Alternative Imaginaries of the Modern Girl: A Comparative Examination of Canadian and Australian Magazines

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> *How would our understanding of modernity change if instead of taking male experience as paradigmatic, we were to look instead at texts written primarily by or about women? And what if feminine phenomena, often seen as having a secondary of marginal status, were given central importance in the analysis of the culture of modernity?* (Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, 1995, 10)

Longstanding meta-narratives about modernity and modernism have not only neglected gender, as the epigram above from Rita Felski suggests, but also overlooked whole nations, including Canada and Australia. Standard accounts of their literature tend to focus on narratives of either the pioneering and settlement phases of the colonial era or the development of their self-consciously national literatures in the aftermath of the Second World War. In fact, the shared origins of these settler dominions, as well as their "struggle to legitimate the national literature" and overcome "the colonial mentality" which continued well into the post-war years to "disparage... the local product" (McDougall and Whitlock 1987, 7) stimulated the first of many comparative approaches to their literatures. It is consequently unsurprising that settler colonial cultures and their literatures are often either perceived as *never* modern or *born* modern, as David Carter has observed of the Australian scene (2013, viii-ix). This misconception tends to contribute to and become reciprocally reinforced by a relative lack of critical attention to the crucial modernising years in Canadian and Australian literary histories.

In addition to this chronological miscoding, both Canada and Australia are also typically and falsely coded as masculine societies. “It virtually goes without saying,” Kay Schaffer observed, “that national identity and the Australian character are masculine constructions” (1988, 4). Carole Gerson observed much the same of Canada, noting the “dominant view that the great Canadian narrative

concerned man's contest with nature" (2015, 345). As a self-described "feminist literary archaeologist" (Gerson 1991, 46), Gerson has challenged this view of Canadian literature as one largely constructed by influential male nationalist critics. Since the 1980s, Drusilla Modjeska (1981) and Carole Ferrier (1985) have also reinstated the place of a number of significant interwar female writers that had been previously overlooked in Australian literature. But, in Australia, Modjeska focused largely on writers of social realist novels and Ferrier emphasised women's political writing. Correspondingly, in Canada, Gerson's significant revisionist literary historical scholarship has tended to focus on women's poetry (1991) or on women's issues in social realist novels (in Sugars 2015). These studies may have restored some aspects of women's literary and cultural history at the cost of overlooking others.

One figure missing from these accounts of Canadian and Australian literatures is the Modern Girl. These studies seem to have emphasised versions of the New Woman instead. This emphasis potentially reinforces a version of literary cultural history that tends to reinscribe the sometimes problematic association between woman and nation-building (Henderson 2003). Moreover, this emphasis tends to obscure the multifaceted role played by women in transnational modernity in these settler colonial contexts, where the association between women, commodity culture, and modernity provoked remarkably complex reactions. In contrast to the earlier figure of the New Woman of the 1890s – 1910s, the Modern Girl was not particularly concerned with suffrage or nationhood. She was more engaged with issues of personal agency in a newly conceived public sphere. Through her association with cinema, jazz, fashion, glamour, and relatively open new attitudes toward sexuality, she experimented with ways in which self-styling afforded her purchase of new forms of self-determination and social mobility. "What identified Modern Girls," the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group observed, "was their use of specific commodities and their explicit eroticism" (Weinbaum et al. 2008, 245). Their emergence occurred "quite literally around the world" (Weinbaum et al. 2008, 1) as "a global phenomenon of the 1920s and 30s" (Weinbaum et al. 2008, 4).

Because of her emergence around the world as a figure of transnational modernity, the absence of the Modern Girl from standard and even revisionist histories of Canadian and Australian literatures is particularly conspicuous (Smith 2018). This literary lacuna is all the more striking in light of her

omnipresence in the Canadian interwar magazines Nicholas (2015) draws on for her historical study, and the Australian interwar magazines examined by Liz Conor (2004) and Jill Julius Matthews (2005) in their cultural histories. In standard accounts, the missing women of national literature can be explained by their active exclusion from the male-centred canon (Gerson 2015). But accounting for the missing figure of the Modern Girl is somewhat more complex, and connected, as Faye Hammill (2003) has hinted, to the commercial nature and success of narratives associated with her. This suggests that one major barrier to her inclusion within these national literary histories is her problematic relationship not only to modernity, but also to transnational commodity culture. The figure's association with unfettered consumerism may have been cause for anxiety amongst those who were in the process of constructing nascent projects of national literature in Canada and Australia.

