

## **Cosmos Magazine and Colonial Femininity**

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Colonial Australian authors published their work in a wide variety of different venues, including numerous local magazines and journals, ranging from the ‘weeklies’ produced by the colonial newspapers to independent specialist periodicals such as the *Australian Journal* from the mid-1860s, or much later, the *Lone Hand*, which was, for a time, a bestselling publication in the first decade of the twentieth century. Their poetry, serialised novels, short stories and articles might sometimes appear in local issues of overseas journals that were adapted for Australian readerships, such as Britain’s *Review of Reviews* and the American-based *Scribner’s Magazine*, as well as in international publications. Colonial Australian popular novels were often published by prestigious British publishing houses, such as Macmillan or Heinemann, as well as by local publishers such as George Robertson, the NSW Bookstall and EW Cole. Exploring any single aspect of these kinds of publishing histories quickly reveals the deep sense of interconnectedness that characterised the colonial Australian literary world: those who populated it were often intensely networked, collaborative, competitive and engaged. The relatively brief but colourful life of *Cosmos: An Illustrated Australian Magazine*—a monthly literary journal published in Sydney from 1894 until 1899—offers a vivid example of this context and the kinds of investments that were made in the local literary culture of the time. This article looks at *Cosmos’s* commitment to the development of a distinctively Australian literary culture and argues that this was closely tied to an engagement with metropolitan modes of colonial Australian femininity.

*Cosmos* was founded in September 1894 by Armand Jerome—a minor and yet significant figure in the colonial Australian literary scene during the 1890s whose personal fortunes rose and fell as dramatically as those of the ephemeral publishing and artistic ventures with which he was involved. Like many others who energetically pursued literary careers in colonial Australia, Jerome has been largely forgotten today, with his published works sometimes attributed to his contemporary, Ernest Favenc. He was a lively figure, who led a decadent lifestyle and quickly became involved in local bohemian and literary circles after arriving in Sydney in 1893. He was later exposed as a charlatan and forger, and after several months on the run, was finally sentenced to three years hard labour at Parramatta Gaol. According to a report published anonymously in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 12 December 1896, Jerome stated at the trial that financial difficulties arising from his literary enterprises had led to his criminality—a claim that was viewed sceptically by his contemporaries (7). But whatever his motivations, within a year of his arrival in the colonies, Jerome had formed close ties with a number of significant popular authors, edited several books, and started what claimed to be the only literary magazine in production in Australasia at that time.

From the first issue, *Cosmos* worked to promote the cultivation of a distinctively Australian literary sensibility and the development of a national literature. In the magazine’s first editorial

in September 1894, this commitment to perpetuating a national literature is presented in hyperbolic terms:

Does Australia realise the fact that with nearly 5,000,000 inhabitants, a national feeling growing up in spite of provincial demarcations, a distinctive mode of life and an ever-increasing patriotic love for a starry banner yet to be unfurled, that it has no living production of its own in the realm of a magazine literature, beyond that of which this is the first number? Does it realise the fact that it, one of the great sections of the English speaking people, is dependent, but for the *Cosmos*, upon publishers in other parts of the world? Does it realise that of the vast field of fictional opportunity, the bush, the settlement and the township offer, scarcely an acre has been taken up? (74)

The expression of the need for a distinctively Australian literature departs little, in this early editorial, from the kinds of clichés about Australian fiction that remained in circulation well into the twentieth century. ‘In fiction as in other branches,’ it announces, ‘the *Cosmos* aims at being Australian, and writers, especially of short stories, are desired, who will reach beyond the bushranger and the blackfellow yarn, and enter the real sphere of Australian life’ (75). But during the first year of *Cosmos*’s production a consistent emphasis on typically feminine popular Australian literary genres in addition to the usual trade in frontier and South Sea adventure is apparent, suggesting that a more considered strategy to move beyond familiar tropes was also at work. Alongside the tales of author-adventurers such as Ernest Favenc and Alex Montgomery appeared fragrant, lyrical poems and short stories by Louise Mack, romance tales by novelists such as Mrs H E Russell and E L Sutherland, articles on women and politics, ‘Lady Journalists,’ and spiritualism, as well as Ethel Turner’s ‘Women’s Department.’

