of prostitutes. The controversial Contagious Diseases Acts were introduced in Queensland in 1868 and Tasmania in 1879. In the other states, lobby groups (largely comprised of feminists) either successfully prevented the passage of venereal diseases legislation or prevented its implementation.¹⁰⁹

As in England and America, the 'free love' debates surrounding the New Woman caused sharp divisions among prominent Australian women. As will be shown in the following chapter, a minority, like Eliza Ann Ashton, argued along the lines of Mona Caird that marriage was a failure and were accused of promoting 'free love'. The reality of free love relationships was highlighted by the large number of illegitimate births in Australia.¹¹⁰ However, the majority of

¹⁰⁹ Barbara Sullivan, *The Politics of Sex: Prostitution and Pornography in Australia since 1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 21-2.

¹¹⁰ Summers, op. cit., p. 321, cites T. A. Coghlan's report that between 1891 and 1900, one quarter of all first births were illegitimate. See Coghlan's *The Decline of the Birth-Rate in New South Wales*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1903, p. 9.

Australia's prominent feminists preferred to ignore this reality. Like Vida Goldstein, they tended to disapprove of free love on the basis that the abolition of marriage would render women more vulnerable than ever.

While Australia had such links with the overseas feminist (and New Woman) movements, Australian feminism was also the product of indigenous demographic, economic, and socio-political conditions. Australian women developed unique feminist agenda(s) which informed the way they interpreted and constructed the New Woman, and prioritised her reforms. For instance, the New Woman emerged in Australia at a time when feminists were endeavouring to make their presence felt on the pre-Federation political landscape and attain citizenship. In the context of Australia imagining its national identity, feminists had a special interest in employing images of the new and modern woman who could be shown to play a vital role in the new nation. The first woman political candidate in Australia, Catherine Helen Spence, aptly remarked in 1905: 'I am a New Woman, and I know it'.¹¹¹ Spence helped to bring about one of the most notable differences between Australian and English feminisms: the success of Australian feminists in achieving women's suffrage well before their English sisters. The first Australian organisation to agitate for women's suffrage, the Victorian Franchise League, with the feminist author Henrietta Dugdale as president, was formed in 1884. As early as 1894, South Australian women won the franchise (regardless of race, marital status, or whether they owned property) and the right to stand for parliament. Western Australia followed suit in 1899, and all white Australian women achieved the vote federally, and became eligible to stand for elections, in 1902.

The vast geographic distances between women in different parts of Australia, and the often vast regional and cultural differences, also produced different feminist agendas in each colony. It is important to note, for example, that whilst

¹¹¹ *Catherine Helen Spence 1925-1905*, pamphlet reprinted from the *Register*, Adelaide, 1905, p. 33. Quoted in Magarey, 'History', op. cit., p. 105.

white Australian women achieved the vote federally in 1902, women living in Victoria were still fighting for the right to vote in their state elections until 1908. For Aboriginal women in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, who were excluded from voting in their states and in the Commonwealth until the 1960s, it was a particularly long and drawn out struggle. Katie Spearritt offers another example of regional difference when she suggests that in late-nineteenth-century Queensland, the lack of a forum for intellectual debate, and the fact that women were consumed by domestic demands, meant that '[f]irst-wave feminism came slowly' to the colony.¹¹² Yet there was certainly a need for feminist reform in Queensland, where a predominantly rural economy, cultural isolation and a culture of male violence created significant hardship for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women.

A range of other social, economic and demographic differences in Australia informed the unique development of its feminisms. In England, feminists placed special importance on reforms for the single woman in the context of the excess of so-called 'superfluous' women who failed to marry, and who were conceived of as a major social problem. The demographic imbalance in England - the fact that women outnumbered men in the second half of the nineteenth century - led to a shortage of eligible bachelors. Numerous women were forced to give up hope of following their prescribed roles as wives and mothers. Others simply chose not to marry, preferring to lead a life of financial and social independence. These women are the subjects of George Gissing's novel *The Odd Women*.

In Australia, there was the opposite problem of an excess of unmarried men and a dearth of marriageable women during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1881, 96 per cent of Australian women aged between 45 and 49 had married, compared with 87.7 per cent of women in England and Wales.¹¹³ One

¹¹² Katie Spearritt, 'The Sexual Economics of Colonial Marriage', in *On the Edge*, op. cit., ch. 5, p. 78.

¹¹³ Summers, op. cit., p. 306.

effect of this demographic difference was that Australian feminists generally gave legal and social reforms for married women greater emphasis than reforms for single women. Feminists demanded laws which would give married women the right to own property and to have custody of their own children, as well as laws to ensure that widows and their children were not left destitute.

While it was the 'condition of married women' that most captured the 'imagination' of the women's movement in the colonies, there were still single women in Australia who had different political and social needs.¹¹⁴

Interestingly, many of the most prominent feminists, including Rose Scott, Vida Goldstein, Alice Henry, Catherine Helen Spence and Miles Franklin, never married. One of the intriguing demographic realities at the turn of the century in Australia was the declining marriage rate. In spite of the country's excess number of men, the proportion of Australian women aged between 25 and 29 who did not marry almost doubled between 1891 and 1901.¹¹⁵ While many argued that men were refusing to marry due to economic factors, such as the commercial downturn of 1893, feminists pointed to the factors deterring women from marrying, such as the problems they faced in marriage. Some historians have examined the relationship between the decline of the marriage rate and the increase in women's employment opportunities during the 1890s, and concluded that Australian women were deliberately choosing alternatives to the 'sexual labour' of marriage in the form of paid employment.¹¹⁶

An equally intriguing drop in the Australian birth rate accompanied the declining marriage rate. In NSW, for example, the number of registered births

¹¹⁴ See Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1999, p. 19.

¹¹⁵ Peter F. McDonald, *Marriage in Australia: Age at First Marriage and Proportions Marrying, 1860-1971*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, p. 134. Cited in Susan Magarey, 'Sexual labour: Australia 1880-1910', in Magarey et al, *Debutante Nation*, op. cit., ch. 8, p. 92.

¹¹⁶ See again Magarey, *ibid.*

dropped from 305,503 in the 1880s to 303,553 in the 1890s.¹¹⁷ In 1903, a Royal Commission was established to investigate the declining birth rate, along with the increase in infant mortality. Various reasons have been put forward for the decline, such as the increasing availability of contraception, the high cost of maintaining children at a time of economic strain, the rise in the age of women who married and the decline in the proportion of women of child bearing age.¹¹⁸ Judith Allen has investigated the way working-class women turned to abortion, infanticide and baby farming to determine their own fertility.¹¹⁹ Again, feminist influences must also be considered: the likelihood that more women were taking measures to preserve their independence and avoid spending their lives as reproductive machines. The new opportunities for Australian women to access education and enter the workforce made the prospect of economic independence more viable than ever before.

V. Australian Women's Writing and the New Woman

As further evidence of the New Woman's impact on the 1890s cultural landscape, Australian women appear to have widely read and discussed the New Woman fiction that was creating controversy in England. In 1894, the *Sydney Bulletin* reported '[t]he girls are still going hot-foot for *A Yellow Aster*, and the library lists are all 50 deep.'¹²⁰ The same year, Ethel Turner claimed the 'average girl' had read several of these novels 'perfectly as a matter of course'.¹²¹ The 1895 report of the Sydney Women's Literary Society reveals that

¹¹⁷ New South Wales Statistical Registers, cited in Judith Allen, 'Octavius Beale re-considered: Infanticide, babyfarming and abortion in NSW 1880-1939', *What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History*, Sydney Labour History Group, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1982, ch. 5, p. 111.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Grimshaw, 'Bessie Harrison Lee and the Fight for Voluntary Motherhood', *Double Time: Women in Victoria - 150 Years*, Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (eds), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1985, ch. 17, p. 142.

¹¹⁹ Allen, 'Octavius Beale', op. cit.

¹²⁰ 29 September 1894. Also quoted in Kelly, *The 'Woman Question'*, op. cit., p. 95 and Magarey, 'History', op. cit., p. 104.

¹²¹ *Cosmos*, September 1894. Originally quoted in Kelly, *The 'Woman Question'*, op. cit., p. 93. Also quoted in Magarey, 'History', op. cit., p. 104.

Olive Schreiner, Ibsen and George Sand were all topics of discussion.¹²² The Society's 1893 report makes clear the nexus between women's interest in literature and their exploration of social problems:

It has been a source of much pleasure and advantage in drawing together thinking women, whose interchange of knowledge and of ideas has been beneficial to each other. In addition to the study of literature some time has been given to the discussion of important social questions, in which it is desirable to increase knowledge, and consequently, the interest and usefulness of women.¹²³

The Society was formed in 1890 with only 13 members, and had a membership of 120 women by 1893. Women's literary societies like this one were not simply places for women to discuss writing or gain experience in public speaking, but also forums in which they could learn about and debate feminist issues. Two other overtly political literary societies, both of which, interestingly, were formed in 1894, were the Karrakatta Club in Perth and the Itinerant Society in Tasmania. One member of the latter club was the suffragist Ida McAuley, who also formed a women's rifle club.¹²⁴

Women's evident interest in this new fiction sparks the question: Were there New Woman novels by and/or about Australian women? Not according to Ann Ardis, who, in her bibliography of one hundred New Woman novels, includes only one book with obvious Australian content, Iota's *A Comedy in Spasms* (1895).¹²⁵ Interestingly, at least part of Iota's best-known novel *A Yellow Aster* was written in Australia. Born in Ireland in 1853, Iota (Kathleen Mannington Caffyn, née Hunt) travelled to Australia in 1880 with her husband

¹²² *Report of the Women's Literary Society*, Sydney, 1895, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, 374.23/W.

¹²³ *Report of the Women's Literary Society*, Sydney, August 1893, p. 3. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, 374.23/W.

¹²⁴ Lake, *Getting Equal*, op. cit., p. 37.

Stephen Mannington Caffyn.¹²⁶ They initially lived in Sydney and Wollongong where Stephen, a writer and surgeon, worked as a government health officer. After moving to Melbourne in 1883, they lived in South Yarra and in Black Street, Brighton, for a number of years in what was described as 'an Oscar Wilde atmosphere'.¹²⁷ Kathleen drew on her experience as a trained nurse to help establish the District Nursing Society in Victoria and was a keen advocate of making nursing a 'scientific profession for educated gentlewomen'.¹²⁸ Both contributed to the press, and Stephen published two novels in Australia, though it was Kathleen who went on to achieve greater recognition as the author of *A Yellow Aster*. In Melbourne, they spent time with the impressionist painter Charles Conder, upon whom Kathleen based the character of Charles Brydon. Apparently it was after Stephen returned to England and Kathleen remained in Beaumaris that she wrote the first part of her famous novel.¹²⁹

There is nothing overtly Australian about the content of *A Yellow Aster*. However *A Comedy in Spasms*, discussed in detail in Chapter Two, is particularly interesting for its Australian heroine and her encounters with a New Woman. Iota's contribution to Australian literature also included *Dorinda and her Daughter* (1910),¹³⁰ which has some minor Australian references, and several short stories, including 'Victims of Circe', published in Harriette Anne Patchett Martin's *Coo-ee: Tales of Australian Life by Australian Ladies* (1891).

¹²⁵ Ardis, op. cit., pp. 205-8.

¹²⁶ Information about the lives of the Mannington Caffyns in Australia comes from Debra Adelaide, *Bibliography of Australian Women's Literature 1795-1990*, D. W. Thorpe, Port Melbourne, 1991, p. 27; Geulah Solomon, 'Stephen Mannington Caffyn', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1851-1890*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1969, vol. 3, pp. 325-7; *Australian Encyclopaedia*, The Grolier Society of Australia, Sydney, pp. 234-5; Weston Bate, *A History of Brighton*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1962; Ursula Hoff, *Charles Conder, His Australian Years*, National Gallery Society of Victoria, Melbourne, 1960, pp. 4-9; E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its beginnings to 1935*, vol. I and II, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1973, reprinted 1975, 1st publ. 1940, vol. 1, pp. 446-7, vol. 2, p. 660; and the *Australasian*, 21 April 1894, p. 693.

¹²⁷ Bate, *ibid.*, p. 289.

¹²⁸ Solomon, op. cit., p. 326.

¹²⁹ This was reported in the *Australasian*, 21 April 1894, p. 693.

¹³⁰ The main connection is that one of the characters, who lives in England, was born in Australia. It becomes more interesting towards the end of the novel when Englishmen migrate to Australia, not, as Morris Miller (op. cit., vol. 1, p. 447) has pointed out, for materialistic reasons, but, rather, for the advancement of their mental welfare.

'Victims of Circe' presents a prototype of the New Woman in the figure of Miss Ariell, a European actress living in a small Australian country town with a man who is ostensibly her step-brother, but who turns out to be her lover. The town is rocked by the discovery that Miss Ariell has deserted her husband in order to have a scandalous affair. She eventually decides to leave her lover and return to her husband, but not before she has corrupted the innocent Australian Girls with her salacious stories.¹³¹

Another writer in the vanguard of the New Woman movement whose Australian connections are not always acknowledged was George Egerton. Mary Chavelita Dunne was born in Melbourne in 1859.¹³² Frustratingly little is known about her early life, apart from the fact that she travelled widely as a young woman. Interestingly, she also trained as a nurse and worked in this capacity in London and New York. Other connections between the authors of well-known English New Woman novels and Australia include the fact of Mary Augusta Ward (nee Arnold), the author of *Marcella*, having been born in Tasmania in 1851. There is also Rita, the pseudonym of Eliza Margaret J. Humphreys (also known as Mrs Desmond Humphreys), who was the author of several New Woman novels.¹³³ Eliza Humphreys lived in Australia as a child, and although it is not included in Ardis' bibliography, her three-decker novel set in Australia, *Sheba: A Study of Girlhood* (1889), displays a number of features of New Woman fiction. These Australian links raise intriguing, though not easily answered, questions about the influence of Australia on these writers' work.

Literary and cultural critics such as Jill Roe, Leonie Prime, Susan Sheridan, Susan Magarey, Robert Dixon, Margaret Harris, Rowena Mohr, Damien

¹³¹ Kathleen Caffyn also contributed a story called 'Lenchen' to Lala Fisher's *By Creek and Gully: Stories and Sketches mostly of Bush Life Told in Prose and Rhyme. By Australian Writers in England*. T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1899.

¹³² Information about Dunne comes from *Women's Literature A-Z*, Claire Buck (ed), Bloomsbury, 1994; and Cunningham, op. cit.

¹³³ She was born in 1860 and died in 1938. Biographical information comes from Adelaide, *Bibliography*, op. cit., p. 94.

Barlow, Patricia Clarke, Audrey Tate, Susan Pfisterer and Kay Ferres are among those who have explored the relationship between the New Woman and the work of Australian women writers.¹³⁴ This important body of critical work demonstrates that most of the best-known late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Australian women writers, including that prominent trio Rosa Praed, Tasma and Ada Cambridge, engaged in debates surrounding the New Woman.

Nevertheless, the nature of the New Woman's discursive manifestations in the Australian context has been a source of some confusion for critics. In 1972, Jill Roe asked: 'Where was the Australian "New Woman", and where was the New Australian Woman?'¹³⁵ In particular, the New Woman's relationship to other female/feminist cultural icons who populated the 1890s Australian cultural landscape, such as the Australian Girl, is not readily defined. Susan Magarey argues, for instance, that the New Woman 'acquired a particular resonance in the Australian colonies' because she 'spoke to a local and specific concern that was already finding expression in the cultural productions of some women writers in Australia' at around the time that Caird's article was published in the Sydney newspapers and *A Doll's House* performed on Australian stages.¹³⁶ Magarey identifies the Australian Girl as a 'specifically Australian' manifestation of the New Woman, who harnessed the 'New Woman's revolt against the discursive barriers confining her to hard sexual labour exclusively in the domestic sphere'.¹³⁷

Magarey demonstrates that, in the Australian context, the international New Woman existed alongside, and even merged with, distinctively Australian feminist cultural types like the Australian Girl. This sometimes produced slightly different discursive forms of the New Woman in Australia. Ultimately, though, Magarey collapses these two female icons - the New Woman and the

¹³⁴ See fn. 88.

¹³⁵ Roe, *op. cit.*, p. 389. Roe proceeds to investigate these questions with regard to Ada Cambridge.

¹³⁶ Magary, 'History', *op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹³⁷ Magary, 'History', *op. cit.*, p. 108.

Australian Girl - into one. In the process, she overlooks the need for each cultural type to be read, also, according to its own terms. It will be argued in Chapter Two that while there are many similarities between these figures, the differences between them are just as important.

Another difficulty that critics have faced concerns the question of the New Woman's origins in Australia - the point at which the New Woman first emerged as an image, or discursive construct. In her article 'Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women', Penny Russell proposes the New Woman was 'imported' to Australia:

not as an embodied woman but as an idea: an iconographic image of modernity, gender inversion and moral instability which could be used to ridicule, condemn and even occasionally to praise a range of female activity and feminist aspiration.¹³⁸

Russell suggests that both the New Woman and the bicycle 'began to be imported to the Australian colonies in significant quantities' in 1894. In this article, Russell relies primarily on evidence of the New Woman's appearance in the Australian press.

Yet, Australian women's fiction reveals that in concept, if not in name, versions of the New Woman also existed in Australia well before the 1890s. It is possible to begin with Catherine Helen Spence's 1854 *Clara Morison* - one of the first novels about Australia written by a woman. Although she precedes the late-nineteenth-century New Woman, Spence's heroine can be seen as an early version, or even prototype, of this figure. When the young Scottish woman, Clara Morison, leaves the Old World for the New, things prove harder than she expects. She arrives in South Australia without money or connections and, unable to secure a situation as a governess, is forced to take the socially inferior

position of a servant. Fortunately, though, in a country where upward social mobility is also possible, the servant-heroine eventually finds love and marriage with a gentleman squatter. A situation that would have been inconceivable back 'home' becomes possible in a colony that is in the process of reinventing itself.

Clara Morison demonstrates how much more adaptable, hardy, intelligent, and prepared for 'new' experiences women in Australia needed to be in order to survive. The novel is also particularly interesting for another 'very favourable specimen' of the 'colonial lady'¹³⁹ in the figure of Margaret Elliot, an intelligent, scholarly and overtly feminist figure:

Margaret...studied mathematics with George and law with Gilbert...She read all the newspapers she could get hold of, and was as well acquainted with current history as with Magnall's Questions. In general she preferred the company of gentlemen to that of ladies, though this preference was not reciprocated, for gentlemen did not like a girl who thought for herself, and spoke as boldly as she thought, without desiring to be led by their superior judgement. From all these characteristics, it is not surprising that she won for herself from the public voice of South Australia the reputation of being a blue, which she bore very philosophically, but sheltered her sisters from any imputation of the kind, for she knew they disliked it.¹⁴⁰

While Margaret prefers the company of men, she is not interested in the conventionally feminine pursuit of romance, and turns down more than one marriage proposal. Margaret knows perfectly well, as Spence knew, the

¹³⁸ Russell, op. cit., p. 31.

¹³⁹ Catherine Helen Spence, *Clara Morison*, introduced by Susan Eade, Rigby/Seal Books, Adelaide, 1971, p. 151.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 160.

dangers of being labelled a blue stocking, yet is largely unconcerned about what society expects of her. She is all the more extraordinary as a character because Spence allows her to retain her unmarried status, even at the end of the novel when all the women around her are married. Instead, Margaret plans to share a house with her brother and enjoy a contented existence as an 'independent old maid'.¹⁴¹ Like Clara Morison, Margaret Elliot demonstrates that nineteenth-century Australian women were in many ways 'newer' than their British sisters. Clara and Margaret both display the New Woman's determination to achieve financial and emotional independence, as well as her intellectualism and adaptability.

Clara Morison demonstrates that the unique circumstances British women encountered in colonial Australia automatically created the possibility for 'new' types of women to emerge. As Tiffany Urwin puts it: 'By virtue of Australia's remoteness and its more heterogeneous or more fluid social make-up, the regional and ideological space open to women in the colonies was effectively broadened.'¹⁴² The 'New World' afforded colonial women the opportunity to try new things, rewrite social and cultural mores, and behave in ways unknown to English women. Here, women could leave behind certain Old World ideas about gender identity and reinvent concepts of womanhood.

There was some cultural baggage, however, that British women could not so easily off-load when they travelled to Australia, Canada and America. Throughout the nineteenth century, single women who travelled to the colonies were made well aware of their mission to marry, procreate, and carry on British imperialist expansion. Government-sponsored emigration of women to the remote colonies was the solution proposed by the journalist William R. Greg, among others, to the problem of the excess of unmarried 'superfluous'

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 407.

¹⁴² Tiffany Urwin, *Caroline Harper Dexter and the 'Feminine Civilising Mission'*, PhD thesis, Department of English, University of Queensland, 1999, p. 6.

women.¹⁴³ In Australia, with its excess men, Britain's odd women were assured of finding husbands aplenty. They were constructed as adventurers and settlers sent, like the first British male explorers, to help colonise the 'empty' New World. Before she arrives in Australia, Clara Morison is assured that, as 'a pretty' girl, she will 'marry well in a country where young ladies are so scarce'.¹⁴⁴

Many of the New Woman's enemies saw her as posing a serious threat to this imperial plan. The emergence of the New Woman coincided with one of the darkest periods of imperialist history, as Europe and England fought for control of Africa.¹⁴⁵ The gender and sexual instability surrounding the New Woman threatened the foundations of society. In 1895, the Melbourne *Argus* indicated the New Woman was responsible for 'all the mannish women and womanish men of society'.¹⁴⁶ Constructions of the New Woman in the mainstream press as anti-marriage and anti-motherhood suggested she posed a threat to the entire heterosexual contract.¹⁴⁷ Like the late-nineteenth-century 'dandy', who also showed little interest in reproducing, she was 'figured as both a symptom and a cause of degeneration and decline'.¹⁴⁸ When, in *The Daughters of Danaus*, Hadria Fullerton leaves her husband and children to study music in Paris, everyone talks about the affair 'with as much eagerness as if the fate of the empire had depended on it'.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the fate of the empire *was*

¹⁴³ W. R. Greg, "Why Are Women Redundant?", *Literary and Social Judgements*, James Osgood & Co, Boston, 1873, p. 306. Quoted in Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁴ Spence, *Clara Morison*, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

¹⁴⁵ For other discussions of the New Woman and imperialism, see Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., ch. 3; Devereux, op. cit., Rebecca Stott, "Scaping the Body: Of Cannibal Mothers and Colonial Landscapes", and Carolyn Burdett, 'Capturing the Ideal: Olive Schreiner's *From Man to Man*', in Richardson and Willis, op. cit., ch. 9 and ch. 10; Laura Chrisman, 'Empire, "race" and feminism in the *fin de siècle*: the work of George Egerton and Olive Schreiner', *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, ch. 3; Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century: Volume 2: Sexchanges*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989, esp. ch. 2.

¹⁴⁶ 29 March 1895, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', Pykett, *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, op. cit., ch. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Pykett, *Engendering Fictions*, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁴⁹ Mona Caird, *The Daughters of Danaus*, afterword by Margaret Morganroth Gullette, Feminist Press at the City University of New York, New York, 1989, p. 313.

jeopardised by women who refused to fulfil their role as breeders. In Australia, women's imbrication in imperialist ideology was rendered especially acute by the presence of neighbouring Asian 'hordes', a small and declining population, and Australia's efforts to establish its identity.

Some considered the New World of Australia to be dangerously suited to the New Women who abandoned their feminine (and imperial) roles and responsibilities. Millie Finkelstein's dystopian novel *The Newest Woman, The Destined Monarch of the World* (1895) plays up the idea of Australia as a morally lax environment that is especially susceptible to the influence of the modern convict, the lawless New Woman.¹⁵⁰ The novel's action is set in the future, the 1950s, in Victoria, the 'land of the Newest Woman'.¹⁵¹ In the introduction, Finkelstein pictures a society in which the New Woman has 'come forth, all-conquering, all-redeeming.' Here, women have adopted masculine roles, achieved the vote and secured complete legislative control: there are women legislators, lawyers and judges, Australian girl cadets, sportswomen, 'female firemen', 'beautiful bushrangeresses', and there is even a 'Lady Governor'. Once-triumphant man, in the meantime, has been 'condemned to bear the burdens of domestic and private life'.¹⁵²

The novel tells the story of an Englishman, Randolph Parker, who travels with his daughters to the 'New World' of Australia in pursuit of his recalcitrant and 'sinful' wife, who went there after leaving him for another man.¹⁵³ In the course of searching for Mrs Parker, they come across Randolph's youngest daughter Faith, who disappeared at the same time. Faith Parker epitomises the New Woman's complete disregard for social laws and conventions: she has re-emerged in Australia as the bushranger Kate Keely, otherwise known as Dare Devil Dolly (there is even a dramatic showdown at Glenrowan).

¹⁵⁰ Dr Susan K. Martin presented a paper on this novel at the *Flapper-Trappers and Modish Maids: Women and Modernity Conference*, University of Melbourne, 4-5 December 2000.

¹⁵¹ Published by Pat Finn, Melbourne, 1895, p. 106.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 'Authoress' Explanation'.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 4 and p. 7.

The Parker family is initially described as noting 'with admiration the advanced manner in which the New World had allowed itself to be conquered and despotically ruled by the New Woman.'¹⁵⁴ The novel soon demonstrates, however, the damaging consequences of the New Woman's despotism. In Melbourne, Randolph encounters his wife's former lover Hector Montgomery, the man who just happens to be playing the villainous seducer in a play called 'The Newest Woman'. The events of the play, of course, parallel the events of the novel. In the play, a married woman is seduced and ruined by a man who, pretending to believe in the woman's movement, persuades her to commit adultery. Randolph learns from Montgomery that he used similar tactics to seduce his wife:

"I saw that she was afflicted with the craze of the New Woman, and for my own base purposes I fostered that craze and humoured her ideas as to the perfect equality of women with men. I showed her that in a new country like Australia we might become the apostles of a great and advancing creed which should regenerate the world. We might found a religion in which both sexes would be equal, and whose members would rise superior to all earthly thoughts of marriage or sensuality, where all should be simply pure and intellectual pleasure".¹⁵⁵

Mrs Parker's act of turning her back on her husband and children is revealed to be a selfish and useless one. After recognising Montgomery's sexual intentions, she is forced to leave him and support herself as a nurse. Meanwhile, upon failing to locate his wife in Victoria, Randolph and his daughters embark on a ship to return to England. In a final dramatic twist, Randolph and his long-lost wife are both washed up on shore together, dead, after a shipwreck. This rebellious New Woman certainly is not permitted to live happily ever after.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 96.

Back in England, the only place that still honours women's traditional roles, the sensible older Parker daughters marry, have children and, unlike their mother, live happily ever after. The narrator's final reassurance is that, while agitation for the 'newest woman' continues, these young women are not interested. In their opinion, the destined monarch of the world is not the New Woman, but the 'power behind the throne - the True Woman'.¹⁵⁶

Although she was herself a suffragist, Finkelstein offers a sustained parody of the New Woman movement in this story. In the 'Authoress' Explanation' at the beginning, she clearly states that the 'advanced woman of the future, whose triumphs in both virtue and vice I seek to picture', does not enlist her personal sympathy.¹⁵⁷ 'I believe', Finkelstein asserts, that a 'greater power than politicians and restless and discontented womanhood has decreed that woman's sphere' lies 'in the home circle, where she is not the inferior, but the true equal and helpmate, of man.' Finkelstein is ultimately at pains to distance herself from the image, so dominant in the mainstream press, of the anti-domestic and sexually rebellious New Woman. In her novel, this version of the New Woman is shown to harm the real feminist project of elevating women in their morally superior roles as wives and mothers. Of course, this was not an uncommon view among late-nineteenth-century feminists.

It will be seen in the following chapters that other Australian women writers took a very different approach to the idea of the New Woman in the New World. They responded to negative images of the New Woman as a degenerate figure by entirely reconfiguring her. They produced a feminist 'counter-discourse of renovation', in which the New Woman was a central figure in a 'brave new world', characterised by redefinitions of gender, new relations between men and women, a new social and sexual morality.¹⁵⁸ In newly

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁸ Pykett, *Engendering Fictions*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

federating Australia, the New Woman could be appropriated by feminists as a positive image of the modern woman citizen of a modern nation.

The idea of motherhood was often central to this particular feminist vision of the New Woman in the New World. Cecily Devereux suggests that while the process of 'maternalizing and imperializing the New Woman' characterised suffrage feminism throughout the empire, 'the reconfiguration of the New Woman as an imperial mother' was especially noticeable in the literature of white settler colonies.¹⁵⁹ Like American and Canadian feminists, many Australian feminists - both those born in the colony and those who arrived from elsewhere - promoted motherhood as women's contribution to nation-building (as Rose Scott said in 1895, 'It is mothers who make the nation') and to the project of defending Australia's racial integrity.¹⁶⁰

The image of the New Woman in Australia ultimately rested on a familiar colonial double bind. On the one hand, she represented colonial women's claim to citizenship, and hope of an end to patriarchal oppression. On the other hand, she assisted the imperial/colonising process in her efforts to claim a space for white middle-class women at the expense of other oppressed people, such as indigenous, Chinese, and working-class men and women.

VI. Outline of Thesis

So how is the New Woman defined in this thesis? In the preceding sections, I have tried to demonstrate that the 'New Woman' was no one thing; rather, she was a multiplicitous identity. A 'complex historical phenomenon', the New Woman 'operated at both cultural (textual and visual) and socio-political levels'.¹⁶¹ This thesis adopts, therefore, an intentionally broad definition of the

¹⁵⁹ Devereux, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁰ Rose Scott Address c. January 1895. *Rose Scott Papers*, MS 2160/Y789, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. Quoted in Marilyn Lake, 'Feminist History as National History', *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996, p. 157.

¹⁶¹ Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

term 'New Woman'. The term will be applied to certain images and representations of women in the Australian press, the heroines of novels, types of writing, and some women writers and feminist activists.

This thesis explores the New Woman's emergence and significance in Australia, with particular emphasis on the *fin-de-siècle* Australian cultural landscape. It examines the representations of the New Woman that are revealed in a range of cultural productions from the period, namely journalism and fiction, as well as the letters and records of women who lived in Australia. At this point I want to emphasise, like Sally Ledger, that the New Woman was to a large extent a 'discursive phenomenon', a journalistic and fictional response to late-nineteenth-century feminism.¹⁶² That is, the very term denotes an ideological and social construct which was produced by and through discourse(s). The form of the New Woman varied depending on the subjects involved and the ideology underpinning her construction. Her form and meaning also varied depending on the specific discursive and generic contexts in which she emerged. For instance, the caricatures of the New Woman that appeared in the *Bulletin* often had a very different meaning and purpose from the New Woman heroines of women's novels.

Furthermore, the New Woman was the product of a number of discourses, both hegemonic and marginal: discourses on gender, sexuality, cultural and national identity, race and class. In her study of the New Woman, Ledger employs the Foucauldian notions of 'dominant' and 'reverse' discourses as a way of analysing the construction of the New Woman as an object of cultural debate in Britain. This refers to Michel Foucault's idea that although a dominant discourse can be 'an instrument and an effect of power', it can also be a 'point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy'.¹⁶³ Ledger suggests that by 'ridiculing' the New Woman, the popular press inadvertently helped to open a discursive space 'which was quickly filled by feminist textual

¹⁶² Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 3.

productions sympathetic – not antagonistic – towards the claims of the New Woman and her sisters in the late nineteenth-century women’s movement’.¹⁶⁴ There was, in other words, always a reverse discourse which enabled feminists to speak on their own behalf and respond to their critics.

In Chapter One, ‘Advanced Women, Shrieking Sisters and Revolting Wives: The New Woman and the Australian Press’, I examine some of the different discursive representations of the New Woman that emerged in both the mainstream and the feminist Australian press. This chapter considers the way the New Woman was constructed as both a feminist icon and a caricature in the Australian press, depending on who represented her. In choosing to begin this way, I hope to demonstrate that the ‘New Woman’ was a highly contested term and concept in Australia. Even within particular publications, the New Woman was represented in a variety of ways. Her most feminist supporters disagreed with each other about the nature and significance of this figure, and often employed quite different discourses in the process of constructing the New Woman. An analysis of the way journalists constructed the New Woman can reveal a great deal about her role and status in late-nineteenth-century Australian culture. From these representations, it is possible to appreciate the centrality of the New Woman in the Australian cultural landscape, as well as the multiplicity of forms she assumed. It also becomes evident that the New Woman sometimes assumed slightly different discursive forms in the Australian context.

Chapter Two and Chapter Three concentrate on the many and varied discursive manifestations of the New Woman in turn-of-the-century Australian women’s novels. While Australian women contributed various forms of ‘New Woman writing’ – that is, cultural and literary texts which helped to produce the New Woman as a discursive construct – it is specifically their novels which

¹⁶³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley, 1976, reprinted Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990, p. 101. Quoted in Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁶⁴ Ledger, *The New Woman*, op. cit., p. 9.

are the focus of the middle chapters. Chapter Two, 'The Australian Girl and the New Woman: Fiction and Feisty Heroines', focuses on the heroines in Australian women's novels in order to specifically examine the New Woman's relationship to the more locally-based cultural icon, the Australian Girl. The Australian Girl shared the New Woman's role in criticising the more oppressive and inviolable tenets of Victorian society. At the same time, she served a number of unique functions that set her apart from, and even positioned her as antagonistic to, her feminist sister. It will be argued that issues such as location, sexuality, and national identity inform the relationship between these figures. Chapter Three, 'Those Wicked Women: Sexuality, Marriage and Desire', concentrates on novels which explore many of the contentious issues about sexuality and women's desire which surrounded the New Woman. These marriage problem and sex problem novels, of which there are so many from this period, often differed markedly from novels that featured the Australian Girl. They reveal Australian women writers' recognition of the need for a new sexual morality, and they present some of the most sexually rebellious 'New Women' in Australian literature.

By focusing on women writers, this thesis acknowledges that the New Woman fiction in Australia, as overseas, was primarily written by women, about women, and for women. The two middle chapters are intended to show that the New Woman provided Australian women novelists with an important discursive site in which to explore and debate feminist issues, and put forward their own models of social and political change. By tracing the representations of the New Woman in their work, it becomes evident that women used writing as a powerful medium by which to assert their political agency.

Late-nineteenth-century critics in Australia, as elsewhere, often grouped the novels about, and by, New Women in such a way as to suggest they formed a distinct fictional discourse, or 'genre', of their own. In Chapter One I consider the way journalists writing for the Australian popular press referred to novels on the subject of the New Woman as the 'Wicked Woman' novels. In the

dominant discourse on the New Woman, the Wicked Woman novels, especially those written by women, were often denigrated as popular, transient, and of little 'literary' significance. This was one way that critics attempted to deny the feminist importance of such fiction and the political agency of the women authors.

However, it is not really possible to say that the women novelists discussed in this thesis shared an aesthetic approach (realist, modernist, romantic or otherwise) to writing. Like their British sisters, Australian women writers employed a wide variety of forms and genres to represent the New Woman, such as romance, utopia, melodrama, the *Bildungsroman*, realism, anti-realism, and satire. In view of the New Woman's appearance in so many different 'types' of Australian novels, I am reluctant to support the notion of a specific 'genre', or 'sub-genre', associated with this figure. I will, however, endeavour to show that the appearance of the New Woman tended to disrupt the narrative ideologies and conventions associated with particular genres. Penny Boumelha has written about the way that at 'any historical moment and in any domain of discourse' there exists the possibility of a 'number of ideologies that may stand in contradiction or even conflict with one another'. It is, she continues, in the 'confrontation and interrogation of these contradictions within and between ideologies that there inheres the possibility of change'. Boumelha explains that while each genre is associated with certain conventions, reading practices, and 'aesthetic ideologies', its 'formal coherence', as a genre, may be 'disrupted, ironised, or subverted by elements that cannot be contained within the limits of its ideology'.¹⁶⁵ Thomas Hardy is the focus of Boumelha's study of narrative form: she writes at length about his experimental use of different genres and modes of writing, the dissonances of narrative voice in his texts, and the resistance of women characters in his novels to any one ideological position.¹⁶⁶ Significantly, she also acknowledges Hardy's awareness of the often formally

¹⁶⁵ Boumelha, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

¹⁶⁶ Boumelha, op. cit.

experimental work of the New Woman writers who were writing at the same time.

The idea that the New Woman represented an ideologically, and formally, subversive element in fiction from the period is also evident in the work of Australian women writers. In Australia, for instance, women writers' frequent use of the romance genre to represent the New Woman often did result in certain 'structural variations on romantic conventions'.¹⁶⁷ Women writers worked 'within and against romance conventions' to explore subversive ideas about women's role in society, marriage, motherhood, sexuality and independence.¹⁶⁸ They created heroines who articulated the New Woman's beliefs and ideas, and who threatened to reject marriage – the expected outcome for the traditional romantic heroine. A number of the novels discussed in this thesis reveal Australian women writers' interest in mixing narrative modes and genres, and their interest in exploring and challenging nineteenth-century expectations associated with character, narrative voice, and narrative closure. Of course women writers were also sometimes constrained by romantic narrative conventions, and it is not uncommon to find quite predictable endings to these novels. However, as Susan Sheridan has remarked, it is a 'question' of what the romance genre 'enabled women to write, not just how it restricted them or was used against them in critical discourse'.¹⁶⁹

Sheridan is one of number of feminist critics who have highlighted the marginalisation of Australian women's writing in the masculinist Australian culture. Such critics have argued that women writers were typically seen as producing inferior, domestic, British, politically conservative, and popular romantic fiction, while men were constructed as the authors of superior, outdoors/public, Australian, politically radical, realist writing.¹⁷⁰ In a culture

¹⁶⁷ Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁶⁸ Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁶⁹ Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, op. cit., esp. ch. 3; Fiona Giles, 'Romance: An Embarrassing Subject', *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, Laurie Hergenhan (ed),

that valorised (masculine) realism as 'high' literature, non-realist writing, such as the romance genre, was both feminised and denigrated at once. The New Woman, and the fiction she inspired, unsettled the binary opposition between feminine romance and masculine realism which was constructed by nineteenth-century critical discourse. In using the romance genre to explore the very real feminist and social issues associated with the New Woman, Australian women writers demonstrated the unstable nature of nineteenth-century gender/genre boundaries.

While the focus of this thesis is on the different discursive constructions of the New Woman in journalism and fiction, it also considers some other ways women responded to, and lived within, the discourse of the New Woman. The term 'New Woman' will be used with reference to certain women writers and feminist activists in Australia who can be considered versions of the *fin-de-siècle* New Woman in terms of the (often quite unconventional) way they lived their lives. In their daily practices and attitudes, such women challenged, in different ways, 'old', or traditional, notions about 'femininity' and 'womanhood'. Many of the 'New Woman figures' identified in this thesis were journalists, playwrights, poets and novelists who were also interested in writing about the New Woman and the many different ideas that she represented.

In the process of examining representations of the New Woman in Australian women's journalism and novels, an inextricable link is revealed between writing, feminism, and the daily political and cultural practices of women activists and writers. As Teresa de Lauretis suggests, it is not so much about a movement from the 'space of a representation' to the 'space outside the representation, the space outside discourse, which would then be thought of as "real"'.¹⁷¹ Rather, it is about a movement 'from the space represented by/in a representation, by/in a discourse, by/in a sex/gender system', to the space 'not

Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 14; Fiona Giles, *Too Far Everywhere: The Romantic Heroine in Nineteenth-Century Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1998.

¹⁷¹ Teresa de Lauretis, 'The Technology of Gender', *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (eds), Blackwell, Malden, Massachusetts, 1998, ch. 6, pp. 719-20.

represented yet implied (unseen) in them'. It is in the spaces that exist in the 'margins of hegemonic discourses' that the

terms of different construction of gender can be posed - terms that do have effects and take hold at the level of subjectivity and self-representation: in the micropolitical practices of daily life and daily resistances that afford both agency and sources of power...and in the cultural productions of women, feminists, which inscribe that movement in and out of ideology.

The final chapter of this thesis considers how one woman, in particular, responded to, worked within, and resisted the constructions associated with the New Woman. Chapter Four, 'Evelyn Elizabeth Dickinson: New Woman and Novelist', presents the first detailed study of an extraordinary woman who travelled from London to Sydney in 1892, studied medicine at Sydney University, and was observed to be one of Sydney's 'new women'. The first part of the chapter outlines Dickinson's contribution to Australian feminism, and considers the way she lived her life within the discourse of the New Woman. The second part then examines Dickinson's long-neglected novels, several of which explore the idea of the New Woman in the New World of Australia.

It is important to note that not all the women writers discussed in this thesis would necessarily have wanted to be labelled a New Woman, or as the author of a New Woman novel. It is not possible to say that they all actively supported the women's movement, or agreed on the same ideological and philosophical principles of feminist reform. Any discussion of the New Woman must necessarily take into account the extent to which she provoked discussion, debate and even conflict between women, lending support to the belief that this period was as much about 'battle *within* the sexes' as it was a battle between the

sexes.¹⁷² Furthermore, contemporary gender theory emphasises what the New Woman made so apparent - that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are socially constructed categories, and the notion of gender as determined by sexual difference is fraught with limitations. These limitations include the tendency to universalise about men and women in a way that ensures women are always discussed in terms of their difference from man. A further limitation of focusing on gender in terms of broad, universal categories is to forget that a subject is not only constituted by sexual difference, but is also a product of differences of class, race, ethnicity, location, sexuality and religion. As a consequence, it becomes difficult to 'articulate the differences of women from Woman, that is to say, the differences among women or, perhaps more exactly, the differences within women.'¹⁷³ As one of the most potent *fin-de-siècle* symbols of gender and cultural instability and inversion, the New Woman proved how vulnerable Victorian subject divides really were.

In the last couple of decades, Australian literary and feminist critics have brought to light the work of numerous women writers who had long been forgotten. There is still, however, a substantial amount of work to be done in this area, and many Australian women writers remain known only to a few bibliographic enthusiasts. This thesis considers some novels by writers who, by now, occupy a canonical status in Australian literature: Rosa Praed, Miles Franklin, Henry Handel Richardson, Catherine Martin, Mary Gaunt, Catherine Helen Spence, Ada Cambridge and Tasma. However, it seeks to approach these texts in a new light by focusing, often for the first time, on reading them as evidence of New Woman writing. It also attempts to make visible lesser-known texts by writers such as Frances Emily Russell, Mrs Herbert Harris, Lilian Turner, Mary Moore Bentley, Evelyn Dickinson and Iota. These lesser-known novels are just as important in understanding the emergence and significance of the New Woman phenomenon. References to 'Australian' writers include those who wrote novels that were set in Australia and/or who lived in

¹⁷² Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁷³ de Lauretis, op. cit., p. 714.

Australia at different times in their lives. While writers such as Rosa Praed, Tasma and Iota spent substantial periods overseas, they all lived in Australia and wrote novels with significant Australian content.

It should be evident by now that the term 'New Woman', along with terms such as 'Australian Girl', 'feminist' and 'feminism', are not easily defined. Representations of the new and modern woman existed well before the term 'New Woman' achieved widespread currency in Australia. Hence, Catherine Helen Spence's 1879 novel *Handfasted* is included for discussion in Chapter Three because it explores many of the issues associated with 1890s New Woman fiction. It also presents a dominant female character who, like the heroines of so many 1890s New Woman novels, challenges 'old' ideas about women and femininity. Similarly, while the term 'feminist' was introduced during the 1890s, it was not widely used until the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁷⁴ It is still regularly employed in this thesis, however, in relation to the late-nineteenth-century women's movement. Women whose 'feminism' consisted of celebrating women's biological roles as mothers, and their place in the domestic sphere, would not, by today's standards, always be described as feminists. Yet, in the context of 1890s culture, such women believed they were placing the needs of women first: by promoting the importance of motherhood, they could argue for women's significance in society. It is also important to emphasise, again, the differences between nineteenth-century feminisms. One feminist's 'radical' plan to elevate women as maternal citizens could be another feminist's idea of 'conservatism'. However, terms like 'radical', 'conservative' and 'moderate' can still prove useful in comparing 'types of feminism within a certain time span',¹⁷⁵ and in differentiating between the degree of change demanded by feminists, and the way they expressed those demands.

¹⁷⁴ A timeline in Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. xv, shows that the word 'feminist' appeared for the first time in the *Athenaeum* of 27 April 1895, and then in the *Westminster Review* in 1898.

¹⁷⁵ Audrey Oldfield, *Women Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 4.

While this thesis is intended as a contribution to literary and cultural histories of this period, it is by no means intended to be a comprehensive and conclusive account of the New Woman in Australia, or in Australian writing. Rather, it examines a selection of novels by Australian women writers, which have been chosen to demonstrate the broad range of women writers' approaches to the subjects of feminism and the New Woman. In the course of researching this topic, it quickly became apparent that there was much that was beyond the scope of this thesis. Many other novels by Australian women writers could have been included in this study. In focusing exclusively on Australian women's novels, other aspects of the New Woman in Australia, including other forms of writing, have been left out. Areas that require more research include the representation of the New Woman in Australian short stories, poems and plays. There is also a definite need for research on men's writing on the subject of the New Woman. Furthermore, while this thesis focuses primarily on late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century writers, this is only one generation of New Women writers. Australian writers of the 1920s and 1930s who wrote about an even newer generation of New Women, also require further investigation.

Chapter One

Advanced Women, Shrieking Sisters and Revolting Wives: The New Woman and the Australian Press

Our mothers and grandmothers - those stately dames and noble women whose memories we have cherished, and lives have almost worshipped - are being replaced by the "New Woman", who loves to stand upon the platform, preach from the pulpit, rush to the polling booth, ride the bicycle, and wear unmentionable garments.

Melbourne Punch, 9 January 1896, p. 21

I. The New Woman and the Mainstream Australian Press

The New Woman's emergence in the Australian press occurred at a time when Australia was also feeling the impact of the 'New Journalism'.¹ The focus of this new brand of journalism was on entertaining and exciting the reader, rather than simply reporting and interpreting the latest political news. It also recognised, importantly, the need to cater for women readers as well as men. The colourful New Woman proved irresistible to Australian journalists, and she quickly became a central subject of discussion and caricature in the popular press at the *fin de siècle*.

It is never as simple as identifying feminist versus anti-feminist responses in the press. In Australia, as elsewhere, a wide range of views and representations of the New Woman existed both between and within publications. Farley Kelly

¹ H. M. Green, *A History of Australian Literature: Pure and Applied*, volume 1: 1789-1923, revised by Dorothy Green, Angus & Robertson, London, 1984, 1st publ. 1961, p. 903.

has shown, for instance, how male intellectuals and labour spokesmen writing for the radical press often provided a valuable forum for the sympathetic discussion of the Woman Question, including issues surrounding the New Woman.² Nevertheless, it is possible to identify broadly the dominant discursive representations of the New Woman in the Australian (male-dominated) mainstream press, just as it is possible to identify reverse discursive representations in the Australian women's press. As in Britain, the New Woman in the Australian press was a contested figure - both a feminist caricature and an icon, depending on who represented her.

In order to understand how this contest developed, it is important to examine when the New Woman first appeared in the Australian popular press. Throughout the 1880s, the Woman Question occupied substantial space in the Australian press along with the Chinese Question, Federation and the Depression. As Deborah Campbell has demonstrated, the performance of Ibsen's controversial play *A Doll's House* in Australian theatres between 1889 and 1891 ensured that people were widely discussing the all-important 'marriage question' - described in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1886 as 'distinctly the social question of the day'.³

As in Britain and America, prototypes of the New Woman proliferated in the Australian press in the 1880s in the form of the Political Woman, the Superfluous, or Redundant, Woman, and the Advanced Woman. The term 'Advanced Woman' applied to any woman who revealed feminist sympathies, whether by wearing a more 'advanced' form of dress, taking up an 'unfeminine' sport, or simply behaving in an unladylike manner. Even after the New Woman was named, these other terms continued to enjoy currency among

² Farley Kelly, *The 'Woman Question' in Melbourne 1880-1914*, PhD thesis, Faculty of Education, Monash University, November 1982, esp. ch. 3. Patricia Grimshaw has also examined the radical press' representation of feminist issues in "The "equals and comrades of men"?: *Tocsin* and "the woman question", *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 9.

those wanting to discriminate between different aspects of the New Woman. Hence, the term 'Political Woman' usually referred specifically to the women suffragist.

The Sydney-based *Daily Telegraph* stands out as one of the more progressive mainstream Australian daily newspapers from this period in the attention it gave to colonial women's issues. Its lead articles covered women's entry into the workforce, the establishment of the Women's College at Sydney University, and changes to the divorce legislation. For instance, an article published in October 1888 celebrated the position of Australian women in the workforce: 'in many walks of industrial life upon which feminine intrusion has hitherto been resented she is the equal of the Australian man'.⁴

On 9 October 1888, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* published extracts from Mona Caird's article 'Marriage' under the heading 'Is Marriage a Failure? An Advocate of "Free Contracts"'.⁵ Its London correspondent reported that the article, which had attracted the attention of every newspaper in England, was 'an unqualified declaration in favour of "free marriage"'. The correspondent also relayed information about Caird's pleasant appearance and 'conventionally respectable life' as a married woman in an aristocratic neighbourhood. This was intended to reassure those who imagined the author of this extraordinary article as a "'blue stocking'", 'frowsy, hard-voiced advocate of "woman's rights"', a "'separated" wife', or a 'pinched-featured, red-nosed old maid'. The Sydney *Daily Telegraph* adopted a cautiously positive tone towards Caird's article. Its correspondent emphasised that Australian women were already well on the way to achieving the marriage reforms outlined by Caird:

³ Quoted in Deborah Campbell, "'A Doll's House": The Colonial Response', *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends: Essays in Australian Cultural History*, Susan Dermody, John Docker and Drusilla Modjeska (eds), Kibble Books, Malmsbury, Vic, 1982, p. 199.

⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 'Women's Work', 3 October 1888, p. 4.

⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 9 October 1888, p. 5.

In the Australian colonies the work of divorce law reformers is to give the wife precisely the same rights of relief as are given to the husband, and already this reform has practically been accomplished. These facts point clearly enough the direction in which public opinion is strongly setting and we can readily believe that without going to the extremes Mrs Caird proposes, it will not be very long before the doctrine that a man takes a wife to 'have and to hold' as if she were a chattel will be swept away as the last relic of the barbarous days when men held their wives by right of power or purchase.⁶

During the late 1880s, 'divorce law reformers' in New South Wales and Victoria fought to widen the grounds for divorce and give married women more legal equality with men. The underlying assumption of this article was that Australian women would not need to protest for reforms to the same extent as English women.

Although a number of Australian newspapers publicised Mona Caird's article, the response from their readers was negligible compared with the response overseas. A survey of the *Daily Telegraph* after it published extracts from 'Marriage' suggests that few readers were apparently inspired to write letters about it. Another major daily newspaper that published extracts from Caird's article, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, had an equally muted response from its readers.⁷ This is particularly curious given that its interpretation of 'Marriage', taken straight from the *Scotsman*, was decidedly critical of Caird. It lambasted Caird for her 'destructive social theory' which was based upon an 'infinitesimally small percentage of cases' of unhappy marriages. The 'philosophical discussion of the foundations of human society in marriage and

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 October 1888, p. 7.

the family', it was pointed out, should be left to 'other and stronger [read - male] hands'.⁸

It is hard to believe that Caird's article simply failed to incite a reaction from Australian readers, especially given the intense response to it in Britain. The more likely explanation is that the Australian papers made a conscious decision not to follow the British papers in opening the floodgates on this issue by publishing readers' contributions. The colonial newspaper editors may have felt the marriage question was already receiving enough attention in the British press, and did not warrant a colonial perspective. Many literate people in Australia at this time, of course, read both the British and the Australian papers, and would have already been well informed of the debate in the London *Daily Telegraph*. The other explanation for the Australian newspapers' relative silence on Caird's article may lie in their belief that such events were taking place overseas, and did not really affect Australia. Or, rather, they desired to convey the message that Australian women were already achieving reforms, and so did not have the same needs or demands as British women. Certainly, the further away Caird was, the easier it was to dismiss her, along with the other British women protesting for reforms.

It became much harder to distance Australia from these British women, however, after Australian feminists took up their cause. On 12 November 1891, the *Daily Telegraph* reported a meeting of the Sydney Womanhood Suffrage League at which its very own columnist, Eliza Ann Ashton, gave a speech on the topical 'Marriage Question'.⁹ Ashton used the pen-name 'Faustine' for her weekly column in the *Daily Telegraph*, 'Passing Notes': an eclectic mix of social and cultural news, women's fashion and literature. Ashton was a foundation member and councillor of the Womanhood Suffrage League and wife of the well-known artist, Julian Ashton.¹⁰ As Faustine, she faithfully reported

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 12 November 1891, p. 3.

¹⁰ Katherine Harper, 'Julian Rossi Ashton', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1891-1939*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1979, vol. 7, pp. 114-15; Jan Roberts, *Maybanke Anderson*:

meetings by the Womanhood Suffrage League, the Women's Literary Society and other relevant women's events. In her 1891 speech, Ashton argued, along the lines of Mona Caird, that once women had attained the suffrage, their next task must be to

amend the marriage laws, or, blasphemous as the words might sound, do away with them all together. Marriage, as a solution of the great sexual problems of to-day, was a failure - a lamentable one - and to them, the small-thinking section in a world of marionettes, was given the righting of a wrong that had endured for centuries...Year after year sweet girls were brought forward in the marriage market; year after year the purest and best of them shrank back from the unequal contest between innocence and worldliness, ideality and stern reality.¹¹

Ironically, this speech provoked a far greater response in the Australian papers than Caird's original article ever did. Disgruntled readers wrote in, objecting to Ashton's support of the 'free-love school' and expressing surprise that such views could come from a 'lady'.¹²

The *Daily Telegraph* devoted a lead article to the issue entitled 'Shall Marriage Be Abolished?', in which it criticised Ashton.¹³ It called on the Womanhood Suffrage League to distance itself from the suggestion that the 'matron must make place for the concubine'. The *Daily Telegraph* accused the 'Mona Cairds of modern society' of 'morbid cynicism' and a 'desire to attract notice by startling

Sex, Suffrage and Social Reform, 2nd edn, Ruskin Rowe Press, Avalon, 1997. Information on Eliza Ashton can also be found in Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits: Women Writers and Journalists in Nineteenth Century Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, pp. 208-9.

¹¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 12 November, 1891, p. 3. Part of this speech is also quoted in Susan Magarey, 'History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996, p. 98.

¹² Agna, 'Letter to the Editor' and T. Greig, 'Letter to the editor', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1891, p. 3.

¹³ *Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1891, p. 4.

and shocking prevailing sentiment', rather than demonstrating an interest in any 'authentic mission of good'. It compared the relationship between Ashton and the Womanhood Suffrage League to the relationship between trade-unions and the new 'firebrand agitators' who threatened to crush capitalism, abolish banks and remove non-unionists from the country: in both cases, the proposers of radical change were fundamentally damaging their cause. While acknowledging there were many unhappy marriages that should never have come to fruition in the first place, the *Daily Telegraph* proposed that marriage was not responsible for 'degrading or enslaving woman'. Rather, it had succeeded in lifting her from 'the position of a chattel, a commodity, purchaseable and saleable at the caprice of passion'. The newspaper drew on an established discourse of the separate but equal ideal of companionate marriage to describe the married woman as a 'lifelong helpmate and partner of man, entitled to share the best with him or the worst'.¹⁴ The real problem was not marriage, it argued, but the absence of the prospect of marriage for so many single women.

At least four members of the Womanhood Suffrage League, including the prominent feminists Maybanke Wolstenholme, Rose Scott and Frances Russell, promptly wrote in to dissociate the League from Ashton's views. Wolstenholme echoed the sentiments expressed by the *Daily Telegraph* with regard to companionate marriage, and insisted that the League's main objective was to obtain the franchise for women. She added that 'few, if any, of its active members' held the opinions expressed by Ashton:

Our object is not social chaos, but social order, in which each part shall do its appointed work, not retrogression to savagery, not abolition of necessary bonds, but advancement to the glorious time when woman shall stand beside man his helpmeet and his equal.¹⁵

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Letter to the editor, M. S. Wolstenholme, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1891, p. 3.

Ironically, Wolstenholme would herself reignite the free love debate three years later, as editor of the *Woman's Voice*, by proposing similarly dramatic changes to the institution of marriage. Jan Roberts notes the *Woman's Voice* would give her the 'freedom to express views which she could never have stated so openly on the public platform as President of the Suffrage League':¹⁶ most members believed that support for women's franchise depended on maintaining an image of middle-class respectability. Furthermore, for many feminists, the prospect of abolishing legal marriage was not one that they believed would necessarily improve women's lives, particularly while it was still so difficult for women to achieve financial independence.

The incident eventually led Eliza Ashton to resign as a council member of the Womanhood Suffrage League. However, she did not back away from her views. Only a few months later, she delivered another lecture on 'Woman and the Marriage Law', this time under the auspices of the committee for 'Sunday Evening Social and Economic Lectures'. The *Daily Telegraph* reported a 'good attendance' at the lecture and said that Ashton was received with cheers.¹⁷ In this speech, Ashton elaborated upon her views on marriage, arguing that the highest form of sexual relationship must be based on the 'voluntary and constant attachment of one woman and one man'. She noted that few women had been bold enough to follow the example of George Eliot and illustrate the theory that the 'spirit of marriage was more important than the letter; that a man and a woman might live purely and well without a priestly sanction to a ceremony that has the terrible disadvantage of giving one party to the contract into bondage.' In place of the existing system whereby two people entered into a life-long legal contract, Ashton proposed that marriage 'should be tentative, renewable at will, with provision made, under a contract drawn up, not by Church and State, but by the parties concerned'. Anticipating one of the main

¹⁶ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹⁷ 'Woman and the Marriage Law', 11 April 1892, p. 6.

charges likely to be levelled against her, she emphasised that the contract needed to be 'properly attested' to ensure the protection of children.¹⁸

It is difficult now to appreciate fully the radical nature of Eliza Ashton's views. In Australia, amidst a group of more moderate, middle-class feminists, Ashton advocated reforms that were seen as irreparably damaging the women's movement. Even her friend Maybanke Wolstenholme failed to support her publicly. Yet Wolstenholme, along with many men and women, must have privately agreed with the substance of Ashton's argument, if not the solution. Alongside these public debates about the Marriage Question, readers of the Australian popular press were exposed to substantial evidence that marriage was not always ideal. The daily newspapers published detailed accounts of divorce cases, brought about by domestic violence, infidelity, bigamy, and desertion.

The fuss surrounding Ashton shows that this controversial brand of feminism was seen as particularly threatening when it intruded onto the Australian socio-cultural landscape. While Caird expressed such views, they could be deemed uniquely British - views that were specific to a remote place and time. Ashton, however, brought Caird and everything she stood for uncomfortably close to home.

The Australian press reacted in a similar fashion to the debate between Ouida and Sarah Grand in the *North American Review* in 1894. In the beginning, the press did not accord the debate local significance. When the *Australasian* reprinted extracts from Grand and Ouida's articles in July 1894, its patronising introductory comments undermined any serious consideration of these women's points of view.¹⁹ The newspaper explained that although Grand's novelistic style was 'smart', her tone was 'petulant and angry'.²⁰ Grand was

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Extracts from Ouida's article appeared on 14 July 1894, pp. 82-3 and extracts from Grand's article 'The Man of the Moment' were published on 21 July 1894, pp. 126-7.

²⁰ Comments at the beginning of Grand's 'The Man of the Moment', 21 July 1894, p. 126.

ultimately a 'complainer', the *Australasian* concluded, while Ouida was simply a woman who did not like other women. The Melbourne *Argus* also trivialised the issues these women raised:

The average male, we fear, will watch with a secret and guilty joy the spectacle of two such petticoated champions as Sarah Grand and 'Ouida' bethumping each other furiously in the pages of the *North American Review* on the subject of the wrongs of woman and the crimes of man.²¹

The *Argus* summarised their arguments amidst plenty of humorous references to Grand's habit of 'spanking' the 'man of the moment'. For its particular take on these events, including the spanking analogy, the *Argus* was indebted to the London *Daily Chronicle*. Only towards the end of the article, did it offer an Australian perspective:

For ourselves, we confess that the whole theme is too high for us, and, with the rest of our guilty sex, we can only gaze shudderingly and at a safe distance upon the spectacle of 'Ouida' and Mrs Sarah Grand tearing each other's literary hair over the virtues of the New Woman and the crimes of the Man of the Moment.²²

The imagery in this article is fascinating, not least for the use of the spanking metaphor, presumably inspired partly by Grand's call to women to hold out their hands to the 'child-man'. An article about reforming men was instead portrayed as the cause of a rift between women, and as having nothing to do with men at all. It is also interesting to notice how the New Woman debate is shifted in the course of the article from the male-dominated boxing ring to the feminine realm of a literary cat fight - a rhetorical device that puts the debate at

²¹ 7 July 1894, p. 6.

²² *ibid.*

a 'safe distance' from male journalists, as well as at a 'safe distance' from Australia.

Of course, the *Argus*' belief that these events were taking place well away from Australia was soon proved incorrect. The term 'New Woman' began to achieve widespread currency in Australia a few months after the furore erupted between Grand and Ouida. By 1895, Australian journalists were using it with great gusto. Like the journalists writing for *Punch*, they seized on 'New Woman' as a term that could encompass the disparate aspects of the feminist movement. The term came to refer to women writers, actors, suffragists, athletes, university students and, indeed, anyone suspected of feminist sympathies or inclinations.

The New Woman's emergence was significant in Australia because it re-energised the Woman Question, giving it a new and unstoppable momentum. Faustine had commented at the beginning of 1894 that the 'woman question seems to be languishing a little'.²³ She noted fewer pictures in the press of 'husbands left to rock the cradle and peel the potatoes, while their spouses scour the country in pattens and goggles' to make speeches. Towards the end of 1894, however, the *Daily Telegraph* described the New Woman as 'clamouring for pantaloons and a vote, and a cigarette, and a latchkey, and all the freedom that belongs to the despised male'.²⁴ Once she appeared, there seemed no end to her demands.

This figure quickly became a popular object of caricature in the mainstream press, easily recognisable by her accessories - the cigar, bicycle, umbrella, pet dog and rational dress. Australian journalists often claimed to know precisely who the New Woman was, even though there was no *one* version of the New Woman: she was represented in various and often dramatically different ways. Images of sexually forward and voracious New Women existed alongside

²³ 6 January 1894, p. 9.

²⁴ 29 December 1894, p. 5.

images of a New Woman who was apparently frigid, and showed little interest in men or marriage.

A poem in the *Sydney Mail* entitled 'The New Woman', published in 1895, reveals the extent to which this figure symbolised socio-sexual transgression and change. It also reveals the anxiety associated with such change:

Oh, the Twentieth Century Girl!
What a wonderful thing she will be!
She'll evolve from a mystical whirl -
A woman unfettered and free.
No corset to cramp her waist,
No crimps to encumber her brain;
Unafraid, bifurcated, unlaced,
Like a goddess of old she will reign!

She'll wear bloomers - a matter of course -
She will vote, not a question of doubt;
She will ride like a man on a horse;
At the club late at night she'll stay out.
If she chances to love she'll propose;
To blush will be quite out of date;
She'll discuss politics with her beaux,
And out-talk her masculine mate!

She'll be up in the science of things;
She will smoke cigarettes; she will swear
If the servant a dunning note brings,
Or the steak isn't served up with care.
No longer she'll powder her nose
Or cultivate even a curl,
Nor bother with fashions or clothes -

This Twentieth Century Girl!