In this chapter, we are therefore committed to uncovering a *female-oriented* literary modernity grounded in the "feminine phenomena" (Felski 1995, 10) of commercial periodical culture. Following the approach of Margaret Beetham, we turn to the magazine as "a genre which addressed the feminine" (1996, 1) in our attempt to understand the complex multi-authored periodical as embedded in commercial culture whilst not overly determined by it. We also follow Beetham in viewing the representation of women in magazines as neither simplistically repressive nor näively productive of female agency but in a way which "throws light on complex relationships enacted in magazines between readers, writers, and editors" (1992, 2). In comparatively examining the figure of Modern Girl in select Australian and Canadian magazine stories of the interwar period, we seek to expand understanding of alternative literary modernities through widening considerations of cultural value beyond the securely literary domain on which the important revisionist work of women's literary histories in Canada and Australia has been focused.

This is part of a larger project of critical recuperation that turns to magazines to explore what Michelle Smith has identified as "intriguing gaps in our knowledge" (2012, 12) of these nations' literary histories due to "a tendency to shelve works that may have been seen as backward or embarrassing" by retrospective projects of national canon formation (Smith 2012, 12). Arguably, the intriguing gap of the Modern Girl was less associated with anxiety about backwardness and more

informed by anxiety associated with her future and outward orientation, which potentially threatened the coherence of the project of literary cultural nationalism. In the Canadian and Australian contexts, literary and cultural hierarchies remained unstable during the interwar period prior to national canon formation (Carter 2004, 180; Kuttainen, Liebich, and Galletly 2018) when high culture was generally still regarded as imported from Britain and mass culture was seen as almost entirely derived from America (Hammill 2007, 19). Due to her relation to transnational, modern consumer culture, the Modern Girl was a figure of intense cultural contestation in these contexts, regarded as "simultaneously the sign of all that was wrong with the direction society was taking and the promise of a brave new world' (Matthews 2005, 19). Recuperating her presence in magazine fiction therefore connects to a broader task of deepening understanding of how these alternative literary modernities in settler colonial domains positioned themselves in relation to various, shifting values and cultural cross-currents.

Following Rasoul Aliakbari (2016) in his pursuit of "heterogenization," and resisting the urge to consider national literatures in terms of what Michelle Smith has called "homogenous lumps" (2012, 12), we examine how the Modern Girl was positioned and contested in Canadian and Australian magazines in relation to cultural hierarchies of taste that aligned differently in relation to different classes of readers. By comparing similar tiers of print culture (upmarket quality magazines versus mass market magazines) across national contexts, we uncover a more precise understanding of Canadian and Australian attitudes toward the figure of the Modern Girl than a single nation-centred approach might afford. Our titles include a set of comparably expensive and lushly produced upmarket quality magazines *The Home* (Sydney, Australia: 1920-1942) and *Mayfair* (Toronto: 1927-1936; Montreal 1937-1959); they also include more affordable and slightly less expensively produced, mass market titles *The Australian Woman's Mirror* (Sydney, Australia: 1924-1961) and *The Western Home Monthly* (Winnipeg, Canada: 1899-1932).

In each of these magazines, the Modern Girl was visibly present, in illustrations for fiction, on covers of magazines, in advertising, and in general discourse, often as a subject of debate. To focus our analysis of her, we have taken a slice approach, considering all issues in one year, 1932, when all the titles of our study were simultaneously in print. Our concern with fiction in these magazines is

paramount, but we read these stories alongside the advertising and non-fiction writing in which it is enmeshed. In particular, our interest centres upon a type of story we term "The Modern Girl Story," loosely defined by its focus on a cheerfully independent flapper-like character.

The Home

Carter has described the audience of the Australian quality magazine *The Home* as one "possessed of good taste and the means to purchase it" (2013, 137). Advertisements for a range of luxury goods including international travel, high class hotels, up-market hair salons, and ready-to-wear fashions from exclusive shops indicate that the magazine addressed, responded to, and helped shape the "smart set" in Australian interwar society. They also suggest the growing influence of American commercial and beauty culture. For instance, in one full-page advert for the New Jersey-based company Johnson & Johnson, a photograph of trouser-wearing Modern Girl instructs young female readers to "Stay Cool" (*The Home* January 1932, p.5). In the May issue, the same company tutors readers to use their product line Modess, purpose-designed "To Meet the Requirements of the Modern Woman" (*The Home* May 1932, 5). These elements suggest the increasing influence of some aspects of modern American commercial culture, but in most other areas the magazine maintained its steady gaze on Europe and England.

Visual culture in the magazine was generally dominated by material from London or the cosmopolitan centres of Europe. Fashion advice looked to Paris, in items such as "Fashion Points from Paris" (March 1932, 34), "Paris Prescribes" (May 1932, 40), or "Paris Notes" (December 1932, 83). Arty photograph features called "Social Studies" (March 1932, 21) filled the magazine with elegantly posed silhouettes of society debutantes, counterpoints to the Hollywood starlets that were beginning to fill other magazines of the day. And while film entered the review pages occasionally, the focus tended to remain on the plot of the play rather than the star. European starlets such as Greta Garbo or British theatre darlings such as Dame Sybil Thorndike (August 1932, 34; October 1932, 25) gained coverage, but cameos of movie stars are notably restrained. Society women who appeared in feature articles were typically from the upper echelons of English high society (June 1932, 27). Cumulatively, this material suggests that iconography around the Modern Girl is tastefully curated in

The Home, hinting at the increasing influence of American glamour, while still predominantly looking to England for cultural cues.

