The Beautiful and Damned: Searching for The Modern Girl in Australian Print Culture, 1930s

By

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Fig. 1. Blanche Amelia Evelyn Crouch (author's grandmother), circa 1930

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, who was the quintessential Modern Girl in every respect, and to my mum, the daughter of a Modern Girl, and my superhero. I also dedicate this work to my dad, who, even though he is not physically here anymore, has always encouraged me to keep going, and to always give my best—I miss you lots! I acknowledge the support of my supervisor, Associate Professor Victoria Kuttainen, who has helped make my candidature a rewarding and enlightening experience. I could not have survived these last six years without the cheers of support and love from my children, Jamie, Nina, and Elise, their partners, Kierrah, Peter, and Hayden, and two gorgeous grandbabies, Zoe and Lucas. Last but definitely not least, I acknowledge the limitless patience and unconditional love from my hubby, best friend, and biggest fan, Ric Lippmann.

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Abstract

A well-known icon of the American jazz age, the Flapper—immediately recognisable by her bobbed hair, red lips, and androgynous dress—was famously immortalised in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) and *The Great Gatsby* (1925). But where was the figure of the Flapper in Australia, and did she even exist in the antipodes? Why is it almost impossible to name an Australian book that might be an equivalent of Fitzgerald's? This thesis searches for the Flapper in Australian literature and print culture of the interwar period. In tracing her footprints across the pages of magazines, stories, and novels, it discovers that while Flappers were notorious figures in American cultural history, it was instead the figure of the Modern Girl who came to represent a more transnational and overarching portrait of interwar womanhood. Drawing on scholarly discussions of the Modern Girl in international contexts, this project attempts to recover representations of the Australian Modern Girl in print and literature. In so doing, it finds not only that she was in fact spectacularly present in Australian print culture of the interwar period, but also that she was a source of deep fascination and anxiety who variously attracted and repelled different shifting and contingent segments of the Australian reading public.

Her silhouette in Australian novels and magazines demonstrates that she embodied aspirations and anxieties in three key areas: work, mobility, and sex, and as such this thesis traces the Australian contours of the Working Modern Girl, the Mobile Modern Girl, and the Sexual Modern Girl in a variety of print and literary forms. Moreover, this thesis finds that her variegated representation across a range of Australian magazines that appealed to different sectors of the reading public—such as *The Australian Woman's Mirror, MAN, The Australian Women's Weekly,* and *The Home*—provides new ways to see the figure of the Modern Girl, and attitudes toward her, across a range of Australian interwar novels including Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau* (1936), J. M. Harcourt's *Upsurge* (1934), Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* (1936) and *Virtuous Courtesan* (1935), and Dale Collins's *Race the*

Sun (1936). Through its close readings of a slice of magazine media and a sample of interwar fiction, this project considers not only how the Modern Girl figured in this work, but also how work that featured her was received, both in its own time and subsequently. Ultimately, it concludes that despite—or perhaps because of—her position of prominent visibility in her own time, the Modern Girl won attention of both positive and negative kinds and that Australian novels about her suffered a similar fate.

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Short Titles and Reference Style

The following magazines will be shortened after the Introduction:

The Australian Woman's Mirror	*The Mirror*
The Australian Women's Weekly	*The Weekly*

This thesis uses MLA 9th Edition as a referencing style. However, the in-text citations for periodicals will take a slightly different approach. Due to the many inclusions of examples from periodicals in this thesis, I have included the author (when known), title, title of publication, date, and page. The Works Cited, however, still conforms to MLA style and will provide the reader with the additional information of volume and number. Additionally, the year has been included in brackets when first referring to novels, for example, *Jungfrau* (1936). This does not align with MLA style but has been included as the dates are pertinent to this thesis' discussion and analysis.

Introduction

> Did I really say "The Literary Flapper"? I did. Probably you have never encountered her in a mutual friend's front parlour, so you cannot add her to your gallery of "Persons I Meet When I Am Without My Gun," but you have tracked her little footprints, so to speak, through periodicals, and have met her again and again in pages headed "Of Interest to Women"—oh you must have! (Deamer, "The Literary Flapper," *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, 19 Jan. 1926, p. 2)

My grandmother was a flapper. Born in 1913, Blanche Amelia Evelyn Crouch came of age wearing bright red lipstick and drop-waist dresses, and dancing to Roaring Twenties jazz tunes. My mother tells me that at sixteen, Blanche worked as a tram conductress in Melbourne, spending her meagre wage on the trappings of modern femininity and freedom: make-up, fashionable clothes, dance halls, picture theatres, and women's magazines. She was also an avid reader, preferring modern novels to the classics.

Before I had become aware of this aspect of my grandmother's history, the only Australian flapper I had encountered was Phryne Fisher, Kerry Greenwood's 1920s socialite detective who solves crimes holding a pistol and a martini glass. While F. Scott Fitzgerald immortalised the American flapper in *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender is the Night* (1934), and Evelyn Waugh paid similar tribute to the English flapper in *Vile Bodies* (1930), the Australian flapper of Greenwood's historical crime series, *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, only appeared in 1989. Where was the Australian flapper in the novels of my grandmother's time? Blanche would not have recognised herself amongst the typical figures of nascent Australian literature: swagmen and bushrangers, pioneer women, and colonial girls. Nor could I recognise her in the 1920s and 1930s novels that have

since been elevated by academic scholarship to canonical status in formal studies of Australian literature. I began my search for the Australian flapper in the print culture that women, my own grandmother included, would have encountered in their distinctly urban lives—in the magazines of the interwar period.

According to Dulcie Deamer, a frequent contributor to interwar print culture (Pearce, *Shameless Scribblers* 69), such magazines were the natural habitat of the Australian flapper. Writing in *The Australian Woman's Mirror* in 1926, Deamer discusses "The Literary Flapper," a figure not often encountered in "a mutual friend's front parlour," but one whose "little footprints" may be "tracked … so to speak, through periodicals," and who may be met "again and again in pages headed 'Of Interest to Women'" (2). Just like Dulcie Deamer, who remarks upon tracking the footprints of the flapper in the women's pages, I found myself tracking her footprints across an expanded range of Australian print culture.

Deamer famously embodied the kind of risqué fashion and self-display for which flappers were well known (see fig. 2). In the 1920s, Deamer discussed being labelled the "Queen of Kings Cross" (Deamer, *The Queen of Bohemia* 79), and the "Queen of Bohemia" (118), labels she acquired after wearing her scanty leopard-print costume to Sydney's notorious Artists' Ball in 1924. It was there that she was inaugurated into the "Nobel Order of Bohemian Artists," a club consisting of writers, artists, and fellow bohemians. For this reason, her dismissive attitude to what she calls "The Literary Flapper" (quoted in the epigraph to this Introduction) is curious, as are her remarks about tiresomely finding her "little footprints" "again and again," and only in pages of "interest to women." How could such a woman, who herself had literary ambitions and took on flapper fashions, be so pejorative and dismissive of flappers—enough to want to bring her gun to a meeting with young flappers? Her autobiography confirms her deprecatory view of such "unfledged youths" (Deamer, *The Queen of Bohemia* 159).

Fig. 2. Dulcie Deamer in Leopard skin Costume, 1923; Swiss Photographic Studios; State Library of New South Wales

Despite Deamer's judgemental attitudes, and her avowed attempts to differentiate herself from flappers, her own literary work was suffused with this female figure and flapper iconography. As Peter Kirkpatrick observes, Deamer's writing "show[s] similarities to the Hollywood of her day, with its sensational interest in the *femme fatale* or 'vamp' figure first portrayed by Theda Barra" (*Sea Coast* 165). These apparent contradictions between Deamer's flapper-like persona and her ambiguous writing, which both romanticises the flapper and derides her, also piqued my curiosity. I wondered if this ambivalence toward the flapper and her relegation to mere "women's pages" contained a clue to her subsequent disappearance from the Australian literary record. Taking a cue from Deamer's own method, I began tracking this figure, and as I did so I also began tracking shifting and mixed attitudes toward her by peeling back the pages of interwar print culture. I found that, indeed, the flapper was a target of both derision and fascination in magazines and novels of this era. Part of my quest,

therefore, became how to understand not only what she looked like in Australian culture, but also how she was regarded.

This doctoral research will test the hypothesis that the cultural history of womanhood in a critical hinge period of Australian modernity (1920s–1930s), as registered in the nation's canonical literature, has constrained our understanding of the various representations and debates as they circulated at the time. An overarching question of this thesis is: *if the flapper did exist in Australia, how was she portrayed, and why do I not know about her?* As a unique intervention in Australian literary history, therefore, this project re-reads interwar Australian writing beyond the narrow band of texts that is usually held up as representative of this period—such as works by Eleanor Dark and Vance Palmer—in a wider search for the flapper in Australia, and in its attempt to understand attitudes toward her, both in her own time and subsequently. As such, it aims to add to the renewed interest in non-modernist modernity in Australia (Dixon and Kelly, *Impact of the Modern*) and to studies that have extended beyond canonical literature in Australia into magazine culture (Osborne; Kuttainen; Carter; Kuttainen, Galletly, and Liebich). It also aims to make a contribution from the field of literary scholarship to a number of other studies of gender and cultural history, including (in Australia) Liz Conor's *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*, and more broadly Alys Weinbaum's The Modern Girl around the World Project.

Weinbaum was the lead researcher on The Modern Girl around the World Research Group, a global consortium of scholars who worked over the last decade to document and analyse the emergence of the Modern Girl as a symbol and figure of global modernity (Weinbaum et al.). Although my initial quest was for the flappers of Australian literature, I was quick to adopt Weinbaum and colleagues' umbrella term, the Modern Girl, which allows for a more global search, encompassing figures who were influenced by both the American flapper and the British bright young thing. Despite the risks of infantilisation that inheres in the word's connotation, I also retain Weinbaum and colleagues' term Girl, in part to

significantly differentiate the Modern Girl from the earlier figure of the New Woman, but also to reinforce her modernity. Moreover, in order to differentiate images from actual women who lived in this time, I adopt Weinbaum and colleagues' convention of capitalising Flappers, Bright Young Things, Modern Girls, and even New Women—all types of modern womanhood—from this point on in my thesis. While Weinbaum and her group attempted to be comprehensive in their quest to find the Modern Girl around the world, their findings contained only one study of the Australian milieu by visual historian Liz Conor. Since then, a few key studies have continued to expand this research into the figure of the Modern Girl in print and literature of other nations, such as Canada and Japan (Sato; Heilmann and Beetham; Frederick; Nicholas; Zhu). A considerable gap exists, therefore, in the research into this figure in the cultural history of print culture and especially the literature of Australia, which this thesis seeks to address.

Literary critic Rita Felski's comprehensive discussion on the complexity of women's representations during the modernist period in *The Gender of Modernity* significantly influences the arguments in this thesis. Felski criticises academic studies and popular histories of gendered modernity. She emphasises, "the domination of masculine qualities of rationalization, productivity, and repression" in work that also tends to pejoratively describe "the feminization of Western society, as evidenced in the passive, hedonistic, and decentred nature of modern subjectivity" (5). Felski argues that literary and cultural history has often privileged the work of high modernist texts written by men, while overlooking texts written by or about women, in any register. Instead, she proposes a different approach, one framed by the following questions:

> 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 or

> marginal status, were given a central importance in the analysis of the culture of modernity? What *difference* would such a procedure make? (10)

A limitation of Felski's work is that it focuses squarely on Anglo-American texts, like so much work on modernism. While Australia may not have embraced modernity in the exact same way that America did, Felski's approach is nonetheless useful as a way of centring the feminine/female in this literary analysis. Indeed, this thesis takes Felski's warning note about the dismissive ways in which women's texts and cultures have been historically sidelined and dismissed. Like Felski, I seek to analyse "[t]hose dimensions of culture either ignored, trivialized, or seen as regressive rather than authentically modern—feelings, romantic novels, shopping, motherhood, fashion" (22). I take up her proposition to give women's experiences and culture central importance and apply this specifically to Australian cultural modernity. Rather than looking at canonical texts of the interwar period, this thesis examines a broader spectrum of print culture that will challenge some of the orthodoxies of Australian literary history while also adding a broader, global dimension to Felski's re-centring work.

* * *

Womanhood underwent major changes between the wars, and central to these was the figure of the Modern Girl. These changes were caused, at least in part, by intensive urbanisation, modernisation, consumerism, more jobs for women, and mass culture, including but not limited to film, magazines, advertising, and leisure culture. Overwhelmingly, what is known about changes in gender mores during this period is gleaned from an American perspective (Robbins; Zeitz) or a British one (Taylor; Sigel). Similarly, most research into the figure of the Flapper in literature and print culture focuses on her appearance in Anglo-American novels and magazines. While the term Flapper is often used to describe the youthful and frivolous figure embodied by Zelda Fitzgerald in America, the British preferred the term and figure of the Bright Young Thing embodied by the likes of socialite Lady Diana Cooper. In Australia, scholars such as Liz Conor (*The Spectacular Modern Woman)* and David Carter

(*Always*) use several terms to signify the modern woman, such as Flapper, Bright Young Thing, and New Woman.

The New Woman is an important precursor to the Modern Girl, yet the New Woman is often confused with her more modern daughter. Unlike the Modern Girl and the Bright Young Thing, the New Woman is associated with the suffragette movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and therefore in-depth analysis of the New Woman is beyond the scope of this thesis. The Australian New Woman—the politically imbued figure of the late 1800s early 1900s—championed suffrage, and, as John Docker observes, "The era was witness to the smoking, bicycling, Rational Dress and trouser-wearing New Woman, that spectacular cultural figure admired by Miles Franklin" (25). Indeed, Miles Franklin's Sybylla in *My Brilliant Career* (1901) and Henry Handel Richardson's Laura Rambotham in *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910) are two such figures who find their way into the Australian novel, warmly portrayed. But in the outlets of print culture targeted at securely male readerships such as *The Bulletin* (1880–1961) and *Aussie* (1918–1932), this woman was depicted as a glum-looking, bicycle-riding, trouser-wearing "wowser". Right up until the end of the First World War, such a figure was described as dedicated to the social and political ruination of men.

Compared to this serious female figure, it seemed the latter figure of the Modern Girl was not concerned so much with her political position, but rather her social one. In the early twentieth century, the Flapper came to suggest the unique combination of young womanhood and modernity found in American cities. Her film debut is often traced to the 1920 Hollywood production of the silent comedy *The Flapper* starring Olive Thomas. The Flapper was famous (and somewhat infamous) through her association with American film stars, socialites, and celebrities, such as Clara Bow and Zelda Fitzgerald, for instance. As an icon of the silver screen, she was often associated with the influence of American mass culture. Unlike the political New Woman, the Flapper is often associated with a leisure lifestyle: a

woman who wore slim-line boyish fashions, bobbed her hair, wore red lipstick, listened to jazz, smoked, and drove automobiles. And just as the Australian New Woman recast the British figure in Australian terms, the influences of the British Bright Young Thing and American Flapper also found their way into Australian modernity.

Jill Julius Matthews' work in *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* confirms the way this type of new and exciting feminine figure entered the Australian cultural milieu. As Matthews has extensively researched modernity in Australia during the interwar period, this thesis draws heavily from her arguments. Yet, while my research augments Matthews' work on challenging accounts that have dominated Australia's historical memory, this study takes a more literary-historical approach to reading for the Modern Girl as a central feature. Matthews' formative study of modernity in Sydney between the wars suggests, as does David Carter in his work on *Aussie* magazine, that Modern Girls were present in interwar Australian society and print culture. This thesis takes their suggestions about how the Modern Girl was present but goes further to argue that she was even more ubiquitous and significant to the project of modernity during this critical hinge period of Australian cultural history than has previously been considered. Nevertheless, Matthews' and Carter's work on vernacular modernity (along with the scholarship of Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly, as well as others) has been an important site from which to reclaim images of the Australian Modern Girl.

According to Matthews, America led the rest of the world in the engagement with modernity. She argues that during the *fin de siecle*, America was rapidly producing new technologies, which fed the growth of mass production and corporate industries (such as the Ford automobile company). Consequently, a new moneyed middle class was established which further fuelled consumerism and mass markets. Because of improvements in shipping and communication, these new technologies and ideas could easily be transported to the rest of the world, including Australia. It was during the early twentieth century (particularly after

the First World War) accordingly, that Australians began to consume and adapt American products and ideas. To illustrate her point, Matthews uses the example of the tango, originally from the barrios of Brazil, popularised in New York and Paris—but which first spread across the American leisure class—and finally exported to Australia where it was taken into local dance halls. In each incarnation of the tango, there was a grafting of local tastes and practices onto an international phenomenon, meshing capitalism, publicity, and local folkways.

Matthews shows, then, how international modernity was influential in determining how people created "an identity as modern Australians and modern citizens of the world" (*Dance Hall* 1). More saliently, Matthews shows how this identity was not merely imported but became thoroughly Australian in the way Australians began to reflect these new identities back to the rest of the world. This concept of vernacular modernity overturns a false binary that is often assumed about authentic Australian culture and inauthentic imported culture, with which the Australian Modern Girl is often aligned.

Matthews' research complicates the valorisation of the Australian bush and its masculine figure that has taken root in both popular imagination and academic discussion, and which segments of Australian literary culture have perpetuated. Her work focuses on urban life rather than narratives of the bush. She contends, "[w]hen Sydney's story is told as a romance, the city is revealed as a cosmopolitan centre of modern pleasure" (*Dance Hall* 8). This, she maintains, presents a vision of Australian social history "considerably at odds with the traditional picture drawn by nationalist historians and writers" (8). Matthews' definition of "romance" is both masculine and feminine. On the one hand, masculine narratives were imbued with the romance of progress and modern technological development; on the other hand, romance signified feminine glamour and popular culture, epitomised in the spectacle of the Hollywood starlet, and related to modern notions of free love. From the perspective of Australian nation-building, however, Matthews claims that a veneration of masculine aspects

of modernity involved a denigration of its feminine aspects as amoral, commercial, and tainted by Americanisation (5–7).

Matthews' work reveals the link between modernity, gender, and cultural value which is a central line of inquiry this thesis pursues. She argues, "modernity … promiscuously mingl[ed] culture and commerce, the beautiful and vulgar" (19). Furthermore, she maintains:

> [r]epresenting 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 in Japan, England, Europe and America as well as Australia. (19)

In terms of the modern woman, she points out, "Australians found the modern exotic, and sexualised it" (63). Matthews's research suggests that modern Australians were both attracted and repulsed by the modern woman as a symbol of international modernity and commercial pleasure: "She was simultaneously the sign of all that was wrong with the direction society was taking and the promise of a brave new world" (19). Indeed, what was so troubling about this new version of femininity was her encroachment on traditional male domains of power, including sexuality, work, and independence.

Overseas scholars have made similar observations about attitudes toward the Modern Girl. The Modern Girl around the World Research Group argues:

> [a]dorned in provocative fashions, in pursuit of romantic love, Modern Girls appeared to disregard roles of dutiful daughter, wife and mother. Contemporary journalists, politicians, social scientists, and the general public debated whether Modern Girls were looking for sexual, economic, or political emancipation. (1)

What the Modern Girl around the World project has confirmed is that this figure was troubling not only in Australian society but also in the international milieus between the wars and was a figure central to debates of the time. Yet, while Weinbaum and colleagues, Matthews and others, have focused on the Modern Girl's role in history, they have not commented on the absence of this figure in literary history. This thesis, therefore, explores the complex "truth" about the Australian Modern Girl as a way of not only recovering and restoring this figure to Australian literary history but also illuminating her complex reputation in her own time, and subsequently her fate in literary history. By necessity, because scholarship on the Modern Girl's presence in literary history is limited, this thesis has drawn from other forms of evidence to trace the outline of this figure. Australian magazines and novels of the time— artefacts I include in the term print culture—provide a vital window into social and cultural attitudes toward the Modern Girl.

Looking for the Modern Girl in Australian Print Culture

This thesis examines Australian print culture of the interwar period drawing on two forms: magazines and novels, reading them both on their own terms and alongside one another in order to explore the world inside these artefacts and the world outside them. Periodical scholars Sean Latham and Mark Morrisson argue that the period from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the "golden age of print culture" (iii). Adding to this, Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier have observed that during the Victorian era and after, what most people were reading were newspapers and magazines (1). Ardis and Collier point out that this significant change in publishing meant that "more newspapers, magazines, and books were published annually than ever before, in a variety of new venues and mixed-media formats" (1). What these arguments show is the significance of newspapers and magazines to the history of reading and print culture. I take up Ardis and Collier's definition of print culture. They maintain that print culture holds a "status as a socially constituted category, worked up

in real material practices and traded in a diverse, complex, and changing marketplace" (3). Their work also takes into consideration "the public sphere…the economics of literary patronage…and modernism's centrality in this cultural landscape" (3). While modernism, perhaps, did not take up a central place in the Australian imagination, this model provides a guide for re-reading the print culture of Australian vernacular modernity.

Ardis and Collier's attention to the transatlantic print cultures of the Victoria era has led them to observe that there is a gap in the scholarship of interwar period print cultures. They argue that "the kind of meticulous bibliographic scholarship that has been the backbone of periodical research in Victorian studies for at least twenty years exists for modernist 'little magazines' but is barely underway for a broader spectrum of twentieth-century periodicals" (4). This point is particularly salient for any project, such as this, that seeks to expand the limited number of texts typically included in literary studies of the interwar period. While David Carter has begun to undertake such a project focusing on Australian print culture of the interwar period in his work *Always Almost Modern: Australian Print Cultures and Modernity* (2013), more work could be done on re-conceptualising the modern literary culture of Australia.

Rather than dismissing magazines as ephemera and too facile for scholarship, then, this thesis acknowledges the ubiquity of print culture and takes seriously an analysis of its reading publics. In line with modern periodical scholarship in literary studies, this project reads magazines as whole heterogeneous documents, rather than "merely containers of discrete bits of information" (Latham and Scholes 517). As Victoria Kuttainen, Susann Liebich, and Sarah Galletly argue, magazines "possess largely untapped potential to reveal much about the contemporary attitudes of their target readerships, or assumptions about these, in relation to a variety of societal concerns" (12). Thus, this project acknowledges these artefacts as both social documents and complex, multi-authored collages that give us insight into the complexity of print culture and society of the period (Clarke; Frederick; Kuttainen, *A*

Lost Australian Story; Scholes and Wulfman; Gildfind). Drawing on H. M. Green's assertion that the interwar period was the "great age of the Australian magazine" (719), this study turns to magazines to reconceptualise this period's engagement with not only the Modern Girl but also with this busy ecosystem of print culture. By tracing the representations and narratives of the Modern Girl through interwar magazines, constructions and attitudes toward modern womanhood emerge, showing the significance of the Modern Girl to the project of modernity.

Fig. 3. *The Home*, 1 Mar. 1923, cover

Indeed, images and narratives of the Australian Modern Girl abound through the interwar press. In *The Australian Woman's Mirror* (1924–1961), *The Australian Women's Weekly* (1933–present), *The Home* (1920–1942), and even *MAN* magazine (1936–1974) illustrators such as Thea Proctor, Hera Roberts, and Margaret Preston used the Modern Girl as their muse. Artwork displaying the Modern Girl was used as cover illustrations for *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *The Home* in particular (see fig. 3). Modern Girls also proliferated in advertisements, stories, and verse in magazines such as *The Bulletin, The Australian Woman's Mirror*, *The Home*, and *Aussie*. Many of these portrayals convey varying social attitudes toward her. For example, her status as a girlish type is evident in an article in

The Mirror titled, "A Flapper Tragedy: A Short Story of a Modern Young Miss (Very Young)" by Ess Ess (*The Mirror* 2 Feb. 1923, p. 8+). In this story, the Flapper is a fast-talking, gum-chewing, vain girl who reads too many inconsequential books. This portrayal caricatures her as a flippant and silly imposter of a woman who wears womanly outfits designed for someone more mature, unbefitting of a schoolgirl. While many references to Flappers focus on her girlishness and frivolity and dismiss flapperdom as a mere stage that young women go through before reaching maturity, others hint at her sexual promiscuity.

The Bulletin mentions numerous Modern Girls throughout the pages of the publication. Yet, its preoccupation with nationalist sentiment and its overwhelming masculine tone do not make it suitable for this project's analysis. While I mention it at several points in this thesis, this is mainly as a comparison to other publications of the time. Furthermore, *The Bulletin* has been comprehensively researched by critics, while magazines such as *The Australian Woman's Mirror* and *MAN*, which are a focus of this study, have not. It is worth mentioning, however, that as a key site for nationalist sentiment, *The Bulletin*—in which contributors were encouraged to locate the 'real' Australia in the rugged outback or masculine-dominated bush—was fascinated with the figure of the Flapper. Flappers were both humoured as sources of fun and scorned for being devilish vamps, frequently satirised in verse, such as "To A Flapper—An Admonition" (The Frequent Lover, *The Bulletin,* 31 May 1923, p. 23). In this verse, the author confesses that he and his male friends thought of Flappers as "dizzy, whizzy whirl," types, who "vamp all mankind at a glance." Consequently, a Flapper is admonished as "A devil of a girl!" (17). In another verse, she is accused of being "Boy-mad" and "provocative" with a "Hide and seek upon her lips" (W.M.W., "The Office Flapper," *The Bulletin*, 9 Sept. 1926, p. 17). While *The Bulletin* chastised the Flapper, the tone of these verses was satirical with an emphasis on the vacuity of this figure. Thus, the "boy-mad" figure in these representations from *The Bulletin* diminishes any threat she could

have posed (except, perhaps, to the wife of the husband infatuated with her), and instead is used to draw a comical response from the reader.

In *The Bulletin*, even though she is thought of as a subject of mischief, she is also seen as an object of desire. In poems titled, "The Flapper" (*The Bulletin*, 26 Aug. 1920, p. 14), "How a Flapper Sees Things", (*The Bulletin*, 17 May 1923, p. 2), and "The Flapper" by the Frequent Lover (*The Bulletin*, 1 Apr. 1926, p. 17), for instance, the Flapper was distinctly a sexual object who elicited the romantic feelings of men. This 1926 poem aptly demonstrates how some of *The Bulletin* writers aligned the Flapper with images of youth, romance, and beauty. The writer acknowledges the youthfulness of the Flapper, who "blunder[s] blatantly, but unashamed" (17). Yet she is also an object of desire: "in your being spring-time is ablaze / And who but loves, when Nature's voices sing / The very crudeness of flamboyant Spring?" (17). In this one publication alone, the attitudes Dulcie Deamer seems to evince towards Flappers—of dismissiveness and yet of attraction too—are evident in the way the figure is imbued with ambivalence. Yet, other magazines go beyond the simple dyad of dismissiveness and fascination and register more complex attitudes toward her.

Women's magazines such as *The Australian Woman's Mirror* oscillate between upholding the Modern Girl as an image to be styled on, such as the images shown on numerous covers, and portraying her as a subject who provokes anxiety. Yet she also represents modern womanhood. In some articles, writers attempt to comment on the social position of the Flapper in order to educate their women readers on social conduct. One article makes this clear by questioning the modern manners of the Flapper. The article argues:

> The faults on the manners of the old-fashioned flapper were due to awkwardness … We hear a lot about the bad manners of the present day flapper. These bad manners are of a different type. She powders her nose in public and shows her knees in trams and ferries because she thinks it is smart to do so. She combs her bobbed hair

> anywhere, in the theatre, in the street, in the office where she is employed. ("Flapper Manners," *The Mirror*, 7 July 1925, p. 39)

Aligning an insecure and awkward young girl with the "old-fashioned flapper", this new version of womanhood was different and more sexually oriented. Her focus was on her appearance and her sexual attractiveness, where her body plays a significant part. The author makes clear the Modern Girl has no sense of propriety and is, thus, a social concern, if only because she registers a new visible form of female sexuality. These numerous debates and differing attitudes towards the Modern Girl indicate the way she was the object of what Jill Julius Matthews describes as "the game of truth about the modern girl" (*Dance Hall* 74). The way the Modern Girl was a focus of debates around the meaning of modern femininity, and indeed modernity itself, was also played out in pages of novels throughout the period.

In a period when the Flapper was becoming a declining target of general abuse, shown in publications such as *The Bulletin*, the Modern Girl emerges in some Australian novels as a complex three-dimensional figure. It is, thus, this figure, and the complicated attitudes toward her in novels and the periodical press, that this thesis examines. While there were a few novels published by Australian or trans-Tasman authors who featured the Modern Girl in the 1920s (such as Jean Devanny's *The Butcher Shop* [1926]), suddenly during the 1930s a series of books featuring the Australian Modern Girl emerged: Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau* (1936), J. M. Harcourt's *Upsurge* (1934), Dale Collins's *Race the Sun* (1936 and *The Weekly's* supplement in 1937), and Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* (1936) and *Virtuous Courtesan* (1935) in particular. These writers also had creative interactions with periodical culture, publishing work in magazines of all grades and kinds with various reading publics and relying on the periodical press to promote and review their work. Amongst this busy new print culture, and sometimes against it, calls for the emergence of a mature Australian national literature arose. Yet, while a serious national literature was being worked up at this time, magazines were an important, and not always adversarial, outlet for emerging

Australian writers, such as the ones mentioned above. As such, alongside the novels, I read the Modern Girl in four magazines: *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, *MAN*, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, and *The Home*.

In reading for the Modern Girl, and attitudes toward her, in these novels and magazines of the period, this thesis also augments the extant revisionist literary scholarship of the period previously undertaken by scholars such as Drusilla Modjeska, Maryanne Dever, and Susan Sheridan (*Along the Faultlines)*. As a research project that began looking for the Flapper in Australia, what has emerged is a new way of reading the Australian literary past, highlighting different kinds of readers and different market segments for various publications, and changing attitudes toward the Modern Girl, and these books, over time. These publications reveal that many images and stories of Flappers existed at the time, but they also provide ways to track her footprints through the busy Australian print culture of the interwar period. In doing so, a vibrant image of this figure emerges in a broader spectrum of Australian interwar print culture that suggests some reasons why the Australian Modern Girl may have been overlooked by subsequent readers and scholars of Australian literature. Furthermore, in reading for the Modern Girl in pages of interwar print culture, a more vibrant and nuanced picture is shown in terms of Australia's engagement with modernity.

David Carter concedes that recent scholarship in Australia has opened new, productive ways of viewing vernacular modernity in Australia (during the period between the 1880s to the Second World War), which is of particular relevance to this project. Carter argues that Australia "is modern not through gradual cultural evolution or sudden modernist revolution but through being 'born modern'" (*Always* viii). He points out, however, how this concept of "Australian Modernity" is paradoxical. On the one hand, Australia's relatively young age as a nation means some regard Australia as being "too modern" (ix) to have substantive or complex literary and cultural history. On the other hand, Australia's relative isolation from European and metropolitan modernity means Australia is often discussed as a

parochial backwater, as not yet modern enough to register any kind of cultural modernity (ix). Carter adds:

> [f]rom the late-nineteenth century to the 1920s, the availability of cheaper print materials, new fiction, and new magazines with better quality illustrations, and the new phenomena of cinema and cinema-going, of jazz dancing, radio, record music and the gramophone, together produced a new modern culture in Australia. (x)

In Carter's conceptualisation of Australia, rather than a parochial backwater untouched by global effects, it was an active participant in a transnational flow of influences from America and other nations. Australians, as Jill Julius Matthews maintains, readily engaged with these influences. It is this proliferation of cheaper commercial material, as well as an emerging, more serious, modern Australian literary tradition in the 1930s, into which this thesis inserts its inquiry.

Several scholars (Dixon and Kelly; Matthews, *Dance Hall*; Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*) agree that a focus on vernacular modernity, rather than merely highbrow literature or serious, non-commercial culture, unlocks new understandings of this period in Australia's social history. Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly argue, for example, that one of the dominant themes of the interwar period is the ascendancy of international modernity and its effect on people's everyday lives. Their work helps to frame this study's discussion on Australia's engagement with this phenomenon. They stress the importance of more research on vernacular modernities, especially for attuning to "distinctions in aesthetic hierarchies and taste between the avant-garde, bourgeois or high art, on the one hand, and popular cultural preferences and practices on the other" (xvi). In their work on Australian vernacular modernity, Dixon and Kelly attend to everyday modernity and its local valences—considering the way that Australian cultural expression takes in the international and grafts it on to local trends. It is this thesis's main argument that the Modern Girl is an example of Australian's uptake of transnational influences, and print culture of the interwar period shows not only the

ubiquitous presence of the Modern Girl but also how popular she was in the imagination of the Australian reading public. Indeed, through an examination of the way she was represented in Australian print culture of the time, she also illustrates the way Australian culture took on her cosmopolitan influence and then Australianised her.

The Invisible Modern Girl in Australia

Despite the prominence and vogue the Modern Girl enjoyed, she has all but disappeared from view. This is in part consistent with larger patterns: womanhood and representations of women in settler colonial contexts such as Australia have suffered long neglect by scholars. Even though Ann Summers extensively writes on some representations of women in Australia in her work *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1994), she does so to address this scholarly neglect. Summers argues that cultural histories have excluded women who did not fit into categories social and cultural elites deemed to be acceptable. She writes, "large numbers of women who undoubtedly were living lives that did not conform to the God's Police stereotype have been hidden within our history" (521). Kay Schaffer offers a reason why representations of women have been largely overlooked by cultural histories. She argues:

> When critics and commentators set out to define Australian culture and construct a national mythology which would mark the country's distinctive difference from England, they scarcely registered the presence of women – as historical figures whose presence helped to shape and alter perceptions of the landscape; as settlers and citizens with roles to play in social and political life; as writers who contributed significantly to the literary and cultural heritage; or as contributors to a cultural discourse which shaped the distinctive battles between father and sons. (28)

Further, she contends, "the neglect of women in nationalist histories may be an attribute of scholarship throughout the Western world. It is particularly pronounced in Australian cultural studies" (30). In Australia, nationalist histories have been focused on a masculinist tradition

that has mythologised an Australian identity very much centred on the harsh Australian bush, mateship, and the ANZACs.

One significant reason both Matthews and Carter offer for the lacuna of scholarship around modern women in Australian literary history is their longstanding association with the rise of consumer culture and American mass entertainment culture in the 1920s. Further, as Matthews argues, cultural histories tend to focus on Australia as a parochial centre saturated with images of the bush. Yet, as Matthews maintains, this parochialism and bush-based image were only partial. Sydney, as she argues, was actively engaging with modern cosmopolitanism, and at the centre of this phenomenon stood the Modern Girl.

Jane Nicholas observes how other settler colonies follow similar patterns. With the significant lack of studies on the Modern Girl of Canada, Nicholas draws similar conclusions about the Modern Girl's historical neglect. As Nicholas states,

> The Modern Girl may seem too frivolous, too insignificant, too feminine, too American, and too elusive to count in the serious business of Canadian history. She may well be (in part) all of those things, but that is exactly why she is significant. (15)

Likewise, the Australian Modern Girl is also significant in terms of constructing and shaping feminine modernities in Australia. Even though she was an icon of vernacular modernity, linked to transnational culture, and was ubiquitous in print culture and fiction of the interwar period, questions remain as to why she is such an overlooked figure. Considering issues of literary value and what is held up as quality Australian literature can point to a neglect of this figure in the print culture she is represented through.

The Tainted Literature of the Interwar Period

In terms of literature, the interwar period has been described as an "uncertain, cautious and shabby era," which was "self consciously barren" (Russel Ward qtd. in Strauss 110). Chris

Wallace-Crabbe likewise proclaimed the interwar period as the "saddest phase of Australian culture" (qtd. in "Literary Democracy" Nile 132), and Ian Reid adds to these negative views of this period, discussing how Australian publishing and writing was in a state of decline (115). However, Jennifer Strauss contests such views, insisting that "this period was an important phase in the conceptualisation of what it might mean to be an Australian writer… [as this era also] saw considerable consolidation of the process of literary production" (110). She adds that Australian writers had "a considerable conviction that they shared in the task defined in Louis Esson's play *Australia Felix* (1926) when a character declares, "'In my opinion, Australia hasn't been discovered yet. That's a job in store for our writers and artists. Captain Cook discovered only the outline'" (qtd. in Strauss 110). Strauss's brief survey of Australian writers of this era and their correspondence with one another highlights the self-conscious way that writers were aware of their role in building a distinct national literature.

In many ways, Nettie Palmer is a writer who exemplifies Strauss's argument. Palmer was a major influence in the development of a national literature; she played a role as a literary critic and was a mentor to many of Australia's budding writers, especially women. Yet, Palmer's intensive role as a curator of Australian letters is also likely to be somewhat responsible for the exclusion of many commercial writers and others who did not fit her view of quality literature. Drusilla Modjeska maintains that "[t]he changed direction of literary debate during those years was intimately related to the explosion of women's fiction and to the work of critic Nettie Palmer" (40). However, Palmer's taste in literature was highly selective in scope, according to Modjeska, and she was dismissive of the literary work of writers writing for mixed commercial as well as artistic purposes, even though she also wrote for commercial purposes in magazines such as *Manuscripts: A Miscellany of Art and Letters* (1931–35) and *The Australian Woman's Mirror*. Modjeska argues, however, that Palmer "characterised Australian culture in the twenties as vulgar and commercial, shunning any

distinctively Australian product" (52), and her attitude to writing from this era has continued to reverberate in literary studies since.

Added to Nettie Palmer's influential dismissal of commercial fiction, in "Fiction and the Australian Reading Public", Tim Dolin explains that much of the print culture from Australia's interwar era has been overlooked largely because of criticism of Australia's "cultural cringe" (post-1950), that maintained this era was a period of "colonial alienation and inferiority" producing literature that was provincial, unoriginal and "common" (173). Yet reading across a broad range of print culture of this era shows a much more nuanced picture than what these critics have presented. As Victoria Kuttainen, Susann Liebich, and Sarah Galletly have argued, Australian print culture "addressed a society made up largely of urban-dwelling moderns, and [magazines] helped coalesce their self identity as [modern]" (13). Magazines were connecting their readers with modern ideas, or, as David Carter emphasises, "[c]osmopolitanism re-emerged in a more populist, nationalist and anti-imperial cultural formation[s]" (*Always* 17), such as periodicals. Women writers were particularly active in writing for periodicals during this time, and writers such as Katharine Susannah Prichard, Dymphna Cusack, and even Nettie Palmer often had writing published within these commercial vehicles. However, as Drusilla Modjeska, Maryanne Dever, and Susan Sheridan have argued, writing by women in any form has been largely overlooked, whether the writing was for commercial purposes or literary.

Furthermore, feminine subject matter, such as the Modern Girl, has also been often overlooked and deemed unsuitable for the project of building a distinct national literature. According to Jennifer Strauss, critics often disregarded women writers of this era as they were perceived as writing fiction too facile for academic scholarship and that, instead, there was a focus on "value-laden" literature which preferred the Australian masculinist tradition, rooted in the late 1800s—a notion cemented by literature produced by Vance Palmer in his work *The Legend of the Nineties* (1954). P. R. Stephensen in his essays in *The Foundation of*

Culture in Australia (1936) praises authors such as Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson as being "of high national significance, as being truly indigenous" (29) and of writing about the "real" Australia. These sentiments have done much to influence the dismissal of literature written by women, particularly when their subjects include the transnational and cosmopolitan Modern Girl, for instance. These two assumptions, that interwar literature was "barren", and that the foundation of Australian literary culture should be based on a masculinist tradition have done much to dismiss the vibrant and prolific writing produced especially by women during this period. However, other scholarship since the 1990s has begun to rectify this lack of research on print culture of the interwar period.

The Rediscovery of Interwar Fiction

This project will ask new questions of 1930s literature that arise from the different approach I take to this subject and by re-reading Australian novels featuring the Modern Girl within and alongside the broader print culture of the era. In the last thirty years, feminist scholarship in Australia, such as Drusilla Modjeska's work in *Exiles at Home* (1981), has unearthed many women writers from the interwar era. Modjeska's extensive survey of women writers from the 1930s resulted in the recovery of many writers and gave rise to several reprints and revisions of these authors' works. Yet her focus was predominantly on social realist texts, or those that feature left-wing political concerns, as was Carole Ferrier's treatment of Jean Devanny. Consequently, Modjeska's work aligned with Nettie Palmer's aversion to literature that could be deemed "too commercial". Modjeska herself argues:

> Writing the history of women's writing is not simply a matter of filling the gaps, slotting people and works into existing literary traditions. Rather, it should be an attempt to unearth a new, dialectically related history. The relationship of women writers to cultural history is, however, highly complex and is mediated by ideology, by class and by the ways in which women become social beings in the first place.

> When literary texts are seen as bearers of meanings and ideologies within a culture, it becomes clear that women's writing has had a great deal to offer a broader social history. (10)

Modjeska's point is an important one that frames this thesis and signals the need for further critical work to untangle women from the ideologies that mediated their presence or absence in literary history and shaped them as particular symbols or agents. Carole Ferrier has conducted extensive archival work on interwar women writers such as Jean Devanny. Similarly, Maryanne Dever and Ann Vickery have collaborated for an exhibition of material from the Monash University Rare Book Collection on writing produced by women from 1900 to 1950. Their mandate for this exhibition was to "bring together writers of established reputation and those less well known; it also brings together genres that cross boundaries of high and low culture," covering topics such as "the emerging figure of the Modern Woman" ("Australian Women Writers 1900–1950" 5).

Susan Sheridan has also set a precedent for this research project by drawing attention to other often overlooked themes, even though her focus, like Modjeska's, was not on representations of women, but on recovering women writers. In *Along the Faultlines,* Sheridan premises her work with the statement "if I pay more attention to romantic fiction, it is because that genre has been so denigrated and dismissed as having no significant bearing on cultural life", and that "[m]y interest is in cultural production generally rather than what modernist critical discourse constructs as 'the literary'" (viii). Her study broadens out from social realist literature to reveal how romance fiction often includes themes of women's sexuality, and is, therefore, "a key site for investigating the relationship between gender, class and race ideologies" (100). Thus, rather than dismissing popular fiction in deference to the more typically highly regarded genre of social realism, Sheridan argues that, in terms of gender studies, it is beneficial to read beyond canonical texts held up as representative of certain eras. And while romance is a theme in some of the novels and material in the

periodicals that I have chosen, it is Sheridan's point of broadening the field that is pertinent to this study.

Added to the scholarship of Modjeska and Sheridan, Maryanne Dever has shown that more questions need to be asked about the "particular strategies available to women in different periods for negotiating their positions as cultural producers" (xi). She believes this

> entails asking new questions of old material in the knowledge that women's apparent 'invisibility' in particular periods may be the product not merely of those processes of essentialising, silencing and forgetting associated with malestream history, but also of a further failure to recognize that women may occupy and speak from different positions within culture. (xi)

Acknowledging its debt to the scholarship of Modjeska, Sheridan and Dever, this research project has taken up their mandate to search beyond what has been previously upheld as canonical Australian literature, and to inquire into material often dismissed in its own time, and subsequently.

Recent scholarship on the middlebrow is also useful to draw upon here. It has expanded studies of modernity beyond the dyad of highbrow and lowbrow and opened up more cross-class fiction for investigation, drawing attention to the dismissal of texts that have been neglected because their very popularity has condemned them. Indeed, scholars such as Nicola Humble, as well as Erica Brown and Mary Grover have found in much of this work more sophistication than they expected to find. Humble argues that broadening scholarship to include often-dismissed areas, such as the middlebrow, can reveal how these forms of fiction were "a powerful force in establishing and consolidating, but also in resisting, new class and gender identities" (3). Even though some of the texts included in this project may uneasily fit the definition of "middlebrow," such as Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven*, Humble's point adds weight to my project, especially when searching for the Modern Girl in periodicals of this period. Humble also offers a clear definition of the middlebrow, explaining:

> The middlebrow novel is one that straddles the divide between the trashy romance or thriller on the one hand, and the philosophical or formally challenging novel on the other: offering narrative excitement without guilt, and intellectual stimulation without undue effort. (11)

All four novels that I have chosen could loosely be cast as middlebrow novels in accordance with this definition; even novels such as Harcourt's *Upsurge* and Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* include some form of romance and offer narrative excitement without being too formally challenging. David Carter and Victoria Kuttainen have researched the middlebrow in Australia; however, this work has not concentrated deeply on gender. This contrasts with British scholarship such as Humble's research on middlebrow which contributed to the explosion of studies of this type across the transatlantic academic domain. Nonetheless, Mitchell Roll and Anna Johnston's monograph on *Walkabout Magazine* (*Travelling Home, Walkabout Magazine and Mid-Century Australia*) does consider both the journalistic and gendered contexts of middlebrow magazine writing in Australia. This project will further develop along these lines but focusing on writing in the urban context rather than travel or bush writing as theirs does. As I analyse these images and stories in the print culture of the time, I seek to restore the Modern Girl to our understanding of the Australian literary and cultural past. In order to recover the Modern Girl from the archives of interwar Australia, however, a broad print culture approach is required—revisiting the magazines and novels that people read in their own day, rather than publications that scholars of Australian literature have subsequently highlighted. In order to achieve this, a methodology for attempting this broad type of reading is required.