An emphasis upon femininity plays itself out in the etymology of the title *Cosmos* itself—a word that offers up a set of meanings which capture a real sense of the magazine’s content and preoccupations. *Cosmos* is an introduced species of wildflower that flourishes in rural New South Wales highlighting a kind of floral investment in something at once international, regional and home grown. It relates to a cosmopolitanism that was reflected in the magazine’s engagement with international politics, fashions, and literatures. It invokes ideas of the well-ordered universe important to the theosophical and spiritualistic concerns that were a vital and recurring theme in the magazine’s pages. Significantly too, ‘cosmos’ relates to ornamentation—especially ‘ornaments of a woman’s dress, decoration,’ a meaning that is echoed in our contemporary use of the word ‘cosmetics.’ The magazine itself was highly ornamented—many stories were accompanied by original illustrations and pages were dotted with curlicues and fertile vignettes of swallows, flowers and grasshoppers. Stories and articles were interspersed with photographs and images—many of which evoke a distinctly feminine world. One example, in April 1897, is a dreamy image of a young woman in a white muslin dress who is seated at the piano of a richly furnished drawing room. Captioned ‘a first lesson’ this image seems to luxuriate in the ideas of colonial wealth, freshness and promise that were elsewhere played out in the magazine’s fascination with the more prosaic devices of nation building: including federation, the growth of cities and infrastructure, the successful management of institutions, and the development of new technologies.

Portraits of popular actresses, musicians and ‘gaiety’ performers—both local and international—gave a sense of cosmopolitan glamour, alongside celebrity profiles and beauty articles such as ‘Art and Fashion’ in the October 1898 issue, which combined an interview with a famous Sydney *coiffeur pour dames* with hair styling advice. The development of aesthetic appreciation and the cultivation of sophisticated tastes formed the basis for a wide range of articles on everything from ‘The Gastronomic Art’ to the Society of Artists exhibition. Women cyclists were another topic of particular interest with articles and interviews accompanied by photographs of ‘lady cyclists’ in their fashionable riding dress. Ethel Turner’s ‘Women’s Department’, likewise, provided detailed fashion notes as well as recipes and social commentaries. A feminine emphasis on questions of lifestyle, domesticity, culture and celebrity might be seen to have both structured and ornamented the broader landscape of *Cosmos*, but the most crucial sense in which the magazine might be registered as ‘feminine’ is literary.

In the first volume of *Cosmos*, the magazine’s book reviews were included within the pages of the ‘Women’s Department’ as if to highlight its investment in linking the literary with the feminine. Turner maintained this interest in literary matters over the subsequent issues—even after the literary pages were placed in a separate section under the title ‘A Parcel of Books.’ Her literary commentaries were satirical and world-weary, and engaged above all things with women and writing. She mocked the literary trends that incited all women to read the latest ‘New Woman’ novels, such as Sarah Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), Emma Brooke’s *A Superfluous Woman* (1894), and Kathleen Caffyn’s *The Yellow Aster* (1894), while neglecting ‘serious’ commentary and the works of canonical male authors such as Dickens and Thackeray (September 1894, 67). She launched severe indictments of the popular writings of international female authors: ‘one could almost imagine a special tank of mud-ink had been prepared in England’, she wrote in the October 1894 edition, ‘and the women there were determined to use it up to the very dregs’ (126). Her scathing portrait of celebrity novelist Sarah Grand presents a woman poisoned by her own jaded politics and literary sensibilities and, finally, corrupted by the attentions of the adoring female fans who were drawn to her. In a supposed quote from a woman who had visited Grand’s salon in Kensington, she writes, ‘She has not the self-possessed air of a married woman, although it is said she was wedded at sixteen to a man much older, and soon after divorced. She looks like a spinster of perhaps forty ... the note of pessimism in her books is reflected in the drooping muscles and weary expression of her face’ (December 1894, 246). Turner’s attacks on the ‘New Woman’ novelists seem to emerge from a straightforward conservatism that privileges conventional marriage and family life over the decadence and sexual immorality that their works were perceived to promote. ‘Let us dispose of the “tainted” books first,’ she wrote in October 1894, ‘and get away as fast as possible to the wholesome and the clean’ (126).