That is the magazine was restrained in its embrace of American glamour, and this restrained tone extended to its fiction. Whilst fiction took up a larger proportion of the magazine in earlier years, by 1932, it appeared largely replaced by a new section entitled "Instructional Articles." These were clearly targeted at the formation of the young woman's social persona; they offered instruction in contract bridge, gardening advice, recipes for fine food and tasteful home décor, ideas for entertaining, reviews of classical phonograph records, and fashion tips. Typically, only a single one- or two-page story appeared in each issue, and few of these focused on the Modern Girl. Those which did demonstrated a pervasively negative and censorious attitude, often satirical, in the vein of celebrated English writer Evelyn Waugh's 1930 novel *Vile Bodies,* the well-known send up of the moral and intellectual vacuity of British Bright Young Things. Suggesting a married rather than young single reader, and consistent with the magazine's aspirational and instructional tone, the stories of *The Home* in 1932 focused on married couples rather than single girls.

In one such, "Full Circle" by Roger Maitland, a travelling gossip columnist (remarkably similar to Waugh's character Adam Fenwick Symes), tells the story of "a rotter and a blackguard" who had "brought to London his newly acquired wife, a beautiful and innocent country girl who obviously adored him and who less obviously dreaded the environment to which he brutally introduced her" (*The Home* September 1932, 78). In another, "Man of Honour" by Patricia O'Rane, a marital affair is narrowly circumvented when the values of restraint and virtue overcome passion (*The Home* July 1932, 26, 53). Similarly, Velia Ercole's "Fool's Chance" raises the subject of possible divorce but proposes a lucky and conservative resolution. A husband trapped in an unhappy marriage in which the couple "talked always […] artificially, allusively, sometimes cleverly as in a drawing-room comedy" suggests a divorce, only to be dismissed by his utterly modern and blasé wife: "there seems no pressing need at the moment" (*The Home* October 1932, 42). The marriage becomes unbearably strained until a strange encounter in a hotel room helps the couple overcome their mutual antipathy and reconcile. These conservative stories seem to serve a didactic purpose that favours social

propriety and stability over individual passion and self-actualisation, which is typically portrayed as destructive.

Stories that focus on single girls are even more critical in tone. “The Cheat” by J. Plain is a satire of Bright Young Things. The narrator lambasts the Modern Girl, his sister, who is comically described as young, vacuous and insipidly enslaved to changing fashions (*The Home* November 1932, 44). In this story, the Modern Girl is forced to move from the city to the country, and desperately tries to fit in to the parochial scene. Yet as she becomes embroiled in a scandal between two old lovers, the plot devolves into a morality tale about the foolishness of a Modern Girl who thinks herself above others and superior to older, more established codes of social propriety which endure in the countryside. In another, “The Bright Young Things at Bridge, etc. etc.” by Dudley Gordon (May 1932, 42), the Modern Girl and her set are depicted as gormless gossips who idle away their time through the pursuit of aimless leisure activities, and who outwardly castigate the various failures of men while secretly competing against each other for their affections.

Thus in *The Home*, the Modern Girl is visible in advertisements and in tastefully displayed visual culture, but curated and framed in keeping with the magazine’s understanding and impressions of good taste. The models for ladylike fashions and behaviour mostly looked to Europe and to England, though influences of American beauty culture began to inflect advertising. Revealingly, in fiction, *The Home* is marked more by the absence of this figure than by her presence, and where does appear in fiction, the tone is didactic moralism or satire. She is depicted as a figure of glamour, but also of potential danger. Where she is not merely the target of directed instruction on matters of social propriety and restraint, she appears as the butt of a joke shared among readers in the know.

Mayfair

The remit, readership, and status of *Mayfair,* which has been classified as “a lifestyle magazine” targeting an “elite” audience (Potvin 2001, 3), suggest that it was a quality taste-making Canadian monthly that addressed an audience of equivalency to Australia’s *The Home.* Like *The Home*, the circulation of Mayfair was directed at a relatively small readership of local elites, comprising less than “20,000 copies in circulation” at its height (Potvin 2001, 32). In 1932, each issue contained one story, almost all of which were authored by Ellen Evelyn Mackie. Notably, Hammill

and Smith rank Mackie as among the many authors who sustained magazine fiction in interwar Canada who are now forgotten (2015 in Sugars, 359). Each of her contributions can be considered a "Modern Girl Story" which cumulatively forms a substantial body of Modern Girl fiction in *Mayfair*. In contrast to the negative portrait of the Modern Girl in *The Home*, readers are clearly meant to relish in the freedoms and fashionable lifestyle of the equivalent character in these stories in *Mayfair*.