Methodology

Rather than confining my work to close readings of a magazine or issue, I will read outward from them (and vice versa from the novels in context) extending their busy, diverse talk into

my reading of literary culture outside of the magazines that enliven the social debates of the period, especially those on the status of women. Periodical scholarship such as Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier's has attempted to reclaim many non-canonical modern writers in America and Britain and broaden the study of the modernist period after the First World War—beyond the cadre of writers who drew on a highly aestheticised esoteric Modernist style—to include overlooked writers. These scholars have contributed to a broadening of literature into wider fields of print culture, including the reclamation of authors situated in a complex space of advertising, reviewing, and celebrity production, as well as fiction publishing. Scholars such as Patricia Clarke, Roger Osborne, David Carter (*Always*) and Victoria Kuttainen ("Lost in the Archive") have conducted periodical studies in Australia, and this project will draw upon their work. Clarke, for example, argues that for many women writers in particular, "the most accessible outlets for their fiction and poetry were newspapers and periodicals. Some women had their novels published initially as books, but more often fiction by women writers appeared first in serial form in newspapers" (3). This, like Ardis and Collier's research, invites more study of an area previously neglected by literary scholarship, especially in terms of women writers. Indeed if, as Clarke argues, periodicals were a format that was more accessible to women than other modes of literary production, then Maryanne Dever's proposal of asking "new questions of old material" (xi) seems most relevant to this form of print culture in particular, and of the literature of the time written by women, or about women.

For this thesis, a methodology for framing such questions and analysis needs to be established. In "How to Study a Magazine," Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman provide eight steps for print culture analysis. They insist "[m]agazines from an earlier period have a unique ability to bring social, political, and aesthetic history to life for those who read them with energy and care" (167). Included in their discussion are methodological steps to undertake when researching magazines. They propose that scholars should analyse the

implied reader, circulation, regular contributors, contents, editor, format, and history, before providing a summary of these findings. They also argue that breaking down periodical studies into this format "will allow us to perceive the issues of the day as live issues" (167). Sean Latham and Robert Scholes also outline a methodology in reading periodicals, suggesting reading *across* items in magazines—seeing how sections speak to each other and to issues of the day—rather than only mining literature and stories in an uncontextualised way. I will take this approach to the magazines that I have chosen and read across the pages of several periodicals to track the footprints of the Modern Girl.

Sarah Frederick outlines and demonstrates a methodology for reading periodicals, examining the figure of the Modern Girl in Japan. *Turning Pages: Reading and Writing Women's Magazines in Interwar Japan* traces several women's periodicals and their influence on intellectual discourse, the literary establishment, and daily life of interwar Japan. She carries out a close examination of periodicals and their literature, articles, advertising, and art. Frederick argues that women's magazines played an important role in modern Japanese culture and Japanese literature and that turning an analytical eye towards women's magazines can transform the way we view Japanese modernity. She also maintains that the Modern Girl was represented in an ambiguous manner. On the one hand, there was much derision attached to this figure, and many of the magazines depicted her as one prone to immorality and vice. On the other hand, she represented freedom and the future of Japanese women and was the subject of many advertisements about modern beauty and fashion. Similar examinations can be made about the Modern Girl in Australian periodicals.

Helen Catherine Gildfind's work models an approach to analysing Australian fiction and print culture together to produce new readings. Her creative writing thesis titled "Women Reading 1936: A Creative Writer's Reading of *Return to Coolami, Jungfrau,* and *The Australian Women's Weekly*", uses *The Australian Women's Weekly* as a lens through which to view these two novels, creating an "evidence-based" approach, rather than a reading made

"with the benefit of historical hindsight" (iii). Gildfind analyses *The Australian Women's Weekly* in 1936, incorporating a methodology of reading periodicals along the lines of Scholes and Wulfman and parallels her reading with creative writing that reflects her understanding of the literature. She then uses the magazines to help her write a more textured portrait of women in the 1930s for her creative project. However, as academic analysis and creative writing divides her thesis, her criticism is often brief and limited, and her terminology of the Modern Girl types, such as the New Woman, seems confused as she conflates the New Woman with her more contemporaneous daughter, the Modern Girl. Still, the attempt to use periodicals to gain a greater awareness of the cultural conversations that were taking place during Australia's interwar period is something that I will borrow from when analysing the two magazines that I have chosen, in order to recover a more three-dimensional portrait of Australian print culture history and its interventions in debates about women in this critical hinge period.

For this thesis, I will use an inclusive approach and conduct both a lateral and longitudinal mapping of all the magazines in this study. I will reflect on how certain magazines used the Modern Girl for their distinct and gendered readerships, and how a multi-dimensional reading complicates a one-dimensional picture of the Modern Girl. Penny Tinkler's chapter, "Fragmentation and Inclusivity: Methods for Working with Girls' and Women's Magazines" identifies different research approaches to magazines, which I will extensively draw on. A lateral approach, she explains, considers "the range of magazines published for a particular constituency at a specific point in time" (26), and a longitudinal approach "considers the forerunners and successors of the magazines that are the focus of research" (26–27). I also take a cue from Tinkler's methodologies for researching magazines, which approaches the magazines using a holistic approach rather than merely cherry-picking for content. This involves "engaging with the different types of content within a magazine and how they are presented, particularly the relationship between text, images and design

features" (31). As magazines are such heterogeneous artefacts, entire contents need to be considered. Fiction, advertisements, readers' comments, editorials, art, etc., are analysed alongside images of the Modern Girl and content featuring her. Tinkler maintains that a holistic approach involves three main features. They are "tracing the threads in themes, reflecting on the impression created by magazine content [and] attending to the different 'voices' that emerge" (32). These three features for this thesis involve tracing representations of the Modern Girl across a slice of print culture of the 1930s, reflecting on how certain magazines employed her and how distinct gendered readerships and magazines complicated a single vision of the Modern Girl, not necessarily visually, but more in how she was mobilised.

Mapping The Multi-Dimensional Portrait of the Modern Girl in Novels

Added to this methodology regarding magazine scholarship will be close readings of selected novels to further test the hypothesis that the Modern Girl was not a distinct one-dimensional figure. Indeed, like the magazines themselves, by reading certain novels of the 1930s, a heterogeneous image emerges, one that reflects a range of attitudes towards her depending on authors, readerships, and political/social agendas. Liz Conor's work on the Modern Girl and visual spectacle has made a significant contribution to gender studies in Australia and will be drawn on in this study as a method of analysing different types of womanhood that are visible in Australia's print culture of the interwar period. Conor's classificatory categories of modern womanhood are the City or Business Girl, Screen Star, Beauty Contestant, and Flapper (*Spectacular* 3). This thesis, however, departs from Conor's work on visual spectacle to emphasise the textual as well as visible traces of her, which remain understudied. It examines in print culture the following typologies of the Modern Girl: the Working Modern Girl, the Mobile Modern Girl and the Sexual Modern Girl, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Dymphna Cusack's novel *Jungfrau* (1936) provides this triptych of Modern Girls that this thesis will take up and use as a guiding map and framework for analysis. In Chapter

One, the Modern Girls presented in *Jungfrau* will be analysed and a description provided in more detail. These three Modern Girls can be used as a heuristic device to research the attitudes and positions certain cultural producers had towards modern femininity and provide a model for refining our cultural understanding of the complex and multi-faceted Australian Modern Girl.

This triptych of Modern Girls—The Working Modern Girl, The Mobile Modern Girl, and The Sexual Modern Girl—provides lenses to view other facets of print culture of the time, and the way certain cultural producers writing for certain readerships employ these three types. Other novels have been chosen for the way they use one of these three, or all three types, in a didactic manner. The novels I will analyse are J. M. Harcourt's *Upsurge* (1934), Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* (1936) and *Virtuous Courtesan* (1935), and Dale Collins' *Race the Sun* (1936). These novels were written in the 1930s and feature Modern Girl protagonists. Three are from female authors and two from male. Two were considered "popular novels" (*Race the Sun* and *Jungfrau*), one was considered a serious piece of fiction with political themes (*Sugar Heaven*), and two were banned and did not have a widespread readership like the others (*Upsurge* and *Virtuous Courtesan*). While several other novels could have been chosen for this project, these five particularly stood out in terms of their controversial content, not surprising considering their troublesome protagonist, their use of the Modern Girl, and their engagement with modernity. Further, all five position the Modern Girl as an agent of modernity and one that either needs punishment or subjugation, particularly if she was an avid consumer, much like the figure in the magazines.

Combining magazine scholarship and close literary analysis is complex. The sheer volume of material when looking at magazines, combined with the periodicity and heterogeneity of these cultural artefacts makes looking for a discursive coherence slippery. Indeed, the heterogeneity of magazines complicates the act of close reading and literary analysis that can more easily take place when reading single novels. While novels

predominantly feature one author's creativity, magazines feature a plurality of voices within a composite artefact. Yet because of magazines' heterogeneity and link to commercial culture, they have often been overlooked in literary analysis. However, what is interesting is the interplay between the magazines and the novels of this era—how often the novels mention magazines and draw assumptions about them, and how magazines feature fiction from prominent authors of the time.

This interplay is even more interesting when using the Modern Girl as a heuristic device to research the range of attitudes different cultural producers have in their approach and employment of her. In *Jungfrau*, Eve flicks through the magazine *Manuscripts* while having a philosophical discussion with Marc on love and the meaning of life. In *Race the Sun,* magazines report on the fashion choices of the aviatrix, and the aviatrix is used to personally deliver new Australian magazines to other international ports. In *Upsurge,* popular magazines are positioned as objects of consumerism and fickleness alongside the Modern Girls who read them. Even though these references occur in the background of the novels, and even though in at least two of the novels the magazine are portrayed as modern forms of consumerist depravity, these references signal the important ways that magazines overlapped with novels as cultural artefacts of the period, producing a complex and diverse print culture. Historian Tracey Loughran verifies this view, maintaining, "because magazines were a continuous, ever-present part of the background of everyday life, they are also found in the background of other cultural artefacts, such as books, films, television and music" (42). Yet rather than positioning magazines in the background, this thesis brings them to the foreground, reading for the way both magazines and novels provide a more detailed account of how the Modern Girl was represented during the 1930s.

Using novels and magazines does indeed reveal a more nuanced picture of how the Modern Girl was presented to the reading public in the 1930s. She was semiotic in the way she came to represent feminine modernities; she was aesthetic in how she was visually

represented and was a model on which young women could style themselves and be included in the body culture movement; she was also a didactic tool, serving as an example of feminine fickleness, of the dangers of modernity, or as a role model of modern femininity. The Modern Girl signalled the ephemerality of modern consumer culture and embraced various forms of transnational and transmedial cultural hybridisation. Within this multi-faceted image of the Modern Girl, three themes of work, mobility, and sex converge in her representation and can be traced across this slice of 1930s print culture. This thesis, then, contributes to the growing scholarship on the interwar period and attempts to present a more comprehensive portrait of the Modern Girl in Australia than cultural and literary histories have previously discussed. Also, by reading across magazines and novels of the period, a new way of reading Australian literary history emerges. This reading shows the literature of the interwar period was not "shabby" and "barren" as some scholars have accused, but rather, it was a vibrant and generative network of ideas and art.

Chapter Outline

The thesis is structured thematically and centres on the triptych of Modern Girls. This project will explore how these figures' deep associations with female consumerism, transnational modernity, and metropolitan cosmopolitanism have contributed to their invisibility. Chapters One and Two provide a template for analysing both novels and magazines and form the basis for the rest of the discussions in the later chapters. Chapter One uses the three Modern Girl protagonists in Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau* to provide a model for analysing the Working Modern Girl, the Mobile Modern Girl and the Sexual Modern Girl. It hints of the hardship of the Depression years and suggests the looming threat in Europe from the standpoint of its publishing date in 1936. Narratives of the hardships women still face reminiscent of Depression times are evident, and the symbol of the Jungfrau (German term meaning virgin), and also a mountain in Switzerland, gestures to Europe like a foreshadowing of troubled

times. Most notably, these Modern Girls read the periodical *Manuscripts* (1931—1935)[1] and many of their discussions are drawn from the magazine's content. Dymphna Cusack herself wrote for *Manuscripts* and the content from this magazine is reflected in the ideas and discussions in *Jungfrau*. Thus, the dialogue between the magazine and the novel raises questions regarding the interplay between Modern Girls, literature, and print culture.

Chapter Two reads for the Modern Girl in *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, particularly as an example of how magazines employ this figure in their content. This chapter argues that the Modern Girl presented in this periodical was more of an aspirational and glamorous figure and presented working-class women with a model to look up to, as well as escapist fantasies. Even though *The Australian Woman's Mirror* predominantly featured advertisements and content aimed at the housewife, the Working Modern Girl, the Mobile Modern Girl, and the Sexual Modern Girl subtly enticed women outside the home, offering women independence, travel, glamour, freedom, and romance. She seductively smiled at readers, she advertised numerous goods and services, she fell in love with rich bosses, and she was sexually alluring to men. She was also thoroughly modern and financially independent; yet, she was also from a certain class demographic, presenting an aspirational figure to working-class women, offering new freedoms. These first two chapters provide a map for reading for the Modern Girl across the pages of other print culture of the interwar period. The chapters that follow will present the Working Modern Girl, the Mobile Modern Girl, and the Sexual Modern Girl in more detail, and will each be given a separate chapter.

Chapter Three examines representations of the Working Modern Girl in order to track feminine and masculine responses to this figure in J. M. Harcourt's *Upsurge*, Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven*, and the men's magazine, *MAN*. With the new freedoms that *The Australian*

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[1] *Manuscripts* was published by Harry Tatlock Miller, the owner of The Book Nook Bookshop in Melbourne, and not only advertised the books on the shelves of Miller's bookshop, but also contained reproductions of art and photographs, poetry, short stories, literary criticism and philosophy.

Woman's Mirror suggests could come from the Working Modern Girl's income, however, came certain dangers, which were subtly hinted at in *The Australian Woman's Mirror,* yet exploited in *Upsurge* and *MAN. Upsurge* is a communist political novel which uses the Working Modern Girl to highlight the oppressed status of the working class, and working girl. To date, *Upsurge* has only been read in terms of its political agenda and is famous for censors banning the book because of its controversial communist and sexual content. This thesis reads this novel in a new way. That is, it reads the novel in terms of its representations of the Working Modern Girl, and how the novel expresses the anxieties of not only the working-class but also of men towards women and work. In Harcourt's novel, the Modern Girl is associated with vacuousness as she is linked with commercial culture, and one who cannot achieve class-consciousness or become radicalised by the prospect of revolution.

In *Sugar Heaven*, Jean Devanny's female protagonists, on the other hand, achieve a political awakening alongside a sexual awakening. Her communist novel has, thus, been celebrated as a serious work of fiction, which aptly displays the class struggle. While *Upsurge* has been regularly relegated to the status of "museum piece" (Cowan 97), and often overlooked in terms of its serious status in Australian literature, scholars of Australian literature have resurrected and reprinted several editions of Devanny's *Sugar Heaven.* In Harcourt's novel, Modern Girls are both antagonists and protagonists; yet compared to the men in the novel, they are typically naïve and powerless. Devanny's female subjects achieve maturity and become powerful women in their circle of influence. I compare the two novels to consider the way one kind of Modern Girl—the kind associated with the modern marketplace and frivolous femininity—is characteristically subject to derision and dismissal, in both novels that feature her, and in subsequent critical analysis. This kind of frivolous Modern Girl is also highly visible in the print culture of *MAN* magazine, and what links *Upsurge* with *MAN* is the way both artefacts of interwar print culture demonstrate male anxieties towards the Working Modern Girl, while insisting on her as a mere sex object.

Indeed, *MAN* parodies the Working Modern Girl, characterising her as purely an object often at the disposal of her male boss. Setting her up as a sexually alluring contrast to the boring housewife, *MAN* emphasises the Working Modern Girl's sexuality, rather than her career status, and diminishes her to an inferior position particularly when compared with men. Vacuous and wanting, the Working Modern Girl was a comic figure whose presence in the workplace was only beneficial—visually and sexually—to her male employers, male co-workers, or male customers. Unlike the aspirational and glamorous depictions in *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, *MAN* used the Working Modern Girl to reinforce the workplace as a male dominated environment where powerful men could play with powerless, but sexually available young women. This stereotype suggested a blurring of boundaries between the Working Modern Girl and sex workers or working girls. Yet this imaginative discourse of powerful men versus vacuous and sexually alluring women was not, of course, only relegated to the realm of male fantasies in magazines.

Focusing on *The Australian Women's Weekly* and Dale Collins' novel *Race the Sun*, Chapter Four discusses the Mobile Modern Girl. This chapter builds on the newfound freedoms that the Working Modern Girl enjoyed, particularly in the realm of mobility, both socially and geographically. The Mobile Modern Girl was a traveller both spatially and symbolically. She traversed geographical borders as well as social ones, which positioned her in a tenuous transnational space that constantly defied containment. The aviatrix, more than any other type of Modern Girl, came to symbolise this figure and the new freedoms she could desire. She was a quintessential transnational figure whose cosmopolitan image was used in a myriad of ways. However, as we shall see, like the warnings the other two Modern Girls constantly heard, there was a cost associated with her independence and freedom. Even in the magazines and novels discussed, her mobility was fleeting and fragile. Narratives seemed to affirm that ultimately women should be situated in the home as mothers. This chapter conducts a close reading of Collins' novel exploring the way a male writer uses the aviatrix as

an international fantasy figure and one whose mobility also becomes symbolic for women's sexual freedom.

I then explore *The Australian Women's Weekly*, looking at ways mobility was discussed concerning the Modern Girl, and I also look at this magazine's representation of the aviatrix. The aviatrix not only encroached on previously male terrains of work and adventure, but she also broke records by soaring to new heights of visibility, which the magazine exploited in articles, advertising, and debates. This chapter also re-reads *Race the Sun* in the version that was printed as a full supplement in the February 1937 issue of *The Australian Women's Weekly*. Distinctly different from the London-published novel, the version of *Race the Sun* in the supplement is heavily edited, and the ways in which this is achieved is analysed and discussed. Instead of a transnational, glamorous, and worldly Mobile Modern Girl, *The Australian Women's Weekly* supplement features a moderated version of a world-famous aviatrix, whose sexuality is erased, whose ambition is curtailed, and whose social and geographical mobility is limited. She is, then, the good Australian Girl who conforms to cultural standards of propriety. Analysing these two forms of print culture together suggests the ways *The Australian Women's Weekly* reflected mainstream Australia fantasies of international modernity in ways that appeased both a progressive as well as a more conservative reader who may have been offended by some of the material it chose to omit. Indeed, the aviatrix, as an icon of the Mobile Modern Girl, was sexual, glamorous, and transnational in ways that could be offensive to a more conservative readership. Therefore, some representations of her needed to be moderated in such a way that would be palatable to a particular Australian reading public, especially an imagined mainstream lower to middle-class readership such as those of *The Australian Women's Weekly*.

Chapter five discusses the Sexual Modern Girl and uses *The Home* and Jean Devanny's banned book *Virtuous Courtesan* to trace the troublesome and sexually charged position the Modern Girl held in certain tiers of mainstream culture. *The Home* was a quality

magazine that predominantly addressed a female readership, and the Modern Girl was ubiquitous on the covers and advertisements. Even though the Modern Girl was visually evident in *The Home*, however, content that features her was edited and framed in keeping with the magazine's understanding and impression of good taste. Yet, numerous photographs that feature artistically naked Modern Girls graced the pages between 1920 and 1939. It is curious that a magazine underpinned with notions of good taste had similar photographs to those that featured in *MAN* magazine.

I then turn to *Virtuous Courtesan* to discuss issues of censorship and the body of the Sexual Modern Girl. This chapter also conducts a close reading of the novel to analyse the way Devanny used this figure to suggest sexual freedom for women was still tenuous, and the contract of marriage was the only socially acceptable space for women to explore their sexuality. Like the novel itself, the perceived freedoms of the Sexual Modern Girl were met with censorship and broad societal dismissal. The novel as a text does, however, highlight the new ways women were exploring sex in a modern environment. Yet, it shows by the novel's end that men still had the advantage in matters pertaining to sex. The protagonist, Sharon, marries despite her desire not to because she realises that "[t]he sea of her love would be flung back upon itself, broken into spume, unless she conformed to his notions of proper behaviour" (262). So even though there are Modern Girls in sexual relationships that challenged 1930s' propriety, the novel suggests that sexual freedom for women is unattainable and only permissible for men. Some critics, such as Carole Ferrier, have thoroughly examined this work; they have, however, focused on the socialist and class themes of the novel. This chapter examines the way Devanny uses the Sexual Modern Girl to challenge 1930s' ideas on sexual freedom and how these were met with the censor's contempt.

In reading these two examples of print culture together, a picture emerges of the way sexual meanings could, on the one hand, be defined as offensive, yet on the other, when

repackaged in other ways, be acceptable. The body culture movement of the interwar period was one way that sexual meanings could be expressed through an acceptable avenue, and images and narratives which upheld its ideals and philosophy did not seem to attract censorship. This philosophy closely resembled ideals of Australian nationalism, and, consequently, was a way in which sexuality, and the Modern Girl's naked body, could be openly discussed and displayed. Furthermore, in order to Australianise the body culture movement which originated in Germany, cultural narratives repackaged these ideals and upheld a feminine ideal that was healthy, suntanned, fit, and a distinct beach-goer. Enter the Australian Beach Girl, who overshadowed the influence of the Modern Girl, and has become a national icon that is still a major stereotype in Australian culture.

Chapter One: *Jungfrau*: A Social Documentary of Australian Modern Girls

The Modern Girl was a figure who captured both notice and notoriety. As a vibrant, attractive, and seductive personality, she attracted attention of both positive and negative kinds. Hence, despite her prominent visibility in her own time, she was often subject to judgement and dismissal. In this chapter, I argue that Australian novels about the Modern Girl ultimately suffered the same fate. One such novel which offers its own reading of a series of Australian Modern Girls is Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau* (1936). Awarded second place in the prestigious S. H. Prior Memorial Prize, the novel was published by The Bulletin Newspaper Company.[2] It was well received by the Australian reading public and by the Australian press. Yet while *Jungfrau* received public acclaim in its own day, it was ultimately overlooked after the formation of the Australian canon and labelled by critics as mere "feminine melodrama" ("To be Rid" Moore 60). Yet by tracking how Cusack uses three Modern Girls to comment on women's issues of the 1930s, a multi-dimensional and complex portraiture of this figure emerges.

While *Jungfrau*, like the Australian Modern Girl more generally, has become largely invisible to literary history, it is important as a "social documentar[y]" (Cusack, qtd. in Freehill 9). This chapter argues that *Jungfrau* is significant because of the way it draws attention to new feminine modes of work, mobility, and sex in early twentieth-century Australia, which are often absent from mainstream understandings of the Australian cultural and literary past. As such, Cusack's first novel offers a way, in the Australian context, to take

[2] The S. H. Prior Memorial Prize was an annual award founded in 1935 to recognize Prior's contribution to Australian literature. It was awarded annually to an Australian author for the best work of fiction. Prior himself had previously established the Endeavour Prize, at Norman Lindsay's suggestion to publish Australian writers, after spearheading *The Bulletin* novel competition in 1928.

up Rita Felski's proposition of undertaking a reassessment of modernity and modernism by taking seriously women who engage with "feelings, romantic novels, shopping, motherhood [or sexuality], [and] fashion" (22). While making visible this figure—and writing about her—to Australian cultural and literary history, the novel also provides an explicit study of the problems the Australia Modern Girl posed as a troublesome figure to established hierarchies of view and to accepted social mores, in her own time and subsequently. In ways not unlike the novel's own trajectory as a visible part of the Australian literary marketplace, which was subsequently judged unworthy of canonisation, the novel's three female protagonists—Thea, Eve, and Marc—present lively three-dimensional images of Australian modern womanhood. They offer female companionship and solidarity, while also being subject to evaluations and judgements, and are ultimately cast aside.

In work that aims to recover the literature of the Modern Girl in Australia, I therefore argue that *Jungfrau* should be a centrepiece. Cusack's novel provides a model for reading the Modern Girl in Australia and understanding attitudes toward her—and literature about her. Situating the novel in the print culture and reception history of its own day, in contrast to its subsequent reception history, also opens ways of considering attitudes toward the place of the Modern Girl in Australian literature. I, thus, read *Jungfrau* as a kind of heuristic, serving to find out the unstable or troublesome place of the Modern Girl in Australian literary history, while also presenting methods to analyse three different types of Australian Modern Girls.

Three aspects of the Australian Modern Girl are made manifest in Eve, Thea, and Marc. Each of these modern women is firmly entrenched in the environment of modernising interwar Sydney, an Australian urban scene comprising an increasingly transnational, cosmopolitan, and commercialised milieu. Cusack uses her female protagonists to explore modern womanhood, including women's sexuality and aspirations. Eve is an obstetrician at a local women's hospital, Marc is a social worker with a special interest in juvenile delinquency, and Thea is a teacher contemplating a master's degree. Thea, the Young

Woman, or *jungfrau* of the novel's title, is associated with the maiden, and with the mountain of the same name in Switzerland, which also dominates the novel as a governing image and metaphor. In the novel, Thea is described by Professor Glover at the University of Sydney as virginal and untouchable, like the Swiss mountain before its peak was conquered in 1811 and the area opened for commerce, including a tram for paying tourists. Thea becomes an object of Glover's sexual conquest, and he eventually casts her aside.

All three female figures in *Jungfrau* are Modern Girls. Each has her own strong opinions on sexuality and women's place in the world, even as Glover sees them as frivolous and ephemeral. Thea, for example, passionately has sex with this married man, and consequently and unbeknown to the father (Glover), becomes pregnant, ensuing debates between the Modern Girls on abortion. Through internal dialogue and open discussions throughout the novel, it is made evident to the reader that these women's experiences and desires are far from Glover's insouciant accusations of vacuousness. They are, in fact, trying to carve their place in a modern world where old-fashioned values still try to thwart inroads women have made into establishing more modern identities.

Liz Conor's work on the modern woman and visual spectacle in Australia's print culture of the interwar period provides a model for the way in which these three female characters in Cusack's work can serve as an organising heuristic of modern womanhood present in this novel, and indeed for this whole thesis. In *The Spectacular Modern Woman,* Conor takes seriously the kinds of visual spectacle that organised the presentation of the Australian Modern Girl in modern advertising and iconography: the City or Business Girl, Screen Star, Beauty Contest, and Flapper (3). Like Conor, I wish to make visible images of womanhood in Australia that have been subsequently rendered too ephemeral to warrant serious consideration. Unlike Conor, who is a visual historian, however, as a literary historian, I emphasise the textual traces of her in the print culture of the 1930s. In *Jungfrau*, as in other aspects of Australian print culture, these traces align with images of work,

mobility, and sex. In Cusack's novel, Eve represents the Working Modern Girl, Thea represents the Mobile Modern Girl, and Marc represents the Sexual Modern Girl.

The Working Modern Girl

All three female characters in Cusack's *Jungfrau* exemplify tensions and benefits women experienced in new fields of work. They are educated, socially mobile working girls, with degrees conferred by the University of Sydney. Of all of them, however, Eve puts her career above her personal life and believes that women should be free to work in whichever profession they choose. By doing so, she places a career above bearing children, not just for herself, but to help women overcome the pitfalls of marriage and routine childbearing. For Eve, work is a place of safety, where she lives on her own in the hospital's doctors' quarters, grieving the plight of the broken women who lie in her wards, suffering from starvation, from having too many babies, from pregnancy outside of wedlock, and from the judgement of society. Her own career, as Eve views it, provides her with a buffer against passionate disorder:

> Thank God, she had a profession that absorbed all her interests and most of her energies, and sufficient balance and commonsense to control what was left over, and, above all, thank God for a moral code that was based on a rock, immovable, sane and immeasurably comforting. (124)

As, perhaps, a play upon the expectations which are encoded by stereotype, Eve subverts the characteristics associated with her biblical namesake. Rather than the figure of temptation, Eve represents the opposite: a sterile, intensely Catholic and zealously religious Working Modern Girl—the Eve *after* the Fall, as it were. This is because Eve is a mother figure, choosing a life of relative celibacy and mothering other women through her career, which involves nursing women who have fallen pregnant outside of marriage. She also counsels women, as we learn later, about having abortions and the dangers of such. Yet even

though religion dictates Eve's behaviour, her departure from the traditional notion of a woman as wife to a highly trained and financial independent professional demonstrates how young women were gaining independence and threatening the future of the family unit as they chose to stay unencumbered. Young working women, as Patricia Grimshaw and colleagues argue, "were an easy target" for the "social disillusionment" in the interwar period (248). They were subjects of criticism, from general society and from other women. To some, they came to represent all that was perceived to be negative about the interwar period: the breakdown of the family unit, female career ambitions, and the rise of capitalism and consumerism with their accompanying destabilisations of other traditional structures.

Eve's choice of work over other female vocations attracts various kinds of attention, both positive and negative. Her career as an obstetric doctor positions her, like her biblical namesake, as a potential mother figure, but her all-embracing commitment to the patriarchal institutions of medical science and religion appears to have robbed her of stereotypically nurturing female traits such as warmth, compassion, tenderness, and even desire. Thea describes Eve as "lucky" (71). Thea regards the rational, ordered life Eve lives as a safe scientific and ethical harbour from the vicissitudes she experiences in her own life: "No emotional upheavals, no spiritual convulsions. Just that quick, brilliant flame that burned up everything irrelevant—making her incapable of compromise, intolerant of weakness" (71–72). By contrast, Marc reviles Eve as one of "these antiseptic women" who have "made so much of their professions" and "make a success of any job other than marriage" (50). She even accuses Eve of putting career above her female friendships, asking her after their friend Thea's death, whether "your job meant more to you than Thea?" (282). Yet to Eve, "her profession that absorbed all her interests and most of her energies" (124), was both a form of salvation and a way of controlling female desire.

Even though Marc admonishes Eve for her devotion to her career, Marc herself is committed to her work and struggles to find balance in her life. As Working Modern Girls,

the new opportunities available to them to make a life for themselves independent of men and families open new conflicts and new contradictions as well. As such, each of these women judges the other, and each must accept a compromise of some kind. Prioritising her work with juvenile delinquents, for example, Marc is shown to "refuse the chance of a trip to New Zealand in her vacation to finish some investigation among girls at Parramatta" (74).

Given that these three women are thoroughly engaged with modern experiences of work for unmarried women, Cusack's novel affirms Jill Julius Matthews's observation that the Modern Girl was central to issues of work and leisure. During the 1920s and 1930s, a young woman who worked was often dubbed a Modern Girl merely because she was advancing into male domains of work. As Matthews argues, "Young women created the modern world by their work and through their leisure" (67). In their discussion of Working Modern Girls in Japan, Alisa Freedman, Laura Miller, and Christine R. Yano maintain that "[t]he 'modern girl'…is the media figure that best represents this complex time and is the category in which women employed in new urban jobs were often placed" (*Modern Girls on the Go* 5). In Australia, the interwar period saw more women entering the workforce than ever before, with a concurrent departure from previous social mores of women living at home as dependants until they were married and financially supported by men. This is confirmed in the *New South Wales Official Year Book* of 1936, published the same year as *Jungfrau*. In a segment titled "Status of Women," new, professional opportunities for women were highlighted:

> In New South Wales women have the right to exercise the franchise and sex does not disqualify any person from acting as member of the Legislative Assembly, as member of a council of any shire or municipality, as judge, magistrate, barrister, solicitor, or conveyancer, or as member of the Legislative Council. Many women have been appointed justices of the peace, and some have been admitted to the

> practice of the legal profession. They are eligible for all degrees at the University of Sydney… (Waites 231)

Thus, work implies not simply financial independence but also access to new levels of society. Through the working lives of Eve, Marc, and Thea, Cusack shows how modern women could now be employed in jobs previously held by men. Through their work, these women also had forms of independence that created benefits, but also disadvantages. Their independence offers Modern Girls new forms of social and geographical mobility; however, these two forms of mobility do not come without conflict and contradiction.

The Mobile Modern Girl

Work brought with it elements of freedom, as well as strife. Even though historians such as Matthews note that young women's wages in interwar Australia were "still only at about 54 per cent of the living wage for men" (*Dance Hall* 231), Modern Girls enjoyed a new sense of freedom which translated to an unprecedented engagement with leisure culture as an element defined in *opposition* to work and in *relation* to sexuality: "For young women the movies and dancing were cheap, accessible entertainments to share with men friends that invoked the romantic possibilities of the modern world" (71). Thorstein Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption explains why women wished to purchase outward signs of distinction, and how engaging in a consumerist leisure economy could be experiences as pleasurable in a modern economy and society (Camic and Hodgson). Women's participation in this, however, was also regarded as the upmost sign of decadence—attracting judgement from those who believed in the ethos of a productive economy and/or the role of women as housewife.

In its most basic definition, mobility refers to freedom of movement. All three heroines in *Jungfrau* participate in dances and sporting activities, including tennis, sailing, surfing, and running. Eve is an avid tennis player, taking to the court (characteristically) as a form of stress relief. Marc lives on Sydney Harbour and has a sailing boat docked at the

bottom of her garden, which she is often tinkering with and modifying, as might a conventional male owner. Thea and Marc go swimming and body surfing during a weekend trip away, and afterwards go running on the beach. Sport and recreation are all forms of movement and mobility, and as such represent new freedoms available to the Modern Girl, associated with a consumer lifestyle. Amanda Card, an historian focusing on performance theory and embodiment, maintains that women's participation in sport was intricately linked to "Beauty, health, and wellbeing [which] could be everyone's through dedication and effort" (32). No longer are leisure activities just for the wealthy; now everyone can participate in conspicuous use and display of leisure time, which Thea and Marc show. These activities also represent spheres of society newly opened to women, which extend throughout the novel to other forms of mobility afforded by other kinds of movement.

Conservative Eve and progressive Marc represent opposite ends of a spectrum of possibilities open to the average Modern Girl, whereas Thea attempts to take up various positions in between. Thus, she is the quintessential Mobile Modern Girl. As well as social mobility, Thea demonstrates geographical mobility in her ease of transiting between Sydney University, the classroom, the department store where she shops, and the greater Sydney region using that modern icon, the tram. In complementary terms, the consistent use of water images to describe Thea and her feelings symbolises her own fluidity and mobility—organic rather than mechanical. While Eve and Marc look to each other in judgement, Thea looks to them both as possible role models between which she might choose. Despite their opposition, Eve and Marc are brought together by mutual regard for Thea and their contest over her affection and loyalty. Thea often feels pulled between these two women, musing, "[w]hy must these two, who meant more to her than anyone else, why must they drag her, spent and unresisting, between their antagonism?" (24). She feels that "Eve was the steady, unceasing crash of the breakers that broke over you in a smother of cold foam, pounded you" (24–25),

and that "Marc [was] the insidious dragging of the undertow, dragging you out of yourself, filling your mind with a terrifying, enchanting vision of wide seas under wild skies" (25).

As the intermediary between Marc and Eve, Thea is the main character of *Jungfrau*, situated between girlhood and womanhood. Life presents her with a range of possibilities, and she oscillates between them, in an ambiguous and unstable position, a contested and troubled as well as troublesome figure. When Marc observes that she is looking tired, Thea responds that the season has been hard on her, and she looks forward to getting active again: "Oh I'll be alright soon as the summer comes and I can get some surfing" (53). For Thea, surfing represents the redemptive possibilities of continual renewal afforded to women by these new forms of mobility. Yet, as with work for the Modern Girl, mobility comes with both promises and pitfalls. Thea is a figure of insecure mobility. Despite her yearning for the revitalisation promised by the surf, "Life," she muses,

> washed over her like a great sea, and she just struggled like a swimmer who goes down with the blue of the sky filling him [sic] with passionate, helpless resentment for their loss. Like a poem she read once: Cover her grave with shells the sea hath scattered/ Frail as the foam by flying winds unfurled./ Their shallow cups have held the sea enchaliced,/ As she the drifting tides of all the world. (48)[3]

Thea is connected throughout the novel with the sea. The poem anticipates Thea's later death by drowning, distraught after taking a married lover and falling pregnant and unable to carry through with Marc's advice to procure an abortion. It also suggests the worldly "drift" associated with the Australian Modern Girl, as she takes on influences of the "drifting tides of all the world" (48). The two rival forms of femininity offered up by Eve and

[3] This poem was also written by Dymphna Cusack and first appeared in *Manuscripts*, November 1933, p.63, and was titled: "For One Who Died So Young."

Marc serve only to set her adrift between them. Literally and symbolically, Thea eventually drowns, rowing out to sea, to take her own life.

In these terms, physical mobility—with its attendant connections with social mobility—and freedom of movement are thus linked and embodied by the Modern Girl. While Thea is the main embodiment of the Mobile Modern Girl in the novel, other secondary characters, such as the dancer Poppy Whetherall, also fit this category. Freedom of movement for the Australian Modern Girl is packed with promise but also precariousness. Dance, with its exotic and sexual overtones, represents both. As Jill Julius Matthews observes: "In Sydney's world of popular culture, work and leisure were so inextricably intertwined as the limbs of young men and women on the dance floor and movie screen" (*Dance Hall* 88). Not only do the girls in this novel participate in dances themselves, they also are an audience of dance in one key scene of the novel that again centres around women judging and watching other Modern Girls.

This is the scene at the leisurely beach house weekend, when all the houseguests are treated to Poppy Whetherall's interpretation of a new, fluid, and exotic dance. Unrestricted by set choreography, Poppy moves to the music and interprets the sounds through her fluid movements, "moth-like and lambent" (97). Dance historian and literary critic Jonathon Appels has noted how novelists such as Gertrude Stein, for example, used modern flowing dance movements and young women dancers to signify the potential liberation available to women in a new fluid space of modernity (168). Cusack likewise gestures to dance as an expression of modernity linked with the Modern Girl and liberation. Reclined on sofas and cushions, the girls, together with several men, become entranced as Poppy demonstrates her dance, which was described as a "virginal mystery…untouched even by the sensuous rhythm of the music" (111), where her audience becomes "bewitched" (111). Lithe and beautiful, Poppy entrances her audience: one man remarks that her dance left him "unprepared," and "caught without my armor" (111). He further comments to Marc that it is "witchlike the

fascination of the dancing girl, where every physical movement seemed more than a thing of the flesh, a promise that the body's beauty is but a faint mirroring of the spirit" (97).

Here, as the object of spectacle, the Dancing Modern Girl is yet again subject to attention that is both positive and negative. The newness and shock of the dance causes Marc and Eve to criticise Poppy, even while admitting that they were entranced by her performance. Marc also accuses Poppy of using "witchery" stating she is "possessed" (111). In her own characteristic fashion, Eve dismisses Poppy's dancing as mere "sensual antics" (118). When it comes to a Modern Girl openly displaying her body through free movements, even a Modern Girl as liberated as Marc, reacts with social judgement and dismissal. Perhaps because dance is so closely associated with freedom from physical restriction and suffused with sexuality, this form of mobility attracts ambivalent forms of attention: attraction and revulsion.

Sexual tension seems to underpin physical movement in the novel, suggesting the way new forms of leisure culture are infused with new sexual complexities. By extension, mobility presents an ambiguous space where new meanings of modernity are played out. The character who most especially embodies this ambivalent space is Thea. Indeed, despite the enticements of movement and the promises of social mobility, there are dangers associated with the Modern Girls' newfound freedoms, especially those of a sexual nature. At the beginning of the novel, Thea tries to tell Eve that she has a new philosophy, where she is "going to *take* life—use it—now, instead of letting it use me" (4). She is trying to become more like Marc, an active and self-determining agent of her own life. But Eve, who is worried that Thea is too delicate to embrace such a dangerous lifestyle, cautions Thea that such a way of life is only "safe…in books" (4). "I'm sick of safety," Thea responds, "Tired of working to pattern—of running in the same narrow groove" (4). Thea acknowledges that to stay stagnant in her way of thinking, her career, and her relationships would mean to atrophy. But her insistence to her friends on having a new life when her thoughts convey insecurity, doubt, and

depression call into question Thea's confidence in breaking into new areas of her life. Indeed, while Thea may try to perceive mobility entirely in positive terms of aspiration, for a woman, she does soon learn it comes with insecurity and high risk.

The cost of Thea's flirtation with danger and adventure is high: an affair with a married man and an unplanned pregnancy. Cast aside and set adrift, she is faced with two options: abortion or adoption. The decisive Marc hopes to help arrange an abortion and finds an illegal clinic in Sydney. Thea attends the clinic but finds the experience overwhelming and flees from it before the abortion could take place. Eve, morally opposed to abortion, hopes to arrange "a couple of months' leave and a sea-trip" (243) so Thea could deliver the child as so many women did in those days, in secret, and relinquish it to adoption. Paralysed by her inability to choose either option, Thea is represented as unable to achieve full womanhood. In the novel's conclusion, incapable of dealing with the consequences of her affair with Professor Glover, Thea makes her way into the shipping channels of Sydney Harbour in Marc's rowboat at night and takes her own life. Even before her suicide, Marc foreshadows her death, describing her as one of Luca della Robbia's 15th century religious sculptures of the Christ child with his mother Mary:

> The little Della Robbia child with all the childishness stamped out of the young mouth and the eyes blank with a grief too heavy for them […] But perhaps the Della Robbia child, immortalised against his ethereal background, was not made for contacts that would shatter the bright, burning blue that protect him and fling him undefended into a world of more than two and a half dimensions. Was Thea ready for such a world? (225)

Thea's life poetically represents a suspension between two choices for the Modern Girl. She can either turn back and choose Eve's life of near-sainthood and bleak aestheticism, who feels grief "as impersonally as though she were contemplating someone else's act, not her own" (252). Or she could venture forth and continue the course toward the other extreme,

to become a near-vamp, like the masculine and jaunty Marc, who Thea thinks had "dark, secret things" that contributed to "Marc's invincibility" (214). Yet Thea feels unable to make either choice and rejects both. Her mobility itself transforms into a kind of frozen immobility, suspended "in a crystal world whose rarefied air no shattering whisper could penetrate" (251). From this moment on, she muses on a collage of poetic traditions reflecting her inner world and oscillation between the two poles of possibility. She then quotes the modern Australian poet, "Chris Brennan," and reflects on happier times stating, "Oh, desolate eves along the way, how oft, despite your bitterness, was I warm at heart" (253). Rejecting Eve and her religious traditions, then, but also Marc's modern one, Thea then makes a firm decision that her "High Song is over" (258), quoting an elegiac poet, Humbert Wolfe. Her life "didn't matter now!" (258). Now she would not regret "the poetry she would never read, and all the music she would never hear" (259) because now, in her crystalline state, "she was living it herself!" (259). This swinging from one poetic register to another and finishing with elegy shows the cost of Thea's insecure mobility and its potential consequences.

Thea's mobility, then, is dangerous. While the water imagery throughout the novel gives an impression of Thea's fluidity, the circumstances immobilise her. Unable to manage the changes in her life, which present adult problems and situations, Thea becomes stuck in a childish position, often labelled the "silly child" (145), "the virgin" (162) or the one "untouched" (286), and her mobility ends tragically in a death by drowning. It is the philosophising and masculine Marc who delivers the line that sums up the moral of the story, a line taken from the mouth of one of her many male suitors: "'Insecurity's a big price for women to pay for independence'" (242). Thea's dalliance with the married Professor Glover, like Poppy Wetherall's dance, suggests the ways that mobility is also connected to new sexual freedom, both of which characterise the Modern Girl. Through Poppy's dance and Thea's affair, new sexual freedoms are intimately linked to both mobility in general and the Modern Girl specifically, in ways that deserve their own elaboration.

The Sexual Modern Girl

The character of Marc is the most immediately recognisable Modern Girl in Cusack's narrative. She is a dynamic, independent modern woman who is drawn to eccentric characters and who behaves transgressively. Yet she is also an androgynous figure, taking on vamp-like characteristics and behaving like a man, having the reputation of being a loose woman but also being admired for it. Her career as a social worker and psychologist for troubled youth suggests both her special interest in and association with youthful deviance. Her philosophical discussions on sex, her insistence on sexual freedom for women, and her demonstration of her sexuality, which verges on lesbianism, signals one of Cusack's underlining themes in the novel: sexuality. Marc is a distinct bachelorette, living on her own in a city flat, smoking cigarettes, and driving her own car and boat. She is characterised not only by her vitality but also by her visibility, by her fashionable "slacks" (85), her "bright, short crop" of hair (41), her "painted mouth" (161), and "her absurdly long theatrical eyes" (160–61).

