Women Reading 1936: A creative writer’s reading of

*Return to Coolami, Jungfrau,* and *The Australian Women’s Weekly*

by

Helen Catherine Gildfind

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Abstract:

This thesis focuses on three texts that were published in 1936: Dymphna Cusack’s novel *Jungfrau*, Eleanor Dark’s novel *Return to Coolami*, and that year’s fifty-two issues of *The Australian Women’s Weekly*.

Cusack’s and Dark’s novels form part of today’s Australian feminist literary canon and are typically understood with the benefit of historical hindsight, especially in regards to their authors’ biographies. Furthermore, academics often turn back to these novels and writers in order to elaborate their own political and cultural agendas and theories. In this thesis, I argue that the original readers of these novels would never have read them in such ways and that such analyses, whilst fascinating and valuable, seldom discuss the problem of their own anachronism. In order to benefit my own and others’ reading and fiction writing practices, I wish to imagine what these novels meant to the audience for whom they were originally crafted. Influenced by New Historicism’s ‘anecdotal’ approach to history – where canonical literary texts are ‘defamiliarised’ through their juxtaposition against various contemporaneous, non-canonical texts – I use *The Australian Women’s Weekly* to create an original, evidence-based ‘window’ of insight into Australian life and culture in 1936. Within this context I speculate upon the ‘imaginative universes’ of Australian women in order to gain new insight into Dark’s and Cusack’s novels’ original meanings.

In the first part of this thesis I discuss my methodology and analyse the novels’ original reception. In the second part of this thesis, I contemplate reading experiences from the past by reconstructing the ‘World of the Weekly in 1936’. Whilst I cannot claim to avoid anachronistic and subjective readings in this thesis, I have assiduously attempted to limit both by allowing the themes in the *Weekly* to lead my interpretations, by anchoring all of my interpretations in primary sources, and by exploring how my writerly movement between different rhetorical modes can expose and problematise the borders between the time-bound reader and the time-travelling text.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

(i) The thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where otherwise indicated,

(ii) Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed: ................................. Date: .................................
Acknowledgments

I’d like to thank Associate Professor Angela O’Brien for helping me establish the foundations of this research. I’d like to thank Dr Tony Birch and Associate Professor Kevin Brophy who offered feedback on this research and oversaw its progress. Thanks also to Dr Jessica Rose for her continual assistance with the administrative side of this project. And thanks to Grace Yee, fellow student and writer, for our many coffees together.

This research could not have been enacted without the State Library of Victoria, who allowed me to spend one year reading the original, hardcopy Melbourne edition of The Australian Women’s Weekly from 1936: access to this precious material truly allowed me to enter the Weekly’s world. I’d also like to thank the State Library of N.S.W. and the National Library of Australia for archival access to Dark’s and Cusack’s papers.

Thanks especially to Dr Jennifer Kloester for boxing me in the ears and kicking me over the finish line. Her generous support, feedback, encouragement and friendship has meant everything to me.

Thanks to my family, for always being there, and thanks particularly to my fiercely intelligent and independent-thinking grandmother, Helen Josephene Speirits, who has always been ‘for the women’, and whose life has made mine – with all of its choices and opportunities – possible.

Thanks most, and always, to Igor. A true friend and partner.
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For short stories and serials, I have only given the page number of the first page where the story appears: most short stories continue on throughout each issue; most serials continue on for 5 or 6 weeks.
I have retained the *Weekly’s* style of punctuation (e.g. Mr. and Mrs. Smith) in quotations only.
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Introduction:
Looking for ‘the present back then’¹

In 1936 King George V died, King Edward VIII abdicated, and King George VI took his controversial brother’s place on the British throne. In 1936 Hitler remilitarised the Rhineland and the African American, Jesse Owens, won gold at the Berlin Olympics. In 1936 Mussolini declared Ethiopia Italian and Generals Franco and Mola led a coup against the elected Popular Front government of Spain that ignited a brutal Civil War. Meanwhile, the world watched Stalin’s Moscow Show Trials as, out of sight, the Gulag grew. In 1936, as the world began to drag itself out of the Depression, it looked up only to face another catastrophic war... and Miles Franklin’s *All That Swagger*, Barnard Eldershaw’s *The Glasshouse*, Jean Devanny’s *Sugar Heaven*, Christina Stead’s *The Beauties and The Furies*, Eleanor Dark’s *Return to Coolami* and Dymphna Cusack’s *Jungfrau* were all published for the first time. I identified these novels as a ‘cluster’ because they are still read today and it is this fact, rather than the ‘big history’ which now subsumes their birth, that focused my attention on this single year of Australian history.

As part of today’s literary canon, Dark’s and Cusack’s novels are typically understood with the benefit of hindsight, or are ‘used’ by academics to elaborate late twentieth century conceptual theories and political agendas. Whilst such readings are fascinating, they are also anachronistic. New Historicists’ privileging of primary sources, their ‘anecdotal’ approach to history, and their technique of ‘defamiliarising’ canonical literature by juxtaposing it against contemporaneous, non-canonical texts, has inspired me to use issues of *The Australian Women’s Weekly* from 1936 as a means of limiting anachronism in my speculations about the ‘imaginative universes’ of my chosen novels’ first and likely women readers. Martin Lyons has recently called for a ‘purposefully reader-oriented’ history of books and, as a fiction writer, I have a particular interest in

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5 See Bibliography, where I have listed secondary texts, particularly theses, which were fundamental to clarifying my methodological approach to the novels and to the Australian ‘history’ of 1936. These texts have not been discussed within the body of this thesis as this thesis is dedicated to speculation upon the novels’ original meanings, rather than explications of subsequent interpretations.
understanding what novels ‘mean’ in the times and places for which, and in which, they are crafted. This introduction explains how my reading around Antipodean interwar women writers led me to New Historicism, *Jungfrau*, *Return to Coolami* and the *Weekly*.

**Founding the Field: Drusilla Modjeska’s *Exiles at Home***


Modjeska uses Anne Brennan to symbolise the situation of women writers in the 1920s. Modjeska notes:

[Anne] was a woman who had ability as a writer, who expressed her wish to write, and hung around the clubs where writers met. Yet she did not become a writer. Instead she became a whore.

As the daughter of Christopher Brennan (whose poetry echoes throughout *Jungfrau*), Anne moved in a literary world defined by the ‘anti-feminism’ of the bohemian ‘artist-aristocrats’ centred on Norman Lindsay. In this milieu, women were either ‘damned whores’ or ‘God’s police’. Until Anne’s time, verse and short story were the most prevalent, male-dominated genres in Australian literature. By the time Anne died in 1929, however, the novel had emerged as a female-dominated form: a ‘certain tardiness’ in recognising the novel as ‘art’ allowed Australian women to write without ‘opposition’ or a sense of ‘inferiority’. Modjeska emphasises Nettie’s centrality to the literary

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8 ibid., p.20.
9 ibid., pp.20-21.
11 Between 1917-1927, 27 novels and 87 volumes of verse were published in Australia, as opposed to 106 novels and 57 volumes of verse published between 1928-1939. See Modjeska, *Exiles*, p.5.
world of the thirties because her critical evaluation of the novel elevated the status of women writers, despite the ingrained sexism of the literary establishment. (Nettie’s own husband claimed that ‘writing a novel seems as easy to almost any literate woman as making a dress’.14) Nettie encouraged writers to fight an uninterested and ‘promiscuous’15 reading public with a progressive, nationalist Australian literature that would counter the ‘negative, derivative’ and ‘apologetic’ nature of Australian culture.16 Modjeska explores how this literary context, plus that of the Depression and European fascism, saw these women’s novels shift attention from a feminist focus on the psychological and personal, to a critique of ‘human’ political, historical and social questions.17

Modjeska’s privileging of the biographical, social and political over the ‘textual’ reflects her position as an historian, but can also be understood as part of the 1970-1980s ‘backlash’ against the post-war dominance of ‘New Criticism’ in literary studies. As historian Carolyn Porter notes, New Critics’ treatment of literary texts as autonomous and ahistorical, and their resultant focus on enacting ‘close readings’ of those texts’ internal, formal worlds, muted the political commentary such texts could make. New Critics’ ‘formalist agenda’ was thus associated with a ‘politics of containment’.18 By reviving the contexts in which and to which literature was written, historicised readings like Modjeska’s empowered literary texts to ‘speak’ again.

The significance of Modjeska’s work in establishing and inspiring today’s research around Australian interwar women writers cannot be overstated. However, Exiles at Home left me wondering what a novel’s specific, writer-centred context of production has to do with its actual existence as a book ‘in the world’. Modjeska asserts

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13 Modjeska uses the name ‘Nettie’, as have I, to avoid confusion with her novelist husband Vance.
14 V Palmer, qtd in Modjeska, Exiles, p.8.
15 N Palmer, qtd in ibid., p.53.
17 Modjeska, Exiles, p.215.
that *Exiles at Home* is about ‘writing’.\(^{19}\) I disagree: it is about writers. My thesis is about readers.

**Navigating Academic Contexts: a canon, politics and ‘theory’**

Modjeska’s academic landscape in the late 1970s was highly politicised, inheriting over a decade of ‘theoretical interventions’\(^ {20}\) by such thinkers as Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, Raymond Williams, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous. Such thinkers still influence many academics today, who thus continue to challenge the notion of a ‘unified, sovereign subject’, the ‘transparency of language’, and the many other assumptions which uphold the ‘cultural authority’ of the ‘master narratives’ of our patriarchal, imperial, racist, homophobic, and sexist Western culture.\(^ {21}\) Modjeska’s attempt to identify and value the subjective experiences of one marginalised group – Australian women writers – signals her engagement with this academic culture, as does her attempt to write against the universalising ‘objective’ voice of academic discourse, or what Ursula Le Guin calls the ‘father tongue’: ‘The father tongue is spoken from above. It goes one way. No answer is expected, or heard’.\(^ {22}\) The political import of Modjeska’s *Exiles at Home* thus lies in its contribution to establishing the ‘canonical status’ of her chosen women writers.

Subsequently, academics including Carole Ferrier, Maryanne Dever, Nicole Moore, Jill Roe, Marilla North, Barbara Brooks, Dale Spender, and Judith Clarke have strengthened and expanded this canon through their publication of numerous letter collections, biographies, theses, academic articles and essay collections.\(^ {23}\)

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\(^{19}\) Modjeska describes her text as being ‘not only about social history but about writing, about cultural and ideological struggle, about feminism and fiction, about the contradictions of class and gender’. *Exiles*, p.2.


\(^{21}\) ibid., pp.132-135.


\(^{23}\) See Bibliography. None of these recent readings combine the same texts that I have, none are enacted from the perspective of a creative writer in academia, and none (apart from Austin-Crowe’s problematic thesis) uses New Historicism. The structure of North’s and Ferrier’s letter collections are, however, of particular relevance to this research. By presenting their primary sources chronologically, and with minimal editorial intervention, these editors allow their writers’ letters to ‘speak’ their own historical narrative:
Whilst a politically sensitive inward and outward scepticism is an invaluable product of the ‘theoretically speaking’ intellectual environment in which I work today, I agree with historian James A. Winn that ‘theories’ can too easily take on ‘a life of their own’. Preoccupied with the problem of our own subjectivity, arguments about ‘what we do or should do when we read’ can oust primary sources from their central position in our studies. In the 1980s, Jane Tompkins commented on the falseness of having to theorise her subjectivity in the obscure language of feminist theory. Similarly, Philippe Lejeune protested against theorists of autobiography using language to declaim language’s ability to represent reality, experience and the self. Such critics were impatient with the ‘melodramatic’ tones of eloquent doomsayer theorists who wordily mourned how language rendered all people ‘eternally deprived of voice and condemned to muteness’. As a female writer, I particularly object to ‘theory’ which essentialises women’s writing by claiming it is the product of some elusive ‘fluid’, ‘plural’ and ‘fragmented’ subjectivity which must be read for its ‘gaps and silences’. How can we privilege what a writer doesn’t say over what they do say? And if we do this, aren’t we just a ‘coloniser’ and ‘usurper’ of others’ lives and texts?

Clifford Geertz warns that just because objective knowledge is unattainable, one shouldn’t ‘let one’s sentiments run loose’. He values an intellectual dynamic characterised by ‘discussion’ rather than limited by the compulsion to force ‘conclusions’. Similarly, Le Guin suggests that writers speak in the ‘mother tongue’, the

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25 ibid., p.860.
33 ibid., p.29.
language of ‘conversation’ and ‘relationship’\textsuperscript{34} that reconciles ‘learning with blood and heart’.\textsuperscript{35} This idea of ‘conversation’ informs my attempt to let my chosen texts speak ‘in their own terms’. I try to achieve this by reading the paper and the novels alongside one another, ‘listening’ for what resonates between them rather than pursuing that which resonates with me personally.

My work takes courage from academics such as Modjeska, North and Ferrier who, despite their politically charged and theoretically-speaking academic context, always keep primary sources central to their studies. New Historicism is a contemporary methodology which enables me to do the same.

**Listening to the past in the present: Rejecting ‘Foucauldian’ New Historicism**

Stephen Greenblatt first used the phrase ‘New Historicism’ in 1982.\textsuperscript{36} He has since been regarded (as if it were a cult) as New Historicism’s ‘leader’.\textsuperscript{37} In *Practicing New Historicism*, published in 2000, Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher recall the impact that an ‘old’ historicist, the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, had upon literature students of the 1960s and 1970s. These students were ‘impatient with American New Criticism’.\textsuperscript{38} They were inspired by Herder’s vision of the ‘mutual embeddedness of art and history’ which saw him ask of eighteenth century drama, ‘When? Where? Under what circumstances? From what sources should a people do this?’\textsuperscript{39} What made Greenblatt and Gallagher’s historicism ‘newer’ than Herder’s was the influence of their interdisciplinary student peers who were literary critics, art historians, historians, political scientists, Lacanians, Foucauldians, Freudsians, neopragmatists, deconstructors and ‘unreconstructed formalists’. Feminism was another, ‘if little acknowledged’, influence.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Le Guin, *Dancing*, p.149.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Modjeska, *Poppy*, p.152.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} ibid., p.7.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} ibid., p.11.
\end{itemize}
Unlike their peers, Greenblatt and Gallagher couldn’t articulate a meaningful theory ‘prior to and independent of individual cases’ and they still argue that imposing ‘abstract systems’ onto primary sources is anachronistic when dislocated from the moment and purpose of those systems’ original design. This recognition drew me to New Historicism and has given me the confidence to discipline my reading and writing practices in a proactive way that responds above all else to the nature of the primary sources at hand.

New Historicists’ association with ‘history’ has seen their work condemned by historians including Winn, who asserts:

… most new historicists are not historical scholars pursuing new discoveries but close readers who work by juxtaposing historical anecdotes with well-known, generally canonical texts... [which] are not studied in a “sustained” way but represented by selected anecdotes thickly described in the manner of Clifford Geertz and analyzed [sic] in light of Michel Foucault’s characteristic concern with power.42

Whilst Winn is wrong to stereotype New Historicists as lazy, New Critical Formalists sneaking about in the guise of ‘real’ historians, he is right to ‘accuse’ New Historicists of being ‘close readers’ who are influenced by Geertz and Foucault. Greenblatt and Gallagher see Foucault’s ‘anecdotal method’43 as key to the ‘counter historical’ impulse of the 1960s and 1970s. Foucault drew anecdotes from the historical archive to show how elements ‘outside of history’ became ‘most visible precisely at the moment of their expulsion’.44 Such anecdotes suggest that power relies on those who resist it. New Historicists’ interest in the historically marginalised ‘anecdote’ led me to The Australian Women’s Weekly. Though this mass-circulated magazine was beginning to exert significant influence on Australian women’s cultural experience by the end of the 1930s, it still lies well ‘outside’ the meta-narratives of Australian and World History. The Weekly’s regular columns, articles, images, advertisements, fiction, and readers’ letters can be treated as anecdote-sized ‘traces’ of the actual, if historically ‘insignificant’,

41 ibid., pp.2,3.
43 Greenblatt and Gallagher refer to Foucault’s The Life of Infamous Men (1979) in Practising, p.66.
44 Greenblatt, Practising, p.68.
voices which both reflected and helped constitute Australia and its women in 1936. The idea of the ‘anecdote’ has also allowed me to value another ‘insignificant’ voice: my own, which I have thus allowed to ‘intrude’ at points in my thesis (as signalled by italics throughout). My interest in New Historicists’ valuation of the ‘anecdote’ does not, however, signal my interest in Foucault’s theories about ‘power’.

Greenblatt and Gallagher seem to be as influenced by Foucault’s interpretations (i.e. how he thinks about what he does) as they are by his basic ‘method’ (i.e. the practicalities of what he does). This is evident in such essays as ‘Invisible Bullets’ where Greenblatt’s compelling ‘Foucauldian’ assertions about the ‘unsubvertable’ nature of power has attracted much critical attention. Marion Austin-Crowe’s New Historicist study of Eleanor Dark’s work, *Eleanor Dark: A New Historicist Reading of her Modernist Fiction*, is also influenced by Foucault. As both she and I claim to read *Return to Coolami* in a New Historicist manner, it is important that I critique her understanding of the practice. Austin-Crowe asserts that it:

is a shared assumption of all new historicist critics, that power is all-pervasive in society, a concept which is adopted from Michel Foucault… the identification and explication of power relations in literary texts, and in texts of all kinds, is fundamental to the new historicist enterprise.

As I have already asserted, Foucault’s thinking on power is not ‘fundamental’ to what New Historicists do so much as a popular influence upon how they interpret what they do. Despite her stated Foucauldian influence, Austin-Crowe cites only one famous quotation from *The History of Sexuality*. She then interrogates this in terms that directly echo those of critic John Brannigan, though she neglects to tackle his observation that New Historicism’s interpretation of Foucault’s thinking on ‘power’ is unnecessarily ‘dismal’. Brannigan argues that those who subscribe to such ‘monologic’ thinking

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45 This essay opens with an anecdote and then discusses Thomas Harriot’s *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* in relation to Shakespeare’s ‘Henry’ plays and the ‘theatrical’ nature of Elizabethan power. Greenblatt uses textual evidence to argue that though ‘subversion’ may be ‘genuine and radical’ in its time, it is both produced and ‘contained by the power [that] it would appear to threaten’. Greenblatt, ‘Invisible Bullets’, *Greenblatt Reader*, pp.127-159.
46 MVW Austin-Crowe, *Eleanor Dark: A New Historicist Reading of her Modernist Fiction* (PhD thesis), University of Western Australia, 2001, p.4.
replace the ‘grand narrative of historical progress’ with another ‘grand narrative of power’.

Such a narrative erases ‘the specificity of the historical moment’, silences ‘dissent and subversion’, and eradicates difference. Brannigan suggests that New Historicists find Foucault’s Power everywhere because they seek it everywhere. Though Foucault appears in Austin-Crowe’s introduction, it is never clear what is ‘Foucauldian’ about the interpretations that follow. There is thus little evidence that Austin-Crowe has read Foucault, and no evidence that she has read Geertz or Greenblatt. Her understanding of New Historicism thus seems to be a third-hand explication of another’s explications.

This seems ironic, considering New Historicism’s privileging of primary sources and its drive to understand cultural acts and artefacts in their ‘own terms’.

Austin-Crowe ostensibly understands that New Historicists approach texts as events that occupy ‘a specific historical and cultural site’ where ‘historical forces clash and political and ideological contradictions are played out’. Austin-Crowe notes Hans Robert Jauss’s argument that texts collide with a reader’s ‘horizon of expectations’. A text that is neither accepted nor rejected by readers may extend these ‘horizons’ by offering them something both familiar and new. Furthermore, these ‘horizons of expectations’ change over time: Jungfrau was ‘disappeared’ by a public who couldn’t or wouldn’t engage with it in the 1930s, but was then republished over fifty years later; Dark’s Coolami continually edified readers, and was published in 1936, the 1940s, 1961, 1981 and 1991. Despite noting New Historicism’s focus on reception and their identification of texts as historically embedded ‘events’ Austin-Crowe seems to forget these principles as her research unfolds.

The title of Austin-Crowe’s chapter on Coolami indicates her methodological confusion: ‘Love or War: Feminist-Masculinist Confrontations in Return to Coolami’.  

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49 ibid., p.53.  
50 ibid., p.217.  
51 ibid., p.206. Ironically, Brannigan replicates the reductive criticism that he attacks, ignoring Greenblatt’s qualification that it is ‘misleading’ – if ‘perversely attractive’ – to conclude that Thomas Harriot’s textual subversions were ‘totally produced and totally contained by the ruling elite’, for ‘Power is not monolithic’. Greenblatt, Greenblatt Reader, p.131-132.  
52 Brannigan, New Historicism, p.206.  
53 I borrowed the notion of ‘explicating explications’ from Geertz in, Interpretation, p.9.  
54 Austin-Crowe, Eleanor, p.7.  
55 Hans Robert Jauss, qtd in Austin-Crowe, Eleanor, p.11.  
56 Austin-Crowe, Eleanor, p.177.
The conceptual and ideological framework signalled by the phrase ‘Feminist-Masculinist’ did not exist when Coolami was first published. Austin-Crowe describes Coolami as feminist,\(^{57}\) and her analysis refers to such feminists as Anne Summers (1975), Gillian Whitlock (1993), Patricia Grimshaw (1988), and Cora Kaplan (1985). Austin-Crowe asserts that Dark did not ‘engage with feminist ideology’\(^ {58}\) after Coolami, despite having provided no evidence that either Dark or her readers saw themselves as engaging in ‘feminist ideology’ when writing or reading the novel. Austin-Crowe’s thesis is thus neither New Historicist nor authentically ‘historical’,\(^ {59}\) like Modjeska’s, because it focuses too much on literary ‘production’ rather than ‘reception’ and depends too much upon secondary sources. This is evident when Austin-Crowe tries to make direct links between Dark’s novels and Dark’s ‘biographical information’\(^ {60}\) or, in her second chapter, when she claims to analyse textual form in relation to ‘literary and theoretical works extant in the period of the novels’ production’.\(^ {61}\) Though she legitimately refers to such writers as George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, Christina Stead, and Freud, nothing explains her references to such writers as David Lodge (1981), Michael H. Levenson (1984), Dorrit Cohn (1978), Gérard Genette (1980), Paul Ricoeur (1984), and Catherine Belsey (1994). In her study of militarism in Coolami, she relies on the insights of such writers as Keith Amos (1976), Stuart Macintyre (1998), Bill Gammage (1988) and Anne Curthoys (1989). Whilst Austin-Crowe refers to a handful of Coolami’s original reviews she seems oblivious to the dozens of reviews and letters in Dark’s archive which show how the novel was understood and publicised by one real, if elite, group of original readers.

Unlike Austin-Crowe, I only refer to secondary sources when I relate my work to that of other scholars (i.e. in this ‘Introduction’ and in my ‘Bibliography’). I seldom refer to secondary sources when I discuss the novels’ original reception or when I read the novels and the Weekly together: this thesis is not an history of how the novels have been interpreted over the twentieth and twenty-first century. Rather, this thesis is an experiment in how primary sources can be used to limit anachronism in a reading that aspires to imagine ‘the present back then’. Consequently, as well as avoiding secondary

\(^{57}\) ibid., pp.181-183.
\(^{58}\) ibid., p.198.
\(^{59}\) ibid., p.177.
\(^{60}\) ibid., p.6.
\(^{61}\) ibid., p.62.
source references, I use such terms as ‘feminism’ only when I refer to my own, or other scholars’, or when I refer to the Weekly’s specific (and rare) use of the term.

As Geertz comments, if you want to understand what a practice is, do not look at what its ‘apologists’ say about it but ‘at what the practitioners of it do’. 62 What New Historicists like Greenblatt do is juxtapose and closely read contemporaneous canonical and non-canonical texts in an attempt to identify what resonates or contradicts between them. In the context of this thesis, it is irrelevant which texts influence authors from the past, and it is also irrelevant if Foucault’s thinking on ‘power’ influences some New Historicists’ work today. Instead, this thesis focuses on how historically contemporaneous texts may have influenced Dark’s and Cusack’s readers, and the following emphasises Geertz’s lesser-known influence on New Historicism as it is his thinking that has enabled me to keep my primary texts central to my analyses.

**Developing a ‘Geertzian’ New Historicism**

In 1973, American anthropologist Clifford Geertz asserted that understanding individual cultures was like trying to ‘construct a reading of’ a ‘foreign’, and ‘faded’ manuscript. 63 He thus advocated a ‘semiotic’ approach to ‘reading’ culture. 64 When Geertz claimed that an anecdote in his field journal was, as an ‘imaginative construction’, no different to an anecdote in Madame Bovary, 65 he drew attention to how imaginative activity constitutes the essential similarity between all interpretative disciplines. Geertz’s ‘textualisation’ of culture, and his valuation of the interpretative gesture, encouraged literary critics to ‘touch the real’ by considering sources – like his field journals, or Foucault’s historical archive – where ‘verbal traces’ were ‘less self-consciously detached’ from the lives of ‘real’ men and women. 66

Geertz asserted that ‘culture is not a power’ but a ‘context’ that allows ‘interworked systems of construable signs’ to be ‘intelligibly’ or ‘thickly’ described. 67

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63 ibid., p.10.
64 ibid., p.5.
65 As discussed in Greenblatt, *Practising*, p.29.
Geertz’s notion of ‘thick description’ involved ‘setting down the meaning particular social actions have to the actors whose actions they are’. A ‘thin description’ describes the appearance of cultural behaviours, whereas a ‘thick description’ attempts to inscribe those behaviours with meaning, setting the observed actors ‘in the frame of their own banalities’ in an attempt to access ‘the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs’. Unable to read ‘anything like the full range of materials to be pondered’ New Historians assert that their primary obligation is to ponder each text individually and ‘(as far as possible) on its own terms’. I treat the Weekly as a source of insight into the ‘banalities’ that shaped the ‘imaginative universes’ of Australian women readers in 1936. By treating the Weekly’s contents as ‘texts in their own right’, and by pulling that material forward and into line with my novels, I try to make my interpretations of Coolami and Jungfrau ‘touch the real’ of the world into which they were first launched.

Some critics worry that New Historians treat atypical and ‘riveting’ anecdotes as ‘paradigmatic moments’ from which ‘cultural laws’ can be sketched, and thus have a naïve belief in the ‘arbitrary connectedness’ of society. Determined to judge New Historicism in relation to ‘traditional’ history, such critics ignore New Historians’ self-critical appraisals, and don’t understand that atypical anecdotes are used to ‘puncture’ history ‘on purpose’. As Greenblatt explains:

New historicists linked anecdotes to the disruption of history as usual, not to its practice: the undisciplined anecdote appealed to those of us who wanted to interrupt the Big Stories. We sought the very thing that made anecdotes ciphers to many historians: a vehement and cryptic particularity that would make one pause or even stumble on the threshold of history… The desired anecdotes would not…

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68 Geertz borrowed the terms ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ description from Gilbert Ryle, but significantly developed Ryle’s thinking. Geertz emphasised how between the ‘thin description’ of an act (e.g. A boy’s eye winking) and the ‘thick description’ of that act (e.g. A boy winking his eye conspirationally) lies ‘the object of ethnography’, namely, the ‘stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures’ through which physical acts become culturally meaningful gestures (see ibid., pp.6-7).
69 ibid., p.27.
70 ibid., p.27.
71 ibid., pp.13-14.
72 Greenblatt, Practising, p.22.
73 Porter, ‘History’, p.257.
74 ibid., p.261.
77 Greenblatt, Practising, p.51.
epitomise epochal truths, but would instead undermine them. The anecdotes would open history, or place it askew, so that literary texts could find new points of insertion.\textsuperscript{78}

It was with delight that I recognised in New Historicism’s use of the anecdote the creative writing technique of ‘defamiliarisation’. Viktor Shklovsky first defined this technique in 1916:

\begin{quote}
Habitualisation devours work, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war... And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone \textit{stony}... The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception...\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

New Historicists juxtapose historical anecdotes against canonical texts in order to make them unrecognisable. The resultant readerly ‘hesitation’ allows New Historicists to ‘illuminate’,\textsuperscript{80} canonical texts by forcing readers to question the expectations they bring to their reading. This textual play does not mean New Historicists value ‘style’ over ‘substance’ or that they use historical material to create ‘a reality-effect’\textsuperscript{81} in their writing, nor does it signal their denial of texts’ ‘ineradicable differences’.\textsuperscript{82} It is the \textit{fact} that texts ‘make sharply different claims upon the actual’\textsuperscript{83} which gives them the power to defamiliarise each other.

New Historicism has influenced my work because it ultimately aims to limit anachronistic literary readings by privileging primary sources, by using the creative writing technique of defamiliarisation, and by recognising that Geertz’s and Foucault’s ‘anecdote sized’ scraps of history offer traces of real people’s voices. This thesis achieves both historical breadth and interpretive depth by juxtaposing a mass of ‘anecdote sized’, ‘historically irrelevant’ material from issues of \textit{The Australian Women’s Weekly} in 1936 against Dark’s and Cusack’s novels. Whilst I cannot claim to avoid anachronistic and subjective readings in this thesis, I have assiduously attempted to limit both by allowing

\textsuperscript{78} ibid., p.51.
\textsuperscript{80} Greenblatt, \textit{Practising}, p.36.
\textsuperscript{81} ibid., p.29.
\textsuperscript{82} ibid., p.31.
\textsuperscript{83} ibid., p.31.
the themes in the *Weekly* to lead my interpretations, by anchoring all of my interpretations in primary sources, and by exploring how my own writerly movement between different rhetorical modes can expose and problematise the borders between the time-bound reader and the time-travelling text.

The final problem attached to New Historicism lies in how a critic chooses their primary texts. Greenblatt and Gallagher suggest that one makes good one’s choice ‘by an act of writing’. If an interpretation evokes a ‘sense of resonance’ and ‘justification’, then the textual choices have been successful.\(^8^4\) The following explains why I have focused on *Return to Coolami* and *Jungfrau*, and why I have used the *Weekly* to, as Geertz directs, try to conjure the ‘imaginative universe’ of the novels’ and paper’s ‘likely’ readers in 1936. The rest of my thesis constitutes an ‘act of writing’ that attempts to reconstruct the ‘world of the *Weekly* in 1936’, identifying not only what resonates between all three texts, but also that which ‘sounds alone’.

**Why *Return to Coolami*? Why *Jungfrau*?**

*Return to Coolami* focuses on the story of Bret and Susan. Susan has been having an affair with Bret’s brother, Jim. She discovers she is pregnant, but Jim is killed in a car accident before they can marry. Bret takes Jim’s place. The baby dies, and Susan leaves Bret’s farm, Coolami, to stay with her parents, Millicent and Tom Drew. The book begins four months later, when Bret arrives to take Susan ‘home’. Their reason for marrying is now gone and the question of divorce hangs over them. With Susan’s parents, the foursome set off in Tom’s new car on a two-day drive from Sydney, through the Blue Mountains, to Coolami. On the way, we learn of Millicent’s yearning for the countryside and materialistic Tom’s jealousy of the bush. We learn of Susan’s relationship with Jim and her love for Bret and Coolami. We also learn of Bret’s love for Jim and the land, and the repulsion and desire he feels for Susan. They spend one night at Susan’s brother’s house. Colin is a shell-shocked alcoholic whose pregnant wife, Margery, is wondering what a war-mongering world will do to her children. On the night of their arrival, Bret goes out to save Colin from the darkness of the mountain Jungaburra. Susan follows. The

\(^{8^4}\) ibid., pp.46-7.
crisis makes Bret discover that – in his own words – love is the ‘aperient’ he needs for his emotional constipation. By the end of the novel, they are united at Coolami. Meanwhile, Tom suddenly ‘sees’ the bush, no longer feels threatened by the Aboriginal names that map its landscape, and he buys Millicent the country cottage where they first lived and loved together.

_Jungfrau_ centres on Thea, a teacher who is infatuated with a married, middle-aged professor called Owen Glover. He associates Thea with the mountain Jungfrau: ‘white, proud, and untouched’. They sleep together, after which Glover returns to his wife, not knowing that Thea is pregnant. Thea turns to her friend Eve, who is a Catholic obstetrician, and to her friend Marc, who is a social worker. Eve refuses to perform an abortion, though she offers to take Thea away until the baby is born and can be adopted. Marc helps arrange an abortion, but the doctor’s predatory sleaziness repels Thea. The novel traces Thea’s increasing self-detachment, culminating in her witnessing her ‘other’ self preparing to kill her in a leaky old row boat. Thea’s body and mind reunite only when she realises she is about to drown. Too late, she dies.

As I read my ‘cluster’ of novels from 1936, I noted which novels ‘spoke to’ me, ‘spoke against’ me or were ‘inaudible’ to me, and – most importantly – which novels ‘spoke’ to each other. I chose _Coolami_ and _Jungfrau_ because of the many parallels between them. Both are about women in their twenties who are ‘coming of age’ in the 1930s, who self-consciously ‘test’ their ‘Modern’ philosophies of life, and are promptly disciplined for doing so. Susan recalls how she once ‘knew all about life and could lead it round like a little dog on the long leash of her theoretical knowledge!’ Similarly, Thea begins her story by telling Eve: ‘I’m going to take life – use it – now, instead of letting it use me’. Both Susan and Thea know they are ‘trapped’ by the pregnant consequences of their choices. Both novels explore what ‘Modern’ means to these young women, and both explore how reductive stereotypes of the ‘Modern Woman’ impact upon them. Both novels ‘resolve’ an unwanted pregnancy: _Coolami_ tastefully does so ‘off-stage’, before the novel begins, whilst _Jungfrau_ includes a ‘sex scene’, openly names and discusses abortion and shows how the only abortion a woman like Thea can get is through suicide. Both novels explore the notion of ‘romantic’ love. _Coolami_ asks if love can be ‘built’ between people, but ultimately argues that love is something that happens ‘to’ a person.
Jungfrau portrays romantic love as a deadly female choice. Both novels also explore the problem of marriage, with Coolami rejecting divorce over love-based marriage whilst Jungfrau attacks the legitimacy of marriage as a romantic union or as a woman’s ‘meal ticket’. Instead, Jungfrau promotes the idea that men and women can only form true partnerships based on a meeting of minds, desires and emotions. Jungfrau also explores the specifically female problem of choosing a career and/or/as marriage, whilst the women in Coolami are never associated with work outside of the home. Both novels are written in multiple, third person, mediated, points of view, with Coolami toying with stream-of-conscious type monologues that allow the past to constitute much of the present narrative.

Finally, there is another ‘symmetry’ which helped me choose these novels. I began this research when I was the same age as Thea and just a little older than Susan, and each novel’s central concern – of how women can ‘make’ a place for themselves in the world, rather than ‘take’ the places that tradition and convention thrust upon them – spoke directly to my struggle to do the same.

...Susan, Thea, Marc, Eve: I know you; I am one of you. You are my sisters, my friends, my enemies. You are strangers I walk past in the street. Your questions, even after all of this time, are mine...

Why The Australian Women’s Weekly?

In 1933, journalist and editor, George Warnecke envisioned a big new women’s publication which would have a broad appeal and ‘an unswerving Australian outlook’, and would stand apart from the usual English-style ‘Peg’s Papers’ and ‘sidelines’ to the dailies. Warnecke pitched his idea to Edward Granville Theodore (a trade-unioner, ex-Federal Treasurer and ex-Deputy Prime Minister), and Douglas Frank Hewson Packer (a politically conservative entrepreneur). As David O’Brien comments, calling the Weekly a newspaper ‘revolutionised the concept of publishing for women’: for the first time

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‘female interests’ were treated as something more than mere ‘topics of domestic routine’.\textsuperscript{86} (Calling it a ‘newspaper’ also created an ‘alibi’ for its cheap look.\textsuperscript{87})

After heavy promotion, \textit{The Australian Women’s Weekly} was launched on 10 June 1933. The first issue announced that the paper would cover ‘every field of work, play, or interest for women’; ‘create interests for women’; ‘interpret local and foreign events from the point of view of women’; offer women ‘practical help’, ‘service’ and ‘guidance’ in ‘domestic, social and business life’, and ‘be a treasure-store to which every woman, stay-at-home, gad-about, intellectual, or just nice-average, will turn to for everything she wants’.\textsuperscript{88} This paper, which ‘had been entirely drafted and engineered by men’,\textsuperscript{89} sold 121,162 copies in its first week in Sydney.\textsuperscript{90} By December it claimed ‘Larger Circulation Than Any Other Weekly Newspaper in Australia’,\textsuperscript{91} with sales up to 162,849.\textsuperscript{92}

The economic context into which the \textit{Weekly} appeared (costing, at 2d, 1d less than its rivals) was the fourth winter of the Depression, when the female basic wage was £1/17/- and approximately half a million Australians were unemployed.\textsuperscript{93} 1933, however, also marked the beginning of Australia’s economic recovery, with the country achieving a Commonwealth surplus of £4,000,000 by December.\textsuperscript{94} In September, the Melbourne edition was launched: 90,000 copies sold instantly; Packer flew more down from Sydney.\textsuperscript{95} Over the next couple of years, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania acquired their own editors. In 1934, an eight page ‘Homemaker’ section and a free ‘full length’ novel were added to the paper’s format. (‘Think of it! Great works, hitherto unavailable owing to price, offered free’.\textsuperscript{96}) The price went up to 3d: circulation soared.

\textsuperscript{86} O’Brien, \textit{Nostalgic}, p.6. \\
\textsuperscript{87} ibid., p.14. \\
\textsuperscript{88} ‘Splendid New Women’s Paper’, \textit{Weekly}, 10 June, 1933, p.2. \\
\textsuperscript{89} O’Brien, \textit{Nostalgic}, p.14. \\
\textsuperscript{90} Packer anticipated a circulation of 50,000 copies, and sold advertising space accordingly: the paper nearly bankrupted in its first year. O’Brien, \textit{Nostalgic}, p.20. One Australian journal claimed initial circulation stood at 60,000, and noted original advertising rates at 5/- per inch: by 1939 it was 60/-, and ‘by far the highest advertising rate in any Australian publication’. ‘New and Vivid Chapter’, \textit{Australia National Journal}, Summer, 1939, p.82. \\
\textsuperscript{91} See cover, reproduced in O’Brien, \textit{Nostalgic}, p. 18. O’Brien notes the circulation of the paper’s ‘cosy’, ‘matronly’, and ‘old-fashioned’ competitors in 1933: the \textit{Australian Women’s Mirror} was selling 167,000, the \textit{Woman’s Budget} was selling 95,000, and \textit{New Idea} 52,000. O’Brien, \textit{Nostalgic}, p.19. \\
\textsuperscript{92} See cover, reproduced in O’Brien, \textit{Nostalgic}, p.15. \\
\textsuperscript{93} O’Brien, \textit{Nostalgic}, p.19. \\
\textsuperscript{94} ibid., p.27. \\
\textsuperscript{95} ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{96} ‘Modern Classics as Free Novels’, \textit{Weekly}, 18 January, 1936, p.2.
In 1936, ‘The Movie World’ section appeared, taking up one quarter of the Weekly’s pages: the price went up to 4d. (By the end of 1936, the ‘weighted average nominal weekly’ rate ‘payable for a full week’s work’ for women was 46s. 5d. It was 84s. 10d. for men.) 97 From January to June 1936, the circulation rose from 290,000 to over 350,000 copies per week. 98 The paper won the ‘highest’ Audit Bureau of Newspaper Circulation certificate ‘ever issued in Australia’. 99 One in nineteen (over 5%) Australians were purchasing the magazine. 100 I chose the Weekly as my primary source of insight into Australian women of the mid-1930s because these awesome circulation figures show that an unprecedented number of Australian women chose to read it. Many more women must have been ‘pass-on’ readers, and many more would have been passively exposed to the issues and attitudes which the Weekly propagated.

Gaining access to hardcopies of the Weekly allowed me to replicate both the ‘textual’ experience of my ‘imagined’ readers from the past, and their ‘tactile’ engagement with the magazines as colour-filled, ink-smelling, rough-edged, and utterly-flick-throughable objects. I have tried to achieve ‘breadth’ in my use of the Weekly by reading every one of its fifty-two, 40 to 60 page issues from 1936, including six whole serials, over one hundred and fifty short stories and each week’s free novel. 101 Though I occasionally refer to the paper’s fiction in my work it has proven to be beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss this ‘Year of fiction’ in depth: I have reserved this for a postdoctoral project. 102 My aim has always been to read Dark’s and Cusack’s novels ‘in the world of the Weekly’, not to selectively use the Weekly as a convenient source of quotations to embellish my predetermined interpretation of the novels. I have aspired to ‘objectivity’ in this reading by consciously submitting my own interests to the pattern of preoccupations which emerged from the paper itself. My attempt to identify, map and document these themes proved very laborious, yet extremely rewarding. I have tried to

98 Every issue announced the most recent circulation figure on its cover.
99 ‘We Sign Up Clark Gable’, Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.4.
100 Based on 1933 census population figure of 6,629,839. Wilson, Official Year Book, 1937, p.312.
101 See ‘Appendix Three’ for a listing of the Weekly’s fiction in 1936.
102 Patrick Buckridge has begun to give the paper’s fiction the attention it deserves, treating the Weekly as a ‘normative source’ which actively prescribes ‘good’ or ‘serious’ reading to its own readers. P Buckridge, “Serious Reading” between the Wars’, in Lyons, A History, p.325.
achieve ‘depth’ in my reading by closely analysing the articles which related to these emergent themes.

Who are ‘likely’ and ‘ordinary’ readers?

Susan Sheridan’s work on the *Weekly’s* evolution from 1945-1971 emphasises, as mine does, the need to ‘defamiliarise’ the magazine in order to ‘denaturalise’ its ‘common sense’ representations of ‘average Australian women’.\(^\text{103}\) To achieve this, Sheridan asked herself the ‘double and urgent questions of feminism’:

“Who is the other woman, the ‘ordinary Australian housewife’ addressed by the magazine?” … [and] who am I, reading the *Weekly* from a different time, place and politics. How do these positionings become part of the story I have to tell about it?\(^\text{104}\)

Part One of my thesis tackles Sheridan’s second question, with my narrative interventions expressing the imaginative and attitudinal world that I bring to my work. Part Two of my thesis responds to Sheridan’s first and most crucial question by reconstructing the world of 1936 via the *Weekly*. In my attempt to identify ‘who’ its readers might be, however, I do not, as Sheridan seems to, begin by assuming that the paper’s ‘ideal reader-identities’ or ‘preferred reading positions’ are that of ‘the Australian housewife’ or that this ‘other woman’ (the ‘ideal of womanhood’ that emerges from the paper) is ‘white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle-class’, and married.\(^\text{105}\) The paper’s circulation history warns against treating today’s *Weekly* as being in any way equivalent to the *Weekly* in its youth. By 1947 it had achieved ‘the greatest circulation of any publication in the world’\(^\text{106}\) with 700,000 magazines circulating each week.\(^\text{107}\) By the 1970s, it still had a circulation ‘larger than that of any other women’s magazine in the world’, with one in four Australians reading it.\(^\text{108}\) By 1978 one third of those readers were men.\(^\text{109}\)

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\(^\text{104}\) ibid., pp.95-6.
\(^\text{105}\) ibid., p.91.
however, the Weekly is a monthly magazine targeting women aged 25–54. Over 2% of Australians currently buy the magazine whilst nearly 10% read it. By creating its own market (women’s ‘news’), the Weekly’s influence in the 1930s was practically uncontested, and the paper was not only a ‘different beast’ to the magazine it is today, but a beast that was still in the process of being born. In 1936, the Weekly was still in its infancy, still adapting to its economic and cultural context, and was, in fact, trying to be ‘all things to all women’. I thus approached the paper with one assumption only: that it would give me insight into the actual or perceived concerns, attitudes and knowledge of a wide range of women reading in Australia in 1936. I did not approach the paper in order to hypothesise a singular, ‘ordinary’ Australian woman from 1936. Rather, I immersed myself in the Weekly’s textual world, confident that the paper’s mass circulation meant it had a significant influence upon many different Australian women’s lives in 1936.

Many people today assume that the Weekly’s readers have always been middle-class and that any use of the magazine as an interpretative tool must take this in to account. However, O’Brien quotes senior staff members who recalled how the paper’s original social status ‘was not high in its early life’ and that people had the ‘distressing habit’ of saying ‘Oh, yes, the Women’s Weekly. My Charlady buys it’, or ‘My cook takes it’. One staffer recalled: ‘We didn’t read it in our house. It was considered to be just a little frivolous, time-wasting’. Alice Jackson, who ‘officially’ edited the paper from 1939, ‘believed it had immediate penetration of a broad scale readership’. Patrick Buckridge suggests that the paper’s letter writers had, in the thirties, a lower middle ‘class ambience’, but he argues that readers’ ‘actual class representation’ was ‘much wider than that’. Whilst the paper’s focus on the social elite provoked one reader to suggest it be called ‘The Australian Ladies’ Weekly’, the very fact of this complaint shows that women outside of this elite not only read it, but read it critically.

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111 O’Brien, Nostalgic, p.23.
112 This assertion replies to comments from my colleagues.
113 O’Brien, Nostalgic, p.17.
114 ibid., p.17.
115 ibid.
117 O’Brien, Nostalgic, p.17.
Today, people also tend to assume that, along with middle-classedness, the Weekly has always been a conservative housewives’ magazine which upholds the status quo. However, George Warnecke wanted ‘his’ magazine to support women’s fight for equality: Linda Littlejohn demanded ‘Equal Social Rights For Sexes’ on the Weekly’s very first cover.\(^\text{118}\) Whilst Warnecke’s ‘feminism’, as we might want to call it, was not ‘revolutionary’ (he ‘wanted women to tackle all kinds of news while preserving the qualities of femininity’\(^\text{119}\)), it resulted in hundreds of thousands of Australian women being exposed to gender inequality as a ‘newsworthy’ issue. In 1935, however, Warnecke went overseas to research printing press technologies and, when he returned, was primarily absorbed in Packer and Theodore’s Daily Telegraph. O’Brien states that Alice Jackson’s ‘reign’ as the paper’s editor was ‘effective’\(^\text{120}\) from the beginning of 1936, and that she ‘took a middle-aged stand for dignity and caution in a post-Depression Australia’ which made the paper ‘not so much reactionary as less wild cat’.\(^\text{121}\) Jackson did not become the paper’s official editor until Warnecke left in 1939, though O’Brien suggests that the paper became ‘more feminine’ and ‘less feminist’\(^\text{122}\) before then, with a bride-housewife ideal emerging by 1937. I have found, however, that it is difficult to ascertain the relative influence that Warnecke and Jackson had in 1936, especially when perusing the paper’s editorials. Bridget Griffen-Foley states that the paper ‘effectively had two editors’ between 1935 and 1939.\(^\text{123}\) 1936 thus seems to be a year when the Weekly had no clear political identity or agenda.

Whilst I have discussed the assumptions that might interfere with my attempts to imagine ‘likely’ readers of the Weekly in 1936, I haven’t yet explained how I can use those imagined readers to speculate upon ‘likely’ readings of my chosen novels. Proving a direct ‘link’ between contemporaneous texts is not necessary for a New Historicist-inspired study, as what matters to New Historicians is that their chosen texts’ ‘voices’ circulate throughout the same time and place. I remain convinced, however, that establishing this link is necessary for my work to be historically plausible. As Buckridge

\(^{118}\) Cover, reproduced in, O’Brien, Nostalgic, p.8.
\(^{119}\) Warnecke, qtd in O’Brien, Nostalgic, p.21.
\(^{120}\) O’Brien, Nostalgic, p.48.
\(^{121}\) ibid., p.51.
\(^{122}\) ibid., p.47.
notes, the paper’s readers seemed to form a ‘pre-war community of naïve booklovers’, and the paper encouraged its readers to not only support Australian writers, but to note the ‘invasion’ of Australian women into the field of novel writing. As a result, all six of the novels which I identified as a ‘cluster’ in 1936 were reviewed on the Weekly’s ‘New Books’ page. Clearly, therefore, the Weekly saw its own readers as ‘likely’ readers of Dark and Cusack’s novels.

A Note on Structure and Voice

Part One of this thesis offers a complete recount of the novels’ original publication and reception. Part Two attempts to reconstruct ‘The World of the Weekly in 1936’, as based wholly on the magazine: this part offers a unique, stand-alone, ‘window’ of insight into Australia at this time. I have also included appendices which elaborate fascinating themes and events which I did not detail within the thesis because they were, in terms of ‘text space’, relatively minor preoccupations of the paper. Much of this thesis conforms to the voice of an academic dissertation, allowing me to construct a meticulously observed and evidence-based context within which I then allow myself to reflect upon my research in a narrative manner. These italicised, narrative interventions represent my experimental attempt to speak in Le Guin’s ‘mother tongue’ and to, as Geertz recommends, create a scholarly discourse based on conversation and questioning. These interventions are not intended to allow my ‘sentiments’ to ‘run loose’, nor do they attempt the impossible by trying to reproduce the ‘voice’ of a woman from 1936. Instead, these passages attempt to enable both me and my readers to speculate imaginatively about the worlds of Return to Coolami, Jungfrau, The Australian Women’s Weekly and 1936 in a way that conventional academic discourse does not allow. This thesis thus derives from my interest in imagining – and creating – historically and textually specific reading experiences.

124 Buckridge, ‘Good Reading’, p.38.
127 Geertz, Interpretation, p.30.
Much excellent historical, feminist and cultural studies work has been done on these novels, and scholars including Susan Sheridan, Kay Whitehead, David O’Brien, Patrick Buckridge and Christopher Davies have done valuable work on the *Weekly*. No-one, however, has enacted a close reading of Australia or the *Weekly* focused on 1936, or used such a reading as a means of exploring Cusack’s and Dark’s novels, and no one has read such material from the perspective of a creative writer in academia.

*How to begin? You’re not sure, and who is this ‘you’ anyhow? Every teacher and book and editor warns against this difficult Second Person. But you (who?) can’t resist its complex and contradictory power to speak to and for everyone: how ‘you’ accuses (‘I hate you!’); how ‘you’ draws one close (‘I love you!’); how ‘you’ so cleverly disguises the first person (the intimacy of a mind, talking to itself); how ‘you’ demands conversation (‘What do you think?’); how ‘you’ lets one address an audience of known or unknown people – all of you, out there – assumed to be listening...*
Part One:
Original Public Reception
Chapter One:
Original Reception of *Return to Coolami*
To the Archive

Walk up to the library from that picture-perfect quay. Walk up through the Botanic Gardens. There, as in the Domain and Hyde Park, as in many of the suburban streets, are those massive fig trees. They sweat with you in the humidity. Look up: the alien distortions of their roots plait down from their branches in heavy bundles, suspended and dead-ended above your head. Look down: their trunks fan out on the ground, cumbersome twists of heavy walls. Prehistoric. Unbelievable. A haven for hiding and seeking. Walk past the spicy herb garden and up the stairs, guarded by the seasons: old man Winter and two girls, Spring and Autumn; Summer is missing. Cut across blazing roses to the Memorial Garden. Here, a boy angel stands in a waterless fountain: he’s pointing you in the right direction. Climb the steps, then back-track a little, so you can exit out the Palace Garden Gate. Salute Governor Philip as you go (with one or more fingers, depending on whether his history is yours), and wander up Macquarie Street. And there it is, the Mitchell Library: you are facing it and it is facing you across the hot steel stink of the midday traffic. Its heavy sandstone walls say it all: you are little; you are nothing; you are no one. You cross the road anyway. You stand at its threshold, studying the images of indigenous Australians hammered into its huge bronze doors: hunting (not hunted), dancing (not dying), serene men, women and children (not shackled, not stolen).\(^1\) You step in to the library’s coolness. Finally, this is it, your chance to delve into the paper-trails left by a ‘somebody’, a ‘real writer’: Eleanor Dark.

Warnings

In order to see Dark’s papers her family has asked that researchers read three documents and then sign the archives’ generic ‘Pain and Embarrassment Declaration’.\(^2\) Signing this means I have agreed not to refer, even in conversation, to archival material in a way ‘that could cause pain or embarrassment to any living person’.

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\(^1\) The Mitchell Library’s eastern ‘Aboriginal doors’, by Daphne Mayo.
\(^2\) Three documents must be read, and a ‘Pain and Embarrassment’ form signed, by all researchers before accessing Dark’s Papers (MLMSS 4545) at the Mitchell Library at the State Library of N.S.W.
The first of these documents is a letter signed by J.O. Dark ‘on behalf of’ E.P. Dark, Michael Dark and ‘the late’ Eleanor Dark. This letter, dated 9 August, 1986, replies to the then ‘recent’ allegations that the Darks were ‘driven’ from their home in Katoomba in the fifties. The letter asserts the ‘truth’ that, whilst the Darks were ‘subject to political repression in the 1940s’, there was ‘no unpleasant political feeling’ when they left in the fifties. The second document is entitled ‘Annexure – The Family of Eric Payten Dark’. It clarifies the nature of Eric’s previous marriage to ‘Daidee’ who died after the birth of their son, asserting that Eleanor and Eric knew each other before Daidee’s death, were married less than two years after that death, and had one son, Michael, who would be brother to Daidee’s John. It then describes John and Michael’s marriages, divorces and remarriages. The third document provides a family tree that clarifies how the ‘total’ family ‘stabilised’, and lists Eric’s war-time commendations.

Until reading these papers I knew little of Dark other than that she was a ‘great’ Australian woman writer who had written a book that I loved, and another that disappointed me. These documents, however, intrigue me in a different way: ‘They protest too much!’ I think, ‘Communists! Adulterers! Instability!’ Why warn against inflicting pain by telling people how they may do so? Of course, I am missing the point. These papers are ultimately aimed at reminding researchers of the power of the writer. I’m just here to see ‘the archives’ view’ of Dark’s 1936 novel, Return to Coolami. And yet, here it is, first and foremost: my desire to pry (I admit it), and my power to hurt.

A Profound Decision

I begin by looking for the original drafts of Return to Coolami. I find Dark’s handwritten version. It makes up two volumes and is entitled Balool to Coolami, a crudely literal title, devoid of the published version’s allusion to circularity and resolution. I find a

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3 This must be a reply to D Modjeska’s ‘Dialogue with Dark’, where she claimed the Darks ‘were frozen out of Katoomba for their politics during the Cold War’ (The Age, 11 April, 1986, p.3).
4 a.k.a. Kathleen Aphra Raymond.
5 E Dark, Prelude to Christopher, Halstead Press, Rushcutters Bay, 1999. (1st edn PR Stephensen, Sydney, 1934.)
6 E Dark, Return to Coolami, Collins, London, 1936. (NB: In this thesis I refer to the White Circle Pocket Novel edn, Collins, London, c1940s. The text is the same.)
7 See pencilled and typed original manuscripts at MLMSS 4545/2.
typewritten manuscript: here, the published title is stuck over the old, suggesting a last minute change. I search for the note that Barbara Brooks says Dark wrote on the front of Coolami’s manuscript: ‘Dedicated to all young women who are looking for something suitable for their mothers to read’. I cannot find it. This is curious, as is Brooks’ lack of comment about what such an epigraph suggests about the novel: firstly, that it was a consciously commercial enterprise; secondly, that it thus spoke purposely to convention – to the older generation – rather than challenging it. I recall the letter that Dark wrote to Miles Franklin about Coolami’s success: ‘It’s a punk book’, she said, and agreed with one reviewer who described it as ‘a novel for the porch and hammock trade’. Despite this, Dark told Franklin she was glad she wrote it: had she not, both Prelude to Christopher and Gnome in Sunlight would have remained unpublished, ‘unaccepted and despised!’ Dark’s letter to Franklin confirms the epigraph’s suggestion that Coolami was intended as a commercial success, one that would pave the way for much more difficult texts to be accepted.

Does Dark’s snobbish attitude to Coolami mean that she did not take the time to draft it at all? I cannot find any differences between the pencilled, typewritten or published copies of the work. Were preliminary drafts too ‘personal’ to leave behind? Did writing Slow Dawning, Prelude and that unpublished novel, Pilgrimage, give her the necessary practice to write Coolami in ‘one shot”? Perhaps I am forgetting what ‘re-writing’ meant before the ‘cut’ and ‘paste’ of computers. Perhaps she was just trying to impress Franklin, whose epic, All that Swagger, had just won the S.H. Prior Memorial Prize. What did I expect to find in this box of manuscripts? I realise I wanted to find process, the process which I expected should go into the writing of a novel. I flick through the pencilled copy again. Perhaps ‘process’ is what I am looking at: simply and

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9 E Dark to M Franklin (letter), 19 September, 1936, in C Ferrier (ed.), As Good As a Yarn With You, Cambridge UP, 1992, p.34.  
11 See ‘Appendix One’ for a discussion of Prelude and Coolami’s publication travails.  
13 See MLMSS 4545/1.  
14 I find such ‘process’ when I come across torn up lectures and notes cut and pasted together, in such folders as MLMSS 4545/16, 4545/15.
steadily, one careful word after the other….perspiration, not inspiration… no epiphanies scrawled across scraps of paper.

As I make to close the book, I realise (with an inexplicably emotional sense of revelation), what I am looking at. I am looking at a decision to write. It sounds mundane, but it isn’t for someone who, vainly and vaguely, hopes to ‘one day be a writer’. I am looking at a statement that a woman expressed through an action, over seventy years ago. When Dark sat down, picked up her pencil and began to write she was saying, both publicly and privately, and in all seriousness, ‘I am a writer. I am someone who writes. Read me’.

**Interesting irrelevancies… whose ‘feminism’?… some discoveries…**

There were many ‘interesting irrelevancies’ in Dark’s archive, and the following notes the most relevant few. First is a letter from a librarian based in the National Jewish Hospital in Denver, Colorado requesting a copy of *Coolami* for her patients.\(^\text{15}\) This letter shows just how far Dark’s novels travelled. Second are the chronologies Dark made for *The Timeless Land*, with each page representing a year. For 1936 Dark has written ‘Death of George V; abdication of Edward; Spanish War broke out’.\(^\text{16}\) I also find Dark’s ‘woman’ and ‘writer’ statements: whilst her thoughts on writing mirror my own, her thoughts on women generally read as one well-off woman lecturing down to others.\(^\text{17}\) This is evident in her attitude towards women’s magazines, which she accuses of perpetuating the housebound woman’s ‘domesticated’, distracted, non-academic, mind. In her lecture, ‘Education and Domesticity’, Dark says magazines are:

> full of miscellaneous bits and pieces, disconnected, superficial, easy to read and easy to forget. For, as a toothless mouth must be fed with slops, so a mind unpractised in concentration must be fed with something which needs no mental mastication.\(^\text{18}\)

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\(^\text{15}\) Librarian (National Jewish Hospital, Denver) to Dark (letter), 22 June, 1936, MLMSS 4545/29/1.

\(^\text{16}\) MLMSS 4545/14.

\(^\text{17}\) MLMSS 4545/30, MLMSS 4545/10, MLMSS 4545/16.

\(^\text{18}\) E Dark, ‘Education and Domesticity’ (lecture), MLMSS 4545/10.
Did Dark see the *Weekly* as such a scrappy magazine? As she wrote *Coolami*, was it this ‘brain-damaged’ housewife to whom she wrote? Wasn’t *she* a ‘housewife’? What is most revelatory about this draft is how it – very literally – allows me to read the ‘gaps and silences’ that Dark enforced in her writing. For instance, she writes that though women work twenty-four hours a day, ‘there is no union of housewives’. Following this, but scored out, is the phrase, ‘and unpaid at that’. Dark has also crossed out the phrase ‘the “tortuousness” of the female mind, by the way, is a myth’. In regards to women in public life, Dark has scored out the phrases ‘majority of them are childless’, and their kids are ‘off their hands’. In another paper, ‘Of Interest to Women’, Dark lists the ‘epic’ demands that sex places upon women, and notes that History should be focused less on the masculine triumphs of war and destruction, than on women’s triumph at sustaining life. She asserts that a woman’s experience of reproduction is ‘long, always tedious, often dangerous, sometimes fatal, and she never forgets it, nor escapes its consequences while breath remains in her body’. This statement is crossed out. Why has Dark deleted such key points? Were they really so controversial? As my later discussion shows, the *Weekly* openly debated such things as ‘Wages for Wives’, and the unfair exclusion of the housewife-mother from public life: it is fascinating to watch Dark ‘dumb-down’ her work by such deletions, even as she orders women to reject the magazines that tackle those very points she censors. Similarly, Dark’s miscellanea include her assertions that writers must be left to represent all social realities – including sex. In *Coolami*, however, Dark (who apparently wanted an ‘open’ marriage) evades representing the ‘reality’ of women’s extramarital sexual pleasure by locating Susan’s affair ‘before’ the narrative begins. Furthermore, *Coolami*’s plot resolves the ‘illegitimacy’ of Susan’s sexuality by containing it within the conventional formula of *Weekly*.

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19 ibid.
20 ibid.
21 ibid.
22 ibid.
23 ibid.
24 E Dark, ‘Of Interest to Women’ (draft), MLMSS 4545/10.
25 ibid.
26 ibid.
27 E Dark, untitled draft for the *Telegraph*, MLMSS 4545/10.
28 As claimed by Eric Dark, in Giulia Giuffre, *A Writing Life*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1990, p.109. (It is unclear if Eric means living separately and uncommitted, or multiple sexual partners, when he refers to an ‘open’ relationship.)
‘love as marriage as sex’. *Coolami* does not, therefore, depict the ‘reality’ of Dark’s own society’s sexual behaviours: instead, it depicts her society’s tabooed relationship to sex. Such archival material shows Dark ploughing towards, but then veering away from, controversy. Did she do so for her ‘respectable’ self, or for her readers? Whatever her motive, *Coolami*’s royalty statements show that it edified Australian, British and American readers for decades. This chapter’s recount of *Coolami*’s original reception aims to identify what it was that engaged its first ‘professional’ readers.²⁹

Finally, I must note the most fascinating ‘irrelevancy’ which I found in Dark’s archive. Dark described her life as ‘humdrum’ and ‘uneventful’.³⁰ If ever proof were needed of this, it can be found in her ‘diaries’.³¹ Ostensibly, these look like a mere log of daily activities: ‘lovely day’, ‘another perfect day’, ‘chores all morning’, ‘home all day’. I flick through them again and again, disappointed, and wondering if I am really looking at lists of omissions. Suddenly, I stop. I stare. I realise that, as each year passed, Dark has written an entry under the previous year’s for the same date: underneath 1 January, 1940, is an entry for 1 January 1941, then 1 January 1942, then 1 January 1943, and so on, down the page. *What?* I remember Dark’s description of life as ‘an endless present moment, moving snail-wise through time, carrying the past and future on its back’.³² How fascinating! I realise that these logs are a years’ long experiment in measuring – and modelling – Time’s passage. Isn’t *Coolami*, too, such an experiment? As Susan, Bret, Millicent and Tom drive through the countryside, it is not just two days and nights which they experience, it is the eternal weight of the past pulling them backwards through memory, and the eternal presence of the future, pulling them forwards through their hopes and fears.

²⁹ See ‘Appendix One’ for the story of *Coolami*’s publication history. *Coolami* won the Australian Literature Society’s Gold Medal for Best Australian novel in 1936.
³⁰ E Dark to Mr Sutherland (letter), 18 December, 1942, MLMSS 4545/30. Sutherland was a lecturer at Pennsylvania State College.
³¹ MLMSS 4545/21.
Original Presentation

The original Collins edition of *Return to Coolami* has a dust jacket showing a man and a woman looking out into a blurred, hilly landscape (Figure 1).\(^{33}\) The American, Macmillan version of the novel has a pale green dust jacket illustrated with a reproduction of the fender ornament of Tom Drew’s Madison (Figure 2).\(^{34}\) These two covers are strikingly different. The Collins’ edition suggests sombre adventure in a harsh landscape with the older man and red-haired girl promising some serious romantic tension. The Macmillan cover presents readers with an abstract image that signals the novel’s multilayered theme of ‘progress’. Collins’ cover looks like a traditional, old-fashioned romance novel. Macmillan’s looks like a stylish, modern book.

Both editions basically share the same blurb (as does my 1940s White Circle Pocket edition, cited throughout this thesis). This blurb asserts that Dark’s story is ‘original’, with a ‘subtle and mature understanding of human problems and contacts’. (The Macmillan blurb omits this phrase. The White Circle edition keeps it, though the word ‘material’ replaces ‘mature’). The blurb emphasises the ‘fateful’ car journey’s

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literal and metaphoric function, describing how it both acts as a ‘framework’ for the novel and takes on the ‘significance of an isthmus of time’, connecting characters’ pasts with their future by triggering memories: ‘landmarks of emotion’ mark their progress towards a ‘new life’ at Coolami while the story exposes ‘the abysses of thought that lie behind a spoken monosyllable or jest’.

The blurb describes how Bret, ‘the husband’, finds ‘true love’ for Susan, ‘building happiness from the wreckage of the past’. Meanwhile, the ‘strange, unearthly beauty’ of the Blue Mountains ‘casts’ its ‘spell’ on Tom Drew who had, till then, ‘reckoned success in terms of wealth alone’ (the Macmillan edition omits the word ‘strange’). Tom learns the ‘love of the country’ that is Millicent’s birth right: together, they travel towards a new ‘harmony of spirit’, and everyone finds happiness and peace (the Macmillan cover omits the word ‘peace’). The Collins edition gives no information about Dark herself, whilst a tiny biography on the Macmillan edition asserts that Dark has published other novels in Australia and ‘knows her Australian countryside’.

This blurb frames the novel as one concerned with the themes of ‘love as marriage’. It also directs readers to consider the novel in relation to notions of time, journey, memory, psychology, and nature. It construes Bret and the countryside as the story’s active principles, and Susan and Millicent as women ‘waiting’ for their men to change. The novel’s romantic genre is suggested by the blurb’s explicit guarantee of a happy ending.

The original reviews of Return to Coolami

The Australian reviews of Return to Coolami can be found in Box 24 of Dark’s archive in ‘Diary 1934’.35 (At the bottom of each page are one-line ads describing how ‘Lactogen’ is recommended for Nursing Mothers, resembles Breast Milk in composition and is suitable for babies of all ages. Pasted around these ads are Coolami’s reviews, as if Dark was creating a visual representation of the difficulty – but not the impossibility – of combining motherhood with a writing career.) The American reviews of Coolami are in

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35 ‘Diary 1934’, MLMSS 4545/24. If authors, dates and/or the place of publication have been omitted in the following references it is only because this information was missing or illegible in the scrapbooks: I have included as much identifying information as possible, and noted where each clipping is archived.
‘Diary 1936’.36 A handful of mixed reviews are in the National Library of Australia.37 The following surveys these original, published responses to the first edition of Coolami.

**An Australian novel?**

Around 1937, critic, writer and publisher, P.R. Stephensen (known as ‘Inky’), noted how ‘magnificently’ Coolami had been received overseas: ‘Almost all of them emphasise its “Australian” quality, and express some surprise that such a good book should come out of Australia’.38 Stephensen’s fixation on Coolami’s ‘Australianness’ typified its first reviews, and it was generally seen – though for different reasons – as a ‘book of Australia’.39 Almost all reviewers enjoyed Dark’s depiction of the ‘glitter of the Australian landscape’.40 Whilst some Americans found Coolami’s story ‘as different as the country’,41 many appreciated how Dark ‘knew’ and loved Australia,42 and some identified closely with her Australian landscape and people. One critic saw California in her novel’s ‘towering mountains and blazing colours’,43 and another asserted:

> It is something of a surprise that we find this strange country inhabited by people very much like ourselves. For Miss Dark does not deal with the lean, hard-bitten

37 NLAMS 4998/2.
38 PR Stephensen, ‘The Novels of Eleanor Dark’ (clipping), NLAMS 4998/2. I presume Stephensen wrote this article, as its author claims to be the first to publish Prelude. I presume it was written around 1937 as it refers to Dark’s ‘new book’, *Sun Across the Sky*.
Colonial of English fiction – her characters… might very well have come from the middle stretches of Tennessee.44

Such quotations not only illustrate the ‘universality’ of Dark’s romantic story (‘Love problems are just about the same in Australia as they are here’45), but show how Americans had a particular sympathy with Australia’s British colonial past (some saw Australia as ‘America as it was yesterday’46). As nationalistic Inky himself proclaimed: ‘[Dark] is writing about Australian themes and scenes, postulating the Australian milieu; not “trimming” in the slightest to her readers either here or overseas’.47

This question of what it meant to be ‘Australian’ permeated literary criticism at this time. One review commended Coolami for its ‘authentic depiction of Australian character and the Australian scene’,48 whilst another praised Dark’s skill at evoking her ‘distinctly Australian background’,49 and yet another praised her for allowing ‘the spirit of Australia’ to throb with ‘reality’.50 Such reviewers, however, seldom defined what they meant when they referred to Australia/ness, though one came close, commending Coolami for its ‘faithful rendering of the bush atmosphere’ that any ‘patriot’ could enjoy’.51 This reviewer equated patriotism with appreciating an Australian ‘bush’ identity. Though one reader felt Dark’s characters could be ‘British or Australian’,52 others commended Coolami for breaking away from British identity and treating Australia ‘as an established and normal background’,53 that was populated with ‘sophisticated, intelligent people’54 rather than kangaroos, bushmen and pioneers.