In these stories, the Modern Girl can be found striking various inviting poses. She is inevitably "aimlessly smoking" (as in Tannis Chown of "Stepping Out," *Mayfair* February 1932, p.29); typically "slim and boyish" (as in Sally Mumford in "Leave it to a Woman," *Mayfair* April 1932, p. 30); frequently a youthful member of the smart set, talking slang and swilling cocktails ("just a snitch of gin," says one in "As Luck Would Have It" *Mayfair* March 1932, p.30). She is often "an acknowledged leader" in social situations, popular among women and able to command her "pick of the men" for potential suitors (as in "Good Fish on the Sea" *Mayfair* May 1932, p. 30); routinely flirtatious (as in "Wings Over a Dude Ranch" *Mayfair* August 1932, p.26); and at ease in perilous social situations (as in "The Goose Hangs High" *Mayfair* September 1932, p. 32). In general, she is also visually enticing, an object of attention and the agent of her own affairs: a seductive self-determining modern subject on the move, associated with travel (as in the aviatrix of "Wings Over a Dude Ranch" [*Mayfair* August 1932, p.26] or the ocean-crossing Pamela Lloyd aboard a "great liner" departing for home in Montreal from England [*Mayfair* May 1932, p.30]). Her links to the strikingly modern mode of automobility epitomise this heady mix of visual enticement, seduction, and agility. Take this car-race scene, for instance, in which the head-turning Modern Girl Betty Crombie is introduced in "Cheese Pairings and Candle Ends" by Ellen Mackie in October 1932:

> The vociferous tooting of a horn. Gary started, and turned involuntarily, to meet the challenging eyes of a girl in a robin's egg blue roadster, directly behind. A wrench at his wheel, and the car swerved right. With a bound the girl's throbbing racer leaped forward and shot on ahead. A low, triumphant laugh was borne back on the morning breeze.
>
> She was a lyric of color, sports suit and beret of gay buttercup, with a demure knot of yellow hair.

> "Boy, oh boy, what a color-study!" reflected Gary, despite a certain pique at the girl's mocking laugh. "Yellow and robin's egg blue—" Then, with a strange throb, he remembered her eyes. Deep blue, like hot-house grapes. Who could she be? He stared at the flashing machine which forged ahead with challenging speed.
>
> The spirit of adventure seized him. (*Mayfair* October 1932, p. 28)

Betty is literally paces ahead: modern, self-propelling, pleasure-loving, and fast. When Gary finally manages to pull alongside, the single girl and male immediately engage in flirty banter, which the female leads: "'Can you spare me a smoke?'" she asks, adding, "'Left my cigarettes behind. That's what comes of dashing off to race with strange men'" (*Mayfair* October 1932, p. 28).

Despite the pleasures that readers can indulge in through reading about Mackie's Modern Girls, her stories also offer a hint of caution. Cautionary didacticism is most often offered when Mackie's Modern Girl risks crossing class lines, race lines, or sexual boundaries. In "Stepping Out," for instance, Tannis Chown becomes enchanted with an Italian beautician, "[t]he Famous Adolph at the Ritz Beauty Salon" who "had society eating out of his hand" (*Mayfair* February 1932, p.29). Threatening to literally step out of the unspoken boundaries of her class and race, Tannis invites Adolph to a dance. Infatuated with his air of cosmopolitan sophistication, she pursues a romantic relationship with him even as one of her other male admirers points out that Adolph is a "dago" (*Mayfair* February 1932, p.54). When his bedraggled foreign wife turns up at the salon with a baby on her hip, however, Tannis sets aside her fantasies about his cosmopolitan sophistication and reframes him as a member of the working migrant class of Montreal. Fleeing from this scene of abrupt realisation, she goes in search of securely Anglo-Celtic "Nick" and "Drew." (*Mayfair*, February 1932, p.54): "'Bright boy,'" she demures, making light with red-headed Drew of her brief dalliance with cross-race romance, "'You knew I was only r-romancing about stepping out with that—*Dago*!'" (*Mayfair* February 1932, p.54). Similarly, in "Leave it to a Woman," the female character breaks unspoken rules of social respectability (*Mayfair* April 1932, 30). Sally, the young wife of Mr. Mumford, pursues an extra-marital affair with a varsity playboy who dismisses her as a mere plaything. To win back his wife and restore her reputation, Mumford concocts an elaborate scheme that succeeds in rescuing the imperilled marriage. As a figure the Modern Girl is fraught with risk;

Mackie's stories in *Mayfair* indulge in the fantasy of frisson and freedom which she seductively offers, but the plot's stylised resolution tends to restore her to the safe bounds of social propriety.