Marc possessed a source of strength that the other women comment on frequently: a sexually imbued confidence Thea considers that Marc had "some secret of her own; as though things possessed a special significance for her that made her curiously invulnerable" (48). However, in a later conversation, Marc reveals to Thea how heartbroken she had been in the past, hinting at a passionate love affair, an abortion, and a time of deep depression (215), showing her vulnerability. During an earlier exchange, Marc's complex relationship to sex and relationships is signalled when she opines, "[i]t's all bunk about love being a woman's whole existence" (50). Going further, Marc complains:

> Being a modern woman nowadays is no sinecure, believe me, however pleasant it seemed in anticipation. Men aren't contented with us unless we combine about fifteen qualities that a century ago would have been farmed out among fifteen women. They expect you to soothe and comfort, and still to have a mind of your own; bear their children and keep figures like Greta Garbo at the same time; be all intellectual while

> retaining a schoolgirl complexion and a movie-magazine face, and cook their dinner before we go out to look the perfect dancing partner. (50)

Yet despite Marc's complaint about how she perceives the hebephrenic expectations of men, she does not get married, bear children, or play the domestic role in a relationship. Her sexuality is expressed according to her own terms and her own desires.

After Marc expressed her opinion on being a modern woman, she attempts to demonstrate sexuality that does not conform to social conventions and to exercise alternative forms of sexual freedom (which are also taboo) by kissing Thea on the mouth. Thea's response in described as physical, immediate, and emotional: she "felt a sense of warmth and comfort in her kiss" (53). This gesture attempts to draw Thea into Marc's way of living without regard for social conventions, categories, and judgements, and to open her friend to even more fluid possibilities. Thea tries to admonish herself with Marc's philosophy, repeating to herself some of Marc's ideals where she should not practice "pigeonholing people; or yourself, for that matter […]. For, the moment you had the labels on, something would happen and off you would go behaving according to the rules laid for Class IV, section 2, lop-eared blonde" (74). Yet the reader is made aware of Thea's struggle despite Marc's attempt to influence Thea with her ideals, and this is further emphasised to highlight the complexities of the Modern Girl and her resistance to categories and rules—even more liberal ones.

Jungfrau illustrates how Modern Girls were openly discussing tensions caused by new ideals of sexuality. Similarly, Lisa Featherstone explores the history of Australian sexuality of the early twentieth century, drawing from the depiction of sexuality in Australian novels such as Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* (1901). Featherstone maintains that many women writing in this period "engaged, to varying degrees, with authority frameworks, but they all also offered a substantial challenge to the way sexuality and pleasure might be understood in the early twentieth century" ("Rethinking" 716). Indeed, described by one

reviewer as “thoroughly modern” when the 1936 novel was reissued in 1989 (“Timeless Work” 8), *Jungfrau* engages with sexuality in a way that is uniquely relevant to its era. It shows the complexities of female sexuality through female perspectives.

Eve, for example, is repulsed by Marc’s open embrace of carnality, and particularly offended by the fact that Marc did not “even [wear] a brassiere” which left her “small, firm breasts lifting the cheap jumper almost indecently” (118). When the three women go away for a weekend, in which couples pair off for some light petting, Eve declares that their pairing off is “revolting” (118) and dismisses the entertainment of the evening as mere “sensual antics” (118). Eve’s world is characterised entirely by facts and obligations, free of sensuality, romance, or fantasy. Observing the disorder into which Thea’s life is plunged when she enters a relationship with the married Professor Glover, Eve declares to herself: “Well if this is love, she was glad she knew nothing about it. If it separated you from your work, your ideas, almost, it seemed, from yourself, she was content with her life as it was” (119). Just like Eve’s namesake and the ancient symbolism it represented, Eve’s perspective about modern sexuality was presented as old-fashioned and tainted by her religious ideals.

While Eve thinks Marc is repulsive and Thea sees Marc as sexually confident and assured, the philosophising Marc reflects the complexities of the Sexual Modern Girl (as opposed to her working counterpart) and her troubled relationship to modern sexual freedoms. Marc later argues, “There’s something primitive about the way everything connected with sex is given an ethical twist” (215). To Marc, women should be able to enjoy sex without it “discredit[ing] you socially” (215). Unlike Eve, Marc does not find salvation in her work, nor is she governed by religious principles; she finds satisfaction in intelligent sex, where “minds dovetail” (131) and a sexual relationship becomes a “companionship of two perfectly free people” (133), free from marital “chains” (131). Thus, Marc is a character who demonstrates the complexities of being a modern sexual subject. As Angela Woollacot argues, “one definable aspect of this epoch’s modernity was women’s encroachment on

sexual subjectivity, expression and autonomy, an encroachment central to gender instabilities and to modernism's fascination with sexuality" ("White Colonialism and Sexual Modernity" 51). The complexities are further cemented by Marc's androgynous and masculine characteristics. She shows that established codes of sexuality favoured men, and it was these that women were encroaching on.

Jungfrau expresses this constant play between meanings of modernity and sexuality through the characters' engagement with leisure. Even for the free-thinking Marc, new forms of leisure culture presented the Modern Girl with scenarios that were sexually dangerous, particularly to women who Marc thought had no intellect. She and Thea attend a dance party of one of Marc's wealthy friends, where men pick up girls. A man, "gripping one of [Marc's] slim, naked ankles", asks her for sex (69). Refusing, she purposely drops her porcelain coffee cup, creating a distraction, so the man releases her ankle. She then responds, "no, thanks…Like Queen Victoria, I am hard to amuse" (69). Despite the sexual danger posed in this interaction, to Marc, modern parties such as this one were mere debauchery, populated by "exotic" women, such as "the leopard slut" (69), who had a "rich mellow decadence about [her]" (67). Here, Marc provides a comparison between her ideals of sexuality based on intellectual ideals and sexuality based on mere lust. She adds, "[i]t makes me sick when I think that a street away people are struggling and battling and growing up warped and stunted on what would not keep that leopard slut…in contraceptives" (67). Asserting her difference to these loose women who have no intellectual capacity, Marc positions herself as having old-fashioned, Victorian values, which the reader knows is merely a veneer and one Marc uses for her own advantage. Thea, likewise, was "wishing desperately that she could get away from it all" (68), while she judged the host thinking his "naked anger and lust don't go with modern evening clothes" (68). The girls themselves, though Modern Girls, are in an ambiguous space between modern and old values, drawn into new ways of participating in leisure culture, but demonstrating a moral standard that also rejects it. Even though Marc aligned herself with the

aristocracy, her criticism of this leisured class is evident. Dancing could be an acceptable leisure activity in some forms, acting as a site where new meanings of modernity and sexuality were being played out, yet in other forms could be troublesome.

Even though work and mobility are issues evident in the novel, sexuality is a dominant theme. While on the one hand the Modern Girl was identified with pleasure and figures of authority often relished in the sexual freedom she presented, on the other hand, as Jane Nicholas maintains, "the Modern Girl often bore the brunt of developing standards for the body—a modern, female, sexed body—as well as subsequent debates about women's proper place and their relationship with community, society and nation" (6). Marc codes female sexual agency as replete with attraction, desire, and freedom, but she views other women who demonstrate these traits with derision, particularly if these women are intellectually vacuous. Marc describes Poppy Whetherall in visual terms as "silver blond and dazzlingly pretty…silver nails, broad silver bracelets" (87), with "a face so blandly beautiful [she] could do anything but posture" (93); yet she is the object of Marc's contempt. Instead of enjoying Poppy's dancing, Marc declares, "I hate being entertained" (93). As a sexual, yet androgynous Modern Girl of Cusack's narrative, Marc is both an object and active arbiter of the sexual double standard, of which she herself is a conscious critic. Her character models the way sexual meanings for women were in a state of flux, yet still constrained by cultural and social norms. Furthermore, the theme of sexuality, particularly as it concerned female desire, was not something that easily fit into the project of building up a national literature. Indeed, the symbolism of Thea's tragic fate represents the Modern Girl's mixed reception by the male-dominated literary establishment, where her vitalism, modernity, and sexuality were accepted on extremely limited terms, terms that denied her legitimacy and longevity.

Jungfrau, Modern Girls, and Australian Literature

Jungfrau is a key text that represents the Modern Girl in the Australian interwar period. This significance is reinforced by the fact the novel was a runner up for the S. H. Prior Memorial Prize competition of 1935, coming second to Kylie Tennant's *Tiburon*, a novel about Australian country life and unemployment. The characterisations of Modern Girls and their relationships between one another in *Jungfrau* open ways to discuss broader cultural attitudes toward gender and modernity. This challenges existing literary traditions and cultural archives that still afford a masculinist perception of Australian literature. Cusack's composite portrait of the Modern Girl as an imagined social documentary is only one part of a broader heuristic that is evident across a range of print culture in Australia, where attitudes toward her seem equally ambivalent.

If, as Robert Dixon has observed, scholarly histories of modernism and modernity tend to be marked by an "occlusion of colonialism" (*Prosthetic Gods* 12), then, conversely, predominant understandings of Australian's colonial heritage seem to occlude the nation's historical modernity. Unlike the dun-coloured sun-baked earth that characterises the undeveloped Australian outback—often metonymically invoked to stand in for Australia's past—the interwar period signals the growth of the city; it was the first time the population of Australia became predominantly urban (Frost). Imagination was cast outward rather than inward to the so-called empty centre—and not so much toward England as the mother country but across the Pacific to the United States of America as the beacon of modernity (Kuttainen, Liebich, and Galletly). *Jungfrau*, then, becomes a text that offers a way to reassess literary and cultural histories of the interwar period as it presents three Modern Girls engaging in a thoroughly modern Australian society. Modern media and communication devices such as gramophones, telephones, radios, and cinema appear throughout the novel. So do technologies of modern mobility, such as the car, tram, bus, speedboat, ferry, and steamer. Thea, for example, is associated with modern consumerism: at one point she expresses her

desire to shop, maintaining she "wished she had yielded to the temptation to buy that lovely Shetland wool pair [of pyjamas] at D.J.'s [David Jones's Department Store]" (7). Cusack's strikingly modern work, like the Modern Girl herself, thus not only challenges the ideal of female respectability and experience during the interwar period but also the iconography of the Australian bush. Despite the prominence the Modern Girl enjoyed, and how she engaged with important issues of interwar society, she has all but disappeared from literary and cultural history. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the Modern Girl's invisibility is, in part, consistent with other occlusions: womanhood and representations of women in settler colonial contexts such as Australia have suffered long neglect by scholars, particularly during the interwar period.

Tania Peitzker's argument helps to reconceptualise Rita Felski's claim mentioned in this thesis' introduction by offering a charge to revisit Australian women writers who have often been dismissed by the literary establishment. Contending against critics who have dismissed Cusack's work as feminine melodrama, she asks:

> should Cusack's fiction still be dismissed as poor realism and relegated to conventional romance? Or should we move beyond the impulse to categorise all fiction according to the aesthetics of high culture and instead use these texts to interpret the various and variable social meanings invested in popular cultural objects. (par. 31)

In reading for the Modern Girl, *Jungfrau* is a valuable literary text that operates as a cultural object, redefining the field of Australian national literature. This re-reading brings into view the figure of the Modern Girl as a legitimate and valuable entity in Australian literary and cultural history and not one who merely embodied feminine melodrama and vacuity.

Jungfrau suggests the multiplicity of connections for the Australian Modern Girl into a vibrant modern world in which distance has contracted and new spheres of influence have become within reach—particularly for women. Glover's imaginary world extends only to the

cultural inheritance of Wordsworth, which he feels "is the visible sign of mental maturity" (162–163), for instance, which he acknowledges, "one must be very careful with" (163). Furthermore, this cultural inheritance, Glover believes, is distinctly masculine and Eurocentric and the only solid basis for Australia's literary culture. Yet, these days, the women in his life dream about new and other horizons. Alice, his wife who is a tourist on the slopes of the Swiss mountain *Jungfrau* itself, extends her trip by three months so she can return through Java, a prolonged adventure on which Glover blames his extramarital affair. He rationalises, "a man got lonely" (162). Thea, associates her post-coital ecstasy with "a dream in which glowed sunrises, mysterious and strange as a Japanese print" (150). Thus, Cusack explores the contrast between old traditional codes (which are more masculine) and modern outward-looking ones (which are more feminine), using the Modern Girl as a central figure.

These open interactions with various forms of transnational and transmedial culture position the novel precariously in terms of national literature of the interwar years. Furthermore, as the cosmopolitan Modern Girl is a central figure of the novel, her "Australianness" can be called into question, further positioning the novel at odds with building up a national literature that showed Australian subjects concerned with Australian life. In the interwar period debates concerning the formation of Australian literature, true literary value, good books, and a democratisation of taste were particularly acute. David Carter observes that during this time, a new

> set of relationships between Australian readers and contemporary books…emerged in the 1920s, and which might be measured in terms of its distance from the modes of colonial readership prevalent in the nineteenth century […]. If colonial reading takes its bearings from and seeks to affirm a relationship to British or European literary traditions, 'modern' reading takes its bearing from the contemporary book and the

> contemporary book market, with little sense of colonial displacement. ("Some Means of Learning" 330)

It is in this milieu of flux in the contemporary book market that Cusack's *Jungfrau* was written and received. *Jungfrau* shows the likes of Glover and his literary set avidly trying to hold on to traditions of reading centred around British and European fiction. Meanwhile, the Modern Girls were reading magazines, modern poetry, and popular fiction. This theme in Cusack's novel is not one to be glossed over. It demonstrates the cultural milieu of the interwar period and offers a way to explore the tensions between shifting values of literary culture. Readers, like the Modern Girls in Cusack's novel, were avidly reading contemporary new books with modern themes (Carter). There was, as Carter explains, a "rapid expansion of publishing and of the reading public, and the restructuring of much of the book trade around the bestseller or popular non-fiction title [which] meant a rapid 'contemporisation' of books and reading" (331). However, due to the absolute glut of books and reading material during this period, critics felt the need to uphold distinctions of taste and inform the reading public of what should and should not be read.

The reviews of the day were important; periodicals such as *The Bulletin* were the only significant means of reviewing books. This was a time before there were formal instruments of literary adjudication in Australia, before literary journals, and before Australian literature became established within the academy. Vance Palmer notes this lack in his 1935 article "The Future of Australian Literature" in the Melbourne *Age*, where he states,

> Our main lack in the literary field is a lively and intelligent criticism. There are columns of gossip about books and authors in all our papers, but little sense of values. Criticism in Australia has lagged badly behind creative work […]. The criticism of music, painting, even the drama, is taken seriously and done by experts, but when it comes to literature people believe that one person's opinion about a book is as good as another's, one vote, one value. ("The Future," *The Age,* 9 Feb. 1935, p. 6)

Even though Vance Palmer complains that the papers represent an outlet which produced reviews with little value, he and his wife Nettie were prolific reviewers for such papers, with Nettie critiquing books in book magazines under titles such as "A Reader's Notebook" in magazines like *All About Books* (see 21 Oct. 1929, p. 337 and 5 Dec. 1930, p. 307–10, for example). David Carter maintains that periodicals such as *The Bulletin* did produce quality reviews, with its controversial "The Red Page" producing lively discussions and critiques on books. He argues, "[t]he *Bulletin* continued into the twentieth century as Australia's principal magazine of review," which continued into the interwar years with "literary pages [that] were still varied and sometimes contentious—its weekly appearance encouraged conversation and debate on literary matters" (*Always* 20). The reviews of *Jungfrau* that are present in magazine pages and newspapers, therefore, provide a window onto the reception of the novel not just through the lens of journalistic avenues, but also through how the novel was received by the reading public. Furthermore, winning second place in *The Bulletin's* S. H. Prior Memorial Prize shows the relevance of the novel with institutions that were held up as authorities on what was considered a good book.

At the time of publication, the novel was generally well-received. In 1937, the Adelaide *Advertiser* named Cusack as the leading figure in a group of women writers paving the way for the future of the Australian novel and praised the novel's depiction of contemporary "Australians' homes, culture, manners, and way of speech," with "depth," and a "quality of sincerity" ("Future of the Australian Novel," *Advertiser,* 9 Jan.1937, p. 11). The review also praised *Jungfrau* for its "vital" portrayal of modern Australian life: a portrayal "that should do much to dispel" (11) stereotypes about Australia characterised by the myth of the bush. A reviewer in the Brisbane *Telegraph* noted that the author was a "writer of promise" and alluded to the persistence of the myth about parochialism in Australian writing:

> It is written with the frankness characteristic of so many writers of to-day who, like modern youth in revolt, demand that their parents (and their contemporaries, too)

> should face facts and not play the ostrich while life goes on round them in aspects which they disapprove, ignore and almost persuade themselves are non-existent. ("A Writer of Promise," *Telegraph*, 20 Feb. 1937, p. 16)

These 1930s reviews show a contemporaneous acceptance of the novel as one which not only challenged the bush myth but also frankly discusses modern feminine and urban experience.

Cusack's contemporary, Frank Dalby Davidson, lauded the novel in 1936, asserting that "[*Jungfrau*] stands alone, because it is the first Australian novel to take the liberated young woman as its theme" (qtd. in *Dymphna* Freehill 42). Other reviewers welcomed *Jungfrau*'s publication in similar terms. In *The Australian Women's Weekly* Leslie Haylen acclaimed the novel as a ground-breaking work about contemporary urban life, calling it "a fine Australian story with a city background and a tale of post-war moderns" (*The Weekly,* 28 Nov. 1936, p. 14) recognising *Jungfrau* as a book about "The problems and the reactions of the young woman in 1936" (14). Haylen emphasised the transgressive modernity of the characters— "three young women, Thea, Eve, and Marc, all educated and modern in outlook"—who "discuss with ease and frankness subjects that would have been taboo to their mothers" (14). The Perth *Sunday Times* called *Jungfrau* "rapturous" and "exciting," maintaining it to be a "charmingly written story" with a "real character" who is "young and beautiful" and a novel "that may be said to faithfully portray a true drama of the age in which we live" ("Jungfrau," *Sunday Times*, 29 Nov. 1936, p. 23). This inter-related play between revelation and cliché in the reception of *Jungfrau* provides a hint as to why the novel has since been overlooked.

Subsequent and contemporary 21st-century critics, however, discuss the ambivalence toward not only the novel itself but also its subject matter with Modern Girls at the centre. According to Nicole Moore, Dymphna Cusack's mother, to whom the book was dedicated, legendarily dismissed it as "all about sex" (qtd. in Moore, "To be Rid" 60). As Moore points out, this attitude emerged in reaction to "its frank treatment of an illegitimate and unwanted

pregnancy, and moreover, one that begins with enjoyable sex outside marriage" (60). Tania Peitzker makes a similar point when she argues that literary critics echoed these sentiments "dismiss[ing] Cusack's work as melodramatic, romantic and popular" (par. 3). But this ambiguous and uncertain attitude towards Cusack's fiction, which features the Modern Girl, could partly signal changing attitudes to novels that featured women as central figures. The cosmopolitan associations of figures such as the Modern Girl, and their deep affiliations with feminised consumer culture, appear to have intensified their marginalisation from dominant literary histories of the interwar period. Thus, where literature and culture have for many years been largely constructed around paradigms of the land and masculine nationhood, the Modern Girl has been undervalued and invisible.

Nicole More provides another reason why *Jungfrau* has been overlooked. She contends that the cosmopolitan aspects of *Jungfrau*, as well as its feminine subject matter to do with sexuality, have made the novel heretofore inscrutable with existing paradigms of Australian literature ("To be Rid" 60). She argues that the feminine subject "the new woman," and its topic of abortion align with "the aesthetic of a non-literary feminine melodrama" (60), providing another clue as to the subsequent scholarly neglect of the novel. Tania Peitzker has also noted that Cusack, whom she labels "The Queen of Australian Soap," tended to write novels that crossed the boundaries between literary and popular commercial fiction. This thesis offers a broader charge, however, that extends beyond the singular example of *Jungfrau* and Dymphna Cusack to a larger set of narratives about the Modern Girl in Australia that have not received critical notice, but which met acclaim in their own time. This troublesome and liminal position of the Modern Girl has made texts about her invisible within existing paradigms of Australian literature. Yet re-reading print culture from this era, and considering the reviews about these books, shows that there are complex ideas within the pages. Reading this novel alongside the reviews reveals the complex position of the Modern

Girl and how she was redefining feminine modernities, an issue many of the authors and curators of print culture understood and engaged with.

Dymphna Cusack's three-faced portrait of the Modern Girl is only one part of a broader heuristic that is evident across a range of print culture in Australia. The reception of the novel foregrounds the troubled relationship between modern womanhood and the project of building a national literature within the currents of colonial and transnational modernity that continues to this day. The way the reception of the novel changed over time—receiving notice and recognition in its day and subsequently being subjected to misrecognition, notoriety, and eventual dismissal (not unlike Thea herself)—signals its place in relation to the intellectual project of Australian literature and a potentially broader program of intellectual respectability that emerged after the Second World War (which was as equally unstable and insecure as that of the Modern Girl in Australian society in general). Cusack's novel shares this capricious reception history, which at least partly signals changing attitudes to the sorts of novels in which the Modern Girl featured in Australia.

The Significance of Dymphna Cusack and her Work to the Project of Recovering the Modern Girl

Ellen Dymphna Cusack was born in 1902 in Wyalong, New South Wales, and died in October 1981. She was a Sydney University Arts graduate with honours in History and Philosophy and a diploma in Education. After graduating, she became a high school teacher and taught for nearly twenty years. Thus, she was mindful of the exigencies and pressures on a woman like herself who needed to work for a living. She was also politically engaged as she was a social reformer and was married to Norman Freehill, a member of the Communist Party and chief-of-staff of the communist newspaper the *Tribune* (1939–1991). Cusack contributed actively to the building of Australian literature, even though her early work was later perceived as unworthy of canonisation. In the interwar years, she wrote across a range of print

culture: novels, plays, travel books, and children's books. She was part of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, and she was also a foundation member in 1963 of the Australian Society of Authors. Because of her contribution to Australian literature, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1981.

Cusack was open to international influences and styles yet was passionately committed to her Australian background. She travelled extensively, though was often hampered by illness, including being nearly paralysed, and was eventually confirmed to have multiple sclerosis. Her literary works were influenced predominantly by her life in Australia, and, as Freehill observes, "In spite of her international fame, she is, to her depths, Australian. Her imagination is fertilised only by her own country and people. That is probably why she is able 'to catch the spirit and interpret the atmosphere of Australia in a way few novelists have achieved', as an English critic said of her work in 1967" (2). Even though Freehill observes her imagination was only influenced by the atmosphere of Australia, her Modern Girls in *Jungfrau* are thoroughly cosmopolitan. Consequently, the grafting of international influences onto an Australian milieu is evident in *Jungfrau* as the Modern Girl in her novel is distinctly like her international counterpart yet thoroughly Australian. The interpretation of the modern Australian cultural atmosphere in *Jungfrau* is indeed what the novel achieves as a "social documentary" on the Modern Girl in the interwar period.

The Modern Girl is the figure Cusack uses to express her disenchantment with these institutions and their hold on even her attitude, positioning her as a type of Modern Girl herself. She admits that during the time she was writing *Jungfrau*, "[m]y mind was torn by the conflict between my old beliefs and the new experimental world around me" (Freehill 25). These tensions are evident in the novel and often represented through characters, particularly through Professor Glover in contrast with the three Modern Girls. Cusack was against the way the university set in Australia long gave preference to literature written in England,

rather than literature written in Australia. In Norman Freehill's biography *Dymphna*, which he co-wrote with Cusack, he remarks:

> Sydney University was a new world to her in many ways…she found it narrow, hidebound and snobbish. It was a colonial-minded place: no hint of anything Australian crossed its threshold. Most of the professors were English or, what was worse, Australians who were completely Europhile and completely bogged down in the past. (24)

Jungfrau reflects these views of what Cusack thought of university men and old beliefs. She positions the Modern Girl in contrast to these, commenting on how this figure was troubling older traditions and experimenting with new ideas, just as Cusack herself was.

While Cusack maintains her novels are like social documentaries, Drusilla Modjeska argues that there is even more depth to *Jungfrau*. Modjeska goes so far as to call *Jungfrau* "a prototype for the feminist novel of the interwar period" (4), which "focus[es] on the experience of women in Australian society" (251). And while this does agree with Cusack's insistence that her novels are social documentaries, Modjeska further argues that "psychological and personal conflict are given precedence over social conflict and exclude more than passing references to economic and political conditions" (251). So, while the novel has attracted mixed reception with some accusing the novel as mere feminine melodrama, Modjeska positions *Jungfrau* in the genre of social realism. While Modjeska seems at first positive about Cusack's work, her discussion turns critical when she analyses the women of the novel, their politics, and, as such, Cusack's also. "Marc's highly individualistic morality," she claims, "is predicated on the assumption that all women are in a position to make such choices, with independent incomes, access to birth control and rooms of their own" (265). While Modjeska's assumptions about Marc are true to some extent, such as her criticisms of the "leopard slut," Marc's sympathies for the working class and poor citizens of Sydney show her awareness of political and social positions beyond her own. Modjeska further accuses the

novel of having "no suggestion of unionism or working class politics; the assumptions and values of a middle class social worker are presented as universal codes which will meet the needs of all women" (265). Yet, as I have argued, Marc's attitude complicates Modjeska's reading. In this way, the novel's classification as one fitting neatly into the genre of Australian social realism is precarious, even to exemplary critics of Australian writing by women of the interwar period.

While there is a tentative placing of *Jungfrau* as a 1930s social realist text, the parameters with which it was judged are unstable. Modjeska sees the women as middle-class. Eve, as a doctor, could fit within this category; however, Thea and Marc are often shown as "hungry" (77), overworked (1), "weary" (82, 53, 71), and underpaid (4). When compared to the men in the novel who had the advantage over the girls "in every way—position, money, education" (41), Marc and Thea were definite Working Modern Girls who worked so hard they "look[ed] peaked" (79). Further, Modjeska's claim that *Jungfrau* draws more attention to the middle-class and, thus, is not aligned with social realist texts that focus on the real socio-political conditions of the working class excludes Rita Felski's broader recognition of texts that also explore modernity in ways that acknowledge "feelings, romantic novels, shopping, motherhood, [and] fashion" (22). Furthermore, viewing *Jungfrau* through the lens of female experience can also be political. It foregrounds women's experience over men's and women's desire to sexually be in control. *Jungfrau*, thus, investigates a more nuanced portrait of women's experience in Australia during the 1930s. Yet the novel presents another challenge to neatly defined parameters of traditional paradigms.

The novel not only suggests a disenfranchisement with cultural elites, but also with the masculinist tradition in literature through the figure of Professor Glover. In her history of literary studies in Australian universities, Leigh Dale in her work *The English Men: Professing Literature in Australian Universities* explains that the university set in Australia, those "English men," long gave preference to literature written in England, rather than

literature written in Australia. While Vance Palmer's set was focused on Australian literature, writing from "the soil" (Walker 156), Glover in *Jungfrau* upheld writing that looks back to European high culture. He is often discussing European novelists with his Modern Girl mistress, such as John Webster (143) and Shakespeare (13). Yet much like Palmer's focus on "value-laden" literature, which preferred the Australian masculinist tradition, Glover insists on valourising European white male authors, such as Wordsworth, and dismisses Modern Girls as mere foils for his sexual needs. Yet the vibrancy and modernity of the Modern Girl contrasts Glover's traditional ideals, based solidly on European traditions, and Cusack makes a distinct point of this throughout the novel. In *Jungfrau*, Glover stands in for a figure that knows about literature, but who cannot write it himself. He is, instead, stuck in the past and positioned in his ivory tower. Removed from the life that the novelist must confront directly, he does not understand these Modern Girls as Cusack herself does. So, not only does *Jungfrau* challenge cultural and social mores, but it also calls into question what is considered value-laden literature.

The novel's commentary on the Modern Girl and her juxtaposition to cultural elites is but one aspect that shows her to be troublesome. The novel, when compared to other novels of social realism during the interwar period such as Kylie Tennant's *Tiburon* (the competition with *Jungfrau* for the S. H. Prior Memorial Prize), also presents a problem. Modjeska's dismissal of the sincerity with which the novel fits a social realist paradigm highlights how Australian social realism tended to focus on issues of work, labour relations, and poverty while foregrounding the fragmented and alienated way of life under capitalism. Tennant's novel fits neatly within this genre, discussing poverty and unemployment set in the Australian bush. Alternatively, Cusack's *Jungfrau* uses three working, mobile, and sexual Modern Girls set within a vibrant urban environment. And, while I argue above that it does gesture towards fragmentation and alienation, the disenfranchisement is not aimed solely at capitalism but also at paradigms of culture that do not benefit these energetic young women who are not

unemployed and completely poverty-stricken. *Jungfrau's* Modern Girl protagonists, therefore, challenge social standards while the novel also challenges nationalist paradigms of Australian culture and literature that have been upheld using ridged frameworks built, particularly, during the interwar period.

The Modern Girl, therefore, was an especially vexatious figure to the project of national literature. This literature defined itself in terms of a difficult relationship to its colonial and local heritage and preferred iconography related to the masculine conquest of land to that of the feminised, rapidly modernising city. A cross-cultural icon who constantly threatened to make a spectacle of herself, the Modern Girl signalled the ephemerality of modern consumer culture and openly embraced various forms of transnational and transmedial cultural hybridisation, intermingling American, European, and other cultural influences as well as crossing different registers of cultural value. Revitalising her figure in Australian print culture and literature presents a challenge, not only to accepted ideas about Australian colonial history and national literature but also to the broader scholarship of literary modernism and modernity. While the Modern Girl was defined by her spectacular visibility, she has since become conspicuously invisible across a range of literary histories which may be productively unsettled by her rehabilitation. *Jungfrau* provides a triptych of Modern Girls that can be used as a heuristic to analyse other novels overlooked by scholarship. Furthermore, this reading of *Jungfrau* expands the map of the literary field and opens avenues in which the Modern Girl can be seen in all her complexity. This method broadens our understanding of the Modern Girl and further helps to understand and trace the varying attitudes towards her, held by different segments of Australian society in which these publications, like the Modern Girl herself, jostled to find a place. The Modern Girl's appearance in other Australian novels and print culture of the time suggests that her place regarding the intellectual project of Australian literature or a broader program of intellectual respectability was equally unstable and insecure. Yet, despite the Modern Girl's precarious

position in Australian literature and cultural histories, in her own time she was ubiquitous in print culture. Periodicals, such as *The Australian Woman's Mirror* featured her significantly, and reading across a slice of the magazine during the 1930s, suggests the way the Modern Girl was both a fantasy figure and one where anxieties concerning the modern world could be displaced onto this highly visible and attractive figure. Reading for the Modern Girl in the pages of magazines, a central component of print culture that accompanies the novel as a container for presenting new and old ideas for an equally diverse range of readers, shows her in all her complexity.

Chapter Two: The Modern Girl in *The Australian Woman's Mirror*

The Australian interwar urban milieu represented in *Jungfrau* suggests that Flappers, or Modern Girls more specifically, were indeed a part of the Australian scene. But if the discussion around Modern Girls in Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau* raised in Chapter One suggests anything, it is that the Australian Modern Girl was constantly subject to judgement and dismissal in her own time as well as subsequently. Chapter One also demonstrated how attempts to trace various appraisals or dismissals of her—by "track[ing] her little footprints," (Deamer "The Literary Flapper" *The Mirror*, 19 Jan. 1926, p. 2) across Australian print culture—is a complex and difficult task. To better understand how the Australian Modern Girl was understood by and presented to the reading public of her day requires an inquiry into the landscape of Australian print culture that is both broad and deep. Enquiring into mass-circulation magazines such as *The Australian Woman's Mirror* [*The Mirror*] (1924–1961) reveals that the Modern Girl was front and centre in magazines of the interwar period. While this type of print culture formed an indispensable part of an emerging female leisure culture, *The Mirror* has been broadly overlooked by scholars of all kinds in Australia and dismissed by literary scholars in particular. This chapter considers not only why this material has been overlooked, but also what it adds as an important dimension to the deeper quest to understand the Modern Girl and how she figured in Australian literature and society. While some scholars have made contributions in adding *The Mirror* into discussions about Australian print culture, this thesis is the first comprehensive reading of this periodical using the Modern Girl to further conversations about feminine modernities of the interwar period. In reading *The Mirror* for the Modern Girl, the centrality of this figure is demonstrated. Because of this cheap periodical, the Modern Girl was in the homes of hundreds of thousands of families and

in shops and hairdressers all over Australia. Peeling back the pages of this magazine brings the Modern Girl to life.

The Dismissal of *The Mirror* and the Modern Girl

Mass-circulation women's magazines (also called mass magazines), such as *The Mirror*, were one of the bastions of consumer culture in Australia during the interwar period. They formed an indispensable part of an emerging female leisure culture, which presented the Modern Girl as its new and glamorous centrepiece. It was her relationship to consumerism, cosmopolitanism, and commerce that provoked such nervous examinations of her labour, her position in society, and her body. Similarly, mass media, and thus mass magazines, were deeply associated with commodity culture in a way that was often perceived as inauthentic. Jurgen Habermas, for example, argues, "commodities formerly restricted to the higher strata attracted greater attention among those strata which, through their style of consumption, were trying to elevate themselves at least symbolically" (191). Even though the magazine was a repository of swathes of writing by female luminaries of the interwar writing scene, the very absence of scholarly attention to this magazine in literary circles suggests that this writing was similarly tainted by commercialism, and, therefore, dismissed.

In Frank Greenop's supposedly exhaustive survey on *The History of Magazine Publishing in Australia*, for example, *The Mirror* does not get a mention. Written in 1947, while *The Mirror* was still popular and widely read, Greenop's survey of periodicals repeatedly mentions *The Bulletin*, but not once does he discuss its sister publication. In the foreword to Greenop's book, E. V. Timms maintains, "In the pages of his History [sic] Mr. Greenop has dealt exhaustively with the character and quality of Australian periodicals and their contributors, and his review is in itself almost a history of the Australian way of life over many years" (vi). Yet Greenop's exhaustive survey of Australian periodicals that represented Australian print culture omitted one of the most popular and widely read periodicals of the

day. His omission is telling. Women's writing, and women's periodicals—according to the way Greenop has ignored *The Bulletin's* popular contemporary—have indeed been overlooked and undervalued in the history of the Australian way of life.

According to either the lack of scholarly attention or explicit negative comments on its content, contemporary scholars have likewise deemed *The Mirror* as a publication not worthy of scholarship. David Carter's work on Australian Print Culture and Modernity, for example, follows in Greenop's footsteps. While Carter repeatedly discusses *The Bulletin* and other magazines during the interwar period, *The Mirror* gets one mention. This is in relation to Dulcie Deamer and her extensive contribution to women's journalism of the time. Cathy Perkins confirms "the *Australian Woman's Mirror* does not take up much space in the history of Australian media" (Perkins, MA thesis, 79), and canvassing scholarship on periodicals of the interwar period confirms her claim. Susan Sheridan claims *The Mirror* is "one of the lesser lights in the grand era of women's magazines" ("Opposing All the Things They Stand For" 199), yet the magazine's circulation and popularity undermine this argument, positioning it as one of the luminous players in the history of Australian women's magazine publishing during the twentieth century. Perhaps Sheridan is making a value judgement based on the literary, social, and cultural aspects of the magazine. The inclusion of notable writers, such as Dymphna Cusack and Katharine Susannah Prichard—writers Sheridan herself values (*Along the Faultlines*)—in addition to the important debates about women, work, mobility, sex, and modern freedoms, suggests the magazine has much more significant social and historical value than commentators have heretofore assumed. However, *The Mirror's* positioning as a women's mass-magazine, its link to commercial culture and its connection to American celebrity culture have, perhaps, been contributing factors to the way the magazine has been overlooked and deemed substandard, both in its time and subsequently, much like the Modern Girl herself.

The Mirror was not only a popular magazine with Australian women, providing them with a way to engage in feminine modernities, but it also offered its readers writing by high calibre and popular Australian female authors. Notable writers such as Zora Cross, Nettie Palmer, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Mary Gilmore, Dorothea Mackellar, and Dulcie Deamer wrote poetry, short stories, serialised fiction, and journalistic pieces. Deamer, for example, was a regular contributor to *The Mirror*, and as Peter Kirkpatrick argues, she "was a successful and prolific writer and journalist" ("Dulcie Deamer and the Bohemian Body" 13). Despite her success, "virtually none of her work survives in print today" (13). Deamer wrote under several pseudonyms, as did many female writers of the time, partly to get more work published and partly to hide their identity. Even during the interwar period, writing for a mass-magazine, particularly one pitted toward women readers, was considered merely a commercial necessity and not a true literary output. Zora Cross was also prolifically writing for *The Mirror*; yet, as Cathy Perkins also argues, Cross has been left out of the recovery of interwar female writers by scholars such as Drusilla Modjeska. Considering the calibre of writing included in the magazine, and the notable women writers who wrote for its pages, it is perplexing why scholarship has continued to overlook this well-read publication of the time. This omission suggests more scholarship on the magazine could be conducted, where a canvass of the serials, book reviews, and writing by Australian women for *The Mirror* could also reveal a more nuanced picture of the Australian literary landscape. In this chapter, I will consider what happens when *The Mirror* is read in terms of its central protagonist: the Modern Girl. Indeed, reading *The Mirror* for the Modern Girl shows how central this figure was to the 1930s and to the themes of work, mobility, and sex.

Reflecting the Modern Girl Through *The Mirror*

Women's magazines were key avenues that showed women how to style themselves and how to purchase cosmopolitan modernity in up-to-date ways. In Australia during the interwar

period, an intensifying commercial culture was marked by the rapid proliferation of leisure and commerce. New forms of subjectivity were indeed on offer through access to pleasure in a freshly conceived public sphere, tied to the marketplace, and linked with cinema, jazz, fashion, glamour, and sex. Young women experimented with ways in which self-styling afforded them the purchase of new forms of social mobility and self-determination. Magazines not only reflected cosmopolitan modernity through their pages, rich with images and content, but they also offered women ways to purchase commodities that helped them to appear modern. As Jill Julius Matthews maintains,

> [c]heap mass-produced magazines recounted endless stories of the movie world and carried photos of the stars in fashionable clothing at home in modern houses and enjoying the modern world. Magazines and newspapers carried advertisements for the brand-name commodities of such modernity… (*Dance Hall* 16)

While Matthews mentions magazines in general, her work does not mention *The Mirror* specifically. Nevertheless, *The Mirror* is a demonstrative example of the way magazines were engaging with commodity and transnational culture. Along with jazz music, dancing, motion pictures, and cheap American novels, magazines did indeed feature a more cosmopolitan outlook. Through the pages of women's magazines such as *The Mirror,* women could participate in current trends.

Pictured on the cover of many issues of *The Mirror* was the Modern Girl fashioned like a Hollywood starlet, or even Hollywood stars themselves, and within its content, these images of beautiful and desirable women were used to sell modernity. In one issue of *The Mirror*, for example, an advertisement featuring an Art-Deco-styled illustration of a Modern Girl smiling out to the reader declares in big, bold lettering "BE MODERN—POWDER YOUR TEETH" ("Calvert's Tooth Powder," 15 Mar. 1932, p. 18). To be modern was to use this particular product. Crème Carmosan also claims that its cosmetics keep modern women "young and lovely" ("Crème Carmosan," 12 May 1936, p. 46). Above this advertisement is a

letter from American film star Joan Blondell claiming that she uses the product, which is "one of the favourites of the stars and tens and tens of thousands of women everywhere" ("Film Stars Letter No. 5," 12 May 1936, p. 46). Matthews observed that "modernity refused" a clear separation between art and advertising. The interwar period, she argues, was an era involved in "promiscuously mingling culture and commerce, the beautiful and the vulgar" (*Dance Hall* 19). Importantly, Matthews notes that "representing that fusion most visibly were modern young women" (*Dance Hall* 19). Consequently, the Modern Girl became both an object of desire and critique, not only during the interwar period but also subsequently (Matthews). While some contemporary scholars have championed the New Woman and her suffrage, the Modern Girl with her link to commercial culture, Americanisation, and frivolous fashion, and her ubiquitous presence in mass women's magazines, has meant a dismissal of not only the Modern Girl in scholarship, but also of women's magazines themselves.

In the past, many feminist scholars read magazines, especially commercial ones like *The Mirror*, as tools of patriarchal oppression that coached women to see themselves through the eyes of patriarchy (for example, Adburgham; Friedan). Rachel Ritchie and colleagues argue that "Many second wave feminist writers condemned contemporary women's periodicals as perpetuating narrowly defined, socially acceptable gender roles and encouraging conformity to these norms" (3). This view maintained that women's magazines presented women as unruly bodies in need of discipline and flawed faces that needed improvement. While certainly this is true, more recent reflections on women's magazines are more nuanced. Margaret Beetham notes that magazines also proved spaces of allure, fantasy, and reflection for women. Beetham asserts that magazines, rather than merely being seen as vestiges of oppression can become an avenue for something much greater: "[t]he magazine itself becomes, for her [the woman reader], a medium of exchange among a community of women, a process which circumvents the economic aims of its producers and reasserts an alternative set of values" (2). Despite their commercial ambitions, women's magazines,

therefore, sometimes presented affirmative spaces of possibility for the modern woman, especially since they provided an outlet and space of their own for women's interests in their own day.

Working out the readership of a particular magazine during this dynamic period of Australian cultural history is a key step in understanding how any given segment of the reading public understood and addressed the Modern Girl in her day. As Victoria Kuttainen, Susanne Liebich, and Sarah Galletly have argued in *The Transported Imagination*, different magazines addressed "various overlapping, shifting, and segmented Australian readerships across the 1920s and '30s" (74). The interwar period saw a burgeoning of magazine publications designed for various readerships. Magazines such as *MAN* catered to a masculine readership, for example, and *The Home* was pitted toward a readership constructed around notions of good taste and class. As such, this period offers literary historians an opportunity to study the various segments of the Australian reading public through these artefacts. This includes a better understanding of how varying attitudes, such as those toward the Modern Girl, were shaped and reflected in them. As Robert Sholes and Clifford Wulfman argue in "How to Read a Modern Magazine," "one of the first steps" for anyone attempting to delve into periodical studies in order to understand how they reflect or comment upon the attitudes of the past "is to get a sense of their readership" (145). Scholes and Wulfman consider the title alone as an important indicator of readership (145). Accordingly, *The Australian Woman's Mirror* saw itself as providing in its pages the reflection of the everyday female Australian, and perhaps even an image of her best self.

Indeed, in the very first issue of *The Mirror*, the editor declared openly that the magazine wished to fill this role. Its first mission statement, outlined in a bevel-looking glass frame, invites a glimpse into its editorial agenda. It declares:

> Vast changes have taken place in their [a woman's] life 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: and it will have behind it the organisation which 'The Bulletin' has built up. ("A Talk About Ourselves" *The Mirror*, 23 Oct. 1924, p. 1)

Acknowledging its debt to its publisher, *The Bulletin*, in this statement, *The Mirror* goes on to distinguish itself from its parent magazine, clarifying that in this publication "[e]very female interest and activity will be served in the best way that long experience can suggest and money can command" (1). Further differentiating the magazine as distinctly for a female readership, it notes, "it has not been possible for 'The Bulletin' to make use of that large amount of purely feminine writing which it has been offered… 'The Mirror' will present to Australian women the best of this work, along with the work of men who appeal particularly to women readers" (1). These editorial statements demonstrate Kuttainen, Liebich, and Galletly's point about shifting and segmented readerships emerging in print during the interwar period. The editorial reflected on the emergence of a significant new female audience with buying power who wished to see their own interests reflected in its pages. Clearly, the very advent of *The Mirror* demonstrated that the publishers of *The Bulletin* felt they now needed to respond to this growing segment of Australian women readers with enough dispensable leisure time and income to buy their own magazine. *The Mirror* does so by effectively giving women a separate sphere of modern print culture, one that caters to those who wished to see their lives reflected in this type of publication. Furthermore, the popularity of *The Bulletin* was waning during this time, because, as Patrick Buckridge points out, "once an instrument of considerable cultural authority, [*The Bulletin*] had lost much of this authority by the late 1930s through a general cultural and political conservatism" ("Greatness" 31). The editors understood, then, that there was a market to secure a readership that was more transnationally oriented, more modern, and more female than the diminishing readership of *The Bulletin*.