Turner’s own literary works were in every way remote from the ‘New Woman’ novels she seems so invested in mocking. Her bestselling children’s book, *Seven Little Australians*, was published in mid-1894—and its popular reception unfolded over the months that she was writing for the *Cosmos* (where Annie Bright published a positive, though not uncritical, review in November). The novel’s exploration of family life might certainly be described as ‘wholesome and clean’. It also carries its own set of literary aspirations, enacting precisely the kind of departure from the archetypal bush yarn that that first *Cosmos* editorial had expressed a longing for. It offers, instead, a largely metropolitan experience of girlhood and femininity (though it still takes its

characters into the heart of the bush to play out its central tragedy). Turner is one of the few popular female colonial writers to have remained well known over time, and, interestingly, it is this focus on metropolitan life that has been remembered as a quality that gave her writing special significance, as shown by Brenda Niall's comment that 'as the first author of any talent to discard the outback adventure story and write about ordinary children in a Sydney suburban setting, Ethel Turner was in herself a revolution' (Niall 26).

The forgetting of colonial Australian women writers and the exclusion of their fiction from the received canon has, generally, been viewed in the opposite way—by Susan Sheridan and others—as partly a product of their relative distance from 'authentic' bush narratives. Fiona Giles writes in *Too Far Everywhere*, 'as the bush was seen best to signify Australian national difference and a distinctive cultural formation, women's identification with domesticity and urban life doubly excluded their fiction from the nationalist tradition' (7). More recently, Angela Woollacott has shifted the focus of this debate, citing, for example, Barbara Baynton's failure to gain local publishing success with her fiction set in the bush and arguing that it was simply the virulence of sexism in colonial Australia that denied such women writers the recognition they deserved and forced them to seek their fortunes in international metropolitan centres (16).

One of the interesting things about *Cosmos* is the way it brought these gendered oppositions of colonial literary culture into such close and seemingly unproblematic proximity with each other. The 'masculinist' bush adventure narrative was certainly a regular feature in its pages, but the magazine was also deeply preoccupied with metropolitan modes of femininity and their relationship to the cultivation of a distinctively Australian literature. Here, the question of what might constitute the ideal literary heroine became a point of particular emphasis. Beyond her straightforward attacks on the figure of the New Woman, Ethel Turner engaged with the development of feminine literary typologies in a range of more detailed ways. This is revealed, perhaps most strikingly, in the following passage, which was published in the October 1894 issue:

An exchange says the heroine of fiction is generally the type of the day. If that is so then this year she is a clever, beautiful, bloodless creature who at twenty-two is bored to death with everything except mountain storms, scientific studies and suicides. She has ceased to be a chatterer; she speaks only in epigrams. She is not given to tears; about once in seven hundred pages her body is shaken with great, tearless sobs. She is not a flirt; she is cold, indifferent—very often absolutely rude. She beats the record for eccentricity; she drives tandem, smokes over billiards, goes out at night unattended; and refuses to be bored by matrimony. In spite of everything, however, she gets along all right; and when she commits suicide it is not because she is not having a good time, but because she is not going to accept her good time with the complacency that any ordinary woman would. She objects to being happy like ordinary cabbage-rose women; so she takes laudanum out of pure 'cussedness.' What will the next type be like? Our novels used to end with marriage; now they begin with it. Our heroines of the past year have been all married women; maidens are out of it. Why not take up the middle-aged woman next and invest her with some romance? She would be a change (127).