Her voice will be heard in the land;
She'll dabble in matters of State;
In counsel her word will command,
And her whisper will laws regulate.
She will stand neath her banner unfurled,
Inscribed with her principles new;
But the question is - What in the world
*The New Century Baby will do!*²⁵

This poem puts forth the prospect of a socially and sexually uninhibited New Woman who is determined to emulate a man by smoking, voting, staying out late, and wearing 'bifurcated' clothing. If she 'chances to love' at all, the New Woman will also usurp the masculine role by being the one to propose marriage. Beneath the poem's humorous veneer lies a serious moral message: domestic and social chaos will result from the New Woman's appearance. No real 'women' will be left to inhabit the domestic sphere and, worse still, fulfil the reproductive role.

The New Woman was most popular with Australian caricaturists from mid-1894 to 1896. In its issue of 2 January 1896, the *Melbourne Punch* titled one of its main cartoons 'The New Woman's New Year'. A week later it declared the replacement of Australia's mothers and grandmothers - 'those stately dames and noble women whose memories we have cherished, and lives have almost worshipped' - by the New Woman 'who loves to stand upon the platform, preach from the pulpit, rush to the polling booth, ride the bicycle, and wear unmentionable garments.'²⁶

Yet, the more popular she became, the more intense seemed the desire among mainstream Australian journalists to downplay her popularity. Hence, only

²⁵ 17 August 1895, p. 325.

²⁶ 9 January 1896, p. 21.

three months after nominating 1896 the 'New Woman's New Year', the *Melbourne Punch* was arguing that the New Woman had had her day. It published an image of a woman as a yellow flame that was about to expire, with the caption, 'Going Out! The passing of the New Woman'.²⁷ Accompanying the image, was this poem:

She came just like a flash of light,
And dazzled all the eyes of men,
But now she splutters, and the night
Will soon engulf the dame again.
She flickers with a feeble ray;
We wait to see her spirit pass -
'Twill leave for twelve months and a day
An odour of carbonic gas.

In declaring the New Woman's demise, Australian journalists chose to ignore the ongoing achievements of the Australian women's movement. They proved increasingly eager to emphasise that the New Woman was little more than a fad, and would not pose any long-term threat to Australian society.

II. Reception of the 'Wicked Woman' Novels

This tendency to downplay the New Woman's significance can also be seen in the Australian press reception of the New Woman fiction. This fiction proved one of the most important catalysts for the emergence of the New Woman as a topic of debate in Australia. When Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* was published in 1883, it was widely read and discussed in Australia. In the beginning it was not necessarily identified as a novel concerned with the Woman Question. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, included it in the category of the Agnostic Novel.²⁸ It was not until the importation to Australia of plays,

²⁷ 2 April 1896, p. 219.

²⁸ 23 March 1889, p. 4.

short stories and novels about the New Woman in the mid 1890s, that they tended to be grouped together. Newspapers reported the inability of the circulating libraries to keep up with the demand for the modern novels. It seemed as though everyone was reading them, including their most outspoken critics. Of course, the readership primarily comprised middle-class people who could afford access these novels in the first place.

The major Australian newspapers often talked about the New Woman novels, particularly, in a way that suggested they formed a distinct fictional discourse, or 'genre', of their own. They also helped to feminise this 'genre', reinforcing the notion that it was written and read largely by women. The *Sydney Mail* noted that when it came to writing fiction, women had 'almost ousted the men'.²⁹ The reason for this, it continued, was that women read far more novels than men and so best understood how to cater for other women. The *Argus* went further and reported a widespread feminist conspiracy:

The *fin-de-siècle* young man is, we all know, on his trial. The lady novelist is his judge, and the jury, composed exclusively of New Women - say, with Mrs Sarah Grand at its head - have already brought in with much loud shrieking a verdict of 'guilty', with no recommendation to mercy.³⁰

The image of shrieking novelists reflected the caricatured versions of shrieking and hysterical women appearing in the press, and detracted from the political seriousness of the issues that these novels raised. These kinds of disparaging remarks, however, apparently did not deter Australian women from reading the new novels. In January 1894, the *Daily Telegraph* ran an article entitled 'What Women Read', based on an interview with the Melbourne publisher Mr Melville.³¹ Melville explained that '90 per cent of the women frequenters of the

²⁹ 'On Some Tendencies in Modern Fiction', 16 June 1894, p. 1216.

³⁰ 12 January 1895, p. 6.

³¹ 8 January 1894, p. 6. In a manner characteristic of the daily newspapers at this time, the article was imported from the *Argus*.

circulating libraries read novels almost exclusively', compared with 75 per cent of men. He cited *The Heavenly Twins*, a book that dealt 'with the emancipation of woman', as typical of the 'ladies' book of to-day'. The type of novel that attracted so much interest, Melville added, tended to be 'cleverly written, novel in treatment', and "'smart" and sensational', though in a different way from the once popular sensation novels of the 1860s.³²

Interestingly, though, Faustine provided evidence only a month later that women's reading of these novels was not necessarily as pervasive as the popular press always led people to believe. Faustine complimented Miss Montefiore on her topical paper on Sarah Grand, delivered at a meeting of the Sydney Women's Literary Society.³³ She added that a 'drawback' to the discussion following Miss Montefiore's paper was that many of the members had still not read Grand's books. However, even those who failed to read these books would have been hard-pushed to avoid talking about them. The major papers published detailed reviews and extracts from the new novels, as well as reporting the overseas reaction to them.

A marked shift can be seen in the major Australian newspapers' reception of the New Woman fiction. While initially expressing a certain amount of admiration for this fiction, they increasingly became less tolerant of it. For instance, the *Australasian* initially gave novels like *The Heavenly Twins* a fairly positive reception. An article published in February 1894 was critical of some of the novel's stylistic features, but praised Grand's cleverness and her 'sound and honest' aim.³⁴ Another article in the same issue supported Mrs Crackanthorpe's argument in 'Revolt of the Daughters', published in the *Nineteenth Century*, that the 'fin de siècle damsel' be given more social freedom and a better intellectual education.³⁵ Only a couple of months later, however, the mood of the *Australasian* had changed, with one of its lead articles emphasising that in 'all

³² *ibid.*

³³ *Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 1894, p. 10.

³⁴ 'New Novels', *Australasian*, 17 February 1894, p. 306.

the new women's novels there is a lofty disregard of duty, as there is of facts.³⁶ Another lead article, entitled 'Morbid Fiction', complained of the 'eruption of singularly unpleasant books and articles, on singularly unpleasant subjects' that were 'all written by women and for women.'³⁷ This latest 'feminine literature is pitched in the shrillest possible key', the article continued. Magazines were 'thick' with articles on the 'Revolt of the Daughters', the 'Woes of Wives', and the 'Longing of Emancipated Women for Inconvenient Knowledge'. The *Australasian* criticised the lack of reserve in these novels, their tendency to deal with aspects of the relationship between men and women that were 'not suited for street-corner discussion, and least of all by feminine lips'. It finished by reassuring its readers, however, that this latest development in feminine literature represented 'nothing but a passing fad'.³⁸

This latter comment is revealing. It is as though the editors of these Australian newspapers and periodicals suddenly realised that the New Woman, and the issues she represented, were not, in fact, a passing fad. It had become increasingly difficult to deny the political message of the new fiction and its inextricable relationship to the Australian feminist movement. In an article in April 1895 about women's newly-won right to vote in South Australian elections, the *Argus* claimed that the same 'persons who rush to read the new literature are under adult suffrage'.³⁹ In other words, the association between the woman voter and the woman reader of novels about women's rights was unavoidable. With the realisation that the New Woman might be here to stay, she acquired a more dangerous status.

Australian journalists proved reluctant to admit that their own place of residence could bear any responsibility for the New Woman novels. When the novels were first gaining recognition, journalists emphasised they were the

³⁵ 'The Decline of the Duenna', 17 February 1894, p. 289.

³⁶ 'Corybantic Literature', 5 May 1894, p. 773.

³⁷ 14 April 1894, p. 641.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ 15 April 1895, p. 4.

product of distant places. In its article 'Morbid Fiction', the *Australasian* proposed that if the new fiction served as a mirror to the 'national visage' and national character, there would be 'some aspects of current English literature which may well cause sensible men real disquiet'.⁴⁰ According to the new school of women writers, 'all the daughters of English homes are clamouring for the right to be as masculine and to know as much as their own brothers'. In a similar vein, the *Argus* claimed:

English fiction at the present moment is suffering from an invasion of what the *Westminster Gazette* terms 'sex-maniacs'. Life, according to them, has no other interest and literature no other theme than a particular set of relations between men and women. What they call the 'sex problem' is the absorbing pre-occupation of these writers. They dissect it, probe it, brood over it, shriek about it, regard it as a moral duty to 'tell the truth' about it at the top of their voices and at the street corner, and dwell on its details with a De Foe-like fidelity which would turn the stomach of a case-hardened hospital surgeon.⁴¹

Like British newspapers, the *Argus* highlighted the sexual aspect of the new fiction. Of interest here, also, is the emphasis on the objectionable realism of the fiction – its capacity to 'turn the stomach' of a surgeon. In an era that saw women writers commonly relegated to the realm of popular romantic fiction, with realism deemed the preserve of male writers, the New Woman fiction directly contravened gender-genre codes.

Nevertheless, by persisting in feminising the New Woman fiction, newspapers like the *Argus* endeavoured to dilute its political force; they emphasised its non-political and 'unliterary' status as popular women's fiction. By dismissing such

⁴⁰ 'Morbid Fiction', *Australasian*, 14 April 1894, p. 641.

⁴¹ 20 April 1895, p. 6.

fiction as being of contemporary interest only, and lacking in literary merit, these newspapers also helped to marginalise it. It was deemed vogue fiction, as disposable as the New Woman's fashion. The *Argus* declared at the beginning of 1896 that the 'book of the hour' - the novel written 'by the "new" woman for the "new" woman' - was 'audacious, shallow, unenticing' and would most likely soon disappear, with 'few regrets' uttered.⁴² The *Sydney Mail's* assessment of the new fiction by women was just as harsh. The paper concluded its 'earnest' desire to convey a moral, social or theological message occurred at the expense of plot, style and humour.⁴³

At the same time as newspapers reported the end of the New Woman's heyday, the *Melbourne Age* declared the 'death of the sex novel'. 'Its day is completely over', it explained. 'The public want something better now, and they have taken readily to the historical and romantic novel'.⁴⁴ The same article pointed out that it had largely been left to the private lending libraries to cater for readers of the latest fiction, since the public libraries made a 'point of not pandering to any vogue, such as that of the sex novel'. Similarly, the *Melbourne Punch* reported that women at Mullens were now seldom asking for 'Yellow' literature or 'sex novels'.⁴⁵ As well as no longer displaying the 'Woman-novel' on their drawing room tables, the '[l]adies' were also manifesting this change in mood by no longer talking about 'the so-called "problems" propounded by certain erotic dramatists'.⁴⁶ Once again, journalists seemed to be trying hard to convince their readers that neither the New Woman, nor her fiction, would last.

⁴² 9 February 1896, p. 6.

⁴³ 'On Some Tendencies in Modern Fiction', 16 June 1894, p. 1216.

⁴⁴ 16 May 1896, p. 11.

⁴⁵ 20 February 1896, p. 122.

⁴⁶ 19 March 1896, p. 188.

III. The *Bulletin* and the New Woman

One of the most outspoken periodicals when it came to the New Woman was the *Sydney Bulletin*.⁴⁷ The *Bulletin*'s literary page, the Red Page, edited by A. G. Stephens, regularly advertised and reviewed the new 'Wicked Woman' books that sparked controversy overseas. The wickedness of this fiction lay, once again, in its preoccupation with what was known as the 'sex problem' or 'sex element'. Much of its appeal was that it promised to tease and titillate. Hence, Frankfort Moore's *One Fair Daughter* was described as a 'book about wicked women by a wicked man' and as being 'full of naughty little thrills'.⁴⁸ Similarly, *Keynotes*, by George Egerton, was promoted as '[s]ubtly, shamelessly audacious'.⁴⁹

Like the *Argus*, the *Bulletin* often delimited the value of the New Woman fiction, emphasising that, while of certain sociological interest, it was not of lasting, literary merit. In a column entitled 'The Wickedness of Women', it noted that the New Woman's

mission is to set Man to rights in fifteen editions, and she is fulfilling it successfully if not artistically. From a classical standpoint, the books mentioned below are mere ephemerae, which to-day are all the rage and to-morrow are cast into the dust-bin.⁵⁰

Bulletin journalists undoubtedly felt a sense of relief in explaining away the dramatic explosion of 'wicked woman' fiction as a harmless fad, much like feminism itself. The unavoidable connection between feminism and the new fiction became the basis on which the *Bulletin* attacked novels such as *The Story*

⁴⁷ For other accounts of the *Bulletin*'s approach to the women's movement more generally, see Sylvia Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox: A Strange Case of Authorship*, Penguin, Victoria, 1987 and Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, op. cit., pp. 74-6.

⁴⁸ 6 April 1895, Red Page.

⁴⁹ 16 February 1895, Red Page.

of a *Modern Woman* by Ella Hepworth Dixon, which it deemed an 'insidiously vicious attack on modern men'.⁵¹

Not all the new novels were rubbished however. An overview of the Red Page between 1894 and 1900 gives the impression of a periodical that, while often scathing and patronising about the New Woman fiction, was also one of its primary defenders. The *Bulletin* described *A Yellow Aster*, for example, as a 'smart and amusing book, which sets and solves a special sex-problem on its own account'.⁵² It also described it as holding 'special interest for Australian readers' since the 'authors were for some time residents of Melbourne'.⁵³ It is interesting that, even though Iota's name was on the cover, journalists immediately assumed it to be the product of a husband and wife team, presumably because its subject matter was considered too indelicate to have been conceived of by a woman writer alone. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* - a 'masterpiece of English fiction'⁵⁴ - was regularly advertised under the heading 'Some Books Worth Reading', and Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* was described as a 'book of rare genius'.⁵⁵ These two novels generally received a more favourable critical reception in the *Bulletin* as real 'literature' than the popular novels by Iota or Grand.

When it positioned itself as the modern and progressive opponent of prudishness and snobbery, the *Bulletin* was a fertile site for the discussion of sexuality and marriage issues that the New Woman fiction raised. One of the most prolific contributors to such debates was the journalist Victor Daley, who produced a range of complex and sometimes contradictory opinions on women and the 'sex problem'. Daley's alias 'Creeve Roe' tended to adopt a sympathetic approach toward the New Woman. In the article 'Mostly about Women', Roe celebrated the sexual openness of the new fiction:

⁵⁰ 15 September 1894, Red Page.

⁵¹ 6 April 1895, Red Page.

⁵² 22 September 1894, Red Page.

⁵³ 1 September 1894, Red Page.

⁵⁴ 16 February 1895, Red Page.

Now and again such literary giants as Thackeray and Dickens would venture to hint that women had legs. But it may be noted that they dared to make this assertion only when they were writing about females in menial positions. It is only within the last decade or so that women have walked boldly and unashamed into literature with real legs of their own. Previously there appeared to be a conspiracy amongst writers to keep dark this demoralising, bifurcated secret.⁵⁶

It is evident from this account that the New Women now walking 'boldly' into literature were middle-class women. In the same article, Roe responded with gusto to complaints that the 'sex element' had featured too prominently in *Bulletin* fiction:

The fact is that to Woman herself is largely due the tendency of recent writers - *Bulletin* scribes included - to deal with her as a charming human female instead of a creature half-divine. Since she took to writing she has done all she could to disillusionise Man, who would so willingly go on believing her to be an angel. She has painted herself as a real being of flesh and blood, with appetites, and passions, and throbbing veins, and a secret hankering after wickedness... Modern woman, in a word, refuses to be idealised. She has of her own free-will come down from her pedestal and out of her shrine.

There is, of course, an edge of facetiousness in this laudatory promotion of the modern woman. Roe appeared concerned not so much with defending feminists, as defending modern fiction containing the titillating 'sex element'. He described as 'silly' accusations that the *Bulletin's* portrayal of the New

⁵⁵ 19 October 1895, Red Page.

⁵⁶ 3 September 1896, p. 6.

Woman was 'immoral', 'indecent' and 'calculated to undermine Religion and wreck the British Constitution'.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, his views on the New Woman were characteristic of the *Bulletin's* anti-clerical, anti-class-dominated, and anti-British stance.

The *Bulletin* has been central to an ongoing debate between historians and cultural critics about the 1890s. Marilyn Lake has famously argued that the *Bulletin* was at the centre of a 'contest between men and women at the end of the nineteenth century for the control of the national culture.'⁵⁸ This periodical promoted a model of masculinity, Lake suggests, that underpinned the 'drinking, smoking, gambling' and often sexually promiscuous bushman: with this figure, the *Bulletin* rejected domestic values and the rights of women. John Docker has replied to this argument by suggesting that, what he terms, the 'Feminist Legend of the Nineties' is in danger of 'underestimating the degree to which women were active agents in their own history'.⁵⁹ He cites the presence of the New Woman - that 'most spectacular "symbolic" public figure of the times' - as evidence of feminist agency. Docker has been concerned to show how ambivalently *Bulletin* journalists viewed the New Woman:

While women's immensely greater public presence and visibility in the Nineties excited the historical visions of contemporary feminists, it caused...unease and puzzlement in the male bosoms of the *Bulletin*. They shouted at and caricatured the New Woman, patronised and corrected her, even sometimes cautiously approved of her; but they didn't, really, quite know what to think.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Marilyn Lake, 'The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context', in Magarey et al, *Debutante Nation*, *op. cit.*, ch. 1, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁹ John Docker, 'Postmodernism, Cultural History, and the Feminist Legend of the Nineties: *Robbery Under Arms*, the Novel, the Play', *The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture*, Ken Stewart (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996, p. 132.

Docker demonstrates that the *Bulletin* adopted a wide range of approaches toward the New Woman. Victor Daley typified the somewhat puzzled, even schizophrenic, attitude toward this figure. While Creeve Roe celebrated the New Woman fiction, Daley could be scathing. This is seen in Daley's poem 'Minerva Victrix', dedicated to Miss Catherine Spence, Miss Rose Scott, and the New Woman movement:

O will she come with spinning-wheel,
And distaff in her hand,
Or will she come with sword of steel,
The Lady of the Land?

*O fare ye well, my dove-eyed girl,
And fare ye well with sorrow,
You were my sweetheart yesterday -
Another comes to-morrow.*⁶¹

With this elegy to the Angel in the House, Daley completely dismissed the New Woman. Such disparate viewpoints were not confined to particular journalists, but, as Sylvia Lawson has shown, characterised the *Bulletin* as a whole.⁶²

Docker has introduced an important element of complication to debates divided neatly along lines of sexual difference. Where his argument is problematic, however, is in its suggestion of a certain amount of innocence on the part of the *Bulletin's* caricaturists and writers. The New Woman is depicted as something journalists simply responded to, rather than an image they helped to construct. This argument assumes a free-floating feminist symbol rather than a carefully designed caricature, intended to curb the New Woman's radicalism and remove the threat she posed to the socio-sexual order. Furthermore, the

⁶⁰ John Docker, *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 55.

⁶¹ V. J. Daley, 'Minerva Victrix', *Bulletin*, 30 June 1900, p. 13.

⁶² Sylvia Lawson, *op. cit.*



PROVISIONAL.

SHE: "Do you think bloomers are good form?"

HE: "Yes, when the wearers are."

Figure A: 'Provisional', *Bulletin*, 21 December 1895, p. 10.

Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

'gendered' nature of periodicals like the *Bulletin* cannot be quickly dismissed. The *Bulletin* was primarily, though not exclusively, written, edited and produced by men, just as Louisa Lawson's the *Dawn* was written, edited and produced by women. The production of the text - the people behind the production of images and views of the New Woman - must necessarily inform any interpretation of these periodicals.

As one of Australia's most enthusiastic periodicals when it came to caricatures of the New Woman, the *Bulletin* is a useful site to explore dominant discursive representations of this figure. **Figure A** is a New Woman riding her bicycle, observed by a conventionally dressed woman and her male companion. The cyclist is wearing the new form of rational dress for women: baggy knickerbockers, or 'bloomers', a tailored jacket and a man's hat. The first woman asks her companion whether he thinks 'bloomers are good form?' He replies: 'Yes, when the wearers are'.⁶³ Although she is wearing a more masculine style of dress than the other woman in the picture, the cyclist is young, single, shapely and attractive. Importantly, she gets away with wearing the New Woman garb because she remains conscious of attracting the gaze of men. The fact that the conventionally dressed woman asks her male companion his opinion of 'bloomers' suggests they are simply the latest fashion, like every other aspect of the New Woman. Again, the possibility this feminist figure might be there to stay is dismissed.

The image of the New Woman on a bicycle was one of the most complex images from the period. These machines gave women a new degree of autonomy and power, as well as improving their physical health and strength. Young women on bicycles were often symbolic of modernity and progress, as this short poem shows:

The modern young maiden says she
As she straddles her bicycle
Sing Ta la la la
Poor dear Ma ma ma
You can't keep the pace with me!⁶⁴

At the same time, women on bicycles were also commonly represented as sexually 'fast'. Penny Russell notes that the image of the 'forked body astride a modern machine could be represented as an essentially sexual image'.⁶⁵ In **Figure A**, the woman cyclist is highly sexualised: the fact that she is revealing some leg at the bottom of her knickerbockers only adds to her appeal to men. By emphasising the way the new bifurcated garments showed off women's legs and so sexualising women cyclists, *Bulletin* journalists downplayed the feminist issues of independence and physical strength represented by this figure.⁶⁶ In the following poem by E. Dyson, entitled 'Two Cycles', the New Woman is presented as having exchanged the spinning wheel - a traditional image of virginity and femininity - for the modern and speedy bicycle wheel:

In bygone days remembered long,
The homely bards, so quaint of phrase
Sang many a sweet and simple song
In pretty Kate's or Annie's praise
Fair Ann with cheeks of apple red
That Cupid's arrow-marks reveal,
In sober gown with apron spread,
Sits modestly with patient tread,
Revolving her swift spinning-wheel.

⁶³ 21 December 1895, p. 10.

⁶⁴ 28 December 1895, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Penny Russell, 'Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 13, 1994, p. 35.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

But now-a-day the anxious bard
Inspired but by demand - poor man!
E'en finds his service very hard
When singing to the modern Ann
Her knickerbockers blue or grey
A length of stockinged calf reveal
A coat and cap a trifle gay
She wears when in the light of day
She boldly rides her spinning wheel.⁶⁷

The New Woman's 'length of stockinged calf' is at once obscene and unladylike, attractive and sexualised. The poem indicates how profoundly the New Woman cyclist challenged traditional ideas about femininity. Rather than sit 'modestly' and passively, waiting to be proposed to, she has 'boldly' taken to her bicycle, with little thought of men.

It is important to note that alongside such caricatures and poems in these periodicals were photographs of 'real' women cyclists. Regular cycling columns in papers like the *Sydney Mail* reported their activities:

The Sydney Ladies' Bicycle Club had a most enjoyable ride on Saturday afternoon. Meeting the Ashfield Bicycle Club at Ashfield, they rode across country through Canterbury, Belmore and Hurstville, arriving at 5.20 at Tom Ugly's Point, where they stayed for tea, afterwards riding home in the moonlight.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ 26 January 1895, p. 15.

⁶⁸ 10 August 1895, p. 299.



**"THE NEW WOMAN WILL WEAR THE
BREECHES." JUST LIKE THE OLD WOMAN.
THERE'S NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN.**

Figure B: 'The New Woman will wear the Breeches', *Bulletin*,
23 February 1895, p. 14. Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

The tendency to caricature New Women cyclists was also accompanied by a contradictory trend towards celebrating them for the purposes of advertising.⁶⁹ Cycle companies used glamorous images of slim and attractive women astride their bicycles, and even images of women cyclists in their undergarments, to market their products. Some cycle shops also provided women with rooms where they could rest during a day of shopping.⁷⁰

One of the most popular versions of the New Woman to appear in the *Bulletin* is pictured as **Figure B**. This New Woman is quite masculine in her stride and demeanour. She also wears an overtly masculine style of rational dress: the vest, jacket, bow tie, and small hat. Her tailored knickerbockers really resemble men's trousers. (Few Australian women from this period would actually have worn such a severe style of rational dress). This New Woman has a pathetic, feminised version of the New Man in tow who is suitably represented as having assumed the domestic burden of caring for the dog and children. Here, the *Bulletin* presents a New Woman who refuses to remain in her proper sphere, and instead proposes to abandon her traditional roles as wife and mother, take over her husband's job, and even his pants. Such gender inversion would, it is implied, lead to the breakdown of separate gendered spheres, so central to Victorian society. However, while this image creates an impression of dangerous gender instability, the caption undermines its significance: 'The New Woman will wear the breeches. Just like the old woman. There's nothing new under the sun'.⁷¹ The extent of disruption caused to the socio-sexual order by this New Woman is mitigated by the idea that her 'newness' is superficially confined to a change of dress.

Another version of the New Woman who regularly appeared in the *Bulletin* was founded on the idea of the spinster - the odd or superfluous woman.

⁶⁹ For an excellent discussion of the different representations of the woman cyclist in the Australian press, including her association with consumerism, see again Russell, op. cit., pp. 31-51.

⁷⁰ See the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, vol. 3, 6th edn, Australian Geographic Pty Ltd, Terrey Hills, NSW, 1996, p. 962.



GETTING INTO CONDITION.

Figure C: 'Getting into Condition', *Bulletin*, 3 April 1897, p. 13.
Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

Figure C is an overweight young single woman who is unsteady and awkward on her bicycle, accompanied only by her own shadow. This New Woman, on whom the cycling costume looks particularly unflattering, is laughingly described as 'getting into condition'. The loss of a slim figure suggests that she has ceased to wear a corset and thus sacrificed her femininity. One subtext underlying this depiction is that modern women who 'lacked' husbands were not single by choice: this ensured that, however falsely, the choice about whether or not to marry remained with men. Katie Holmes demonstrates that the spinster was seen as a 'disturbing, threatening figure', particularly in the context of declining birth and marriage rates.⁷² There were various reasons put forward in the popular press, often by anti-feminists, for the declining marriage rate. The economic depression of the 1890s was commonly cited as a reason why men were unable to afford to marry. One factor that was often played down was the possibility that women were choosing alternatives to marriage and motherhood in the form of 'bodily autonomy and independence'.⁷³ It is not surprising then that debates in the *Bulletin* and the *Argus*, which, Holmes suggests, were most representative of the position of 'conservative masculinists', centred on economic and other considerations deterring *men* from marrying.

At the same time, Figure C also represents the New Women's 'excessive' strength and independence. As she hurtles toward the man in the picture, who may be representative of a policeman, there is a sense in which she is unstoppable and lawless. The image of the enormous woman pictured next to a small, undernourished man could also be interpreted as evidence of progressivism. That is, women were seen as becoming larger and less easily distinguishable from men.⁷⁴ This was a disturbing prospect for those who believed that sexual difference needed to be maintained in the interest of a

⁷¹ 23 February 1895, p. 14.

⁷² See Katie Holmes, "Spinsters Indispensable: Feminists, Single Women and the Critique of Marriage, 1890 - 1920", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 110, 1998, p. 70.

⁷³ *ibid.*



Figure D: 'Melbourniana', Bulletin, 17 September 1898, p. 17.
 Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

'civilised' society. Medical doctors also fostered fears about the future of the race by arguing that women cyclists were expending energy needed for childbirth, potentially harming their reproductive organs.

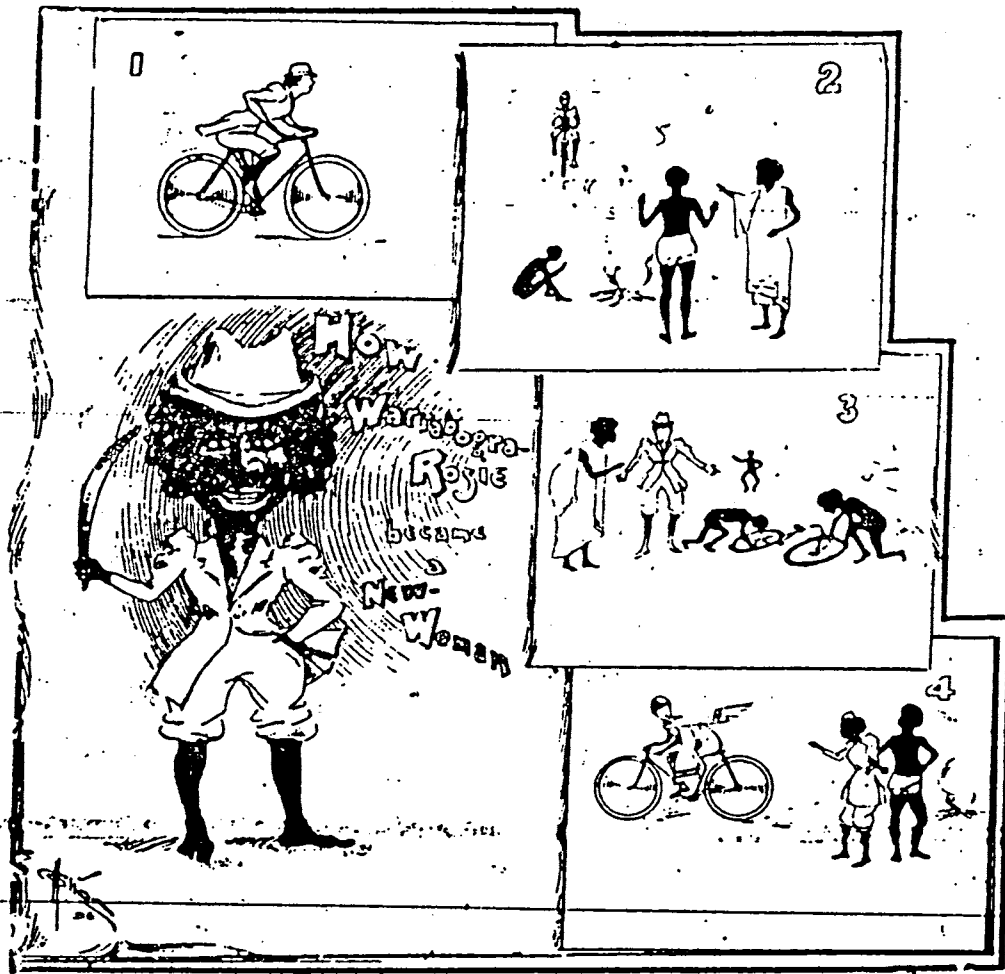
The final version of the New Woman who commonly appeared in the *Bulletin* was the dowdy, hysterical, bespectacled old spinster who enjoyed nothing more than to berate men. She was also depicted as an ugly and, therefore, discarded superfluous woman - a convert to the new feminist movement because she lacked a husband and had no other choice. In **Figure D**, she is depicted as a member of the Victorian Woman's Suffrage League, typically threatening to beat a man with her umbrella.⁷⁵ She was often conflated with the suffragists and platform women, who both insisted on accessing the predominantly male, public-political sphere. Her interest in encroaching on this male territory meant she automatically sacrificed any claim to femininity. The old, shrieking spinster was also the antithesis of the young, sexualised New Woman who showed off her legs on a bicycle. She often took on the connotations of a conservative, asexual and puritanical Mrs Grundy.⁷⁶ Like the much-maligned members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, this figure was resented and ridiculed for wanting to ruin men's enjoyment of drinking, smoking, gambling and womanising.

One of the ways the *Bulletin* made the New Woman knowable was by mapping her location. She was almost always located in the city - in cafes drinking beer, in the university, or riding her bicycle. Occasionally, however, she also ventured into the Australian bush where it was soon evident she did not belong. This was an interesting variation on the predominantly urban, latchkey-carrying New Woman who featured in the English press. **Figure E** is a New Woman cyclist who comes across an Aboriginal camp and is forced to dismount. The cartoon, entitled 'How Rosie became a New Woman', presents

⁷⁴ See Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 1990, ch. 6.

⁷⁵ *Bulletin*, 17 September 1898, p. 17.

⁷⁶ A character from Thomas Morton's 1798 play *Speed the Plough*.



1. Lady cyclist on tour. 2. Falls a victim to Warratjira's camp. 3. Rosie, enraptured with rational costume, demands same. 4. Fair exchange no robbery. (Cyclist allowed to depart peaceably with Rosie's blanket.)

Figure E: 'How Rosie became a New Woman', *Bulletin*, 1 June 1895, p. 14.

Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

an Aboriginal woman who is 'enraptured with rational costume' and demands a '[f]air exchange'. She appropriates the New Woman's rational dress and sends her off wearing her blanket instead. Figure F also depicts the New Woman in the bush, unsteady on her bicycle along the rough road. Again, 'she' presents as a curiosity to the Aboriginal observers, who are confused about the trouser-wearing cyclist's gender identity. Both depictions are poignant for their reversal of the usual direction of the gaze: the Aboriginal people's puzzlement over the New Woman renders her the novelty, the Other. Both images have the effect of highlighting the incongruence of the New Woman in the Australian bush, and in the Australian cultural landscape more generally. In reality, however, more and more 'new' women in Australia at this time were seeking adventure and physical exercise by taking their bicycles on cross-country journeys.

While much of the *Bulletin's* commentary on the New Woman was devoted to deriding and ridiculing her, there occasionally appeared a statement of frustration at the passivity and blandness of the 'old' Angel in the House. Such statements suggested a level of acceptance of a newer, modern woman, and even helped pave the way for her arrival. A poem published at the end of 1895 entitled 'A Question of Time' summed up the mood:

They'd scarce begun their married life
Her cheeks outbloomed the peaches
"O Dick" she cried, "I'm not a wife
"Who wants to wear the breeches
"I'm quite a little goose, I fear,
"And must remain so ever -
"You would not love me would you, dear.
"If I were "new" and clever?"

Dear Richard smiled, and muttered
"Well",



*FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE LADY CYCLIST IN A
QUEENSLAND BUSH TOWNSHIP.*

JENNY (log.): "My word, Billy, what name that pfella?"

BILLY: "That pfella bin lose 'em dress. He bin steal 'em trouser b'longa his
father." (Disgust of lady cyclist.) "Old man put him longa
lock-up."

Figure F: 'First Appearance of the Lady Cyclist in a Queensland Bush
Township', *Bulletin*, 11 July 1896, p. 11.
Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

Then gazed
At her intently:
The truth seemed very hard to tell
And so he broke it gently.
"I hate a girl who rides a bike,
"But still, I'm merely human -
"In *two years time*, perhaps, I'd like
"A somewhat *newer* woman".⁷⁷

Ironically, one of the *Bulletin's* most vocal opponents of the New Woman movement was its long-term woman columnist, Sappho Smith - the pseudonym of Alexina Wildman. Smith deplored the women she termed, variously, the 'he-women', 'shrieking sisters' and 'revolting wives', who appeared as members of the Womanhood Suffrage League, shrieking platform women, or as women cyclists or swimmers. At her most vehemently anti-feminist, Smith proposed as understandable that a man would be provoked to physically abuse his wife, given how mercenary, shallow and false so many wives turned out to be. She objected to higher education for women, arguing that they were rarely financially better off than uneducated women. Further, women were spending the best years of their lives, she argued, slaving away over books when they should have been in the marriage market finding husbands. Smith adopted an unequivocal attitude to working women: the entry of women into the workplace would inevitably mean women stealing men's jobs.

According to Sappho Smith, no woman could possibly look dignified or ladylike on a bicycle. But, by far, the woman who insisted on wearing rational dress represented the most unforgivable departure from femininity:

The cycling woman - whom even the 'bus horses shy at as she jig-jags over the loose metal, with her skirts hanging like a couple of chaff-bags, and her body bent over the steering-gear as if she was in training for a hunchback...has at last encompassed us...Now that ladies' [cycling] clubs have started the situation is hopeless...Knickerbockers come next - though why, in these hard times, a woman should exhibit her legs for nothing when theatre-managers pay salaries for the very same thing, is a puzzle to...Sappho Smith.⁷⁸

Smith echoed fears that women were adopting masculine styles in a way that complemented the *fin-de-siècle* tendency of certain men to adopt feminine dress:

As feminine garb becomes more mannish, masculine raiment, it would seem, grows 'prettier', more elaborate, and more milliner-made. Witness the rustling silk-lined coats, the evidently tongs-curved hair, and the elaborate cravats of to-day.⁷⁹

Smith was unconvinced that women either wanted the franchise, or deserved it, since few would be capable of exercising a sensible or rational political choice. One of the feminist arguments of the time was that women, as victims of sexual and financial inequality in the marriage market, were often forced to marry to survive. In the face of such arguments, Smith leaped to the defence of men who, she argued, were the true sufferers, often deceived into marrying selfish, mercenary women. She labelled Judge Windeyer the 'divorce-Judge' for his judgments that were sympathetic to women.

⁷⁷ Edmund Fisher, 17 December 1895, p. 11.

⁷⁸ 23 February 1895, p. 8.

⁷⁹ 29 June 1895, p. 16.

All these views suggest that Sappho Smith was no defender of feminism. Interestingly though, while firmly believing that women belonged in the home, she did not publicly question her own role as a woman employee of the *Bulletin*. Yet, in her role as a journalist for a male-dominated publication, and in her confident assertion of her right to remain single, she was more complex than she appeared. She vehemently defended the right of an unmarried woman to assume the title 'Mrs' rather than 'Miss' in the interest of disguising her single status from men.

Like many of her colleagues, Smith also became a mouthpiece for the *Bulletin's* anti-British, anti-prudish stance. While no fan of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* when it was performed in Sydney, she produced a diatribe against Henry Arthur Jones, author of the English play, *The Masqueraders*:

At Sydney Lyceum *The Masqueraders* continues to set forth the limitations of the English four-act drama. An Australian audience can well bear its drama unlimited and French fashion, without any foolish fig-leaves; but so long as we import our plays from England it is vain to try and wriggle from the clutch of Mrs Grundy. Mrs Grundy rules Britannia, as Britannia rules the waves; and the British dramatist knows very well that whatever he does in the first three acts he must never omit to appease the respectable goddess in the fourth.⁸⁰

It is interesting that Smith distinguished between the Australian openness to new things and British prudishness. She continued:

...in the fourth act all loose characters must be thoroughly punished and the superiority of Sunday-school morality decisively established...Jones dare not exhibit to an English

audience the spectacle of a man going off to enjoy a comfortable future with another man's undivorced wife - no matter how good the character of the pair, how they have loved, what they have suffered, or what the villainy of the husband. That would be "immoral" ...Meanwhile, it is the woman's duty to discard the man who loves her, and whom she loves, and go and live with the brute of a husband whom she hates. To all which THE BULLETIN says - Bah!

The theatre, for which Smith was such an enthusiast, was another popular forum for the New Woman's entry onto the Australian cultural stage. Jones was also the author of *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, a play about a wife's adultery, performed in Australian theatres in 1895. Like the Wicked Woman books, the play generated a lot of discussion about the New Woman in the Australian press. The above passage is particularly notable for its assertion of Australian audiences' tolerance of such a radical departure - that is, a man living with the wife of another man - from social and sexual mores.

One thing apparent from a closer study of the *Bulletin* on the subject of the New Woman is that it was decidedly more tolerant of the New Woman fiction than it was toward the prospect of 'real' women wearing rational dress, smoking or riding bicycles. Even Sappho Smith was more tolerant of feminism when it manifested itself on the stage. As long as the New Woman was confined to the realm of fiction and fantasy, as the heroine of a novel or a play, she was not perceived to be much of a threat. The real danger lay in her relationship to 'real' women.

⁸⁰ 23 March 1895, p. 8.

IV. The *Dawn* and the New Woman

Alongside the often hostile and satirical representations of the New Woman in the mainstream Australian press, feminist publications put forward their own vision of the modern woman. When it began in 1888, the *Dawn* was the 'first Australian journal produced entirely by women which actively campaigned for women's rights'.⁸¹ In its first issue, it promised to give 'publicity to women's wrongs', 'fight their battles', assist to 'repair' evils and 'give advice'.⁸² Despite more than one attempt to curb its success, the *Dawn* easily outlasted other journals from the period, including Maybanke Wolstenholme's *the Woman's Voice* (1894-5) and Vida Goldstein's journal, *Woman's Sphere* (1900-5). The *Dawn*, which lasted until 1905, offers a useful starting point for examining how Australian feminists perceived the emergence and status of the New Woman.

The editor of the *Dawn*, the prominent feminist Louisa Lawson, did not baulk at addressing the most controversial aspects of the Woman Question. The *Dawn's* regular subjects included dress reform, prostitution, unwed mothers, domestic violence and the problems of marriage, women's right to own property and to custody of their children, as well as their right to access education and achieve economic independence. Lawson helped to establish the Dawn Club: A Social Reform Club for Women in 1889, a forum for teachers, journalists, office workers and nurses to discuss questions of 'life, work and reform'.⁸³ With Rose Scott, she also helped to establish the Womanhood Suffrage League in Sydney in 1891, and used the *Dawn* to actively support the women's suffrage campaign.

The *Dawn's* all-female staff recognised they belonged to an international community of feminists. As well as reporting on the activities of Australian women, the *Dawn* reported on American, English and European women's dress

⁸¹ Olive Lawson's introduction to *The First Voice of Australian Feminism: Excerpts from Louisa Lawson's The Dawn 1888-1895*, Simon Schuster/New Endeavour Press, Brookvale, 1990, p. 1.

⁸² May 1888, in Olive Lawson, *ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸³ Janette Joy Prichard, 'Louisa Lawson', *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, Barbara Caine (ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 446-8.

reform movements, and their legal, professional and educational advances. An article celebrating the first entry of a woman's name on the NSW medical register looked forward to the day when, as in America, Australian women would also join the legal profession:

America, as usual, has set the example in this, and there are now twenty-one law firms in the United States composed of husbands and wives, and about two hundred American women who practise law or manage legal publications.⁸⁴

Lawson was an admirer of the New Woman writer Olive Schreiner, and kept the *Dawn's* readers up-to-date on her work, along with the work of other well-known feminist writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman.⁸⁵

The *Dawn* also helped to construct feminist representations of the New Woman. One of its lead articles, published in October 1892, reprinted from the Boston *Woman's Journal*, was entitled 'The New Womanhood'.⁸⁶ This article, originally published in the *Woman's Journal* in February 1892,⁸⁷ anticipated by well over a year the *Woman's Herald* article that Michelle Elizabeth Tusan credits with naming the New Woman.⁸⁸ It is interesting that both articles referred to a similar feminist ideal of 'new womanhood'. The 1892 article reprinted in the *Dawn* was aimed at men as much as women. It declared that 'to-day the true man's ideal of a true woman is she who, at home and abroad, or wherever opportunity offers, does her woman's share of the great, sad, hungry world's work'.⁸⁹ It acknowledged that a 'new chivalry' would be needed to ensure the success of the 'new womanhood':

⁸⁴ February 1892. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁸⁵ For a discussion of how the *Dawn* shared the concerns of feminists like Gilman, see Docker, *Nervous Nineties*, *op. cit.*, ch. 1.

⁸⁶ 4 October 1892, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁷ Catharine Cole, 'The New Womanhood', *Woman's Journal: Boston*, 27 February 1892, p. 68.

⁸⁸ Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, 'Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de-Siecle', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1998, pp. 169-82.

⁸⁹ Cole, *op. cit.*

The new chivalry, extended to the new womanhood, comprises a respect for brains, for culture, for philanthropy, for pluck, no less than for beauty and innocence and helplessness. To-day, low indeed is the man whose hat is not off to Miss Fawcett, the senior wrangler of a great college; to Clara Barton, the merciful nurse of many battlefields; to Frances Willard, teaching millions of young men to be temperate and sober; to Josephine Butler, rescuing thousands of young girls from infamy.

Instead of claiming (like the men's press) that the New Woman would completely replace traditional Victorian womanhood, this article proposed a reworking of women's traditional roles to reflect their modernity. Like the later article in the *Woman's Herald*, it celebrated women's difference from men, and emphasised that the new woman's inherent femininity and domesticity were not in question. Rather, she would use her unique domestic skills both at home and abroad. It suggested that while women would always be respected as philanthropists, there was also scope for them to be respected for their 'brains' and 'pluck'.

This ideal of the modern woman was grounded in social purity feminism, and a far cry from the image, common in the mainstream press, of the sexually fast New Woman. The 'woman of to-day', the article continued, not only wears the ribbon of 'temperance' and 'social purity' upon her breast, but also the 'red ribbon of education'. It was time for the educated and intelligent women to enter the public sphere and take on more of the 'world's work'. The 'new [women] crusaders' would 'speak and act' for animals, for overworked children and exploited factory girls, open colleges for girls, and secure work opportunities for other women. These were the women who were accomplishing the 'frontiersman's work'. Any woman who was not allied with

the 'new crusaders' and 'apostles of the new womanhood' was deemed to be 'behind her century'.⁹⁰

The *Dawn* backed up this ideal of the new and modern woman in its own articles. It promoted a similar brand of social purity and temperance feminism, and argued for social intervention to end the exploitation of children and factory girls. The *Dawn* also argued in favour of women's right to apply their unique skills and abilities, not only as mothers and housewives, but also in carrying out the public work of the world. It celebrated women's difference from men, while also promoting the notion that they be entitled to equal legal and educational rights, and work opportunities. Another article it published in 1892 insisted the 'influence and the presence of women' should be felt everywhere, since the 'energies of a woman' were not intended to be spent 'only in making beds and dusting furniture':

nor are they meant to be dissipated in steam over a hot stove cooking meals. Women can do these things but they must have time and encouragement for intellectual efforts too, and they must have outlets for their opinions and their activities, for these are quite necessary and important to a world which contains at least as many women as men.⁹¹

An 1898 article pointed out that while man was only superior to woman in 'physical power', God had appointed men and women different spheres.⁹² The modern woman was man's 'companion and helpmate, not his rival'. Let her pursue the study of mathematics to develop her mind, and enter the professions if she were ambitious or intelligent, the article argued. However,

⁹⁰ Cole, *op. cit.*

⁹¹ February 1892. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁹² 'Education of Woman', 1 February 1898, p. 9.

the home would always be woman's 'proper place', and she should 'strive to become great as a woman, not as a man'.⁹³

Despite promoting the idea of the home as a woman's 'proper place', the editor of the *Dawn* understood perfectly well that marriage was far from ideal. Like most late-nineteenth-century Australian feminists, Lawson highlighted the problems endured by the wife and mother. The *Dawn* supported changes to the Divorce Acts and to the laws governing married women's rights to own property and have custody of their children. It campaigned against men who subjected their wives to physical violence, and offered a damning critique of male sexuality. In one article in 1890, advocating support for the Victorian Divorce Extension Bill, the *Dawn* described the fate of the Bill as a 'source of keen anxiety to many a miserable wife' who had the 'misfortune to be linked for life to a drunkard' and was forced to 'perpetuate his ignoble race'. It continued:

...if he [the husband] possesses enough command of his tottering limbs to bring him to his lawful wife's chamber, [he] may then collapse in abandoned beastliness upon the floor or conjugal couch if he reaches it, and proceed to make night hideous for her.⁹⁴

In such circumstances, women needed a 'nerve of iron' to 'endure nightly, this horrid ordeal' in the marriage bedroom - the 'chamber of horrors'.⁹⁵ In linking men's excessive drinking to their sexual abuse of their wives, and the creation of an 'ignoble race', this article reflected the commonly held belief in the hereditary dangers associated with alcoholism. It also reflected the common feminist belief that male sexuality was the cause of most social problems.

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ March 1890. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-4.

⁹⁵ March 1890. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

Despite such explicit attacks on marriage, as well as the support it expressed for unmarried mothers, the *Dawn* did not advocate 'free unions' between men and women. One argument it employed against 'free love' was that it would be detrimental to older women, who would be readily discarded by men.

Lawson's journal also promoted marriage as a fundamental pillar of society. An article in 1892 entitled 'Marriage Not a Failure' (presumably intended as a reply to Mona Caird), argued that marriage still formed the centre of the social system and was necessary for the survival of the race.⁹⁶ The necessity for divorce was described as evidence of a 'great crisis' being faced in society. The hope for the future of civilised society, therefore, depended on women's success in improving marriage.

The social purity feminism that predominated in the *Dawn*, and its intersection with evolutionary theory, help to explain the journal's ongoing support of the institutions of marriage and motherhood. Like American women, Australian women were aware they belonged to a 'new' country, and exploited this emotionally charged notion to their advantage - a notion inherent in the name, the *Dawn*. The *Dawn* reminded Australian women of the inextricable link between their roles as mothers and as racial guardians:

If you would help to lift the burden of sin and suffering from humanity and lead them up in the heights of peace and joy, destroy man's dominance of your mind and person. Keep your thoughts and body pure for the use of the sacred functions of motherhood, for which use alone these functions were given; and devote your surplus strength to the elevation of womanhood to this standard. Follow man no longer as his slave; step forward as his peer; advance, and if he does not keep pace, be his leader in progress.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ August 1892. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, op. cit., pp. 121-3

⁹⁷ July 1892. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, op. cit., p. 120.

Louisa Lawson's journal promoted the need for happy and physically and emotionally healthy mothers as essential to the propagation of a healthy race. Marriage could not be deemed a failure when, like motherhood, it was central to the survival of the race. Certainly, though, there was room for improvement. For the *Dawn*, the ideal marriage of the future would see women enjoy the same social and economic rights as men, and possessing self-respect. If women had more dignity and liberty, the race, generally, would be 'nobler' and 'stronger'.⁹⁸ In taking this line, the *Dawn* tended to endorse the traditional idea that women would have sex primarily for reproductive purposes. It also encouraged married women to maintain their bodily purity and set the example of sexual restraint for their husbands. Women should dispense with any behaviour that did a disservice to the race:

A woman will tell lies to shield her husband, or perhaps to shield her own pride. If she is pinched or bruised, or injured, if things are broken in a fit of temper, she will swear it was not he, it was the result of accident purely. If he insults her by boasting of his connection with other women, she does not resent it, if he squanders the money, she works the later and the harder to replace it, if he drinks she hides the fact and shelters him with lies and bears him dipsomaniac children. In time she does not own her own body or mind, and her only morality is to be faithful to the marriage contract.⁹⁹

The *Dawn's* vision of new and modern womanhood remained grounded in a traditional notion of women as moral, spiritual and racial/hereditary guardians. As wives and, even more importantly, as mothers, women held an 'exalted' position in society.¹⁰⁰ The *Dawn* generally supported a Lamarckian

⁹⁸ July 1890. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, op. cit., p. 67.

⁹⁹ July 1890. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁰⁰ 'A National Council of Mothers', 1 February 1897, p. 15.

view of evolutionary processes: that is, the belief that environmental conditions were responsible for producing physical and hereditary changes. As Carol Bacchi demonstrates, many suffragists and social reformers drew on contemporary eugenic discourses to argue that improvements to the environment in which women lived and worked would lead to improvements in the quality of the race.¹⁰¹ This enabled feminists to argue against forms of dress (eg. corsets) that were detrimental to women's health, and promote a range of social interventions that could improve women's mental and physical health. The *Dawn's* attitude to Aboriginal people, whom it described as a 'dying race', also suggests an acceptance of the Darwinist school of eugenics, the theory of selective breeding. However, the *Dawn* was still one of the more sympathetic feminist journals toward the plight of Aboriginal women, and it emphasised the need for white women to recognise the 'terrible conditions' under which Aboriginal wives and mothers lived.¹⁰²

The *Dawn* differed in some significant ways from other feminist periodicals from the period. In the first place, it adopted a more detailed approach to women's domestic lives than periodicals like the *Woman's Voice*. Lawson recognised domestic labour as *labour*, and was concerned with providing practical household and budget advice for women, as much as she was concerned with providing information about educational and work opportunities. Much more so than the *Woman's Voice*, the *Dawn* also displayed an interest in the lives of lower-class women, and acknowledged women's right to support themselves financially and enter the workforce. The *Dawn* emphasised the need for working women to form trade unions in order to improve their pay and working conditions. It also advocated the need for women inspectors in factories so that the truth could finally be known about the 'conditions imposed on the labour of girls and women'.¹⁰³ In another article,

¹⁰¹ Carol Bacchi, 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes towards Women, 1870-1920', *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*, Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed), Fontana/Collins, Melbourne, 1980, ch. 5.

¹⁰² 'A Word for the Blacks', 1 November 1897.

¹⁰³ February 1892. Reprinted in Olive Lawson, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

it advised working girls and the women 'advancing in years' to protect themselves financially by investing in life insurance.¹⁰⁴ This last article reveals another of the *Dawn's* concerns - the situation of middle-aged women. While the popular press enjoyed caricaturing the old bespectacled woman, Lawson's journal celebrated her.

The *Dawn* interpreted, and reinterpreted, the New Woman in light of its own vision of ideal womanhood, and also in light of caricatures in the popular press. It protested against the dominant image of the New Woman as a masculine, smoking, trousers-wearing woman, determined to abandon her family and compete with men for their jobs. A poem, published in 1898, praised the New Woman as a feminist icon:

The New Woman

She does not 'languish in her bower'
Or squander all the golden day
In fashioning a gaudy flower
Upon a worsted spray;
Nor is she quite content to wait
Behind her rose-wreathed lattice pane
Until beside her father's gate
The gallant prince draws rein.

The brave 'New Woman' scorns to sigh,
And count it such a grievous thing
That year on year should hurry by
And no gay suitor bring;
In labor's ranks she takes her place,
With skilful hands and cultured mind;
Not always foremost in the race,

¹⁰⁴ 'Women and Life Insurance', 1 December 1896, p. 27.

But never far behind.

And not less lightly fall her feet
Because they tread the busy ways;
She is no whit less fair and sweet
Than maids of olden days,
Who, gowned in samite and brocade,
Looked charming in their dainty guise,
But dwelt like violets in the shade,
With shy, half opened eyes.
Of life she takes a clearer view,
And through the press serenely moves,
Unfettered, free; with judgement true
Avoiding narrow grooves,
She reasons and she understands;
And sometimes 'tis her joy and crown
To lift with strong yet tender hands
The burdens men lay down.¹⁰⁵

This 'skilful' and 'cultured' New Woman deserved to take her place in the workforce. She was not completely dependent on marriage for her existence. Rather, she was reasonable, brave, strong, independent and modern, and still no 'less fair and sweet/Than maids of olden days'. In other words, she remained as much a 'womanly woman' as ever.

Apart from the occasional reference, the *Dawn* rarely employed the term 'New Woman' to describe its vision of ideal womanhood. In a lead article of April 1897, it attacked the version of the New Woman who was constantly 'vilified and held up to derision' in the popular press.¹⁰⁶ This popular image was sustained, it argued, by the appearance of the occasional eccentric 'crank' who

¹⁰⁵ E. Mathewson, 1 January 1898, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Coming Woman', 1 April 1897, p. 13.

was taken to be representative of all women who were in favour of their rights. Unlike the 'crank', the real 'new woman', the *Dawn* continued, had existed since the writing of the bible. She was 'quiet and refined, well-read and evenly balanced', wanted to 'purify the moral and physical world', and raise men to her own level. It is significant that, by the end of the article, the *Dawn* had replaced the term 'new woman' with 'coming woman'.

The 'coming woman' referred to in the *Dawn* was the middle-aged mother, fighting for the cause of improving her sons and husband. Her daughter was the 'strong, brave and resolute' 'colonial', or Australian, girl - the mother-to-be.¹⁰⁷ The 'colonial girl' and the 'coming woman' were both heavily imbricated in the discourses of imperialism, nationalism and progressivism. In one of its lead articles, the *Dawn* asserted that the 'moulding of the nation lies in the hands of our women'.¹⁰⁸ As Cecily Devereux points out, Louisa Lawson produced:

an image of the feminist that fundamentally transformed the transgressive New Woman into an icon of maternal imperialism. This "new" woman is the figure that came to be known as "the mother of the race". She was not only to be a biological mother, not to be limited to her own private, domestic sphere, but was to exercise her maternal skills upon the race at large. She demanded education, the vote, and a hand in the running of nation and empire, not for the New Woman's putatively self-serving ends, but for the good of "the race".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ 'The Colonial Girl', 1 June 1894, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Cecily Devereux, 'New Woman, New World: Maternal Feminism and the New Imperialism in White Settler Colonies', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 22, issue 2, 1999, pp. 175-184.

In this way, the *Dawn* challenged the dominant discursive constructions of the anti-domestic New Woman, while also reasserting feminist ownership of this symbol. While the 'coming woman' and the New Woman were not necessarily one and the same, the former preserved the New Woman's main attributes of strength, intelligence, and courage. The 'coming woman' was physically strong and healthy, compared with the weak and nervous woman of the past. Hence, Lawson's journal criticised the injurious effects of the corset¹¹⁰ and encouraged women to embrace the 'modern wonder', the bicycle, as an appropriate form of exercise.¹¹¹ It emphasised, however, that women cyclists did not need to sacrifice their femininity. A lead article explained that, in view of the improvements to the bicycle, there was no reason why women cyclists could not continue wearing that 'distinctively feminine garment', the skirt.¹¹² The *Dawn* also recommended tennis - 'not however, in tight stays and tight boots' - and swimming for women.¹¹³ It drew the line, though, at girls attempting to emulate their brothers on the cricket field.

Despite its modern ideal of womanhood, the *Dawn* pronounced in 1899 that the New Woman was a 'myth' perpetuated by male journalists, and one that simply would not die.¹¹⁴ It declared that the New Woman had emerged as one of the favourite 'stock-butts for the funny man's witticisms':

It should be easy to recognise her, with her hard face, big feet, spectacles, and the 'gingham', which she flourishes as she talks, and bangs over the heads of men when they do not agree with her. Although unsexed, she has a husband and a

¹¹⁰ 'Spurious Women', July 1889. Quoted in Sharyn Pearce, 'From Bush Battler to City Editor: Louisa Lawson and the *Dawn*', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 54/55, 1997, p. 13. For other accounts of the *Dawn*'s feminism, including its representations of the New Woman, see again Russell, *op. cit.*, and Docker, *Nervous Nineties*, *op. cit.*, esp. ch. 1 and ch. 2. Also see Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-80.

¹¹¹ 'Learning to Ride the Bicycle', 1 October 1896.

¹¹² 'Bicycle Clothes up to date', 1 November 1896, p. 18.

¹¹³ 'Girls and Exercise', 1 January 1898, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ 1 May 1899, p. 7. Also quoted in Docker, *Nervous Nineties*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

numerous family, which she systematically neglects, particularly the baby.

'Do the men who write so glibly about her really believe in her existence?' the *Dawn* demanded to know. 'Has anyone ever seen her?' Let these 'enemies' of reform rave, the article concluded. Eventually, they would wake up one morning to find their vocation gone, and a 'band of happy, contented wives and mothers with metaphorical broom and mop' giving Parliament House a badly needed spring clean. Thus, the *Dawn* reiterated the idea of the modern woman - still a wife and mother - maintaining her essential femininity, happily engaged in national housekeeping.

What happened between 1892 and 1899 to cause the *Dawn* to reject the concept of the 'New Woman'? Cynicism about the New Woman's relationship to real women was not new and, in fact, was a common refrain among journalists from the moment of her inception. However, it is difficult to believe that Lawson herself actually discounted the New Woman's existence. Indeed, the term could be used to describe this self-educated, fiercely independent and ambitious woman. It would certainly seem that after male journalists began widely using the term 'New Woman', Australian feminists, like English feminists, became more conscious of distancing themselves from the anti-feminist caricatures. Nevertheless, feminists like Louisa Lawson still (re)presented their own ideal of the new and modern woman, whether in the form of the 'coming woman', or simply in terms of a woman who was determined to vote, ride a bicycle and work for a living.

V. The *Woman's Voice* and the New Woman

Another impressive Sydney feminist, Maybanke Wolstenholme (nee Selfe, later Maybanke Anderson) was the editor of the short-lived feminist periodical the *Woman's Voice*. This publication was targeted at the modern 'thinking woman'. It promised to be 'democratic but not revolutionary, womanly but not weak,

fearless without effrontery, liberal without license'.¹¹⁵ Contributions from readers were welcomed, provided their subjects were 'treated with moderation and in a spirit of calm inquiry'.¹¹⁶ Wolstenholme was President of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales throughout her editorship of the *Woman's Voice* and, like Louisa Lawson, used the journal to promote the suffrage campaign. The fact that the existence of the *Woman's Voice* (August 1894-5) coincided with the height of the New Woman movement makes it an important journal to consider in a study of Australian feminist responses to this movement.¹¹⁷

More so than the *Dawn*, the *Woman's Voice* cultivated an audience that was largely sympathetic to the concerns of the middle-class New Woman. Wolstenholme tried to ensure that her readers at least understood the position of their lower-class sisters. Hence, she published a pithy story told in the first person by a working-class mother who commits infanticide to spare her child a life of poverty.¹¹⁸ Like the *Dawn*, the *Woman's Voice* also dealt with many subjects that affected women of all classes, such as the need for reforms to the divorce laws, suffrage, the situation of single women, and women's right to earn their own living. For the most part, however, this journal focused on issues of importance to its middle-class readership. In its columns, for example, the thinking woman could find information about women medical students studying at Edinburgh University. She could also find reviews of the latest New Woman novels, with their profoundly middle-class heroines.

The *Woman's Voice's* readers were also assumed to be readers of the modern woman's novel. In the *Woman's Voice*, the New Woman novels were referred to in the context of a wider liberal feminist project of reform. In October 1894, it celebrated the achievements of the modern woman novelist:

¹¹⁵ 9 August 1894, p. ii.

¹¹⁶ Editor's note, 22 September 1894, p. 50.

¹¹⁷ For other discussions of the feminism expressed in the *Woman's Voice*, including issues surrounding the New Woman, see Farley Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-111 and Susan Sheridan, 'The *Woman's Voice* on sexuality', in Magarey et al, *Debutante Nation*, *op. cit.*, ch. 10.

For many years women have written novels in which women were depicted, but the women in woman's novels were until quite lately mere lay figures on which to hang stories of romantic love or conjugal felicity. The woman novelist has at last lifted the veil which hid the mind and heart of her fellow-women from herself and from the world, and the reader of the modern woman's novel is able to see the unrest, the bitter revolt of the woman who thinks against the laws and customs - the conditions - that fetter the growth of her individuality...We owe, as women, an eternal debt of gratitude to Olive Schreiner, and to the women who have taken up her parable and continued it.¹¹⁹

It is notable that while the *Bulletin's* Creeve Roe emphasised the sexual wickedness of the New Woman fiction, the *Woman's Voice* concentrated on its success in having 'lifted the veil' on women's hearts and minds. For the *Woman's Voice*, such novels were not 'wicked', but, rather, represented the real concerns of women, and made public some of the most private forms of women's suffering. It described Sarah Grand as 'one of the most valuable recruits' to the cause of women.¹²⁰ In another article, it touted Grand as responsible for demanding 'an equal standard of morality for the sexes' and described Iota's *A Yellow Aster* as a book against 'enforced motherhood'.¹²¹ The concerns raised by both these writers were echoed in the *Woman's Voice*. Interestingly, one of the least celebratory accounts of the New Woman fiction was a review of Emma Frances Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman*, which presented the story of a love affair between an upper-class heroine and a farm labourer. The reviewer in the *Woman's Voice* proved unsympathetic to the situation of Jessamine Halliday, who eventually ends up unhappily married to a syphilitic nobleman. The reviewer felt compelled to point out that 'the average nobleman

¹¹⁸ 17 November 1894, p. 111.

¹¹⁹ 6 October 1894, p. 63.

¹²⁰ 28 August 1894, p. 24.

is usually very healthy'.¹²² Brooke's 'revolt' against the 'aristocracy in particular' apparently did not sit well with the middle-class readers of the *Woman's Voice*.