Just as the figure of Modern Girl threatens to cross boundaries of all kinds within these stories in *Mayfair*, the stories themselves also constantly threaten to cross class boundaries. A mix of sophistication and light fun, the fiction blurs lines between commercial and artistic codes, and mixes the registers of art and entertainment. The slick, polished feel of Mackie's well-constructed and often lightly satirical writing seems to have more in common with the sophisticated commercial art that graces the magazine's covers than with advertising or cinema alone. Further, as with many Modern Girls, Mackie's creations have an intense cinematic quality to them, described by their red lips, bobbed hair, or other visual cues, gesturing toward the "visually intensified modern scene" which Liz Conor has noted characterised modernity (2004, p.7), in which women were presented and learned to negotiate their subjectivity as embodied "spectacles" (2004, p.7). In "Stepping Out," most of the action occurs within the space of the cosmopolitan hotel's salon, where Adolph "practically made you a new face while you waited" (*Mayfair* February 1932, p.29): "The fashionable set lined up" for "the 'bridge face', the 'cocktail face,' the 'nightclub face'…" (*Mayfair* February 1932, p.29) appear elsewhere in the pages of the magazine, in its regular mix of photographs of film actresses, advertisements, and fashion illustrations.

The Modern Girl fiction in *Mayfair* thus bore witness to modes of fusion and hybridity. She embodied the tensions between culture and commerce that were at the very heart of transnational modernity in these settler colonial domains. Whilst some of the advertisements *Mayfair* carried, for Simpsons or Calay, for instance, represented Canadian firms, overwhelmingly this material was American in origin. As Potvin explains, accepting these American advertisements was for *Mayfair* "a matter of economic survival" in an unprotected publishing environment immersed in a deluge of British and American imports (19). Although Potvin notes that this American advertising was accepted as a necessary evil, he also concedes that much of the fashion advice in the magazine began by the end of 1932 to look to "New York as the preferred centre of style and fashion" (Potvin 2001, 10).

The Modern Girl thus sits at the cross-roads of these various influences in this magazine: on the one hand, she conveys the ascendancy of American commercial culture, and on the other, she appears as an alluring beacon of tasteful sophistication and modern style. Similarly, Mackie's own writing style was sleek and polished, marked by some aspects of slick genre fiction, but also conveying a knowing, sophisticated tone. Reading across the page from the stories, the illustrated advertisements often ran seamlessly into the fiction, in ways that complemented the illustrated stories, and again blurred the boundaries between commerce and art, commodity culture, and fiction.

The Western Home Monthly

In contrast to the relatively small circulations of these quality magazines, Canada's *The Western Home Monthly* was a mass magazine. Carrying a range of advertisements for inexpensive beauty treatments and kitchen, cooking, or cleaning products, it was also a household magazine, addressing both men and women of several generations (Hammill and Smith 2015a, 355). Having established an audience of readers amongst Winnipeg and the largely rural prairie provinces of Canada whilst also seeking to grow its readership, its editorials covered a range of issues of importance to the region, nation, and the Empire. In addition to discussions of politics and Christian virtue, it also dispensed relatively progressive advice for women and men on marriage and legal matters, such as "Matrimony and the Matter of Money" by Emily F. Murphy (April 1932, 12, 13). Unlike *The Home* and *Mayfair,* short fiction was its staple. It offered three to five illustrated stories in each issue, as well as the occasional serial. Many of these were genre stories, featuring crime, detection, or man's contest against nature. Modern Girl stories also appeared. In contrast to the way in which the Modern Girl was carefully curated in the high-class magazines *Mayfair* and *The Home*, however, these stories suggested mixed attitudes and a heterogeneous readership.

Montreal-based writer Anita Gabrielle Lavack's story "A Girl Needs a Trousseau" announces itself as Modern Girl story through its signal word "Girl" and its focus on her commercial desires. The story's illustration also announces its topic, featuring a buxom young woman with bobbed hair dancing with her suitor (January 1932, p.6). In it, the single working girl with designs upon a Montreal scion crosses class lines and successfully works her street smarts upon the society set. Taking a cue from another family who managed to "buy off" a chorus-girl who was threatening to

marry their wealthy son, a high-society matriarch employs a junior company man to carry out a scheme to break off the relationship. In a plot involving hijinks, mistaken identity, and a clever-twist, the wealthy son follows through on his intention to marry below his class, and the company man engaged to break off the relationship ends up falling for her friend, too. To top it off, the girls cleverly redeploy money set aside as a reward for the company man to purchase a trousseau for the bride, the matriarch's new daughter-in-law. In contrast to the plots of *Mayfair* and *The Home* the Modern Girl in this story manages to expand the boundaries of social propriety and mirthfully change the hearts and minds of the society set.