In 1937, the American journalist, C. Hartley Grattan criticised Inky’s push for Australian writers to ‘root their work in the Australian earth’.55 (He would also have

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45 Register, Des Moines, 21 June, 1936, in Diary ‘1936’, MLMSS 4545/24.
51 AAH, MLMSS 4545/24.
objected to Barnard Eldershaw’s assertion that Dark’s potential lay in developing Australia’s ‘sense of race and of natural beauty’. Grattan claimed that the profusion of Australian travel and adventure books freed creative writers from the ‘besetting vice’ of writers in ‘new countries’, of incorporating ‘large gobs of unassimilated local colour’ in an attempt to create ‘a factitious Australian-ness’. By the 1930s, Grattan felt Australian writers could ‘take the environment as completely subdued to their purposes’ and thus concentrate on their characters instead of ‘the strangeness of the setting’. This, he argued, would not create a ‘deracinated’ literature, but would set up ‘a completely natural and inevitable reciprocal relation between man and the Australian world’, and would achieve an ‘Australianness’ that was ‘vital and true’. Though some accused Coolami of using Australia as ‘a painted backcloth’, of not being a true ‘novel of the soil’, or of having a background that only served the ‘purposes in the story’, other critics commended Coolami for – as Grattan advised – keeping the ‘local colour’ subsidiary to the story. Howard Spring noted how Coolami seemed to reconcile these two kinds of Australian realisms, by depicting an Australia where ‘social life’ was both ‘urban and rural’.

As these contrary reviews suggest, Coolami somewhat ‘bridged’ the gap between writing that perpetuated the ‘bush’ and pioneering literary tradition, and that which focused on the urban reality of most modern Australians’ lives.

57 Grattan, ‘The Literary Scene’, p.86. In 1966, C Semmler also noted how Australian interwar writers had moved from learning to ‘describe’ and ‘accept’ the physical environment, to learning to describe and accept the ‘social environment’. C Semmler & D Whitelock (eds), Literary Australia, FW Chesire, Melbourne, 1966, p.182.
58 Grattan, ‘The Literary Scene’, p.86.
61 Barnard Eldershaw, Essays, p.192.
A triumph or travesty of technique?

Perhaps the most positive and harsh criticisms of Return to Coolami derived from reactions to its ‘retrospective’ technique, constituted by ‘swift darts of reminiscence, backward from effect toward cause’. Whilst many critics found this ‘a trifle confusing’, they generally saw Coolami as being ‘clever’, ‘truly exceptional’, ‘human’, and ‘beautifully written’ with an ‘exquisite choice of words’. One American described it as ‘food for the gods’, seeing Dark’s technique as ‘extremely difficult’, but so successfully enacted that her ‘ordinary’ plot became a ‘thing of brilliance’. Inky even claimed that Dark was, ‘without doubt’ the most skilful ‘user of interior monologue, as a narrative form’, in the ‘entire English writing world’. One British reviewer accurately predicted that Dark would ‘come to occupy a rich shelf of her own’ among Australian novelists.

Many critics understood Dark’s retrospective technique as a ‘literary adaptation from the “flash-back” of the cinema’. One reviewer noted that this device ‘was increasingly common in “modern romances”’ and was ‘readily understood’ by ‘every reader’. Not everyone, however, admired Dark’s retrospective technique, with one New York reviewer stating of Dark (as one couldn’t imagine him stating of a man): ‘One pictures her, flushed with excitement, jotting down… “Use flash-back method of films...”

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66 Good Housekeeping, NLAMS 4998/2.
67 ibid., and Current Literature, 1936, NLAMS 4998/2.
69 Good Housekeeping, NLAMS 4998/2; Current Literature, 1936, NLAMS 4998/2.
70 Woman’s Pictorial, 29 Feb, 1936, NLAMS 4998/2.
71 M Pope, Woman’s Journal, February, 1936, NLAMS 4998/2.
73 ibid.
77 McCay, ‘Novels’, NLAMS 4998/2.
for past action.’’

Hunter found Dark’s technique confusing, and felt that the novel lacked style. Dark’s use of internal monologue and memory to ‘‘conjure’’ the ‘‘silent soliloquies’’ of the characters was another formal aspect of Coolami that critics regularly noted, with many of them describing these passages as ‘‘stream of consciousness’’. In their 1938 critique, the Barnard Eldershaw duo offered a detailed analysis of Dark’s work that focused on its crafting. (As Brooks notes, they ‘‘dissected’’ rather than ‘‘appreciated’’ Dark’s work, and thus ignored the ideas she tackled.)

Though they praised Dark’s ‘‘skilful’’ handling of time, they argued that her ‘‘thought representations’’ were too ‘‘pruned and trained and fashioned-to-need’’ for ‘‘true’’ stream-of-consciousness. They argued that Dark’s characters’ thoughts were, like the story, ‘‘conceived in hard objective terms and the stream-of-consciousness is merely a method of retailing’’. Barnard Eldershaw thus point to what I’ll call the ‘‘subjective-objective paradox’’ which both structures and undermines Return to Coolami: such a narrative, built from multiple ‘‘internal’’ points of view seems a ‘‘democratic’’ means to tell a story; however, such a narrative actually requires an author to be omniscient and God-like in relation to her characters. As the duo complains, Dark’s narrative world is thus ‘‘entirely visible and rational’’, there is ‘‘no room for the unknown’’, and her stories lack ‘‘verisimilitude’’. Whilst some critics were happy to ‘‘revel’’ in what they saw as the novel’s ‘‘compact form’’, and whilst prominent critics like Inky saw ‘‘no intrusion of the author as “God”’’ in Dark’s stories, the Eldershaw duo saw Dark’s tight narrative control as making her characters ‘‘inorganic’’, ‘‘stated’’, and seem to be ‘‘held as in a vice’’.

The pair blamed the romantic genre for Dark’s flat characters. They identified her ‘‘romanticism’’ in her attitude towards her characters, noting how the ‘‘romantic

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78 R Hunter, ‘‘Sorrows of Susan’’, Sun, NY, 13 June, 1936, NLAMS 4998/2.
79 RP, ‘‘Several Novels’’, pp.2,4.
81 Journal, Pottsville, 26 June 1936, in Diary ‘‘1936’’, MLMSS 4545/24; News, Buffalo, MLMSS 4545/24; ‘‘General Literature and Fiction’’, Courier-Mail, Brisbane, 7 March, 1936.
82 Brooks, Eleanor, pp.204-5.
83 Barnard Eldershaw, Essays, p.197.
84 ibid., p.197.
85 ibid., p.189.
86 Pope, Woman’s Journal, NLAMS 4998/2.
87 Stephensen, ‘‘The Novels’’, NLAMS 4998/2.
88 Barnard Eldershaw, Essays, p.190.
89 ibid., p.190.
tradition’ demands an ‘hierarchical’ narrative structure, where the minor characters ‘play up to and illuminate’ the principles.\(^9\)\(^0\) *Coolami* does not wholly conform to this, the duo believed, because Mr and Mrs Drew provided some of ‘the finest examples’ of Dark’s ‘portraiture’.\(^9\)\(^1\) Whilst Bret conformed to the stereotype of the ‘strong silent’ older man, for whom love is ‘a solvent and a cure’ for ‘disillusion and disappointment’,\(^9\)\(^2\) they thought Susan allowed ‘a certain realism’ to be ‘imported’ into the story. They added, however, that whilst Dark’s heroines faced life, they never got too far:

Susan insists on her pride and suggests divorce from the man she loves, but she is not forced to pay the penalty for her pride. She gets what she wants in the end without sacrificing it.\(^9\)\(^3\)

Barnard Eldershaw did not discuss just how much *Coolami* avoids showing of Susan facing ‘life’: the reader never ‘sees’ what it means to Susan to have sex, give birth to an illegitimate baby or to see that baby die. Despite dissecting Dark’s technique, and drawing damning conclusions about her dogmatic and unrealistic narrative technique, the duo nevertheless asserted that it was Dark’s technique *alone* which saw her add ‘lustre to Australian fiction’.\(^9\)\(^4\)

Barnard Eldershaw were not the only critics to find Dark’s writing technique ‘unconvincing’.\(^9\)\(^5\) Rex Hunter saw the text as dogmatic, suggesting it could be subtitled ‘How light came to the philistines’.\(^9\)\(^6\) One American complained of the novel’s ‘almost oppressive’ amount of introspection, finding it unbelievable ‘that anyone could think quite so continuously about his own emotions and their significance’.\(^9\)\(^7\) Another recommended the book to those ‘interested in the musings of strangers’,\(^9\)\(^8\) and another described the novel as ‘A Six-Ring Circus’ where each character ‘has a psychological

\(^9\)\(^0\) ibid., pp.191,2.
\(^9\)\(^1\) ibid., p.191.
\(^9\)\(^2\) ibid., p.190.
\(^9\)\(^3\) ibid., pp.193,194.
\(^9\)\(^4\) ibid., p.194.
\(^9\)\(^5\) ‘Novels of the Day’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September, 1937. See also ‘Eleanor Dark’s New Novel’, *The Bulletin*, 22 September,1937, p.8, which suggests there was a growing critical ‘fatigue’ with the ‘special effects’ of modernist experimentation by the mid-1930s.
\(^9\)\(^6\) Hunter, ‘Sorrows’, NLAMS 4998/2.
quirk that keeps him from being happy’. 99 One reviewer dismissed the text as being ‘Introspection and retrospection for 325 pages’, 100 and another complained that Dark was ‘extending her favourite device of the interior monologue until one bogs down in it’. 101

Will Hanley wrote of Coolami in the Labor [sic] Daily:

Introspection is apt at all times to become tedious, but when the puppets in a novel possess badly shop soiled intellects and indulge in this form of self analysis to extremes, the effect on the reader is one of complete nausea. 102

Despite his insulting tone, Hanley and other critics’ observation of Coolami’s puppet-like unnaturalness shows that the Eldershaw duo’s formal insights weren’t limited to that of Dark’s Australian (and potentially jealous?) writing peers: Coolami has certainly taught me to be wary of multiple internal monologues, in my own writing, that are inexplicably in dialogue with each other.

Despite these critics’ complaints, many saw Coolami’s ‘introspective’ nature as one of its ‘strongest’ elements. 103 Howard Spring thought Dark’s subtle narrative handling got ‘to the very roots’ of her characters. Rather than feeling ‘tricked’, 104 Spring felt she left readers ‘satisfied’ that the plot’s resolution lay ‘in the nature of the case’. Another reviewer saw the novel’s characterisations as having ‘harmony and truth’. 105 Some felt they had made ‘four new friends’, 106 whilst another felt impatient that ‘such four fine human beings’ could ‘make such a mess of things’. 107 This reviewer saw the novel’s resolution as ‘simple and natural’. 108 Another reviewer also interpreted ‘the final harmonious development’ of the characters as ‘the logical result of their honest self-examination’, with the story’s ‘series of climaxes and emotional crises’ creating a

100 ERC, Times, MLMSS 4545/24.
104 Spring, Evening Standard.
105 ‘Across the Blue Mountains’, The Times, 1 February, 1936, NLAMS 4998/2.
106 Woman’s Pictorial, NLAMS 4998/2; McCay, ‘Novels’, NLAMS 4998/2.
107 Pope, Woman’s Journal, NLAMS 4998/2.
108 ibid.
‘satisfying solution to each one’s problem’. This reviewer thus found verisimilitude in the novel’s plotting, as well as its interior monologues. *The Australian Women’s Weekly* applauded Dark’s ‘clever’ method of time compression, her ‘fine literary sense and strong dramatic values’, and the ‘artistically satisfying’ conclusion of the novel, though it also conceded that the novel’s ‘introspective touches’ were ‘a little overdone’.

Alfred Kazin suggested that Dark’s novel was ‘saved’ by something much more elusive than its literary content or form. He found the ‘journey’, ‘flashback’, and the plot’s resolution in a ‘tinsel Arcadia’ of ‘manufactured bliss’, to be dreary clichés of modern fiction. *Coolami* was saved from mediocrity, however, by ‘the type of feeling’ Dark brought to bear on her ‘undeserving material’. Kazin wasn’t the only reviewer to locate *Coolami’s* success in the ‘deep feeling’ of Dark’s writing. One reviewer also noted that the poor material was saved by the ‘liveliness’ and ‘vitality’ of the writing. Another reviewer identified *Coolami’s* characters as the source of the vitality which excused the novel’s ‘artificial framework’, whilst another described the characters as being ‘magically alive’, and yet another described them as bound in ‘an atmosphere of live tension’ in a book whose descriptions were ‘living things’.

All these reviews show how *Coolami’s* form was noticed by most of its original ‘professional’ readers. Those who enjoyed the novel seem to have accepted, admired, trusted – or not noticed – Dark’s intricate co-ordination of *Coolami’s* characters’ internal monologues. Such reviewers enjoyed Dark’s evocative poetic language and the comfort of her plot’s happy ending. Those who were annoyed by the novel blamed Dark’s over-calculated crafting and its romantic resolution for undermining the verisimilitude of her story. Whilst such ‘negative’ critics were often rudely disparaging, they nevertheless made astute insights into the craft of writing itself.

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112 Kazin, ‘Australian’, (Proquest).
The feminine… the Modern… the modernist?

Whilst reviewers’ critical focus upon Coolami’s form suggests that they saw the text’s design as unique, only one review explicitly described the novel as ‘modernist’. More commonly, reviewers alluded to modernism indirectly. For example, one stated that Dark was ‘one feminine novelist who writes with the same dashing vigour that has made Daphne du Maurier ace high among moderns’. Here, the term ‘moderns’ seems to refer to an identifiable art movement (modernism?) as well as a modern ‘type’ of artist (female?). Further evidence that Dark’s Australian literary critics were aware of modernism can be found in The Bulletin, where ‘R.P.’ complained that Australian writers were ‘years in arrears’ of (unnamed) international writing trends. R.P. said Coolami stepped over this ‘time lag’:

[Dark’s] novel is perfectly modern – in its diction, in its form, in its psychological concept of character… its modernness – by which is meant its being directly in tune, in the beat of the life-rhythm of this present time – gives it an importance in Australian literary effort which seems very great today.

R.P.’s comments suggest that there was, in the interwar years, a general critical confusion about the distinction between ‘modernism’, as an aesthetic and philosophic movement, and the ‘modern’, as that which is current or ‘new’. This confusion, or conflation, saw most critics focus on the ‘modern’ aspects of Coolami’s content. A.C. Walker saw the novel as humourless for the fact that it was ‘an attempted solution of modern problems’. Likewise, others described it as a tale of ‘a modern and rather silly trial-marriage’, or ‘a modern, realistic story with a setting in Australia’, or ‘a modern problem novel’, or a ‘strictly modern manners story’. Many saw Susan as a

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120 ibid.
121 ibid.
123 Gilksyson ‘From Australia’, MLMSS 4545/24.
recognisable ‘modern’ female type: one described her as ‘alert, realistic and articulate in the modern mode’, whilst another alluded to her modern sexuality by noting how her ‘modern ideas’ allowed her to have an apartment in Sydney with a man. Others focused on the story’s technological references, seeing the story’s ‘brisk, modern, sophisticated’ tone as evoking – and reinforcing the symbolism of – Tom Drew’s car. Some readers felt that the car, and the modern times it symbolised, made the story itself go too fast, and one reader even blamed the car for Dark’s use of ‘rather irritating’ contractions, like ‘he’d’! These reviewers referred to a ‘modern’ that was not clearly associated with ‘modernism’.

Will Hanley’s review was the one review that did explicitly link modernism to the novel. He stated:

The story smacks of a form of modernism that a number of our authoresses strain so desperately to portray, and there leave their readers cold. Love’s moloch, matrimonial discontent, and the divorce court looming in the background as the final haven, are the main ingredients that leaven these stories to a pitch often bordering on absurdity.

With commendable restraint, Modjeska describes this review as ‘crudely misogynistic’, and Hanley’s notion of ‘modernism’ seems to have less to do with a particular aesthetic movement than with his distasteful association of that movement with middle-class, women writers of romance.

Critics often referred to Dark as a ‘woman’ writer. This was most evident in headlines where the fact of her gender (combined with her success) was newsworthy. Other ‘gendered’ approaches to Dark and her writing lay in critics’ repeated reference to

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126 Journal, Pottsville, MLMSS 4545/24.
128 Register, Des Moines, MLMSS 4545/24.
her as the ‘wife of’ Eric Dark and the ‘daughter of’ Dowell O’Reilly.\textsuperscript{135} O’Reilly was a noted creative writer and politician whose writing, Inky claimed, ‘anticipated Ulysses’ in its ‘skilled and sustained use of interior monologue’.\textsuperscript{136} Eleanor thus shared with her father the modernists’ interest in representing mindscapes. Most reviewers did not comment on Dark’s gender, and only one reviewer, other than Hanley, was blatantly ‘anti-woman’. Rex Hunter described Dark as a manufacturer of ‘nice, safe, comfortable novels on the eternal sex theme for the porch and hammock trade’.\textsuperscript{137} He claimed women would ‘swoop joyously’ upon \textit{Coolami} and would enjoy the novel for its clichés and ‘obvious truisms’. Had Hunter read \textit{Prelude} he might not have dismissed Dark as an unchallenging romance writer, but his sexist attack is most noteworthy because, not only did he identify and assault a certain type of ‘woman’ writer and a certain type of ‘feminine’ novel, he attacked a certain type of woman reader. Reinforcing his ‘high’ cultural position over Dark’s inferior, and femininely popular one, Hunter concluded that \textit{Coolami} was destined for Hollywood. Perhaps what is most interesting about this review, is that Dark quoted Hunter in her embarrassed letter to Miles Franklin about \textit{Coolami’s} success.\textsuperscript{138} This shows not only that she read his review, but that she subscribed (or thought Franklin would subscribe) to its derogatory stereotyping of women writers and readers.

These reviews show that whilst knowledge of ‘modernism’ may have informed critics who noted \textit{Coolami’s} crafting, psychological focus and its assimilation of international literary trends, most critics focused on the ‘modern’ aspects of the novel, like its references to technology, its ‘modern’ problems, and its ‘modern’ characters. Modernism and the modern thus seem confused or conflated in critics’ minds at this time. The ‘newsworthiness’ of Dark’s gender shows how acclaimed ‘women writers’ were


\textsuperscript{136} Stephensen, ‘The Novels’, NLAMS 4998/2.

\textsuperscript{137} Hunter, ‘Sorrows’, NLAMS 4998/2.

\textsuperscript{138} Dark wrote to Franklin ‘It’s a punk book, and I’m glad you haven’t read it, and hope you won’t…. One American reviewer… described it as “a novel for the porch and hammock trade”, and that puts it in a nutshell. Anything less highbrow could hardly be imagined!’, E Dark to M Franklin (letter), 19 September, 1936, in Ferrier, \textit{As Good As a Yarn}, p.34.
themselves a modern phenomenon, even if critics like Hanley derided them as a modernist disease. Though the newsworthiness of Dark’s gender, and the repeated identifications of her as an ‘authoress’ and the ‘wife of’ and ‘daughter of’ her husband and father abounded in these reviews, the violent sexism expressed by Hanley and Hunter was completely exceptional: most reviewers were too busy acclaiming *Coolami* to attack its author’s gender.

**Of and for the Middle Classes?**

Reviewers like Hanley attacked Dark because she was writing in the feminine *and* middle class form of modernism. His prejudices are evident in his description of Bret as running ‘true to pedigree’, 139 and in his construction of the characters’ romantic discontents as a luxury most people could not afford. Dark’s archive shows that – married to a doctor, living in a beautiful house, whining about housemaids, and filling her time with gardening, sewing, going out to ‘tea’, and playing tennis, golf, and rock-climbing 140 – she was as middle class as her novel’s ‘problems’ suggested. Whilst it is not surprising that class antagonism should appear in a paper like Hanley’s *Labor [sic] Daily*, he was not the only reviewer to note the classed nature of Dark’s novel. One American noted how the story’s ‘emotional elements’ were ‘insured against unpleasant discord by the inherent politeness and courtesy of the well born’. 141 Another critic described *Coolami* as ‘a tale of what happens when well-bred people sin in Australia’. 142 This critic seemed unconvinced that Dark’s characters were of a class that would be so tolerant of Susan’s situation. Again, the novel’s verisimilitude was in question, though this time in terms of class rather than crafting.

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Personal Responses to Coolami

In Dark’s archive, a number of private letters directly discuss Coolami. Whilst letters from other writers, like Eric Lowe and Ruth Park, could be lumped with ‘professional’ criticism, I have assumed that their private (unpublished) nature provides a unique insight into creative writers’ first readings of Coolami. I have also found letters from ‘fans’ of Coolami that, I think, offer direct insight into the ‘non-professional’ person’s response to the novel. I have included letters written at dates later than 1936, because some of these writers imply they read Coolami at the time of its original publication, and also because such early, personal responses should be recorded for posterity’s sake.

In 1936, Lowe wrote to Dark to thank her for sending him a manuscript of Coolami. He wanted to ‘have a stab’ at reviewing it, and said he envied its ‘natural body and soul’, which had a ‘nostalgic effect’ on him. Lowe found in Bret’s joyful contemplation of Coolami, an ‘intimate and fitting’ picture that directly matched his own experience of a place called Black Bull Hill. Lowe cheerfully damned Dark for her brilliance. Like Kazin, Lowe found Coolami’s strength in its capacity to evoke a ‘feeling’ of Australianness, a feeling that was not political and was associated with the intimate workings of memory, personal experience and nostalgia.

Ruth Park wrote to Dark at the end of the 1940s, after her novel, The Harp in the South, was released. Park wrote: ‘Well, this is the side of fame (however momentary) that I like… answering a letter from you instead of looking at you through a telescope’. Park went on to describe the public outrage at her own novel, claiming she’d been sent ‘asbestos envelopes’, and letters addressed to ‘The Harpy of the South’. She hoped that The Harp wouldn’t disappoint Dark, and thanked her for ‘all the pleasure’ her novels had given her. Of Dark’s novels, Park only mentioned Coolami, and claimed it was ‘the first modern Australian book’ she’d ever read, a book that ‘intrigued’ her so much that she’d started reading Australian literature in earnest’, with ‘the consequence’ being her own writing. As in the published reviews of Coolami, it is not clear if Park saw Dark’s novel as ‘modern’ or ‘modernist’. Though disparaged by its own author, Coolami seems

143 E Lowe to E Dark (letter), 13 (June/July?), 1936, NLAMS 4998/28.
144 R Park to E Dark (letter), 23 January, 1947(?), NLAMS 4998/238.
to have prompted the writing career of another of Australia’s most successful woman writers.

In May, 1936, Edith Hall from Hobart wrote to Dark of Coolami: ‘Cheers and Cheers and Cheers!’ She said she hadn’t been as ‘thrilled’ or ‘absorbed’ by a book ‘for years’. Hall – like many of Dark’s critics – summed up the novel as being about ‘Australians with the true Australian atmosphere’, claiming it represented ‘the authentic mode’ which everyone had been ‘waiting for’. (She compared the ‘bubbling wit’ of Coolami to The Glasshouse’s ‘self-conscious mode’.) Hall felt there wasn’t ‘an unnecessary word’ in the novel, and hoped Dark would write ‘another book as good’. She ended her letter by asking, ‘You’ve read ‘Antony’ [?] I suppose?’ Was Hall, here, linking the ‘marriage of convenience’ in Coolami to the marriage of Antony and Octavia in Antony and Cleopatra? Who knows. What matters is that Hall’s private response to Coolami’s form, and her evaluation of the book in relation to notions of ‘Australianness’ and ‘authenticity’ reinforced, rather than contradicted, many of the views of Coolami’s first critics.

On the 16 of June, presumably in 1936, a man or woman called ‘Starbison’ told Dark they couldn’t resist writing to her: ‘you are not very far away’ and ‘our lives are somewhat similar’. Starbison explained that they considered writing in their ‘spare time’, and had watched Dark’s ‘output’ with interest. They had known Dark as ‘Pixie’ from Dowell O’Reilly’s letters, had read Prelude with interest, ‘but not with complete satisfaction’. Starbison found ‘the greatest satisfaction’ in Coolami’s ‘method of telling’, its ‘masterly style’ and its ‘clear insight’ into the ‘minds and actions’ of its characters. Perhaps Starbison focused on Dark’s crafting because they approached her as the ‘daughter of’ O’Reilly, a writer who was also famous for depicting characters’ minds. Starbison concluded by telling Dark to write more for her ‘most ardent admirers’.

On the 30 November, 1937, John Coghlan wrote to Dark from Dublin, telling her he was ‘very grateful’ for her ‘most original, absorbing and touching novel’ of

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145 E Hall to E Dark (letter), 2 May, 1936, MLMSS 4545/29/3.
146 Starbison to E Dark (letter), 16 June, 1936 (?), MLMSS 4545/30.
‘Australian life and character’. He had read it twice and was ‘absorbed, impressed excited and even moved’ by the novel’s ‘rare and remarkable qualities’, like ‘its imaginative insight, unusual time-scope, and its psychological subtlety and skill’. He felt Dark’s characters and ‘background’ were cleverly drawn, commended her for ‘conjuring’ up ‘the Australian scene’ with ‘beauty and intensity’, and praised her for engaging the ‘mind and imagination’ in a way that left readers convinced they had ‘read a most unusual, vigorous, penetrating and persuasive piece of work’. He claimed the story seemed ‘bigger, better and more impressive’ the more he thought about it. Coghlan’s praise of the novel’s ‘fresh, credible and powerful’ themes mirrored those of the critics who felt Coolami’s strength lay in its realism, though his description of the novel as ‘unusual and subtle’ also echoed those critics who saw the novel as ‘strange’. For this Irishman, Coolami’s appeal ultimately lay in its Australianness.

There are three letters, apart from Park’s, from the 1940s. In 1944, Sergeant Karl Shapiro, an American poet whom Eleanor and Eric befriended in Katoomba, wrote to Dark from New Guinea. He wrote:

Coolami is the nuts! I read it twice and think it terrific. I love that twist ['hint'] of psychological stewing in juice. I love it. I’m a neurotic myself and proud of it.

A year later, Mr L.G. De Garis of Geelong wrote to Dark. De Garis’ letter responded to Susan’s wonder at how men and women could fuse their bodies and ‘souls or spirits’ to create children and love, but seemed unable to create anything by fusing their minds. De Garis moved from this into a convoluted diatribe on ‘the problem of human relationships’. He claimed that Coolami’s formal time compression saw him experience ‘progressive revelation of growing consciousness on different planes of being’. He then explicated his own thoughts on ‘being’ for Dark, with a particular focus on women and

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147 J Coghlan to E Dark (letter), 30 November, 1937, MLMSS 4545/29/5.
148 K Shapiro to E Dark (letter), 12 March, 1944, NLAMS 4998/190.
149 LG De Garis to E Dark (letter), 31 April, 1945, MLMSS 4545/28/2. I have recently found out who LG De Garis was, through Ruth Lee’s work on his sister, famous feminist doctor, Mary De Garis. LG spent thirty years writing for his Credit Crusade, ‘seeking to reform the monetary system to bring fairer conditions and wages to workers’, see Lee’s Mary De Garis: Progressivism, Early Feminism and Medical Reform, Deakin University, 2010, p.50. See Lee’s Chapter, ‘Utopian Dreams: The Credit Crusade, 1930-63’. Perhaps Dark kept De Garis’s eccentric letter because, as a doctor’s wife, Dark knew, or knew of, Mary De Garis.
children’s lowly status within marriage. He felt the world’s progress was being held back by a conflict between ‘evolution’ and ‘revelation’, and the ‘conventional and fundamental!’ De Garis’ letter was the only public or private response that treated Coolami as a means of questioning the institution of marriage itself. Reviewers who responded positively to the novel willingly consumed its reinforcement of the ideal of ‘marriage as love’, whilst those who saw the novel as unrealistic did not identify ‘unnaturalness’ in the ‘marriage’ enforced upon Bret and Susan, but in Dark’s formal and generic choices.

The last personal response I could find to Coolami came from H.S. Canby in 1945. He wrote to Dark from the University of Melbourne, just to tell her he’d read the novel ‘with very great admiration’ and thought it ‘most excellently composed’.150

Conclusions: The Original Reception of Return to Coolami

As the initial reviews of Coolami show, critics almost always approached the book as an ‘Australian’ novel, with the majority revelling in its poetic evocation of place. Coolami’s crafting was generally commented upon: though it was seldom described as ‘modernist’, reviewers alluded to modernism when they noted her psychological focus, her time compression, her stream-of-consciousness and her work’s similarity to ‘new trends’ overseas. Most critics focused on the recognisably ‘modern’ aspects of the story’s themes, characters or motifs, and associated the ‘modern’ and ‘modernist’ with the feminine. Coolami’s style and technique were generally associated with its success, so much so that the improbability of its romanticism, and its class specificity, was often ‘forgiven’ by reviewers. A number of reviewers criticised Dark’s crafting in some detail, but even Barnard Eldershaw pronounced that Dark’s ‘scientific’ attack on romance ‘by means of laboratory methods’ was ‘tantamount to sophisticating it’.151 Most of the ‘personal’ responses to Coolami reflected the positive criticism of professional reviewers, with De Garis standing alone in his use of the novel as a means of critiquing social institutions.

150 HS Canby to E Dark (letter), 11 May, 1945, MLMSS 4545/29/1.
151 Barnard Eldershaw, Essays, p.194.
Chapter Two:
Original Reception of Jungfrau
Finding Her

Pat is the name of Marc’s huge bulldog in Jungfrau. Pat is a fictional dog. Pat is a fictional device. Pat lets Cusack show how Marc values something other than herself and her ideas. Pat lets Cusack criticise how her female characters are coerced to ‘pair off’ into heterosexual couplings: at that party at Whale Beach, Marc is asked if she brought a man; she says she brought a dog instead; ‘Thank God for a dog’.¹ Pat also lets Cusack hint at an androgynous ideal: both dog and master have androgynous names and utopian aims; Marc aspires to ‘be’ rather than to ‘have’² and Pat, as any dog-lover knows, is hardwired for ‘being’. To call a dog ‘Pat’ is also, of course, to make a joke: ‘Pat the dog’.

Yes, Pat is a charming and hardworking fictional dog.

And yet, isn’t that her grinning out from this album? (Figure 3)³ Aren’t those slobbery jowls and that square, muscled body hers? Is it mere resemblance? No! Hand-scrawled labels announce ‘Bee and Pat’, and ‘John Thackery and Pat’. (Another resonance there... Listen. Listen. Of course! You are thinking of Dr John, Eve’s ‘friend’.) Ridiculous emotion! You’ve found that rare locus where fiction meets fact. It is the third photo – blurred and unlabelled – that you will never forget (Figure 4).⁴ From now on, this image will come to represent Jungfrau in your mind. In the foreground is blackness. In the background, the dark cragged curves of a cliff’s edge stretch into the distant glare of sea and sky. In the centre, a woman stands in profile to us, with the sturdy, pig-bodied silhouette of Pat behind her. You cannot make out their features, but one of the woman’s heels – hovering, as it does, above the ground – and Pat’s bent legs worry you: they look as though they have been caught mid-stride, on their way to somewhere. Where can they going? They are standing at the edge of a cliff.

You think of the Gap, in Sydney, where so many people have gone, and still go, to murder themselves. How did Christina Stead put it? ‘A suicide at the Gap was a commonplace affair. Everyone knew why a person committed suicide: if it was a man,

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¹ J, pp. 81, 85.
³ Photo album, NLAMS 4621/10/44.
⁴ ibid.
because he couldn’t pay his bills or had no job; if a woman, because she was going to have a baby’. So, of course, this photo is of Thea, poised, poised, poised on the edge. She is beginning to make connections between the sea and the baby, her body and Glover’s unlove. Her lifted heel shows she is canvassing possibilities. She has remembered Marc’s little boat, riddled with holes, stinking of tar and prawns. And she has forgotten Pat, who, if she cared to look, would remind her just how much joy can be found by a body let loose on a tangible, sensual world.

Figure 3: ‘Bee and Pat’ and ‘John Thackery and Pat’, Cusack Papers

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5 C Stead, *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*, Sirius, Angus & Robertson, 1981 (c.1934), p.70.
Figure 4: Unlabelled photo, Cusack Papers.
**Jungfrau: Original Presentation**

The cover of *The Bulletin*’s 1936 publication of *Jungfrau* shows rugged, snow-capped European alps reaching up from a darkly forested valley (Figure 5). The blurb describes Cusack as a ‘young author’, and her book as a ‘strikingly unusual Australian novel’, set in ‘present day’ Sydney. The blurb refers to the characters as ‘modern young women’ and identifies them only by their professions, stating that a teacher’s affair with a ‘University man’ forms the ‘core’ of the novel. This blurb thus characterises the novel as one about ‘modern’, urban, and professional women, rather than adultery, pregnancy and abortion.

On the back cover, *Jungfrau*’s Australian and literary importance is emphasised by the publisher’s assertion of Cusack’s brilliance, its noting of *Jungfrau*’s second place in the 1935 S.H. Prior Memorial prize, and its listing of the novel alongside Franklin’s *All that Swagger*, which itself won that prize in 1936, and was ‘Acclaimed by critics as the finest book of Australia ever written’.

![Figure 5: The Bulletin’s cover for Jungfrau.](image)
The original reviews of *Jungfrau*


*Jungfrau: a warning for the Modern Miss?*

Mutch’s article appears to be based on an interview with Cusack. After provoking readers’ interest in *Jungfrau* by introducing Cusack as an educated Australian and a talented, conscientious writer, who was already a successful playwright, he went on to explain how the novel’s ‘symbolical’ title (which came to Cusack before the story) shared the name of the Bernese Alps whose funicular railway left it ‘soiled by swarming tourists’. (He did not explain that ‘jungfrau’ is German for ‘virgin’, translating to ‘young girl’.) He noted how the novel’s story resulted from a ‘chance discussion’ about whether women were ‘as loyal to each other’ as men. Mutch thus directed readers on how to interpret the novel’s central themes, and continued to do so when he described Thea as a school teacher who seems ‘almost unreal’ in her innocence but who is, paradoxically, ‘drawn from life’. He described Eve as a ‘coldly wise’ Catholic doctor, whose work and religion place ‘a definite limit on her loyalty’, and Marc as a ‘cynical sophisticate’ with limitless loyalty and ethics. (Though Mutch mentioned Marc’s many

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10 Mutch, *Ellen*, p.2. Mutch noted how Cusack had conscientiously withdrawn her ‘second novel’ for rewriting: he was probably referring to her first unpublished novel, *This Nettle Danger*. See North, *Yarn Spinners*, pp.23-25. See also ‘Anniversary’ (Clipping, 24 April, 1936, NLAMS 4621/14/1) which announced Cusack’s new play, and noted she was rewriting *This Nettle Danger* for Heinemann, in London.
lovers, he did not mention her career.) Mutch said *Jungfrau* explored female loyalty by asking ‘whether a woman should or should not bear the unforeseen consequences of an unlawful love’ (i.e. ‘go through with it’), when her lover sees their affair as incidental. This ‘problem’, Mutch reflected, is ‘as old as society’, but the ‘modern’ nature of Cusack’s exploration lay in how her three characters’ social context allows them a ‘freer consideration’ of ‘the application of medical science to sociology’. Mutch thus told his readers – without telling them – that *Jungfrau*’s plot focused on an unwanted pregnancy and abortion. After quoting Eve’s warning to Thea about combining ‘Victorian’ ignorance with ‘experience’, Mutch asserted Eve’s words should act as ‘wisdom for the modern miss who knows everything’. Thus, even as he commended Cusack’s ‘restraint’ in avoiding melodrama and propaganda, Mutch used her text to propagate his own ‘warnings’ to ‘modern’ females. (Perhaps he didn’t detect propaganda in *Jungfrau* because he ‘agreed’ with the ‘moral’ he interpreted from it.) Mutch also praised Cusack for writing about ‘the problems of sex’ without ‘stripping the woman naked’.

Mutch’s review suggests that abortion and adultery existed, in the 1930s, on a plane of public consciousness where they were known of (familiar) and yet taboo (unspeakable).12 As the first person to introduce *Jungfrau* to the world, it is significant that he framed the novel in a moralistic and ‘de-sexed’ way. By focusing potential readers’ attention on Cusack’s credentials as a true-blue, educated, professionally-employed and gifted Australian writer, and by defining the novel’s theme as being about female loyalty – and its ‘moral’ as a warning to ‘modern misses’ – Mutch may have been trying to pre-emptively diffuse outrage that *Jungfrau*’s future audience might feel.

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12 See N Moore’s extremely good work on *Jungfrau* and taboo, and her discussion of how widespread pre-textual, ‘clichéd’ knowledge of abortion allowed it to be ‘spoken’ of by euphemism at this time, in ‘To be rid, to be rid of it’, *Australian Studies*, BASA, London, vol.16, no.2, 2001, p.66. In 1981 Cusack reflected on how *Come in Spinner* faced similar problems to *Jungfrau* because of its sexual content at a time when ‘You didn’t talk about penises’. Her editor, Brian Penton, replied to her claim ‘But it happened’, with ‘But you can’t say it’. See Julie Rigg & Julie Copeland (eds), *Coming Out!*, Nelson, ABC, Melbourne, 1985, p.61.
**Jungfrau: euphemising themes; evaluating importance**

Whilst the *Adelaide Advertiser* congratulated Cusack on her ‘deft handling of human nature’, Mutch congratulated her on her ‘true and profound’ knowledge of ‘feminine human nature’. Mutch thus found *Jungfrau’s* ‘realism’ in its capacity to express elements of an essential femaleness. Similarly, Frank Dalby Davison revealed a psychoanalytic approach when he claimed Cusack’s characters enacted aspects of ‘the universal feminine’, that Thea was ‘the active principle’ in her affair with Glover, that the affair might have sprung ‘from some unrecognised climacteric’ in Thea’s life and that Thea represented parts of her friends that were ‘in subjection’. Davison described the ‘premise’ of Cusack’s book as being an exploration of young women’s new-found economic independence which made them responsible for both their ‘happiness’ and ‘material welfare’. (Hence his review’s title, ‘Daughters of Freedom’.) Mutch and Davison seem to read the text in ways that affirm (rather than challenge) their understanding of ‘modern women’.

Stewart Howard usually wrote the *Weekly’s* film-reviews, so it was unusual that he appeared in Leslie Haylen’s book review section, discussing *Jungfrau*. Howard’s extended review included a glamorous photo of young Cusack (Figure 6). Howard wrote:

Fifty years hence, the publication of a novel such as Dymphna Cusack’s “Jungfrau” will not be of such importance as it is to-day. The “Jungfraus” of that time will still be good novels, they will still find an audience – a much bigger one than that which awaits Miss Cusack’s book.

Australians by then will no longer regard with a sense of shock any book which deals with contemporary city life, and with the young, modern people of our capital cities.

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13 *The Adelaide Advertiser*, November (?), 1936, NLA MS 4621/14/1.
16 ibid.
17 S Howard, ‘NB’, *Weekly*, 26 November, 1936, p.14. NB: Somewhat confusingly, whilst Leslie Haylen’s name headlines this book-review page, *Jungfrau’s* review ends with the initials ‘SH’: Freehill confirms that Stewart Howard wrote this review (Freehill, *Dymphna*, p.43.) as does correspondence, see S Howard to Cusack (letter), 3 December (?), 1936, NLA MS 4621/1/11 and 4621/1/12.
“Jungfrau” is a noteworthy addition to the growing list of Australian novels, because it does deal with these things, and because, as well, it has craftsmanship and a fine understanding of the problems and reactions of the young woman of 1936.  

Howard commended the ‘ease and frankness’ with which Cusack’s characters discussed ‘subjects which would have been taboo to their mothers’. Like Mutch and Davison, Howard used euphemism to ‘name’ the tabooed content of the book, but directed readers to ignore the novel’s ‘shocking’ aspects and focus on its contemporary importance and realism. Significantly, his prediction that Jungfrau would not find a large audience suggests he saw the Weekly’s massive readership as closed-minded and conservative. (He was right: 1,000 copies of Jungfrau were published in 1936. Cusack made £23 from it. It disappeared until republication in 1989. Even Cusack’s mother was ‘horrified’ that a book ‘all about sex’ was dedicated to her; it ‘nearly shocked’ her ‘into a stroke’.

![Figure 6: Stewart Howard’s review of Jungfrau in the Weekly.](image)

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19 In 1938, American critic, CH Grattan, described Cusack as a writer aiming to ‘realistically… assess the Australian scene’ and recommended Jungfrau as a resolute attempt ‘to deal with aspects of Australian urban life’ (p.29). CH Grattan, ‘On Australian Literature’, The Australian Quarterly, p.29.
20 Freehill, Dymphna, pp.43-44. Cusack also recalls, in Freehill’s book, how a senior teacher hid the novel at the bottom of her cupboard so visitors couldn’t find it.
21 Rigg, Coming Out, p.60.
Perhaps Howard had read Mutch’s claim that *Jungfrau* should warn ‘the modern miss who knows everything’, for he seemed to reply to this when he presented *Jungfrau* as a warning to people who stereotyped ‘modern’ girls as being ‘hard, brittle, ready for anything’ and as knowing ‘all the answers’. Cusack, he said, had ‘laid bare the fallacy of this’, showing how ‘the young woman’ of his era was ‘still vulnerable; despite her mark of self-assurance’ and at least ‘as open to hurt as the young woman of any previous generation’. Significantly, Howard transformed Mutch’s ‘modern miss’ into a universal ‘young woman’. His use of the word ‘hurt’ shows how ‘unspeakable’ *Jungfrau*’s content was, even for its greatest fans: his readers might have expected something tamer than Thea’s adultery and quest to abort her unwanted ‘illegitimate’ baby.

Camden Morrisby, reviewing for the radio station 2SM (and then secretary of the Federation of Australian Writers), was the only reviewer who explicitly referred to ‘pregnancy’ and ‘abortion’ in his review (he used the term ‘abortionist’). He thought Cusack courageous in her attempt to deal with society’s ‘impositions’ on the modern generation, and ordered readers to pay attention to the plot’s ‘sttingingly contemporary theme’:

> whether we like it or not, this theme is part of our everyday life. It is so painfully real that I found myself asking, again and again, what would I do in such circumstances?  

Morrisby thus praised Cusack for making him empathise with Thea. He claimed that *Jungfrau* brought ‘alive’ a ‘new generation’ and ‘a new world’ that was ‘known’ to everyone except Australian writers. He praised Cusack’s ‘exquisite delicacy’ in bringing this world to readers through a ‘searing commentary’. Morrisby, therefore, identified *Jungfrau*’s ‘Australianness’ as lying in its contemporary realism, and encouraged readers to approach the novel as a socio-political critique. Instead of interpreting a generalisable ‘moral’ from the novel, both Morrisby and Howard valued *Jungfrau* for speaking the unspeakable in a way that provoked empathetic response. They each demanded that

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25 ibid.
readers approach *Jungfrau* with open minds and eyes, ready to *see* the realities which Australian writers had thus far ignored.

Reviewers’ euphemistic attempts to discuss *Jungfrau*’s tabooed content, and to understand the book’s significance in relation to Australian literature, granted it a paradoxical status whereby it was recognised as Australian but *not* as ‘Australian literature’. As one short review stated, *Jungfrau* was ‘A strikingly unusual Australian novel’.26 This review didn’t (or couldn’t) specify where this ‘unusualness’ lay. Both Davison and Howard commended Cusack’s light touch with her Australian setting: the former praised the text’s ‘natural acceptance – without exploitation’ of the ‘urban scene’, whilst the latter named Cusack’s ‘easy and unselfconscious’ handling of her ‘background’ as one of the novel’s ‘most admirable features’. Davison claimed Cusack showed readers ‘social and domestic settings’ that were ‘understandable’ to anyone with urban experience. He added, however, that whilst the ‘wide application’ of the novel’s theme prevented it from being ‘deeply rooted in Australian earth’,27 the story was well rooted in ‘life’. He did not explain how a text rooted in life could be anything *but* rooted in the place where that life is lived, though his interpretation seemed to be shared by an English publisher who wanted to publish *Jungfrau* because of its ‘international’ theme, but would only do so if Cusack gave it an English background.28

As well as praising *Jungfrau* for exploding feminine stereotypes, Howard applauded Cusack for deserting the ‘tradition’ of Australian literature that stereotyped Australia as a land of pioneers, gum trees, sheep, convicts, cattle, sundowners and flies. He noted that overseas readers of Australian literature were unlikely to ‘suspect’ that the majority of Australians lived in cities ‘larger that most of those in Europe and America’. Howard claimed that the prime ‘importance’ of Cusack’s book thus lay in her urban focus.29 Davison lumped *Jungfrau* with what he saw as ‘a budding literary movement’ in Australia producing books that, like Jean Devanny’s *Sugar Heaven*, embodied ‘implicit topical comment’, though *Jungfrau* was unique for focusing on the ‘liberated young

26 ‘Ready This Week, *Jungfrau*’, Untitled/dated clipping, NLA MS 4621/14/1.
27 FDD, ‘Daughters’, p.4.
28 Freehill, *Dymphna*, p.43.
woman’. The fact that Coolami (published earlier in 1936) was not mentioned by Davison shows how Dark’s much more indirect and romantic approach to similarly controversial themes did not provoke political or sensational commentary. Davison’s insistence on associating Jungfrau with a small and specific group of texts within Australian literature positioned Jungfrau as an interesting, but peripheral, contribution to the evolution of Australian literature and culture.

The Adelaide Advertiser was one paper which felt that Jungfrau was (‘despite its title’ and ‘absurd’ cover) ‘arrestingly Australian in every way’ as well as a ‘fine piece of fiction’. It described Jungfrau as ‘a valuable picture’ of ‘city life’ that would help ‘dispel persistently recurring illusions abroad’ about Australian homes, culture, manners, and ‘way of speech’. The Advertiser thus saw Jungfrau as fulfilling the broad, international, cultural function of breaking down stereotypes by asserting an authentic Australian identity. The Advertiser further emphasised the ‘internationalism’ of Jungfrau by relating it to English ‘novels of ideas’, which, it noted, were increasingly being written by women (the paper reviewed Jungfrau alongside Rosita Forbes’ The Golden Vagabond, and Eleanor Farjeon’s Humming Bird). The paper claimed that Australian women writers were developing a particular ‘individuality’ in this genre, with their literary efforts being ‘more interesting and inspiring than the efforts of their contemporaries among men’. The Advertiser even suggested that Cusack might be a ‘successor’ to Henry Handel Richardson. The Advertiser thus asserted Jungfrau’s cultural, national, global and literary value.

In 1935, Cusack wrote to Florence James that she’d been told Jungfrau’s success lay in it not being ‘typically Australian’. The text’s paradoxical identity – as being true to Australian Life, but not to Australian Literature – may have been why it came second in the Memorial Prize. Among Jungfrau’s original reviews is a newspaper clipping where Cusack ‘replied’ to this critical confusion. She noted how people had trouble ‘reconciling’ the foreign title of Jungfrau with her nationality, and replied to those who ‘complained’ that the novel wasn’t ‘typically Australian’ that she had written as ‘true a

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30 FDD, ‘Daughters’, p.4.  
31 Adelaide Advertiser, NLA MS 4621/14/1.  
32 ibid.  
33 D Cusack to F James (letter), 30 September, 1935, in North, Yarn Spinners, p.32.
translation of Australian city life’ as she was capable of.34 She added that the ‘outback’
tradition of the Australian writing of the 1890’s may have been ‘valuable’ in ‘formulating
a distinctively Australian Literature’, but no longer represented ‘the most significant
aspect’ of Australian ‘national life’.35 Cusack thus confirmed Howard’s interpretation of
her book’s importance. In this article, Cusack also validated Mutch’s thematic focus on
‘female loyalty’, though she clarified that her interest lay in women ‘caught between
personal and impersonal loyalties’, as women weren’t presumed to have the latter. She
also confirmed Davison’s interpretation of the novel as being about modern women
having to face the ‘responsibility for their own destinies’.36 Like most of her critics,
Cusack did not mention abortion or adultery at all. (In an interview in 1981, however, she
said Jungfrau: ‘was about abortion’, written at a time when ‘everyone admitted...
abortions happened’, and knew of ‘abortionists’, though ‘nobody talked about it’.37)

Jungfrau’s ‘modern women’: love them, or hate them?

Whilst Jungfrau’s initial reviewers praised its crafting and realistic depiction of the
young, ‘educated and modern’38 women of their times, their reactions to individual
characters often differed. All of the reviewers saw Thea and Eve similarly. Thea was seen
as passionate, romantic, vulnerable, emotional, sensitive, poetic, loving, but also
‘strangely nebulous’ or ‘unreal’. (One article in Cusack’s archive reported on a Mrs Allen
Innes who dressed up as Thea for an F.A.W. ball. Her interpretation of Thea saw her
dress from head to toe in frilly, feminine whiteness.39) Eve was seen as cold,
unemotional, fanatical, ‘antiseptic’ and restrained by her beliefs to the point of

34 ‘Dymphna Cusack on Danger’, Radio Times, 15 August, 1936 (?), NLAMS 4621/14/1. Another article
sees her deplore ‘the Australian student’s diffident attitude to his own achievements, and his unnecessary
reverence for things overseas’. (‘Entertained Noted University Women’, DT, 8 June, 1936, NLAMS
4621/14/1.) Another describes Cusack as an ‘itinerant writer’ who ‘cannot stand the phrase “The Great
Australian Novel’, Cusack states: ‘French reviewers don’t talk about The Great French Novel, neither do
the English. It’s a peculiarly Australian description – and it should be banned!’ (See, ‘This Authoress
Certainly Seems to Have it in for the Academics’, 3 March, 1967, NLAMS 4621/14/1.)
35 ‘Dymphna Cusack’, Radio Times, NLA MS 4621/14/1.
36 ibid.
37 Rigg, Coming Out, p.60.
39 ‘Book Characters Live at Ball’, (Paper untitled/dated), NLA MS 4621/14/1.
inhumanity. The biggest difference in reviewers’ responses lay in their feelings about Professor Glover and Marc.

Mutch dismissed Marc as a ‘cynical sophisticate’, whilst Davison described her as a well-armoured disbeliever in love’s permanence, who took life as it came. Davison was the only reviewer to note that Marc’s real name is Mary, with her nickname deriving from Marchesa Casati: curiously, Davison did not ponder Marc’s naming beyond this. In opposition to Mutch and Davison, the *Advertiser* saw Marc as being the most modern woman because of her vitality and gallantry, her ‘piquant, haggard beauty’, her ‘wisdom and irony’, and because she was ‘so very much a mistress of her own fate’. Similarly, Howard (himself a part of Sydney’s Bohemian set) named Marc as the only truly ‘emancipated’ character and felt her to be ‘passionately alive, and yet secure enough in her own feeling of integrity to face life without armor [sic] and unafraid’. Morrisby described her as ‘progressive, balanced’ and ‘unconventional’. Davison, was the only reviewer to treat the text as a psychological study, and thus understood the characters as representing ‘opposed philosophies of life’, with Thea being torn between Eve and Marc’s world views. Just as the *Advertiser* saw Thea as ‘nebulous’, Davison asserted that Eve and Marc’s intelligence and ‘maturity of mind’ made the text succeed: whilst the story was Thea’s, he said, the book was theirs. Howard also noted how the characters were used to structure the novel triangularly, claiming that Cusack maintained excellent ‘balance’ between its ‘three central figures’.

*Jungfrau*’s initial reviewers (all men) reacted as oppositionally to Glover as they did to Marc. Mutch, perhaps too busy pointing a warning finger at foolish ‘modern misses’, hardly alluded to Owen’s key role in the story. Though Davison quoted Owen’s

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41 Marchesa Casati was a scandalous European celebrity. Cusack must have used such a namesake to emphasise Marc’s controversial ideas and behaviours. No reviewer, past or present, however, seems to have mused much upon Marc’s naming beyond noting (as they do of her physique) its androgyny. Mary might refer to the Virgin Mary, but more likely it refers to Mary Magdalene, the maybe-prostitute come good. It simply cannot be accidental that Marc-Mary is opposed to Eve in the novel: both have religiously-loaded names; both have strong belief systems; both survive a ‘modern’ world that Thea, who constantly searches for meaning, does not. See <http://www.marchesacasati.com/casatihome.html#>, accessed 25 May, 2011.
42 *Adelaide Advertiser*, NLA MS 4621/141.
45 FDD, ‘Daughters’, p.4.
46 ibid.
47 ibid.
self-deluding perceptions of Thea’s unhurtability, he commended Cusack for not construing Glover as ‘a rake’. Davison thought Cusack had ‘admirable feeling for the realities’ of the story. (Davison’s uncritical perception of Glover may have reflected the acceptability of Glover’s rationalisations, or Davison’s blinkered view of his own ‘romantic’ dealings. Unlike Davison, however, *The Advertiser* contrasted Thea’s loving generosity, to Glover’s egotism, vanity, and pomposity. More subtly, Howard presented Cusack’s women as belonging to a generation that was being victimised by a stereotyping society. Morrisby empathised with Thea’s situation, understanding her horror when Owen retreats to his wife and leaves her to face the ‘brutal reality’ of her illegitimate pregnancy alone. It seems that reading *Jungfrau* as a taboo-breaking text – as the *Advertiser*, Howard and Morrisby read it – produced a positive feeling towards Marc and a negative feeling towards Glover.

The *Sunday Sun* was the only review to trivialise *Jungfrau* in a tiny article that noted that the novel’s reference to the spicy smell of azaleas was incorrect: ‘However, it is said that even Homer nods, so a lady novelist is surely entitled to one nod’. No other critic used such a patronising phrase as ‘lady novelist’: ‘poetess’ was used by Mutch, but only when he noted it was Celtic for ‘Dymphna’. What is most interesting about the *Sun*’s article, however, is the way it is positioned in Cusack’s archive: it is pasted next to a letter from Miles Franklin which lists quotations from John Galsworthy’s *The Man of Property*. These quotations refer to the ‘sweet hot’, ‘sick and dizzy’, or ‘stuffy’ scent of azaleas. Franklin clearly took the *Sun*’s public trivialisation of Cusack and *Jungfrau* to heart.

In 1981 Cusack reflected upon the ‘extraordinary’ fact that Howard and Morrisby’s reviews were the ‘best’ she’d received: ‘They were beautiful – I call a review

48 ibid.
49 See Francis de Groen’s description of his eight year, uncommitted affair with Marjorie Barnard which began when he left his first wife and ended when he married his second. (F de Groen, ‘Dymphna Cusack’s *Comets Soon Pass*: The genius and the potato wife’, in M Dever, *Wallflowers and Witches*, p.100). See M Barnard’s account of her affair in her letter to J Devanny, 1 January, 1947, in Ferrier, *As Good As*, pp.156-158.
50 Adelaide *Advertiser*, NLA MS 4621/14/1.
51 Morrisby, qtd in Freehill, *Dymphna*, pp.42-43.
52 ‘Sydney romance’, *The Sunday Sun*, undated, NLAMS 4621/14/1.
53 M Franklin to D Cusack (letter), undated, NLAMS 4621/14/3 (NB: All of the other pastings in this journal are referenced NLAMS 4621/14/1).
beautiful when it sees what you mean’. These critics’ interpretation of Jungfrau as an empathetic exploration of an ill-defined generation was thus closely aligned to the meaning ‘intended’ by Cusack. Though this is interesting, it cannot be assumed that these critics’ views defined or reflected those of Jungfrau’s original readers: the fact that such positive views were circulated throughout the mass-media – plus the fact that Jungfrau was only printed once – suggests nothing could have made Jungfrau ‘speakable’ for Australians in 1936. Whilst Jungfrau’s ‘death’ might suggest it ‘said nothing’ to its first readers, it might also suggest that it said far, far too much.

**Personal Responses**

As in Dark’s archive, there are a number of personal letters to Cusack that offer insight into what Jungfrau meant to some non-‘professional’ readers.

Coralie Clarke Rees wrote to Cusack in January, 1936. Rees led a stellar career as an academic, journalist, broadcaster, author, and actor who edited the feminist magazine *Dawn*, and wrote for women’s magazines (including the *Weekly*). Rees wrote that Jungfrau was so good that it would be worth reading ‘even if one had a limited time to live, and knew it was limited’. She confessed that she did not much like the novel’s ‘immaturity’ and affected style: ‘You weren’t quite easy with your theme or way of expressing it’. (Rees assumed that Cusack had written the book from beginning to end when, in fact, Cusack wrote the first chapter last.) Rees thought the book improved when Thea began her love affair, and started ‘living reality instead of merely talking about it’. Though it is hard to decipher, Rees seems to state that, from this point onwards, the book seemed ‘wrought in pure flame’. Rees described Jungfrau as a ‘remarkably live piece of work’, proclaimed her envy and said it made ‘the worth’ of Australia’s ‘more established literary luminaries’ look sick. Like Howard and Mutch, Rees saw Cusack’s novel as positively different to Australian Literature. Rees went on to commend the novel’s ‘analytic fearlessness’, which suggests she saw the novel as a book of ideas. She noted the ‘momentum of inevitability’ that ploughed the story to its final end, and

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54 Rigg, *Coming Out!*, p.60.
55 CC Rees to D Cusack (letter), 10 January, 1936, NLAMA 4621/1/10.
56 Cusack, qtd in Freehill, *Dymphna*, p.42.
described the novel as being ‘three dimensional’ because ‘each’ of the girls’ point of view was substantial. She said Jungfrau’s ‘passionate poetry’ and ‘clear line of conviction’ was ‘astonishing’ for ‘a young writer’ and had left her ‘excited’ and ‘impatient’ for the next.

Rees concluded by stating: ‘May the royalties roll in! Though the book’s so uncompromisingly true that I doubt whether they will in sufficient force.’ Like Howard, Rees suspected that Jungfrau was too confronting for Australian readers.

Howard himself wrote a letter to Cusack at the end of 1936. He said he was glad she’d thought he’d ‘done fairly’ by Jungfrau, but wished he could have reviewed it ‘for some other paper’: ‘one has to observe certain rigid taboos on a publication like this one’.

This comment is important: it shows us how the staff of the Weekly had a very clear idea about what was and was not considered ‘acceptable’ to the paper’s readers, and Howard’s euphemistic review was thus calculated to cater to an audience for whom adultery, sex, illegitimate pregnancy and abortion were presumed to be ‘rigid taboos’. When Howard suggested that other papers would have allowed him a more open discussion of the novel, he construed the Weekly’s readers as being of a particularly conservative – rather than universal – type. He told Cusack:

it is most important that more novels of that type should be published in this country. The trouble [?] is that those of us who are trying to put our cities on paper are up against one hell of a prejudice [?] so far as cities and public are concerned. I know; I’ve tried it.

As in his review, Howard named Jungfrau’s urban setting as its most important aspect, and seemed to perceive a powerful, external ‘prejudice’ against this. Howard, who also wrote novels, identified himself and Cusack as writers who were trying to modernise a national literature that was being stunted by its own traditions. Interestingly, the miniscule, trivialising review from the Sunday Sun seems to have annoyed Howard as much as it annoyed Franklin. He told Cusack that such ‘priggish and supercilious’ pieces of ‘rubbish’ should not affect her. He affirmed that her book was ‘sincere and honest’ and that nobody’s derogatory comments could ever alter that. Clearly, what annoyed Howard

57 Howard to Cusack (letter), NLAMS 4621/1/11 and 4621/1/12.
most was that the Sun’s stupidity should constitute literary criticism at all, and he concluded by offering Cusack help with her future work.  

At the end of 1936, Margaret Neville wrote to Cusack from Broken Hill, where Cusack had taught in 1928. Neville, a teacher, described herself as ‘endeavouring to formulate her own philosophy’. Like Davison, she seemed to see Jungfrau as a philosophical text. Neville identified with the novel’s ‘well delineated and vital’ characters so much that she discussed them as though they were real. She thought Marc called ‘for the most admiration being so individual’, and saw her as an amalgam of two women she’d known as a student in Sydney: ‘possessing the showiness and unconventionality of one but the strength of purpose and resource of the other’. She added that ‘Marc was never erratic, she could never be termed “mad” even by the sternest of her critics’. No other critic – private or public – questioned the sanity of Marc, but Neville seemed to assume that a woman of Marc’s ‘type’ might well be dismissed as such. Neville thought Eve (‘of course’) was ‘the finest character’, and admired ‘her quiet strength and strict adherence’ to her ‘code’. Neville understood that Eve did only what she could, despite Marc’s ‘condemnation’ and, Neville presumed, the condemnation of Cusack’s readers, ‘particularly’ those of ‘the intellectual left wing’. Neville thus considered Jungfrau’s characters in relation to ‘real’ politics. (Many critics, like bohemian Howard, did condemn Eve as ‘cold’, ignoring those parts of the novel where she is overcome with grief for Thea, feels rage and jealousy for Marc, and warm stirrings for John.) Neville found Thea ‘the most debatable character’, a ‘dreamer’ and an idealist who was doomed to remain outside a materialistic world’s ‘general estimate’ or kill herself by conforming ‘to its so-called practical standards’. Idealists, Neville lamented, were seen to contribute nothing ‘definite’ to society, and thus received the ‘most censure’. Neville believed that ‘practical’ readers would dismiss Thea as ‘stupid’, but she thought her ‘the most sympathetic and beautiful character’, and wondered (as Eve did) if

60 FDD, ‘Daughters’, p.4.
Thea’s real tragedy lay in having no ‘practical outlet’ to express herself. In a strikingly similar fashion to De Garis, Neville thus used *Jungfrau* as a means to explicate her own anti-materialist, anti-establishment philosophy. She claimed its characters represented a part of her own community ‘whose fringe’ she’d touched and whom she’d ‘care to be a central member of’. Such women, she said, had ‘a deep-rooted sense of independence and loyalty to those of their own sex’, had ‘an easy intellectual footing’ with one another, and had ‘access to varied and stimulating people’. Most women, Neville thought, made a ‘convenience of their sisters’ till they found a man to ‘cling’ to. Again, *Jungfrau* was praised for its realism, this time found in its positive portrayal of a certain type of woman with Neville, like Mutch, identifying female loyalty as a central theme.

Cusack also received a letter from ‘Jim’, who seemed attached to the world of theatre. He saw *Jungfrau* – as no other critic had – as a ‘woman’s book’ that he wouldn’t have read had she not written it. Cusack’s ‘work of art’, however, ‘amazed’ and ‘staggered’ him with its creativity and because its content was, he assumed, ‘outside’ of Cusack’s experience. He loved her ‘similes’ (especially ‘Jungfrau’, though this is a metaphor), and her ‘beautiful prose poetry’ and ‘pen pictures’. He felt Cusack’s ‘stage work’ had improved her novel’s crafting, with each chapter ending with a good ‘curtain’. He thought her characterisation was ‘good’, and was the only critic to call the book ‘introspective’, or to see Thea as ‘well drawn and logical’. He liked Eve, who reminded him of his ‘austere Methodist’ upbringing, but couldn’t ‘reconcile’ Marc’s ‘type’ with being a prison charity worker. He felt Glover ‘was probably drawn from life’. Again, the success of *Jungfrau*’s characterisations was being measured in relation to real ‘types’ of people. Jim was the only commentator to criticise Cusack’s handling of the Sydney setting, feeling it was ‘rather dragged in’ and ‘forced’. He was thus one private reader whose opinions were contrary to those of Cusack’s professional reviewers.

In January 1937, Elizabeth Skottowe wrote to Cusack from Adelaide. Skottowe was an artist, and sub-editor of an art periodical. She wrote to Cusack to tell her she’d received *Jungfrau* in order to review it:

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61 ‘Jim’ to D Cusack (letter), 22 December, 1936, NLAMS 4621/1/18 - NLAMS 4621/1/19.
62 ES Kattowe to D Cusack (letter), 27 January, 1937, NLS MS 4621/1/20. I’m not sure which review was hers, or if I found it.
63 See the Austlit database for information on her life and writing <http://www.austlit.edu.au.ezp.lib.>
I read it, and read parts of it again, then I took it to the man for whom I do reviews and said “you must read this” – He did, and said that, in his opinion, it was far better than *All That Swagger* – and that he was giving it the review of the week.

Skottowe and her boss thus measured Jungfrau in relation to what they saw as the skewed values of an Australian Literature that still reified pioneering, bush-set novels like Franklin’s. Skottowe’s letter also shows how yet another man actively sought to positively promote the book through his powerful place in the media. (Like Rees, Skottowe confided to Cusack that *Jungfrau* made her feel ‘rather small’, though Skottowe’s novel had just won second prize in the Adelaide Centenary competition.64)

In 1940, Cusack received a curious letter from ‘Colleen’, sent from a ‘Mental Hospital’ in Gladesville, NSW.65 Colleen began by apologising for ‘the horribly muddled and wretched’ letter she’d written previously: ‘Did I talk too much? Was I indiscreet?’ She said she’d reread *Jungfrau* and described it as ‘all poetry’ like the *Story of Solomon* and Katherine Mansfield: ‘It hurt me as they do’. Colleen referred to a ‘strange’ letter or ‘story’ which she’d sent Cusack just before reading *Jungfrau*: she’d been ‘startled to find how alike’ they were. It seems that *Jungfrau*’s language affected Colleen, and though her letter says little about the novel, it offers us a glimpse of one of its original, private readers. This nurse (who was awaiting a new teaching appointment, and had worked as nursemaid, governess, and in a shop) found *Jungfrau* painfully similar to her own life. Though she was confident enough to write to Cusack, her letter is practically incoherent, reading with a remarkably confessional and intimate tone that makes it seem – unlike Coolami’s interior monologues – like ‘real’ stream-of-consciousness writing.

**Conclusions: the original reception of Jungfrau; comparisons to Coolami**

Overall, the original published reviews of *Jungfrau* were positive. Whether seeing the novel as being at odds with, or part of, the evolution of a realistic, urban and modern ‘Australian’ identity – or as leading ‘Australian literature’ away from its traditional
pioneer and bush themes – all its reviewers positively engaged with it. All published reviewers recognised Thea, Eve and Marc as real female ‘types’. Whilst they generally saw Thea and Eve similarly, their feelings towards Marc and Glover were often opposed: dislike of Marc and sympathy for Glover saw the book read as an affirmation of a negative female stereotype; admiration of Marc and a damnation of Glover saw the book read as an attack on such stereotypes. All the reviews, whose authors were named, were written by men, and it was thus men who used *Jungfrau* to encourage Australians towards certain understandings of Modern Women, Modern Australian Society or Modern Australian Literature. The tabooed nature of *Jungfrau*’s content saw all reviewers, except Morrisby, rely on euphemism to name the novel’s subject. Likewise, the personal responses to *Jungfrau* never mentioned adultery or abortion, and also used the novel’s realism to discuss modern women and modern life, whilst praising Cusack for her insight, courage and skill. Whilst the personal responses to *Jungfrau* were from people whom the novel did not horrify, such responses show that *Jungfrau* was relevant and audible (if not speakable) to ‘ordinary’ Australians in 1936.