While the *Woman's Voice* questioned the New Woman's very 'newness', it was for quite different reasons than the *Bulletin*. In the *Woman's Voice*, the New Woman was not the nagging 'old' woman in disguise or a participant in a fad. Rather, she represented the culmination of years of feminist protest. Hence, gratitude was not only owing to Schreiner and the women writers of the 1890s, but also to the women before them who helped pave the way for their arrival. The *Woman's Voice* praised George Eliot, as well as Mary Wollstonecraft - the 'founder of the school':

there is not one claim made by the modern woman in the woman's novel which was not put into words by Mary Wollstonecraft. In return for her brave outspokenness she lived exiled or estranged, and died in poverty. The women who take up her thoughts and theories, and, after pinning them together with a few fancies, use them to dress the characters in a modern novel, become famous, earn thousands, and live in luxury.¹²³

The *Woman's Voice* proposed that, as 'the woman's century dawns', the time had truly come for women to succeed in achieving the reforms they had long worked towards.¹²⁴ Like the *Dawn*, it encouraged Australian women to exercise by riding bicycles and keep pace with progress. In an 1895 article, it reported the feats of E. A. Maddock, the first woman to ride from Sydney to Melbourne

¹²¹ 22 September 1894, p. 51.

¹²² 'New Books', 20 October 1894, p. 83.

¹²³ 6 October 1894, p. 63.

¹²⁴ *Woman's Voice*, 17 November 1894, p. 98.

(other than tandem) and captain of the Sydney Ladies' Bicycle Club.¹²⁵ According to the *Woman's Voice*, woman, 'whether she be a grand New Woman, or a dear old woman, likes to share the pleasures as well as the toils of men.'¹²⁶ Not only had she picked up the tennis racket, invaded the cricket field and the golf links, but she was now 'mounting the bicycle'. The *Woman's Voice* counteracted the concern that bicycle riding could be detrimental to women's reproductive health by pointing out that too much of anything could be unhealthy. Maddock was quoted as saying she initially perceived a woman on a bicycle as 'unfeminine', until she rode one herself. She now strongly advocated cycling as exercise for women and emphasised the 'feeling of independence' that it imparted. Furthermore, Maddock's dress demonstrated, according to the *Woman's Voice*, that it was 'not only possible but easy' to cycle in a skirt: 'a bifurcated garment is by no means a necessity'. In other words, it was still possible to remain a womanly woman whilst on a bicycle. Only a few months later, however, the *Woman's Voice* was forced to concede that women in Sydney and Melbourne were not 'much in evidence as bicyclists yet'.¹²⁷ And in Brisbane, there were reportedly none.

The *Woman's Voice* addressed the most controversial debates about sexuality that were associated with the New Woman. Susan Sheridan convincingly argues that the concepts of sexuality represented in this journal constituted a 'vanguard position within Australian feminist thinking of the period'.¹²⁸ She explores in detail its representation of sexual subjects: prostitution both within the marriage bed and outside it, enforced motherhood, sex education for girls, free love, and venereal disease. Even today, the honesty with which the *Woman's Voice* addressed questions of sexuality is startling. Like Sarah Grand, Wolstenholme focused on male sexuality as the cause of social problems such

¹²⁵ 6 April 1895, p. 206. The trip to Melbourne in 1894 lasted nine days. In addition, she completed a 500-kilometre trip to Bega in 1893 and a 2,600-kilometre return trip to Brisbane in 1895. See the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, vol. 3, 6th edn, Australian Geographic Pty Ltd, Terrey Hills, NSW, 1996, p. 962.

¹²⁶ 6 April 1895, p. 206.

¹²⁷ 5 October 1895, p. 361.

¹²⁸ See Sheridan, 'The *Woman's Voice* on sexuality', op. cit., p. 115.

as the 'sorrowful sisterhood' of the streets, as well as the cause of public health problems like venereal disease, and the poor health endured by women forced to have numerous children.¹²⁹ Men were also shown to be responsible for the sexual double standard: readers of the *Woman's Voice* were reminded of the grim fact that many apparently well 'respected' married men had an 'illegitimate' wife and children in addition to their 'legitimate' family.¹³⁰

The *Woman's Voice* tended to promote a brand of social purity feminism that, like the feminism of the *Dawn*, generally failed to challenge the traditional image of women as sexually passive. It focused on women's right to refuse unwanted intercourse and unwanted motherhood. Indeed, it was the 'demand for women's sexual autonomy', or 'bodily integrity' that, according to Sheridan, was distinctively feminist about the *Woman's Voice*.¹³¹ An article spanning three issues, 'A Vital Question', reprinted from the Boston journal *Arena*, explored the subject of prostitution within marriage in frank detail.¹³² *Arena's* male editor, B. O. Flower wrote the article - a fact that should not be overlooked.¹³³ Given that women were not supposed to acknowledge sexual issues, it was wise of Wolstenholme to rely on a male voice to put forward some of the journal's most contentious subject matter. Flower used the word 'rape' to describe situations in which women found themselves obliged to have sex with men - whether it be with their husbands or employers.¹³⁴ Drawing on eugenic discourses, he also highlighted the connection between the physical and moral degradation of women in marriage, and hereditary problems that would lead to the breakdown of civilisation. The lustful husband, he argued, was bound to produce 'children of lust' who would, in turn, be unable to curb their own sexual desires.

¹²⁹ 1 December 1894, p. 110.

¹³⁰ 1 December 1894, p. 110.

¹³¹ Sheridan, 'The *Woman's Voice* on sexuality', op. cit., p. 124.

¹³² The first part was published on 7 September 1895, p. 337-8.

¹³³ 'Prostitution within the Marriage Bond, *Arena*, 13, 1895, pp. 59-73. The information about *Arena* comes from Sheridan, 'The *Woman's Voice* on sexuality', op. cit., p. 120 and fn 24. Sheridan offers a detailed discussion of this particular article.

¹³⁴ 'A Vital Question', 7 September 1895, p. 337.

Articles like these emphasised that women's physical and mental health was essential for a healthy society and race, and that men's sexual abstinence was the only way to protect their wives' health. The *Woman's Voice* argued that it was time to leave behind 'prudery' when it came to sexual matters, and acknowledge that compulsory motherhood was not in the interests of a noble race.¹³⁵ It employed a similar argument to justify the need for young girls to be educated about sexuality, physiology and the spread of venereal disease. Motherhood, according to the *Woman's Voice*, was women's 'crowning glory'.¹³⁶ It published an article on 9 August 1894 that asserted the 'health of the race-mothers' was a matter of 'national import'.¹³⁷ The journal elevated the mother's role as an educator, responsible for teaching her son to control his 'animal nature' and showing him that the 'degradation of women would be his own degradation'.¹³⁸ Once again, there are clear similarities between the *Dawn* and the *Woman's Voice* in the application of contemporary eugenic theories to justify feminist arguments.

However, while generally reproducing the image of women as sexually pure and passionless, the *Woman's Voice* did occasionally allude to women's experience of sexual desire by suggesting that women might have sex, not purely for reproductive purposes, but also for love.¹³⁹ The lead article of 17 November 1894 began by citing the case brought before the Victorian Supreme Court of whether children whose parents were not married could inherit their grandfather's property.¹⁴⁰ The article briefly outlined the argument for free love, by giving voice to the young girl who wondered why it would be necessary to be bound by 'legal tie' to the man she loved. It also gave voice to the 'experienced mother' who pointed out, in response, the 'possibility of desertion when the charms of youth are gone', and the protective benefits for women of a legal union. The article then went on to state two 'facts':

¹³⁵ 29 June 1895, p. 275.

¹³⁶ 29 June 1895, p. 275.

¹³⁷ 9 August 1894, p. 4.

¹³⁸ 6 October 1894, p. 66.

¹³⁹ See again, Sheridan, 'The *Woman's Voice* on sexuality', op. cit., p. 122.

(1) that the people whose marriage is founded on true affection and suitability will live together to the end without any law, and that therefore to those united in heart and mind the legal tie is valueless; and (2) that those whose marriage is not founded on true affection, and who are not therefore really united in heart and mind, are often forced by law, and therefore by custom, to drag out an unhappy life together, when each one might be more happy if free.¹⁴¹

It proposed that the 'marriage system' presented society with a problem that needed a solution. More women were growing 'less disposed to look upon marriage as an easy method of earning a living', and this was not surprising when married women faced a 'dozen disabilities' including 'enforced maternity', loss of 'independent action' and 'income' and 'drudging house-work'. Careful not to overstep the mark, however, the article concluded by assuring readers there would be 'no violent revolt of the daughters'. Rather, there would be a 'gradual alteration' of the marriage customs and a 'definite change in the laws relating to marriage'. In this way, the article briefly picked up the sensationalist rhetoric commonly associated with the New Woman in the popular press, only to then distance itself from such a 'violent revolt'.¹⁴²

Despite the editor's fairly cautious approach to the thorny free love issue, the article prompted accusations from readers that the *Woman's Voice* was proposing the same radical and unhelpful views expressed by that recalcitrant suffragist, Eliza Ashton. The article was 'injudicious', according to one correspondent, because it was likely to 'offend the prejudices of a very large and influential section of society' at a time when 'much diplomacy' was required if women were to win the franchise.¹⁴³ Another correspondent suggested the introduction of 'free love' was no solution to the present social

¹⁴⁰ 17 November 1894, pp. 97-8.

¹⁴¹ 17 November, 1894, p. 98.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

problems associated with marriage.¹⁴⁴ Not all correspondents opposed the article. One wrote in to thank the journal for addressing a question which 'for a long time has been waiting for women', adding that every woman in Australia must have witnessed the 'moral and physical degradation' that resulted from the 'misery of ill-assorted marriages'.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the number of disapproving comments on the subject prompted the editor to follow up with a lead article in the issue of 1 December, in which she described as 'completely unwarranted' accusations that the *Woman's Voice* advocated 'libertinism' or 'free love'.¹⁴⁶ In another politically astute subversion of the sensationalist rhetoric being levelled against feminists, Wolstenholme criticised the anti-feminists who began to 'shriek' the moment one tried 'only to speak plainly of wrongs' in marriage: these people were quick to brand any attempt to discuss or reform the marriage customs and laws as advocating 'free love'. Looking at society with 'calm eyes', she proposed, it was possible to see the many men and women who despised marriage, the 'miserable record of the divorce court', and the girls who were brought up to look to marriage as the 'goal' of their 'ambition'. It was also possible to see the ten years of books 'from Olive Schreiner to Ella Dixon' that set forth the 'utter uselessness of the legal tie' unless it was a tie made by 'the strong, higher nature which is above all law'.¹⁴⁷

The *Woman's Voice* was another feminist journal that proved increasingly wary of employing the term 'New Woman' after it was appropriated by anti-feminists and caricaturists. In a letter in May 1895, titled the 'New Woman', a contributor, known only as E. C. T., claimed to see no 'growth of the specimen which comic papers' so 'graphically picture and describe'.¹⁴⁸ The woman coming most prominently before the public of late, E. C. T. continued, 'was mostly a higher development of the sex.'

¹⁴³ 15 December 1894, p. 181.

¹⁴⁴ 1 December 1894, p. 118.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ 1 December 1894, pp. 109-10.

¹⁴⁷ 1 December 1894, p. 110.

¹⁴⁸ 18 May 1895, p. 244.

Like Lawson, Wolstenholme presented a positive feminist vision of the New Woman designed to counteract the caricatures that appeared in the popular press. A report from the Womanhood Suffrage League, included in the *Woman's Voice*, quoted its own editor as saying it was time for the abolition of 'sex-dominance'.¹⁴⁹ At the same meeting, another member of the League, Alice Thompson, stressed the importance of suffragists remaining 'womanly in the highest and best sense', since they 'had no desire to turn the world upside down nor convert women into men'. In the *Woman's Voice*, these two feminist views were not considered to be in opposition. Rather, they complemented each other. Competitions on the subject of 'True Womanliness' existed alongside competitions for the best suggestion for 'Rational Dress for women'. The winning essay on the subject of 'True Womanliness' promoted the idea of an intelligent, well-read, educated, independent and self-reliant woman.¹⁵⁰ The home was 'undoubtedly the first, the true place for her'. If she were to marry, she would be an intellectual 'companion' for her husband. She would also educate her children and contribute to the 'moulding of the race' - in this lay her 'power'. Marriage, however, was not the only option for this modern and womanly woman. If necessary, she would be well equipped to go out into the world, without being a burden on anyone. Importantly, she would always 'remain womanly, gentle, and refined in thought, manner, and voice'.¹⁵¹ Like Lawson, Wolstenholme promoted an ideal of the modern, educated and political woman whose femininity, or 'womanliness', was not in doubt.

¹⁴⁹ 17 November 1894, p. 101.

¹⁵⁰ 'True Womanliness', 12 January 1895, p. 153.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

Chapter Two

The Australian Girl and the New Woman: Fiction and Feisty Heroines

[I]t is only the bush-reared girl - at home with horse, gun, and stock-whip, able to bake the family bread, make her own dresses, take her brother's or father's place out of doors in an emergency, while at the same time competent to grace a drawing-room and show herself conversant with the poets - who can rightfully lay claim to be more typically Australia's than any other country's daughter.

Miles Franklin, *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn* (1909)¹

I. The Australian Girl and the New Woman

Independent, assertive and feminist female subjects appeared with increasing frequency in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Australian novels. In constructing their heroines, numerous writers, many of whom were women, drew on the discourses associated with well-known feminist types like the New Woman and the Australian Girl. In exploring the relationship between these figures, much is revealed about how women writers viewed the role of Australian women in a new nation, as well as their role in an international feminist movement. It also becomes apparent that the New Woman sometimes assumed slightly different discursive forms in the Australian context.

Early in the nineteenth century, the Australian-born girl, known variously as the 'colonial girl' and the 'currency lass', was often seen in an unfavourable

¹ Introduced by Jill Roe, Virago, London, 1986, p. 76.

light when compared with the morally, physically and intellectually superior English lady. In 1827, the surgeon Peter Cunningham described the 'currencies' as physically unattractive - since they typically lost their teeth early - and as not appearing to 'class chastity as the *very first* of virtues'.² The latter accusation was a damning one in the context of rigid nineteenth-century sexual mores relating to women and purity. The colonial girl's convict origins, along with her harsh colonial environment, lent a negative tone to this figure.

Nevertheless, more favourable renderings of the Australian Girl emerged as the century progressed. Writers like Catherine Helen Spence presented colonial girls who, while not necessarily as polished as their English sisters, boasted a number of unique and impressive attributes. Spence's first novel *Clara Morison* (1854) contains one of the earliest positive representations of the Australian Girl in the character of Minnie Hodges - a 'country girl' who firmly believes 'the bush is the most delightful place in the world'.³ The reader is assured that, despite her having freckles and red hands, 'nobody could say there was anything vulgar in Minnie's appearance'.⁴ Minnie's good heartedness and lack of pretension are favourably contrasted with the insincerity and arrogance of the English 'lady', Miss Withering. In Spence's 1865 novel *Mr Hogarth's Will*, it is observed that, although the Australian or, rather, the Adelaide girls are 'not so formidable in the array of their accomplishments and acquirements as the modern English young lady', they are nevertheless 'frank, agreeable', 'not ignorant of domestic matters', and have 'no apparent horror of the bush'.⁵

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Australian Girl appeared with increasing frequency in Australian fiction, much of which was written by women. There was a growing awareness of the Australian Girl as a national

² Peter Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, Henry Colburn, London, 1827, vol. II, pp. 48-50. Reprinted in *The World Moves Slowly: A Documentary History of Australian Women*, Beverly Kingston (ed), Cassell, Stanmore, NSW, 1977, p. 14.

³ Catherine Helen Spence, *Clara Morison*, introduced by Susan Eade, Seal Books/Rigby, Adelaide, 1971, p. 85.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 88.

type, mainly in response to burgeoning national sentiment in the lead-up to Federation. Rosa Praed's *Policy and Passion: A Novel of Australian Life* (1881) depicts a heroine, Honoria Longleat, who represents the transition from the 'colonial' to the 'Australian' woman. Honoria, a 'New-World product', displays a boldness and 'frankness' that cause some to perceive her as 'not womanly'.⁶ She is unsure whether to embrace her national identity, and baulks at being described as 'colonial', since to be colonial is 'to talk Australian slang; to be badly dressed, vulgar, everything that is abominable'.⁷ However, Honoria is also celebrated for the very things that make her Australian, such as her courage and independence. She is a fearless horse rider - 'poised like an Amazon upon her saddle' - and an equally fearless bush girl.⁸ She saves a man's life by sucking snake poison from his arm: 'There was small danger in the act, yet it was one at which most young ladies would have hesitated'.⁹ Honoria displays the Australian Girl's complex mix of 'boldness' and 'innocence'.¹⁰ In the sense that she 'belongs to a new type', and rejects a marriage proposal because she fears marriage will mean no more 'new sensations', Honoria can also be considered an early version of the New Woman.¹¹ However, her rebellious independence does not extend to accepting the offer to try a cigarette: she refuses, saying 'we have not yet learned to imitate' English women in that respect.¹² Praed demonstrates that the modern Australian Girl still had to be more defensive than English women of her claims to true gentility.

There was growing confidence in the capacity of the Australian Girl to compete with and even outshine her English sister. She was increasingly celebrated for possessing intelligence and common sense, and lacking the affectation of British

⁵ Catherine Helen Spence, *Mr Hogarth's Will*, introduced by Helen Thomson, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, p. 301.

⁶ Mrs Campbell Praed, *Policy and Passion: A Novel of Australian Life*, Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1881, pp. 66-7.

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 153-4.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 191.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 201.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 67.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 166 and p. 85.

women. The heroine of Rita's novel *Sheba: A Study of Girlhood* (1889) represents the typical Australian Girl as a superior type altogether:

"Sheba is not a tom-boy', said Mr Saxton; "she is a perfectly natural specimen of girlhood. And she is very clever too. I wish there were more girls like her. They are too artificial and too much hampered by conventionality in the old country. Sheba is as different from the typical English girl, as light from darkness."¹³

Throughout the 1890s, the term 'Australian Girl' was virtually synonymous with the 'Bush Girl'. As the passage at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the Bush Girl was multifaceted: she was as adept at handling a stock-whip or gun as she was at baking bread or discussing poetry. She tended to be an enthusiastic and vigorous horse rider, and, when necessary, was capable of stepping in to take her 'brother's or father's place out of doors'. Hence, as a child/young girl, the Bush Girl often attracted the label 'tomboy'.

It is now something of a truism to point out the significance of the bush in national mythologies of the 1890s and its role in late-nineteenth-century definitions of an Australian 'type'. Despite increasing urbanisation, the bush was seen as the most distinctively Australian environment. Cultural historians have explored the way periodicals like the *Bulletin* elevated the bush in the representation of Australia's national identity, constructing it as the home of profoundly masculine characters such as the independent, hardy, man of action - the Coming Man - and the smoking, gambling, nomadic and even sexually 'libertarian' Lone Hand.¹⁴ As Richard White comments, women were 'generally

¹² *ibid.*, p. 161.

¹³ Rita (Mrs Desmond Humphreys), *Sheba: A Study of Girlhood*, in three volumes, facsimile edition, F. V. White and Co, London, 1889. Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1976, vol. 1, p. 158.

¹⁴ See, for example, Marilyn Lake, 'The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the masculinist context', *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 1.

excluded from the image of the Australian “type”.¹⁵ The national values associated with the rural, nomadic and anti-authoritarian bushman were established in opposition to women’s domestic values.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Australian Girl participated more successfully than most other female types in the predominantly masculine Australian legend. Indeed, much of the Australian Girl’s cultural power lay in her ability to move easily between the feminine domestic sphere and the masculine public sphere, defined in terms of the socio-cultural terrain of the bush. Admired for her competence both at home and in the bush, along with her hardiness, adaptability, and strength of character, the Bush Girl could be celebrated as a feminine version of the idealised Australian Bushman.

As with the Bushman and the Coming Man, representations of the Australian Girl were heavily imbricated in imperial, racial and class ideologies. Turn-of-the-century Australia proved receptive to the evolutionary and eugenics theories being used to justify the new imperialism. Confidence in the new Australian type stemmed from a popular belief in Australia’s need to continue protecting its racial purity, and perpetuate the relentless campaign of discrimination against Aboriginal and other non-white peoples. As a younger version of the Coming Woman (the mother of the coming race), the Australian Girl was integral to the continuation of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, the intention underpinning the White Australia policy.

In her masters thesis *The New Woman and the Australian Girl: Cultural Narratives of Identity 1885-1915*, Leonie Prime¹⁷ cites Rosa Praed’s article ‘A Daughter of Greater Britain’, in which the Australian Girl is favourably contrasted with another bush inhabitant, the ‘[d]ispossessed’ ‘half-caste girl’, a ‘resigned hybrid

¹⁵ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1981, p. 83.

¹⁶ See again, Lake, op. cit.

¹⁷ Leonie N. Prime, *The New Woman and the Australian Girl: Cultural Narratives of Identity 1885-1915*, MPhil thesis, Department of English, University of Western Australia, 1998. I was made aware of Prime’s thesis after I had already written much of this chapter, and there is, unfortunately, some overlap in the novels that we examine.

creature, full of repressed instincts of savagery'.¹⁸ Quite clearly, according to this article, the Aboriginal girl is no 'Australian' girl. Furthermore, although the word 'girl' did not immediately connote any particular class background, Praed's real Australian Girl is the squatter's daughter, a member of the more privileged classes.¹⁹ That is, while she may 'run almost wild', 'hob-nob with blacks', or even 'cook and clean', the genuine Bush Girl, according to Praed, remains a 'natural little gentlewoman' who possesses the 'knack of refinement'. Indeed, it was largely the privileged white middle- and upper-class women in Australian society who benefited from the improving perception of Australian-born women in the 1890s. Working-class women still had to confront enduringly negative perceptions of their colonial background and class status.²⁰

The novels discussed in this chapter draw on the discourses associated with the Australian Girl and the New Woman, and their heroines typically present features of both cultural figures.²¹ Like the New Woman, the Australian Girl represented a significant departure from conventional ideals of femininity. Both female types were outspoken and frank when it came to subjects normally considered taboo for women to discuss, such as sexuality, science and politics. Both were physically active and adventurous when it came to venturing into traditionally masculine terrain, and were known to occasionally don male attire. The Australian Girl shared the New Woman's role in criticising the more oppressive and inviolable tenets of Victorian society. Many heroines in 1890s Australian fiction, for example, question the institution of marriage, reject religion, and challenge outmoded ideas about femininity and womanhood.

¹⁸ Cited in Prime, *ibid.*, p. 14. Rosa Campbell Praed, 'A Daughter of Greater Britain', *Girl's Realm*, January 1899, pp. 249-53. Reprinted in Kingston, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁹ Sally Mitchell points out that the word 'girl' was more inclusive of different social classes than young 'lady': the former could take in the work girl, servant girl, factory girl, shop girl or college girl. See *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880-1915*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 25.

²⁰ Kingston, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²¹ Prime, *op. cit.*, p. 15, notes that by 1885, the heroines of novels and short stories by some Australian women writers 'displayed diverse characteristics attributable to both the Australian Girl and the New Woman'.

However, the Australian Girl was never simply a local imitation of the British New Woman. As Prime rightly points out, '[c]asting the Australian Girl in the role of the New Woman...introduced an underlying tension between the more radical aspects of the "improper" New Woman and the necessarily "proper" Australian Girl'.²² The Australian Girl served a number of unique functions that set her apart from and, at times, put her in conflict with the New Woman.

The Australian Girl's association with an emerging nation and sense of national identity brought with it a unique set of social, cultural and political discursive conditions. Her difference from conventional women was often more likely to be 'attributed to Australianness' than to the New Woman movement.²³ One of the main things distinguishing the Australian Girl from the New Woman was her location. The bush was a vital ingredient in the former's inclusion in national mythologies of the 1890s. Alternatively, the New Woman's assertions of independence and efforts at national recognition were largely based in the city. Sally Ledger proposes that the emergence of women in the modern city threatened the 'patriarchal construction of the Victorian metropolis as masculine public space'.²⁴ Hence, the familiar image of the bespectacled New Woman striding through the streets of London unchaperoned, holding a latchkey to her own room. Australian girls affiliated with the urban landscape did appear in fiction, but with less frequency than their rural sisters. The heroine of M. Broda Reynolds' *A Black Silk Stocking* (1907), for example, lives in Sydney and works to support herself in a variety of jobs, including typing, waitressing and working as a shop girl.

When she travelled overseas, the Australian Girl more commonly ventured into large and bustling cities. During a period when the Australian Girl's identity was undergoing substantial scrutiny, the opportunity to test and explore that identity overseas became more important than ever before. In particular,

²² Prime, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²³ Richard White, *Inventing Australia*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

²⁴ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997, p. 152.

London proved one of the most fictional destinations, since it was here that she faced the ultimate test in terms of her physical, moral, social and intellectual worth. Sylvia Leighton, the narrator of Louise Mack's 1902 travel narrative *An Australian Girl in London*, points out that to be in London was 'the dream of every Australian girl'.²⁵ Sylvia is well and truly up to the test as she confidently traverses the city:

Sometimes I get up in the black morning and go out in the streets before six and roam about the streets and squares. Through the blackness the lamps glimmer dimly. Then the areas begin to wake up. And the glow of fires and gaslights from the kitchens below shines along the streets. The bare black trees and I have the city all to ourselves. From square to square I wander...²⁶

Unconcerned about chaperones or a specific destination, Sylvia is content to independently 'roam' and 'wander' the city streets, much in the style of the *flâneuse*. The New Woman helped to redefine the concept of the 'public woman'²⁷ as she vied for the role of the Baudelairean *flâneur*, the privileged (and traditionally masculine) stroller who symbolised freedom of movement within the city.²⁸ Sylvia Leighton finds accommodation in Bloomsbury where,

²⁵ Louise Mack, *An Australian Girl in London*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1902, p. 174.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 180.

²⁷ The public woman was traditionally the prostitute. Judith R. Walkowitz has identified the prostitute as the 'quintessential female figure of the urban scene'. See *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 21.

²⁸ I accept Ledger's argument that the emergence of women in the city 'problematizes the idea of the (definitively male) *flâneur* as a symbol of modernity'. See Ledger, *op. cit.*, p. 152. However, some scholars question the concept of a female *flâneur*, or *flâneuse*. Janet Wolff, for example, argues that the character of the *flâneuse* was 'rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century'. See 'The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990, ch. 3, p. 47. On this subject, also see Anke Gleber, 'Female Flanerie and the *Symphony of the City*', *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, Katharina von Ankum (ed), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, ch. 3; Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991; Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible *Flâneur*', *New Left Review*, 191, 1992, pp. 90-110; Deborah Epstein Nord, 'The Urban Peripatetic: Spectator, Streetwalker, Woman Writer',

for the first time, she has a room of her own. Sylvia revels in her newly discovered autonomy and feels at home in London, although she misses the 'glad' spirit of the Australian city and is still aware of the tendency of English people to look down on her as a 'girl from Australia'.²⁹ Kate Flint suggests with regard to the American Girl that, when she travelled overseas, her apparent 'rootlessness' (eg. the absence of family ties) and 'lack of history' - made her in some ways an even newer type than the New Women in English novels.³⁰ Along similar lines, Angela Woollacott claims that white colonial women's 'outsider status in England allowed them slightly greater freedom of movement' in the city, and their 'culturally based self-definition as confident and capable made them willing to traverse the city alone'.³¹ Such arguments can be put forward with regard to an intrepid traveller like Sylvia - undoubtedly a new, modern and very independent woman.

It was certainly not always the case, however, that the Australian Girl was represented as 'newer' than the New Woman. Indeed, a number of Australian women writers explored the relationship between the Australian Girl and the New Woman, with the purpose of demonstrating the former's more conservative inclinations. This can partly be explained by the fundamental difference between girlhood and womanhood, and its implications for fictional subject matter. Novels that featured the Australian Girl were generally inspired by quite different concerns from those that featured the New Woman.³² Writers who modelled their heroines on the Australian Girl were automatically supplied with a stock set of 'girlhood' concerns: her attitude to Australia, her connection with the environment (especially the bush), the amount of freedom

Nineteenth-Century Literature, 46, 3, 1991, pp. 351-75; and Angela Woollacott, 'The Colonial Flâneuse: Australian Women Negotiating Turn-of-the-Century London', *Signs*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2000, pp. 761-87. I am grateful to Melinda Harvey for the references cited in her paper, 'From *Passante* to *Flâneuse*: Encountering the Prostitute in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 27, no. 6, 2001, pp. 746-64.

²⁹ Mack, op. cit., p. 163 and p. 166.

³⁰ Kate Flint, 'The American Girl and the New Woman', *Women's Writing*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1996, pp. 226-7.

³¹ Woollacott, op. cit., p. 766.

she should have, her relationship with her family, her attitude to religion, how she should be educated, in what ways she resembled and differed from her English sister, and, perhaps most importantly, whom she should marry. Hence, in many women's novels from the period, the Australian heroine has to decide on an appropriate suitor. These novels usually presented a heroine in the process of growing up and learning about men and marriage.

The New Woman heroine, however, was generally burdened with the adult problems of marriage, motherhood and the sexual double standard. While Australian Girl novels often ended in marriage, the New Woman novels just as often began with marriage - and an unhappy one at that. Furthermore, the most controversial heroines of 1890s British New Woman fiction unapologetically defied sexual codes, with the most radical among them revealing the concept of the sexually pure and submissive woman to be a literary and cultural fiction.

The issue of sexuality is an important key in understanding the difference between the Australian Girl and the New Woman. Novels featuring the Australian Girl tended to avoid the more contentious sexual subject matter of New Woman fiction. Despite her modernity, women writers had difficulty representing the Australian Girl heroine as an autonomous and experienced sexual subject. In her social freedom, she resembled the so-called 'new girl' who appeared in British fiction toward the end of the nineteenth century. Girls' culture suggested 'new ways of being, new modes of behaviour, and new attitudes that were not yet acceptable for adult women'.³³ However, the state of being neither child nor (sexually aware) adult meant that the new girl only ever occupied a 'provisional free space': the freedom could dissipate at any moment.³⁴ Sexual experience meant an end to the social freedom that young women enjoyed.

³² As Flint points out, *op. cit.*, p. 218, stories about the American Girl were similarly concerned with her youth, innocence, and 'capacity to look after' herself, rather than with the 'trials, the disillusionment and the double standards' associated with marriage.

³³ Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁴ Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Certain limitations were attached, therefore, to the Australian Girl's socio-sexual status. Her privileged position as a national cultural icon depended on her difference from more sexually radical ('fast') female types. While she could get away with appearing tomboyish, the Australian Girl was still expected to one day transform into a proper Victorian lady. She was not permitted to emulate the Lone Hand by taking up smoking and gambling, or acting on her sexual desire. It was important for her credibility that she was no longer seen in relationship to her embarrassing 'colonial girl' predecessor - the girl who did not 'class chastity' as an important virtue. Women writers also had to be wary of their heroines resembling the infamous 'Girl of the Period'. In 1868, the novelist and journalist, Eliza Lynn Linton, defined this type of young woman as 'a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face' and who was capable of 'strong, bold talk'. Her other crimes included a 'love of pleasure and indifference to duty', a 'desire of money before either love or happiness' and a 'horror of all useful work'.³⁵

It is possible to find Australian Girl heroines who express, and even go some way toward acting on, their feelings of sexual desire. As Susan Magarey points out, not all Australian Girl heroines were 'opposed to (hetero)sexual intercourse and what social-purity feminists like Rose Scott saw as its pollutions'.³⁶ It is fairly rare, however, to come across the Australian Girl heroine who takes the dramatic step of having sexual intercourse outside marriage, and attracting the stigma of the 'fallen woman'. One such rare example is Sheba Ormatroyd, the very unconventional heroine of Rita's *Sheba: A Study of Girlhood*. As a girl, Sheba is fascinated, much to her mother's disgust, by George Eliot, that woman who 'believes in free love, and has gone to live with a man who has left his own wife and family for her sake'.³⁷ When Sheba grows up and falls in love herself with a married man, the memory of Eliot

³⁵ E. Lynn Linton, 'The Girl of the Period', *Saturday Review*, 14 March 1868, pp. 339-40. Quoted in Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*, Macmillan, London, 1978, p. 8.

³⁶ Susan Magarey, 'History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996, p. 108.

³⁷ Rita (Humphreys), *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 216.

inspires her to agree to live with him as his mistress: Sheba 'vowed that his love should be her law'.³⁸ However, Sheba is abandoned by her lover while heavily pregnant, and also eventually loses her baby. This Australian Girl is punished for her failure to obey socio-sexual codes, and henceforth must live the penitent life traditionally expected of the fallen woman.

With much of her freedom hinging on her girlhood, some women writers considered that the Australian Girl had nothing to grow into. This point was most famously made by Ethel Turner in her 1894 children's novel *Seven Little Australians* featuring the tomboyish Judy Woolcott, 'a disturber' of her father's peace, and, thus, of the patriarchal order.³⁹ Ultimately, Judy meets an early death in the very place where the Australian Girl derived her freedom: on the brink of womanhood she is killed by a falling tree in the bush. Sue Rowley demonstrates that the process of maturation from girlhood to womanhood in late-nineteenth-century Australia can be described in terms of a 'journey' that took women from the outside space of the bush to the interior space of the home - a journey that concomitantly saw them further removed from the public domain of the nation.⁴⁰ In this sense, maturation could often mean less freedom, mobility, and, ultimately, less power to participate in nation-building.

Nevertheless, many Australian women writers still turned to the Australian Girl as a vehicle for exploring women's role in the new nation. The American Jessie Ackermann claimed that the 'world's greatest reforms must be brought about by girls, and Australia is the natural starting-point'.⁴¹ In her youth and affiliation with a new nation, the 'free, independent, and unconventional' Australian Girl could be constructed as the original New Woman in the New

³⁸ Rita (Humphreys), *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 162.

³⁹ Ethel Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, Ward Lock, London/Sydney, 1976, p. 126.

⁴⁰ Sue Rowley, 'The Journey's End: Women's Mobility and Confinement', *Australian Cultural History*, 10, 1991, esp. p. 76.

⁴¹ Jessie Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman's Point of View*, facsimile edition, 1913, Cassell Australia, North Ryde, NSW, 1981, p. 208. Also quoted in Kerry M. White, 'The Real Australian Girl?: Some Post-Federation Writers for Girls', *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*, Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 4, p. 74.

World.⁴² Importantly, she enjoyed a degree of acceptance in her home country unavailable to an international feminist icon. At a time when anti-feminists blamed the New Woman for her putative abandonment of the reproductive roles of wife and mother, therefore allowing the Anglo-Saxon race to degenerate, some feminists fought back with their own images of a modern Australian Girl/Woman whose aim was to save society. Constructed as both the daughter of the unspoiled New World of Australia, and the daughter of Great Britain, the Australian Girl stood for the future of Australia and the future of the British race. Her sexual purity metaphorically stood for racial purity. The heroine of Miles Franklin's novel about the suffrage movement in Australia, *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*, symbolically named Dawn, exemplifies the 'imperial mother-to-be'.⁴³

At the same time, women writers found innovative ways to introduce the more controversial features of the New Woman into novels about the Australian Girl. Australian children's novelists like Ethel Turner, for instance, often adopted a 'dual plot' whereby adult feminist issues were presented alongside the children's story.⁴⁴ Another ingenious way women writers introduced the New Woman was by bringing them into the background of the narrative. In Catherine Helen Spence's *Mr Hogarth's Will*, Jane and Alice Melville have as a role model the admirable farmer Miss Thomson, described by the girls' uncle as 'an instance of the skill and success with which a woman can conduct masculine avocations'.⁴⁵ These powerful women characters served as examples for the heroines, and often advised them about the future.

⁴² Ackermann, *ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴³ For a discussion of this novel, see Cecily Devereux, 'New Woman, New World: Maternal Feminism and the New Imperialism in the White Settler Colonies', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 22, issue 2, 1999, pp. 175-84.

⁴⁴ Kerry M. White, 'The Real Australian Girl?', *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁵ Spence, *Mr Hogarth's Will*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

II. The Australian Bush Girl: Catherine Martin, *An Australian Girl* (1890) and Miles Franklin, *My Brilliant Career* (1901)

The heroines of Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl* and Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* have become two of the best-known literary representations of the Australian Girl. Both demonstrate the Australian Girl's modernity, her difference from more traditional female types, and her resemblance to contemporary international feminist icons like the New Woman. At the same time, they show that, despite this resemblance, the Australian Girl still needs to be read according to her own terms.

An Australian Girl was first published in three volumes in 1890, and then in an abridged version the following year. The heroine, Stella Courtland, is a new and modern departure from the old British ideal of womanhood, epitomised by her insipid and passive sister-in-law Dora. Importantly, the heroine's difference from more conventional female types is intimately connected with her Australian identity: Stella proudly declares: 'I am an Australian'.⁴⁶ Having grown up in South Australia, she has developed a 'passionate love of books and of her native woods' (vol. 1, p. 88). The 'woods' offer her a 'stern freedom which has never borne the yoke of man's dominion' - an environment, in other words, perfectly suited to the development of the free-spirited Australian Girl. As well as being confident and outspoken, Stella is, in the style of the eponymous Australian Bush Girl, an enthusiastic horse rider.

An Australian Girl presents a heroine who openly questions the institutions and values of late-nineteenth-century Victorian society. She is startlingly frank about subjects not normally considered appropriate for women to discuss, whether they be euthanasia or socialism. The narrator describes Stella as 'quick to feel, to see, to think', and endowed with 'rare qualities of intellect and imagination' (vol. 1, p. 15). Her impressive knowledge of German philosophy

and writing is particularly apparent in the three volume edition of the novel. The lengthy philosophical account she offers her brother Cuthbert of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, along with an account of her religious disillusionment, were among the cuts made for the 1891 edition.

As Fiona Giles points out, this 'problem novel' shares some of the preoccupations of the English New Woman fiction.⁴⁷ Its modern and intellectual heroine becomes the main voice for the frank critique of marriage offered in *An Australian Girl*. Stella proves understandably cynical about marriage, given that most of the marriages she witnesses are far from ideal. The vain, superficial and materialistic Laurette Tareling marries 'not for love', but because of her husband's pedigree (vol. 2, p. 30). She is even prepared to tolerate her husband's infidelity rather than risk losing social caste. Stella also witnesses the unenviable situation of her friend, Cicily Mowbray, who ultimately does risk social ostracism by leaving her unhappy marriage and living with another man. Stella staunchly defends Cicily's actions:

"I knew she was living with a horrible man, who used to lock himself up and drink till he was in delirium tremens - one who was a dipsomaniac before she married him, and yet managed to conceal it from her till after they were married. I know she is living a purer life now than she could then. The only child that was born to her was paralytic and imbecile. Fortunately it died. What sort of a crime would it have been against herself, and still more against society, if she had gone on adding to the probable criminals of the world - to its certain weaklings?" (vol. 1, pp. 41-2)

⁴⁶ Catherine Martin, *An Australian Girl*, in three volumes, Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1890, vol. 1, p. 328. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

⁴⁷ Fiona Giles, *Too Far Everywhere: The Romantic Heroine in Nineteenth-Century Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1998, p. 98.

The reference to Cicily's 'purer' life without her husband connotes a new physical, sexual and hereditary purity. In this instance, alcoholism is specifically blamed for hereditary degeneracy, however there is the added implication that syphilis may also be responsible for the paralytic child. The language in this passage invokes a familiar two-pronged temperance feminist protest against women's lack of autonomy over their own bodies, and men's failure to exercise restraint with regard to alcohol and sex.

Against the background of these sentiments, Martin's novel loosely adheres to the typical Australian Girl romance narrative, which traces the heroine's growth to maturity and her own decision about marriage. In many ways, Stella is established as the ideal heroine of a romance novel with her 'silky hair', 'beautiful' eyes and 'fair' and 'clear' complexion (vol. 1, pp. 14-15) and an 'essentially feminine' nature, capable of being 'kindled with love' (vol. 2, p. 249). In possession of "'money, position and friends'", she also enjoys the privilege of being able to choose whom she marries (vol. 2, p. 88). The opening pages set up what appears to be a potentially ideal romance between the heroine and her 'good-looking', wealthy and 'athletic' childhood friend, the young Australian, Edward (Ted) Ritchie (vol. 1, pp. 15-16).

Despite appearing to contain all the ingredients of a conventional romance, however, *An Australian Girl*, as other critics have observed, by no means conforms to the formula of a man and a woman who meet, fall in love, and marry.⁴⁸ Although Stella and Ted share youth, energy, and nationality, Ted is 'distinctly unintellectual' and cannot converse with Stella about literature or philosophy (vol. 1, p. 15). Having already rejected Ted's marriage proposals on more than one occasion, Stella is ambivalent about the prospect of marriage: indeed, her brother considers her the sort of girl who "'might be happier single all her life'" (vol. 2, p. 255). The romance plot is further complicated when Stella

⁴⁸ For example, see Elizabeth Webby's introduction to *An Australian Girl* by Catherine Martin, Pandora, London, 1988, p. vii.

meets the European doctor, Anselm Langdale, who does share her intellectual interests.

It was not unusual for the Australian Girl to have to choose between an Australian and a European/English suitor. This device was used by countless women writers from the period to explore the heroine's cultural and national affiliations.⁴⁹ Ted, the typically flawed, though likeable, Australian man, is young, athletic and an inveterate gambler, but also prepared to work hard to maintain his wealth. Anselm Langdale offers the appropriate contrast of European class and culture. Where Martin's novel differs from other Australian Girl romance narratives is that its heroine ultimately decides to marry the 'wrong' man. Stella becomes informally engaged to Langdale, but before they can marry, he has to return to England to confirm his former wife's death. Through a series of melodramatic contrivances, Stella is deliberately tricked by Ted's sister, Laurette, to believe that Langdale's wife is still alive. As a result, she rashly agrees to marry Ted Ritchie instead.

An Australian Girl is also unconventional in that Stella's marriage does not mark the end of the novel. As in so many New Woman novels, Stella learns during her honeymoon how little she has in common with her husband. Her belated discovery that Ted drinks excessively immediately suggests threatening parallels with Cicily Mowbray's disastrous marriage. Stella resembles the heroine of a New Woman novel when, after learning about Laurette's deception, she suffers a nervous breakdown.⁵⁰ The New Woman's conflicts with social convention - her ongoing fight to assert her own needs and desires - frequently resulted in psychological turmoil. When Stella meets Langdale again in the wintry city of Berlin, she describes feeling trapped in dark corridors, at the end of which wild caged women 'beat at the bars and shriek to get out' (vol. 3, p. 235). The image operates as a powerful metaphor of Stella's own mental and physical entrapment in her marriage.

⁴⁹ Giles, *op. cit.*, ch. V, explores this aspect of the novel.

The account of Stella's breakdown is followed by a number of very interesting chapters - mostly missing in the abbreviated version of the novel - which reveal Catherine Martin's interest in exploring the relationship between feminism and socialism.⁵¹ Stella's personal problems are put in perspective as she learns, from Frau Schulz, about the young working-class women seduced by German soldiers, who become victims of the sexual double standard:

"If a woman has property and wealthy relations, they [men] run after her, bowing to the dust. But let her be poor and unknown, let her be in service with no friends to protect her, and there is nothing they will not do to bring about her ruin." (vol. 3, pp. 254-5)

Martin again produces a variation on the conventional romance narrative by exploring controversial feminist ideas about the sexual status of women. These chapters draw attention to the double oppression, along both class and gender lines, encountered by working-class women, and reveal the parallels between socialist and feminist anarchy. More particularly, Stella identifies a link between the 'anarchy of scepticism' and 'madness', which proves significant in the context of the events that follow (vol. 3, p. 257). As she begins to emerge from her depression, the heroine initially seems determined to ignore patriarchal 'authority and tradition' and run away with Langdale (vol. 3, p. 293). For a moment, the novel poses a very radical feminist solution to the problem of her marriage to a man she does not love.

⁵⁰ On the subject of Stella's breakdown, also see Christopher Lee, 'Strategies of Power and Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl*', *Southerly*, vol. 52, no. 2, 1991, pp. 189-206.

⁵¹ Ra Campbell has explored the idea that Martin's publisher George Bentley, and an editor he employed to work on the one-volume edition of the book, engaged in a certain amount of censorship of *An Australian Girl*. With regard to the socialism scenes, Campbell comments: 'It is perhaps not without some significance in the light of female activism in Australia that Bentley's editor appears to have excised most completely episodes involving women advocates of socialism from the novel'. See '*An Australian Girl: A Case of Political Censorship*', *Margin: Life and Letters of Early Australia*, no. 47, 1999, p. 25.

Ultimately, however, *An Australian Girl* retreats from a full scale rebellion against social, sexual and narrative conventions. The restoration of Stella's sanity occurs only after she decides to abide by her familial and social obligations. Or, as Christopher Lee suggests, 'it is Stella's conversion to the ideal woman which guarantees her sanity'.⁵² In the novel's final pages, Stella attends a Catholic service in London conducted by Cardinal Newman, and is reminded of the (traditionally feminine) values of 'self-sacrifice' and 'generosity' (vol. 3, p. 305). In recognition of the idea that 'devotion to duty' is the mark of true 'womanhood', Stella decides to return to Australia with Ted and observe her marriage vows, a decision which is inextricably linked to her rekindled religious belief (vol. 3, p. 307). Hence, although this modern heroine has at one stage threatened to abandon her dutiful feminine role, two of the main institutions governing that role - religion and marriage - remain intact at the end of *An Australian Girl*. Stella sounds uncharacteristically defeatist when she explains to Langdale:

"A man's life is so much more twofold than a woman's. He has his work and his place to fill in the world. She has the large leisure of home; and if at her side the phantom comes of broken vows and duties trampled under foot, the spring of her life is poisoned at the source." (vol. 3, p. 317)

While her words are intended partly as an affirmation of her religious awakening, they also reveal a sense of resignation to the constraints of her gender. To a certain extent, Stella's national identity - her desire to return to Australia - means compromising New Woman/feminist ideals about the importance of her own happiness. A reviewer from the *Sydney Mail* celebrated Stella Courtland as the 'new and original type of Australian heroine'.⁵³ Stella's marriage to an Australian man consolidates her national/feminine status, but

⁵² Lee, 'Strategies', op. cit., pp. 205-6.

⁵³ *Sydney Mail*, 15 November 1890, p. 1090. Quoted in Christopher Lee, 'Women, Romance, and the Nation: The Reception of Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl*', *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 17, 1993, p 76.

the reader is left with a feeling of lack, and the suspicion that she has decided on the wrong partner.

A feature of the ending that should not be overlooked, however, is Stella's attendant decision to use her position as Ted's wife to assist the impoverished and dispossessed urban people of the 'Old World' (vol. 3, p. 336). The heroine wins agreement from her husband to return to the New World and establish a farming community in the bush for the urban poor of London and Berlin. It is difficult to suggest that the critique of marriage offered in this novel is accompanied by an argument for women to take up careers. As Elizabeth Webby points out, the one example of a career woman in the novel, an American journalist, 'is not an attractive model'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Stella's projects place her within the conventionally feminine and Victorian role of the middle-class philanthropist. However, it is significant that, in Stella's mind, this role is equally as important as her wifely role. The ending makes it clear that marriage alone will not guarantee the heroine's fulfilment.⁵⁵

While Martin's novel upholds the institution of marriage, it still demonstrates that, realistically, there is no such thing as an ideal marriage outside the pages of romance novels. Early in *An Australian Girl*, Stella and Langdale discuss the ingredients of the modern novel. Stella responds to Langdale's argument that modern novelists fail to adequately represent the goodness and happiness in people's lives by accusing him of being overly optimistic, and imagining a "'glorified Arcadia"' where all the "'good people are happy and the wicked ones overthrown"' (vol. 2, p. 88). The only fairy tales Stella can think of are those in which the fairies are left out. Her conception of the modern novel as one which is only "'real"' if it represents "'misadventure"', is played out in the less-than-perfectly happy ending of *An Australian Girl*.

⁵⁴ Webby, op. cit., p. ix.

⁵⁵ Also see Margaret Allen, 'Reading Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl*', *Southwords: Essays on South Australian Writing*, Philip Butterss (ed), Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 1995, p. 59: 'There is a sense in which Stella now does not need a man to define her. She is now larger and too autonomous for that'.

Some ten years after the publication of Martin's novel, a more fully realised version of the Australian Girl/New Woman heroine appeared in Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*.⁵⁶ This novel has, of course, already been the focus of substantial critical attention in Australia. Literary critics like Susan Martin have explored the influence of earlier nineteenth-century Australian women's writing on the novel.⁵⁷ Others, like Frances McInhery, have argued for the need to also examine *My Brilliant Career* in the context of an internationalist tradition of women's writing.⁵⁸ Curiously, though, it is to the Brontës, not the late-nineteenth-century New Woman novels, that McInhery primarily turned as her point of reference. However, few critics have examined Franklin's novel in relation to the New Woman.⁵⁹

From the opening pages, the indomitable Sybylla Melvyn demonstrates how 'utterly different' she is from other girls.⁶⁰ As Ian Henderson argues, Sybylla 'refuses to endorse any stable and unified model of identity, most crucially, with regard to her gender'.⁶¹ When it comes to horse riding, she does not, like Stella Courtland, stick to riding side saddle, asserting that '[s]ide-saddle, man-saddle, no-saddle, or astride were all the same to me' (p. 3). On her family's dairy farm at Possum Gully, near Goulburn, she rides among the musterers 'as gamely as any of the big sunburnt bushmen'. Her mother considers her a 'great

⁵⁶ Giles, op. cit., p. 110, notes that in *An Australian Girl*, the 'Australian girl is seen in the process of constructing herself as a heroine'.

⁵⁷ Martin has explored the connections between Franklin and her "'grandmothers" and "mothers", the white middle-class Australian women writing "romantic" fiction in the nineteenth century', in 'Relative Correspondence: Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, and the Influence of Nineteenth-Century Australian Women's Writing' in Ferres, op. cit., ch. 3.

⁵⁸ Frances McInhery, 'Miles Franklin, *My Brilliant Career*, and the Female Tradition', *Who Is She? Images of Woman in Australian Fiction*, Shirley Walker (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983, ch. 6.

⁵⁹ There are exceptions, such as Farley Kelly, who points out that Gwen Waring from *A Yellow Aster* is a 'direct antecedent of the more truly independent Australian heroine, Miles Franklin's Sybylla Melvyn'. See *The 'Woman Question' in Melbourne 1880-1914*, PhD thesis, Faculty of Education, Monash University, 1982, p. 95. Susan Magarey briefly discusses this novel in the article, 'History', op. cit., esp. p. 106, p. 108. Also see Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s - 1930s*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995, esp. pp. 41-3.

⁶⁰ Miles Franklin, *My Brilliant Career*, Angus & Robertson, Arkon edition, Australia, 1979, reprinted 1980, p. 28. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

unwomanly tomboy' and, significantly, it is her father whom the young Sybylla thinks of as her 'hero, confidant, encyclopedia, mate, and even...religion' (pp. 3-4).

Again, *My Brilliant Career* initially appears to be a typical Australian Girl romance narrative, tracing Sybylla's growth to a mature young woman, forced to make decisions about love and marriage. However, the fact that the heroine tells her own story in the first person - a particularly unconventional device for women novelists to use - introduces another level to the novel. In the tradition of the *Künstlerroman*, and New Woman novels like *The Beth Book* and *The Story of a Modern Woman*, *My Brilliant Career* tells the story of a young woman with artistic and intellectual ambitions:

My ambition was as boundless as the mighty bush in which I have always lived. As I grew it dawned upon me that I was a girl - the makings of a woman! Only a girl! - merely this and nothing more. It came home to me as a great blow that it was only men who could take the world by its ears and conquer their fate (p. 33).

Sybylla recognises early on the constraints of her gender. As a woman, she will always be forced to hide her brains, cramp her mind and 'study to appear unintellectual' (p. 34). Furthermore, with the discovery that her father, an alcoholic, is unable to cope with the demands of a failing property, Sybylla's future looks even more likely to imitate her mother's life of dependence and domestic drudgery.

Franklin dramatises the limited options available to a woman to pursue intellectual and artistic ambitions, particularly in the absence of financial independence. The heroine is offered a brief respite from Possum Gully when

⁶¹ Ian Henderson, 'Gender, Genre, and Sybylla's Performative Identity in Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1997, p. 165.

her wealthy grandmother invites her to stay at the property of Caddagat. It is evident from the beginning, however, that Sybylla's continued enjoyment of a lifestyle free of domestic drudgery, a lifestyle wherein she has time to read and write, is conditional upon her eventually marrying an eligible suitor. In her grandmother's world, 'a girl's only proper sphere in life was marriage' (p. 31). Sybylla goes further than Stella Courtland (who feels ambivalent about marriage) and expresses outright 'antipathy to the very thought of marriage', that 'most horribly tied-down and unfair-to-women existence going' (p. 31). Like Stella, Sybylla witnesses few marriages that challenge this gloomy interpretation. There is her Aunt Helen, deserted by an unfaithful husband, who 'symbolises the socio-sexual inequality of this world'.⁶² Sybylla's mother wishes that she 'had never married' and concludes that her husband is a 'failure' (p. 203). Interestingly, as with Stella, Sybylla's early rejection of marriage finds a parallel in her rejection of religion: 'There was no God. I was an unbeliever' (p. 36).

My Brilliant Career makes explicit the connection between marriage and women's lack of autonomy over their own bodies. Having witnessed her mother endure unwanted pregnancies, Sybylla views childbirth as that 'most cruelly agonising of human duties' (p. 198). On the two occasions when she receives marriage proposals, she recoils from the reality of physical contact with a man. She hits the first man to propose to her, Frank Hawden, assuring him that even were she to 'perpetrate matrimony', he would not be the 'participant' in her 'degradation' (p. 70). Following this encounter, Sybylla's grandmother attempts to induct her in the ways of the world, explaining that men who 'sow their wild oats' before marriage can still turn out 'very good husbands' (p. 72). Sybylla immediately identifies the double standard implicit in this advice:

⁶² Delys Bird, 'Towards an Aesthetics of Australian Women's Fiction: *My Brilliant Career* and *The Getting of Wisdom*', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1983, p. 175.

“It is disgusting, and you ought to be downright ashamed of yourself, grannie! A man can live a life of bestiality and then be considered a fit husband for the youngest and purest girl! It is shameful!” (p. 72)

In the last couple of decades, particularly, feminist critics have emphasised the importance of *My Brilliant Career* in the genealogy of Australian women’s writing. Susan Sheridan credits the novel with marking ‘a significant break in the traditions of Australian women’s fiction’, and representing the ‘transition from feminine complaints against woman’s lot to overtly feminist protest against patriarchal power’.⁶³ Nevertheless, Sheridan concludes Sybylla is ‘not a “New Woman” of the type developed in British novels of the late nineteenth century, whose principal protest against patriarchy was sexual’.⁶⁴

However, Sybylla Melvyn’s ‘unwomanly’ behaviour, love of physical activity, and intellectualism can be seen as attributes of the New Woman, as much as of the Australian Girl. Even more reminiscent of the New Woman - including the sexually rebellious version - is Sybylla’s anger about the sexual double standard, aversion to marriage and hostility toward men who desire to appropriate her body. Franklin also depicts, in a modern and unconventional light, a young woman coming to terms with her own sexual desire. For example, upon arriving at Caddagat, one of the first books Sybylla longs to read is George Du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894), the notorious novel about a Parisian artist’s model, caught up in the sexually unrestrained world of the avant garde. Sybylla’s grandmother, the voice of traditional womanhood and moral probity, brands her a ‘hussy’ on more than one occasion (p. 109) and even confines her to her room for being ‘forward with men’ (p. 131). Franklin further makes the point by showing Sybylla’s behaviour from the moment she meets the

⁶³ Sheridan, op. cit., pp. 42-3.

⁶⁴ Sheridan, op. cit., p. 42.

handsome owner of a neighbouring property, Harold Beecham. Her conversations with him are characterised by lively flirtation.

Sybylla's feelings of sexual desire are soon curbed, however, by her growing realisation that women's social roles are defined in terms of their sexual relationships with men. 'Why', she wonders, 'did not social arrangements allow a man and a maid to be chums' and enjoy each other 'without thought beyond pure platonic friendship?' (p. 69). As Susan Gardner notes, one of the novel's 'most disconcerting aspects is the adolescent girl's sadomasochism'.⁶⁵ This is epitomised by the infamous scene in which Sybylla strikes Beecham with a whip after he proposes marriage to her and tries to claim a kiss. Sybylla is as shocked as he is by her actions, explaining:

It was hysterical - the outcome of an overstrung, highly excitable, and nervous temperament. Perhaps my vanity was wounded, and my tendency to strike when touched was up in arms. The calm air of ownership with which Harold drew near annoyed me, or, as Sunday-school teachers would explain it, Satan got hold of me (p. 125).

Critics have consistently dwelt upon this scene. For Susan Martin, the use of the whip reveals the heroine's understanding of the vulnerability of her chastity/power. Afterwards, Sybylla is remorseful about having done such a 'mean unwomanly thing' and her inclination is to cover her face with that very traditional symbol of femininity, her hair (p. 125). Martin reinforces the idea that the freedom and independence of an Australian Bush Girl depended on her sexual inexperience:

Pre-adolescent, or at least pre-sexual because unmarried, bush girls such as Sybylla embody an ambiguity of gender role inaccessible to other women in nineteenth-century

fictions. Their pre- or a-sexual status allows them to exhibit features and behaviour elsewhere regarded as 'masculine' - independence, fearless horse-riding, bush knowledge and skills, and even male attire.⁶⁶

The Australian Girl was both liberated and constrained by her own chastity. On the one hand, it permitted her to enter a masculine world that would otherwise be off-limits, as it already was for other women. However it also helped to preserve the gender and sexual double standards responsible for women's exclusion from this masculine world in the first place. The different representations of the bush in the novel, as a variously hostile and welcoming space, capture the Australian Girl's contradictory place in the socio-cultural landscape. One way to interpret the proposal scene, therefore, is in terms of Sybylla's sudden realisation that if she were to maintain her independence, she could not act on her sexual desire.

It can perhaps also be interpreted as encapsulating the sadomasochism inherent in women's relationships with men more generally. The novel depicts women like Sybylla's mother and aunt, both of whom end up suffering for having pursued their desire/need for marriage. Throughout Sybylla's relationship with Beecham, she is divided by her feelings of desire for a man who is 'masterful and strong' (pp. 221) and the awareness that, if she succumbs to this desire, she will end up a 'slave' (p. 143). Although the heroine appears to revel in the bruises that Beecham inflicts on her, there are ominous warnings about the threat of domestic violence.

Where *My Brilliant Career* continues to stand apart from so many other novels from this period is in its extraordinary ending. The romance genre demanded marriage; yet Franklin's heroine refuses to marry Beecham. Sybylla's nervous

⁶⁵ Susan Gardner, 'My Brilliant Career: Portrait of the Artist as a Wild Colonial Girl', *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, Carole Ferrier, (ed), 2nd edn, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992, p. 35.

⁶⁶ Susan Martin, 'Relative Correspondence', op. cit., p. 61.

breakdown toward the end of the novel while working at the M'Swats symbolises, as it does for Stella Courtland, the strain of conforming to familial/social conventions, and repressing her own needs and desires. For Stella, the strain is only alleviated once she accepts her marriage and religious/feminine duty. For Sybylla, however, there is no suggestion that life will necessarily become easier. With her final assertion of celibacy, Sybylla knowingly violates the 'social laws' that are 'so arranged that a woman's only sphere is marriage' (p. 144). This statement of independence is given all the more weight because, as an unmarried woman at Possum Gully, she risks a lifetime of poverty and working-class status. Another significant difference between *My Brilliant Career* and *An Australian Girl* is that Franklin's heroine does not, like Martin's, have to sacrifice her feminist ideals in order to assert her nationality. Although there is nothing easy about Sybylla's decision to stay at Possum Gully, her well-known declaration at the end of the novel shows that she is prepared for the future: 'I am proud that I am an Australian, a daughter of the Southern Cross, a child of the mighty bush' (p. 231). For this 'common little bush-girl', national and feminist subjectivity are closely intertwined (p. 220).

III. The Australian Girl in the City: Ada Cambridge, *A Marked Man: Some Episodes in His Life* (1888-89) and Mrs H. E. Russell, *Joyce Martindale* (1894)

While the bush was central to the Australian Girl's identity, she also occasionally appeared in the Australian city. Ada Cambridge's *A Marked Man* and Frances Emily Russell's *Joyce Martindale* present heroines who, in different ways, assert Australian women's claim to this masculine social space. Simply by virtue of their locations, these heroines immediately invite comparison with the *fin-de-siècle* urban New Woman who predominated in English fiction.

Even though she is located in the city, the heroine of Ada Cambridge's novel *A Marked Man*, Sue Delavel, is as physically active and healthy as any Australian Bush Girl. Sue is an enthusiastic walker, an 'expert' boatwoman, and has an

'intelligent, eager face' that reveals 'the want of parasols and veils'.⁶⁷ It is precisely this 'look of health and wholesomeness' pervading her 'whole person' that makes her, while not necessarily handsome, at least 'decidedly attractive'. A resident of Darling Point, and the daughter of a successful business man, Sue revels in her independence as she strides alone through Sydney's streets, very much in the style, also, of the urban and urbane New Woman:

All the way she had an air of being full of business and economical of time, but in the end she did nothing - nothing, that is to say, which seemed to justify so much trouble for the sake of doing it (p. 141).

In her brisk and purposeful manner of walking, there is the semblance of decorum: as an unchaperoned woman, it was important to display an awareness of destination. But in the very absence of any genuine destination, Sue assumes the role of the *flâneuse* as she walks the streets alone, observing the seedier aspects of urban life. She sits by the water at Dawes Point and simply gazes out at the bay, then sits, while '[s]urveying' the 'scene', in a street considered a "'low" thoroughfare to most people of her class' (p. 143). This heroine insists on being the observer and surveyor, rather than the object of someone else's gaze. Even more controversially, she knowingly ventures into terrain regarded as inappropriate space for someone of her privileged position in society.

In women's romance novels, the modern heroine's difference from other women was usually emphasised by contrasting her with a more conventional Victorian female type. Hence, Stella is contrasted with her sister-in-law Dora,

⁶⁷ Ada Cambridge, *A Marked Man: Some Episodes in His Life*, introduced by Debra Adelaide, Pandora, London, 1987, p. 257 and p. 141. All future page references are to this one-volume edition, first published in 1891, and will be given in parentheses in the text. Note: *A Marked Man* was first serialised in the *Age* between 1888-89, with the title 'A Black Sheep'. It was published in three volume book form in London in 1890. The first one-volume edition, which, according to Adelaide, appears to have been widely available in Australia, was published in 1891 by Heinemann.

and Sybylla is contrasted with her mother. In *A Marked Man*, it is also Sue's mother, Annie Delavel - somewhat comically referred to as the 'model of a gentlewoman' - who exists as a foil for the heroine (p. 151). Sue proves as adventurous, unorthodox and accepting of her Australian identity, as Annie is timid, conservative and attached to her original home of England. Not surprisingly, Annie disapproves of Sue walking alone through the city:

"Where have you been, my dear?"

"I have been - out", replied Sue.

"So I see. But where?"

"Into the town!"

"O Sue, into the town! Alone?" (p. 147).

As with Sybylla Melvyn, Sue's tendency to look to her father Richard Delavel as a role model signifies a rejection of her mother, or, more specifically, the kind of woman Annie Delavel represents. Ironically, Sue's father is the one who educates her about feminism by reading aloud from John Stuart Mill. Richard is forced to pause, however, at certain passages that Annie considers unfit for their daughter's consumption: "To Mrs Delavel the very word "sex" was improper, and the subject, howsoever treated, unfit for feminine ears' (p. 154). Annie operates in the narrative as the firm, yet often ridiculous, voice of moral probity.