The Mirror was first published on 25 November 1924 by The Bulletin Newspaper Company in Sydney and ceased publication in 1961. It was issued on newsprint-grade paper, a cheaper alternative to the glossy pages of higher-end magazines such as *The Home* (1920–1942). It was published weekly and could be considered a mass-magazine designed for a large readership. Each issue of the publication consisted of around sixty to sixty-six pages. By the beginning of the 1930s, *The Mirror* was selling over 160,000 copies per week (*The Mirror*, 7 Jan. 1930, cover), a large circulation for an Australian magazine. *The Mirror* initially cost 3d, approximately $1–2 dollars in today's value.[4] This price continued up until the 1950s, which saw an increase to 6d. Its cheap price meant that the periodical got into the houses of many people, and, therefore, the Modern Girl was also in the houses of many readers. Cathy Perkins notes that the circulation for *The Mirror* "was unprecedented in Australian magazine publishing," and "[u]ntil the advent of the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1933, it was the most popular women's magazine" ("Australian Woman's Mirror Now Online" par. 3). Contributing to *The Mirror's* success, it was the first Australian periodical to publish the American comic strip "The Phantom" (1936), gathering a cult following of readers enthusiastic to follow the storyline presented. Perkins also argues, however, that

> [i]f ever a magazine was the victim of its success, it was *The Australian Woman's Mirror*. Having started out as *The Bulletin's* little sister, it was so popular by 1960 that Frank Packer bought it in order to kill it and clear the market for his *Australian Women's Weekly*. He acquired the struggling *Bulletin* as part of the package. ("Nothing is Wasted" 184)

Merging *The Mirror* with *The Weekender*, in the resulting publication, women's issues were sidelined, and *The Mirror's* editorial agenda vanished. This is an all too familiar

[4]This dollar value has been calculated using the website "Measuring Worth," and comparing 3d to today's current dollar value.

pattern, one that appears to be duplicated and itself mirrored in how some literary histories of Australia elide women's contributions, and in how scholarship itself has tended to overlook *The Mirror.* Yet turning to *The Mirror's* extensive female-authored material and women's readership—which its editorial itself identified as a "field [that] is astonishingly large and attractive" ("A Talk About Ourselves" *The Mirror,* 25 Oct. 1924, p. 2)—reveals the prominent role this magazine played in shaping feminine modernities. Consequently, as one of Australia's prevalent and most influential interwar magazines, it had a large target audience.

Many of the women reflected in the pages of *The Mirror* indicate the magazine's assumed audience. Working girls were often featured in the fiction, advertisements, images, and articles. Business girls such as stenographers, secretaries, clerks, nurses, those working in retail, and professional women saw themselves represented in its pages. In one issue, "Miss Business Girl" discusses the concerns of a Working Modern Girl. She assertively tells her readers that there are "thousands of bright, practical young things who help the machinery of business to run smoothly; typical of the Modern Girl" ("Miss Business Girl Thinks It Over," *The Mirror*, 7 Apr. 1936, p. 8). Working-class girls who worked in mills, factories, and domestic work were rarely featured, however, and these representations were usually only found in the readers' comments.

The working woman was also the target of the magazine's advertisements. The assumption was that these women had at least some surplus income to spend on cosmetics, clothing, accessories, and leisure culture. Advertisements featured inexpensive beauty products such as cold creams and soaps, as well as foodstuffs and home products like furniture polish and napery. An advertisement for "the New Kissproof Indelible Lipstick," for example, promises to send four shades for the Modern Girl to try before she has to spend her hard-earned wage ("Kissproof," *The Mirror,* 12 July 1932, p. 53). The implication here is that the Modern Girl is the kind of very modern, sexual woman who desires to wear make-up and

kiss men. Another advertisement observes: “How smart and chic the modern girl keeps in these lean purse times. All credit to her, she has learnt to combine quality and economy in her buying” (“Lustre,” *The Mirror,* 30 May 1933, p. 18). Compared to the more expensive magazine *The Home*, *The Mirror* did not feature advertisements for luxury goods such as cars, crystal glassware, and art. From this omission, it is inferred that the target readership, while having some surplus income, was neither wealthy, nor of a high class. The magazine’s affordability also suggests its readership could include those with a lower income, reflecting the aspirational tenor of the magazine and its ambitious vision to include women from all walks of life.

The inclusion of the Modern Girl’s career aspirations and concerns aligns with *The Mirror’s* broad target demographic. Looking across these issues from the 1930s implies that many Australian women who read this magazine did indeed work. While young women were a glamorous addition to the workplace, the magazine made clear that their working lives were beset by anxieties. These anxieties included concerns about getting and keeping jobs and about what would happen after marriage. The article “Miss Business Girl Thinks It Over,” for example, discusses what could happen to a Modern Girl if she were to wed and her husband earned less money than she did. She maintains that in that situation, “she couldn’t be laid on one side as far as her job was concerned, and yet we all want a kiddie or two, and the country wants ‘em more than we do” (“Miss Business Girl,” *The Mirror*, 7 Apr. 1936, p. 8).

While there were many advertisements and even articles that addressed the Working Modern Girl or “Miss,” *The Mirror* also included the housewife’s concerns, with household hints, recipes, gardening, craft, and beauty tips presented across its pages. In just one issue from 1932, for instance, out of the thirty-nine entries in the table of contents, over thirty of these specifically concern housewifery, knitting patterns for babies, how to deal with “finicky” children’s appetites, “kitchen craft”, and the every issue “Mirror Pattern Service” (*The Mirror,* 15 Mar. 1932, p. 3). This issue also contains a segment on “Failures in Birth-

giving," which provides medical advice to a range of women: married women desiring to fall pregnant, those who are pregnant, and those who have lost babies. The article is also informative in detailing periods, conception, and gestation (Le Medecin, *The Mirror,* 15 Mar. 1932, p. 11).

Even though the magazine predominantly addressed a female audience, peppered throughout its pages were also children's pages, book recommendations on female and male authors, and glamorous photo spreads of film stars and their movies, making the magazine attractive to not only the housewife and the working woman. A woman's household was also served by this periodical. Even so, as discussed previously and made clear in *The Mirror's* mission statement, the magazine's target readership was women, both young and older. The Australian modern woman, and the figure of the Modern Girl, was a definite focus, with *The Mirror* helping shape her and reflecting her back to herself.

To determine *The Mirror's* ambitious claims—and linked to its agenda of reflecting a new vision of Australian womanhood—in its second issue one article questions, "[i]n what ways a true Mirror would show that the Australian woman was unlike other women[?]" (Wren, *The Mirror,* 25 Nov. 1924, p. 38). Noting that "she is not like the Englishwoman" (38), the article goes on to consider what is distinctive about the Australian modern woman. In part, this is an "Australian look"; it argues that Australian women "are generally recognisable by being wrinkled around the eye at an early age" (38). However, rather than framing this feature negatively, the author believes "[w]omen's wrinkles here do not really get so very much worse as age increases, and they often accompany superb health and a youthful, free carriage. Still, they had better be faced," in fact, she demands, women should "[l]ook in the glass again and face them" (38). Certainly, this invocation for the woman to look in the mirror suggests the way in which cosmetics, ointments, and creams might be sold in the pages of this magazine to a woman who might wish to improve her looks. No doubt this is one function of the mass commercial magazine for women.

But additionally, the repeated request to gaze in the mirror might also intimate the way the magazine offered a new way of looking and assessing feminine modernities. The article discussed above also suggests that the Modern Girl of Australia is different from the woman of the past and different from the Modern Girl of England, Germany, or France, for instance. This, too, is how this magazine distinguishes its readership, making itself distinctive in a busy print market crowded by attractive magazine imports from all around the world. Much like how the author of this article urges, a deep look into *The Mirror* reveals some refractions of the Modern Girl heretofore understudied, which also offers a more nuanced picture of this figure in Australian print culture of the 1930s. In fact, these are the images of the Modern Girl presented to a mass female readership that was Australian and was engaging with new and more modern freedoms pertaining to work, mobility, and sex. What follows is a discussion of how *The Mirror* was engaging with these three themes, and how the magazine was positioning its readers as modern subjects.

The Working Modern Girl in the *Mirror*

Fig. 4. *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, 7 Jan. 1936, cover

The Mirror presents the differing attitudes towards the Working Modern Girl. Work was a large social concern after the First World War and during the Depression, especially. For women, work was indeed a large and burgeoning component of what it meant to be modern, and *The Mirror* responds to these interests. As historian Louie Traikovski points out, *The Mirror* was active in discussing "The Married Women Worker Debate"—whether women who married should be able to continue their employment when they were now presumably supported by their husbands. These discussions were just one way that *The Mirror* showcased many debates about interwar womanhood. Furthermore, articles and readers' comments show that the magazine was also informing women of their working rights, giving them confidence about their newfound working situations, and helping them advocate for their rights and for others.

Although an occasional reader's comment reveals the precarious position of some unemployed Modern Girls, the overall tone of the magazine during the Depression years prefers to glamourise the Working Modern Girl's economic position, and some even emphasise her earning capabilities. One reader's comment, for example, bemoans the lack of jobs for single women, replying to a previous reader's letter mentioning job vacancies for young women on cruise liners. The reader makes it clear instead that "[t]here are no vacancies for stewardesses in any of the local lines, and the P. and O. and other British companies engage their stewardesses in London. You might put in an application to any of the Australian lines, but in any case you will be a long way down on a lengthy waiting-list" ("Answers to Correspondence," *The Mirror,* 2 Feb. 1932, p. 41). Conversely, in a previous issue during this same year, another article maintains there are indeed jobs for single girls, particularly in nursing where women can travel, "working their way around the world, and learning far more of foreign countries than the mere tourist can hope to do" (Shiphrah, *The Mirror,* 26 Jan. 1932, p. 12). Also, in another issue, an advertisement maintains women can earn salaries of up to £600 per annum. It articulates:

> women are now firmly established in business as an essential part of the administration. Never before were the opportunities for the trained business woman so good as at the present time. The Secretarial profession is a congenial career for progressive women. The work is interesting, the duties and environment suitable, and the work well-paid. ("Lady Secretaries," *The Mirror,* 5 Jan. 1932, p. 30)

Overall, *The Mirror* preferred to glamourise the Working Modern Girl rather than present her as a figure with few employment prospects.

In the article "Miss Business Girl Thinks It Over", the subject interviewed seems particularly representative of the way *The Mirror* reflected images of the glamorous Working Modern Girl in its pages. The author describes a particular woman that she interviews as representative of the "thousands of bright, practical young things who help the machinery of business to run smoothly; typical of the Modern Girl" ("Miss Business Girl," *The Mirror,* 7 Apr. 1936, p. 8). The Working Modern Girl shares her opinion on the working conditions she envisages, the rates of pay and job satisfaction she desires, as well as the social conditions and benefits she expects. She maintains that Modern Girls should be offered "National Health Insurance," for example (8). She also critiques other social norms of the time that restrict women in the workforce, such as the earning capability of girls compared to men, and how women are required to leave their work once married. The Working Modern Girl assertively comments, "Girls must go into business—it needs them and they like it" (8). Her words suggest the hopes some women experienced in their new roles as career women. Yet she also hints at the tensions her work causes, particularly concerning men. She notes, "but of course it means that lots of eligible young men are in any sort of job and can't marry and support a wife […but] [i]f public opinion was changed there'd be no reason why a girl shouldn't marry a man who was earning less that she was" (8). This girl's expectations, desires, experiences, and thoughts on women and work contribute to many discussions of Working Modern Girls

evident across the pages of this magazine and provide an insight into the way the magazine reflected this figure to its readers.

Another way *The Mirror* engaged with the Working Modern Girl was to present to its readers other opinions of women in this growing demographic. In one article, "Let Me Look Back!," Mrs Forty-Six maintains that, due to the absence of men from the workforce during the Great War, now the Working Modern Girl could occupy "[o]ffices, laboratories, executive sanctums and experts' chairs" ("Let me Look Back," *The Mirror*, 7 May 1935, p. 53). Providing a first–hand example of her argument, Mrs Forty-Six explains she is a career woman who obtained her BA in law. During the war, she was able to take her husband's position in his firm twice: once while he was fighting in the war, and the other as he was going through a mental breakdown post war. She writes,

> [t]he effects of this 'arrival' of women in every sphere are reflected in the bearing of the modern girl, in her self-reliance and the courageous way she faces life. She is physically much better off than the girls of my day, for her knowledge of hygiene has enabled her to take intelligent care of her health and make the most of her charms. Her interests, instead of being confined chiefly to goffering-irons, lace flounces and tea-parties, are as wide as those of men and have given her sounder judgement and a more tolerant outlook—priceless possessions! (53)

Much like Miss Business Girl articulates in "Miss Business Girl Thinks It Over," in the Miss Forty-Six article, the Working Modern Girl is presented as self-reliant and courageous, and the author maintains she is necessary, if not "priceless" to the workforce. This article shows how *The Mirror* was also offering its Modern Girl audience confidence and self-empowerment. However, *The Mirror* also presents the contrary views of other women readers who were not so positive about women in the workforce.

As in *Jungfrau*, some segments of society regarded the Working Modern Girl as a figure who represented all that was negative about the interwar period: the breakdown of the

family, women's career ambitions outside the home, and the rise of consumerism with its effect of destabilising traditional structures. As a general magazine targeting a wide swathe of the population, including housewives and other members of a household, these attitudes are, accordingly, reflected in *The Mirror's* pages. One demographic of society seemed vocal against her presence in the workforce, and was, perhaps, a reaction to the lack of jobs for men. In contrast to the opinion expressed above by Mrs Forty-Six, one woman reader writes to the magazine, painting the Working Modern Girl as a threat rather than priceless. Under the heading "Stern Words from Mother," the writer warns that "the modern girl has grown so ultra independent (and so mercenary) that she is looked upon with fear by the man with ordinary means" ("Stern Words from Mother," *The Mirror,* 12 Apr. 1932, p. 11). Another writer for the same segment labelled "The Wife," also pejoratively maintains the "modern unattached girl constitutes a serious menace" ("The Wife," *The Mirror,* 12 Apr. 1932, p. 45), particularly to men because male "[p]artners are scarce…half the poor devils are out of work" (45). But it was not only the unattached single Working Modern Girl that some married women writers and readers of *The Mirror* regarded as threatening.

Other comments in the magazine show the way debates were circulating over whether women should continue working after they were married. One article, "Home or Job or Both?" makes these debates clear and included several opinions from women who wrote to *The Mirror* about this subject. The contributors were responding to a previous issue's article that "presented the problem of Geoff and Helen, whose romance was breaking because Helen wished—'on principle'—to remain after marriage an independent earner from nine till five, 'a woman among humans as a man is a man among humans'" ("Home or Job or Both," *The Mirror*, 13 Sept. 1932, p. 9). *The Mirror's* editor acknowledges that "[c]ontributions received show that many women in Australia succeed in running home, job and nursery" while their critics "protested against married women earning in times of depression" (9). The first contribution, by "Niminy Nim" from Kenthurst NSW, makes a strong argument defending

women who work, maintaining that these women were contributing to their households by assisting their men with the finances in a time when economics were tough. Upfront, she maintains that Helen should keep her job because women do have the capability to "combine home, motherhood and business without neglect to any of them, for a business girl is used to working by system and to time" (9). The way the editor of *The Mirror* presented and framed the opinions, placing a positive opinion on married women who work directly under his or her paragraph, suggests the way the magazine was indeed positioning its reader to view women who worked positively.

The negative contributions did indeed seem illogical, overly dramatic, and archaic. Of the eight contributors who wrote in for this segment, six supported the position of women's work after marriage, while only two did not. One woman claims that she "made the greatest mistake of [her] life" (9) by continuing to work. She dramatically complains that her neighbour took care of her two children while she was at work, and, consequently, "she it was they went to; to them [she] was just a stranger who tends to meals" (9). Another writer flatly starts her contribution with "Independence doesn't pay" (9). Nevertheless, the magazine weighed in favour of women maintaining their jobs after marriage. Representing this as a debate suggests that the readership may also have possessed mixed attitudes towards the issue, but perhaps also being largely in favour of women continuing in work after marriage. Interestingly, one of the positive views was from a male writer. The article distinguishes this author as "a letter received from a 'George' of his 'Helen'" (35), who is a doctor. George writes: "I wouldn't like to give mine [job] up if I were a woman. She [his wife] does not neglect the care of our flat, and I have never been looked after so well in my life" (35). Overall, this segment demonstrates that, during the height of the Depression, the varying attitudes to the Working Modern Girl and women who work were showcased in the pages of the magazine in ways that highlighted the debate.

Despite a more glamorous picture of the Working Modern Girl emerging later in the decade, warnings and criticisms still appeared in the pages of the magazine. In one such article by "A *Bulletin* Financial Expert," the author maintains that Working Modern Girls have the potential to earn more money than men. The author states, "if they [women] are in a job they often earn more than a reasonable mode of living calls for. This is particularly so with expert typists, secretaries, professional women, etc." (A Bulletin Financial Expert, *The Mirror,* 30 June 1936, p. 12). In a tone that seems future-looking, the author further stresses a Modern Girl's earning capacity by exclaiming, "[s]ome girls barely out of the flapper stage, if they are clever, artistic, or have some other talent that may be capitalised, often earn more than their fathers did at fifty" (12).

Switching tones, the author then makes clear another debate that was circulating concerning women who waste money on non-essential commercial products, on magazines and stockings, and women's wear, for example. He assumes that "[g]irls and women who are highly paid often waste money" (12) and women who want independence can be "extremely unwise if having set out on a course of bachelordom, they do not commence to make a lay-by in their youth to safeguard the later stages of their lives" (12). Noting the tone of the article and given that it was written by *The Bulletin's* financial expert, it is assumed that this author was a male, and as such, this article shows another segment of the Australian public and his views of Working Modern Girls.

This commercial woman's magazine clearly advocated for and profited from women being buyers and having an independent wage with which to engage in new forms of leisure and commodity culture. It provided a space for affirmative aspiration, where women could see an image of their best and future selves. But as a general household magazine advertising to housewives and other readers of a household, it tempered its enthusiasm about women's participation in the marketplace of commercial culture. One aspect that it endorsed was the idea that a woman might advance her station in life, if she focussed on her future security

rather than merely indulge in pleasure. Work was represented as one kind of upward mobility in terms of class. However, other forms of mobility were also represented, as the following section will explore.

The Mobile Modern Girl in *The Mirror*

As Jill Julius Matthews and others show, Modern Girls were a new independent demographic earning their own wages. More than ever before, women were engaging in consumer culture that offered the latest forms of leisure and entertainment. The consumerist leisure economy accessible to Modern Girls blurred class distinctions; Modern Girls could now dress and play like any other girl from any strata of society. What this new economy offered Modern Girls was a sense of social and even geographical mobility. Jane Nicholas observes,

> [m]odern femininities certainly crossed class lines – which was a source of concern and debate – but propelling them to a good degree were young, working women. By the 1920s this included most young women, since many engaged in paid labour between schooling and marriage. This makes the Modern Girl more than a central character to histories of work. (5)

Magazines, such as *The Mirror*, were attuned to the intensification of women's engagement with paid work and their assumed surplus income. Not only did the articles and features offer women ways to style themselves in a modern way, but the advertisements showed women what they needed to become up-to-date modern women.

The Mirror showed women how to style themselves like film stars or those from a higher class. Women could now, through their work and their purchases, buy themselves symbols of culture that were once only available to wealthy people. Styling themselves in the image of movie stars would have attracted judgements from some aspects of the population, who saw them as flamboyantly dressing beyond their means and class and wasting their money. Helen Barclay and Madge Evans, both glamorous American film stars, were used to

advertise modern pyjamas ("Pyjamas Severe and Sumptuous" *The Mirror,* 13 Dec. 1932, p. 13) or a "pastel-shaded chiffon frock," which would "be a delightful model for a verandah (sic) dance party" ("For Warmer Nights" *The Mirror,* 9 Aug. 1932, p. 11). Other fashionable photos of English aristocrats and British elites were used as models for products. The Marchioness of Milford, the Countess of Galloway, and Lady Brougham of England, advertised Pond's Creams, promising that using this product would "safeguard the precious youth and beauty of the skin" (Pond's Creams, *The Mirror,* 17 May 1932, p. 2), and that "[w]herever I [Lady Brougham] go I depend on Ponds" ("You Can Rub…You Can Scrub" *The Mirror,* 27 Aug. 1935, p. 2). The images and advertisements with glamorous elites provide ways for Modern Girls to emulate these women, allowing class distinctions to flatten in terms of fashion, glamour, and the use of modern cosmetics. However, this blurring of class distinctions was not considered positively by some segments of the Australian public.

During the interwar period, there was much discussion about the rise of American mass and cinema culture and the way Australian Modern Girls were responding to this. Liz Conor observes that cultural critics and tabloid newspapers that espoused a particular national sentiment, such as the Melbourne *Truth* (1902–1995), were troubled about the way Australian Modern Girls were emulating American screen stars. The *Truth*, Conor mentions, went as far as labelling them as "human derelicts" (*Spectacular Modern Woman* 78). Conor explains,

> [t]he naïve Screen-Struck Girl overidentified with the cinematic image, which itself was viewed with suspicion as being untrue to life. Because Australian audiences—among the most eager cinematic audiences in the world—were viewing a glut of American films, the reproduced image was condemned as untrue to Australian character and sentiment. (78)

Because Modern Girls were modelling their image on American film stars, some critics accused them of transgressing the typical "Australian girl" image. Unperturbed, it seems, by these critics, *The Mirror* used the image of the American screen star ubiquitously.

Perhaps participating in American culture was one way Australian women wished to regard themselves as modern, and as part of international modernity. Along with articles and features on how women could style themselves like these stars, such as "[h]ow Hollywood, months ahead, dictates to the English-speaking world what it should wear" (Forbes, *The Mirror*, 13 Apr. 1937, p. 6), *The Mirror* also prolifically presented American actresses as its cover girls. In 1936, out of fifty covers of the magazine, seventeen were of Hollywood actresses. Modelling one's image on Hollywood starlets was one form of imagined mobility—which was both geographical and related to notions of fashion, class, and social mobility.

Modern Girls now had access to new forms of social mobility and mass magazines such as *The Mirror* were offering their readers opportunities to engage in geographical mobility, particularly through the trope of travel. Sarah Galletly maintains,

> Given that modernity and aspiration were so closely linked in this era, it is perhaps unsurprising that geographical mobility became increasingly associated with social mobility, and that, in the context of massifying tourism and modern, mass-market magazines, such symbols began to reflect on ideas about modernity more broadly. (74)

Unlike magazines such as *The Home*, which were aimed at a higher-class readership, *The Mirror* did not feature a swathe of advertisements for tourist spots, shipping companies, or hotel chains. This is predictable given that *The Mirror's* target audience was not like the imagined elite reader of *The Home*. For readers of *The Mirror*, travel was largely imagined. While statistics from the time show that a significant number of women were travelling from places like New South Wales, these women were likely not the average reader of *The Mirror*. There were 12,283 women travellers compared to 9,763 male travellers recorded by the Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics in 1936 (Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics "Australia Demography: Bulletin no. 54", p. 28). While this is a substantial number, *The Mirror* infrequently includes content for this demographic.

The Mirror only occasionally included articles which explicitly detailed true travel experiences. When it did, the stress would be on frugality rather than opulence. Concerning itself with its aspirational readership rather than those with wealth, then, *The Mirror* did include "a travel article" outlining how a "mirrorite" could affordably attend King George of England's coronation in 1937. This article addresses "those of moderate means" ("Are You Going to the Coronation?" *The Mirror*, 22 Sept. 1936, p. 7) who could journey by cargo steamer from Australia to England. Maintaining that the author "can recommend it," he or she lets the reader know how much the fare will cost (fifty-pound sterling), what the woman traveller should pack and wear ("two or three semi-evening frocks," (7) for example), and what to see at certain ports along the way. With this lack of content aimed at tourism and women travellers, and travel being more represented in the serials than non-fiction content, geographic mobility in *The Mirror* seems more an aspirational fantasy than an actual reality. Nonetheless, it was one way that the magazine's readers imagined themselves as modern, with wider horizons than Australian women of the past.

One way readers expanded their horizons and imaginations was through Hollywood iconography and imagery, another was through stories and serials. In some serials, the trope of travel came to represent a breaking away from the domestic sphere and into new forms of freedom. In this way, imagined travel was one way of breaking away from domestic drudgery and imagining wider and more exciting horizons for their lives. In a serial by Rosemary Rees titled "Concealed Turning," for example, a Modern Girl named Dulcie runs away on the morning of her wedding to a man twenty years her senior. She then spends the next few weeks travelling around England on a bus tour where she falls in love with the bus driver. In this serial, travel is an escape and a symbol of freedom from family expectations and even marriage. The Modern Girl protagonist uses travel to "lose herself" (Rees, *The Mirror*, 9 Feb. 1932, p. 58). On several occasions, this Modern Girl reflects that escaping meant "[s]he was still Dulcie Kendall—still had her freedom. Oh blessed, thrice blessed word—freedom!" (59).

Dulcie's bus journey around England, thus, represents her liberation from an oppressive situation. Breaking from the commonplace domestic realm, her journey was constructed as an opportunity for her to achieve self-development, emancipation, and freedom. This newfound mobility, or fantasy of it, was a product of the debate around separate work/home spheres and domesticity. It is yet another way women fantasised about independence, not just from the home sphere, but also from the domestic Australian sphere. In this way, women could begin to indulge in cosmopolitan life in all its interwar panoply. The female traveller came to represent more than just a body moving through geographical space; adorned in modern fashions, the female traveller was a spectacle of social mobility.

The Mirror showed women how to appear modern and how to participate in new forms of pleasure culture. It facilitated their mobility, geographically through imagined travel and socially through emulating modern celebrities. Indeed, advice about fashion and cosmetics was very much a part of how to appear modern. Maryanne Dever challenges future scholarship to consider "women's altered perceptions of themselves as cultural producers and cultural consumers" (*Wallflowers and Witches* ix). This thesis' more nuanced look into *The Mirror* is a means to achieve Dever's general charge. Noting the fashion promoted in *The Mirror* can suggest ways Modern Girls were positioned as cultural consumers and engagers of social mobility. By participating, even imaginatively, in new freedoms on offer through dress and through looking through the pages of magazines such as *The Mirror*, women could reimagine themselves as modern subjects.

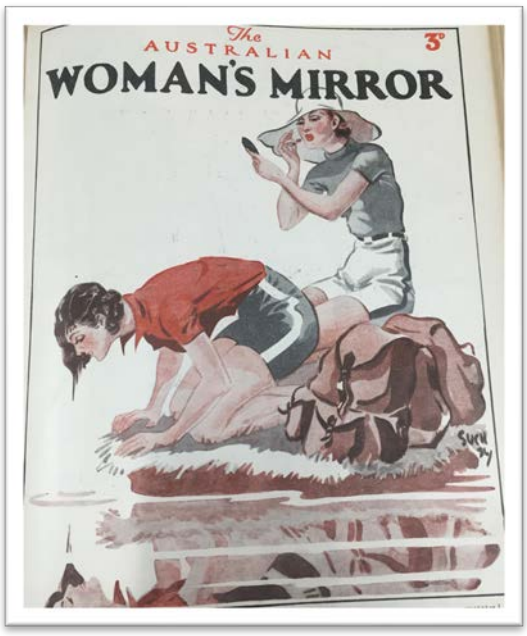

Fig. 5. *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, 24 Nov. 1936, cover

The cover in figure 5 exemplifies the way *The Mirror* reflected the image of the modern woman back to its readers. The cover of 24 November 1936 shows two Modern Girls. Both women are wearing close-fitting shorts, and their bare legs provide not only a tantalising view of female flesh but also a glimpse into the fashionable sports apparel modern women were wearing. One Modern Girl is looking into a body of water, gazing at her reflection, and the other is applying red lipstick while looking into her compact mirror. The title *The Australian Woman's Mirror* appears in red and black bold lettering just above the two women. The rule of three, with the triple symbolic use of "mirrors," registers the way the publication was urging its female readership to take a good look at the Modern Girl who was held up as an ideal. But the image also hints at the way Modern Girls could be accused of narcissism: a preoccupation with their looks, such as those pictured on the cover, might be deemed obsessive. In this way, the magazine was engaging in debates on how the Modern Girl was symbolised as both the best and the worst of modernity. Further, in this illustration, spatial and social mobility is also implied through the backpacks pictured alongside the

women and their stylish and contemporary fashion choice. The magazine presents the Modern Girl as defined by her mass market, fashionable clothing, the display of her body, her use of cosmetics, and her recreational choices.

The Sexual Modern Girl surveyed and controlled in *The Mirror*

While critics have pejoratively cast aside *The Mirror* as being of a doubtful quality and facile, narratives concerning feminine sexuality hint at the magazine's engagement with new feminine prescriptions of sex, positioning the magazine as containing more substance than previously thought. Vane Lindsay berates the publication, claiming *The Mirror* "was demonstrably status quo—the only ruffles in society it favoured were those to be seen on the free girt paper-patterns for polka-dot frocks" (105). However, reading for the Modern Girl across a slice from the 1930s shows an engagement with issues that could indeed ruffle the feathers of some readers, however masked the content seemed to be. This was particularly evident concerning sex. Many of the references to sex are didactic and warn Modern Girls about themselves and their own sexuality and about men and their ideas on sex. Furthermore, even though advertisements on birth control were illegal during the 1930s, and public discussions were not encouraged, *The Mirror* still engaged with this issue, reflecting the magazine's sense of its own contemporaneity and modernity. Peeling back the pages of this magazine, therefore, shows rich narratives detailing the anxieties women were experiencing to do with issues around work, mobility, and sex. While there were some anxieties, there was also a celebration of the new freedoms women could experience. *The Mirror*, thus, becomes—to borrow a phrase from Dymphna Cusack—an important social documentary on representations of the modern woman in the interwar years. Situated front and centre in *The Mirror* was the Modern Girl.

Much as the women portrayed in *Jungfrau* were judged by others and themselves, throughout the pages of *The Mirror*, women's lives, appearances, conduct, and sexuality were

often regulated and commented upon. Used ubiquitously, the Modern Girl seems to become a focal point of commentary, one who, again, captures both notice and notoriety. Dulcie Deamer's article about modern swimwear, "Are We Women to be Standardised" (*The Mirror*, 2 Apr. 1935, p. 19), is one of many articles that exemplifies the issues the Modern Girl attracted and the way she became subject to a kind of surveillance and control. Deamer discusses "the beautiful Modern Girl" (19), who is the target of new government regulations regarding swimwear. She comments on how government officials will be patrolling beaches determined to catch the Modern Girl out for indecent exposure. Maintaining that the government will soon be initiating "[a] Board to control the Appropriate Selection of Partners" which will include a framework and law for "Standardised boy-friends" (49). She warns her readers, "Do you suppose that when Governments start to attempt to standardise we women they'll stop at the upper and lower boundaries of a bathing suit?" (19). Even though the article is couched in humour, Deamer's point is that the surveillance of Modern Girls has gone too far, and so has the over-sexualisation of her body. Yet, *The Mirror* itself promotes a form of Modern Girl surveillance, and her body is presented as an ideal that women should emulate.

The Mirror presented women with images of active and beautiful Modern Girls, combining sport, fashion, and ideas of perfect beauty. As Liz Conor argues, during the interwar period, "women's bodies became a place of action in modern visual culture" (*Spectacular* 2). In the same issue that was discussed above, another article written by Annette Kellerman presents the Modern Girl as the perfect woman with the perfect "figure" (*The Mirror*, 28 Aug. 1934, p. 13).[5] Kellerman explains her success in confident and authoritative tones. The article titled "Women the Success Makers: They are Guardians of Art

[5] In 1908, Kellerman was labelled the perfect woman in a study conducted by Harvard University. Her figure was compared with the desirable image of Venus de Milo, and she was also dubbed Australia's most perfect woman.

and Good Taste" pictures the famous swimmer, film star, and writer in not only modern swimwear wearing high heels (a typical visual image of Kellerman), but also as a fashionably styled model wearing make-up and modern clothing. Kellerman writes that modern women are not concerned anymore with artists such as her "appearing semi-nude" (13). Instead, she writes that women appreciate films, such as the ones Kellerman appears in, where women have hardly any clothing on, amounting to that which would only fit "into a lady's handbag" (13). Her assumptions about what women find acceptable are seemingly taken for granted, and she informs her readers that the way she appears on film and in photographs is completely modern. She maintains "[t]he women of the United States have become "figure-conscious" (13), and as such, they hold up figures such as Kellerman's as ideal and one that should be emulated. Kellerman was, indeed, a visual icon of the perfect feminine ideal, and her status as the perfect body was also highlighted in the pages of *The Mirror*.

Kellerman's article reveals how the rhetoric of modernity and mobility were tied together with a simultaneous sexualisation and public display of the Modern Girl's body. To be modern and successful, according to this article, was to be fit and healthy and to present a beautiful and disciplined body to the world. The added emphasis on the ideal body, though, is more than just a presentation of Kellerman's social success; it is also representative of the way new sexual freedoms were on offer through the maintenance of the female body, and through the exposure of bodies. Despite some critics labelling *The Mirror* as a publication that was morally prudish, the magazine was indeed engaging with new sexual freedoms. Explicitly through its visual images and articles like Kellerman's and implicitly through sex advice, birth control information, and serials presenting women involved with forms of sexual agency, *The Mirror* did engage with discussions on modern sexuality.

For *The Mirror*, the Modern Girl was the focus of its understanding of interwar modernity and sexuality. Discussions of the act of sex were limited to that of married sex. However, sexual behaviour was discussed as a characteristic of the single Modern Girl. While

The Mirror does not explicitly discuss the Modern Girl's sex acts, as such there are coded references, innuendoes, sex advice, and anxieties about the Modern Girl's sexuality throughout the pages of the 1930s issues. Historian Frank Borgiorno explains that during the interwar period, "[s]ex advice literature, popular Freudianism and consumer culture combined to redefine women as an essential sexual being who achieved an ideal womanhood in beauty and glamour" (165). *The Mirror* combined the subject of the idealised glamorous and attractive Modern Girl with hints of her sexuality. It included hints at female emancipation and sexual freedom, as well as warning of the dangers of sexual expression for single women.

Several issues discuss how Modern Girls should be circumspect in their sexual freedoms, clearly referring to unwanted pregnancies and lascivious men. In one issue, for example, the article "Things Are Changing For Girls, by One of Them," (*The Mirror*, 26 Jan. 1932, p. 18) is framed by illustrations of two women: one is a fashionable and glamorous Modern Girl and the other is a Victorian-looking woman who is clearly portrayed as out-dated. In this sense, the Modern Girl symbolises the contemporaneity of the young, modern and self-confident women, compared with older, Victorian moralism. Interestingly, while the Modern Girl is portrayed positively, the modern man is not. The writer, a Modern Girl herself, 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 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). Somewhere in between, this article suggests, is the perfect man who does not view women as merely sex objects, but who offers romance, mutual pleasures, and excitement. The implication in this article is that young women enjoy sex, but the sex act should be one that both parties view as mutually beneficial.

However, a warning accompanies the article, explaining the pitfalls of modern sexuality. The Modern Girl warns her readers about the first man she mentions, detailing the dangers he presents. The writer of the article cautions, "The 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). Instead, the author maintains, Modern Girls should be smart in their choice of men and in their sexual choices and avoid at all costs the disgrace of "unwanted mistakes" (18)—obviously referring to unwanted pregnancies. She does, however, insist that the Modern Girl should enjoy dating men and going to "dances, theatres and restaurants" (18), but take heed to her warning of the pitfalls of dangerous men who also inhabit these spaces. In this way, the article makes note of the new public space Modern Girls were taking up. Pleasure and freedom were held up as desirable and attainable, so long as Modern Girls, particularly if they were single, were wary.

A serial during 1931 fictionalises this tone of wariness for the sexual freedoms that were on offer for the single Modern Girl. "Sanctuary: A Serial Story of Youth" presents a friendship group of single women navigating their way through modern life and living together in a flat in Sydney (Margaret Boyd, *The Mirror*, 1 Dec. 1931–2 Feb. 1932). Their status as Modern Girls is coded by their fashionable dress, their use of cigarettes, their career aspirations, and their relatively free views on sexuality. In the serial, the girls kiss men, have petting sessions, and speak of sexual issues. Janie, the main protagonist, remarks "there can be no set rules for behavior when in male company…there were men…who made one's flesh creep if they merely looked at you, and men like Ken on whose knees one loved to sit" (5 Jan. 1932, p. 53). Janie, falls in love with a foreign man, Paul, who woos her, promises her romance, and offers her sexual pleasures symbolised by his status as a stereotypical romantic Frenchman. Some of the girls joke of Janie's infatuation, commenting with a double entendre, "With French…I got stuck when it came to trilling my uvular," and another girl jokes, "[r]emember…you're in mixed company" (12 Jan. 1932, p. 7). In the space of their flat, the

Modern Girls can freely discuss sex, and take pleasure from entertaining men, even cosmopolitan men with experience.

Yet, the serial is not as progressive as one initially assumes. Predictably, Janie's Frenchman is two-timing her. Despite his pleading and his offer of having Janie as his mistress (after he marries the other woman), she dumps Paul and instead marries the Australian boy-next-door, Ken. Ken takes up the place of being Janie's "sanctuary," and she realises that after leaving her family home, the space in between was merely a journey of vulnerability. Now that domestic bliss seems possible, she has reclaimed her feeling of sanctuary and safety in the arms of Ken. The serial suggests that sexual freedom for the single Modern Girl was tenuous, particularly when concerning men with ulterior motives. Janie's perilous journey between the time she left her parents' house and when she becomes a wife is seen as merely a fad that girls should get over, much in line with the rhetoric concerning Flappers discussed in the Introduction to this thesis. Included in this journey were the dangers of sexual freedoms on offer to vulnerable women, and *The Mirror* made note of these.

Taking up this note of caution were some of the readers' comments. In one issue, for example, a young married woman describes her experience in a maternity ward. She noticed that single, expectant mothers were segregated and treated poorly ("Between Ourselves" Bermudiana, *The Mirror*, 15 Sept. 1936, p. 4). The woman, who remains anonymous, speaks to a female audience in intimate tones that does not mask her distress at the treatment of young, single women. She mentions how another married woman, in the presence of one of these girls, remarked at how well these single mothers were treated despite their "sins," and how they were allowed to mix with the married women during visiting hours. The single girl shot back, "You call that kindness!…Why, that's the worst part of our punishment, seeing your husbands and friends admiring your babies and knowing that ours aren't wanted" (14). Mentioning several times how these girls were made to work in kitchens, laundries, and wards, the author compares her own convalescence and how she was given bed rest and

waited on by these other unfortunate single mothers-to-be. The tone of the article is sympathetic towards single mothers, and the author questions their unfair treatment and the critics that judge them. Yet the editorial decision to include this reader's comment signals the magazine's engagement with issues of modern sexuality, including unwanted pregnancies and the pitfalls of not using birth control.

Signalling *The Mirror's* interest in new forms of birth control, during 1936 an article by D. G. Barcom makes a bold claim. The article is titled "The First 'Modern' Marriage," but the women it addresses are not just "married women." Implied is also the single Modern Girl. The article discusses Havelock Ellis and his work, *The Psychology of Sex* (1933). Arguing that Ellis's work is "an acknowledged scientific classic," Barcom concludes, "This with his other writings has done more than can ever be assessed towards freeing woman from traditional shackles and encouraging her to step forward and take her place beside man in an intelligent working out of their mutual destinies" (*The Mirror*, 19 May 1936, p. 18). While some could point to the way *The Mirror* did not ruffle feathers, the inclusion of a type of book review of Ellis's sex manual could certainly seem controversial. Nicole Moore notes, "[t]he circulation of Havelock Ellis's books in Australia is difficult to establish…and…*Sex in Relation to Society* in its third reprint [was] the only record of his work having been seen by the [censorship] Board" (*The Censor's Library* 143). Yet Moore does point out that "censors gave only restricted access [to publications] such as the work of sexologist Havelock Ellis" (6). *The Mirror's* inclusion of an article that promotes Ellis's publications is telling and cuts across the view of the magazine as insipid. It also signals the way the magazine was engaging with modern views on sexuality, including those promoted by leading and controversial contributors of sexology.

Not only was the magazine promoting views offered by leading sexologists, but it was also offering its readers ways to safely engage in sexuality, thus alleviating the dangers of unwanted pregnancies, mentioned above. Frank Borgiorno challenges the assumption that the

interwar period was one of masked sexual conversations and the strict controlling of contraceptives. He argues, "[b]y the 1930s, in the face of widespread use of birth control and a growing consciousness of the dangers of repeated pregnancy to women's health, the Australian medical profession was softening in its attitude to contraception" (172). *The Mirror* reflects Borgiorno's argument, as it also includes sex advice to women from female doctors advocating its use. Until now, these examples of conversations on sexuality in *The Mirror* have not been canvassed.

In a 1936 issue, for example, a "Mother M.D." provides "advice" to women on sex and contraceptives (*The Mirror*, 21 July 1936, p. 37). The article is titled, "When to Have a Baby" and she reminds her audience of a former reader's letter that was included in its previous "Mothercraft" page. The writer of the letter asks, "whether the older teens, the fresh young twenties or the thirties was the best age for child-bearing" (37). Responding to this question, Mother M.D. notes, "many couples are faced with the problem whether they will allow Nature to take her course early in marriage or postpone the coming of children until circumstances are favourable to their upbringing or until inclination turns in that direction" (37). The way to "postpone" having children, the article suggests, is through modern contraceptives. Yet she also provides a caveat, covering herself with the protest that it "is unusual for a married woman to 'space' her family…and, indeed, to decide whether she will have a family or not" (37). The fact that this supposed medical doctor is initiating a conversation about women having a choice in when to have children and hinting that she is also talking to unmarried women is telling. In ambiguous terms, she dismisses moralists who "make any sweeping statements or pass any decided opinion on the matter as a whole" (37), maintaining, "every case is different" (37). That *The Mirror* includes such advice on birth control shows more substance than it merely being a magazine for the insipid housewife's concerns of ruffles and roulade.

Typical of many of the articles in *The Mirror*, which continue on later pages, the Mother M.D. article concludes at the back half of the magazine, which is busy with advertisements, other interrupted features, serials, and articles. This second half of the article is more explicit in its advice. The doctor explains that for a woman to "space" her family, "some method of birth control" is needed (45). The doctor admits that this is a "vexed" issue (45), but she separates herself from the "moral" standpoint and argues that her views are purely "medical" (45). She disputes the current thought that "the reproductive organs are […] affected by the passing passions of the parents" (45), maintaining that what is worse is the predicament of a baby who is not welcomed. The disconnection of this article, where the latter information is more explicit and controversial, and the way the second half is obscured by a busy page of other interrupted features suggests something. While *The Mirror* mentions birth control and seems progressive in its stance, it couches its standpoint in ambiguity, preferring to take a stand in a space where it could, perhaps, be overlooked.

This discussion on birth control, albeit sometimes evasive, is noteworthy, particularly as Borigornio has shown, because discussions on birth control were heavily policed at this time and advertisements for such were banned. However, *The Mirror* even evades this ban in ways that further showed the magazine's ambiguity to moralistic standpoints. Not only does the article above include Mother M.D.'s qualifications, but it offers a way for curious women to obtain more information. The doctor will "answer privately by personal letter inquiries" any question a reader may have (37). Adding to her information on birth control included on a later page, within the same issue is an advertisement titled "Married Women Don't Worry" (*The Mirror*, 21 July 1936, p. 64) from Bakers Pharmaceutical Division in Sydney (see fig. 6). While this advertisement is very ambiguous, stating that women should write in for a sample of "Q.T", which "Brings Happiness because it eliminates worry," the advert claims the product has "been sold enormously throughout Australia during the past 10 years" (64).

Fig. 6. "Married Women Don't Worry." *The Mirror*, 21 July 1936, p. 64

Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what "Q.T." was. It could be a type of spermicide or jelly, as researching further into this advertisement showed that the same company included a similar advert in *The Barrier Miner* (1888–1954), a small workers publication in Broken Hill. With its much smaller readership (pitched towards the working-class miners of Broken Hill), this magazine was not as well read and popular as *The Mirror*. Perhaps because of its small circulation and, thus, less of a public presence, the makers of "Q.T" could be more explicit in describing their product. *The Barrier Miner* advertisement states the product was a great development in "feminine hygiene," and "married women have long waited for this protection" as it helps to alleviate the "danger of disastrous errors" (*Barrier Miner*, 27 Oct. 1936, p. 3). Further, this advertisement notes, "With its dependability and swift ease of application…'Q.T' brings feminine Hygiene up-to-date" (ellipses and capitals in original, 3). The use of the words "protection," "alleviates disastrous errors," and "ease of application" suggests a form of birth control to protect women against unwanted pregnancies. The ellipses also seem suggestive, and this is also featured in *The Mirror's*

version. This implies that it was purposefully ambiguous in order to slip under the censorious and legal policing, while informing women of their options. Yet the fear of pregnancy and the "worry" of "disastrous errors" were still firmly in the space of women's concerns, and *The Mirror* reflects these worries. The advertisement in *The Mirror* appeared in at least three of the issues that were canvassed for the 1930s, showing that birth control was an issue to its women readers, and that *The Mirror* also went as far as it did to publish such controversial material—especially as advertisements for contraceptives were meant to be banned at the time.

In reading for the Modern Girl across the pages of this magazine, therefore, a large source of commentary regarding modern women and their concerns emerges—particularly to do with sexuality. While critics such as Vane Lindsay have dismissed the publication as one which would not ruffle the polka-dot frocks of the society ladies that read the magazine, paying attention to the Modern Girl and the themes of work, mobility, and sex shows otherwise.