There is a number of things worth noting from a comparison of *Coolami* and *Jungfrau*’s original reception. Few reviewers disliked Dark’s ‘people’, even if they were annoyed by their constant introspection. *Jungfrau*’s reviewers, however, reacted more personally to Cusack’s characters, perhaps because they ‘read’ them as ‘real’ types. Reviewers noted the ‘Austrianness’ of both novels, however *Coolami*’s Austrianness lay in its sparkling depiction of the countryside, whilst *Jungfrau*’s lay in its familiar, modern, urban landscape and characters. Curiously, though both novels were based on multiple, third person, mediated points of view, only *Coolami*’s form received sustained attention: *Coolami* broke with ‘traditional’ Australian literary form; *Jungfrau* broke with ‘traditional’ Australian literary themes and settings. ‘Modernism’ was related only once to *Coolami*, and never to *Jungfrau*, though reviewers often noted how ‘modern’ both stories’ themes, characters or settings were. Reviewers never noted the controversial aspects of *Coolami*, whilst *Jungfrau*’s reviewers had to talk euphemistically around its central themes of abortion, adultery, and suicide. Consequently, whilst readers of *Coolami*’s reviews could not have been surprised by the novel, it was almost inevitable that *Jungfrau*’s first readers were horrified by its explicit nature. Reviewers seldom
qualified their readings in relation to Dark or Cusack’s gender, and sexist, abusive or trivialising reviews were exceptional. Interestingly, Jungfrau, which was neither read nor reviewed overseas, received long and detailed reviews whilst Coolami’s many reviews were typically brief and superficial. Both novels, however, affected some individuals so deeply that they felt prompted to write to their authors. Perhaps the most interesting comparison – and certainly one most relevant to this research – is that, whilst both novels were reviewed in the Weekly, Coolami (which would be republished for decades) only got a superficial ‘Short Review’ whilst Jungfrau (which would disappear) won the eye-catching, extended review of the week.
Part Two:

Reading in the World of the Weekly
Figure 7: ‘Enter --- 1936’, Weekly, 4 January, 1936, p.1.
Chapter Three:
“What Women Are Doing” in 1936
In 1936, the *Weekly* told its readers that a New Woman was ‘emerging’ into a New World from an ‘old-fashioned’ home that she was unlikely to ‘desire or consent’ to return to: ‘the daughters of to-day have the world at their feet – radio, sport, aviation, science, farming, law, politics, business, and even soldiering claim their interest’.¹ The rest of this thesis explores how the *Weekly’s* glamorisation of this physical, public, career-defined woman collided with the paper’s simultaneous, unrelenting affirmation of marriage, motherhood and the home as ‘Woman’s Right Sphere’.

This chapter looks at what the paper’s regular format presumed about readers’ interests and occupations, presumptions that must have been well-founded considering the paper’s phenomenal circulation. Subsequent chapters discuss the news, themes and attitudes which predominated in the paper, attempting to construct an historically-valid ‘imaginative universe’ within which I embed my speculations upon what Jungfrau and *Return to Coolami* might have meant to Australian women readers in 1936.

**Cover Girls First: stepping into the world of the Weekly**

In order to get an initial impression of the ‘types’ of women which the magazine idealised, I placed the fifty-two cover-images from 1936 into categories (See ‘Appendix Two’²). These categories were established according to the images themselves, with the images’ accompanying titles and poems used to refine the grouping process.

The largest category, ‘Physical Women’, consists of fifteen images showing women that refer to physical, outdoor activities: sports girls, horsewomen, women of the ‘domestic’ outdoors, and motor women. ‘Public Women’ form the second largest group of eleven covers. Five of these refer to a career (e.g. ‘The Nurse’³), three to ‘apprentice’ public women (e.g. ‘School Girl’⁴), two to film stars, and one to women as consumers. ‘Love Calling’,⁵ groups eight covers that refer to heterosexual relationships. ‘Mirrored

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² Only one cover differs between the hardcopy Melbourne edition and the (microfilmed) Sydney edition. On the 30 May, 1936, the Sydney edition had a family study of Queen Mary for its cover, whilst Melbourne had a portrait of a woman in horse riding gear, captioned ‘Angel on Horseback’. My research uses the Melbourne edition only.
Charm\textsuperscript{6} includes seven covers that posit a non-specific, idealised female type, whilst the ‘Spinning Wheel’\textsuperscript{7} category presents idealised feminine types whose images suggest a nostalgic yearning for the past. Only five covers refer to maternity, with two covers depicting mothers and their children, and three presenting small children alone. The final category includes portraits of real people, namely, ‘Queen Adelaide’,\textsuperscript{8} ‘Edward the Eighth’,\textsuperscript{9} and the New Zealand aviator ‘Jean Batten’.\textsuperscript{10}

Many of these covers are analysed throughout this thesis. I have mentioned them here because it seems significant that the initial ‘entry’ and ‘sales’ point of the magazine was dominated by images of independent, physical and public women, whilst only a handful refer to romantic love, only two explicitly depict mothers, and none depicts a ‘housewife’.

‘What Women Are Doing’ in 1936

In 1936, every issue of the \textit{Weekly} had a full page section called ‘What Women Are Doing’ (Figure 8).\textsuperscript{11} This page assumed readers were interested in ‘career’ women like Miss Crespin (the first woman Commonwealth Palaeontologist),\textsuperscript{12} Miss Evans (one of the first women barristers in the Commonwealth),\textsuperscript{13} and Mrs von Bibra (Mayoress of Launceston).\textsuperscript{14} Both lesser known, and internationally renowned artists, like Australian pianist Eileen Joyce, also appeared regularly.\textsuperscript{15} Charity workers and missionaries like Mrs J.R. Andrews (a New Guinean missionary)\textsuperscript{16} and Miss A.M. McCaul (a welfare worker amongst Aboriginal people)\textsuperscript{17} were always newsworthy, as were women travellers like Mrs L.A. Middows, who saw Russia for £27.\textsuperscript{18} Such travellers were enjoying a ‘Grand

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{11} ‘WWD’, \textit{Weekly}, 5 December, 1936, p.33.
\bibitem{13} ‘WWD’, \textit{Weekly}, 7 March, 1936, p.23.
\bibitem{17} ‘WWD’, \textit{Weekly}, 25 April, 1936, p.23.
\bibitem{18} ‘WWD’, \textit{Weekly}, 4 April, 1936, p.21.
\end{thebibliography}
Tour’, accompanying their husbands on business trips, travelling for business or study, or attending conferences, as Mrs B.M. Rischbieth did when she attended the League of Nations’ conference on women’s welfare.\textsuperscript{19} Women in sports like hockey, bowling, fencing, tennis, Physical Culture and cricket were also assumed to be of interest to the paper’s readers, as were organisations like the Country Women’s Association, the League of Women Voters, the Free Kindergarten movement, the Housewives’ Association, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the YMCA and YWCA, the League of Health and Beauty, and the Truby King Mothercraft League.

![Image](image_url)

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{‘What Women are Doing’}
\end{figure}

Whilst the magazine’s covers glamorised common occupations like physical leisure pursuits and ‘feminine’ work-a-day jobs, like nursing and typing, the ‘What Women are Doing’ page – despite the ‘representative’ connotations of its title – told the Weekly’s readers that ‘what’ women were doing was rising to the tops of their specialised professions (often as the ‘first’ women in Australia or the Commonwealth to do so), globe-trotting, perfecting their physical, creative or intellectual skills, or working hard in prominent positions within charitable or religious organisations. Like the covers, the

\textsuperscript{19} ‘WWD’, \textit{Weekly}, 2 May, 1936, p.23.
What Women are Doing’ page generally did not focus on its subjects’ status as wives and mothers. The following evaluates whether the women who appeared on this page, and the Weekly’s covers, reflected the readers that the rest of the Weekly’s content seemed aimed at.

What were women really doing in 1936?

The Weekly persistently emphasised its status as a unique provider of ‘news of feminine and general interest’. Such news included the paper’s obsession with Canada’s Dionne Quins and ‘Stork Derby’, reportage on the death and funeral of King George V and the antics (and abdication) of his son, Edward VIII, the spectacular achievements of women like aviatrix Jean Batten, and reportage on women’s struggle for equal rights. Articles about women in the ‘New World’, the status of Spinsters and Old Maids, a ‘Man’s Most Fascinating Age’ and ‘The Woman a Man Prefers’ also appeared in the paper’s ‘news’ pages. Successful men and women were newsworthy too, and appeared in page three’s ‘Let’s Talk of Interesting People’ column (Figures 9,10).

The Weekly also reported as ‘news’ the promotion of its new and existing features, its search for modern printing presses, and the progress of its competitions. The paper always emphasised its internationality by drawing attention to its special correspondents in Hollywood, London and New York, and its war correspondents in Abyssinia and Spain. It reported on Germany, and ran a series of extended articles on Russia. The paper repeatedly noted its reporters’ use of beam wireless, cable and radio-pictures and thus made the paper’s technological modernity part of the news that it reported. In these ways, the paper constructed itself and its readers as significant, both engaged in creating a ‘modern’, unique, and feminine ‘Australianness’ which included a political and cultural outlook that gazed well beyond the domestic sphere.

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21 D Aiken, ‘New Era Has Dawned for Maiden Aunts’, Weekly, 4 April, 1936, p.3.
22 D Aiken, ‘A man’s most fascinating age!’, Weekly, 30 May, 1936, p.3.
25 E.g. ‘Five Big New Star Features’, Weekly, 25 January, 1936, p.2. This article reported the ‘news’ of a new Movie supplement, new fiction, and a new competition.
After the news pages, the full-page, illustrated beginnings of two short stories and a serial appeared, each of which continued throughout the rest of the magazine, taking up (along with advertising) much of the magazine’s central and final pages. A third short story would often appear and every magazine came with a free, separate ‘full-length’ novel. Most of these novels consisted of twenty-four to thirty-two pages of tiny print, triple-column text. A handful of these novels were written by ‘Antipodean’ writers including New Zealander Joyce West, or the Australian F. Coleman, the Margot Neville duo, and Edward Vivian Timms (Figures 11, 12, 13). The vast majority of the Weekly’s fiction was, however, British and American: see ‘Appendix Three’ for a complete list.

26 Samples shown: A Mills, ‘Calling at Trinidad’ (short story), Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.4; D Hoys, ‘Chinese Waters’ (short story), Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.5; AD Miller, ‘Five Little Heiresses’ (serial).
27 Samples shown: J West, ‘Sheep Kings’ (novel), Weekly, 4 January, 1936; R Sabatini, ‘Captain Blood’ (novel), Weekly, 2 May, 1936.
Jessie Tait’s ‘The Fashion Parade’, illustrated by Petrov, appeared around page eight and was typically followed by a full-page fashion photospread. (In December, Tait died in childbirth, along with her baby). From mid-year, Tait was followed by Rene’s ‘March of the Mode’. These pages offered illustrated fashion advice, and the paper’s ‘Fashion Service’ (in the paper’s ‘Home Maker Section’) enabled readers to economically emulate stylish looks with free sewing patterns (Figures 14, 15, 16).²⁸

The Weekly’s ‘Editorial’ column appeared on pages ten or twelve, and often made strong statements about such controversial issues as ‘Women and Diplomacy’, ‘The Marriage Age’, and ‘The Death Penalty’.\(^{29}\) I have analysed many of these editorials in the following chapters, treating them as the paper’s ‘official line’ on a range of issues. The editorial (written by George Warnecke or Alice Jackson) was always accompanied by Leslie Haylen’s ‘Points of View’, where he presented paragraphs commenting on

anything from the absurd (like the Texan Queen of Spinach\textsuperscript{30}), to the socially or politically urgent, like the plight of the ‘unwanted’ women who served in – and were left single by – the Great War,\textsuperscript{31} or Hitler and Mussolini’s failure to laugh away their troubles.\textsuperscript{32} This page included ‘Blondie’, a cartoon about a tall, slim, stylish young woman enjoying a multitude of urban, modern situations (Figure 17).\textsuperscript{33}

L.W. Lower’s humour article, illustrated by W.E.P., followed the editorial page and sympathetically mocked such things as the effect of women’s emancipation on men,\textsuperscript{34} the plight of exiled Ethiopian King, Haile Selassie,\textsuperscript{35} and the Berlin Olympics.\textsuperscript{36} Leslie Haylen’s ‘New Books’ column appeared next and offered readers an extended review of one novel, along with four or five shorter reviews: in 1936, this page positively promoted both \textit{Return to Coolami} and \textit{Jungfrau}; the paper clearly saw its own readers as ‘likely’ readers of these novels. ‘New Books’ was followed by ‘Some New Laughs’, which included jokes sent in by readers for a payment of 2/6. Around page seventeen the paper offered a full-page photospread relevant to current news, or randomly themed. (Figure 18)\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{blondie}
\caption{‘Blondie’}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} ‘POV’, \textit{Weekly}, 6 June, 1936, p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{31} ‘POV’, \textit{Weekly}, 30 May, 1936, p.10.
\item \textsuperscript{32} ‘POV’, \textit{Weekly}, 18 April, 1936, p.10.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Sample of ‘Blondie’, \textit{Weekly}, 25 July, 1936, p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{34} LW Lower, ‘Dawn of the Golden Age’, \textit{Weekly}, 23 May, 1936, p.11.
\item \textsuperscript{35} LW Lower, ‘Hail Haile!’, \textit{Weekly}, 30 May, 1936, p.11.
\end{itemize}
The ‘So They Say’ page usually appeared next. Its first and last columns were made up of miscellaneously themed letters, with its central columns presenting multiple reader-replies to previous letters (Figure 19).\textsuperscript{38} I have treated these letters as an important source of the real ‘voices’ of ordinary Australian women in 1936, though it must be remembered that these ‘voices’ belonged to a specific type of reader, namely, one who wrote to be published. More importantly, I’ve kept in mind how these ‘voices’ were editorialised by the paper’s acts of selection, titling, its awarding of £1 to the most ‘important’ letter each week and its addition of captioned cartoons that emphasised one side of a story. Men also wrote in, and though they were outnumbered by women it is difficult to know the exact gender split as many reader-writers did not signify their gender or marital status with a ‘Miss’, ‘Mrs’, or ‘Mr’.

\textsuperscript{38} Sample of ‘STS’, \textit{Weekly}, 1 August, 1936, p.19.
In the middle of the magazine, the American comic ‘Mandrake’ appeared, as did Tilly’s ‘Intimate Jottings’, which reported Australian society news (Figure 20). The ‘What Women are Doing’ page appeared in the middle of the magazine, and included a cartoon by W.E.P. called ‘In and Out of Society’ (Figure 21) which showed the social and marital bungles of a matronly and naive ‘lady’: a definite contrast – aside from her naivety – to Blondie. ‘Girligags’, ‘A Bachelor Girl’s Philosophy’, ‘Miss 1936’, and ‘A Bachelor’s Philosophy’ cartoons, were dotted throughout the magazine (Figure 22), and commented on modern times, men, women, and marriage. Poems by the Weekly’s staple poets Yvonne Webb, Phyllis Duncan-Brown, and Louis Montrose also appeared throughout.

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39 Sample of ‘IJ’, Weekly, 1 August, 1936, p.31.
In January, 1936, the *Weekly* launched ‘a new and special field of service to its readers’. The *Movie World* promised to place readers ‘in direct contact with the motion-picture colonies’ of Hollywood, Elstree, London and New York. Its eight pages included large photo portraits of individual stars (Figure 23) and photospreads promoting individual films. ‘Here’s Hot News from All the Studios’ and ‘Calling Australia! Hollywood News as it Happens’ gossiped about celebrities’ romantic and screen dramas. ‘The Movie World’ included substantial feature articles (Figure 24) by such ‘special film correspondents’ as Judy Bailey (London), Barbara Burchier (Hollywood), and John B. Davies (New York and Hollywood), whilst Stewart Howard reviewed films in ‘Private Views’.

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43 Photo of Simone Simon on the cover of ‘MW’, *Weekly*, 1 August, 1936, p.23.
The next substantial section of the paper was the ‘Home Maker’ supplement (Figure 25), which offered economical home decoration, sewing, cooking and mothering advice. ‘Cash Prizes’ (up to £1) awaited ‘Alert Housewives!’ who sent in recipes (Figure 26) whilst ‘Clever Ideas’ gave readers money-saving hints around the home (‘Rejuvenate Your Shoes’, restore ‘Rancid Butter’). Meanwhile, ‘A Doctor’ answered readers’ questions about such things as ‘sane’ eating routines, ‘mental depression’, and constipation. Evelyn gave beauty, diet and exercise advice in her ‘Body Beautiful’ column (Figure 27), telling readers: ‘Look Lovely and be Admired… To be admired is to be happy’. Mary Truby King’s ‘For Young Wives and Mothers’ column directed women on pre-and post-natal care in an often unsympathetic and aggressive manner. The ‘Home Maker’ section also included a gardening page, whilst the rest of the paper contained June Marsden’s astrology column, the tail-ends of fiction, and a mixed bag of news, including plenty of reportage by prominent sportswomen like Ruth Preddey and Joan Hartigan.

45 Sample cover of ‘HM’, Weekly, 1 August, 1936, p.37.
51 ‘WPM’, Weekly, 7 November, 1936, p.44.
52 Sample of ‘BB’, Weekly, 1 August, 1936, p.43.
Figure 25: ‘Home Maker’

Figure 26: ‘Best Recipe’ column and competition

Figure 27: Evelyn’s ‘Body Beautiful’
No attempt to imagine the social reality suggested by the *Weekly* can ignore the advertising which dominated its pages and upon which its very existence depended (Figures 28-37).54 The consistently ‘ad free’ spaces in the paper were the cover, its stories’ opening pages, the photospreads, the ‘Editorial’ page, Tilly’s ‘Intimate Jottings’, ‘Mandrake’, and the paper’s free novels. ‘The Movie World’ was effectively an ‘Ad for Hollywood’, with its ‘news’ about stars and films effectively promoting both. The rest of the paper was filled with scores of ads. One dominant group promised women that make-up and beauty products would solve the related problems of ugliness, aging and singledom. Another huge group of ads offered constipation, indigestion and heartburn treatments, weight loss products, nerve-repairing and blood-cleansing ‘tonics’, and medicines for headaches, colds, lethargy and depression: these ads always constructed the human body as self-poisoning, disobedient, deadly and in urgent and constant need of external intervention. Cleansers for the teeth, skin, the home and clothes formed another substantial group of ads that again emphasised the relationship between dirtiness and danger, whilst asserting that wives and mothers were entirely responsible for men and children’s wellbeing. Fabric and pre-made clothes, feminine ‘pain’ and hygiene products, education, cars, petrol, bank loans, insurance, credit home furnishings, insecticide, holidays (including the *Weekly’s* Travel Bureau), pet care, and astrology services were also advertised in the paper, as were information pamphlets on how to grow muscles, get taller, gain confidence, or develop a better bust. One tiny ‘coded’ ad about ‘Australia’s Best Immigrants’ appeared in every single issue and seemed to offer free advice on fertility problems.55

Figure 28: Palmolive soap, for keeping skin young.
Figure 29: Clements ‘Nerve and Brain’ Tonic to keep ‘ever young’

Figure 30: Bidomak, for frizzled nerves and ‘Cranky Children’
Figure 31: Bile Beans for keeping slim and in ‘perfect health’

Figure 32: Kruschen Salts, for the ‘over-stout’

Figure 33: Bonkora, for organs ‘encumbered by fat’
**Figure 34:** Protex, for ‘complete germicidal protection’

**Figure 35:** A.M.P. Society’s Insurance, for ‘the wisdom of increased assurance’

**Figure 36:** Aspro, for retaining ‘the charm of youth’, and treating headache, irritability, malaria, dengue, gout, and for giving ‘great relief to women when depressed’

**Figure 37:** write to the Sydney Physical Institute, to ‘gain all the social and business advantages of a commanding figure’
Whilst women in the Weekly’s ‘What Women Are Doing’ page were racing to the tops of their professional or social ladders, and whilst the magazine’s covers depicted attractive, physically powerful young women with public identities other than mothers (and never as ‘housewives’), the Weekly’s fiction, fashion, and advertising – plus its substantial ‘Movie World’ and ‘Home Maker’ supplements – suggest that what the Weekly’s readers were really presumed to be doing in 1936 was dreaming and gossiping about the Talkies, wondering about famous children and royalty, buying or making clothes, furnishing their homes, making themselves beautiful, cooking, cleaning, looking after babies, reading vast amounts of popular fiction, and trying to save money whilst consuming masses of products that both created and ‘cured’ their bodily and domestic fears of toxicity, fatness, ugliness, singledom, aging and their adequacy as wives and mothers. Though the ‘New’ or ‘Modern’ Australian woman named by the Weekly was encouraged to look out across the seas, her feet were planted firmly in the dirt of her own little backyard.

Thea, Eve, Marc... What are you doing?

Thea. You are a twenty-five year-old English teacher who lives alone. You are childish, as exquisite and ‘frail’ as ‘eggshell china’. You hate your job. You are considering a Masters, but only to be near Glover. You aren’t dreaming of the Talkies; you are having nightmares. We gaze with fascinated horror at the cold, naked clone lying next to you in bed. Reality, meaning, significance – these are the questions that plague you. Your budding philosophy of ‘taking’ life, rather than letting it take you, culminates in a night with Glover (a man with ‘love’ written into his name, no less). We wonder: Who has taken what from whom? This night gives your life meaning, and so, when you realise it

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57 J, p.105.
58 J, pp.7-8.
59 Chapter One introduces one of Jungfrau’s key concerns: ‘What’ is ‘reality’? (J, p.1. Other references to ‘reality’: J, pp.1, 5, 16-7, 59, 95, 103, 107, 200-201, 225, 235-236, 252.) See also, continued references to the related themes of ‘meaning’ and ‘significance’. (J, pp. 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 25, 48, 54, 55, 70, 71, 72, 73, 94, 95, 121, 149, 172, 180, 199, 212, 218, 221, 240, 277, 281.)
60 J, pp.4,15.
61 J, pp.148-149.
is merely an 'incident' to him, your life becomes meaningless. Your self splits further. Brennan's words haunt your desolation: 'I am shut out of mine own heart, because my love is far from me'. But not far enough. Glover's unlove grows in your belly. You cannot escape it until your other self warms fully to life in order to kill the baby, by killing you. Living, loving, killing, dying: this is what you do in Jungfrau.

Marc. You are a psychology-obsessed social worker. You help boys in the children's courts. You live in an attic on the quay with your bulldog, Pat, and spend idle hours tinkering with your old boat. You are wild, rude, flamboyant. Though plain and thin, your 'disturbing vitality' inspires 'yearning and distaste' in others. Your 'flaming' red hair shouts passion: you've had lovers; you have a reputation. Like Glover, you trade in eloquent rationalisations, but when you meet Oswald Mackins, you wonder if, as you've preached to Thea, love can be more than a mere 'incident'. What you do in Jungfrau, Marc, is live by your own code: unlike Thea, your code lets you survive your modern world.

Eve. You are an Obstetrician. You are seen as efficient, colourless and cold. You wear sensible shoes and are constantly fiddling with your gloves: they signal your conventionality. (Is it a co-incidence that the respectable professor has 'Glove' in his name too?) You are practical and 'perfectly poised'. You hate Marc, that pretentious, cynical Modern full of 'poisonous' ideas like 'all experience is valuable'. You warn Thea that the world will rush in on her, if she lets it. She ignores you; the world rushes in. Religion is your comfort. It promises you that even suffering has 'a divine meaning', and it teaches you abortion is murder: you cannot do it, not even for Thea.

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63 J, pp.51, 56, 156, 195, 233, 265. This quotation is from the poem 'I Am Shut Out of Mine Own Heart', by Christopher Brennan.
64 J, pp.23, 25, 41, 43, 91, 118.
65 J, pp.87-88. Other references to Marc's vitality or 'aliveness': J, pp.30, 41-43, 46, 118, 206.
66 J, pp.23, 41, 117.
67 J, pp.43, 74,123.
68 For Marc on 'incidents', see J, pp.51-52, 134, 216-219.
70 J, pp.19, 23, 170.
72 J, pp.5, 29, 119, 122, 179,183, 246.
74 J, pp.121, 177, 180, 201-202.
75 J, pp.121, 180.
What you do in Jungfrau, Eve, is help those around you according to the rigid teachings of science and God. Like Marc, you survive.

Does the Weekly fit into your urban world, Thea, Eve and Marc? You read Blake, Shelley, Dunne, Brennan, Eddington, John Webster, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. You stare at the Mona Lisa, muse on Della Robbia reliefs, listen to Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms, César Franck, and Wagner. The only magazine you read is Manuscripts. (Eve, you detest its ‘passionate emotionalism’, poetic ‘incomprehensibilities’, and ‘slatternly technique’. You sound like Glover, describing the Moderns.) Though the Weekly does not seem a part of your world, any of you – attractive, young, professional – might appear in its ‘What Women are Doing’ or ‘Let’s Talk of Interesting People’ pages. If you marry the right kind of man, you might appear in Tilly’s society news, though the ‘news’ of your death, Thea, would never appear in any of the Weekly’s reportage.

Susan, Millicent, Margery... What are you doing?

You are all articulate and intelligent, but only you, Margery, allude to a university education. Your story is not littered with references to books and poems and songs and plays, and the world we see through your eyes is not Cusack’s recognisable Sydney streets: it is a rural world; perhaps not a real world at all. None of you work outside of the home, and each of you are financially supported by fathers or husbands.

Susan. You are twenty-one. Like Thea, you are childish, Peter-Pan-ish, tiny. Your thirty-five year old husband, Bret, feels like your uncle. Like Thea, you tried to live according to your own theories. Like Thea, you ignored others’ warnings, and the world rushed in on you in the form of pregnancy and a marriage-of-convenience. How
you reacted to this trap, however, makes you seem like Marc. You are also a plucky,\textsuperscript{86} disturbing,\textsuperscript{87} vital\textsuperscript{88} and fiery red-head,\textsuperscript{89} determined to preserve your inner self.\textsuperscript{90} You have the baby, as Marc hopes she would if she were pregnant,\textsuperscript{91} not only to pay the ‘forfeit’\textsuperscript{92} of your gamble with Jim, but because the child must not suffer. Like Thea, Susan, you think ‘love’ happens ‘to’\textsuperscript{93} a person, and so, what you do in Coolami – as you literally and metaphorically move from being a daughter and Jim’s lover, to Bret’s wife and lover – is wait for love to happen to Bret. Lucky for you, it does.

Millicent, you are fifty-seven years old. For thirty-seven years Tom, your husband, has tried to outdo your love for the country with an endless procession of meaningless, material perfections. When Tom nearly crashes, you worry that nothing remains for you both ‘but an existence and a host of material possessions’.\textsuperscript{94} When you are not musing on your marriage, you are worrying about your children. You pray that your shared journey will see the ‘uncaring fecundity’ of the earth transform everyone’s ‘unhealthful complexities’.\textsuperscript{95} First and foremost, what you do in Coolami, is be a wife, and a mother-to-all. Like Susan, you passively wait for change. You are also lucky: your children’s wounds heal; Tom transforms into a ‘new husband’.\textsuperscript{96}

Margery, you are also a wife and mother and the only woman in either novel who suffers the feverish ‘drudgeries’\textsuperscript{97} of housework and childcare. You are burdened by pregnancy and your marriage to Colin. Though reeling from another fight, you are grateful for your children and your ‘difficult husband’\textsuperscript{98} You seek refuge in the ‘restful’ tangles of ‘impersonal problems’.\textsuperscript{99} Like Millicent, a fellow life-maker, you are preoccupied with the problem of war.\textsuperscript{100} Margery, what you ‘do’ in Coolami is look after

\textsuperscript{86}C, pp.54, 158, 173.
\textsuperscript{87}C, pp.45, 92-93, 157.
\textsuperscript{88}C, pp.101, 110.
\textsuperscript{89}C, pp.28, 101, 49, 113.
\textsuperscript{90}C, p.37.
\textsuperscript{91}J, p.214-215.
\textsuperscript{92}C, pp.30, 51.
\textsuperscript{93}C, p.20.
\textsuperscript{94}C, pp.171, 40, 24, 11.
\textsuperscript{95}C, p.85.
\textsuperscript{96}C, p.178.
\textsuperscript{97}C, p.103.
\textsuperscript{98}C, p.107.
\textsuperscript{99}C, p.123.
\textsuperscript{100}C, p.121-126, 104.
your children, your home and Colin’s family whilst you wait for him to come home. And, of course, he does.

Drew’s and Bret’s rural and urban empires might see you, Susan and Millicent, appear in Tilly’s society pages. If you two travelled, or did charity work, you may appear in the ‘What Women are Doing’ pages. Your husbands may appear in the ‘Let’s Talk of Interesting People’ column. Perhaps Balool would appear in the ‘Home Maker’ section’s series on Australian homes. Susan and Millicent: though you might crop up in its pages, I’m not sure if you’d read the Weekly. Maybe the Weekly belongs in your world, Margery: would its scraps of news and fiction offer you some escape? Its economical tips on homes and babies might help you. Might you pick up a pen to reply to another woman’s assertions on the ‘So They Say’ page? Of all of Dark’s and Cusack’s women, Margery, the Weekly seems of most relevance to you and your domestic world.
Chapter Four:
Modern Women are Amazons?
As the largest category of covers, ‘Physical Women’ seems an appropriate place to begin my reconstruction of ‘The World of the Weekly in 1936’. This chapter explores how female physicality manifested in the paper, Return to Coolami and Jungfrau.

**Sporting Amazons: As Good As Any Man?**

The *Weekly* promised that 1936 would keep Australian women ‘in a whirl of excitement’, with female sports stars competing in big events like the Berlin Olympics and the National Games in Adelaide. Sportswomen-journalists, like Australians Joan Hartigan (tennis player) and Ruth Preddey (cricketer), and England’s Dorothy Round (tennis player), reported on such sports as tennis, cricket, golf, cycling, swimming, athletics, rowing, bowling, shooting, and lacrosse. Many articles focused on the silly or eccentric, like the ‘Cyking’ craze (as they nicknamed it) which saw 1,000,000 bicycles on Australian roads, or clergymen’s bewilderment with sportily-dressed congregations. L.W. Lower joked that emancipated women were ‘wearing our trousers, beating us at golf, smoking our cigarettes, and drinking our cocktails’. Sportiness was thus one of the many ‘masculine’ traits that identified the modern woman.

Thea, ‘almost boyish’ in shorts and shirt, you arouse Glover. He marvels at your body’s natural grace, your unselfconscious ‘lack of coquetry’. You and Marc easily surf the waves. You casually wander the beach in shorts and swimsuits. Your own swimmers are crimson, Thea, as ‘arresting’ and ‘vivid’ as a jewel: you might be the Weekly’s ‘Goddess of Sunshine’ herself. (Figure 38) Even you, Eve, look radiant in tennis gear. It isn’t just your sportiness that signals your modernity, however. Susan, you don’t think

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1 See ‘Appendix Two’.
3 See ‘Appendix Four’ for a discussion of the paper’s reportage on the Berlin Olympics.
7 J, p.140.
8 J, p.142.
9 J, p.108, 100, 141,102, 120.
10 J, p.108.
12 J, p.243.
twice about pulling on pants and driving to Jungaburra to save Bret and Colin. Marc, you drive too. You all smoke. Marc, Terry, Thea: at parties you drink cocktails and watch your decadent peers, like the ‘leopard slut’ at that first party which you go to, perplexing men with her sexual games. You see yourselves as modern, and such parties show how your generation – ‘Mellow to-day, rotten tomorrow’ – are reconfiguring male and female roles. And yet... though you watch the ‘leopard slut’ at that party – Marc and Thea – you never are the ‘leopard slut’ at the party. Perhaps you girls are stuck, somewhere, between the loaded labels that surround you: modernist, the Moderns, Modern times. Whatever your ‘type’, there are flickers of resemblance between all of you and the modern, physical women who appeared in The Australian Women’s Weekly in 1936.

Figure 38: ‘the lovely, distinctive Australian girl – a slender, sun-tanned goddess of the surf... a new race of woman that is evolving under the southern skies’

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13 Marc, J, pp.106; Marc and Thea, J, pp.50-52; Glover, J, pp.144, 160-163.
14 J, p.67.
17 Eve, J, pp.5, 178; Marc, J, pp.49-50, 68; Tom, C, p.14; Bret and Susan, C, p.67.
Most sports articles in the *Weekly* were serious, with many drawing attention to gender inequalities, such as the neglect of Australian women athletes in the Olympic team selection, or the ‘Good Conduct Rules’ imposed on traveling women cricketers. Sport was regularly linked to racial and national health, as when the paper praised Germany’s economic support of sport (which reduced its spending on ‘hospitals and sanatoriums’), or in the paper’s racially supremacist response to Australia’s disappointing performance at the Games. Other writers complained that women’s sport was reported ‘as if it were a mannequin parade’, though the *Weekly* encouraged this by focusing on Olympic women’s nationally-distinct dress, style and manner, and with its interest in sporty fashions: ‘Culottes for All Sports’, ‘Sport and Resort Wear’, ‘Polo and Sports Wear’, ‘Vivacity... in Sporting Outfit’.

The ‘Sports Girl’ and ‘The Lure of Golf’ covers (Figures 39, 40) hint at the paper’s extreme and oppositional feelings towards the physical woman. The Sports Girl flies over a hurdle, her shorts and t-shirt exposing toned, bare limbs. Meanwhile, the golfer’s self-conscious pose, elaborate make up, fashionable dress, and direct eye contact suggests she controls both her image – and our reaction to it. The Sports Girl’s poem identifies her as a new type of woman, though emphasises her chaste modesty (she belongs to a ‘sisterhood’ and is ‘fair’). Her lack of adornment and apparent obliviousness to us emphasises this modesty, despite her bare skin. In ‘The Lure of Golf’ the notion of ‘lure’ seems to relate less to the sport signified by the golf club, than to the allure of the

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18 ‘Appendix Four’.
21 ‘Let’s All Go to Olympic Games’, *Weekly*, 29 August, 1936, p.3. See ‘Appendix Four’.
26 ‘Vivacity... in Sporting Outfit’, *Weekly*, 8 August, 1936, p.32.
27 ‘Sports Girl’, *Weekly*, 25 January, 1936, p.1. Note: The microfilmed Sydney edition has two separate covers for this week’s issue. The ‘Sports Girl’ cover is used by the Melbourne edition and has therefore been used in this analysis. Sydney’s second cover (‘World Mourns Our King’) has a portrait of King George.
confident woman who holds it poised at her shoulder. She looks as if she is about to thump us.

The *Weekly* published a number of editorials which expressed the paper’s ambivalence towards the sporty, physical woman, as when it claimed athletics was not a ‘true career’ but a diversion and ‘a dead end’,29 or when it pondered the ‘vexed question’ of female sportswomen’s move towards professionalism.30 More often, the paper praised the 80,000 Australian women who had replaced Victorian ‘hit-and-giggle tennis’ with a ‘cult of strenuous sport’ that saw women challenge men’s achievements and add to the nation’s ‘health-wealth’.31 The paper praised how sport encouraged women to put the team before the individual,32 or healthfully filled suburban leisure hours (whilst trimming suburban waistlines),33 or noted how women players and spectators had a ‘civilising’ influence on games like cricket.34 Readers also debated whether ‘team spirit’35

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29 ‘Athletics As a “Career”’, *Weekly*, 11 April, 1936, p.10.
encouraged ‘back-biting’, or (as most argued) it made a person unselfish ‘for the good of the whole’. One woman argued that the sporting team spirit ‘would teach men to co-operate, and thus eliminate war’, whilst the Deputy Premier of N.S.W., claimed that sport was the ‘best tie’ of Empire. Some readers associated sport with ‘Pleasure-Mad’ women, or an over-entertained ‘youth’, whilst others accused unsporty types of being lazy. Obviously, the physicality of the modern woman represented something other than mere physical movement.

‘The Lure of Golf’: Sporting Amazons, As ugly as any man?

Golf was one of the most prominent sports in the Weekly, and was a common ‘hobby’ of the women who appeared in the society or ‘What Women are Doing’ pages. It was reported as the number one activity – after a cruise – requested by women aged 18 to 25 at Victorian tourist bureaus. In response to this popularity, the paper ran a series of articles by amateur golf champion, Jim Ferrier. He assured readers that ‘golfing figure’ and ‘golfing face’ were ‘bunkum’, citing a Mrs McKay as a ‘charming and feminine’ golfer. This concern about sportswomen’s femininity recurred throughout the paper. One article, entitled ‘Girls Will Be Boys’, noted how women were upsetting Australian golf clubs by refusing to wear stockings, or by wearing shorts and trousers. One photospread presented ‘Attractive Outdoor Girls’, including a Miss Vedas Ebert ‘whose grace and good looks’ disproved ‘the argument that the out-in-all-weather sportswoman loses her feminine charm’. (Figure 41) Another article emphasised the grace of golfer,

38 ‘STS’, Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.29.
41 ‘Holidays Are Here Again’, Weekly, 26 December, 1936, p.2.
46 ibid.
Miss Millicent Cairns, who was ‘frequently seen in mannequin parades’. The Body Beautiful’ directly addressed these concerns in an article that advised sports girls against letting themselves ‘develop into the hard-faced, half-baked, muscular type’, and relegated sport to the realms of ‘personal activity’ that served women’s goal of being ‘appealingly dainty’. The fact that this article was illustrated with a photo of film star, Rosina Lawrence, rather than a photo of one of the rugged-looking champion sportswomen who appeared a few pages later (Figure 42, 43), shows how ‘sport’ often referred to a fashionable, feminine ‘style’ rather than to serious female occupation at this time in Australia.

Figure 41: ‘Our Attractive Outdoor Girls’

49 See photos, Weekly, 1 February, 1936, p.55.
The *Weekly’s* golf articles also reveal sport’s positive power to prove women’s equal worth with men, though its capacity to do this was dependent on sportswomen’s ability to retain their femininity, whilst having their success recognised and admired by men themselves. This was evident, in May, when golfing champion Enid Wilson emphasised the importance of Pam Barton’s British Open triumph: Wilson described this as the ‘envy of many of our foremost men golfers’, then emphasised Barton’s childish and feminine character by noting her love of ‘sweets’ and her ‘charming’, ‘unaffected’ and ‘unspoilt’ nature. The *Weekly’s* most gender-conscious golf reportage can be found in its articles about American golfer, Helen Hicks. Hicks was the first female golfing professional to visit Australia.\(^\text{50}\) Preddey argued that, if Hicks were allowed to compete

with men in Adelaide’s Centenary Open Championships, she would ‘Make Men Play Better’.\footnote{R Preddey, ‘Women Golf “Pros.”’, \textit{Weekly}, 16 May, 1936, p.51.} One man agreed that Hicks’ presence ‘would improve the game’ by making men ‘concentrate more determinedly’: men ‘would hate to be beaten by a woman, no matter how good she was’.\footnote{Preddey, ‘Women Golf “Pros.”’, \textit{Weekly}, p.51.} The value of women’s inclusion in men’s sphere thus lay in allowing men to display their superiority, with man’s contempt for woman spurring him on to play his best. Notably, this article included a photo of Enid Wilson, whose image again emphasised the difference between ‘sportiness’ as a fashionable ‘style’, and the physical reality of physically triumphant women (Figure 44).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{enid_wilson.jpg}
\caption{Enid Wilson, champion golfer}
\end{figure}

In September, reportage on Hicks’ visit moved from the back to the front of the paper with an article whose headline announced, ‘Men Jealous of Women in Big Golf’,\footnote{‘Men Jealous of Women in Big Golf’, \textit{Weekly}, 19 September, 1936, p.2.} whilst a subtitle commended Hicks’ ‘Service to Sex’: the \textit{Weekly} was now treating Hicks’ story as a test case for equal rights, asking whether the open should remain all male because it had always been so, or if it should be ‘an event to determine the best golfer, independent of sex’.\footnote{ibid.} The article argued that women who qualified at a \textit{very} high level must be allowed to play: Hicks had ‘proved herself worthy in every respect to be
accepted on equal terms with practically any male golfer in the world’, and was the ‘superior of a goodly number of them’. Furthermore, Hicks should be welcomed ‘if for no other reason’ than that she would glamorise the game. In order for a woman to be accepted and respected in this sporting field, she had to be feminine and, not only ‘as good as any man’, but better than most.

‘The Lure of Golf’, presented readers with an image that attached the qualities of seduction, power and aggression to both sport and a certain kind of modern woman. The reportage on women golfers elaborated these fears, including the anxiety that women’s entrance into this ‘male’ sphere would see them masculinised. Though the Weekly supported women’s ‘invasion’ into sport, particularly in terms of women’s fight for equality, it heavily qualified that support by directing women to value femininity above sporting achievement by relegating sport to the realms of fashion, or by directing women to value their sporting achievements only if and when those achievements were at least as good as men’s, and valued by men themselves. Notably, the paper’s reportage on the Spanish Civil War’s fighting ‘Amazons’ expressed identical concerns about the New Woman’s physicality: both the ex-senorita’s femininity and equality were monitored by the paper as it moved from applauding her courageous defence of her men, to recoiling in horror as it realised that these brave women had won an ‘equal’ share of War’s tortures.55

Susan, when you climb Jungaburra,56 Bret reprimands you like a child even though he and Colin are suffering vertigo. You insist on helping. You use the rope, which Bret brought to save Colin, to save Bret himself: angrily, he lets you. This physical challenge shows you are ‘as good as’ these men, and better than them. When he is safe, Bret gives you a cigarette, still appalled that a ‘midget’ should drive the Madison along such a dangerous track. He’s amazed you climbed past the chock stone which he and Colin struggled over. You tell him you climbed under it: a woman’s body has strengths of its own. He calls you ‘idiotic’, and says you had no ‘business’ coming out to Jungaburra. What is he talking about? Men’s business? You goad him by disappearing, again, behind the chock stone.

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55 See ‘Appendix Five’.
56 C, p.150-155.
Throughout this ordeal, Susan, you are both ‘grotesque’ and comic. Margery knows how your ‘charm’ depends on this ‘kitten’-like mix of beauty, tininess and indomitability: only you would drive out at midnight to ‘succour two large and strapping males’. So what is this crisis for in Coolami? To show Woman conquering Man’s sphere of the physical, dangerous world? Or to show your charm?

When Bret is safe, you start crying. He and Colin help you complete the descent, for suddenly you need help, and you fall into Bret’s arms. You each stand silently, your bodies listening. This is what the physical challenge is for: for making Bret’s anger transform into fear, and then into love. It’s not Man’s physical world of danger that you conquer, Susan, but Woman’s sphere of Love.

Physical Culture: Fitness is Health, Health is Beauty, Beauty is Cleanliness

Whilst the Weekly’s discussion of women’s sport expressed fears about its threat to femininity, the paper approved of physical fitness aimed solely at the cultivation of female beauty. Evelyn’s ‘The Body Beautiful’ directed readers to become ‘slim, trim and beautiful’ through ‘simple, regular exercise’, claiming that this was ‘the surest way of combating that age-giving droop’.\footnote{‘BB’, Weekly, 1 August, 1936, p. 43.} Another recommended simple ‘monotonous’ exercises like the ‘daily dozen’.\footnote{‘BB’, Weekly, 19 September, 1936, p.45. See also, ‘BB’, Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.57.} The paper noted how Gwen Munro, who won the Weekly and Paramount’s ‘Search for a Beauty’ competition, transformed herself from a ‘fresh, well-built, sporting type of Australian girl’, into a Hollywood glamour queen through dieting and exercise.\footnote{‘Gwen Munro Made Most of Her Chance’, Weekly, 9 May, 1936, p.28.} Clearly, ‘well-built’ and ‘sporting’ were antithetical to glamour.

In January, Evelyn noted how the governor general’s wife, Lady Gowrie, was an enthusiast of the ‘Women’s League of Health and Beauty’.\footnote{‘BB’, Weekly, 18 January, 1936, p.10.} This League was associated with the Physical Culture Movement, a movement which formalised and propagated a belief that fitness and individual health were synonymous with female beauty and racial
When the *Weekly* announced the visit of the ‘Young Beauty Leader’ Prunella, it explained how the League – which began in London with 16 members in 1930 and had nearly 100,000 members in 1936 – aimed to achieve ‘racial health’ by enabling ‘business girls and busy women to conserve and improve their physique’. The paper introduced readers to a Mrs Thompson, of Ballarat, who had become ‘a zealous prophet’ of the ‘new philosophy’ in Australia when the regime made her lose weight. Though Physical Culture generally referred to exercises that involved rhythm and ‘swing’ type movements, this article shows how it became a religion for some women. As Miss Beer, from Victoria, observed, ‘Every business girl in England... attends a Physical Culture class’, with ‘health and beauty consciousness’ spreading to Germany where Beer thrice saw 10,000 women perform in mass demonstrations. Beer emphasised that German women were not, despite popular perceptions, ‘heavily built, muscular and masculine’. Rather they, especially the business girls, were ‘slim, svelte, and thoroughly feminine’. This article’s photo of Prunella stretching in vest, shorts, and bare feet, confirmed that the physically cultured woman (who was, it seems, often a working women) was a thing of feminine and artistic beauty.

In July, Mary St Claire again reported on the League’s progress in London, where grandmothers were tackling ‘Physical Jerks’ whilst ‘Mothers of flappers’ looked as ‘youthful and sprightly’ as their daughters. Contrary to the *Weekly*’s reportage on the League’s ‘racial’ focus, Prunella (a ‘slim, vivacious, 21-year-old’) claimed that her mother founded the League because she felt most women led ‘a very dull life’ by sitting around their houses, eating too many sweets, and not spending as much time as they ‘should’ on their appearance. Her mother believed beauty came ‘automatically’ to a woman who was ‘really healthy’. Prunella thus made explicit the Physical Culture movement’s equation of beauty with physical fitness.

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64 ibid.
This equation was elaborated by the *Weekly’s* ads. Whilst most ads coerced women to consume a range of products in order to be younger, slimmer, taller, bustier, less busty, less ‘toxic’, more beautiful, a better worker, a better wife and a better mother, some Lifebuoy soap ads were aimed at encouraging young girls to join the company’s ‘Lifebuoy League of Health Guards’.\(^{65}\) One of these ads warned against ‘dangerous germs’ and stated:

> All schoolgirls admire the healthy sportswoman. And cleanliness is the first step towards physical fitness... There is no easier health training than this regular use of Lifebuoy Soap.\(^{66}\)

This ad, which reformulated sports training into ‘health training’, showed a schoolgirl winning a race. Another Lifebuoy ad asserted:

> It isn’t just a stroke of luck that makes special girls excel at sport. Physical fitness counts beyond everything, and you can’t be really healthy if you neglect to keep the pores of your skin free from germ-laden impurities.\(^{67}\)

Such ads thus linked fitness and health to cleanliness. Men were not excluded from this pressure to ‘succeed’ by being fit and beautiful. Just as a beautiful woman was feminine, a beautiful man was super-strong and masculine. Alfred J. Briton, ‘Australia’s Leading Physical Director’, and founder of ‘Health and Physical Culture’ magazine (which propagated the notion that ‘health, beauty and happiness’\(^{68}\) were inextricable), placed large ads in the *Weekly* that included a topless, muscle-pumped picture of Briton proclaiming ‘I want YOU next!’\(^{69}\) (Figure 45). He promised that his free book (which apparently 80,000 people had read) would force ‘Floods of vitality’ to men’s ‘vital organs’ thus making them feel ‘Alive!’ Another of Briton’s ads announced:

> A Message to Married Men and Men About To Be Married... Ask her what kind of a man she wants for a husband. Ask her whether she prefers a man with a weak...ill-shaped body to a man with a body as strong, sturdy and handsome as a Greek God’s.\(^{70}\)

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Briton thus reinforced the traditional ‘He-man’ ideal of masculinity that was then epitomised by the ‘virile’ super-star Clarke Gable.\(^{71}\) Whether aimed at men or women, such advertising shows how the *Weekly*’s readers were told that bodies were inadequate, dangerous, and dirty, and in constant need of the external intervention of specific products, including the ideology and instruction offered by the gurus of Physical Culture.

![I Want YOU Next!](image)

*Figure 45: Alfred J Briton promoting his ‘Health and Physical Culture’ magazine and books*

The *Weekly*’s recognition of Physical Culture’s social significance was evident when it dedicated an editorial to the movement, tellingly entitled ‘Health Happiness’.\(^{72}\) This editorial traced Woman’s ‘new consciousness of herself’ back to the Great War, ‘when women were thrown, as never before, upon their own resources’. The war made women realise that ‘bodily health’ was needed to ‘support’ their new-found ‘self-dependence’. Physical culture wasn’t, therefore, merely ‘a cult’ of make-up, but a ‘cult of an inner beauty of the spirit’ that cultivated ‘contentment and mental poise’. The paper thus recognised the movement’s ideological basis, explaining how its ‘cult of health and

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beauty’ conformed to a classic Greek ideal that saw health treated as a ‘religion’ or ‘a religious duty’. The editorial condoned this, adding that a ‘man or woman with a clean body’ was ‘liable to measure up to decent standards of conduct’. Whilst the Lifebuoy ads equated cleanliness with fitness and success, the paper equated physical hygiene with moral and intellectual ‘hygiene’. This editorial presented Physical Culture as a movement inextricably associated with a new kind of woman whose identity was partly defined by an ideology based on the glorification of the physical body. Unlike much of the paper’s own reportage and adverts, however, this editorial suggested that the really ‘practical’ benefits of the movement were spiritual rather than physical-aesthetic.

So many resonances.

The valuation of ‘poise’. Though Glover says the Moderns lack ‘poise’ and that their art never crystallises, he nevertheless describes you, Thea, as modern, poised, and crystalline. You envy Eve and Marc’s ‘poise’, and that of your sinister other half. You feel something same-named but different: the tugging swells of your unhappiness gather ‘like a wave poised to break’. If only, like Marc, you knew how to ride its ‘curling crest’ to safety.

Fitness, beauty, morality, religion. Catholic Eve, you hate modern Marc and her ‘philosophy’ that ‘all-experience-is-valuable’. Her dismissal of chastity as ‘superstitious abstinence’ is a dig at you, isn’t it? You link them together: ‘experience’ with sex, sex with chastity, chastity with ‘purity’, purity with ‘the capacity to demand all or nothing’. You think of John’s white-knuckled reaction to Marc’s ‘sickening’ tricks: her ‘small, firm breasts’ pushing, bra-less, through her clothes. You wonder if she’s purposely ‘indecent’.


74 ‘Poise’ is repeatedly referred to in J, pp.78, 88, 100, 102, 142, 162, 171, 173, 187, 213, 236, 246.
75 J, p.162.
76 J, p.284.
77 J, pp.160,142.
78 J, p.236.
79 J, p.171.
80 J, p.102.
81 J, p.122.
82 J, p.122.
or naturally ‘vulgar’, and you recognise the attraction of her elusive ‘aliveness’. (Does she make you feel dead?) You blush at the memory of Marc and John going off together at the Whale Beach party, after the ‘sensual antics’ of beautiful, dancing Poppy. Why is his subsequent strangeness Marc and Poppy’s fault? The fact is, Eve, you despise women’s sensual, physical display, though the exposed, ‘tortured’ flesh of your patients means ‘reality’ itself to you. Why do you judge those same bodies’ pleasures in terms of morality? Because your religion grants meaning to suffering? You interpret Marc and John’s ‘experience’ as proof that Marc’s ‘moral code’ is, ‘in the best tradition of humanism’, solely governed by ‘individual desire’ and ‘health and fitness’. Eve, your religion clearly merges morality, sex and suffering, but why do you think the Moderns have a humanist religion that glorifies ‘health’ and ‘fitness’? (And shouldn’t you approve, as a doctor?) Have you simply picked this correlation up from somewhere – from the Weekly, from the zeitgeist? The only time Marc asserts such values is in your absence, when she admires Terry’s Greek God’s body as he plays with Pat: they seem ‘part of a wider existence, a deeper reality’. Like you, Eve, Marc finds reality in the body, but she finds reality in its beauty, universality and continuity of form throughout time. As Glover does with Thea, Eve, you transform Marc into a wordy idea, then you merge her into another set of ideas about the Moderns. The problem is, Eve, words are no great help-mate to ambivalence.

Ambivalence and the modern woman’s physical body: Poppy, everyone at the Whale Beach party detests you. Because you are beautiful, they assume you are cold and stupid. Then, ‘mothlike and lambent’, you dance. Oswald damns you! He loathes your ‘witchlike’ fascination, like his ex-wife’s: ‘deeper than reason, or love, or even loathing’. (Funny, how Oswald and Glover associate women with witches, wolves and devils. And everyone, even your ‘bewitching’ mother, Susan, says there’s a ‘devil’ in you.) Poppy, you repel Eve. Thea finds it ‘agony’ to watch you. Even Marc quivers:

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83 J, p.118.
84 J, p.16.
85 J, pp.103,109.
86 J, p.97.
88 J, pp. 95-97, 101,150, 161, 143-144.
89 C, p.99. See also, C, pp.148, 12, 59.
90 J, p.97.
she too damns you for intoxicating everyone, for making her ‘idiotic’ and ‘cheap’ by letting John kiss her.  

Apparently so coolly ‘virginal’, Poppy, how can you weave ‘spells’ of ‘desirous surrender’, sensuousness, and ‘seduction’? How do you blur everyone’s sense of values? Oswald tells Marc your dance disarmed him: he values ‘detachment’; he’d rather dinted armour than scars. Marc doesn’t believe in armour: she’d ‘rather die on a clear, bright blade than be battered to death like a sardine in a tin’. What words these people have! And yet, Poppy, it’s your mute dancing body that provokes their conversation. You forced them to confront the power of the body – not as object – but as reality: reality as inarticulable, embodied experience; reality as ‘Pure, exquisite being’. Their reaction? Lust and loathing. In short, a rage of ambivalence. 

Cleanliness. A ‘clean body’ is ‘liable to measure up to decent standards of conduct’? So says the Weekly. But what does ‘clean’ mean? Millicent, you feel (like Bret) that every adventure should begin with the ‘extra freshness’ of the early morning, when the day seems ‘clean’, as if everything is ‘beginning anew’. You think it’s like being the first to inscribe your name on a hotel register. (Funny coincidence, Susan, your new surname is ‘Maclain’.) As you journey on, Millicent, you ponder Susan’s ‘clean fight’ against Life, and Colin’s unclean fight against War. 

But Susan, is your fight ‘clean’? You don’t think it’s easy trying to be ‘clean’ – ‘rational, honest, controlled, just’ – in the ‘fathomless’ woods of people’s minds, souls, and psyches. You recall when you fainted at the news of Jim’s death: Nature cut you off ‘as cleanly as a knife’ from the ‘horrors on the other side’ of that news. Then you awoke to a reality where there are no clean breaks between the conscious and unconscious, present and past, feeling and thinking, one person and another.

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91 J, pp.95, 98-99.
92 J, pp.94-97, 98,101,111.
93 J, p.111.
94 J, p.96,111,112.
95 J, p.112.
96 J, p.95
97 J, p.110.
98 C, p.15.
99 C, p.16.
100 C, p.30.
101 C, p.63.
Margery, your housework exhausts you though you have a willing, ‘clean’ maid.\(^{102}\) (What do you mean? That she is clean? That she can clean?) You love to pull the threads of impersonal problems ‘cleanly away’\(^{103}\) from their knotted tangles, leaving you with ‘neat’ conclusions. You are sick of having to clean up Colin and you marriage’s image with lies.\(^{104}\) Only once your house is ‘swept and garnished’, do you feel your anger at him fall away.\(^{105}\) And Colin? You will use ‘righteous toil and rest’ to give yourself another ‘clean’ start.\(^{106}\)

Bret, you learn that love is a powerful cleanser, powerful enough to rid a man of all his pain, anger and resentment.\(^{107}\) You realise that ‘the healthy human being’ has ‘the waste products’ of his feelings to get rid of, as well as the waste products of his ‘digestive organs’.\(^{108}\) You realise that you’ve been ‘constipated’, that love is your ‘aperient’, that Susan’s kisses are your new ‘daily dose’.\(^{109}\) Not a romantic allusion, and yet, strangely apt: this problem of constipation seems to dominate the Weekly’s ads. ‘Coloseptic’ ads sound like you, Bret! ‘Good Health results from internal cleanliness’, a clogged colon creates ‘a state of autoxima’ or ‘self-poisoning’, an unclogged colon ends ‘all danger’ (Figures 46, 47).\(^{110}\) If your times were to be ‘diagnosed’, Bret, by the ads the Weekly, they would be diagnosed as chronically constipated, ‘autoximatic’, poisoned and poisoning. (An echo there: poisoned, poisoning, poise...). If you hadn’t found Love as your aperient, Bret, perhaps you’d be susceptible to such ads, and all of you seem, in Coolami, to hope that cleanliness in the physical world will somehow cleanse you of your internal messes of thought and feeling.

\(^{102}\) C, p.114.
\(^{103}\) C, p.123.
\(^{104}\) C, p.107.
\(^{105}\) C, p.106.
\(^{106}\) C, p.169.
\(^{107}\) C, p.180.
\(^{108}\) C, pp.165-166.
\(^{109}\) C, pp.165-166.
\(^{110}\) Coloseptic ad, Weekly, 15 February, 1936, p.41. See also, All-bran ad, Weekly, 15 February, 1936, p20.
And Cusack’s girls? Thea, you tell Eve you’d rather die in ‘a dark little place’ than her ‘stark’ and ‘shelterless’ ward. Eve says you’re morbid: it is ‘unhygienic’ to die like a sick dog. Well, ‘antiseptic’ Eve would thank goodness for public hospitals and health boards; it’s her job to clean the body of disease, just as it’s her religion’s job to clean minds and bodies of immorality. You recoil again, Thea, when Glover tells you how ‘proud’ and ‘untouched’ Jungfrau – a white-capped mountain; a virgin – is being soiled by tourists. (Is he warning you? Excusing himself?) When you dress for your final day with Glover, you wear a ‘clean’, if ‘old’, white silk frock. And after you sleep together, you – a white hyacinth; a white poppy – pull on a ‘very old and stained’ man’s sweater. This is the ‘all’ that Glover has given to you? Marc’s wrong when she says

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111 J, p.50.
112 J, p.28.
113 J, p.61.
114 J, p.138.
116 J, p.147.
that ‘nothing outside’ of you can leave an ‘indelible’ stain,\textsuperscript{118} for Glover’s stain grows within you. Months later, in your final hours, you clean your flat, your tears, and put on clean clothes, even new silk undies.\textsuperscript{119} Unlike the characters in Coolami, unlike Eve in her ward, you find no comfort or catharsis in these cleaning – controlling – rituals: your world won’t let you clean away the one stain you need to. When you try to cleanse that stain away yourself, with a wild salt ocean, all you find is terror. Poor Thea!

And Marc? Your beau, Lionel ‘equis’ (a ‘creature far too pure and good’),\textsuperscript{120} is furious that, despite your ‘faded, soiled’ men’s clothes, and your aroma of prawns and tar, you still render his position, money, and education meaningless.\textsuperscript{121} This is the difference between you and everyone else, Marc: you aren’t afraid of stains; you know how to wear them; you know stains mean Life, not dirt, not death.

Modern Women are Adventuresses, As brave as any man?

The following looks at the \textit{Weekly}’s interest in modern women whose public physicality derived from their relationship to technology (like planes and cars), or the exotic (like the Australian Outback or international travel).

\textbf{Speed Nymphs: the ‘hand that rocks the cradle’ also ‘holds the road’}\textsuperscript{122}

Two of the covers from my ‘Physical Women’ category include cars in their imagery (Figures 48, 49). Like the ‘Sports Girl’, the woman in the ‘Special Birthday Number’\textsuperscript{123} is not elaborately made-up and seems unself-conscious. The carefully posed and styled ‘Speed Nymph’,\textsuperscript{124} however, seems haughty and distant, with her car asserting her definite boundaries, just as the golfer’s club does in ‘The Lure of Golf’. As these covers suggest, ‘motor cars’ were integral to the world of the \textit{Weekly} in 1936, with driving, and

\textsuperscript{117} J, p.146.
\textsuperscript{118} J, p.220.
\textsuperscript{119} J, p.259, 260.
\textsuperscript{120} J, p.44.
\textsuperscript{121} J, p.43.
women drivers in particular, being ‘newsworthy’. Just as King Edward’s modernity was identified in his skill as a pilot and car driver,\(^{125}\) a woman’s capacity to drive signified her ‘modern’ status both by asserting her competence with a new, physically exacting and dangerous technology, and also by showing – once again – how Woman was ‘invading’ another of Man’s spheres.

Though the *Weekly* asserted that, in 1936, people were no longer ‘frightened’ of motor travel,\(^{126}\) many articles emphasised driving’s inherent dangers. ‘Beware of These Men in Cars’,\(^{127}\) (Figure 50) reported that ‘Deaths by accident’ in Australia were ‘only surpassed by those due to heart disease and cancer’, with a phenomenal 400 to 500 people killed annually in car accidents in Sydney and Melbourne alone. Even Dr Wolfe, whose research the article cited, was ‘murdered’ by a ‘speed-hog’ motorcyclist who caused his car to crash. (Motorcycle safety was one topic that prompted men to write in to the paper.\(^{128}\) ) Haylen described how ‘speed demon’\(^{129}\) cars had forced pedestrians to form

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\(^{125}\) ‘We Enter the Era of Edward the VIII’, *Weekly*, 1 February, 1936, p.5.


\(^{127}\) ‘Beware of These Men in Cars’, *Weekly*, 25 July, 1936, p.3.


their own safety societies, whilst one reader suggested that the ‘ alarming ’ road toll demanded children receive a ‘ safety first ’ education, whilst yet another argued that pedestrians who ‘ abused ’ the ‘ privilege ’ of being allowed to cross the road were the problem. Motor cars’ danger even lay in their capacity to cause divorce, with one barrister explaining how modern transport made for ‘ quick and easy ’ (and thus doomed) marriages, whilst fascinating young men with cars broke up more homes ‘ than any other class ’. Even the rich and famous, like Prince Alexis Mdivanis, or Belgium’s Queen Astrid, appeared in the paper’s global road toll.

As with sport and the professions, motoring was a ‘ male ’ realm, and thus one where the ‘ modern ’ woman was judged in relation to – and by – men. Car danger itself was often discussed in gendered terms, as when one reader argued that ‘ Women Drivers

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133 ‘ She’s Certain To Be Divorced! ’, Weekly, 5 December, 1936, p.3.
135 M St Claire, ‘ Queens of Europe ’, Weekly, 10 October, 1936, p.3.
Should Not Be Allowed’, 136 whilst another article announced ‘Our Women Motorists Can Take a Bow! “You’re Not Dreadful”’. 137 This article included a subtitle that emphasised women were ‘As Good as Men’, and quoted a policeman who said Australian women were the best drivers in the world because their out-doorsy sportiness trained their eye and quickened their reactions. Another article complained how men sneered, ‘Only another woman driver’, whenever there was an accident. 138 Meanwhile, one Viscount in London said women were safer than men only because they were slower, though a pioneer motorist called women ‘road hogs’ who ‘lost their heads’ in emergencies. 139 A woman racing car driver replied to this fellow that women were safer because, ‘by nature’, they were more cautious than men.

The significant road toll of the mid-1930s also shows just how common cars were becoming on Australian roads, and the Weekly interpreted increasing car sales as evidence of growing prosperity and thus proof of ‘the death of old man Depression’. 140 Vauxhaul and Ford ads regularly appeared in the Weekly, with the latter’s ‘beautiful’ V-8 proclaimed a ‘truly’ modern car for ‘the thoughtful modern woman’ 141 (Figures 51, 52). 142 Such ads directly linked the ‘modern’ woman with driving, and she was even targeted by petrol and oil ads, with Super Plume Ethyl and Mobiloil stating: ‘The power behind the throne! That’s you, charming lady... When motoring, get the thrill of a maximum surge of engine power’. 143 Such ads tried to harness women’s presumed influence over men, whilst asserting that women desired both ‘charm’ and ‘power’. Even make-up ads targeted the woman driver, with Crème Charmosan products promising to

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139 M St Claire, ‘Women Safer Drivers’, Weekly, 18 April, 1936, p.35.
140 ‘On the Broad Highway’, Weekly, 28 March, 1936, p.10. In 1936, Australian ‘capital investment’ in the motor industry was ‘considerable’. On the 30 June of that year, 98 motor vehicles (excluding motor cycles; including motor cars and commercial vehicles) were registered per 1000 people. The number of motor bodies built in Australia in 1935-1936 was 67,337 at a value of £6,043,735. In that same period, 1,699 motor bodies were imported at a value of £149,593. The number of motor bodies built in Australia in 1931-32 was 6,323 at a value of £450,510, while 61 bodies were imported at a value of £7,360. See Wilson, Official Year Book, 1937, p. 171,172.
143 Mobiloil ad, Weekly, 1 February, 1936, p.53.
endure driving, dancing, golf, and tennis. Motoring also appeared in the Weekly’s fashion photos, and was referred to in ads for unrelated products, like Dr Sheldon’s Gin Pills, aimed at ‘Every woman’ with back ache: this ad showed a stylish ‘Every woman’ clutching her back next to her car. A regular ‘Motor Car’ competition was run through the paper, where entrants could win £25 for reciting car-brands. While ‘modern’ children demanded toy cars that were ‘fast’ and ‘streamlined for speed’, the paper’s jokes regularly presented gender-specific driver stereotypes. (Figure 53) Many of these jokes used cars to construct an ‘ultra’ modern type of woman:

Husband: I wish you’d come down off your high-horse.

Ultra-modern wife: Oh, why do you insist on using such old-fashioned expressions? Why not learn to motorise your thinking?

This ultra modern woman – identifiable by her driving prowess – regularly appeared in the paper’s news. Readers were introduced to women like Miss Cummins and Miss Naughton, whose masculine careers in brewing and grazing signified a modern status that was only emphasised by the fact they drove cars around Australia, with Cummins acting as her own mechanic whilst Naughton also flew planes. Notably, Naughton’s modernity did not define her sexuality, which was ‘contained’ within traditional and chaste realms by the fact that her ‘boy-friends’ were her brothers, and she was a ‘real mother’ to them. Cummins, who also played cello, built radios, and was the first woman in Australia to get a transmitters’ license, was also noted for her modesty.

144 Crème Charmosan ad, Weekly, 1 August, 1936, p.20.
146 Dr Sheldon’s Gin Pills ad, Weekly, 24 October, 1936, p.3.
150 ‘SNL’, Weekly, 5 December, 1936, p.15.
Figure 51: Ford V8 ad

Figure 52: Vauxhall ad

Figure 53: from ‘Some New Laughs’
More evidence of just how popular, mainstream and feminine cars were becoming in Australia in 1936 lay in the paper’s reportage on ‘The Great 10th International Motor Show’ in Port Melbourne, which displayed 240 makes and 700 different models including the ‘Woman’s Car’ that won ‘car of the year’. The paper also advertised the first ever ‘All-Australia Motor Rally’ which had ‘special prizes for women drivers’ and required entrants to drive from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth or Broken Hill to Adelaide. The Weekly took a particular interest in this event’s women contestants, with Miss Corbin noted as one of the first to enter. Another potential entrant, Mrs Morrin, was applauded for driving 98 miles before breakfast, as well as for rearing her family, doing her own housework, being ‘her own mechanic’, and completing a course in home nursing: ‘Even men motorists... look to their laurels’. Clearly, the Weekly admired Morrin not only for conquering Man’s Sphere, but for conquering Woman’s Sphere too.

The Weekly and its advertisers clearly saw cars as significant to Australian women. The ‘masculine’ capacity for a woman to drive, both positively and negatively signified her modernity. By enabling women’s domestic sphere to open up to the world beyond, cars forced Australians to reconfigure understandings of men and women that had previously depended upon those spheres remaining separate.

Marc, you drive your own car to Whale Beach. When you get there you tell the hostess you brought Pat instead of a man. Your driving and your dog thus seem to declare to a Man’s world that you don’t need Man at all.