"The Run Across" (January 1932, 12, 13, 47) is another such contributed by a Canadian author, centring on a Modern Girl scenario: in this case Louis Arthur Cunningham, one of Atlantic Canada's most prolific writers of magazine fiction, who has been largely forgotten. Travelling on a passenger liner en route to Montreal from New York, Dorothy, the successful and independent main character, is portrayed as mobile and self-determining. She is in possession of "hard-won common sense resulting from five years of working for a living and making a good one" (January 1932, 13), and faces, on this journey, the daunting prospect of relinquishing her independence by accepting a proposal of marriage. A clever plot twist exposes her suitor as a con man, and restores her to the romance of her youth. The resolution to the story allows the heroine to escape a doomed marriage, and allows her to have the best of both worlds: her hard won career independence and the rekindled affair of her youth.

In other stories the Modern Girl appeared as a love interest with the potential to derail the plans of the hard-working male protagonist. In these sorts of tales in *The Western Home Monthly*, the Modern Girl is a foreign element, typically associated with American big-city influences. In "The Lipstick Sort" by British genre fiction author Florence S. Howard-Burleigh, for instance, Miss Sandra Merridew is characterised as "one of the most thoroughly spoiled of the younger and brighter set" and "[m]ade up, of course, as they all are nowadays to a travesty of the normal human colouring, but so attractive" (May 1932, 9). The owner of the garage where she parks her car dismisses her "with venom in his voice" as "that two-bit chunk of lipstick and powder, with the Isotta-Fraschini that she can't drive" (9). As well as a lifestyle characterised by glamour and mobility, she is associated with American values and with promiscuity ("The Lipstick Sort" May 1932, 9). In the serial "Out of the

Woods" by John Middleton Ellis, the Modern Girl is similarly positioned as an American temptress. The hard-working Canadian lumberjack and family man Con is lured by Clem, a mysterious stranger from New York who swindles the family out of their timber fortune. Down on his luck, Clem is forced south to New York City where he trains as a prize fighter. It is here that he first encounters "early morning throngs of hard-faced flappers […] as they rushed to their work" (May 1932, 50). Before long, he falls under the influence of Kitty Fallon, who turns his attention away from the wholesome girl-next-door character he has left behind in Quebec, and introduces him into the world of mobsters, racketeers, and rum-running.

In yet another, "Cinderella Meets the Prince," a didactic plot directs the young male suitor away from the allures of the American city, and back to the heart of the small-town girl. Alvin Deane, a young man of marriageable age from small-town New England, leaves his cloistered life where he feels the girls are cheap imitations of high-class city girls they have seen in magazines, in search of the real thing. At first overawed by the proliferation of "millions of short skirts and neat ankles" on the New York streets (15), soon finds city girls to be "tawdry" and "blasé" (27). Downcast, contrite, and resolved to return to his hometown, Alvin gives up on his quest to find the girl of his dreams. At the last stroke of the clock before his departure, however, Alvin meets a girl, Kay Cardiff, who lives up to his dreams. In a plot twist, it turns out that she hails from his hometown, and is equally homesick for it and for its good men. These stories thus offer a cautious warning about the allures of the Modern Girl, and her associated trappings of commercialised American modernity signified by big city life.

In part, the mixed attitudes toward the Modern Girl encountered in this periodical may be explained by its heterogeneous audience. But the mixed nature of the stories also suggests that the magazine was at the cross-roads of American and Canadian influences, and marked by both the trappings of modernity as well as antimodernist impulses. Many of the stories were illustrated by lush, two-tone images of what Jaleen Grove identifies as the iconography of "wilderness adventure and that of pretty girls" which signified, as she explains, "the rivalry of the opposing political sentiments known as 'nationalism' and 'continentalism'" that positioned the mass market Canadian magazine as a cultural battleground (Grove 2014, 13). As an eye-catching feature of the magazine's illustration, set

against other aspects of the magazine's visual culture, comprising images of untamed landscapes and wild animals, and photographs from the Shadowlands section featuring Canadian starlets who made it in Hollywood, iconography of the Modern Girl not only blurred the boundary between advertising and fiction, but also signified the way in which this Canadian mass magazine was itself positioned within and a witness to a various cultural cross-currents.

The Australian Woman's Mirror

In strictly economic terms *The Australian Woman's Mirror* targeted a similar range of readership to *Western Home Monthly* in ways that suggest is can be considered its equivalent. A weekly magazine published by the *Bulletin* (Sydney: 1980-1984), it was an affordable title that appealed to the aspirational, working class. It was issued on newsprint-grade paper, and presented a mix of serialised novels, short stories, and advice for housewives and single working women. With advertisements for inexpensive beauty treatments like cold creams and soaps, as well as foodstuffs and home products like "Silver Star Rice Starch" or "Fairy Dyes" it offered monthly dress patterns, recipes, children's pages, book recommendations, and photo features filled with attractive film stars and their latest movies. It also sometimes printed articles defending the role of women in the workplace and occasionally offered advice for women seeking a divorce or wishing to buy property.