Significantly, although she lives in the city and feels at home there, Sue is still shown to identify closely with the Australian bush environment. In her father's effort to escape what he refers to as his 'matrimonial bondage', he establishes a bush 'camp' on a beach in Middle Harbour (pp. 164). The bush environment offers this Australian Girl an opportunity to demonstrate her affinity with a more authentic Australian landscape and, by implication, Australian mentality. The fact that Sue's English mother refuses to go there is pertinent: Annie Delavel abhors the absence of established social guidelines at the camp, and fears that anyone might gain 'unauthorised access to her unguarded daughter'

(p. 162). This 'refuge' from 'fashionable society' has an uncivilised air of freedom and running 'wild' about it that inspires and enables the Australian Girl, particularly, to escape oppressive (British) social conventions (p. 162-3). According to Louise Wakeling, the camp is 'a symbol of hope of some kind of natural process of utopian change'.⁶⁸

This is another Australian heroine who refuses to consider marriage her primary goal. Sue Delavel is as passionate as Sybylla Melvyn in her belief that the marriage system is both a 'mistake' and an 'anachronism' (p. 286). The example of her parents' mismatched marriage only serves to further consolidate these views. When compared with other Australian women's romance novels from the period, it is evident just how rarely they begin, as *A Marked Man* does, with such a realistic depiction of marriage. The first half of the novel is set in England and charts the circumstances that led the upper-class Richard Delavel to rebel against his family's expectations that he become a clergyman, and to enter into a 'mesalliance' with a farmer's daughter, Annie Morrison. For Richard, the realisation that his wife Annie is not the ideal woman he had imagined her to be is devastating. Where this story is also particularly unusual is that it is largely sympathetic to the husband's perspective. Annie is portrayed as a selfish and materialistic woman, lacking any individuality or awareness of the feelings of others. She essentially forces Richard to travel to Australia alone to secure a home for them, where he promptly falls in love with Constance Bethune, the woman who nurses him back to health from a long illness. While the novel does not excuse Richard's near-infidelity, it offers a certain degree of justification for his actions, implicitly suggesting that Annie is as much to blame for what happens.

The importance of marrying for love becomes a major theme of *A Marked Man*, as it is in most of Cambridge's novels. Importantly, however, this alone is not enough to ensure happiness. Cambridge is also at pains in her fiction to show

⁶⁸ Louise Wakeling, "'Rattling the orthodoxies": A View of Ada Cambridge's *A Marked Man*', *Southerly*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1989, p. 616.

that, realistically, true companionship is needed between men and women if a marriage is to be successful.⁶⁹ An independent and modern woman, Sue is determined never to have a husband who will 'order' her about or make a 'slave' of her (p. 150). As with Cambridge's other New Woman heroines, however, Sue changes her mind about marriage once she meets the 'right' man. At the harbour-side camp, Sue meets and falls in love with the radical former clergyman, Noel Rutledge, who is an understated version of the New Man and, as Audrey Tate suggests, the modern heroine's 'ideal' partner.⁷⁰ Like others looking to escape the restrictions and judgements of society, he is drawn to the camp after bringing disrepute on himself by renouncing his vows.

Sue's determination to marry a man who does not possess the bourgeois trappings of money, employment, property or pedigree demonstrates the importance of marrying for love and companionship, rather than for materialistic reasons. Noel and Sue are able to discuss the important issues of the day, such as the status and significance of religion and marriage; although Noel does not share Sue's view that marriage, in its existing form, is 'not a good thing' (p. 287). He is also quite prepared to offer a 'gentle check', when he considers it necessary, on Sue's expression of advanced views (p. 286). On a more practical level, the novel also demonstrates the need for women to be financially independent if they are to decide whom to marry and whether to marry at all: Sue's family's affluence provides her with the security to make such decisions. Even with this security, Noel still insists on establishing himself financially before they live together.

Outside the idyllic harbour camp, Sue and Noel still have to contend with old-fashioned social rules that deem it inappropriate for a man and woman of

⁶⁹ Also, see Patricia Barton: 'Ada Cambridge: Writing For Her Life', *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, Debra Adelaide (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 10. Barton explores this idea in more detail: 'As the 1880s progressed and Cambridge's personal crises mounted, there is an increasing rebellion against parental and conventional authority, and more emphasis on marriage to an equal, a complement, almost a twin (who frequently embodies both masculine and feminine characteristics)', p. 145.

different social status to marry. Most notably, Annie Delavel, the representative of old-fashioned womanhood and guardian of traditional social mores, has to die before two couples can marry for love. Annie's precipitous death in a boating accident paves the way for Sue and Noel to marry, as well as finally freeing Richard to be with Constance, without paying heed to 'Mrs Grundy' (p. 283). In Constance, Richard is finally shown to have found his 'natural and necessary complement' - a woman who is his intellectual equal and spiritual companion (p. 311). Their relationship serves as an 'education' to Sue, as she prepares for her own companionate marriage (p. 312).

Constance Bethune is a relatively minor, yet intriguing, character. As a working woman, able to be her 'own mistress', Constance displays, in many ways, a greater resemblance to the independent and self-supporting New Woman than Sue does (p. 191). During her lengthy absence from Sydney and from Richard, following their brief romance, Constance has travelled to London, supporting herself by working as a nurse. Cambridge provides a model of a genteel woman who has not only survived, but also managed to see something of the world before marrying. Years later, Sue Delavel, initially unaware of Constance's former relationship with her father, encounters her during a walk through Sydney's streets. It is appropriate that they meet in the city, where the New Woman, in particular, sought to defy social expectations. Ultimately, however, it is Sue, not Constance, who represents the Australian woman of the future.

The endings of Cambridge's novels typically involve death and a compromise of some sort: rarely does everyone get what they desire. *A Marked Man* is no different in demonstrating that romantic ideals are not always realised. Having submitted to so much compromise in his life, Richard is punished with only three years of happy marriage to Constance before they both suffer precipitous deaths. Nevertheless, *A Marked Man* presents a society that, while often

⁷⁰ Audrey Tate, *Ada Cambridge: Her Life and Work 1844-1926*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1991, pp. 153-4.

oppressive in its social regulation, is in the process of changing. Sue Delavel exemplifies the modern woman whose intellectualism, education, strength of character and independent spirit enable her to achieve the kind of personal happiness denied to her parents' generation. It is also suggested that she possesses a greater sense of social responsibility than her father, and is more likely to act on her 'schemes' for social reform (p. 329).

Importantly, Cambridge's novels present New Women who are not denied love or romance simply because they espouse feminist ideals. In her 1894 *A Marriage Ceremony*, the well-known anti-feminist stereotype of the New Woman is directly challenged. The 'vigorous' and literary women with whom Rutherford Hope socialises are described as

quite different, as a rule, from the 'shrieking' person of Mrs Lynn Linton's imagination. Modern in every fibre, but not therefore degenerate; on the contrary, more completely womanly than women have ever been in our time, because more fully complementary to their contemporary men.⁷¹

Cambridge's feminist, or blue-stocking, heroines tend to disprove the idea that the New Woman is anti-marriage and anti-children. For Dinah French, the 'strong-minded' and 'independent' heroine of *A Platonic Friendship* (1905),⁷² or Esther Livingstone, the medical student in *The Eternal Feminine* (1907),⁷³ the potential for romance emerges once they meet men with whom they can establish a companionate relationship. At the end of *A Marked Man*, Sue Delavel is happily married to Noel Rutledge, and the mother of a newborn child. By embracing both marriage and motherhood, Sue demonstrates that the modern woman did not automatically need to shun her domestic responsibilities. Some critics have viewed such an ending as evidence of Cambridge's concurrence

⁷¹ Ada Cambridge, *A Marriage Ceremony*, 3rd edn, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1894, pp. 24-5.

⁷² Ada Cambridge, *A Platonic Friendship*, George Bell & Sons, London, [1907?], p. 141 and p. 174.

⁷³ Ada Cambridge, *The Eternal Feminine*, George Bell and Sons, London, 1907.

'with prevailing attitudes towards women's roles in her time'.⁷⁴ However, *A Marked Man* should also be seen in the context of contested debates in the press about the nature of the advanced, or modern, woman. In light of such debates, Cambridge can be seen to promote a positive image of new womanhood that challenged the anti-feminist caricatures of the popular press.

In terms of its heroine, setting and narrative structure, Frances Emily Russell's *Joyce Martindale* bears a number of interesting similarities to *A Marked Man*. The novel is set in the 1880s in Sydney. Joyce Martindale is the daughter of a solicitor in a leading Sydney firm and, like Sue Delavel, a privileged resident of Darling Point. Like Sue and, indeed, 'like all Australians', Joyce is also a 'true patriot' who displays a love for the bush, and maintains there is 'more beauty in the twisted convolutions of an ancient gum-tree than in the smooth bole and rich green foliage of the silver elm or beech'.⁷⁵ Joyce is a 'young woman of the present day' in terms of her views and interests (p. 6). She is intelligent and, the narrator explains, her 'ambition' has 'always been that of scholarship', although there is little evidence in the novel to support this aspect of Joyce's character (p. 15). In this often satirical novel of the upper-class social scene, socialising occupies most of Joyce's time. An impression is conveyed of a young woman with few outlets for her intellectual and scholarly interests.

This may well have been the experience, at times, of Frances Russell (née Robey) herself. Russell, the wife of bank manager Henry Russell, was at the centre of late-nineteenth-century Sydney high society: newspaper society columnists recorded her presence at various 'at homes', meetings at the Victoria Club, and fashionable afternoon teas.⁷⁶ Even her decision to take a twelve-

⁷⁴ Wakeling, op. cit., p. 623.

⁷⁵ Mrs H. E. Russell, *Joyce Martindale*, Remington and Co, London/Sydney, 1894, p. 6 and p. 65. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

⁷⁶ Born 1846 and died 1899. Some biographical information comes from Debra Adelaide, *Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographic Guide*, Pandora, London, 1988, p. 173. Other information comes from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 1896, p. 7 and 13 February 1897, p. 7; and the *Illustrated Sydney News*, 18 June 1892, p. 4 and 6 August 1892, p. 14.

month tour of Europe with her husband was reported by the *Sydney Mail*.⁷⁷ Along with other prominent Sydney women, such as Rose Scott and Louisa Macdonald, Russell also participated in the women's movement. She attended women's suffrage meetings, helped raise funds for the new Women's College, and was one of the first Vice-Presidents of the Sydney Women's Literary Society.

Joyce Martindale is generally a less adventurous heroine than Sue Delavel when it comes to independently exploring the city streets. Her own incursion into Sydney takes the form of philanthropic work. A sermon delivered by the new curate, Everard Trewyn, inspires Joyce to devote less time to indulging in social pleasures and more time to helping others (the curate's emphasis on the 'reward of abstinence' becomes especially significant towards the end of the novel) (p. 29). Joyce subsequently becomes involved in establishing a club for Sydney's young women who work in the city. Based on the assumption that none of these women would work in a factory by choice, the club's very middle-class philanthropic goal is to help the girls, who will 'eventually become wives and mothers', by combining religious instruction with the teaching of domestic skills (p. 52). Russell explores issues of class and gender inequalities in the scenes where Joyce ventures into the less salubrious parts of Sydney and encounters working-class women for the first time:

these wild unkempt girls with the training of the city upon them...were quick to recognise a stranger, although she was not wholly so to them. For, standing, as was their custom, at the entrance-gates of the great hall where many of the large balls of the city were held, they had often watched her ascend the broad steps leading to the vestibule, the light which fell full upon her revealing her to them, whilst they, standing back in the shadow, were naught to her but the

⁷⁷ 30 January 1897, p. 221.

offscouring of the city, with its poverty and dirt and other not-to-be-comprehended mysteries (pp. 52-3).

Suddenly, women previously invisible to Joyce are rendered visible. She observes the girls' inferior dress and unpleasant smell and experiences a 'sense of repulsion hitherto quite unknown to her' (p. 53). Yet it is precisely the heroine's shock at the discrepancy between her own life, and the lives of the young women working twelve-hour-days in Sydney's factories, that awakens her to the reality of gender oppression: 'is it not unjust or illegal that these girls should have to work such long hours in a country where men always refuse to work more than eight?' she asks (p. 58). Upon further investigation, Joyce learns of the absence of a proper Factories Inspection Act that would regulate the conditions endured by these women, and begins to question the absence of the political power women need to improve their situation: 'If women had votes', she argues, 'as they ought to have, such injustices would soon be remedied' (p. 59). This statement horrifies one of the club's more conservative helpers, who is astonished that a girl 'brought up' as Joyce has been would 'want to have a vote' and to mix herself up in politics, without 'knowing what it might lead to' (p. 59).

Reviewers tended to ignore Russell's interest in social and political reforms for women. A review in the *Sydney Mail* concluded that *Joyce Martindale* could be described as a 'society' novel, and added that '[f]ortunately, we do not yet look to lady-novelists for guidance on points of social or political economy'.⁷⁸ Despite this assessment, Joyce's involvement with the women's club is the catalyst for her feminist awakening, and is also evidence of Russell's interest in social reform. Henceforth, Joyce begins to challenge the club's endorsement of separate spheres for men and women and questions the basis of women's social, economic and political inequality. The heroine's political awareness even threatens to spill over into, and interfere with, the romance plot. A tension soon

⁷⁸ 27 January 1894, p. 176. Reviews also appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on 20 January 1894, p. 9 and the *Australasian*, 17 February 1894, p. 306.

emerges between Joyce's burgeoning feminism and her growing desire for Everard Trewyn. Joyce's views about women's suffrage do not endear her to the curate, who expresses his hope that she is not 'one of the women who clamour for political rights' (p. 113). Unlike Noel Rutledge, Everard Trewyn is firmly committed to the church, and to the biblical notion that 'woman was to be subject to man, and that her ornament was to be that of a meek and quiet spirit'. From a modern feminist perspective, it is hard not to feel disappointed with the direction of the story from this point. Although Joyce continues to participate in the club, this is increasingly represented as less important - in terms of the narrative focus - than her relationship with Everard. This heroine is apparently unable to reconcile completely her political and romantic interests.

While the main plot subsequently assumes a more conservative tone, Russell produces a second and provocative story line about an unhappy marriage marked by infidelity - another similarity to *A Marked Man*. Much of *Joyce Martindale* is set on a property in Victoria, Glenbrae, where Jason Saldern lives with his wife Alice, who is a foil for the newer heroine. Russell highlights the problem of 'untrained' and 'uneducated' (p. 232) women like Alice, who view marriage as the 'essential object of existence' (p. 132). She has no concept of a woman pursuing her own intellectual or career ambitions. The idea that

women should seek to usurp any of the functions of men seemed to her far less feasible and much more ridiculous than it would have appeared to the purer temperament and loftier aspirations of Joyce Martindale (p. 232).

Consequently, Alice, who has married for convenience rather than love, 'hated to think of the tie' that bound her to her husband (p. 153). Through a series of coincidences, Everard Trewyn's brother Richard, believed dead, shows up as a stock rider at Glenbrae. 'Dick' Trewyn also turns out to have been the former lover of Alice Saldern, and the two decide to run away together. This is the last

straw for Jason Saldern, already burdened with financial problems; upon discovering his wife is missing, he commits suicide.

The novel's treatment of infidelity is somewhat surprising in that, while Jason Saldern's suicide is a particularly melodramatic consequence, the narrative does not conform to the usual pattern in Victorian fiction where the 'villains' suffer retribution for their actions. On the contrary, Alice and Dick set up house together in Melbourne, where they enjoy 'new-found domestic happiness' (p. 315). While they are forced to use pseudonyms, there is nothing to suggest their relationship will necessarily fail. Though neither character is presented as particularly honourable, they are not necessarily blamed either. For Joyce, the prospect of living the kind of life Alice has with Dick Trewyn 'would have been so utterly distasteful', but Alice is simply shown to have behaved as might be expected of a woman of her traditionally limited education and upbringing (p. 314). However, Alice's willingness to act on her desire for Dick Trewyn, regardless of the cost, is unfavourably contrasted with Joyce's capacity to rise above the physical: whilst Alice 'magnified the question of sex as between man and woman', Joyce's 'ideal was of a communion of soul, in which the feminine element should be the guide and inspiration of the physical' (p. 232). Thus, Joyce comes to represent an image of modern and ideal womanhood that has quite conventional foundations. The narrator implies that Joyce's observance of her more traditionally 'feminine' role as a moral guardian would prevent her from ever making a marriage of convenience, or allowing herself to be ruled by physical/sexual or material needs.

In the events that follow, *Joyce Martindale* draws heavily on eugenicist and imperialist discourses. In the novel's final melodramatic twist, Everard Trewyn learns of his brother's existence and the fact that Dick spent time in Pentridge prison for embezzlement of money belonging to Joyce's father. When Joyce's father discovers the undesirable connection, he refuses permission for his daughter to marry the curate. Joyce's mother also plays a crucial role in dissuading her daughter from acting on her desire for Everard, reminding

Joyce of the risks attached to having a child to a man with such hereditary weaknesses. Women have a responsibility, she suggests, to 'contribute towards the progress of mankind by the evolution of the higher forms of humanity' and the 'repression of all that is lowest in the type' (p. 289). Joyce rather obediently agrees to abide by her parents' wishes. The religious theme of self-sacrifice and abstinence, which emerged during the curate's sermon, features strongly in the novel's closing pages.

Eugenics offered feminists 'an illusion of power without challenging the existing separation of male and female spheres of influence'.⁷⁹ In other words, it still gave women an important role in public life - one that stemmed from their place in the domestic sphere. Given its links to theories about the 'naturalism' of motherhood, the eugenics debate could easily be turned against feminists, and used to argue that women's entry into the public sphere would lead to their neglect of domestic and procreative duties. *Joyce Martindale's* answer to this dilemma is to emphasise that, by not marrying Everard, Joyce is enforcing selective breeding, and protecting the quality, rather than the quantity, of Anglo-Saxon stock. This ending enabled Russell to avoid having to deal with the difficult consequences of promoting either marriage or motherhood as women's natural duty. It also puts forward an argument in favour of exercising sexual restraint - a common late-nineteenth-century way that women protested against unwanted motherhood, prostitution in the marriage bed and the sexual double standard more generally.

The eugenics movement was, like the feminist movement, often imbricated in the new imperialism, a point aptly demonstrated in the concluding pages of *Joyce Martindale*. Everard is appointed chaplain to the New South Wales contingent on its way to the Sudan to avenge General Gordon's death. The narrator celebrates the Australian contingent of coming men sent 'to prove to the outer barbarian that England's sons had not degenerated, nor the force of their arm weakened beneath the influences of a soft and southern clime' (p.

322). As Joyce proudly farewells Everard at the wharf, she too is shown to do her part for Great Britain. In demonstrating that her primary allegiance is to the race, rather than to any particular man, geographical location or national identity, this heroine is truly a 'daughter of the old and new world' (p. 18).

IV. Overseas Adventures: Tasma, *The Penance of Portia James* (1891) and Iota, *A Comedy in Spasms* (1895)

The Australian Girl's national and feminine identity was properly tested during her overseas experiences and adventures. Tasma's *The Penance of Portia James* and Iota's *A Comedy in Spasms* both present an Australian Girl heroine who, in the course of travelling to cosmopolitan cities in England and Europe, comes face to face with the New Woman. In this way, Tasma and Iota explored the Australian Girl's relationship to other female/feminist cultural icons in the context of an international feminist movement.

In Tasma's *The Penance of Portia James*, the heroine, Portia James, demonstrates that far from being inferior to English women, the Australian Girl boasts the superior attributes of adaptability and modernity. Portia is enjoying her first social season in London when the novel opens. This 'Australian bush maiden', who has galloped bare-backed on horses, wielded a stock whip and generally been permitted to 'run wild during the greater portion of her life', has convincingly blended into London life.⁸⁰ Stylish and independent, Portia travels 'alone and unattended' through London's streets on her way to visit an Art Gallery (p. 11). On this particular morning, one of her male admirers, the English artist Harry Tolhurst, has contrived to bump into her. Portia is 'conscious of enjoying the sense of unrestraint the early morning meeting seemed to bring with it', and the two discuss art in a manner that hovers 'upon the brink of a flirtation' (pp. 14-15). Portia's act of travelling through London

⁷⁹ Ledger, op. cit., p. 70.

⁸⁰ Tasma (Jessie Couvreur), *The Penance of Portia James*, United States Book Company, 1891, pp. 82-3. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

alone, and her conversation with a man whom she does not know well, suggest she is modern and unconventional.

While the novel's action is not actually set in Australia, the presence of an Australian heroine reveals Tasma's interest in exploring the relationship between Australian and English/European feminism.⁸¹ Margaret Harris suggests that:

The institution of marriage, and the terms on which it operates, are at issue in all Tasma's novels, which though more often seen only as colonial romance, should also be considered in the context of the 'New Woman' fiction produced in England in the 1890s...the Australianness of her novels is inextricable from their dramatising of 'the woman question'.⁸²

The Penance of Portia James is one of several novels in which Tasma explores the consequences of young Australian women precipitously entering engagements. It is also, like her other novels, in many ways an anti-romance. Portia and Harry Tolhurst are prevented from exploring their feelings for each other by the fact of Portia's earlier engagement to an Australian, John Morrisson. Portia's impending marriage is described as a 'dread ceremony' (p. 41) which signals the beginning of her 'imprisonment' (p. 62). Familial obligation - Portia's step-brother Wilmer is financially indebted to Morrisson - along with the upbringing Portia has received under the supervision of the Church of England are put forward as reasons for Portia's seemingly 'passive acceptance of her fate' (p. 49). The extent to which women can assume control of their own

⁸¹ For other discussions of this novel, see Giles, *op. cit.*, ch. VI; Rowena Mohr, 'The Vampire's Kiss: Gender, Desire and Power in *Dracula* and *The Penance of Portia James*', *Australasian Victorian Studies Journal*, vol. 4, 1998, pp. 80-7; and Margaret Harris, 'The Writing of Tasma, The Work of Jessie Couvreur', in Adelaide, *A Bright and Fiery Troop*, *op. cit.*, ch. 12.

⁸² Harris, *ibid.*, p. 166.

lives is a recurring theme: the heroine seems both unwilling and unable to put a halt to the events leading up to her marriage.

Like a number of the novels already discussed in this chapter, *The Penance of Portia James* dramatises the way women's sexuality determined their social and cultural identities. When John Morrisson arrives in London to collect his bride, he seems to view Portia purely in terms of her capacity to fulfil his sexual needs. She is 'literally deprived of breath' by his 'hungry, devouring kisses' (p. 37). The reality of the sexual double standard is exposed when, only hours after the wedding ceremony, Portia learns of the existence of her husband's former mistress, Mary Willet, and illegitimate child. Upon hearing how Mary was taken advantage of by a man who abused his social power, Portia begins to question the category of the 'fallen' woman, particularly as she has known of it from books (p. 128). When Mary turns out to be the woman who modelled for Harry Tolhurst's picture of Madonna and child, the traditional Madonna/Magdalene dichotomy is unsettled. Subsequently, the heroine determines on leaving her husband. Tasma's novels expose the plight of Australian women unhappily married to adulterers, gamblers and alcoholics. *The Penance of Portia James* explores the options available to a woman who refuses to remain in an unhappy marriage. One such option was to follow the independent New Woman's example.

As already indicated, novels featuring the Australian Girl, and set in Australia, typically contrast the heroine with a more conservative type of woman. In novels that traced the Australian Girl's adventures overseas, this narrative structure was often reversed. In *The Penance of Portia James*, Portia is contrasted with a more radical female type in a way that posits the Australian Girl as the more conservative. After meeting Mary Willet, Portia flees to Paris and seeks the protection of the 'emancipated' Anna Ross, a woman she met on the ship to England, who is stereotypically representative of the Advanced Woman (p. 225). Described by the narrator as one of the 'solitary women with male brains', Anna is immediately constructed as antithetical to Portia, the 'naive'

child from the Australian bush (p. 86). Anna writes a letter to Portia which arrives on the day of the latter's wedding, in which she states:

...marriage, as it is at present understood, is the most foolish and suicidal step a woman can take. Why should we bind ourselves to belie for the remainder of our natural lives our real natures, our real selves, as expressed in the new instincts, promptings, or desires we may feel?...As it stands at present, I hold it in abhorrence, as one of the cumbersome contrivances by which man, who has systematized war and rapine, and oppression and persecution, has further burdened our existence upon earth (pp. 90-1).

A denizen of the bohemian Latin Quarter, Anna revels in an environment in which there is no all-seeing 'Mrs Grundy' (p. 193). A woman artist, preoccupied with the traditionally male act of artistic creation, she belongs to what Janet Wolff describes as one of the most 'transgressive' categories a woman could occupy at the time.⁸³ Anna Ross refuses even to acknowledge the conventional institutions of 'family, county, Church and State' (p. 173).

In Paris, Portia finally has the opportunity to sample this New Woman's way of life. Temporarily free from familial ties (she assumes her mother's maiden name), she is encouraged by Anna to embrace the sense of 'power' that comes with financial independence (p. 207). Anna proposes for Portia a career as an artist's model - ironically, the same career pursued by the hapless Mary Willet - and wants to sketch her as an Impenitent Magdalene: the image operates, once again, as a reminder of the tenuous boundary separating the 'fallen' /unmarried from the respectable/married woman. When Portia inadvertently meets up with Harry Tolhurst in Paris, there is an immediate temptation for her to embrace Anna's free love doctrine.

⁸³ Janet Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1995, p. 104.

Yet, while Tasma's novel flirts with its heroine's conversion to Anna Ross's way of thinking, it ultimately rejects the New Woman's agenda. Portia is unable to feel at home in the 'strange new world' of Paris, with its formidable crowds and sexually charged atmosphere (p. 192). The Parisian women wear a look on their faces that causes her to blush. In contrast to the confidence with which she negotiated London's streets, Portia feels timid and self-conscious in the unsavoury Latin Quarter. Thus, Tasma demonstrates the undesirable consequences of women attempting to assert their independence. Wherever she goes, Portia attracts unwanted attention from men. The heroine's naivety and status as an Australian Girl are never quite so apparent as here, in the proximity of sexually independent New Women. The more time Portia spends with Anna and her friends, the more disturbed she becomes about a perceived lack of moral guidelines: 'She heard them characterise conduct as weak or strong, but never as right or wrong' (p. 192).

In the absence of clearly defined moral and social codes, *The Penance of Portia James* increasingly reveals a lack of sympathy toward the New Woman and what she represents, especially her association with the free love doctrine. Harry Tolhurst draws on his paternal authority to advise Portia 'as father, brother, lover' not to become a convert to Anna's school, which believes 'love and inclination are to be the only arbiters' and that 'honour and duty and self-control are to have no say in the matter at all' (p. 273). The New Woman is foreign to the Australian Girl, and not only by virtue of her location. This sense of foreignness is also emphasised in the narrator's sketch of Anna's heredity. The atavistic product of an alliance formed generations ago in her family between an English officer and a Native American woman, Anna's 'swarthy, un-English skin' is visible evidence of the extent to which she is an aberration and 'thorn in the side' of her family (pp. 173-4). The subtext is that the uncivilised, savage component in Anna's constitution explains her difference from more 'civilised' western women. By extension, the New Woman herself becomes an aberration in western society: Anna Ross is ultimately little more than a caricature of the degenerate and sexually promiscuous New Woman.

As is the case in many New Woman novels, Portia embraces her womanhood at the end of the novel - as both wife and surrogate mother - after having undergone a brief period of rebellion. She returns to London where, despite encountering an unrepentant Morrisson, she agrees to Mary Willet's dying request that she take care of both the child and his father. The heroine's apparent obedience toward patriarchal law raises the question of whether Tasma's novel, generally, upholds that law. Unconvinced that *The Penance of Portia James* can be 'labelled a New Woman novel',⁸⁴ Rowena Mohr argues that its ability to 'challenge the ideological basis of the Victorian sexual economy is compromised by its author's ambivalence about the kinds of social change the New Woman demanded'.⁸⁵ Mohr notes, however, that the novel still 'does go some way towards undermining its own reluctant complicity by representing the very things which it cannot be seen to support'. It is also important to remember that the novel's ending offers little real endorsement of Portia's decision to return to Morrisson. Doubts about her motives are planted in the reader's mind:

Did Mary's child forge the chain that must bind her henceforth to John? Was it that her short insight into Anna's life had been a disillusion, and that she was afraid of launching, as Anna had done, upon a rudderless existence?...Was she moved by the sudden impulse to immolate herself that has converted so many women into nuns and nursing sisters? (p. 290)

In the final scene, Portia is on a ship with John and his child, bound for Australia, and 'bravely trying to smile' (p. 292). Tasma apportions a certain amount of blame to Portia for the predicament in which she finds herself. The novel's title offers a clue that the punishment for her passivity is to be life-long penance. The fact that this penance is to be served in Australia may also

⁸⁴ Mohr, op. cit., p. 81.

⁸⁵ Mohr, op. cit., pp. 86-7.

suggest it is specifically the Australian Girl who is punished for her failure to adequately challenge socio-sexual codes: the consequence of Portia's passivity is the preservation of a sexual status quo that disadvantages women. At one point, just before meeting the dying Mary Willet, Portia 'reflected that only where a woman's affections are fixed there can she cast her anchor' (p. 277). Portia's return to her husband, and to Australia, signify an attempt to avoid the New Woman's 'rudderless existence'. Ultimately, however, as she embarks on her journey, there is no assurance that her destination will provide her with the certainty she desires.

The first part of Iota's *A Comedy in Spasms*, published in August 1895 as part of Hutchinson and Co's 'Zeit-Geist' series, is set on a property near Melbourne, where the spirited romantic heroine, Elizabeth Marrable, lives with her family. Elizabeth boasts all the necessary attributes of the eponymous Australian Girl heroine: confidence that borders on audacity, intelligence, and a love of physical activity. This 'unique and quite beautiful' girl is celebrated for being a 'healthy type'.⁸⁶ Her Australian identity is most overtly demonstrated in her love of the landscape, her 'longing for the open, broad sunlight, the silence' of the Australian plains (p. 27). Like so many Australian Girl heroines, Elizabeth is also shown to have doubts about whether or not to marry: when the novel opens, she is hesitating about accepting a marriage proposal from the heir to an earldom, the 'Honourable Ferdinand Fitz-Clarence Falconer', whom she is not sure she loves.

After her father is killed in a farming accident, Elizabeth demonstrates the Australian Girl's competence by immediately stepping in to assume his place as head of the household, and take responsibility for the family's financial difficulties, which turn out to be more significant than first thought. In the face of her mother's contrasting incompetence and lack of interest in the reality of having to live on only £500 pounds a year, Elizabeth also assumes the role of

surrogate mother to her younger siblings. The significance of motherhood is a recurring theme in this novel, and in Iota's fiction generally. In *A Comedy in Spasms*, women's value is measured in terms of the extent to which they possess, or are capable of developing, motherly instinct. On various occasions in the novel, Elizabeth demonstrates through her love of children, particularly of her younger sister Judith, that she was 'made to be a mother' (p. 248). In this way, Iota, like a number of late-nineteenth-century women writers, celebrates women's unique contribution to society as mothers.

The somewhat romantic depiction of the value of motherhood in Iota's fiction is accompanied by a realistic portrayal of the difficulties women encounter in finding an appropriate husband and, by extension, father for their children. Unsure of whether Falconer is her ideal partner, Elizabeth delays her decision about whether to marry him, and instead decides that she and her family should travel to London in order for her brother to attend Oxford (at no stage does she entertain the idea of pursuing higher education herself), and try to manage on the small amount of money left to them. In nineteenth-century novels, ships commonly feature as forces of change and transition. They offer a space in-between countries and cultures, where people and ideas meet, and national identities are explored. So, on the ship to England, Elizabeth's identity undergoes the first serious test. One of the ship's other passengers, Mrs Leslie, notices that Elizabeth stands apart from English women:

"Just look at the girl there, as unconscious and gay as a trout in a stream, and the whole crowd of men grovelling at her feet. An English girl in her position would, I'm open to bet...queen it, smirk and blush, or be detestably smart and fast...And how did she learn to dress like that...in that snake-beridden abomination of desolation of a Bush?" (pp. 77-8).

⁸⁶ Iota (Kathleen Mannington Caffyn), *A Comedy in Spasms*, Hutchinson & Co, Zeit-Geist Library, London, 1895, pp. 23-4. All future page references are to this edition and will be given

Mrs Leslie's friend, the 'old maid' Miss Sefton, goes on to speculate that the effect of hot suns and clean air on the 'stiff British soul' is a belief in the 'holiness of amusement as a factor in development' (p. 79). She suggests that this adds 'enormously' to the 'attractions' of the Australian Girl. These two women represent the Australian Girl as a freer, more genuine, and in some ways a more modern female type than the English girl. The only area of the heroine's constitution they identify as questionable is her 'jerky' moral sense: Miss Sefton fears for Elizabeth in her dealings with men (p. 81). The absence of a fully developed sense of morality, it is indicated, makes the heroine more vulnerable to the teachings of Mrs Morton, whom Elizabeth also meets on the ship. Mrs Morton, a woman who has separated from her unfaithful husband, is representative of the New Woman.

A Comedy in Spasms initially appears to prise open a space for a newer and more modern woman. Iota presents an unflattering portrait of the traditional Victorian woman, epitomised by Elizabeth's selfish and 'sloppy-minded' mother, whose passivity prevents her from being an agent of her own destiny (p. 81). The fact that Elizabeth has been born in Australia, and must bear the taint of being a 'Colonial', is the source of guilt and embarrassment to her mother. However, as seen above, others on board the ship celebrate this Australian Girl for her difference from English women, her independence and open-mindedness: 'There was nothing cramped in her; there were no local prejudices to warp her - no parochial limitations about her to make one chafe and fret against that feeling of tightness that absolute civilisation brings' (p. 156).

A Comedy in Spasms does not, however, endorse a complete rebellion of the kind promoted by the New Woman. As with Anna Ross, the representation of Mrs Morton is largely an unsympathetic one: she is referred to as the 'Basilisk', a reptilian creature intent on corrupting the heroine. Elizabeth's perception that Mrs Morton's eyes are 'those of one inspired' is corrected by the narrator, who

in parentheses in the text.

suggests, rather, they have simply 'grown mad from morbid introspection' (p. 179). Both Tasma and Iota bring their Australian Girl heroines into direct contact with the New Woman and explore how far she will go in emulation. The fact that both meetings take place on board a ship, a force for change, may suggest the inevitability of the New Woman's impact on Australian women. However, both novels also convey a certain amount of ambivalence about the Australian Girl coming under the New Woman's influence in the first place. As in *The Penance of Portia James*, Iota's heroine is posited as a more innocent and conservative type of woman when compared with the New Woman character. Mrs Morton serves a number of important functions in the novel, not least of which is her role in taking the edge off the Australian Girl's naivety and educating her about feminism. By introducing the Australian Girl to a character who espouses and represents more radical values and ways of life, Iota makes feminist issues visible that would otherwise be difficult for her heroine to promote. Mrs Morton rails against the tendency of women to endorse the very notions responsible for their oppression: "You wrap up things in sacredness...It's a sacred thing, forsooth, to let yourself be kicked to death by a drunken husband, and to die with a lie on your lips to screen him" (p. 176-7). Like Anna Ross, Mrs Morton is opposed to institutionalised marriage and in favour of free love:

"The marriage of men and women in a church, amid pæans of praise and thanksgiving, is an evil thing - do you hear? - because it's irrevocable - everlasting, without redress."

(p. 123)

Elizabeth is both repelled by, and attracted to, the New Woman. She can see that the price of expressing such radical feminist views is to acquire, as Mrs Morton has done, the status of a social pariah. Yet, the ideas that Mrs Morton implants in Elizabeth cause her to completely sever her relationship with Falconer, thus dismissing the prospect of ever being persuaded to marry him.

Mrs Morton promises Elizabeth shelter and, by implication, another way of life should she ever need it.

Mrs Morton's agenda remains a strongly subversive subtext to the novel's main romance or, rather, anti-romance narrative. Again, as in *The Penance of Portia James*, circumstances prevent Elizabeth Marrable pursuing an ideal romance with a man she meets on the ship, Tom Temple. This time, however, Tom's engagement to an English woman is responsible for the heroine's romantic expectations being thwarted. Although they briefly contemplate the possibility of Tom breaking his engagement, Elizabeth is already aware of England's formidable social and moral rules: "'it's England in which we live; and hereditary honour and virtue live there too'" (p. 163). Interestingly, she speculates that, were they to live in Arcady, things might be different. It is one of several occasions in *A Comedy in Spasms* when the rigidity and stuffiness of English society are contrasted with the freedom of Arcady-Australia. When the Marrables arrive in London, the desire to conform to social expectations and defend their gentility leads Mrs Marrable to spend money extravagantly. Her failure to curb her extravagances in the interests of her children's survival - her failure, in other words, to perform her motherly duties - again means the burden of responsibility is transferred to Elizabeth. Having presumed to step into the role of provider, Elizabeth learns that the conventionally feminine pursuit of marriage is the only real avenue for her to acquire an income. She enters a marriage of convenience with Colonel Richard Prynne, a kind-hearted, intelligent, yet sickly, former friend of her father's: Miss Sefton is unequivocal in her opinion that Elizabeth has finally 'sold herself' into marriage (p. 211). Again, much of the blame for Elizabeth's predicament is indirectly levelled at Mrs Marrable, for her inability to provide her daughter with appropriate motherly guidance.

In the style of many New Woman novels, *A Comedy in Spasms* proceeds to explore the problems of marriage. It is not long before Elizabeth is shown to be restless and dissatisfied in her marriage to an older and sickly man, with whom

she has little in common. It should be noted that the husband is not demonised in this novel. Emasculated by his infirmity, Prynne exists primarily as the catalyst for the heroine to experience the traditionally feminine roles of wife and nurse at once - roles which start to overwhelm and suffocate her. It is the idea of domestic entrapment in marriage, for both women and men, which becomes important. Elizabeth gives up almost every 'amusement' in order to attend to her husband's needs (p. 258). Although she derives some comfort from spending time with her younger sister, the absence of a child of her 'own' adds to her misery (p. 256). After a while, the restrictions of marriage become indistinguishable from the oppressiveness of England itself, 'a pigmy land' in which she finds herself unable to 'breathe' (p. 258). The idea that the Australian Girl's freedom is curbed is given dramatic force through the image of Elizabeth riding her horse along the same Row every day, which 'after a time, began to choke and cramp her in much the same way that her house did' (p. 251). The claustrophobia she experiences on these rides is contrasted with flashbacks to the wide and expansive Australian plains, where it is her 'one desire' to escape.

One of the most interesting aspects of the development of Elizabeth Marrable's character is a growing sense of her physical, and even sexual, frustration in her marriage. The unexpected arrival of Tom Temple in London, with news that he never married after all, causes Elizabeth to contemplate marital rebellion. Upon encountering Tom while out riding, the heroine invites him to join her for a "real ride" out of London:

"Now bring me to this emancipated air. And we shall get tea somewhere, or bread-and-cheese and beer before a pub, or light a fire in a field and have boiled tea." (p. 261)

The heroine's momentarily unleashed passion is metaphorically expressed through the act of galloping her horse outside the Row's boundaries. Elizabeth assumes the role of initiator, persuading Tom of the need to "forget civilisation". The transgressive nature of the proposal - of gender, sexual and

class boundaries - is highlighted when she notices them being observed by a British workman, the proprietor 'of a moral code which must be respected' (p. 262).

As in *The Penance of Portia James*, the heroine's dramatic thoughts of rebellion against social and sexual convention are soon followed by a realisation of the need to return to a traditional notion of womanhood. Like Harry Tolhurst, it is Tom who symbolically upholds the law of the father by reminding Elizabeth of the risks attached to violating social codes. In the final pages of the novel, Tom and Elizabeth meet again in a park where the heroine makes another impassioned plea about the need to abandon her unhappy marriage:

"Tom, can't you try to understand, just for one minute, that my life is a life of dishonour, and that in love - love like ours - is no dishonour. It is pure - lovely - Divine. We injure no one - nothing. There's no dishonour like that of the marriage of commerce, of necessity..."

In her agony, her confusion, in the madness of her despair, she was repeating verbatim the sentiments of her latest mentor. Mrs Morton's success in her cult of enlightening the young was undoubted (p. 279).

The narrator presents the New Woman's agenda as a dangerous force that threatens to claim another cult victim. Fortunately, Tom is there to exercise paternal restraint: he effectively closes off the avenue of free love when he fails to meet Elizabeth again after this scene. The novel puts forward a powerful argument against the marriage of convenience, only to then hurriedly retreat from endorsing the New Woman's radical answer. Iota, like Tasma, seems to have believed her heroine could not get away with such a solution. Ironically, the novel's reserve became the basis on which it was criticised by the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. While acknowledging the novel was a 'thoroughly readable, and even brilliant, little story', the review in the newspaper concluded:

One respects a good "sex problem" study when it gives the impression of genuineness. But Mrs Caffyn cramps her real powers by a deadly fear of the British Matron, yet cannot honestly throw in her lot with her. She toys with the pale ghosts of her own theories instead of clothing them in good healthy flesh and blood.⁸⁷

Like *The Penance of Portia James, A Comedy in Spasms* ultimately endorses the status quo in its heroine's observance of the institution of marriage. It also endorses a similarly traditional idea about womanhood that is based on the mystique of motherhood.⁸⁸ The crucial difference between these novels and the ending of *A Marked Man*, which also elevates women's role as mothers, is that Cambridge presents the Australian Girl/New Woman heroine as happily married, and the mother of a child. For Portia James and Elizabeth Marrable, however, the discovery of the importance of motherhood becomes something of a compensation for their inability to rectify unhappy marital situations. The deciding moment for Elizabeth comes when she is reminded of her little sister Judith, and realises that, were she to abandon her husband, 'never again could she look into the face of a little child; never could she let one lie upon her breast' (p. 282). Unlike Portia James, Elizabeth Marrable is not sent back to Australia at the end of the novel. However, the fact that she is staying in England - a place she has consistently found so oppressive - in an unsatisfying marriage, also fails to offer much likelihood of happiness for this heroine.

V. The Career Girl: Mary Gaunt, *Kirkham's Find* (1897) and Lilian Turner, *Betty the Scribe* (1906)

Novels that featured the Australian Girl and the New Woman heroine often highlighted the lack of options available to women other than marriage and motherhood. At the end of Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, Sybylla rejects

⁸⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 28 September 1895, p. 9.

marriage, with the intention of pursuing her desire to write. A number of other Australian women writers, including Mary Gaunt and Lilian Turner, also present heroines who pursue their intellectual ambitions, and their desire for financial and social independence. Most importantly, these ambitions are given precedence over romantic interest in a way that distinguishes them from many other novels from the period.

Kirkham's Find presents a society in which, despite certain feminist advances, women were still expected to pursue marriage as their primary goal. Those who did not marry were automatically deemed superfluous and burdensome on their families. The heroine of *Kirkham's Find*, Phoebe Marsden, is the eldest daughter of a stock and station agent in Ballarat. With her father struggling financially, it becomes imperative that Phoebe and her sisters marry. However, at the ripe old age of twenty-three, and apparently lacking the good looks of her sister, Phoebe is already considered 'quite an old maid'.⁸⁹ When the cousins and farmers Allan Morrison and Ned Kirkham arrive on the scene, it soon becomes apparent to Phoebe that, although she is attracted to Allan, both men prefer her sister Nancy. Gaunt's heroine is convinced she has little hope of ever marrying.

As in several of the novels discussed so far in this chapter, *Kirkham's Find* is modern in the critique it offers of marriage, and of women's position in late-nineteenth-century society. Phoebe knows very well that a woman has 'neither position, nor place, nor money, nor anything else unless she marries' (p. 222). She also knows, however, the dangers of marriage without love. Although Phoebe insists she does not approve of a woman living with the man she loves out of wedlock - mainly on the basis that 'somebody would have to pay in the end, probably the woman' - she considers it a 'far more decent thing' than a

⁸⁸ In *A Yellow Aster*, the rebellious heroine also discovers her authentic womanhood through the mystique of motherhood.

⁸⁹ Mary Gaunt, *Kirkham's Find*, introduced by Kylie Tennant, afterword by Dale Spender, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, p. 4. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

marriage of convenience (p. 96). Her mother's marriage, to a man who comes across as tyrannical and irrational, is far from ideal. There is also the example of Phoebe's sister Nancy who lacks the strength of character to maintain her engagement to Ned Kirkham. A failed farmer, Kirkham eventually leaves to pursue his luck on the goldfields so he can afford to marry. Nancy becomes impatient and breaks their engagement to marry the solicitor Josiah Sampson, a man with whom she has little in common, but who offers financial security.

While various characters in the novel allude to reforms for women that were taking place, Gaunt makes it clear there were still significant barriers to overcome. Although some women, including Mary Gaunt herself, were beginning to attend university, they encountered substantial prejudice and hostility. Phoebe's brother Stanley demonstrates that being a man does not automatically make him a diligent university student. Yet, according to Stanley:

"all this talk about higher education for women is all bunkum. No fellow likes a learned wife. Let the women stick at home and mind their houses. A nice girl's pretty sure to get married in the end; what does she want spoiling herself earning her own living?" (pp. 10-11)⁹⁰

Even though she is a 'clever woman' with a love of reading, higher education is never presented as a real option for Phoebe (p. 273). Gaunt demonstrates how, in the face of such adverse circumstances, Phoebe has to rely on inner resources of strength and imagination.

Rather than patiently wait for a prospective husband to come along, Phoebe Marsden wants to be 'able to do without marrying'; she aspires to 'be somebody, to do something in the world' (p. 97). This unconventional heroine

⁹⁰ Gaunt failed to complete her degree. Bronwen Hickman suggests 'we are closer to the reasons that led Mary to drop out of university in Stanley's comments to Phoebe than we are in anything Mary Gaunt wrote about herself'. See Hickman, 'Mary Gaunt: An Australian Identity', *Overland*, 158, Autumn 2000, p. 59.

is determined to earn her own living, be 'quite independent', and continue improving herself 'like a man' (p. 100). Phoebe is quite 'new' in the sense that she actively sets out to realise her goal of financial and social independence. Furthermore, rather than pursuing the more conventional and, in Phoebe's view, 'dreadful' occupations of a middle-class woman, such as becoming a 'governess or companion', Phoebe decides to focus on beekeeping (p. 287). Significantly, however, she is shown to still need a certain amount of financial assistance and moral support from a man before she can realise her ambition: when Phoebe's father attempts to put a stop to the beekeeping, she is forced to accept a loan from her brother-in-law in order to purchase a small farm at Benger's Flat in southern Victoria.

Kirkham's Find subverts a typical nineteenth-century narrative structure whereby the masculine adventure story operated alongside the feminine domestic story. In the case of *Kirkham's Find*, two adventure narratives operate - Allan Morrison and Ned Kirkham's attempts to find gold, and Phoebe's farming adventure. Moreover, Phoebe is shown to be a competent and intelligent farmer, and it is impossible for the reader to avoid contrasting her success with Morrison and Kirkham's failure, first as farmers, and subsequently as gold miners. Phoebe, a 'strong, active young woman' who is 'not afraid of work', is soon running a sustainable farm which sells honey and other produce (p. 241). In the evenings, she finds time to satisfy her intellectual needs by reading Shakespeare.

In becoming a farmer, Mary Gaunt's heroine immediately transgresses not only gender boundaries, but also class constraints. In the eyes of her mother, Phoebe's very gentility is jeopardised. This 'obstinate girl' is, according to Mrs Marsden, so 'very unlike' the 'ideal woman' (p. 230). Upper middle-class Victorian society did not permit a lady to work for money, let alone take the 'very improper' step of leaving her family to live alone. Mrs Marsden is convinced that her daughter is demeaning herself by stepping 'outside the bounds of her home' and selling honey 'like any farmer's wife' (p. 141).

Gaunt's novel questions the assumption that an unmarried woman is superfluous, and makes her the basis of its reinvention of the 'ideal woman'. With the success of her farm, Phoebe is finally able to boast that she is 'independent - above all things' (p. 293). By this time she is thirty, an age when, according to the use-by-date imposed by society, a woman was usually considered 'old and worn out', especially with regard to the marriage market (p. 127). Moreover, Phoebe's very difference from other women is shown to be precisely what makes her ideal. Her independence is gradually revealed to make her a far more impressive woman than her more traditionally feminine, attractive, yet shallow and unreliable sister Nancy. Phoebe wins praise from a neighbouring male farmer as being the 'right sort of woman' (p. 249). She can also be considered a version of the New Woman. A year before the publication of *Kirkham's Find*, the outspoken and often anti-feminist social writer for the *Bulletin*, Sappho Smith, reported on the emergence in Australia of the New Woman farmer:

The two ladies who have conceived the idea of being farmers on their own account, and are already working a small holding with success somewhere in the neighbourhood of Healesville, Vic., are both highly-educated women, one being an accomplished linguist, while the other, a devoted student, has taken a university degree. Besides milking cows and hoeing potatoes, they are coaching up some of the youth of the neighbourhood for matric. Both are young and good-looking. They are quite a new kind of New Woman. Instead of shrieking their hate of man on the platform, they take up one of his occupations without making a fuss.⁹¹

⁹¹ *Bulletin*, 21 March 1896, p. 9.

Smith would presumably have approved of the quiet and unassuming way Phoebe Marsden goes about establishing herself in a traditionally male occupation.

Kirkham's Find puts forward an image of a modern and independent 'new' woman that is not incompatible with more traditional ideals of femininity. The novel's title refers to Ned Kirkham's (re)discovery of Phoebe five years after he first left Ballarat. Upon turning up in Benger's Flat, Kirkham is struck by the attractiveness of this newly self-assured and independent woman. As his feelings for Phoebe develop, Kirkham fears that this 'new style of woman' is completely 'content' to lead a 'single life', and has no interest in marriage (p. 309). He is soon reassured, however, that Phoebe Marsden has not converted to a way of life stereotypically associated with the New Woman. On the contrary, under Kirkham's gaze, Phoebe remains a

very woman still, a woman to be wooed and won, a woman well worth the winning. A tender, loving woman. What fairer jewel could any man desire to place in his household?
(p. 326)

The suggestion that Phoebe will now belong in Kirkham's household is not necessarily an ideal outcome according to a modern feminist perspective. The novel upholds women's domestic role in the sense that, all along, Phoebe has quietly hoped, 'as what woman does not hope', to some day be a 'wife and mother' (p. 190). However Gaunt can be seen to assert, like Ada Cambridge, a late-nineteenth-century feminist vision of the 'new' woman that counteracts the caricatures of masculine and degenerate New Women in the popular press. The above description of Phoebe is similar to the account of a 'completely womanly' New Woman, who is 'complementary' to the contemporary man, offered in Ada Cambridge's *A Marriage Ceremony*. As Susan Martin suggests, the rather traditional romantic ending of *Kirkham's Find* 'cannot blot out the message of the rest of the novel: that a woman is capable of an independent, single life, that

her first duty is to herself, and that unmarried life is as viable and attractive for a woman as it is for a man.⁹² Furthermore, Gaunt's novel promotes the idea that a woman's independence is not automatically incompatible, as it is for Sybylla Melvyn, with romantic love. Indeed, the romantic outcome of *Kirkham's Find* is only possible because Phoebe has first pursued opportunities for self-development. Ned Kirkham is attracted to Phoebe precisely because of her independence and confidence: in other words, because of her difference from other women. Gaunt also sets up a situation where, because of her financial independence, Phoebe is able freely to choose to marry for love, rather than for the mercenary reasons of her sister. There is arguably less of a sense of compromise at the end of Gaunt's novel than in the other novels discussed so far, perhaps with the exception of *A Marked Man*.

Lilian Turner's *Betty the Scribe* is the sequel to *An Australian Lassie*, published three years earlier, which tells the story of young Betty Bruce - one of five children living in genteel poverty near Sydney. Betty is a typical Australian Girl - a tomboy who dresses up in her brother's clothes and fights his enemies on his behalf. Even as a young girl, Betty proves fascinated by the subject of 'self-made women'.⁹³ At one stage, she runs away from home to try her luck as a singer on the streets of Sydney. While other girls plan to marry once they leave school, Betty is 'earnest in her intention to be something great', and decide on a 'career'.⁹⁴ In *Betty the Scribe*, the heroine, now a young woman, has concluded she wants to be a writer. Although *My Brilliant Career* is frequently touted as the ultimate novel about a woman's efforts to achieve independence, *Betty the Scribe* is in many ways a more comprehensive story of female independence.

Like Franklin, Turner dramatises how difficult it was for women to combine their domestic duties with intellectual interests. Before Betty can realise her

⁹² Sue Martin, "'Sad Sometimes, Lonely Often...Dull Never": Mary Gaunt, Traveller and Novelist', in Adelaide, *A Bright and Fiery Troop*, op. cit., p. 191. For another interpretation, see Dorothy Jones, 'Water, gold and honey: A discussion of *Kirkham's Find*', in Magarey et al, *Debutante Nation*, op. cit., ch. 15.

⁹³ Lilian Turner, *An Australian Lassie*, Ward, Lock & Co, London, 1903, p. 132.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

artistic ambitions, there are significant barriers to overcome, as there are for both Sybylla Melvyn and Phoebe Marsden. Once again, the heroine must demonstrate that she possesses the strength of character to conquer circumstance. Following her mother's death, the seventeen-year-old Betty has had to assume the primary responsibility of managing the Bruce household, and struggles to find time to write. The novel details Betty's largely futile attempts to incorporate writing into her daily routine, in between sewing, supervising her siblings, feeding the baby and preparing the family's meals. From 11am to 1pm, Betty plans to '[b]olt and bar' her door and write, but rarely do things go according to plan.⁹⁵

The impossibility of belonging even for separate hours to the two worlds - the world of romance and the world of reality - struck her tragically (p. 35).

The tension between romance and reality becomes an important theme. When Betty attempts to find time to write there are a series of mishaps, including burnt dinners and missing babies. At one stage she becomes so disillusioned that she buries all her writing materials in the garden.

Yet, although she is obviously better suited to writing than cooking, Betty is never shown to ignore her domestic duties. Turner's novel does not suggest that a woman with intellectual or career ambitions automatically neglects her domestic roles and sacrifices her femininity. Throughout this novel, Betty exists as a challenge to the spectre of a domestically and socially irresponsible New Woman, intent on selfishly fulfilling her own needs and desires. Turner introduces the familiar device whereby the new and modern heroine is contrasted with a traditional Victorian woman. In this novel, Betty provides a stark contrast to her elder sister Dorothea (Dot), who 'wanted earnestly to be a womanly woman' (p. 90). Dot's friend, Dr Mark Parbury, would undoubtedly

⁹⁵ Lilian Turner, *Betty the Scribe*, Ward, Lock & Co, London, 1906, p. 19. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

classify Betty as one of the unappealing New Women, 'bent on shaking the world to get her rights, or writing a book, or painting a picture, or, in short, doing anything but just the old-fashioned woman's work' (p. 125). Dot's eagerness to assure Dr Parbury that she, herself, is 'not a new woman' demonstrates the social stigma attached to this label (p. 126). Significantly, however, it is Dot who is shown to be the more selfish and self-absorbed sister when it comes to avoiding 'old-fashioned woman's work': she generally proves much more interested in wearing nice clothes than in assisting Betty to run the household.

One of the most unconventional features of *Betty the Scribe* is that it offers an empowering picture of a woman 'artist', driven by her creative impulses. Interestingly, although the novel's title immediately suggests the centrality of Betty's writing in the narrative, it does not really do justice to the seriousness with which the heroine approaches her career. The reference to Betty the 'Scribe' tends to connote an image of the traditional woman 'scribbler' - a word/image that often had the effect of trivialising a woman writer's occupation. Against this, however, Betty is described in the novel as a 'dreamer' and 'artist' whose career plans deserve to be taken seriously (p. 142). Like any real artist, she unashamedly thrives on the 'joy of conceiving and executing' her writing (p. 60). As is so typical of the Australian Girl heroine, Betty's father is her main role model and, importantly, her artistic mentor. But even Mr Bruce, an editor and small-time writer himself, is initially guilty of trivialising Betty's ambition to write: 'I'd be surprised if you didn't, seeing you're seventeen, and a girl' (p. 28). Although he advises her on her writing, Mr Bruce also proves frustratingly oblivious to the domestic demands on his daughter that prevent her from acting on her ambition. Nevertheless, as in *Kirkham's Find*, *Betty the Scribe* demonstrates the importance of a woman having a certain amount of moral and financial support from a man if she is to embark on a career.

Even more important than her father's support is the assistance Betty eventually does receive from her sister: it is Dot's willingness to return home and take over Betty's domestic responsibilities that, for the first time, enables the heroine to resume her writing and leave home to become a 'self-supporting young woman' (p. 198). This is shown to be a defining moment in Betty's life and career. Turner anticipates Virginia Woolf's call for a woman artist to have a room of her own: only when Betty rents her own room, in an attic in a house in Sydney, romantically situated far above the everyday life of the streets, is she really ready to embark on her career:

There are girls in the world in plenty who would have shuddered to have stood where Betty stood that day - girls who love jewellery, dress, gaiety, pleasure. To them the song of gladness that burst to Betty's lips as she walked round and round her kingdom, would have been simply incomprehensible (p. 232).

From this point on, Turner's novel offers a fascinating account of how Betty goes about establishing herself as a writer. Interestingly, from the moment she begins meeting male newspaper editors, the heroine becomes noticeably more diffident about her career title. At the *Sydney Weekly Times*, Betty is, like numerous other women writers from this period, immediately recruited to write the traditionally feminine society column. However the prospect of earning £4 a month cannot be readily dismissed. Betty explains to her sister that she should call her 'a scribe' - '[s]omething of an author and something of a journalist' - until she is out of a 'grub-like state' (p. 203). In this way, Turner continues to explore the tension between Betty's creative/romantic desires, and the realistic need to generate an income by writing columns and potboilers. Of course, this was the experience of writers like Lilian Turner herself, who never achieved the financial success of her sister Ethel. Although she published twenty novels with Ward, Lock & Co between 1902 and 1931, Lilian Turner continually struggled to make a living from her writing, often at the expense of

creative independence.⁹⁶ Significantly, it is only once Betty has been sacked from the job of society columnist, and told by her editor that she is 'not cut out' for this kind of work, that a London publishing firm accepts her first novel (p. 287). This event, as her landlady Mrs Thornton points out, symbolises the real 'beginning of a career' (p. 306).

The strain of trying to realise her ambitions eventually causes Betty, like a number of other heroines discussed in this chapter, to suffer a nervous breakdown. In Betty's case, the 'break-down' of 'body and mind' is not caused by entrapment in marriage, but through her fierce dedication to writing: her doctor diagnoses it as a case of 'starvation, over-work, and worry' (p. 311-12). After her sacking from the paper, this represents yet another barrier to be overcome. The novel shows that not even this, however, can deter the heroine from returning to her chosen career: 'There was something indomitable about her, something of what the world always wants - true grit, as well as the fire of inspiration' (p. 315). Reviewers were well aware that Turner's novel might inspire young girls to emulate Betty. A review in *The Christian World* described the novel as a 'fresh' and 'fascinating' story which would be sure to set the girls who read it 'longing for a career of their own.'⁹⁷

Yet, at the very point when Betty does, finally, achieve financial security - ironically, in the form of a large inheritance from her grandfather rather than as a writer - a new threat emerges to her career and independence. When she meets again her childhood friend John Brown, the 'look' he gives her immediately transforms Betty into 'a woman' (p. 319). Betty greets this evident development of romantic interest with little enthusiasm. The final passage of the novel is particularly telling:

⁹⁶ Brenda Niall, 'Ethel Turner', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1891-1939*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1990, vol. 12, pp. 290-2.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Kerry M. White, *Founded on Compromise: Australian Girls' Family Stories 1894-1982*, PhD thesis, Department of English Literature and Drama, University of Wollongong, 1985, p. 157.

It was hateful to be a woman - she simply *wouldn't* be a woman...

When she reached home she feverishly put on the shortest dress her wardrobe held and let her hair down her back, and tied it with a piece of pink ribbon.

It was her way of indignantly insisting to Fate that she refused to be a Woman (p. 320).

By wearing a shorter dress and letting down her hair, Betty fiercely clings to her girlhood. As Kerry M. White points out, she 'denies her sex as the only way she can see to overcome its restrictions'.⁹⁸ The ending of *Betty the Scribe* very much resembles the ending of the earlier *My Brilliant Career*. Even though Betty achieves more than Sybylla Melyvn in terms of her career, in the end, she is also unable to reconcile it with marriage. Ultimately, both heroines recognise the need to hold on to their girlhood if they are to retain complete independence. Turner's novel demonstrates that although, by 1906, Australian women had achieved a great deal in terms of social reforms, clearly there was still a long way to go.

⁹⁸ Kerry M. White, 'The Real Australian Girl?', op. cit., p. 81.

Chapter Three

Those Wicked Women: Sexuality, Marriage and Desire

I. The 'Sex Problem'

One of the most notable and, indeed, controversial features of *fin-de-siècle* New Woman writing was its exploration of sexuality (mostly heterosexuality), women's desire, and the problems associated with marriage and motherhood. The Australian novels discussed in this chapter demonstrate their authors' belief in the importance of resolving the so-called 'sex problem', and imagining a new sexual morality. They explore the subjects of adultery, unhappy marriages, romantic friendships between women, 'free love' and venereal disease. They also present heroines who, like those in British New Woman novels, rebel against the sexual status quo.

Why were issues surrounding sexuality so fundamental to the New Woman's agenda(s)? White middle and upper-class women had long been educated to believe their difference from, and superiority to, men lay in their asexuality and spirituality. Furthermore, their (a)sexuality was inextricably linked to their class and race. As Susan Sheridan notes:

'Sex' in the sense of active sexual desire was then seen to belong to masculinity, and only mad women, or 'bad' women (ie. prostitutes and women of the working class or of non-white races) were believed to have any active sexual desire.¹

¹ Susan Sheridan, 'Sexuality and Representation', *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, Barbara Caine (ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 289.

In *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, Elaine Showalter makes the further important point that the 'dominant sexual discourse among New Women, as among other late-nineteenth-century feminists, reproduced and intensified stereotypes of female sexlessness and purity'.² Many feminists saw sex primarily as a male drive, responsible for socio-sexual problems such as prostitution, rape, adultery and venereal disease. They also recognised that an emphasis on women's sexuality could reinforce the degrading masculinist belief that women existed for men's sexual pleasure. Feminists like Christabel Pankhurst considered female celibacy a way of protesting, on both ideological and practical grounds, against the problems caused by patriarchy. Other feminists elevated motherhood as women's primary role and contribution to society, emphasising this as the only real justification for marriage and, by extension, sex between men and women. Often this rhetoric took on racial overtones, as sexual and hereditary purity (eg. freedom from disease, hereditary weakness) became linked to racial (Anglo-Saxon) purity. Thus, many New Women 'envisioned themselves as chaste yet maternal heralds of a higher race'.³ However inadvertently, they often helped to endorse what, in Victorian terms, was the normative patriarchal model of women's sexuality: that is, solely as a means to reproduce.

At the same time, toward the end of the nineteenth century, new definitions, and forms of regulation, of women's sexuality also emerged. Showalter argues there was a move away from the mid-Victorian 'notion of female "passionless"', as late-nineteenth-century thinkers 'acknowledged women's capacity for sexual pleasure'.⁴ Some doctors even expressed concern about the psychological and physical harmfulness of women's celibacy. The independent New Woman of the 1890s who appeared to embrace the single and celibate life was accused by journalists, doctors, scientists and anti-feminists alike of

² Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, Viking/Penguin, New York, 1990, p. 45.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 21.

contributing to the spread of sterility and racial degeneration.⁵ Doctors argued that a woman who focused on developing her brain (by pursuing higher education for example) was starving her uterus, and would eventually be unable to have children. Nervous disorders such as neurasthenia and hysteria were also presented as symptomatic of the New Woman's interest in unnatural aspirations.