Susan, your driving also signals your modernity – you are no ‘clinging vine’. But you only drive once. Otherwise, your father drives you: this signals your coerced transition from daughter to wife. Without cars, Susan, you’d have no story: your narrative unfolds in a car journey; the car merges city and country; a car enabled your

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154 ‘This Year’s Car a Woman’s Car’, Weekly, 9 May, 1936, p.52.
156 ‘Women Motorists – Here’s Your Chance!’, Weekly, 16 May, 1936, p.4.
158 J, p.85.
affair with Jim; a car killed him; epiphanies abound when Tom’s car nearly crashes and, when Colin’s car crashes at Jungaburra, the men become dependent upon your arrival with the Madison. (Critics will argue, Susan, that the ‘abundance’ of this ‘machinery’ of ‘coincidence and accident’ – three car crashes in one story! – proves Dark an ‘unwilling romantic’, and your story a ‘melodrama’.160)

Tom, you know the symbolic and literal power of your ‘costly and magnificent’ car. It is material proof of your material triumphs, and it lets you annihilate miles of Millicent’s beloved countryside. It gives you (and Dark) the power to condense time and space.161 It lets you position your wife and daughter: you order Millicent into the front and Susan into the back with Bret; you’ll show them what a marriage is!162 (Two people trapped in a small space? A wife ‘meekly’,163 obeying her husband?) Your car makes Margery’s home seem ‘comfortless’.164 (She is waiting for a small, brown, dilapidated car: Colin’s car, symbolising Colin.165) Millicent, however, remains unimpressed by your ‘wonderful’166 toys. For her, your car is just another manifestation of your possessive materialism: it is your car, just as she is your wife, and her clothes and house and garden are yours.167 Strange how, despite her anti-materialist spiels,168 Millicent is overjoyed when your ‘all-powerful money’ buys her Wondabyne.169 In Millicent’s mind, it is not materialistic to want to possess ‘things’ associated with the countryside: such things are more authentic, more ‘spiritual’ than the world your car signifies.170 Whilst sitting in your grand Madison, Tom, even Bret becomes confused about the role ‘things’ play in a marriage: should he give Susan clothes, and jewels, and cars; a ‘toy-shop of the adult female’s heart’s desire’?171 Susan thinks this a ‘psychological manifestation’ of his remorse at being unable to give her himself. And yet, like Millicent, it’s not just love that

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161 C, pp.22-23.
162 C, p.12.
163 C, p.12.
164 C, p.108.
165 C, p.106.
166 C, p.8.
167 C, p.8, 10-11.
170 C, p.43.
171 C, p.120.
Susan wants, she wants Coolami. You know, Marc would damn the lot of you, Tom. She’d say, ‘It’s not having things but being things’ that matters.\textsuperscript{172}

Of course, it’s no accident that your car nearly kills you.\textsuperscript{173} Dark is making things clear: Millicent (woman and mother; lover of the rural, the spiritual, the primitive) is Good; you (man and father; lover of the urban, the material, the technological, the modern) is Bad. The crash makes all of you cry out for ‘another chance’, protesting less against death ‘than fear of waste’, and of destroying beauty before it blossoms.\textsuperscript{174} The effigy on your radiator cap, Tom, hammers Dark’s point home. Whilst its ‘boyish’, forwards straining silver body also suggests Progress and modernity, its ‘simple’ and ‘primitive’ design (neither masculine nor feminine) begs all of you – man and woman; husband and wife – to shake off your complexities and embrace your unstoppable futures. Dark uses your car to tell you, and us, that ‘things’ like cars don’t matter.

Adventuresses

Just as the Weekly was fascinated by women’s progress within men’s physical ‘spheres’ of sport and driving, it was also fascinated by women who were more ‘extreme’ in their physical independence, namely those whom I have called ‘adventuresses’ who either lived in environments perceived to be dangerous and exotic, or who sought such places in their travels.

The idea of adventure permeates Coolami. Bret, when you taste the ‘exciting tang of adventure’, you wonder if it’s because you’re going home or because Susan is ‘bound’, however ‘unwillingly’, to go with you.\textsuperscript{175} (Think harder, Bret! To be ‘bound’ can mean so many things: to be going somewhere; to be tied up, imprisoned; to be bound in bandages, healing... or dying, like Jim. To be legally bound or house-bound. To enforce boundaries, or to leap and jump and soar over them.) Susan, you thought your affair with Jim was a

\textsuperscript{172} J, p.93.
\textsuperscript{173} C, p.74.
\textsuperscript{174} C, pp.192, 75, 82.
\textsuperscript{175} C, p.12.
‘jolly adventure’,\textsuperscript{176} and the adventure of climbing Jungaburra is what makes Bret realise his love for you. Millicent, contemplating death makes you hope your life will take on the ‘flavour of adventure again’. Adventuring into the ‘inexhaustible unexplored territory’ of your mind, and your children’s lives, is no longer enough.\textsuperscript{177} Death makes Tom wonder if he’d care less about his age if he’d ‘always lived widely, colourfully, adventurously’.\textsuperscript{178} He blames the ‘black magic’ of the ‘geegaw’ on his radiator for making him swap security for ‘unimaginable adventures’\textsuperscript{179} in the country: it is he who convinces you, Millicent, to go forth into the unknown, turning your marriage into ‘the game’ and ‘adventure’ it should be.\textsuperscript{180} In Coolami, the physical dangers of adventure force you to turn your minds from the past to the future.

Thea, you are the only true adventuress in Jungfrau. Like Tom, you are sick of ‘working to pattern – of running in the same narrow groove’.\textsuperscript{181} You want to know ‘what life is about’.\textsuperscript{182} You struggle with Marc’s claim that all experiences are incidents.\textsuperscript{183} For you, experiences must link to the past and future.\textsuperscript{184} You’re devastated when you realise Glover sees your affair as a mere ‘incident’, an ‘interlude’, something that doesn’t ‘count’.\textsuperscript{185} (If only you could read what Cusack has written: you’d see the connections, the significance, your value.) Whilst Marc says you are lucky to have had ‘perfect’ moments with Glover,\textsuperscript{186} Eve wonders why people like Marc get off ‘scot-free’ when living out the theory that ‘all experience is valuable’, whilst people like you, Thea, suffer lifelong. But Marc’s not blind: though she thinks she has gained more than she has lost from her own adventures, you show her that not everyone profits from ‘experience’.\textsuperscript{187} You make her wonder what it means to have lost the ‘power’ to believe in permanency.\textsuperscript{188}

Your adventures, Thea, see you pursue reality and purpose by loving Glover. And you do

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{176} C, p.19.
\item \textsuperscript{177} C, pp.82-83.
\item \textsuperscript{178} C, p.81.
\item \textsuperscript{179} C, pp.175-176.
\item \textsuperscript{180} C, pp.188-190.
\item \textsuperscript{181} J, p.4.
\item \textsuperscript{182} J, p.5.
\item \textsuperscript{183} J, pp.51-55, 73-74, 137-139, 172, 216-217.
\item \textsuperscript{184} J, pp.155-157, 216.
\item \textsuperscript{185} J, pp.54, 73-4, 172, 216-217,155-158.
\item \textsuperscript{186} J, pp.137, 216-217.
\item \textsuperscript{187} J, pp.218-219.
\item \textsuperscript{188} J, p.219.
\end{itemize}
find reality, but it is the brutal reality of being unloved. Unlike those in Coolami’s world, your adventure-won epiphanies are deadly, Thea: you cannot ‘take life’ and ‘use it’ by ‘living dangerously’; Life takes you, life is dangerous.\textsuperscript{189}

The Australian Exotic: White Women of the Outback

In March, readers were introduced to nineteen year old Miss Hobley who lived in the ‘Never-Never’ of Roper River, a ‘Paradise’\textsuperscript{190} located hundreds of miles inland from the Gulf of Carpentaria. Hobley hadn’t seen another white child, danced, played tennis, or seen a play till she’d visited Perth as an adult. She wrote to the \textit{Weekly} to refute claims that the Northern Territory was no place for white women. She argued that cities were dirty and rushed, that city people were worried and unhappy, and that so-called ‘wild blacks’ were but lazy and ‘tame’ little ‘pups’. In December, Roper River appeared again, in an article about ‘very attractive’ and ‘golden-haired’ Mrs Edward Heathcock and her ‘wild’ and ‘lonely’ life on the ‘outposts of civilisation’.\textsuperscript{191} Heathcock, who had only seen five white women in three years, had a government-supported role to ‘minister’ to the natives (including lepers), and otherwise camped for months with her lubra-servants whilst her policeman husband patrolled the 100,000 square miles of his watch. She described Aboriginals as the happiest and ‘most gentle race in the world’, said they were ‘childlike in their simplicity’, and thought their stories were ‘as beautiful as the Greek classics’. (Notably, Heathcock claimed she depended on the \textit{Weekly} for her supply of fiction.) She asserted that no woman of the ‘right type’ would be lonely at Roper River because ‘when you work hard for the love of work it becomes a real pleasure’. Both Heathcock and Hobley thus asserted that a certain ‘type’ of modern woman was not only unfrightened by isolation and physical hardship, but saw in it a desirable escape from an inferior urban world. Heathcock’s article – illustrated with the image of two half-dressed Aboriginal children happily assisting a city-styled girl to commune with ‘nature’ (Figure 54) – reinforced this ‘urban versus rural’ and ‘civilised versus uncivilised’ dynamic which characterised the \textit{Weekly}’s reportage on the Outback.

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\textsuperscript{189} \textit{J}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{190} ‘POV’, \textit{Weekly}, 7 March, 1936, p.10.
\textsuperscript{191} ‘Roper River Paradise For Two’, \textit{Weekly}, 12 December, 1936, p.3,8.
\end{flushleft}
In June, the Weekly introduced readers to Miss Kaberry in an article entitled ‘Plucky Girl’s Life Among Abos’. Miss Kaberry spent a year ‘roughing it’ in the ‘primitive squalor’ of Aboriginal camps in the ‘Bad Lands’ of the Kimberleys, where only twenty other white women lived and where Aboriginals apparently murdered prospectors and trackers. Kaberry’s trip was to serve her ‘science’ (anthropology?), and she was described as having ‘all the sangfroid and quiet confidence of the modern young woman’ for ‘whom the whole world, wild or civilised’ was ‘a hunting ground for a career’. Kaberry nursed wounded Aboriginals, was ‘nonchalant’ when caught in the crossfire of warring tribes, and said the Aboriginals protected her ‘at all costs’ from danger and inconvenience. She noted how one ‘lubra’, who had ‘killed her first husband, and was believed to have helped eat another’, wept because Kaberry’s feet had gotten wet whilst she carried her across a creek. Miss Kaberry also described how her ‘henchmaidens’ (another lubra) cleaned her supplies from insects. Miss Kaberry praised the ‘hospitality, generosity, and consideration’ of the regions’ ‘race of whites’, and said

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she’d always remember ‘the simple kindnesses’ of the ‘Australian blacks’. Like Hobley and Heathcock, Kaberry gave Aboriginal people a child or animal-like status, despite depending on them for her safety, and Kaberry’s acceptance of her own white superiority makes it hard to tell if it was novelty, respect – or fear – that saw ‘her’ Aboriginal servants oblige her. As well as offering insight into race-based class dynamics between white women and indigenous Australians at this time, such articles show how the paper represented the ‘plucky’ modern woman as one who seemed unaffected by the world around her (‘nonchalant’ or ‘insouciant’), career driven and both willing and able to conquer a dangerous world previously unknown to most men, let alone any women.

*Thea, Marc hopes that, if she loved a man, and were carrying ‘his child’, she’d have the ‘pluck’ to ‘go through with it’. Her ‘pluck’ means bravery in the face of social danger. It means embracing whatever Life throws at you: Life must be lived. Though Marc sees a ‘mad, desperate courage’ in your suicidal impulse, Thea, no one ever thinks of you as ‘pluck’y’.

Susan, you are the only woman in either story directly referred to as ‘pluck’y’. Bret thinks your ‘splendour’ and ‘uncompromising honesty’, and your sensible behaviour during your pregnancy, is plucky. He associates pluck with a woman’s honesty, and her ability to accept and withstand Life’s blows. Your pluck is where Bret’s love begins: his admiration of it is the only ‘frail barrier of approval’ that dams back his resentment.

In Coolami and Jungfrau’s worlds, pluck has nothing to do with conquering the dangerous corners of the earth, and everything to do with traversing the deadly topographies of social taboo that control people’s minds and bodies. In Coolami and

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194 G Armour, “‘Insouciance,” What the Stars Must Have Nowdays’, *Weekly*, 29 August, 1936, p.28. This article defines insouciance as being ‘casual; unconcerned; nonchalant; debonair’, and locates its origins in new films which were revealing a ‘fascinating new companionship between the sexes’, based not on Elinor Glyn’s notion of ‘charm’, but on ‘the charm of independence’.
196 J, p.280.
197 C, p.54.
198 C, p.173.
199 C, p.158.
Jungfrau, *women aren’t plucky for living among ‘black savages’. They’re plucky for surviving the savages of their own tribe.*

In August, the *Weekly* reported on Mrs Foy’s 5,000 mile journey with her husband, son and eleven men, to ‘Australia’s romantic legendary goldfield’, Lasseter’s Reef.²⁰⁰ Foy was ‘the first white woman’ to travel in many of the regions she crossed, though, unlike the previous three adventuressesses, she was a matronly, middle-aged woman who was emphatically negative about the outback’s ‘Spinifex, sand, flies, damper, and dirt’. Though her son got along with the ‘naked’ and ‘wolfish’ Aboriginals around their camp (for he was used to the ‘more civilised’ natives of Alice Springs), and though Foy felt ‘tremendously sorry’ for the Aboriginals’ evident hunger and dirtiness, stories about spearings had left her uneasy. Foy said she’d be happy to live in the city for the rest of her life. Unlike Hobley, Heathcock, and Kaberry, matronly Foy was a fearful and ‘reluctant’ adventuress who did not romanticise the outback’s harsh isolation. Mrs Hall and Mrs Hussey had similarly negative experiences of the outback. Hall described her ‘Grim’ car trek from Melbourne to Darwin in an article illustrated with a picture of a car, an attractive young blonde, and a man cutting his way ‘with axe and shovel and mattock’ through a jungley scene.²⁰¹ (Figure 55) Hall’s article was politically activist, drawing attention to the neglected ‘race’ of ‘bush whites’, and making no reference to Aboriginal people at all. Mrs Hussey looked as matronly as Foy. She was the first woman to, with her husband, do ‘a round-Australia trip in a baby car’.²⁰² Hussey spoke of disease, the nightmare of washing day, the ‘staggering’ cost of food, and, like Hall, described an impenetrable Australian terrain that was apparently devoid of Aboriginal people.

The *Weekly*’s reportage on all of these Australian adventuressesses reveals an Australian outback that is isolated and dangerous and, except in Hussey’s and Hall’s articles, visibly populated by Aboriginal people. The idealisations of Roper River, and of Miss Kaberry’s year of travel, each have, at their core, constructions of the ‘plucky’ modern woman and the Aboriginal who is that woman’s willing protector and servant. Mrs Foy’s perception of Aboriginals as dirty, starving and frightening was exceptional,

²⁰⁰ ‘Woman’s 5,000 Mile Trek Inland’, *Weekly*, 1 August, 1936, p.4.
²⁰¹ ‘Woman’s Grim Trek Outback’, *Weekly*, 19 September, 1936, p.3.
²⁰² ‘Modest Luggage for her 10,000 Mile Trip’, *Weekly*, 22 August, 1936, p.51.
and her and Hussey’s stout middle agedness, plus their negative perceptions, reinforce the sense that 1936 saw a new generation of women emerge in Australia who fearlessly fled urban desolation in pursuit of untamed wilds.

Figure 55: ‘Woman’s Grim Trek Outback’

_Thea, you are the character who communes most with nature in Jungfrau. When you meet Glover in the Botanic Gardens, one half of you waits under a ‘dark cedar’ whilst the other meets him ‘lightly, joyously, like a winged seed caught in an eddy of air’.²⁰³ Your cedars remind you of the ‘wild lands’²⁰⁴ of Lebanon. The ‘wilds’ in your story aren’t the Australian outback, but an exotic imagined place overseas, and your ‘natural’ environments are the choreographed gardens of your city. You seek refuge in the ‘swift beauty’²⁰⁵ of primroses, wild violets, azaleas, and boronia. Perhaps it was your poets who taught you to turn to the concrete, natural world in order to make meaning of your life. Why else contemplate your cedars, poplars, jacarandas, sarsaparillas, grevilleas, banksias, paperbarks, and willows?²⁰⁶ On your final walk, you watch the poplar’s leaves shimmer next to the brooding cedar. You wonder at the ‘alien sap’_

²⁰³ _J_, p.10.
²⁰⁴ _J_, p.32.
²⁰⁵ _J_, p.54.
²⁰⁶ _J_, pp.32, 233, 265-266.
coursing through the ‘ageless’ cedar’s branches. Aren’t you really wondering about Glover’s alien sap, coursing through you? Don’t you identify yourself in the poplar’s ‘dry rot’ and ‘transient radiance’? When you place your cheek against the plane tree and realise its survival depends on its sap’s memory of summer, your pregnant body suddenly strokes you from within. But this proof of life simply resolves you to die. You’d make a bad poet, Thea. You won’t develop your metaphors. You refuse to connect the dots. Look around you! Nothing chooses to die.

The ocean is the other ‘wild’ place you trek to. Though it cradles Marc, filling her with ‘content’, it seems both a threat and refuge to you, Thea. You’re not a bad swimmer: Glover notices your ‘natural, almost rhythmic ease’ in the water. So why must Terry save you from drowning at Whale Beach? And what portent does Marc register when she sees you staring into the ocean’s ‘seething depths? When you flee the abortionist and run to the sea’s ‘perfect unbroken turquoise’, its ‘impersonal waves’ and the fecund earth of its shores remind you that the living can kill themselves. Your sinister half materialises. As she rows you into the night, you see a fisherman and notice the Harbour bridge, the ferries, the comforting suburban lights. You also notice the water’s ‘grape-dark and gleaming’ depths, the ‘ragged’ clouds and ‘blunt’ cliffs. Like your city’s gardens Thea, your sea merges nature and people, life and death, safety and danger. When you slept with Glover, you thought you’d found a love which meant you’d ‘never fear time or change again’. That morning, you ran joyfully through the ‘endless swaying rhythm’ of the sea’s icy shallows. Were you thanking Nature with this ritual, or asserting the power of Love against its brutal indifference? Isn’t this your deadly confusion? That you locate the safety of Glover’s love in its timelessness, yet hate him for seeing your affair as an ‘incident’ with neither ‘past nor future’? Perhaps your

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207 J, p.265.
208 J, p.266.
209 J, p.102.
210 J, p.141.
211 J, p.149.
212 J, p.108.
213 J, pp.234-235.
214 J, pp.269-272.
215 J, p.149.
216 J, p.148.
217 J, p.172.
fundamental problem is less Glover, and Love, than your determination to relate meaningfulness to Time in a world where Nature constantly reminds you that whilst Time goes on, you will not. And you’re not the only one whom Time bothers in Jungfrau. Glover hates you for making him feel old.\(^{218}\) Marc is reading ‘An Experiment in Time’, and she also feels a ‘timeless moment’\(^{219}\) in Oswald’s arms that leaves her questioning the nature and value of ‘incidents’.

Susan, your physical world lacks both the Weekly’s arid, dangerous ‘outback’, and Thea’s familiar, urban landscape. Instead, your father’s car, a concrete symbol of the wealthy urbanite, is transporting you to the ‘bush’ or the ‘country’. (They are apparently two and the same: Bret is both a ‘countryman’ and a ‘bushman’.\(^{220}\)) For you, Susan, ‘the country’ is more psychological than physical: the country is Coolami and Coolami is a ‘word’, a ‘mass of pictures’, an ‘ache of memories’, and ‘a chill of many fears’.\(^{221}\) Coolami is an idea that bridges your past and future: to lose Coolami means ‘hacking’ out a piece of yourself; returning to it means becoming someone else, Susan Maclean.\(^{222}\)

Bret, your Australian countryside is also nothing like the Weekly’s parched outback. For you, Coolami means the ‘refreshing physical simplicities’\(^{223}\) of hard work in a landscape that feeds ‘the memories of all your senses’ and gives your life ‘a background of contentment’. As Margery says, you’ve always been ‘so very much a bachelor’, so satisfied with your work on the land.\(^{224}\) And now? You still love Coolami, but its psychological aspect has grown, for it is riddled with heart-wrenching gaps: Jim’s absence.\(^{225}\) Perhaps you were less a bachelor than a man married – through the land – to another man: a brother, a best friend, a companion, a helpmate. You edge towards this, recalling how you and Jim both spoke the same language, loved the same landscape, the same work and then... ‘the same woman’?\(^{226}\) Disconcerting thought! You think your

\(^{218}\) J, pp.150-151. 
^{219}\) J, p.134. 
^{220}\) C, pp.8, 126. 
^{221}\) C, p.9. 
^{222}\) C, p.10. 
^{223}\) C, p.12. 
^{224}\) C, p.112. 
^{225}\) C, p.13. 
^{226}\) C, p.32.
marriage to Susan is doomed, for you know love must be ‘both of and for’.\textsuperscript{227} Perhaps that’s why you ‘love’ Coolami, Bret: because you never have to worry about reciprocation. Coolami is less a wild, natural landscape than an object that you own, can act upon, and project onto, without resistance. Susan is not.

\textit{Millicent, the only thing you love more than Wondabyne is Tom: his jealousy is why you’ve hidden your ‘craving for the country’}.\textsuperscript{228} You admire how Bret’s dead mother grew Coolami from the ground, like ‘some vast rock flung there in prehistoric ages’.\textsuperscript{229} You wonder how that woman escaped the ‘gospel of beauty’ handed down to the generations who’d ‘dwelt on a milder gentler soil’. She understood Australia’s ‘new and more difficult beauty’. That’s why she planted native flora, and fought it in to living.\textsuperscript{230} You are glad Susan is picking up her battle, but you are nervous of how your car journey has resurrected your ‘strange ache’ for the land.\textsuperscript{231} Even Susan’s pregnancy rekindled ‘pictures and sensations’ for you, reminding you how the country could be drunk like wine.\textsuperscript{232} You stare over the Blue Mountains and feel yourself ‘in the midst of it with no clear conception of time either before or behind you’. You feel ‘spiritual expansion’ while absorbing ‘living colour’ and eerie silence from the land’s ‘infinite and dreaming calm’: it hurts, as music hurts, opening your heart, toppling defences, and making you ‘mysteriously receptive’.\textsuperscript{233} This is what the Australian ‘countryside’ means to you Millicent: it does not mean the practical challenge or harshness of the Weekly’s outback; it means a spiritual feeling, suppressed; a memory in the blood; the timelessness of prehistory.

\textit{Tom, you are the only character who struggles with just ‘what’ the countryside is. You associate instability, uncertainty, endless work, and endless anxiety with country life.}\textsuperscript{234} Doesn’t Balool prove there is ‘other enterprise than country enterprise, other endeavour, other achievement’?\textsuperscript{235} Your car – a ‘powerful animal’\textsuperscript{236} – transforms you
into a benevolent God: together, you conquer the ‘naïve and humble’ landscape that has stolen your family. Despite your resistance, the country light converts you. Finally, you can see your ‘native bushland’. You realise Millicent is right: Balool looks like an architect’s advertisement. You learn that beauty can be ‘fugitive, fragile, ephemeral, incredibly elusive’, an ‘illusion’, even an emotion. Now you hear ‘music’ in the ‘queer’ Aboriginal placenames which once sounded like ‘Jabber-jabber’ and ‘gibberish’. You learn just how descriptive names like Kerrajellanbong (‘the place in the shadow of the mountain’) and Jungaburra (‘a spirit place’) really are. You realise the tiny circle you’ve imposed on your married life: ‘from one suburb of Sydney to another’. You feel an urge for ‘spaciousness’. You open yourself to the map’s ‘black magic’, realising that ‘tantalising mysteries’ have been hidden from you ‘behind the soft syllables’ of an ‘alien tongue’, and by an education which taught you Australia was ‘born’ from ‘Mother England in the year 1770’ with Captain Cook as ‘midwife’. Now you hear in the so-called ‘language of savages’ the voices of ‘an ancient people’, a ‘primeval past’, like something ‘forgotten’, something to which you are now returning, not just physically, but in ‘spirit through a dissolving barrier of time’. Like Millicent, the Australian landscape makes you feel the ‘strangeness’ of Time ‘arrested’ and ‘suspended’. As for Thea, Tom, Nature means ‘timelessness’ to you, and ‘timelessness’ means confronting your own mortality. Unlike Thea, that confrontation compels you to live.

Does Nature – as Coolami – really change any of you? Tom, you think there is ‘nothing left to fight’ at Balool. You think you’ve found an ‘inexhaustible source of combat’ in Wondabyne. How’s this any different to your material quests in the city?

237 C, p.23.
239 C, p.38.
240 C, p.176.
241 C, p.39, 10–11.
242 C, p.79.
243 C, p.102.
244 C, p.127.
245 C, p.145.
246 C, p.176.
248 C, p.176.
249 C, p.177.
And Millicent, your happiness depends on possessing – rather than experiencing – Wondabyne. What’s spiritual about that? Bret, you ‘treasure’ Coolami as your personal ‘possession’. Do you love the land, or your power to control and exploit it? No, Coolami is nothing like the harsh Australian outback of the Weekly: Coolami has none of the Weekly’s ‘savages’ (just scraps of their language, dotted like tombstones along the road) and is, in fact, a pastoral landscape, just like the lush landscapes of England that Millicent scorns.

The Exotic Over-seas: Modern Women conquer the world

Another group of courageous, ‘physical’ women who appeared in the Weekly took their adventures overseas. In July, the Weekly introduced readers to Rosie Clunies Ross, a ‘Cashier Who Became Queen of Cocos Island’ (Figure 56). During the war, Ross was one of the great army of women-workers who were fighting their own silent battle in industry. Tied to the routine of an office desk, she worked, played, planned, and dreamed.

One day ‘romance passed by’ Ross’ desk. She married a ‘bronzed, handsome young island king’ who ‘whisked’ her away to his ‘beautiful tropical domain’ where ‘she has since ruled as Queen’. The paper pronounced this story ‘a Prince Charming fairy tale come true!’ Ross’ story resonates with the stories suggested by covers like ‘Typist’, ‘Helen’ and ‘Telephone Girls’. These covers present ‘Career’ girls who seem detached or bored, as if passively waiting for something – or someone – to take them away from their tedious jobs: ‘Helen’s’ cover makes this explicit, announcing that she has finally won a fiancée. Reportage on other international adventuresses, like royal German socialite Mrs Hugo Brassey, may also have fuelled readers’ passive fantasies of adventure. The Weekly emphasised Brassey’s modernity not only by noting that she had been a ‘well-known airwoman’ before her marriage, but by emphasising her

250 C, p.170.
251 C, p.56.
254 See ‘Appendix Two’.
internationality, and ‘her nerve and courage’: she was navigating her husband’s yacht from Queensland to Koepang. Though the paper visually and textually emphasised Brassey’s aristocratic glamour, it also emphasised how, when she lived on an Australian Island, she ‘lived in shorts and skirts, like a typical Australian surf girl’. By asserting that Brassey was ‘like them’, the paper thus brought Brassey closer to readers, making her glamour and adventure more attainable.

Figure 56: ‘Queen of the Cocos’

Figure 57: Aloha’s World Tour.

255 ‘Woman’s Daring Voyage in Yacht’, Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.11.
The *Weekly* also tracked adventuress Aloha Baker’s ‘Hurricane Skip’ around the world. Aloha had visited over 60 countries, spoke 14 languages and was the first woman to drive from Cape Town to Cairo. She even drank warm animal’s blood in her ‘excursions into primitive wildernesses’: the ‘commonplace security of normal life’ was as useless to Aloha as reptiles were to the ‘woman of normal existence’. When ‘Girl Adventurer’ Aloha appeared in one of the *Weekly’s* photospreads (Figure 57), she was shown gripping a baby crocodile, holding its mouth open to reveal the size of its bite: the crocodile had attacked her canoe in the ‘River of Death’ on the Bolivian border. Though Aloha was clearly meant to look ‘wild’ in this photo, her make-up, ringlets and spotless, flattering clothes reveal how contrived her ‘adventures’ really were, and the previous article noted that she would be publishing books and giving lectures in America: it seems publicity was the means (and the motive?) through which glamorous young Aloha saw the world. Aloha – whose powder-puff was a pistol – was one adventuress who was explicitly constructed as Other to the *Weekly’s* ‘normal’ readers.

These international adventuresses were presented to readers as fearless, exotic, and beautiful. Ross’ story was that of the ‘every-girl’ whose passive yearning to escape her tedious, city-based job was literally fulfilled by Prince Charming: her story was both exotic and domestic, for, though she might be Queen of the Cocos, she was also a mother to her children and the island’s ‘natives’. Though Brassey’s story was, in fact, a direct reversal of Ross’ (for Brassey transformed from a princess into an Australian surfing girl) both women’s glamour was made ‘attainable’ to readers by the ‘ordinary’ aspects of their stories. Though Aloha’s adventures were clearly contrived for Hollywood, and though her glamour and adventure thus seemed less attainable, she shared one fundamental thing in common with all of the paper’s adventuresses: she represented fantasies of escape and adventure ‘come real’; she personified ‘adventure’ as something young, beautiful, courageous, glamorous and feminine.

*In Coolami, the car journey is the adventure that enables all of you to travel psychologically into your pasts so that you can then venture forth into your shared*

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256 ‘Young Woman’s Hurricane Skip Round World’, *Weekly*, 30 May, 1936, p.4.
257 ‘Glimpses of Girl Adventurer’s World Tour’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 1 August, 1936, p.15.
futures. There is no ‘international’ world in your story, except for that implied by your references to the Great War. As all of you drive towards Coolami, you are overcome by a ‘luxurious fatalism’. You move, ‘passive, tranced and pleasantly comatose’, towards your destinies.\textsuperscript{258} If Love is the ultimate adventure in Coolami, it is an adventure like Mrs Ross’ of the Cocos: one defined by passivity and fatalism. Susan, you wait for Bret to realise his love for you. Margery, you wait for Colin to come home. And Millicent? You’ve been waiting thirty-seven years for Tom to transform into his best self.

In Jungfrau, Oswald Mackins, the Polar ‘explorer-man’\textsuperscript{259} (a real adventurer, though not a Weekly-styled adventuress) is the only person who travels overseas. Marc, you are paired off with him at Whale Beach. You think there’s something of the ‘whipcord’ about him,\textsuperscript{260} and he is one of the few people you listen to: you think he offers you the ‘breath of a wider world’, a world that seeks being over having, a world where people do things for the sake of doing them. You ask him if the Antarctic is a place where one can get ‘real thinking’ done.\textsuperscript{261} He tells you there’s freedom in the ‘tremendous impersonality of it all’,\textsuperscript{262} that the Antarctic is his ‘retreat’.\textsuperscript{263} You attack him for equating freedom with personal detachment.\textsuperscript{264} Marc, you know already what Bret learns in Coolami – that ‘being’ requires all of the human senses, including the emotions. Though Oswald might have conquered the exotic and vast world overseas (a world that seems irrelevant to yours and Thea’s and Eve’s), you know that Life’s real adventure lies in ‘being with’ another, as well as ‘being in’ the world.

The Domesticated Seas: Modern Women Cruise the World

In January, the Weekly announced a letter writing competition for a ‘Grand Trip to Hongkong [sic] Free!’\textsuperscript{265} The prize – a ‘De-Luxe’ eight week tour of the ‘Romantic China Seas’ – was presented as a ‘gift for readers’ from the Australian-Oriental Line and

\textsuperscript{258} C, p.185. 
\textsuperscript{259} J, p.90. 
\textsuperscript{260} J, p.108. 
\textsuperscript{261} J, p.99. 
\textsuperscript{262} J, p.126. 
\textsuperscript{263} J, p.128. 
\textsuperscript{264} J, pp.128-129. 
M.G.M., who were then launching the film ‘China Seas’ in Australia. Nineteen year old Miss Shirley Macleod, whose modernity was evident in her job as a typist at Austin Motors, was announced the winner in February. Hers was one of ‘thousands’ of 50-word ‘essays’ sent from all over the Commonwealth:

My eyes ache over rows of black figures on white paper. I close them. I see waving palms – transparent tropic seas – glorious colors [sic] – sea flowers – sea creatures – birds of paradise – strange lands – strange people. My eyes have stopped aching... I open them to write again. But now my heart aches.

Macleod’s fragmented prose evokes a sense of her glimpsing and gasping as she strains within the tedium of her job to retain this image of a generalised, coveted ‘exotic’. The Weekly described Macleod as having ‘captured the feelings’ of ‘thousands’ of other office girls who’d like to exchange their work routines for ‘glamorous exploration of the East’. MacLeod’s story resonates with Ross’s story of the Cocos. Both women’s ‘modern’ careers as secretaries were constructed as prison-like, and both women’s escape was granted by dramatic, romantic external intervention. Over 1936, the paper kept track of Macleod’s trip, describing her as an ‘unofficial ambassador’ who would be meeting the Chief Commissioner of Police in Hong Kong, the managing director of Austin Motors, and the editor of the women’s section of the South China ‘Morning Post’.

Clearly, the fact of a young Western woman traveling ‘independently’ to the ‘exotic’ East was quite an event at this time.

The Weekly’s ‘China Seas’ competition, and its attempt to promote both the cruise-ship industry and a cruise ‘themed’ Hollywood film, show how the ‘ocean cruise’ played a significant role in the imaginations of Australian women in 1936. Steam-ship technology had rapidly developed since the mid-nineteenth century, when it took 2-3 months to get from England to Australia: after 1900, the same trip took 4-8 weeks.

269 ‘Dreamed a Dream that Came True!’, Weekly, 12 September, 1936, p.16.
1936 also saw the maiden voyage of the R.M.S. Queen Mary, a ship second in size only to the French Normandie, from which she soon stole the Blue Riband. This was reported by the paper as evidence of Britain’s national superiority, and the Weekly maintained interest in the liner with Mary St Claire reporting from aboard the ship itself. She described it as a ‘floating luxury city for 2100 passengers, and a crew of 1100’ which only needed a Parliament to become ‘a sovereign state’. This article was followed by a painting of the Queen Mary at sea (Figure 58), with Cook’s Endeavour painted into the clouds: ‘What a story of human progress is here shown’. This image thus reasserted how the ship symbolised Britain’s technological and national superiority, this time linking that superiority directly to Australia, and giving both nations a place in the grand epic of Human Progress. Importantly, the paper gave Woman a place in this epic too, with St Claire claiming that ‘but for a woman the ship might not have been built’.

As previously noted, the paper reported golf as the Australian working girl’s number one holiday preference after a cruise. The cruise thus represented a specific type of adventure associated both with financial cost and temporary escape, with the paper claiming that the working girl’s entire year revolved around funding such holidays. One article, which wondered ‘What is it About A Ship...?’ (Figure 59), itemised a cruise’s cost (Totalling £11, 2s.6d.), and identified ‘young men and business girls’ as making up ‘the larger part’ of a ship’s passengers. This article claimed that the cruise’s chief feminine appeal lay in its being a glamorous, ‘moving hotel that takes one somewhere’: although ‘more venturesome than ever’, modern women demanded ‘a background of luxury’. Here, the idea of the ‘adventurous’ modern woman, epitomised by Aloha, Hobley and Heathcock, transformed into the ‘adventurous’ modern woman as

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273 J Alcott, “‘The Liner – She’s a Lady”... Kipling’ (painting), Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.3.
274 M St Claire, ‘Woman Helped to Build the Queen Mary’, Weekly, 8 August, 1936, p.4. When the ship’s building ground to a halt in 1931, Lady Astor, M.P., gave one Tyneside M.P. the opportunity to convince the then Prince Edward that the Cunarder meant ‘work’ and ‘life’ and ‘the prestige’ of Britain itself. The government pledged £3,000,000: Edward credited Astor’s intervention in the ship’s success.
276 ibid.
277 ‘What is it About a Ship...?’, Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.3 of ‘Fashions & Pictures’. (NB: this supplement, the ‘MV’ and ‘HM’ were treated as separate supplements towards the end of 1936, with their own page numbers.)
pleasure seeker. In turn, this pleasure seeker’s desires transformed the ship from being a means to reach adventure, into becoming the adventure itself. The paper’s interest in cruising fashions (Figure 60)\textsuperscript{278} also suggests that women cruisers’ adventures were confined to the ship, as does the paper’s presentation of the cruise as ‘a happy hatchery for love affairs’.\textsuperscript{279} Some letter writers saw truth in these constructions, with one arguing that women merely ‘long to experience’ travel’s ‘luxury’, whilst another argued that women travellers were really ‘looking for romance, not adventure’.\textsuperscript{280} This theme – cruising for love – appeared regularly in the \textit{Weekly’s} fiction.\textsuperscript{281}

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\caption{Figure 58: J Alcott’s ‘The Liner – She’s a Lady’ Figure 59: ‘What is it About a Ship....?’}
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\item\textsuperscript{279} ‘What is it About a Ship....?’, \textit{Weekly}, p.3.
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The growing popularity and accessibility of cruise trips for Australians was also evident in the *Weekly’s* advertising. The Aberdeen & Commonwealth Line promised ‘unlimited pleasure at a limited cost’, offering fares to England for £38 on their ‘One Class Bay Liners’: ‘every passenger is free to roam where he will’ with ‘service typical of a first-class hotel’.282 This same trip cost £39 by October, and travelled from Australia to England via Ceylon, Aden, Suez Canal and Malta.283 This company also offered trips to England timed for the Coronation in 1937.284 The New Zealand government’s tourist bureau assured readers that it ‘only’ took three days ‘by fast luxurious liner’ to visit Australia’s closest neighbour,285 whilst the *Weekly’s* own travel bureau arranged and advertised such trips as its ‘Holiday Cruise to Colombo’,286 or its ‘25 Days’ Cruise’ in the South Seas for £32,287 or its £103, three month trip to Japan.288 (Figure 61) All of these ads assumed readers wanted a ‘domesticated’ adventure free from uncertainty, danger

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and discomfort. Furthermore, these ads assumed travel-spending was a luxury for the paper’s readers, with the Weekly’s Travel Bureau directing those who were ‘doubtful about costs’ to write ‘fully and frankly’ to the Bureau, which could then match a holiday to their budget.\(^{289}\)

In 1936, the cruise ship was a palace on water, a speedy record breaker, and a symbol of national superiority and human progress. The cruise ship allowed Modern Woman to wear ‘adventure’ on her fashionable sleeve as she prowled luxurious decks looking for love. Though the paper’s ‘real’ adventuresses must have fed readers’ fantasies about fearless escape into the exotic, the paper suggests that ‘the cruise’ was significant to Australian women, in 1936, because it packaged the idea of ‘adventure’ into something that was both safe and increasingly accessible.

Marc, you wish Eve would perform Thea’s abortion so you can send her off on a ‘sea-trip or something’, something ‘to get her back to normal’.\(^{290}\) You have £50 to help Thea with: as working women you can just afford such things. For you, Marc, a cruise is not the Weekly’s luxurious, romantic escape. For you, Marc, a cruise is a cure; something prescribed to a woman in social danger; a way of normalising a woman’s bad situation at home, simply by removing her from it.

Motifs of Modernity: Modern Women Fly High

In 1936, the Weekly constantly referred to the triumphs of women aviators and always mentioned a woman’s flying prowess as a means of signifying her ‘plucky’ modernity: Naughton, Brassey and Aloha were all pilots. The Weekly’s interest in King Edward resided largely in the fact that he was a new type of King – a ‘completely modern man’ – whose newness was also signified, in part, by the fact he could fly his own plane and drive his own car.\(^{291}\) (Figure 62) The following asks, if such flying men signified a New World, then flying women signified... what?

\(^{289}\) Weekly’s Travel Bureau ad, Weekly, 18 April, 1936, p.37.
\(^{290}\) J, p.243.
\(^{291}\) ‘We Enter the Era’, Weekly, p.5.
Figure 62: Edward marks new era

Figure 63: Flying women make Page 3 ‘News’
In January, the *Weekly* offered readers a detailed discussion of women’s role in world aviation, and treated both the industry, and women’s place within it, as newsworthy and important.\(^{292}\) This article noted the recent development of Australia’s Trans-Tasman Air Development company, and compared Australian, American and Dutch airlines’ employment of women, noting how the latter two countries required hostesses to be multilingual, educated, registered nurses who had ‘perfect physical fitness’.\(^{293}\) Some of these hostesses could have flown the planes they served on, but were never employed to do so. This article noted Australia’s flying women, like Miss Nancy Bird, Mrs Bonney, Miss Bradford, and Freda Thompson, whilst other articles’ focus on the growth in women air passengers proved women had ‘No Fear of the Air’.\(^{294}\) Articles noted how such passengers generally travelled interstate,\(^{295}\) or claimed women were ‘as good air travellers as men’,\(^{296}\) or described how Australian air services linked more than twenty centres in four different states,\(^{297}\) or noted how 25% of the Australian women who travelled to London with Imperial Airways flew for business reasons.\(^{298}\) Such articles presented aviation as a source of new careers for women, with one describing Holyman’s three ‘girls’ as ‘splendid successes’.\(^{299}\) Whilst readers debated whether human ‘progress’ was worth aviation’s deadly toll,\(^{300}\) the speed of modern transport clearly impressed the paper when it reported three American reporters’ race to ‘girdle’ the world by ‘regular’ sea, land and air transport.\(^{301}\) The winner circled the globe in less than nineteen days, proving that ‘world tours of a month’s duration’ were no longer ‘idle dreams’.\(^{302}\) International events, like the England to Johannesburg air race, were also treated as evidence that air transport was ‘making the continent grow smaller’.\(^{303}\) The fact that the Johannesburg Golden Jubilee was even *advertised* in the

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\(^{292}\) ‘Ladybird, ladybird, roaming on high!’ *Weekly*, 18 January, 1936, p.3.

\(^{293}\) ibid.

\(^{294}\) ‘Women have no fear of the air’, *Weekly*, 11 January, 1936, p.2.

\(^{295}\) ibid.

\(^{296}\) ‘Time Flies – So Do Women!’, *Weekly*, 19 September, 1936, p.36.

\(^{297}\) ibid.

\(^{298}\) ‘Women have no fear of the air’, *Weekly*, p.2.

\(^{299}\) ‘Time Flies’, *Weekly*, p.36.


\(^{303}\) ‘Pictorial Flight Around This Modern Africa’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 10 October, 1936, p.17.
Weekly (‘Join the 2,000,000 visitors’\footnote{Weekly, 3 October, 1936, p.36. This ad offers ‘Specially reduced steamer fares’ for Australians.}) showed that at least some of its readers were assumed to be candidates for international leisure travel.

Holidays and business trips were not the only spheres of life to be influenced by aviation with ‘The Body Beautiful’ promoting a new ‘aviation perfume’: ‘a very modern scent, with a deep whiff of the unknown in its bouquet’.\footnote{‘BB’, Weekly, 11 July, 1936, p.47.} Similarly, the idea of aviation was used in an ad for ‘Cream of Yeast’, where a call to ‘Feel Better’ was placed under a photo of a windswept young woman in a cockpit.\footnote{‘Cream of Yeast’ ad, Weekly, 17 October, 1936, p.34.} (Figure 64) Leslie Haylen even claimed that growing ‘air-mindedness’ had born a modern ‘note’ in fiction: that of the ‘flying school’ story.\footnote{‘NB’, Weekly, 31 October, 1936, p.14.} Aviation also impacted upon medicine, with the Weekly referring to Australia’s unique Flying Doctor service\footnote{‘Making Back O’Beyond A Better Place for Women’, Weekly, 21 March, 1936, p.3; ‘Are Queensland Towns “Uncivilised”?’, Weekly, 11 July, 1936, p.2; ‘How Seven White Women Live at Hall’s Creek’, Weekly, 12 September, 1936, p.52; ‘CA!’, Weekly, 17 October, 1936, p.25.} and promoting the related Gaumont-British film.\footnote{‘Farrell Turns Australian’ (photospread), Weekly, 5 September, 1936, p.29.} Apart from showing how the Flying Doctor service operated, this curious film presented marital abandonment, divorce and bigamy as quite uncontroversial, commonplace Australian affairs.\footnote{The Flying Doctor, (film), as ‘suggested by the novel by Robert Waldron’, National Productions, Gaumont-British, 1936.}
Just as the Adelaide Centenary’s advertising focused women’s attention on sport and cars, it also drew attention to aviation. In April, the paper reported that the celebrations might include a special air race for women.311 The Centennial Air Pageant, where entrants would fly from Brisbane to Adelaide in pursuit of £1000, was presumed impossible for women. One man explained that it would be ‘a much greater strain on women’ than the short flights they were used to, whilst Australian pilot, Helena Cato, saw money as women’s main obstacle. By April, however, the Weekly announced Freda Thompson and Ivy Pearce as possible contestants.312 Pearce thought it an ‘excellent’ opportunity for ‘lady fliers’ to show they were ‘quite capable’ of competing against men: just like sports and driving, the paper’s interest in aviation often derived from its perceived capacity to measure woman’s worth against men’s. This was evident in its article announcing that a ‘Quintet of Charming Airwomen’ would ‘Swoop to Conquer’ the forty male entrants.313 As usual, the Weekly applauded these airwomen for their man-like skills whilst expressing fears for their femininity. Though two photos in this article showed the airwomen looking suspiciously sexless in non-descript flying suits, the article emphasised how all the women did normal things like ‘dance, sing, swim’, and the women’s accompanying portraits affirmed this feminine normalcy (Figure 65). In September, the paper’s concerns for the aviatrix’s femininity were most blatantly expressed when it published a glamorous photo of Bird and proclaimed ‘there is nothing that is not feminine about this young Australian’314 (Figure 66).

312 ‘Freda Thompson In Adelaide’s Big Air Race’, Weekly, 18 April, 1936, p.52. Thompson is also mentioned in ‘WWD’, Weekly, 19 September, 1936, p.23.
313 ‘They Swoop to Conquer’, Weekly, 28 November, 1936, p.3.
Jean Batten: The Ultimate Feminine Modern Girl

In February, Mary St Claire reported that though London airports believed women pilots were better than men, Imperial Airways had no intention of employing them because they were mechanically ignorant and could not ‘take command’ in an emergency. St Claire introduced two women who were trying to get air taxi licenses in London. These women simply accepted their future customers would share such prejudices ‘against having women at the controls’. These women turned to England’s Amy Johnson and New Zealand’s Jean Batten for inspiration, for if they could break world records, then their ‘simple venture’ must succeed. Similarly, one editorial used the figure of the aviatrix to specifically attack the ‘lingering’ prejudices against women doctors, barristers, surgeons, pilots, and drivers which assumed women were not ‘self reliant’ because (once again) they panicked in emergencies. Such articles show how stars like Batten – and the idea of the aviatrix – were an icon for all women who sought to fulfil their potential in a man’s world which told them they had none. The following discussion shows how,

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though Batten’s triumphs were celebrated by the *Weekly*, the paper clearly felt ambivalent towards this ultimate symbol of modern womanhood.

The *Weekly’s* reportage on Batten was constantly concerned with her ‘femininity’. Haylen kicked off this trend in January, responding to the ‘news’ that when ‘thoroughly feminine’ Batten conquered the South Atlantic, she refused publicity until she had replaced her laddered stockings:

> Under the skin, a woman is always a woman. No matter how she may ape masculinity, there comes the time when the urge to be truly feminine masters any desire to be regarded as “one of the boys” – in dress as well as in manners...

> A man’s a man for all that...  

Haylen thus used Batten to generalise about *all* men and women, conflating femininity with womanhood whilst construing woman’s triumph in man’s sphere as being driven only by a desire to ‘be like’ him. Of course, Haylen did not consider that reportage like his own may have influenced Batten’s careful choreography of her image as the ‘Garbo of the skies’.  

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Batten’s name continued to appear in the *Weekly* throughout 1936, with reportage increasing in mid-October when – as the first person to fly solo from England to New Zealand – she became the ‘World No.1 Woman Flyer’. The *Weekly* put Jean on its cover, with a poem by Phyllis Duncan-Brown that romanticised her and her historic trip. (Figure 67) In typical *Weekly* fashion, the paper used Batten to assert its own newsworthy significance, describing how it had organised the ‘greatest nation-wide broadcast yet attempted’, which saw Batten listened to by 2,000,000 Australians, plus people overseas. This issue recounted Batten’s life story, including her failed attempts to fly to Australia which saw her crash in Karachi and Rome. Some articles emphasised Batten’s ‘purity’ (describing her as ‘a gem of purest quality’, or as a woman with a ‘stainless gaze’), and all articles presented her as modest, describing her motives as being the joy of achievement, or to close the air link between New Zealand and England, or simply to fly her plane home. Jean’s modesty was reflected in her appearance, with one article noting how, though she had just completed an exhausting, epic journey, the ‘frail-looking’, ‘thin’, ‘girlish’, ‘small’, ‘pale’, and ‘tiny’ woman had tidied her hair, wore spotless white canvas overalls and a fresh silk hanky. Three entire photospreads were dedicated to Batten, and were filled with images that reinforced her girlish femininity and modesty, including one showing her as a teen in school uniform and another as a beautiful ballerina. One photospread’s captions emphasised how ‘trim’, ‘neat’ and attractive she was. Batten’s success thus seemed to lie less in her amazing flying record (which men were yet to attempt), than in her success at maintaining her unthreatening femininity as ‘a gracious sky lady’, or a ‘breathless’ girl.

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326 ‘Half Hour’s Talk’, *Weekly*, 24 October, 1936, p.3.
328 ‘This is Jean Batten’, *Weekly*, p.17.
The triumph and importance of Batten’s femininity was ‘proven’, perhaps, by the fact that Crème Charmosan ads used her image to sell its cosmetics, claiming that what Batten’s female admirers really wanted to know was how she protected her ‘priceless complexion’ on her trip (Figure 70).

Even though Batten’s record was a first for men and women alike, the paper could only claim that Batten ‘might well rank with any man’ in building up future air services. Though always constrained by this ‘male’ measure of success, by concerns about femininity, and by related fears about the fate of women’s marriageability and fertility in man’s sphere, the paper did emphasise that the ‘secret’ to Batten’s success lay in her courage, her flying skill, her genius for organisation, and her mechanical knowledge. Similarly, though Castrol Oil used Batten’s feminine attractions to draw readers’ attention to their product, their advertisements also emphasised Batten’s ‘amazing’ achievements (Figure 71). Batten herself claimed her success depended on care and skill (never ‘luck’), and on that other traditionally feminine figure, the sacrificial mother.

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330 ibid.
333 The paper said Batten had ‘given up’ her life to flying, and was surprised that Amy Johnson and Amelia Earhart continued to fly after marriage (‘Half Hour’s Talk’, *Weekly*, p.3; ‘LTIP’, *Weekly*, 24 October, 1936, p.3). Batten actually gave up flying after WWII. She lived the rest of her life as a recluse with her mother in Europe, dying, in 1982, from a septic dog bite in Majorca. She was buried in a pauper’s grave, her fate unknown, until uncovered by her biographer. See, Mackersey, *Jean Batten*.
336 ‘Half Hour’s Talk’, *Weekly*, p.3.
Figure 68: ‘This is Jean Batten’

Figure 69: a ‘gracious sky lady’
Whilst the paper used the aviatrix to both expose and attack the male prejudices that hindered women’s success, readers (many of whose genders were unclear) also used the aviatrix to expose or express such prejudices. Whilst one reader felt Batten proved that the romantic and the wonderful lay in the ‘everyday’, 338 other readers approached Batten as a means to debate the vices and virtues of modern women. In July, Mrs Brown quoted a male pilot who claimed women fliers were ‘spurred on’ only by their ‘lack of personal charm’. Brown complained how, even when women did ‘fine’ things, ‘better or equally as well as men’, their achievement was not ‘regarded as a triumph’, but as the ‘working out’ of an ‘inferiority complex’. 339 Brown’s letter was illustrated with a cartoon showing a stylish looking woman writing at a desk over a caption that read: ‘Can a clever woman be charming and feminine, too?’ The Weekly thus twisted Brown’s letter, shifting readers’ attention from her identification of widespread male prejudice to the Weekly’s favourite question of successful women’s femininity. A number of readers replied to Brown, with many expressing similar concerns, though serial letter writer, Miss Dorothy Liddicott, asserted Woman’s success in Man’s sphere always ‘Masks her Failure’:

I am inclined to believe that much of the success of the swaggering, aggressive type of woman who boasts loudly about her career is merely a mask for her personal failure to achieve the values in life that most women regard as essentially feminine and worthwhile. Bringing up a happy family then growing old gracefully – these are woman’s happiest achievements.\(^{340}\)

How ‘Miss’ Liddicott knew that marriage and children guaranteed feminine happiness is unclear, but, evidently, some Australians in 1936 felt that each sex had an essentially ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ core that should define their place in society.

The paper framed Liddicott’s attack on ‘masculine’ women with a cartoon showing women knitting over the caption: ‘Woman’s place in the home?’ In November, H.B. Bisley won £1 for affirming that ‘Women’s Sphere’ \(\text{was, indeed, the home}\).\(^{341}\) Bisley argued that women like Batten had proven the sexes were equally ‘brilliant’: women’s ‘fearless entry’ into male fields had shattered ‘the old-time illusion’ that women’s ‘duty’ was in the home. Bisley worried about what would happen if modern women kept emulating men ‘more and more’– they already smoked, drank, drove and wore men’s clothes. When would women ‘slip into their right sphere and make a success of marriage and the home’? One reader shared Bisley’s concerns, stating that modern woman’s restlessness was making her neglect ‘children, home, and husband’, namely those spheres of work that related to women’s undeniable ‘natural function’ and were thus her truest source of happy ‘fulfilment’.\(^{342}\) Another reader also worried that women were changing so rapidly that men would soon ‘be taking “backseats” in every profession’. This writer acknowledged women’s ‘marvellous feats’, but thought women would be happier and more appreciated by men if they thought more of their ‘future husbands’. Feats like Batten’s were thus less important than the desires of both actual and hypothetical husbands. A number of women were furious with Bisley. Tessa Jacobs was one of the few writers in \textit{The Australian Women’s Weekly} in 1936 to assert a clear distinction between being ‘female’ (biologically sexed) and being a ‘woman’ (socially gendered): ‘why should a woman, just because she is born a female, waste all ability, curb all ambition, because in the best tradition she should take up housekeeping?’ Miss J.


Beale called Bisley ‘narrow-minded’, and said men and women alike saw the notion of ‘woman’s right sphere’ as ‘ridiculous’. Under the title, ‘Bravo, Modern Girl’, H.G. Caswell also asked ‘narrow-minded’ Bisley why smoking, drinking, and driving a car were ‘men’s fields’, whilst the ‘burden’ of marriage was woman’s. Caswell’s letter ended, however, by calling for more modern girls to be like Batten for, ‘in spite of her achievements’ she remained ‘a sweet woman, respected by both sexes’. Like the paper itself, Caswell was clearly sceptical that feminine achievement and femininity could coexist. The contradictory nature of Bisley’s letter – moving, as it did, from admiration to fear, and from denying women’s domestic ‘duty’ to reasserting it – plus the oppositional nature of other readers’ replies, again exposes the deep ambivalence Australians felt towards the modern woman in 1936: she was clearly changing society as quickly as she was changing herself.

Jean Batten – the ultimate ‘Physical Woman’ – offered the paper and its readers a real figure around which to debate concerns about Modern Woman’s Right Sphere. Her complicity in constructing herself as a ‘gracious sky lady’ affirmed the Weekly’s attitude that, if ‘modern’ woman had to invade men’s spheres, she had better do so in a feminine manner. The paper’s fascination with Batten also shows that, whilst male prejudice generally dictated women’s professional and commercial potential in ‘male spheres’, women aggressively policed each other’s choices: it was not Australia’s governor general, but his wife, Lady Gowrie, who begged Batten (as ‘one woman to another’) not to fly across the dangerous Tasman and win her historic record.343

Jean, you made a public career of a physical pursuit. You were both an awe inspiring reality and a potent symbol. The idea of you started a heated conversation in the Weekly that had nothing to do with aviation and everything to do with whether Woman’s Right Sphere lay in a ‘career’ in man’s public world, or a ‘career’ in the private world of marriage and the home. Jean, you form a bridge between themes.

Chapter Five:
Modern Women are Career Women?
In 1936 The Australian Women’s Weekly announced the death of ‘the helpless, feather-headed, blushing, shrinking, “clinging vine” type’ of woman, proclaiming she had died along with ‘Victorian prudery, seclusion, black bombazine, plush furniture and antimacassars’.¹ As the previous chapter shows, the paper repeatedly presented readers with a New Woman – ‘as good as any man’ – who destroyed notions of female weakness by triumphing in such fields as sport, adventure and aviation. This chapter explores how this ‘shrewd and practical’² New Woman was also formulated as one who could perform on ‘an equal footing’ with men ‘in all businesses and professions’.³ Though the Weekly celebrated this woman’s economic independence, the paper generally presented her choices as being mutually exclusive, encouraging readers to debate whether ‘Woman’s Right Sphere’ lay within or without the home.

‘Dainty undergraduette’

Three of the Weekly’s covers allude to education, with ‘Cap & Gown’⁴ (Figure 72) presenting a solemn and detached looking, tertiary educated woman. Her accompanying poem describes her as a ‘Dainty undergraduette’ full of ‘knowledge most alarming’ and culminates by asking ‘what genius taught you, dear, How to be so charming?’ This cover thus presents knowledge as threatening to women, and only values it as a source of feminine charm. The following discusses the Weekly’s attitudes towards education, as such attitudes directly influenced women’s occupational choices.

A number of articles asked whether Australian education should ‘Educate for Living as well as for Livelihood’, or worried about Australian students being overburdened by homework and exam ‘cramming’, or questioned institutional assumptions that Australians were an outdoorsy, unintellectual racial type. One article asked why the American Carnegie Corporation was funding Australian libraries, whilst others argued that Australian education’s materialism and commercialism meant poor children were increasingly being exempted from school in order to work in ‘cheap and frequently unregistered factories’ where they were quickly ‘turned out’ for younger children. The health of such children was significantly compromised, for they were best-fed at school. Some linked the cultural poverty of Australian education with young people’s lack of manners and good ‘tone’, with people’s ignorance of classical music, or with crime, with one article arguing that, in a ‘machine-run age’, people must be

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10 Miss M FitzPatrick [sic], in ‘STS’, *Weekly*, 20 June, 1936, p.19.
educated on how to fill their excess leisure time. Another article reported on the formation of the Delphic youth club in Melbourne, aimed at combating churches’, homes’ and schools’ fixation on ‘training for earning power’ by offering a forum free from the ‘barriers of prejudice, dogma, creeds,’ and ‘conventionality’. Though one reader claimed that degrees did not procure a jobs, the majority of articles thus suggested that many Australians in 1936 felt theirs was a materialistic age where making a living was valued over learning how to live.

Marc, this sounds like you talking about how everyone is ‘white-anted’ by doing things through ‘vicious’ motives like money and advancement. You value ‘being’ over ‘having’, and ‘Art for art’s sake’. I bet you believe in education for its own sake too. It’s unclear how Thea and Eve got to university, but you had to pay your way, earning money by day and studying at night. All three of your educations enable you to make a living, and have given two of you careers that you love.

Thea, you hate the job that your education has allowed you. In fact, you think you’ve spent years ‘getting over being educated’. You associate education with ‘working to pattern’, being safe. Unlike Marc and Eve, your education does not empower you to engage with, and survive in, your world.

Though you are all articulate and analytical in Coolami, you, Margery, are the only person to refer to university. You smile at your ‘extreme seriousness’ as a student, recalling how you weren’t rich or pretty enough for ‘good times’ like Susan’s. Not rich? Can any girl to go to university in your world? Perhaps yours is a class that can afford education for its own sake, or education to create a certain kind of wife and mother, or education to attract a certain kind of man. You don’t seem to value your education

Margery: your ‘university days’ seem little more than an indulgence; nothing compared to your hardship as wife and mother.

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14 J, p.92.
15 J, p.28.
17 J, p.4.
18 C, p.10.
Though the paper generally called for a good cultural and vocational education for everyone, the specific question of women’s education also appeared. Mrs Lyons, the prime-minister’s wife, wrote a prominent article to the ‘Mothers of Australia’ that said education should prepare men and women for work that suited their ‘fundamental sex instincts’. Though Lyons felt that, where ‘possible’, all girls should follow their own ‘calling’, she also argued that, as the ‘vast majority’ of girls became wives, all girls should ‘know how to run a home’. She thus praised schools that included housework in their curriculum, especially if they granted qualifications for professional domestic work. Lyons felt ‘economic necessity’ saw most young people work, whilst ‘common sense’ said a woman should ‘be equipped to support herself should the need arise’. Lyons thus didn’t advocate women’s financial independence for its own sake, but as a buffer against husband’s or parents’ financial troubles.

Many articles reinforced this notion that women be educated for domesticity. Lyons would have approved of Muriel Marshall’s attempt to remove the ‘drabness’ from domestic work through her renovations of the Domestic Arts School in Launceston. Nobel Prize winner, Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins, believed that, if women were ‘taught about food values’ through a government-enforced ‘cookery diploma’ then divorce rates would drop and the nation’s health would improve. Mary Truby King pleaded for ‘mother craft’ courses in schools, and also told wives off for cooking ‘scientifically correct’ but unappetising meals. Meanwhile, Bidomak ads proclaimed:

No woman may presume to call herself educated if she is ignorant of food values, dietetics, and good cooking. Because women are complacent in their ignorance,

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20 An editorial also berated Australian women for their ‘ignorance and helplessness’ in regards to their husband’s ‘monetary affairs’, and to monetary affairs in general, ordering them to smarten up in case they ever needed to take control. ‘Women & Business’, Weekly, p.12. Miss Q.C. Barton also wrote in to suggest that boys be trained for ‘domestic life’, so they could meet ‘little domestic emergencies’ when their wives were ill. Miss QC Barton, in ‘STS’, Weekly, 11 January, 1936, p.17.
half the population of this green England is suffering from mineral and vitamin starvation.25

This association of women’s domestic education with divorce, crime and the nation’s health regularly appeared in the paper.

Readers also argued about women’s education. One reader felt it ‘most unfair’ that boys were better educated than girls, seeing as girls were meant to be ‘entering into equal competition with men’.26 Whilst another reader agreed,27 Mrs Harry shared Lyons’ belief that the ‘majority’ of girls forsook ‘business for matrimony’. Mrs Fletcher felt that, because ‘most girls marry early’, they only needed ‘primary schooling’, and perhaps training in dressmaking or another useful ‘trade’. Fletcher felt women could develop their ‘mentality’ through books and lectures. Mrs Murray said a woman should not be taught maths, but things like ‘cooking, food values, mother-craft, biology, hygiene’ and ‘social service’: these subjects would ‘equip’ a woman to be a ‘good wife and mother’. Though Murray also suggested that clever girls be educated to fulfil their potential, none of these writers considered the possibility that a person’s potential might only be revealed through extended education, and no writer considered a causal link between women’s poor educational ‘choices’ and their predominant – seemingly ‘inevitable’ – ‘choice’ to marry.

These articles show how the paper manifested a widespread concern that Australian education’s vocational, materialistic and commercial nature deprived ordinary people of cultural richness. Despite this, the paper and its readers expressed a clear ambivalence about women being educated for anything other than their natural ‘vocation’ of domesticity. Whilst some writers felt talented women must develop their abilities, most felt that all women must learn how to run a home for this was not only seen to be women’s ‘inevitable’ occupation, but – as my later discussion will show – the greatest occupation of all.

“Women Classed with Lunatics”: Women Fighting for a New World

The first issue of the *Weekly*, in June 1933, had a picture of Linda Littlejohn on its cover demanding equal rights for women. In 1936, the paper still showed a distinct interest in activists like Littlejohn, Jessie Street and Mrs B.M. Rischbieth. The following surveys articles about women’s struggle for equality in order to contextualise later discussions about women’s actual occupational choices.

In May, the paper reported on the League of Nations’ aim to improve ‘the economic status of women’ all over the world. The League was performing an international survey of women’s access to administrative positions, their potential for promotion, their salaries as compared to men’s, their forced resignations upon marriage, and their pensions. In June, the paper emphasised the internationality of women’s fight for equal rights by reporting on Littlejohn’s attendance at the British Commonwealth League Conference. She stated: ‘The status of woman as wife, mother, and homemaker will soon be at its lowest, since most countries consider it unworthy of economic reward’. Littlejohn thus directed readers to interpret unpaid domestic work as society’s failure to value women’s work in general. Though Littlejohn noted that protective industrial legislation could remove women’s leverage within the workforce, she asserted: ‘There are no separate rights for men and for women’. In September, Littlejohn asked why Australia’s representative at a professional woman’s conference in Paris was a hospital matron, whilst other countries sent engineers, bank directors, and politicians. She reported on the conference’s resolution to get women the same ‘civil, political, and economic status as men’, including ‘equal pay for equal work’. This article was published on the same page as an editorial which saw the *Weekly* vehemently oppose the ‘sex hatred’ and ‘male dominance’ of the Commonwealth Government, as proven by their refusal to appoint women diplomats. All of these articles show how the *Weekly* often

29 Street was mentioned in ‘POV’, *Weekly*, 18 April, 1936, p.23.
encouraged readers to take an active, internationalist and completely uncompromising stance in women’s fight for equality with men.

In October, this demand appeared most prominently in the article, ‘Big Moves for Women’s Rights’. This article’s photos emphasised the ‘either/orness’ of women’s choices, presenting one woman on a telephone (over the caption, ‘Women in industry want wages on the same scale as men’), and another woman peeling potatoes in an apron (‘Wives who work at home want allowances’). The article reported on Australian conferences where women including Mrs Irene Longman, Street and Rischbieth argued for legislation that would give ‘wages for wives’, and give women the same pay, rights and responsibilities as men, including the maintenance of husbands. Speakers asserted that a man’s wage was a family’s wage, and that married women’s independence should be part of the ‘Marriage Act’ as it was in Scandinavian countries. (Sweden appeared a number of times in the paper as a ‘Feminist’ Utopia.) Street described the humiliation of married women with no private income, but clarified that women were not asking for the ‘payment of wives by their husbands’, or for a wife to ‘have any more than she has to-day’, but for ‘a legal right’ to what wives generally, already got. Street thus saw women’s request for ‘more’ as controversial, and explained how protective legislation should also be passed for ‘husbands who have extravagant wives’. These activists never claimed women’s work should be paid for simply because it was work, and they clearly felt their campaign was threatened by an actual or perceived ‘excessive type’ of woman who would use such freedoms to exploit ‘good’ men. Rischbieth even felt the need to clarify

35 Similarly, Haylen praised women who, in the Depression, ‘stood manfully to the dual task of being both wife and breadwinner… If ever there were justification for equal pay for equal work, these women have supplied it’. ‘POV’, *Weekly*, 23 May, 1936, p.10.
36 ‘Country Where Women Avoid Motherhood’, *Weekly*, 14 November, 1936, p.12. This article uses the word ‘feminist’.
that women’s fight for a ‘new social order’ wasn’t ‘anti-male’. Clearly, these activists believed many people interpreted women’s desire for equality as a desire for female dominance. Importantly, this article also shows how such activists cannot be treated as representative of all women: the article ended by quoting the secretary of the Victorian Housewives’ Association who said, whilst her organisation had no view on ‘wages for wives’, she felt such income should be spent on ‘beautifying’ homes and – ‘more importantly’ – on making wives ‘more attractive in their husbands’ eyes’.

At the end of October, the Weekly published an editorial on ‘Wages for Wives’. It argued that any wife who did housework ‘unaided’ could, ‘in principle’, justify a claim for wages:

washing clothes and scrubbing is monotonous drudgery, physically and mentally wearying. There is no limitation of hours (as in men’s labor [sic]), and many women work an 84-hour week the whole year round.

Despite this endorsement, the paper set about proving the impossibility of such wages, noting that the basic wage was spent (it assumed) entirely on living costs and that, whilst women in poor households worked hard, wealthy women did not. The paper thus identified a ‘paradox’ whereby the only men who could afford ‘salaries’ for their wives had wives who did nothing. Though the editorial disapproved of ‘middle wage’ men who deprived their wives of money, it emphasised that blanket laws wouldn’t work, and even warned ‘reformers’ that such wages might lead to women returning to their ‘degraded status’ of ‘being looked on as servants’. This editorial thus linked a husband’s respect for his wife with her economic dependence, ignored the humiliation of the penniless wives it had itself reported upon, never wondered if poor unhappy women might prefer paid to unpaid ‘servitude’, and never considered female financial autonomy as a basic right. Despite appearing across from an article that noted women were, by law, classed

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40 Similarly, one reader complained that ‘talk’ about divorce and ‘wages for wives’ was turning men and women into ‘natural enemies instead of dearest and closest friends’. Mrs S Reynolds, in ‘STS’, Weekly, 10 October, 1936, p.19. Another reacted against the encouragement of sex antagonism, saying the constant disparagement of one sex by the other insulted all happy couples. Mrs C Laudet, ‘STS’, Weekly, 27 June, 1936, p.19.
with lunatics and children,\textsuperscript{41} this editorial presented women’s matrimonial degradation as a thing of the past.

These articles show how the issue of women’s rights within marriage and the paying workplace were presented to the \textit{Weekly’s} readers as being significant and urgent. Whilst the contradictory nature of these articles may suggest the paper’s open-mindedness, or its cultivation of controversy, or its attempt to appeal to as many people as possible, all of these articles show how the debate about women’s rights in the \textit{Weekly} generally focused on female financial autonomy.