Turner's objections to the heroine of contemporary women's fiction here are intriguing not so much for their rejection of the New Woman's unconventionality as her predictability within a literary mode which is seen as somehow more formulaic than that of the romances she is supposed to be departing from. Turner's complaints seem directed against literary fashion and imitation as much as the traits of worldliness, decadence, and self-conscious 'modernity' that she condemns. This is confirmed by her nostalgia for more straightforward romance narratives on the one hand (regretting that the contemporary female protagonist 'is not a flirt') and her suggestion for the development of a new type of romance heroine—an older woman of experience—on the other.

The call for a new type of literary heroine is replicated elsewhere in the pages of *Cosmos*—not least in 'A Parcel of Books'—the literary section in the magazine's early editions, written by Annie Bright. Bright remarked in the December 1894 issue, for example, that Mark Rutherford's novel *Catherine Furze* (1893) would be 'read with avidity by all who are tired of the class of literature that portrays (sic) the "New Woman" everyone is growing weary of' and offering a different kind of heroine in her place—in this case the daughter of a provincial shopkeeper, who Bright describes as 'an unconventional type, almost as unlike her surroundings as was Shelley among the Norfolk squires' (249). Indeed, unconventional, older and experienced female protagonists did develop a notable presence in stories by colonial Australian women writers around the turn of the nineteenth century, providing more reflective and sometimes caustic insights into their social and cultural encounters—such as Mrs Vallings in Kathleen Caffyn's 'The Victims of Circe' (1891) or Alma Belmont in Harriett Patchett Martin's 'Cross Currents' (1899). Perhaps most significantly, Louise Mack, Ethel Turner's friend and school-years literary rival, later took up the call for a middle-aged heroine of romance with the publication of her novel, *The Romance of a Woman of Thirty*, in 1911.

Louise Mack herself became an increasingly visible presence in *Cosmos* at the same time that Ethel Turner faded away: she had left the magazine altogether by February 1895. In an interview with Mack published in October the same year, Annie Bright described the growing interest in her writings for *Cosmos* from 'literary people in Sydney and other colonies' (77). Accompanied by a full-page photograph of Mack wearing a white lace collar and with a white rose in her hair, the article highlights her youthful femininity, recounting an anecdote of her first meeting with J S Archibald of the *Bulletin*, who was surprised to meet this 'blue-eyed girl' after assuming her poems were written by a man. Mack's girlishness is played up here, but her literary success also is emphasised: by this time, as she explains in the interview, she had published stories and poems in 'Cassell's magazine and nearly all the Sydney papers, including the *Bulletin*, [Sydney] *Mail*, *Town and Country Journal*, *Illustrated Sydney News*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sydney Times* and others.' London publisher Fischer Unwin had also accepted her first novel, *The World is Round*, for publication, and the article ended by anticipating 'her high rank among the popular novelists of the day' (78). Part of the investment in Mack here seems caught up in precisely the same engagement with literary femininity and its relationship to Australian national identity that this article has been mapping, a point that is strikingly visible when Bright compares Mack with Ethel Turner: 'Australia ... has an exclusive claim to Miss Mack, as she, unlike the author of *Seven Little Australians*, who is of English birth, was born in Hobart over twenty years ago... Miss Mack is therefore a native born genius and *Cosmos*, being exclusively Australian, is glad to

welcome this young literary aspirant' (78).

The publication of the profile on Mack in October 1895 coincided with the appearance in *Cosmos* of the first installment of her novel 'In an Australian City', which was serialised over the following months. Its themes, once again, summed up the interest in an Australian literary and metropolitan femininity that was reflected everywhere in the magazine's pages. Opening in the library of a Sydney newspaper printer's office, it charts the romantic and literary fortunes of Anne le Roselle and Thea Service, two young Australian women—or 'Australian girls' as their character type was known—with obvious similarities to Mack herself, at least as she was cast in Bright's article. The Australian girl circulated freely throughout *Cosmos* as well as having a much wider presence in colonial Australian popular print culture during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Though sometimes pitted against the figure of the New Woman, the Australian girl's more direct comparisons were with the 'girls' of other nations, such as the 'English girl' and the 'American girl' who were, likewise, invested with a set of traits that helped define the spirit of the nation.