A small group of New Women also began to 'speak out for the reality and importance of female sexuality'.⁶ Some feminists, such as the American Victoria Claflin Woodhull, even advocated 'free love' relationships between men and women. While the celibate odd woman was often mocked for being sexually repressed, and blamed for jeopardising the future of the race, the sexually independent New Woman was threatening for different reasons. This version of the New Woman was perceived as particularly radical because, in acting on her sexual desire, she contravened the most fundamental socio-sexual codes of 'respectable' white (middle-class) women's behaviour.

Regardless of where late-nineteenth-century feminists positioned themselves on the spectrum of women's (hetero)sexuality (with celibacy at one end and 'free love' at the other), most agreed on the centrality of sexuality to their project of personal, social, political and legislative reform. Feminists representing a wide range of positions understood women were victims of a sexual double standard in that their social roles, unlike those of men, were primarily determined by their sexual status. For this reason, the first-wave feminists protested vehemently against the Contagious Diseases Acts, argued for celibacy, promoted the need for women to be educated about physiology, insisted on raising the age of consent, promoted contraception, argued for an end to compulsory motherhood, emphasised women's sexual autonomy within marriage and right to refuse sexual intercourse. Women also pushed for the vote so they could realise these social and political reforms.

⁵ This is a paraphrase of Showalter, *ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 45.

The emergence of sexology towards the end of the nineteenth century played an important part in defining and regulating sexuality. In England, sexologists like Havelock Ellis, author of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, began to 'focus attention upon male and female homosexual behaviour and other non-standard forms of eroticism'.⁷ Thus, they helped to construct a homosexual 'identity'.⁸ In recent years, there has been a great deal of valuable scholarship on the romantic friendship, or 'Boston marriage': the latter term was used in late-nineteenth-century New England to describe a long-term relationship between two unmarried women.⁹ While these relationships did not, of course, suddenly emerge during the 1890s, they did gain a new degree of visibility. As Lillian Faderman argues:

Love between women could take on a new shape in the late nineteenth century because the feminist movement succeeded both in opening new jobs for women, which would allow them independence, and in creating a support group so that they would not feel isolated and outcast when they claimed their independence. Living situations which would have been impossible earlier became feasible now.¹⁰

In 1912, the socialist reformer Edward Carpenter, recognised the link between feminism, the New Woman and the rise of such relationships: 'It is pretty certain that such comrade-alliances - of a quite devoted kind - are becoming increasingly common', Carpenter remarked, 'and especially perhaps among the more cultured classes of women who are working out the great cause of their

⁷ Mary Ann Warren, 'The Social Construction of Sexuality', *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*, Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, reprinted 1987, 1989, ch. 9, p. 144.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁹ Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, William Morrow and Co, New York, 1981, p. 190.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 178. On female friendships, also see Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930*, Pandora, London, 1985, esp. ch. 6, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America', *Signs*, 1, 1975, pp. 1-29.

own sex's liberation'.¹¹ Faderman questions whether these long-term relationships between women necessarily involved genital contact.¹² Certainly, women were intimate when it came to sharing almost every aspect of each other's lives, writing romantic and loving letters to each other, and holidaying and working together. Even in the absence of genital contact, therefore, these romantic friendships emulated modern lesbian relationships in a number of ways. The new awareness of these relationships, and growing tendency to characterise them as deviant, inspired anti-feminist caricatures of the New Woman (and feminist) as a man-hating lesbian.

As discussed in the introduction, Australian feminists, like those in Britain, held a broad range of views on the subjects of sexuality, marriage and desire. Hence, feminist publications like the *Woman's Voice* explored everything from the problems of enforced motherhood to the question of free love. Ann Summers has suggested that women in Australia failed to argue for, or practise, free love in the way that English and American feminists did.¹³ However, it is more accurate to say that Australian feminists were quick to repudiate the term 'free love', just as they often rejected the politically charged and sensationalised term 'New Woman'. This does not mean they completely rejected arguments in favour of the radical reform, or even abolition, of marriage. Eliza Ann Ashton's call to 'amend the marriage laws, or, blasphemous as the words might sound, do away with them all together' comes to mind.¹⁴

¹¹ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, Mitchell Kennerley, New York, 1912, pp. 72-3. Quoted in Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present*, Vintage Books, New York, 1995, p. 59. Also quoted in Faderman, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

¹² Faderman, *op. cit.*, p. 190: 'Whether these unions sometimes or often included sex we will never know, but we do know that these women spent their lives primarily with other women, they gave to other women the bulk of their energy and attention, and they formed powerful emotional ties with other women. If their personalities could be projected to our times, it is probable that they would see themselves as "women-identified-women", ie. what we would call lesbians, regardless of the level of their sexual interests.'

¹³ Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia*, Allen Lane, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 364-5.

¹⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 12 November 1891, p. 3.

Among the most outspoken feminists on the topic of sexuality was the Melbourne temperance feminist Bessie Harrison Lee, author of the bestselling *Marriage and Heredity* (1893), who promoted the importance of male sexual abstinence and 'voluntary motherhood'.¹⁵ She was also among the few feminists prepared to publicly advocate women's use of contraception to control the number of children they had. The suffragist Brettina Smyth, who owned a chemist shop in Melbourne, attracted controversy as the author of several items about birth control.¹⁶ One reason why contraception proved so contentious was that it raised the radical prospect of women starting to have sex for their own pleasure, rather than simply for the purposes of reproducing or satisfying their husband's needs. In the context of the late-nineteenth-century eugenics movement, contraception was also considered a 'race suicide' practice.

It is true, however, that, as in England, the dominant feminist discourse on sexuality in Australia tended to endorse the idea of women as sexually pure and passive. The main emphasis was on women's right to refuse unwanted sexual advances from men. Hence, a feminist like Rose Scott promoted the notion that male sexuality was the cause of women's problems and probably would have agreed with the English feminists Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Sarah Grand, both of whom criticised Grant Allen's tale of free love in *The Woman Who Did* as detrimental to the feminist cause.¹⁷

The range of views held by Australian feminists on the subject of sexuality was reflected in women's writing from this period. Novelist and poet Ada Cambridge produced one of the most thorough explorations of the 'sex problem' in her extraordinary collection of poems *Unspoken Thoughts*,

¹⁵ For information about Bessie Harrison Lee, see Patricia Grimshaw, 'Bessie Harrison Lee and the Fight for Voluntary Motherhood', *Double Time: Women in Victoria - 150 Years*, Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (eds), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1985, ch. 17.

¹⁶ See Farley Kelly, 'Mrs Smyth and the Body Politic: Health Reform and Birth Control in Melbourne', *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1982, ch. 17.

¹⁷ Fawcett wrote in the *Contemporary Review* in 1895, pp. 625-31, that while Allen 'purports to write in the interests of women', there will be few women 'who do not see that his little book

published in 1887. After all these years, the poems remain startlingly frank accounts of physical relationships between men and women. The often-quoted 'A Wife's Protest' is exactly that: a wife's protest against her marriage, and, in particular, her sexual slavery to her husband:

I lay me down upon my bed,
A prisoner on the rack,
And suffer dumbly, as I must,
Till the kind day comes back.¹⁸

This language recalls Louisa Lawson's equally violent description of the marital bedroom as the 'chamber of horrors'.¹⁹ 'A Wife's Protest' is primarily a critique of a marriage that is not founded on love and companionship. The persona experiences a sense of sexual defilement and shame as a result of what she endures in the marriage bed, which leads her to question her supposed moral superiority to prostitutes. From the persona's middle-class perspective, the prostitute at least enjoys an enviable degree of autonomy over her own body. The persona wonders whether the fallen woman deserves ignominy at all when she may well have acted out of love rather than obligation:

Maybe she gave all for love,
And did not count the cost;
If so, her crown of womanhood
Was not ignobly lost.²⁰

belongs very much more to the unregenerate man than to women at all.' Quoted in Sarah Wintle, introduction to *The Woman Who Did*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 1.

¹⁸ Ada Cambridge, 'A Wife's Protest', *Unspoken Thoughts*, Kegan Paul, Trench, London, 1887, pp. 95-103. Scholarly Electronic Text and Image Service, Fisher Library, University of Sydney. <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/>

¹⁹ March 1890. Reprinted in Olive Lawson (ed), *The First Voice of Australian Feminism: Excerpts from Louisa Lawson's The Dawn 1888-1895*, Simon Schuster/New Endeavour Press, Brookvale, 1990, p. 54.

²⁰ Cambridge, 'A Wife's Protest', *Unspoken Thoughts*, op. cit.

In this poem, middle-class women are united with prostitutes as victims of sexually selfish and irresponsible men. In a powerful repudiation of the Victorian idea that a woman should gratefully embrace her feminine roles as wife and mother, the persona appeals to Nature not to give her a child: 'Thou knowest I could not bear to look/On its reproachful face'.²¹ Australian feminists were aware that prostitutes were also victims of the sexual double standard, and it was not uncommon for them to draw analogies between the situation of prostitutes and the situation of wives who had to endure 'prostitution in the marriage bed'. However, the bourgeois perception of prostitution as a 'social problem' meant that few Australian feminists really appreciated the specific needs of prostitutes.

Other poems in *Unspoken Thoughts* are equally confronting, such as the final one, 'An Answer', which puts forward a particularly radical solution to the problem of unhappy marriage by advocating the need for couples to be 'free to kiss and part'.²² Cambridge includes a range of views in these poems, some of which highlight male sexuality as the cause of problems, while others allude to more sexual freedom for both men and women as a possible solution.

The Australian popular press deemed the 'sex' novel a British/European phenomenon, one that was occurring at a distance from Australia. This view has been reinforced, however inadvertently, by some contemporary literary critics. In her important study of Australian women's fiction, *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s-1930s*, Susan Sheridan questions the presence of the New Woman in Australia, specifically the sexually rebellious version.²³ Employing the definition of the New Woman as a 'sexual rebel who lived out her conscious and principled objections to patriarchal relations', Sheridan argues:

²¹ Cambridge, 'A Wife's Protest', *Unspoken Thoughts*, op. cit.

²² Cambridge, 'An Answer', *Unspoken Thoughts*, op. cit., p. 142.

²³ For a different perspective, see Susan Magarey, 'History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996, pp. 96-110.

The 'rebellious structures' employed by Australian women writers of the 1890s did not produce 'New Women' of this type. None of them, to my knowledge, admired the New Woman novels, and indeed Rosa Praed's friendship with Mrs Lynn Linton, the notorious anti-feminist writer, suggests that she would have strongly disassociated herself from them. Feminist debate on specifically sexual issues appears in some Australian women's movement publications, but such subjects were more muted in fiction.²⁴

Certainly, it would be a mistake to ignore Rosa Praed's relationships with people like Eliza Lynn Linton when considering her attitude toward feminism and the New Woman. Yet, as Patricia Clarke notes, Linton's intellectual attitudes often differed from Praed's.²⁵ Furthermore, it is just as important to acknowledge the strong feminist influences on Praed's life and writing, such as her other close friendship with the American Louise Chandler Moulton. Moulton wrote to Praed in 1894 recommending that she read George Egerton's sexually frank collection of stories *Keynotes*: 'I have read the book - have read it twice', she gushed, 'and I am greatly moved by it. I think every woman unless she has been so fortunate as to make an ideal marriage has felt *just* as did the heroine of the first story - "A Cross Line"'.²⁶ In 'A Cross Line', the married heroine contemplates running away with a man she meets while out fishing. Another of Praed's close friends, Justin McCarthy, wrote to her with details of his dinner with the 'bright and lively' Mona Caird.²⁷

One only has to look to Praed's intimate relationship with Nancy Harward to see how she lived her life within the discourses of the Boston marriage and the

²⁴ Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s - 1930s*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1995, p. 41.

²⁵ Patricia Clarke, *Rosa! Rosa! A life of Rosa Praed, novelist and spiritualist*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 1999, p. 108.

²⁶ 16 January 1894, Letter 4/4/7, *Praed Papers*, OM 64-1, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

New Woman.²⁸ Praed, an acquaintance of Oscar Wilde, was a thoroughly unconventional woman. In this sense, she can be compared with another of her cosmopolitan Australian contemporaries, Jessie Couvreur (Tasma), described by Patricia Clarke as also having ‘lived the life of a “New Woman”’. For six years, Clarke explains, before Tasma’s second marriage, ‘she lived an independent life in Paris, earning her own living, and involved in the radical issues of the day’.²⁹

Nevertheless, Sheridan’s comment that feminist debate on sexual issues tended to be more ‘muted’ in Australian women’s fiction deserves further consideration.³⁰ It is worth investigating whether Australian women writers really failed to participate in the debates about sexuality and the New Woman, and if so, what institutional factors may have been at play. For instance, there is evidence of censorship of sexual issues in their work. Rosa Praed, for one, was firmly instructed by her publisher, George Bentley, to ‘tone down’ the sexually explicit parts of *Policy and Passion: A Novel of Australian Life*.³¹ Bentley advised Praed to make significant changes to a scene in which the heroine accompanied her would-be-lover Barrington to his rooms late at night. He also singled out the realism of Praed’s depiction of an adulterous scene:

It is too plainly put. The situation, one of extreme danger, should be indicated not dwelt upon. For your object it appears to be sufficient to state that Longleat took Mrs Vallancy home...All the wine-drinking & the temptations of

²⁷ Letter of 22 February 1890. Rosa Praed, *Our Book of Memories: Letters of Justin McCarthy to Mrs Campbell Praed*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1912, p. 221.

²⁸ Damien Barlow, “‘My Little Ghost-Slave’: The Queer Lives of Rosa Praed”, *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1996, pp. 344-52.

²⁹ Patricia Clarke, *Tasma: The Life of Jessie Couvreur*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p. xiii.

³⁰ Sheridan herself acknowledges that for the ‘very reason’ such subjects were ‘more muted in fiction’, it is ‘interesting to trace their presence in the heroines’ complaints about their lot, and the structural variations on romantic conventions made by their authors’. See *Along the Faultlines*, op. cit., p. 41.

³¹ This and following quotes come from George Bentley’s letters to Rosa Praed, 3-11 February 1881, *Praed Papers*, 9/4/4-12. Quoted in Clarke, *Rosa! Rosa!*, op. cit., p. 59.

her personal appearance are so realistic as to leave a very unpleasant impression.

Women writers were not expected to think about, much less write about, sexual matters. As Bentley also reminded Praed: 'One has to remember that it has your name on the title page' and 'you cannot so well say what Mr Praed may'.³² But, here, Praed's deviations from the romance genre, as much as the controversial subject matter, earned Bentley's disapproval. Praed, like many other New Women writers, extended the boundaries of women's writing by using the romance genre to expose the reality of people's marital and sexual relationships.

Significantly, Rosa Praed responded to her publisher's demands that she tone her writing down by pointing out the differences between Australian and English society. In Australia, she explained, there is 'less varnish - situations must be more unconventional. There are fewer lights and shadows, and as a whole society is purer'.³³ Praed presumably did not mean by this that Australian society was free of the kind of sexual corruption she wrote about in her novel. Rather, she seems to have implied that it was neither prepared nor able to disguise such corruption in the way that English society did. Bentley evidently did not agree, and Praed was ultimately forced to accept his changes in order to see her novel published.³⁴ His power to censor Praed should not be underestimated, especially when it came to the *New Woman*, for whom he expressed contempt. In 1894, Bentley wrote to Praed declaring his intolerance of the new novels:

The new woman is my abomination...The less of her the better. I have not read these latter day books *Yellow Aster* and *Heavenly Twins*. I expect they are doomed to an early death. The *Yellow Aster* I am told is poor stuff. Mrs McFall is

³² *ibid.*, pp. 58-9.

³³ *ibid.*, pp. 58-9.

really clever, but seems to have got out of bed on the wrong side and stayed there since.³⁵

Almost twenty years after Praed's difficulties with *Policy and Passion*, Miles Franklin encountered similar problems with her manuscript of *My Brilliant Career*. Franklin's Australian editor Henry Lawson blushed over the novel's 'political, and sex-problem passages'.³⁶ Hence, Lawson and the English publisher, William Blackwood, 'toned down' parts of *My Brilliant Career* before publishing it. It is interesting, though, that Lawson compared the novel to *Jane Eyre* and the *The Story of an African Farm*. The comparison with the latter novel suggests that he saw *My Brilliant Career* as engaging with similar social, political and sexual themes.

Franklin's contemporary, Barbara Baynton, is another well-known writer whose controversially frank approach to the 'sex-problem' did not always meet with her publisher's approval. The literary editor of the *Bulletin*, A. G. Stephens, commented in a review of Baynton's stories:

...its truthful glimpses of Australian life, graphically expressed, could not (would not) have been printed in any Australian paper, though they rank highly as literature...We are too mealy-mouthed (in print) and stuff far too much 'respectable' wadding in our ears.³⁷

Stephens highlighted Baynton's tendency to depict the 'obstetric quality' of bush life as one of her stories' most confronting aspects. His view of Australian society, specifically its tendency toward respectability, offers a stark contrast to

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁵ Bentley to Praed, 17 September 1894, Letter 9/4/71, *Praed Papers*, OM 64-1, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

³⁶ This information comes from Elizabeth Webby's introduction to Franklin's *My Brilliant Career/My Career Goes Bung*, Collins/Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, NSW, 1990, pp. vi-vii.

³⁷ *Bulletin*, 28 February 1903. Quoted in Elizabeth Webby's introduction to Baynton's *Bush Studies*, Collins/Angus & Robertson, Pymble, NSW, 1993, p. 3.

Rosa Praed's assertion that Australians desired the 'unconventional'. Interestingly, as Elizabeth Webby demonstrates, the revisions made to another of the stories, 'Squeaker's Mate', substantially altered Baynton's unconventional characters - characters designed to question 'sexual stereotypes' - by superimposing onto them more 'traditional male/female characteristics'.³⁸

These examples indicate that Australian women writers addressed issues of sexuality, only to come up against opposition from their (male) publishers. There are several possible reasons for this. In the first place, while English publishers initially found great commercial potential in New Woman novels, the charge of 'erotomania' became an increasingly dangerous one. Publishers and writers alike understood they had to exercise caution when it came to this subject. Furthermore, Australia's significantly smaller publishing market at the turn of the century did not allow it to support the range of publications that emerged in England during the 1890s. There was no Australian equivalent of *The Yellow Book*, for instance, where George Egerton published her unconventional short stories. It is significant that, in spite of these barriers, Australian women writers still persisted in writing about sexuality as often as they did.

The more political and realistic aspects of late-nineteenth-century Australian women's fiction not only caused problems for publishers and editors. Some twentieth-century literary critics have also proven unsympathetic to the political purpose of the 'sex problem' novels. Tasma's *In Her Earliest Youth* (1890), *The Penance of Portia James* (1891), *A Knight of the White Feather* (1892), *Not Counting the Cost* (1895) and *A Fiery Ordeal* (1897) all explore the subjects of women being coerced into marriage, marrying too young, marrying unreliable husbands and encountering the sexual double standard. Tasma was clearly contributing to a public debate about the political, social and sexual position of

³⁸ Elizabeth Webby, 'Barbara Baynton's Revisions to 'Squeaker's Mate'', *Southerly*, no. 4, 1984, p. 459.

women in her society. Yet, in their 1979 study, Raymond Beilby and Cecil Hadgraft represent Tasma's 'sex problem' novels as inferior to her best-known work *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*, and suggest that to 'overlook' them 'entails no great loss'.³⁹ These critics emphasise the biographical content of the novels, and Tasma's interest in dealing with a commercially popular subject, rather than the more political/feminist aspect of her writing. Certainly, in the case of writers such as Tasma and Rosa Praed, their own experiences of unhappy marriages were reflected in their novels. It would also be naive to claim that women writers were not conscious of the commercial potential of the new fiction: in many cases, writing provided women with a much-needed source of income and financial independence. However, it is also important to recognise the valuable insight that such novels provide into Australia's feminist history, as well as into the history of women's political writing.

Most of the best-known Australian women writers from this period, as well as many lesser-known writers, wrote novels that engaged with the 'sex problem'.⁴⁰ Ada Cambridge's now relatively well-known 1904 novel *Sisters* presents the four sisters' experience of marriage, none of which is ideal.⁴¹ Mary Pennycuik, for example, is blackmailed into marrying the repulsive Reverend Goldsworthy in what the narrator describes as a 'means to commit suicide without violating the law'.⁴² While Rose Pennycuik at least marries a man she cares for, she ends up with a formidable number of children. Most controversially, the third sister, Frances, who marries an older man for money, has an adulterous affair. When her husband dies and her lover refuses to marry her, she learns the 'essential

³⁹ Raymond Beilby and Cecil Hadgraft, *Ada Cambridge, Tasma and Rosa Praed*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1979, p. 27.

⁴⁰ For example, Laurie Clancy suggests that Thomas Hardy's 'radical questioning of marriage in *Jude the Obscure* is paralleled and to some extent anticipated in the work of Ada Cambridge, "Tasma", Rosa Praed, Mary Gaunt and...Catherine Martin'. See Clancy, 'Madness in Australian Fiction', *Left, Right or Centre? Psychiatry and the Status Quo*, Harry Heseltine (ed), Occasional Paper No. 19, English Department, University College, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 1990, p. 128.

⁴¹ For another discussion of this novel, see Leonie N. Prime, *The New Woman and the Australian Girl: Cultural Narratives of Identity 1885-1915*. MPhil thesis, Department of English, University of Western Australia, 1998, pp. 25-7.

⁴² Ada Cambridge, *Sisters*, introduced by Nancy Cato, Penguin, Ringwood, 1989, pp. 92.

difference between a mistress and a wife'.⁴³ Her lover, Guthrie, even has the audacity to use the line that 'marriage is a failure' to convince her it would be ludicrous for them to marry.⁴⁴ Even the strong-willed and independent Debbie Pennycuick, who turns down three proposals before finally marrying, is struck by the disappointing reality of marriage to a man who expects her to act as his nurse.

Like English New Woman writers, Australian women writers sought to transfer the emphasis from the 'fallen' woman to the fallen man. The heroine of Mary Gaunt's 1910 novel *The Uncounted Cost*, Anne Lovat, has to face the social stigma attached to being an unmarried woman with a sexual past: she has been sexually intimate with Dicky Bullen, a man to whom she was once engaged.⁴⁵ However, Gaunt's novel convincingly portrays Dicky Bullen as culpable for the heroine's situation. At the end of the novel it is Dicky who suffers the fate traditionally meted out to the fallen woman and dies. Anne Lovat, on the other hand, is permitted to develop another relationship with Jo Cunningham, a man who, after some hesitation, accepts her in spite of her past. The narrator acknowledges the benefits of belonging to a more modern generation of women:

In the days of our mothers and grandmothers the woman who was deserted had lost everything. There was for her no possibility of redemption. But nowadays the deserted woman knows that great and grievous as her loss may be, it is at least one that may be hidden from the world. Anne felt she must not go about a woman with a sorrow. She must present a smiling face. She must be successful.⁴⁶

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴⁵ Again, cf *Prime*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁴⁶ Mary Gaunt, *The Uncounted Cost*, A & C Black, London, 1925, p. 94.

The Uncounted Cost draws attention to the importance of a woman having a career and enjoying financial autonomy (Anne is a successful novelist) in order not to be dependent on men's decisions about her socio-sexual status.

Australian women's novels from this period not only made the problems associated with marriage visible, but explored possible solutions. One was for the unhappily married heroine to leave her husband. Rosa Praed's 1902 *Fugitive Anne* opens with the heroine absconding from her belligerent husband by fleeing into the Australian bush, disguised in men's clothing. In Ethel Turner's 1895 *The Story of a Baby*, the heroine, whose husband refuses to support her ambitions to be a singer, takes her baby with her when she leaves him. Such novels typically considered some of the legal and social implications of what, in this period, was a drastic action. Lilian Turner's 1896 *The Lights of Sydney, or No Past is Dead*, for which she won first prize in a competition run by the London publisher Cassell & Co, also opens with a woman who takes her son with her when she runs away from her husband.⁴⁷ She thereafter disguises herself as a widow so that her husband will not find her and demand custody of the child. Turner shows how little had changed since Anne Brontë's much earlier *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), which also tells the story of an unhappily married woman who, upon leaving her husband, pretends she is a widow in order to escape social condemnation.

Some Australian women's novels presented heroines who tackled the sexual double standard head on by refusing to conform to expectations of the modest and sexually passive woman, and openly expressing their sexual desire. Rosa Praed's infamous novel *Nadine: The Story of a Woman* (1882) presents a woman who becomes pregnant to her married lover. After he dies of a heart attack, Nadine gives birth to their illegitimate daughter. In Praed's later *Outlaw and Lawmaker* (1893), the heroine Elsie Valliant desires 'to feel' and 'to know'.⁴⁸ An incorrigible flirt, she is the first to admit she is 'not a nice girl', at least in terms

⁴⁷ Brenda Niall, 'Ethel Turner', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1891-1939*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1990, vol. 12, pp. 290-1.

⁴⁸ Rosa Praed, *Outlaw and Lawmaker*, introduced by Dale Spender, Pandora, London, 1988, p. 145.

of Victorian society's definition of one.⁴⁹ In her independent and frank interactions with men, Elsie demonstrates her 'curious unconventionality', and refusal to abide by the socio-sexual mores governing women's behaviour, or more particularly, ladies' behaviour.⁵⁰ The act of kissing becomes symbolic of Elsie's sexual rebelliousness. Her first 'passionate and unrestrained' kiss with Morres Blake is suggestive of uncontrollable sexual desire.⁵¹ Since Morres has made it clear to Elsie that he can never marry her (she is unaware for most of the novel of his double life as the bushranger Moonlight), their kisses take on a particularly illicit quality.

Even more threatening than the heroine who acted on her sexual desire for men, was the heroine whose desire seemed directed towards other women. This raised the dramatic prospect of women not needing men at all - a particularly radical notion in the context of concern about population decline. Lilian Turner is one of a number of Australian women writers who sympathetically presented intimate relationships between women as an alternative to heterosexual relationships. In *An Australian Lassie*, Betty Bruce's elder sister Dorothea has a 'bosom' school friend, Mona Parbury:

Such was Mona in the days when Dorothea loved her - in the days when Dorothea told her all her hopes, and dreams, and often very foolish thoughts; when she made her the heroine of her stories; and wrote little poems to her as - 'her love' - and little loving letters if the cruel fate which sometimes hovers over such friendships separated them for half a day.⁵²

Far from downplaying the intensity of their relationship, Turner highlights the romance of it all with phrases such as 'her love'. The novel normalises women's

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 148.

⁵² Lilian Turner, *An Australian Lassie*, Ward, Lock & Co, London, 1903, p. 101-2.

romantic friendships, with the narrator pointing out this is not a one-off affair but, rather, the type of friendship that 'school-girls all the world over' both 'know and understand'.⁵³ Hence, because the principal of the school had once 'given to Dorothea's mother much the same sort of love as Mona Parbury now gave to Dorothea', Dorothea was granted admission to the fashionable school in the first place.⁵⁴ Just as fascinating in terms of its representations of romantic friendships is Turner's *The Lights of Sydney, or No Past is Dead*. The New Woman character, Barbara Frew, develops a friendship with a mysterious and unnamed youth, whom she is increasingly convinced is her soul mate and 'ideal' man.⁵⁵ This ideal man is ultimately revealed to be a woman in disguise. Barbara's cross-dressing friend effectively fades out of the narrative after this dramatic disclosure, freeing her to accept a heterosexual relationship with the mysterious woman's brother, Jem Withycombe. However, the reader is left with the distinct impression that Jem is no substitute for Barbara's female soul mate.

Reform of heterosexual codes was often at the heart of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century utopian novels, especially utopias created by women writers. In her account of the history of women's writing, Elaine Showalter said, of what she famously termed the 'Feminist phase', that the 'purest examples' are the 'Amazon utopias of the 1890s, fantasies of perfected female societies set in an England or an America of the future, which were also protests against male government, male laws, and male medicine'.⁵⁶ A well-known example is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Moving the Mountain* (1911), which presents an ideal society in which women are not discriminated against on the basis of their sex (in terms of work, education, etc). The novel of utopian intent, as Nan Bowman Albinski notes, 'is defined by its social orientation and

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 103.

⁵⁵ Lilian Turner, *The Lights of Sydney, or No Past is Dead*, Cassell and Company, London, 1896, p. 182.

⁵⁶ Elaine Showalter, 'Toward a Feminist Poetics', *Critical Theory Since Plato*, Hazard Adams (ed), revised edition, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Fort Worth, USA, 1992, p. 1231.

belief in not only the desirability, but possibility, of change'.⁵⁷ A number of Australian writers, both male and female, were also inspired by the Woman Question to produce feminist utopias. The Victorian suffragist, Henrietta Dugdale, wrote *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age* (1883), which imagines a future utopian society in which women wear trousers and short hair, enter parliament, and have ideal marriages. These utopias were not always set in the future, or in actual countries. Often, they were set in a time contemporaneous with the writer's own, though situated in geographically remote or imaginary places. However, they were linked by their authors' interest in putting forward an ideal vision of feminist change and sexual reform.

II. The Failure of Marriage: Rosa Praed, *The Bond of Wedlock* (1887) and Tasma, *A Fiery Ordeal* (1897)

While a decade separates the publication of *The Bond of Wedlock* and *A Fiery Ordeal*, these novels by two of Australia's best-known nineteenth-century women writers explore a similar theme, namely the failure of a marriage. In the tradition of numerous New Woman novels, both *begin* by exposing what a marriage might really be like after the honeymoon has ended.

Set in London, *The Bond of Wedlock* is one of Rosa Praed's most frank explorations of marriage and its problems, particularly for women. Such was the commercial potential of the Woman Question, *The Bond of Wedlock* became a bestseller when published. It was also transformed into a play, *Ariane*, performed in London a year later.⁵⁸ As the title suggests, *The Bond of Wedlock* presents two people, Ariana and Harvey Lomax, bonded together in a far from satisfactory marriage. The materialistic basis of their relationship is immediately identified as one of the main reasons for marital disharmony. The daughter of a once wealthy man, Ariana has grown up believing it is her

⁵⁷ Nan Bowman Albinski, 'A Survey of Australian Utopian and Dystopian Fiction', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1987, pp. 15-16.

'divine right' to marry well.⁵⁹ After her father loses his fortune, however, Ariana settles for a marriage of convenience to 'a commonplace, middle-class man of very moderate means' whose unglamorous occupation is buying and selling tea (p. 4). As a financial burden, therefore, she is effectively transferred from her father to her husband. Praed's novel demonstrates that a marriage that begins as a financial transaction is no basis for an ideal relationship.

The Bond of Wedlock presents a picture of unhappy marriage that was to become particularly common in later New Woman fiction. Harvey Lomax is a typical flawed husband: he has a weakness for spending money he does not have, and a propensity to drink and act aggressively towards his wife. Ariana's feelings toward her husband range from indifference to 'passive hatred' (p. 4). She is also physically repulsed by him - '[h]er marriage had seemed a degradation' - and even more so after he has been drinking (p. 26). While Harvey's behaviour is partly responsible for their unhappy situation, the narrator also apportions a significant amount of blame to the heroine for failing to take control of her own future. In Praed's fiction, the most admirable women characters - Elsie Valliant serves as an example - are those who possess courage and strength of character. Yet there is little about Ariana Lomax that is admirable: she is vain, superficial, materialistic and lacks the 'energy to conquer circumstance' (p. 3). Without the strength of character to be an agent of her own destiny, Ariana prefers to blame 'malignant Fate' for her unhappy marriage (p. 5).

The Bond of Wedlock is an anti-romance in that it sets out to thoroughly deconstruct heterosexual romantic ideals, as well as expose the unrealistic Victorian ideals of masculinity and femininity. When Ariana meets the debonair and wealthy Sir Leopold d'Acosta, he represents everything missing from her husband. Having once written a novel of 'the passionate romantic

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the performance and reception of this play, see Kay Ferres, 'Women making a spectacle of themselves: Rosa Praed's *Ariane*, melodrama, and marriage reform', *Australasian Drama Studies*, 23, October 1993, pp. 56-64.

⁵⁹ Rosa Praed, *The Bond of Wedlock*, introduced by Lynne Spender, Pandora, London, 1987, p. 3. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

order' that has gained him many female admirers, Leopold epitomises romance (p. 19). His wealth and social status (he has a seat in parliament) further consolidate the image of the ideal potential husband. This powerful man sets out to pursue Ariana who, in turn, is configured as his 'ideal' woman:

She was not to be won like the vain, silly creatures who readily swallow a bait. She was something higher, something worth the winning...there was about her almost a childish simplicity (p. 23).

It soon becomes clear from the narrator's ironic tone that Leopold is not nearly as perfect as he seems. His 'passion' is 'intensified' by his belief in Ariana's chastity and bourgeois 'sense of rectitude'. This rhetoric suggests the ideal of the Angel in the House, in which the traditional features of purity, 'passivity and asexuality' were so prized.⁶⁰ According to Victorian literary tradition, a man's passion was more inflamed by the prospect of the chase. Even after marriage, the ideal woman was still expected to play hard to get, thereby demonstrating her enduring nobility and chasteness. Yet, in *The Bond of Wedlock*, the credibility of this well-rehearsed chase scene is seriously undermined by the fact of Ariana's marriage to Harvey. After Leopold kisses her, Ariana is tormented by 'wicked' and 'wild, rebellious fancies', and, in this sense, sounds neither chaste nor angelic (p. 35). The spectre of infidelity irrevocably taints their courtship.

Despite Ariana receiving much of the blame for her unhappy marriage, the novel also emphasises the legal and social impediments that worsen the situation. When the 'bonds' of Ariana's marriage prevent her from being with Leopold, she is more convinced than ever that marriage is an 'evil' and 'insoluble problem of civilisation', an 'unnatural state of union in disunion which exacted impossibilities, and forced together elements absolutely and

inherently antagonistic to each other!' (p. 58). This disunion culminates in a strikingly graphic account of domestic violence, when an intoxicated Harvey lashes out at his wife:

He came close to her. For a moment she seemed to see only the flash of fury from his reddened eyes. His heavy arm was raised and fell in a cruel blow - once, twice, thrice, upon her shoulder and half-bared neck. He was blind with drink and with passion, and scarcely realised what he was doing...She staggered beneath the weight of his clenched hand, but reared herself again and stood erect. The pain made her dizzy; for a few moments everything was dark (p. 49).

Interestingly, while Harvey's behaviour is by no means excused by the narrator, he is described as not having fully 'realised what he was doing'. At this point in the novel, even Harvey Lomax is presented as a victim of a situation in which two people clearly unsuited to each other are under a moral and legal obligation to remain together.

The novel raises what, at the time, was a familiar feminist protest against the injustice of English marriage and divorce law; such laws entrenched the double standard by making it more difficult for women to acquire divorces from their husbands, than for men seeking divorces from their wives. Under the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, a wife could only procure a divorce if her husband was physically cruel, incestuous or bestial, in addition to being adulterous. As Leopold observes, Ariana could not get a divorce from Harvey 'if he were to beat her black and blue all over every day for a month' (p. 57).⁶¹

⁶⁰ See Carol Christ, 'Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House', *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, Martha Vicinus (ed), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1977, ch. 7, p. 147.

⁶¹ The 1878 Matrimonial Causes Act finally gave a wife beaten by her husband the opportunity to appeal to a local magistrate's court for a separation order. However it did not give the wife the automatic right to leave him. Nor did it allow her to obtain a divorce and remarry. See

The Bond of Wedlock also alludes to the legal barriers that prevented women having custody of their children: Ariana decides, mainly, for the 'child's sake', to remain with her husband (p. 52).

The Bond of Wedlock not only portrays women as victims of legal inequality, but also reveals the extent to which they existed as commodities exchanged between men.⁶² Following the incident of domestic violence, Ariana's future is almost entirely controlled by her father and would-be-lover Leopold. Together, they orchestrate a situation in which Harvey is caught in the act of infidelity, thereby enabling Ariana to divorce him and marry Leopold. However, the fact that Ariana is not told of their plan to deceive Harvey reinforces her passivity and powerlessness. Her father, who intends to benefit financially from his daughter's marriage to Leopold, effectively acts as her pimp in these scenes.

The image of women prostituting themselves in marriage is further developed through the character of the prostitute Babette, Leopold's former lover. This outspoken and sexually daring woman is by far the most colourful and intriguing character in the novel. A free spirited and sexually experienced woman, committed to the validity and pursuit of her own desires, Babette is one of the more controversial prototypes of the New Woman - one that many feminists would have resisted identifying with. She smokes, reads French novels, knows the can-can and, superficially, is the antithesis of Ariana, who enjoys the semblance of middle-class respectability. Babette's worldliness and confident sexuality contrast markedly with the very 'unworldly' heroine's naivety and frigidity (p. 3). Hence, while Ariana typically wears white, the traditional colour of purity, Babette wears decadent yellow - a colour that gives her a 'modern, even a Parisian, air' (p. 85). Nevertheless, Babette and Ariana are

Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989.

⁶² For an excellent discussion of *The Bond of Wedlock*, see Kay Ferres, 'Rewriting Desire: Rosa Praed, Theosophy, and the Sex Problem', *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*, Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 12. Ferres also notes: 'The narrative of Ariana's experiences as a wife and mother locates her as an object of exchange between men', p. 242.

shown to have more in common than initially appears, not least of which is their dependence on men - specifically Leopold - for financial security. Furthermore, Robert Dixon notes that these two women are 'linked by the metaphor of the theatre, which implies that both act within roles that are constructed for them by the culture they inhabit'.⁶³ When she is first introduced, Babette is 'posing' as the wife of a German artist, and is already beginning to tire of 'respectability':

"I want to be free...free as the wild bird...I want to have my evenings free...to come home as late as I please, and let myself in with a latch-key, and go to bed when I like, and get up when I like...it isn't wickedness, Leopold, half so much as freedom. That is the way with many of us women whom the world calls bad. We should do no harm if only we were free to do what we like." (pp. 44-5)

Praed gives Babette a dominant and powerful voice in the novel, which helps the reader understand and sympathise with her desire for freedom - the latchkey, of course, being one of the New Woman's most prized possessions. Hence, although Babette plays the role of seducing Harvey Lomax in exchange for Leopold's financial reward, there is a refreshing honesty about her motives.

Upon marrying Leopold, Ariana discovers that having the money and prestige that come with being Leopold's wife does not guarantee happiness. Having acquired her, Leopold subsequently loses interest in his new wife. The ideal of marriage, just like the ideal of the perfect husband (Leopold proves to be 'no better than the rest') is revealed to be a fiction (p. 128). He reminds Ariana that a honeymoon does not last forever, and that '[i]deal morality, love, sentiment' are 'the monopoly of the bourgeoisie nowadays' (p. 131). Leopold himself acknowledges the concept of a masculine ideal to be a myth: 'I never set myself

⁶³ Robert Dixon, 'The New Woman and the Coming Man: Gender and genre in the "lost-race" romance', *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, Susan

up as anybody's hero or anybody's ideal' (p. 130). Ironically, Babette is shown over the course of the novel to be somewhat freer than Ariana when it comes to choosing whom she sells herself to. It turns out that she is having an adulterous affair with Leopold and managing to retain his interest longer than his new wife. Ultimately, however, Babette is also a victim of a society in which women are treated as second-class citizens. In the sense that Babette remains just as financially dependent on Leopold as Ariana, she does not resemble the New Woman of later novels who rejected men altogether in the quest to attain social and financial independence.

The setting of Tasma's *A Fiery Ordeal* is a bush property in Victoria, where Ruth and James Fenton live in what is another far-from-ideal marriage. When the heroine is first introduced, she is running around the house looking for a hangover cure for her husband who has been "'on the booze again'".⁶⁴ The 'hero' - a term used by the narrator with considerable irony - has woken up to the familiar fact of their dire financial situation, having once again gambled their money away (p. 18). Like Harvey Lomax, James Fenton also demonstrates his willingness to physically abuse his wife in order to assert his authority. James, whose favourite pastimes are drinking and gambling, is another version of the typically flawed husband. While the drinking, gambling and abusive husband is by no means exclusive to Australian fiction - he also appeared in fiction by George Egerton, and numerous other New Woman writers - this figure appeared with notable frequency in Australian women's novels from this period.

The bush setting of *A Fiery Ordeal* immediately distinguishes it from most English marriage problem novels. As well as exposing the reality of marriage, Tasma's novel shows the reality of life in the Australian bush for women. While Ruth enjoys the physical activities she can pursue in the bush, such as horse riding or swimming in the lagoon, they are 'transient pleasures' (p. 21). Unlike

Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 14, p. 171.

the heroines she reads about in novels, who occupy their 'hearts and brains' with lovers, religion, social questions or the poor, Ruth is isolated in the bush, and without an 'object' in life (pp. 36-7). There is nothing romantic about the loneliness and boredom she experiences, and the absence of social support afforded by an urban environment. In the novel's opening pages, Ruth openly talks to her husband about her willingness to leave him and support herself.

As in *The Bond of Wedlock*, a man is introduced into Ruth's life who is the antithesis of her husband. Donald Brewer, an educated, scholarly, well-travelled 'gentleman', is clearly a better intellectual and emotional match for the heroine, whose interest in poetry is not shared by her husband (p. 45). A familiar dichotomy is established between the unreliable, weak and unsophisticated husband, and a strong, reliable and cultured would-be suitor. Donald, like Sir Leopold d'Acosta, is also shown to be more capable of fulfilling the traditional masculine role of financial provider when he steps in to alleviate Ruth's husband's debts.

While there are many similarities between the characters and plots of *The Bond of Wedlock* and *A Fiery Ordeal*, there are also a number of differences. Tasma's heroine, for instance, is generally a more sympathetic and fully rounded character than Ariana Lomax. One of the most interesting and New Woman-like aspects of Ruth's character is her desire for an occupation: she wants some interesting 'work to do' (p. 151). While she is ultimately dependent on a man's help to realise this desire - Donald Brewer arranges for her to translate French articles for him - much is made of the idea that this opportunity for intellectual stimulation provides the heroine with considerable satisfaction, and enables her to 'cast off the nightmare of depression' (p. 172). Unlike Ariana, Ruth has been raised by a working mother (and widow). After her mother's death, she was put into the care of another financially and socially independent woman, the 'old maid' and schoolmistress Miss Martin (p. 24). Far from growing up in the

⁶⁴ Tasma (Jessie Couvreur), *A Fiery Ordeal*, Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1897, p. 6. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

belief that marriage was her only option, Ruth trained to become a teacher herself. Despite this training, however, Ruth is still shown to have been as susceptible as other young women to believing in the fairytale of marriage. Upon meeting James Fenton, a squatter's son, she agrees to give up teaching and marry:

It was inevitable that the first man who should ask her to be his wife, and who had nothing inherently repellent in person or manner, should appear to her in the light of the rescuing prince who was to deliver her from the sleeping palace as represented by Miss Martin's school (pp. 27-8).

Of course, James Fenton turns out to be the furthest thing from a 'rescuing prince', and Ruth, like Ariana, is quickly disillusioned by the reality of marriage. All 'her hopes had been doomed to disappointment' (p. 31). Motherhood also fails to redeem Ruth's marriage: her baby dies not long after its birth. *A Fiery Ordeal* shows just how dramatically a woman's freedom and independence have been curbed by her marriage: 'Her whole being was in a state of revolt against the conditions under which she lived and moved and breathed' (p. 20).

As in her earlier *The Penance of Portia James*, Tasma toys with the radical prospect of the heroine leaving her unsuitable husband in favour of a non-marital relationship with a man she evidently has more in common with. Ruth does in fact walk out on James Fenton upon discovering he has squandered some money, given to them by Donald, in another bout of drinking and gambling. In the dramatic scenes that follow, she travels to Melbourne with the intention of saying goodbye to Donald before she kills herself. (On different occasions, Ruth and James Fenton both contemplate suicide as a way of escaping their situation). As she walks alone through the city in the early hours of the morning, Ruth attracts 'half-admiring, half-dubious' glances from men who, it is implied, assume she is a prostitute (p. 199). This serves as a reminder

of the severity of her moral transgression, particularly since it comes moments before she and Donald embrace. As in *The Bond of Wedlock*, the kiss, evidence of infidelity, is loaded with significance. It is a moment, the narrator anticipates, that will inevitably cause people to associate *A Fiery Ordeal* with a particular school of fiction:

Given an entrancingly pretty young woman, who allows herself to be kissed like a child in need of consolation, by a young man to whose room she has made her way uninvited at the unconventional hour of eight o'clock in the morning...then ask yourself what would be the natural and French-fiction-sanctioned dénouement of the scene (p. 206).

The playful tone of the narrator's reference to French novels somewhat dilutes the political impact of this scene. Indeed, from this point on, the novel takes a decidedly more conservative turn as Tasma demonstrates *A Fiery Ordeal's* difference from French novels, with their controversial sexual scandals. As in *The Penance of Portia James*, *A Fiery Ordeal* raises the prospect of a non-marital relationship, only to then hastily retreat from this scenario.

Once again, Tasma seems at pains to preserve the heroine's respectability, and highlight her difference from the notorious and sexually rebellious New Women of English and French fiction. Suffering a bad conscience, Ruth returns to Tarooma, only to discover her husband has disappeared. In this novel, the would-be lover, Donald, actually proves a willing participant in the act of 'illicit love' (p. 218). He is aware that they might travel to Europe together and, in a place where they would be completely unknown, be a 'law unto themselves' (p. 314). Yet, during what turns out to be James Fenton's lengthy and mysterious absence, the heroine is apparently conscious of social and moral laws - 'intangible obstacles' - that prevent her from violating her marriage vows (p. 218). The novel continues for more than a hundred pages, during which time Ruth and Donald carefully observe social (and legal) protocol and demonstrate

sexual restraint. Importantly, the time that Ruth subsequently spends living in the Brewer household, under the chaperonage of Donald's mother, also ensures they will have the family's, and the world's, 'sanction' (p. 263). From this point on, there is little about their relationship that can be said to be particularly unconventional.

Only after Ruth's husband has reappeared (deranged) and somewhat conveniently dies in a bushfire, is the heroine finally permitted to marry Donald, a man who will presumably continue to assume a very traditional masculine role as her 'protector and defender' (p. 210). The tone of Tasma's denouement is more positive than the tone at the end of *The Bond of Wedlock* or *The Penance of Portia James*, since there is every indication that Ruth and Donald are like-minded people who will have a happy marriage. This, however, does not erase the political power of a novel that, for the most part, is a frank and sustained critique of the institution of marriage.

III. Sexually Rebellious New Women: Francis Short, *The Fate of Woman* (1897) and Henry Handel Richardson, *Maurice Guest* (1908)

The woman who asserted and acted on her own feelings of sexual desire proved one of the most controversial versions of the New Woman. Francis Short's *The Fate of Woman* presents a heroine whose overt displays of sexual desire, and willingness to defy sexual mores, distinguish her from more conventional romantic heroines. This sexually rebellious version of the New Woman, and the atmosphere that she creates, is more fully realised in Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest*. The discourse on sexuality which emerges in these novels challenges the dominant sexual discourse among New Woman which reproduced stereotypes of female sexlessness.

Francis Short was the masculine pseudonym of Mrs Herbert Harris, who published two novels: *Val Constable's Career* (Remington, March 1895) and *The Fate of Woman* (John Macqueen, October 1897), both set in a harbour town that

is a thinly disguised Sydney. These novels present unhappily married women who are tempted to pursue adulterous affairs. In *Val Constable's Career*, the hero, Val, a politician, falls in love with Diana Ballantyne, a married woman with three children. Although they contemplate running away together, their relationship ultimately does not progress beyond an adulterous kiss, Diana deciding to remain with her husband after he is injured in a riding accident. Val subsequently travels to England where, although he establishes a successful political career, his true desire for Diana remains unfulfilled.

Short's second novel *The Fate of Woman* presents a similar scenario, but goes further in pursuing its ramifications. *The Fate of Woman* also begins with the premise that marriage is a failure, at least according to the heroine, Marguerita Paul-Browne, married with six children. In a review of the novel, the *Sydney Mail* noted that the nom de plume of 'Francis Short' was 'said to cover the identity of a Sydney lady with a family of somewhat similar dimensions to that of the heroine'.⁶⁵ The daughter of an English rector, Marguerita marries the Australian stock and station agent, Charley Paul-Browne, seemingly to please her family. Apart from the fact that Marguerita does not particularly care for her 'commonplace, fussy little husband', there are no dreadful circumstances associated with her marriage.⁶⁶ Rather, a picture is created of a woman whose temperament is simply unsuited to domesticity, marriage and motherhood: she refers to her 'experience' of being a wife and mother as a 'handicap' that 'no woman wants' (p. 118).

Marguerita is a thoroughly modern heroine who, in the style of the freewheeling New Woman, speaks 'with candour' and smokes cigarettes (p. 78); although, 'in reality', smoking holds little appeal for her, and is merely a concession made to the 'rôle she imagined herself filling' (p. 108). More generally, *The Fate of Woman* comes across as modern in the candour with

⁶⁵ *Sydney Mail*, 18 December 1897, p. 1268. Unfortunately, I have not succeeded in identifying Mrs Herbert Harris's first name.

⁶⁶ Francis Short, *The Fate of Woman*, John Macqueen, London, 1898, p. 13. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

which it addresses (hetero)sexual issues. From the beginning, the reader is presented with evidence that Marguerita's relationship with her husband is sexually dissatisfying. On the rare occasions that Marguerita and her husband embrace, their kisses are 'absolutely colourless and anaemic'; they eventually cease kissing altogether (p. 38). The novel alludes to the problem of prostitution in the marriage bed, with the narrator explaining that Charley Paul-Browne is the 'master' of his wife's 'body and actions to a certain extent' (p. 22).

Nevertheless, there is in the heroine's nature still 'an untameable free residue' that manifests itself in her interest in other men. Indeed, Marguerita's marriage becomes almost inconsequential in the narrative, as most of the action concentrates on her flirtations with other men, namely a parliamentarian, Cyprian Hope, and a doctor, Maximilien Carpenter. For instance, one chapter, sensationally called 'Federation and Flirtation', is devoted to Marguerita's trip to parliament to watch Cyprian deliver a speech on the Federation debate and flirt with him afterwards.

In *The Fate of Woman*, Short explores the discursive nature and significance of the New Woman. While Marguerita is eager to distance herself from the stereotype of the 'ugly, masculine women who are prepared to dare and do', she still demonstrates the New Woman's readiness to defy social and sexual conventions (p. 104). One of the most remarkable features of the novel is that it presents a heroine who is not sexually naive. Marguerita Paul-Browne challenges the sexual double standard in her determination to live according to her own needs and desires. She is unapologetic about her own practice of flirting with various men, explaining to Carpenter:

"Mr Hope, in common with yourself, and every one I meet, will be made a means of affording me change, excitement, experience, whatever you choose to call it. Neither he nor any man will ever bound my horizon. At present he is like a bottle of liqueur, and while he provides me with the necessary little drains to stimulate my dull life, he serves my

purpose. I shall never take enough to intoxicate myself; and if one day I find I have emptied the flask, I shall fling it away without a shade of compunction, and get a new one, with a totally different flavour." (pp. 121-2)

Marguerita enjoys drinking, and the reference to intoxication becomes a powerful and recurring metaphor for sexual desire in the novel. The notion of consuming the 'excitement' and 'experience' provided by men in the manner of drinking alcohol suggests a feminist appropriation of a traditional male practice. Similarly, Dr Carpenter's suggestion that Marguerita reminds him of a ship in full sail, with a 'careless' mariner aboard who wants to see the world, uses another traditionally masculine metaphor. In the sense that Marguerita's quest to arrive at an awareness of her own subjectivity involves experiencing different men, she is a true adventurer, on a modernist quest for knowledge of her sexual and feminine self. Marguerita comments on the irony that, as a mother, she is expected to help form the minds and characters of young people, when her own 'mind and character are in hopeless, embryonic chaos' (p. 118). This part of the novel becomes an argument in favour of women experiencing something of the world before rushing into marriage and motherhood.

Despite Marguerita's lack of naivety, even she is shown to be vulnerable to being taken advantage of by men. Although she is married, most of the men in Marguerita's social circle perceive her as sexually available. Whether it be by men winking at one another, or by Hope's assumption of Marguerita's willingness to meet him in his private rooms, men are overt in classifying her sexual status, and in a way that jeopardises her gentility, or respectability, as a married middle-class woman. Marguerita is well aware of the sexual double standard, and the way 'men always object to women doing things to which they are particularly addicted themselves' (pp. 110-11). Hence, the tendency of the 'fast' man to marry the 'quiet, dowdy' woman. Nevertheless, even she is taken somewhat by surprise when, upon visiting Hope's rooms, she discovers

the sexually predatory side of his character. In Rosa Praed's *Policy and Passion*, the heroine, Honoria Longleat, flees from her would-be-lover upon going to his room and discovering his true sexual designs on her. Marguerita is less innocent, and can even be said to knowingly go to Hope's rooms. However, Hope's promise that it will give them a chance to discuss his plan to arrange Government patronage for her husband conveys the idea that Marguerita is unwillingly prostituting herself. Confronted by the reality of Hope's assumption that she is prepared to sleep with him, she ends up leaving almost immediately. Later, she describes to Carpenter a feeling of uncleanness: 'it makes me sick now. I want fresh air - clean clothes - a dozen baths' (p. 210).

One of the most extraordinary features of this scene is Hope's awareness that he is not repulsed by Marguerita 'for virtue's sake', but, rather, because of her preference for Carpenter (p. 235). The heroine is not shown to display any feelings of guilt or remorse with regard to her husband. Indeed, not long after this scene, Marguerita embarks on a more significant act of marital infidelity when she confesses her growing love for Carpenter, and implores him to kiss her:

Intoxicated, oblivious of everything in the world but her lover, Marguerita let herself be led to a sofa. There they sat side by side, her head on his breast, with arms entwined about each other. They hardly spoke: all their eloquence was expended in long kisses, and looks, unabashed, into the depths of each other's eyes. The rain stopped; the sun came out...(p. 246).

Remarkably, this is not a one-off incident, but the beginning of a 'perfect companionship' that continues for a significant period of time (p. 251). The tone of these scenes is serious and romantic, convincing the reader that Marguerita has finally found someone who can satisfy her in a way her husband cannot. When her husband discovers that something is amiss, he insists that Marguerita

stop seeing Carpenter. She is forced to consider, like a 'girl of twenty-two or - three, weighing a proposal of marriage', the prospect of running away with her lover (p. 256).

Of all the novels discussed so far, *The Fate of Woman* is among the most radical in its presentation of a sexually rebellious heroine and its treatment of infidelity. The fact that Marguerita is already a wife and mother when she pursues her relationship with Carpenter makes it all the more unconventional, even compared with other 'rebellious' heroines discussed so far. While Ariana Lomax and Ruth Fenton, for instance, both contemplate leaving their husbands for other men, and have an adulterous kiss, neither goes any further until she is completely 'free' of the marriage tie. Neither is as uninhibited and unapologetic about her own sexual desire as Marguerita is. Short portrays a woman who, for the most part, refuses to be a hapless victim of social and sexual inequality under patriarchy.

This novel received a mixed critical reception. A review in the *Sydney Morning Herald* described *The Fate of Woman* as 'cleverly written' and 'vigorous in style'.⁶⁷ However, the *Daily Telegraph* was more critical of this 'unhealthy record of illicit passion and secret domestic adventure'.⁶⁸ While acknowledging the book was 'cleverly written', the reviewer expressed wonder that:

a writer capable of such excellent presentation should choose to waste his ability on pages which are barren of any apparent purpose, save to gratify the taste of those who hanker after full reports of divorce court cases. The credit which the writer might obtain will never come to him in this branch of literary work. That is well enough supplied to its clientele by many publications more trashy, if hardly more unwholesomely suggestive.

⁶⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 December 1897, p. 4.

⁶⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, 11 December 1897, p. 3.

This reviewer evidently did not consider that the novel was redeemed by its ending, which backs away somewhat from a radical feminist agenda. While Marguerita goes much further than a heroine such as Elizabeth Marrant in *A Comedy in Spasms* in acting on her desire for another man, she arrives at the same conclusion. Short, like Iota, suggests that women's role as mothers is of foremost importance: a woman's 'fate' involves having to choose between heterosexual desire and motherhood. Ultimately, Marguerita acknowledges she has been 'wicked' (p. 267), decides the 'natural tie' of motherhood is impossible to break, and agrees to give up her lover (p. 260). The reader learns that Carpenter subsequently dies on the Western Australian gold fields, while Marguerita lives on to raise her children. Significantly, like a number of the novels already discussed, the rather lacklustre tone of the ending leaves the reader with the sense that the outcome is far from ideal. In this case, Australia apparently cannot accommodate the sexually rebellious New Woman.

Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson chose to use what is by now the well-known pseudonym of Henry Handel Richardson when she published her startling first novel *Maurice Guest* in 1908. Michael Ackland notes that Richardson adopted the pseudonym as a 'licence to transgress and as a rebuttal of gender stereotypes'.⁶⁹ Ackland continues by quoting Richardson: the novel "appeared at a time of feminist agitation, and I wanted the book to be a test. No one, positively no reviewer, spotted it as 'just a woman's work'". *Maurice Guest* is set in the modern, decadent and sexually charged environment of a conservatorium in Leipzig during the 1890s. Here, women smoke cigarettes and fight for emancipation. In the context of this modern world, Richardson presents several female characters who are versions of the New Woman: first there is Madeleine Wade, the hardworking, independent and forthright music student who befriends Maurice. There is also the less important, but nevertheless interesting, American Johanna Cayhill, Ephie's scholarly and over-

⁶⁹ Michael Ackland, 'A School of Authority: Richardson's personal investment in *The Getting of Wisdom*', *Southerly*, vol. 59, no. 2, 1999, p. 19. Ackland quotes from *Henry Handel Richardson: Some Personal Impressions*, Edna Purdie and Olga M. Roncoroni (eds), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1957, p. 48.

protective elder sister, whose ambition is to attend Harvard University. One of the most elusive characters, Avery Hill, can be considered another version of the New Woman. She is undoubtedly modern in her behaviour (she smokes cigarettes) and in her close relationship with the decadent Heinz Krafft.⁷⁰

However none of these women is as radical or provocative as Louise Dufroyer, the flawed, but intriguing, Australian-born woman with whom the novel's protagonist, Maurice Guest, becomes obsessed. Louise, as Brian Kiernan has observed, is 'the New Woman, emancipated from all but her emotions'.⁷¹ More specifically, of all the heroines discussed in this chapter, Louise most resembles the sexually rebellious version of this feminist figure.⁷² Richardson's notes on the novel make her intention clear: she wanted to present Louise as the 'sexual woman'.⁷³ When Maurice first sees Louise she is wearing a yellow rose at her waist - the colour so often associated with the decadent New Woman and her fiction. At one point, Mrs Cayhill expresses confusion over whether Olive Schreiner's famous novel was about an Australian or an African farm. This is particularly telling given that Louise resembles Schreiner's heroine, Lyndall, in her determination to live according to her own needs and desires.

Louise is a thoroughly new type of woman, and never more so than in the way she unashamedly expresses and acts on her sexual needs, regardless of the risk posed to her 'reputation'.⁷⁴ Madeleine informs Louise that her intimate relationship with the musical genius Schilsky has made her the "'talk of the place'" (p. 197). Yet Louise consistently demonstrates how unconcerned she is about what other people think of her. She represents the New Woman in her

⁷⁰ Anthony J. Palmer makes a case for viewing Krafft as a decadent figure in 'A Link with Late Nineteenth-Century Decadence in *Maurice Guest*', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1972, pp. 366-73.

⁷¹ Brian Kiernan, 'Romantic Conventions and *Maurice Guest*', *Southerly*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1968, p. 290.

⁷² For a different perspective, see Catherine Pratt, *Resisting Fiction: The Novels of Henry Handel Richardson*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999, p. 37.

⁷³ Dorothy Green, 'Power-Games in the Novels of Henry Handel Richardson', *Who Is She? Images of Woman in Australian Fiction*, Shirley Walker (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983, ch. 7, p. 84.

most excessive manifestations: she buys flowers to excess, rebels against the everyday in excessive ways, and has an extended nervous breakdown after Schilsky leaves her. Even Louise's dancing is perceived by Maurice as having '[s]omething of the professional about it' - an image of bodily ease and 'abandon' that is often associated in literary tradition with the sexually 'fast' woman (p. 278).

Through her excessive and open display of sexuality, Louise automatically insists on the same sexual rights as men. In the course of the novel, she is involved in sexual relationships with Schilsky and Maurice. As she tells Maurice, "'remember in future that I'm not an inexperienced child. There's nothing I don't know'" (p. 406). Her sexual knowledge distinguishes her markedly from other women characters in *Maurice Guest*, including the young and naive Ephie Cayhill, whose inexperience and lack of sexual knowledge render her particularly vulnerable to Schilsky. Unlike Louise, Ephie is concerned about her reputation upon learning that, all the time she believed they were engaged, Schilsky was secretly involved with Louise. In despair, Ephie takes to 'wandering the streets like any outcast, late at night, without a hat' (p. 226). It is her 'condition of hatlessness' that she feels 'to be the chief stigma' - something that symbolically distinguishes her from Louise, who enjoys going 'bareheaded' (p. 325).

In considering the representation of Louise, the fact of her financial independence should not be overlooked, since it also distinguishes her from the other heroines discussed so far. Not only does she not need to marry for financial security, but, in a reversal of gender roles, her lover Schilsky actually relies on her for survival. Nevertheless, not even the more worldly Louise is entirely prepared for Schilsky's infidelity (his relationship with Ephie). Richardson demonstrates that Louise's superior sexual knowledge of men does not necessarily lead to her being better treated by them. The more pragmatic

⁷⁴ Henry Handel Richardson, *Maurice Guest*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1965, p. 104. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

Madeleine Wade understands that in a more sexually permissive world, it is women who must invariably continue to suffer discrimination. Madeleine comes across as somewhat prudish and old-fashioned in her attitude towards Louise; she has contempt, for instance, for the latter's brazen way of "looking and being looked at, by a stranger, in a way no decent woman allows" (p. 198). Just as determined to live her own life, and just as unable to bring herself (despite briefly considering it) to marry simply for the sake of it, Madeleine is in some ways more independent than Louise, who demonstrates a greater reliance on romantic involvement with men.

In *Maurice Guest*, Richardson presents a world in which the traditional rules governing sexual and gender identity and behaviour are undergoing considerable change. As well as depicting the sexual liberation of women, Richardson's novel deals with the reality of men's sexual desire for each other: there is the revelation of Krafft's sexual advances to Maurice and the suggestion of his relationship with Schilsky. The characters in this novel also defy immediate gender categorisation. Hence, Madeleine says of Krafft that "[h]e ought to have been a girl" (p. 160). In the characters of Louise and Maurice, Richardson plays with contemporary ideas about gender inversion. Maurice has never seen Louise engaged in 'feminine employment' (p. 356) such as sewing, and she has an 'almost masculine signature' (p. 315). Maurice, in turn, is frequently emasculated by his love for Louise and willingness to serve her.

Maurice Guest highlights the tension between modernity (free love) and traditional Victorian socio-sexual mores. While Maurice is initially attracted to Louise by her difference from other women and her 'courage' in living by her own convictions, he grapples with the need to reconcile the reality of Louise with his very traditional ideal of womanhood (p. 62). Louise herself understands few men would be able to accept her past, and demands to know of Maurice whether he is "simple enough to believe any man living would get over what I have to tell him, and care for me afterwards in the same way" (p.