\textit{Eve, Thea, Marc, you are all aware of money’s use in times of crises: money buys abortions; supports friends in need; buys tickets of escape. Marc, you are the only character to wonder about the relationship between marriage, women’s choices and money. Your beaus know their power lies in the ‘luxury and security’ they can offer you. As Albert says: ‘Insecurity’s a big price for a woman to pay for independence’.\textsuperscript{42} (Meanwhile, Lionel resents how you, in smelly men’s clothes, somehow strip him of the ‘advantage’ of his wealthy position.\textsuperscript{43}) You think Lionel’s is a ‘good bait’, but ‘not good enough’: you might ‘exchange independence for real companionship’, never ‘for a meal-ticket’. You associate marriage with female dependence. It is your financial independence that lets you redefine marriage itself: if you marry it will be for your own reasons, not because you need a roof over your head.}

\textit{Margery, Millicent, Susan, none of you seem to have an independent income. Apparently this is unremarkable, for none of you remark upon it.}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} ‘Women Classed With Lunatics’, \textit{Weekly}, 24 October, 1936, p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{42} \textit{J}, p.242.
\item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{J}, p.41.
\end{itemize}
New Women in a New World: Utopia is Here?

In September, the paper published an article by Bishop E.H. Burgmann, entitled ‘Women in the New World’. (Figure 73) This article was illustrated with images of a woman on the phone, a woman tennis player, politician, pilot, soldier, scientist, farmer and radio technician. Burgmann defined the New World as one born by the ‘emancipation of women’ from domestic drudgery (via modern appliances), extended periods of child rearing (via reduced births), and the tyrannies of marriage and family (via economic independence). Burgmann applauded this emancipation. Though he did not discuss women’s ‘careers’, his article’s illustrations directed readers to associate female domestic ‘emergence’ with their acquisition of traditionally masculine careers, and Burgmann implied New Women were working women when he identified females’ previous economic dependence as the main cause of domestic tyranny.

Figure 73: Bishop Burgmann’s ‘Women in the New World’

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Burgmann’s article claimed the ‘old fashioned’ home was dangerously and artificially separate to the rest of the world. He attacked the conventions and sentiments that coerced women into submission, and applauded women’s rejection of them. Likewise, many other articles in the Weekly applauded women’s domestic emergence, with one predicting ‘Magic Years Ahead for Women’.45 Psychologists,46 women’s rights activists,47 and the Weekly’s own writers defended the modern girl’s right to choose love and occupation and told her to forget about ‘catching’48 a man, to refuse chaperoning by backward elder females,49 and to protest when their new ‘masculine’ pleasures, like smoking and drinking, were judged by ‘Poor Mrs Grundy’ and her ‘mid-Victorian propriety’.50 Though they rarely argued about marriage without mentioning money, readers clearly perceived a new type of woman whose newness derived from her financial independence and her resultant capacity to marry for ‘love’ alone.51 When one reader argued that parents should arrange their daughters’ marriages (for girls didn’t realise the importance of a man’s ‘solid financial backing’),52 other readers voted in favour of love, with one asserting that a woman who earned her own living also earned the right to plan her own life.53 This reader, of course, implied that unemployed women had no such right at all.

Other articles explored the idea of the New Woman by looking at Russia.54 Russia was forever in the ‘background’ of The Australian Women’s Weekly in 1936, and was generally presented positively,55 with Soviet women’s status seen as proof of the state’s ‘progress and modernity’.56 One traveller claimed that one factory worker’s ‘rapturous look’ typified the attitude of Russian women, whose ‘new life’ meant they could now

45 IH Moss, ‘Magic Years Ahead for Women’, Weekly, 12 September, 1936, p.3.
47 Moss, ‘Magic Years Ahead’, Weekly, p.3.
48 ‘POV’, Weekly, 1 August, 1936, p.12.
50 ‘POV’, Weekly, 4 April, 1936, p.10.
54 See ‘Appendix Six’ for a detailed discussion. See also ‘Appendix Five’, for how the Weekly’s reportage on Spain depicted it as a nation based on true equality between the sexes.
55 See ‘Appendix Six’ for a brief discussion of the Weekly’s few negative allusions to Russia.
56 ‘LTIP’, Weekly, 9 May, 1936, p.3.
‘express themselves’. An editorial claimed Russia exposed British culture’s ‘Victorian’ and ‘irrational prejudice’ against women: Russia and America were more progressive than the Commonwealth for both employed women diplomats. Mary St Claire also presented readers with the Russian woman, Miss Mina Mossina, whose rise from orphanhood to become the only ‘accredited woman diplomat in London’ was construed as the ‘amazing product of an ultra-modern system’. One reader’s letter, which demanded that Australia follow ‘Russia’s Example’ by better funding scientists, was illustrated with a cartoon of people dancing over a caption that read, ‘No time to think about scientific research’. The paper thus opposed Russia to a pleasure-seeking and trivial Australia. Judy Bailey even aligned Australia with Nazi Germany when she discussed how, whilst Germany had banned Chaplin’s ‘Modern Times’, and Australia had censored it, only Russia appreciated its ‘humorous satire of the capitalistic system’ and it was the first non-Russian film the Soviet bought.

When the Weekly’s editor-in-chief and originator, George Warnecke, published prominent articles on Russia, he also focused on the status of Soviet women, with his first article characterising Russia as a nation ‘Where Women Work Like Men’, and where ‘Home is Not the Most Important Place’. (Figure 74) He claimed that the nation’s rapid industrialisation had made Russian women ‘man’s equal’ in social, legal, domestic and political life. He was amazed by Russian women’s apparently phenomenal physical strength and claimed that child-bearing was no ‘hardship’ to them, with their babies being put into nurseries within weeks of birth so they could return to work. Warnecke believed that such childcare expressed ‘the profound difference’ between the Soviet and Australian ‘conception of life’ for, in Australia, everything revolved around ‘a man, his wife, and his children’, rather than the state and nation. In another article, Warnecke discussed how ‘Easy Divorce in Russia!’ had liberated women from domestic violence: when the old Russia fell, ‘it was not the sanctity of the marriage ties, but the brutality of the knout, that

57 ‘WWD’, Weekly, 4 April, 1936, p.21.
64 GW Warnecke, ‘Easy Divorce in Russia!’, Weekly, 11 January, 1936, p.28.
disappeared’. Russian women used their ‘emancipation’ to write new laws that ‘were not in the interest of masculine morality, but in the interest of female independence’. No woman, Warnecke emphasised, ‘could be the slave of a man... if she had the power to walk out on him’. Warnecke even claimed that Communism was no different to religion – or any other ‘human institution’ that consisted of ‘plain, homely wisdom’ – except that Communism also had ‘highly modern and advanced’ ideas about women and children. Whilst applauding the Russian government’s treatment of woman as the ‘political equal’ of man, Warnecke clearly approved of the Soviet’s ‘recognition’ that women had ‘a special duty to society’ to have children: Warnecke thus used Russia to present an ideal of ‘equality’ that enforced maternity.

![Image](WHERE_Women_WORK_Like_MEN.jpg)

**Figure 74**: the ‘common’ sight of Russian women in overalls, parading with banners

Whilst many of the Weekly’s articles on marriage focused on love, domestic drudgery and women’s economic status, Warnecke’s Russian articles told women to see marriage as an institution made by and for men. He explained the causal relationship between women’s degraded social, political and legal status and domestic violence, and encouraged women to see Communism itself as a woman-friendly ‘religion’. 
Interestingly, Warnecke reified both Russian women and Communism even as he noted how some Russians were questioning rearing children ‘on mass production’, that institutionalised care reflected housing shortages and ‘general poverty’, and that Russians lived under an ‘all-pervading atmosphere of control’. Warnecke never considered Russian women’s ‘emancipation’ in relation to these observations, or in relation to how the Soviet ‘utopia’ was born through male violence and administered by a ‘womanless’ dictator. He did not wonder, as the paper did with Spain, if Russian ‘equality’ meant women had won an equal share in men’s miseries, on top of their obligation to have children.

_Thea, you see the ‘Leopard Slut’ as ‘a dark exotic creature’ who seems ‘rather Russian’. Russia thus signifies a dangerously seductive, distinctly Other woman._

Another time, you day-dream whilst Terry and Marc argue about Communism, Free Love ‘and all the rest of it’. Communism thus seems little more than one of many hot topics of conversation. However, when Eve refuses to perform your ‘illegal operation’, the fact and idea of Russia gains potency: you tell Eve, ‘it’s perfectly legal in Russia’. Later, when you try to find an abortionist, you angrily wish you were in Russia. Enraged, you damn the ‘rotten antiquated laws and stupid prejudices’ that deny you the ‘right’ to do what you want with your body. _Like the Weekly, Thea, you see Russia as uniquely progressive. Unlike the Weekly, it’s not Russian women’s child-bearing ease that strikes you, but their right to refuse to bear children at all._

Though the _Weekly_ reveals many positive perceptions of the New Woman, it also reveals how often that figure was attacked, and it didn’t even comment when it reported on an interstate debate that had affirmed women were ‘an inferior animal’ to men.

65 ibid.
66 M St Claire, ‘Queens of Europe’, _Weekly_, p.3.
68 J, p.66.
69 J, p.33.
70 J, p.193.
71 J, p.223.
72 ‘Encouraging Women to Talk and Talk!’, _Weekly_, 4 April, 1936, p.56. Tilly’s ‘Intimate Jottings’ later wondered how one society girl could marry one of the winning debaters, _Weekly_, 28 March, 1936, p.23.
Another article allowed ‘Miss Australia’ to call one judge a ‘real pain in the neck’ for claiming that modern girls didn’t peel enough potatoes, had bad manners, were too busy ‘gadding about’, ate like bandicoots, and didn’t sleep enough. When an English Clergyman claimed that the Church should arrange marriages, the paper argued that ‘modern youth’ would not let a ‘loveless old bachelor parson’ make such decisions. These articles suggest wider shifts in the power relations between authority figures and ‘youth’ at this time, and the paper’s jokes also show how traditional institutions like marriage were also being reformulated by New Women. One joke showed two stylish women talking about how, once married, they could expect to prepare 200,000 – 300,000 meals: ‘Good Heavens! Fancy having to open that many tins’. ‘Girligags’ also referred to modern women as tin-opener cooks, and an editorial officially damned such women as lazy. Whilst cartoons like ‘A Bachelor’s Philosophy’ sympathised with men’s position in marriage (Figure 75), ‘Girligags’ also sympathised with men, depicting them as the victims of oppressive young wives (Figure 76), with one cartoon saying everything in its presentation of a tiny, apron-clad man in the palm of a glamorous young woman. Perhaps Burgmann applauded the New Woman in direct response to such depictions of her as powerful, dominating, spoiled, selfish and vain. Whilst these cartoons didn’t name their women as ‘working’ women, they implied that they were by depicting women who were not beholden to their tiny, submissive and exploited husbands.

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74 M St Claire, ‘Must we Bid Good-Bye to Romance?’ *Weekly*, 9 May, 1936, p.2.
75 ‘SNL’, *Weekly*, 31 October, 1936, p.15.
77 ‘Solving a Problem’, *Weekly*, p.10.
81 Haylen reported statistics from New York – that literally did not add up – which found that 61% of marriages were happy with a dominant male; 47% with a dominant woman and 87% with 50-50. ‘POV’, *Weekly*, 4 January, 1936, p.10.
Figure 75: ‘A Bachelor’s Philosophy’

Figure 76: ‘Girligags’
Could that ‘leopard slut’ – using Terry to torture her ‘thin, small’, and ‘fanatically jealous’ paramour – be the leopard skin clad woman in the Weekly’s ‘Girligags’ cartoon who is about to divorce her frightened little husband? (Figure 77) Marc, you leave that party before they ‘issue leopard skins all round’. Why focus on the skin? Because it’s fashionable in your time? (Did you see Dulcie Deamer in hers? Figure 78) Or because you see it as key to the slut’s exhibition of a womanhood that casts Woman as dominator and predator of Man?

Figure 77: Leopard skin woman in ‘Girligags’

Figure 78: Dulcie Deamer in her leopard skin in 1924

Thea, is the slut’s cruelty so different to your own dealings with ‘adoring’ but ‘puzzled’ Terry? You won’t marry him, yet you let him touch and kiss you. Are you toying with him? Why kiss him sincerely only in your last hours? Perhaps, despite appearances, your world isn’t so modern after all: you kiss him passionately only when you know you do not have to marry him. It’s not, as Bret says, that women can suddenly

83 J, p.69.
86 J, p.33.
87 J, pp.262, 263.
'kiss and ride away', for whilst men and women’s behaviours, and their coded meanings, are clearly changing in your world, marriage and love are still the ultimate expectation.

And Glover? You know that the rules governing your modern world are in flux. (Why else write a book defining the Moderns?) When it suits you, you see Thea as ‘emotionally chaste’ and ‘half as experienced’ as her ‘conversation’. This doesn’t stop you sleeping with her. When it suits you, Glover, Thea is an armoured Modern, ‘more than ready to come half way’. When it suits you, Thea stops being a child and becomes a God, a wolf, or a devil. Predator or prey, Glover? Which are you?

Poor Jim was as baffled as Terry! During your affair, Susan, Margery asked you why you did not marry him. (She realised you were in love with Bret.) Of course, you never said you stayed with him for sex. Instead, you tell yourself you got stuck: your theories on Life became whispers ‘in a hurricane’ in the face of Jim’s love. You learned that personal codes don’t work when applied to other people. Despite this, you still believe your theories are good: it’s the ‘world’ that is wrong and unfair. Your mother knows that ‘fairness’ is not decided by Nature, but by the ‘clumsy adjustments of a fumbling civilisation’. Though she sees how your generation struggles for power – autonomy – in a world whose rules and meanings are in flux, she accepts that you are ‘paying fairly’ for your affair, that you must propitiate the ‘Gods’ of the ‘established order’ and their male prejudices. Who is adjusting to whom in your world? Who are predators and who are prey? Your faith in ideas makes you seem heartless, Susan. Bret thinks it your fault Jim loved you, that Jim was scalped by a vain flapper, just as you later ‘vamped’ their brother Ken. Bret even blamed you for Jim’s death. Now, your father thinks Bret is the current victim of your goading and wifely neglect.
think, repeatedly, ‘Poor Bret!’\textsuperscript{99} Until Bret realises his own power, as your unloving beloved, you, Susan, are a predator of men.

What a confusing mess for everyone. Thea, you give Terry nothing and he loves you; you give Glover everything and he rejects you. Susan, you give Jim your body but he demands your heart; you give Bret your heart but, at first, he seems only to want your body. Where is the power in all of this? Powerful Susan, forced into a loveless marriage by pregnancy? Powerful Thea, pregnant and dead? You aren’t predatory women: you are playing with a gun to which others have the bullets. Perhaps the Weekly’s cartoonists have confused Modern Woman’s predatory power for its performance. Marc, you focus on the slut’s leopard skin. You both play for an audience. You each use the same ‘theatrical’ props of ‘too red’ lips and nails.\textsuperscript{100} When Albert flirts with you at that same party, Marc, you humiliate him. His face flashes with anger and lust.\textsuperscript{101} At Whale Beach, you humiliate John – he also looks at you with ‘yearning and distaste’.\textsuperscript{102} You and the slut seem to announce yourselves by making men seem small. So, Marc, stop loathing her. Watch her. Recognise that, no matter how powerful the ‘leopard slut’ looks or feels, she is parading in a dead predator’s skin. Her power begins – and ends – with her performance.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the heated debate which arose around H.B. Bisley’s assertion that women needed to focus on conquering their own ‘sphere’ of the home, rather than conquering the spheres of men. Even more vehement assertions about women’s place in a New World were made by Commandant Mary Allen, in an article entitled: ‘Her Job To Discipline Women’.\textsuperscript{103} This prominently placed article introduced readers to Britain’s ‘Monocled Lady Cop’, a ‘Lady’ whose subordinates addressed as ‘Sir’. The article’s photos (Figure 79), showed how Allen’s ‘picturesque’, ‘stiff-shirted’, and ‘formal and severe’ uniform made her look like a man, and one photo showed her standing next to two key symbols of modernity: a woman pilot and an aeroplane.

\textsuperscript{99} C, pp.88, 121, 164.  
\textsuperscript{100} J, p.282.  
\textsuperscript{101} J, p.68.  
\textsuperscript{102} J, p.88.  
\textsuperscript{103} M St Claire, ‘Her Job To Discipline Women’, Weekly, 14 November, 1936, p.3.
paper noted Allen’s work organising women’s police forces globally, and her history as one of the ‘first of the hunger-strikers’: she was even gaoled for breaking windows. The paper added that, despite the ‘masculine atmosphere’ of her ‘office’, Allen had ‘an amazingly feminine outlook’. Readers were thus explicitly encouraged to interpret this manly-looking woman’s ideas in relation to notions of femininity and masculinity, as well as in relation to Allen’s previous history as a militant suffragette.

Allen’s ‘feminine’ outlook saw her state that there could ‘never be equality of the sexes’, that there were ‘necessary limitations’ placed on women’s rights, and that women must ‘not abandon’ their ‘privilege’ and ‘duty’ to ‘carry on the race’. Under the sub-title, ‘Back To Domestic Life’, Allen claimed that modern women were reaching a point of ‘saturation in the crazy, post-war search for excitement’ and would soon revert to ‘domesticity.’ She named marriage as ‘undoubtedly’ women’s sphere, because women needed ‘security and protection’. She professed ‘the utmost contempt’ for young women who broke their vows, were unsatisfactory wives, and divorced their husbands for alimony. Such women, Allen believed, were ‘a direct menace to society’.

**Figure 79:** Commandant Mary Allen, shown with a pilot from the Women’s Reserve
Like so many other writers, Allen located the newness of her era in women’s war-born emergence from domesticity. Unlike the *Weekly’s* celebration of the ‘clinging vine’s’ death, however, Allen believed ‘new’ women were merely in denial of their need for protection by men via marriage. Whilst Bergmann damned traditional marriage’s oppression of women, Allen damned modern marriage’s oppression of men, just as many of the *Weekly’s* cartoonists did. For Allen, Hitler’s ‘ideal’ woman, Frau Scholtz-Klink was exemplary: Germany’s ‘more scientific’ treatment of women gave them professional access whilst teaching them that ‘carrying on’ the race was their ‘greatest work’. Allen went on to explain how she only employed ‘intelligent, sensible, sympathetic’ police women for whom marriage and children were unattractive. Curiously, therefore, Allen generalised that women socially and biologically needed domesticity, whilst valuing another ‘type’ of woman who rejected domesticity entirely. Just as curiously, although Allen was a recognised career woman in a male-dominated profession, she felt no conflict in telling other women to stay at home: the very fact that she referred to women as ‘they’ suggests (as her image does) that she did not identify as a woman herself. Whilst the *Weekly* didn’t directly comment on Allen’s views, its fascination with such a ‘masculine’ woman having such a ‘feminine’ outlook may be read as an endorsement of her views, an ironical comment, or an attempt to make readers focus less on what Allen thought than on what her manliness portended for men and women in the New World.

*Thea and Susan, you are both adult and child, masculine and feminine. Thea, you are associated with white purity,*¹⁰⁴ *your career is traditionally feminine, yet you are ‘boyish’.*¹⁰⁵

*Susan, you’re tiny, but Plucky in pants.*

*Cool, efficient Eve: Thea thinks hearing you cry is ‘as bad as hearing a man cry’.*¹⁰⁶ *She equates your ‘boyish’ short hair and ‘large hands’ with your sanity and efficiency.*¹⁰⁷ *(Your hands are the steadiest in your man’s world of the hospital.*)¹⁰⁸

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¹⁰⁴ J, pp.61, 286, 254,158.
¹⁰⁵ J, p.140.
¹⁰⁶ J, p.173.
¹⁰⁷ J, pp.188, 174.
¹⁰⁸ J, p.168.
Marc thinks you cry ‘not as women cry’. As you prepare Thea’s funeral, she admires you, Eve, but she also thinks you an inhuman ‘automaton’. What would you think, Eve, if you knew Cusack made you from two real people: one, a ‘puritanical professional woman’, the other, a ‘fanatically Catholic man’?

Marc, your plainness seems neither masculine nor feminine, but you exude vitality. Perhaps you, with your flaming red hair, are the personification of Life itself. Why did Cusack give you and Pat names that can be men’s or women’s? Surely her choice was no less calculated than her naming a Catholic as Eve, or the Weekly’s emphasis of Mary Allen’s ‘masculine’ air and ‘feminine’ views, or their emphasis of Margot Miller’s boyishness? Why do you claim Pat is better than a man, and only kiss Thea (not Oswald) warmly on the mouth? These aren’t accidents; they’re authorial and editorial choices. What are they aimed at?

I don’t want to do what Pietzker did, Marc, and impose my era’s words and concepts onto worlds where they simply weren’t known or used. Certain of the ‘homosocial’ nature of you, Eve and Thea’s relationship, Pietzker saw Eve look at you with ‘yearning and distaste’. But Cusack wrote that look into John’s face. Pietzker’s words made her see something that was not there. Though I see ‘androgyny’ when I look at you three boyish, manly, vital women, I want to know what readers saw when they met you in 1936. Your first reviewers simply saw ‘Modern Women’. Does their use of this phrase signal the identification of an actual female type, or a set of very pointed, but unanswerable, questions?

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110 J, p.277.
111 Cusack ‘Autobiography’ notes, NLA4621/9/123.
112 Mary St Claire’s article ‘Australian Girls as Nurses in Spain’, (Weekly, 5 September, 1936, p.2) described how Aileen Palmer (‘daughter of the novelist Vance Palmer’) and Margot Miller had joined a British medical team to help the ‘suffering Spaniards’. St Claire focused on the ‘boyishness’ of Margot, with one sub-title proclaiming she ‘Dresses Like a Boy’, alongside a photo showing her in a tweedy jacket with her ‘Eton crop’ haircut. St Claire’s construction of Margot mirrored the paper’s presentation of Commandant Mary Allen, for both women’s masculinity was emphasised by the paper though never once ‘speculated’ upon. In October, a lone photograph of Margot appeared in the paper (Weekly, 31 October, 1936, p.40), with a caption noting that she was the first Australian injured on the Spanish front. Whilst Margot’s boyish looks had been reported on page two of the paper, this significant news appeared in the paper’s back pages. For minor references to the Palmers and Spain see ‘LTIP’, 10 October, 1936, p.3 and “Utopia is Here,” says Nettie Palmer’, 17 October, 1936, p.22.
114 J, p.88.
**Goodbye ‘Spinster’, hello ‘Bachelor Girl’**

Perhaps the most potent indicator of interwar women’s new status lay in that era’s reformulation of the ‘spinster’. Doreen Aiken announced hers as a ‘New Era’ for ‘Maiden Aunts’ where ‘Bachelor Girls’ were no longer in a ‘Hurry to Marry’\(^{115}\) (Figure 80). Underneath the cartoon of a frumpy, old-fashioned, and startled looking woman, a caption read: ‘Patronised, financially insecure, was it any wonder the maiden aunts of other days looked like this?’ The second image showed a young woman with lipstick, plucked brows and smoothly styled hair, whose modernity was emphasised by the fact that she was photographed. Her caption announced: ‘Maiden Aunt – modern version, confident and free’. Whilst Aiken’s article textually asserted that economic independence distinguished the New Woman from old, these images suggest that their differences were, potentially, only fashion-deep.

Aiken reported that the Industrial Commission was concerned about the ‘displacement of males by females’ caused by the post-war influx of 70,000 women into industry. She immediately asserted these women’s economic value, proclaimed them as there ‘to stay’, and noted that such women’s rise in ‘prestige’ was ‘undoubtedly the most important’ of the ‘outstanding triumphs’ that Woman had achieved in her emergence from ‘obscurity’ into a world where she ‘unquestionably’ shared ‘equality of opportunities with men in every sphere’.\(^{116}\) Aiken emphasised how these women were adaptable, companionable, socially popular and busy ‘bread-winners’, who had finally been ‘recognised’ as individuals and assets ‘with definite sane views on a wide range of subjects’. Burgmann had also found it necessary to assert that women seemed ‘on the face of it... as capable of sanity as men’. His and Aiken’s defensiveness suggests that, despite their claims to the contrary, the New Woman was up against huge prejudice at this time.

\(^{115}\) Aiken, ‘New Era’, *Weekly*, p.3.

\(^{116}\) Aiken, ‘New Era’, *Weekly*, p.3.
Working women’s vulnerability was also evident in the paper’s reportage on women’s very right to work. The Shop Assistant’s Union of Employees in Queensland reportedly lost their application to have married women, whose husbands earned the basic wage or more, legally disbarred from shop work. 117 In the future, the union would be allowed to ‘renew an alternative claim for individual investigation’. The Weekly noted how Australia was watching the case:

the principle of individual examination of a married woman’s right to work in a shop is practically unique in general industry.

How far it might be used as a lever to apply similar restrictions to married women in all industries is causing a great deal of speculation.

Married women’s right to work was clearly – unlike the single girls’ right to work – incomprehensible to many in 1936, though the idea of legally disbarring those women from employment was also controversial. Reader-writer, N. Wetherall, expressed similarly controversial attitudes, arguing that the girls of well-off parents should be given a legally-enforced parental allowance and be ‘legally prevented’ from doing jobs except those ‘suitable only for women’.¹¹⁸ Wetherall believed this would enable the ‘economic recovery’ of Australia, and prevent it from becoming decadent. Wetherall’s letter thus moved from the unexplained idea that employed women stood in the way of the country’s economic progress to, and again illogically, the idea that single, well-off, working women were a moral hazard to Australia itself: such women epitomised excess by being, themselves, an excess. Readers quickly replied to Wetherall’s arguments.¹¹⁹ Constance Bingham agreed that ‘superfluous women’, like ‘financially comfortable married women, and daughters of wealthy parents’, should be ‘eliminated from business’. Bingham assumed these women worked only for extra ‘pin money’ and that they were always given a share of their husbands’ income. Bingham also only focused on what women’s work ‘took’ from – rather than gave to – the world. Janet Richmond pointed out that no one would legally remove ‘a boy’s right to a career’, and argued it was as unfair to see working women as ‘superfluous’ as it was to see unemployed men as ‘wastrels’. Richmond’s letter, and a Mrs Harris’, thus reoriented the debate to being one about ‘equal rights’ and revealed Wetherall’s emotional prejudice by emphasising the illogic of his or her proposition. Mrs Saffiyah Heuser-Nasayada was the only reader to perceive the ‘problem’ in terms of women taking men’s jobs,¹²⁰ whilst J. Mutch argued that though Wetherall’s scheme smacked of ‘tyranny’, ends justified means.¹²¹ These writers felt talented women must be excepted. The paper editorialised this debate with a cartoon of two stylish young women (one smoking), at a table over the caption, ‘Does Seem Unfair!’ Despite the caption’s reference to ‘fairness’, this cartoon completely reinforced the stereotype of the excessive, leisure-burdened women.

¹²⁰ See also, ‘LTIP’ (Weekly, 28 March, 1936, p.3.) where Muriel Heagney appeared because of the ‘wide comment’ provoked by her book, ‘Are Women Taking Men’s Jobs?’
One doesn’t need to look beyond the phrase ‘bachelor girl’ to understand her loaded status: ‘Spinster Girls’ living in ‘Spinster Flats’ could never have referred to the young, single, working women of the interwar years. The term ‘bachelor girl’ thus shows how the working type of New Woman was understood to be imitating single men, just as sporty, driving, drinking, smoking and flying girls were. Aiken responded to such fears by emphasising bachelor girls’ fundamental domesticity, claiming their wages allowed them to indulge their ‘natural desire for home life’, which saw them increasingly live in ‘bachelor flats’.¹²² Persil ads also emphasised the domestic nature of ‘bachelor girls’, presenting them as both glamorous working girls and apron-clad conquerors of housework (Figure 81).¹²³ Lifebuoy soap used ‘bachelor girls’ to sell itself, showing one girl realise that her new flat mate has ‘B.O.’ (Body Odour).¹²⁴ The girls use Lifebuoy and win fiancées: “‘Bachelor Hall’ breaks up!” Other ads positioned the single working girl in a more general culture of ‘working-at-all-costs’, with Horlick’s ads telling fatigued workers they were suffering ‘Night-Starvation’. One of these ads focused on ‘Miss White’ who was just one of ‘hundreds of business girls’ feeling ‘too fagged to cope with the day’s work’.¹²⁵ Lux soap also used working girls to show how easy it was to be a ‘change daily’ girl: ‘No wonder you get all the good jobs – You’re always so bright and fresh’.¹²⁶ In this ad, the Lux-convert quickly gets a new job, proving that a career-woman’s success relied on ‘clean, sweet undies’. Such ads suggest both that ‘bachelor girls’ were so positively connoted that they could be used sell anything, and that they were, in themselves, perceived to be a significant consumer group.

Thea, Eve, Marc: aren’t you bachelor girls? You don’t use that phrase, but you do work, and you live in ‘bed-sits’,¹²⁷ attic rooms¹²⁸ and flats.¹²⁹ None of you refer to family. None of you remark on your situations, and none worry about your age. And why should

¹²² Aiken, ‘New Era’, Weekly, p.3.
¹²⁵ Horlick’s ad, Weekly, 25 April, 1936, p.18.
¹²⁶ Lux ad, Weekly, 11 April, 1936, p.37.
¹²⁸ J, p.203.
¹²⁹ J, p.164.
you? You might be unmarried, but you have your admirers and, more importantly, your friends.

Susan, the only roofs you’ve lived under are your father’s and Bret’s. You don’t work. You are younger than Cusack’s girls – only twenty-one – but you have been a mother, are a wife, and have a house and farm of your ‘own’, at least in so much as Bret’s things are your things. Have you no female friends, outside of your family?

A new generation of financially independent Australian women had, it seems, shrugged off the stigmas attached to spinsterhood by 1936, but another look at the phrase ‘bachelor girl’ is revealing: the term ‘Bachelor Boy’ was not current at this time; men could be legitimately single at any age. The Weekly gives insight into the ‘fate’ of older single women at this time. Leslie Haylen worried about Britain’s ‘surplus’ females,
which included the ‘Forgotten Women’ who did men’s work in the Great War: ‘To-day many of these women are unwanted – too old at 40... They are too young for pensions, and too old for industry’. Other articles monitored the plight of such ‘pathetic’ women, with one worrying about the ‘higher death-rate of males in Australia’, and referring again to Britain’s 2,000,000 ‘surplus’ women who were being ‘left behind’ by migrating males: this writer suggested such men should marry before they left. (An article next to this one claimed married people were saner, live longer, and were more ‘thoughtful and solid’ than singles.) Yet another article noted how women in the Rhineland ‘vastly’ outnumbered men: an ‘army of occupation’ as their ‘only hope’ for marriage. The paper also reported on the lengths to which people went in order to marry, discussing the Italian ‘bride-ship’, the Viminale, and showing 130 couples being simultaneously wed in China.

Whilst the paper’s advertising shows how fashionable the ‘Bachelor Girl’ was in 1936, this advertising also shows how supremely important it was that all ‘girls’ marry. Kathleen Court cosmetics quoted one mother’s plea: ‘WHY doesn’t MY daughter marry?.. Is it her skin or her figure?’ (Kathleen replied that both were ‘tremendously important’, adding that ‘girls marry a little later now’, and proclaiming that the next two years of the twenty-five year old’s life were ‘most important’.) One Lifebuoy ad introduced ‘Poor Rose’ who was ‘past 30 and not married’. Needless to say, smelly Rose discovered Lifebuoy and became ‘a Happy Bride’. Another ad saw smelly Nan announce: ‘When a girl’s over thirty she’s on the shelf. Men aren’t interested’. Nan realised she had ‘B.O’, used Lifebuoy, and was soon stealing younger girls’ men (Figure 82). Creme Charmosan – ‘The crème of happiness’ – most systematically campaigned against age and singledom:

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132 ibid.
134 ‘Proxy Brides Meet Their Proxy Husbands’, Weekly, 18 January, 1936, p.10. (NB: Jean Devanny’s Sugar Heaven looks at the community of Italian migrants in Queensland)
135 Photo and caption, Weekly, 11 April, 1936, p.40.
136 Kathleen Court ad, Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.52.
137 Lifebuoy ad, Weekly, 5 September, 1936, p.38.
Jennifer THRILLED because a man loves her. Because she, at 37, had the clear, young, pretty skin of mere 27. Well, Crème Charmosan gave her that charm, that youth, that cunning “youness” that stirred that man’s soul.\textsuperscript{140} Another Charmosan ad pronounced: ‘Clever, clever women aim to look young even if they’re not’.\textsuperscript{141} Such ads show that whilst Bachelor Girls were desirable in interwar Australia, single women generally ceased to be attractive or acceptable by the end of their twenties: then, and despite Aiken’s claims to the contrary, the stigma attached to the spinster ‘maiden’ aunt returned in full force.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Lifebuoy saves smelly Nan}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{140} Creme Charmosan ad, Weekly, 8 August, 1936, p.22.
\textsuperscript{141} Creme Charmosan ad, Weekly, 18 July, 1936, p.45. See other Creme Charmosan ads in, Weekly, 5 September, 1936, p.35; 19 September, 1936, p.30; 11 July, 1936, p.35.
As with women’s education, the paper felt more able to value women’s careers if they seemed to prepare them for the ultimate and inevitable ‘career’ of marriage. Aiken thus emphasised that the bachelor girl’s work disciplined her ‘for the obligations and duties’ of married life.\(^\text{142}\) Similarly, one American lawyer claimed ‘the average business girl’ made a ‘far better wife’ than the girl who ‘merely’ stayed at home: ‘As a wage-earner the business girl learns the value of money and is not extravagant’.\(^\text{143}\) (Again, the bogey of the excessive woman reared her head.) Many readers and writers argued that domestic service was ideal training for woman’s ‘ultimate’ role and, unlike activists like Littlejohn, never realised how this belief defined married life as unpaid servitude.\(^\text{144}\)

Like Aiken, many other writers focused on the improved status of spinsters, with one Londoner, Mary Hector, stating: ‘Anyone can get married, but it takes a good, valiant woman to be a successful spinster.’\(^\text{145}\) Hector claimed spinsters’ new economic value had turned their ‘apologetic’ expressions in ones ‘of gaiety and self-confidence’. Haylen agreed, adding that, whilst a bachelor was always ‘hailed a merry old lad’, spinsters were still ‘an object of pity’.\(^\text{146}\) He suggested women ‘bury the old Victorian title’ and find one ‘more in keeping with the modern idea of the millions of competent, self-supporting women, who have decided on a solo flight through life’. Here, Haylen merged the idea of the financially independent single woman with that of the aviatrix, thus emphasising how New Women marked the divide between a backward ‘Victorian’ era and a positively ‘modern’ one. Haylen’s article is, however, preceded by Agnes Sligh Turnbull’s short story, ‘Spinster Indeed’.\(^\text{147}\) In this story, ‘not at all modern’ or ‘emancipated’ Martha fits into the ‘old maid’ persona: she is a working librarian, but has low family status in her aunt’s house. Though Martha’s economic independence and car driving both suggest her modernity, her ultimate triumph lies in rebelling against – but then \textit{shedding}, rather than reformulating – her ‘spinsterish’ status by winning a man’s love.

\(^{142}\) Aiken, ‘New Era’, \textit{Weekly}, p.3.
\(^{144}\) The ‘not blatantly militant’ Professor Winifred Cullis reversed this logic by arguing that women who had the ‘nerve’ to be wives and mothers had the nerve for ‘anything’ and, with some more ‘faith’ in themselves, should enter public roles. ‘Women Have Nerve for Anything!’, \textit{Weekly}, 29 August, 1936, p.4.
\(^{145}\) M St Claire ‘Real Pluck is Needed to be a Spinster’, \textit{Weekly}, 14 November, 1936, p.2.
\(^{147}\) AS Turnbull, ‘Spinster Indeed’ (short story), \textit{Weekly}, 24 October, 1936, p.11.
Spinster indeed! Thea, couldn’t this phrase describe your reaction to your neighbour, Mabel? When you answer the door to her you think, it’s ‘only’ Miss Chatham, but you immediately note how ‘fresh and handsome’ she looks.148 With her ‘breezy, powerful personality’ she coerces you over for dinner.149 You admire her good looks: she attributes these to her ‘cheerful nature’.150 You’re amazed she’s forty-one. She warns you not to ‘over-estimate’ youth: there is ‘life over thirty’. She’s never been happier: ‘I don’t care a damn now whether I look thirty-one or forty-one, and as a result I don’t’.151 (Curious, how she’s apparently indifferent to her age, yet prides herself on looking young.) Like Eve, Mabel is ‘perfectly poised’152 and has large, white competent hands.153 You think both women ‘marvellous’ and ‘sane’.154 Were women – or single women – presumed to be insane in your world, Thea? Or do you note Mabel’s sanity because your own is slipping? Would you even have flinched at the Weekly’s article about women being legally classed with lunatics? Later, at home, you lament that you are not made of the same ‘lasting’ stuff as Mabel: you already have fine lines and grey hairs.155 No, Thea, you see nothing spinsterish about single women like Mabel, though you suspect you’ll become a ‘neurotic hag’ yourself.156

At her Whale Beach party, Mabel transforms. She ‘looms’ next to Marc.157 Her hands are as white as ‘marble’.158 Again, she looks ‘magnificent’ in black, but also ‘a little voluptuous’. When she bossed you about her flat, Thea, Mabel seemed like a concerned mother. At Whale Beach, though, it’s a man she’s bossing. She introduces George Ransome as a man with a ‘nice nature’, as if he’s a dog (George himself proclaims Pat is a ‘nice dog’).159 Is George’s name accidental? (Who’s ransoming whom

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148 J, pp.76-77.
149 J, p.77.
150 J, p.78.
151 J, p.78.
152 J, p.78.
153 J, p.78.
154 J, p.78,188.
155 J, p.80.
156 J, p.78.
157 J, p.86.
158 J, p.86.
159 J, pp.87-88.
for what?) Over the evening, Mabel’s voice booms\textsuperscript{160} orders at him. She mocks his cocktails and rolls her eyes and calls him a ‘silly old thing!’ He carries out his orders ‘silently’, ‘quietly’, and ‘reluctantly’.\textsuperscript{161} One guest wonders why Mabel doesn’t marry him: ‘He’s so useful’.\textsuperscript{162} Another suggests that’s why. Is George like your Terry then, Thea, whom you won’t marry though he is ‘kind, dependable, understanding’\textsuperscript{163}? Could George be one of the tiny apron-trussed men in the ‘Girligags’ cartoons?

Spinster Indeed? Thea, your admiration for Mabel makes her seem like the applauded bachelor girl in Aiken’s article. Her dominance of George makes her seem like the exploitative modern women of ‘Girligags’. Mabel seems to embody the ambivalence which the world of 1936 felt towards the growing reality of financially independent single women. (You don’t know this, Thea, but a man based a play on your story in 1997: he cast Mabel as the Madame of a brothel. What does this say about the figure of the older, single woman in your time, and mine?\textsuperscript{164})

Readers debated constantly about whether marriage or careers were better for women. In the middle of the year, they argued over whether it was foolish or wise for working girls to marry men ‘whose wage-earning capacity’ was ‘not much greater’ than their own.\textsuperscript{165} Some readers vouched for the secure job over a marriage ‘where life is a never-ending struggle against poverty’.\textsuperscript{166} Others focused on the compensations of partnership and children, or pointed out that ‘single life’ was not ideal for older women. One reader commended women who married poor men for showing the ‘courage of pioneers’:

They are answering an age old instinct which, despite woman’s emancipation, is still the strongest trait in feminine nature, and an instinct which for the sake of the human race must continue to predominate. To a great proportion of girls a job is nothing but an anteroom to the hall of marriage. Their salary is a necessity, but it is not the chief pivot of their existence. Husband, home and children are, despite

\textsuperscript{160} J, p.88.
\textsuperscript{161} J, pp.88, 96.
\textsuperscript{162} J, p.88.
\textsuperscript{163} J, p.96.
\textsuperscript{164} J. Hardy, \textit{Jungfrau} (play adaptation), Current Theatre Series, Paddington, Sydney, 1997.
\textsuperscript{166} Multiple replies to I Connors, in ‘STS’, \textit{Weekly}, 6 June, 1936, p.15.
frantic protestations to the contrary, the secret dream of every healthy, properly constructed girl.

This was the only reader to (like Mary Allen) bring notions of ‘nature’, health, biological destiny – and racial necessity – to the question of whether or not women should marry or work outside of the home. In October and November, readers argued over whether being a spinster career woman (for they were synonymous), or a wife and mother, granted women ‘freedom’. One reader argued marriage meant ‘freedom’ because working women, depending ‘entirely’ on their ‘own ability’, were ‘heavily-chained’ slaves.167 Some agreed,168 claiming all women longed for home and children, and that ‘over-worked and underpaid’ jobs threatened women’s health. Others felt working women had ‘freedom and leisure’ whilst the married woman was ‘securely chained to her job’. (The paper’s report on a Polish ‘Bride Who Was Chained... And Liked It’169 used language that resonated with these letter-writers’.) In December, readers again debated ‘Where Matrimony Scores Off Spinsterdom’,170 replying to Mrs H. Corby’s assertion that companionship was more important than a woman’s career.171 Readers noted that whilst ‘a true love-match’172 won over spinsterdom, few marriages offered perfect companionship (Figure 83), married women lost their ‘independence’ and ‘freedom of action and spirit,’ women could find companionship in each other, and men were never ‘more interested’ in their wives after marriage than before. Mrs Whalen argued that career women merely sought compensation for their poor luck in the marriage stakes.

171 Mrs H Corby, in ‘STS’, Weekly, 5 December, 1936, p.29.
Whalen’s view was common, and prompted readers like Mrs Brown to write in and defend ‘Clever Women’, asserting:

[A certain outlook] seems to tinge many men’s minds when they are assessing the value of new conquests by women in all departments of life. It seems every fine thing a woman does better or equally as well as men in world affairs is not to be regarded as a triumph, but merely the working out of an “inferiority complex.”

Surely that is an unkind analysis of many brilliant, courageous women?

Significantly, Brown’s letter was illustrated with the image of a stylish woman writing at a desk over the caption, ‘Can a clever woman be charming and feminine too?’ The paper thus shifted readers’ attention away from Brown’s admiration of clever women and her attack on male prejudice, to the question of such women’s femininity. Readers promptly replied to Brown, with some equally annoyed at how clever women were always analysed for flaws in their ‘make-up’, or how male prejudices kept women in a ‘rut’.

However, serial letter writer, Dorothy Liddicott claimed that the ‘swaggering aggressive type of woman who boasts loudly about her career’ merely masked her ‘personal failure to achieve the values in life that most women regard as essentially feminine and worthwhile’. Liddicott named these values as: ‘Bringing up a happy family, then growing old gracefully’. The cartoon accompanying Liddicott’s letter showed four differently-styled women knitting over the caption ‘Woman’s place in the home?’

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174 Multiple replies to Brown, in ‘STS’, *Weekly*, 8 August, 1936, p.27.
These letters show how the paper’s readers generally assumed that, as marriage and a career were presumed to be mutually exclusive, spinsterdom and a career were presumed to be synonymous. Readers always focused on marriage’s economic aspects, even if only to denounce such an economic focus: readers never asked if marriage would improve if women could make financial contributions. Readers also didn’t ask if women’s predominant choice to marry related to the careers that were open to them or to the fact that they earned half a man’s wage. Significantly, readers generally opposed ideal careers to impoverished marriages, or ideal marriages to impoverished careers, and the paper constantly intervened in their debates to manipulate readers to have such extreme perceptions.

Marc, you and Oswald also speak in the language of chains and freedom. He’s ‘baffled’ that you’d be his lover, yet not feel ‘bound’ to him in any way. You explain that you cannot marry a man who thinks freedom comes from detachment, and for whom marriage will mean ‘putting on fresh chains’. If he wants you because you are the only woman he’s known who values ‘impersonal issues’, why does he want to bind you with ‘personal bonds’? Good question, Marc! The only relationship you value is the ‘chosen companionship of two perfectly free people’. Like some of the Weekly’s reader-writers, you think marriage should promise a ‘wider freedom’ than singledom. Like many of those reader-writers, you are sceptical that it ever can.

176 Perhaps those who associated marriage with poverty were influenced by the Depression, when married life did not promise even the most basic material comfort, with many women exhausted by their role as housewives, mothers and primary bread winners. The increase in marriage rates, in 1936 was interpreted by the paper as indicative of the Depression’s end. ‘POV’, *Weekly*, 11 January, 1936, p.10.
177 J, p.131.
178 J, p.131.
179 J, p.132.
180 J, p.133.
The paper’s reportage on Hollywood also reinforced the perception that marriage and a career were mutually exclusive. Hollywood presented readers with the most glamorous, rich and public career women of all time, and two of the *Weekly’s* covers were dedicated to Film Stars in 1936.  

One cover portrayed an approachable, girl-next-door type of woman (Figure 85), whilst the other showed a glamorously untouchable women of mystery (Figure 84). It was within this real-unreal binary that the paper reported on stars’ attitudes to careers, marriage and divorce: the paper claimed film stars were ‘just the same as anyone else’ even as it constructed Hollywood women as a new and highly evolved species of female who was making men ‘subordinate’ in their ‘Modern Amazonia’. When the paper reported upon the death of the vamp in film, it didn’t comment on the irony that ex-vamps like Myrna Loy were making lucrative public careers through newly popular, women-at-home domestic dramas. In reality, many of Hollywood’s stars had signed contracts that included ‘no marriage’ clauses, which not

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only pandered to fans’ matrimonial fantasies, but also reacted to the more general belief – which the *Weekly* ultimately perpetuated – that marriage and a career were mutually exclusive. Samuel Goldwyn claimed marriage was ‘no help to a beginner’s future’, and blocked Merle Oberon and David Niven’s marriage. Oberon explained: ‘Pictures and marriage constitute careers in themselves’. Her belief that marriage and a career were mutually exclusive was further emphasised when she added that she would make one film per year once she was married but only to keep her marriage ‘interesting’. Robert Taylor, Madge Evans, Jean Harlow, and Florence Eldridge all saw marriage and a career as unmixable and, though the paper noted the popularity of parenthood in Hollywood, it also noted that when a female star had a baby she did so ‘with the realisation’ that she was ‘sacrificing thousands of dollars and possibly her entire career’. Articles that applauded stars who had successfully combined marriage and a career reported on such women’s success with polarised and morally-laden notions of ‘success’, ‘failure’, ‘sacrifice’, ‘devotion’, ‘perfection’ and ‘happiness’. The paper also emphasised how all actress-wife-mothers agreed that, ‘if a choice had to be made, family would always come first’. Just as it turned to Hollywood for insight into the ‘career versus marriage’ problem, the paper reported on many public women’s views on this issue, including artist, Dame Laura Knight (who rejected her ‘wifely cares’), Mrs C. Booth-Clibborn (who put her evangelism before her invalid husband and huge family), and Mrs Rubin-Zacks (who abandoned her operatic career for marriage to a Rabbi). The paper also constantly monitored women’s career status in relation to their marriages: Mrs Brassey

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188 ‘HHN’, *Weekly*, 29 August, 1936, p.29.
191 ibid.
194 ‘Marriage... and a Career – the solution’, *Weekly*, 4 April, 1936, p.42.
‘was’ a well-known pilot prior to marriage, whilst Amy Johnson and Amelia Earhart continued to fly once wed. Tilly noted Australian society girls who planned to work post-nuptials. As I showed with my discussion of Commandant Mary Allen, women with acclaimed careers were – curiously – often the most vehement in asserting that Woman’s Right Sphere was in the home: pianist Eileen Joyce claimed the world would be a ‘better place’ if women ‘put home and family life before careers’. (Joyce ultimately got married, divorced, and put her three year old son into boarding school.) Other articles conveyed mixed messages about women’s domestic-public role, with politician, Mrs Cardell Oliver, telling women they must take public roles because they were ‘the core of home life’ and home life was the ‘backbone’ of the nation. How was a woman to work outside of her home if the nation itself depended upon her staying within it? Articles on Sweden told readers that whilst Swedes thought it ‘ridiculous’ that women should cease work after marriage, they also avoided motherhood. Another article – appearing next to a picture of ‘Hitler’s ideal woman’ – replied that Swedish girls did fulfil their role as the ‘blessed’ and ‘divine’ wife and mother, or ‘the cradle of the nation’ itself.

The Weekly’s preoccupation with the choices of career women from Tinsletown to Toorak shows it recognised the urgency of this issue to its readers. Whilst admiring women who could ‘do it all’, the paper emphasised such women’s claims that home-life was more important than a career, or expressed concerns about their femininity or fertility. Such wonder-women’s stories were qualified, anyhow, by the fact that they – just like Spanish and Russian Amazons – lived in a completely glamorous and Other world to the Weekly’s readers.

197 ‘Woman’s Daring Voyage’, Weekly, p.11.
198 ‘LTIP’, Weekly, 24 October, 1936, p.3.
199 Like P Wellington and H Lawrence, noted in ‘IJ’, Weekly, on, 7 March, 1936, p.21 & 15 August, 1936, p.33.
Marriage or a career? Susan, as with money, marriage is not a question in your world: winning and maintaining love-as-marriage is woman’s full-time occupation.

Marc, you think women are ‘cursed’. If they ‘wither on the virgin stem’ they go ‘pathological’. If they ‘go off the deep end’ they get a ‘foul disease’. If they marry, they have ‘dozens’ of children and ‘die of exhaustion’. You think it a terrible waste that women like Thea, pregnant and unmarried, are forced to get rid of children in whom they might find the ‘fulfilment’ that neither work nor ‘ordinary human contacts’ could give them. Here, you are talking about the either-orness of women’s sexual choices. Later, you link this to women’s worldly choices. You admire professional ‘types’ like Eve, but think them ‘antiseptic’: for a woman to succeed at ‘any job other than marriage’ she must live with the inhibitions, and without the compensations, of a ‘cloister’. Marc, you assume that women like Eve relinquish sex, and that they must therefore be antiseptic. (Antiseptic? It’s Eve, not you Marc, who sobs for Thea and whose pulse quickens around John.) Eve’s no idiot. She recognises – but simply accepts – the either-orness of women’s choices, and hates seeing women ‘suspended’ between marriage and a job, ‘unable to give themselves to either’. She thinks Thea must ‘make a profession’ of teaching or ‘get married’. And for herself? Eve watches Thea lose sight of her work, her ideas and her friends: if that’s what Love does, Eve doesn’t want it. She’s grateful that her work absorbs her entirely. Even Thea wonders if women would be ‘happier’ with just ‘work and friends’. Clearly, all of you see marriages and careers as legitimate, full-time, mutually exclusive occupations.

Marc, when you conclude that being ‘a modern woman’ is ‘no sinecure’, your modern women aren’t the kind that Glover idealises and demonises, or the kind whom Bret loathes, or the exploitative kind in ‘Girligags’. Your modern women are women torn between the choices they think they have, and the realities they have to face.

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205 J, p.28.
206 J, p.240.
207 J, p.50.
208 J, p.17.
209 J, p.119.
210 J, p.50.
211 J, p.50.
Reality Check: Glamorous Careers, or Dead-End Jobs?

The papers’ second largest group of cover images, ‘Public Women’,\textsuperscript{212} glamorised women who had identities other than ‘woman’, ‘mother’, or ‘wife’. This, and the paper’s continual reference to professional women and their organisations, perpetuated the sense that many women in Australia in 1936 were career women.\textsuperscript{213} The paper even reprimanded readers who were ‘covetous’ towards these ‘outstanding’ others, accusing them of lacking the ‘courage’ to aim as high.\textsuperscript{214} Quoting census data (presumably from 1933), the paper noted that, whilst there were 5 women horse-breeders, 2 hop-growers, 27 cotton growers, 114 women in forestry, and 14 ship builders the data ultimately confirmed how women’s ‘conservativeness’ and ‘nervousness’ made them turn to more ‘orthodox jobs’: 19,633 women worked in agricultural, pastoral, and dairy work,\textsuperscript{215} 107,102 worked in public administration and the professions and 101,512 in commerce (mostly as typists), and 190,024 women worked in personal and domestic service.\textsuperscript{216} Though ‘domestics’ represented the largest area of paid female employment, and despite unpaid housewifery being reified in much of the paper’s letters and articles, not a single cover of the \textit{Weekly} from 1936 represented a professional domestic \textit{or} a ‘housewife’. This reality – that Australian women had ‘jobs’, rather than ‘careers’ in 1936 – seems exemplified by how Australian women’s ‘Amazon’ rowing team included office clerks, typists, machinists, textile-workers, dressmakers, teachers, family housekeepers, and munitions or motor factory workers.\textsuperscript{217} (Only one lone rower had the more unusual job as a photographer.)

The advertising in the \textit{Weekly} also gives insight into the actual ‘careers’ available to women in 1936. Stott’s Correspondence College regularly announced ‘Careers for

\textsuperscript{212} ‘Appendix Two’.
\textsuperscript{215} An ad for the Bank of N.S.W. claimed that there were over 23,000 factories in Australia, giving employment to over 400,000 workers’. \textit{Weekly}, 22 February, 1936, p.11.
\textsuperscript{216} 1933 Census Figures: 50,424 women were ‘working on own account’, over 400,000 were a ‘wage or salary earner’, 26,827 were part-time wage or salary earner, 20,831 were an ‘employer’, 75,775 were unemployed, 5,262 were ‘helpers’ unpaid, 2,674,756 women were ‘grade not applicable’ and included pensioners, people of private means not in business, ‘females engaged in home duties, scholars and other dependents’. 787,841 women (2,367,780 men) were ‘Breadwinners’. All statistics are ‘exclusive of full-blood Aboriginals’. Wilson, \textit{Official Year Book}, 1937, pp.351,353.
Girls and Ladies’ in Commercial Art, Showcard Ticket Writing, Story Writing, Freelance Journalism, Dress Cutting, Nurses Educational, Architectural Work, Advertising, Accountancy, Book-Keeping, Shorthand, Salesmanship, University Exams, Window Dressing and Typewriting. Their ads announced: ‘There is no need to leave home to prepare’.\(^{218}\) Other ads, like Hemingway & Robertson’s claimed jobs like ‘Lady Secretary’ had the ‘greatest business future’,\(^{219}\) or told parents their daughters’ futures lay in ‘advertising’.\(^{220}\) Other ads encouraged readers to make money at home by making lollies,\(^{221}\) or writing,\(^{222}\) or growing mushrooms’.\(^{223}\) All of these ads suggest that girls and women-at-home were seen to be either working, or desiring to work, in low-skilled, factory or secretarial jobs, rather than in the prestigious careers that dominated the ‘What Women are Doing’ page.\(^{224}\)

_Eve, you are aware of your unique social status as a female obstetrician: you’re ‘absurdly pleased’ when a maid tells you she and her co-workers think you ‘marvellous’.\(^{225}\) In her eyes, you are glamorous: you could be one of the Weekly’s cover-girls. Being female doesn’t seem to have impinged on your work: colleagues like John seek your advice; you have the steadiest nerves in the hospital.\(^{226}\) Eve, you thank God for your ‘profession’: it absorbs all your energies and interests, and keeps you out of Thea-type troubles.\(^{227}\) Thea herself envies how your profession (and your religion) give you purpose and place in a world where she can find neither.\(^{228}\)

_Eve, after Mrs O’Brien dies, you go to Thea’s flat. Marc’s there. Not knowing what’s happened, she mocks you: ‘it must be comforting to know that you’ve done_
something for suffering humanity'. Coolly, you say you’re glad you do something other than potter about with ‘pseudo-sciences’. Why attack her, Eve? Does Marc really do nothing? Despite what she says, what Marc does is spend her days helping delinquent kids through the courthouses. She’s considering ‘dedicating’ her life to ‘mental defectives’ and ‘half-wits’ and ‘morons’. Does she ‘adore’ such work merely – as she jests – because of her ‘pure scientific spirit’, because, as ‘a budding psychologist’, she wants to ‘study all human species, however foul’? Is it self-gratification which sees her, at Whale Beach, rushing back to the city because the police have found a boy she’s trying to help? Is Marc really so bad, Eve? Whatever she might say, it’s the unfortunate she serves. Just like you, she loathes the futility and waste of human lives. Because Marc is indifferent to ‘reputation’ and ‘scandal’, she has a reputation: why is that reputation based on how she looks, what she says and the sexual relationships she’s apparently had, and not based on the work she does every single day?

Thea, you are relieved to farewell your ‘wretched’ unmarked exam papers: they represent ‘dreadful’ wasted years. You think death better than a holiday: you’ll never have to return to ‘the dreary round’ of your life; you’ll never again be ‘enshackled and seared’ by a life you have ‘hated’. Those papers do not represent a ‘profession’ to you, and the only thing in your flat that matters are Owen’s letters. He – not your ‘profession’ – was the only reason you pursued your Masters, and it was Eve, not you, who worried you were ‘wasting’ your time with teaching: she feared your mind would go ‘to seed’. But you have a low opinion of your mind, Thea, and teaching was only ever your ‘job’. You see how Eve and Marc’s work completely defines them both. If you had defined yourself through your work, instead of romantic love, perhaps you’d have survived too.

231 J, pp.205,206.
232 J, p.67.
233 J, pp.218,279.
234 J, pp.252,253.
235 J, p.252.
236 J, p.254.
237 J, p.34.
238 J, p.34.
239 J, p.74.
The paper’s reportage on factories\textsuperscript{240} shows how both men and women could be ruthlessly exploited in the Australia of 1936, often without any legal regulation or protection. Such reportage also shows, however, that workers’ unions and welfare groups were working to rectify such injustices, and the \textit{Weekly} sympathetically reported on their struggles, perhaps assuming that some of their readers shared them. This reportage also shows how the new science of psychology was becoming more prominent and respected in mainstream society, teaching industry leaders that the ‘purely mechanical’ and ‘soul destroying’\textsuperscript{241} nature of factory work was not only inhumane, but unprofitable.

The sheer amount of reportage on – as the \textit{Weekly} saw it – the Domestics ‘crisis’ in Australia in 1936 shows how the paper saw this crisis as being directly relevant to its readers, a group that must have included mistresses and maids alike.\textsuperscript{242} Though the paper supported domestic’s struggle for legislative rights by allowing them to voice their calls for unionisation and professionalisation, it undermined this struggle by its reiteration that domestic work was the customary, inevitable and natural work of women. Furthermore, though the paper identified the ‘stigma’ of housework as lying in its being \textit{women’s} work, it simply accepted that ‘women’s work’ had a degraded status and did not ponder the connection between that status and women’s status in general.\textsuperscript{243} In fact, both the paper and its readers expressed a fear that a domestically working man was effeminate, thus revealing how much was at stake in ‘masculinising’ domestic labour by giving it the legal

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{241} M St Claire, ‘Rhythm Used to Pep Up Industry’, 31 October, 1936, p.40.
\item \textsuperscript{243} ‘Domestic Training for Boys’, \textit{Weekly}, p.12.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
and economic status of ‘work’. Interestingly, the women activists engaged in the
domestics’ ‘crisis’ (unlike Littlejohn and her fight for ‘Wages for Wives’) did not ask for
domestic work itself to be valued. Rather, they wanted such work valued if and when it
was performed in another woman’s home. In this way, the domestics’ struggle for rights
and recognition promised no elevation in the status of housewives.

Eve, you like Lucy, the maid who proclaims her and the other maids’ adoration of
you. She ‘gurgles’ with ‘enthusiasm’\textsuperscript{244} as she cleans your room, even though it’s Edna’s
job. You think Lucy a decent, unspoilt, ‘little kid’. You think Edna too loud and
‘slatternly’, too prone to weekends off and citing ‘Union Regulations’. You think Edna’s
the type who’d murder you if you complained. Clearly, Eve, there is a right place for
everyone in your world: ‘kids’ like Lucy should happily serve women like you; females
like Edna should know their place.

Margery, Susan asks you whether you still have ‘Simple Sarah the Idiot Child’ as
a maid.\textsuperscript{245} You don’t: Richard kept imitating her dropped jaw and ‘vacant expression’.
You now have a ‘lass called Annie’ who is ‘strong and willing’ and ‘clean’. You sound
like your maker, Dark, when she chuckled with her husband over their own
‘henchwenches’.\textsuperscript{246}

None of you women think twice about looking down on the women who clean up
your messes.

\textsuperscript{244} J, p.114.
\textsuperscript{245} C, p.114.
\textsuperscript{246} E Dark to M Franklin (letter), Ferrier, \textit{As Good As a Yarn With You}, p.34.
The paper presented the typist-secretary as the glamorous face of ‘ordinary’ working women: whilst two covers depicted typists in 1936 (Figures 86, 87), it had none depicting domestics, housewives or factory workers. In this year, the paper also published romance writer, Faith Baldwin’s novel ‘Wife versus Secretary’, promoted the same-named Hollywood film, and published an extended article by Baldwin called ‘Must a Secretary Have Sex Appeal?’ These texts both created and cultivated tensions between financially-dependent women who worked at home, and the stereotypical ‘modern’ woman who was single, fashionable, urban, sexually confident and working in those women’s husbands’ workplaces. As it was the typist-secretary whom the paper held up as a ‘cover girl’ for working women, it’s worth looking at her representations in some detail.

In the two covers which glamorised the typist-secretary, ‘Helen’s’ career is revealed, by her cover’s poem, to be merely a temporary space in which she has waited for marriage whilst the ‘Typist’s’ pensiveness also suggests something temporary or dissatisfying about her job. In Chapter Four, I introduced Shirley MacLeod, an attractive, young typist who won the *Weekly’s* ‘China Seas’ competition by articulating her passive...

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yearning to escape that career’s tedium. Another article reported on London office girls who, whilst protesting against their working conditions at the House of Commons, knitted, talked and read ‘novels about handsome heroes who marry hardworking typists’. Though one reader protested against this clearly popular notion that modern office girls were passively waiting for romance (arguing that such women’s lack of influence and money forced them to ‘await’ other opportunities), the paper fostered this idea that such girls were – despite their economic autonomy and ‘modernity’ – always waiting for something (or someone?) else.

The paper suggested that there was both a shortage and excess of typists and stenographers in Australia in 1936. The ‘What Women are Doing’ column regularly introduced female secretaries of important people and organisations. As well as adverts for secretarial or ‘business’ training, the secretary-typist was also regularly used to sell other products (Figure 88). The paper also cultivated interest in the profession when it reported such things as the South Australian Centenary typewriting championships where ‘modern Juliets’ typed at 5000-6000 words per hour, or when it presented readers with glamorous Hortense Stollnitz, who held the world typing record (Figure 89). In August, Lower defined a good secretary as being: ‘a suave and convincing prevaricator’ who combined ‘the work of nurse, cook, waitress, accountant, short-hand writer, typist, office-cleaner, nerve-soother and chucker-out’ (Figure 90). Lower might have been describing a wife here, and the Weekly constantly emphasised the wifely-threat of the secretary figure. Haylen noted the ‘traditional’ joke that saw ‘the big business man ringing up his wife with [a] typist on his lap’, or when readers argued over which sex made a better boss and the paper used a cartoon of a secretary to show how sexually

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253 ‘Juliet Never Wrote to Romeo at this Hot Pace’, Weekly, 25 April, 1936, p.4.
254 Photo, Weekly, 13 June, 1936, p.4.
255 LW Lower, ‘Wanted: One Secretary with Ability of Twenty’, Weekly, 1 August, 1936, p.13.
manipulative women preferred men.\textsuperscript{257} (Figure 91). Another article proclaimed that Claudette Colbert’s film, ‘She Married Her Boss’, had ‘foundation in real life’, and listed prominent secretary-boss romances.\textsuperscript{258} The ‘power behind the throne’ – at home – must have felt very nervous when contemplating the ‘wolfish wifehood’\textsuperscript{259} of the secretary, for when such ‘office wives’ were presented as crucial to men’s worldly success, ‘real’ wives were put in the humiliating position of being as dependent upon secretaries as they were on their husbands.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure88.png}
\caption{Ad for Bourn-Vita tonic, quoting a ‘woman secretary’s letter’, whilst Horlick’s saves ‘Miss Secretary’s always ill’ from losing her job}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{258} M St Claire, “‘Perfect Secretary’ to marry her “Boss””, \textit{Weekly}, 30 May, 1936, p.4.
\textsuperscript{259} ‘Women – Always Sublime to Chesterton’, \textit{Weekly}, 27 June, 1936, p.10.
Figure 89: Champion typist Hortense Stollnitz

WANTED: One Secretary with Ability of Twenty
Must be dainty, Sherlock Holmesish, a good cook and competent pugilist

BY L. W. LOWER

Figure 90: Lower’s sympathetic parody of secretarial work
The *Weekly*’s publication of Faith Baldwin’s novel ‘Wife versus Secretary’, its promotion of the film and its publication of Baldwin’s article on secretaries’ sex appeal (Figures 92-94),\(^{260}\) aggressively positioned working and domestic women around a curious paradox: ‘good’ wives and ‘good’ secretaries were judged by identical standards. Both had to be as ‘decorative’ as they were competent. Neither were allowed to interfere with men’s business, but were blamed entirely for those men’s sexual behaviours: men had affairs either because their wives were insecure failures who forced them into their perfect secretaries’ arms, or because their secretaries were calculating sex-bombs. Furthermore, both wives and secretaries deserved to be ‘sacked’ if they failed to conform to these standards. Though she did not represent the majority of working women in Australia, the typist-secretary was thus clearly – as an idea – prominent in the world of Australian women in 1936, and was key to making the woman at home distrust the woman who worked in the public world.

\(^{260}\) F Baldwin, ‘Must a Secretary Have Sex Appeal?’, *Weekly*, 21 November, 1936, p.3; ‘Brunette vs. Brownette for Gable’, *Weekly*, 13 June, 1936, p.31; F Baldwin, ‘Wife versus Secretary’ (novel), *Weekly*, 27 June, 1936; *Wife versus Secretary* (film), Clarence Brown (director), AD Miller et al (screenplay), MGM,1936. See ‘Appendix Seven’ for a detailed discussion of these texts.
Figure 92: Baldwin’s ‘Must a Secretary Have Sex Appeal?’

Figure 93: The Weekly promotes ‘Wife versus Secretary’

Figure 94: Free novel, Baldwin’s ‘Wife versus Secretary’ and ‘Masquerade’
Whilst many articles constructed secretaries as calculatedly attractive, a number of letters and articles indicate that secretaries had to look good in order to both get and keep a job. One Californian ‘Business Woman’ complained that working girls had ‘dirty hands, dirty nails, and untidy hair’ and wrote a book aimed at helping such women ‘get on in the business world’. Haylen claimed it was ‘Not All Vanity’ that saw the working woman ‘mortgage her wages to have her hair permanently waved’. He quoted the Banking Commission in Melbourne which said a woman’s investment in her looks ‘might be an appreciating asset to her and enable her to work better’. Another wage enquiry heard one woman claim: ‘I must make 35 look 25... in order to keep my job’. This article noted Woman’s new, post-War ‘necessity’ to be ‘well-groomed’, with ‘grooming’ requiring hair dressing, manicures and make-up. The paper even noted how women’s post-war make-up habit saw armaments factories being used to make lipstick cases to assist their ‘war on plainness or old age’. These articles suggest that, if secretaries were ‘invading’ man’s sphere of business, they were doing so in a very qualified way: office ‘decorations’ were not, it seems, always powerful ‘office wives’.

Coolami’s women are all home women. Jungfrau’s women are all working women. Neither type is explicitly positioned against the other in either novel.

Thea, surely you – an educated, professional, young woman – are a direct threat to Glover’s marriage? You genuinely don’t care if the ‘old hens’ at school are talking: without possessing the ‘secret, strong core of a man’ you know nothing else matters. You never see yourself as being in competition with his wife, Alice. Instead, you are ‘content’ to stay ‘in the background’ of Glover’s life ‘for ever and ever’, so long as you ‘have him for rare exquisite moments’. (You also say you’d live ‘openly’ with him. It

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261 ‘LTIP’, Weekly, 4 July, 1936, p.3.
264 ‘Defence Department’s Lipstick Exhibits’, Weekly, 25 April, 1936, p.16. These factories reportedly ceased making women’s ‘paint’ in 1936 in order to make soldier’s ‘powder’, in support of ‘Man’s War on Man’.
265 J, p.3,172.
266 J, p.172. Marjorie Barnard’s attitude to her relationship with Frank Dalby Davison sounds strangely – and poignantly – similar to the one Thea imagines with Glover. Barnard wrote to Devanny: ‘Frank wanted to make love to me but I found that hard to come at, because I loved him and he didn’t pretend to love me…. we had every Monday evening together. I never asked for any more ... I didn’t want to put any bond
seems you have no idea what a future with him might really look like.) You say you’d have born Glover’s child with ‘pride’, had he loved you. Of course, that’s the catch. You realise that the desirability and future of your unconventional ‘friendship’ is a ‘lovely illusion’ because it depends on the presumption of Glover’s love. When you see him at the graduate ball, with Alice’s ‘possessive’ hand on his arm, you realise that a ‘part of him’ had never belonged to you, and never will. Your subsequent shame comes not from being his ‘other’ woman, or from your ‘illegitimate’ sex and pregnancy, but from your belief that he gave you ‘so much’ out of pity. (Again, we see you wearing that stained, old man’s jumper the night after Glover gave you ‘all he had to give’. We see, though you cannot, how Cusack damns Glover’s ‘all’.)