As Tanya Dalziell has pointed out in *Settler Romances and the Australian Girl* a set of 'very specific concerns regarding race, gender, sexuality, class and colonisation in settler Australia are played out around the Australian Girl' (3). As a result, she is a varied and sometimes unstable figure, one that might be deployed in a range of quite different ways. Nonetheless, she is recognisable for her 'slim and graceful' figure, practicality, freshness and freedom from social constraints. She is modern, independent and perhaps even a little too sexually open, as suggested in the following passage from Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians*:

Australian girls nearly always begin to think of 'lovers and nonsense,' ... long before their English aged sisters do. While still in the short-frock period of existence, and while their hair is still free flowing, they take the keenest interest in boys—boys of neighbouring schools, other girl's brothers, young bank clerks and the like. Not because they would be good playmates, but because they look at them in the light of possible 'sweethearts.' I do not say English girls are free from this ... But in this land of youthfulness it is the rule more frequently than the exception, and herein lies the chief defect of the very young Australian girl. She is like a peach, a beautiful, smooth, rich peach, that has come to ripeness almost in a day, and that hastens to rub off the soft, delicate bloom that is its chief charm, just to show its bright, warm colouring more closely (88-89).

Here, as always, the Australian girl is invested with the promise and freshness of the New World; but in this rendition—precocious and eager for experience—she risks casting off the very qualities that constitute her as an ideal. Even the terms for suggesting this 'defect,' however, employ the same sense of fertile abundance that accompany her everywhere—as if this vigorous fertility itself is what underpins the future of the nation.

Accurately defining the qualities of the Australian girl was crucial not just because she was invested with the aspirations of the developing nation, but because she could be deployed as a foil to negative views of Australians in currency 'back home.' As Angela Woollacott suggests in *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 'the Australian girl was a vehicle for combating English

condescension' (159)—and an explicit sense of this ideological function flows through many popular colonial short stories. The short story 'An Australian Girl,' published in *Cosmos* in November 1896, humorously highlights the familiarity of this literary trope, at the same time that it seems to write back to the archetypically male nationalist bush narrative. Signed, 'The J Nib' (referring to the broad kind of writing nib that any schoolchild would use), the story embraces its own popular literary status even as it gently satirises the stereotypes it engages. Opening in the comfortable surrounds of a prosperous country homestead, it gives us Stella Eldridge, an Australian girl, her brother Thomas, who is soon to marry English girl, Hazel Royce, and Hazel's brother Francis Royce, who loves Stella but is otherwise outspokenly critical of everything Australian. Feisty Stella is incensed by his views, and refuses to marry him, until he and Thomas go missing on a possum hunt. The English girl is unable to do anything but weep so it is left to Stella to find and rescue the two men, who have injured themselves falling into a gully. Along the way she encounters the kinds of dangers and disorientation typically found in an Australian bush story, such as snakes and dingoes stalking her from the darkness. She overcomes her aversion to firearms and shoots a dingo, alerts the search party and, finally, marries her reformed suitor—'who never ceases congratulating himself that he has married an Australian girl' (184). The tone of the story is light hearted, with its humour arising from the proximity of its parody to the type of works that it is modeled on, as well as the decline of the male settler whose heroics are so far diminished that he fails even in the relatively domesticated sport of possum shooting. Despite highlighting her status as a literary stereotype, however, the story remains faithful to the Australian girl, who is shown as the only character to have any agency remaining, or indeed the capacity to change and evolve according to her circumstances.