In contrast to *The Western Home Monthly*, however, the *Mirror* did not address a mixed audience of men and women readers. Rather, as the counterpart to the predominantly masculine and nationalist *Bulletin* out of which it emerged as an offshoot, it attempted to compete with the new magazines imported from Britain and America that offered something more appealing to the growing segment of the female buying public. Even the title "the mirror" suggested a space of intimacy and reflection, a refuge for feminine dreams of wish-fulfilment or escape from the masculine public sphere. Its first editorial proclaimed that "[v]ast changes have taken place in [women's lives] during recent years; and the daily and weekly newspapers written chiefly by men for men no longer fully answer their needs. 'The Woman's Mirror' proposes to serve those needs" (23 Oct 1924, p.2). Another of its selling points was its female-oriented fiction where "[e]very feminine interest and activity will be served in the best way" (2). Serialised fiction, short stories, literary anecdotes, poems and book reviews were its staple, comprising over half the magazine's pages, in which the Modern

Girl often featured. In contrast to *The Western Home Monthly*, the Modern Girl predominantly featured as the protagonist.

In one such serial, "Sanctuary," a number of single women negotiate the establishment of their careers in work and romance at the height of the Depression in Sydney. One of them is an aspiring actress who hopes to achieve fame in the Hollywood talkies. Their status as Modern Girls is coded by their fashionable dress, their use of cigarettes, their career aspirations and their relative freedom regarding sexuality. Yet while the girls and their friends readily cross established lines of social propriety, they know that they still must appear to operate within these boundaries. The last instalment shows how Janie finally dismisses her French lover's influence in her life and accepts her dependable male friend's marriage proposal. Ultimately, sanctuary is found in stability and security, rather than in romance and risk.

Many of the Modern Girl stories in this magazine are likewise didactic even as they offered working women dreams of romance and escape. "Romance" by Nina Lowe provides a clear example, as the protagonist is a hardworking farm girl who reads too many romance novels. She is ardently pursued by Bill, whom she dismisses for the dream of "one experience that would stir her to the depths; one great twang upon her heart strings; one romantic glow of crimson to light the world," something like the situation in "a book she had read and was re-reading – the story of an Arab who discovered a lady lost in the desert with a collection of Paris model gowns" (8). It is only when a Syrian beggar appears at the farm "in the midst of her romancing" (51), and threatens her sexually, that her oasis disappears. Like the stories in *The Western Home Monthly* this tale warns not only of the sexual but also the racial dangers of crossing the unspoken boundaries of social respectability. It suggests that Modern Girls are perilously at risk if they mistake their romantic fantasies for reality, which remains at once threatening and dependable. Like Tannis Chown's Anglo-Celtic suitors, the boy next door is ordinary instead of exotic, but he provides safe harbor in a world fraught with risk. As in *The Home* satirical pieces in *The Mirror* send up the Modern Girl. In one, "A Flapper Tragedy: A Short Story of a Modern Young Miss" (2 Feb, 1932 8, 35, 36), the Modern Girl is depicted as vacuous, consumeristic, poorly mannered and vain. The story's "tragedy" involves the flapper wearing inappropriate fashionable attire to school, where she experiences public shame and

admonishment by the head mistress who chides her in Latin: "*varium et mutabile semper femina*" (36) (women are ever fickle and changeable). Yet this type of didactic tale warning female readers of the vain pursuits of fashion clash with some of the non-fiction pieces featured in the multi-authored, multi-genre magazine.

In the 26 Jan 1932 issue, for example, an article titled "Things Are Changing For Girls" by One Of Them is bookended by attractive illustrations women: one of them is a distinctly Modern Girl poised fashionably next to her Victorian mother is clearly portrayed as outdated. The article laments the disappearance of men who "not so very long ago…courted us girls, invited us to the theatre and paid us attention in little thoughtful ways" (18). Nowadays, the Modern Girl author warns, "I have found that there are really two types of men—the man who looks at women from only the sexual standpoint and the other type whom women interest and amuse as companions, and who, if he loves, gives all his love to the one woman, and the rest of the world is to him sexless" (18). She adds, "[t]he first type of man means 'rocks ahead,' absolute trouble for any woman who could care for him. There are plenty of these men, no limit to their number, married and single" (18). Rather than warning against the Modern Girl, this article warns women about the Modern Man and even modern marriages. She cautions, "[i]n trying to give men what they want, they [Modern Girls] are trying to be what they are not. It is pathetic in a way; it is unfair to the girl" (18). The Modern Girl, she insinuates, should not play the game, but stand on her own two feet and keep enjoying the things she like, such as "dances, theatres and restaurants" (18), for example.