Glover actively uses his marriage to contain your affair as an ‘amazingly delightful’ interlude. When you see him with Alice, you recognise the ‘elegant, frail wall of convention’ that separates you. Frail? You can see that wall is built of rock! Glover repeatedly mentions his marriage in order to tell you, without telling you, that your affair is ‘essentially impermanent’. You never react to his mentioning of Alice. He assumes you have no ‘false’ hopes, turns you into a plural, and helps himself: it is ‘neither here nor there’ for ‘girls to-day’ to have a ‘friendship’ with a man, he muses. Perverse, that he takes you to Alice’s cottage: if he thinks he’s taken you there to emphasise the terminality of your affair, why does he then sleep with you? Beforehand, you read to him. He’s surprised that you don’t choose to read the Moderns but he ponders neither this nor what you quote (‘Cover her face, mine eyes dazzle / She died young’). Instead, he recites to himself ‘Woman to man / Is either a God or a Wolf’.

on him... I don’t think I did him any harm’. She asks Devanny not to talk of it, ‘You’re wise enough to know he wasn’t to blame, and that anyhow men can’t be judged on these things... I want to be as dead for him as he wished me’. A major difference between Thea and Glover, and Barnard and Davison, is that Barnard ‘kept’ Davison, as she was more educated and financially secure than he. See M Barnard’s account of her affair in her letter to J Devanny, 1 January, 1947, in Ferrier, As Good As, pp.156-158.

268 J, p.217.
269 J, p.173.
270 J, p.157,256.
271 J, p.158.
272 J, p.156.
273 J, p.158.
274 J, pp.60, 141.
275 J, p.141.
276 J, p.144. This quotation is from The Duchess of Malfi, by John Webster.
277 J, p.143. This quotation is from ‘The White Devil’, by John Webster.
In your poetry, Thea, women die; in Glover’s, they dominate and devour. At the ball, Glover stands by Alice and dismisses you from his life with a look of ‘dignity and intimacy’.\textsuperscript{278} Though he sees your ‘lost and hopeless’ face, he tells himself your generation is without ‘hope and incapable of despair’.\textsuperscript{279} When he learns of your death, your face has been completely submerged by the symbol of Jungfrau: white, proud and untouched.\textsuperscript{280} Untouched? No, Thea. You were never a threat to Glover’s wife and marriage; it was his marriage, in fact, that made him deadly for you.

Whose ‘fault’ are extra-marital affairs like yours, Thea? Eve is furious that you won’t tell Glover you’re pregnant: ‘he is responsible and should take his share of the responsibility’. Though you say the question of responsibility is irrelevant, you claim you are as much to ‘blame’ as Glover. Thea, you seem confused, especially when you tell Eve you think you ‘wanted it as much as he did’, but didn’t realise until ‘afterwards’.\textsuperscript{281} How do you choose something you don’t know you want? Eve says that, though your ‘argument’ might ‘go down’ with people like Marc, ‘ordinary people’ think it’s ‘fairly obvious’ who’s responsible when ‘a middle-aged man deliberately seduces a perfectly innocent girl’.\textsuperscript{282} She is ‘revolted’ by your ‘insistence’ upon ‘equal responsibility’, by your ‘demoralising subjectivism’.\textsuperscript{283} You are just another woman trying to ‘shield’ another ‘utterly rotten’ man.\textsuperscript{284} Though Eve feels ‘sick at heart’ for you, she also thinks that, whatever your ‘innocence’, your affair was ‘plain adultery’.\textsuperscript{285} Now there’s a word that doesn’t appear in the Weekly. Eve damns Glover and Marc and the modern’s ‘poisonous ideas’ that forget the ‘wages of sin’.\textsuperscript{286} Thea, you think you forced Glover into a corner. Eve thinks your affair was everyone’s fault but your own.

And Marc? She pities people who are ‘in love and can’t get anywhere’, but won’t ‘accept responsibility’ if someone falls in love with her: ‘It’s different when you both go headlong together... Otherwise it’s all so irrational, and utterly stupid’.\textsuperscript{287} What is she

\textsuperscript{278} J, p.158.
\textsuperscript{279} J, p.163.
\textsuperscript{280} J, p.286.
\textsuperscript{281} J, p.176.
\textsuperscript{282} J, p.176.
\textsuperscript{283} J, p.178-179.
\textsuperscript{284} J, p.178.
\textsuperscript{285} J, p.178.
\textsuperscript{286} J, p.179.
\textsuperscript{287} J, p.45.
talking about? Is there such a thing as ‘rational’ love? Is love a thought or a feeling? Isn’t this what Bret struggles with in Coolami? At first, Thea, Marc asks you if you are being ‘fair’ in assuming your ‘friendship’ was just an incident that ‘didn’t count’ to Glover. The question of adultery is irrelevant: what matters is whether you’ve had a ‘perfect’ incident. Whilst you see your night with Glover as perfection,\textsuperscript{288} Marc understands the bleakness of carrying the child of an unloving man. She learns that people like you, who can’t ‘come to grips’ with life, are doomed to wander outside of it until ‘some filthy, damnable thing ensnares them.\textsuperscript{289} Without saying so, Marc thus sees Glover as a predator and you as his prey. After your suicide, Marc goes to Eve to talk about responsibility. Marc says she’d thought everyone was to blame: she’d sent Glover the news cutting announcing you ‘accidentally drowned’,\textsuperscript{290} hoping he’d have his ‘private hell’. Marc thinks she and Eve should have been able to save you, Thea, if people can be saved from themselves. And that’s the question your story ends on: who is to blame for your affair, pregnancy, suicide?

\textsuperscript{288} J, p.216.
\textsuperscript{289} J, p.218.
\textsuperscript{290} J, p.285.
Chapter Six:
Marriage is the ultimate career?
‘Love Calling’: Valuing marriage as the ultimate career

‘Love Calling’ refers to the next largest group of covers after ‘Physical’ and ‘Public’ women, and refers to covers that glamorise heterosexual love. These covers typically emphasised love’s transformative qualities, with the poem on the ‘Wedding Day’ cover attaching the notions of reality, life, adulthood and womanhood to its image of a happy bride, and explicitly defining her role as the life-guide, and ‘mate’, of Man (Figure 95).

Figure 95: ‘Wedding Day’

**Love calling?**

*Thea, you grant Love the power to kill you. At the beginning of your affair, your subconscious seems to warn you against this: though you only feel a ‘complete person’ with Glover, you dream of yourself splitting in two. When you sleep with him, you shed*

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2 See ‘Appendix Two’.
4 J, p.73.
silent tears: you realise that your ‘love’ is the kind where he will always have more of you, than you of him. You ignore this. You focus on the immutable fact that ‘for one night’ you have been loved, that the ‘terrifying gap’ between you has been closed. Does sex mean love to you, Thea? In those first moments of ecstasy, you believe you have found your life’s ‘meaning’ and ‘significance’. By the end of your story, you have abandoned love altogether: not ‘all love is worthwhile’, not when you’ve ‘thrown things away’, not when you’ve opened the gate ‘to the enemy yourself’. Eve was right: if you open yourself to the world, it rushes in on you. Marc tries to console you: you’re the ‘winner’ for you’ve ‘had something no-one else can take away from you’. She’s right about that, your ‘love’ has left you with something that no one can (or will) take from you.

Eve, we already know how suspicious you are of love’s way of severing people from their friends, work, and selves. It’s as if you’ve read that refrain in Thea’s mind: ‘I am shut out of mine own heart, because my love is far from me’. You think romanticism should be listed as a ‘highly infectious disease’ and ‘made notifiable’. You think you’re ‘content’ with your life as it is. You don’t need love! Then why does ‘loathing and hatred’ fill you as you think of John and Marc at Whale Beach? Because you loathe the ‘cheap philandering’ and ‘subtle moonlit excitement’ that such ‘pairing off’ encourages? Because you’re frigid, as your ‘antiseptic’ image suggests? But your ‘superstitious abstinence’, as Marc calls it, is not a result of your frigidity, but your valuation of ‘purity’ – the capacity to ‘demand all or nothing’. Isn’t that demand romantic, Eve? You remind yourself you have ‘no claim’ on John. What he does has ‘nothing’ to do with you, ‘Nothing – only...’ In that ellipsis lies your never admitted desire for him, for you tell yourself that you miss his friendship. ‘Friendship’ is a euphemism that permeates your world, isn’t it? If you are only ‘friends’ with John, why do you worry about looking a ‘hag’ in front of him? Why do you want your home to look ‘fresh and tidy’ for him? Eve,
like Marc, you are learning that you aren’t immune to love and longing when it comes to men.

Marc, when Thea asks you if you’ve ever been in love, your face darkens: you have; it was ‘Bloody’.\(^{14}\) You have no patience for your era’s ‘sentimental tosh’, which connects sex to romance: it makes modern relationships ‘frightfully’ complicated.\(^{15}\) You think it ‘bunk’ that love is ‘a woman’s whole existence’.\(^{16}\) The Greeks didn’t make ‘sex relations’ the ‘be-all and end-all’ of life, yet now modern men expect ‘one unfortunate’ woman to have all the qualities he once found in wives, mistresses and female relations.\(^{17}\)

Marc, you aren’t just talking about the modern conflation of love with sex here; but the conflation of love with sex and marriage. You concede Thea’s point that sex relations were probably the be-all and end-all for the Greeks’ harem-bound women: but only because they had nothing else to do. And isn’t that Thea all over? She has nothing better to do than to turn love and Glover into her life’s meaning. (Eve wishes she would find something practical to ‘absorb’ her ‘passionate emotionalism’.\(^{18}\)) You lecture Oswald about love, seeing his desire for detachment as cowardly armour, but Marc, isn’t your eternal reduction of life and love to ‘incidents’ a form of armour too? You think marriage is flawed because it tries to make a permanent situation out of impermanent feelings. When you begin to ‘fiercely’ miss Oswald,\(^{19}\) however, you begin to rethink relationships. Like Eve with John, you are learning that love doesn’t have to be romantic twaddle: it can see minds ‘dovetailing’, can grant a feeling of completeness,\(^{20}\) and can mean the truest of friendships. Everyone knows that friendship is defined by continuity over time, not ‘incidents’.

Susan, you think that, because you are twenty-one, have ‘been in love’ and ‘had a baby’, you must be a woman.\(^{21}\) Love, womanhood and motherhood thus define adulthood in your mind. Your experience of Love has taught you that it happens ‘to’ a person: it

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\(^{14}\) J, p.45.
\(^{15}\) J, p.49.
\(^{16}\) J, p.50.
\(^{17}\) J, pp.50,51.
\(^{18}\) J, p.165.
\(^{19}\) J, p.283.
\(^{20}\) J, pp.131,132.
\(^{21}\) C, p.9.
can't be forced, or denied. Love and sex aren’t related for you as they are for Thea, or you’d never have found your affair with Jim so ‘jolly’. You’d hoped love would ‘happen’ to you with him: doesn’t everyone say that love comes ‘after marriage’, that love can be built, can be an end point rather than a starting point? No luck: as you tried to fall in love with Jim, you found yourself falling in love with Bret. Love renders us all passive victims. Now, you are married to a man who does not love you, though nothing can stop the ‘steady-burning flame’ of your feelings for him, a flame from which comes all your ‘torture’ and ‘joy’. Like Thea, Susan, love is something that ‘aches’ and hurts you. Unlike Thea, Dark shapes your destiny: love happens ‘to’ Bret. When he then asks you what else you want, you tell him: ‘Nothing on earth’. Like Thea, Susan, love is your everything.

Bret, whilst ‘Love’ answers Thea’s question of ‘What’ is ‘reality?’; you’re stuck on the question of ‘What is Love?’. You tell Susan you’re not ‘the loving sort’: you don’t ‘understand it’, you don’t really want to. So how do you move from loathing Susan to loving her? You know of love of family, and that ‘most satisfying’ and ‘lasting’ love for your work and Coolami: if loving a woman equalled this, then you’d understand ‘all the talk about it’. But a woman isn’t an inanimate stretch of land, is she Bret? You’ve seen your sister Kath in love. (How come you smile at her ‘impetuous’ affairs, her ‘detachment’, her ‘cheerfully discarded armours’, yet see Susan’s same as criminal?) You’ve watched Margery and Colin use love ‘like a lifebelt in a stormy sea’. You’re impressed that Drew and Millicent still love one another. You watched a ‘mischievous, incomprehensible’ love entangle Jim, and can see how Susan’s love builds barriers about

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22 C, pp.19,20.
23 C, p.19.
24 C, p 49.
25 C, p 50.
26 C, p.88.
27 C, p.50.
28 C, p.184.
30 C, pp.32, 44,97.
31 C, p.55.
32 C, p.31.
33 C, p.97.
34 C, p.97.
her.\(^{35}\) Your time with ‘big and rosy and kind’ Myrtle, long ago, was ‘pleasant’ and ‘wholesome’. She didn’t leave a ‘sour taste’ in your mouth like those ‘six feverish months’ you spent with Lillian during the war: you felt ‘badly and callously let down’ when you discovered Lillian was engaged, though felt nothing for her soon after.\(^{36}\)

You’ve seen Love, perhaps even imitated its gestures, but you’ve never felt it. It remains, for you, ‘the giraffe among emotions – impossible, incredible’.\(^{37}\) You were aghast when Susan pronounced her love for you.\(^{38}\) Now you’re learning it’s ‘as difficult to be the loved as the lover’.\(^{39}\) You’re learning that love must be ‘both of and for’. You are enraged at Susan’s claim she will play-act your marriage into success. When she says you won’t know when she’s acting,\(^{40}\) you wonder if love is a ‘sixth sense’. It sounds plausible: ‘I see, I taste, I smell, I hear, I feel, I love’. You wonder, if emotions come to you ‘through your senses’, and you don’t feel love, mustn’t you be ‘an emotional half-wit’? Isn’t Susan thus forced to ‘beguile’ your senses ‘as one might beguile some shuffling moron’?\(^{41}\) Perhaps things will be better if Susan stops loving you: a marriage based on ‘comradeship’ and ‘companionship’ and ‘good plain emotions’ makes sense.\(^{42}\) What is love? Is it, as Colin once jested, ‘a bio-chemical reaction between two persons of opposite sex’? Is sex love? No: Susan slept with Jim, but she did not love him; she loves you, yet she withholds her body from you.\(^{43}\) When you see Susan’s ‘strangely arresting beauty’\(^{44}\) through a curtain, you feel a ‘nebulous, queerly satisfying emotion’. Is this love? You go inside to be with her and realise your ‘mood is not transferable’. Is love a ‘mood’? After the ‘excitement’ and ‘anxiety’ on Jungaburra, you again feel ‘a hitherto unknown emotion’.\(^{45}\) You awaken the next morning feeling ‘a most tremendous glow’.\(^{46}\) You find yourself singing: ‘I can’t BE happy till I make YOU happy too!’\(^{47}\) You realise

\(^{35}\) C, p.91.
\(^{36}\) C, p.32. This edition uses both ‘Lilian’ and ‘Lillian’ to name Bret’s ex.
\(^{37}\) C, p.97.
\(^{38}\) C, p.95.
\(^{39}\) C, p.33.
\(^{40}\) C, p.58.
\(^{41}\) C, p.61.
\(^{42}\) C, pp.79, 161.
\(^{43}\) C, p.61.
\(^{44}\) C, pp.115,116.
\(^{45}\) C, p.155.
\(^{46}\) C, p.160.
that, just like muscles, emotions need exercise: you’ve been emotionally ‘constipated’ and your love for Susan is your ‘aperient’.\textsuperscript{48} This is your epiphany. This is what your story is about, Bret: discovering what love ‘is’.

In its editorial, ‘Careers for Girls’,\textsuperscript{49} the \textit{Weekly} named school-leavers, who looked ‘no further than to “growing up,” meeting the ideal mate, and making a career of matrimony’, as ‘fortunate’. Just like many of the ‘Love Calling’ covers, this editorial saw marriage itself as women’s initiation into adulthood, and believed only ‘exceptional’ girls sought other careers. The paper believed this latter ‘minority’ never lost sight of ‘the prospect of marriage as an alternative “career”,’ and that the ‘only drawback’ to their ‘very human change of mind’ was they weren’t trained for marriage, ‘the most exacting career’ of all. The paper expressed a similar attitude in its editorial on ‘Athletics as a “Career”,’ when it dismissed athletics as a ‘dead end’ job that was merely ‘a side-issue’ in the preparation for an ‘actual career’ in business, the professions or the ‘domestic spheres of life’.\textsuperscript{50}

The perception of marriage as women’s ultimate and hardest career was reiterated many times in the paper. When brides were attacked for trivialising marriage with theatrical and materialistic weddings,\textsuperscript{51} some women defended them by construing the wedding day as the highest point of a woman’s life and the only time when she was publicly valued as an individual and served by others: from thenceforth she had to ‘work very hard’.\textsuperscript{52} When readers debated whether widows or spinsters made better wives, many emphasised how marriage was both a skilled job – requiring patience, loyalty, carefulness, ‘mothercraft’ and housekeeping skills – \textit{and} an almighty let-down.\textsuperscript{53} This was evident when one reader claimed widows were superior, because they’d already had the ‘bitter’ awakening that marriage was not a ‘bed of roses’, and knew men needed

\textsuperscript{48} C, p.166.
\textsuperscript{49} ‘Careers for Girls’, \textit{Weekly}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{50} ‘Athletics as a “Career”’, \textit{Weekly}, 11 April, 1936, p.10.
humouring for they were only boys grown up.\textsuperscript{54} Such disillusionment was common, and cast wives as mothers to ‘Peter Pan husbands’.\textsuperscript{55} As ‘Girligags’ warned: ‘When he promises you castles, you seldom receive more than the grounds for divorce’.\textsuperscript{56}

Despite such disillusionment, the paper regularly reified wifedom, as when it proclaimed that married women were ‘the real force behind the successful efforts of men’.\textsuperscript{57} The paper elaborated on this when it reported on thinkers like G.K. Chesterton, a ‘champion of women’ who recognised ‘the grandeur’ of women’s ‘daily lives’.\textsuperscript{58} Though his comments were published in 1910, the \textit{Weekly} affirmed that Chesterton’s ‘philosophy’ was ‘as modern as this morning’ and as ‘factual as any court of law’. Chesterton claimed that ‘always sublime’ Woman held up civilisation with her ‘thrift’ and her ‘dignity’. Whilst he supported the suffragettes, he particularly adored women ‘of the home’, seeing men as clever ‘specialists’ who depended on their ‘wise’ domestic ‘Jills-of-all-trades’:

Women stand for the idea of sanity; the male mind that finds its way to wild places finds its return to normal in the home. A woman has her many parts to play. She must be an optimist to a pessimistic husband and a pessimist to a happy-go-lucky spouse. She has to prevent the Quixote from being put on and the bully from putting upon others.

Chesterton’s description mirrored the female role described by the ‘Wedding Day’ cover’s poem, which cast Woman as the supporter of Man on his life’s journey. Chesterton emphasised that being ‘everything to someone’ was not ‘narrow’, and that housewives’ ‘function’ was ‘laborious’ because it was ‘gigantic’. Chesterton thus acknowledged the smallness and drudgery of Woman’s domestic world – which Bergmann attacked – but only in order to glorify it. Having thus put domesticity on a pedestal, Chesterton considered the career women, asserting:

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{58} ‘Women – Always Sublime’, \textit{Weekly}, p.10.
\end{footnotes}
Women defend their office with all the fierceness of domesticity. They fight for desk and typewriter as for hearth and home, and develop a sort of wolfish wifehood on behalf of the invisible head of the firm.\textsuperscript{59}

Though Chesterton clearly admired the office-woman’s dedication, he reinforced Liddicott and others’ belief that career women were always driven by an inferiority complex born from their unfulfilled, instinctual need for domesticity. Finally, Chesterton proclaimed that the whole world was ‘under petticoat government’, for ‘even men wear petticoats when they wish to govern’. Though tongue-in-cheek, this comment asserted the idea that the world was – despite appearances – ruled by women.

Many articles reinforced this idea of women’s ‘invisible’, but world-shaping, domestic power. One editorial claimed that Queens Victoria, Alexandra and Mary ‘ruled the private lives of Britons’ as surely as their Kings ruled the nation,\textsuperscript{60} proclaiming that Edward’s mother would continue to ‘wield’ Woman’s influence over the ‘bachelor king’. Another article proclaimed women were ‘Powers Behind the Throne’, and presented readers with non-royal ‘Makers of History’ who had sacrificed themselves ‘and their personal pleasures’ for their husband’s political work.\textsuperscript{61} This article reinforced the ‘Wedding Day’ cover’s implication that married women’s lives served their husband’s, and presented one politician’s wife as a ‘buffer’ protecting him from ‘tiresome, small duties and worries’, as the keeper of his ‘creature comforts’ and as ‘his constant companion’. Anthony Eden’s wife agreed with him: ‘in his hours of leisure’ he needed ‘the peace of a well-ordered household’, for this was ‘absolutely essential’ to a man facing ‘all the vagaries and strife of foreign politics.’ Whilst this article complained that History focused on men, its apparent call to rectify this was neutered by its glorification of these wives ‘unobtrusive’ and ‘noble’ background role.\textsuperscript{62} Jeanette MacMahon also found, in Hollywood, evidence that successful marriage depended on one partner

\textsuperscript{59} ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} ‘Women and the Throne’, \textit{Weekly}, 1 February, 1936, p.10.
\textsuperscript{61} M St Claire, ‘Women who are Makers of History’, 25 January, 1936, p.2.
\textsuperscript{62} Leslie Haylen also drew readers’ attention to ‘the unrecorded history of the depression’ where ‘many an epic of an heroic’ woman’s story lay. ‘POV’, \textit{Weekly}, 23 May, 1936, p.10. See also Spanish Ambassador Don Calvo’s lamentation of the death of the Spanish senorita who had traditionally been ‘the magnificent power behind the scenes’, in M St Claire, ‘Bachelor Girls of Spain Go to War!’, \textit{Weekly}, 1 August, 1936, p.12. See ‘Appendix Five’ for a discussion of how Spanish women were seen to be morphing from cloistered senoritas into awesome Amazonian warriors.
suppressing their ambitions for the other’s.\(^63\) Though the *Weekly* generally upheld this idea that women were ‘The Power Behind the Throne’, it could protest against it, as when it reported women activists’ resentment at Governments only giving women ‘futile frilly jobs’;\(^64\) or when it attacked the Commonwealth Government’s ‘irrational prejudice’, ‘sex hatred’ and ‘male dominance’ that saw it bar women from consular and diplomatic employment.\(^65\)

Whether domesticity was woman’s ‘greatest’ occupation clearly interested the *Weekly*’s reader-writers. Some reinforced Chesterton’s idea that housewifery was a ‘world’-sized job. One noted that ‘economics’ was derived from the Greek word for ‘housekeeping’, and argued that ‘governing a nation’ was ‘the same job’ (if on a ‘larger scale’) as running a home. This reader noted that, as women must ‘wisely’ spend her husband’s income, and provide for her children’s ‘mental, physical and spiritual welfare’, hers was ‘THE most important job in the world!’\(^66\) For such writers, the weight of the world literally rested on women’s shoulders, and the *Weekly* upheld this letter’s attitudes when it published readers’ much more varied replies under the title: ‘Finest Job in the World – Housekeeping!’\(^67\)

Susan, you are a wife, but unlike your mother and Margery, you didn’t really choose to marry Bret: you married him ‘for the baby’s sake’.\(^68\) When you were pregnant at Coolami, you had nothing to do: the servants wouldn’t let you run the house, You thus lived at Coolami as neither family, wife, friend nor guest.\(^69\) (Is a wife’s job a servant’s?) Less than the ‘power behind Bret’s throne’, you’ve been a spanner in his works. The ‘power’ you exert lies in your psychological impact on him, but this impact depends on Bret’s reactions to you. Though you recognise some power in your withholding of your body from him, you know this power also depends on Bret’s reactions, on his capacity for ‘self-denial’.\(^70\) Your ‘power’ Susan, is thus wholly granted or denied by Bret. We never

\(^{64}\) ‘POV’, *Weekly*, 26 September, 1936, p.12.
\(^{65}\) ‘Women and Diplomacy’, *Weekly*, p.12
\(^{68}\) C, p.50.
\(^{69}\) C, p.29.
\(^{70}\) C, p.88.
get to see what sort of power you have in your marriage-of-love to Bret, for the moment Coolami ends, Susan, is the moment you step up to his throne.

Margery, it’s you whom Millicent thinks of with ‘hope and confidence’ when she worries about Colin. You fight with him, lie for him, and care for his home and child and family. Though he has a reputation as a ‘drunken swine’ who’s destroying the land, though you are aching with weary, tragic loneliness, and though your loyalty for him is ‘half-nauseated’, you still defend him, your ‘difficult husband’ who yet remains your ‘lover’. When he finally comes home, your ‘lost youth’ returns and everyone carries on, as if ‘nothing’ has happened. You are the means through which Colin survives his mind, his family, his social world. Does he recognise you as the power behind his throne? He’s annoyed at his parents for their ‘darned propriety’, for not recognising that, from the moment he ‘took a wife and begot a child’ he’d ‘ceased to be part of their microcosmic existence’. ‘Took’ a wife and ‘begot’ a child? Pregnant Margery, what would you make of this description? Would you mind how he lumps you with everyone else who’s failed him, how he interprets your anger as your forgetting that, whilst his drunkenness means failure, his soberness means triumph? He thinks no one knows ‘how precious a weapon’ his self-respect is to him, how nothing sustains him sometimes but his own convictions’. Nothing? If you are the power behind Colin’s throne – and we can see that you are, Margery – Colin himself gives you no credit.

And Millicent? Like the bride on the Weekly’s ‘Wedding Day’ cover you seem to have accepted that your marriage is about supporting Drew on his life’s journey. He accepts this too, recognising that you forsook the countryside ‘to share his climb with him’. By the end of Coolami, he’s ‘ready to begin living... ready to play’. He assumes you will follow. Throughout your marriage, you never openly questioned Tom’s

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71 C, p.84.
72 C, pp.97,109,48.
73 C, p.97.
74 C, pp.107, 147.
75 C, p.103.
76 C, p.107.
77 C, p.166.
78 C, p.168.
79 C, p.168.
80 C, p.168.
81 C, p.145.
82 C, p.146.
materialism and you hid your country yearnings: you didn’t want to undermine his
‘endearing’ arrogance, ‘so like the arrogance of a little boy with more marbles than his
schoolmates!’ You wanted to protect his ‘hearty confidence’ and ‘dominance’.83 Tom is
both ‘dominant’ and a little boy? And Margery, you call men the ‘irresponsible child-
mates’ of women.84 Your ‘power’ over each of your husbands’ lives seems just like a
mother’s over a child: you both sacrifice your needs for theirs; you humour and
discipline them and you protect them from themselves and the world. Your husbands’
love also seems like that of a child’s for a mother, namely one defined by a seldom
acknowledged, but complete, dependence. Millicent and Margery, you are both powers
behind your husbands’ thrones because they are powerless in the world without you.
Your power is thus psychological, and is enacted through your actual passivity (for you
are both waiting for them to become better men) and your actively strategic, apparent
’submission’ to them.

Thea, the context in which you are forced to confront the fact of Alice is curious.
When you, Terry, John and Eve first enter the graduate ball, Terry proclaims: ‘All the
world seems to be here – plus wives and concubines’.85 You giggle! Can’t you listen to
Terry for once? He’s no fool: he sees, if you cannot, the toxic dynamic of this class of
people. Is it funny to think that Glover is The World, whilst you’re merely his concubine?
You wander around, enjoying Terry’s insolence, until you are struck dumb by the sudden
appearance of Glover and Alice. She is dressed in black velvet, and has a ‘brilliant, hawk
like face’, ‘glorious snowy hair’, ‘magnificent shoulders’, and a ‘slow, swaying grace’.86
She seems to ‘dominate’ their group. (There’s that word again. Does Alice ‘dominate’
Glover, the man who impregnates you while she’s away?) Alice radiates power: Glover
stands ‘in a magic circle’ with her.87 You realise there is more in her ‘quiet possessive
hand’ than in any of your ‘wildest caresses’, and you crumble as Glover dismisses you
from his life with a ‘rare’ smile of ‘exquisite courtesy’.88 What would you think if you
heard his thoughts at this point, Thea? Perhaps, if you’d read Chesterton, you’d

83 C, p.86.
84 C, p.125.
86 J, pp.154,156.
87 J, p.155.
88 J, p.155.
understand that men need women ‘of the home’ to keep them sane and normal, for Glover thinks this too: it’s Alice’s fault he strayed, because her absence left him ‘lonely’.  

He usually ‘deplores’ such ‘entanglements’, but your affair has been an ‘amazingly delightful interlude’ that has even proven ‘valuable’ for his writing. Now that Alice is home ‘to attend to his creature comforts’, he’s back on track. Alice is the power behind his throne. You’ve learnt, Thea, that the power of Love is never enough: in your world, a ‘married couple’ is a very powerful thing; the identity and status of a wife and husband is public, recognised, respected, protected.

Oswald, you recall your ex-wife as an ‘acid’, ‘incalculable’, ‘caustic’ and bewitching91 female who, like most women, had ‘no sense of any issue other than personal ones’. She was never a power propelling you on your life’s journey. In fact, you seem affronted that she had desires other than being left at home alone whilst you spent years exploring. You recall how you always felt ‘flicked on the raw’ at her ‘amused tolerance’ of your ‘queer’ ideas and her complaints that you never made money.92 Poppy’s dancing (‘Being! Pure exquisite being’93) recalls the ‘reality’ you expected to find in your wife, something ‘austere, virginal and remote... a gleam of radiance’.94 Does this describe wife as companion, or wife as object? How, exactly, was she meant to ‘be’ a ‘gleam of radiance’? Your only regret about your divorce, Oswald, lies in losing ‘a home to return to’.95 Was your wife, then, a ‘home’, a context within which you were meant to live out your life? You see your ex-wife’s power as a black one: she was a witch with the power to undermine, ridicule, tempt and torment; the power to dissolve marriage itself.

We see nothing: it is hard to imagine a woman without name or face or voice.

Reality Check: Married Life is ‘Humdrum’

Many of the paper’s readers did not see housewifery as glorious. When the Weekly’s humourist, L.W. Lower, attacked the notion that women at home were ‘unemployed’, he

89 J, p.162.
90 J, pp.158,159.
91 J, pp.91,92, 110, 101.
92 J, p.92.
93 J, p.95.
94 J, p.95.
95 J, p.94.
emphasised just how over-employed and unappreciated housewives were, as well as starved of time, interests, energy and self-esteem.96 Many letters reinforced this negative view, with Mr Johnson emphasising the ‘dreary monotony of the manifold duties and anxieties of the average wife and mother’.97 He wondered why his fellow-men called him ‘henpecked’ whenever he helped his wife. Clearly, wider cultural attitudes policed both genders’ roles. Many women agreed that men didn’t appreciate what an ‘all-time job’ the ‘dual role’ of wife and mother was,98 or claimed that, when women exaggerated their hardships or modelled ‘self-effacing’ behaviour, they encouraged men to think they were ‘the superior sex’. Some readers thought men merely forgot to express their appreciation, with Nan Child claiming that kind words helped women ‘endure the hardest and loneliest day’ and stopped the ‘weary round’ from being ‘monotonous and soul-destroying’. When one reader proclaimed it a privilege for the ‘weaker sex’ to clean a man’s shoes she was promptly told she was ‘foolish’: one ‘self-respecting male’ told her he’d rather clean his own.99 Another reader begged housewives not to overtax themselves, and wondered how the so-called ‘weaker sex’ did the work of an ‘Amazon’ everyday.100 When another reader mused on the ‘Pleasures of Washing Day’,101 others replied that such ‘exhausting’ and ‘routine tasks’ could ‘never give pleasure’, and that washing day was ‘a veritable nightmare’.102 Though the majority of readers damned washing day, the paper manipulated their debate by entitling it ‘Joy Can Be Found Even At the Wash-Tub’, and including a cartoon of a young woman cleaning and ‘Enjoying herself!’. When another reader asked why the ‘art of domesticity’ had become ‘the Cinderella of occupations’,103 no-one replied to her call for women to proclaim ‘I love housework!’

Other letters suggest a more general malaise plaguing Australian housewives in 1936. Miss Jayens advised women to create a routine so that ‘keeping to time’ with their

102 Multiple reader replies to Walton, ‘STS’, Weekly, 8 August, 1936, p.27.
chores would become ‘a sort of game’: this would help relieve their ‘tedium’. Mrs Symons lamented ‘modern’ life as ‘Humdrum’, lacking ‘colourful incident and adventure’. In multiple replies, that the paper accusingly entitled ‘If Life’s Humdrum It’s What You’ve Made It!’, women advised Symons to combat ‘drabness’ through imagination and cheerfulness, to seek out the adventure ‘Hidden below the suburban clothes of quiet lives’, and to ‘be contented’ with ‘ordinary everyday life’ because adventure ‘might bring sorrow and tears’. Only one woman agreed that ‘modern times’ were devoid of ‘thrilling adventure’. Similarly, when Miss McGahan asked ‘Has Anyone a Cure for the Blues?’, readers promptly told her to get some ‘self-control’, to buy something new, to stop thinking about herself, to do something for others, or to ‘find something to scrub’. One reader said McGahan’s depression meant she needed ‘self-expression and mental interest’. Another reader advised all married women to get a sense of humour that would stop them being ‘too serious’ and ‘humdrum’. (‘Girligags’ claimed that ‘the looks of most husbands’ suggested most married women did have a ‘wonderful’ sense of humour.)

The fact that the Weekly had a substantial ‘Home Maker’ section shows that the paper thought ‘housewives’ constituted a significant number of their readers. This supplement responded to the apparently widespread reality of housewifely dissatisfaction when it directed readers to ‘escape the humdrum’ by creating beauty ‘no matter the form’, for to do so ‘was to accomplish something worthwhile’ in life. It also told bored, tired, and ‘restless’ readers to make their lives fuller through hobbies. Another article simply assumed that unhappiness and marriage were synonymous, directing readers on ‘How To Be Happy Though Married’. Yet other articles presented housework’s drudgery and women’s beauty as mutually dependent, with the Osteopathic Society of Boston warning women that the only way to ‘obtain a perfect figure’ was by

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110 ‘Girligags’, Weekly, 24 October, 1936, p.34.
111 ‘Yet Another Way of Adding Beauty to Your Home!’, Weekly, 7 March, 1936, p.41.
‘going down on one’s hands and knees with a brush, soap, and pail, and scrubbing the floor’. Another article explained how to ‘Make Your Housework a Pleasure and Your Home a Slimmery’, and showed a woman doing housework in her underwear over captions that quoted ‘a doctor’ who believed ‘Housework keeps housewives fit.’ (Figure 96). Such articles suggested not that housework needed women but that women needed housework.

In Australia in 1936, many women were clearly struggling with married life’s ‘humdrumness’: even Eleanor Dark described life as ‘humdrum’. Just as clearly, the advice given to women who weren’t feeling as ‘sublime’ as Chesterton proclaimed they should, typically ignored the causes of their feelings, and instead directed them to change their bad attitudes or distract themselves with physical activities.

![Figure 96: Housework for slimming, as prescribed by ‘a doctor’](image)

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114 ‘Make Your Housework a Pleasure and Your Home a Slimmery’, *Weekly*, 3 October, 1936, p.4.
115 E Dark to Mr Sutherland (letter), MLMSS 4545/30.
Margery, you are the only ‘housewife’ in these two novels. Despite your maid, your life is ‘crammed’ with household ‘drudgeries’ and the ‘incessant’ attentions of Richard.\(^{116}\) You find some peace and satisfaction in your house being ‘swept and garnished’, but really it’s all part of a lie: housework is but daily toil; caring for Colin is the work that really corrodes you.

Susan, when you were pregnant, and the servants disallowed you your housewifely role, you were in limbo: neither Bret’s wife nor yourself. When Bret loves you, you look forward to returning to your ‘husband’s home’.\(^{117}\) You step out of your father’s car ‘gladly and confidently’, seeing Coolami as ‘a potential bringer and receiver of gifts’.\(^{118}\) There is no sense that ‘drudgery’ awaits you as the queen of Bret’s empire.

And Millicent? Tom made sure you had every ‘electric gadget’ and ‘comfort’ that money could buy.\(^{119}\) Your housewifely tedium, Millicent, was one born from an excess of comfort and a paucity of adventure.

Eve, Thea, Marc: the only ‘housewives’ in your world are the women in Eve’s labour wards: they say nothing; they are too busy giving birth, or dying.

Unlike many of its articles, the Weekly’s advertising never depicted housewifery as a glorious, world-saving pursuit. Instead, it plied housewives with products designed to combat the oldness, ugliness and unhappiness that housework exacerbated. Kathleen Court cosmetics promised to combat that ‘married look’ with ‘Facial youth’ cream and powder.\(^{120}\) Intestone promised to ‘Keep Wives as YOUNG as their HUSBANDS’.\(^{121}\) Wincarnis tonic was ‘the reliable friend of all housewives and mothers’ whose work was ‘heavy and exhausting’.\(^{122}\) Myzone quoted ‘Another irritable wife’, screaming: ‘Don’t Speak to Me!... I want to be alone!’\(^{123}\) Cleaning products fed women’s fears about their competence as wives. One Rinso ad showed a man scolding a tearful woman: ‘Half-
washed as usual! Other wives manage to get shirts white – not grey.124 (Figure 97) Another Rinso woman lamented to her sister: ‘I’ll never be a really capable wife’,125 whilst another struggled over her washing until her husband, who was reading the paper, showed her an ad for Rinso and freed her from her drudgery.126 One Persil ad told the story of Peg who had ‘gone off terribly’ since getting married (Figure 98).127 She explained to her friends, ‘I feel a hag beside you two girls. That’s marriage and washing-days for you’. A Persil ad showed a husband’s shock at his wife’s needing money to launder their clothes: an older woman tells the wife about Persil and the husband reappears with flowers for his ‘very good girl’.128 (The woman’s clothes change from chic and modern, to girlish and modest in this cartoon.) A Lux ad showed a ‘happy and self-confident’ man whose wife washed his underwear daily (Figure 99).129 A Mortein ad showed another man scolding his wife for losing their friends: ‘The flies in this place are terrible!... When WILL you spray with MORTEIN!!’ (Figure 100).130 These ads show how housewives were repeatedly – and acceptably – ‘surveilled’ and ‘disciplined’ by their husbands, family and female friends. Whilst the Weekly often glorified women’s ‘power behind the throne’, the industries that targeted its readers assumed that the only ‘throne’ involved in women’s daily lives was that of the family toilet.

Marc, when you visit Eve, you presume she’ll spray you with Mortein and have you carted off to the morgue.131 Mortein thus signifies something other than itself. It signals your essential difference: women like ‘antiseptic’.132 Eve see women like you as unclean, infested, even infective.

126 Rinso ad, Weekly, 7 November, 1936, p.16.
127 Persil ad, Weekly, 15 February, 1936, p.46.
128 Persil ad, Weekly, 21 November, 1936, p.32.
132 J, p.50
Figure 97: Another Rinso man berates grey-wash wife to tears
Figure 98: Lux, ‘Don’t let him risk a second day’s wear... keep him happy and self-confident’

Figure 99: Mortein man berates wife over friend-repelling, fly-filled home

Figure 100: Friends berate newlywed for letting washing make her hag-ridden. ‘Drudgery Dismissed’!
The paper’s articles, letters and advertising show how readers were simultaneously presented with the idea that marriage offered women a powerful, world-sized career and a humdrum life of drudgery. Whilst those outside of this role – like Eileen Joyce, Chesterton, or ‘Sir’ Mary Allen – most vehemently enforced domesticity, actual housewives often emphasised its hardships. The idea that a woman’s wedding day was the highlight of her life reinforced the then prevalent notion that marriage’s success depended on a woman sacrificing her own ambitions for her husband’s.

Millicent, what does marriage mean to you? Whilst yours seems synonymous with suburban housewifely boredom, it is never synonymous with domestic drudgery: you are rich. Instead, your ‘career’ is that of being a loving mother and an ostensibly submissive, loving and beloved wife. It’s when you muse on Susan’s marriage, however, that you tell us most about ‘what’ marriage should be: you are, after all, returning Susan to her husband. You wonder if you’d have ‘allowed’ her marriage if it weren’t for Tom’s ‘simple views’: Susan was ‘in trouble’; Bret was ‘making an honest woman out of her’, saving her and the baby from ‘disgrace’.133 Tom hadn’t worried about the ‘dark undercurrents’ beneath their calm, ‘rational discussion’.134 But you knew, Millicent, that a wedding doesn’t change people. You warned Tom marriage may mean ‘worse unhappiness’ for Susan. You warned Bret it was ‘a dangerous way out’: wouldn’t it be better the child was born to a ‘happy mother’ and brought up ‘in a harmonious home’?135 Bret thought this legally and socially ‘rough’ for the child.136 You were struck by his ‘magnificent’ unawareness of anything except ‘facts’, as if marriage was nothing other than ‘A wedding ring and a double bed’.137 It seems ironic to you now, that the baby whom everyone acted for, should ‘so casually’ disappear, leaving Bret and Susan ‘absurdly committed’ to a marriage whose ‘essential reason’ is gone. And now you see just how ‘terribly isolated’ Susan’s marriage has made her.138 You wonder, Millicent,

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133 C, p.69.
134 C, p.68.
135 C, p.71.
136 C, p.71.
137 C, p.71.
138 C, p.73.
what all of you are ‘doing to her’ by consenting to cast such a ‘charming veil of perfection’ over her ‘tragedy’. But how can you help? When Bret asks you what a good marriage is made of, you cannot explain ‘the ultimate mystery of the human race’. When you and Tom lie together in bed, we see what really binds you: a ‘strange elixir’ born from two lives being ‘beautifully and mysteriously’ united over time; two lives alleviating each other’s ‘spiritual solitude’. For you, Millicent, marriage has nothing to do with ‘careers’, or housework or Woman’s Right Sphere: marriage-as-love, and love-as-mystery, is life itself.

Bret, what does it mean that Susan confesses her love for you near a ‘passion-vine’ and a ‘chopping block’. After being with Jim, she perhaps knew best the danger of a marriage built on unequal love. Like Millicent, you recall the ‘business-like’ atmosphere of the registry office, as if you and Susan were signing a lease. On your honeymoon, you’d hoped companionship could take the place of love. Now, you realise Millicent was right: you can’t give marriage with one hand and ‘years of misery’ with the other. On that honeymoon, you’d noticed Susan trying to make herself ‘unalluring’. Since then, you’ve both become increasingly aware of the problem, as Tom puts it, of your husbandly ‘rights’. It’s a dangerously ‘unnatural’ mix, isn’t it? Susan’s love, your anger, and the fact you desire her ‘like hell’. You were both disturbed by your indifference to finding her kissing Ken. As Ken put it, he might as well have married her himself: he’s a ‘Maclean too’. You realised Ken was really saying: ‘If I had a wife I’d have a wife!’ You sometimes think your marriage just needs ‘the closed door’ between your rooms to be opened, allowing ‘a wholesome adjustment of natural, bodily needs!’ You recoil, just as you have each time you’ve almost forced yourself onto her.

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139 C, p.74.
140 C, p.84.
141 C, p.100.
142 C, pp.144,145.
143 C, p.91.
144 C, p.157.
146 C, p.93.
147 C, p.7.
148 C, p.90.
149 C, p.44.
150 C, p.98.
151 C, pp.57,58, 90.
Susan’s ‘absolute passivity’ had ‘chilled’ you then, as does her promise that there will be no more ‘scenes’: she’s decided she will ‘play-act’.152 You don’t want an unwilling, unhappy, driven wife ‘submitting because she must’!153 You want a willing wife, and Susan’s pregnancy also made you realise you want children.154 Coolami does mean, ‘birthplace of heroes’ doesn’t it? Is it heroic, now, for you to ‘take’ Susan, ‘leave her alone’, or ‘let her go’?155 Bret, your own marriage’s ‘meaning’ is unclear to you, and knowing that marriage gives you the ‘right’ to expect sex and children from Susan only confuses you further. As a ‘decent’156 man, you don’t demand anything from her: you are learning that the only marriage you want is one that begins and ends with mutual Love.

For you Susan, marriage is the conventional punishment for your unconventional behaviour: you chose your road; you’re paying your forfeit.157 When you told Bret you’d deliberately ‘vamped’ Ken into kissing you, his ‘indifference’ poisoned you, showing you ‘the essential ugliness’ of your ‘compact’.158 His resentment has left you in ‘utter solitude’.159 Why is he so offended that you propose play-acting? How else can a ‘marriage of convenience’ work? How else can you, having spent your life being ‘Susan Drew’, suddenly become ‘Susan Maclean of Coolami’? This ‘queer’ name makes you feel psychologically disoriented.160 You’re tripping on marriage’s enforced reconfiguration (or erasure?) of female identity: doesn’t Millicent refer to Bret’s mother only as ‘Bret’s mother’, whilst referring to his father as George Maclean?161 Such issues (never discussed in the Weekly) are not unique to your situation: you’re learning that marriage always ‘means’ something different to women than it does to men. You remember enjoying the pleasures of male attention, and you remember how those pleasures were always ruined by knowing that you ‘had to’ marry one of them some day. ‘Had’ to? How were you to choose without knowing what came after? Books taught you ‘facts’,162 but

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152 C, p.58.
153 C, p.79.
154 C, p.44.
155 C, p.134.
156 C, pp.72,113.
157 C, pp.30, 51.
158 C, p.183.
159 C, p.30.
160 C, pp.28,29.
161 C, p.37.
162 C, p.49.
facts aren’t ‘feelings’, and people’s promise that love ‘comes after marriage’ never helped: what if it didn’t? Quite frankly, you think girls are forced to buy ‘a pig in a poke’, which is ‘unreasonable’ seeing as women bear the ‘weight’ of matrimonial misery.¹⁶³ Susan, this belief in women’s inevitable, married misery derives from an assumption that you share with Bret: marriage ‘means’ children. You recall all the women you know whose motherhood has crippled or killed them.¹⁶⁴ (Strangely, you don’t relate to them through the birth and death of your own baby.) Even once Bret has fallen in love with you, you trip across another apparent universal: how can men and women’s minds create ‘nothing’ together, whilst their bodies and spirits and souls create children, and that ‘mysterious’ but ‘far from illusory power called love’? So this is what you have won Susan? This is what Coolami upholds: marriage-as-love, but also as intellectual solitude? Marc would be horrified: it is only because her and Oswald’s minds ‘dovetail’ that she sees a future with him.

Thea, marriage to Glover never occurs to you, though you often wonder if you should marry Terry: it would get you ‘away’ from the ‘torment’¹⁶⁵ of your affair. You too assume marriage means having children and you think being a mother would replace the ‘old dreary treadmill’ of your thoughts with quietness, if not happiness. Terry wants to marry you to protect you from whatever it is that is distressing you, plus, he knows you hate teaching and he finally has a decent job.¹⁶⁶ Terry has no problem seeing marriage to himself as an escape route for you. Eve wishes you would marry him too: marriage would give you ‘real problems’, and force you to face the ‘realities of life’.¹⁶⁷ Her labour ward teaches all of you what such ‘realities’ are: as in Susan’s world, marriage always includes the dangers of motherhood. And Marc? For you, marriage should mean ‘stepping into a wider freedom’. For you, there is only ‘one worthwhile relationship’, and that’s the ‘chosen companionship of two perfectly free people’.¹⁶⁸ Well, eloquent Marc, in exactly which world are people ever ‘perfectly free’?

¹⁶³ C, p.49.
¹⁶⁴ C, p.49.
¹⁶⁵ J, p.75.
¹⁶⁶ J, pp.157, 104.
¹⁶⁷ J, pp.22,17.
¹⁶⁸ J, p.133.
Modern Women are ‘the Divorcing Type’?

In 1936, divorce directly informed The Australian Women’s Weekly’s understanding of the New World and the New Woman. The paper was often ‘light hearted’ about divorce in its jokes and cartoons, where divorce was typically associated with ‘modern’ women’s flippancy, materialism, dominance and superficiality. In ‘The Movie World’, divorce was entertaining, merely part of Hollywood’s excesses, absurdities and dubious morality. Other international divorce ‘news’, however, was often reported from a curious position of ‘no comment’, as if the paper didn’t know what to make of Hitler’s ‘Compulsory Divorce’, or Frederico Paex’s ‘five-minute divorce mill’, or ‘postcard divorces’ on trial in Russia, or the denial of divorce for an American woman whose husband spanked her, or a Parisian’s attempt to divorce his wife for her vampish make up. In turn, the paper’s fiction was generally judgmental about divorce, with stories upholding ‘good marriage’ by emphasising divorce’s devastation on children (as in the British serial, ‘Nothing is Safe’), and by blaming divorce on women’s maternal or wifely failure. Finally, when it came to divorce ‘at home’, the paper was, like its fiction, much sterner.

In February, one article asked if Australian law would emulate England’s by banning ‘the mysterious “Mrs. X”’ as a co-respondent in divorce actions. (Apparently Mr X did not exist.) Citing an ‘Unknown Woman’ was blamed for making divorce too easy, and for ‘facilitating collusion’. The paper explained how, in Australia, ‘a petitioning wife’ could obtain a divorce by ‘proving misconduct with a woman unknown’. If the wife’s evidence suggested she was hiding Mrs X’s name, she was denied divorce until

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170 ‘Compulsory Divorce’, Weekly, 28 March, 1936, p.25. Such divorces could be imposed on criminals, those seen to be leading ‘an immoral life’, those who perpetuated ‘Communist propaganda’ and those whose marriage was seen as ‘devoid of all ethical purpose’.
173 ‘POV’, Weekly, 31 October, 1936, p.33
175 EM Delafield, ‘Nothing is safe’ (serial), Weekly, beginning 10 October, 1936, p.5.
176 See ‘Appendix Eight’ for a detailed discussion of Divorce in Hollywood, the paper’s fiction, and King Edward’s abdication.
her name was revealed. Then, the ‘other woman’, immune to punishment herself, could defend herself in court. The Weekly felt Mrs X should be banned if that reduced the divorce rate, noting its record increase of 24% in N.S.W. since 1928. Whilst judges wanted to make divorce harder, the Weekly quoted ‘new moralists’ who wanted more ‘freedom and sanity’ in regards to divorce, and less stigma and guilt. Though this idea of ‘guilt free’ divorce was clearly circulating at this time, most of the Weekly’s articles were determined to ‘blame’ someone for the growing trend. When the paper detailed the ‘Legal Torture’178 of Australian divorce courts, it focused on women, noting how female pride saw many women wear ‘startling clothes’ and use ‘extra make-up’ as an ‘unspoken challenge’ to the husbands who had ‘lost interest in them’. This article damned divorces that aired family secrets, turned children into ‘mere items of property’, and lamented those which saw old men abandon old women for younger ones. This article was one of the few that implicated male infidelity in the divorce problem, but when it also applauded the ‘nobility’, ‘courage’ and ‘self-sacrifice’ of women who divorced their husbands because they had failed as wives, this article blamed male philandering on wifely inadequacy. One solicitor blamed divorce on women’s financial autonomy, arguing that ‘the happiest marriages’ were those where money played ‘no part’: apparently female economic dependence fitted this.179 Women were ‘blamed’ for divorce in an article entitled: ‘Health and Divorce are Controlled from Kitchen’,180 where a Nobel Prize winning scientist said women should complete ‘a cookery diploma before marriage’, for they were paying too much attention to vitamins and not enough to ‘well-balanced, beautifully-cooked meals’. This man – who discovered vitamin B – thought such a Diploma would halve divorces whilst increasing ‘the health of the nation’ by 25%. One editorial suggested that, seeing as the divorce rate and marrying age had increased simultaneously, people were marrying so late that their personalities were too ‘fixed’ to be compatible.181 In this article, the paper simply dismissed the ‘official’ reasons behind divorce – of ‘infidelity, gross cruelty, or desertion’ – as being ‘white lies’ that shielded

‘mutual incompatibility’. The *Weekly* assured readers that such ‘incompatibility’ was not ‘incurable’, for ‘bad’ husbands and wives were merely ‘incompatible’ with ‘their social, economic’, and ‘mental’ environment. Another article linked happy marriages to ‘romance’ and blamed individual selfishness and ‘careless’ attitudes for ‘modern’ marriages’ failure. Meanwhile, one reader claimed constant ‘talk’ about marital unhappiness encouraged enmity between men and women.

The paper noted how, whilst countries like Germany and Italy were ‘removing all possible obstacles’ to marriage, Adelaide had not only instituted a law that forced couples to wait ten days, but had appointed Brigadier-General J. Price Weir as the state’s first Honorary Marriage Conciliator. Weir’s job was to reunite married couples before they made it to the Divorce Court. Seventy-year-old Weir – armed with the ‘weapons of charm, public experience, and common sense’ – promised there would be ‘no legal tinge’ to his private meetings. Notably, this introductory article was illustrated with a photo of a stylish young woman over a caption that read:

> A FANTASTIC marriage problem that Australia’s new “trouble-fixer” is hardly likely to encounter here. This is Georgiana Cusachs Harp, whose marriage was recently annulled in America. Now she says, “I’ll never marry again unless the man settles a million dollars on me first and promises to set me free after six months if I want him to. I wouldn’t dare try it otherwise.”

Harp’s image (Figure 101), juxtaposed against this article, and considered in relation to the photo that appeared one week later of ‘trouble-fixer’ Weir in full military garb (Figure 102), suggest the oppositions that the *Weekly’s* reportage on divorce perpetuated: man versus woman; young versus old; modern versus traditional; Australia versus America; disciplined versus self-indulgent; social responsibility (see Weir’s chest medals) versus individual ‘freedom’. Though Weir himself blamed unemployment for the divorce rate, the positioning of Harp’s image against the news of his appointment implicated a certain ‘type’ of woman in the divorce problem that seemed to resonate with the vow-shunning,
money-grabbing, decadent and exploitative type whom ‘Sir’ Mary Allen had ‘the utmost contempt for’. 188

Figure 101: American divorcee, Georgiana Cusachs Harp
Figure 102: Adelaide’s divorce conciliator, Brigadier-General J. Price Weir

The paper’s reportage on ‘The Strange Case of Mrs Freer’ 189 reveals the very real stigma surrounding divorce in Australia in 1936. Freer, an Englishwoman, was ‘prohibited’ from entering Australia by government officials who threatened to submit her to the ‘usual dictation test’ if she tried. Freer was eventually welcomed in New Zealand, despite their harsher immigration laws. Freer, a mother of two, was told she had been barred for reasons ‘best known to herself’. She assumed Australian authorities were referring to her ‘private domestic affairs’, which included divorce proceedings in England. The paper published a ‘Legal Comment’, from a ‘Lawyer’, that described the Government’s secrecy over Freer as ‘ever repellent to the sense of British justice’, proclaimed its use of the dictation test as political and thus ‘arbitrary’, and asked why an English citizen had been denied her right to move ‘freely’ around the Commonwealth. This article referred to an unnamed ‘second party’, whose ‘personal affairs’ were also being presented to the Government. One week later, Freer reappeared, protesting against the Minister for the Interior, Mr Paterson, who had barred her because she was ‘an undesirable character’ and he wished ‘to prevent the breaking up of an Australian

188 St Claire, ‘Her Job To Discipline Women’, Weekly, p.3.
home’. Freer accused Paterson of libel. The Weekly went on to convey the ‘facts’ of Freer’s case indirectly, noting that a Lieutenant Dewar (whom Mrs Dewar claimed had been happily married for three years) had met Mrs Freer in India. Six weeks before his return, Mrs Dewar received a letter from her husband: ‘I couldn’t believe it’, she said. ‘What’ Mrs Dewar couldn’t believe always remained unstated, and this moment in her interview was conveniently interrupted by the entrance of her toddler. Mrs Dewar claimed she was doing ‘what any woman would do’ by ‘fighting’ for her home, child, and future: she would not be ‘driven into the position of getting a divorce’. In all of these articles, Mrs Freer’s ‘crime’ was only alluded to: presumably, she and Lieutenant Dewar had had an affair, resulting in the latter wanting a divorce. Though the Lieutenant was the one who had done the ‘cheating’ – for Freer was already getting a divorce when they met – all of the reportage focused on Mrs Dewar and Mrs Freer, just as the paper’s divorce-court articles had focused on the ‘wife’ and ‘Mrs X’.

Whilst such articles indirectly encouraged readers to place women at the centre of the modern divorce problem, one article explicitly ‘blamed’ women for divorce’s ‘growth’. This article appeared in the paper’s prime ‘news’ pages, and was dominated by a striking, full colour illustration of a woman on a phone: her leisurely recline, stylish clothes, cigarette, red lips, driving gloves, and apparent wealth all announced her as a modern ‘type’ of woman who was ‘Certain to be Divorced!’ (Figure 103). A sub heading noted how ‘Lawyers, Doctors and Clergymen’ knew how to classify this ‘Type’, whilst a framed section of text proclaimed that the ‘Three Golden Rules for Happiness’ were: ‘Have at least one child. Run the home efficiently. Do not boss or nag’. Readers thus didn’t even need to read this article to know that, according to authoritative men, modern women’s failed maternity and housewifery were wholly responsible for divorce.

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190 ‘Mrs. Freer States Her Own Case’, Weekly, 21 November, 1936, p.2.
192 ‘She’s Certain To Be Divorced!’, Weekly, 5 December, 1936, p.3.
193 See also: CRL Davies, New Women, New Culture: The Women’s Weekly and Hollywood in Australia in the early 1930s (PhD Thesis), Griffith University, 1998, p. 161. Davies discusses the striking similarity between this image and another, in the Weekly, where a stylish young woman sits in exactly the same manner but is knitting. This similarity points to the paper’s ambivalence towards the modern woman, seeing her as both attractive and a threat to Woman’s traditional role. Davies sees the divorcing woman’s cigarette and telephone as ‘possibly negative markers of modernity’. 
This article defined the ‘divorcing type’ as childless, aged between thirty and forty, self-described as ‘modern’, fond of ‘outside entertainment’, and not fond of ‘home life’ or ‘quiet pursuits’ like reading, sewing and bridge. Clearly, this divorcing type was a woman (were men expected to like sewing and bridge?). The article noted how, since 1880, the annual number of divorces and judicial separations in Australia had risen from 29 to 2000 (one in twenty-five marriages), with N.S.W. having ‘the highest ratio in the Commonwealth’ of one divorce per twenty marriages. The article’s ‘experts’ listed those professions that produced the most divorces, with the services (Army, Navy, Air Force) producing ‘Girl Bigamists’, whilst seafarers, artists and commercial travellers regularly formed ‘friendships’ that resulted in ‘domestic unhappiness’. Doctors and clergymen seldom divorced, because the ‘scandal’ would ruin their careers. One ‘eminent’ scholar concluded that ‘Lack of occupation’ was ‘the father of divorce’, whilst another blamed the overcrowding for poor people’s high divorce rate. One lawyer proclaimed that 90 per cent of divorce cases resulted from ‘girls’ not being ‘taught how to make the home attractive to their husbands.’ This meant husbands soon wished to ‘go anywhere’ rather than home. This lawyer felt – as did many writers on women’s education – that girls should be taught ‘how to look after the home and make it attractive to a husband’, for this
meant much ‘more to the nation’. Once again, undomesticated and over-educated women were seen not only as a threat to marriage, but to the Nation itself. The article quoted a divorce judge who said a ‘good wife’ was ‘gentle and unaggressive’, liked company, hadn’t ‘much faith in herself’, loved ‘children and household pursuits’ and had ‘just enough brains’ to be an ‘attractive’ and ‘amusing’ companion. A ‘good husband’ was ‘even-tempered and humorous’, didn’t ‘mind being told what to do’, was ‘cautious and well-insured’ and ‘not very passionate in any direction’. These docile men and woman also had to be ‘healthy and energetic’. Whilst even the paper thought ‘good wives and husbands’ sounded pretty ‘dull’, one reader affirmed the judge’s perception by noting that, if men did indulge their ‘spirit of adventure’ they usually ended up divorced. One solicitor blamed the divorce rate on the disappearance of the pre-war ‘social ostracism’ of divorcees: he complained that divorce had, in fact, become fashionable. This solicitor concluded that women were ‘more to blame’ for divorce and said henpecked husbands had a ‘right’ to escape. The article ended by noting that male divorcees were more inclined to remarry: only 145 brides were divorcees in 1934, compared to 1007 grooms. Perhaps this was a coded warning to women readers.

If divorce was ‘okay’ in Hollywood, but serious business ‘at home’, what did it mean when the King of the British Empire abdicated the throne in order to marry twice-divorced American, Mrs Wallace Simpson? The Weekly had tracked the Bachelor King’s movements all year, and he appeared on its cover in February. He was presented as a man who stood for ‘the modern hope of humanity – a planned world’, whose ‘ultra-modern’ example and ‘revolutionary’ influence would affect everything from Commonwealth industry and social relations, to men’s fashion. Whilst the paper seemed even more excited about Edward’s bachelor status than that of Hollywood stars, it was at pains to associate him with stability, continuity and Family, assuring readers he

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195 See ‘Appendix Eight’ for a detailed discussion of the paper’s treatment of this event.
197 ‘We Enter the Era’, Weekly, p.5.
would maintain the domestic ideals of his father, even as it reported that he had never wanted the throne and was determined not to be ‘bossed by a woman’.  

Throughout the year, the paper monitored Edward’s relationship with Mrs Simpson, including the news that Simpson’s ‘undefended’ divorce case had stirred the world’s interest. The paper did not comment on this, other than to encourage readers to consider the news in relation to Simpson’s ‘charm’ and her ‘friendship’ with Edward. The paper said little about the couple until a stunning, eight page ‘Royal Supplement’ appeared in December enacting a post-mortem on the King’s abdication. This supplement defined the crisis as a conflict between the private and the public, literally opposing ‘The King and His Friends’ against ‘The Church and the State’ in a photospread. The paper solemnly outlined the legal and religious issues involved in the King’s case, including the Church’s right to exclude divorcees from Communion, a ritual which was key to the Coronation ceremony. This supplement portrayed Simpson as both a benign ‘Beautiful Friend of Royalty’, who seemed a passive object of Edward’s affections, and as a woman of ‘different personalities and moods’, who was ‘responsible for the gravest constitutional crisis in the recent history of the British Empire’ (Figures 104-106). Despite their scandalous choices, the paper never presented Edward or Simpson negatively. Instead, in an editorial entitled ‘Royalty and Romance’, the paper ignored the complexity and controversy of the abdication by transforming Edward from a modern bachelor king into a safely ahistorical, universal, chivalrous hero. When the paper emphasised that chivalry was something that transformed ‘gross passion’ into ‘a more spiritual emotion’ it neutered the controversial reality of adultery. When the paper defined chivalry as involving ‘devotion, service,

200 M St Claire, ‘King’s Happy Time on Informal Holiday’, Weekly, 12 September, 1936, p.2; See photo and caption, Weekly, 7 November, 1936, p.2.
201 The significance of this event seems suggested by this supplement’s absence from the State Library of Victoria’s archives: Who stole it? When? Why?
202 ‘The King and His Friends – The Church and the State’, Weekly (Sydney edn), 12 December, 1936, pp.2,3 of ‘Royal Supplement’.
204 ‘The Church and the Constitution’, Weekly, (Syd. Edn), 12 December, 1936, p.6 of ‘Royal Supplement’.
personal loyalty and readiness to fight against all odds’, it transferred these qualities from
its story of ‘The Modern Bachelor King’ into a new narrative of ‘Edward the Romantic’. Clearly, the paper was not ready to present Edward’s impending marriage to an American divorcee as further proof of his revolutionary, reforming and open-minded modernity. Instead, the paper openly sympathised with the ‘many citizens’ who would trip on the ‘stumbling-block’ of Simpson’s divorcee status, and named this objection as one ‘founded on honest conviction and based on religious teaching.’ The paper thus managed to simultaneously glorify Romantic Love in a cynical modern world, and the traditional institutions upon which that world was built.

![Figure 104: Mrs Simpson, ‘the central figure in the Royal crisis’](image)
The *Weekly* both assumed and cultivated reader interest in divorce. Much material explicitly or implicitly blamed divorce on ‘modern’ women’s selfishness, ambition, or inadequate housewifery. Men’s contribution to marital unhappiness was generally ignored or constructed as being of a passive, even victim-like nature. The fact that the Australian government attempted to stop a divorce in Australia by refusing entry to British divorcee, Mrs Freer, says everything about the ‘moral climate’ surrounding divorce at this time. Public outrage at Freer’s treatment, and the paper’s radical reformulation of Edward from a Modern Bachelor King into a Chivalrous Knight, hints that this moral climate was changing. However, the *Weekly*’s repeated endorsement of Adelaide’s Conciliation experiment, and its fictions’ attack on divorce and the ‘divorcing type’ of woman, ultimately show that, in Australia in 1936, divorce was still a socially, morally, and religiously suspect choice for the ordinary person to make.

*Whilst the central theme of your story might be Love, Susan, your story’s plot hinges on the question of divorce: its possibility is both Coolami’s immediate conflict, and a major source of its narrative tension. Though a portrait of you – you vain flapper – could easily illustrate the Weekly’s damning article ‘She’s certain to be divorced’, divorce does not seem so controversial in your world. Bret realises it might just be ‘a*
veritable deliverance’ for you.\textsuperscript{208} He sees ‘nothing against it’, and wonders why he didn’t offer to ‘free’ you ‘legally’ when you’d first come out of hospital: by then, the baby’s death had already ‘morally released’ you from your ‘obligation’. Bret also realises divorce will free you from the ‘violence’\textsuperscript{209} of his lust and loathing. In Bret’s mind, morality is not to do with divorce or the ‘sanctity of marriage’, but the welfare of a child and, after that, the welfare of adult individuals. If you want a divorce, Susan, Bret thinks you must have it.\textsuperscript{210} When he offers you this, you’re neither shocked nor shamed, Susan: losing Bret and Coolami saddens you, but divorce seems ‘the only decent way out’;\textsuperscript{211} and ‘the best thing to do’.\textsuperscript{212} You don’t want your marriage to deprive Bret of ‘the chance to love another. In these ways, divorce becomes, in Coolami, a potential means of doing the ‘right’ thing. When it comes down to it, however, both of you use the possibility of divorce as a symbolical weapon in your ongoing rhetorical war. Bret realises that, despite his misery, you’ve ground into the ‘pattern of his life’: he tells you he doesn’t want a divorce because he likes you and wants children.\textsuperscript{213} He thinks these ‘adequate’ and ‘sound’ reasons. You dismiss his reasoning as ‘Very rational indeed’. You aren’t rational: divorce won’t ‘free’ you from loving him, or from being unloved.\textsuperscript{214} For you and Bret, Susan, divorce is a morally valid option in the face of lovelessness, misery and sexual vulnerability. Lucky for you, Susan, Love conquers all.

Glover, would you get divorced to be with Thea? The thought crosses neither of your minds. And Oswald? You are the only divorcee in these two stories. There is no shame in your situation: you ask Marc what she knows of your marriage; she knows only that it wasn’t a ‘success’.\textsuperscript{215} You explain that its failure was much your ‘fault’ as your wife’s: you were ‘interested in ‘being’; she wasn’t.\textsuperscript{216} You say you have nothing to reproach’ your wife with: she ‘merely acted according to her nature’.\textsuperscript{217} As when Mabel speaks of George’s ‘nice nature’, you seem to see your wife as some sort of simple

\textsuperscript{208} C, p.43.  
\textsuperscript{209} C, p.57.  
\textsuperscript{210} C, p.44.  
\textsuperscript{211} C, p.10.  
\textsuperscript{212} C, p.54.  
\textsuperscript{213} C, p.55.  
\textsuperscript{214} C, p.56.  
\textsuperscript{215} J, p.130.  
\textsuperscript{216} J, p.130.  
\textsuperscript{217} J, p.130.
animal. Despite what you tell Marc, we can see inside your head: we know you completely blame your wife for failing to be the ‘reality’ – the ‘gleam of radiance’ – you’d ‘hoped to find’ in her. How, exactly, is a woman meant to ‘be’ a ‘gleam of radiance’? How is a woman meant to ‘be’ anything married to a man who thinks ‘being’ is dependent on personal detachment? This is why Marc won’t marry you: she knows ‘being’ includes ‘being with’. Marriage meant prison for you, Oswald. Divorce meant freedom from your wife’s failures.