295). When she explains to Maurice that she contemplates suicide, it is with a poignant reference to the constraints of her gender:

“Every day I ask myself why I have not thrown myself out of the window, or over one of the bridges into the river, and put an end to it...I have never even been passably content. Something is always wanting. Tonight, for instance, I feel so much energy in me, and I can make nothing of it - nothing! If I were a man, I should walk for hours, bareheaded, through the woods. But to be a woman...to be cooped up inside four walls...when the night itself is not large enough to hold it all!” (p. 116)

Richardson demonstrates convincingly that, despite attempting to accept Louise for what she is, Maurice is never able to come to terms with the reality of her sexuality. Throughout their relationship as lovers, Louise is unapologetic about her reluctance to marry Maurice: “I don’t want to be married - not yet” (p. 348). With each of Louise’s descents ‘from the pedestal’ (p. 53), Maurice becomes more interrogative of her past, and more sensitive to her ‘want of restraint’ (p. 419). Increasingly, Louise’s refusal to feel guilty and remorseful about her past - to behave, in essence, according to traditional expectations of her as a woman - appals Maurice. In what becomes a compelling story of sexual possessiveness, Maurice proves unable to emulate Louise in defying convention. Their relationship reaches its climax when he physically assaults her during an argument about her past in an attempt to prove that ‘physically’, at least ‘he was her master’ (p. 462). Maurice’s visit to a prostitute not long after this, named, significantly, Luise, highlights his hypocrisy and support of the sexual double standard.

In the depiction of Louise, particularly, Richardson shows that there was still a long way to go before women like her could win complete acceptance. At the same time, the novel is extraordinary for the fact that Louise is not punished at

the end for her transgressions, as was still so often the case in fiction from this period. (It is Maurice who is so distressed at the loss of his relationship with Louise that he commits suicide). Rather, Louise is pictured at the end as Schilsky's wife and is, as Dorothy Green has pointed out, the 'only character, male or female, who gets what she set out to get.'⁷⁵

IV. Romantic Friendships and Same-Sex Desire: Ada Cambridge, *A Woman's Friendship* (1889) and Henry Handel Richardson, *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910)

Although twenty years separates the publication of Ada Cambridge's *A Woman's Friendship* from Henry Handel Richardson's *The Getting of Wisdom*, both novels deal with the subject of close relationships between women. This subject is still presented, however, in different ways by these writers. While Cambridge's novel tends to downplay, even ignore, the element of same-sex desire that was increasingly associated with late-nineteenth-century women's 'romantic friendships', Richardson's acknowledges their sexual nature.

A Woman's Friendship was serialised in the *Melbourne Age* between August and October of 1889, and is Cambridge's playful variation on a theme famously explored by Henry James in *The Bostonians*, which was published three years earlier.⁷⁶ *The Bostonians* was based on what James described as 'one of those friendships between women so common in New England' - the Boston marriage.⁷⁷ The friendship James depicts is between Olive Chancellor, a wealthy American committed to the emancipation of women, and her young and beautiful protégée Verena Tarrant. It is Olive's ambition to use Verena's superior talents as a platform speaker to promote the feminist cause. However their relationship is threatened, along with these feminist ambitions, when Verena falls in love with Olive's conservative cousin Basil Ransom.

⁷⁵ Green, op. cit., p. 87.

⁷⁶ Henry James, *The Bostonians*. Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1966, reprinted 1985, 1st publ. 1886.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Miller, op. cit., p. 58.

In terms of story and structure, there are obvious parallels between *The Bostonians* and *A Woman's Friendship*.⁷⁸ Cambridge also presents a close friendship between two women, the 'intellectual' and 'eccentric' emancipist Margaret Clive and her young protégée Patty Kinnaird.⁷⁹ Louise Wakeling and Margaret Bradstock comment: 'it could be argued that in place of the [heterosexual] romance plot', Cambridge 'substitutes female friendship as a central relationship'.⁸⁰ Patty is not nearly as clever as Margaret, but is nevertheless an '*interesting*' woman who seems to share her friend's enthusiasm for women's rights (p. 7). They spend all their time together and are 'bosom friends', apparently unscathed by suspicion, jealousy or any other of the 'petty feelings that tradition associates with such a union'. In presenting their relationship, Cambridge draws on the model of the 'romantic friendship' between women.

Cambridge self-consciously draws attention to Henry James in a reference to one of the Kinnairds' horses being called Henry James Junior. Yet there are significant variations on *The Bostonians* that need to be considered. From the early pages of *A Woman's Friendship*, the narrator's satirical tone is palpable. Like James, Cambridge is clearly having fun with these women's rights activists, however without the same degree of suspicion, and even hostility, towards the new and modern woman found in *The Bostonians*. *A Woman's Friendship* captures the very real spirit of change for women which was infiltrating the Australian consciousness. The novel is set in Melbourne at the time of the Centennial International Exhibition of August 1888 to January 1889. Margaret and Patty regularly visit the Exhibition, both independently and together, and are mainly drawn, like 'all cultivated and would-be cultivated persons', to the British loan pictures (p. 11). Cambridge presents two Australian women who long to demonstrate how modern and cosmopolitan they are.

⁷⁸ Prime, op. cit., p. 24, also notes there are parallels between these novels.

⁷⁹ Ada Cambridge, *A Woman's Friendship*, Elizabeth Morrison (ed), Colonial Text Series, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, p. 6 and p. 11. All future references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

⁸⁰ Louise Wakeling and Margaret Bradstock, 'Colonial Women Writers: Dispossessed Angels', *Southerly*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1990, p. 121.

They discuss all the important issues of the day, ranging from dress reform, to women's franchise, and the class system more generally. To explore their interests, they decide to establish their own private Reform Club: 'They wanted to make their ideals as real as possible, to put their faith into practice, to use the strength afforded by their mutual support to the best advantage' (p. 8).

Margaret proves the more committed activist of the two, and the more likely to act on her ideals. This is seen in her rebelliously simple style of dress, determination to buy second class concert and train tickets, and habit of assisting servants in their chores - though not to the extent of doing 'rough work' (p. 58). While Patty is willing to emulate Margaret in many ways, these deviations from normal middle-class behaviour cause her considerably more anxiety.

As in *The Bostonians*, the relationship between the women is threatened by the addition of a man, the wealthy and handsome Seaton Macdonald. A parody of the New Man, Seaton professes to be an advocate of women's rights and has written papers on 'The Liberty of Women'. By virtue of his difference from 'common men', he is invited to become the third member of the Reform Club (p. 41). The trio read well-known feminist tracts together, including Mary Wollstonecraft on 'Marriage and the Rights of Women' and Mona Caird's marriage paper. It soon becomes clear, however, during a visit to Seaton's property at Yarrock, that his only real interest is in wooing Patty. What follows are some of the novel's most amusing scenes, as Patty and Seaton find opportunities to isolate themselves from Margaret so they can flirt with each other. Margaret's early repudiation of the common assumption that a 'man and a woman cannot be close friends without danger of becoming more than friends' is shown to be incorrect (p. 40). In a chapter ironically entitled 'A Purely Intellectual Friendship', the fertile rural environment of Yarrock provides the background for increasingly intense expressions of sexual desire between Patty and Seaton. Meanwhile, Margaret's jealousy of their relationship is increasingly apparent.

The Bostonians raises the possibility of sexual desire, not just between a man and a woman, but also between women themselves. In recent years, a number of critics have explored Olive Chancellor's lesbian 'credentials'. Sally Ledger, for instance, includes James in the category of male writers who 'pathologised' New Woman characters as 'lesbian'.⁸¹ James can be seen to present Olive as a man-hater who has no interest in marrying, and who is jealously possessive of Verena. In *A Woman's Friendship*, Margaret Clive undoubtedly wants to dominate Patty and transform her into her preferred image of woman, even to the extent of having Patty wear the same style of Greek dress that Margaret wears. Ultimately, though, *A Woman's Friendship* attempts to normalise intimate friendships between women, and downplay the element of same-sex desire. Unlike Olive and Verena, for instance, Margaret and Patty are both married and both demonstrate, at different stages, their dependence on their husbands. In James's novel, the emphasis is on a competition between Olive and Basil to win Verena's affections and loyalty. In Cambridge's, the emphasis is transferred to a competition between two women over one man, as Margaret and Patty vie for Seaton Macdonald's attention.

It is particularly ironic that Seaton plays such an instrumental role in the failure of the Reform Club, and in the breakdown of the women's friendship. Much of the blame can be directed towards the women themselves, however, for their ineffectual forms of feminist protest. From the beginning, Patty's inherent snobbery and reluctance to embarrass herself by going against convention is a formidable barrier to the club's success. Margaret is, as has been mentioned, the more willing radical, but even she is satirised for her failure to properly live up to her feminist ideals, and her dream of a Norman Shaw house in England.

This does not mean that *A Woman's Friendship* entirely negates the possibility of women achieving reform. Rather, the ending of the novel substantially rewrites

⁸¹ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997, pp. 124-5. Also see again, Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, op. cit., pp. 27-35, and Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, ch. 7.

the ending of *The Bostonians* in a way that actually gives greater hope for feminism. James's novel ended with Basil Ransom successfully severing the relationship between Olive and Verena, just in time to prevent Verena delivering an important speech at the Boston Music Hall. The ending of Cambridge's novel, on the other hand, sees Seaton Macdonald isolated from Patty and Margaret when he becomes engaged to another woman. It also reaffirms the friendship between Margaret and Patty when these women are drawn together again, this time becoming 'better friends than they were before' (p. 121). The final lines of the novel concern their agreement that in future they will refrain from including men in their club:

"I think", says Mrs Clive seriously, "that we had better not take men into it this time. What do *you* think, Patty?"

"I think we'd better not", says Patty, with a sigh.

Interestingly, in 1920, Cambridge wrote a short story called 'The Reform Club' which, as Elizabeth Morrison notes, was based on *A Woman's Friendship*.⁸² In 'The Reform Club', the original ending of *A Woman's Friendship* is reworked. This time, Patty and Margaret fail to reconcile in the end, and the significance of their friendship is not affirmed. Rather, Patty's relationship with her husband Ted is the focus of the short story's ending. After Patty learns of Seaton's engagement to another woman, she is finally able to forget him and concentrate, instead, on being 'much nicer' to her husband (p. 167). Furthermore, the 'very next thing that happened to Patty was a baby' (p. 168). Thus, Cambridge's short story version ensures the heterosexual plot is unquestionably dominant. The change in ending may well have reflected the change in the perception of women's friendships over the thirty years since *A Woman's Friendship* was published. By 1920, it was arguably even more difficult to distance female friendships from the 'taint' of lesbianism.

⁸² Morrison, *op. cit.*, p. xxii. This story is reproduced in an appendix to Morrison's edition of the novel.

In Henry Handel Richardson's well-known account of life in an Australian girls' school, *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910), intense 'friendships' with other young women form a crucial aspect of the heroine's development. As a boarder at the Ladies' College in Melbourne, Laura Rambotham is thrust into a world dominated by women. The novel documents the success of first-wave feminists in promoting women's intellectual and scholarly achievements, both of which are valued at the school. Here, despite some initial hurdles, Laura gradually begins to feel 'a person of some consequence'.⁸³

Nevertheless, in the course of Laura's emotional and intellectual development, she learns that finding a man to marry still represents another, often more important, measure of success for women. The novel makes clear the considerable stigma attached to being an 'old maid' (p. 208). Even in the context of the all-female school, the idea remains prevalent that women depend on men for social, even more than financial, security. There is still an assumption that no woman would voluntarily choose not to marry: Laura's teacher Miss Snodgrass declares she would happily give up her profession to 'marry the first man' who proposes to her (p. 97). Laura learns early on that she is expected to conform to established notions of 'modest and womanly' appearance and behaviour (p. 10). She discovers, for instance, that her social status will be significantly affected if her schoolmates learn her mother works for a living: 'ladies did not work' (p. 96). The novel demonstrates the persistent Victorian belief that a woman's gentility and value stemmed from her role in the domestic sphere. Hence, the image of the working woman - independent of men - was not acceptable. Catherine Pratt argues that the 'sharpness and subtlety with which Richardson observes the physical and social constraints placed upon a girl's development - as well as the ideologies which render such limitations desirable - make this novel her most explicitly feminist'.⁸⁴

⁸³ Henry Handel Richardson, *The Getting of Wisdom*, Mandarin Australia, Port Melbourne, 1990, p. 73. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

⁸⁴ Pratt, op. cit., p. 135.

Information about women's sexual relationships with men forms a fundamental component of Laura's informal education at the school. From surreptitious discussions with her schoolmates, Laura forms an impression of man as an 'animal, a composite of lust and cruelty' (p. 112). Yet the prospect of meeting a man inspires various romantic fantasies among the schoolgirls, including Laura. From the beginning, Laura's apparent inability to attract the attention of boys also sets her apart from the other girls and, knowing the damage this will do to her peers' perception of her in a place where the 'unpardonable sin is to vary from the common mould', the thirteen-year-old invents a secret love affair with the curate, Mr Shepherd (p. 84). Inspired by the tale of imperilled virtue told in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Laura fabricates her own story of a 'frustrated attempt on her virtue' (p. 152) for the benefit of her schoolmates' 'craving for romance' (p. 177). Richardson reveals the readiness of all these young women to transform stories of male 'lust and cruelty' into tales of romantic love. It is notable that, as on other occasions in the novel, Laura gains her understanding of women's sexual behaviour from a male writer.

In *The Getting of Wisdom*, Laura's developing sexual awareness with regard to other women ultimately becomes more important than her awareness of men. When Laura's schoolmate Chinky is dismissed from the school for stealing money, it is revealed her motive was to have enough money to buy Laura a ring. Although the heroine appears largely oblivious to the romantic subtext of Chinky's actions, they take on more significance in light of the events that follow. When Laura meets the older female student, Evelyn Souttar, it is her first real experience of romance. Evelyn, a 'rich, pampered and very pretty' eighteen-year-old, is the only member of the Literary Society who does not laugh at Laura's contributions (p. 194). They quickly develop a close friendship and, from this point on, are 'seldom apart' (p. 207). The narrator's heavily ironic tone continues to suggest that Laura is often unaware of the meaning of her own actions. It is quite clear to the reader, however, that Evelyn and Laura's 'friendship' demands new terms of reference.

The Getting of Wisdom acknowledges the sexual nature of female 'friendship' in a way that *A Woman's Friendship* does not. Laura's relationship with Evelyn is both emotionally intense and, to a certain extent, physically sensual. The heroine finds herself 'unable to disguise' what she feels for Evelyn (p. 204). The need for them to be in physical proximity to each other is emphasised from the moment Evelyn requests they share a room. The rhetoric used to describe their initial encounters with each other contains all the traditional trappings of romance: Laura 'would smile shyly at Evelyn when their looks met' (p. 193). Under Evelyn's tutelage, Laura 'shot up and flowered like a spring bulb'; significantly, this simile reverses the traditional heterosexual notion of a woman being deflowered (p. 197). Laura throws her arms around her friend and kisses her, and derives comfort from knowing Evelyn is 'safe and sound' asleep in the bed next to her (p. 209). As well as contributing to Laura's emotional and sensual development, Evelyn plays a role in facilitating the heroine's intellectual growth by enabling Laura to 'speak out her thoughts again' and be herself (p. 197). It is presumably no coincidence that, at about the same time as Laura and Evelyn discover each other, the heroine reads Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which ends with a woman turning her back on men and marriage. While Laura finds the play to be 'distasteful' (p. 191), she reads it 'with an interest' she cannot 'explain' (p. 187). In the course of her 'dear friendship' with Evelyn, Laura briefly has access to a utopian environment in which men play no part (p. 207).

The utopia is ultimately destroyed, however, when Laura discovers, with the 'shock of a rude awakening', that Evelyn is interested in men and does think about marriage (p. 199). The knowledge of this causes Laura to become increasingly 'jealous' and 'suspicious' whenever Evelyn leaves her (p. 207). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, sexologists such as Havelock Ellis irrevocably changed the way same-sex relationships were viewed by seeking to classify them. Ellis cast a negative light on homosocial environments such as girls' boarding schools and women's colleges by viewing them as environments

in which susceptible women could be lured into lesbianism.⁸⁵ Laura is perceived by her teachers as 'frightfully unbalanced' in her demands on Evelyn's attention (p. 206), and she becomes the 'laughing-stock' of the school (p. 204). Significantly, Laura's intimate relationship with another woman clearly marks her as different from her schoolmates. While Ada Cambridge sought to normalise female friendship, in Richardson's novel, Laura and Evelyn's relationship is perceived, by other characters, as abnormal, even deviant. Although *The Getting of Wisdom* is set during the 1880s, Richardson did not begin writing the novel until 1903.⁸⁶ It is possible that Richardson's representation of their relationship also reveals the strong suspicion of same-sex relationships that had emerged by the early twentieth century.

V. The New Woman's Utopia: Catherine Helen Spence, *Handfasted* (1879) and Mary Moore Bentley, *A Woman of Mars, or Australia's Enfranchised Woman* (1901)

Catherine Helen Spence's *Handfasted* and Mary Moore Bentley's *A Woman of Mars, or Australia's Enfranchised Woman* are both utopian novels with distinct feminist agendas. Despite the twenty years separating their publication, the reform of sexual morality is a central feature of the utopian environments they create.

Catherine Helen Spence's previously unpublished *Handfasted* is one of the most fascinating novels to come to light in the last twenty years, as a result of feminist efforts to recover nineteenth-century Australian women's writing. The novel was submitted in 1879 to a competition run by the *Sydney Mail*, and ultimately rejected on the basis that 'it was calculated to loosen the marriage tie - it was too socialistic, and consequently dangerous'.⁸⁷ As a result, it was not

⁸⁵ This is a paraphrase of Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁸⁶ Henry Handel Richardson, *The Getting of Wisdom*, Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele (eds), Academy Editions of Australian Literature, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2001, p. xv.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Helen Thomson, preface to *Handfasted*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1984, p. viii. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

published until 1984. Reading *Handfasted* even now, it is possible to appreciate how radical its propositions concerning marriage and sexuality were. In the genre of utopian fiction, *Handfasted* explores issues that were of real and primary importance in the context of the late-nineteenth-century Woman Question. In fact, the second chapter, entitled 'The Marriage Question', raises the issue of the decline in the number of people marrying in Victoria. In *Handfasted*, Spence tackles the marriage problem by creating a new world in which relationships between men and women are re-imagined.

Handfasted has a male protagonist and narrator, the Melbourne doctor, Hugh Keith. For Spence, using a male narrator was presumably a way of dealing with subject matter perceived as too contentious for a woman to discuss. Nevertheless, women still play pivotal roles in the narrative. Hugh's worldly, open-minded, and modern grandmother, for instance, inspires his interest in the adventures of their lost Scottish kin who, in the eighteenth century, left their homes to establish a remote community. In the course of Hugh's subsequent travels in North America, he stumbles across the descendants of this community in Happy Valley, in the Commonwealth of Columba.

Happy Valley is a utopian community in which the problems associated with Hugh Keith's world, such as poverty, alcohol and war, are entirely absent. Also absent, are many of the problems associated with men and women's relationships. Most notably, the traditional institution of marriage has undergone considerable reform in Happy Valley. The novel's main premise, and the inspiration for its title, is the concept of 'handfasting' - the practice of trial marriages that last a year and a day. After a year, couples have a number of options: they can consolidate their union in a proper marriage, break it off altogether, enter a handfasting with someone else, or even extend the original handfasting if need be. In this community, where marriage does not signify the only option for men and women who want to be together, divorce is 'unheard of' (p. 300). *Handfasted* presents a strong and positive argument in favour of significant marital reform, and it is little wonder the *Sydney Mail's* judges saw

the novel as posing a serious social and political threat. Susan Magarey points out the 'radicalism of this form of union, in a period when divorce was far from easy and well nigh impossible for women'.⁸⁸

Much of the success of handfasting is shown to stem from the absence of a sexual double standard that works to disadvantage women. Along with many other first-wave feminists, Spence realised how crucial it was for women to have the same sexual rights as men. *Handfasted* shows, for instance, that in the absence of the sexual double standard in Columba, prostitution, with its attendant social problems, does not exist. Hugh Keith observes that Happy Valley is in many ways a socially and morally superior world to the one he has grown up in. In particular, he comes to recognise the benefits of handfasting:

The vague ideas that I had entertained and even sometimes partially expressed, as to the necessity for some relaxation of the marriage laws in England, and especially in France, took dominating and distinct shape here and now. Freedom of contract had never seemed to me so just and fair in this momentous personal matter as it did now when I saw the singular elasticity up to a certain point of the Columban marriage laws, and the apparently satisfactory working of these laws among this simple and sincere people (p. 123).

The reference to Hugh having 'partially expressed' his belief in the necessity of marriage reform indicates how contentious this subject was, even more so in 1879 than in the 1890s. Such views immediately raised the spectre of 'free love'. Importantly, the narrator is careful to qualify his acceptance of the Columban marriage laws with the observation that their 'elasticity' is only 'up to a certain point'. As radical as this novel is, it does not endorse the outright rejection of marriage. Rather, handfasting is put forward as a way of improving

⁸⁸ Susan Magarey, 'Feminist Visions across the Pacific: Catherine Helen Spence's *Handfasted*', *Antipodes*, Spring 1989, p. 32.

heterosexual relationships. As Nan Albinski Bowman notes, handfasting is still subject to 'social sanctions',⁸⁹ such as the inability of another suitor to have a relationship with a handfasting woman. Like marriage, handfasting is a 'solemn religious ordinance' (p. 41). Furthermore, those Columbans who spend their lives going from one handfasting to the next are 'not much respected' in the community (p. 43).

Women are shown to have played a crucial role in establishing the ideal community in Happy Valley. A strong feminist agenda comes through in the narrative of Marguerite Keith, one of the founders of Columba. Her narrative, which runs for several pages, records the significant change and reform for women that took place once they established Columba. Marguerite Keith reveals that handfasting was introduced to address the problem of Scottish men setting up house with the Indian women of Columba, and then deserting them. Prior to handfasting, she, like other women, had been a victim of an unhappy marriage, and experienced how it was 'hard to be a woman; to have no will of one's own and no career' (p. 176).

Columban women have achieved the very social reforms Australian feminists were pushing for. 'Nowhere in the world', Hugh remarks, 'was there such equality of conditions as I saw here in Columba' (p. 84). In a place where there is 'little or no repression' of people of either sex, women can independently own property, vote in elections, and become preachers (p. 101). The novel places special emphasis on the Columban community's success in dealing with the problem of illegitimate children. In fact, in Happy Valley, there is no such thing: in situations where neither parent is able to keep a child born during handfasting, it is raised and educated by the community/state. Most importantly, such children are not considered inferior to those born in wedlock, but, rather, join Columba's most privileged cohort of educated professional men and women. In such ways, as Helen Thomson suggests, Spence gave

⁸⁹ Nan Bowman Albinski, 'Handfasted: An Australian Feminist's American Utopia', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1989, p. 21.

'expression to her conviction that environment and not heredity' was 'crucial to character'.⁹⁰

In the context of this social, political and sexual utopia, *Handfasted* also presents a strong and unconventional story of romantic love. Hugh falls in love with Liliard Abercrombie, a Columban woman known for her talents as an actress and public storyteller, and, in many ways, a prototype of the 1890s New Woman. The romance that develops between them is unconventional because of the fact that Liliard is already handfasted when Hugh meets her. Hence, he is forced to abide by the customs of Columba and wait until her current period of handfasting is up before they can be together. The idea of a sexually experienced romantic heroine, and one who is not married for most of the novel, would presumably have shocked many nineteenth-century readers.

Within the context of the imaginary and 'unreal' community of Columba, the political significance of Hugh and Liliard's union is somewhat diluted. Yet, Spence pushes the boundaries further by having Hugh and Liliard leave Columba to discover how they would be received in the 'real' world. Despite his appreciation of Columba, and his own acceptance of Liliard's past, Hugh is uncomfortable with their unmarried status once they re-enter his world, and insists that she wear a wedding ring. Demonstrating her marked difference from the typical nineteenth-century 'lady', however, the courageous Liliard insists they remain handfasted, regardless of custom. Her sexual independence, adaptability, receptiveness to new experiences, and determination to act on her own 'ambition' and 'desire' make her a new type of woman (p. 273). Physically she is also healthier, larger and more typically 'Amazonian' than the women she meets outside her world. She continues to display her expert storytelling skills as a platform speaker in London - an experience that parallels that of publicly vocal feminists like Spence herself.

⁹⁰ Thomson, 'Afterword', *Handfasted*, op. cit., p. 374.

Nevertheless, Liliard is gradually overwhelmed by nineteenth-century 'public opinion' (p. 307). The pressure of not conforming to social laws takes an emotional and physical toll on the unconventional heroine, increasingly causing her to sacrifice her principles. This begins in San Francisco, when she experiences the 'trammels' of Victorian women's clothing - the 'tight, long dress', the 'high-heeled shoes' and the 'stiff hat and gloves' (p. 295).⁹¹ When people learn of her handfasting to Hugh, Liliard experiences first hand the social scarring that comes of violating Victorian socio-sexual codes: the idea of scarring is represented both physically and metaphorically when she contracts smallpox. After her illness, Hugh is finally able to convince her to abide by Victorian law and marry him before the period of handfasting has ended. Liliard learns to 'read and write and to speak and behave like an English gentlewoman' in preparation for returning to Australia as Hugh's wife (p. 359).

After having travelled the world, Hugh and Liliard, with their newborn son, ultimately choose to settle in Australia, another kind of New World. Yet Australia is hardly as 'new' or modern an environment as Columba, despite the presence of Hugh's open-minded grandmother, who believes women should have the vote. She is 'in no way shocked' by the story of Liliard's past, but understands that Australia is still not ready to accept the Columban reforms (p. 361). When Liliard speculates on the wisdom of handfasting being used outside of Columba, the grandmother points out the timing is wrong: 'Oh no, my dear, society is not prepared for it yet, though maybe when you are as old as I am, I'll not say what will happen' (p. 361). *Handfasted* bravely gestures toward social and sexual reforms that, as Spence was well aware, were too advanced for the time.

Mary Moore Bentley's novel *A Woman of Mars, or Australia's Enfranchised Woman* presents another type of feminist utopia, one that very much reflects the agenda of the turn-of-the-century New Woman. In Moore Bentley's novel, the

⁹¹ Albinski notes that Liliard is 'literally strait-jacketed' by this clothing, and in a way which is 'symbolic' of the other changes that ensue. See '*Handfasted*', op. cit., p. 23.

most utopian environment of all is the planet of Mars, where there are no wars, gaols, lunatic asylums or poor houses, and there is no disease. Women are not oppressed on Mars, but are in fact elevated as the most admirable sex. They wear 'bifurcated' robes, and are revered as mothers and as teachers - two roles that, in the context of late-nineteenth-century Victorian society, can still be considered traditionally feminine.⁹² Nevertheless, the Martian woman who is the heroine of this novel, Vesta, is actually described as a 'New Woman', sent to Earth with the mission of assisting in the 'emancipation of Woman and the regeneration of the race' (p. 35).

Mars is a utopian world free of gender inequality, and the antithesis of Sydney, Vesta's destination. Marguerite, a woman who has died and visited Mars on her way to heaven, has already prepared Vesta for some of the problems found on Earth, such as the way the 'sacred laws of propagation and maternity' have been 'outraged and degraded' (p. 30). Still, upon arriving in Sydney, Vesta is shocked to witness for herself the degradation of women, the suffering of illegitimate children, and the broader problems of poverty and over-population, social injustice and inequality. Whereas on Mars the values of reason, self-sacrifice and love prevail, on Earth, the opposing values of passion (which stands for moral weakness and animalism) and capitalist-inspired selfishness and individualism reign. Interestingly, as committed as she is to women's emancipation, Vesta is also very attentive to the socio-economic injustices prevalent in Sydney: she notices, for example, the plight of the 'tired shop-girl', who must wear 'unsuitable clothing' and stand on her feet all day (pp. 71-2). In this respect, the novel is more sympathetic to the needs of working-class women than the other novels discussed in this chapter.

As Gillian Whitlock suggests, the subtitle, *Australia's Enfranchised Woman*, needs to be interpreted rather broadly, since this is much more than a novel in favour

⁹² M. Moore Bentley, *A Woman of Mars, or Australia's Enfranchised Woman*, Edwards, Dunlop & Co, Sydney, 1901, p. 13. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

of women's suffrage.⁹³ At the time the novel was published, South Australian and Western Australian women already had the vote, and New South Wales women were on the brink of achieving it. Vesta acknowledges that the Australian woman had 'not failed to mark her victory at the close of the nineteenth century, in her obtaining equal political enfranchisement with Man' (p. 72). However, she also recognises there is still substantial work to be done in other areas of women's lives, and with Marguerite's daughters, Marguerite (the younger), Sunshine and Hero in tow, embarks on a feminist project of revolutionising the position of women in Sydney society. After only five years in Australia, there is marked evidence of Vesta's success in persuading people that the 'Woman's Right question was the bedrock foundation upon which a statesman must seek to establish a happy, progressive social State' (p. 89). Women have ceased to wear 'paint and finery' like 'savages', and a new generation has emerged of healthy 'modern maidens' who ride their bicycles with 'grace and intelligence' (p. 131).

Moore Bentley exploits the notion of Australia as a New World that proves more receptive than other countries to revolutionary ideas. Vesta, who, like Liliard Abercrombie, becomes known as a prominent platform speaker, travels to England and America in order to preach the virtues of Martian and, increasingly, Australian feminist philosophy. As a country shown to be advanced, in world terms, with regard to women's suffrage, Australia becomes an ideal base from which the New Woman can promote her agenda:

All the nations of the earth have their attention rivetted upon Australia. She has become the wonder of the civilised world. Distinguished visitors from every land and clime throng her now incomparable shores, imploring her wonderful guest to come to their help also (p.77).

⁹³ Gillian Whitlock, '1901/1933: From Eutopia to Dystopia', in Ferres, *The Time to Write*, op. cit., ch. 8, p. 168.

The success of Australia's 'wonderful guest', Vesta, in achieving reforms for Australian women adds to this young country's appeal. The heroine considers Australia an 'embryonic nation' with the potential to 'breed a race with humanity-embracing sympathy' and 'lead the van of human evolution' on Earth (p. 120). Moore Bentley makes the intersection between emerging nationalism and racial 'evolution' explicit. The ideal nation in *A Woman of Mars* rests on racial (distinctly white, Anglo-Saxon) purity. As in Frances Russell's *Joyce Martindale*, late-nineteenth-century eugenicist and Social Darwinist discourses underpin the feminist agenda of *A Woman of Mars*. Vesta travels to Earth with the clear intention of studying the laws of heredity and environment. Both novels put forward an agenda for the improvement of the race that combines a belief in environmental reforms (eg. improved factory and shop environments for working women) with the need for selective breeding.⁹⁴ There is also, as with *Joyce Martindale*, a strong religious discourse informing Vesta's feminist and eugenic philosophies. On Mars, the Sabbath is observed, since religion, like literature, is posited as one of the 'great agencies of national education' (p. 109). Women are presented as important conduits for the dissemination of these closely linked feminist, racial, moral and religious ideas. *A Woman of Mars* presents several interesting ideas about womanhood, femininity and the New Woman. On the one hand, it celebrates a vision of the bicycle-riding, political and platform-speaking New Woman who was a visible symbol, in the popular press, of women's entry into the public sphere. On the other hand, it promotes some of the most dominant and traditional images of women - in their biologically-determined roles as mothers, and as moral, religious and racial guardians of the domestic sphere. Although these images may potentially seem in opposition to each other, Moore Bentley's novel reclaims and reinvents the New Woman as an icon, much in the way of the *Dawn* and the *Woman's Voice*. In a similar vein, Moore Bentley's New Woman is not turning her back on the domestic sphere, but intends to put her unique

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the way feminists tapped into scientific theories of eugenics and evolution, see Carol Bacchi, 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes towards Women, 1870-1920', *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*, Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed), Fontana/Collins, Melbourne, 1980, ch. 5.

domestic skills to good use in public life. In this way, feminists sought to challenge the passivity traditionally associated with the image of women as moral guardians by making their moral superiority to men the basis of an active, public role.

In line with social purity feminists, Moore Bentley emphasises the importance of women having ownership of their own bodies and sexuality. Only then, is there any hope for a (racially) healthy society. In her attack on the sexual double standard, Moore Bentley does not, like Catherine Helen Spence in *Handfasted*, propose full sexual equality for women. Rather, in *A Woman of Mars*, women's sexuality is reserved for the all-important role of procreation. It is as 'mothers of the race' (p. 213) that women have such an essential role to play in 'National Vitality' (p. 72). Vesta wonders that any 'nation could be so blind to its own interests, as to ignore so important a factor as the health and well-being of its Motherhood'.

As the basis for ensuring women can fulfil their maternal role, the novel emphasises the need for ideal eugenic marriages between sexually and hereditarily pure men and women. Vesta plays an influential role in the romantic affairs of Marguerite's daughters, guiding them to take into account the implications of their romantic/sexual decisions on the future of the race. These decisions are given added dramatic weight in the context of repeated attempts by the novel's villain, Lord Beauclerc, to destroy Vesta's philosophy, and ensure that sensuality and animalism remain dominant on Earth. Beauclerc, who believes women are created 'solely for man's pleasure and profit', contrives to destroy the younger Marguerite's marriage by exposing her husband Hector to the temptress Judith (p. 89). For Hector, Judith is the 'indispensable mate of diabolical animalism', appealing to the part of himself that he is unable to repress - the unrestrained sexual appetite that has the potential ramifications of disease and death (p. 189). Judith, a prostitute of Asiatic appearance, embodies a profound threat to Vesta's vision of both sexual

and racial purity.⁹⁵ Even though Hector and Marguerite have a son together, their marriage is not permitted to survive Hector's infidelity. The threat of racial degeneration is only completely expunged when Hector shoots Judith, before turning the gun on himself.

The ideal eugenic marriage requires both the man and woman to be unselfishly committed to the future of the Anglo-Saxon race. Importantly, it is the 'English-speaking race' which is destined to 'bear the torch-light of truth to the world' (p. 78). Marguerite's sister Sunshine is required to sacrifice marriage to Edison, the man she loves, when he confesses to having been 'the victim of a most transmittable disease' (p. 163). Like Joyce Martindale, Sunshine is shown to protect the quality, rather than the quantity, of the race. Her emotional needs and desires become secondary to the larger project of racial protection: Sunshine and Edison must give each other up, to allow Sunshine to make a more appropriate marriage with Edison's sexually irreproachable friend Carlyle. Even Edison eventually acknowledges that the 'pure women alone' can redeem humankind from the 'slavery' of the animal nature' (p. 198). Although she has not married for love, Sunshine derives comfort from her maternal function: she ultimately proves to be the 'happiest little mother on earth' (p. 261).

Both Spence and Moore Bentley ensure that reform of heterosexual relationships is at the centre of their utopian societies. Women writers from this period generally proved more interested than men in reinventing sexual morality. In contrast, for example, there is Julius Vogel's extraordinary 1888 novel *Anno Domini 2000; or, Woman's Destiny*, optimistically set in Melbourne 2000, when Australia is part of a wider empire called United Britain. In this modern society, men are accorded physical strength, while women are the intellectual leaders: both the Prime Minister and the opposition leader of United Britain are women. Despite its radical re-imagining of gender roles, however, Vogel's novel is far more interested in political, scientific and

⁹⁵ Also see Whitlock, op. cit., p. 169.

engineering changes than it is in the question of sexual relationships between men and women.

A Woman of Mars arguably does not challenge the institution of marriage in the radical manner that Spence's much earlier novel does. In Moore Bentley's novel, marriage is the 'basis of the social and moral evolution of mankind', and must be 'duly protected', provided it takes place between the right people (pp. 51-2). With so much importance placed on marriage and motherhood, Nan Bowman Albinski argues the franchise of the novel's subtitle is 'biological and moral, not political'.⁹⁶ This assessment, however, fails to take into account the emphasis that is also placed on the figure of the independent woman in *A Woman of Mars*. At the end of the novel, Vesta returns to Mars to live with her own husband, but her legacy remains in Australia's period of 'uninterrupted' progress, during which time its citizens become 'citizens of the world' (p. 261). Her legacy also remains in the younger Marguerite, who is ultimately the real heroine of the novel. Marguerite does not remarry after Hector's death, but, rather, assumes a more important role after Vesta's return to Mars as the 'able leader of a mighty social reform' (p. 261). The new proprietor of the radical newspaper, the *Democracy*, she becomes the 'wonder of the age as a woman journalist'. This image of the independent woman journalist and reformer very much accords with one of the most empowering feminist images of the turn-of-the-century New Woman.

⁹⁶ Albinski, 'A Survey', op. cit., p. 22.

Chapter Four

Evelyn Elizabeth Dickinson: New Woman and Novelist

I. Introducing 'Dick'

The *Bulletin* described Evelyn Elizabeth Dickinson in 1897 as a 'travelled lady with short hair who rides a bike and has written a book'.¹ Often referred to by the nickname of 'Dick', she was athletic, intellectual, ambitious, independent, and the close companion of Louisa Macdonald, first Principal of the Women's College at Sydney University. Dickinson lived at the College from 1892 to 1911 while she completed a medical degree, wrote novels and contributed articles to Sydney newspapers. She arranged for the College to have its own dog, and proceeded to train it (often unsuccessfully according to the students) using a whistle and a small whip. In 1953, W. Vere Hole and Anne Treweek wrote that Evelyn Dickinson was 'regarded as representative of the "new woman", for she wore her hair short, and had written a number of novels containing somewhat advanced ideas'.² They added the parenthetical comment, 'it was also whispered that she smoked in private'.

These images of Dickinson, which are typically recreated in other accounts, raise a number of important questions about her identity. As with any identity, there are often more questions than answers. How did Dickinson perform, and resist, 'feminine' roles, including the role of the New Woman? To what extent were others responsible for constructing images of her? Such questions underpin the discussion of Evelyn Dickinson's life with which this chapter begins. Dickinson was evidently an unconventional woman, and, like her

¹ *Bulletin*, 26 June 1897, p. 12. Quoted in Jeanette Beaumont and W. Vere Hole, *Letters from Louisa: A woman's view of the 1890s, based on the letters of Louisa Macdonald, first principal of the Women's College, University of Sydney*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, p. 84.

friend Louisa Macdonald, active in the late-nineteenth-century feminist movement. The first part of this chapter outlines Dickinson's contributions to Australian feminism, and considers the way she lived her life within the discourse of the New Woman.

The second part of this chapter comprises an examination of Evelyn Dickinson's long-neglected novels, including two that are set in Australia. In her fiction, Dickinson displays an interest in the nature and significance of the New Woman, and the feminist issues associated with this figure: the position of women in society, the problems of marriage, and the nature of sexual and gender identity. Apart from their setting, Dickinson's novels are particularly interesting from an Australian perspective because they raise questions about the New Woman's place in the 'New World'. They also raise the question of how, if at all, a discussion of Dickinson's life impacts on a reading of her fiction. Elizabeth Grosz contends:

The sex of the author has...no direct bearing on the political position of the text, just as other facts about the author's private or professional life do not explain the text. Nevertheless, there are ways in which the sexuality and corporeality of the subject leave their traces or marks on the texts produced, just as we in turn must recognize that the processes of textual production also leave their trace or residue on the body of the writer (and readers).³

The relationship between Dickinson's life and her writing is also of interest in this chapter, both the traces of her life on the texts she produced, as well as the traces of textual production on Dickinson's person/body.

² W. Vere Hole and Anne H. Treweeke, *The History of the Women's College Within the University of Sydney*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1953, p. 98.

³ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: The Politics of Bodies*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1995, p. 21.

Evelyn Dickinson belonged to, and was a product of, the era of first-wave feminism. She was born Evelyn Elizabeth Harris in Dublin in 1861, the daughter of Alfred Edward Ormonde Harris, a Clerk in Holy Orders. Unfortunately, little is known about her childhood, apart from the fact that, after her father's death, she was an orphan, and in possession of little money. Dickinson moved to London where, in 1883, she took advantage of the University College London's recent decision to admit women to its degrees and enrolled in Arts (English and Greek). By this time she had, curiously, changed her surname from Harris to Dickinson.⁴ In January 1884, she was among the first students to enter the new university residential college for women, College Hall, where each of the 22 students had the all-important room of her own.⁵ Dickinson lived there until July 1886, and embarked on what was to become a life-long friendship with another resident, the highly motivated and academically gifted young Scottish woman, Louisa Macdonald. Macdonald, who had enrolled several years earlier, obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1884 with First Class Honours in Classics and Honours in German, before going on to obtain a masters in Classics. After travelling to America and Australia, Macdonald returned to London, was elected a Fellow of University College in 1888, and was well on the way to establishing an academic career. Later, Macdonald reflected on her years at College Hall:

...our views of students' life then were distinctly Bohemian and independent...the irresistible urge of the time had driven us to strike out for ourselves, and the lure of London, the lectures, the churches, the theatres, the museums - everything that was happening had so much personal appeal.⁶

⁴ One possible explanation is that Dickinson may have married, though no evidence of this has yet been found.

⁵ Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶ Louisa Macdonald, "Miss Grove": An address to students at College Hall', 1925, p. 4. UCL 1B/19, University College London archives. Also quoted in part in Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

As well as taking advantage of the broader social, cultural and intellectual activities London offered, both Macdonald and Dickinson actively participated in extra-curricular activities at the university, such as the Literary Society for men and women. Macdonald was also involved in the Women's Debating Society, while Dickinson contributed poems to the *University College London Gazette*. One writer who captured the 'urge of the time', or mood of social change, was Ella Hepworth Dixon:

If young and pleasing women are permitted by public opinion to go to college, to live alone, to travel, to have a profession, to belong to a club, to give parties, to read and discuss whatsoever seems good to them, and to go to theatres without masculine escort, they have most of the privileges - and others thrown in - for which the girl of twenty or thirty years ago was ready to barter herself for the first suitor who offered himself and the shelter of his name.⁷

University College London was one of the more inspiring and supportive environments for the independent and modern woman who refused to consider marriage her only career option. At College Hall, women's intellectual and educational pursuits were highly valued. Dickinson and Macdonald found close friends and role models in the Principal and Vice-Principal of College Hall, Eleanor Grove and Rosa Morison, both of whom were ardent supporters of higher education for women. Grove was of the view that higher education was an essential prerequisite if women were to have 'real opportunities' in life.⁸ Morison was also a leader in the English suffrage movement. For Dickinson, College Hall proved to be an intellectually stimulating environment, a place where she could explore the more unconventional aspects of her personality. In

⁷ Quoted in Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, Viking/Penguin, New York, 1990, p. 39. Also quoted in David Rubenstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s*, Harvester, London, 1986, p. 41.

⁸ Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 13.



Figure G: Photograph of residents at the Women's College, University of Sydney. Maud Anderson, Louisa Macdonald (centre, standing), Evelyn Dickinson (top right), Hortense Henrietta (Etta) Montifiore, Jenny Uther, Eleanor Madeline Whitfeld, Constance Harker. Taken by F. Lloyd Esq. in 1893. Reproduced with the permission of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

their book based on Louisa Macdonald's letters, Jeanette Beaumont and W. Vere Hole capture Dickinson's difference from other women:

Of the four women, she was the youngest, and least likely to conform to social mores. She was the only member of the group who was perceived to be in any way outrageous.⁹

Macdonald later described her friend as having been 'like a delightful mischievous "Puck"', and quoted a 'disapproving elderly lady' who considered Dickinson 'far too brilliant a talker for so young a person'.¹⁰

As a representative of genteel poverty, Evelyn Dickinson had much to gain from the new opportunities emerging toward the end of the nineteenth century for middle-class women to access education, enter previously unavailable professions and achieve financial independence. It was still not an easy task, however, and Dickinson had trouble supporting herself in London. This appears to have been one reason why she decided to follow Louisa Macdonald to Australia when Macdonald won the position of foundation Principal of the new Women's College at Sydney University. Among those who had encouraged Macdonald to apply for the position was an influential member of the English women's movement, Millicent Garrett Fawcett.

In November 1892, Dickinson arrived in Sydney to live in Macdonald's quarters as her 'unofficial' secretary and companion. An 1893 photograph (**Figure G**) exists of the Women's College's first students, their Principal Louisa Macdonald (centre, standing) and her rather severe looking companion, Evelyn Dickinson (top right). Macdonald's annual salary of £500 made her the highest salaried woman in New South Wales, and enabled her to contribute to Dickinson's

⁹ Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁰ Louisa Macdonald, 'Miss Grove', *op. cit.*, p. 4.

living expenses.¹¹ Both women missed their friends Eleanor Grove and Rosa Morison enormously. Macdonald was particularly close to Grove, her mentor as well as her friend. She was to exchange weekly letters with the woman she affectionately referred to as 'Pixie' for over a decade. These letters are the most valuable extant source of information about Evelyn Dickinson, and the environment in which she lived.

The early years of the Women's College proved a testing time for Louisa Macdonald in the face of low student enrolments and unrelenting accusations from people like the fiery women's columnist for the *Bulletin* 'Sappho Smith' that the College was a white elephant. Although the University of Sydney had admitted women to 'all its advantages and privileges in complete equality with men' in 1881, it would be years before society fully accepted the value of higher education for women.¹² In 1892, the first year the temporary Women's College, Strathmore, operated, only four students were in residence. By 1894, when the official building was opened on the Sydney University campus, there were still only five students, even though there was room to accommodate 27 of them.

Macdonald was not deterred, however, from her project of turning the Women's College into a viable and empowering environment for women university students. In 1907, the *Sydney Morning Herald* described her as a 'woman of progressive views, and one who has the best interests of her sex at heart'.¹³ In her role as Principal of the College, Macdonald emulated her mentor Eleanor Grove by impressing on her students the value of women's intellectual endeavours. When the new College building was opened, Macdonald gave a speech in which she argued: the 'woman who has a trained mind and thought and understanding is none the less a woman, less practical, less helpful, less truly womanly because of that. I think her mental training will render her

¹¹ Amanda Hooton, 'The Women's Room', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Good Weekend, 28 April 2001, p. 41.

¹² W. M. Manning, Commemoration Address, 16 July 1881, p. 13. Cited in U. Bygott and K. J. Cable, *University Monographs* no. 1, University of Sydney, 1985, p. 8. Also cited in Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 1907, p. 5.

better in all these ways.¹⁴ Macdonald's speech was not only impressive for its feminist determination, but also for its emphasis on class barriers: she anticipated a time when a university education would be considered 'a desirable thing for every class and every individual'. It is also notable that, like many other feminists from the period, Macdonald emphasised the value of new higher education and employment opportunities for women, without denigrating their traditional domestic roles as wives and mothers. Her contribution to a debate at the University Students' Association, on the subject 'Women's Higher Sphere is in the Home, not public work in the World', reveals how she felt about women's roles in society more generally.¹⁵ She led the opposition in the debate, arguing that 'as the highest sphere for anyone was where his or her work was most wanted, we should leave it to the individual woman and her circumstances to decide where her "higher sphere" might lie'. Macdonald told Grove that her students all considered her mistaken in her view.¹⁶ Nevertheless, she was comforted by the knowledge they had given up a Sunday afternoon to discuss the question.

The first Principal of the Women's College always encouraged her students to value their friendships with other women. Macdonald told Grove she considered the Women's College had 'a tendency to create a feeling of solidarity amongst the women of the country'.¹⁷ An early student, Eleanor Wood (Whitfeld), later reflected on how successfully the Principal conveyed this message to her students:

Another lesson Miss Macdonald was always impressing upon us was the necessity of women working together, of comradeship between women, of ideal friendships. Women must look to other women for help, the fate of

¹⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 17 May 1894. Cited in Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁵ Letter from Louisa Macdonald to Eleanor Grove, 19 May 1894, *Letters from Louisa Macdonald to Eleanor Grove 1892-1898*, FM4/3106, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. Also cited in Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 13 October 1894, *Letters*, *op. cit.*

the meanest woman in the land was the concern of every woman of the land.¹⁸

Macdonald enjoyed precisely the kind of 'ideal friendship' with Evelyn Dickinson that served as an example for the students. There is no question of her gratitude toward Dickinson for the active and supportive role she assumed in the daily running of the College. This is expressed in another letter to Grove, in which Macdonald commented that her friend practically shared the care of the place even 'though nominally she is my guest'.¹⁹ On the occasions that Dickinson did not accompany Macdonald on leave, she stepped in to fill the role of Acting Principal. She also helped Macdonald with the ongoing work of raising the College's profile - a process that required constant publicity, political astuteness and money-raising activities. Mary Roseby, one of the first students at the College, later wrote about how fortunate she felt to have had Macdonald and Dickinson as her first Principals, both of whom were 'pioneers in Higher Education for Women'.²⁰ Roseby specifically recalled of Evelyn Dickinson that it was a 'liberal education to sit beside her and discuss politics and books and interesting topical events' such as the efforts of the early women students who were trying to 'gain recognition and entrance into the medical school at University College London'.²¹ Another student fondly recalled that '[f]rom Miss Dickinson we learned not to be afraid of uttering an opinion which was unpopular'.²² One of the student's great enjoyments 'was to hear Miss Macdonald and Miss Dickinson, who was a brilliant conversationalist, having a discussion on some topic of the day'.

Although Macdonald and Dickinson were often referred to in the same sentence, they were also perceived in very different ways. People tended to

¹⁸ Eleanor Wood (Whitfeld) 'The Women's College in the Pioneer Days', *Magazine of the Women's College*, June 1919, p. 7.

¹⁹ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 4 March 1894, *Letters*, op. cit.

²⁰ 'Reminiscences of Mary Roseby, an early student of the Women's College, 1960,' Women's College Archives, Women's College, University of Sydney.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 19. Also quoted in Hole and Treweeke, op. cit., pp. 98-9.

warm to Macdonald more quickly than to her inseparable friend. When Louisa Macdonald first arrived in Sydney, the *Sydney Mail* reported with a palpable tone of relief:

Miss Macdonald, despite her great attainments, has nothing of the typical blue stocking in dress or in manner. With a fine and vigorous frame and handsome face, a ringing and unaffected voice, she confesses a liking for nice clothes and wears gowns and hats of the period, with an appreciation of what is becoming and a due sense of what custom demands in the attire of a gentlewoman. She by no means shares the belief that blue spectacles and disregard of the conventions of society are necessary to support academic honours.²³

While Macdonald's dress and behaviour convinced people she did not disregard the 'demands' of gentility and femininity, Evelyn Dickinson's dress and behaviour proved far less reassuring. Eleanor Wood (Whitfeld) described Dickinson as '[s]timulating, interesting, and amusing', but added they were 'all inclined to be rather afraid of her' at first, before discovering the 'warm heart and kindly sympathetic nature beneath the witty tongue'.²⁴ The College Council was evidently so suspicious of Dickinson that they were reluctant to recognise officially her position at the College.

Evelyn Dickinson clearly transgressed, in an overt way, the boundaries that defined conventional femininity. This is seen in an account of Dickinson by Elma Linton Sandford-Morgan, a former student of the Women's College, and one of Australia's pioneer women doctors.²⁵ A palpable tone of distrust underpins her description of Dickinson:

²³ *Sydney Mail*, 2 April 1894. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁴ Wood (Whitfeld), op. cit., p. 8.

²⁵ Sandford-Morgan became Director of Maternal and Baby Welfare in the NSW Public Health Department, and was thus accorded the honour of being the first woman to hold an executive

She was witty and entertaining, but we did not share the Principal's great admiration for her. We felt that the masculine pose - strictly tailored suits, starched collars, short hair, gruff voice and even cigars - *was* only a pose, and it was Miss Macdonald who was really the strong partner. One night, when a drunk from the paddock had wandered in, it was 'the Prink' who dealt with him, while 'Dick' gave advice from well in the background.²⁶

The emphasis placed on Dickinson's masculine 'pose', or performance, invokes a strong image of gender instability and inversion. It also invokes an image of the New Woman which had become well-known by 1931, when this account was written. In his 1897 *Sexual Inversion*, the first of the *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, the sexologist Havelock Ellis defined the so-called 'inverted' woman as possessing instinctively 'masculine traits'.²⁷ These included the tendency to adopt male attire and a different tone of voice, a taste for smoking, a dislike of domestic activities, a capacity for athletics, and an indifference towards men. Ellis distinguished between women who were 'true inverts' and those for whom homosexuality was an acquired characteristic that could be prevented. As discussed in the previous chapter, all-female environments such as women's colleges were, according to Ellis, places where susceptible women could succumb to the invert's influence.²⁸ The importance of Ellis's account was that, as Sheila Jeffreys points out, it classified as "homosexual" precisely those forms of behaviour for which spinster feminists, the "New Women" of the 1890s,

position in the NSW Public Service. This information comes from the article, 'SA pioneer woman doctor dies at 92', *Advertiser*, 11 January 1983, p. 6.

²⁶ E. L. Sandford-Morgan, 'Louisa Macdonald of the Women's College', unpublished paper, c.1931, p. 33, Women's College Archives, Women's College, University of Sydney. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

²⁷ Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, reprint of the 1897 edition, Arno Press, New York, 1975, pp. 87-98.

²⁸ Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present*, Vintage Books, New York, 1995, p. 62.

were criticised by anti-feminists'.²⁹ Jeffreys continues: 'In the 1890s some women were trying to escape the "effeminate" stereotype of women. These feminists were neatly slotted into a picture of lesbian women who were really pseudo-men.' Such accusations were then used to sabotage women's attempts at emancipation. Negative journalistic accounts of the 'mannish' version of the New Woman, who represented the loss of conventional 'femininity' and 'womanliness', were directed at women who demanded the vote, wore rational dress or rode bicycles. As seen in previous chapters, such representations caused many women to disown the 'New Woman' label.

Evelyn Dickinson arrived in Sydney at a time when England was responding to its excess of 'odd' and 'superfluous' women - women who could not marry - by encouraging them to head for the colonies. The colonies were supposed to be the superfluous woman's salvation - a place where potential husbands abounded, and where she could finally marry and cease to be odd. Evelyn Dickinson and Louisa Macdonald can be seen as New Women who, upon arriving in the New World, unapologetically refused to conform to this expectation.³⁰ In her study of spinsters in Australia, Katie Holmes emphasises that the new and increasing work opportunities available, particularly for white middle-class women, at the turn of the century, made possible a 'vision of the single woman' that 'involved imagining another self, a self free from the physical, financial and emotional bondage of marriage'.³¹ In both London and Sydney, Dickinson and Macdonald surrounded themselves with other women who generally did not consider 'spinsters' oddities, or superfluous women, but rather New Women who pursued alternative, often more fulfilling, lives. Such

²⁹ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930*, Pandora, London, 1985, p. 106.

³⁰ I am indebted to Dr Ian Henderson for this idea.

³¹ Katie Holmes, "'Spinsters Indispensable': Feminists, Single Women and the Critique of Marriage, 1890-1920", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 110, April 1998, p. 74.

women demonstrated that Australian women were not limited to the roles of Damned Whores or God's Police.³²

Yet, in the context of declining birth and marriage rates, the spectre of the 'single' woman who *chose* to live independently of men was still perceived by many as threatening the future of Australian society. Most threatening of all, perhaps, were the women who established long-term and intimate relationships with each other - Boston marriages - as alternatives to heterosexual marriage. These women were, according to Lillian Faderman:

generally financially independent of men, either through inheritance or because of a career. They were usually feminists, New Women, often pioneers in a profession. They were also very involved in culture and in social betterment, and these female values, which they shared with each other, formed a strong basis for their life together.³³

Indeed, the discourse of the Boston marriage informed the solid personal and professional relationship Dickinson and Macdonald enjoyed with one another, as well as their involvement in organisations for social reform. Together, they worked to transform the College into a viable residence for women university students. They read aloud to each other, and accompanied each other to work and social occasions. At Dickinson's instigation, the Women's College began to hold Christmas Dinners during the Australian winter in order to experience something closer to 'home' in England. At one of these fancy dress occasions, Macdonald dressed up as Professor MacCallum's great grandmother, and was accompanied by Dickinson, wearing a Barrister's gown and wig.³⁴ The two

³² These were, of course, the two social stereotypes which, according to Anne Summers, characterised Australian women. See *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia*, Allen Lane, Melbourne, 1975.

³³ Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, William Morrow and Co, New York, 1981, p. 190.

³⁴ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 27 June 1897, *Letters*, op. cit.

women went on cycling holidays together to Tasmania: Macdonald sometimes found it difficult to keep up with Dickinson, who thought 'nothing of a bicycle ride of twenty and thirty miles'.³⁵ On other occasions, they rented a cottage in the Blue Mountains, where Dickinson cultivated the 'useful accomplishment of wood chopping with great success', and took them on drives in a horse and buggy.³⁶ They also visited Macdonald's brother's bush property at Mudgee, where Dickinson gathered material for her novels.

Up until Macdonald's death in 1949, these intelligent and dynamic women rejected marriage in favour of education and careers, and looked to each other as lifelong companions. Their relationship was evidence, according to one former student of the Women's College, of 'how perfect can be a friendship between two cultured women with similar broad interests, intellectual pursuits, wide-reaching sympathies and ever-soaring ideals.'³⁷ Two trees were planted in the Women's College garden in their honour, and nicknamed the 'Heavenly Twins'. When Louisa Macdonald resigned from her position as Principal of the Women's College and returned to London in 1919, she bought a house with Dickinson, who had returned there several years earlier. Following his great aunt's death, the Reverend Frederick Macdonald met Dickinson on a number of occasions at the home she shared with Louisa at 42 Ordnance Hill, St John's Wood:

...and that always meant a good feed! I think she found it amusing to have a teenager to talk to, and I always found the conversation was 'peppy'. She told me once that she had smoked her first cigar at the age of 11...Always gruffly spoken, a chain smoker (with a matching smoky voice) she was quick witted and sarcastic, and yet had a marvellous way of getting to the heart of things, with a few succinct words. I think Louisa found Dick both

³⁵ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 25 February 1897, *Letters*, op. cit.

³⁶ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 8 February 1895, *Letters*, op. cit.

amusing and useful. She would run errands for her and help with the housekeeping. E. E. D. was certainly everything that Louisa wasn't, and in conversation people would often find that 'Dick' would be 'going for the jugular'.³⁸

In her will, Dickinson left one hundred pounds to Frederick Ronald Macdonald Wardel. She bequeathed the rest of her estate to a woman identified as her niece, Brita Sophia Dahlstrom.

Despite the hostility Dickinson sometimes encountered as a result of her deviations from convention, the discourse of the New Woman also afforded her a new degree of freedom from the constraints of traditional Victorian womanhood. The new emphasis placed on women's physical health and fitness suited Dickinson, who was an inveterate sport enthusiast. She played tennis, learnt to swim after arriving in Sydney, and encouraged physical fitness among the students by converting a room at the College into a gymnasium. The Dickinson Challenge Cup was presented to the College Tennis Club in remembrance of Dickinson's 'keen interest' in sports and the 'physical training of the students'.³⁹ Dickinson was also one of the first women cyclists in Sydney, and proved a target for the boys in Newtown who 'used to throw stones at her, until she got off and gave one of them a good spanking!'⁴⁰ On Sundays, she went on cycling expeditions with Miss Gurney and Mlle Soubeiran, the Principals of the Kambala girls' school.

New Women like Dickinson occupied a central and visible place in the contested socio-cultural terrain of late-nineteenth-century Sydney. The modern Australian city was the place where the modern Australian woman could best avail herself of the new opportunities to access an education and earn her own

³⁷ Wood (Whitfeld), op. cit., p. 7.

³⁸ Rev. Frederick Macdonald, letter to Beaumont and Hole, October 1992, op. cit., p. 19.

³⁹ *The Women's College within the University of Sydney Calendar 1913*, W. E. Smith, Sydney, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Roseby, op. cit.

money. The New Woman symbolised the increasing instability of separate spheres, as women left their homes and intruded on what had been predominantly a masculine domain. Cycling enabled Dickinson to assert her autonomy, maintain her health, and contribute to women's appropriation of urban public spaces. She also achieved these things with her characteristically long walks through Sydney: on one occasion, Evelyn went to Coogee Bay, and then 'walked over to Double Bay afterwards with Mrs Mere, and stayed to dinner'.⁴¹ In histories of modernity, feminist researchers have been particularly interested in the notion of women walking alone in the city in the style of the wandering, Baudelairean *flâneur*. Far less attention has been paid to women like Evelyn Dickinson, who regularly chaperoned other women to various public events in the city.⁴² In one of her letters, Louisa Macdonald described the Jubilee Day celebrations of 1897:

Evelyn took me to see the illuminations on Monday and she chaperoned all the girls on Tuesday while I guarded the house.⁴³

As they strode through the city streets unchaperoned by men, Dickinson and Macdonald jointly asserted their claim on Sydney. During the 1890s, this version of the New Woman was joined by, and also represented by, shop girls, typists and nurses who entered the city in large numbers. Gail Reekie details, for example, how the rise of department stores in Sydney saw women of different classes contesting this previously masculine space and pursuing for the first time 'the pleasures and possibilities of the culture of consumption'.⁴⁴ Macdonald's letters recorded her regular shopping excursions with Dickinson:

⁴¹ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 20 April 1895, *Letters*, op. cit.

⁴² I am specifically referring here to women chaperoning each other on trips into the city. Of course, women often acted as chaperones for other women at private events.

⁴³ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 27 June 1897, *Letters*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Gail Reekie, 'The Sexual Politics of Selling and Shopping', *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, p. 60.

'in the afternoon did much shopping of various kinds, till I was so tired of wandering about the streets I could hardly stand'.⁴⁵

While more women began exploring Sydney, there were still very real dangers attached to women walking in the city alone. In Macdonald's letters to Eleanor Grove, she depicted a bifurcated urban landscape, divided at the border of the university, and the suburbs of Newtown and Redfern, deemed to be the 'worst slums' in Sydney. In such areas, she wrote, it was 'unsafe for anyone, man or woman' to walk 'alone after dark'.⁴⁶ Yet this did not prevent her and Dickinson from taking omnibuses, steamers, trains and buggies to a dizzying succession of social and work engagements. Macdonald wrote:

...there has been nothing very interesting doing here this week, only a great many little entertainments, which take up time and prevent one having any leisure for anything. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday afternoon tea parties and dinner parties, a garden party, a concert, a lecture and another dinner, a charity bazaar, various meetings and a supper party. Some of it is amusing, and a great deal is very dull...⁴⁷

While Macdonald found the endless social engagements onerous, she knew it was a compulsory part of her role as Principal of the Women's College. It was also because of this role that she and Dickinson were able to take advantage of the new intellectual, educational and political activities that Sydney offered. The formation of cultural and political networks among women in Sydney during the 1890s gave them an unprecedented degree of visibility in the public sphere. Dickinson and Macdonald soon belonged to a vibrant urban community of middle- and upper-class women - journalists, philanthropists,

⁴⁵ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 23 December 1894, *Letters*, op. cit.