As well as publishing self-consciously ephemeral stories such as 'An Australian Girl,' however, *Cosmos* also connected colonial Australian literary and feminine identities in more considered ways—not least in helping to mark out a future for colonial Australian women novelists. In October 1894 there appeared an article called 'Australians in Fiction' by 'Eric', a writing name belonging to author Caroline Levi Montefiore (who also contributed a romance story set in the Middle Ages to a later edition). Her essay looks at the appearance of the Australian girl in a number of recent novels—closely tying the accurate representation of this figure to a work's overall literary success. 'As a picture of Australian life and Australian authors,' *Sam's Sweetheart* (1883) by Helen Mathers, she writes, 'is simply a tissue of absurdities from beginning to end,' while E W Hornung's novel, *A Bride From the Bush* (1890), is 'a libel on Australian girls in general' (122). While these novels fail to represent the Australian girl in a sufficiently refined, educated or complex light, however, Montefiore's essay is equally critical of works that offer an overly cultured alternative. She finds Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl* 'scarcely more misleading in a totally opposite direction,' writing that 'the girl who can quote Kant's "Kritik of Pure Reason" in the original (and does so at every opportunity) must be a rather *rara avis* in most countries; but the authoress does not lead one to suppose her attainments excited any surprise in South Australian society' (123). Rosa Praed also comes in for criticism for creating outlandish Australian heroines who 'too often conduct themselves in a manner that would be denounced as impossible for an English girl,' while Tasma and Ada Cambridge are the only authors praised for 'doing a good deal to remove false impressions as to the manner of life in Australia' (123). The tone here is obviously light hearted, and similar in its satirical amusement to many women's pages across the colonial presses, such as those written by 'Sappho Smith' or Louise Mack for the *Bulletin*. But the work it undertakes to define the

national type of the Australian girl is significant—not least for the way it yokes this to the development of a canon of colonial Australian women writers.

More broadly too, *Cosmos* offered women an opportunity to comment on the state of Australian literature, publishing essays such as ‘An Australian School of Literature’ by Edith Badham in April 1895. Badham—who went on to become principal of Sydney’s Church of England Girls Grammar School—dismisses the whole of Australian poetry and drama and notes the inferior quality of the fiction published in the Australian newspapers and magazines compared to those in England. Her only comments on the novel relate to women writers, implicitly acknowledging their limited local opportunities: ‘though one or two Australian women have been successful as novelists’ she writes, ‘they have transferred themselves and their productions to the old world’ (416). Despite her privileging of high literary works such as Shakespeare, Bacon and Milton over what she calls the ‘comic penny-a-liners,’ Badham nonetheless contributed a popular serial story of romance and spiritualism, ‘No. 666: The Story of an Australian Artist,’ to *Cosmos* later that year—undercutting, to a degree, such literary hierarchies of ‘high’ and ‘low’ in a gesture that is also more widely perceptible in colonial Australian popular print culture.

Apart from giving women a critical voice, *Cosmos* also highlighted the careers of successful women working in professions, publishing photographs, articles and detailed interviews about their experiences, such as ‘The Sydney Hospital and its Matron,’ (December 1895) and ‘The Sydney Women’s College and its Principal’ (June 1895). The latter profiled Miss Louisa MacDonald in her role as head of the college, as well as surveying the current state of women’s higher education and possible career destinations for female students. As always in *Cosmos*, it is a cultivated and empowered colonial femininity that is being promoted rather than a feminist identity: ‘it is not to make un-womanly women that the Women’s College at the Sydney University was erected,’ the article states, ‘and stockings will be mended and households managed all the better that a scientific training has given a purpose to existence’ (488). But Australian women’s literary careers are, nonetheless, registered as a significant mark of progress in the advancement of women’s rights: ‘Fifty years ago it was considered hardly womanly to write a book, but now, not only are some of the most successful novelists women, it is no longer considered unbecoming for a woman to speak from the public platform if she can say anything worth listening to’ (488).

These and many other articles were written by colonial author and spiritualist Annie Bright, who took over the editorship of *Cosmos* from Armand Jerome very early on—possibly even from the second volume—while Jerome stayed on as manager. Bright retained a focus on Australian modes of femininity and Australian literary themes throughout her editorship, as well as writing regular biographical columns, articles on spiritualism and book reviews. Her monthly editorials positioned the magazine within colonial Australian as well as international contexts, and ranged widely in subject matter over topics such as local train wrecks and steamship disasters, the state of the French presidency, the position of the Fabian Society in England, and local theatre notes. Perhaps most central, however, were the themes of nationalism and federation, the development of an Australian literature and the public reception of the magazine itself.