* * *

The Mirror's positioning as a women's mass-magazine, its link to commercial culture, and its connection to American celebrity culture have, perhaps, been contributing factors to the way the magazine has been overlooked and deemed substandard, both in its time and subsequently. *The Mirror's* dismissal in terms of literary value seems similar, as I have suggested in the chapter on *Jungfrau*, to the fate of the Modern Girls. It is no wonder the Modern Girl, works about her, and works that reflect her have been overlooked. She seems to sit in a precarious intersection of interwar anxieties, both then and subsequently. She was too American, too flashy, and too cosmopolitan. Further, representations of her were often mixed up in debates about women's place in modern society. Rather than situate herself in the domestic sphere, going from her own family to building her own, she entered the workforce, and was accused of taking men's jobs. Her income could enable her to participate in forms of

leisure culture, such as dancing, and she could also buy a form of social mobility, maintaining her appearance like celebrities. Her freer sexual identity was not one so concerned with family, and thus she was not a national figure that could bear the children of a white Australian population. *The Mirror* reflects these anxieties, all the while using the fashionable and desirable Modern Girl as a centrepiece of its international and outward looking editorial agenda. Yet it is not only women's magazines that express anxieties and fantasies about Modern Girls. Even though some critics could see *The Mirror* as ephemeral fodder representing capitalist markets and desires, other print culture of the interwar period also reflected the anxieties and fantasies of the Modern Girl. The next chapter will discuss works that have been perceived as more serious. I will discuss J. M. Harcourt's *Upsurge* and compare it to Jean Devanny's novel *Sugar Heaven;* both are works of serious repute. My discussion will also contrast these political-themed novels with *MAN* magazine. All three texts are artefacts that represent male anxieties and fantasies about the Modern Girl.

Chapter Three: Victims and Victors of the Revolution– *Upsurge*, *Sugar Heaven*, *MAN*, and the Working Modern Girl

While Chapter Two showed that the Modern Girl was ubiquitous in commercial magazines such as *The Mirror* and was overlooked for serious consideration in her own time and subsequently, her presence in other aspects of Australian culture that may be regarded as more serious has also been under-examined. J. M. Harcourt's 1934 novel *Upsurge*, set in Perth, Western Australia, uses the predicament of shop girls and working-class men to highlight corruption in government, the justice system, trade unions, commerce, and class structures. This novel is yet another important, overlooked site for analysing attitudes towards the Modern Girl in the print culture of her own time, particularly the Working Modern Girl. Because of the scandal it raised, *Upsurge* has been regularly relegated to the status of a "museum piece" (Cowan 97) of censorship. Conversely, a contemporaneous novel that takes up related topics, Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* (1936), has been resurrected and reprinted several times over. In Harcourt's novel, Modern Girls are both antagonists and protagonists. The type of Modern Girl who is associated with buying and selling and who never achieves class-consciousness or becomes radicalised by the foment or prospect of revolution is portrayed negatively. In Devanny's novel, the critical celebration of the political awakening alongside the sexual awakening of the interwar Australian female protagonist renders her status as a Modern Girl almost invisible to subsequent critics, who celebrate this portrait. I will compare the vexed relationship of the Modern Girl associated with commercial culture in Harcourt's novel with the type of woman associated with the working-class struggle celebrated in Devanny's novel. I also consider how one kind of Modern Girl—the kind associated with the vapidness of the modern marketplace, as visible in the print culture of

MAN magazine (1936–1942)—is routinely subject to derision and dismissal. What links Harcourt's work with *MAN* is the way both artefacts of interwar print culture demonstrate male anxieties toward the Working Modern Girl, all the while insisting on her as merely a sex object.

As a controversial novel which attracted the wrath of Australian censors and police alike, *Upsurge* was banned throughout Australia in 1934. According to historian Peter Cowan, the novel was censored for its communist propaganda and for its erotic content; these aspects, Cowan maintains, "might indeed serve as museum pieces demonstrating what Australian readers of those years were told to regard as indecent" (97). All copies of *Upsurge* were removed from bookstores around Australia, and Harcourt received threats of prosecution. The book has subsequently become, to adopt Cowan's term, a "museum piece" (97) of censorship and prurient attitudes. What has been less observed is that this novel also features representations of the interwar modern woman in the Australian milieu.

In fact, the erotic and sexual content in the novel that attracted such controversy centres on the Working Modern Girl. As a communist imagining of the Great Depression in Australia, its connections with socialism arguably overshadow the fact that it is also a repository of representations of Modern Girls, even if its spicy content is often commented upon in relation to the scandal the book raised. Yet as a novel focused on work, politics, and corruption, it is suffused with portraits of all kinds of workers, including Working Modern Girls. While most critics have looked at the novel through a communist lens, I am more interested in looking at it through the lens of gender and reading it for special attention to its commentary on the status of shop girls and other Modern Girls.

Even though Katharine Susannah Prichard and reviewers of the day have argued that *Upsurge* was the first proletarian novel to appear in Australia, subsequent critics such as Nicole Moore and Carole Ferrier have given *Sugar Heaven* that status in literary history. Moore even compares the two novels, claiming it was the tone of *Upsurge* that relegated the

novel as inferior to *Sugar Heaven* ("*Sugar Heaven*" 13). While *Sugar Heaven* does present women who seem more politically serious in their quest for self-awakening, compared to the women in *Upsurge*, there are still gender issues in *Upsurge* that deserve attention, particularly concerning sexuality and the plight of working women in the Depression. Furthermore, *Upsurge's* representation of women offers a way to trace male anxieties about the encroachment of women in the workforce and political arenas. In my comparison of the two novels, I argue that the rejection and subsequent dismissal of *Upsurge* shows which types of books gain the attention of scholars, as well as the types of characters who gain attention in critics' work. Harcourt's novel shows Working Modern Girls who do not achieve the same political consciousness as the women presented in Devanny's work. The women in *Upsurge* and their link to commercial culture, and the fact that they are decisively Modern Girls, makes them doubly subject to dismissal.

While in some ways these two novels and *MAN* magazine could not be more different, these artefacts of interwar print culture illustrate a deep anxiety about the alignment between modern women, commercial culture, work, and sexuality, and illustrate how Modern Girls have been doubly dismissed over time. *MAN* was targeted towards a broad male readership, and the Working Modern Girl is both pervasive and highly sexualised in its pages. As a titillating figure draped over her boss's desk or sitting on a stepladder allowing men a delectable view up her skirt, the Working Modern Girl was caricatured in the publication as a buxom, small-waisted, long-legged, alluring figure. The game of truth concerning Modern Girls, according to *MAN*, is they were sexually available, desirous of male company (of any status, age, and race), and easy to seduce. Thus, they were sexually irresponsible, and as women who desired freedom from the domestic realm, they were also socially irresponsible. While the magazine rejected women, particularly if they were a "Miss," its cartoons exploited and sexualised these girls. The persistent image of the vacuous and over-sexualised Modern Girl divulges male anxieties towards women and work and female sexuality. Though female

sexuality was a subject most coveted by the magazine, this was only when manipulated and controlled by men, either through textual or visual domination. While Vane Lindsay argues that *MAN* presents a confused version of masculinity (143), I argue that there does not seem to be much confusion in terms of masculinity presented throughout the pages; rather, the status of man as a sexual master seems quite clear—much like the status of men compared to women in the political arena for *Upsurge*. Yet, in the same way *Upsurge* has been overlooked in terms of its portrayal of Modern Girls, *MAN* has also been overlooked in terms of its obsession with Working Modern Girls. Its positioning as a magazine which was modelled on international publications such as *Esquire*, and which was a forerunner to men's magazines such as *Playboy*, has rendered *MAN* as a publication that sits uncomfortably in nationalistic scholarship of print culture in Australia. In analysing these texts crafted by men, I also counterpoise their vexed relationship to the canon of Australian literature.

Upsurge and Controversy

Upsurge was a source of contention. Published in 1934 by John Long in London, it was banned in Australia that same year, with reviewers decrying the novel as "pornographic" (AustLit "Upsurge"). A review condemned it as an "immature narrative of 'petting parties,' shop-girls' strikes, street-rioting…communist agitators, crude caricatures of magistrates and business magnates—the whole extraordinary conglomeration being liberally spiced with frankly erotic situation and choice specimens of schoolboy obscenities" ("Recent Fiction" *West Australian*, 2 June 1934, p. 4). "The most repellent feature of the book, I think," a reviewer wrote in the little magazine *Manuscripts*, "will be found [in Harcourt's] handling of the frequent intimate passages assigned to his characters. They are described with what, in a more skilful writer, I should call careful lubricity, because the selection of incidents for emphasis, their tone, never rises above the perceptual level of the reader who is capable of delight in simple pornography" (A. C. J. *Manuscripts*, May 1935, p. 119). While these

reviews dismiss the novel in terms of its erotic content, others note *Upsurge's* political agenda while still providing caveats to its readers.

A comparison of reviews of the novel in two complementary Australian magazines of the time, *The Bulletin* and *The Mirror,* shows how the novel was reviewed differently for male and female readerships. In *The Bulletin*, for example, Denton Prout described the book positively, siding with Harcourt against negative reviewers and stating, "The Australian writer who sets out realistically to portray his country meets with persecution and pettiness at every turn … [and] his work is subjected to the inane denunciations of illiterate wowsers and prurient old maids" ("The Laureate and the Local" *The Bulletin* 19 Dec. 1934, p. 5). Using the terms "illiterate wowsers" and "prurient old maids," Prout imagines those who repudiate the book and cry for its censorship as distinctly feminine and petty, in contrast to the educated male readership of *The Bulletin* he addresses. At this time, *The Bulletin*—and particularly the Red Page, which featured the review of the novel—had a definite focus on a masculine nationalist agenda. As David Carter states, *The Bulletin* reflected its commitment to an "egalitarian poetics" that might not include serious commentary on (or acceptance of) the Modern Girl, unlike its sister publication, *The Mirror* (*Always* 5). In *The Bulletin,* sex was a topic much like Harcourt's novel with its "naughty-boyish" delight in language and content ("schoolboy obscenities"). Consequently, *The Bulletin* reviewer's positivity towards the novel is unsurprising.

As if to solidify Prout's claim, and siding with *The Bulletin's* "prurient old maids," *The Mirror's* book reviewer, Franziska (pen name of Frances Zabel, owner of the Roycroft bookshop and library in Sydney), provides her women readers with this précis of what she called "surely Australia's first Red Novel":

> Not a character in it but is amoral; its bourgeois are all venal, its proletarians oppressed, its police brutal, and the magistrate … is swayed by personal feelings as well as being a vulgar amorist. The book pillories the idle rich in the interests of the

> submerged, but with curious illogic shows how its hero-characters became submerged through fracture of some accepted convention, legal, social, moral or commercial. The author takes a naughty-boyish delight in using words and describing events that most keep from the notice of women. W. A.'s belated decision to ban the book is understandable. (*The Mirror*, 4 Sept. 1934, p. 24)

As we have seen in Chapter Two, *The Mirror* played a role of curating modernity for women. It chose what was appropriate for their emerging modern sexuality: giving hints that they might have sex through discussions on birth control and unwanted pregnancies. It is somewhat surprising, however, that *The Mirror* even included a review of this novel given its explicit theme of sex. In doing so, the magazine aligned with its mission to mediate modernity for women by warning them against such "amoral" material. The review also hints at ways the reviewer condemned Harcourt for representing bourgeois and female characters as always amoral.

Contemporary scholars have also noted the mixed reception of *Upsurge*, with some focusing on its political emphasis, and others writing of its dismissal. Agreeing with Franziska's claim that *Upsurge* was Australia's first "Red" work of fiction, Richard Nile mentions that Katharine Susannah Prichard labelled it as "Australia's first truly proletarian novel" (qtd in Nile "Introduction to *Upsurge*" xi). Rather than focusing on the way an Australian reading public could have received the novel, Peter Cowan reflects on the way censors of the day read the novel: "Government officials of varying position and a few zealots of various persuasions," constituted the literature censorship department during the interwar period, and it was these officials that decided *Upsurge* was not fit for public consumption, rather than "the result of readers' anguish or disgust" (97). Expounding on issues of censorship, Nicole Moore includes *Upsurge* in her work on books banned in Australia, and comments that it was "influenced by political involvement with organisations like the Industrial Workers of the World and banned in part for rude insults to the judiciary"

(*Censor's Library* 7). Yet in all these instances of its critical reception, the "Red" emphasis is on masculine social and political institutions. As such, the book has never been explicitly read in terms of its Modern Girl protagonist.

Upsurge has often been submerged in the controversy that surrounded it after publication. In particular, the controversy centred not so much on its communistic propaganda or the novel's offence to the judiciary, but rather on its *sexual* content, most of which (as we might expect) involved the "liberated" Modern Girl. In fact, while the novel seeks to expose the corruption of capitalism and its institutions (such as the law), it also—in terms reminiscent of sexual conservatism—identifies the breakdown of society with the breakdown of women's morals, particularly the Modern Girl's. Nicole Moore recognises the female protagonist, Theo, as a Modern Girl, maintaining that Theo was a "modern young woman" (*Censor's Library* 89) whose presentation involves both "politics and sexuality" (87). David Carter argues that the novel focuses on "the relationship between political and erotic themes" before concluding that it *displaces* the "language of sentiment … by the language of politics" (*Always* 172). Yet this very dialectic—sentiment versus politics, politics versus sexuality—seems gendered. The political arena is coded as male, and the sentimental and erotic realm is coded as female. This positions the feminine realm's importance as secondary (and dismisses these aspects of life as decadent). These critical dynamics around the novel's reception repeat the problematic dynamics that are encoded within Harcourt's own work.

While the men of the bourgeoisie and proletariat participate in political and philosophical debates, Harcourt presents the women as mostly vacuous and immoral. Indeed, women—particularly Modern Girls—are the barometers for Harcourt's decadent society. This is signalled when one (male) character announces that, "The morality of a civilisation…is an ethical reflection of the economic organization of that civilization. A breakdown of morality necessarily implies a breakdown of the economic machinery behind it" (33). The reader has already been guided to the conclusion that poor standards of contemporary morality are tied

to women when, earlier in the novel, scantily clad beach girls participate in what another male character calls an "orgy of sensuality" (17), where they were "concealing their breasts only with their cupped hands, making barely a pretence at holding up their costumes" (17–18). These girls also "sat upon the knees of men … without self-consciousness or coyness" (15). Modern Girls in the novel are thus symbolic of corruption, consumption, and all that is wrong with modern society—particularly regarding their sexuality and their links with commercial culture. The shop girls, their desire to move beyond their station in life, their fashion choices, and lust for entertainment sabotages the great communist ideal that characters like the protagonist Steven stand for. Disregarding the Modern Girls in the novel, Harcourt overlooks them in favour of his male characters, and, furthermore, the Modern Girls become scapegoats for all that is wrong with Harcourt's imagined society. For Harcourt, the Modern Girl is a problem to say the least; she represents the new—and the destruction of the old—in problematically moral terms. She also undermines the gendered expectations of "Red" ideas of progress. Moreover, the Modern Girl's decadence repeatedly associates the decadence of capitalism with that of decadent sexuality.

Upsurge's Modern Girls—Kisses, not Revolution

At first glance, Harcourt seems sympathetic to young women, but a close reading reveals male anxieties towards women and female sexuality. The novel traces the adult life of Theodora (Theo), a shop girl who works at a major department store in the city of Perth, and her relationships with her two friends Olive and Ethel. Tried for indecent exposure at a Perth Beach, Theo's overt sexuality attracts the attention of the judge, Jeremy Riddle. After her sentencing, Riddle pursues her romantically. Yet Theo is torn between a romance with Riddle, and a political and sexual relationship with communist leader, Steven. Theo, Ethel, and Olive, who all work in the department store, are eventually sacked for unfair reasons.

This sets Theo on a pathway of political discovery and activism, where her relationship with the judge is called into question.

As a foil for the working-class characters, a set of petty, bourgeois characters are also depicted in the novel. Their flippant attitudes toward wealth, their obvious decadence, and their depraved values are often commented on throughout the novel. The female characters who are represented this way are particularly subject to derision and negative commentary. Harcourt favourably portrays characters who move toward the cause of the revolution, but not others. Unlike Olive, who becomes a comrade and is portrayed in masculine terms, Theo represents stagnation; she cannot move beyond her romantic ideals into a fully-fledged communist. Discarded by the revolution, she is also discarded in the novel: she becomes a victim of a police stampede at a revolutionary riot and dies.

David Carter labels the novel as one of "revolutionary romanticism" (*Always* 172). Carter is alluding to the genre of social realism that critics like Drusilla Modjeska (*Exiles at Home*) have subsequently rescued and established as part of the Australian canon. Carter notes that the novel "attempt[s] to construct a narrative that shows historical veracity, artistic conviction, and revolutionary optimism … [and is] relentlessly self-reflexive, making explicit [its] work on often incommensurate discourses" (*Always* 176). Carter's discussion of the novel, like Modjeska's work on interwar social realist novels by women, implies some consideration of gender and the novel's representation of modern female experience. Carter maintains that *Upsurge* shares "thematic and structural qualities" with novels by Katharine Susannah Prichard, such as *Working Bullocks* (1927) and *Intimate Strangers* (1937), which include "the displacement of romance by desire, the transformation of self-consciousness into class-consciousness, and mixed rhetorical strategies for incorporating a revolutionary perspective into a faithful picture of a non-revolutionary society" (*Always* 176). While this reflection of female experience as transformed into class-consciousness is true in some sense,

I argue that Harcourt's deployment of the Modern Girl is not limited to the linkage between female experience and class-consciousness.

Portraits of the Depression largely focus on men's lives and representations and overlook the role of the Modern Girl. As established in the previous chapters, The Modern Girl was a figure of cultural tension, and her newfound independence in the domain of work was often a topic of discussion. Yet, many scholars overlook representations of any type of women during this critical period of Australian history. Russel Ward's account in *Australia* (1969), for example, discusses how "30 per cent of breadwinners were unemployed. Thousands tramped the bush roads again with swag and billycan, often ready to work for their keep if only work of any kind could be found" (139). Yet he does not specifically mention women in his account, and his note that these breadwinners were "bushm[e]n" (139) specifies a masculine experience. Some female scholars have sought to highlight and recover this oversight. "The images that have been handed down convey almost exclusively the male experience of the Depression," Anne Summers maintains, noting "we have been told little about what it was like for women during the 1930s" (549). For Sharyn Pearce, "[a] survey of the sociological and historical literature certainly supports [Summers'] argument. There is no Australian equivalent of *Working Class Wives*, Margery Spring Rice's exposure of the living conditions of English working-class women in the Depression" (41), she claims. Pearce points out that even Summers' commentary on the period, however, "devotes only seventeen pages to an analysis of the effects of the Depression upon Australian women" (41), and that other cultural historians gloss over women in that era, preferring the earlier "image of the pioneer woman" in Australian history (41). Harcourt's novel, on the other hand, emphatically presents the Modern Girl in an Australian city centre during the Depression and exposes men's anxieties towards that figure. Admittedly, the novel does not exclusively concern itself with the hardships Modern Girls faced; men's experience and power dominance are

emphasised throughout. Nevertheless, the novel does afford a reading that traces how a male writer interacts with themes of work and sex around the Modern Girl.

Like *Jungfrau's* trio of Modern Girls, *Upsurge* also depicts three working women: Theo, Ethel, and Olive. Cusack's Eve and Marc are in the professional class as a doctor and social worker, whereas Harcourt's protagonists are empathetically working class. Earning two pounds and seven pence a week, Theo sells stockings at a department store owned by a notorious entrepreneur named Mr Kronen; Ethel and Olive work in the haberdashery department. At the beginning of the novel, Theo is charged with indecent exposure at a local beach. When the judge asks her why she committed the crime, she replies, "well, the sun is nice on your skin…Besides, if you don't slip off the shoulder-straps you have white marks where they keep the sun off and…and it looks unsightly in evening dress" (11). Theo may be a Sexual Modern Girl, but despite appearances, she is held up as kind of virginal archetype, like Thea in *Jungfrau*. Just as Cusack's Professor Glover muses about Thea, Harcourt's judge Riddle contemplates her as virginal yet sexually desirable. Riddle muses that "[a]n image of her [Theo] hung in his mind and would not be dismissed" (12), one where she is "unspoiled" (74), and like a "naiad, with water laving her young breasts and dripping from her face and hair" (76). Ethel is introduced in less hebephrenic terms, as a young woman who makes use of her sexual attractiveness and availability. On one occasion, Mr Kronen "slipped his hand in at the neck of her frock and began to fondle her breast. She did not object…she laughed and sighed and submitted" (110–111), despite his obvious dislike for her as a person, and his rough and insistent need for sex. Olive, on the other hand, is conventionally unattractive: a "big, raw-boned girl … [with] a loud, rough voice" (96). She becomes the leader of the union and addresses their subsequent meetings. This threefold set of images of the female is established almost entirely based on their sexual attractiveness and availability. This contrasts with *Jungfrau*, in which the issue of sex is more subtly contextualised in terms of female desire.

For Harcourt, men are the main figures at the centre of the Depression crisis, and women are merely foils to either sexually satisfy men or for men to measure societal decadence against. Peter Cowan comments that *Upsurge* was "determined in its exposure of the harshness and brutality of the depression years for those who did not have the insulation of jobs or capital," and that it "was a novel of social classes" (95). But the novel's over-emphasis on women's sexuality, seen in isolation from other aspects of their lives, overshadows the exposure of the real harshness the shop girls at the centre of this narrative would presumably have faced. Sharyn Pearce discusses women's anxieties during the period, observing:

> Those women who went out to work in the Depression years had to confront the hostility of a male-dominated trade union movement which feared that the unrestricted entry of lesser-paid females into the work force would permanently endanger men's jobs; they also had to face the guilt and bitterness nourished by many unemployed male workers (their husbands included), who felt ashamed and threatened by the overturning of their traditional social roles. (42)

The hostility, fear, and bitterness Pearce mentions are tones that permeate Harcourt's novel. They are targeted towards the female characters, both bourgeoisie and working-class. The female bourgeoisie, however, are not the focus of the novel. Harcourt dismisses them as merely vacuous women who "gathered in the lounges of fashionable hotels and drink cocktails and tea, shrieking at one another the latest fashionable catch-cries and phrases" (244). The men, on the other hand, even those of the bourgeoisie, discuss philosophy, politics, and class struggles (42). The novel decisively positions men as powerful players both socially and politically. This hints at male anxieties towards women who were challenging traditional social roles.

Upsurge represents the pervading societal anxieties regarding women who worked, and women who desired social mobility. According to historians Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn

Lake, Ann McGrath, and Marian Quartly, there was a dominant narrative during this time that centred on women as lower-paid employees thought to be occupying men's jobs and taking away their livelihood (Grimshaw et al. 190). In one scene in *Upsurge*, this occupation of men's jobs is explained: "[t]here weren't any more men employed now than were strictly necessary; men had to be paid higher wages than girls" (103), so, therefore, women were more economically attractive to employ than men, which, in turn, meant women could enjoy a new sense of economic freedom. Rather than being sympathetic to working class shop girls, Steven, the communist protagonist and apparent mentor to Theo, also accuses them of taking advantage of wealthy men to betray their class: "It's happened a million times to a million working girls … [wealthy men] win you away from your class. A million working girls turned into a million complacent little snobs" (188). Yet Steven's obviously hyperbolic accusation has no logic. At a time where the Depression was having a distinct mark on most Australian subjects, to find a million single (or even married) men to whisk away a million mere shop girls seems satirical, and thus calls into question his rationale.

Harcourt, however, does give his readers one Modern Girl who aligns with Steven's definition of a good, class-conscious communist. Olive loses her job in the department store and becomes active in and for the Communist party. Sharyn Pearce observes, "while Australian working-class men in Depression fiction usually evoke images of anonymity and hopelessness, pessimism and alienation, their female counterparts are seen to have experienced a broadening of their horizons created by the overturning of the established sex roles" (50). This is true to some extent in Harcourt's novel through his character of Olive, who hints at a form of approved political mobility. The title *Upsurge* attests to two uprisings that happen in the novel. One is led by Olive and is directed against Mr Kronen and his department store empire. The shop girls dominate this first uprising, and many of the girls are publicly vocal about their lack of acceptable working conditions. Olive's political consciousness grows together with her "voice" and she encourages other shop girls to strike.

Aligning with Steven's definition of a good communist who "must hate … only hate can sustain him!" (126), Olive "was bitter with hate" (161), and she becomes a forceful dissenter, but one who takes on masculine traits. Steven approves of Olive and often compares her to Theo. Taking on Steven's criticism, Theo often wishes "she could find the reserves of strength ever to lead" like Olive (226) as perhaps, then, she would have Steven's approval. However, she does not reach the maturity or brute strength of Olive. Theo is distinctly feminine, while Olive is more masculine.

In terms of Olive's leadership, "many of the men resented the domination of the meeting by a girl" (166), and this misogynist tone infuses the novel, signified by the magnitude of the second uprising, which is led predominantly by men. This uprising constitutes the climactic scene of the novel and involves the Premier of Western Australia, not merely a businessman. This protest results in violence and death, including the jailing of Olive and death of Theo. The novel attaches greater weight to this second, male-oriented and more forceful political uprising. The epilogue states:

> [A]n international conference of peasant and proletarian organizations took place. A revolutionary upsurge in every industrialised country of the world was remarked. The Australian delegates observed that even in Western Australia, the least advanced of the Austral States, there was a definite revolutionary upsurge. (287)

The novel's engagement with Olive and her contribution is, thus, brushed over, and the author manifestly prioritises male and internationalist political activity over the local and domestic politics of the Modern Girls in the narrative. Revolution, then, is more the domain of men than women, even women such as Olive—who are depicted as sexless and masculine by virtue of political involvement. Even though she is part of Harcourt's triptych of Modern Girls, Olive is not the main protagonist of the novel and her upsurge fades compared with the climactic uprising led by men. Through this treatment of Olive and the sexualised

commentary on Theo, the emphasis is placed on the Modern Girl's sexuality and not her politics.

Sexuality and Politics

Harcourt's novel thus betrays a deep ambivalence about its female characters, fusing (or confusing) the stereotype of Working Modern Girls with sex workers, but also with decadent sexual libertarianism, depicting women from all classes as sexually promiscuous, immoral, and easily available. Judith Smart explains that during the interwar period,

> [w]omen, then, were defined primarily in terms of their sexuality, which was managed by their dichotomisation as either good or bad, innocent or seductive. These oppositional categories reflected men's ownership of both the public sphere in which they were serviced by prostitutes (public women), who were ascribed a lowly status to delimit the boundaries and terms of their access to this space, and the private sphere in which they were serviced by their wives, whose higher social status may be seen as signifying their acquiescence in the patriarchal order. (10)

In *Upsurge,* the Modern Girl emphatically operates in the public sphere. Harcourt's Modern Girls clearly align with Smart's "public women." Their single status and their sexual availability are frequently emphasised. Clothed in "bright, scanty bathing suits, in loose gay gowns, in jazz-patterned pyjamas" (15–16), Modern Girls "resent their clothes," (42), are "hypnotized by romantic novels" (90) and enjoy "a little huddled dancing as a preliminary to copulation on the beach at three o'clock in the morning" (32).

The Modern Girls in the novel are described as vacuous and indecent. The men in the novel explicitly label them as such, calling them "pitiful" (28), "minx[es]" (24), or "little wanton[s]" (106), who "chat of unimportant matters" (20). Furthermore, the labels often used of sex workers are applied to the shop girls, such as "slut" (178), and "bloody little whore" (139). Steven also accuses Theo of being bought by "wealthy men who have money to spend,

and manners, and charm" who "win you away from your class" (188); thus, sex and politics are joined in specific ways when it comes to women's experience and their behaviour. After Theo attends a political meeting that fuels the men to feel enough hatred to inspire action, Theo confesses that it is "Kisses … she wants, not revolution" (171). Thus, the Modern Girl's intellectual capacity is portrayed as inferior to men because she cannot curtail her sexual desires. Indeed, she is seen as a potential traitor in the class war.

The novel has elements of the *bildungsroman* in its attempt to show Theo's growing political consciousness, but her character barely develops beyond her emphasised sexuality. Her status as a vacuous and decadent Modern Girl is more pronounced than her political growth. Theo is imagined as an unreliable collaborator who would fulfil her sexual desires at the cost of her political ideology and her class. To emphasise this, Harcourt uses Steven as a contrast. Theo berates herself because "[s]he could never resist. Ah, she was weak, weak, when desire importuned her!… Her will went out of her and her reluctant flesh responded with flutes and violas" (56). By contrast, Steven refuses to "offer up his Communist austerity on the white and golden altar of [Theo's] flesh" (185). Showing candid misogyny, sex is merely a physiological need and love is a potentially dangerous entrapment. Theo takes pride in her "animal" and "carnal" likes which are "bathing, lying in the sun, eating, sleeping—or falling to sleep" (74). Steven takes "pride in the fact that of all the men who had enjoyed intimacy with Theodora, he alone had never been her lover… A Communist had no surplus energies to vitiate on women. If he burned he went to a brothel. There was no softening influence in that. But to love was to become weak" (149). Dubiously and dangerously, Theo falls in love with two men at opposite ends of the political spectrum: the judge James Riddle and Steven. When Theo is asked if she is a Communist, she replies airily, "I don't know. Sometimes I think it's something I don't understand" (52). In this way, the Modern Girl is not only decadent but also unintelligent. Rather than acting on her class ideologies, Theo thinks

more about carnal issues like sleeping and sex and fails to comprehend the politics of the upsurge.

Ironically, though the Modern Girl and sex workers are identified with one another in the novel, Steven's use of prostitutes shows little regard for sex workers (who are shown as women of his class—the working class). In fact, they are depicted as being useful for the Communist agenda only because they help alleviate men's lusts and make authentically loving but distracting relationships unnecessary. Steven uses sex workers to take "the fever…out of his blood" (190). When he visits a brothel, he is serviced by Yvonne, a prostitute who was "raddled like the madam" and who "smiled fixedly" as "she pull[ed] up her short dress" (190). She is named; she has an identity and (no doubt) a reason for resorting to prostitution in a time of economic decline. Yet in the novel, the focus is taken off women in her predicament and placed on Steven and his needs; "It was over in a moment" (190), he is glad to report. Harcourt does not mention prostitutes again. This visit to a brothel shows the hypocrisy of Steven's pride. Despite Theo's large list (according to Steven) of male lovers, he could curtail his lusts and adhere to the way "the Communist party imposed [sexual] discipline upon its members" (149)—by exploiting the very women whose conditions they should protest. This hypocrisy of the men towards female sexuality, coupled with the feverish way women are linked to capitalist immorality, signals male anxieties and reinforces the way women are victims of these anxieties. But judge Riddle regards women in much the same way as the Communist Steven. When he contemplates Theo, he admits, "Her personality eluded him. Only her sensuality seemed real" (79). A woman's sensuality overshadows her identity as a real person with values, feelings, and political awareness. This monomaniacal emphasis on sex speaks of male anxieties about the Modern Girl, even among radical authors like Harcourt, who might be expected to welcome women's demand for social liberty and progress.

Harcourt's female character Ethel models the anxieties Sharyn Peace discusses, in which men were "ashamed and threatened by the overturning of their traditional social roles" (42) by the modern woman. In effect, the novel punishes Ethel for her sexual encounter with the department store owner, Paul Kronen. Thinking she was merely a friend of Peter Groom's, a bourgeois male character who develops communist sympathies, Kronen—like Riddle—pays no attention to her identity; rather, he exploits her for sex. He dismisses her because he did not realise she was one of his shop girls, and he derogatively calls her "The bitch!" (139). Up to this point, he refuses to pay serious attention to his workers, and this breach of his principles leads to his downfall. The resolution, implementation, and justification he uses to excuse his dismissal of Ethel shows a man with not only a sense of personal power, but also a sense of sexual and social-political power as an employer. Even though Ethel tries to appeal her dismissal, confessing that Kronen knew "me as well as a man *can* know a girl" (112 emphasis in original), the authority of the men around her silences her voice. Accordingly, she threatens to blackmail Kronen with a sexual harassment charge. The only power that is ascribed to women takes the form of sexual politics, but the novel demonstrates that the exercise of such power is always unsuccessful and ultimately results in tragedy.

Even though Ethel's dismissal from the department store draws the reader's sympathy, the crisis of her father overshadows the termination of both her employment and her life. When Ethel returns home after her dismissal, she sobs uncontrollably, knowing her wage, which was supporting her household, would cease and her family would become destitute. Rather than keeping the focus on her, the narrator's attention moves to her father, Colin, who—instead of reacting sympathetically to his daughter's unjustified dismissal—"smiled in a queer, resolute way" (141). Colin had not been in work for over three years, and as a result, he is forced to draw "his sustenance for himself and his wife and his younger daughter" (132) from Ethel's wage; he thus faces utter poverty. The narrator also comments

how “married men could never send enough from their earnings to keep their families in the city, and there were periods of bitter destitution for many families when their men were sent to relief works” (132). Colin, then, chose to stay in the city. Further emphasising the desperation and hopelessness that the Depression wrought upon men in particular, Colin writes a suicide note, cuts the throats and breaks the necks of his wife and two daughters, then hangs himself in the backyard. Claiming that he could not face the future, as he was sure Ethel would end up in a brothel (potentially to be visited there by Steven, of course), he writes in his suicide note: “When a man’s got no hope left…it’s no good him going on living, and it’s not good to my wife and girls to go on living either, so they are going with me” (142). The fate of the women is totally bound up with that of the patriarchal male and head of the household. Thus, the emotions of Ethel are glossed over, and her mother and other sister are ignored. The father’s feelings are given precedence in much the same way that the political upsurge of the men overshadows Olive’s revolutionary upsurge.

The Modern Girl, with her obvious sexuality, could not even begin to politically succeed in Harcourt’s imaginative world, let alone survive. It is not only Ethel whose sexual promiscuity indirectly leads to her death. Theo also dies in the hospital ward after being stampeded by the police during a protest, which she attended perhaps in the hope of winning Steven’s affections by demonstrating her radical credentials. Yet before she dies, Steven gives Theo an ultimatum: knowing she likes him and wants to seduce him, he says, “When you see things as I do maybe you’ll have more success” (245). There is no success for Theo. By contrast, the sexless Olive, fuelled by hatred, gets arrested and, therefore, gains the approval of the Communists in general and Steven in particular. Perhaps, then, Olive transforms from a Modern Girl to a good Communist subject. To be a “success” in Steven’s terms is to be a political activist in a wholeheartedly masculine way. At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that David Carter labelled the novel as one of “revolutionary romanticism,” (*Always* 172) which emphasises the “displacement of romance by desire [and] the

transformation of self-consciousness into class-consciousness" (176). However, this is not the case for the Modern Girls of the novel. The men do replace romance with mere physiological need and love is shown as a potentially dangerous entrapment. Yet Modern Girls do not attain a full measure of class-consciousness, apart from the sexless Olive. The others are, instead, sexually self-conscious.

Doubly Dismissed Working Modern Girls

The juxtaposition of Theo and Ethel's weakness with the strength and power of men in *Upsurge* paradoxically highlights the anxieties the Modern Girl produced among her male contemporaries, even among radicals whose support and sympathy we might expect her to win. Harcourt's novel suggests that there is no necessary contradiction between political radicalism and misogyny; neither does Harcourt himself appear to stand aside from that confusion. In one scene, a male member of the Party is philosophising with another sympathiser. This conversation constitutes a clear attempt to highlight the theme of the novel. He remarks:

> Marx made the obvious discovery that the first task of the human species is earning a living…and that that task is sufficiently important to colour all our other activities, our art, morality, philosophy, religion and all the rest, and he went on to draw the necessary conclusion that the forms these other activities take depends upon the manner in which we earn a living, that is to say, upon our economic organization. (34)

However, "all the rest," including personal, economic, and sexual autonomy, overshadows the politically radical narrative that Harcourt was trying to deliver. Rather than being a novel showing the plight of the working class trying to earn a living, the novel does—as reviewers of the time made clear—focus on sex in a "naughty-boyish" manner, weakening its Marxist agenda. The novel, then, exemplifies Jill Julius Matthews's claim that "[a]cross the whole

period, women's interests in modern things and in making themselves modern was commonly treated in such sexualised ways. It was part of the game of truth about the modern girl" (*Dance Hall* 74). Harcourt treated issues to do with work and the class struggle in sexualised ways—but only when women were involved.

In Harcourt's novel, the Modern Girl is doubly overlooked. The author writes her out of his novel, accusing her of commercial contagion and sexual vacuousness, a figure who is unable to attain serious political consciousness. He therefore kills her influence by her death in the novel. While the Modern Girl could be used to comment on politics, revolution, and social consciousness, the Modern Girl Theo cannot move beyond her sexual desires into a sincere form of social and class awakening. Her link with commercial culture, her desire for class mobility, and her overpowering sexuality sabotages the great communist ideal.

Therefore, Modern Girls in the novel have been doubly passed over—by the author himself, and by critics who have subsequently recovered this text, and who have continued to overlook the critique of the Modern Girl. The few critics who have researched and commented on *Upsurge* fail to see the importance of gender issues within this novel and the way it highlights male anxieties towards women, their work, and sexuality. Perhaps this is because the female protagonists are Modern Girls, and their alignment with commercial culture and sexuality presents them as unworthy of subsequent scholastic inquiry. Yet, as I have argued, the novel presents an interesting way to trace male anxieties towards the Working Modern Girl during a time when issues of work were an important social concern. Illuminatingly, another novel which took up similar subject matter in the same period, Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* (1936), has not suffered the same lack of serious critical attention. *Sugar Heaven*, like *Upsurge*, reflects on the working lives of Australians during economic difficulties, and was also written by a novelist with deep socialist and communist affiliations, who also infuses her novel with sex. Comparing two novels of similar political persuasion

and themes offers insights into the twinned preoccupations of this thesis—attitudes toward the Modern Girl and the marginal status of the Modern Girl in canons of Australian literature.

Sugar Heaven But Not Sugar Coated

Jean Devanny wrote *Sugar Heaven* after a visit to the cane fields of North Queensland. Witnessing the cane cutters' strike against Weil's disease (a form of bacterial infection carried by animals and dangerous to humans), Devanny sought to bring to light the economic hardships and poor working conditions prevalent in this field of work. The novel was first published by Modern Publishers, a publishing house established by the Communist Party of Australia, which also published works by authors such as Katharine Susannah Prichard. Devanny also sought to have *Sugar Heaven* published by international publishers. Yet the manuscript of her new work was not so popular with her English publisher Duckworths, despite the work's socialist politics. Devanny then turned to her agent Lily Turner in New York, seeking to have *Sugar Heaven* serialised by Federated Press, a left-wing newspaper established in 1920. Devanny wrote to Turner, "Sugar Heaven is my only thoroughly working class novel as my English publishers, Gerald Duckworths, dont [sic] like the otherkind. But how glad I would be if your firm opened up possibilities for me to write on workingclass [sic] lines!" ("Correspondence" JD/CORR (8)/77). Yet Federated Press did not publish this work. Perhaps the North Queensland setting for the novel was considered too parochial, and one which international readers would not find interesting enough. However, the hardships her working-class subjects faced seem representative of the broader class struggle evident across international lines. Even so, the dismissal of her manuscript shows the difficulties some Australian authors had getting their work published internationally, even if the themes could be globally recognised.

Not only does the novel detail the cane cutters' strike, but Devanny uses two female protagonists to comment on sexism, even within a political system underpinned by notions of

equality. Nicole Moore observes, "*Sugar Heaven* is a women's novel, consciously concerned with the lives, struggles and identities of women as members of the working class" (Introduction to *Sugar Heaven* 14). Even though the novel details the cane cutters' strike, the personal struggles of the women are front and centre. Dulcie is a working girl living in Sydney who is tired and disillusioned with life. A cane cutter from North Queensland, Hefty, romantically pursues her. Due to Dulcie's desire to escape life in the city, she accepts his proposal of marriage. Yet sexually she is not attracted to Hefty, and at first, she finds his erotic demands distasteful. Eileen, Hefty's first wife, is distinctly sexual. Through this character, Devanny explores the relationship between sexuality and love. At the beginning, Eileen's previous marriage to Hefty causes jealous and emotional scenes between Dulcie and Hefty. Despite this, Dulcie and Eileen eventually become close friends, and the two women become more sexually and politically conscious as the novel progresses. Moore argues that Dulcie and Eileen are "committed 'new women'; sometimes implausibly perfect feminist models of a type" (14). Indeed, their political activism and ideals align with those of New Women.

While it could be a stretch to consider Dulcie and Eileen as Modern Girls, their status as working girls, their political mobility, and their explorations of sex are like what we have seen with other Modern Girls in *Jungfrau* and *Upsurge*. Yet, what distinguishes them as different from the Modern Girls in these novels is their distinct separation from commercial culture, glamour, urban life, and cosmopolitanism. *Upsurge* takes pains to describe the young women's nubile bodies while they saunter around in their working city uniforms, sunbake on the beach in their modern swimwear, and dance to jazz tunes in their fashionable clothes. *Sugar Heaven* does not describe its female characters in any such way. In fact, there are hardly any physical descriptions of the women included in the novel. These women are more like Olive from *Upsurge* in their political consciousness and fervour. Dulcie and Eileen had to be "clever. And strong too. And … fierce" (147). Dulcie admits to her new husband Hefty

that she's only given men "kisses, that's all. Just kisses and playing around;" she is also fervent in exclaiming that "[m]y body is clean … I was good" (34). Furthermore, unlike Theo, Dulcie's sexual awakening draws her into her political consciousness and away from romantic notions of sex and love. She muses to herself that "her old conception of sex repelled her now. She glimpsed sex as a real force, apart from love; as a physical necessitous urge like food hunger, satisfaction of which meant clearer action for the class, clear heads, quiet bodies, better men" (246). Thus, while Dulcie is a Modern Girl with respect to her previous working life and ideas on sex; compared to Theo, her sexuality is underpinned by intelligent and philosophical ideals, making this character appear more complex and more politically motivated.

This point presents a reason for *Upsurge's* subsequent double dismissal: its female characters are definitely Modern Girls—whom Harcourt himself treats derisively and dismissively; they fail to attain what could be considered serious political consciousness, compared to the political feminism presented in *Sugar Heaven*, a novel which critics seem to have accorded positive attention. This problematic representation of women in *Upsurge* is, however, not an acceptable reason for its lack of due consideration in literary criticism; in fact, this problematic representation itself deserves attention, especially considering the way female emancipation in *Sugar Heaven* has been subsequently celebrated.

At the time of *Sugar Heaven's* release, however, the novel was met with as much ambiguity as *Upsurge*. Reviews glossed over Devanny's feminist and sexual themes, preferring to concentrate on the men of the novel, the strike, and politics, and the tropical setting, unlike the reviews for *Upsurge*, which focused on its sexual content. Again, the reviews speak to the reception of these two novels, and the conditions of the marketplace, where even then, issues to do with the Modern Girl and her sexuality were fraught and complex. One review accuses *Sugar Heaven* of being "frankly propaganda," and that Devanny "is given to strong language, spares us no disgusting detail of the [Weil's] disease,

and speaks of the 'turgid obscenity, the squalor and stress, the brutal finality at the end of the knife'" ("Books Worth Reading" *Truth*, 19 July 1936, p. 24). Ending satirically and with a condescending tone, the review exclaims, "[i]f conditions which provide sugar are so awful one envies those who can take their tea unsweetened" (24). Another review in *Queensland Country Life* (1900–1954) was even more critical of the novel, accusing it of pitiful feminine observations. *Sugar Heaven*, the review complains, "smacks somewhat of a report that might be expected by a newspaper sob-sister, who wasn't quite certain what the strike was all about, but thought the men were just too, too lovely just the same" ("Sugar Heaven" *Queensland Country Life*, 9 July 1936, p. 4). Ignoring the feminism in the novel, and brushing the female characters aside, not even calling Dulcie by name but as the mere "wife" of the "canefields he-man No.1" (4), the review ends by vehemently claiming, "[a]s a contribution to Australian literature it does not even toe the line" (4).

Despite these deleterious reviews, *The Bulletin* named *Sugar Heaven* as one of the most outstanding works of fiction included for the 1936 Australian Literature Society medal, alongside *Jungfrau* and Eleanor Dark's *Return to Coolami* (1936) (the overall winner for the year) ("Literary Society Medal" *The Bulletin*, 8 Dec. 1937, p. 2). This favourable mention of *Sugar Heaven* in *The Bulletin* is not surprising. Devanny's political sympathies would have aligned with *The Bulletin's* socialist leanings, and her vivid picture of a decidedly Australian and North Queensland scene would have also fit with *The Bulletin's* nationalist focus. Another periodical review from the archive celebrates the novel for its contribution to Australian literature:

> *Sugar Heaven* is an event in Australian literature because it is the first novel to present life and labour from the viewpoint of the working class. It is a sympathetic account of the forces which underlie industrial conflicts, and therefore, from the literary point of view, it breaks new ground and merits critical examination" ("Here is a Virile Tale of the Queensland Sugar Fields," Sept. 26, 1936, qtd. in Ferrier).