⁴⁶ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 4 March 1894, *Letters*, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 18 May 1895, *Letters*, op. cit. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 135.

platform women and suffragists - all of whom were working in the public domain for the realisation of (mostly liberal) feminist ideals. This network included feminist activists like Maybanke Anderson (Wolstoneholme), Lady Mary Windeyer, the philanthropist and President of the Womanhood Suffrage League, and her daughter Margaret Windeyer, who was in charge of the exhibition of Australian women's work at the World Fair in Chicago in 1893. Dickinson and Macdonald were regular visitors to Rose Scott's Friday night salons at her home in Edgecliff, also frequented by the likes of Miles Franklin, Henry Lawson, Sir Henry Parkes and Judge William Charles Windeyer. They attended together the lectures delivered by Annie Besant, leader of the Theosophical Society, in Sydney in 1894. As well as putting forward radical ideas about the importance of birth control, Besant promoted ideas about 'Spiritualism' that gained a great deal of attention. Like the students at the Women's College, Dickinson and Macdonald were intrigued by theosophy.⁴⁸ In 1925, Macdonald described herself as a 'firm believer' in reincarnation.⁴⁹

Louisa Macdonald and Evelyn Dickinson can both be considered first-wave feminists who, as well as establishing the Women's College, actively participated in the most important Sydney women's clubs and societies of the day. Macdonald helped to establish the Sydney University Women's Association and the National Council of Women, and was President of the Sydney Women's Literary Society in 1896. As already mentioned, Frances Emily Russell was one of the subscribers to the Women's College Building Fund, as well as a Vice President of the Literary Society. Both Macdonald and Dickinson also maintained membership of the Womanhood Suffrage League throughout the decade. Dickinson was elected to the Council of the Suffrage League in 1893. Much to Rose Scott's annoyance, Macdonald turned down vice-presidency of the League: her role as Principal of the Women's College made her reluctant to take up such an overtly political position. Dickinson was also a founding member of the new Ladies' Club at Sydney University, designed to be

⁴⁸ Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

a place where women could write letters and entertain friends.⁵⁰ Macdonald wrote in one of her letters that she and Dickinson were part hostesses at a dinner given by the Ladies' Club to Lady Manning, the wife of Sir William Patrick Manning. After dinner, she explained, speeches and toasts were proposed, 'one, rather amusing by Mrs Neville Griffith, who is president of the Women's Suffrage League to "Other Women", to which Evelyn replied; and hers was an admirable little speech'.⁵¹ The *Bulletin* reported that at this meeting, '[e]very detail was arranged from manly models, minus spirits and smoke'.⁵²

Through clubs such as these, women gained valuable public speaking experience, as well as experience in formulating and expressing their opinions about women's issues. In 1894, Dickinson was elected Treasurer of the short-lived Women's Industrial Guild, an organisation devoted to helping 'gentlewomen in distressed circumstances' to find paid work.⁵³ Macdonald commented of Dickinson:

It is really curious to find anyone with the literary faculty and the artistic temperament so strongly developed as she has them, so capable, so conscientious and so long suffering over a piece of management and organisation.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, Dickinson found that the women she was working with were hopelessly disorganised when it came to managing the finances of the organisation, and the Industrial Guild failed not long afterwards. Dickinson also occasionally lectured for the Shakespeare Society. In one of these lectures

⁴⁹ Macdonald, 'Miss Grove', op. cit., p. 5. Also quoted in Alice M. Copping, *The Story of College Hall 1882-1972*, Newman Books, London, 1974, p. 27.

⁵⁰ Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., pp. 82-3.

⁵¹ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 20 June 1897, *Letters*, op. cit. Quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 83.

⁵² *Bulletin*, 26 June 1897, p. 12. Quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 84.

⁵³ Brochure of Women's Industrial Guild, *Aims and Objects and Handbill*, c. 1891. Cited in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 107.

⁵⁴ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 18 August 1894, *Letters*, op. cit. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 107.

she combined her enthusiasm for literature with her knowledge of medicine to discuss Shakespeare's attitude toward the 'Healing Art'.⁵⁵

If her unorthodox dress, cigar smoking, outspokenness, athleticism and participation in women's organisations were not enough to suggest the stereotype of the New Woman, then Dickinson's decision to study Medicine at Sydney University presumably did. She began the degree in 1903, at a time when Medicine was still considered by many an 'improper' occupation for women. In 1905, there were only 22 women enrolled in Medicine at the University of Sydney, 11 of whom lived at the Women's College.⁵⁶ This compared with 112 women who were studying for an Arts degree. Louisa Macdonald never forgot the attitude toward London's first women medical students, among whom was her sister Isabella Macdonald. She recollected:

One day a curate...burst unawares into their sitting room, and beating a hasty retreat they heard him apologising profusely to the landlady in the passage. "Oh, it doesn't matter a bit Sir", said she, "they're no ladies, they're only medical students".⁵⁷

Dickinson completed her Bachelor of Medicine in 1908 and a Master of Surgery in 1910. During a two year visit to England c. 1908-1909, she also gained a Diploma of Public Health of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons (Ireland).⁵⁸ After finishing her studies, she assumed the official role of Honorary Physician of the Women's College from 1910 to 1911. This was the first real indication of her acceptance there, and the beginning of an impressive medical career. After Dickinson returned to London permanently in 1911, she became

⁵⁵ 'Shakespeare and the Healing Art: Prepared by Miss E. E. Dickinson before the Shakespeare Society of New South Wales on May 8th', *Australasian Nurses' Journal*, vol. IV, no. 6, 15 June 1906, pp. 174-82.

⁵⁶ These statistics come from *Biographical Register: The Women's College within the University of Sydney*, Volume 1: 1892-1939, Rosemary Annable (ed), The Council of the Women's College, Sydney, 1995, p. 163.

⁵⁷ Macdonald, 'Miss Grove', op. cit., p. 4. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 7.

assistant physician to the out-patients at the London New Hospital for Women from 1912 to 1913. In 1915, she was Superintendent of the Sanitorium at Nayland, Suffolk, for tuberculosis patients, as well as being responsible for her own private practice.⁵⁹ When she died at the St John's Wood home on 8 January 1957 at the age of 96, it was for her career as a 'spinster medical practitioner' that she was remembered on her death certificate.

II. A Writing Career

Medicine was evidently more financially viable for Evelyn Dickinson than writing. Yet writing had obviously also been very important to her, providing her with intellectual satisfaction and much-needed income, particularly before she embarked on her medical career. The type of the 'literary' New Woman was well-known in literature from the period. In Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), there is a version of the New Woman writer in the independent, assertive and indomitable journalist Henrietta Stackpole:

Henrietta was a literary woman, and the great advantage of being a literary woman was that you could go everywhere and do everything.⁶⁰

For Isabel Archer, Henrietta exists as 'proof that a woman might suffice to herself and be happy'.⁶¹ Similarly, Herminia Barton, the heroine of Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*, turns to journalism and writes 'A Very Advanced Woman's Novel' to support herself and her child financially.⁶² Writing appealed to many of the New Women as a means to attain financial, physical and intellectual independence. Dickinson contributed short stories to English periodicals such as the *Temple Bar*, wrote articles for Australian newspapers like

⁵⁸ Annable, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Annable, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁶⁰ Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981, p. 134.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁶² Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did*, introduced by Sarah Wintle, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 97.

the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Sydney Mail*, and book reviews for *Woman's Voice*. Since she often published anonymously, or identified herself simply as 'E. E. D.', it is difficult to know exactly how much she wrote, and how many journals she was published in. Nevertheless, it is apparent from the few pieces that can be traced back to her that Dickinson was interested in experimenting with different styles of fiction and non-fiction, and writing for different audiences. A poem she published in the *University College London Gazette* in 1888 included the lines:

I have a tiny bubble reputation for a certain knack at scribbling,
I have a little trick of saying things incongruous - out of joint,
Which hath at times been known to make men laugh⁶³

The comic poem, written in deliberately lofty language, offers a dramatic contrast, in tone, to the somewhat melodramatic short story Dickinson published in the *Temple Bar* in 1899. The story, 'The Garden of Proserpine', is about an English civil servant living in India.⁶⁴ Lauder Walpole talks to another man about his growing belief that he is engaged to a woman he does not really love. When Walpole's betrothed suddenly dies, however, he is racked with guilt, convinced his neglect of her has caused her to die of a 'broken heart'.⁶⁵ The story is told from the perspective of a male protagonist, who frankly discusses, with another man, the subjects of women and alcohol. Of course, the name 'E. E. Dickinson' at the end of the story did not immediately reveal the author's gender.

For the *Sydney Mail*, Dickinson wrote quite a poetic article about five natural sounds, and their effect on one's mood.⁶⁶ Louisa Macdonald considered this one of the best things she ever wrote.⁶⁷ Dickinson also published a philosophical article in the *Sydney Mail*, 'This Wicked World', which examined the way

⁶³ E. E. D., 'To the Editor', *University College London Gazette*, 14 March 1888, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁴ E. E. Dickinson, 'The Garden of Proserpine', *Temple Bar: A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*, vol. 117, May to August 1899, pp. 369-77.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 375.

⁶⁶ E. E. D., 'Five Sounds', *Sydney Mail*, 28 April 1894, p. 853.

⁶⁷ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 13 July 1894, *Letters*, op. cit.

people view their own and others' sins and wickedness.⁶⁸ Both these articles were simply signed 'E. E. D.' and, once again, disguised the author's gender. Dickinson's obituary for Frances Mary Buss, published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1895, stands out as the most overt public expression of the author's commitment to feminist ideals, apart from her novels. The obituary, entitled 'A Remarkable Woman', described Buss as having, in Dickinson's words, 'devoted the immense energies of her whole life to the promotion, the enlargement, the consolidating of women's education'.⁶⁹ She continued:

The most striking feature in British society during the last half-century is in the change in the position of women. Miss Buss has been greatly responsible for this. When she taught as a girl with her mother in a small school in Kentish Town - somewhere in the "forties" - the usual feminine education was the expensive system of elaborate ineffectuality known as the teaching of "accomplishments"; when she died at the age of 67 last December every reasonable subject could be studied in her two great schools [the North London Collegiate School and the Camden School for Girls] - Greek, physics, music, gymnastics, needlework!

Dickinson made it clear in the article that she knew Frances Buss, and admired her greatly. She also emphasised the importance of a woman like Buss as a role model for her students, who were 'among the first to take advantage of the senior and junior University examinations, and of the opening of the English Universities'.

Like so many other women writers from this period, Evelyn Dickinson has been largely invisible in Australian literary histories. One possible reason for her absence from Australian literary canons is that she was not as prolific as

⁶⁸ E. E. D., 'This Wicked World', *Sydney Mail*, 23 March 1895, p. 615.

⁶⁹ E. E. D., 'A Remarkable Woman', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 February 1895.

writers like Rosa Praed and Ada Cambridge. She only published four novels, and only two of these have Australian content. The minimal correspondence that survives between Dickinson and her publishers also reveals a relatively unspectacular literary career in terms of the reception of her fiction. Her first two novels *A Vicar's Wife* (London: Methuen & Co, 1892) and *The Sin of Angels* (London: Methuen & Co, 1896) received scant attention from reviewers, though both had at least two editions.⁷⁰ *The Sin of Angels* did, however, gain a certain amount of notoriety in Sydney for its satire of members of Sydney society. The dinner held by the Ladies' Club for Lady Manning, at which Dickinson gave a speech, was reported in the *Bulletin*, partly because of the problems generated by this novel:

A hitch arose in the arrangements owing to one of the givers of the feast (a travelled lady with short hair who rides a bike and has written a book) having aired in that work some facts of life of another member, a sassiety star, but the difficulty was got over by the caricatured lady leaving herself out of the party.⁷¹

The practical difficulty of writing about the upper-class society in which Dickinson circulated suggests one reason why *The Sin of Angels* was originally published as being 'by the Author of *A Vicar's Wife*'. Frederick Macdonald recalled that certain 'members of Sydney society' threatened Dickinson with legal action for defamation.⁷² It was generally not considered unusual for women to publish anonymously or employ a pseudonym. For Australian women writers such as Miles Franklin, this was a way of gaining access to the male dominated world of publishing. For others, like Rosa Praed, anonymity was adroitly used, just as it was used by male authors, as a way of attaching an air of mystery or scandal to a publication. In a letter to Praed, the publisher

⁷⁰ *A Vicar's Wife* was also published as part of Angus & Robertson's Colonial Library in 1902[?]. *The Sin of Angels* was re-released by Methuen's Colonial Library in 1897.

⁷¹ *Bulletin*, 26 June 1897, p. 12. Quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 84.

⁷² Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 19.

George Bentley pointed out the positive influence this could have on book sales.⁷³

Evelyn Dickinson's third novel *Hearts Importunate: a tale* (London: Heinemann, 1899) was more successful than her earlier ones. It also had more than one edition, and was widely reviewed and well-received in both England and Australia.⁷⁴ However, her final novel *One Man's Way: A Novel* (London: George Allen & Co, 1914) was, in Dickinson's view, 'doomed to failure' given that its publication coincided with the outbreak of the first world war.⁷⁵ She wrote to her publisher on 14 August 1914 asking, 'Who will buy anything at a time like this?' Yet earlier letters reveal the book had already sold slowly for several months before the outbreak of war. On 3 June, immediately after the novel was released, the Managing Director of George Allen & Co reported to Dickinson that the book had 'not been very well subscribed' even though the booksellers were offered 'most favourable terms'.⁷⁶ He continued: 'W. H. Smith & Son only took 55 and Simpkins 30, Boots took 50 (which was rather better), Mudies 7, The Times 4 and Days 6, making, with a few miscellaneous country sales a total of 174 copies'. Towards the end of June, sales had only risen slightly to 216 copies. Despite Dickinson's publisher expressing his hope that she would not be 'discouraged' from writing another novel, she appears not to have done so.⁷⁷

The novels Dickinson did write are of particular interest for their contribution to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century debates surrounding the New Woman. There is no doubt that Macdonald and Dickinson were well acquainted with the New Woman writing that was attracting controversy in England and Australia. The Women's College library's feminist collection

⁷³ Letter from George Bentley to Rosa Praed, 4 December 1883, Letter 9/4/35, *Praed Papers*, OM 64-1, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

⁷⁴ *Hearts Importunate* was also published by Heinemann's Colonial Library in 1899 and 1900.

⁷⁵ A letter from Dickinson to her publishers George Allen & Co dated 14 August 1914. Letter Book no. 40, Allen Main Series, *Letter Books 1893-1915*, MS 3281. Publishers' archives, Archives Department, Reading University Library.

⁷⁶ Letter 630, Allen Main Series, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Letter from the Managing Director, George Allen & Unwin, to Dickinson dated 30 March 1915. Letter Book no. 53, *ibid.*

included early feminist texts such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, as well as the New Woman novels, Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*, which specifically examined the situation of the independent woman, and Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*.⁷⁸ Furthermore, in her letters, Louisa Macdonald regularly mentioned the new fiction that everyone was reading and discussing. Although she seemed personally well read in this fiction, her comments, on the whole, were not complimentary. For instance, she found *The Heavenly Twins* to be one of the 'most depressing books' she had ever read.⁷⁹ Macdonald was particularly disapproving of the new novels' focus on sexual matters:

I have been reading the *Yellow Aster*, and was rather interested by it, although it hardly seems to me to deserve all the praise it has received. But I am getting very tired of the books about sex. If people are to go through all these painful experiences why don't they remain single?...The world of fiction nowadays seems to revolve around the marriage bed: and really men are not so interesting as that comes to, while the young woman whose mind is always on matrimony whether with longing or revolt is down right objectionable.⁸⁰

In another letter, she mentioned a particularly difficult conversation she had had, during which her conversation partner, a Mrs Cohen, raised the subject of the new fiction:

At last she asked me a question about *Marcella* with an air of profound relief, feeling sure that would do. Then as a last resort she fled for refuge to *The Heavenly Twins*.

⁷⁸ *The Women's College within the University of Sydney Calendar 1900*, W. E. Smith, Sydney, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 8 October 1893, *Letters*, op. cit. Also quoted in part in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., pp. 129-30.

⁸⁰ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 22 June 1894, *Letters*, op. cit.

Alas again my views on the marriage question are even stronger than on Mrs Ward. Weariness almost to loathing fills my mind at the mere mention of it...⁸¹

Several months later, she continued:

...the women's books - as that horrible *Yellow Aster*, the books about women like *Dodo* and *The Manxman*- the very tone of the *Woman's Signal* itself, the whole of them are always concerned about sex and the sexual act till the very air seems full of it. I do not believe in special teaching on that subject. It is making it of too much importance. If boys and girls could only be trained in everything to be clean minded and self denying, not self indulgent, and thoughtful for others the social evil will diminish as far as may be.⁸²

Here, Macdonald's rejection of the idea - a recurring one in New Woman fiction - that girls should be better informed about sex and physiology, and insistence on the need to be 'clean minded' and 'self denying', suggested a strong element of social purity feminism. Her conclusions about Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, in which the unhappily married heroine finds refuge from her husband in a secret room, where she concentrates on writing novels, were slightly more positive:

It is very clever but rather long, and certainly falls off at the end. I don't know whether to say it will have a great effect on Women's minds or whether perhaps it is not rather an expression of a great change that has already

⁸¹ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 7 July 1894, *Letters*. op. cit. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 124.

⁸² Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 8 December 1894, *Letters*, *ibid*. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 130.

come over them - a little of both may be. Certainly Sarah Grand gives expression to what in her own heart almost every woman thinks about her male belongings, and in so doing definitely makes objective knowledge out of what to many was before subjective fancy.⁸³

Overall, Macdonald's views on sex and marriage were somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, she declared her weariness of the marriage problem novels, and seemed to have no objections to marriage per se. Sandford-Morgan recalled that while she remained faithful to the 'cause of happy single women', she did not influence her students to consider marriage less important than a career.⁸⁴ On the other hand, Macdonald did hold a dim view of marriage in the Australian context, particularly when she first arrived in the country and was made aware of married women's sexual subjugation. She told Grove she found it hard to understand why colonial women wanted to marry at all, when marriage in Australia largely meant the 'gratification of an animal instinct, consequent burden, weariness and squalor'.⁸⁵ From Macdonald's financially privileged perspective, there were clear alternatives to marriage, and rather than thinking obsessively about men, women should consider what work they could do. She was also surprised that the idea of 'mutual interdependence of women' was so 'foreign' to Australian thought, especially compared with England.⁸⁶ In one sense, this should not have been surprising to her, given the excess of 'superfluous' women in England compared with Australia.

Unfortunately, Macdonald's letters mostly fail to reveal what Evelyn Dickinson thought about the new novels. Given Dickinson's demonstrated interest in pursuing the subjects of sexuality and the problems of marriage in her own

⁸³ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 10 February 1898, *Letters*, *ibid.* Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁸⁴ Sandford-Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁸⁵ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 8 October 1893, *Letters*, *op. cit.* Quoted in Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁸⁶ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 20 October 1893, *Letters*, *op. cit.*

fiction, she would presumably have disagreed with some of Macdonald's opinions. Macdonald acknowledges this difference of opinion in one letter to Eleanor Grove, in which she included a review Dickinson wrote of Hall Caine's popular and somewhat sensational 1894 novel *The Manxman*:

I send you a number of the *Woman's Voice* for which Evelyn wrote a review of the *Manxman*...Her opinions aren't quite the same as mine, but it may interest you to see it.⁸⁷

Macdonald explained that although she 'liked' *The Manxman*, the heroine, Kate, seemed to 'do every thing that was wrong all through'. She was clearly unimpressed by the heroine's decision eventually to leave her husband for another man. Macdonald singled out for criticism the fact of Kate acting as a seducer, marrying a man she did not want to marry, and then proving unable 'to cook a chop decently' after six months of them living together. She also criticised her for consistently acting on her 'own physical passion' rather than out of 'loyalty' and 'love'. Macdonald conceded to Grove however:

At the same time I agree with you that the moral of the story that the act of marriage is marriage without regard to priest or registrar, and is equally binding on man and woman, is absolutely true, and cannot but have an effect. But I wish for my own pleasure that I could have sympathized with the woman more.⁸⁸

In her piece for *Woman's Voice*, Dickinson reviewed *The Manxman* alongside George Moore's now better known story of the fallen woman, *Esther Waters*, published the same year.⁸⁹ Ann Ardis, it should be noted, includes *Esther Waters*

⁸⁷ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 23 December 1894, *Letters*, op. cit.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 126.

⁸⁹ 'New Books', *Woman's Voice*, 22 December 1894, p. 143.

in her bibliography of New Woman fiction.⁹⁰ Dickinson's opinion of both novels was quite favourable. She expressed her admiration for the 'strong dramatic power' of *The Manxman*, and came across as far less critical of its heroine than Macdonald did: for one thing, she described Kate as having been seduced, rather than describing her as the seductress. Nevertheless, Dickinson considered Moore's work an example of finer writing. She praised the character of Esther as a 'most real woman', and concluded the novel was a 'forcible and veracious work of art'. It is pertinent that she began the review by pointing out the two novels were particularly interesting to compare, since Hall Caine 'may be called the leader of the melodramatic, and George Moore the leader of the realistic party among English novelists'. She explained Caine's greater popularity as an author in terms of most people's preference for 'romance to fact'. In her own fiction, Dickinson frequently combined features of romance, melodrama and realism. Her review of these novels reveals her interest in different ways of representing a similar theme - the situation of the 'fallen' woman:

Each story deals with a girl's betrayal and abandonment; but in the one case the act results in the wild remorse, the far-reaching confusion, the hysterical passion of the established school of fiction, and in the other in the ugly dogged endurance and compromise of actual life. Four souls are wasted by the seduction of Kate. In the instance of Esther Waters only herself suffers, and she comes out of her suffering brave, self-sacrificing, well-doing. It would seem to be Hall Caine's view that love is the relation of sex on the chief matters of mortal life. It would seem to be George Moore's - as indeed it is the experience of most of us - that though immensely important, at times verily overwhelming, it takes its

⁹⁰ Ann L. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1990.

place in the long run among many other human conditions. Love - *pace* Byron - is no one's whole existence, no sane creature's, no intelligent being's, who has ambitious brains, bread to earn, friends to enjoy!

This last line offers a rare insight into Dickinson's determination to live her own life as an intelligent and career-ambitious woman, who did not look to heterosexual marriage as her primary goal. The review is also interesting because, as will be seen in her novels, Dickinson was eager to explore the role of the so-called 'fallen' woman in Victorian culture, specifically in the context of debates surrounding the late-nineteenth-century Woman Question.

III. Disobeying His Command: *A Vicar's Wife* (1892)

Evelyn Dickinson's first novel *A Vicar's Wife* was published before the term 'New Woman' was officially coined, yet there is no mistaking its affiliation with a new school of fiction concerned with making the plight of women visible. Although set entirely in Southamptonshire, England, *A Vicar's Wife* is particularly relevant from an Australian perspective because it is the prequel to Dickinson's later novel, *Hearts Importunate*, which is set in Australia. *A Vicar's Wife* is in the style of marriage problem novels like Rosa Praed's *The Bond of Wedlock* and Tasma's *A Fiery Ordeal*. It begins with a similar scenario: the intelligent and sensitive heroine, Lucia Wilbraham, is made aware as early as the honeymoon - a 'terrible anti-climax' - of the disappointing reality of marriage to the Vicar of Colewater, Markham Fletcher.⁹¹ Nothing about marriage is as Lucia had 'expected', and her feeling of 'depression' upon returning to their home is 'overwhelming' (pp. 63-5). The novel sets out to disprove certain fictional representations of ideal love and romance: it examines what married life is like once the 'lady of the sonnet is won' (p. 43).

⁹¹ Evelyn Dickinson, *A Vicar's Wife*, Methuen & Co, London, 1892, p. 43. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

From the outset, *A Vicar's Wife* challenges the narrative conventions of romance with its realistic depiction of marriage.

The Vicar is harshly satirised in the novel as a one-dimensional patriarch who resents to the point of 'violence' any 'domestic shortcomings', such as not receiving 'food of particular nicety and perpetual variety' (p. 86). This deeply flawed, domineering, jealous and violent man is far from the ideal husband. He throws plates, locks his wife in rooms, and berates her for entering his study 'without warning', as 'though it were - a kitchen', and thus '[d]isobeying his distinct command' (pp. 92-3). Using adverbs which contribute to the tone of excess and hysteria in this particular scene, he claims his wife has violated her marriage vows 'wantonly' and 'unblushingly'. Lyn Pykett writes about the way that Sarah Grand's novels represent male brutishness 'not by means of a feminist rhetoric of argument, but by a rhetoric of feeling and sensation'.⁹² In *A Vicar's Wife*, the Vicar's extreme rhetoric is used to raise consciousness of the absurdity and moral injustice of a wife's subordination. When Lucia leaves her husband's study, she appears 'like a woman in a dream', a simile that recurs through the novel, connoting her despair and disbelief at the situation in which she finds herself (p. 95).

In her novels, Dickinson consistently demonstrates an interest in presenting different images of women. *A Vicar's Wife* tends to present journalistic stereotypes, rather than more fully formed 'characters' in the traditional sense. The effect of introducing such stereotypes was to engage directly with public debates about the Woman Question taking place in the popular press. On the one hand, Lucia conforms to the well-known image of the self-sacrificial wife, whose belief in the need to preserve her family's 'respectability' - that 'strange boast so dear to the average Briton' - means the 'absolute negation of all freedom of action or sentiment' (p. 10). On the other hand, she represents the modern and dissatisfied wife who emerged as one of the New Woman's

⁹² Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 155.

prototypes. Lucia is eager to educate herself, and reads Plato, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Thackeray and Gaskell. She also questions the social, political and religious foundations of marriage, and is

hot for reform in a dozen directions - for model dwellings for the poor and universal education, for stringent adulteration acts, and the removal of every legal disability endured by women (p. 195).

Dickinson responds to critical, anti-feminist images of the modern woman by helping the reader empathise with Lucia's situation. Another stereotype, and foil to Lucia, is the 'worldly old woman' Lady Claviger, whose function is to support Lucia, and insinuate new and iconoclastic ideas into the reader's consciousness (p. 133). She is the one who raises the provocative idea that Lucia leave her husband for her childhood friend, and the man she should really have married, the politician, Eddy Bengough. Early in the novel, Lucia and her former beau share an adulterous kiss. However, the heroine is not convinced that leaving her husband is ever an option: 'Help a woman who is married?', Lucia asks. 'Nay, death only can do that' (pp. 210-11).

A Vicar's Wife attacks the institution of marriage and, more fundamentally, the underlying (im)morality responsible for women's legal and social inequality in the first place. The first part of the novel is set in the late 1860s, prior to the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 which made it possible for a married woman to hold property in her own name. Much is made of the fact that the Vicar 'naturally considers his wife's money as his own' (p. 109). The institution of religion also comes under attack, when the Vicar is revealed to have bought his presentation. For Lucia, the discovery that her husband is a professional fraud, among other things, leads to a crisis in religious faith: 'Church and its dogmas and sacraments were closely interwoven with her husband' (p. 151). Thus, the Vicar at once embodies religious and patriarchal

tyranny. It is intriguing that Dickinson chose, in this novel, to make her own father's profession the object of such scathing criticism.

As in a number of the novels discussed in this thesis, *A Vicar's Wife* elevates women's unique role as mothers. The one thing that prevents Lucia from utterly despairing is the birth of her daughter Avis. Although its 'sex', the narrator explains matter-of-factly, is 'inferior', the little girl gives Lucia a reason to live (p. 100). As the baby becomes the primary object of Lucia's devotion, the Vicar perceives that she is neglecting him, and reminds her of yet another English law that disadvantages women. He points out that the child 'is mine just as you are mine', and that he has 'the power to take it away' from her (p. 102).⁹³

Like the New Woman novelists Louisa Macdonald objected to, Dickinson also represents women's sexual degradation in marriage, although in a less explicit way than writers like Egerton and Grand. Lucia describes herself as '[d]isgraced, contaminated' and 'polluted' by her husband's contact - language that commonly operated as code for sexual pollution (p. 117). While Lucia is never overtly shown to refuse her husband's sexual demands, she does refuse his demand that they take on greater financial debt. In such ways, the novel emphasises the importance of a wife's ability to say no to her husband, and to protest against her subordination. During this argument about money, Lucia declares it would be better to kill herself than remain married. She subsequently exits the room via a window and flees her husband. Lucia's act of domestic rebellion - epitomised by her unladylike departure - is accompanied by a dramatic change in narrative form. After leaving the house, Lucia enters a dark, febrile and timeless landscape that is experienced entirely through her consciousness: all is 'black' and 'hot' in Lucia's 'heart and round her' (p. 117). The normally omniscient narrator is conspicuously absent from these scenes, as

⁹³ It was not until the Infant Custody Acts of 1873 and 1886 that mothers were finally granted certain rights to appeal for custody of their minor children.

Lucia flees the 'horrid reptile', her husband. The atmosphere is 'misty' and 'suffocating':

Away, swish, swish, over the short winter grass, her head burning, her feet cold; only and ever away from him - from life, from shame, from dead dreams and hopes unfulfilled, from herself, the *wife* of Markham Fletcher! Splash! and a rustling; water here, the overflowings of the river...what else is there for women when the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them lie in ashes in their hearts? (p. 118)

There is greater emphasis on sound as Lucia stumbles through the nebulous landscape: the 'short winter grass' and the overflowing river are heard rather than seen. Confusion is created by the conflation of the narrator's voice with Lucia's consciousness. These are the kinds of narrative techniques that would subsequently become trademarks of modernism: the narrative breaks down into impressions, time is replaced by timelessness, and reality is replaced by dreamscape. Of all Dickinson's novels, *A Vicar's Wife* is the most stylistically experimental. Close to becoming lost in this psychological wilderness, Lucia's 'dreamy senses' are awoken to 'consciousness' as she remembers her daughter (p. 119). She subsequently becomes a martyr whose suffering is only ameliorated by the prospect of caring for her child. Even though the idea of remaining with her husband is 'one of indescribable loathliness and degradation', Lucia realises there is no possibility of leaving him if she wants to remain with Avis (p. 121). The element of martyrdom is accentuated by the heroine's renewed religious faith. In London, Lucia is contemplating the dramatic possibility of leaving her husband and giving in to her love for Eddy Bengough when she wanders into a Roman Catholic chapel and observes the 'beautiful' face of Christ (p. 217). Like Stella Courtland, Lucia is reminded of her religious obligations just in time to prevent her from completely rebelling against the institution of marriage.

Interestingly, it is left to Lucia's daughter to take up the project of feminist rebellion. The second part of the novel is set fifteen years later, during the 1880s, and dramatises the emergence of an even newer type in the figure of Avis, who is by this time an intelligent and beautiful young woman with hair of a 'sunny golden red' (p. 223). Red hair was typically associated with the wild woman. In Avis's case, it matches the temper she has inherited from her father, and her 'mobile, passionate' and 'rebellious' mouth. Avis is another journalistic stereotype: the recalcitrant Girl of the Period, or Revolting Daughter, who was as destined to collide with social convention as the New Woman. Having observed the way her mother has lived as a martyr, Avis is determined to do the opposite and become an agent of her own destiny. Where Lucia ultimately chose to remain silent, her daughter will 'speak and be damned' (p. 220). She displays a brave impudence toward her father and, in one particularly memorable scene, mocks him while she flourishes a whip: "'Don't come too near me, there's a wise papa...I don't seem able to keep this whip still just now, and suppose - suppose I hit you!'" (p. 238). The image of a woman flourishing a whip commonly emerges in Evelyn Dickinson's fiction as a symbol of powerful and recalcitrant women.

In *A Vicar's Wife*, the patriarchal oppression of women is shown to have devastating social consequences, including, ironically, the breakdown of the family. Not only does the Vicar's tyrannical rule fail to ensure Avis's obedience, it encourages her rebellion: she pines 'for excitement', and increasingly avoids spending time at home by riding around the local district on her horse (p. 279). During one of these forays she meets the 'fine stalwart' farmer, Jo Flitwick, with whom she embarks on a passionate and illicit affair (p. 239). The implications of this relationship are twofold: not only is Avis transgressing social boundaries by striking up a friendship with a man to whom she has not been formally introduced, but, worse still, he is her social inferior. A similar theme was explored by Emma Frances Brooke in her well-known New Woman novel *A Superfluous Woman* (1894). However, *A Vicar's Wife* goes even further, since Jo is killed in a riding accident on the very day, it is implied, Avis was to tell him she

was pregnant. Avis's father reacts to news of his daughter's iniquity by accusing her of being a 'strumpet' and beating her from the house (p. 312). For added measure, he also beats his wife, and finally provides the catalyst for her to leave him.

A Vicar's Wife explores, therefore, a range of issues of concern to late nineteenth-century feminists: unhappy marriage, prostitution within the marriage bed, domestic violence, non-marital affairs, and pregnancy out of wedlock. It also explores the dominant cultural attitudes toward the 'fallen woman'. Having lost both her purity and middle-class respectability, Avis is deemed 'wicked' by the local community (p. 319). Both Avis and Lucia, whose sin was supporting her daughter and leaving her husband, are considered to have 'transgressed the social law' (p. 340). The 'strong conservative feeling of rural and ecclesiastical England' is behind the Vicar. He is able to take full advantage of his status, gender and public position to brand Lucia a 'virago'. The narrator explains that simply by virtue of being a 'man - a clergyman', his interpretation of events is 'believed'. Lucia and Avis, on the other hand, are both judged by the community before being given the opportunity to put forward their own position. *A Vicar's Wife* reveals the extent to which men's perception of women, particularly their sexual status, inescapably defined their social roles.

One of the most interesting features of *A Vicar's Wife* is that it resists the kind of closure traditionally expected of Victorian fiction. The reader's curiosity about Avis's future is never satisfied. The last we hear of her is that she has travelled to Europe with her aunt and uncle. Significantly, she does not suffer any of the traditional fates of the fallen woman. Rather, the novel ends with the literal and symbolic death of the father: the Vicar keels over during a final argument with his wife, finally bringing 'peace' to Lucia's 'tired heart' (p. 348). The unconventional ending may well have been one reason that reviewers found the novel difficult to accept. A number of reviewers focused on the novel's departure from realism to discredit the contentious subject matter. The *Daily*

Graphic described the characters of Avis and the Vicar as 'repulsive and almost inconceivable', and the *Review of Reviews* suggested that Evelyn Dickinson's 'moral would have been more effective had she not presented such an extreme case as that of her vicar and his wife'.⁹⁴ Alternatively, however, a reviewer from the *Morning Post* found the story altogether too realistic to be the stuff of fiction, complaining that 'Avis's fall is a piece of coarse realism, without which the tale would have fared as well if not better than it does'.⁹⁵ These contradictory responses suggest the novel ultimately resisted categorisation in terms of its style and form.

IV. The New Woman Arrives in Sydney: *The Sin of Angels* (1896)

After she moved to Australia, Dickinson proceeded to explore the trope of the New Woman in the New World in her second novel, *The Sin of Angels*. In this novel, 1890s Sydney is the backdrop for a rapidly changing cultural and political landscape in which the New Woman becomes a significant player. *The Sin of Angels* is far less stylistically experimental than *A Vicar's Wife*. However, Dickinson continues to present different images of women and once again uses satire with great effect to make social and political points. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that those who 'found much to admire' in *A Vicar's Wife* would 'not be disappointed' by *The Sin of Angels*.⁹⁶ The fact that the satire was directed toward upper-class Sydneysiders was of most interest to Australian reviewers. In the *Sydney Mail's* society column, Dickinson stood accused of 'bad taste' for her 'thinly veiled' portrayal of the 'personality of several members' of Sydney society.⁹⁷

Overall, *The Sin of Angels* is decidedly 'imperial' in its outlook, and there is little about it that would have appealed to Australian nationalists. In summing up the novel, Morris Miller writes: '*The Sin of Angels* is concerned with Sydney

⁹⁴ *Daily Graphic*, 14 April 1892, p. 3 and *Review of Reviews*, April 1892.

⁹⁵ *Morning Post*, 11 April 1892, p. 3.

⁹⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 January 1897, p. 4.

⁹⁷ *Sydney Mail*, 6 February 1897, p. 281.

suburbia, local politics, and life on a sheep station'.⁹⁸ Despite its relatively brief dealings with the sheep station, the novel's largely urban setting and status as a popular romance novel signified unforgivable deviations from bush realism. For such reasons, it is perhaps not surprising that *The Sin of Angels* has been condemned to obscurity since its publication.

In *The Sin of Angels*, a picture is painted of a morally and spiritually bankrupt society, where individualism, greed and materialism reign. Sydney's harbour-dwelling upper-class residents are socially ambitious men and women 'devoted to pleasure'.⁹⁹ One of the primary objects of satire is Sara Rosenroth, the socially ambitious wife of the German-born businessman, Lewis Rosenroth, Australia's 'Kapok King'. Lewis Rosenroth, described as the 'richest Jew in the colony', is also the main target of the novel's anti-Semitism (p. 62). It is more than likely that the Rosenroths were loosely based on Richard Teece, the General Manager of AMP, and his wife Helena.¹⁰⁰ Teece was a founder and council member of the Women's College, and Louisa Macdonald's 'bête noir'.¹⁰¹ In her letters to Eleanor Grove, Macdonald described Helena Teece as the 'very clever, rather pretty...daughter of a hotel keeper' who was particularly adroit about making 'opportunities of rising into "society"'. Helena's father, John Benjamin Tanner Palmer, owned several hotels in Sydney before he was appointed mayor of the city from 1875-6.¹⁰² Macdonald continued:

It may seem droll to you to talk of 'society' here but there is certainly, if not society, some thing that very fairly represents it, and as far as bars and barriers go is an excellent imitation. It is interesting to watch the rise of

⁹⁸ E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its beginnings to 1935*, vol. II, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1973, reprinted 1975, p. 651.

⁹⁹ Evelyn Dickinson, *The Sin of Angels*, 2nd edn, Methuen & Co, Colonial Library, 1897, p. 39. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

¹⁰⁰ J. M. Bennett, 'Richard Teece', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1891-1939, vol. 12, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1990, pp. 190-1.

¹⁰¹ Beaumont and Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

some into the happy regions and the decline and fall of others.¹⁰³

She expressed puzzlement that Richard Teece had made it onto the College council, and speculated that it was because of his business acumen. The wry tone of these comments revealed her ill-disguised contempt for a society which elevated people like the Teeces to a position of prominence.

The Sin of Angels opens with an epigraph from *Henry VIII*: 'Ambition;/By that sin fell the angels'. Sara Rosenroth, who divides her time between reading French novels and planning her social schedule, is a former bush girl who has achieved her goal of becoming an urban society queen. A woman who views marriage purely in materialistic terms, she epitomises Sydney's vulgar *nouveau riche*, as well as an old type of womanhood, whereby marriage is considered the primary career goal, and the only vehicle for social and financial advancement. Sara fails to display any love or affection for either her husband or children, and is apparently sexless and passionless. However, she also maintains a clear and hypocritical awareness of her sexual power over men. Even her husband finds himself 'powerless' before her 'as a man is always powerless before a woman over whose body he has no control' (p. 198). For much of the novel, Sara discreetly flirts with George Brae, the son of an equerry to the Prince of Wales, with the intention of using him to realise her social ambition of meeting royalty. Eventually, Brae commits suicide upon discovering his feelings for her are unrequited.

The heroine of this novel is Helen Wavertree, a specifically English version of the New Woman who comes to Sydney from the significantly larger, more modern and cosmopolitan centre of London. Helen is well-educated,

¹⁰² H. J. Gibbney and Ann G. Smith (eds), *A Biographical Register 1788-1939: Notes from the name index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. II, Australian National University, Canberra, 1987, p. 161.

¹⁰³ Letter from Macdonald to Grove, 30 June 1894, *Letters*, op. cit. Also quoted in Beaumont and Hole, op. cit., p. 68.

intelligent, independent, and, having been raised by her aunt in a 'stirring mental and moral atmosphere', is a foil for vulgar Australian women like Sara Rosenroth (p. 30). A modern and morally superior New Woman, Helen arrives in the New World on a mission. As her ship passes through the Sydney heads, there

under the sinking moon, a little smoke rose over the towers of Sydney, and the city stretched out embracing arms of coast...Helen was dizzy with the beauty of the place and time. Artist and reformer strove within her soul. The reformer conquered. With a quick breath of glad anticipation she dedicated the coming days to the service of the New World in morality (p. 36).

There is a mildly satirical tone to this, as to virtually every other character description in the novel. However, Helen is still constructed as the novel's most admirable female character. The hero, the Australian Labor politician Pat Derrigan, is immediately intrigued by this 'new' type of woman:

Her ease of manner, her self-possession, her entire unconsciousness of sex either in herself or in the men round her, the slight mockery of her words, baffled him. He was at a disadvantage before her (p. 23).

As with so many New Woman heroines, Helen Wavertree becomes a vehicle for reinventing the ideal of the late-nineteenth-century woman. In Helen, the discourses of the Angel in the House and the New Woman intersect. When she is first introduced in the novel, for instance, she is dressed in pure white, a colour that reinforces her angelic 'goodness of soul' (p. 31). For Pat Derrigan, she displays a 'beautiful womanhood' which she never 'obtruded', for the 'standard of the best breeding in England is as that of the angels of God in heaven', where there is 'neither male nor female', nor anything but a 'cool

bright calm' (p. 109). Helen's New Woman credentials are subtly delineated. She is physically active, but as a fearless horse rider (who thrives on the 'bliss of rapid motion' and 'trifle of danger') and an accomplished rower, rather than as a woman cyclist (p. 91). The most dramatic reversal of gender roles occurs when she helps rescue Derrigan after his boat capsizes in Sydney harbour. In a subversion of stock rescue scenes in nineteenth-century romance, Dickinson's heroines always set out to rescue the hero.

Helen Wavertree lives with her wealthy and aristocratic father in Sydney's most exclusive harbour suburb, and is shown immediately to be well positioned for her reformist project. Geographically, Sydney is represented in the novel as a bifurcated urban landscape. Despite its morally weak denizens, the site of most society gatherings, the harbour, is depicted in its most physically charming light, the narrator celebrating the beauty of its 'port' and 'gardens' (p. 39). The affluent harbour suburbs are presented as quite distinct from the 'city', which is characterised by contrasting, and far more threatening, 'medley' and 'disorder'. In Sydney, there is evidence of poverty and racial disintegration. Overwhelming 'stenches' are associated with the Chinese gardens, where 'lithe yellow workmen...showed their teeth in yellow laughter' (pp. 89-90). Such descriptions lend support to the imperialist narrative that underpins the necessity of the English New Woman's journey to a New World that is not only morally and socially bankrupt, but also racially threatened. The description of Helen as an example of the 'best breeding in England' echoes the argument employed by many feminists (as well as by many anti-feminist conservatives) that women had an important role to play in the propagation of a morally, socially and racially healthy white race. A similar theme has already been identified in Frances Russell's *Joyce Martindale* and Mary Moore Bentley's *A Woman of Mars, or Australia's Enfranchised Woman*.

However, in *The Sin of Angels*, Helen is far from convinced that racial propagation/protection should be her primary concern. At twenty-five, this 'daughter of the moment' is 'in no way anxious to marry' (p. 31). Helen's

loyalty to the British Empire, and ambition to dedicate herself to the moral 'service of the New World', does not manifest itself via an interest in men as potential marriage partners. Nor does Helen seek to practise the better-known forms of nineteenth-century philanthropy, like helping the poor. Unlike Russell's Joyce Martindale, or Moore Bentley's Vesta, Helen does not witness women working in factories or venture into city slums. Rather, she dedicates herself to reforming the corrupt masculine world of colonial politics. As becomes 'a young Englishwoman of her kind', she 'loved information', and the prospect of learning about the 'politics of the colony' proves far more interesting than traditionally feminine pursuits (p. 105). When her father queries her newfound interest, she explains:

"...what I like about it is the feeling that I am really understanding a little tiny scrap of the inner movement of the community. It is so much more interesting than endless theatricals and dances, and, papa, do you know, I have a sort of idea that I, bringing my unprejudiced mind to bear on the circumstances of this little case, may help these men to, perhaps, juster conclusions!" (p. 129)

Helen pursues her interest in politics with a visit to the New South Wales parliament where she observes male parliamentarians behaving like a 'pack of children' (p. 113). She becomes intrigued by Pat Derrigan's vehement opposition to a proposal to build a road and bridge between Bully-bully and Qwongwoy, a small, neglected former mining town. Derrigan doubts the need for these public works, and suspects the conservative parliamentarian lobbying for the controversial bridge, Augustus Philbrick, of acting out of self-interest. Despite knowing Derrigan's suspicions, Helen accepts Philbrick's invitation to journey to the Australian bush to see the towns in question for herself. These scenes, in which Helen witnesses first hand the poverty and hardships encountered by bushwomen, represent Dickinson's contribution to bush

realism. Helen's impressions of this Australian landscape are not favourable, and it is evidently no place for the New Woman:

Helen, resolutely cheery, was seized at intervals with a fierce longing for some sight that was not the writhen, leaden, endless eucalyptus, grey, rayless, mile after mile. She had never conceived a vegetation so monotonous, so dreary. Here and there a cultivated patch relieved the eye with a space that was really green; here and there a small wooden township, a selector's shanty, with a rough fence, a haystack, and a few fruit-trees battling in the tempest, showed that human beings existed. Otherwise there was nothing save pale grass and grey gums (pp. 147-8).

The heroine returns from the trip convinced of a need for a road and bridge that will improve the lives of people who live in the bush. At Philbrick's instigation, she subsequently uses her 'feminine' charm to successfully influence the man with the final say on the issue, Mr Blacklock, the Minister for Public Works.

At first glance, this all seems a rather trivial involvement in politics. Helen's input is framed in terms of the conventional feminine role of moral guardian, there to wield a positive influence on the voting intentions of male parliamentarians. Modern readers are likely to observe that at no stage does she question the absence of her right to vote on the issue herself. Yet this question is still implicit in the novel's broader depiction of feminism's impact on the late-nineteenth-century Australian cultural and political landscape. In the context of other characters attending meetings of the Womanhood Suffrage League, *The Sin of Angels* reflects the increasing pressure for women to become more involved in the public-political arena. Furthermore, the very notion that women could help to elevate the moral tone of the political world was central to the

suffrage movement: feminists often depicted women as the moral housekeepers of the nation.

What makes Helen particularly new is that she effectively chooses her 'unwomanly' political beliefs over the more socially acceptable and more feminine interest in men and marriage. The romance plot's normally unstoppable progression towards marriage is jeopardised by this heroine's determination to oppose the hero on a political issue. Pat Derrigan is unable to forgive Helen for her political stance, and they ultimately fail to come together at the end of the novel. In this sense, *The Sin of Angels* can be read as something of a feminist tract: an attempt to imagine a space for a woman outside marriage, where she can pursue her political and intellectual interests and ambitions.

However, the novel's ending does not bode well for feminism's future. To return to the epigraph at the beginning of the novel, Helen's feminist ambition is also shown to be her sin. After the proposal to build the bridge is passed, she discovers that Pat Derrigan was right all along: Philbrick has ruthlessly used her to ensure the success of a project that would directly benefit his future father-in-law. Seemingly disillusioned by the grubbiness of this male political world, the heroine's own political ambitions are quashed. She feels 'soiled and disgraced' by the experience and contemplates 'creep[ing] home to England' (p. 252). Despite her efforts, this city-scape remains populated by corrupt and selfish men who are unprepared to take the New Woman seriously. Furthermore, Helen is seemingly punished for having presumed to step outside a woman's sphere by the impending arrival from England of Arthur Standish, a former suitor. By the end of the novel she looks to marriage as her future after all - mainly, it would seem, in the absence of anything else.

In *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s*, John Docker talks about a New Woman who, while 'bold and dashing' and 'powerful in her independence', was also 'a haunted figure, shadowed by the terror of

repression' and 'defeat'.¹⁰⁴ In the resolution to *The Sin of Angels*, there is, indeed, an element of feminist failure. Evelyn Dickinson's New Woman is profoundly unconfident, even tired and defeated. According to this novel, in the arena of colonial politics, and in the New World more generally, there does not seem to be a place for the New Woman. Given the suspicion with which Sydney journalists, Women's College students and council members greeted Evelyn Dickinson when she first arrived in Australia, it is not unreasonable to speculate that the novel's ending may have reflected some of the author's own disillusionment.

V. A New Type of Australian Heroine: *Hearts Importunate* (1899)

Fortunately, Dickinson's third and most interesting novel *Hearts Importunate* imagines a considerably brighter future for the New Woman in Australia. *Hearts Importunate* was not marketed as the sequel to *A Vicar's Wife*, yet anyone familiar with Dickinson's first novel would have recognised it as such. *Hearts Importunate* is quite different in a number of respects from Dickinson's earlier fiction, and it is easy to see why it received more favourable reviews. The *Sydney Morning Herald* insisted:

Hearts Importunate by Evelyn Dickinson (William Heinemann), will be read with much interest. Miss Dickinson can tell a story vividly, with a nice regard for the conventionalities, tempered with a keen eye for shams of whatever sort, dignified by whatever name.¹⁰⁵

The review in the *Sydney Mail* was just as complimentary of Dickinson's writing style:

¹⁰⁴ John Docker, *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 235.

¹⁰⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 1900, p. 4.

One of the books that is having a wide run at the Sydney libraries just at present is Miss Evelyn Dickinson's latest - *Hearts Importunate* - an Australian tale that is distinctly smart and readable. A reliable reviewer says that the story is good, and possesses artistic completeness, while the fact of its Australian environment has probably brought the book into further favour.¹⁰⁶

Hearts Importunate is mostly set in the all-important Australian bush, and so had immediate appeal for an English, as well as an Australian, audience. Miller writes that *Hearts Importunate* 'deals with N.S.W. bush and station social life' and 'introduces phases of pastoral work and its problems'.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, unlike *A Vicar's Wife* or *The Sin of Angels*, both of which could ultimately be described as anti-romances, *Hearts Importunate* was marketed as a popular romance, the cover adorned with love hearts and angels' wings. A rather patronising review in the *Bulletin* in 1900 commented that while the 'new novel by the Sydney writer' Evelyn Dickinson was 'not a book of literary account', it was 'skilfully written' and 'agreeably' presented 'the conventional love-motive against an Australian background'.¹⁰⁸

Despite this assessment, *Hearts Importunate* is still, like Dickinson's earlier novels, a reaction against the conventional romance in certain ways, namely in that it presents an unorthodox romantic heroine, parodies certain romantic conventions, and provides variations on the standard romance plot. In *Hearts Importunate*, Avis Fletcher from *A Vicar's Wife* reappears, now living with a Mr and Mrs Bolitho on a property called Wamagatta, in rural New South Wales. She is twenty-five, and has travelled to Australia to escape her turbulent past. At one point in the novel, she is visited by her mother, Lucia, who is finally happily married to Eddy Bengough. In *Hearts Importunate*, Dickinson does not explicitly outline the circumstances of Avis's past, but leaves it to the reader to

¹⁰⁶ *Sydney Mail*, 7 July 1900, p. 17.

¹⁰⁷ Miller, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 651.

piece together bits of information. For instance, Avis refers to the Bolithos as her aunt and uncle; however, there are a number of indications that they are really no relation to each other. Towards the end of *A Vicar's Wife*, Eddy raises the possibility that he might assist the Flitwicks to flee the shame of their son's behaviour by helping them emigrate to Queensland, where he has spent time as a boundary rider. In *Hearts Importunate*, it is difficult to ascertain clearly the relationship of the Bolithos to the Flitwicks, although there is evidently a Queensland connection. The Bolithos describe themselves as Eddy's friends, and, like the Flitwicks, have three sons, one of whom - Richard - has died on a Queensland station. Perhaps most remarkably, the elderly Bolithos are caring for two young children whom they refer to as their grandchildren (ie. Richard's offspring). Yet Dickinson drops several hints that suggest at least one of these children, the boy, 'Boyah', may belong to Avis, his 'lifelong friend and worshipper' (p. 83).

In *Hearts Importunate*, New Woman rhetoric is recalled in references to Avis as a 'restless creature' who is always 'learning new things'.¹⁰⁸ She reads Ibsen's plays, has strong opinions on the treatment of women, and contemplates one day riding across the Continent on a bicycle (p. 54). Avis is sympathetic toward Emily Fagan, a young woman whose desire for a career as a singer is thwarted by her father. She expresses her disbelief that 'fathers in our, as we call them, free days should have such powers!' (p. 22). This heroine presents as a modern foil to Mrs Bolitho, a woman 'of the old school' who believes an unmarried person is incomplete (p. 245). Avis declares her frustration with prescribed gender roles, saying 'I wish there were no men and no women...only a kind of intelligent and slightly materialized angel' (p. 45). She herself displays a somewhat ambiguous gender identity. Her assertion at a dinner party that she would qualify as a bushranger, given her riding skills and ability to use a gun, causes Paula Winch, the barrister's wife, to remark on how 'extraordinarily

¹⁰⁸ *Bulletin*, Red Page, 16 June 1900.

¹⁰⁹ Evelyn Dickinson, *Hearts Importunate*, William Heinemann, Colonial Library, London, 1899, pp. 57-8. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

unfeminine' Avis appears (p. 195). This assessment leads to a broader discussion of feminine and masculine traits, with one woman guest defining masculinity as "'divided garments, crossed legs, a good dinner and a cigarette, freedom of speech, power of the purse'" (p. 197). Another guest, Sir Osbert (Helen Wavertree's father from *The Sin of Angels*), proposes that definitions of the masculine and feminine are "'personal and relative facts'" (p. 198). In a letter to her mother, Avis gleefully reports on the confusion caused by the fact that her horse has an ambiguous name:

It was the greatest success naming her Pilgrim - people always call her *him*, and when I am particularly insistent with my *she*, they turn upon me, or half turn, to tell me that a pilgrim is a male, and then they are not so sure, because they seem to have heard of females going to Lourdes and so forth, and I see it in their faces (pp. 78-9).

Significantly, this unorthodox heroine is also closely identified with the natural Australian environment. Having completely lost her desire for 'society' (p. 12), she makes a 'religion' (p. 49) of her love for the Australian bush, finding it a liberating space that enables her to assert her individuality as '[r]eader, spinster, horsewoman, embroiderer, violinist' (p. 77). In the sense that she claims the bush as her new home, a refuge from England and from 'society', Avis confidently asserts her Australian citizenship. The selection of the bush as the background for this novel acknowledges the importance of this distinctively Australian setting in Dickinson's construction of a feminist and national subjectivity. Avis Fletcher can be seen as an amalgam of the Australian Bush Girl and the New Woman, and thus carefully tailored to the Australian cultural and political landscape of the 1890s.

Where Avis represents a radical departure from Australian female character types like the Australian Bush Girl is that, in the style of the more worldly and advanced New Woman, she poses a fundamental challenge to the sexual

double standard. She is a provocative and problematic figure in a culture that celebrated the sexually libertarian bushman, while not permitting women to express their sexuality. When confronted with Mrs Bolitho's assertion that a woman 'should be everything that is good', Avis responds:

"How? It is a literary fiction. The men who write books, being men, are each in love with some woman, who has every virtue because she has a dimple in her cheek, or because she has a soothing way with him!" (p. 179)

When reminded that women also write books, Avis adds: "'Yes; and they, as women, keep up the fiction'". This novel casts doubt on the notion of an inviolable Angel in the House, proposing instead a more 'realistic' representation of women. *Hearts Importunate* is a title reminiscent of 'Hearts Insurgent', the original title of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, and, like that better-known text, portrays a woman who expresses and acts on her sexual desire.

Significantly, Dickinson pits two different versions of the New Woman against one another, and two competing feminist discourses on sexuality, when Helen Wavertree from *The Sin of Angels* makes a cameo appearance in *Hearts Importunate*. In *The Sin of Angels*, Helen's New Woman credentials are largely established through her forthright opinions, independence and intelligence. Unlike Avis, she remains virtuous and can be seen as representative of the feminist discourse that 'reproduced and intensified stereotypes of female sexlessness and purity'.¹¹⁰ In *Hearts Importunate*, Helen is initially appalled to learn of Avis's past, and distances herself from this other sexually advanced New Woman. Although mocked by the narrator for possessing 'a horror of any female of her class who was not quite *nice - quite nice*', Helen's disavowal of Avis reveals the extent to which readers may also have questioned Avis's status as a romantic heroine (p. 239). Given that one of the main sources of a lady's

social standing was the acceptance of her status by other genteel people, Avis's gentility is clearly jeopardised.

Like *A Vicar's Wife*, *Hearts Importunate* highlights the dangers associated with women expressing feelings of sexual desire. Mrs Bolitho, the dignified representative of traditional Victorian womanhood, is the voice of sympathy and reason. She explains to Helen how the young and "'excitable'" Avis was neglected, tormented and misunderstood by her father to the point where, it is suggested, she was driven into the arms of a "'flattering yeoman youth'" (p. 246). With its emphasis on adverse circumstances, an unhappy home environment and the vulnerability of girlhood, Mrs Bolitho's narrative exonerates Avis from a certain amount of responsibility for her downfall. She refers to the pregnancy indirectly, urging Helen to "'guess'" what she does not already "'know'" (p. 248). Given how carefully references to Avis's past are delineated in the novel, then, the relatively sympathetic reaction of English, as well as Australian, reviewers to *Hearts Importunate* is not surprising, even though, according to the review in the *Morning Post*, Avis committed the 'only serious sin a woman can commit'.¹¹¹ The *Morning Post* found Dickinson's novel to be a 'well-written story' that 'may be read with interest'. The *St James's Gazette* offered unqualified praise:

In *Hearts Importunate* (Heinemann) Miss Evelyn Dickenson [sic] has written the novel of conspicuous ability which her earlier work had led sagacious critics to expect. If we are not mistaken, Miss Dickenson holds an appointment connected with teaching in Australia, and she has made excellent use of her local knowledge without the least trace of pedantry or pedagogic moralisms...The story is well worth reading for...its

¹¹⁰ Showalter, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹¹¹ *Morning Post*, 26 April 1900, p. 2.

skilful plotting [and] its agreeable talent for vivid and true characterisation.¹¹²

Dickinson was clearly still taking a risk with a heroine who would not automatically win an audience's sympathy. The often scathing reaction of the Australian popular press to the subject of the unmarried woman with a sexual past is dramatised when the truth about Avis's past first leaks out into the local community. She finds herself disparaged in the society columns of a periodical called, pertinently, the *Live Un* (clearly a take on the *Bulletin*). Commenting on the tendency for 'male English riffraff' to travel to Australia, the columnist observes that a new trend in this 'day of the New Woman' is the introduction to Sydney of 'the female ne'er-do-well who has left her country for her country's good' (p. 172). Avis recognises unmistakable references to herself as the 'female ne'er-do-well' in a periodical that, according to the narrator, dealt with 'every phase of colonial life from the standpoint of vulgar irreconcilability' (p. 171). It is a textually self-conscious reference to the dominant cultural representation of the middle-class woman who acted on sexual desire as 'fallen' and ruined, as socially and morally reprehensible as the much-maligned prostitute.

Hearts Importunate presents the issue of female sexuality in a complex and surprising way. Avis's earlier exoneration from blame for her past is complicated by the novel's concomitant assertion of women's sexual desires. A woman not normally expected to be choosy about a husband, given her 'tainted' past, in fact proves quite selective about her marriage partner, and whether she even wants to marry at all. In what is essentially a parody of a stock proposal scene, Avis explains to Mrs Bolitho her reasons for rejecting an offer of marriage from an unwanted suitor:

"He begged me to take time to consider. I did take time - five minutes. I went to the heart of the matter. I tried to

¹¹² *St James's Gazette*, 6 April 1900, p. 5.

imagine him kissing me; and then something uprose in me and hit him - mentally, of course" (p. 237).

Beneath the glib response is a provocative declaration of a woman's right and, indeed, need to sexually desire her marriage partner.

Most importantly, the novel challenges the sexual double standard and insists that women's sexual status should not determine their social roles. In *Hearts Importunate*, the Australian bush becomes a social 'haven' for Avis, a place where sexual morality can be reinvented and gender roles redefined (p. 307). Upon meeting the tall and manly newcomer to Wamagatta, Ralph Hazell, Avis finally appears destined for romance. This handsome Englishman has also travelled to Australia to escape a mysterious past and try a new career as a squatter. They meet and are immediately attracted to each other, when Avis ventures onto his property while out riding. Avis apologises for being a 'trespasser' on his land if, indeed, 'there is such a thing as trespass in the Bush' (p. 4). In spite of her love for the bush, she is aware she is trespassing on what is predominantly a masculine socio-cultural terrain. Ralph Hazell is initially shown to perpetuate the masculine ownership of the land: as he looks over his new property he is compared with Adam, standing on the hills of Eden, 'surveying his inheritance' (p. 105). Yet the notion of masculine ownership is soon challenged as the bush is also constructed as the heroine's new home. It becomes a place where Avis - as one of the people for whom the 'unpardonable sin is to be different' - can look for acceptance (p. 52). Mrs Bolitho explains that while there 'was no forgiveness possible for Avis in England', she 'has found life possible...in a new country' (p. 248).

As a romantic hero, with all the credentials of the ideal English gentleman (he is a former soldier), Hazell becomes integral to Avis's quest to recover from her past and begin again. His immediate interest in Avis, and recognition of her status as a 'lady', reinforce her social standing and emphasise her desirability (p. 3). He is also a version of the New Man: Hazell is aware 'that woman has

fair cause of complaint against man and against society' (p. 110). He is largely responsible for reinventing Avis as the ideal woman. In his mind:

...she would stand radiant with a promise of joy, like a golden figure of dawn in a virgin world; now she galloped before him on a flying horse, a vision of achievement or of fame; now she sat spinning, spinning, and the calm of sweetest peace, of evening rest, was the essence of the song of her wheel (p. 109).

Dickinson has Hazell construct an image of the ideal woman that, once again, involves a combination of 'old' and 'new' aspects of women. This modern woman who is a 'vision of achievement' has not entirely sacrificed her claim to traditional femininity. Despite the earlier evidence of Avis's gender ambiguity, she still resists identification with the caricatures of undesirable and 'masculine' New Women in the popular press.

The subject of the heroine's past, however, threatens to disrupt the progression of the romance plot toward marriage. When Hazell initially proposes to Avis, she refuses him out of feelings of moral inferiority. Baffled, he demands to know whether she is "'someone else's wife'":

Shaking with the fateful meaning of the words...[Avis] gave him up her secret: "No, I am not, and the world said that was my shame!...I ought to have been someone else's wife." (pp. 289)

The significance of this declaration is somewhat diluted by the fact of Hazell also having a reason to disown his past:

His eyes flamed. He stood a minute weighing her words, then: "What do I care for that? I have been someone else's husband." (p. 290)

Hazell's revelation that he has been married and divorced helps to put them on a more equal footing, yet in terms of Victorian social mores their pasts are by no means the same. Aside from the fact that Hazell turns out to have been the victim of his former wife's infidelity, his gender immediately exempts him from the kinds of criticisms levelled against a woman who flaunted sexual codes. Where he proves such an appropriate match for this unconventional heroine, however, is in his willingness to accept her for who she is. Learning the truth about her does not deter him from his decision to marry her: "'There is no past for either of us,'" he says (p. 290). This is precisely the kind of New Man who is an appropriate partner for the New Woman, if only *he* can persuade *her* that she is worthy of him!

The novel's denouement offers another unusual variation on the conventional romance narrative. Avis discovers that Hazell has gone missing while out riding and imagines him 'lying helpless, dead or injured, in the desolate Bush' (p. 301). Up until now she has consistently rejected his marriage proposals. This proves a catalyst, however, for the realisation that she cannot live without him. In a reversal of the stock situation in nineteenth-century women's fiction where the hero rescues the heroine following a riding accident, she sets out on a quest to save him:

She went to the stable where Hajji [her horse] awaited her pleasure. He received a mechanical caress. He was no longer her darling; he was merely the best means for her purpose...She saddled him, and started away (p. 301).

Avis's skilful riding is the reward of 'years of riding through gum-forest': she clearly asserts her mastery over her male horse and the bush landscape (p. 303).

Breaking away from a larger search party of men, the heroine independently climbs a steep mountain in search of the hero. Contrary to the usual pattern whereby Australian women who venture outdoors are represented as cautiously sticking to well-trodden pathways, Avis Fletcher is mobile, confident and adventurous.¹¹³ She leaves the familiar paths to search for Hazell in the unknown and open bush.

In *Hearts Importunate*, the heroine's romantic quest for love is intrinsically connected with a quest for a new geographical, cultural and political home. At the top of the range, where she encounters a view of a 'horizon-bounded pastoral', Avis succeeds in finding Hazell (p. 304). Amidst this Arcadian landscape, the hero and heroine - 'together in the beyond' - enjoy a poignant moment of complete spiritual unity before the sun rises (p. 306). In language that appears to reflect Dickinson's knowledge of late nineteenth-century theosophy, they are described as sharing a 'bond of brotherhood' that is 'almost more than loverhood' (p. 264).