It is sometimes tempting to think about colonial Australian magazine production primarily in terms of artistic choices, the growing fame of the contributors, the international models



individual journals may have been based on, their readerships and modes of circulation and so on. The project of nation building that fundamentally preoccupies much of the colonial Australian popular fiction published in the journals can seem somehow purely symptomatic of the times. But the development of a distinctive national literary identity through these creative outlets was also a profoundly commercial consideration—one that circulated quite transparently through the pages of *Cosmos*. Criticising cultural cringe, playing up the importance of Australian writing—even the satirical and occasionally savage commentaries published in its pages about the derelict state of ‘Australian literature’—were not only genuine attempts to contribute to the development of a distinctively Australian literary culture, they were also part of an obvious marketing strategy. To offer something that was ‘purely Australian ... that could not be obtained elsewhere’ (‘Our First Year’ August 1895, 616) was what the magazine offered as a point of difference to the customer browsing at the bookshop counter, and the success or failure of the magazine as the months progressed was a continuing topic of discussion in editorials and articles.

Bright’s essay, ‘Our Local Contemporaries,’ in the May 1895 issue provides a unique insight into the colonial Australian journal scene, covering what she describes as Sydney’s ‘immense quantity of reading matter with its four daily journals, to say nothing of the twenty weekly papers and twenty two periodicals of diverse kinds, ranging from the A.B.C. guide to our own magazine’ (479). While careful to note that ‘*Cosmos* is the only purely literary magazine published at the present time in Australasia,’ Bright goes on to discuss a wide range of publications, including those publishing popular literature such as the *Sydney Mail* and the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, and women’s magazines such as Louisa Lawson’s the *Dawn*, the *Australian Home Journal* and the *Women’s Voice*. Perhaps *Cosmos* positioned itself in the marketplace somewhere between these literary and women-focussed publications. The domestic and aestheticised but nonetheless empowered colonial femininities that *Cosmos* embraced were certainly viewed as more appealing to readerships than the more strident feminism of publications such as the *Dawn*. As Patricia Clarke has noted in *Pen Portraits* (1988), Louisa Lawson sought to increase circulation by toning down the purely political dimension of her journal, adding articles on domestic topics such as ‘where to buy good original works of art and the use of artificial flowers for decoration’ as well as ‘many stories of women’s successes’ (164). In fact, Bright’s essay praises the journal on this very point, noting that after seven years the *Dawn* had now ‘taken its place as a useful and entertaining household publication’ which had nonetheless shown ‘what women can do’ (480).

*Cosmos*’s investment in federation and Australian national identity, and the way these might be wedded to colonial femininities as part of a strategy for appealing to local readerships, was reflected in the magazine’s changing covers. Starting as a collection of colonial shields on a thread that binds a bundle of paintbrushes and writing pens, it went through a variety of different incarnations over time. Perhaps most telling is a fertile image of an Australian girl wearing a bright yellow smock—her eyes downcast as she reads the magazine in her hand—and surrounded by golden daffodils. The globe of the world behind her is a stylised blue disc, highlighting a broader sense of cosmopolitanism, while the freshness of femininity in an Australian springtime vigorously occupies the foreground—the present—and (the image seems to suggest) the future. This cover was a later one, from Alex Montgomery’s time as editor, and a significant indication that the magazine’s engagement with colonial femininity was, at least to

some degree, maintained until the end.