These reviews show how some readers were identifying with the novel's Australian setting and socialist cause, attributing it a certain literary status. So, while some reviews were dismissive of the novel, just like some reviews of *Upsurge* were, these positive reviews set the tone for its subsequent, more serious examination.

While Katharine Susannah Prichard and some reviewers of the day called *Upsurge* the first Australian proletarian novel, Jean Devanny, and subsequent critics, such as Nicole Moore (*Sugar Heaven* 13), claim *Sugar Heaven* to be the first. Alongside the positive reviews from the likes of *The Bulletin*, Devanny herself felt that *Sugar Heaven* was indeed "the first really proletarian novel in Australia" (Devanny "The Workers Contribution" 58). This labelling seems to have stuck. However, *Upsurge* was written two years before *Sugar Heaven* and even though censors banned Harcourt's novel, copies of the book were in circulation, enough for book reviewers to comment on it, such as those from *The Bulletin* and *The Mirror*. As I have argued previously, it is Harcourt's "naughty-boy" focus on sex and the Modern Girl that positions the novel in a precarious place in terms of its critical reception, even with subsequent critics.

Neither Nicole Moore nor Carole Ferrier has acknowledged *Upsurge* as Australia's first proletarian novel, favouring *Sugar Heaven* and according it this status instead. In her introduction to the latest (2002) re-publication of *Sugar Heaven*, Moore notes that *Upsurge* could be considered a notable working-class novel in the 1930s. Yet she claims that Harcourt only "used some of the techniques of socialist realism to depict striking relief workers and advocate revolution" (13). Moore admits that she, "think[s] it's *Sugar Heaven's* tone, however, that distinguishes it as a working class novel" (13), where its "characters are assertively hard-headed and energetic in their struggle, convinced of the objective justice of their cause" (13). Thus, Moore calls the tone of *Upsurge* into question, and consequently overlooks its female characters (Modern Girls) in favour of the ones in Devanny's novel that seem more politically serious in their quest (but who lose their Modern Girl status in their

political awakening that occurs when they move from the city to the country). And while Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* presents sex as arguably more adult and philosophical than Harcourt's novel, there are still gender issues concerning sexuality that undergird both these novels. Although Harcourt's Modern Girls seem simpering and weak, the novel does offer a way to critique the sexism of Harcourt and the political world he favours. The sexism inherent in communist politics is also present in Devanny's novel, but Devanny's portrait of modern womanhood has been critically favoured.

Sugar Heaven has been reissued four times (1942, 1963, 1982, 2002), with its gender content, particularly Devanny's comments on female sexuality, prominent in editorial reflections and criticisms. In the introduction to the latest edition of *Sugar Heaven* (2002), Nicole Moore, for example, writes:

> *Sugar Heaven* is a women's novel, consciously concerned with the lives, struggles and identities of women as members of the working class. It is the importance of sexuality for the novel, also, that makes its portraits of gender relations and women's involvement most interestingly modern and unconventional. (14)

Literary critic Carole Ferrier, who has done extensive research on Devanny, and who has published numerous articles and books on the author, including an edited edition of *Sugar Heaven* (1982), argues, "[t]hrough the presentation of a relationship between the characters, particularly through Eileen (whom several people I have interviewed find very similar to Devanny herself), aspects of sexuality and love, and sexist and racist ideology are explored" (267). These notable feminist critics take pains to outline the gender issues presented in *Sugar Heaven*, analysing them as important aspects of the novel and ones worth considering. Moreover, the sexual agency and sexual and political awakenings of the female characters in *Sugar Heaven* align more with the political leanings of second wave feminist critics, such as Ferrier. Arguably, this alignment has promoted *Sugar Heaven* for their attention, over and above critical analysis of Harcourt's work, and Theo and Ethel's failed attempts at reaching

political consciousness. Furthermore, even though there could be aspects of the Modern Girl in both Dulcie and Eileen, they have no elements of cosmopolitanism or glamour, and instead, as Nicole Moore has argued, their identities align more clearly with the nineteenth-century New Woman—the politics of this type of woman have often been the subject of feminist scholarship, and, thus, the New Woman has been upheld as a feminist icon.

The association between commercial culture, working women, and sexuality was something that made the Modern Girl a subject of dismissal by writers like Harcourt and subsequent gatekeepers of Australian literature, and by contemporaries of the Modern Girl in her own time. One location of culture where this link is made clear is the Australian magazine *MAN* (1936–1975). As David Carter has noted, just as some books become winners and losers in the way they are remembered or forgotten, so too do magazines. Carter confirms that in literary criticism, "[t]he focus has been on a small number of publications including the weekly *Bulletin*," which have been studied for their "serious commitment to the nation, the public, and cultural life" ("Literary, But Not Too Literary, par. 3). The term "serious" that Carter uses seems pertinent here. I argue that the female characters in *Sugar Heaven*, who are radicalised and become political, make them more favourable than the Modern Girl characters in *Upsurge* to subsequent feminist critics. *Sugar Heaven* aligns with their ideas about what content has serious literary historical value, even if it was often dismissed by readers in its own time. By extension, novels like *Upsurge*, which some critics defended in its own day even as others considered it replete with "petting parties" and "immature narratives," have been overlooked for serious attention and only recovered by later critics in terms of debates about censorship. The portrait of womanhood in *Upsurge*, I have argued, is one that is not favourable to feminist literary critics, and nor is the urban setting for its working girls, in Department stores and offices in Perth, amenable to Australian literary representations that have privileged the bush as the locus of the nation. Magazines like *The Mirror*, which evidenced the life of the urban working woman, and which were replete with images of the

Modern Girl, have also been overlooked for critical attention. *MAN* too evidenced the proliferation of working women in the urban interwar Australian milieu, and similarly needs to be taken seriously. As another location of culture that connected women, commercial culture, urban life, and sexuality, I argue that it deserves to be taken seriously, even though it was filled with gags and entertainment, often offered at women's expense. The anxieties expressed in *MAN* reflect a rapidly changing gender balance in the workplace, as well as an important and perhaps under-observed demographic shift that occurred in Australia at this time.

MAN's Vacuous Working Modern Girl

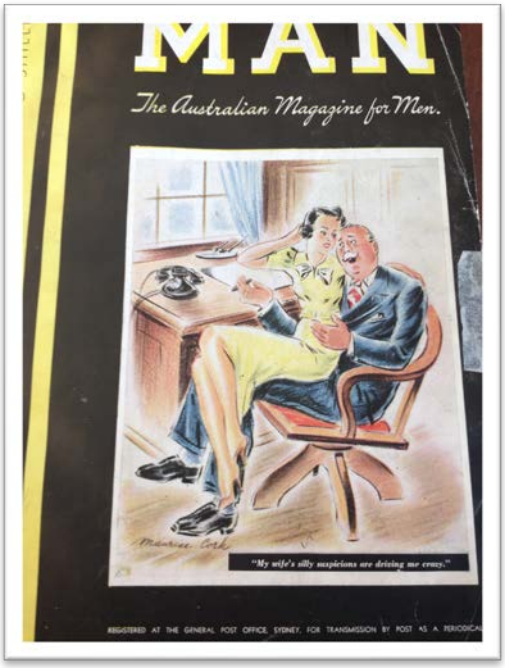

Fig. 7. Illustration by Maurice Cork, *MAN*, June 1937, cover

MAN: The Australian Magazine for Men is a periodical flagrantly focused on sexuality. Situated front and centre in its sexual content is the Modern Girl. The Modern Girl in this magazine, like Harcourt's Modern Girl, is constantly stereotyped as young, buxom, and sexually attractive. She could be single or married, but invariably, she is sexually and socially

irresponsible. *MAN's* hyperbolic over-sexualisation of the Modern Girl registers anxiety much in the same way as *Upsurge*. The magazine's continual insistence on the "otherness" of young women, especially the Modern Girl in the modern urban milieu, and its construction of an inane female who tantalised, teased, and fascinated men, seems to be a mechanism that defused the threat of this troublesome figure in the workplace. Matthews explains that "[a]nxieties about the modern world could be displaced by using the well-worn trope of eternal feminine fickleness" (*Dance Hall* 65), especially when levelled at young women. This trope of female vacuity was decidedly "well-worn" throughout the pages of *MAN*. Modern Girls in general and the Working Modern Girl in particular, were, merely a muse for the working man according to *MAN* and were at the centre of masculine jokes.

MAN was first published by Kenneth G. Murray in 1936 as a monthly publication costing an expensive two shillings (this figure would be the equivalent of around nine dollars in today's value), and was printed on high-quality glossy paper, indicating its status as an expensive magazine. As of April 1937, the circulation, which is explicitly mentioned on the editorial page, was 14,000, a large figure for the Australian market. Despite borrowing the style of the magazine from the American publication *Esquire* and other overseas cabaret magazines, its editor (from 1936 to 1955) Frank S. Greenop, attempted to establish the periodical as firmly Australian. He insisted that the writers and artists of the magazine be Australian, and many well-known authors of the time, such as Ion Idriess and Vance Palmer, contributed. According to editorial comments in subsequent runs of the magazine, circulation continued to increase throughout the years to approximately 100,000 by 1946. As Victoria Kuttainen notes, the magazine "boasted the fastest growing readership of any magazine in Australia, and with that came a capacity to reach both a broad and discerning readership" ("A Lost Story" 168). Kuttainen argues that one reason this magazine grew so quickly in Australia was that comparable material from overseas was either banned from import or distribution

through Australia Post or was prohibitively expensive. Despite the titillating content, the magazine deserves to be taken seriously because of this growing readership.

One thing that made *MAN* so successful, besides its highly sexualised content, was the fact that it addressed a new urban readership. As Victoria Kuttainen, Susanne Liebich, and Sarah Galletly maintain, *MAN* addresses its readership as urban and sophisticated, and "it condemned the old image of a parochial, insular Australia: 'drab pictures' that they considered at least 'half a century old" (*Transported* 30). *MAN* presented content that broke away from a nationalist, bush ideal that other publications such as *The Bulletin* were still eager to uphold as representative of Australia. *MAN's* ideal man was dapper and urbane, and the advertisements responded to his desires. The magazine had a Fashion Notes section, for example, featuring advertisements from city tailors, such as those in the high-end sections of Collins Street in Melbourne and George Street in Sydney ("Belvedere" *MAN*, June 1937, p. 84, "O'Brien & Earle" p. 85). Other advertisements used words to appeal to a cachet of cosmopolitan sophistication, describing their target audience as having "discriminating" tastes in alcohol ("Wines & Spirits," *MAN*, June 1937, p. 3), and those who are "smart" in their choice of cigarettes ("Ardath" *MAN*, Sept. 1937, inside cover). These advertisements made it clear which type of readership the magazine was addressing, just like those that featured in *The Mirror* did.

Another aspect that made *MAN* successful was the way it drew on content from both registers: serious and silly, in order to reach a new middlebrow readership. Appealing to the returned soldier from the First World War, it contained long tracts of discussion about politics and international affairs, and other aspects of instructional material. Arguably, part of this instructive material was provided to balance the more sordid content and allow the magazine to escape the censor's pen for distribution via the Australia Postal service. Yet it was not only through discussions about serious transnational content, such as the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, that the magazine sought to instruct its readers. It also sought to curate art through

images that reflected the magazine's links to international publications such as *Esquire.* This meant that some of the images it presented were potentially artistic, whether using black-and-white photography or cartoon art, but they were also erotic entertaining. Lynda Nead observes, Western culture makes distinct oppositional categories between "fine arts versus pornography/obscenity" and "nude images tend to be firmly contextualized into one or the other category" (qtd. in Breazeale 11). Like *Esquire*, *MAN* features both types of images, "creating a dyad that appeared in virtually every number, 'framing' the magazine's representations of women" (Breazeale 11). Thus, the photographic, artsy, images of women sit alongside the blonde caricatures featured in the cartoons that have large breasts, tiny waists, and long slender legs, confusing the boundaries of what could be considered "art" and what was mere titillation. Circumventing the Government's censorship regime, which was "the worst in the empire" (Moore *Censor's Library* 319) and whose agenda was underlined by the policing of obscene, seditious, blasphemous and immoral material, the images in *MAN* were neither pornography nor art. They were encoded as humour, as way of smuggling in the obvious sexual content. Even though the Modern Girl's body was held up as ideal, especially in how she was depicted in the art within *MAN*, her independence was something that caused anxiety, as the Modern Girls did in *Upsurge*. *MAN*, likewise, reflects masculine anxieties on the newfound freedoms women were experiencing.

Masculine fears of the Modern Girl's bid for independence are expressed in numerous articles, cartoons, illustrations, short stories, anecdotes, and features. Yet the magazine's first editor, Frank S. Greenop, demonstrates these fears profoundly in his comments on the periodical's first few years. In his book *The History of Magazine Publishing in Australia* (1947) he confesses:

> Some of the earliest *MAN* cartoons represented the first attempt for many years at trenchant satire of the current world: the cartoon that depicted the girl of 1836 running away from a mouse and the young woman of 1936 running away from a

baby, was of a social-critical quality to be regarded as real satire, directed in its truest sense against the follies of the time. (258) (see fig. 8)

This tone permeated the magazine's early years, which was largely a condescending and misogynistic view of women, and especially the Working Modern Girl. Commenting on the large appeal of the magazine and its success, Greenop further claims, "*Man* was a unique combination of frivolity and seriousness, but its viewpoints were soundly based and seriously taken" (260). As the magazine was demonstrably a man's magazine, the publication's opinions were meant to be taken seriously by men.

Fig. 8. Maurice Cork, *MAN*, June 1937, cover

Tellingly, in the initial issue of *MAN* a male writer attempts to exorcise his anxiety, ascribing to men the qualities of reason and intelligence and to women fickleness and frivolity, especially working women. However, what results is a weak attempt at mitigating the influence of the Working Modern Girl and could demonstrate what Vance Lindsay observes was a "confused" version of masculinity evident in the pages of *MAN* (143). In

"She's A Man," Franklin Beresford complains women are invading men's society, particularly in the business world. Indeed, he laments, the situation is direr with women entering professional careers. Rather than visit a woman dentist, he declares he would rather keep his toothache (Beresford, *MAN*, Dec. 1936, p. 38). He thinks women have "petty problems" (38) and poses a "magnificent obsession to emulate the cuckoo," by which he means these women are "scrambling to secure masculine laurels in every department of modern day activity" (38). But is the writer accusing women of being cuckoos, or of trying to copy males who are cuckoos? Unfortunately, the writing is not clear, and the reader is left deciding for himself. Beresford downplays the way women were broadening their horizons, such as going into professional careers like dentistry, and instead gloats over the way men were encroaching on women's domain and doing a better job. He boasts, "the only one vacation which is hers alone [the woman's magazine] has been neatly invaded by a man" (95). Compared to publications like *MAN* (despite also being the domain of one gender), women's magazines, according to Beresford, were inane publications of no intelligence. He postulates:

> women's magazines were edited by women. And they could be likened in their day to a mildly digestible manna which, if too highly seasoned, was wont to upset the stomach of the susceptible. The male of the species did not appear. It was a woman's magazine. But the women's magazine has evolved under a man's care. The gingerly dignity of 'dare we print it' has given way to the breathless tempo of the 20th century. (95)

He believes that now that men have risen to the forefront of editorial prowess in women's magazines, "[s]tories whizz like cars, shiny and snappy. Sensationalism rears its marcelled head. Romance blares, service hollers a helping hand" (95). It is hard to determine whether this new version of print culture is a positive or negative, but it seems his focus is on profit and success, which is solely attributed to the prowess of male editors. Beresford's

"romance" which is attributed to masculine success aligns with Jill Julius Matthews's comment that "commercial industries of popular culture" took on a "masculine form of the trope" of romance (*Dance Hall* 5), aligning it with success and progress and, it seems, men. Yet even with men taking control over women's magazines, Beresford argues, "man takes the bullets and the fair sex fires them…It boils down to the simple truth that our women are ruling us with a book of rules carefully prepared and left by chance on the kitchen safe" (95). This "rule book" is a woman's magazine. Whether Beresford is gloating over the dominance of male editors or complaining about women's power through their "rules" set out in women's magazines is unclear. While his argument seems confused at this point, he quickly steadies himself with an answer to his problem. While he acknowledges that women are influencing modern working life, as discussed above, he sharply points women back to the domestic sphere and encourages male editors of women's magazines to do the same. He agrees, "the Editors know their onions and their women," but he stresses they should "know also that in these hectic times it is essentially safer to cater to the lady primarily interested in setting her table than discussing the terrestrial manifestations beneath it" (95). His confusing critique of female roles and emphasis on her inability to be successful, apart from making men's lives difficult, seems to belie a form of anxiety, despite his insistence, via the title of the article, that his narrative is in the guise of satire. His fear goes as far as to rather nurse a toothache than visit a female dentist. Almost in a schoolboy manner, he finishes by complaining about who will now look after his home and his needs when the woman refuses to be at home. Yet his hebephrenic tone changes throughout the article, also dreamily confessing "man dreams of women as being beautiful…charming, luscious creations that stare and stare, those bright-eyed babies of Venus-like proportions, those strange girls" (36). In this infantile state (babies), women would be powerless and just stare, while the Venus-like proportions of her womanly body would offer men what they need: sexual satisfaction. This, to Beresford, should be the position of women, and then they would not challenge his

masculinity. Beresford's article was included in the first issue, along with the strict "rules" concerning the role or rejection of women. This seems to foreshadow the tone of the issues to follow. Bright-eyed babies of Venus-like proportions, illustrated as Modern Girls, offer *MAN's* male readers a fantasy escape and a way of positioning the Working Modern Girl.

As mentioned previously, the interwar period in Australia saw more women entering the workforce than ever before, with a concurrent departure from previous social mores of women living at home as dependants until they were married. During the Depression, the Working Modern Girl became an attractive and employable commodity, because employers could pay her much less than men. This caused great social debate and, as has been discussed earlier, the Modern Girl's inclusion in the workforce caused much upheaval. However, after the Depression, women had made firm inroads into the domain of work, and as Miss Business Girl affirmed in *The Mirror*, "Women have come into the world of business and affairs and—in British communities anyhow—they're not going to be shooed back into kitchen and nurseries and harems again" ("Miss Business Girl" 7 Apr. 1936, p. 47). *MAN* offered a counterblast to this argument, positioning women back in harems, back into kitchens (albeit looking like a Hollywood starlet draped in sheer lingerie). When in the workplace, she was merely there for males' visual and sexual pleasure. The trope of the over-sexualised secretary is exemplified in the cartoon below of a buxom secretary in a cage (see fig. 9). Her boss tells his bug-eyed colleague, "It's the wife's idea. She used to be my secretary." As a foil for this attractive and sexy secretary, a portrait of presumably the man's matronly looking wife sits looming above the scene, underpinning the cautionary tone.

Fig. 9."It's the Wife's idea." *MAN*, Aug. 1937, p. 65

The Modern Girl, however, seems to have no say over her confinement and nor does she seem to offer a complaint. Her stance is merely a sexy pose for the benefit, even caged, of the men. Thus, what registers in both *Upsurge* and *MAN* is an anxiety towards the shifting of traditional sex roles, and the way both texts mitigate this is to devalue women's work and over sexualise the Modern Girl to the point of caricature. Drawing on the Hollywood starlet, *MAN* exploits the Modern Girl's sexual potential attempting to defuse any threat she may pose in the realm of work or sex, and *Upsurge* defuses the political ambitions women could have by insisting they are vacuous and unable to achieve any type of intellectual awakenings.

* * *

Nationalist accounts of the histories of Australian print culture during the interwar period often fail to consider many of the texts that include the Working Modern Girl. This is also true of critiques of periodicals where nationalist magazines such as *The Bulletin* are favoured over their more commercial counterparts, such as *MAN*. Even though *The Bulletin* also used the Modern Girl as a target for nationalist concern, *MAN's* obsession with her body, particularly her overly sexualised body, overshadowed its attempt to present serious content. Indeed, her link to commercial culture, her fickleness, and her over-sexualisation have made

this figure hitherto questionable within the histories of Australian print culture in general, as this thesis has argued.

This is made clear through the comparison of *Upsurge* and *Sugar Heaven*. *Upsurge* has been overlooked for its representations of shop girls and working women, in favour of the controversy surrounding its censorship. Whereas *Sugar Heaven* has been repeatedly reprised and analysed for its portrayal of working-class women and its feminist politics. *Upsurge's* focus on the Modern Girl, her sexuality, and her link to commercial culture made the book less likely to be considered for critical analysis by some scholars, compared to those texts seen as part of the literary canon. *MAN* too, with its obvious link to commercial culture, and its transnational and cosmopolitan influences and content, has had less critical analysis compared to nationalist magazines like *The Bulletin*. Yet both *Upsurge* and *MAN* present interesting ways to trace male anxieties towards the Working Modern Girl.

MAN did cultural work exposing its readers to misogynist attitudes towards the Modern Girl, for example, as did *Upsurge*. Drawing from international magazines such as *Esquire*, *MAN* included titillating photographs and cartoons that exploited the Modern Girl's body and helped to establish her as a sexual fantasy figure and, therefore, a mostly unthreatening figure. This was especially true of the Working Modern Girl, the secretary, or the shop girl. In this way, male anxieties about the way women were encroaching on male domains of work could be mitigated. Paying attention to representation of the Modern Girl in overlooked areas of print culture of the interwar period can destabilise the boundaries imposed by nationalist histories of literature and print culture. This attention can also show interesting ways to trace the way different spheres of print culture, in this case, male writers and literature targeting men, have used the Modern Girl to mitigate fears concerning women and their role in the workplace. Another text written by a man further shows the male anxieties played out on representations of the Modern Girl. In the case of Dale Collins's *Race the Sun*, anxieties concerning the Modern Girl's mobility can be traced. In the next chapter, I

investigate the way a London-published novel represents the most quintessential Mobile Modern Girl in ways that highlight the precariousness of feminine mobility during the interwar period.

Chapter Four: The Mobile Modern Girl in *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *Race the Sun*

In the interwar period, the aviatrix featured across a range of literature as well as in the press. One such novel featuring an aviatrix is *Race the Sun* (1936) by Australian author Dale Collins. In this chapter, I read this novel as a story that thematises the number of ways the Modern Girl of Australia's newfound mobility attracted cultural anxiety, as well as fascination, in relation to a range of issues she embodied. I argue that the anxiety and fantasy associated with the Mobile Modern Girl also surrounded novels that depicted her, like Collins' *Race the Sun*, not only when they were first published but also subsequently. This chapter explores how the mobility of the Modern Girl figure represented by the aviatrix of this novel is a feature that makes her both attractive to some readers and distasteful to others. This makes fiction about her troublesome to paradigms of Australian literature that were emerging in the interwar period.

The aviatrix was a quintessential Mobile Modern Girl who was pushing social, geographical, and gender boundaries. As literary scholar Eleonora Federici argues, aviatrixes were "flappers of the sky" who were "powerful symbols of a new feminine role in a changing era" (319). As Federici also points out, Amy Johnson became a British national icon of "strength and courage" (320), who, as aviator Charles Lindberg declared, represented "a new British womanhood" (qtd. in Federici 320). Unconstrained by national borders, the aviatrix everywhere "became a metaphor for the transformation of consciousness, its liberation from the constraints of normal day to day existence" (Federici 314). The enthusiasm that awaited the likes of British Amy Johnson, New Zealander Jean Batten, and American Amelia Earhart as they landed in airfields across Australia after their record-breaking flights attests to their popularity and celebrity status. *The Australian Women's Weekly* (1933–present), like many

women's magazines of the time, featured the aviatrix not only as a cover girl, but also as a figure of fascination and aspiration.

Fig. 10. "Wings." *The Weekly*, 27 July 1935, cover

In *Race the Sun*, the female protagonist and aviatrix Kay—through the various ways her mobility signifies both possibilities and precarity—functions as both a mediator of modernity and an emblem of all that is wrong with it. She traverses the world, achieving success amongst both British high society sets and boosterish American media. Australian literary scholar Chris Lee has argued that novels featuring aviators typically "romanticise flight and glorify the pilot [and are] a product of the mytholisation of aviation, which…is a response to the threat of technology and the alienating conditions of modernity" (par. 1). Through its depiction of both female and male aviators, *Race the Sun* exemplifies some of these dynamics. In its deployment of an alluring and attractive aviatrix who falls for a roguish aviator, the novel portrays the romance and dangers associated with aviation through themes of social, geographical, and gender mobility. Collins could have had in mind the Australian pilot, Jessie "Chubbie" Miller, who was the original Australian celebrity female flyer, when

crafting his protagonist, and the trajectory of Miller's career, from Australia to Britain and then to America is mimicked by Kay Connelly's. Miller, like Kay, also mixed with the British Young Things and was followed by the pursuit of a media-focussed career in America, which also included some high-profile love interests, fluctuating fortunes, and possible criminal activities. The novel, too, has had its own transnational adventures. Collins' novel is an entertaining romp with commercial, popular, and Hollywood appeal, but it is not only that. It found success in emerging markets for new, clever, polished, and witty novels, especially overseas. Although Collins was an Australian writer, this novel was first published in London by Constable and Company (1936) and then in Toronto by the Macmillan Company of Canada (1936).

The novel later appeared in Australia as a supplement in the 6 February 1937 issue of *The Weekly*. Interestingly, the mainstream Australian women's magazine made significant editorial cuts to the original novel. As such, what emerges in *The Weekly's* supplement is a different type of Modern Girl whose sexual adventurousness is tamed in ways that may have been more palatable to some segments of the magazine's readership, or its advertisers. The novel's appearance in this abridged magazine form suggests one way that anxiety about the Mobile Modern Girl as emblamatised by the aviatrix was quelled for the mainstream domestic Australian readership. Just as Jill Julius Matthews noted, the Modern Girl became the symbol, agent, and victim of all that was perceived as wrong with the modern world (*Dance Hall* 19). In this chapter, I argue that Collins' novel thus suggests the way in which the aviatrix—as the quintessentially Mobile Modern Girl—represented both the promises of feminine mobility and its pitfalls to modern Australian audiences.

* * *

In the interwar period, Modern Girls were often depicted in motion, frequently linked to new machines and new modes of transport such as the aeroplane and car, through the "fast" lifestyle they came to represent and evoke. Canadian historian Jane Nicholas discusses the

"association between flappers and cars [and] the shape of their body" (192). In much the same way that Chris Lee understands the deployment of romance in relation to aviation helped temper technology's associations with alienation, Nicholas observes that "the relationship between women's bodies and modernity articulated a concern over the increasing speed of life and modern change" (193). "It is of little wonder," Nicholas argues, that during the interwar period in Canada, for example,

> the Modern Girl—herself an embodiment of perpetual motion—came to be a central figure. She appeared in car advertisements along with friends who were motoring for fun and adventure, and cars were frequently described in similar terms to Modern Girls and their apparel. Advertisers promised cars that had 'the streamline effect of the body,' 'conspicuous good looks,' 'long graceful lines,' and 'slender profile.' (193–94)

If motorcars driven by Modern Girls speeding down roads came to signal the increasing pace of modern life, then the Modern Girl in a flying machine came to be synonymous with all things new and the dangerous.

As argued in previous chapters, one way the Modern Girl was modern was in her penetration of the previously male domain of the workplace, and certainly the aviatrix was a Working Modern Girl. Work enabled Modern Girls to acquire an income, which as Matthews has further demonstrated, gave them money to spend on leisure culture in ways that attracted the concern and admonition of the New South Wales Board of Trade, as well as the Commonwealth Royal Commission into the Basic Wage (*Dance Hall* 68). Someone who achieved career success by becoming an aviatrix achieved the means to engage in conspicuous consumption. She was also a product of modern leisure culture. On the one hand, the Working Modern Girl could achieve independence from her parents and from the inevitable fate of marriage. She could participate in economic possibilities—that is, earn success, full liberty, agency, and freedom from the domestic realm, marriage, and maternal

expectations. On the other hand, the Modern Girl's spending money inevitably associated her with the perceived scourge of consumerism. A young woman could now experience upward economic mobility, and, consequently, social mobility; but equally she could become subject to downward social mobility and economic insecurity. Modern Girls could become victims of economic precarity, exposure to exploitation and failure, crassness and class degeneracy, and become fallen women with tainted reputations. So, while the Modern Girl presented the possibilities of social mobility, she also represented its hazards and drawbacks. The symbol of the aviatrix was, of course, a fantasy of the heights women could reach in penetrating previously male domains of work and travel, especially mechanised forms of these areas. The aviatrix figure required capital investment in her technology and success, and as such, she represented the high stakes gamble of investing in expensive female labour, which could serve as both a fantastic dream and a cautionary tale.

The Mobile Modern Girl, as emblematised by the aviatrix, was also quintessentially transnational. In terms of geographical mobility, the Modern Girl crossed spatial boundaries and was able to traverse both old and new societies in a period where Australian modernity was poised between two landscapes and timescapes—one associated with Edwardian Britain across the Indian Ocean and another associated with modern America across the Pacific Ocean. The Australian Mobile Modern Girl also embodied the anxieties and possibilities of aligning Australian culture with either of these cultural choices: anxiety about the degeneracy of the British aristocracy and the attractions of the smart set, as well as the excitement and fear associated with the emergence of American commercial power and its bold democratic experiment of the marketplace, including commodity culture and the glamour of Hollywood. After the First World War, Britain's former colonies, including Australia, were looking with anxiety and anticipation between these two geographical locales. The Mobile Modern Girl as aviatrix presented the ability to move freely between both, untethered to one single country,

during a period when the hollowness of extreme nationalism was perhaps even more resonant, and when the allure of cosmopolitanism was also coming into question.

As the Mobile Modern Girl, the aviatrix was the opposite of all that was traditional, old-world or domestic—she was free, popular, visible, and exotic. She also presented the possibilities and dangers of women's liberation—her potential to have increased agency and self-determination and the degeneracy of sexual liberation. While she attempted to 'exceed' the traditional female sexual role, both literally and symbolically, press coverage often re-emphasised her femininity, reminding the public that she was still a woman with traditional feminine attributes. *The Weekly*, for example, paid particular attention to the aviatrix's performance of femininity. By way of example, two articles exemplify this obsession. In the January 1936 issue, the magazine contains an article that emphasises Jean Batten's femininity. The article maintains that "under the skin, a woman is still a woman," and Batten's flying skills were downplayed ("The Feminine Touch" *The Weekly*, 25 Jan. 1936, p. 10). In another issue, this same emphasis reminded the reader that for Batten, "underneath it all, she is a woman, with all the emotional capacity of a woman" ("I Shall Always Fly" *The Weekly*, 24 Oct. 1936, p. 20). In focusing on the aviatrix's performance of femininity, articles such as these seem to contain the threat of her transgressions of gender norms, while still featuring her as glamorous and exciting.

The aviatrix also had the potential to become an androgynous icon whose sexuality sometimes verged on lesbianism: she often appeared happy to participate freely in a man's world, to serve as an icon of exoticism at the same time, and to engage freely in heterosexual and homosexual encounters. In many visual images, she is shown wearing make-up and is fashionably styled, but she is also almost always attired in trousers and flight gear. These images themselves represent the tensions the aviatrix presented to the public. On the one hand, she was a symbol of glamour and freedom; she was obviously in command of a machine that would take her far and wide, and she looked glamorous whilst doing it. Yet on

the other, her androgynous presentation and link to a powerful machine also presented a new feminine image that signified an encroachment on traditional male domains of work, adventure, and even war. As she came to embody both glamour and transgression, it is understandable that responses to her were ambivalent and mixed. Despite her popularity and press coverage, famous American aviatrix Amelia Earhart, for example, was notoriously considered a sexual libertine after her 20 April 1933 "date in the skies" with Eleanor Roosevelt. The pair were said to have escaped a boring dinner at the Whitehouse, sharing the cockpit in Earhart's plane on a spontaneous flight to Baltimore. Speculations continued to ensue around Earhart's lesbianism despite her marriage to American publisher George Putnam. It was this form of mobility—gender mobility and sexual liberation—that perhaps drew the most anxious responses. *Race the Sun* draws out these themes.

Race the Sun and its Racy Aviatrix

In terms of its plot, *Race the Sun* is an entertaining read that follows the career of an attractive and highly popular Australian aviatrix. As in *Jungfrau* and *Upsurge*, *Race the Sun* presents three Modern Girls. In this case, they are the Mobile Modern Girl, Kay Connelly—the aviatrix; her Australian best friend and conventional stay-at-home mother and housewife, Sylvia; and the English aristocrat and British Bright Young Thing, Lady Charmian Ponsford. This familiar triad pattern is significant in its suggestion of a set of possible archetypes between which the heroine must steer to find her own path, tragically or otherwise. Kay, the heroine of *Race the Sun*, starts out from humble beginnings as a shopgirl in a department store with her best friend Sylvia, where she is working when she meets the dashing aviator Nigel. Nigel takes her flying and instantly Kay falls in love with both Nigel and his profession. Besotted, she sleeps with him to keep him interested; yet he is dating a rich heiress, and eventually he lets Kay know he is marrying the other girl. A few weeks later, Nigel dies in a plane crash, and Kay vows to seek her revenge by becoming a better flyer than

he ever was. Rising to fame quickly and with seeming ease, Kay eventually begins to break flight records and flies to England for yet more publicity. Her main competitor for these flight records is British aviator Rex Masters: an arrogant, but attractive working-class man, who is involved in an affair with the luscious and aristocratic Charmian. Although Kay and Rex hate each other—Kay refers to him as a detested "creature" (194)—eventually they realise that an alliance will help them each achieve the financial backing they desperately need to keep flying, and so they get married in a ceremony staged for publicity. Flying together from England to Australia straight after their sham marriage ceremony, they crash somewhere in the heart of the Australian desert, fall desperately in love, and vow to never fly again. They buy an outback pub, settle down, and have children.

The two other Modern Girls in the plot serve as didactic foils to Kay, offering object lessons in the pitfalls of ambition and the perils that await a young woman who seeks to penetrate echelons of society beyond the station into which she was born. As mentioned, Kay is the central protagonist, and her two friends are Sylvia—who represents the conventional Australian girl—and Charmian—who represents the potentially decadent lifestyle of the British libertine. These two characters, like Eve and Marc in *Jungfrau*, represent opposite poles of a spectrum of social possibilities for the Modern Girl—from conservative to progressive—with Kay, much like Thea, attempting to take up the various positions in between. Yet unlike Eve, Marc, and Thea in *Jungfrau*, none of these three Modern Girls in Collins' novel has a university degree. Rather, like the protagonists in Harcourt's *Upsurge*, Kay and Sylvia come from the other end of the social spectrum and work as shopgirls in a department store—albeit in this instance in Melbourne rather than in Perth. It is Kay's meteoric rise from obscurity to fame and success, from shopgirl to covergirl, therefore, which shapes the trajectory of the plot.

The progress of Kay's career from lowly Melbourne shopgirl to a famous flyer who mixes with English aristocracy suggests that she is a symbol of female possibility in the novel, which functions as a modern Cinderella story. Kay gallops

> through the blue in a shining chariot drawn by two thousand horses tireless and invisible, the horses of a modern fairy tale. Cinderella's coach had been a mere box of glass compared with the Bat [Kay's plane]. To turn a pumpkin into a mere box of glass was nothing. To dig ore from the ground and shape it into this chariot…made the most mythical of myths probable and even ordinary. (8)

Yet this is a modern, updated version of the Cinderella tale. Rather than in a chariot, she ascends in a modern machine. Unlike the traditional fairy tale, the princess seems determined to avoid her destiny of marrying a prince. Instead, she is her own woman: "Kay Connelly," a modern "superwoman" (8). The heights of fame and glory she reaches are world class: "[s]he was famous and among the famous, not just in that village called Melbourne, but in mighty London at the heart of the world. And none of the women was better dressed or more attractive" (195). Thus, her ascent is not only social but also geographical; she is born a colonial girl in a small Australian town and eventually achieves renown in the metropolitan centre of the world. Sylvia may be the Australian conventional domestic type, and Charmian may be a British sexual vamp, but Kay is the transnational Modern Girl with celebrity, glamour, and status.

However, just like the other Australian novels of Modern Girls this thesis has explored, the Modern Girl's trajectory of ambition in *Race the Sun* is met with a fall. Like Thea in *Jungfrau*, who crashed into a Sydney ferry and dies, and Theo in *Upsurge* who crashes to her death in the rioting mob in Perth, Kay's crash is both literal and symbolic. Even though she does not perish as a result of her plane crash, the novel still dramatises the way Kay's ambitious social climb in met with a fall. Parachuting out of the falling plane and falling to earth, Kay may survive, but afterward her identity is drastically altered, her social

status changed, and her career ambitions come to die. Kay's overdetermined social mobility—her movement away and autonomy from the traditional family system and the Australian domestic sphere—seem to serve an allegorical function as a cautionary tale that dramatises both the fantasies and anxieties that the Australian Modern Girl represents.

After Kay's literal and symbolic fall, Rex Masters repositions her into a role apparently more suited to her sex and nationality, from the perspective of traditional values. Their crash in the Australian desert jolts her into taking a less dangerous and less adventurous course in life, jettisoning her career to focus instead on her domestic role as wife and mother. As Kay gushes to Rex (whom she now calls "darling" (304)), "I think it'd be nice if we could scrape together enough money to buy a little pub somewhere in the nice country…And I could run the cooking side" (306). This is an about-face from her declaration, at the height of her career, that she would never have children because she was "married to a Masterton Eagle, and that's a wholetime job" (184). After this, Kay then appears to distance herself from the Smart Set of Charmian and her British Bright Young Things, and aligns her life more clearly with her Australian girlhood friend Sylvia, back in a safe domestic space.

Reflecting on her life of ambition and competition, from this newfound life of domesticity, Kay comes to view her past "need for speed" as a kind of neurosis:

> We were both a bit cracked all the time, Rex, always going farther and faster, farther and faster. We were out of breath. We couldn't think. We'd forgotten how to think plain sort of things like we could, and yet we weren't fit to think the difficult things. (305)

By her own admission, Kay's foray into international aviation, celebrity, and the world of men's career pursuits did not suit her, and plain domestic life involving marriage to Rex and babies—like Sylvia's—is expressed, thus, as a saner lifestyle choice. Yet it was not only Kay's social mobility that is of concern in the novel. Kay is represented as potentially sexually transgressive in ways that her marriage to Rex also serves to contain. Kay's sexually

liberal thoughts play into a publicity spectacle that also questioned the femininity and sexuality of the woman flyer. In Collins' novel, Kay questions her own sexuality during several passages of interior monologue. "I don't believe I am Lesbian" (271), she avers, expressing her feeling that lesbians who wanted to take up flying "were creepy a bit. Nasty Voices. Boom! Boom! Boom!" (270). She recoils from being one herself. Yet she appears confused, finally acknowledging that, unlike traditional domestic women, her problem was "that I'm too interested in my job to have time for men" (271). But she does confirm her heterosexuality, pointing out that the gender trouble she is experiencing is not identity confusion, but instead the pressure put on women by society: "I'm a woman. That's the trouble always" (267). It is Piggy, the society columnist, who provides Kay with the solution to her problems of being a single woman without capital: marriage. As Piggy states, "that is your solution, as it always has been for women: matrimony" (237). Marriage provides Kay with the financial backing and security she needs, while also allowing her to mitigate the risk of her occupation. As a conventional marriage becomes the solution to Kay's unconventional career, the novel's plot allows the reader to engage in the fantasy of this gender-crossing figure, while also containing and refracting public anxiety about her transgressions of social and gender boundaries. Yet, as we have seen in general of the Australian aviatrix, her mobility was not just gendered and social mobility, she also evoked the promises and dangers involved in the modern age of geographical mobility. The aviatrix, as this female icon of modern mobility, was traversing other kinds of boundaries in ways that also stretched limits and invited further constraint and chastisement.

As an Australian female traveller, Kay's journey between Australia, England, and America symbolises the way in which Australian women could be participants in international modernity, but also become potentially over-influenced by new or decadent culture and ideas. On many occasions, Kay makes the journey across the Indian Ocean from Australia to England and back again, but she also crosses the Atlantic and the Pacific on her

worldwide travels. These journeys are fraught with danger. In some instances, echoing the feats of real aviators such as Jean Batten, Amy Johnson, and Amelia Earhart, the novel seems to showcase and celebrate the fact that a woman could now fly these winged technological marvels—crossing gender, class, and geographical boundaries. In other instances, the novel seems to comment negatively upon the fate of an Australian woman exposed to transnational influences such as the degeneracy of British culture and the vulgarity of American commodity culture, especially in cases where publicity, fame, and glamour affect Kay negatively.

One scene at the end of the novel succinctly outlines the decadence of the British Smart Set portrayed in the novel. Ensconced in British society life, Kay's social life in England is a swirl of cocktail lunches and champagne functions, often on the arm of British society gossip columnist Lord Midge, known as Piggy. While Kay enjoys the heady lifestyle for a time, she finally comes to reflect that this way of life has a falsity to it that threatens to extinguish her down-to-earth Australian core identity:

> We seemed like Piggy and all the rest because we went about with them, but we weren't really with them…We'd never have been with them if we hadn't been stunt flyers…We were–we were sort of modern gladiators. We risked our neck and gave them second-hand thrills, and were in the papers, and so they took us up and made a fuss over us and turned our silly heads. (305)

Momentarily forgetting her Australian values, Kay's head is "turned" by fame and career. She even goes as far as offering her body in return for funds, making, as Rex accuses, a "whore of herself" (225). When Kay finally comes to her senses and recognises these dangers, she bemoans "[g]osh…has it come to this, that a woman must sell her virtue if she would follow a career" (202). Propositioned by wealthy men, she narrowly escapes this sexual predicament by marrying Rex Masters. As a working-class Australian woman, she strays beyond her background in achieving fantastic levels of social success while bringing

upon herself economic and even sexual insecurity. Kay's marriage to Rex serves as a domestic refuge from potential danger.

The dangers Kay faces are not only from the British Smart Set. In Kay's visit to America, she is exposed to America's obsession with popular modernity, celebrity, and commodity culture. After Kay takes up the Australian media mogul's offer to deliver his magazine all over the world in a new type of plane, she arrives in New York in record time, where she is invited as a guest on a radio broadcast called "Celebrity Chat" (185). This chapter is set out in transcript form: a satirical send-up of American radio culture. The broadcast, as the chapter shows, has been made possible because of "Dixie Drops," a medication designed to alleviate dyspepsia, a form of indigestion. This link between the obsession with Kay's status as a celebrity, a commercial radio, and indigestion is a clever jab at American consumer culture. This culture is viewed as obsessed with surfaces rather than substance. As the transcript begins, the radio announcer focuses not on Kay's record-breaking flight, but on her looks:

> No doubt more of you know her already from the papers and the newsreels, because she's not easy to forget alongside that big boat of hers that's brought her from the other end of the world to New York, but I feel I'd like to tell you how she looks to me. Well, she looks just grand, and isn't she the littlest lady with the biggest nerve! Five foot nothing and every inch the right stuff. Trim and cute as they come, and listen, girls, so smart and feminine you'd think the highest she'd ever been up in the sky was the Rainbow Room to dance. (180)

What is also of note is the fact that Kay's appearance on the broadcast is an attempt to advertise an Australian, not American, magazine that she had brought over with her. The magazine is titled *Advance, Australia*, and its purpose is to showcase Australian culture to the rest of the world. Yet the broadcaster brushes aside Kay's mention of the magazine, preferring to focus on her glamorous appearance, her exciting adventures, and her status as a

single, unmarried, and by implication, available woman. Rather than an interest in other cultures, then, the broadcaster seems more interested in celebrity and popular culture, highlighting America's vapid obsession with style over substance.

Another satirical way the novel expresses perceptions about American celebrity culture is the comparison, again, between the Americans' focus on the glamorous Kay over Rex Masters. Two chapters prior to this broadcast, Rex's thoughts are revealed as he attempts to beat Kay's flight records between England and America. Emphasising the dangers of the flight toward "the fog-bound Atlantic" (177), and possibly the cultural dangers exposed in a British subject encountering the miasma of American culture, Rex makes a vow to God promising "he'd never do another spectacular flight. It's a promise, O God. They're so damn' silly. Just let me do this once, O God" (177). Following this chapter is a press release from the New York paper *America Week by Week*, with the tagline, "Is the public growing blasé about great feats of flying?" (178). Using Rex's above flight as an example, the article states, "The question seems to be answered in the affirmative by the lack of excitement over Mr. Rex Masters' magnificent lone crossing of the Atlantic from east to west" (178). The voracious public no longer finds a male aviator glamorous enough, and thus Rex's aviation feats had become boring to the American public. The society columnist Piggy understands the cycle of publicity all too well as he explains to Rex, "Who cares a whoop what flights you do or what record you break? But if you were an equally beauteous and blond damsel—oh boy! That's the whole trouble, Rexy. Flying isn't a man's job nowadays" (188). The American broadcaster's example, and the New York paper's comments cement his point. The glamorous aviatrix, by contrast, fascinated the public in ways that made her a darling of American capitalism.