Not only does the magazine feature advice for the Modern Girl on matters such as men, but it also gives career advice. One such, "In a Detective's Office: The Thrills of a Girl's Unusual Vocation" by Private Secretary (19 Apr 1932, 11, 47) outlines the exciting rewards of a vocation with some risk attached, and outlines the dividends paid in the investment of effort and time to build such a career. The article is accompanied by a photograph of a "Miss Storey, a woman detective from the North of England," who "employs only women" (11). Styled clearly as a Modern Girl, she poses boldly in the middle of the photograph wearing a cloche hat and a luxurious fur coat. Another such, "The McDonagh Girls: Talkie Production as a Vocation for Women" by Viola C. West (12 July 1932, p. 9, 45), outlines the career paths of three ordinary hard working girls who achieved roles in

Hollywood films. Both of these articles reward the aspirational dreams of young working women, and direct their gaze to Hollywood glamour and London fashion, in ways that are reinforced by the fashion advice and advertisements of the magazine, which also feature the Modern Girl.

Directed into both the domestic sphere and to the working class girl who could be expected to earn her own money *The Australian Woman's Mirror* navigated the new identities on offer to Modern Girls in agile ways. Whilst providing dreams of escape and fantasy from domestic drudgery, the stories generally served didactic purposes. They warned young women of social, sexual, and even the racial risks of trading the dreamy images of the Modern Girl that suffused magazine illustrations, photos, and films, for cruel realities. On the one hand, the magazine seemed to offer aspirational fantasies for new glamorous careers, and encouraged the Modern Girl to become financially and emotionally independent.

Conclusion

Jill Julius Matthews has argued that "modernity refused" a tidy "segregation" between art and advertising, "promiscuously mingling culture and commerce, the beautiful and the vulgar" (2005, 19). As Matthews points out:

> Representing that fusion most visibly were modern women. Traditional symbols and embodiments of beauty, young women now engaged in selling and buying and came to symbolise commercial pleasures. The modern girl, the girl of today, the flapper, was both the subject and the metaphor at the heart of the international discourse of modernity… (Matthews 2005,19)

The Modern Girl challenges established and revisionist accounts of Canadian and Australian literatures, and in her boundary-pushing and code-crossing behaviour, even threatens the very coherence of orthodox approaches to national literature that have prevailed in these contexts since the formation of their national canons and survived challenges from feminist revisionism in the 1970s and 1980s. Whilst Canadian and Australian literary studies have largely ignored the figure of the Modern Girl until recently, it is all too apparent that she was a stock figure in their magazines and regularly appeared in their fiction, even as a figure of contestation.

Despite critical orthodoxies that have placed the mainstream magazine and the novel in opposition, loosely categorising the one as commercial and the other as literary, magazines of many kinds maintained a strong link with literary culture, publishing short stories and serialised novels of varying quality by a range of writers, and often including book reviews and other aspects of book chat. As Hammill and Smith have written of the Canadian titles of their study, "[s]everal of the magazines relied heavily on literary content" (qtd. in Sugars 2015, 358). These texts also captured a broad audience. Rather than dismissing these literary artefacts because of their popularity, Hammill and Smith argue that this aspect is part of what makes studying mainstream magazines "important" (359). We have turned to them not only because they allow us to put the Modern Girl back in the picture of the literary and cultural histories of these nations, but also because magazines can tell literary and cultural historians about their target demographic, and help identify the differentiated tastes of readers.

Our comparative reading across four magazines of two classes, quality and mass, has revealed that the Modern Girl was coded differently according to readership, and that her associations with transnational modernity, with Hollywood images and London fashion in particular, was framed in distinct ways which varied with the different remit and audience of each periodical. The way in which she risked crossing established and unstated codes of cultural respectability and good taste meant that different tiers of society were positioned in relation to her in distinct ways.

It would seem that on the whole mass magazines were more positive toward the Modern Girl than upmarket magazines, though she offered a fantasy of alternative lives to all classes of readers and can be found in the work of alternative writers, whose names were once well known by readers but whom have been subsequently forgotten. Presumably a risk of carrying this ambiguous class of fiction in an elite taste-making magazine was its uncertain status, and unclear affiliation with aspects of feminine modernity considered gauche, crass, or low-class. Just as the plot of these stories often worked to contain troublesome and transgressive Modern Girl by restoring her to the domestic sphere, these magazines similarly allowed readers to indulge in the fantasy offered by the Modern Girl while also seeking out ways to contain her potentially transgressive and dangerous qualities. Our essay has aimed to challenge homogenous approaches to national literature that focus on the coherence of the

domestic narrative of nation at the cost of overlooking these sorts of messy and risky entanglements with transnational modernity, and as such releases the Modern Girl from this domestic containment. Moreover, our comparative examination demonstrates the re-purposings of European and American cultural templates in Canadian and Australian contexts, both at the so-called edges of trans-national modernity, and outlines an alternative designation of literary modernity as *female-oriented*, rather than masculinist, as grounded in commercial periodical culture as opposed to canonical novelism.

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