By August 1895, in an article titled ‘Our First Year,’ Bright was optimistic about the magazine’s survival, noting the love of literature that had sustained its production, the financial constraints that had caused many literary contributors to offer their work for free, and rather backhandedly, regretting that the quality of literature they produced did not always reach the high standard the magazine was striving for—another example of a strange reflex (one that is visible more generally in commentaries of the time) to position Australian literary excellence as a distant goal even as it was promoted as an ideal. Although little archival material relating to the production of *Cosmos* remains other sources offer occasional hints that literary contributions to the magazine may not always have been intended by the authors to go unpaid. An entry in A G Stephens’ *Bulletin* diary notes: ‘Alex Montgomery was to get £15 from Armand Jerome for 15 stories—doubts whether he had got £10—doesn’t know exactly, having got dribblets when more or less drunk’ (Cantrell 58).

*Cosmos*’s struggling finances were publicly exposed by the revelation of Jerome’s fraudulent dealings in mid-1896, and once again, Stephens noted this event in his diary, writing: ‘*Cosmos Magazine* now defunct through flight of the owner, Armand Jerome, charged with forgery. Alex. Montgomery (new editor) left in the lurch. [Ernest] Favenc is owed some £6 or £7’ (Cantrell 42). But despite this drama, *Cosmos* continued publication under Alex Montgomery’s editorship for several years, maintaining a focus on colonial femininity and continuing to publish works by colonial Australian women writers. For the most part, however, these were far less notable or diverse than in the earlier life of the magazine. With only a few exceptions, including a romance story by Lillian Turner, Ethel Turner’s sister, appearing in the November 1898 issue, the female contributors became less well known as time went on, with many publishing under pseudonyms. Alison Randwick (‘Mrs John Kirk’) briefly reprised a version of the ‘Women’s Department’ in 1898, which retained the same set of concerns that had characterized the magazine all along: federation, literature, femininity and fashion. She concluded her column in the April 1898 issue with the words: ‘Fashion, babies, servants—these are the comments which form the staple of the average woman’s conversation, and fashion comes easily first’ (638), revealing significant assumptions about the class, gender and social status of her readership. Despite wanting to intervene in local and international literary debates, however, ‘Bubbles’ lacked the satirical and intellectual sharpness of Turner’s earlier column and was rapidly dropped. Meanwhile Randwick continued to publish extensively in *Cosmos*, with four serialised novellas as well as numerous short stories and poems appearing in 1897 and 1898. Her romance tales jostled for space alongside the masculinist adventure narratives that continued to feature prominently in the magazine—including the (probably pseudonymous) works of Falcon Ralphsburgh, a little-known colonial Australian author whose published oeuvre seems to have been limited to fourteen stories in *Cosmos* over two years.

Other new columns—including a children’s page—were added, but content levels continued to decrease over time, with the magazine coming to rely on long running, exotic serials, such as Walter H Bone’s ‘Simba Roho: A Story of Zanzibar,’ to flesh it out. Finally, in May 1899, *Cosmos* was incorporated into another of Maclardy’s literary publications, the *Southern Cross*, a much more parochial title that seems to turn away from the cosmopolitan possibilities that *Cosmos* had invested in (Stuart 63). The lively engagement with feminine glamour, metropolitan

music, theatre and society entertainments, domestic life and women's literary and professional careers that had been so central to *Cosmos* during Annie Bright's time as editor may have been diminished in the years following her departure. But the possibilities for women that had been opened up in *Cosmos's* pages were not finally shut down by the magazine's closure. Other colonial journals and magazines went on to cultivate a variety of different spaces for expressing distinctive modes of colonial femininity. These ranged, for example, from the fascination with female celebrity and colonial Australian feminine typologies that characterised *AAA: All About Australians* magazine, published in Sydney from 1901, to the (admittedly still limited) publishing opportunities made available to women writers by the *Lone Hand*, with regular female contributors including Ethel Turner, Dulcie Deamer, Helen Jerome (who had married Armand Jerome in 1900), and the successful colonial Australian romance writer Alice Grant Rosman. Turner's name, among others, went on to become linked with writers such as Catherine Martin, Ada Cambridge, Rosa Praed, Tasma, and Louise Mack in a loose canon of colonial Australian 'authoresses' which, despite remaining relatively minor, partly reflects the significant work of recognition that *Cosmos* had undertaken.

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