Through including press releases about Kay's feats, presented as vignettes scattered as separate chapters throughout the novel, Collins also expresses masculine anxieties towards this aviatrix figure. In one press release, a jingle is included titled "No. 869 Salute to

Adventurers," by "Florence Fairweather" (17). This vignette is published before Kay and Rex make their record-breaking flight from England to Australia. It reads:

> Hail, darling plucky little Kay! Our thoughts are all with you to-day, and as you climb into the sky we women will be standing by. You mean an awful lot to us: you do a man's job without fuss; you fling a girdle round the earth, thus proving what a woman's worth. While we at home plod our dull round, you'll be some miles above the ground. (17)

The jingle sits at odds with the snappy and more eloquent narrative of the novel, and insinuates the simple, and even foolish, fodder that could be included in women's magazines, written by women and about women. While the title gestures to both Rex and Kay, only Kay is the focus of the jingle, revealing the fascination women at home directed towards the lofty aviatrix. The almost childish rhyming scheme and lack of eloquent expression implies an amateurish and frivolous imagining of the aviatrix and the gushing feminine responses to her achievements as found in women's magazines. This vignette is in direct contrast with a previous press release which details the make of the plane and its engine capacity (13), the anxieties of the Air Ministry about Kay and Rex's flight (13), the flying ability of Rex (14), and aviation terminologies regarding their flight (15). The focus on serious matters, technological descriptions of the plane and journey, and Rex suggest the readers of this press release were more masculine. And compared to the feminine frivolousness presented in the press release with the jingle, this one seemed markedly more intellectual, much like the implicit comparison the novel makes between Rex and Kay.

Through the character of Rex, however, the novel explicitly expresses masculine anxieties towards women who were transgressing traditional gendered expectations. Rex's position is that of Master—as his surname makes clear. But his tantrums towards Kay and the demands he makes of her seem childish and exaggerated. Rex accuses her of being "useless," (24). As a response to the poem in the woman's press that admired Kay for doing a "man's

job without fuss" (17), he bellows that she should "go get [herself] a husband and rear a family. That's [her] job!" (160). Reacting to his outbursts, Kay calls him a "big gasbag!" (160). Yet despite her negative reaction over his juvenile tantrums, Kay ends up doing that exact thing, becoming dutifully happy in her place as Rex's wife in country Australia. Affirming her decision, Rex declares "[y]ou seem to have got [your head] straight again" (305). And to solidify his position as her master, in a god-like fashion, he renames her Kathie. In an authoritative voice he asserts, "It suits you somehow better than Kay now I know you. 'Kay' sounds too much like a film star or someone. You're not at all like that underneath" (307). Indeed, now that she was Rex's wife, she could settle down to a working-class and domestic existence, where he confirms he is her "lord and master" (4). So, while the novel implicitly suggests masculine anxieties towards a woman encroaching on male domains of work in many of the press releases and plot points, it also explicitly articulates these through the character of Rex. When all is said and done, the novel suggests, Australian girls like Kay are far better suited to the domestic realm and traditional feminine activities than being loose in a cockpit, and fast and loose in metropolitan spaces of decadence and decay.

Thus, *Race the Sun* thematises both the glamorous fantasy and anxious responses of interwar society toward the Modern Girl aviatrix and her newfound social, geographical, and gender mobility. While it romantically presents two working-class characters making a meteoric rise to fame, it also presents the dangers associated with international publicity and fame, and social decadence. In this way, Collins' own satirical novel appears to take a position of ambivalence: one romanticising aviatrixes and their adventurous feats and anxiously chastising these transgressive women. Ultimately, the novel does not provide a stable answer to the question it evokes about the Mobile Modern Girl: is she an image of modern possibility, or a symbol of all that is wrong with the modern world? Even though the novel is an entertaining read, and its Modern Girls provide a titillating portrayal of modern femininity, the ambiguity in its treatment of Kay both as a symbol of fantasy and anxiety

means it inconclusively celebrates and castigates the fantasies of modernity she emblematises. The mixed reception of *Race the Sun* also reflects the various fantasies and fears that accompanied the figure of the Modern Girl aviatrix in Australia.

Race the Sun's Reception, Precarious Position, and Dismissal

Like *Jungfrau* and *Upsurge*, *Race the Sun* received mixed reviews in Australian newspapers and periodicals in its time. Collins' former employer, the Melbourne *Herald*, for example, called the novel "an amusing account of what fame demands of its victims," and noted that Collins' "dialogue, crisp and witty—sometimes audaciously so—is set against a very cleverly described background of certain circles of English social life" ("New Novel by Dale Collins" *Herald*, 17 Dec. 1936, p. 42). This review understands the novel as a clever satirical send-up of the interwar smart set in Britain, and of the vacuousness of the ascendant culture of fame and publicity deriving from Hollywood and America more generally. Another reviewer, by contrast, dismisses Collins' writing as mere fantasy, a commercial fantasy of modern consumer leisure culture, where the novelist "appears to be all up in the clouds. The story certainly deals with aviation, but the author shows a pronounced disinclination to come back to earth and face realities" (Hanley *The Labor Daily*, 17 Dec. 1936, p. 6). The review finishes with a scathing, "[i]t would be difficult to find a more worthless and materialistic bunch of persons than the characters Collins has assembled" (6). Significantly for this study, *The Labor Daily* reviewer's particular focus is on Kay, whom he labels "a particularly vicious and worthless piece of femininity…she is the replete materialistic, vulgar and 'gold-digging' type of modern flapper" (6). The review is a revealing criticism, given that Rex Masters seems to "gold-dig" more successfully and more often than Kay. For an ostensibly progressive and socialist publication, *The Labor Daily*, like Harcourt's *Upsurge*, is one that should champion the social progressions women were making in interwar society. Yet what seems to be an

issue for *The Labor Daily* is the glamour, commercialism, and capitalism Kay represents in her alliance with the ascendance of conspicuous consumption and entertainment culture.

The Labor Daily's focus on the vulgarities of the Modern Girl in the novel also registers masculine anxieties towards modern women, in the same vein as *Upsurge*. *Upsurge* highlights male anxieties about women's advancement and participation in commercial culture, and *The Labor Daily's* prejudiced assessment of Kay registers the same. *Race the Sun* clearly depicts Rex having a longstanding affair with Charmian, and she (and by default her rich aristocratic husband) pays for all his flight training, his new plane, and his continued employment. Kay obtains her pilot's licence and first plane by working hard in a department store as a shopgirl. And while she does face the confronting possibility of having to sell her body to secure funds, she does not go through with it. Furthermore, Kay's "vulgarity" is also well and truly overshadowed by that of the British Bright Young Thing, Charmian, who engages in multiple affairs, and is by no means coy when it comes to sex. The review then—in a newspaper that was an organ of the progressive Australian Labor Party—could be an example of how the Modern Girl, even an imagined one in a novel, was a figure of criticism across the political spectrum and the spectrum of print culture.

By contrast, the reviewer at *The Mirror* describes Kay simply as "an intrepid Australian girl" (Franziska, Review of *Race the Sun*. 29 Dec. 1936, p. 43). The reviewer focuses on her Australian attributes rather than her troublesome Modern Girl ones. It was not, she went on, "clear whether Dale Collins intended *Race the Sun* to be an aeronautical comedy or a satire on publicity for notables" (43). The reviewer then concedes that the novel will "pass an hour or two pleasantly" (43). Addressing the female readership explicitly, she concludes by saying, "take heart, romantic readers, the finale is anything but hateful" (43). As has been discussed in the chapter on *The Mirror*, this review merely reflects the editorial remit and target audience of the publication. While *The Mirror,* like *The Weekly*, was responding to shifting interwar cultural values, it was still a magazine which curated modernity in such a way as to appease a certain type of readership that comprised of both mothers and daughters in the same household. Moreover, the criticisms in these reviews

indicate the tenuous position *Race the Sun* took up in the Australian print culture of its day: a position as tenuous as the Modern Girl herself—at once adored and reviled. The novel being discussed as having slick and witty narratives, and featuring romance and scenes representing international culture, positions it in a category which itself was a contentious one during the interwar period: middlebrow.

Arguably, rather than being securely literary or firmly commercial, Collins' novel fits into a middlebrow categorisation, particularly the kind emerging from Britain and America at this time. While it is obvious *Race the Sun* contains romance, the romance is not sentimental or gushy. The novel is also not formally challenging compared to novels authored by Collins' contemporaries such Evelyn Waugh or P. G. Wodehouse, for example, whose works found lasting fame in ways that escaped Collins'. Yet Collins' witty, polished surfaces often concealed hidden depths of social commentary. David Carter notes how the changes in the reading public with which the Australian middlebrow came to be assigned perhaps suggests the way its association with the "fiction industry" made this class of novel particularly unappealing to the securely literary sets that were emerging in Australia then:

> Middlebrow culture was named most insistently in relation to the novel and to changes in the 'fiction industry' institutionalised in the 1920s around the growth of mid-range fiction, the rise of the literary bestseller, and the emergence of a new class of readers comprising an expanded *literary* reading public. (*Always* 130)

Certainly, the varied reviews of *Race the Sun* show that different classes of readers are discernible across the variety of print publications reviewing books in Australia. And while some readerships recognised the material as clever and noteworthy, enough so that it was included in a highly popular magazine such as *The Weekly*, others perceived elements of it as distasteful or merely entertaining.

While it is difficult to determine if *Race the Sun* was a literary bestseller, its inclusion as a supplement in *The Weekly* suggests it was well read. As an adventure story which offered its readers snappy dialogue and transnational scenes and situations, it presented modernity in

appealing ways. *The Weekly's* readership was indeed eager for adventure stories, like *Race the Sun*. In one vignette included in a 1937 issue, *The Weekly* responds to its readers who have written in exclaiming, "Why don't you give us some more Sabatini stories?" ("Captain Blood Returns" *The Weekly*, 30 Jan.1937, p. 10). *Captain Blood* (1922) by Rafael Sabatini was a swashbuckling and romantic historical tale of pirates in the Caribbean, and like *Race the Sun*, was included as a free novel supplement in the magazine. The themes of justice, slavery, retribution, and romance are evident in the novel, and are ones which fit into a middlebrow category where entertainment and edification collide.

David Carter makes the case that, at this time in Australia, culture from overseas was not always received as cultural imperialism or belatedness, but the opposite was true in many forms of print culture. *The Weekly's* insistence upon including modern and popular fiction is an example of Carter's argument. The editorial responds to the demands of the reader remarked on earlier, explaining that "Sabatini himself has answered the request by writing a series of short stories detailing further with the exploits of the redoubtable Captain Blood, pirate, figure of romance and glamorous adventurer" (10), and *The Weekly* has obtained these copies for their readers. In this way, in its weekly periodicity that kept readers up to date with the latest, *The Weekly* was informing its readers that it was current in terms of transnational modernity and modern works of fiction. Also responding to the readers' requests, *The Weekly* informs that other writers "of the calibre of Sabatini" (10) will also be included in upcoming issues. It also mentions Dale Collins' *Race the Sun* (10). Collins, similarly to Sabatini, sold the rights of *Race the Sun* to MGM in Hollywood, further linking the novel with overseas success. For some class of readers, especially those adamant about focusing Australia's cultural taste on securely Australian topics, this success alone no doubt linked Collins with international contagion. Yet Australians were reading novels with international themes and settings, and, as the readers of *The Weekly* have shown, they were hungry for these.

While it is easy to ascertain that *Race the Sun* was well read in Australia—through *The Weekly's* inclusion as a supplement—the disappearance of this novel, and books like it, from histories of Australian literature is telling. While the Sabatini story was a backward-

looking historical romance, Collins' story is distinctly modern with a Modern Girl as his protagonist, and even futuristic. It provided wider horizons to its reader than the kind of "outback-and-blackened-billy tradition" that Dulcie Deamer railed against in as early as 1921 when she protested that her overseas-set romances were inscrutable to Australia's cultural curators (*Sea Coast* Deamer qtd. in Kirkpatrick 95). Deamer's complaint registers the way cultural elites were focusing on works from the Australian soil, and that middlebrow fiction, international settings, and works containing glamorous themes were precariously positioned in terms of Australian literature.

The importance of P. R. Stephensen's work in building an Australian national literary culture cannot be overstated here. Carter notes that *The Foundations of Culture in Australia* was an "important twentieth century piece" (*Always* 5) which played a key role in the creation of the modern form of "literary nationalism" in Australia (22). Stephensen criticised several Australian writers and intellectuals who had moved to England and were writing about transnational subjects intermingled with Australian themes. Of those he criticised, Dale Collins was a named subject of his derision, particularly because of his acceptance and appearing advocacy of a transnational lifestyle. As Stephensen states, there was "a whole colony of them [writers and intellectuals], living in England, or longing for England: Jack McLaren, Dale Collins, Norman Haire…" (122). Stephensen goes on to complain,

> [i]f these novelists, professors, artists, and scholars had remained in Australia, had resisted the blandishments of the shipping advertisements, what a redoubtable body of literature, learning, art, and scholarship would by now be associated with the name of Australia! Had these people remained here, and dealt with the realities of Australia, instead of with the fantasies of European glamour and European antiquity, they would with ease have created a body of Australian literature which, added to that we already possess, would by now have been enough to make Australia's name and quality resound as one of the most highly cultivated and civilised nations upon the earth. (123)

Stephensen rejected expatriate writers such as Collins, as well as writers who wrote of transnational subjects—such as the subjects included in *Race the Sun* and who emblematised in particular the Mobile Modern Girl as aviatrix, with her associations with consumer culture, leisured lifestyles, and mobility. This meant that Collins was relegated to the status of second-rate writer. It also brandished him with the criticism of being 'unAustralian'—with his 'head in the clouds' rather than a true writer who focused on Australian realities.

P. R. Stephensen's manifesto, *The Foundations of Culture in Australia* (1935–36), makes evident the forces that would conspire against making a space for a book like Dale Collins' in the Australian canon. As a manifesto, it circulated in the age of modernist manifestos of all kinds, even if it reviled European modernism as decadence. Equally, it reviled American culture as another kind of commercial decadence, making a particular target of the slick, vapid magazine story. Stephensen's manifesto averred that true literature in Australia should be truly Australian, devoted entirely to promoting a distinct Australian literary tradition in which "we should become actively conscious of our own history, literature, and traditions, *in order to develop an adequate sense of our own destiny and national character*" (91, italics in original). Stephensen was actively protesting other cultural influences that could shape an Australian destiny; instead, he advocated a romantic ideal of an Australian national literary culture built solely from local material and which exclusively focused on local themes. Stephensen particularly condemns British and American influences as exogenous to Australian literature, which threatened to make Australia a derivative culture. Moreover, the emerging culture industries—related to the cult of the bestseller and the Hollywood film—were prime sources of cultural contagion in his eyes. As he noted, "the predominance in Australia of overseas culture-propaganda is a result primarily of superior mechanics of marketing and superior salesmanship by the culture-importers and distributors" (105). What Stephensen's manifesto was calling for was an authentic Australian literary tradition devoid of transnational influences and one that would showcase the realities of the Australian condition, uncontaminated by the market. What becomes ironic here is that Collins' novel is in fact satirical in its portrayal of these very same influences and markets,

while also creating an enjoyable, entertaining, clever Australian novel with overseas settings. And yet, this novel, it would appear, like the Modern Girl herself in Australia, would become a victim of these nationalist forces.

While I am not making claims for Collins' novel to be re-read in terms of its literary merit, I am making an argument that novels that trouble conceptions of what is good Australian literature deserve to have a place in Australian literary history, and, at least in part, account for the absence of portraits of the Modern Girl in the Australian story. The Modern Girl is transnational, glamorous, and certainly marketable. She and stories about her existed in Australia and deserve to be known. I also suggest that the way novels such as Collins' have been subsequently dismissed from the Australian canon can also be linked to the way the Modern Girl has been sidelined from the cultural historiography and literary history of Australia. Clever, witty novels that took up transnational themes like *Race the Sun* may have fit with emerging understandings of what was culturally acceptable for an emerging British or American middlebrow audience, and even for some segments of the Australian public. However, they—like the Modern Girl that was their subject—were indeed troublesome for the project of conceptualising authentic Australian literature and culture.

Some of the clues as to what happened to the Modern Girl in Australia can be found in her traces in print culture itself. Even though *The Weekly* included *Race the Sun* as a supplement, for whatever reason—perhaps the risk of losing circulation registration for subscriptions with the GPO, the risk of losing advertisers, or the risk of losing some of their more conservative or older audience—the editors also appear to have understood the troubling nature of both the Modern Girl and novels that featured her. *The Weekly* markedly moderated the novel when it abridged it as a supplement, curating the presentation of the Modern Girl in such a way as to make her more palatable to a domestic Australian readership. In the last section of this chapter, I compare the London-published novel with *The Weekly's* supplement to show how the Mobile Modern Girl was presented for an Australian audience in ways that curtailed her sexual adventurousness.

The Very Popular *Australian Women's Weekly*

The Weekly was not a conservative magazine, nor was it entirely progressive. Like many magazines of the period, it emerged when general household magazines like *The Bulletin* were beginning to look tired, and new, female readerships wished for their own publications. In 1933 R. C. Packer and George Warnecke, under the name of Consolidated Press, established *The Weekly*. At first the magazine was only available in New South Wales, but it soon became so successful that in 1936 its distribution expanded to other states, and by 1937 a specific edition was printed for New Zealand. It was sold at newsstands and as well by postal subscription. At the end of the 1930s, *The Weekly* boasted a circulation of 445,000 (Audited Media Association of Australia) positioning it as one of Australia's leading women's magazines. According to Deborah Thomas and Kristie Clements, for the first fifty years of its publication, it was "the highest selling magazine, per capita, in the world" (vii). The popularity of the magazine meant its agenda was readily consumed by a large population of the Australian reading public. Warnecke was editor-in-chief until 1938 when Alice Jackson, who had worked with Warnecke from the beginning of the publication, took over.

According to Pat Buckridge, Warnecke and Jackson had different political inclinations, and this contributed to a tonal split in the publication. "One side of the *Weekly's* perspective is continuous with the politically progressive, culturally sophisticated, democratic-nationalist attitudes to things like censorship, public libraries, women's rights, and Australian literature," Buckridge argues, "while [t]he other side, at its worst, is socially conservative, morally prudish, culturally naïve, and deeply anglophile" ("Good Reading" 34). According to Buckridge, Warnecke's progressive approach was evident in the editorial content and some other articles, and the conservative aspects of the magazine were, then, attributed to Jackson's influence ("The *Women's Weekly*" 362). Jackson's previous experience and achievements, however, suggest a woman who was less conventional than Buckridge suggests.

Jackson was a prominent writer for several Australian magazines, such as the *Triad* and *Smith's Weekly*, employed to report on women's issues. George Blaikie labelled her one of the "bright women…[who] promptly declared that they would sick up if they had to write social pap, and set about outwriting the male journalists on every subject anyone cared to name" (Radi, qtd. in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*). The tonal split, therefore, was perhaps more complicated than Buckridge's assessment of it conveys. What does come through when reading across issues of the magazine throughout the 1930s is an anxious interaction with the complexities of modernity. The magazine profited from these, while also warning women against embracing modernity too wholeheartedly.

The Weekly offered its readers a variety of articles on budgeting, books, health, childcare, as well as including comics, advice, readers' comments, free patterns, serial fiction, and supplementary free fiction additions, such as *Race the Sun*. Further, as already stated, *The Weekly's* interest went beyond Australian shores. It kept women up to date with the latest international trends and fashions, for example, and it also reported on Hollywood celebrities and other international figures of interest. As Deborah Thomas and Kristie Clements point out, "[t]he clothes, hats and hairdos that appeared in the pages of *The Australian Women's Weekly* in the early 1930s often imitated the style of American socialite Wallis Simpson—a leading trendsetter who would later become the Duchess of Windsor" (5). The magazine also included ways for its readers to interact with the magazine, through letters to the editor and opinion pieces. Thus, *The Weekly* offered women opportunities to express their opinions, style themselves in internationally modern ways, be informed of the latest beauty products and regimes, escape into fiction, keep up to date with Hollywood news, and be advised on how to become a better housewife. Advice was also even given to women seeking jobs, even new and glamorous jobs such as those in the aviation sector. The focus was, however, predominantly domestic, and the magazine was aimed toward a lower middle-class feminine readership.

Advertising affirms this. Numerous companies and firms invested in advertising through the magazine, knowing it had such a large circulation. "As an advertising medium,"

Denis O'Brien notes, "it had no equal. Few national advertisers conceived a campaign without first thinking of The Weekly [sic] and the vast market it commanded" (6). This market was lower middle-class with income to spend on the products shown in the pages of the magazine. An advertisement for Kellogg's breakfast cereal, for example, shows a respectable family gathered around the table ("Kellogg's" *The Weekly*, 6 Feb. 1937, p. 26), and another for W. W. Campbell, a large furniture store in Sydney, shows attractive brides furnishing their homes with the products Campbell's offers ("New Year Weddings" *The Weekly*, 6 Feb. p. 31). Taking inventory of the types of advertisements featured in one issue of the magazine also confirms the overwhelming majority pitted toward a feminine middle-class readership. In the issue of 6 February 1937, for example, there are one hundred and sixteen advertisements: 59% of these cater to the domestic scene and family healthcare, 20% are specifically for women's cosmetics or bodily care, 8% for leisure, 4% for women's fashion, 3% for travel, 1% for careers for women, and less than 1% for careers for men. Therefore, the target readership, as shown by the advertising, was the woman in the domestic sphere. For this woman, travel was largely a fantasy.

While advertisements were mostly aimed at the domestic market, the Modern Girl was the visual star across its pages. On the covers of fifty-one issues in 1937, for example, forty-two include a fashionable and attractive Modern Girl, and only one shows a housewife in her kitchen. Many of these cover images show a very glamorous and fashionable Modern Girl. On the cover of 16 October 1937, for example, a Modern Girl in a scanty (for the time) bathing suit lounges on the beach in front of a male. Her make-up is fresh, and she has bright red lips. Her body language is open, inviting, and bold, and her admirer is appreciative, smiling, and smoking (see fig. 11).

Fig. 11. *The Weekly*, 16 Oct. 1937, cover

On another cover, a Modern Girl sits on a bench with her long bare legs clad in short white shorts; her make-up is done, and her lips are bright red. Her scarlet top and coat match her lips, and her tennis racket is positioned near her feet (*The Weekly*, 16 Jan.1937, cover). Both Modern Girls are carefree, relaxed, and engaged in leisure. By comparison, the only housewife pictured on a cover for 1937 is in her kitchen looking despairingly at a burnt pie. She is crouching down to pull the scorched item from the oven. Her hair is pulled tightly in a bun, and she is wearing an apron and a watch. This image is far from the other glamorous ones showing attractive, carefree, and happy Modern Girls with fashionable bob hairdos, trendy outfits, and heavily made-up faces. In 1937 alone, housewifery and the domestic scene, according to the narrative arc of the covers, does not seem as appealing as a life of leisure, of which the Modern Girl is front and centre. While this complicates the domestic ideal the magazine seemed to maintain, it also shows the visual appeal of the Modern Girl and how she was used to sell products and fantasies, even magazines themselves. This could represent the tonal split Buckridge was arguing. However, the Modern Girl was ostensibly a progressive figure, and her over-abundant usage in the magazine also suggests an acceptance of cultural shifts happening during this period.

A notable article in an early 1930s issue showcases the way the magazine was progressively interacting with social themes that concerned women. The article is titled "Equal Social Rights for Sexes" and discusses the conference findings for the Women's Voters Federation of Australia ("Equal Rights" *The Weekly*, 10 Jun. 1933, front cover). This article was included on the front cover of the very first issue, highlighting the progressive tone of the newly established magazine. From its very first issue, it was not only catering to the housewife, but was also advocating a woman's right to work and championing alongside women to obtain the same social rights as men. The article discussed how numerous topics were debated during the conference, including equal pay, equal opportunities, equal guardianship of children, and "that all laws, measures, or regulations that deal with public morals should be framed so as not to differentiate between the sexes" (front cover).

These articles and features demonstrate the way *The Weekly* was significantly interacting with modern, complex topics. Yet alongside the article on "Equal Rights" are photographs of "What Smart Sydney Women are Wearing" which show Modern Girls in fashionable dress, advertisements for face creams, and vignettes about upcoming free knitting patterns to outfit babies and children (*The Weekly* 10 Jun. 1933, front cover). This cover page, in the very first issue of the magazine, therefore, showcases the comprehensive topics the magazine intended to cover and the way it sought to be of interest to a wide range of imagined readerships. Not only were women's interests served in a broad way—in social aspects and work, and in the domestic sphere—but also the magazine was progressive in recognising women as an important part of print culture with their own needs, in work and at home. The magazine, therefore, interacts with the interwar period in more complex and nuanced ways than being one which was either progressive or conservative in its editorial remit, as the following discussion of *Race the Sun* will show.

The Weekly's Moderated Version of the Racy Aviatrix

The way the magazine approached the Modern Girl aviatrix is another way through which to explore the complexities of print culture in Australia, and its responses to modern women.

While on one hand *The Weekly* promoted the social and cultural mobility of women through travel and work, on the other, it understood the cultural values of its readership and the limits of these. It is unsurprising, then, that *The Weekly* made editorial cuts to the original version of *Race the Sun*, instead shaping the aviatrix in ways that made her behaviour acceptable, her thinking decent, her speech polite, and her sexuality prudish and even non-existent. The emphasis in Collins' novel was very much on the pitfalls of social mobility and the way women were traversing boundaries, spatially, symbolically, and sexually. What emerges in *The Weekly's* version is an image of a good Australian Girl and a particular de-emphasis on the celebrity status, social and career aspirations, transnationalism, and liberated sexuality of Collins' Mobile Modern Girl. Certainly, the magazine's inclusion of *Race the Sun* showed that it cannily understood the selling power of this fantasy figure of modern female mobility. Even so, the editorial cuts made in the abridgement reflect the tensions the aviatrix presented to a periodical aimed at an imagined middle-class Australian readership with family values and mores. What follows is a brief discussion on the main editorial cuts *The Weekly* made to Collins's version of *Race the Sun*. Three main themes were distinctly moderated in the supplement, and all three were focused on Kay's social, geographical, and gender mobility.

In *The Weekly's* version of *Race the Sun* (6 Feb. 1937, supplement) Kay's social mobility was not as meteoric as in the London-published novel, and the distinction between Sylvia and Kay is not as pronounced. The novel includes two pages detailing Kay's social rise from her job as a shopgirl at "Samuelson's" (151) to her new and exciting job as an aviatrix. Sylvia reasons, "Lord knows how far you'll go or where you'll end up" (151), and Kay affirms her, maintaining that when she is flying "the troubles of the silly old world are left behind. The only thing I hate is having to come down to earth again" (152). The discussion the girls have signals the new social distance between the two, with Sylvia as the earth-bound and Melbourne-based observer to Kay's lofty new position in locales far from home. Yet *The Weekly* omits this example of Kay's social mobility and her thoughts on such, cutting not just a few passages, but whole pages detailing this new social position. In the novel, for example, Kay comes home to Melbourne after one of her record-breaking flights and takes Sylvia out

for lunch at a fancy restaurant. The novel clearly emphasises the difference between the two women, once Kay had become famous. Sylvia admits that now Kay

> knew what she wanted, and knew she could get it. If she didn't there'd be trouble. You could tell that from her manner with these alarming waiters. She gave them orders as if they were nobody. Sylvia through it must be grand to be like that. Poised, sure, unafraid. It was wonderful how Kathie had got on, just by determination. It showed what a girl could do, even if she started behind the glove counter. If Kathie had been loveable, Kay was someone to worship. (149)

This passage shows the social disparities between Sylvia and Kay and the changes in Kay's identity and confidence. Kay was fearless and socially in control now that she was famous and with economic resources, and Sylvia was an admiring observer of Kay from the firm standpoint of her ordinary Australian lower middle-class life. Yet the supplement removes the two women's discussions about these changes. In this way, the distinctions between the Australian and very domestic Sylvia compared to the career-focused and unafraid transnational Kay are minimised.

Given the widespread anxieties regarding Australian women's social place in the interwar period, analysing the way *The Weekly* moderated Kay's social position provides an insight into which topics were deemed acceptable or praiseworthy and which were downplayed. The way the magazine downplayed the novel's portrayals of the decadence of the British Smart Set and diminished the tone of accusation in Collins' satire of American celebrity culture, also suggests that the magazine understood the way it offered its readers the positive affordance of access to international modernity. Rather than portraying the British Smart Set as decadent, and Charmian as a British Bright Young Thing, the supplement presents a different version of Collins's London set with its modern culture and values similarly embracing American celebrity culture. Much of the content *The Weekly* omitted was concentrated on dialogue centred around the social columnist, Piggy, Lord Ponsford, and Charmian. In the novel, an entire chapter details Piggy bantering with Rex while playing

billiards. Piggy mentions he had watched Chekhov's play *Cherry Orchard* (224), had read Noel Coward's novels (224) and American smutty books, and had seen American films (223). The two men also discuss whores and loose women (225). These types of women are very much aligned with aviatrixes; Rex points out to Piggy that "if [Kay] cares to make a whore of herself" he does not care (225). The chapter covers nine pages, yet *The Weekly* cuts this bantering to a few paragraphs, reducing the overseas allusions and anchoring the novel more to its domestic setting, while still portraying overseas lifestyles as glamorous, though not dangerously so.

The supplement's version merely keeps in the men's discussions on the place of aviators in modernity compared to aviatrixes; the innuendo about the aviatrix as a loose woman is completely omitted. Celebrity and literary socialites mixing in London clubs and places of high society are also cut from the supplement. These omissions include mentions of H. G Wells and the film director Alfred Hitchcock (194), and famous movie stars such as Elisabeth Bergner (194), Douglas Fairbanks (199), and Conrad Veidt (194). When listing several American and British celebrities, the supplement only notes that Kay "was as well-known as any of them. Just as many people looked at their table as at any in the room" (194–95). The pronoun "them" is left without antecedents, so *The Weekly* reader must fill in the blanks using their own imagination. In the same way *Race the Sun* notes that Sylvia would imagine Kay's friends as "great figures seen on the screen and great names read in print" (195 novel, 12 supplement), the supplement leaves open the question of which characters Kay was mixing with. So, instead of celebrating the likes of British Noel Coward—a known homosexual—or American Douglas Fairbanks—with his roughish reputation as a ladies' man—*The Weekly* lets its readers come up with their own imaginings of who could be great—presumably celebrities who graced the pages of the magazine in the year and place it came out. Yet the supplement does include how Kay "was famous and among the famous, not just in that village called Melbourne, but in mighty London at the heart of the world" (15). In this way, Kay was the only celebrity in focus, and her link to so-called "loose" women, the decadence of the British Smart Set, and the crassness of American celebrity culture that

Collin's novel makes clear is cut. Kay is, thus, contained in the supplement. All aspects of her mobility are restrained, and she emerges instead as a good Australian Girl whose fame is untainted by transnational contagion.

British decadence and its focus on sex were also moderated in *The Weekly's* version. Instead, what is presented is more of a respectable English society, imagined by a middle-class Australian readership. Charmian's vampish sexuality is absent from *The Weekly's* version, and her aristocratic position emerges as one of respectability, not debauchery. One of the largest text cuts occurs when Charmian is discussing her sexual relationship with Rex and other men. In the novel, Charmian's sexuality and views on sex are given precedence, while the supplement omits many pages of her libertine opinions. In the supplement, Rex's career ambitions are instead the focus of the few paragraphs included in the scene in which Charmian explains to Rex that she only wants to be with him for sex. Charmian's desires are all cut, and Rex has most of the dialogue. Because of these cuts, rather than the climax of this chapter detailing Charmian's insistence that she does not "want to wash my own hair, and I don't want to wear hideous clothes and I don't want to get ugly and lined and hag-ridden. I tell you there isn't a man on earth worth doing those things for" (136), the climax in the supplement is where Rex claims, "I've made up my mind [to become a pilot]" (9), and that "I've got to take charge now…I'm going to do my he-man stuff now, little Charmian" (10). Charmian's sexual prowess and her agency in choosing the terms of her relationships are reduced. In the supplement, she is a diminutive female under the control of a male. The novel also shows Rex remonstrating that he "thought we were great lovers, like there are in poetry, like you read about, and all the time you were just a bored wife, having some fun on the side with her young chauffeur whom she'd taken on just for that purpose" (138–39). The supplement omits this sentence. In *The Weekly's* version, the focus is on Charmian's position as an aristocrat, where she tries to explain to Rex that "I'm Lady Ponsford, which sounds snobbish, but Heaven knows I don't mean it that way. What I do mean is I've certain responsibilities as a result" (10). Thus, in *The Weekly's* version, the decadence of the British set is downplayed and reduced to inconsequential mentions. The reader of this version is

presented with an English scene which still could hint at the liberties afforded by the aristocracy, but does not detail and make this explicit. But it was not only Charmian's explicit sexuality that was omitted from the supplement.

All mentions of all three women's sexuality are omitted, including passages to do with Sylvia's pregnancy. While the novel maintains Sylvia's naivety by not including any discussions on her sex life with Fred, her pregnancies show that Sylvia did have sex. What is striking about *The Weekly's* editorial cuts is the extent it goes to remove any references to Sylvia's pregnancies, or her having any babies at all. The novel often has Sylvia mentioning her love for her baby Kathleen (150), who was named after Kay herself, but the supplement removes these mentions. In the novel, Sylvia tells Kay, "I'm so happy I could cry sometimes…It's just perfect. And now that we've little Kathleen it's more than perfect. How could it be more than perfect?" (150). By comparison, *The Weekly's* version states, "I'm so happy I could cry sometimes. It's just perfect. Of course Kay, we're only happy in a quiet sort of way" (11). Indeed, Sylvia's life was so quiet that according to *The Weekly* they did not even have sex. Given that *The Weekly* was aimed at a predominantly domestic middle-class reader, including, of course, mothers, it is puzzling why even this mention of Sylvia's pregnancies and babies would be removed. Yet what is evident is the way *The Weekly* removed all mentions of the female protagonists' sexuality—explicitly or implicitly.

Another large portion of editorial cuts *The Weekly* made to Collins' novel were to do with Kay's gender mobility: that is, her increased sexual agency, self-determination, and the way she attempted to exceed the traditional female role. While the novel details the titillating aspects of Kay's sexual behaviour, preferring these to Kay's aviation prowess, *The Weekly* omits these. In this sense, Kay becomes not a sexual object, but one who experiments with a career, albeit rather briefly, and with a diminished fervour compared to the novel. Where the novel highlights Kay's choice of sexy underwear and the sexual feelings she gets when flying, for example, *The Weekly* removes all this content. In the novel, Kay's very first flight is linked to her first sexual experience, with Nigel caressing her and causing her body to respond sexually. Kay's "heart thumped against the blue brassier which matched her panties,"

the novel explains; "[s]omehow that had seemed only right, for Nigel and everything…He slid his hand up her bare leg. She tingled" (38). The climax of the flight is linked to a sexual climax. *The Weekly*, however, leaves her first flight experience as only two small paragraphs, and has Kay merely as a silent observer whose strongest emotion was expressed by how "tears ran down her cheeks" (4). The novel shows that Kay and Nigel's relationship included sexual activity, beginning with their first flight and ending with Kay lying to Nigel about being pregnant in order to keep him. *The Weekly*, however, reduces this relationship to include only "flying, dancing, kissing" (5), activities which were also included in many of the serials and other articles in the magazine's pages and would not have been unsettling for its female readership.

Rather than including Kay's sexual encounters, *The Weekly*, unsurprisingly, focuses on her performance of femininity, in much the same way the articles on Jean Batten also did. In the novel, it was not only Kay's first flight that aligned with her sexual awakening and experiences. When Kay and Rex lift off in their new plane, for example, Collins notes the physical feelings she has in her body, where she "felt a twitch in her groins" (4), and that this was a "climax in her life" (4), where she was one with the "throbbing creature with wings" (5). Instead of the obvious sexual connotations of this "dainty bride" riding a "roaring monster" (4), the emphasis in *The Weekly* was on Kay's appearance as she self-consciously "patted her sleek dark hair neatly into place…pity she wasn't blonde and fluffy…She'd always thought that" (2). Rather than her body reacting sexually in the supplement, what is a focus is Kay experiencing anxiety, where her "nails bit into her palms. Her nails were scarlet. They had to be, just as her eyebrows had to be plucked and her mouth a Cupid's bow" (2). The novel repeats the use of scarlet in order to symbolise her status as a tainted woman, whereas *The Weekly's* version includes only the one mention of her scarlet nail polish. Omitting the sexual innuendoes and references, *The Weekly's* version, then, has a distinct focus on Kay's performance of femininity. This would be appropriate entertainment for a middle-class readership, interested in fashion, romance (genteelly moderated), and glamour.

The Weekly, although enamoured with the figure of the aviatrix, needed to moderate its presentation of the Mobile Modern Girl Kay to convey her as a good Australian girl and less like the sexual and career-driven aviatrix of Collins's novel. In emphasising the target readership of this magazine, Denis O'Brien explains, "The Weekly [sic] [was] part of the national ethos, standing squarely in the Australian middle-ground as one of the strongest influences in cultivation of middle-class standards and values" (10). Indeed, *The Weekly's* large circulation and reputation as being a strong influence over mainstream Australian female readers speaks to the dramatic power it held over this audience. It also accounts, perhaps, for some of the forces at work in the way it both helped shape and reflect middle-class Australian feminine values, while still exposing this readership to a tamed fantasy of the Modern Girl with which it was so enamoured. The content that *The Weekly* omits from Collins' novel reflects the way female sexuality, desire, and agency needed to be shaped into a palatable format, one which the largely middle-class readership of *The Weekly* would consider appropriate. Instead of a sassy Modern Girl figure who explored her sexuality, pushed career boundaries, and experienced newfound freedoms, the Kay in *The Weekly's* supplement was distinctly Australian working-class, naïve, and demure. Yet while critics, such as Pat Buckridge, maintain that *The Weekly's* readership was prudish and often snobbish, the inclusion of a novel that did present career women making inroads on male domains also registers the way Australian magazine publishers like *The Weekly* were responding to various cultural shifts in interwar society, albeit moderated. Women's mobility, as discussed, was increasing in this period, alongside their access to income, travel, and technology. While *The Weekly* was responding to these shifts, it did so in a way that still promoted the idea and practice of what constitutes good taste, good reading, and good womanhood for its segment of readers, advertisers, and other onlookers. A comparison between Collins' novel and *The Weekly's* supplement offers a way to explore just how this preoccupation with "good," "Australian," and "womanhood" operates between its well-filled pages.

The examples of the editorial cuts *The Weekly* made to a novel—which originally offered its readers a tantalising and controversial discussion on women's newfound social, geographical, and gender mobility—highlight the way a successful mainstream women's magazine like this, in interwar Australia, was assessing and then repackaging transnational modernity. It also suggests the way editors of women's magazines were repackaging works of fiction attuned to certain standards of taste—in this case, a predominantly lower middle-class readership, and readers both young and old. While *Race the Sun* was a novel that would appeal to both a male and female readership, *The Weekly's* supplement was changed to suit a more feminine audience. By downplaying the novel's anxious response to modernity and the Modern Girl, the supplement presents an entertaining read that would not challenge this wide, middle-class feminine readership, even its conservative elements. Nonetheless, it would still appear culturally progressive. Ellen McCracken argues that "[m]agazines work to set the agenda for cultural expression, engaging in a leadership role that guides readers' concerns to certain areas. Hegemony is achieved uncoercively in a cultural form such as women's magazines, a sphere of activity that readers view as an arena of freedom, free choice, and free time" (72). The cultural expression of *The Weekly*, exemplified by the editorial cuts to Dale Collins' novel, upheld certain notions of gendered mobility, sanctioning some elements and restricting others. And while *The Weekly* did acknowledge the new inroads women were making into new spheres, these were moderated in ways that would suit their imagined Australian readership, with a focus on her feminine qualities rather than her potentially transgressive activities. In this way, the Modern Girl *The Weekly* was promoting was a good and proper Australian girl, and novels that featured her, such as *Race the Sun* were curated in such a way as to be more palatable to an Australian audience.

Race the Sun has thus become inscrutable to paradigms of Australian literature and the Australian public in two ways. On one level, its middlebrow positioning, transnational themes, Modern Girl protagonist, and the mobility and expatriatism of the author himself, appear to have combined to count against the novel with cultural elites, like P. R. Stephensen, who were campaigning for an Australian literature based on distinctly Australian themes. At

the same time, *The Weekly's* need to curate the novel shows the way the themes *Race the Sun* presents were also deemed unsuitable for a large sector of Australian readers. Furthermore, mainstream audiences who comprised readers of conservative and progressive tastes, as well as older women and their daughters, meant that the magazine appeared to moderate its content, even if it knew the Modern Girl ultimately sold copy. Yet, what can be observed here is the trouble with the main theme of the novel—the Mobile Modern Girl—with all the anxieties and possibilities that surround this figure and all the kinds of mobility she represented in modern times: gendered, social, and geographical. Her overt sexuality, the way she was making inroads into traditional male domains, and the way she easily traversed international borders did not fit into the framework of what constituted a "good" Australian girl, for the mainstream reader or the cultural elite. Indeed, the aviatrix, as an icon of the Mobile Modern Girl was sexual, glamorous, and transnational. Therefore, some representations of her needed to be moderated in a way that would be palatable to an Australian public, especially an imagined mainstream lower middle-class readership such as the readership of *The Weekly*.

While *The Weekly* reflected fantasies of international modernity to Australia, it did so in ways that appeased both a progressive and a more conservative reader, who may have been offended by some of the material in the novel's version. While mainstream magazines shaped and reflected mainstream taste, others of higher quality and class were considered authentic tastemakers. Magazines such as *The Home* were playing their part in representing international glamour and art to Australian readerships and edifying, as well as entertaining, their readerships. In the next chapter, I explore how *The Home's* aim at a slightly higher-class segment of the Australian public allowed it to experiment more progressively with sexually explicit themes in its coverage of the Sexual Modern Girl.

Chapter Five: The Sexual Modern Girl in *The Home* and *Virtuous Courtesan*

> "Just what do you call a square dame, Jack? Usual man's definition, I suppose. Keeping my body to myself" (*Virtuous Courtesan* 64).

Fig. 12. Max Rothkegel, "Last Dose of Summer"

As an icon of a suddenly new cinematic, image-infused culture, the Modern Girl of the interwar period was an extraordinarily visible, apparently liberated, and highly sexualised version of womanhood. Consequently, "in both Australia and internationally," as Lisa Featherstone has argued, "the flapper has risen to some notoriety as a symbol of both modernity and sexual pleasure" ("Rethinking Female Pleasure" 717). This means, as Liz Conor has noted, that in Australia and elsewhere, everywhere the Flapper "appeared she was marked by scandal because, by constituting herself as spectacle, she was asserting her sexual agency" (13). Thus, any research that considers the Flapper or Modern Girl in Australia during the interwar period needs to consider her sexuality. The Modern Girl's active embrace of sexual pleasure was both her defining attribute and her most scandalous feature.

In this final chapter, then, I seek to trace the presence of the Sexual Modern Girl in Australian print culture to gauge attitudes towards her and to ascertain whether she was able to find a place in Australian society as an independent being with sexual agency, or if she was in fact too scandalous for the Australian reading public. I will attempt to accomplish this by tracing the presence of the Sexual Modern Girl across two artefacts of Australian print culture where this figure was prominent. One is *The Home* (1928–1942), an upmarket culture and leisure magazine for aspirational and discerning Australian readers. The magazine connected its readers with currents of international modernity and set benchmarks for Australian taste, and where—somewhat surprisingly because of its focus on the domestic scene— photographs of naked women regularly appeared. The other is the New York-published novel by Australian-based and New Zealand-born Jean Devanny—*Virtuous Courtesan* (1935). It is set in bohemian Sydney, a city Peter Kirkpatrick described, drawing on Dulcie Deamer's contemporaneous description of it in the Roaring 1920s, as "the least conventional—even if only in small pockets—of Australian cities" with a "focus […] for hedonism" (*Sea Coast* 76). *Virtuous Courtesan*, banned in Australia in 1936, seems to push the boundaries of acceptability. The Modern Girl's sexually free behaviour within it makes the book very risqué. As such, it is an artefact where the Modern Girl's sexuality was met with disapproval from those inside the world of the novel, as well as from aspects of society in the world outside the novel who deemed *Virtuous Courtesan* unacceptable for the reading public. Labelled a "sex novel," (Moore *Censor's Library* 146) and subject to the censor's ban before it even arrived on Australian shores, *Virtuous Courtesan* was not widely read—both during its own time and subsequently. This chapter will, thus, consider the rise of censorship in Australia and the role of the Sexual Modern Girl as central to restrictions placed on the circulation of certain types of material, like *Virtuous Courtesan*.