Theosophy allowed for 'self-improvement and for social amelioration by philanthropic brotherhood and cooperation'.¹¹⁴ It also placed an emphasis on the idea of the 'psychic self'.¹¹⁵ In *Hearts Importunate*, the final resounding emphasis on spiritual love and unity enables the thorny issue of Avis's sexual past to be transcended. It also undermines the significance of sexual difference. Like Rosa Praed, who also drew on theosophical notions in her fiction, Dickinson translates her 'interest in theosophy' into a feminist 'politics' which privileges emotional and spiritual unions between lovers, over the physical.¹¹⁶ Both Praed and Dickinson can be considered to have put forward new models

¹¹³ See Sue Rowley, 'The Journey's End: Women's Mobility and Confinement', *Australian Cultural History*, 10, 1991, p. 70.

¹¹⁴ Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1879-1939*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW, 1986, p. 20.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹⁶ See Kay Ferres, 'Rewriting Desire: Rosa Praed, Theosophy, and the Sex Problem', *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*, Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 12, esp. p. 245.

of heterosexual desire that avoid the problem of representing women simply as 'the sex'.

In the context of Dickinson's relationship with Macdonald, the final emphasis on spiritual unity in *Hearts Importunate* can perhaps also be traced to a covert attempt to articulate same-sex desire. It is interesting, for instance, that Ralph 'Hazell' is predominantly referred to in this novel by his more feminine-sounding surname. Was Dickinson using a heterosexual romance plot to explore aspects of a relationship between two women? There is another possible comparison here with Praed, whose close friendship with Nancy Harward was also informed by the discourses of theosophy, the New Woman and the Boston marriage.¹¹⁷

In *Hearts Importunate*, the closing image of dawn, along with earlier recurring references to Australia as a 'new' and a 'young' country, is rhetoric that encodes a familiar turn-of-the-century feminist sales pitch: in this new world, a new future for women is possible. Some reviewers were unconvinced by the novel's ending. The *Morning Post* considered that the novel lacked 'reality' towards the end,¹¹⁸ a criticism echoed in *The Spectator*, which claimed *Hearts Importunate* was 'strangely disappointing and unreal'.¹¹⁹ The latter also noted that Dickinson was 'sympathetically disposed towards the highly educated Amazon of to-day'. For the most part, however, English reviewers, particularly, praised the novel's ending, and found the final depiction of the Australian bush one of its most appealing aspects. The *Pall Mall Gazette* concluded the novel was 'enjoyable' and 'clever', and that the 'Australian bush setting is as interesting as it seems to be faithfully given'.¹²⁰ The *Daily Telegraph* reviewer commented on the representation of Australia as the 'promised land'.¹²¹ Praising the novel as 'vigorous, forcible' and 'convincing', the reviewer acknowledged that Avis had

¹¹⁷ See Damien Barlow, "'My Little Ghost-Slave': The Queer Lives of Rosa Praed", *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1996, pp. 344-52; and see again Ferres, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Morning Post*, 26 April 1900, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Spectator*, 31 March 1900, pp. 453-4.

¹²⁰ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 April 1900, p. 11.

¹²¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1900, p. 9.

encountered the 'hard fight of an unprotected woman with a past'. Finally, however, she ended up in the Australian bush, a 'virgin country, holding one man and one woman'.

This notion of erasing the past and beginning again in the 'virgin country' is never an innocent one, recalling as it does the familiar fiction of *terra nullius*: Australia is depicted as empty of its original inhabitants and therefore available for occupation by the English New Woman and New Man. Metaphors like this ignore the presence of the Chinese labourers who, though visible in this novel as workers on the land, are deprived, like the Indigenous people, of any right to its ownership. In this respect, the ending unashamedly reinforces the hero and heroine's English cultural capital.

In feminist literary criticism, nineteenth-century women novelists are frequently accused of succumbing to Victorian narrative conventions when they marry their heroines off at the end, apparently resolving any threat otherwise posed to the socio-sexual order. But Avis's marriage to Hazell at the end of *Hearts Importunate* is still unconventional in that the fallen woman is permitted to transcend the narrow expectations of society and enjoy future happiness. Avis is by no means the first 'fallen woman' to arrive on Australian shores. As Coral Lansbury has demonstrated, the trope of Australia as Arcady was traditionally employed, particularly by English writers, to provide a 'solution to the social ills of England'.¹²² Most famously, in *David Copperfield* Charles Dickens transports two fallen women to Australia to escape their pasts and begin new lives. For the well-meaning and honest Little Em'ly, betrayed into sacrificing her virtue by the ignoble Steerforth, Australia enables the adoption of a new and rewarding role in the pursuit of good deeds. For Martha, the prostitute, Australia affords the opportunity of marriage to a farm labourer and, as Mr Peggotty explains, they happily 'set up fur their two selves in the

¹²² Coral Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1970, p. 2.

Bush'.¹²³ In English literary tradition, Australia has often been imagined as the place where women who would find it impossible to marry at home can find husbands and begin again.

Yet, in the case of Avis Fletcher, the concept of the fallen woman, or 'female ne'er do well', connotes not just a fall from grace, but also a fall from middle-class respectability. As the implementers of the Contagious Diseases Acts would so ruthlessly demonstrate, the health and well-being of prostitutes was never of as much social concern as that of middle and upper-class women. As a literary heroine, Avis is perhaps more aptly compared with Maida Gwynnham, the heroine, and 'fallen woman', of Caroline Leakey's *The Broad Arrow* (1859).¹²⁴ Maida, the daughter of a gentleman-farmer, has a non-marital affair with Captain Norwell, and even bears their child. When the child dies of starvation, she is wrongly accused of infanticide and transported to Van Diemen's Land for life.¹²⁵ *The Broad Arrow* also depicts Australia as a site of redemption and recovery in the sense that Maida eventually finds spiritual salvation in the New World. Ultimately, however, she succumbs to one of the most common fates of the fallen woman: she dies.

Hearts Importunate was published forty years after Leakey's text. It is further evidence of how intransigent attitudes toward the woman who transgressed sexual boundaries remained. Yet, while the notion of the Damned Whore was still alive and well at the end of the nineteenth century, Dickinson's novel imagines a new role, a different future and narrative outcome for women. For Avis Fletcher, there is the promise of a loving and enabling relationship with a man she desires - a man who accepts her as she is. Better still, her husband's gentlemanly status works to salvage her gentility. A woman who, according to

¹²³ Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, Penguin, London, 1994, p. 709. Lansbury specifically discusses *David Copperfield* in ch. 7, 'The Micawbers', *ibid.*

¹²⁴ 'Oliné Keese', *The Broad Arrow: Being Passages from The History of Maida Gwynnham, A Lifer*, in two volumes, Richard Bentley, London, 1859.

¹²⁵ Fiona Giles discusses this text, including Maida's status as a 'fallen' woman, in *Too Far Everywhere: The Romantic Heroine in Nineteenth-Century Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1998, ch. 3.

Victorian social convention, should not have been entitled to the privileges of a 'good' marriage and happiness, will enjoy both. Avis's future is still contingent on the notion of a New World where, as the *Daily Telegraph* reviewer put it, the hero and heroine can 'find forgetfulness and indifference to their kind'.¹²⁶ This time, however, the Arcady motif is imaginatively appropriated by a woman writer as the home of the New Woman, and the basis of a reinvention of sexual relations between men and women. What initially appears to be a conventional romance narrative ultimately gestures toward very modern possibilities. In *Hearts Importunate*, a new social and political world is constructed to accommodate new representations of women.

VI. The New Woman in the New World

Dickinson's final novel *One Man's Way: A Novel*, published in 1914, again pits different representations of the New Woman against each other. The novel is mostly set, like *A Vicar's Wife*, in England, and also tells the story of an unhappy marriage. This time, however, it is told from the perspective of a male protagonist, Hilary Forrestier, a doctor who is evidently bored and dissatisfied in his marriage. Upon meeting a wild French-speaking seductress, Daphne Laurentz, he is promptly caught up in an adulterous affair. Daphne is arguably Dickinson's most sexually rebellious version of the New Women, and also her most colourful character. She is athletic, smokes cigarettes, loves to 'learn new things' and displays a 'disconcerting frankness'.¹²⁷ Like Louise Dufrayer in Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest*, Marguerita Paul-Browne in Francis Short's *The Fate of Woman*, or Nadine Senguin in Rosa Praed's *Nadine: The Story of a Woman*, Daphne is thoroughly unapologetic about her own sexual needs and desires: she is described as 'concentrated sex, not feminine, but primitive female' (p. 321). She makes the advances toward Hilary, exclaiming, 'Yes I am wicked. I do not care' (p. 117). Yet, in this novel, Daphne's very difference from

¹²⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1900, p. 9.

¹²⁷ Evelyn Dickinson, *One Man's Way: A Novel*, George Allen & Co, colonial edition, London, 1914, p. 131, p. 82. All future page references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

other women ultimately proves to be her downfall: she ends up the unhappy mistress of Colonel Ruthven, suffers a 'serious nervous disorder', and would appear to be sent away to a psychiatric institution (p. 343).

Another version of the independent New Woman who is a contrast for Daphne, much in the way that Madeleine Wade is a contrast for Louise Dufrayer in *Maurice Guest*, is the entomologist, Beatrice (Trixie) Westruther. This forthright and well-educated woman is too preoccupied with her career to be interested in matters of sexuality. She rejects a marriage proposal from Hilary, who fails to understand that a 'woman with good health, many interests, many human sympathies, ambitions, and means to gratify aesthetic tastes, might be quite content without marriage' (p. 221). The proposal confirms her belief in how difficult men find it to get 'beyond the blessed and highly important sex point of view'. Unlike Daphne, Trixie is not dependent on men for sexual or any other type of fulfilment, and is shown to be far less vulnerable to being taken advantage of.

In this final novel, the Australian version of the New Woman also makes a brief appearance. Australia is alluded to in *One Man's Way* as a place where women's social and sexual roles are being reinvented. Hilary is on board a ship destined for India - again, the ship exists as a space of cultural transition and change - when he meets a tall young woman with red hair who is 'one of the lively Australian sort' (pp. 243-4). He recognises this daughter of a Riverina squatter as the 'free and frank young woman of the New World'. This woman, called, with heavy symbolism, Miss Goodbody, is referred to as the 'latest development of individualism'. Although Miss Goodbody is on the narrative margins of this novel, her presence suggests the New World has produced a higher type altogether on the evolutionary scale of New Women. This Australian version exists as a symbol of feminist hope for the future.

The traces of Evelyn Dickinson's feminism - her demonstrated interest in challenging prescribed gender roles and ideology, and her belief in the need for

personal, political and social reforms for women - can be found in her novels. Although their form varies, all the novels draw on the discourses surrounding the New Woman as a way of exploring feminist concerns and ideas. They are all notable for their strong-willed and unorthodox woman characters, who, like Dickinson herself, display intelligence, wit, a love of physical activity, and a rebellious refusal to passively accept their 'lot' as women. It is worth adding that Dickinson's heroines are rarely quite as radical as the author appears to have been herself with regard to their behaviour, their dress or their interest in such things as higher education and a career. This may partly reflect the constraints of writing with a view to popular and financial success: heroines who could be categorised as feminist 'caricatures' would be less likely to appeal to Dickinson's (mostly) female audience. However, it would be a mistake to focus on identifying the heroine who best represents the author, especially given that Dickinson's novels are characterised by an acute awareness that there was no 'one' New Woman. They demonstrate, rather, that this discursive construct varied significantly depending on who represented her, and the context in which she emerged.

In Dickinson's fiction, different discursive representations of New Women are shown to intersect, contradict and even compete with one another. On one level, these different representations can be seen to reflect the diverse nature of late-nineteenth-century feminism(s). On another level, it is interesting to speculate whether Dickinson's apparent reluctance to put forward, in her fiction, any one image of this modern feminist icon stemmed from discomfort with the assumptions made about her own identity as a so-called 'New Woman'. Like the heroines in her novels, this unconventional author was also performing an unstable, multiplicitous role, or 'identity'.

Conclusion

Whether she appeared as a caricature in the Australian popular press, a feminist icon in the feminist press, an independent and rebellious heroine in an Australian woman's novel, or as a feminist activist and writer like Evelyn Dickinson, the New Woman was a provocative symbol of, and also a catalyst for, modernity, socio-sexual transgression and change. The New Woman was a central figure in the *fin-de-siècle* Australian cultural landscape. In her impatience to enjoy the same political, social and even sexual rights as men, she re-energised the Woman Question, and helped to revise gender roles. For Australian feminists, this figure symbolised the right to wear rational dress and control their own bodies, the push for new legal and civil rights, educational and professional opportunities, and changes in sexual morality.

At the same time, while the New Woman who appeared in Australia represented many of the same social and political goals for women as she did in Britain and America, Australia's unique feminist agenda(s) informed the way Australian women constructed the New Woman and prioritised her reforms. For some women, there was a special interest in appropriating the idea of the New Woman in the New World as part of a general claim to citizenship. The appearance of this feminist icon alongside others like the Australian Girl also sometimes produced different discursive forms of the New Woman in Australia.

The New Woman did not suddenly emerge in Australia during the 1890s: it is possible to identify versions, or prototypes, of this feminist figure much earlier in the century. However, as in Britain, the New Woman was officially 'named' in the Australian popular press during the 1890s. Chapter One explored the way the New Woman of the Australian press was, like her British counterpart, a contested figure - both a feminist icon and a caricature depending on who

represented her. By 1895, the New Woman had become a central subject of discussion and caricature in the mainstream Australian press. Even though there was no one version of the New Woman, Australian journalists seized on 'New Woman' as a term that could encompass the disparate aspects of the feminist movement. Whether a sexually voracious advocate of free love, an asexual spinster, or a bicycle-riding, cigarette-smoking, trousers-wearing woman, caricatures of the New Woman became weapons that could be wielded against the feminist movement. This figure was commonly represented as anti-marriage and anti-motherhood, and a threat to the future of Australian society.

One of the most common ways the Australian popular press dealt with the New Woman's growing popularity was by trying to downplay her significance. This is especially evident in the reception in the popular press of the New Woman novels, which acted as one of the most important catalysts for the emergence of this figure as a topic of public debate. As Australian journalists realised the link between the woman voter and the woman reader of New Woman novels, they increasingly tried to decry this fiction as a passing fad. Journalists tried to emphasise that the novels were the product of distant places, and had little association with Australia. At the same time, by representing such issues, and ensuring that everyone was talking about her, the Australian popular press helped to ensure the New Woman had an enormous impact on the social and political landscape. The *Bulletin* highlighted the New Woman fiction's preoccupation with the 'sex problem', and was in many ways a fertile site for the discussion of issues surrounding marriage and sexuality.

Australian feminists responded to the dominant discourse(s) on the New Woman in the mainstream press by (re)presenting their own positive feminist vision of this figure. The *Dawn* and the *Woman's Voice* protested against the image of the New Woman as a masculine, smoking, trousers-wearing woman who was determined to abandon her roles as wife and mother. Both journals emphasised that the New Woman's femininity and womanliness were not in doubt. Nor had she necessarily withdrawn her commitment to the domestic

realm. The *Dawn* made the modern wife and mother the basis of its feminist vision of ideal womanhood, arguing that the real 'new woman' was the 'coming woman', who would 'purify the moral and physical world'. The *Woman's Voice* promoted the image of a respectable, modern, educated and political New Woman who was not a threat to the future of Australian society but, on the contrary, one of its greatest assets.

Chapter Two examined how the Australian Girl was constructed in Australian women's novels as both representative of, and antagonistic to, the New Woman. The intelligent, resilient and tomboyish Australian Girl resembled the New Woman in a number of ways. Both figures challenged conventional ideals of femininity in that they were physically active, outspoken, and prepared to critique the more oppressive and inviolable aspects of Victorian society. Indeed, to a certain extent, the Australian Girl was the more authentic New Woman of the New World. Her association with an emerging nation and sense of national identity meant that she enjoyed a certain status in Australia that could not be emulated by the international New Woman. For this reason, the Australian Girl was never simply a local manifestation of the New Woman. Some Australian women writers demonstrated that the Australian Girl's (bush) location, sexual innocence and girlhood set her apart from and, sometimes, put her in conflict with the New Woman.

One of the most controversial features of New Woman writing was its exploration of sexuality (mostly heterosexuality), women's desire, and the problems associated with marriage and motherhood. Chapter Three examined novels by Australian women writers that explored the contentious 'sex problem'. Despite Australian journalists' attempts to deem the sex novels a British/European phenomenon, many Australian women writers were just as interested in writing about the controversial subjects of adultery, the sexual double standard, unhappy marriages, romantic friendship between women, 'free love' and venereal disease. Australian women writers recognised the importance of sexuality to the project of feminist reform. They presented New

Woman heroines who played fundamental roles in protesting against the sexual status quo, reinventing gender roles, and imagining a new sexual morality.

Chapter Four focused on a little-known writer, the Irish-born Evelyn Dickinson. Dickinson, a bicycle-riding, cigarette-smoking and rational-dress-wearing writer and medical student, was herself considered a type of New Woman. She was one of many women who took advantage of the new opportunities at the end of the nineteenth century to access education, enter the professions and achieve financial independence. The discourse of the New Woman afforded Dickinson a new degree of freedom from the constraints of traditional Victorian womanhood. In Sydney, Dickinson and her long-term companion Louisa Macdonald belonged to a community of 'single' New Women who contributed to Australian feminism, and did not regard (heterosexual) marriage as their only option. They occupied a central place in the contested socio-cultural terrain of late-nineteenth-century Sydney, symbolising the increasing instability of separate spheres for men and women.

Like many New Women, Evelyn Dickinson turned to writing as a way of attaining independence and intellectual satisfaction. Although she was not a prolific novelist, she produced a number of interesting novels that make Australia the site of the New Woman's endeavours to redefine gender roles, and re-imagine a new social and sexual morality in the New World.

Dickinson's novels are characterised by strong and unorthodox heroines who transgress, as the author did in her own life, the boundaries of femininity and gentility. Her novels also demonstrate awareness that the New Woman was a discursive construct that varied significantly depending on who represented her. Although Dickinson has been largely invisible in Australian literary histories, her novels offer a valuable perspective on the first-wave feminist struggle for reform, and the attempt to find new forms of modern and political writing.

Turn-of-the-century Australian women's fiction reveals the New Woman was an important discursive site for Australian women writers to explore feminist ideas, problems, dreams and desires. Many of their novels addressed the very real problems of unhappy marriages, women's social and sexual inequality, and women's dissatisfaction with their prescribed roles in society. It is notable that a number of the novels discussed in this thesis ultimately offer a gloomy outlook for feminism. For many women writers, however, the discourse of the New Woman still provided a language with which to produce their own visions of social, personal and political change. Australian women writers used fiction to, in the words of Italo Calvino, give a 'name to what as yet has no name', and thus enable the creation of a 'model' of aesthetic and ethical values that are 'essential to any plan' of political action.¹ The New Woman reminded Australian women writers that they belonged to a vibrant international feminist community. This figure became a vehicle for them to analyse the relationship of Australian women to this international feminist movement, as well as their role in the formation of a new nation.

¹ Italo Calvino, 'Right and Wrong Political Uses of Literature', *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, Dennis Walder (ed), Oxford University Press/Open University, New York, 1990, p. 101.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

Broderick, Mary. 'College Hall in the Nineties'. Address, 1927. University College London Archives. Coll. A 20 BRO.

College Hall General Meeting Minute Books 1886-1894. College Hall Archives, University of London Library.

College Hall newspaper cuttings and photographs. College Hall Archives, University of London Library.

College Hall Student Register, College Hall Archives. University of London Library.

Dickinson, Evelyn. Correspondence with George Allen & Co., and contracts with Methuen & Co. *Letter Books 1893-1915*. MS 3281. *Correspondence 1915-1960*. MS 3282. Publishers' Archives, Archives Department, Reading University Library.

Harte, N. B. *The Admission of Women to University College London: A Centenary Lecture*, 1979. University College London Archives. D15 HAR.

Macdonald, Louisa. *Letters between Rose Scott and Louisa Macdonald 1895-1900*. Rose Scott correspondence (Papers of the Scott family, part 1). Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. MSS 38/20X.

Macdonald, Louisa. *Letters from Louisa Macdonald to Eleanor Grove 1892-1898*. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. FM4/3106.

Macdonald, Louisa. "'Miss Grove': An address to students at College Hall", 1925. University College London archives. UCL Mem. 1B/19.

Praed (Rosa Caroline) Papers 1885-1930. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. OM 64-1.

Roseby, Mary. 'Reminiscences of Mary Roseby, an early student of the Women's College, 1960'. Women's College Archives, Women's College, University of Sydney.

Sandford-Morgan, E. L. 'Louisa Macdonald of the Women's College'. Unpublished paper, c. 1931, pp. 1-44. Women's College Archives, Women's College, University of Sydney.

University College London Gazette. University College London Archives.

The Women's College within the University of Sydney Calendar. W. E. Smith, Sydney, 1900-1920.

Women's Literary Society Minute Book 1892-1893. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. MSS B693.

Women's Literary Society Reports 1893-6. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. 374.23/W.

Wood (Whitfeld), Eleanor. 'The Women's College in the Pioneer Days'. *Magazine of the Women's College*, June 1919. Women's College Archives, Women's College, University of Sydney.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Argus

Australasian

Bulletin

Daily Express

Daily Graphic

Daily Telegraph (London)

Daily Telegraph (Sydney)

Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women

Illustrated Sydney News

Melbourne Punch

Morning Post

Observer

Pall Mall Gazette

Punch

Review of Reviews

St James's Gazette

Spectator

Sydney Mail

Sydney Morning Herald

Westminster Review

Woman's Journal: Boston

Woman's Voice

Unpublished Dissertations, Books and Papers

Campbell, Rosemary (ed), *An Australian Girl*. By Catherine Martin. Three Volumes, Version 2, October 1998, unpublished.

Kelly, Farley. *The 'Woman Question' in Melbourne 1880-1914*. PhD thesis. Faculty of Education, Monash University, 1982.

Prime, Leonie N. *The New Woman and the Australian Girl: Cultural Narratives of Identity 1885-1915*. MPhil thesis. Department of English, University of Western Australia, 1998.

Urwin, Tiffany. *Caroline Harper Dexter and the 'Feminine Civilising Mission'*. PhD thesis. Department of English, University of Queensland, 1999.

White, Kerry. *Founded on Compromise: Australian Girls' Family Stories 1894-1982*. PhD thesis. Department of English Literature and Drama, University of Wollongong, 1985.

Primary Sources

This is a list of novels and other primary material either referred to in the body of this thesis, or read as background for the arguments and information provided. In the case of a novel, the edition used is listed first, followed by the original publication date.

- Ackermann, Jessie. *Australia From a Woman's Point of View*. Facsimile edn, 1913, Cassell Australia, North Ryde, NSW, 1981.
- Allen, Grant. *The Woman Who Did*. Introduced by Sarah Wintle, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, 1st publ. 1895.
- Anonymous. 'The Social Standing of the New Woman'. *Woman's Herald*. 17 August, 1893, p. 410.
- Ashton, Eliza Ann. 'Marriage Question'. *Daily Telegraph*. 12 November 1891, p. 3.
- Atkinson, Louisa. *Tom Hellicar's Children*. Mulini Press, Canberra, 1983, 1st serialised in the *Sydney Mail* 1871.
- Baynton, Barbara. *Bush Studies*. Introduced by Elizabeth Webby, Collins/Angus & Robertson, Pymble, NSW, 1993, 1st publ. 1902.
- Brontë, Anne. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Penguin, London, 1994, 1st publ. 1848.
- Brooke, Emma Frances. *A Superfluous Woman*. William Heinemann, London, 1894.
- Caine, Hall. *The Manxman*. William Heinemann, London, 1894.
- Caird, Mona. *The Daughters of Danaus*. Afterword by Margaret Morganroth Gullette, Feminist Press at the City University of New York, New York, 1989, 1st publ. 1894.
- _____. 'Marriage'. *Westminster Review*. July to December, vol. 130, 1888, pp. 186-201.
- Cambridge, Ada. *The Eternal Feminine*. George Bell and Sons, London, 1907.

- _____ *A Marked Man: Some Episodes in His Life*. Introduced by Debra Adelaide, Pandora, London, 1987, 1st serialised in the *Age* 1888-89 with the title 'A Black Sheep', 1st publ. in three-volume book form in 1890 with the title *A Marked Man*, 1st publ. in one volume in 1891.
- _____ *A Marriage Ceremony*. 3rd edn, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1894.
- _____ *A Platonic Friendship*. George Bell & Sons, London, [1907?], 1st publ. 1905.
- _____ 'The Reform Club'. Reproduced as an appendix to *A Woman's Friendship*, Elizabeth Morrison (ed), Colonial Text Series, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, pp. 143-68.
- _____ *Sisters*. Introduced by Nancy Cato, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1989, 1st publ. 1904.
- _____ *The Three Miss Kings*. With a new introduction by Audrey Tate, Virago, London, 1987, 1st publ. in book form in 1891.
- _____ *Unspoken Thoughts*. Kegan Paul, Trench, London, 1887. Scholarly Electronic Text and Image Service, Fisher Library, University of Sydney. <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/>
- _____ *A Woman's Friendship*. Elizabeth Morrison (ed), Colonial Text Series, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, 1st serialised in the *Age* 1889.
- Cole, Catharine. 'The New Womanhood'. *Woman's Journal: Boston*. 27 February 1892, p. 68.
- Cunningham, Peter. *Two Years in New South Wales*. Henry Colburn, London, 1827, vol. II, pp. 48-50. Reprinted in *The World Moves Slowly: A Documentary History of Australian Women*. Beverley Kingston (ed), Cassell, Stanmore, NSW, 1977, pp. 14-15.
- Dale, Alice Mary. *With Feet of Clay*. George Robertson and Co, Melbourne, 1895.
- Daley, Victor. (Creeve Roe) 'Mostly about Women'. *Bulletin*. 3 September 1896, p. 6.
- Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield*. Penguin, London, 1994, 1st publ. 1849-50.
- Dickinson, Evelyn. (E. E. D.) 'Five Sounds'. *Sydney Mail*. 28 April 1894, pp. 853.

- _____ 'The Garden of Proserpine'. *Temple Bar: A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*. Vol. 117, May to August 1899, pp. 369-77.
- _____ *Hearts Importunate: a tale*. William Heinemann, Colonial Library, London, 1899. Also published in 1900.
- _____ 'New Books'. *Woman's Voice*. 22 December 1894, p. 143.
- _____ *One Man's Way: A Novel*. George Allen & Co, Colonial Edition, London, 1914.
- _____ 'A Remarkable Woman'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 9 February 1895.
- _____ 'Shakespeare and the Healing Art: Prepared by Miss E. E. Dickinson before the Shakespeare Society of New South Wales on May 8th'. *Australasian Nurses' Journal*. Vol. IV, no. 6, 15 June 1906, pp. 174-82.
- _____ *The Sin of Angels*. Methuen & Co, Colonial Library, London, 1897, 1st publ. 1896. Second edition published 1897.
- _____ 'This Wicked World'. *Sydney Mail*. 23 March 1895, p. 615.
- _____ 'To the Editor'. *University College London Gazette*, 14 March 1888, pp. 3-4.
- _____ *A Vicar's Wife*. Methuen & Co, London, 1892. Another edition published by Angus & Robertson, Colonial Library, 1902[?].
- Dixon, Ella Hepworth. *The Story of a Modern Woman*. William Heinemann, London, 1894.
- Dowie, Ménie Muriel. *Gallia*. Helen Small (ed), Everyman edition, J. M. Dent, London, 1995, 1st publ. 1895.
- _____ *A Girl in the Karpathians*. George Philip & Son, London, 1891, 1st publ. 1890.
- Dugdale, Henrietta. (Mrs H. A. Dugdale) *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age*. McCarron, Bird & Co, Melbourne, 1883.
- Egerton, George. *Keynotes and Discords*. Introduced by Martha Vicinus, Virago, London, 1983 (*Keynotes* 1st publ. 1893, *Discords* 1st publ. 1894).
- Ellis, Havelock and John Addington Symonds. *Sexual Inversion*. Reprint of the 1897 edn, Arno Press, New York, 1975.

- Finkelstein, Millie. *The Newest Woman, The Destined Monarch of the World*. Pat Finn, Melbourne, 1895.
- Fisher, Lala (ed), *By Creek and Gully: Stories and Sketches mostly of Bush Life Told in Prose and Rhyme. By Australian Writers in England*. T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1899.
- Franc, Maud Jeanne. (Matilda Jane Evans) *Marian; or, The Light of Some One's Home: A Tale of Australian Bush Life*. Sampson Low, London, 1894, 1st publ. 1859.
- Franklin, Miles. (Stella Maria Sarah Miles) *My Brilliant Career*, Angus & Robertson, Arkon edition, Australia, 1979, reprinted 1980, 1st publ. 1901.
- _____ *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*. Introduced by Jill Roe, Virago, London, 1986, 1st publ. 1909.
- Gaunt, Mary. (Mrs H. Lindsay Miller) *Kirkham's Find*. Introduced by Kylie Tennant, afterword by Dale Spender, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, 1st publ. 1897.
- _____ *The Uncounted Cost*. A. & C. Black, London, 1925, 1st publ. 1910.
- Giles, Fiona (ed), *From the Verandah: Stories of Love and Landscape by Nineteenth Century Australian Women*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Melbourne, 1987.
- Gissing, George. *The Odd Women*. Introduced by Margaret Walters, Virago, London, 1980, 1st publ. 1893.
- Gosse, Edmund. 'The Decay of the Literary Taste'. *North American Review*. 161, 1895
- Grand, Sarah. (Frances Elizabeth McFall) *The Beth Book: Being a Study of the Life of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, A Woman of Genius*. Introduced by Elaine Showalter, Virago, London, 1980, 1st publ. 1897.
- _____ *The Heavenly Twins*. In Three Volumes, William Heinemann, London, 1893.
- _____ 'The Man of the Moment'. *North American Review*. Vol. 158, 1894, pp. 620-7. Reprinted in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key*

New Woman Texts. Volume 2: The New Woman and Female Independence.

Ann Heilmann (ed), Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

_____ 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question'. *North American Review*. Vol. 158, 1894, pp. 270-6. Reprinted in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts. Volume 2: The New Woman and Female Independence*. Ann Heilmann (ed), Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

Gunn, Jeannie. (Mrs Aeneas Gunn). *We of the Never-Never*. Arrow Australia/Random Century, Sydney, 1990, 1st publ. 1908.

Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. C. H. Sisson (ed), Penguin, England, 1978, reprinted 1986, 1st publ. 1896.

Heilmann, Ann (ed), *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 1: Marriage and Motherhood*. Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

_____ (ed), *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 2: The New Woman and Female Independence*. Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

_____ (ed), *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 3: New Woman Fiction (1): Marriage, Motherhood and Work*. Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

_____ (ed), *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 4: New Woman Fiction (2): Gender and Sexuality*. Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

_____ (ed), *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 5: Literary Degenerates*. Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.

Humphreys, Eliza. (Margaret J. Desmond Humphreys) (Rita) *Sheba: A Study of Girlhood*. In Three Volumes. Facsimile edition, F. V. White and Co, London, 1889. Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1976.

Iota. (Kathleen Mannington Caffyn) *A Comedy in Spasms*. Hutchinson & Co, Zeit-Geist Library, London, 1895.

- _____ *Dorinda and her Daughter*. Hurst and Blackett, London, 1910.
- _____ 'Lenchen'. *By Creek and Gully: Stories and Sketches mostly of Bush Life. Told in Prose and Rhyme. By Australian Writers in England*. Lala Fisher (ed), T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1899.
- _____ 'Victims of Circe'. *Coo-ee: Tales of Australian Life by Australian Ladies*. Mrs Patchett Martin (ed), Richard Edward King, London, 1891, pp. 115-73.
- _____ *A Yellow Aster*. In Three Volumes, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1894.
- James, Henry. *The Bostonians*. Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1966, reprinted 1985, 1st publ. 1886.
- _____ *Daisy Miller*. Aerie Books, USA, 1988, 1st publ. 1879.
- _____ *The Portrait of a Lady*. Introduced by Graham Greene, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981, 1st publ. 1881.
- Keese, Oliné. (Caroline Leakey) *The Broad Arrow: Being Passages from the History of Maida Gwynnham, A Lifer*. In Two Volumes, Richard Bentley, London, 1859.
- Lee, Christopher (ed), *Turning the Century: Writing of the 1890s*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999.
- Mack, Louise. (Mrs J. P. Creed) *An Australian Girl in London*. T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1902.
- _____ *Theodora's Husband*. Alston Rivers, London, 1909.
- Mansfield, Katherine. *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield*. Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1981.
- Martin, Catherine. (Mrs Alick Macleod) *An Australian Girl*. Introduced by Elizabeth Webby, Pandora, London, 1988, 1st publ. as one volume edition 1891.
- _____ *An Australian Girl*. In Three Volumes. Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1890.
- Martin, Harriette Anne Patchett (Mrs Patchett Martin) (ed), *Coo-ee: Tales of Australian Life by Australian Ladies*. Richard Edward King, London, 1891.

- Meredith, Lousia Anne. (Mrs Charles Meredith) *Over the Straits; A Visit to Victoria*. Chapman and Hall, London, 1861.
- Mill, John Stuart. 'The Subjection of Women'. *On Liberty and Other Writings*. Stefan Collini (ed), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, reprinted 1991.
- Millett, Mrs Edward. *An Australian Parsonage; or, the Settler and the Savage in Western Australia*. Introduced by Rica Erickson, facsimile edn, 1872, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1980.
- Moore Bentley, Mary. (Mary Anne Ling) *A Woman of Mars, or Australia's Enfranchised Woman*. Edwards, Dunlop & Co, Sydney, 1901.
- Moore, George. *Esther Waters*. Introduced by David Skilton, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, reprinted 1995, 1st publ. 1894.
- Morgan-Dockrell, Mrs. 'Is the New Woman a Myth?' *Humanitarian*. Vol. 8, 1896, pp. 339-50. Reprinted in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts. Volume 2: The New Woman and Female Independence*. Ann Heilmann (ed), Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1998.
- Murray, Elizabeth A. *Ella Norman; or, A Woman's Perils*. Hill of Content Publishing Co, Melbourne, 1985, 1st publ. 1864.
- Oliphant, Margaret. 'The Anti-Marriage League', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 159, 1896, pp. 135-49. Reprinted in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Volume 5: Literary Degenerates*. Ann Heilmann (ed), Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London, 1998.
- Osmond, Sophie. *Dungabeena: An Australian Story*. Pater & Knapton, Melbourne, 1894.
- Ouida. 'The New Woman'. *North American Review*. Vol. 158, 1894, pp. 610-19. Reprinted in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts. Volume 2: The New Woman and Female Independence*. Ann Heilmann (ed), Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1998.

- Praed, Rosa. (Mrs Campbell Praed) *The Bond of Wedlock*. Introduced by Lynne Spender, Pandora, London, 1987, 1st publ. 1887.
- _____ 'A Daughter of Greater Britain'. *Girl's Realm*. January 1899, pp. 249-53. Reprinted in *The World Moves Slowly: A Documentary History of Australian Women*. Beverley Kingston (ed), Cassell, Stanmore, NSW, 1977, pp. 17-20.
- _____ *Fugitive Anne: A Romance of the Unexplored Bush*. John Long, London, 1902.
- _____ *Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land: A Story of Australian Life*. Introduced by Pam Gilbert, Pandora, London, 1987, 1st publ. 1915.
- _____ *My Australian Girlhood: Sketches and Impressions of Bush Life*. T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1902.
- _____ *Nadine: The Story of a Woman*. Chapman & Hall, London, 1883, 1st publ. 1882.
- _____ *Our Book of Memories: Letters of Justin McCarthy to Mrs Campbell Praed*. Chatto & Windus, London, 1912.
- _____ *Outlaw and Lawmaker*. Introduced by Dale Spender, Pandora, London, 1988, 1st publ. 1893.
- _____ *Policy and Passion: A Novel of Australian Life*. Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1881.
- Reynolds, Broda M. *A Black Silk Stocking*. Henry Edgar Reynolds, Sydney, 1907.
- Richardson, Handel Richardson (Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson) *The Getting of Wisdom*, Mandarin Australia, Port Melbourne, 1990, 1st publ. 1910.
- _____ *The Getting of Wisdom*. Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele (eds), The Academy Editions of Australian Literature, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2001.
- _____ *Maurice Guest*. Sun Books, Melbourne, 1965, 1st publ. 1908.
- Russell, Frances Emily. (Mrs H. E. Russell) *Joyce Martindale*. Remington and Co, London/Sydney, 1894.
- _____ *Too Easily Jealous: An Australian Romance*. Remington and Co, London/Sydney, 1892.

- Schreiner, Olive. *The Story of An African Farm*. Introduced by Dan Jacobson, Penguin, London, 1971, reprinted 1995, 1st publ. 1883.
- Short, Francis. (Mrs Herbert Harris) *The Fate of Woman*. John Macqueen, London, 1898, 1st publ. 1897.
- _____ *Val Constable's Career*, Remington and Co, London, 1895.
- Showalter, Elaine (ed), *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*. Virago, London, 1993.
- Spence, Catherine Helen. *Clara Morison*. Introduced by Susan Eade, Rigby/Seal Books, Adelaide, 1971, 1st publ. 1854.
- _____ *Handfasted*. Helen Thomson (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1984.
Submitted for *Sydney Mail* competition 1879.
- _____ *Mr Hogarth's Will*. Introduced by Helen Thomson, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, 1st publ. 1865.
- Spender, Lynne (ed), *Her Selection: Writings by Nineteenth Century Australian Women*. Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988.
- Tasma. (Jessie Couvreur) *A Fiery Ordeal*. Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1897.
- _____ *In Her Earliest Youth*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, London, 1890.
- _____ *A Knight of the White Feather*, E. A. Petherick & Co, Melbourne, 1893, 1st publ. 1892.
- _____ *Not Counting the Cost*. D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1895.
- _____ *The Penance of Portia James*. United States Book Company, New York, 1891.
- _____ *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*. Introduced by Margaret Harris, Pandora, London, 1987, 1st publ. 1889.
- Turner, Ethel. (Mrs Herbert Raine Curlewis) *Seven Little Australians*, Ward Lock, London/Sydney, 1976, 1st publ. 1894.
- _____ *The Story of a Baby*. Ward Lock & Bowden, London, 1895.
- Turner, Lilian. (Mrs F. Lindsay Thompson) *An Australian Lassie*. Ward, Lock & Co, London, 1903.

- _____ *Betty the Scribe*. Ward, Lock & Co, London, 1906.
- _____ *The Lights of Sydney, or No Past is Dead*. Cassell and Company, London, 1896.
- Vogel, Julius. *Anno Domini 2000; or, Woman's Destiny*. Hutchinson & Co, London, 1889, 1st publ. 1888.
- Ward, Mary Augusta. (Mrs Humphrey Ward) *Marcella*. Virago, London, 1984, 1st publ. 1894.
- Wise, John R. de C. 'Belles Lettres'. *Westminster Review*. Vol. 84, 1865, p. 568. Reprinted in *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883*. Vol. 3, Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder (eds), Garland Publishing, New York, 1983.

Critical Studies

This is a list of articles, chapters, reviews and books either referred to in the body of this thesis, or used as background resources.

- Ackland, Michael. 'A School of Authority: Richardson's personal investment in *The Getting of Wisdom*'. *Southerly*. Vol. 59. no. 2, 1999, pp. 17-30.
- Adelaide, Debra, *Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographic Guide*. Pandora, London, 1988.
- _____ *Bibliography of Australian Women's Literature 1795-1990*. D. W. Thorpe, Port Melbourne, Vic, 1991.
- _____ *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988.
- Albinski, Nan Bowman. 'Handfasted: An Australian Feminist's American Utopia'. *Journal of Popular Culture*. Vol. 23, no. 2, 1989, pp. 15-31.
- _____ 'A Survey of Australian Utopian and Dystopian Fiction'. *Australian Literary Studies*. Vol. 13, no. 1, 1987, pp. 15-28.

- Allen, Judith A. 'Octavius Beale re-considered: Infanticide, babyfarming and abortion in NSW 1880-1939'. *What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History*. Sydney Labour History Group, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1982, ch. 5.
- _____'Our deeply degraded sex" and "The animal in man": Rose Scott, Feminism and Sexuality 1890-1925'. *Australian Feminist Studies*. Nos. 7 & 8, 1988, pp. 64-91.
- _____*Rose Scott: Vision and Revision in Feminism*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.
- _____'Rose Scott's vision: feminism and masculinity 1880-1925'. *Crossing Boundaries: Feminisms and the Critique of Knowledges*. Barbara Caine, E. A. Grosz, Marie de Lepervanche (eds), Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, ch. 11.
- Allen, Margaret. 'Catherine Martin: An Australian Girl?' *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Debra Adelaide (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 11.
- _____'Reading Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl*'. *Southwords: Essays on South Australian Writing*. Philip Butterss (ed), Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 1995, ch. 4.
- Annable, Rosemary (ed), *Biographical Register: The Women's College within the University of Sydney*. Volume 1: 1892-1939, The Council of the Women's College, Sydney, 1995.
- Anonymous. 'SA pioneer woman doctor dies at 92'. *Advertiser*. 11 January 1983, p. 6.
- Ardis, Ann L. *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1990.
- Australian Dictionary of Biography 1851-1890*. Vols. 3-6, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1969-76.
- Australian Dictionary of Biography 1891-1939*. Vols. 7-12, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1979-90.

- Bacchi, Carol. 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes towards Women, 1870-1920'. *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*. Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed), Fontana/Collins, Melbourne, 1980, ch. 5.
- Barlow, Damien. "'My Little Ghost-Slave': The Queer Lives of Rosa Praed'. *Australian Literary Studies*. Vol. 17, no. 4, 1996, pp. 344-52.
- Barton, Patricia. 'Ada Cambridge: Writing For Her Life'. *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Debra Adelaide (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 10.
- Bate, Weston. *A History of Brighton*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1962.
- Beaumont, Jeanette and W. Vere Hole. *Letters from Louisa: A woman's view of the 1890s, based on the letters of Louisa Macdonald, first principal of the Women's College, University of Sydney*. Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996.
- Beetham, Margaret. *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914*. Routledge, London, 1996.
- Beilby, Raymond and Cecil Hadgraft. *Ada Cambridge, Tasma and Rosa Praed*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1979.
- Bevege, Margaret., Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*. Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1982.
- Bird, Delys. 'Towards an Aesthetics of Australian Women's Fiction: *My Brilliant Career* and *The Getting of Wisdom*'. *Australian Literary Studies*. Vol. 11, no. 2, 1983, pp. 171-81.
- Bjørhovde, Gerd. *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel, 1880-1900*. Norwegian University Press, Oslo, 1987.
- Bland, Lucy. 'The Married Woman, the "New Woman" and the Feminist: Sexual Politics of the 1890s'. *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*. Jane Rendall (ed), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, ch. 5.
- Boumelha, Penny. *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form*. Harvester Press, Sussex, 1982.

- Brand, Dana. *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.
- Brandon, Ruth, *The New Women and the Old Men: Love, Sex and the Woman Question*. Secker & Warburg, London, 1990.
- Buck, Claire (ed), *Women's Literature A-Z*. Bloomsbury, 1994.
- Burdett, Carolyn. 'Capturing the Ideal: Olive Schreiner's *From Man to Man*'. *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (eds), Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001, ch. 10.
- Burdett, Carolyn. *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender, Empire*. Palgrave, Hampshire, 2001.
- Butterss, Philip (ed), *Southwords: Essays on South Australian Writing*. Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 1995.
- Caine, Barbara (ed), *Australian Feminism: A Companion*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998.
- _____. *English Feminism 1780-1980*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997.
- _____. 'Generational Conflict and the Question of Ageing in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Feminism'. *Australian Cultural History*. No. 14, 1995, pp. 92-108.
- _____. (ed), *The Woman Question in England and Australia*. Sydney Studies in History, Department of History, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1994.
- Calder, Jenni. *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1976.
- Calvino, Italo. 'Right and Wrong Political Uses of Literature'. *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, Dennis Walder (ed), Oxford University Press/Open University, New York, 1990, pp. 99-102.
- Campbell, Deborah. "'A Doll's House": The Colonial Response'. *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends: Essays in Australian Cultural History*. Susan Dermody, John Docker and Drusilla Modjeska (eds), Kibble Books, Malmsbury, Vic, 1982, pp. 192-210.

- Campbell, Ra. 'An Australian Girl: A Case of Political Censorship'. *Margin: Life and Letters of Early Australia*. No. 47, 1999, pp. 16-26.
- Castle, Terry. *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.
- Chrisman, Laura. 'Empire, "race" and feminism in the *fin de siècle*: the work of George Egerton and Olive Schreiner'. *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, ch. 3.
- Christ, Carol. 'Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House', *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*. Martha Vicinus (ed), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1977, ch. 7.
- Clancy, Laurie. 'Madness in Australian Fiction'. *Left, Right or Centre? Psychiatry and the Status Quo*. Harry Heseltine (ed), Occasional Paper No. 19, English Department, University College, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 1990, pp. 125-35.
- Clarke, Patricia. *Pen Portraits: Women Writers and journalists in nineteenth century Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988.
- _____. *Rosa! Rosa! A life of Rosa Praed, novelist and spiritualist*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 1999.
- _____. *Tasma: The Life of Jessie Couvreur*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1994.
- Copping, Alice M. *The Story of College Hall 1882-1972*. Newman Books, London, 1974.
- Cunningham, A. R. 'The "New Woman Fiction" of the 1890's'. *Victorian Studies*. 17, 1973, pp. 177-86.
- Cunningham, Gail. *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*. Macmillan, London, 1978.
- Daniels, Kay. 'Rejecting the New Woman: problems with nineteenth century publishers'. *Refractory Girl*. No. 1, summer 1972/3, pp. 5-7.
- _____. *So Much Hard Work: Women and Prostitution in Australian History*, Fontana Books, Sydney, 1984.

- de Lauretis, Teresa. 'The Technology of Gender'. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (eds), Blackwell, Malden, Massachusetts, 1998, ch. 6.
- De Vries, Susanna. *Strength of Purpose: Australian Women of Achievement from Federation to the Mid-20th Century*. Harper Collins, Pymble, NSW, 1998.
- Dermody, Susan, Docker, John, and Modjeska, Drusilla (eds). *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends: Essays in Australian Cultural History*. Kibble Books, Malmsbury, Vic, 1982.
- Devereux, Cecily, 'New Woman, New World: Maternal Feminism and the New Imperialism in the White Settler Colonies'. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 22, issue 2, 1999, pp. 175-84.
- Dixon, Robert. 'The New Woman and the Coming Man: Gender and genre in the "lost-race" romance'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 14.
- Docker, John. 'The Feminist Legend: A New Historicism?' *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 2.
- _____. *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991.
- _____. 'Postmodernism, Cultural History, and the Feminist Legend of the Nineties: *Robbery Under Arms*, the Novel, the Play'. *The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture*. Ken Stewart (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996, pp. 128-49.
- Dowling, Linda. 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s'. *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*. Lyn Pykett (ed), Longman, London, 1996, ch. 4.
- Fabian, Suzane (ed). *Mr. Punch Down Under: A Social History of the Colony from 1856 to 1900 via cartoons and extracts from Melbourne Punch*. Greenhouse Publications/Landmark Educational Supplies, Richmond, Vic, 1982.

- Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. William Morrow and Co, New York, 1981.
- Felski, Rita. *The Gender of Modernity*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995.
- Fernando, Lloyd. *'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel*. Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1977.
- Ferres, Kay. 'Rewriting Desire: Rosa Praed, Theosophy, and the Sex Problem'. *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*. Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 12.
- _____ (ed), *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*. Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993.
- _____ 'Women making a spectacle of themselves: Rosa Praed's *Ariane*, melodrama, and marriage reform'. *Australasian Drama Studies*. 23, October, 1993, pp. 56-64.
- Ferrier, Carole (ed), *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*. 2nd edn, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992, 1st publ. 1985.
- Flint, Kate. 'The American Girl and the New Woman'. *Women's Writing*. Vol. 3, no. 3, 1996, pp. 217-29.
- _____ *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993.
- Forward, Stephanie. 'The "New Man" in *Fin-de-Siècle* Fiction'. *Women's Writing*. Vol. 5, no. 3, 1998, pp. 437-55.
- Gardner, Susan. 'My Brilliant Career: Portrait of the Artist as a Wild Colonial Girl'. *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*. Carole Ferrier (ed), 2nd edn, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992, 1st publ. 1985, pp. 22-43.
- Gibbney, H. J. and Ann G. Smith (eds), *A Biographical Register 1788-1939*, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Australian National University, Canberra, 1987.

- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century. Volume 2: Sexchanges*. Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1989.
- Giles, Fiona. 'Romance: An Embarrassing Subject'. *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*. Laurie Hergenhan (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 14.
- _____. *Too Far Everywhere: The Romantic Heroine in Nineteenth-Century Australia*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1998.
- Gleber, Anke. 'Female Flanerie and the *Symphony of the City*'. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Katharina von Ankum (ed), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, ch. 3.
- Golder, Hilary. 'An exercise in unnecessary chivalry: The NSW Matrimonial Causes Act Amendment Act of 1881'. *In Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law, 1788-1979*. Judy Mackinolty and Heather Radi (eds), Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, ch. 4.
- Green, Dorothy. 'Power-Games in the Novels of Henry Handel Richardson'. *Who Is She? Images of Woman in Australian Fiction*. Shirley Walker (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983, ch. 7.
- Green, H. M. *A History of Australian Literature: Pure and Applied*. Volume 1: 1789-1923. Revised by Dorothy Green, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1984.
- Griest, Guinevere L. *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel*. David & Charles/Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1970.
- Grieve, Norma and Ailsa Burns (eds), *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, reprinted 1987, 1989.
- Grimshaw, Patricia. 'Bessie Harrison Lee and the Fight for Voluntary Motherhood'. *Double Time: Women in Victoria - 150 Years*. Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (eds), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1985, ch. 17.
- _____. 'The "equals and comrades of men"?: *Tocsin* and "the woman question"'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue

- Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 9.
- Grimshaw, Patricia, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly. *Creating a Nation*. Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1996, 1st publ. 1994.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Space, Time and Perversion: The Politics of Bodies*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995.
- Harris, Margaret. 'The Writing of Tasma, The Work of Jessie Couvreur'. A *Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Debra Adelaide (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 12.
- Harvey, Melinda. 'From *Passante* to *Flâneuse*: Encountering the Prostitute in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*'. *Journal of Urban History*. Vol. 27, no. 6, 2001, pp. 746-64.
- Heilmann, Ann. *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism*. Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000.
- Henderson, Ian. 'Gender, Genre, and Sybylla's Performative Identity in Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*'. *Australian Literary Studies*. Vol. 18, no. 2, 1997, pp. 165-73.
- Hergenhan, Laurie., Bennett, B., Duwell, M., Matthews, B., Pierce, P., and Webby, E. (eds), *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*. Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988.
- Hickman, Bronwen. 'Mary Gaunt: An Australian Identity'. *Overland*. 158, Autumn, 2000, pp. 58-62.
- Hoff, Ursula. *Charles Conder; His Australian Years*. National Gallery Society of Victoria, Melbourne, 1960.
- Hole, W. Vere and Anne H. Treweek. *The History of the Women's College Within the University of Sydney*. Halstead Press, Sydney, 1953
- Holmes, Katie. "'Spinsters Indispensable': Feminists, Single Women and the Critique of Marriage, 1890-1920'. *Australian Historical Studies*. No. 110, April 1998, pp. 68-90.

- Hooton, Amanda. 'The Women's Room'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. Good Weekend. 28 April 2001, p. 41.
- Jeffreys, Sheila. *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930*. Pandora, London, 1985.
- Jones, Dorothy. 'Water, gold and honey: A Discussion of Kirkham's Find'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, ch. 15.
- Jordan, Ellen. 'The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894'. *Victorian Newsletter*, no. 63, Spring 1983, pp. 19-21.
- Kelly, Farley. 'Mrs Smyth and the Body Politic: Health Reform and Birth Control in Melbourne'. *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*. Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1982, ch. 17.
- Kerr, Joan. *Artists and Cartoonists in Black and White: The Most Public Art*. National Trust of Australia, S. H. Ervin Gallery, 1999.
- Kiernan, Brian. 'Romantic Conventions and Maurice Guest.' *Southerly*. Vol. 28, no. 4, 1968, pp. 286-94.
- Kingston, Beverley. *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*. Nelson, Melbourne, 1975, reprinted 1980.
- _____ (ed), *The World Moves Slowly: A Documentary History of Australian Women*. Cassell, Stanmore, NSW, 1977.
- Kranidis, Rita S. *Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of Late Victorian Feminist Novels*. Macmillan, London, 1995.
- Lake, Marilyn. 'Feminist History as National History'. *Australian Historical Studies*. 106, 1996, pp. 154-69.
- _____ *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1999.
- _____ 'The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Susan Magarey, Sue

- Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 1.
- Lake, Marilyn and Farley Kelly (eds), *Double Time: Women in Victoria - 150 Years*. Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1985.
- Lansbury, Coral. *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1970.
- Lawson, Olive (ed), *The First Voice of Australian Feminism: Excerpts from Louisa Lawson's The Dawn 1888-1895*. Simon & Schuster/New Endeavour Press, Brookvale, 1990.
- Lawson, Sylvia. *The Archibald Paradox: A Strange Case of Authorship*. Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1987, 1st publ. 1983.
- Ledger, Sally. *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle*. Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997.
- _____. *Women's Writing*. Vol. 3, no. 3, 1996.
- Ledger, Sally and Scott McCracken (eds), *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siecle*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995.
- Lee, Christopher. 'The Australian Girl Catches the First Feminist Wave'. *Hecate*. Vol. 19, no. 1, 1993, pp. 124-33.
- _____. 'Strategies of Power and Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl*'. *Southerly*. Vol. 52, no. 2, 1991, 189-206.
- _____. 'Women, Romance, and the Nation: The Reception of Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl*'. *Australian Feminist Studies*. No. 17, 1993, pp. 67-80.
- McInherny, Frances. 'Miles Franklin, *My Brilliant Career*, and the Female Tradition'. *Who Is She? Images of Woman in Australian Fiction*. Shirley Walker (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983, ch. 6.
- Mackinolty, John. 'The Married Women's Property Acts'. In *Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law, 1788-1979*. Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, ch. 6.
- Mackinolty, Judy and Heather Radi (eds), *In Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law, 1788-1979*. Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979.

- Magarey, Susan. 'Catherine Helen Spence: Novelist'. *Southwords: Essays on South Australian Writing*. Philip Butterss (ed), Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 1995, ch. 3.
- _____ 'Feminist Visions across the Pacific: Catherine Helen Spence's *Handfasted*'. *Antipodes*. Spring 1989, pp. 31-2.
- _____ 'History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia'. *Australian Historical Studies*. 106, 1996, pp. 96-110.
- _____ 'Sexual labour: Australia 1880-1910'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 8.
- _____ *Unbridling the tongues of women: a biography of Catherine Helen Spence*. Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985.
- Magarey, Susan, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993.
- Mangum, Teresa. *Married, Middlebrow and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, USA, 1998.
- Marks, Patricia. *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*. University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 1990.
- Martin, Sue. 'National Dress or National Trousers?' *The Oxford Literary History of Australia*. Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, ch. 5.
- _____ 'Relative Correspondence: Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* and the Influence of Nineteenth-Century Australian Women's Writing'. *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*. Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 3.
- _____ "'Sad Sometimes, Lonely Often...Dull Never": Mary Gaunt, Traveller and Novelist'. *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Debra Adelaide (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1988, ch. 13.

- Maynard, Margaret. *Fashioned from Penury: Dress as Cultural Practice in Colonial Australia*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.
- _____. "'A Great Deal Too Good for the Bush': Women and the Experience of Dress in Queensland". *On the Edge: Women's Experiences of Queensland*. Gail Reekie (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, ch. 4.
- Miles, Rosie. 'George Egerton, Bitextuality and Cultural (Re)Production in the 1890s'. *Women's Writing*, Vol. 3, no. 3, 1996, pp. 243-59.
- Miller, E. Morris. *Australian Literature: A Bibliography to 1938, extended to 1950*. Frederick T. Macartney (ed), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1956, 1st publ. 1940.
- _____. *Australian Literature from its beginnings to 1935*. Vol I and II, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1973, reprinted 1975, 1st publ. 1940.
- Miller, Jane Eldridge. *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*. Virago, London, 1994.
- Miller, Neil. *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present*. Vintage Books, New York, 1995.
- Mitchell, Sally. *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class, and Women's Reading, 1835-1880*. Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1981.
- _____. *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1995.
- Mohr, Rowena. 'The Vampire's Kiss: Gender, Desire and Power in *Dracula* and *The Penance of Portia James*'. *Australasian Victorian Studies*. Vol. 4, 1998, pp. 80-7.
- Nord, Deborah Epstein 'The Urban Peripatetic: Spectator, Streetwalker, Woman Writer'. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*. 46, 3, 1991, pp. 351-75.
- _____. *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1995.
- Oldfield, Audrey. *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

- Palmer, Anthony J. 'A Link with Late Nineteenth-Century Decadence in *Maurice Guest*'. *Australian Literary Studies*. Vol. 5, no. 4, 1972, pp. 366-73.
- Parker, Christopher (ed), *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature*. Scholar Press, England, 1995.
- Pearce, Sharyn. "'The Best Career is Matrimony": First-Wave Journalism and the "Australian Girl". *Hecate*. Vol. 18, no. 2, 1992, pp. 64-78.
- _____. 'From Bush Battler to City Editor: Louisa Lawson and the *Dawn*'. *Journal of Australian Studies*. No. 54/55, 1997, pp. 12-21.
- Pfisterer, Susan. 'Cultural Anxiety and the New Woman Playwright: Mrs E. S. Haviland's *On Wheels*'. *Australasian Drama Studies*. 27, October 1995, pp. 143-50.
- Pratt, Catherine. *Resisting Fiction: The Novels of Henry Handel Richardson*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999.
- Pykett, Lyn. 'The Cause of Women and the Course of Fiction: The Case of Mona Caird'. *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature*. Christopher Parker (ed), Scholar Press, England, 1995, ch. 7.
- _____. *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*. Edward Arnold, London, 1995.
- _____. *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*. Routledge, London/New York, 1992.
- _____. (ed), *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*. Longman, London, 1996.
- _____. *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to The Moonstone*. Northcote House, Plymouth, 1994.
- Radi, Heather. 'Whose Child? Custody of Children in NSW 1854-1934'. In *Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law 1788-1979*. Judy Mackinoly and Heather Radi (eds), Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, ch. 11.
- Reekie, Gail (ed), *On the Edge: Women's Experiences of Queensland*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994.

- _____'The Sexual Politics of Selling and Shopping'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 6.
- Richardson, Angelique and Chris Willis (eds), *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*. Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001.
- Roberts, Jan. *Maybanke Anderson: Sex, Suffrage and Social Reform*. 2nd edn, Ruskin Rowe Press, Avalon, 1997.
- Roe, Jill. *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1879-1939*. New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW, 1986.
- _____'The Scope of Women's Thought is Necessarily Less': The Case of Ada Cambridge'. *Australian Literary Studies*. Vol. 5, no. 4, 1972, pp. 388-403.
- Rowley, Sue. 'The Journey's End: Women's Mobility and Confinement'. *Australian Cultural History*. 10, 1991, pp. 69-83.
- _____'Things a bushwoman cannot do'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 16.
- Russell, Penny. "'For Better and for Worse": Love, Power and Sexuality in Upper-Class Marriages in Melbourne, 1860-1880. *Australian Feminist Studies*. No 7 & 8 Summer 1988, pp. 11-26.
- _____'Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women'. *Australian Cultural History*. No. 13, 1994, pp. 31-51.
- Scandrett, Elizabeth. *Breeches & Bustles: An Illustrated History of Clothes Worn in Australia 1788-1914*. Pioneer Design Studio, Lilydale, Vic, 1978.
- Shanley, Mary Lyndon. *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989.
- Sheridan, Susan. *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s - 1930s*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995.
- _____'Sexuality and Representation', *Australian Feminism: A Companion*. Barbara Caine (ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 286-95.

- _____. 'The Woman's Voice on sexuality'. *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, ch. 10.
- Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Expanded edition, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999, first published, 1977.
- _____. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. Viking/Penguin, New York, 1990.
- _____. 'Toward a Feminist Poetics'. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Hazard Adams (ed), revised edition, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Fort Worth, USA, 1992, pp. 1224-33.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America'. *Signs*, 1. 1975, pp. 1-29.
- Spearritt, Katie. 'The Sexual Economics of Colonial Marriage'. *On the Edge: Women's Experiences of Queensland*. Gail Reekie (ed), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, ch. 5.
- Spender, Dale (ed), *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Women's Intellectual Traditions*. The Women's Press, London, 1996, 1st publ. 1983.
- _____. *Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Australian Women Writers*. Pandora, London, 1988.
- Stewart, Ken (ed), *The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996.
- Stott, Rebecca. "Scaping the Body: Of Cannibal Mothers and Colonial Landscapes". *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (eds), Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001, ch. 9.
- Stubbs, Patricia. *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920*. Harvester Press, Brighton, 1979.

- Sullivan, Barbara. *The Politics of Sex: Prostitution and Pornography in Australia since 1945*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.
- Summers, Anne. *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia*. Allen Lane, Melbourne, 1975.
- Tate, Audrey. *Ada Cambridge: Her Life and Work 1844-1926*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1991.
- Thomson, Helen. 'Catherine Helen Spence: City Woman'. *Populous Places: Australian Cities and Towns*. Anna Rutherford (ed), Dangaroo Press, Sydney, 1992, pp. 131-41.
- Tusan, Michelle Elizabeth. 'Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de-Siecle'. *Victorian Periodicals Review*. Vol. 31, no. 2, 1998, pp. 169-82.
- Vicinus, Martha. *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920*. Virago, London, 1985.
- ____ (ed), *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973.
- ____ (ed), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1977.
- Wakeling, Louise. "'Rattling the orthodoxies": A View of Ada Cambridge's *A Marked Man*.' *Southerly*. Vol. 49, no. 4, 1989, pp. 609-23.
- Wakeling, Louise and Margaret Bradstock, 'Colonial Women Writers: Dispossessed Angels'. *Southerly*. Vol. 50, no. 1, 1990, pp. 115-22.
- Walker, Shirley (ed), *Who Is She? Images of Woman in Australian Fiction*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.
- Warren, Mary Anne. 'The Social Construction of Sexuality'. *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*. Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, reprinted 1987, 1989, ch. 9.

- Webby, Elizabeth. 'Barbara Baynton's Revisions to 'Squeaker's Mate'. *Southerly*. No. 4, 1984, pp. 455-60.
- _____. Introduction to *An Australian Girl* by Catherine Martin, Pandora, London, 1988, pp. vii-xii.
- _____. Introduction to *Bush Studies* by Barbara Baynton, Collins/Angus & Robertson, Pymble, NSW, 1993, pp. 1-15.
- _____. Introduction to *My Brilliant Career/My Career Goes Bung* by Miles Franklin, Collins/Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, NSW, 1990, pp. v-xviii.
- White, Kerry M. 'The Real Australian Girl?: Some Post-Federation Writers for Girls'. *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*. Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 4.
- White, Richard. *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1981.
- Whitlock, Gillian. '1901/1933: From Eutopia to Dystopia'. *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*. Kay Ferres (ed), Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1993, ch. 8.
- Wilson, Elizabeth. 'The Invisible Flâneur'. *New Left Review*. 191, 1992, pp. 90-110.
- Wolff, Janet. 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity'. *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990, ch. 3.
- _____. *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*. Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1995.
- Woollacott, Angela. 'The Colonial Flâneuse: Australian Women Negotiating Turn-of-the-Century London'. *Signs*. Vol. 25, no. 3, 2000, pp. 761-87.