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218 J, p.95.
Chapter Seven:

“For Young Wives and Mothers”
Of the fifty-two covers printed in 1936, only two depict mothers, with another three referencing parenthood by depicting infants alone.¹ ‘Mother o’Mine’² (Figure 107) shows a woman who seems in complete control of her body, style, and individual identity: she asserts a definite – but joyful – physical distance between herself and her child. In ‘Mother’s Day’³ (Figure 108), the cover’s poem describes motherhood as sacrificial, and the image seems to emphasise this in how the mother’s body blurs into her children’s.

Despite their fundamental differences, both images idealise motherhood as a happy feminine state. Whilst previous chapters have shown how the paper generally presented marriage as woman’s natural, inevitable and ultimate ‘career’, the following uses the Weekly to speculate upon what motherhood ‘meant’ to Australian women in 1936.

_Thea, what does prospective motherhood mean to you? The thought of Glover’s child (you never see ‘it’ as your own) fills you with ‘horror’ and ‘hysterical terror’,⁴ less_
because of what it is, than what it represents: his unlove; his pity.\(^5\) Your skin creeps at the thought of having to ‘go through with it’.\(^6\) You feel ‘ungovernable rage’ and ‘a sense of violation’\(^7\) at the inevitable, irrevocable, ‘monstrous certainty’ of your condition.\(^8\) In your final hours, when you feel a ‘faint stirring’ within you, a ‘warm joy’\(^9\) overwhelms you, but only because that proof of life resolves you to die.

Like Thea, Susan, the child you carried was always Jim’s child,\(^10\) or ‘the’ baby.\(^11\) Only once do you call it your ‘own’.\(^12\) Curiously, it was Bret who understood what your pregnancy meant to you. He saw how the swift, lithe, gracefulness of your young, ‘slender body’ was ‘slowly and relentlessly obscured’ by your coming maternity.\(^13\) He felt ‘sick with pity’ and ‘compassion’ for your ‘ordeal’. How awful, he thought, to share your body with another life: mustn’t women thirst for physical, mental, and spiritual solitude whilst the ‘small parasite within’ drew life from them?\(^14\)

Margery, you wear your pregnancy wearily, though it never occurs to you to ‘question’ your ‘own health and child-bearing’.\(^15\) You don’t think yourself a ‘very maternal kind of person’: your pregnancy makes you ‘nervous and irritable’. You resent the ‘interloper’ that is ‘annexing something’ that is ‘sacredly’ your own. You want to be more ‘alone’ than is possible with the insistent and demanding life within you.\(^16\)

Thea, Susan, Margery: your pregnancies are negative experiences. Your unborn babies suck the life from you. Thea and Susan, your unwanted pregnancies always mean something other than themselves: Susan, yours means punishment deserved; Thea, yours means romantic love is ‘bunk’. For both of you, pregnancy means entrapment.

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\(^{5}\) J, pp.189,172.

\(^{6}\) J, pp.208, 195, 216.

\(^{7}\) J, p.190.


\(^{9}\) J, p.266.

\(^{10}\) C, pp.44, 66,67,89, 93.

\(^{11}\) C, pp.93,112, 5, 13, 18, 44, 50, 66.

\(^{12}\) C, p.109.

\(^{13}\) C, p.34.

\(^{14}\) C, p.34.

\(^{15}\) C, p.147, 109.

\(^{16}\) C, p.104. See also, N Moore: ‘The colonizing relation of foetus to woman in Return to Coolamboy’ uncannily parallels the nationalist project of the narrative, as the squatter family drive the new womanist heroine ‘home’ to the interior, to the bush’ which is ‘only apparently intact or unoccupied’ in ‘The Rational Natural: Conflicts of the Modern in Eleanor Dark’, Hecate, vol.27, no.1, 2001, p.22.
Truby King’s ‘Mothercraft’: A Question of Life and Death

The title of Mary Truby King’s weekly column, ‘For Young Wives and Mothers’, shows how marriage and motherhood were synonymous in Australia in 1936. Her father’s ‘world-famous baby-rearing system’ was wholly endorsed by the Weekly, which claimed his ‘blend’ of the ‘natural’ with ‘science and common sense’ produced ‘better babies’. Mary Truby King’s articles thus had everything to do with what ‘motherhood’ meant in the paper.

Truby King constantly emphasised that breast milk was the ‘best food in the world’ for babies. She said babies must be fed in a ‘restful, placid atmosphere’, for they needed ‘happy, placid milk’ and would not thrive on ‘worried milk’. She told the ‘nervous, anxious, fussy mother’ she was ‘asking for trouble’ and told such women to ‘take themselves in hand’. She lamented the number of babies weaned by six months, and claimed that ‘failure’ to breast-feed led to ‘pelvic congestion’, ‘displacements’ and ‘other disabilities’. She educated readers to the ‘universal truth’ that ‘complete fulfilment of the full cycle of motherhood’ (nine months pregnancy; nine months breast-feeding) ‘invariably’ strengthened a mother’s ‘nutrition and physical fitness’.

When Mary wasn’t lecturing readers about breast feeding, she was telling them off for smacking their babies, for being ‘pathetic’ and ‘weak’ for comforting crying babies, and even accusing them of ‘pure selfishness’ for having babies at all. Mary blamed epidemics on

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17 ‘Bonny “Quads” are Growing Up Without Fuss’ (photospread), Weekly, 11 July, 1936, p.17. See also, photo captioned as ‘Three Bonny Australians ... reared by the Truby King Method’, Weekly, 1 February, 1936, p.44.
22 ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.58.
24 ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 25 April, 1936, p.44.
26 ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 26 December, 1936, p.4 of ‘HM’.
mothers,\textsuperscript{29} damned their ‘slovenly habit’ of dummy use,\textsuperscript{30} and got stuck in to babies themselves: ‘baby should be trained to suck vigorously while feeding... Baby should be made to work for his living’.\textsuperscript{31} Such articles repeatedly revealed that ‘problem’ babies were merely symptoms of problem mothers.

Perhaps Truby King’s accusatory tone was primarily a reaction to the dangers of maternity in the mid-1930s, and one ad in the paper equated pregnancy with a woman’s descent into the ‘Valley of Death’.\textsuperscript{32} Maternity’s dangers were brought home to the paper when, in 1936, ‘Fashion Parade’ columnist, Jessie Tait, died – along with her baby – in childbirth.\textsuperscript{33} She was only in her twenties. Even Hollywood wasn’t immune to such dangers, with the paper reporting Jessie Matthews’ nervous breakdown upon the death of her newborn.\textsuperscript{34} Despite such tragedies, much of the paper’s reportage on maternal and infant mortality was positive. One article claimed that a child born in 1936 would live 15 years longer than one born 50 years prior.\textsuperscript{35} Another article noted that, for the first three months of 1936, Victoria recorded the second lowest infant mortality rate ever.\textsuperscript{36} ‘Experts’ credited this shift to pre-natal education and better hospital facilities, though other ‘authorities’ simply blamed N.S.W.’s ‘abnormal increase’ in baby deaths on ‘the inexplicable functioning of Nature’.\textsuperscript{37} Dr Isobel Younger Ross furiously replied that Nature was blamed too often ‘for a multitude of sins’.\textsuperscript{38} Ross ordered authorities to look for causes, herself suggesting the Depression. The paper also pressured the government to see that the £200,000 raised for maternal and infant welfare, via the King’s Jubilee fund, was ‘quickly applied to its purpose’.\textsuperscript{39} By August, the paper announced that the money would be used for research, and said this was ‘opportune’ considering that all Australian mothers,\textsuperscript{29} damned their ‘slovenly habit’ of dummy use,\textsuperscript{30} and got stuck in to babies themselves: ‘baby should be trained to suck vigorously while feeding... Baby should be made to work for his living’.\textsuperscript{31} Such articles repeatedly revealed that ‘problem’ babies were merely symptoms of problem mothers.

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\textsuperscript{29} ‘FYWM’, \textit{Weekly}, 15 February, 1936, p.50.
\textsuperscript{30} ‘FYWM’, \textit{Weekly}, 16 May, 1936, p.44.
\textsuperscript{33} ‘Women’s Weekly Mourns’, \textit{Weekly}, 5 December, 1936, p.11.
\textsuperscript{36} In 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, and 1936, 42, 40.43, 44.63, 41.17 and 37.48 babies died out of every 1000, respectively. ‘Victoria Wins in Fight Against Baby Deaths’, \textit{Weekly}, 18 July, 1936, p.52.
\textsuperscript{37} ‘Victoria Wins in Fight’, \textit{Weekly}, p.52 (my emphasis).
\textsuperscript{38} As Professor Winifred Cullis observed in another article: ‘It was not... mere chance that united low infant mortality to suffrage – the two went hand in hand’. ‘FYWM’, \textit{Weekly}, 3 October, 1936, p.52.
\textsuperscript{39} ‘Maternal Welfare... What of that £200,000?’, \textit{Weekly}, 14 March, 1936, p.2.
states had suddenly experienced an inexplicably ‘substantial increase in infant mortality’.  

Though the reasons for maternal and infant mortality weren’t clearly understood in Australia in the 1930s, Truby King blamed pre-natal causes, and found proof of this in the fact that ‘a great many’ of Australia’s ‘best immigrants’ died whilst less than one week old. Just as Truby King ordered schools to teach girls ‘Mothercraft’, she ordered pregnant women to attend pre-natal clinics fortnightly, told their husbands to enforce this, and blamed women’s inadequate pre and post-natal care for their babies’ death or damage. King promised women who submitted to medical supervision that they would have an ‘easy confinement’ and have ‘a happy, normal baby’. Another of Truby King’s articles used this idea of the ‘normal child’ to promote English-type nursery schools and kindergartens, and the spectre of the ill, dead or ‘abnormal’ baby was regularly used by her to coerce ‘good’ mothers to submit to both the ‘natural’ (like breast feeding and ‘airing’ babies in the sun) and the ‘scientific’ (like medically supervised, ‘scientifically sound’ pregnancies). Clearly, a prospective mother’s body and behaviour was, in 1936, increasingly the business of medical and educational ‘professionals’ who treated her as if she was, herself, a child.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{40}}\] ‘POV’, Weekly, 22 August, 1936, p.12. Sydney’s figures for July jumped to 41.47 deaths per 1000 babies born, with 32.3 deaths occurring for the same period in 1935.  
\[\text{\textsuperscript{41}}\] ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 29 August, 1936, p.44. The language in this article directly echoes that of the ‘Australia’s Best Immigrant’ ad which appeared in every issue of the Weekly, (E.g. 1 February, 1936, p.42.). This ad noted how in ‘many homes Baby does not appear, to the disappointment of husband and wife’, and offered a free book of ‘valuable information and advice’.  
\[\text{\textsuperscript{43}}\] ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 26 September, 1936, p.48.  
\[\text{\textsuperscript{44}}\] ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 11 July, 1936, p.44.  
\[\text{\textsuperscript{45}}\] ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 11 July, 1936, p.44. Truby King told readers, in this article, that a baby wakened outside of routine could be brain damaged: ‘too much handling is bad for baby’.  
\[\text{\textsuperscript{46}}\] ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 3 October, 1936, p.52. These crèches involved ‘organised play, in cleanly surroundings, with proper food given at regular hours’. The paper constantly referred to women who were campaigning for ‘Free Kindergartens’ all over the world. For examples, see ‘WWD’, Weekly, on: 8 August, 1936, p.37; 22 August, 1936, p.23; 3 October, 1936, p.25; 24 October, 1936, p.34; 21 November, 1936, p.32. See also Dale, ‘Doctor Sums Up’, Weekly, p.38.  
\[\text{\textsuperscript{47}}\] ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 4 April, 1936, p.50; ‘FYWM’, Weekly, 19 December, 1936, p.6 of ‘HM’.  
\[\text{\textsuperscript{48}}\] See, J McCalman, Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond, 1900-1965, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984, p.209, and the chapter ‘Young Marrieds’. McCalman discusses the strengths and weaknesses of Melbourne’s ‘Health Centres’ which, she states, ‘had become the mouthpieces of medical systematisers like Dr Truby King’, staffed by ‘nursing sisters addicted to bossiness and possessed by an unerring knack of making young mothers feel guilty’. Women often turned from these centres to the advice of their mothers for help, especially with breast feeding.
Eve, your work proves the fallacy of the belief that a woman is an ‘enigma’ whose only ‘solution’ is pregnancy.\textsuperscript{49} You’ve seen hundreds of happy women with adored babies,\textsuperscript{50} but you’ve also seen dozens destroyed by the ‘unassuageable torture’ of their bodies.\textsuperscript{51} Alongside her ninth baby, Mrs O’Brien wills herself to die. Another young woman, muting her agony, faces a ‘very bad delivery’.\textsuperscript{52} (Why, Eve, do you muse with satisfaction how she – like so many other ‘deucedly proud’ women – will inevitably be broken by labour?\textsuperscript{53} Is it because, unmarried, she has no right to pride at all?) Another woman has given birth to her seventh child: her previous two were ‘diseased’; this one is blind.\textsuperscript{54} Then there’s the Catholic woman with tuberculosis: even you think it ‘a crime’ she’s giving birth for the third time in four years,\textsuperscript{55} though you also think of her and her husband, ‘they knew what they were in for when they married’.\textsuperscript{56} Did they? Did Thea know what she was ‘getting into’ with Glover? Thea’s pregnancy, Eve, strips you of the ‘hard-won composure’\textsuperscript{57} that has thus far allowed you to do your job by letting you be ‘detached’, though not ‘callous’ or ‘indifferent’. Suddenly you are filled with a whole ‘new emotion’\textsuperscript{58} as you walk the wards. You ’shiver’ at the thought of your patients’ agonies – and deaths – being Thea’s.\textsuperscript{59} Their ‘unjust’ and endless suffering sickens you, just as it did when you first became a doctor. Thea’s pregnancy thus transforms your patients from objects-to-be-managed, into women whose hurt hurts you. But not for long. You remind yourself that the only way you can help anyone is by avoiding ‘incessant sentimentalising’.\textsuperscript{60} You refocus on the ‘facts’ and ‘practicalities’.\textsuperscript{61} Though Thea’s pregnancy momentarily rehumanises your patients, your professional experience allows you to dehumanise Thea, transforming her from being your closest friend into some
anonymous ‘woman’ who is ‘going to have a child under the worst possible circumstances’. 62

And Thea? How do Eve’s perceptions of you and your pregnancy affect you? When you realise she will not give you an abortion, she seems ‘suddenly terrifying’, ‘monstrous’. 63 How can she – who has neither had sex nor been pregnant – tell you that you don’t know what an abortion is? 64 Later, Eve will feel ‘stabbed’ by the memory of your anguished face: she will think, again, of how like a child you are, 65 and pray that you will have the ‘courage’ to ‘go through with it’ 66 to avoid further sin. And what about the other Doctor whose help you seek? To him, you are just another of the ‘young ladies’ he apparently likes to ‘help’. Help? Or ‘help himself’ to? You note the luxurious respectability of his suite, and are repelled by his business-like manner and amusement. 67 He tells you your ‘personal matter’ can be ‘easily fixed up’. When he stands, ready to examine you to ‘see just how things are’, he flippantly asks: ‘Been having a good time, eh?’ 68 You want to smash his face in. 69 You are enraged at the sordidness of your options: have you no ‘right’ to do what you want with your ‘own body’? 70 When you leave he thinks, with ‘ironical amusement’, that you will return: ‘They always come back’. 71 Just as Eve transforms you from being her friend into ‘a woman’ and ‘a child’, this doctor submerges you into the anonymous ‘they’ of ‘young ladies’. Both he and Eve know their power over you, and each talk down to you as if they know who you are, and what you need, better than you do yourself.

Susan, what are the realities of maternity in your world? Before you were pregnant you saw young, un-‘sickly’ women killed or crippled by motherhood. You accepted this as part of the ‘miseries’ of marriage. 72 Like Thea, Susan, you saw your

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62 J, p.178.
63 J, p.192,196.
64 J, p.194.
65 J, p.198, 201.
68 J, p.231.
69 J, p.232.
70 J, p.223.
71 J, p.232.
72 C, p 49.
pregnancy as your own problem. You assured Jim that it wasn’t his fault.\(^{73}\) Like Thea’s, your pregnancy meant that judgmental others gained power over your life. You went to see Margery’s brother, a doctor. Helpful, kind and ‘matter-of-fact’ he told you – as everyone else did – that you must marry for ‘the baby’s sake’.\(^{74}\) Your behaviour during pregnancy was also monitored by others: Bret approved of your careful pluckiness, your refusal to complain or ‘mollycoddle’ yourself and your refusal to use your ‘condition’ as a ‘weapon’ of attack or defence, or as ‘an excuse’ for bad behaviour.\(^{75}\) Even your reaction to your baby’s death is up for judgment. Though Bret thinks it reasonable that your ordeal left you physically and emotionally exhausted, your father thinks your ‘rest’ is rubbish: who needs four months ‘to get over a perfectly normal childbirth’? He thinks it ‘natural’ that you were ‘upset’ when ‘it’ died, but finds no ‘excuse’ for your ‘continued absence’ from Bret.\(^{76}\) Were Eve doctoring you, Susan, she’d have thought your baby’s death was ‘for the best’, and you say as much when, in response to Margery’s dismissal of its death as ‘Rotten luck’,\(^{77}\) you say ‘Maybe’. Like Thea’s, Susan, your pregnancy puts you at the mercy of a world who think’s it knows what’s best for you and your baby. Like Thea, Susan, this world is one where a baby’s death is accepted as unfortunate, but normal, natural, and practically unremarkable.

‘Love That Makes All Mothers Kin’\(^{78}\): Mother-Love versus Science

Truby King’s stance of maternal ‘surveillance’ was one encouraged more generally by the paper, as when it positioned readers as judgmental voyeurs of the lives of famous children and famous mothers. Reportage on Canada’s Dionne Quins visually and textually dominated the paper throughout 1936,\(^{79}\) and this reportage reveals the dubious forces which could influence the Weekly’s manipulation of its readers’ attitudes to very important topics. This was most evident when the paper ran a competition asking readers whether Mrs Dionne’s ‘Motherlove’ mattered more to the Quins’ than Dr Dafoe’s

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\(^{73}\) C, p.51.  
\(^{74}\) C, p.50.  
\(^{75}\) C, p.173.  
\(^{76}\) C, p.7.  
\(^{77}\) C, p.109.  
\(^{78}\) ‘Love That Makes All Mothers Kin’, Weekly, 13 June, 1936, p.2.  
\(^{79}\) See ‘Appendix Ten’ for a detailed discussion of the Dionne Quins.
‘unemotional but practical and scientific child-welfare’. Dafoe had helped deliver the Quins two years earlier, and he, along with the Quins’ father, the Canadian government and the King, was one of the toddlers’ guardians. The babies lived with Dafoe and his nurses in his hospital, where thousands of people travelled to watch the Quins play in their special enclosure. The competition was announced in the paper’s ‘Movie World’ supplement, in an article that included a photo of Jean Hersholt. This article appeared a number of pages after a large portrait of Shirley Temple. Hersholt was the actor who played Dafoe in the Quins’ soon-to-be-released film ‘The Country Doctor.’ The Quins’ competition was thus clearly the product of the Weekly’s commitment to positively promote both ‘A Country Doctor’ and the Shirley Temple ‘industry’ (the competitions’ entrants could win one of a hundred Shirley dolls). Though this competition was presented as a chance for readers to voice their own opinion about the value of Mrs Dionne’s ‘Motherlove,’ its promotion actively coerced readers to see her and her family as a direct threat to their welfare. Furthermore, the paper explicitly directed readers to treat ‘A Country Doctor’ as an unproblematic, documentary source of information on the Quins’ welfare.

In July, the paper announced that 16,217 out of 26,000 ‘Australian Mothers’ had decided that the Quins should stay with Dafoe, whilst 8,409 voted for Mrs Dionne and 2,182 were ‘Indefinite’. Even entrants who were horrified by Mrs Dionne’s literal and narrative obliteration from her children’s lives (Figure 109), or who saw the children’s status as being that of toys, or who felt that the real debate should be about ‘mother-love versus poverty’, ultimately submitted to Dr Dafoe’s expertise by agreeing that he must have a supervisory role in the girls’ lives. After the competition, the paper published

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80 ‘New Competition... Shirley Dolls as Prizes’, Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.35.
81 ibid.
82 ‘Shirley... The World’s Sweetheart’ (full page colour photo), Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.33.
84 For example, the paper presented Mrs Dionne’s new pregnancy as a threat to the Quins, suggesting her many children would not allow her to give them the attention they needed. ‘New Interest Given to “Quins” Contest’, Weekly, p.28.
86 ‘Down by the Pool with the Quins’ (photospread), Weekly, 5 December, 1936, p.7. This is but one of many images and articles which show how Dr Dafoe effaced Mrs Dionne from her Quins’ lives and public story. See ‘Appendix Ten’ for a more detailed discussion.
87 ‘Leave Quins With Doctor’, Weekly, p.27.
Dafoe’s own account of the Quins’ birth. These articles completed Mrs Dionne’s effacement from the babies’ lives and story, as was most brutally evident when Dafoe named the nurses and neighbourhood women who helped with the birth, whilst only ever referring to Mrs Dionne as ‘the mother’. ‘Professional’ and ‘scientific’ voices, like Dafoe’s and Mary Truby King’s, explicitly disciplined the *Weekly’s* readers to understand that, whenever there was anything wrong with a baby, its mother’s pre and post-natal body and behaviour was to blame.

Though it seems incredible that the paper convinced the majority of its readers that Science was better than Motherlove, it’s worth wondering if readers also sided with Dafoe for reasons *other* than the paper’s Hollywood-serving manipulations: the paper’s repeated reference to the babies’ physical perfection, happiness and wealth, plus its presentation of Dafoe’s enforced, paternal control as ideal child care, may have been comforting to ordinary people who had spent most of the thirties struggling to meet the basic necessities of life. Perhaps, and for the same reasons, Dafoe’s appeal was not so dissimilar to the appeal of fascists overseas.

Figure 109: ‘Foster-daddy’ Dafoe and ‘his’ Quins

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Whilst the paper’s reportage on the Quins was largely dictated by its Hollywood interests, the Quins fit right in to the *Weekly’s* obsession with multiple births, an obsession that saw it name the Quins, New Zealand’s Johnson Quads and England’s Miles Quads members of ‘the world’s three great families’. In April and May, the paper reported that Australia was heading towards a record number of multiple births, and noted quadruplets that had recently been born overseas. Some people believed that Nature had ‘stepped in with multiple births as a protection’ against modern women ‘limiting’ their families or looming ‘war clouds’. One London doctor said multiple births only seemed more common because news travelled more widely, and because such babies would have died, previously, because they lacked ‘the resources of science’. This quotation appeared next to a photo of Mrs Miles in a face mask, looking over her four babies: though this photo again presented science’s maternal intervention positively, the paper’s reportage on Quads expressed more ambivalence about this than its reportage on the Quins. Notably, the week after the Quins’ competition closed, the paper published an editorial that contrasted the ‘simplicity and naturalness’ of the Truby King-raised Johnson Quads’ against the ‘artificial routine and perpetual publicity’ of the Dionne’s. This editorial said ‘specious’ reasons were being used to justify the Quins’ segregation from the world. Having fulfilled its obligations to promote ‘The Country Doctor’, the paper thus used the world’s quads to reassert the value of the ‘Truby King System’ which its paper’s propagated on a long term, weekly basis. The paper provided numerous photospreads of the world’s quads (including quadruplet lion cubs), and tracked the film careers of the Miles and Johnson babies. Whilst the Miles quads had a publicity agent, their own company (‘Quadraplets Ltd’), and were receiving similar medical supervision

91 M St Clair, ‘“Quads” are now restored to their parents’, *Weekly*, 25 April, 1936, p.3.
92 St Clair, ‘“Quads” are now restored’, *Weekly*, p.3.
93 ‘“Quins” and “Quads”’, *Weekly*, p.12.
and publicity as the Quins, Truby King presented the Johnsons as a ‘splendid example of the natural rearing of multiple babies’, and noted Mrs Johnson’s belief that, if she could look after her quads, Mrs Dionne could look after her five babes. Truby King also emphasised that, whilst the Johnson babies’ ‘natural’ rearing ended with a mother caring for her babies at home, it began with that mother and her babies’ ten month stay at a Truby King hospital in Dunedin. Whilst Dafoe conquered motherhood with his highly interventionist brand of science, experts like Truby King did something much more subtle: they ordered mothers to parent ‘naturally’ whilst demanding they privilege the values and knowledge of scientific medicine over their own. Experts like Truby King thus made ‘natural’ something which was defined by professionals, rather than felt by individuals.

The Weekly’s reportage on quins and quads ultimately shows how essentially ‘fickle’ the paper could be about themes that were fundamental to women’s lives. The fact that the paper simultaneously condoned the usurpment of one woman’s motherhood by ‘science’, whilst reifying a ‘natural’ brand of parenting that was likewise defined and enforced by ‘professionals’, suggests that ‘motherhood’ was in some sort of crisis at this time. Perhaps, in the post-Depression, increasingly fascist, and war-nervous world of the mid-1930s, the certainties proclaimed by such scientific and rational rhetoric could only have widespread appeal.

Millicent, you are a mother-to-all in Coolami, even to Tom himself: you can feel yourself ‘wading into old age’ on ‘other names’: mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother. Throughout your journey you continually ponder what it is to be a good

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96 St Clair, “‘Quads’ are now restored’, Weekly, p.3; M St Claire, ‘Rearing “Quads” on £3 a Week’, Weekly, 26 September, 1936, p.22; ‘English “Quads” Now a Year Old’, Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.35.
99 See ‘Appendix Nine’ for a discussion of how Woolworth’s heiress, Barbara Hutton, was constructed by the paper as a feminine symbol of revolting excess whose fears for her son’s safety also seemed to feed a more general anxiety about motherhood’s increasingly compromised status in children’s lives. See ‘Appendix Nine’, also, for a discussion of how girl-child stars may have acted as an ‘antidote’ to popular perceptions of the ‘modern woman’ in 1936, with the infant Shirley Temple, and the sexed-up vamp, Mae West, simultaneously competing to be Hollywood’s most popular actress.
mother: though your children are the only thing of your ‘own’ in your marriage,\textsuperscript{100} you remind yourself that they must be left to ‘live their own lives’.\textsuperscript{101} They are not your children, they are ‘people, individuals’.\textsuperscript{102} When you are not disciplining yourself, you are disciplining Tom, explaining to him that parents are ‘very selfish creatures’: they can never give their children ‘half the joy’ that their children give them.\textsuperscript{103} Funny, Truby King said much the same thing.\textsuperscript{104} Even Margery watches you and Tom, and hopes she never forgets that ‘one vast Commandment’ for parents: ‘Thou shalt keep out of the way’.\textsuperscript{105} Like Truby King’s diatribes – ignore that screaming baby! – your lectures, Millicent, also direct women to orient their lives around their children, though at an eternally ‘rational’ distance. Your kind of mother must always ‘be there’ for her children, but she must never come too close, and never, ever, assert her own needs and desires. How lonely this seems. Did the textual prominence of your point of view in Coolami, assure readers that Mothers Mattered, that they retained their traditionally central and powerful role at the centre of Family? Or did your constant validation of your ‘kind’ of motherhood make those same readers feel surveilled, disciplined, judged? Whilst Coolami is largely about the universal value of Romantic Love, it is also one woman’s treatise (yours or Dark’s?) on what Motherlove ‘should’ be.

Thea and Susan: both of your stories are – at their core – about young women trying to live by their own code in a modern world. When we first meet you, Susan, you are reeling from the discovery that all of your ‘theories’ on life have failed you: you’d been so ‘deliciously certain’ that you ‘knew all about life’, that you ‘could lead it round like a little dog’ on the ‘long leash’ of your ‘theoretical knowledge’. But then you got pregnant, Jim died, and you found herself married to a man who did not love you: your ‘poodle’ turned out to be ‘a lion after all’.\textsuperscript{106}

When we first meet you, Thea, you are trying to grasp ‘reality’ and ‘meaning’ by rationalising a personal, ‘new philosophy’ about Life.\textsuperscript{107} But you are better at feeling

\textsuperscript{100}C, p.171.
\textsuperscript{101}C, p.36.
\textsuperscript{102}C, p.83.
\textsuperscript{103}C, p.167.
\textsuperscript{104}‘FYWM’, Weekly, 8 February, 1936, p.50.
\textsuperscript{105}C, pp.148,149.
\textsuperscript{106}C, p.18.
\textsuperscript{107}J, p.4.
than thinking: no wonder you hang everything on Romantic Love. You envy Eve’s work and religion. If Millicent is a mother surveilling motherhood, Eve is a Catholic scientist surveilling women’s lives and bodies alike: she knows it is more important that a woman sin than suffer; she knows suffering has its own divine meaning.\textsuperscript{108} You recoil at the news of Mrs O’Brien’s death, remembering Eve’s ‘stark’ and ‘shelterless’ ward where bright light brutally exposes every patient: you think scientists like Eve can ‘know’ everything about a living body except its life.\textsuperscript{109} Eve can think, but can she feel? Does her strength lie in her superior knowledge, or is it just that the rhetoric of her science and religion have more value – more social status – than your own incoherent and poetic musings on Love? Thea, you also envy Marc’s ability to live by her ‘own standards’ and ‘own values’!\textsuperscript{110} She’s a scientist too: a psychologist, and there is no problem on the planet that she can’t eloquently rationalise about. Just as Millicent lectures on motherhood, and Eve and Glover on the Moderns, Marc lectures on love and sex and Experience. You can see it, Thea, how Marc and Eve are united by one powerful thing, their fanaticism.\textsuperscript{111} All of you are all trying to ‘make’ a place for yourselves in the world, rather than take the places traditionally imposed upon you. What does it say about your times, then, that the dogmatists, ideologues, and fanatics survive, whilst idealists like Susan conform and idealist like you, Thea, die?

\textbf{The limitless silence on ‘limiting’ families}

Related to the issue of infant and maternal wellbeing, was that of family size and birth control. In an editorial entitled, ‘Large or Small Families?’,\textsuperscript{112} the paper noted that, despite contemporary denunciations of small families as ‘race suicide’, Australian, British, European and American families were shrinking. Meanwhile, families in fascist states were increasing ‘by means of national appeals and monetary gifts’. Russia, for example, had moved on from its post-war legislation favouring the ‘scientific limitation of families’, to rewarding women with ‘special bonuses’ for ‘their seventh and eleventh

\textsuperscript{108} J, p.123.
\textsuperscript{109} J, p.2.
\textsuperscript{110} J, p. 205.
\textsuperscript{111} J, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{112} ‘Large or Small Families?’, \textit{Weekly}, 26 September, 1936, p.12.
child’. Whilst the paper interpreted this as being for ‘man-power’ in the ‘event of war’, it wondered what sized family was best for ‘national health and the general physique of the race’. The paper thought fascism’s huge ‘experiment’ in family size would be worth watching, so long as it was not ‘marred’ by War’s ‘slaughter of the physically-fit’. Whilst this editorial again shows how the paper continually linked family to race and nation, and whilst it gives yet another example of the paper’s tentative, uncritical curiosity about fascism, it also hints at the Weekly’s profound silence about birth control.

Like a number of other articles, this editorial referred to contraception indirectly or euphemistically in its use of the phrase the ‘scientific limitation of families’. I could only find two articles in issues of The Australian Women’s Weekly from 1936 that made explicit references to birth control. The first was printed in January, when Mrs Dionne noted she’d received hundreds of letters about ‘midwifery’, and a handful about ‘birth control’. Of the latter, she said:

I’d never even heard the words “birth control.” Nor have I investigated the matter since.

This I will say, though. It’s difficult for me to see – brought up as I’ve been – how anyone could shut the door of life in the face of a human being whom God would bring to earth.

In saying this, however, I hope I don’t sound censorious. I realise in a matter of this sort one’s own conscience should be one’s guide, always.

This, the most explicit statement on ‘birth control’ that I could find in the papers of 1936, came from a Catholic mother of 11. Interestingly, Mrs Dionne saw no contradiction in asserting – simultaneously – the religious imperative to have children and an individual’s ‘conscientious’ right not to.

The second explicit reference to birth control came from the paper’s regular reportage on the weird and wonderful from overseas:

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113 One article noted that ‘the women of to-day limit their families’, (‘St Clair, ““Quads” are now restored’, Weekly, p.3), another noted how a perceived ‘poor outlook for children’ saw parents hesitate to have large families, rendering the birth rate ‘at a level barely sufficient to maintain the population, much less to increase it’. (Dale, ‘Doctor Sums Up’, Weekly, p.38.)


115 JB Davies, ‘What a Life for the “Quins”’, Weekly, 12 December, 1936, p.2. This article lists the Quins’ six other siblings’ names and ages.
It is claimed that birth-control by hypnosis is practicable. A woman already the mother of four children, whose life, according to two eminent [English] gynaecologists, would be endangered if she had another child, was permanently freed from the possibility... by “suggestion” only.\(^{116}\)

Here, even unrealistic and unreliable birth control—enacted by ‘magic’—seemed uncontroversial only so long as it were performed on mothers for whom another pregnancy was deadly.

Eve, you’re Catholic, but unlike Mrs Dionne—a woman who has had children—you are ‘censorious’ about everyone and everything: you don’t think Thea’s ‘conscience’ had anything to do with her pregnancy. For you, an abortion is two things: ‘an illegal operation’\(^{117}\) and ‘murder’. Though you know that many ‘medical men’ have ‘far-reaching ideas’ about abortion,\(^{118}\) the ‘decision’ of whether or not you should abort Thea’s pregnancy was made for you ‘long ago’: an abortion is not just a ‘horrible way out’\(^{119}\) it is the ‘deliberate and premeditated slaughter of a creature whose soul was destined to be united with God’,\(^{120}\) it is thus ‘an offense against God and Nature’. You pray for strength ‘to cling to’ what you know—‘beyond all questioning’—to be right.\(^{121}\)

It’s so strange, Eve, how you will not join Thea in committing the ‘sin’ of abortion, yet think it ‘fortunate’ when the babies of unfortunate women die: you even hope Thea’s baby will be born dead.\(^{122}\) For you, Eve, ‘Natural’ birth control is permissible.

Marc, you see nothing wrong with abortion ‘at all’: it’s ‘messy’, but no more ‘fundamentally concerned with ethics or morality’\(^{123}\) than having a tooth or appendix out. (As the abortionist says to Thea, hers is merely a ‘personal matter’ that is ‘easily fixed up’\(^{124}\)) You say this to Thea, Marc, and yet you also tell her that an abortion is not the sort of thing you’d do ‘unless absolutely necessary’,\(^{125}\) that you feel you’d be letting

\(^{116}\) ‘Strange Bypaths of Medical Research’, *Weekly*, 17 October, 1936, p.12.
\(^{117}\) J, p.193.
\(^{118}\) J, p.201.
\(^{120}\) J, pp.195,198, 201.
\(^{121}\) J, p.201.
\(^{122}\) J, pp.19, 123,184.
\(^{123}\) J, pp.215, 228.
\(^{124}\) J, p.231.
\(^{125}\) J, p.215.
yourself ‘down’ if you had one to ‘get out of it’,\(^{126}\) and that an abortion ‘goes deeper’ than ‘mere physical things’.\(^{127}\) You are thus telling Thea two things: an abortion both is, and is not, a merely physical operation. As time passes, Thea’s distress convinces you she must have an abortion for her ‘sanity’\(^{128}\): clearly, not everyone ‘profits’ from ‘experience’.\(^{129}\) Though you tell her that her choice is entirely her ‘own business’ (‘purely a personal matter’) and that, despite all your ‘heroics’,\(^{130}\) you’d probably do the same, you also tell her that you think she’ll ‘hate’ herself ‘for ever’ if she does it. How confusing! Marc, though you ‘know’ what an abortion is, you seem confused about what an abortion ‘means’.

What would Mrs Dionne say when, finally, you and Eve confront each other about Thea’s pregnancy? You accuse Eve of being ‘a complete fish’, of ‘cold-bloodedly’ dictating terms.\(^{131}\) You ask her if she realises what the abortion ‘means’ to Thea.\(^{132}\) You understand, Marc, that it’s what the pregnancy ‘means’ to Thea that is destroying her. You tell Eve it will kill Thea if she has to have the baby. Eve replies that ‘Women don’t die so easily’.\(^{133}\) (Is she forgetting Mrs O’Brien’s self-willed death?) You agree with her: women don’t die easily; instead they ‘go on living with the mainspring broken’.\(^{134}\) Eve thinks she knows better than anyone what the consequences of ‘living dangerously’ are: her work gives her ‘rather wide opportunities for judging’.\(^{135}\) You keep battling against her ‘perfect poise’,\(^{136}\) arguing that Thea isn’t ‘an ordinary case’. Eve tells you that there are no ‘special cases’ for abortions: ‘A thing is either right or wrong’.\(^{137}\) She will not commit a crime. She will not ‘add fresh sin to what Thea has already committed’ or ‘betray the teachings’ of her God.\(^{138}\)

\(^{126}\) J, p. 215.
\(^{127}\) J, p. 223.
\(^{128}\) J, p. 242.
\(^{129}\) J, p. 218.
\(^{130}\) J, pp. 221, 223.
\(^{131}\) J, p. 245.
\(^{132}\) J, p. 246.
\(^{133}\) J, p. 246.
\(^{134}\) J, p. 246.
\(^{135}\) J, p. 246.
\(^{136}\) J, p. 246.
\(^{137}\) J, p. 247.
\(^{138}\) J, pp. 247, 248.
Mrs Dionne’s apparently open-minded attitude to ‘birth control’ is thus split, and personified in your story, Thea, in the opposing figures of Eve and Marc. But what about ‘birth control’ other than abortion? Though the word does not exist in the Weekly, the word ‘contraception’ appears early in your story. When Marc denounces the leopard slut’s excesses, she says she’s sickened by how so many people are ‘struggling and battling’ on incomes that wouldn’t keep that slut in ‘contraceptives’. Here, contraception signifies ‘decadence’, just as the leopard slut herself – a predatory, manipulative, modern woman – is a sign of excess. Eve also refers to contraception when she warns you, Thea, to learn about ‘physiology’: you cannot ‘safely combine’ what people ‘rather euphemistically’ call ‘experience’ with a ‘degree of ignorance that’s almost mid-Victorian’. She tells you to ‘be practical’, if you’re going to be a ‘realist’. Eve, a Catholic, thus tells you (without ever telling you) that you should use contraception. She also takes comfort in the thought that Glover will be ‘careful’ and take ‘precautions’, and even gives Marc ‘credit’ for being ‘fastidious’ in her own ‘affairs’. Eve thus wants you to use birth control, Thea, in so much as she wants you to be safe, but her religious prohibitions mean she cannot permit you the knowledge that her science has given her: she, and then you, are left drowning in euphemisms.

Contraception was clearly a common reality in your world, Thea, though you neither think nor speak of it yourself.

And Susan? Musing on your failed ‘theories’, you recall how those theories had, in fact, warned you: you’d known that ‘No method is 100 per cent safe’, and you’d been ‘the hundredth’. Method for what? Safe from what? Like Eve, Susan, your evasive, euphemistic language shows us how, whilst ‘birth control’ clearly existed in your world, it was taboo.

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139 J, p. 67.
140 J, p. 67.
141 J, p. 5.
142 J, p. 123.
143 C, p. 51.
Given that ‘birth control’ was only explicitly referred to twice by *The Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1936, it is unsurprising that ‘abortion’ was never referred to at all: even in Stewart Howard’s rave review of *Jungfrau*, the *Weekly* did not mention sex, adultery, unwanted pregnancy or abortion though all of these things were explicitly addressed by the novel. Reading *Jungfrau* within the paper’s context, therefore, reveals the screaming silence that surrounded these topics in Australia in the mid-1930s. That the paper encouraged hundreds of thousands of women to read the novel also shows, however, that such taboo topics were recognised, at least by Howard, as being real, important, relevant, and completely ‘speakable’ to ordinary women, if only within the context of their private universes.

The paper’s reportage on Canada’s bizarre ‘Story Derby’ or ‘Baby Race’ brings together the *Weekly*’s ‘silence’ around birth control, the relationship between poverty and family size, the reality of infant mortality and the sense that mothers were being increasingly surveilled and judged at this time. This race was the brainchild of ‘eccentric lawyer’, Charles Miller, whose 1926 will left £125,000 to whichever Toronto woman had the most babies in the decade after his death. By 1936, the paper reported that seven families (of whom four were on government relief) were contenders for the prize, having had 65 babies between them. The paper published a table listing each mother’s name, age, number of years married, total number of births, number of children still alive, and number of twins. Though the paper didn’t see this tallying of live babies against dead as disrespectful or morbid (it was clearly ‘normal’ for large families to have so many deaths), it did note that ‘a sensational maze of litigation’ had sprung up around whether

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144 See my discussion of Howard and Camden Morrisby’s reviews, in Chapter Two.
145 I am not asserting that the *Weekly*’s ‘silence’ represented that of the entire culture, though, as the most read Australian magazine, this silence must have replied to very real taboos. Flicking through *The Australian Journal*, from 1932, I came across an ad that openly offered readers help with ‘Birth Control’, and reproduced a doctor’s belief that there was ‘wisdom’ in ‘permitting’ women to control their fertility by ‘safe, unobjectionable, scientific means’, in order to make sure all babies were loved and all women could preserve their own ‘health and life and freedom’. This ad appeared next to a much more discreet ad that offered advice to women who had been ‘denied the blessings of Motherhood’. 1 February, 1932, p.232.
dead or stillborn babies should be counted in the race. Though the paper hinted that Miller’s will was really a social critique – he left Jockey Club shares to gambling reformers, and brewery shares ‘to some of Canada’s most ardent “Drys”’ 151 – and though the paper specifically noted the entrants’ poverty and the babies’ mortality, it never speculated upon what ‘point’ Miller might be trying to make through the race. Instead, the paper obtusely claimed the women would have had as many children anyway. 152

Though the Weekly did not give an ‘official’ opinion about the competition, it reported the criticisms of others, noting how Miller’s family was contesting the will because the competition encouraged women ‘to obtain money contrary to public decency and morality’. 153 One reader, I. Brown, agreed with Dr Dafoe’s assertion that the Derby was ‘a little disgusting’. 154 Brown worried about the fate of children who’d been born for money rather than love, and wondered at women ‘being willing to commercialise their motherhood’. 155 Brown thus wholly blamed these women – rather than their poverty, Miller or the spectating public – for their motherhood’s commercialisation. Though Brown may have identified one of the ‘points’ Miller was trying to make through his will, Brown’s automatic assumption that the children were either born for money or ‘love’, rather than as the inevitable consequence of consensual or non-consensual sex, meant he or she ignored the possibility that Miller’s will was highlighting the issue of ‘birth control’. Haylen also reported that British parliamentarian, Lady Astor, was ‘disgusted’ by the derby: ‘It’s horrible...We need quality in children, not quantity’. 156 Though Astor clearly alluded to the issue of birth control, here, Haylen distracted readers from this by asserting that people liked the Baby Race, and all famous babies, simply because they were ‘very interested in family life’.

Reportage on the Stork Derby shows how, though abortion was ‘unspeakable’ in the Weekly’s world in 1936, Nature’s ‘culling’ of children was a normal and accepted means through which a families’ size could be ‘limited’. This reportage also shows how mothers were being increasingly surveilled and commodified by individuals and the

151 ibid.
153 ‘Baby Race Mothers May Petition the King’, Weekly, 14 November, 1936, p.52.
wider public who were both complicit in – and yet critical of – turning motherhood itself into a spectacle.

Susan, when you first knew you were pregnant, why did you think it an ‘inspiration’ to see Margery’s doctor-brother? Why go to someone attached to your family with something so ‘scandalous’? Did you expect him to offer you something other than the advice that you marry the father?¹⁵⁷ You left him, feeling ‘queer’ and ‘stupid’. You napped in a park and awoke resolved to marry Jim.¹⁵⁸ Seeing Margery’s brother thus clarified your options for you: abortion was not one of them. Just after Jim died, Bret asked you what you were going to ‘do about’ the baby. You told him you’d ‘bear it’ and ‘look after it’. ‘Fiercely resentful’, you asked him what else he’d expected.¹⁵⁹ What might he expect a ‘vain flapper’ to do? Abort? Adopt? Of course, you end up marrying Bret. He remembers how you’d laughed recklessly when he’d asked you to be careful horse-riding during your pregnancy: his protestations turned to ‘accusations’ when you kept riding with Ken.¹⁶⁰ Accusations of what? As with Thea, Susan, self-injury was one means of abortion that was open to you. If abortion exists in Coolami, it is unspeakable, barely hintable, never, ever, a real option.

Whilst Eve and Marc openly use the word ‘abortion’ in your story, Thea, you do not.¹⁶¹ You don’t even think or speak of yourself as ‘pregnant’: you tell them, ‘I’m going to have a baby’.¹⁶² Being pregnant automatically means having a baby in your world, doesn’t it? The taboo nature of your situation is not just evident in how you euphemise reality, Thea, but in how Eve and Marc do so too: all of you primarily refer to the pregnancy and abortion as ‘it’.¹⁶³ Of course, the stigma attached to your plight is most powerfully shown by the tragic story of your struggle to ‘get rid of it’.¹⁶⁴ When you become pregnant, you descend into a world of secrecy, shame and sordidness,¹⁶⁵ as if,

¹⁵⁷ C, p.50.
¹⁵⁸ C, pp.50-51.
¹⁵⁹ C, p.65.
¹⁶⁰ C, pp.172,173.
¹⁶¹ J, pp.215, 194.
¹⁶² J, pp. 213, 169.
¹⁶⁴ J, p.220.
¹⁶⁵ J, pp.222,223,213,199.
you think, getting an abortion is ‘committing a crime’. Well, that’s the thing, Thea: it is an ‘illegal operation’. It’s not that abortion is impossible: Marc knows a girl who got one from a doctor. She wants you to go to a doctor too, because it’s ‘much safer’: she knows ‘several’. Safer than what? When Marc gives you the doctor’s details, she tells you to memorise them and burn the paper she’s written them on. You’re to tell the receptionist that ‘Miss Smith’ sent you. Again, you feel a ‘spasm of rage’ at such sordidness. The doctor’s smooth, business-like manner repels you. You are furious when he asks if you’ve been ‘having a good time’. Even an abortionist – a criminal – can judge you. You flee. You find yourself lying in the gorse undergrowth by the sea. You feel ‘shut out’ from the world, your heart, from ‘life’ itself. One thought races around your head: you cannot submit to the ‘intolerable humiliation’ of returning to such a man. As you contemplate the ‘monstrous’ alternative of having ‘it’, the ‘force’ of the ‘life’ around you reminds you: ‘You can die...’ You feel ‘a tremendous sense of relief’: not because dying will end your pregnancy, but because it will end the terror, humiliation, and ‘unbearable emptiness’ of a life without Glover. You suddenly hear the word ‘Die’ spoken aloud. And there she is: the figure from your nightmare, lying ‘triumphant and alive’ beside you. Who is she? Yourself? No, she is too ‘poised, assured and faintly insolent’ to be ‘Thea Mackinley’, though your own body has become transparent. This – the moment you are denied the abortion you need; the moment your self splits fully so you can enact that abortion yourself – is the first time we hear your full surname.

Meanwhile, Marc calls the doctor and is enraged by his ‘pleasant’ and ‘deprecating’ manner. Marc knows you are in danger: she knows it’s your mind, as well as your body, that’s at stake. She storms over to Eve’s, demanding she free you from your ‘humiliating subterfuges and sordid precautions’. You suddenly appear at the door.

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166 J, p.223.
167 J, pp. 244, 193.
168 J, p. 220.
169 J, p. 223.
170 J, p. 231.
171 J, p. 233.
172 J, p. 234.
173 J, pp. 234,235.
174 J, p. 236.
175 J, p. 243.
With dread, Marc senses your ‘invisible dislocation’. Eve doesn’t: she is joyful that you’ve apparently decided to ‘see it through’. Of course, you’ve decided no such thing. Later, in your flat, you watch the ‘automaton’ makes preparations to die. You watch her row into the quay in Marc’s leaky old boat. Not until the waters rise up, ‘grape-dark and gleaming’, do you suddenly realise that you are rowing the boat. Why are you fighting for your life? Aren’t you meant to be dying? When your oar snaps, something snaps within you. You relax. The bow looms above you. The starry sky clusters around its prow: the ‘world’ closes in upon you. A self-splitting unequal love, an unwanted pregnancy, and then a suicide – the only abortion you felt able to have – proves how right Eve was: the world will rush in on you, if you let it.

The story of your abortion does not end with your suicide, Thea. Your death effects Eve and Marc profoundly. Marc finds it ‘queer’ that it’s the sin of your suicide that wounds Eve, not the fact of your death, or the ‘shipwreck’ of your life. Marc wants to know who is responsible. When she’d spoken to the abortionist, she’d blamed the ‘inexpressibly idiotic system’ that ‘terrified women into any measure’ to avoid bearing an illegitimate child. She’d also blamed Eve, for not doing as you’d asked. Then she blamed herself, for letting you go to the abortionist alone. And she blamed Glover: she sent him the newspaper clipping reporting your death. The stigma attached to your pregnancy, and then, to your suicide, saw her convince the papers to report your death as ‘accidental’: why does she think the clipping will cast Glover into his own ‘private hell’? Will he care enough to join the dots? She asks Eve if she’d have acted differently had she foreseen your suicide. Eve says there was ‘no other way’. Marc thinks this appalling, and yet expresses a similar belief when she construes your death as just another of the ‘utterly unjust’ stupidities of human existence.
How curious this scene is: Marc confronts Eve about blame, whilst being ever-aware of her own ‘too-red lips’,\(^\text{184}\) and thinking her ‘disgustingly painted fingernails’ make her hands look like a ‘butcher’s’.\(^\text{185}\) Does Marc’s make-up – just like the Leopard slut’s – implicate someone else in your death, Thea? Does it implicate the ‘modern woman’ herself, or the idea of her? After all, it’s the stereotype of the moderns, rather than your reality, that allows Glover to treat you as he does. What does it mean, that the last scene in your story shows him – once again – defining the Moderns? He proclaims them (you?) as being ‘without hope and incapable of despair’.\(^\text{186}\) We watch him read of your death: ‘Dorothea Mackinley: accidentally drowned’. Only now do we hear your entire name, as if, in death, you assert your individual identity against the stereotypes he’s obliterated you with. No use. Glover cannot even remember your face, just an image of Jungfrau, ‘white, proud and untouched’.\(^\text{187}\) If Glover killed you it was through the two ideas he split you into: a Modern Woman and Jungfrau. Equal, but opposite, those two ideas combined to create nothing at all, and certainly not a space in which a girl like you could live.

Thea, your death leaves Marc wondering if people can be saved from themselves. Perhaps her question should be, can women like you be saved from your modern world?

The paper also addressed the problem of children whose mothers couldn’t or wouldn’t care for them. In one random assortment of photographs, the paper published a picture of a young woman passing a newborn to an older woman (Figure 110).\(^\text{188}\) The caption read:

Mother gives baby away. Mrs Linda Jones... 22-years-old mother, of San Francisco, overcome with despair in her fight against poverty, allegedly sent her children into a public park with a neighbour to give them away to the first person who wanted them. One child was given away, and Mrs Jones is here giving her two-months-old daughter to Mrs Simonsen, who has adopted her.

\(^{184}\) J, p.282.
\(^{185}\) J, p.276.
\(^{186}\) J, p.285.
\(^{187}\) J, p.286.
\(^{188}\) ‘When the East Laughs: Ski Fashions’ (photospread), Weekly, 2 May, 1936, p.15.
In another article, the paper noted a local instance of adoption by ‘wireless broadcast appeal’, and reminded readers this was illegal.\textsuperscript{189} Though the paper didn’t discuss the tragic circumstances implied by these stories, it did publish a number of articles exploring why mothers abandoned their children. Lady Cilento (president of the Brisbane Mothercraft Association) told readers that ‘every’ woman had a ‘very strong’ maternal instinct, and that impoverished women might feel it was in a baby’s ‘best interests’ to leave it.\textsuperscript{190} Such a woman, Cilento argued, might be considered ‘unselfish’ for putting her child’s welfare before her own ‘pleasure’. The matron of a Victorian maternity hospital agreed, noting that marsupials ‘instinctively throw away their babies when danger threatens’ and that to do so expressed ‘an introverted form of mother love’. Cilento ultimately argued, however, that the Australian government and Australian charities were so ‘excellent’ and ‘sympathetic’ that no mother need abandon a baby. Mr Henry, from the Victorian Children’s Welfare Department, agreed, adding that women’s ignorance and their ‘unwarranted fear’ of ‘institutional care’ and ‘publicity’ saw them

\textsuperscript{190} ‘Why Mothers Abandon Their Babies’, \textit{Weekly}, 5 September, 1936, p.20.
desert their babies. He emphasised that most women were ‘good’ mothers, and explained that ‘destitute’ or ‘deserted’ mothers, widows, and the wives of ill men, could seek assistance: this ‘assistance’ could, however, include making a child a ward of the state, which enabled it to be fostered or cared for by an institution. Another article also emphasised how churches, charities, and the ‘foster-parent’ of the Australian Government took good care of the material, mental and spiritual development of destitute ‘future citizens’. This article noted how Child Welfare’s ‘liberal’ definition of an ‘orphan’ included children who had lost one or both parents, were foundlings, had unmarried mothers or destitute parents, or had been deserted or neglected. Child Welfare’s ‘liberal’ definition of orphanhood thus had the power to legally render single or poor parents as worthless, non-entities. This article explained how welfare officers were based in public hospitals to ensure unmarried mothers knew their babies would ‘not be entirely bereft of the care and advantages’ of ‘those born in wedlock’. Apparently, the appearance of these officers had ‘blotted out the once-frequent cases of murdering newly-born children’. Clearly, a dead baby was a better option for some unmarried women, at this time, than an ‘illegitimate’ life.

None of the Weekly’s articles about family size, infant and maternal mortality, or unwanted children asked how women actually managed or felt about their fertility. Reportage on Canada’s Stork Derby focussed readers’ attention on women’s fertility, and presented readers with a motherhood that was triumphantly fecund, and grotesquely commodified but never, seemingly, in need of control. The paper’s silence around unwanted pregnancy and birth control shows how married Australian women were expected, in 1936, to have children whether they wanted them or not. Women who wanted to control their fertility must have done so covertly and from a position of probable ignorance. Whilst birth control and abortion were clearly ‘unspeakable’ in the world of the Weekly in 1936, some articles did try to de-stigmatise the status of ‘troubled’ motherhood by emphasising how economic factors made ‘good mothers’ do ‘bad’ things.

191 ‘State Shelters Children’, Weekly, p.12. In 1934, 296 private homes were licensed to board children and 500 children were boarded whilst 51 government, ‘denominational’ or ‘private’ institutions housed 1649 orphans.
192 Another article suggested Australia’s stigmatising attitude to unmarried mothers when it noted how unmarried mothers in Sweden had ‘equal rights with married mothers’, and then commented: ‘In our eyes the moral standards are startlingly different’. ‘Country Where Women Avoid Motherhood’, Weekly, p.12.
These articles inadvertently affirmed such women’s ‘illegitimate’ status by presenting their plight as a thing of the past and by directing them to the ‘generous’ support of welfare bodies who could, in fact, erase their parental status altogether. Most significantly, all of these articles exposed and perpetuated the stigma of single motherhood in one very simple way: by focusing on women.¹⁹³

_Thea, Eve is overjoyed when you apparently agree to have the baby._¹⁹⁴ She has already worked out a ‘commonsense’ plan: she will take a job in Western Australia, where you can give birth and get ‘it’ adopted, though she knows that that will ‘depend entirely’ on your attitude to ‘the child’.¹⁹⁶ She does not consider your ‘attitude’ in light of the fact you want an abortion. Instead, she reflects, as if she is not a woman herself, that women are ‘incalculable creatures’ who become ‘positive tiger-cats’,¹⁹⁷ at the sight of their baby. Eve’s planning largely involves economic ‘calculations’,¹⁹⁸ for money has everything to do with whether or not you can put ‘a good face’ on things.¹⁹⁹ She thinks that, together, you will have £150, and she considers asking Glover for money too: he should be ‘willing enough’; such men ‘usually’ are.²⁰⁰ By focusing on practicalities, Eve tries to ignore the ‘sordidness’ and ‘madness’ of your situation,²⁰¹ for to her, Thea, your situation is one of sin and shame. (Didn’t she blush ‘all over her body’ when you told her the news of your pregnancy, ‘as though the shame were hers’?)²⁰²) For Eve, it doesn’t matter if ‘modern people like Marc’ talk ‘glibly’ about there being ‘no such things as

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¹⁹⁴ _J_, p.249.

¹⁹⁵ _J_, p.184.

¹⁹⁶ _J_, p.184.

¹⁹⁷ _J_, pp.184,185.

¹⁹⁸ _J_, pp.184,185.

¹⁹⁹ _J_, p.188.

²⁰⁰ _J_, p.185.

²⁰¹ _J_, p.178.

²⁰² _J_, p.169.
illegitimate children’. For Eve, adultery, sex, and pregnancy outside of marriage are so shameful she wishes your baby dead.

Marc’s plans for you, Thea, aren’t really so different from Eve’s. She realises you must get an abortion, and plans to give you £50 so you can take sick leave and go for a ‘sea-trip’ or ‘something’, something to get you ‘back to normal’. Aborted or adopted (how similar those words look!), both women plan to ‘get rid of’ your baby and make you go away so you can return to your ‘normal’ life. When Marc watches you apparently acquiesce to Eve’s plans, she’s furious. She asks what you ‘intend’ to do with the baby. A ‘shadow’ passes over your face: ‘I suppose there are ways’. Eve says it can be adopted. Scornful, Marc asks if it is ‘fundamentally’ more ‘moral’ to ‘deliver a child like a pound of sausages’, and then ‘disclaim further responsibility’ for it, than it is to have an abortion. ‘Disdainfully’ she says to Pat, ‘At least you suckle your own pups’. Why is she so brutal? Even she – the most ‘modern’ of you all – recognises that an illegitimate child means losing your job and most of your ‘associations’, and ‘putting yourself at the mercy of the thousand souring, searing, poisoned criticisms of ordinary society’. After your death, Thea, Marc tells Eve that she apologised to you for what she said: she was ashamed she’d judged you. Perhaps she realised that – no less than Eve, Glover, and the abortionist – she was part of the ‘inexpressibly idiotic system’ which she’d blamed for terrifying women to do anything other than have an illegitimate child. After your death, Marc isn’t sure that any system could have ‘done much’ for you: nothing could have salved the ‘humiliation’ and ‘loss’ caused by Glover’s unlove. Marc understands – as Eve cannot – that your problem never lay in the shame of an illegitimate pregnancy, but in how that pregnancy proved the ‘lovely illusion’ of Glover’s love. Is Jungfrau primarily an attack on a society that won’t give a woman the right to an abortion? Or an attack on the stigma attached to ‘illegitimacy’? Thea, these aren’t the questions that
you’d define your story with: for you, everything begins – and ends – with the problem of Romantic Love in your modern world.

The stigma of illegitimacy has everything to do with your fate, Susan: you accept that you must marry for the ‘baby’s sake’.213 Your father saw your pregnancy as a ‘disgrace’ for you and the child, and thought Bret ‘magnanimous’ to marry you at all.214 He and Margery thought you lucky to have a ‘way out’ of such ‘nasty business’, such a ‘tight corner’.215 And Bret knew you had ‘no right to refuse’216 your ‘moral’ obligation to marry him.217 The moral hazard of your child’s illegitimacy was thus always more threatening than the moral hazard of a loveless marriage, though even Ken recognised that your and Bret’s ‘compact’218 was so arbitrary that he could have married you himself: ‘My name’s Maclean too’.219 Only your mother suggested the alternative ‘way out’ of seeking no ‘way out’ at all. She apparently saw no shame in allowing you to raise your child in her ‘harmonious’ home. However, she ultimately agreed with Bret that that would be legally and socially ‘rough’220 for the child. In fact, Millicent knew the moment she learned of your pregnancy ‘the appalling truth’ that, in your ‘imperfect world’, it would not be exciting, but ‘disturbing and rather unpleasant’.221 She’d accepted then, as you have since, that you’ve been paying ‘fairly’ for straying off the conventional path. She hopes you can propitiate the ‘gods’ of the ‘established order’ and do what Thea could not: maintain your ‘inner’ self in a world that will damn you. Susan, you and Thea have so much in common: your illegitimate sex leads to illegitimate pregnancy, which makes each of you illegitimate women who have lost the right to control their own lives. You both end up taking horrible ‘ways out’. There, your stories’ similarities end, for whilst Romantic Love ultimately legitimises everything and everyone in your world, Susan, Thea’s death proves the illegitimacy of Romantic Love itself.

214 C, p.7.
215 C, pp.69,71,113.
216 C, p.66.
217 C, p.44.
218 C, p.44.
219 C, p.98.
220 C, p.71.
221 C, p.36.
‘There’s war talk in the hair now’222: Mothers’ War on War

Throughout the year, the paper made regular references to fascism. Somewhat bemusedly, it noted Hitler’s banning of the anti-Nazi play ‘Till the Day I Die’223 and ‘Modern Times’224 (banned due to Chaplin’s ‘Hitler-like moustache’). It also noted U.S. politicians’ agitation at a film that imagined America under fascism.225 The Weekly joked at how ‘Curious’ countries’ ‘sporadic outbursts of Fascism’ saw followers desperately research original shirt-colours and salutes,226 whilst German women’s refusal to wear Hitler’s prescribed uniform proved that ‘fashion is, after all, the supreme dictator’.227 The paper complained that Sir Philip Gibbs’ novel had ‘middle-class folk’ talking of ‘Hitler and Mussolini, of Abyssinia and the League of Nations, and disarmament’.228 It remarked on how the ‘Turkish dictator’s’ wife waited in queues just like everyone else,229 reported on the growing popularity of German war parlour games,230 and lamented how Mussolini and Hitler’s trade sanctions had reduced imports of the increasingly popular piano accordion.231 ‘Tilly’ told readers that one Australian socialite was ‘a Hitler fan’,232 whilst the paper’s fashion and beauty reporters noted such trends as ‘cartridge curls’233 (Figure 111) and ‘lovely Mussolini hats’.234 The paper even joked about setting up a retirement home for Nazis in Palestine.235 Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia had, apparently, prompted the paper to make history, ‘as far as women’s papers were concerned’,236 by having its own war correspondents, and Abyssinia and Mussolini were mentioned a

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222 ‘Prince’s Romances: War Hair Styles’ (photospread), Weekly, 14 March, 1936, p.15.
228 ‘NB’, Weekly, 8 February, 1936, p.12.
231 ‘Oh, Mussolini... We Can’t Play Accordion!’, Weekly, 28 March, 1936, p.25.
235 Lower, ‘Hail Haile!’, Weekly, p.11.
236 HR Knickerbocker, ‘Muskets Now Replace Spanish Mantillas’, Weekly, 8 August, 1936, p.2; See also, photo of Fay Gillis with leopard cub (‘A pet from Abyssinia’). Gillis was another of the Weekly’s special war correspondents, ‘When the East Laughs: Ski Fashions’, Weekly, p.15.
The paper was particularly interested in Haile Selassie’s daughter Princess Tsshai, a ‘Social Hit’ in London. Whilst the Weekly presented Russia as a fascinating social experiment rather than as a fascist state, and the Spanish Civil War as a bloody fight between an unspecified Fascism and Freedom, the following explores the paper’s much more ambivalent attitudes towards Hitler and Nazi Germany, as well as the paper’s use of ‘motherhood’ to critique War.

Figure 111: Cartridge Curls. ‘Maybe next we'll hear of the Hitler fringe, Mussolini twist, and Haile Selassie shingle’

239 See ‘Appendix Six’.
240 See ‘Appendix Five’.
Whilst the paper’s ridicule of fascism can be interpreted as a form of criticism (Figure 113), and whilst it consistently denounced films and books that smacked of propaganda, the Weekly was generally uncritical and curious about Hitler and Nazi Germany, particularly in regards to its health and marriage laws. A number of articles wondered if Australia’s relatively small families portended ‘race suicide’, whilst another claimed that the ‘racial stimulants’ in Germany, which came in the ‘form of bonuses and financial help’, were failing due to the prospect of war and unemployment. Another article noted how German men, who were still unmarried by twenty-six, were assumed by the Nazis to lack ‘courage and determination’ and barred from leadership courses. (The paper merely jested that such men had shown the leadership qualities of ‘resourcefulness, wily strategy and evasiveness.’) In January, the paper reported that the German Official Gazette had published an ‘inquisition for lovers’ that detailed the Nazis’ new ‘marriage health laws’. These laws meant that doctors had to endorse the ‘marriage worthiness’ of prospective couples who could only marry if they were healthy and their marriage did not contravene ‘Aryan protection laws’. The Weekly merely commented that a ‘point in favour’ of this ‘system’ was that it gave people time to change their minds. Another article noted that the London Eugenics society had issued a ‘schedule’ to doctors for the assessment of couples who also wanted health certificates.
before marrying. The paper declared this ‘An important step towards ensuring healthier marriages’. 247 Yet another article called for such certificates to be compulsory. 248 The paper thus clearly saw eugenics as an international, rather than Nazi, phenomenon, and it matter-of-factly noted the opening of Australia’s first Eugenics society in Melbourne, 249 and joked that Hollywood was a ‘promising eugenic laboratory’. 250 (The Weekly was a little surprised, therefore, when the ‘great Garbo’ and Marlene Dietrich fell ‘under the ban of racial taint’, with both declared un-Aryan by the Nazis 251). When the paper reported Germany’s ‘Compulsory Divorce’ 252 laws – which enabled courts to forcibly divorce people if they were criminals, ‘leading immoral lives’, were communist or lacked ‘ethical purpose’ – the Weekly again said nothing. The paper also reported that German families could be imprisoned in concentration camps in order to help cure ‘anti-social’ evils. 253 Such families earned privileges for good behaviour, were released if they showed ‘signs of redemption’, or were labelled ‘socially unfit by heredity’ and ‘treated accordingly’. The paper did not speculate upon what ‘accordingly’ meant, and only commented: ‘Nature, in the guise of economic necessity, thought of this long before Hitler’. The paper thus presented Nazism as merely a ‘natural’ form of economic Darwinism. These uncritical articles show how the Weekly and Nazism were, in many ways, obsessed with exactly the same things: marriage, The Family, and racial and national health.

248 Moss, ‘Magic Years Ahead’, Weekly, p.3.
251 ‘CA!’, Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.29.
Whilst the paper was clearly ambivalent towards Nazism, it was seldom ambivalent towards War. In March, it began focusing readers’ attention on the German occupation of the Rhineland in an article which presented the ‘Joys and Woes’ of the region’s women who lived ‘in Daily Fear of War’.254 This article noted that, whilst locals were happy to farewll the French, 3000 German women had married British soldiers in one year. In April, Mary St Claire tried to continue this ‘romantic’ theme, in an article entitled, ‘Live in Fear and Hope for Romance’.255 Whilst St Claire again noted how some of the Rhineland’s women welcomed the occupying soldiers, who represented their ‘only hope of marriage’, her article emphasised the locals’ fear of war. She claimed they knew nothing about War’s ‘pomp and glory’, and everything about ‘the horrors of evacuated homes, divided families, and little children killed and maimed.’ St Claire described the Germans’ ‘goose-stepping’ across the Rhineland as a ‘political and military manoeuvre’ that had ‘sent the fear of war into almost every home in Europe’. Clearly, not even Romance in the Rhineland could distract the Weekly from the implications of Hitler’s occupation.

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Marjorie Florance’s articles, which began in May, offered readers an eye witness account of Nazi Germany. She quoted one Nazi Official who showed her a photo of Hitler, and said: ‘This is our leader... We follow him blindly, though we do not always know what his meaning is, or what the end will be’. Florance was ‘impressed’ by such ‘hero-worship’ and passionate ‘follow-the-leader’ spirit. She described how new amphitheatres were being built for ‘plays of a national character’, noted the fervent displays of pride by ‘ardent Nationalist Socialists’, and the ‘battalions of youth’ who were conscripted to work on infrastructure and agriculture. Florance also noted how Hitler’s ‘regime’ was doing much to ‘enlighten’ German women, with the Frauenschaft organisation, run by Mrs Scholtze-Klink, educating women on social and child welfare. (In December, the paper published a photo of Klink, and described her as Hitler’s ‘ideal woman’. Figure 114) Whilst Florance thought Klink’s work on child welfare was ‘excellent’, she felt Nazism’s ‘taboo on cosmetics’ was ‘rather sad’: ‘Lipstick is “verboten.”’ Florance assured readers, in typical Weekly fashion, that German women were nevertheless ‘charming’, and deserved their ‘reputation for good housekeeping’. Under the happy subtitle, ‘Heil Hitler!’, Florance recounted how she had been warned ‘that it was almost death’ to salute incorrectly. Flustered, at a train station, she saluted with both her arms, dropped her bag, and tripped into her carriage. Luckily, the carriage was full of ‘jolly-looking Germans in uniform – all definitely friendly – in fact, all definitely amused’. This article was one of the few that directly referred to the Jews’ ‘persecution’, but did so in a way that maintained a positive image of Germany: Florance claimed there was a ‘more lenient feeling’ towards them, and said she’d heard ‘several’ Germans ‘regret’ their treatment. In her next article, Florance’s positive tone began to shift as she noted how French children were having nightmares about German invasion. By August, she lamented:

258 See also, the free weekly novel Little Man – What Now?, which depicted a young couple struggling to survive in the poverty, prejudices and unemployment of Nazi Germany (H Fallada, Weekly, 7 March, 1936.). Mary St Claire also interviewed a German circus performer who said that her and her family refused to live there because there were ‘so many restrictions’, and ‘one is frightened to say what one thinks’, unlike in England where ‘There is no fear of anything’. (M St Claire, ‘People who risk their lives to Amuse the World’, Weekly, 15 February, 1936, p.10.)
In this gentle spring of 1936 the minds of men have turned to many things: to poison gas, to bombs and shells; to aeroplanes capable of performing incredible feats of destruction; to munitions, and still more munitions. In the name of peace? But certainly, in the name of peace. Who could doubt it?260

Florance’s movement from joviality to despair was typical of the paper’s general response to the growing tensions in Europe, and such articles suggest that whilst everyone dreaded another world war, many hoped it might still, somehow, be avoided.

As well as these eye witness accounts, the paper constantly referred to the problems of ‘World Peace’ and ‘War’ in a multitude of articles throughout 1936. Even the Weekly’s astrologist, June Marsden, proclaimed in March, ‘Stars Point to War and Rumors [sic] of War’.261 Marsden optimistically argued that England could be ‘drawn in to war if she feels in a fighting mood’, but was ‘more likely to control matters’ and avoid conflict. Another article suggested that universalising English would create ‘a period of

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261 J Marsden, ‘Stars Point to War and Rumours of War’, Weekly, 14 March, 1936, p.36.
peace, by common understanding, based on a common language’. In April, Haylen interpreted one war veteran’s suicide (prompted by talk of another conflict) as ‘a tragic rebuke to the war-mongers... in a world striving for peace under the grim shadow of war’. Throughout the year, Haylen noted an Indian ‘soothsayer’ and prophet’s forecast of war, expressed hope (much like Marsden’s) that England could ‘complete her defence plans on schedule’ and thus avert war, called Europe ‘pigheaded’ and pitied the British taxpayer who had to fund the world’s ‘Policemen of Peace’. Though Haylen declared war tensions would resolve if Europe got a sense of humour, he asserted the complexities of the situation when he attacked one woman writer’s suggestion that Britain should simply return Germany its colonies. Haylen noted that ‘Six million dead’ could never be returned, and that ‘a great war can’t be settled entirely on the kiss-and-be-friends basis’. Even radio and film were implicated in the problem of War, with a conference in Geneva discussing ‘Broadcasting and Peace’, and a reader suggesting that ‘Peace pictures’ should be made to ‘uplift the moral standard’ and crush the ‘thoughts of savagery and brutality’ that war films fostered. Other readers argued that showing the ‘stark’ horrors of war through film divested it of ‘all glamor [sic] and glory’. Yet another reader suggested that international Pen-Friendship was ‘surely the first step towards universal peace’ because it allowed one to see other nations’ points of view. On Boxing day, the paper ended the year by begging for ‘the nations of the earth’ to ‘follow the simple human motives epitomised by the spirit of Christmas’: Peace on Earth Goodwill to Men. All of these articles show how, by the end of 1936, another Great War was increasingly seen as inevitable.

263 ‘POV’, Weekly, 4 April, 1936, p.10.
271 Multiple replies to Gosden, in ‘STS’, Weekly, 5 December, 1936, p.29.
Thea, the ‘real’ world of the Depression loiters at the edges of Jungfrau. The ‘real’ world of War does not.

Susan, though your world seems untouched by the Depression, War, as fact and idea, is everywhere. Bret, Tom and Colin all fought in the Great War. Though Millicent and Margery constantly damn war, these men’s silence, and the fact that Colin is a ‘drunken swine’ seems commentary enough.

Millicent, you feel ‘bitter self-reproach’ that you and Tom let Colin, a ‘child’ of eighteen, go off to that ‘unspeakable shambles’ that destroyed him. You damn yourself for being ‘taken in’ by a ‘hotch-potch’ of second-hand, ‘poetical’ and old-fashioned ideas about War and God and England: they were ‘wrong’ ideas, ‘fine phrases spun’ over ‘abominations’. Colin’s war created a very New World, didn’t it? One where war was unclean and unfair: ‘something obscene that grabbed and devoured’, ‘butchery’, the ‘ancient sacrifice of little children into the molten jaws of the god Moloch’, an orgy of ‘nauseated killing’ enacted ‘coldly and mechanically’ from afar. That war had nothing to do with hot outbursts ‘of natural hostility’ or ‘honourable defeat’. (You never explain why you see Susan’s war against society as ‘fair’. Aren’t both she and Colin victims of the same ‘established order’?) When Bret told you he was ‘lucky’ to get wounded, you realised that many men ‘owed their continued mental stability’ to their shattered bodies. Colin won no such ‘respite’. War! It has destroyed your son and, by doing so, has wounded you and Margery. Even little Richard hurts. He is denied a father in a savage new world that’s already trying to teach him that soldiers, canons, and machine guns are but toys for boys to play with.

As well as mocking fascists, or paying attention to their social ‘experiments’, or keeping an eagle’s eye on the likelihood of conflict, the Weekly repeatedly linked the

274 See references to malnourishment, poverty, homelessness, unemployment in J, pp.82, 240-241, 7, 16.
275 The only reference to the Depression in Coolami is Tom’s reflections about how the previous owners of Wondabyne were ruined by it: Tom and his family apparently remained untouched by it. C, p.15.
276 C, p.97.
277 C, p.68.
278 C, p.17.
279 C, pp.16,17,133.
280 C, p.37.
281 C, p.83.
282 C, p.84.
problem of war (as it did ‘race’ and ‘nation’) to the idea of Woman. When the paper predicted ‘Magic Years Ahead for Women’ it claimed the pre-condition for this was the ‘complete fulfilment of peace’.\textsuperscript{283} Published in September, this article optimistically told readers that the world of 1936 was ‘organising for peace’ more than it had ever organised for war. Another article drew readers’ attention to the ‘curious coincidence’ that war clouds should loom over Europe when there was an ‘absence of womanly influence in the homes of the mighty’.\textsuperscript{284} This article described Hitler as the ‘most womanless dictator’, but refuted the accusation he was a woman hater. The paper also drew readers’ attention to Susan Ertz’s book, ‘Woman Saves the World’.\textsuperscript{285} This novel was set in 1985, and offered a ‘provocative’ but unconvincing ‘tirade against men, as administrators of world affairs’, and made ‘constant reference to the weakness of women in permitting male rulership and domination’. The paper mentioned the ‘Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom’,\textsuperscript{286} and regularly reported on women peace activists,\textsuperscript{287} noting, for instance, how Australians were ‘well to the fore’\textsuperscript{288} at The International Peace Congress in Brussels. At this conference, women were ‘seeking a peace ballot conducted throughout the civilised countries of the world’. If the people of the world ‘decided on peace’, then these women wanted to set up a ‘people’s League of Nations to see that war is outlawed by the people themselves’. The League of Nations was clearly a disappointment to the world of 1936, with one editorial noting that Australian women had ‘little sympathy’ for the League because of its failure to deal with the ‘plundering dictators in Europe’.\textsuperscript{289}

A number of articles and letters addressed the question of women and peace in some depth. One editorial, entitled ‘Peace and the Woman’,\textsuperscript{290} noted recent ‘revelations’ from British and American Arms Inquiries:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{283}Moss, ‘Magic Years Ahead’, \textit{Weekly}, p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{284}M St Claire, ‘Queens of Europe’, \textit{Weekly}, p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{285}‘NB’, \textit{Weekly}, 4 January, 1936, p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{286}‘WWD’, \textit{Weekly}, 18 April, 1936, p.23.
\item \textsuperscript{288}‘POV’, \textit{Weekly}, 19 September, 1936, p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{289}‘Will Geneva League Help Women?’ \textit{Weekly}, 16 May, 1936, p.10.
\item \textsuperscript{290}‘Peace and the Woman’, \textit{Weekly}, 22 February, 1936, p.10.
\end{itemize}
we have learned an aspect of war more terrible even than war’s own essential
ghastliness. Here we find war discovered as commercial massacre, where
dividends are won and paid literally in blood and tears, with callous carelessness
as to whether those dividends are derived from the slaying even of one’s own kith
and kin.

This editorial interpreted Great Britain, America and Australia’s defence-spending of
over £300,000,000, £114,000,000, and £19,500,000 (respectively) as proof of another
war’s ‘imminence’. Whilst the paper claimed even the ‘veriest pacifist’ must see in such
spending ‘our first safeguard against the incidence of conflict’, it argued that the ‘surest’
and ‘perfect’ way to avoid war lay in ‘a rearmament of the women of the world’, for this
was really a ‘rearmament of the forces of the spirit of humanity’. The paper elaborated:

for the woman who has achieved motherhood there could be no greater task to
achieve than that – none dearer to her heart than this new and insistent
motherhood of peace.

Beyond asserting a link between women, motherhood, and humanity, this editorial made
women responsible for Peace but offered them no concrete means of achieving it.

Leslie Haylen also explicitly linked ‘Women and Peace’\(^{291}\) when he noted how
some Sydney women’s belief, that young people needed to be trained for peace, pointed
to ‘the task ahead’ for ‘mothers in the peace crusade’. He quoted ‘a famous writer’ who’d
said:

Women are the unofficial censors of the things that are not done in this world.
Anything unworthy that they have instinctively turned their back upon has
perished. If women – all women – denounce war, it, too, will perish.

Haylen saw in this ‘the logic of sound reasoning, and a gleam of hope for a war-troubled
world’, as well as ‘an admission that the outlawry of war is something that man cannot
accomplish alone’. Just as women were repeatedly told that they ruled the world as the
powers behind their husbands’ thrones, the paper’s repeated claim that women –
particularly mothers – had the ultimate ‘power’ to enforce Peace made women partially
or wholly responsible for war itself. Many women accepted this responsibility, with
Haylen reporting how, at a Yugoslav conference of the International Council of Women,

delegates from 42 nations (representing 40,000,000 women) declared: ‘We women have firmly decided that war shall not be’. Lord Aberdeen added to this that England, young people, and ‘the mothers of the world’ were all against war. One reader implicated women in war when they named military-inspired fashions as ‘deplorable’ and ordered women, ‘who are the biggest losers and the greatest sufferers through war’, to do everything within their power to stop war-mindedness. Another reader won £1 for stating her ‘honest’ belief that ‘the women of the world can prevent war’ by forming leagues whose ‘ambassadors’ would ‘preach against war’ throughout the world: ‘Women! The onus is on us!’ Even the paper’s poetry explicitly linked women and war (Figure 115).

![About Women](image)

The paper’s articles, jokes and letters on fascism, war and Germany show how the *Weekly* believed that another world war was immanent. Whilst readers were introduced to women peace activists from around the world, the *Weekly* never made it clear what

ordinary women should do to fight war beyond just ‘being’ women. Just as wives and mothers were told that their domestic role as ‘powers behind the throne’ made them responsible for the well-being of men, marriage, family, race and nation, the ‘war narrative’ running throughout The Australian Women’s Weekly in 1936 told women that – because of their inherent humanity – they were responsible for World Peace itself.

If anyone knows what war does to men, Margery, it is you. You don’t blame Colin for the ‘sickness’ of his drunkenness: you blame ‘the unknown powers’ that send ‘boys of eighteen to war’. Unknown powers? Margery, you blame men entirely for what happens to men in War: this is inevitable, seeing as it is your motherhood – motherhood as your womanhood – that dictates your attitude to war. You identify the ‘one fundamental psychological difference’ between men and women as being man’s urge to destroy and woman’s urge to create. You think these urges ‘complementary’, for would a ‘world of peace-loving men’ really be a ‘Utopia’? If women’s ‘creative urge’ implies ‘peace, toil, construction,’ and ‘stability’, whilst man’s ‘destructive instincts’ imply strife, change and ‘mobility’, doesn’t that mean a ‘feminine’ civilisation would be ‘entirely static’, and a masculine one unable to ‘endure’? Must ‘old Adam’ remain? Like Millicent, Margery, you know that ‘old Adam’ is dead: a new Adam has replaced him. Now men – ‘the half of humanity which has never grown up’ – have ingenious weapons and a world-sized ‘nursery’ to ‘annihilate’. (How strange you and Millicent’s marriages seem, Margery, for whilst you both uphold the value of Love and marriage you both see men as destructive children. Perhaps, like the Mothers in the Weekly, when a woman becomes a mother in the world of Coolami, she becomes a mother-to-all, responsible-for-all.) You wish that the ‘irresponsible child-mates of womankind’ would fight germs and sharks and rats and blowflies. Why must Man attack the life that Woman so ‘faithfully’ renews? You can feel the world reaching its ‘hungry hands’ for Richard.

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297 C, p.104.
298 C, p.104.
299 C, p.124.
300 C, p.124.
301 C, p.125.
302 C, p.122.
Let Man wait for a ‘brave new world’, you think, where the ‘food’ for their ‘artificial slaughters’ is ‘artificially produced’! Heavy with pregnancy, you know that the ‘unfailing maternal instinct’ is a lie. You think the starved ‘feminine brain’ is finally ‘fighting’ into ‘its own’: if old Adam is dead, so is old Eve! Woman may soon refuse Man his children in ‘a world not fit to receive them’. You – and ‘thousands of others’? – already feel ‘revolt’ flaming within you: ‘After this one’, you think, ‘no more!’

Like the Weekly, Margery, you make women responsible for war by making them responsible for peace: you locate in Woman’s fertility both the source of her humanising influence, and war’s fuel. It’s a powerful suggestion, telling Woman to protest against war with her womb: but how is she meant to do this? In your world, birth control is unspeakable. What’s a woman to do? Perhaps, Margery, you’d have come up with something less symbolical if you’d wondered less about redirecting men’s warring urges, and more about redirecting women’s creativity to something other than maternity: how can a woman act upon a warring world when she cannot act upon her own body?

If Jungfrau (where mothers are agonised objects, where motherhood is ruthlessly avoided, where enforced motherhood kills) shows us what society was doing to its women in Australia in 1936, then perhaps Coolami shows us – through the eyes of mothers – what that same society was doing to its men.

\[303\] C, p.125.
Conclusion
I began this research determined to gain insight into what Jungfrau and Return to Coolami meant to the ordinary women who first read them. New Historicism’s method of defamiliarising canonical literary texts by juxtaposing them against contemporaneous non-literary texts, offered me a powerful and historically-plausible way of re-envisioning these novels’ first meanings. Geertz’s interest in speculating upon the ‘imaginative universe’ of historical and cultural ‘actors’, plus his and Le Guin’s valuation of a scholarly discourse characterised by conversation and questioning, encouraged me to explore voices that allowed me to read and write about Jungfrau, Coolami and the Weekly in an insightful and engaging way. This thesis evokes the conversations that I had with these primary texts whilst I investigated how they conversed with one another. My resultant movement between different rhetorical modes, and my emphasis on asking rather than answering questions, is intended to provoke today’s readers to join my struggle to imagine these texts’ original meanings. The following discusses the problems and limitations of this research and then recounts my findings.

Though my desire to read Coolami and Jungfrau without anachronism was always fantastical, I knew that the Weekly’s phenomenal circulation would grant my interpretations historical plausibility. My focus on one year proved to be ideal, allowing me to engage deeply with masses of text whose continual references to the past and concerns for the future also granted me broader insight into the interwar years. I minimised reading the papers selectively by initially reading ‘over’ them in order to get a ‘bird’s eye view’ of their concerns. I then reread them with these patterns in mind, building up a formidable database of theme-specific information from which I reconstructed the ‘World of the Weekly’ in 1936. This thesis has focused on the themes that dominated the paper, and I have provided extended appendices for readers who want insight into themes that did not demand detailed elaboration within the thesis itself. I am acutely aware of those themes which the constraints of this thesis have disallowed me from discussing in depth, and I plan to write further on the Weekly’s Australian Nationalism, its representations of Indigenous Australians, the ‘feminine knowledge’
valued and shared by its ‘Home Maker’ section, its artwork, cartoons and jokes, and its advertising.304

Once I had written my history, I searched for a voice that would allow me to contemplate the novels’ original meanings within the Weekly’s world. Despite its dangers, I found that the intimate and inclusive second person point of view encouraged me to engage in the novels in a conversational and inquisitive manner, provoking me to ask questions rather than impose interpretations. My movement between traditional academic discourse and this second person voice convinced me that my attempt to limit anachronistic and subjective reading depended less on my rhetorical style than on truly allowing the Weekly’s themes to lead a meticulously referenced reading. As I had hoped, the Weekly did ‘defamiliarise’ my novels, forcing me to approach them from historically-specific facts, values and concepts that I wouldn’t have otherwise.

Part One of this thesis surveyed the published reviews and private letters that give direct insight into the original reception of the two novels. Both novels were generally applauded for their skilful crafting, the realism of their characters and their utterly different – yet ‘authentic’ – Australian settings. Though both novels were written in multiple, third person, mediated points of view, only Coolami was seen to break from ‘traditional’ Australian literary form. Jungfrau’s urban focus on working girls was interpreted as a break from traditional literary themes and settings. Both novels were primarily understood in relation to notions of the ‘modern’, rather than ‘modernist’. Whilst reviewers ignored the controversial aspects of Coolami, Jungfrau’s reviewers relied heavily on euphemism. This may explain why, though mass-circulated magazines like the Weekly gave Jungfrau more sustained and positive attention than Coolami, Jungfrau’s readers were so shocked by its explicit content. The private responses to both novels generally echoed the positive terms of the professional critics.

Part Two of my thesis reconstructed the ‘World of the Weekly in 1936’. In Chapter Three, I found that the paper’s covers predominantly glamorised public and physical women, whilst its ostensibly representative ‘What Women Are Doing’ page presented readers with women at the top of their professional and social worlds. I

304 Davies has already written about the paper’s relationship to Hollywood, and Buckridge has begun writing on the paper’s interwar fiction. See Bibliography.
contrasted this to the content of the paper, which suggested that what women were *really* doing in 1936 was watching movies, reading fiction, wondering about famous children and royalty, looking after their families and homes in an economical way, and consuming products that diagnosed their bodies and homes as dirty, dysfunctional and inadequate.

From these observations I turned to the novels and asked their women what *they* were doing. I immediately saw how *Jungfrau*’s women, especially Eve and Marc, were like the paper’s cover girls or the women on its ‘What Women are Doing’ pages. I also saw how, in *Coolami*, Susan’s and Millicent’s wealth made them candidates for Tilly’s society pages, whilst Margery was the only character for whom the paper itself might be relevant.

In Chapter Four I focused on the largest group of cover girls, ‘Physical Women’. I traced the paper’s ambivalence towards this ‘plucky’ New Woman, finding that such Amazons’ success depended on them retaining their femininity whilst being not only ‘as good as’, but better than, the men in their fields. I turned back to the novels. I saw how Susan’s ‘pluckiness’ and Thea’s obsession with others’ ‘poise’ were directly attached to notions of the modern woman. Poppy’s dance in *Jungfrau* became the Modern Woman’s body on display, and her audience’s reaction mirrored the paper’s ambivalence to that same body. I found the *Weekly*’s fears for the New Woman’s femininity in references to Thea and Susan’s boyishness, in Eve’s sterile manliness and in how skinny and plain Marc’s sexual identity seemed subsumed by a ‘vitality’ that fascinated men and women alike, a fascination that resonated with the paper’s interest in ‘manly women’ like Commandant Mary Allen. The paper’s equation of physical cleanliness with fitness, health and happiness revealed that Bret’s odd perception of Love as an emotional laxative was really the direct expression of a consumerist culture that constructed the human body as broken, dirty, ‘blocked’ and in need of external intervention. The paper’s obsession with internal and domestic ‘cleanliness’ also revealed how, whilst *Coolami*’s characters successfully turned to Nature to cleanse themselves of psychological baggage, *Jungfrau*’s relationship to ‘dirt’ was more complex. ‘Antiseptic’ Eve’s work and religion cleansed people of disease and immorality. Marc wore her stains with pride. Thea could not rid herself of the ‘stains’ Glover left growing within her.

In Chapter Four, I recognised how Tom’s relationship to his Madison saw him directly express his era’s awareness of the literal and metaphoric power of cars.
Meanwhile, the paper’s fixation on adventuresses made me notice how Coolami’s characters referred repeatedly to ‘adventure’, with their conquering of physical danger enabling their psychological progress. I contrasted this to Thea’s deadly adventures into Love, and ultimately recognised that the ‘pluckiness’ of the paper’s adventuresses was a purely physical quality, whilst the novels’ women needed ‘pluck’ for social survival. The Weekly’s outback adventuresses’ repeated reference to Aboriginals drew attention to the absence of Aboriginals – if not Aboriginal placenames – in Coolami, emphasising how the novel’s Australian ‘bush’ was really a pastoral, British idyll. The paper revealed how ‘the cruise’ offered women a domesticated ‘adventure’ defined by luxury and romance. This contrasted against Eve’s and Marc’s perception of the cruise as an accessible escape and panacea for women in social danger. The paper’s interest in adventuresses also highlighted how Thea’s splitting self is constructed via her movement between the peopled and unpeopled ‘natural’ world, with Nature’s timeless eternal cycles intensifying her confusion about the meaninglessness of life’s ‘incidents’. Nature’s timelessness was also key to Tom’s awakening from his materialism in Return to Coolami.

In Chapters Five and Six I explored the paper’s concerns about whether Woman’s Right Sphere lay within or without the home. Jungfrau’s explicit discussion of this theme, the paper’s glamorisation of career women, and the paper’s perpetual interest in career women’s marital status, emphasised how career women simply do not exist in Coolami. I found that the paper’s concerns about education generally presumed women’s inevitable domestic role, whilst its concerns about education’s vocational and commercial focus amplified Millicent’s and Marc’s critiques of materialism. Articles like George Warnecke’s and Bishop Burgmann’s, which detailed how political, economic and legal structures oppressed women, made Marc’s similar critiques seem less radical, whilst the paper’s perception of Russia as a progressive utopia increased the potency of Thea’s seemingly trivial references to the Soviet State. Likewise, seemingly trivial things within the paper grew in significance when read alongside the novels, with the leopard-skin wearing woman in ‘Girligags’ focusing my attention on the clothing (rather than the ‘sluttiness’) of Jungfrau’s ‘leopard slut’. In turn, this provoked a fruitful exploration of the notions of predator and prey, and performance and power, in the novels. The paper’s admiration for the fashionable ‘bachelor girl’ showed me how single working women
were glamorous *only* so long as they were — like Eve, Thea and Marc — young and attractive. I realised the superficiality of financially-dependent Susan’s ‘modernity’ and suddenly noticed that whilst Mabel, the only older single woman in the novels, was attractive and independent in Thea’s eyes, she was otherwise construed as a dominating oppressor of George Ransome.

The paper’s assertion that married women were the power behind men’s thrones highlighted how Margery’s and Millicent’s maternal attitude to their psychologically-dependent husbands acted upon those husbands in indirect but fundamental ways. When I first read *Coolami* I dismissively disliked it for its assertion that Romantic Love was key to a successful Marriage and a Happy Life. Immersion in the *Weekly* and *Jungfrau* emphasised how *Coolami* never considered women’s financial situation in relation to this formula, however the paper also showed me how *Coolami*’s presentation of divorce as a potentially ethical choice was actually highly controversial. The paper’s debates over whether marriage meant ‘freedom’ or ‘slavery’ made me notice how Marc used identical language to discuss the same theme. Most importantly, the open manner in which the paper and its readers hotly debated such controversial issues undermined many of my assumptions about the texts and their era, emphasising how Marc and Eve’s denigration of romantic love, their belief in the importance of woman’s work, or Marc’s damnation of marriage as a meal ticket, weren’t as radical as I’d assumed.

Though I realised that many of Marc’s and Eve’s views would have been ‘familiar’ to readers, their actual occupations must have seemed exceptional. The paper showed me how typical women’s work in Australia in 1936 did not lie in ‘careers’ but in dead-end, mind-numbing or physically strenuous ‘jobs’ as domestics, factory workers and administrators. Just as Thea saw marriage to Terry as an escape from teaching, the paper presented marriage as both an ideal and inevitable alternative to most women’s ‘work’. In this context, Eve’s career looked ridiculously unrealistic, though the paper’s reportage on domestics emphasised the realism of both her awareness of her exceptionality as well as her superior attitude to her maids. The only ‘glamourisable’ and common female job in the *Weekly* was secretarial work. The paper’s promotion of Faith Baldwin’s writing and the film based on her novel, ‘Wife versus Secretary’, made me turn from the tensions *within* women facing the ‘marriage or career’ bind, to the tensions
between the women in these spheres. I saw that a new kind of ‘wife’ stalked Australian streets in the 1930s, an ‘office wife’ whom the magazine and general media aggressively opposed to housewives even as it told both ‘wives’ they deserved to be ‘sacked’ if they didn’t conform to the same criteria. I suddenly realised that, for the woman at home, Thea’s initially ‘professional’ relationship with married Glover, and Marc’s relationship with a divorcee, could not have seemed benign. Whilst the paper emphasised the realism in how Oswald and Glover blame their wives and exes for their marital failures, it also emphasised the implausibility of Thea’s initial indifference to Glover’s marriage. When Thea realises that it is Glover’s marriage that truly separates her from him – and not his thoughts or feelings – she finally steps into the ‘real’ world of the Weekly.

Truby King’s dogmatic articles, and the paper’s articles on welfare, famous mothers and babies, and Canada’s Stork Derby, all offered insight into maternity’s dangers and the stigmas attached to single motherhood in 1936. This material ultimately suggested that mothers were under increasing surveillance by scientific ‘professionals’. I was amazed by how the Quins textually and visually dominated the Weekly’s pages, and by how the values of authority figures like Dr Dafoe and Truby King resonated with the fascism of Europe and the eloquent dogmatism of ideologues like Eve and Marc. I recognised the power of the ‘modern’ rhetoric of ‘science’ and ‘reason’ at this time, as most stunningly revealed when Australian women favoured Dafoe’s scientific ‘care’ over Mrs Dionne’s Motherlove. In this cultural context, Eve’s attitude to her patients gained significance, and her re-recognition of their humanity, as prompted by Thea’s pregnancy, suddenly read as Cusack’s attack on the dehumanising impact of modern medicine. I imagined my novels’ first readers in this same cultural context and wondered if they – like Thea, Susan, Eve and Marc – were struggling to formulate their own ‘theories’ on life in a rhetoric of reason which, no matter its popularity or eloquence, could never reconcile their thoughts with their feelings.

Whilst I ‘knew’ the paper would be silent on women’s experience of unwanted pregnancy, birth control and abortion, immersion in the Weekly let me hear that silence, making me truly understand just how unspeakable such things were. I suddenly felt the shock-impact of Jungfrau’s open discussion of abortion and adultery, whilst Coolami and Jungfrau’s positing of pregnancy as a parasitic condition, and their association of
maternity with illness and death, suddenly seemed exceptional and radical. The paper’s allusions to the stigma attached to unwed mothers made Thea’s apparent indifference to her baby’s illegitimacy seem absurd, whilst highlighting the realism of Susan’s choice to marry. Similarly, the paper’s mixed attitudes towards infant mortality showed the realism of everyone’s indifference to the death of Susan’s baby. Susan’s suggestion that ‘maybe’ that death was ‘for the best’ gave context to Eve’s curiously co-existent beliefs that, though abortion was ‘murder’, it was ‘fortunate’ that the babies of ‘unfortunate’ women should die. I realised that there was an acceptable form of ‘birth control’ in interwar Australia, namely, the ‘natural’ death of live babies. Most importantly of all, perhaps, immersion in the Weekly sensitised me to the euphemisms used in both novels. I suddenly noticed possible allusions to abortion in Coolami and realised its explicit reference to birth control meant it was not the conventionally ‘safe’ text I’d initially dismissed it as.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I found that the paper’s allusions to fascism, and its repeated critique of war, amplified Millicent’s and Margery’s war critiques. Though the Weekly’s silence on contraception showed how Margery’s suggestion of a maternal strike could only be symbolical, the paper also showed me how her and Millicent’s views weren’t as unique as I’d initially thought. Rather, they were part of a mainstream, maternal critique of war. The paper and Coolami thus mutually emphasised how mothers – whilst being increasingly infantilised and dehumanised by ‘professional’, scientific and consumer industries – were also being made increasingly responsible for all of the world’s ills. It was both eerie and poignant to read the paper’s tentative reportage on European ‘War Clouds’, particularly its obvious interest in Hitler’s marriage and health reforms. Such reportage again revealed how the society in which the novels first circulated was one whose beliefs and values were in a confusing state of flux. Ultimately, the paper’s maternal critique of war changed my perception of the novels: whilst Jungfrau always seemed like a book about what Australian society was doing to ‘modern’ women in the 1930s, the Weekly emphasised how Coolami was just as concerned about what that same society was doing to its men.

My New-Historicist inspired experiment in reading and writing offers a new means of imagining and valuing Return to Coolami, Jungfrau and The Australian Women’s Weekly. This thesis shows how my deep immersion in the Weekly has given me
a unique, and historically-specific ‘sense’ of Australian women’s concerns in 1936 that has enabled me to read these novels in a way that combines feeling with knowing, asking with answering, and evidence with imagination.

Do the worlds of the novels and the Weekly really intersect? Do you know what I see? I see the Weekly for sale on a newspaper stand on one of Jungfrau’s sharply drawn Sydney streets, perhaps in front of the Sun’s offices outside Thea’s bedroom window. I see Eve and Marc hurrying by, on their way to work. People look up, noticing: Eve, a cool white light; Marc, a crimson flash of fire. Thea wanders by, pining for Glover, putting off school, day dreaming. People notice her too: she’s a white china doll; something made for a child, in the image of a child. She stops by the newsstand and picks up the Weekly. She flicks through it. She hovers over one of its many, random poems. She flicks to the back, to see what its free novel is: it’s Return to Coolami. She stands there, paused, her purse in one hand, the magazine in the other, as if weighing things up...
Appendix One:
The story of *Return to Coolami*’s publication
In Dark’s archive, there seems to be an infinite number of royalty statements, contracts and letters between Dark, Curtis Brown (her literary agent) and American and British publishers. Drusilla Modjeska, in her article discussing the ill-fated publishing history of *Prelude to Christopher,* does an excellent job of untangling a story from such documents, piecing together Dark’s persistent and frustrated attempts to get *Prelude* reprinted in Australia, Britain and America. Modjeska’s article provides me the essential bones and background for unravelling *Coolami’s* publication story from this confusing papery mess, for *Prelude* seems to have competed against *Coolami* throughout time: the author’s favourite text vs. the public and the publishers’ favourite text; the literary novel vs. the popular novel; the macabre theme vs. the predictable gratifications of the romantic plot. Modjeska says that she turned to Dark’s archive to work out what caused Dark’s formal retreat from modernism, as represented by her *Timeless Land* trilogy. Her essay thus traces how Dark’s modernist experiments were hampered by publishers’ expectations as to what a female colonial writer can or should be writing. I am turning to Dark’s papers primarily to get a sense of *Coolami’s* publishing ‘success’ over time, as background for my research on how the novel might have been understood by its original readers. Whilst the data in these papers does not tell me what the novel ‘meant’ to these readers, it does show how many people thought the book worth buying, whilst offering insight into what publishers identified as the novel’s ‘qualities.’

The correspondence regarding the publication of *Return to Coolami* seems to begin in October 1935, with a letter from Collins Publishers regarding the proofs of the novel. By March, 1936, Collins was writing to Dark to congratulate her on the ‘particularly good’ sales of *Coolami:* 1,840 had been sold at ‘home,’ and she had achieved 1,110 Colonial sales. (Could anything make Dark’s ‘Antipodean’ status clearer than how these figures were divided and named?) Collins stated that hers were ‘very good figures for a first novel,’ adding that *Coolami* had been accepted by Macmillan in America. Collins also commended *Prelude* but noted that it would not be ‘so easy to

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1 See Dark’s archives at the Mitchell Library, State Library of N.S.W., MLMSS 4545/25/26/27.
3 Modjeska, ‘Hoodoo,’ p.76.
4 ibid, p.79.
6 Collins Publishers (London) to Dark, 12 March, 1936, MLMSS 4545/25.
handle’ as Coolami, though everyone was ‘very interested’ in it. Collins added that Dark’s new unpublished novel, Gnome in Sunlight, was thought by its in-house readers to be ‘more disconnected’ and ‘not quite so good’ as Coolami. At the end of March, Dark replied to Collins with thanks, telling him that her own readers of Gnome all agreed ‘it was considerably better’ than Coolami. She also declined an invitation to visit England due to everything seeming ‘so unsettled’: she and Eric did not want to ‘risk’ leaving work and their sons ‘when it might become difficult if not impossible to get back to them.’ This shows how shifts in European politics were, even before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, perceived from Australia as being both significant and dangerous. Dark also pleaded for understanding in regards to her rate of production: ‘I am working hard at my new novel, but I write slowly and with truly awful difficulty!’

In a letter to Collins in April, Dark described Coolami as ‘cheerful,’ and hoped that Prelude’s winning of the Australian Literature Society’s gold medal would make way for its Australian re-release. (Coolami was printed before Prelude in Britain; in Australia, P.R. Stephensen’s original 1934 edition of Prelude sold only 500 out of 1000 copies). In July, Collins wrote to Dark expressing the hope that Prelude would have even better reception from the press than Coolami. Modjeska seems to see Coolami’s success as overshadowing Prelude’s potential and perhaps, in America, it did. However, it was equally likely that Coolami ‘softened’ Dark’s British readers up, making them more open to Prelude’s blacker and more complex subject matter. Whilst Coolami was not modernist in its romantic ‘theme,’ it was modernist in its crafting and in its focus on inner psychological states: the combination of its conventional content and experimental form thus made it an ideal ‘bridging’ text to Prelude.

In August, Curtis Brown wrote to Dark from New York, quoting Macmillan’s reasoning for not publishing Prelude:

‘we do not think it advisable to bring out this book over here. Judging from our own reaction to it, it is neither as subtle nor as well executed as Return to Coolami and I think it would be a mistake from Miss Dark’s point of view to have this

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7 This would be published as Sun Across the Sky
9 Dark to Collins Publishers (London), 7 April, 1936, MLMSS 4545/25.
appear as her second book. We have not, to be sure, had tremendous success with her first but it is a book which has a great deal of distinction and one which I hope will serve to lay the right foundation for later success on her part. I hope therefore that you will be able to dissuade Miss Dark from endeavouring to publish the book over here at this time as I feel sure it would be a definite mistake from her point of view.'

Curtis Brown reinforced Macmillan’s statement with the request: ‘I hope, therefore, you will agree to putting this at one side,’ reminding Dark that her work was contractually under option. Dark was being treated in a most paternalistic manner by both her agent and Macmillan, neither of whom seemed to have much respect for her authorial judgement or for her right to determine the path of her own writing career. In this letter, the power of the publisher to determine authorial image – that is, in this case, to demand genre – is evident. As Modjeska notes, Curtis Brown (paid at 10% of Dark’s earnings) was meant to argue Dark’s case for her, not to side with a publisher’s refusal to consider her work. What is of most interest to me, however, is how Macmillan’s belief that Coolami was written before Prelude deeply influenced both how the latter was read and their perception of ‘what kind of a writer’ Dark was. What is also of interest are the qualities which Macmillan associated with Coolami’s ‘distinction,’ namely its ‘subtlety,’ and its effective ‘execution.’ It was thus, ostensibly, in its ‘technique’ that Coolami’s superiority lay. However, as Prelude’s difference to Coolami lies primarily in its content, it seems more likely that Coolami’s benign subject matter made it more attractive to the American publisher.

One week after their patronising letter, Curtis Brown again wrote to Dark from New York:

‘I have just had a chance to read again Return to Coolami, and I am taking this opportunity of telling you how good I think it is. It may not attain the best seller lists here but it augers well for your future…

Macmillan tells me that they have been selling about one hundred copies a week, but total sales to date are not very much, being about fifteen hundred.

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12 Curtis Brown (New York) to Dark, 11 August, 1936 MLMSS 4545/25.
If I may say so, I think your best asset is your keen awareness.\textsuperscript{14}

Is Curtis Brown manipulating Dark here through careful praise? This letter certainly reads as a ‘follow up’ to his earlier pushy request that she give up on an American publication of \textit{Prelude}, and it is equally paternalistic, as if Dark needed advising on her ‘future.’

In November, Dark wrote to a Mr Collins\textsuperscript{15} of \textit{Prelude}’s winning of the Evening Standard’s Book of the Month:

‘[Macmillan’s] statement that they considered it less good that \textit{Coolami} is one that I simply can’t take seriously or finally. Was this the opinion of one reader or several? All the really competent criticism I have had supports my own view that it is an infinitely better book than \textit{Coolami}... It does not, of course, come under the heading of a subsequent book to \textit{Coolami} as it was published in Australia before \textit{Coolami} was written, and thus there would be nothing in my contract with Macmillan to prevent this.’

In this letter, Dark implicitly accused her agent and Macmillan of ‘incompetence,’ of being unable to value literary work correctly. Her own valuation of \textit{Coolami} was clear: it was ‘infinitely’ worse than \textit{Prelude}. Dark also – again, at the politically astute level of implication – threatened to try another publisher for \textit{Prelude} if Macmillan continued to ignore her arguments for American publication. In December, Curtis Brown replied to Dark’s threat and continued their polite sparring match. Again, Brown quoted Macmillan:

‘I grant that \textit{Return to Coolami} was not as successful as we hoped it might be, but it did establish her as a writer of serious and skilful fiction, and it seems to us a very sound foundation on which to build. Had we had a chance to consider \textit{Prelude to Christopher} prior to \textit{Return to Coolami} we should undoubtedly have brought it out recognising in it the promise of a good writer. As a book to follow \textit{Return to Coolami}, however, it has definite disadvantages. It is melodramatic in conception and is not as mature a work as \textit{Return to Coolami}... You know as well

\textsuperscript{14} Curtis Brown (New York) to Dark, 18 August, 1936, MLMSS 4545/25.

\textsuperscript{15} It seems a ‘Mr A.C. Collins’ may have been working at the New York office of Curtis Brown, hence it is unclear if this letter is to Mr Collins at the publishing house in London, or the former. I think it is the former. Dark to Collins, 3 Nov, 1936, MLMSS 4545/25.
as I how important a second book is and, to be frank, we do not want to take a chance with this novel as a second book…”\textsuperscript{16}

The random contingencies involved in a text and author’s reception is again clear. These letters show how the intertextual process of relating one book to another, and of relating those readings to a specific author (or, more particularly, to a ‘new, woman writer’) profoundly affected the publication of Dark’s work. Were Prelude written by a man, would anyone have been so concerned for the ‘image’ it gave its author? Were Prelude as ‘Australian’ as Coolami, would it have been more appealing and ‘identifiable’ to international readers? Was Coolami’s romantic content ‘mature’ or ‘feminine’? Reading Prelude before Coolami, as I myself have done, makes Dark seem a very challenging writer: Coolami is horribly lightweight in comparison, irrespective of its technical polish. Having read Coolami first, however, readers like Macmillan clearly recoiled from Prelude’s macabre difference. This letter truly emphasises how the context of a text’s reception powerfully influences understandings not only of that text, but its author. Curtis Brown again ordered Dark to put Prelude aside:

‘all publishers want to see a future for themselves when they take on an author…
if Macmillan has convinced you that it would be poor strategy to have Prelude to Christopher your second book here, then it also follows that it would be even worse strategy to have it come out under another publisher’s imprint. Naturally, it would annoy Macmillan considerably.’\textsuperscript{17}

Polite demands, polite refusals, polite threats! How ‘little’ Dark seems in these letters, ricocheting between the ‘powers that be,’ as irritating – and consequential – as a fly.

Modjeska also notes how the difficult reality of ‘commercial exchange’ is ‘never far below the surface’ of these letters.\textsuperscript{18} She believes that such pressure ‘left its mark’ on the form and theme of Dark’s later novels, where she made a ‘sideways move’ to the popular genre of the ‘semi-historical novel,’ a move that was duly rewarded: she made $27,000 in a single royalty period in 1942.\textsuperscript{19} Modjeska suggests that Dark ‘knew that

\textsuperscript{16} Curtis Brown (New York) to Dark, 7 Dec, 1936, MLMSS 4545/25.
\textsuperscript{17} Curtis Brown (New York) to Dark, 7 Dec, 1936, MLMSS 4545/25.
\textsuperscript{18} Modjeska, ‘Hoodoo,’ p. 90.
\textsuperscript{19} ibid, pp. 90-91.
money has a good deal to do with how books happen, and *Prelude*’s fate shows how publishers can impact not only what gets written, but also ‘what gets imagined.’

Perhaps Dark’s generic shifts simply signalled her acceptance that popular literary packaging was the most reliable way to communicate her ideas to the widest range of people: perhaps her ‘sideways’ move in technique thus had less to do with money, or publishing pressure, than her desire to be read. Perhaps she was bored with the predictability of her own technique. Perhaps she wanted to do exactly what the literary circles were pressuring writers to do then: write the ‘great Australian’ novel.

In January, 1937, Collins wrote to Dark of *Prelude*’s success in Britain:

‘This book has had some excellent reviews… The sales too have been good and show a considerable increase in the Home Sales of *Return to Coolami*, being to date 760 more than that book.’

The sales of *Prelude* then stood at 2,730 copies ‘at Home’ and 780 ‘Colonial’ copies (making a total of 3,510). These figure did not include the previous 500 copies that were published and sold by P.R. Stephensen in 1934, and Collins blames *Prelude*’s lower colonial sales on this previous publication. By this time, *Coolami* had sold 1,964 copies ‘at Home’ and 1,318 ‘Colonial’ copies (making a total of 3,282). From these figures, and totally at odds with Macmillan’s fears and predictions, *Prelude* was clearly the more successful text. So again, and now armed with hard evidence, Dark wrote to Curtis Brown in New York:

‘The “case” for *Christopher* seems to be a pretty sound one, quite apart from my own conviction that it is a far better, if less pleasant, book than *Coolami*. Without exception the best critics in England and Australia have supported this view… And its sales in England for the first two months have exceeded the total sales there of *Coolami* by 700 odd.’

The book, nevertheless, remained unpublished in America.

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20 ibid, p.76.
21 ibid, p.90.
23 ibid.
24 Ibid.
In October, 1937, Dark received a letter from The Australian Literature Society announcing that *Return to Coolami* had been awarded the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. It was considered ‘the best novel published in 1936,’ just as *Prelude* had been considered the best novel of 1934. The letter curiously ended with the statement ‘There is much controversy on the pronouncement of *Coolami*. Would you mind telling me?’ *Coolami*, or its award’s, ‘controversy’ was not explained. Did commentators share Dark’s conviction that *Coolami* was a ‘punk’ book, and that not even its sophisticated technique could forgive its formulaic romantic themes? Did the controversy lie in Dark winning the medal twice? Or was the novel’s content – allusions to sex and divorce and unwanted pregnancy – where the controversy lay?

The final relevant letter from this period was written in November, 1937, when Dark replied to Collins, who had clearly been fishing for information about her next novel:

‘the time seems to have come when I must confess that I can’t help what I write, and even if I could understand the criticisms of reviewers and believe that they were right, it would make not the smallest difference. When I begin a book I have nothing but a handful of characters – perhaps only one or two – and the vaguest and broadest idea of a setting… With *Coolami* I had the general triangular situation and the idea of a car journey… it is not possible for me to decide what kind of book I am going to write, or even (except in the most tentative way) what it is going to be about, because if I tried the characters would change it utterly before I had done three chapters.’

Dark’s description of the writing process renders the writer as passive, merely the vehicle through which characters dictate a story. Such a description seems, however, to be at odds with *Coolami* itself which feels so structured, so choreographed and so calculated that it is difficult to imagine any spontaneity or confusion in its creation. The lack of drafts in Dark’s archive suggests this also. Writing much later, in 1976, A. Grove Day also felt that Dark’s psychological novels were ‘carefully scheduled’:

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26 Elvie Williams (Australian Literature Society) to Dark, 23 October, 1937, MLMSS 4545/30.
‘it is a surprise to be told that Mrs Dark is dominated by her creation… This testimony seems disingenuous… [Dark’s] psychological novels… are not the work of a writer who is in danger at any time of painting herself into a corner.’”\(^{29}\)

It is certainly arrogant to suggest that Dark is ‘lying’ about her own method of writing. Perhaps what is most fair to say is that, irrespective of Dark’s intentions or method of production, her psychological novels, and certainly *Coolami*, emit an *effect* of being highly structured and controlled by their author.

Initial Macmillan sales of *Coolami* in America were as follows: 1653, 60, 24, 9 and 2 copies were sold annually in the years 1937 to 1941.\(^{30}\) Collins’ first edition sold 1962 copies in Britain, and 1284 Colonial copies, in the six months up to the 30\(^{th}\) June, 1936.\(^{31}\) In the six months to 31\(^{st}\) Dec, 1936 this edition sold 51 copies in Britain and 92 Colonial copies.\(^{32}\) In the six months to 30\(^{th}\) June, 1937, 852 discounted copies sold in Britain with 288 Colonial copies.\(^{33}\) In the twelve months to 31\(^{st}\) December, 1939, 259 further discounted copies sold in Britain and 92 Colonial copies.\(^{34}\) Over 1940 and 1941, a total of 34 copies were sold in Britain with 60 more Colonial sales. By 1942, no Colonial copies of the Collins edition were sold with only 14 sold in Britain.\(^{35}\) In the 1940s, Collins published *Coolami* in their White Circle Pocket Novel series. For the six months ending the 31\(^{st}\) December, 1944, 9,600 copies of this edition sold,\(^{36}\) and by the 30\(^{th}\) of June, 1945, 14,800 copies had been sold.\(^{37}\) These royalty statements are not particularly easy to understand, nevertheless it is clear that *Coolami*’s initial sales were not negligible, especially in the White Circle edition, and the very fact of the novel’s reissue proves *Coolami*’s positive and widespread initial reception.

The trials and travails of *Prelude*’s doomed attempts to get republished are well documented in Modjeska’s article. *Coolami*’s republication was never, however, taken for granted by Dark, who pushed for its republication just as she pushed for *Prelude*’s. In

31 Royalty Statements, Collins, MLMSS 4545/27.
32 Royalty Statements, Collins, MLMSS 4545/27.
33 ibid.
34 ibid.
35 ibid.
37 ibid.
March, 1960, Dark received a letter from Rigby, in Adelaide, which asked her if they could reprint 20,000 copies of *Coolami*. These would be ‘pocketbook’ editions that would keep the text permanently in print. Collins was already considering a reprint of the novel and expected her to, therefore, await their decision before responding to Rigby’s offer. In April, 1960, Dark wrote to Curtis Brown, stating that she thought it ‘quite unreasonable’ for anyone to expect her to ‘wait indefinitely’ for Collins to re-issue the novel when she had had such a generous offer. Plus, she noted, Collins would only issue ‘a few thousand’ copies and then allow it to fall out of print again: ‘I am a slow writer and I simply cannot afford to have books lying idle when there is a chance of their producing some royalties.’ Abruptly, and completely ignoring her contractual obligation of three months, Collins demanded Dark give them six months notice of her move to another publisher. By June, 1960, Collins did finally commit to republishing *Return to Coolami* and *Sun Across the Sky* as part of their Fontana series. Rigby was able to publish *Prelude* and by the December, 1962, they had sold 639 copies. The rest were destroyed by fire, and Rigby never sold enough copies to cover Dark’s advanced royalty. Rigby’s entire series was suspended: *Prelude*’s unlucky fate seemed sealed. This disaster might suggest that Dark was ‘lucky’ to have rejected Rigby’s original and generous offer for reprinting *Coolami*, but Dark’s luck with Fontana was not much better than her troubles with Rigby. The royalty statements relating to the Fontana edition, like all of the others, are not easy to understand. I presume that when they refer to copies sold, they refer to orders placed by booksellers. The figures read as follows. In the twelve months to 31st December, 1961, 4254 copies of the Fontana edition were sold in Britain, whilst 7026 were sold for ‘Export.’ In the twelve months up to the 31st December, 1962, 354 copies were sold in Britain, 1092 were sold for Export and - 549 were Returned. In the twelve months leading up to 31st December, 1963, - 663 copies were ‘sold’ at Home, 363 copies were sold for Export and 467 Export editions were Returned. Referring to her query

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38 Rigby Ltd. (Adelaide) to Dark, 3 of March, 1960, MLMSS 4545/25.
40 Cable 136699 TA01316 EK718 London 22 1530, MLMSS 4545/25.
42 ibid.
43 ibid.
44 ibid.
about negative royalty statements for *Sun Across the Sky* and *Coolami*, Curtis Brown explained:

‘What happened on these two books in 1963 was that the number of copies returned exceeded the number of copies sold. Consequently there is a debt of royalties from you to Collins, instead of a credit of royalties payable to you!’

It is unclear why Curtis Brown states this sorry news with such glee (‘!’) and once again, the difficult business of being a writer, the sheer *powerlessness* of a writer’s position within the industry that depends on them, is horribly evident.

In November, 1976, Curtis Brown wrote to Dark to revert the rights of *Coolami* back to her. They mentioned its potential for T.V., and she wrote back thanking them for the reversion, agreeing that ‘marvellous things can sometimes be wrought by the magic of television’ (*The Timeless Land* had been made into an A.B.C. mini-series, screened in 1980). It was a very different world to that into which *Coolami* had been launched into forty years earlier. Surprisingly, *Coolami’s* story does not end here. In 1981, *Coolami* was reprinted as part of the Sirius imprint of Angus and Robertson. It was reprinted by them, again, as part of its Imprint Classics series in 1991. When I contacted Angus and Robertson Publishers (who are now a division of Harper Collins Publishers Australia), they refused to give the sales figures for these editions, considering them as confidential information between author and publisher.

*Return to Coolami* was never a ‘blockbuster,’ but, published in the 1930s, 1940s, 1960s, 1980s and 1990s, and still studied and read by students like myself today, *Coolami* seems to have been a text that has ‘stood the test of time.’

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45 Curtis Brown to Dark, 14 August, 1964, MLMSS 4545/25.
46 Curtis Brown to Dark, 19 November, 1976, MLMSS 4545/25.
Appendix Two:  
Thematic Grouping of the Weekly’s Cover Girls\textsuperscript{48}  

\textsuperscript{48} All of the following cover images are from the Melbourne edition of \textit{The Australian Women’s Weekly}, 1936, p.1.
1.0 Physical Women: Sports Girls

25 January

21 March

8 February

17 October
1.1 Physical Women: Driving Women
1.2 Physical Women: Horse Women
1.3 Physical Women: Domestic Outdoors

18 January

14 November

31 October
2.0 Public Women: Career Women

19 September

15 February

26 September

10 October
2.1 Public Women: Film Stars

20 June

22 August
2.2 Apprentice Public Women

21 November

5 September

2.3 Public Women: Consumers

23 May

5 December
3.0 ‘Love Calling’: Romantic Love

11 July

14 March

7 March

13 June
4.0 ‘Mirrored Charm’: Idealised Female Types

29 February

28 March

25 July

12 December
19 December

8 August

25 April
5.0 ‘Spinning Wheel’: Idealised Female Types (Nostalgic)

18 July

11 April

3 October
6.0 ‘Mother O’Mine’: Motherhood, childhood

22 February

9 May

4 January

1 August

26 December
7.0 Famous People

1 February

24 October

12 September
Appendix Three:
The *Weekly’s* Fiction
Novels

The following novels came free with each issue of the Weekly in 1936, and are available at the State Library of Victoria.

Baldwin, F, *Wife Versus Secretary* and *Masquerade*, 27 June.
Black, D, *Love in Exile*, 21 November.
Chancellor, J, *The Mystery of Norman’s Court*, 30 May.
Ewer, M, *Fifty Bob a Week*, 18 April.
Farjeon, JJ, *Sinister Inn*, 4 April.
Hedworth, B, *Husband to Anna*, 28 March.
Kyne, PB, *Jim the Conqueror*, 1 February.
Morgan, D, *Cruise To Nowhere*, 14 November.
Parrott, U, *Next Time We Live*, 7 November.
Raymond, M, *The Isle of Atonement*, 16 May.
Timms, EV, *Marry for Love.*
Webster, FAM, *By Shadowed Ways*, 13 June.
Wylie, IAR, *The Inheritors* and *With Their Eyes Open*, 8 February.

Novels for the 11 April and 26 December were missing in the SLV archive. NLA could not identify novels for these weeks.

* Copy missing from SLV. Undated copy found at NLA, though it must be from the last 2 issues of August.

**Serials**

The following novels were serialised in the *Weekly* throughout 1936. I have included the beginning date and first page of each serial only. Most serials lasted about six weeks.

Delafield, EM, *Nothing is Safe*, 10 October, p.5.
Wheatley, D, *The Fabulous Valley*, 6 June, p.16.

* Continued from 1935.

**Short Stories**

I have included the first page number of each story only. Most stories continued throughout the rest of the magazine, over four or five pages.

Webster, FAM, ‘Great Faithful Heart’, *Weekly*, 5 December, 1936, p.5.
Select Bibliography

Note: unauthored material has been listed according to date of publication at the beginning of each section.

1.0 PRIMARY TEXTS

1.1 Novels (and editions)


My references are based on this edition


Dark, E, *Return to Coolami*, Angus & Robertson (Sirius Series), Sydney, 1981.


1.2 Archives

Eleanor Dark

Papers held at the Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales:
MLMSS 4545 / Boxes 1-19, 21-31
MLMSS 4545 / Item 20X
Microfilm CY 1051, frames 1-757
For *Return to Coolami’s* typed and handwritten manuscripts see MLMSS 4545/2.
For original reviews see ‘Diary 1936’, in MLMSS 4545/24, and ‘Diary 1934’, MLMSS 4545/24.

National Library of Australia (NLA), in Canberra:
NLA MS 4998
Primarily correspondence and book reviews.

Dymphna Cusack

‘Florence James Papers, 1890 – 1993,’ Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales:
MLMSS 5877
For material relating to *Jungfrau* see MLMSS 5877/26
1.3 The Australian Women’s Weekly, 4 January – 26 December, 1936. (52 newspapers and 50 novels)

I used the original, hardcopy, Melbourne edition of these papers at the State Library of Victoria. There are content differences between these Melbourne editions and the microfilmed Sydney edition. The free weekly novels have never been microfilmed. See ‘Appendix Three’ for a list of all of the Weekly’s free novels, short stories and serials. See ‘Appendix Two’ for photos of the Weekly’s covers. All of my references, unless otherwise stated, are from the Melbourne hardcopies. I have only listed, here, those articles which are directly cited by this thesis, and I have excluded those whose titles don’t indicate the article’s specific content (e.g. ‘HHN’, ‘WWD’, FYWM’, etc.). Many articles overlap thematically, but I have positioned them where they are most relevant. Please see footnotes and appendices for exact theme-specific references, and please contact me directly for more articles from 1936 on any theme or event (hell_g81@hotmail.com).

1.3.1 The Weekly on literature

‘Splendid New Women’s Paper’, Weekly (Sydney edn), 10 June, 1933, p.2.

1.3.2 The Weekly on sport, the Berlin Olympics and Physical Culture

‘Solving a Problem’, Weekly, 8 February, 1936, p.10.
‘Athletics As a “Career”’, Weekly, 11 April, 1936, p.10.
‘Pat Norton’ (photospread), Weekly, 11 April, 1936, p.15.
‘Women Athletes and the “Gate”’, Weekly, 23 May, 1936, p.10.
‘Sport and Resort Wear’, Weekly, 8 August, 1936, p.17.
‘Vivacity... in Sporting Outfit’, *Weekly*, 8 August, p.32.
‘Let’s All Go to Olympic Games’, *Weekly*, 29 August, 1936, p.3.
Ferrier, J, ‘How to be Happy’, *Weekly*, 4 April, 1936, p.55.

1.3.3 The Weekly on driving women

‘This Year’s Car a Woman’s Car’, *Weekly*, 9 May, 1936, p.52.
‘Women Motorists – Here’s Your Chance!’, *Weekly*, 16 May, 1936, p.4.
St Claire, M, ‘Women Safer Drivers’, *Weekly*, 18 April, 1936, p.35.

1.3.4 The Weekly on adventuring women

‘Young Woman’s Hurricane Skip Round World’, *Weekly*, 30 May, 1936, p.4.
‘Woman’s 5,000 Mile Trek Inland’, *Weekly*, 1 August, 1936, p.4.
‘Glimpses of Girl Adventurer’s World Tour’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 1 August, 1936, p.15.
‘Woman’s Grim Trek Outback’, *Weekly*, 19 September, 1936, p.3.
‘Woman’s Daring Voyage in Yacht’, *Weekly*, 12 December, 1936, p.11.
1.3.5 The Weekly on cruising women

‘Why they all want to visit the China Seas’, *Weekly*, 11 January, 1936, p.4.
‘Dreamed a Dream that Came True!’, *Weekly*, 12 September, 1936, p.16.
Alcott, J, ‘“The Liner – She’s a Lady”... Kipling’ (painting), *Weekly*, 6 June, 1936, p.3.
St Claire, M, ‘Woman Helped to Build the Queen Mary’, *Weekly*, 8 August, 1936. p.4.

1.3.6 The Weekly on flying women

‘Ladybird, ladybird, roaming on high!’ *Weekly*, 18 January, 1936, p.3.
‘Women have no fear of the air’, *Weekly*, 11 January, 1936, p.2.
‘Air Race for Women is Adelaide Idea’, *Weekly*, 4 April, 1936, p.25.
‘Freda Thompson In Adelaide’s Big Air Race’, *Weekly*, 18 April, 1936, p.52.
‘How Seven White Women Live at Hall’s Creek’, *Weekly*, 12 September, 1936, p.52.
‘Jean Batten as World No.1 Woman Flyer’, *Weekly*, 17 October, 1936, p.4.
‘Scenes of Jean Batten’s Flight’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 17 October, 1936, p.17.
‘Half Hour’s Talk’, *Weekly*, 24 October, 1936, p.3.
‘This is Jean Batten’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 31 October, 1936, p.17.

1.3.7 The Weekly on Education

1.3.8 The Weekly on Equality

‘Encouraging Women to Talk and Talk’!, *Weekly*, 4 April, 1936, p.56.
Aiken, D ‘New Era Has Dawned for Maiden Aunts’, *Weekly*, 4 April, 1936, p.3.
Littlejohn, LP, ‘Equal Social Rights For Sexes’, *Weekly* (Sydney edn), 10 June, 1933, pp.1,2.
Moss, IH, ‘Magic Years Ahead for Women’, *Weekly*, 12 September, 1936, p.3.

1.3.9 The Weekly on Factory Workers, Domestic and Typists.

‘Juliet Never Wrote to Romeo at this Hot Pace’, *Weekly*, 25 April, 1936, p.4.
‘Did She Marry Her Boss?’*, *Weekly*, 20 June, 1936, p.16.
‘Domestic Workers Can Have Their Say!’*, *Weekly*, 27 June, 1936, p.35.
‘League that Fights Against Sweating of Workers’, *Weekly*, 22 August, 1936, p.52.
‘Mary Ann’s Hours Will be Numbered’, *Weekly*, 31 October, 1936, p.4.
Baldwin, F ‘Must a Secretary Have Sex Appeal?’*, *Weekly*, 21 November, 1936, p.3.
St Claire, M, “‘Perfect Secretary” to marry her “Boss””, *Weekly*, 30 May, 1936, p.4.
1.3.10 The *Weekly* on Maternity and Famous Children

‘Can You Tell One Quin from Another?’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 18 February, 1936, p.15.
‘The Quins are Running a Store!’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 21 March, 1936, p.15.
‘Shirley Competition Winners Soon to be Announced’, *Weekly*, 21 March, 1936, p.36.
‘Inoculating the Dionne Quintuplets’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 16 May, 1936, p.15.
‘“Quins” and “Quads” – A National Contrast’, *Weekly*, 11 July, 1936, p.12.
‘Beauty Unadorned is Adored the Most’, *Weekly*, 19 September, 1936, p.4.
‘Large or Small Families?’, *Weekly*, 26 September, 1936, p.12.
‘The “Quins” – Down on Their Selection’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 3 October, 1936, p.17.
‘Here’s What the Stork Race Families Eat!’, *Weekly*, 7 November, 1936, p.20.
‘How the “Quins” have Changed!’ (photospread), *Weekly*, 14 November, 1936, p.17.
Dafoe, AR, ‘He’s Telling on the “Quins”’, *Weekly*, 22 August, 1936, p.3 & p.46.
Dafoe, AR, ‘“Quins” Were Near Death Many Times’, *Weekly*, 5 September, 1936, p.16.
Dafoe, AR, ‘Putting a “Quin” To Bed 71 Times a Night’, *Weekly*, 12 September, 1936, p.36.
Davies, JB ‘Quins Score Enormous Triumph in Film Debut’, Weekly, 14 March, 1936, p.4.
Marsden, J ‘Five of a kind – or five kinds?’, Weekly, 6 June, 1936, p.45.
St Claire, M, ‘No Germs or Dust for This Millionaire Baby’, Weekly, 28 March, 1936, p.2.
St Claire, M ‘“Quads” are now restored to their parents’, Weekly, 25 April, 1936, p.3.
St Claire, M, ‘Rearing “Quads” on £3 a Week’, Weekly, 26 September, 1936, p.22.

1.3.11 The Weekly on Fascism and War

‘Prince’s Romances: War Hair Styles’ (photospread), Weekly, 14 March, 1936, p.15.
‘Oh, Mussolini... We Can’t Play Accordion!’, Weekly, 28 March, 1936, p.25.
‘Castles in Spain are Tumbling Down Again’ (photospread), Weekly, 8 August, 1936, p.23.
If the World Always Laughed at its Troubles’, Weekly, 18 April, 1936, p.10.
Florance, M, ‘Cosmetics Taboo’, Weekly, 16 May, 1936, p.3.
Lower, LW, ‘Hail Haile!’, Weekly, 30 May, 1936, p.11.
Marsden, J, ‘Stars Point to War and Rumours of War’, Weekly, 14 March, 1936, p.36.
St Claire, M, ‘People who risk their lives to Amuse the World’, Weekly, 15 February, 1936,
p.10.
St Claire, M, ‘Bachelor Girls of Spain Go to War!’, *Weekly*, 1 August, 1936, p.12.

1.3.12 The *Weekly* on Divorce and the Royal Abdication

‘Joan Crawford’s Intriguing Romances’, *Weekly*, 1 February, 1936, p.29.
‘Gable again in the marriage market’, *Weekly*, Feb 8 1936, p.35.
‘She’s Certain To Be Divorced!’ *Weekly*, 5 December, 1936, p.3.

Gable, C, ‘Clark Gable Continues his Life Story’, *Weekly*, 27 June, 1936, p.27.
Gable, C, ‘They agreed... To Disagree’, *Weekly*, 11 July, 1936, p.27.
Gable, C, ‘Matrimony Unsuccessful Again’, *Weekly*, 1 August, 1936, p.28.

Olivier, M, ‘Charity Begins... In Hollywood’, *Weekly*, 24 October, 1936, p.27.
St Claire, M, ‘Queens of Europe, Where are they Now?’, *Weekly*, 10 October, 1936, p.3.

1.3.13 The Weekly on Woman’s Right Sphere (Career and/or Marriage?)

‘Marriage... and a Career – the solution’, *Weekly*, 4 April, 1936, p.42.
‘Make Your Housework a Pleasure and Your Home a Slimmer’, *Weekly*, 3 October, 1936, p.4.
‘Every Inch a Man’, *Weekly*, 31 October, 1936, p.2.
‘Stars Don’t Last Like Women’, *Weekly*, 7 November, 1936, p.27.
Lister, T, ‘Romantic Hollywood... Ruled by WOMAN’, *Weekly*, 4 April, 1936, pp.28,35.
St Claire, M, ‘Real Pluck is Needed to be a Spinster’, *Weekly*, 14 November, 1936, p.2.
St Claire, M, ‘Her Job To Discipline Women’, *Weekly*, 14 November, 1936, p.3.

1.3.14 Miscellaneous Weekly

‘Mae... the Screen’s Foremost Siren’, *Weekly*, 15 February, 1936, pp.29, 35.
‘350,000 Papers, Think of it!’, *Weekly*, 1 May, 1936, p.6.
‘Look Masculine... For Real Beauty’, *Weekly*, 20 June, 1936, p.16.
‘Euthanasia... Is It Too Callous?’, *Weekly*, 12 December, 1936, p.35 & 6; p.24.
Aiken, D, ‘A man’s most fascinating age!’, *Weekly*, 30 May, 1936, p.3.

1.4 Original Book Reviews (not in archives)


1.5 General Primary Texts


*Thoroughbred* (film), KG Hall (director), E Seward (screenplay), Cinesound (Australia), 1936.

*Wife versus Secretary* (film), Clarence Brown (director), AD Miller et al (screenplay), based on Faith Baldwin’s novel, MGM, 1936.


‘Spain’, *All About Books*, vol.VIII, no.8, 12 August, 1936, pp.127.


‘New and Vivid Chapter’, in the *Australia National Journal*, Summer, 1939, (pp.82-83).


Smith, V (ed.), *Nettie Palmer: Her private journal Fourteen Years, poems, reviews and literary essays*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988.


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#### 2.1 Unpublished Theses

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Lee, RL, *Mary De Garis: Progressivism, Early Feminism and Medical Reform* (PhD), Deakin University, 2010.


O’Reilly, H, *Time and Memory in the Novels of Eleanor Dark* (PhD), University of New South Wales, 2009.


2.2 Secondary Texts: Reading & Writing Methodology


2.3 Secondary Texts: Reading Dark


Buckridge, P, “‘Greatness’ and Australian Literature in the 1930s and 1940s: Novels by Dark and Barnard Eldershaw”, *Australian Literary Studies*, vol.17, iss.1, pp.29-37.


2.4 Secondary texts: Reading Cusack


Rigg, J & Julie Copeland (eds), Coming Out!, Nelson, ABC, Melbourne, 1985, p.61.


2.5 Secondary Texts: Literary Contexts


Kelada, O, ‘“As the past coils like a spring”: Bridging the History of Australian Women Writers with Contemporary Australian Women Writers’ Stories’, Lilith, no.15, 2006, pp.48-60.


Moore, T I, Social Patterns in Australian Literature, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1971.


2.6 Secondary Texts: *The Australian Women’s Weekly*


Sheridan, S, *Who was that woman? The Australian Women’s Weekly in the postwar years*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2002.


2.7 Secondary Texts: General


3.0 Databases


*Marchesa Luisa Casati* <http://www.marchesacasati.com/casatihome.html#>
Author/s: Gildfind, Helen Catherine

Title: Women reading 1936: a creative writer’s reading of Return to Coolami, Jungfrau, and The Australian Women’s Weekly

Date: 2012


Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/37615

File Description: Women reading 1936: a creative writer’s reading of Return to Coolami, Jungfrau, and The Australian Women’s Weekly