The interwar period was a watershed era in terms of the history of female sexuality. Angela Woollacot argues that "[o]ne definable aspect of this epoch's modernity was women's encroachment on sexual subjectivity, expression and autonomy, an encroachment central to gender instabilities and to modernism's fascination with sexuality" ("White Colonialism" 51).

If women's sexuality was central to modernism, it was also the focus of interwar popular culture, too. Frank Bongiorno notes, "[n]ew identities were becoming available to Australian women in the 1920s with the development of cinema, photography, and mass-circulation illustrated magazines and newspapers" (160). As Liz Conor maintains throughout *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, it was the visibility of the Modern Girl in advertising, film, and other new technologies of reproduction and entertainment that led to the central fact of modernity: women's bodies were increasingly displayed in a sensual and sexual way. Consequently, as Lisa Featherstone observes, in the interwar period "sex was in the spotlight. From the sultry tones of jazz emerging in night-clubs, to an increasing interest in physical perfection promoted by body culture movements, to the raw sexuality flaunted by the flapper, sensual bodies were everywhere" ("Sex Educating the Modern Girl" 459). However, as Bongiorno cautions, "[f]or all the cultural force of the new iconography, older identities, rituals and practices did not disappear before an all-conquering sexual modernity" (161). As Jill Julius Matthews has pointed out in ways I have underscored throughout this thesis, the modern woman was both the symbol and most contested figure of international modernity (*Dance Hall* 19). Out of the various types of Modern Girls explored in this thesis, I argue that it is the Sexual Modern Girl that was particularly troublesome.

Even as, and perhaps *because*, there were visual images of sensual bodies everywhere, the Sexual Modern Girl was both a figure of fantasy and anxiety. While she appeared as an alluring image in tastefully posed photographs in *The Home*, in other sections of the magazine, a thoroughly disapproving attitude emerged toward young and careless Flappers. Bongiorno argues that sexual modernity was curated and controlled, and not all sectors of society embraced new sexual freedoms. These issues form major themes in Jean Devanny's novel, *Virtuous Courtesan*. As I will show, the interwar period was thus saturated with debates about the sexualisation of womanhood in ways that register in Australian print culture, and which become central to addressing the overarching question of my thesis: *If the Modern Girl did exist in Australia, how was she portrayed, and why do I not know about her?*

In this chapter, we see that it is the Sexual Modern Girl who was a major cause of public debate and a troublesome figure in Australian interwar society.

* * *

Some Australian feminist histories that discuss the first half of twentieth century maintain the traditional role of wife and mother was central to understandings of proper femininity during this period. Reading across *The Mirror* and *The Weekly* confirms this assessment to some extent. However, as I have argued in other chapters, attending to the Modern Girl in these magazines complicates this assumption about conservative attitudes toward Australian womanhood. This complication is because magazines featured attractive Modern Girls who were figures of fantasy, and who offered models for young women in new careers. The advertisements in both *The Mirror* and *The Weekly* also suggest these publications appealed to multiple readers in one household, for instance both a mother and a daughter. As such, these magazines needed to adroitly navigate the twin, sometimes conflicting aims of attracting the modern, younger set while also avoid causing offence to their potentially more conservative mothers. Yet what is clear in reading across both *The Mirror* and *The Weekly* is that these magazines were key publications which showed modern women how to style themselves modern and how to secure purchase of some cheap-to-acquire, up-to-date aspects of transnational modernity in Australia. As such, Australian print culture of the interwar period was an important tool that helped women, young and old, encounter new images of themselves and negotiate modern ideas of femininity.

While some scholars such as Lisa Featherstone and Marilyn Lake see the period after the Second World War as inaugurating major challenges to longstanding notions of femininity in Australia, the examples I have repeatedly uncovered strongly suggest that it was instead the interwar period that brought the most significant challenge to perceived notions of gender propriety, especially regarding notions of women's sexuality. Featherstone, notes that the Flapper was a symbol of sexuality in Australia, maintaining that it was only after the Second World War that "femininity underwent a radical transformation: out with the traditional maternal wife and mother, and in with the new, glamorous woman" ("Sexy

Mamas" 234). From this point onwards, she argues, there was "an increasing emphasis on youth, beauty and heterosexual attractiveness" (234). However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the Flapper—or Modern Girl as I have more broadly defined her for purposes here—was a notorious symbol of sexuality, who radically transformed feminine modernities *prior* to the Second World War. Lake also claims the Second World War saw a marked shift towards women as objects performing for the male gaze (65). However, as the photograph at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, the print culture of interwar Australia displays a distinct emphasis on physical attractiveness, youth, and sexuality, and suggests a shaping of femininity to satisfy a sexualised gaze much earlier than many scholars acknowledge.

Liz Conor's work on visual culture in the 1920s further confirms that the shift towards a focus on female attractiveness and sexuality occurred earlier than Featherstone and Lake contend. She argues that it was indeed the 1920s' Flapper who transgressed traditional roles of wife and mother, as she "embodied the scandal which attached to women's new public visibility, from [women's] increasing street presence to their mechanical reproduction as spectacles" (*Spectacular* 209). My arguments in Chapter Four show how the aviatrix, in particular, was spectacularly embodied with scandal, and how her newfound mobility and visibility attracted large amounts of both negative and positive attention in many segments of Australian society. Likewise, Conor's argument signals that an earlier, glamorous version of femininity was already troubling longstanding gender norms, with an emphasis on youth, sexual attractiveness, and heterosexuality. The Flapper, she goes on to explain, "seemed to court the gaze, specifically of men, and to assert her modernity and sexual subject by paradoxically constituting herself as an object within new conditions of feminine visibility" (209). Sexuality was the defining feature of the Flapper and Modern Girl, to the extent that unsurprisingly, this aspect of her identity drew perhaps the most attention of both positive and negative kinds in Australian print culture of the interwar period.

Modern Girls were significant to narratives of modern sex, and their bodies were central to these. Geneviève Brassard observes that,

> [p]rimary documents and recent cultural histories of the period […] suggest an uneasy co-existence of domestic ideology (the so-called conservative backlash against feminism's gains) alongside a progressive gesture towards female sexuality and new ways to facilitate its expression and fulfilment via sex manuals and birth control. (284)

Brassard also argues that conversations about female sexuality in the interwar period focused on married sex. Yet according to contemporary agitators and activists of the period—such as the Australian sex reformer, eugenicist, and feminist Marion Piddington—sexuality limited to the institution of marriage was too restrictive for the sexual expression of modern women. Tracing the Modern Girl through print culture of the interwar period does indeed reveal that Modern Girls desired experiences of sexuality outside the institution of marriage, despite social pressures to the contrary.

In private, Modern Girls eagerly sought out literature on sexuality, especially in the form of sex advice. According to Piddington, Marie Stopes's book *Married Love* (1918) was "'selling widely' and 'girls save up and pay it off weekly to get it'" (qtd. in Bongiorno 165–166). This is despite Stopes's book being directed toward married women. Piddington's use of the term "girls" instead of "married women", however, acknowledges the take-up of literature by girls wishing to, or already engaging in, pre-marital sex. Furthermore, Marie Stopes and Ruth Hall's book *Dear Dr. Stopes* (1978)—which features numerous pages of correspondence to Stopes from a worldwide public in the 1920s—reproduces many letters from Australian women concerned about their sex lives, despite Stopes's *Married Love* being censored and banned in Australia at numerous times throughout the interwar period. Significantly, Piddington's comment, together with Stopes and Hall's book, suggests that there was a significant demand for this material, and that Australian women and others could get their hands on printed matter dispensing advice on sexuality despite the censor's restriction.

The interwar period was a time when state censorship boards were established to curb the increase of literature dealing with sexually suggestive material; nevertheless, according to Jill Julius Matthews, "because these measures interfered with intimate pleasures, they were hard to police" and "censorship was hard-pressed to keep up with the proliferation of mass-produced smut, high-class porn and sex education materials" (*Dance Hall* 39). [6] Bongiorno's research agrees with Matthews' findings, as he discusses an account by a secretary in the 1920s who recalls that her employer "thoughtfully left copies of Stopes's book lying around the office when his young employee married" (165–166). What these accounts show is that material on sex was circulating at the time despite the effort of Australian censors to ban such literature. However, as the Sexual Modern Girl became more informed about her own sexuality and experimented with new modes of sexualised behaviour, the perception of her as a devious figure, both real and imagined, increased.

The Modern Girl's body was a site of public contention. Health professionals and educators felt that the Modern Girl was severely at risk of danger to herself and others because of her newfound sexual freedoms or her limited knowledge of the repercussions of sexual practices. This concern was valid considering a notable number of young women were falling victim to venereal disease and unwanted pregnancy (Bongiorno; Smart). Increasing apprehension over the Modern Girl's sexual health was heightened by the prospect of infected soldiers returning from the Great War spreading venereal disease among Australian women. Lisa Featherstone argues, "There is no doubt that venereal disease (VD) was considered one of the most serious problems faced by Australian society in the first decades of the twentieth century" ("Sex Educating the Modern Girl" 459). Moral and medical guardians warned of these dangers, creating a disjuncture between public standards of acceptability and private conduct in reality. To curb this private behaviour, the Modern Girl, thus, became the target of national public health campaigns about the spread of sexual diseases.

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[6] For a more thorough background on censorship in Australia, see Nicole Moore's *The Censor's Library* (2012), as well as Marita Jane Bullock and Nicole Moore's "Banned in Australia: Federal Censorship, 1900-1973" on the AustLit specialist dataset.

Significantly, according to social commentators, it was not men's behaviour that required regulation, but feminine sexuality that needed to be policed. Bongiorno affirms, "[t]he new freedoms said to be enjoyed by young single women were heavily qualified by dangers of disease, violence, pregnancy and disgrace" (161). Other debates centred on the nation's declining birth rate, and, inevitably, the Modern Girl was also central to this commentary. Modern Girls, some believed, were negligent in their duty to bear children by delaying matrimony, experiencing sex outside the institution of marriage, and increasingly using new forms of birth control. To enjoy sex outside of marriage, for the Modern Girl, was fraught with dangers, and these threats were emphasised through national, social, and cultural narratives that focused on the practice of her sexuality.

While debates circulated around the Modern Girl and the practice of her sexuality, her body was often celebrated and displayed. Held up as an icon of ideal femininity, the Modern Girl's attractive and healthy body became symbolic of national fitness, and it was particularly during the interwar period that the ideal of a perfected body, as well as the eugenics movement—which linked the perfect body with the notion of a perfect race—were beginning to gain momentum. Through avenues of mass media, visual culture played an important role in promoting the idealised feminine body in relation to some of these other ideals. This is evident through glossy magazines, such as *MAN* and *The Home*, which were participating in newfound technologies of print that afforded the reproduction of quality black-and-white photographs and colour illustrations. The medium of the camera became the perfect tool to reproduce the ideal feminine body, and, consequently, photographic spreads of naked women proliferated in gentleman's magazines like *MAN* and other publications that were referred to colloquially as "spiceys."[7] Naked images of women also appeared in other more respectable magazines during this period, in ways that are perhaps surprising to subsequent readers.

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[7] See "The Pulp Magazines Project" https://www.pulpmags.org/contexts/essays/history-of-girlie-pulps.html. Also see Victoria Kuttainen's article, "A Lost Australian Story: MAN in the 1930s." *LINQ* 36 (2009): 161-180.

During the 1920s and 30s, a series of photographs of naked women graced the pages of *The Home*, sitting alongside photographs of fashionable middle- to upper-class society women. The photographs display the Modern Girl's body stripped bare. Often the images are like those that appeared in *MAN*, which also used the same photographers—Max Dupain and Laurence Le Guay, for example, are just two of the prominent photographers whose work featuring female nudes graced both magazines. The discussions in *The Home* about these images are conspicuously short, or even absent, compared to those in *MAN*. Usually only the titles of the photographs or brief descriptions of the woman in the photograph are included. The reasons for the inclusion of these photographs in *The Home* are difficult to ascertain. David Carter argues that *The Home's* "embracing discourse was good taste" (*Always* 137), and that the magazine predominantly catered for a female readership. Indeed, there is an aspirational artiness about these posed images of naked women.

However, it may also be the case that these magazines chose to signal their progressiveness by mobilising the image of the naked woman and blurring the line between fine art and pornography. Certainly, as I have argued in previous chapters, the Modern Girl crossed borders and challenged boundaries. She participated in cosmopolitan and American fashions and desired pre-marital sexual experiences, for example. Matthews decisively argues, "sexuality is a key tool in the search for meaning with the experiences of modernity" ("Erotic Modernities" 9). Issues to do with the Modern Girl, as I discuss in this chapter, reveal the conflicting meanings her spectacularly nude body conveyed to different segments of the rapidly modernising Australian reading public. *The Home* is a magazine that engages with issues to do with the Sexual Modern Girl in both obvious and covert ways.

The Home: A Magazine of Quality, Leisure, and Modernity

The Home was an expensive, upmarket, quality culture and leisure magazine published between 1920 and 1942. Sydney Ure Smith—partner and co-founder of Smith and Julius, the exclusive Sydney advertising agency that brought commercial art to Australia—was the force behind the magazine. His interest in home interiors, graphic design, photography, and art

permeate its pages. Smith was passionate about art and cultivated extensive connections in the art world. He was an artist and the president of the Society of Artists from 1921, and a trustee of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales from 1927. Given Smith's links with the art world and his creative interests, *The Home* conveyed his artistically refined taste, and was thus a luxury magazine that presented its readers with more than just a generalised notion of what it meant to keep a good home. During the 1930s, *The Home's* circulation was around 6,000 to 7,500 copies—a much smaller and, thus, more exclusive readership compared to *The Mirror* and *The Weekly*. The publication initially sold for two shillings and sixpence (approximately ten to fifteen dollars in today's money), dropping down to two shillings after 1926, which positioned it as a relatively expensive, quality magazine. Beginning as a quarterly, it was printed on high-quality paper and contained close to one hundred pages in each issue. It was in-demand enough to be published monthly by the 1930s.

The magazine functioned as a cultural tastemaker, offering ideas of social distinction through its promotion of not only art, but also certain class activities such as travel, home luxuries, and *haute couture*. Famous Australian modern artists such as Thea Proctor—whose student and cousin, Hera Roberts also contributed many artistic illustrations for the magazine—helped *The Home* secure a reputation of artistic prowess (see fig. 13).

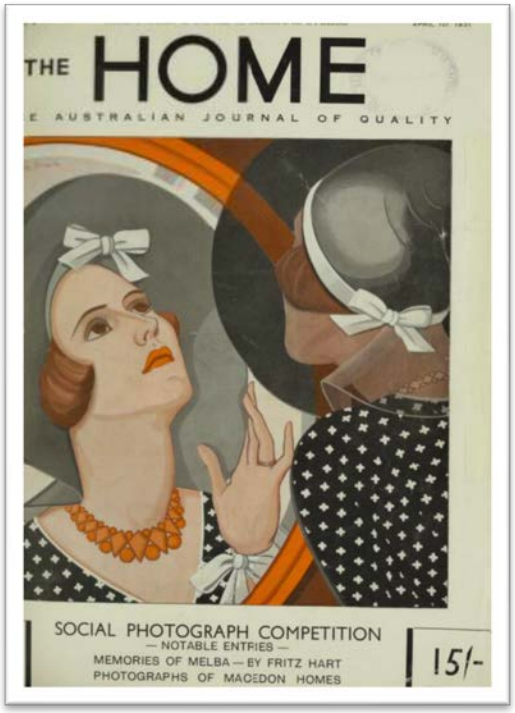

Fig. 13. *The Home*, cover art by Hera Roberts, Apr. 1931, cover

The Home's cover images were stylishly modern Australian analogues of other covers from notable international magazines such as *Vogue* (1892–present) and *Harper's Bizarre* (1867–present). As David Carter argues, if modernism was present at all in Australia, it was present through the stylish forum of *The Home,* "about the only journal at the time receptive to modernist art and design," moderated for a general audience through "its embracing discourse" of "good taste" (*Always* 137). The periodical also included cubist and surrealist artistic reproductions and images in its content, instructing Australian readers on international artistic culture.

Overall, however, "good taste" in *The Home* included helping its readers understand how to be fashionably and tastefully modern. As Victoria Kuttainen explains, "[a]s a statement of the magazine's modernity, *Home* was alive with colour and replete with highly stylised commercial art made-to-order for high-paying clientele of luxury goods and national brands" ("Illustrating Mobility" 8). The first editorial of the magazine announced its intention of presenting good taste and its desire to be modern. While the editorial acknowledges that English and American magazines of similar quality to *The Home* "set a standard of taste—

mostly good and always modern—which will guide their readers in the many problems of their own homes," *The Home*, it announced, will "attempt to serve, in one good Australian publication, the useful purpose which is achieved elsewhere by many good foreign publications" ("How it Proposes to be of Service to You" *The Home*, Feb. 1920, p. 3). The desire to be modern and to present a distinctly Australian version of cosmopolitan culture permeates the publication. Part of this Australian good taste was, as I argue in this chapter, a familiarity with international markers of taste. The magazine carefully curates these for its audience through images, illustrations, and advertisements of fashion and beauty products.

While national products and brands appear in *The Home*, other content suggests a growing influence of American commercial and beauty culture, as well as film. In a full-page advertisement for the New Jersey-based company Johnson & Johnson, for instance, a photograph of a trouser-wearing Modern Girl coaches young female readers, "have you learned to look cool?" (*The Home*, Jan. 1932, p. 5). In the May issue that same year, Johnson & Johnson urges readers to use their product Modess, purpose designed "To Meet the Requirements of the Modern Woman" (*The Home*, May 1932, p. 5). Another advertisement for an American product, Palmolive, urges women to use their beauty products in a bid to "Keep that Schoolgirl Complexion" (*The Home*, Jan. 1932, p. 12). As if to demonstrate how using products such as these can make one beautiful, Hollywood starlets begin to emerge in the advertising pages of the magazine. In other areas of the magazine, *The Home's* demonstrated good taste was in the restrained way it discussed film, with film reviews centring on the storyline rather than the appearance of these actresses. When film did appear in the photo pages, European starlets such as Greta Garbo or British theatre actresses such as Dame Sybil Thorndike gained coverage (Prichard "Sybil Thorndike," *The Home*, Aug. 1932, p. 34; Dayne, Oct. 1932, p. 25). Notably, one of these articles, "Sybil Thorndike," was written by Katharine Susannah Prichard. *The Home's* page spreads featured cameos of movie stars that were conspicuously restrained in contrast to many other magazines of the period. While these touches of glamour suggest the increasing influence of some aspects of American commercial culture on the magazine, the periodical tended to curate good taste by looking to

Europe and England instead of Hollywood. It would seem that *The Home's* "embracing discourse" of "good taste" (Carter, *Always* 137) did not fully embrace all aspects of American culture, regarding some elements as crass.

Certainly, some progressive, and even proto-feminist views did begin to emerge in the pages of *The Home*, yet the emphasis of the magazine was on a leisured lifestyle, typically addressing the well-to-do matron of the house who did not need to work. One such example of a progressive article is "The Ideal Divorce," which counselled that dissolution of marriage was permissible and increasingly socially acceptable in some circumstances, such as the "childless marriage," but which still urged a woman of taste to consider that this option is never "ideal" (Oliphant *The Home*, July 1932, p. 37). Much like the way *The Weekly* occasionally discussed the Working Modern Girl, in another rare article, *The Home* encouraged women in a particular professional field. "The New Career for Women," for example, focused on the formation of the first residential college for the training of female physical education teachers (*The Home*, Nov.1932, p. 54), and encouraged women to pursue such a career. Yet these articles that focused on women's social progressiveness in society and the workplace were the exception rather than the rule.

Unlike *The Mirror*, which addressed a mixed audience of working women and stay-at-home mothers, *The Home* rarely published content on working or single women. When it did, it tended to make working girls the butt of satire. "The Wave" by E. J. Francis, for example, describes Miss Dulcie Smith as a "mentally under-developed and physically over-exposed" young thing, who was a "rather flash, wobbly young woman who tottered from a jam factory where she worked, to her home, on very high heels which imparted a lavish undulation of figure to her walk," (*The Home*, Apr. 1935, p. 44). Notably, her reading tastes are portrayed as in poor taste as well; she is said to have only read novels and "magazines devoted to the lives of film stars" (44). Compared to the girls of a higher society who did not work, and who were tasteful in their manners and their clothes, the working girl of this story is portrayed as silly and wearing "dreadful clothes" (44). Thus, even though the magazine did

sometimes feature or mention working girls, references were few and tended to be derogatory.

During the 1930s, in each issue of *The Home,* only one very short (one- or two-page) story appeared 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*—a dark comedy that lampooned the moral and intellectual vacuity of the generation of British Bright Young Things. These stories seemed to be didactic and warned of the sexual follies of the Modern Girl. Surveying the whole of the magazine's issues for 1932, for example, two stories featured the Modern Girl, both of which reinforce this censorious and critical attitude found elsewhere in the magazine. "The Cheat" by J. Plain (*The Home*, Nov.1932, p. 44) is a satire of Bright Young Things. The narrator criticises the Modern Girl, in the person of his sister, who is comically described as young, vacuous, and insipidly enslaved to changing fashions:

> The life-work of my sister Maud is to be well ahead of her friends in the adoption of each new fashion. Her skirts shoot up and down, widen and narrow, with a zeal quiveringly attuned to every report from Paris, and her hair has followed with impassioned devotion to every phase of knobbing, bobbing, shingling, and bingling. She changes her slang as regularly as her clothes, and her pursuit of novelties in parties and pastimes partakes of a fanatic's frenzy. (44)

In this story, the Modern Girl is forced to move from the city to the country, and she desperately tries to fit into the parochial scene. Yet she becomes embroiled in a scandal between two old lovers, and the plot soon 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, such as those which endure in the countryside. In "The Bright Young Things at Bridge, etc. etc." by Dudley Gordon (*The Home*, May 1932, p. 42), the Modern Girl and her set are depicted as gossips who idle away their time by pursuing aimless

leisure activities, and who outwardly castigate the various failures of men while secretly competing against each other for their affections.

More often than tales of the single girl, stories sampled from the 1932 issues of *The Home*, for example, focused on married couples. "Full Circle" by Roger Maitland, a travelling gossip columnist (remarkably like Waugh's character in *Vile Bodies*, 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*, Sept. 1932, p. 78). In another, "Man of Honour" by Eleanor Dark (published under her pen name 'Patricia O'Rane'), a marital affair is contemplated, and the topic is broached between the prospective adulterers, but restraint wins out over passion (*The Home*, July 1932, p. 26+). Similarly, Velia Ercole's "Fool's Chance" raises the subject of divorce but proposes a resolution that avoids such drastic measures. 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 unflappable wife: "there seems no pressing need at the moment" (*The Home*, Oct. 1932, p. 42). The husband enjoys extramarital flirtations with "those pretty women who happen occasionally whenever one is a little drunk or desolate" (42), and the wife remains cold and aloof. The marriage becomes unbearably strained until one evening, on an overnight motorcar trip, 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—the old conservative order—over individual passion and erotic expression, which is typically portrayed as destructive.

Thus, *The Home* represents the Modern Girl glamorously in advertisements and displayed visual culture, but in the stories, codes of social propriety meant that the Modern Girls' behaviour was frowned upon in ways keeping with the magazine's 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 the Modern Girl than by her presence. Where she is present, the tone is of didactic moralism or satire. She is depicted as a figure of potential danger to be carefully restrained and restored within the bounds of social propriety and marital respectability. Alternatively, she is mocked as a figure of intellectual vacuousness—presumably the butt of a joke shared by readers in the know, at the expense perhaps of a younger, more progressive member of the household. However, the Modern Girl was visually ubiquitous in the magazine: on the covers, in illustrations for articles and stories, in advertisements and modelling fashions, and in artistic compositions of naked women. This is perhaps *The Home's* most surprising feature, by today's standards. Unlike the mainstream weeklies, which mitigated sexualised material through self-censorship, making the material generally acceptable for the broad public—as the case of careful editing out of erotically charged material in *The Weekly's* version of Dale Collins' *Race the Sun* demonstrates—*The Home* celebrated the female form in erotically charged black-and-white photographs.

Between 1928 and 1939, twenty photographic images of naked women appear in *The Home*, predominantly displaying Modern Girls. Some are modern dancers and showgirls, and some are described as modern young women. Most show full frontal nudity from the waist upwards, and some only just hide the pubic region, or present a woman without pubic hair, tactfully positioning her to teasingly cover her lower region. While it is possible these images were included to align with the magazine's arty modern image, their appearance raises questions when one considers that they were printed alongside the more conservative stories which are often disapproving and sometimes censorious in their attitudes toward the Modern Girl. The inclusion of these photographs is especially curious as similar photographs of nudes by the same photographers appeared in *MAN* (see fig. 14 and fig. 15, for example), and these prominently featured erotically coded representations of women. By today's standards, these photographs of naked women in *The Home* seem at odds with the magazine's remit to curate and present good taste.

Fig. 14. Max Dupain, “Photographic Study.” *The Home*, Feb. 1936, p. 57

Fig. 15. Laurence Le Guay, *MAN Junior*, Jan. 1938, p. 58

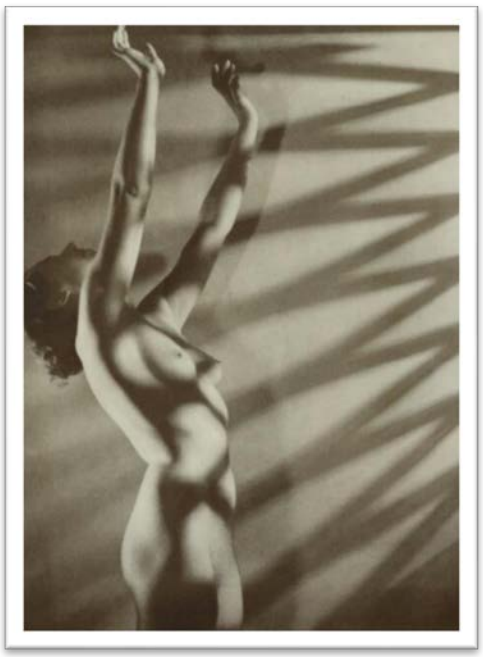

Fig. 16. Max Dupain, “Prisoner at the Bar.” *The Home*, Apr. 1934, p. 22

Fig. 17. Max Dupain, “Splendid Spectacle.” *The Home*, July 1934, p. 23

Moreover, the photographs were often given titles that positioned the women photographed as spectacles to be looked at (as in fig. 16 and fig. 17, for example). Liz Conor argues that the Modern Girl’s erotic image was an object of visual spectacle that served to elicit viewing pleasure (*Spectacular* 2); certainly, these images exemplify her argument as

they present an erotically styled Modern Girl whose breasts, pubic region, thighs, and legs are often highlighted. Indeed, the use of light and shadow in these photographs in *The Home* lend them an artistic composition, emphasising the erotic parts of a female body. The Max Dupian photo studies "Prisoner at the Bar" (fig. 16) and "Splendid Spectacle" (fig. 17), for example, depict a naked woman posing in artfully styled ways. The play of light is centred on breasts and even the woman's pubic region. "Splendid Spectacle" is particularly jarring in this issue of *The Home*, however, since it follows pages featuring photographs of the children of society families at play in their gardens.

While on one hand these photographs of naked women seemed to align with *The Home's* editorial remit to present tastefully modern and artistic material, on the other hand, the magazine's inclusion of images of naked women seemed sexually evocative and erotic in ways that were at odds with other material in the magazine. A comparable contemporary high-quality magazine with a similar editorial remit is *Vogue Living* (1966-present). Such images, by today's standards, would not be appropriate for its pages. What the inclusion of these images suggests is how the nude female body in such a magazine apparently did not shock and offend its readership when it appeared in this context—that is, within a magazine that styled itself modern in a way that aligned with new artistic standards of modern art.
It is notable that *The Home* sometimes, although rarely, included descriptions of the photographs that apparently attempted to defuse the sexual connotations of the images. The text accompanying the photograph in figure 18, for example, details "an exquisite [sic] draped figure study from the famous photographic studio of d'Ora, Paris" (d'Ora *The Home* May 1931, p. 22). The photograph is titled "Fashioned so Slenderly" and is by Madame d'Ora; it apparently serves to exemplify the way modern women might aspire to mould their figures according to this new slender ideal. Illuminatingly, the text accompanying the photograph notes that the image is meant to be "illustrating the slender grace and *sexlessness* of the feminine figure sought by the woman of to-day" (22, italics added). Yet the woman's naked figure does not so simply speak of a sexless woman. Obviously young, the woman is fit and apparently nubile, with muscles outlined in her legs and arms indicating physical fitness.

Moreover, Madame d'Ora's photographs were renowned for exuding "energy, imagination and often sensuality" (Wrigley n.p.). She was famous for photographing Parisian dancers, including the well-known burlesque dancer, Josephine Baker, who was often photographed naked. Judging by the footwear of the model in *The Home's* photograph, the model is indeed wearing dancing shoes, and her elegant pose and the fabric she is draped in both indicate that she is a theatrical figure. All these points suggest that, so long as the naked female image was in some way presented as art in *The Home*, her sexuality was coded as acceptable for its reading audience.

Fig. 18. Madame d'Ora, "Fashioned So Slenderly." *The Home*, May 1931, p. 22

The Home seemed to indicate that these images of naked women were sexless and should not, therefore, be considered offensive. The stylistic mannerisms of the women in the photographs emulated the stylistic devices of modernist art with its play of light and shadow, and thus fit within the magazine's remit to promote art. In this way, the Sexual Modern Girl could be visually displayed in numerous photographic studies, such as the ones in *The Home*. Nevertheless, her actual sexuality was coded ambivalently or glossed over, and in the practice of female sexuality, *The Home* was silent.

Two other photographs provide clues as to why *The Home* included these images—the image included for this chapter's epigram is one of them (see fig. 12). This photograph

was taken by Max Rothkegel, a German photographer, and suggests a link between *The Home* and its focus on body culture. Body culture was an aesthetic and physical movement that started in Germany in the early 1900s, gaining international attention during the interwar years. This movement called for a "revival of the body" and included programs of "rational self-cultivation and an exposure of the body to fresh air and sunlight" with a strong emphasis on "strength and beauty" (Kenway par. 1). Another photograph titled "Lady at Low Tide" is from *Modern Photography: The Studio Annual of Camera Art 1932*, a publication featuring the French photographer Jean Moral (*The Home*, May 1933, p. 25). Moral gained international fame through his provocative and highly sexualised images. As an international artist, Moral was renowned for his boundary-pushing images of naked women (See fig. 19 for a famous example of his work.)

Fig. 19. Jean Moral, "Selected Lingerie Studies," 1932

Yet, in contrast to some of his more risqué work, such as that in figure 19, the Moral photograph chosen for *The Home* (fig. 20) depicts a naked woman posing in the shallows of the water, bending down to grasp something below the surface, emphasising the active body, naked in nature. This set of images resonates with other narratives included in *The Home* that also point to the influence of the body culture movement on this periodical, especially in

terms of its inclusion of photographs which drew heavily on iconography of the Modern Girl's nude body.

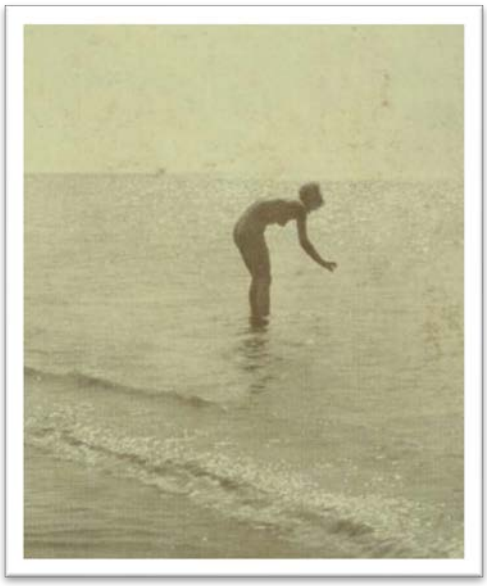

Fig. 20. Jean Moral, "Lady at Low Tide." *The Home*, May 1933, p. 25

The inclusion of photographs from the Australian photographer, Max Dupain, also attests to the preoccupation of *The Home* with ideals from the body culture movement. Isobel Crombie maintains that "Dupain's nude photography of the 1930s is only possible when these works are located as part of the prevalent discourse on health, fitness and eugenics" (9). From this perspective, including nude photography in an Australian magazine which was underpinned with notions of good taste could only be possible when the images sat alongside discourses espousing vitality and beauty. *The Home* encouraged their female readers, to "work now for [their] looks" (Macdonald "The New Feminine Beauty" *The Home*, May 1929, p. 29), and to shape their figures according to a certain ideal. The Modern Girl was the perfect model to visually depict these ideals since she was young, attractive, and nubile. The work *The Home* urged women to accomplish in obtaining fit and trim figures aligned with the ideal of the body culture movement.

Body Culture

The term "body culture" first appeared around the early 1900s, delineating an emerging practice that incorporated ways of physically moulding and shaping the body through exercise and specific attention to the body's appearance (Kenway). This movement originated from German *Korperkulture* (body culture), which "promoted an ideology of health whose diverse components included—alongside strength and beauty—hygiene, aesthetics, healthy sexuality, nudism (*Nacktkultur*), physical education, sports, [and] gymnastics" (Kenway 104). Central to these components were the qualities of "strength and beauty" (Kenway 103). It is worth noting, of course, that these ideals were Aryan, and the figures that exemplified these principles were white. Australian government and cultural institutions were actively discussing and sometimes promoting these German-originating ideals in this era. In the 1933 New South Wales Public School Teacher's Federation publication, for example, "three of the most interesting physical cults in Europe—the German dance, the Naktkulture and the Wandervogel, a youth movement" receive mention (Hypatia, *Education* 15 Nov. 1933, p. 24). Yet German ideals of body culture were also discussed in relation to physical culture in Australia.

Dance practitioners who had studied in Germany, but with studios in Sydney, actively practised and advertised their engagement with the *Korpenkulture* movement. Sonia Revid, for example, a Russian who migrated to Australia in the early 1930s after studying in Germany, dispersed these German theories and practices, especially through her Sydney schools (Card 18). Notably, *The Home* ran an article on Revid in which she is described as one of Mary Wigman's "pupils" (Berkeley *The Home*, Oct. 1933, p. 37).[8] Perhaps, by way of distancing the magazine from open avocation of German ideals this late in the interwar period, *The Home* celebrated Revid as a talented "Russian girl" who practised free dance moves incorporating physical elements from *Korpenkulture* (37). Irene Vera Young also

[8] Wigman was a famous German dance teacher who taught modern expressionist dance.

established dance schools in Australia, which she called "the Vera Young School of German Dance, Motion Choir and Body Culture" (Card 31). She is also discussed in *The Home* numerous times, with her schools upheld as cutting-edge, modernist institutions producing quality dancers (see Berkeley, *The Home*, Oct. 1933, p. 37; Young, Dec. 1934, p. 36; "Arrivals From Abroad," Mar. 1937, p. 18, for example). One article explains Young's beauty culture philosophy, which was informed by her experience in Germany and "the modern dance" (Warren, *The Home*, Apr. 1937, p. 64). Young is quoted explaining that for Australian subjects, the "cultural movement must be virile and healthy, strong and lusty, with imagination and the zest of life" (64). Young's discussion stresses that the ideals of the body culture movement were particularly fitting for Australians, who already benefited from fresh air and a lifestyle that was seen as healthier than in Europe. There is certainly an undercurrent of nationalism in these discussions, as well as an ethos of purity and youthful vitality that aligned with Australia's ideals as a young nation, particularly one that was embracing vitalism in some arts.

The Home further promoted the benefits of modern dance and its engagement with the body culture movement through its nude and modernist photographs. One particular photo spread by Russell Roberts, for example, showcases Miss Eve Alwyn, "the modern expressionist dancer, who is giving a final recital this month before returning to Europe" (Roberts *The Home*, June 1936, p. 22–24). In this photographic study, titled "The Ecstasy of Abandon," the bare-breasted dancer is wearing a sheer skirt. While the text does not detail and describe the dance, the photographs are evidently images of a dancer practising the free-form movements espoused by the body culture movement, celebrating Alwyn's athletic body, vitality, and obvious enjoyment in ways that align with the ideals espoused by the movement. (See fig. 21). These images of dancers depict women exhibiting physical fitness, naturalness, and healthy beauty, all of which align with interwar ideas influenced by eugenics and nationalist ideals. These ideals were also evidenced in novels such as *Jungfrau*, with Poppy Whetheral's dancing style, and in *Virtuous Courtesan*, which will be discussed further in the next section.

Fig. 21. Russel Roberts, "The Ecstasy of Abandon." *The Home*, June 1936, p. 23

In Australia, the body culture movement was taken up and repackaged to suit specific national narratives. Physical culture was held up as an ideal that reflected the vitality and strength of the Australian nation as well as a way of being a modern co-participant in transnational modernity; in general, the strong body also suggested a strong body politic, as well as a fashionable kind of citizenship, which was at once national and international. Indeed, this version of cosmopolitan modern life very much aligned with *The Home's* whole ethos—Australia and Australian readers could be modern too by participating in international modernity, but in particularly Australian ways.

With these insights in mind, it is easy to see how magazines such as *The Home* participated in vitalist and eugenic discourses connecting young women, physical culture, and the nation. In one article, "Compulsory Games and Physical Training," for example, the author stresses the need for women to engage in physical culture, recognising that "it is only a few years ago that physical education for women was frowned upon as not only injurious to the female form, but as socially improper" (Warren *The Home* Apr. 1937, p. 42). This article signals the newness of the body culture philosophy in Australia, and the author maintains that physical culture "should be disciplined and made to benefit the nation as much as the

individual" (43). The author further stresses that the future of Australia is determined by the health and physical fitness of the people in the nation. Women, in particular, were shouldered with the responsibility to bring this vitality to the nation, not only through disciplining their bodies, but also through raising and educating a generation of healthy and physically disciplined children. These articles and images implied nubile bodies were fertile bodies, and this kind of modern sexuality suggested enjoyment of natural sexuality, but only for a short time, before childbirth.

Another article discusses the importance of women to be physically fit and places the responsibility of women to encourage future generations of Australians in their quest for physical perfection. "The New Career for Women," for example, maintains that the "Physical Training Teacher or Mistress of Physical Culture" must have "intelligence, personality, health and good physique" in order to cultivate the nation's "growing bodies of young children" (*The Home*, Nov. 1932, p. 54). Not only should this feminine educator be intelligent and healthy, but she should also be a "healer," who educates in "physiology, hygiene, dietetics, medical gymnastics, massage, dancing and every form of sport" (54). These two articles reflect the emphasis that Australian political leaders, cultural commentators, and the mass media placed on nation-building in this period. They imply a development project not just for women, but also for the nation, and suggest the role that the healthy, robust, fertile, white woman had to play in the development of a strong and cohesive white Australian population. These women needed to maintain their health, and particularly their fertility, through a concentration on physical fitness, vitality, and fecundity.

The Home, therefore, took up these ideas of body culture in both text and imagery. Central to this was the figure of the young and healthy Modern Girl. Numerous articles on dance, physical culture, hygiene, and aesthetics regularly appeared in its pages, further illustrating *The Home's* alignment with modern ideas and philosophies. The point is that these photographs of young, naked women served a purpose in line with the magazine's overall tone, embracing a cosmopolitan modernist aesthetic in ways suitable to its aspirational and well-to-do Australian readership. However, what *The Home* also achieved is a repackaging of

these ideas, presenting a more Australianised version of this philosophy. Its articles and images often encouraged women to compete with an international ideal figure. They emphasised sand, surf, and sunshine in ways that anticipated the later incarnation of the healthy and happy Australian Beach Girl (see fig. 22, for example).

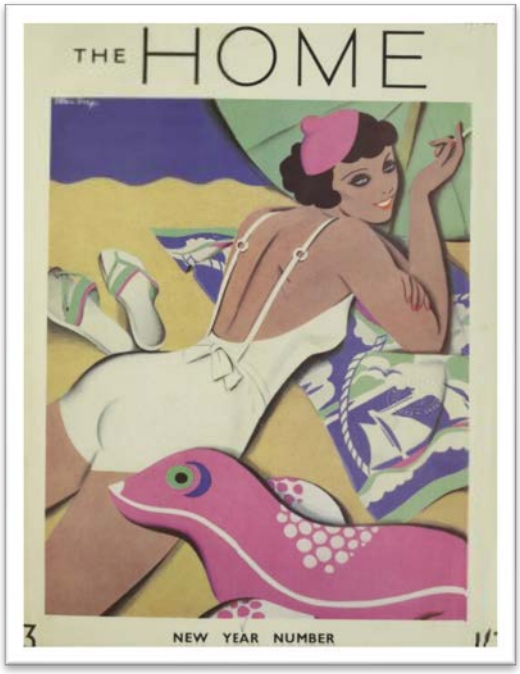

Fig. 22. *The Home*, Jan. 1934, cover

While some aspects of the Sexual Modern Girl found their way into acceptable society and higher echelons of Australian magazine print culture like *The Home*, what the above discussion suggests is that the Sexual Modern Girl needed to be coded appropriately in order to be deemed acceptable. Many stories in *The Home* targeted the Modern Girl as a focus of satire—particularly if she embodied or embraced American values of conspicuous consumption or wayward sexuality—while many other articles and images celebrated the Modern Girl's sexuality so long as her health and vitality conveyed an Australian version of European cosmopolitanism, and especially if nubile sexuality implied fertility and nation-building. The repackaging of the body culture movement to suit and convey ideals of the fitness of white Australia reflects the way the glamorous and exotic starlet and dancer needed

to be repackaged in particular ways to suit an Australian audience primed for a particular kind of arty, vitalist, sexual modernity.

This glorification of an ideal Australian woman was epitomised by the visually spectacular Sexual Modern Girl. Gradually, however, the focus on the glamorous, red-lip-sticked, bobbed haired, androgynous styled Modern Girl of the 1920s and early 1930s in Australian print culture seemed to shift toward a naturally healthy and physically fit Australian Beach Girl. This particular incarnation of the Australian Modern Girl seemed to counter the influence of the Hollywood version of an exotic, glamorous, and transnational figure. And while *The Home* continued to show images of popular Hollywood Modern Girl starlets alongside these healthy beach girls, the pages articulate a distinctly growing focus on a uniquely Australian version of modern womanhood (see fig. 23, for example).

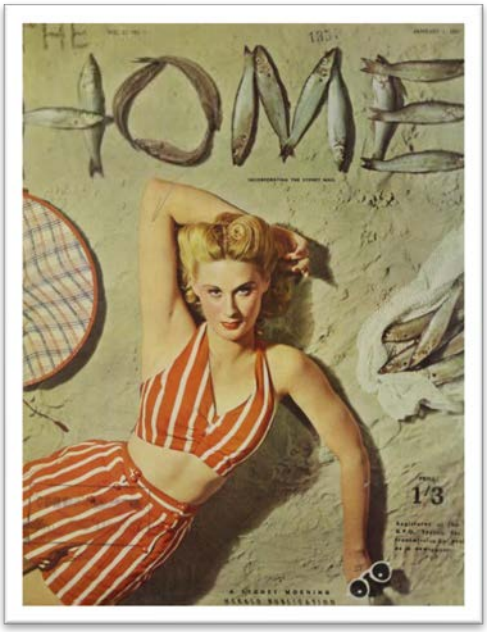

Fig. 23. *The Home*, vol. 22, no. 1, Jan. 1941, cover

Through periodicals like *The Home*, Australian cultural commentators signalled a preoccupation with defining an Australian ideal of femininity at this time, suggesting a reaction to Hollywood's flirtation with exoticism and sex. Richard White argues that during the interwar period "never was Australia's innocence and purity protected with more zeal […]. Australia had to be protected for the benefit of British civilization" (140). The Modern

Girl, and her link to Hollywood glamour, transnationalism, and degenerate sexuality was, therefore, of particular concern to moral pundits. If she was considered unduly sexual and indolent, she was definitely not the Australian ideal. And while visually the Modern Girl's body could be used to imaginatively render utopian ideals concerning the body, her sexuality in practice was still a point of contention. To illustrate my point further, novels that engaged with the glamorous, cosmopolitan, transnational and Sexual Modern Girl were met with vehement censorship and disdain—particularly if they explicitly dealt with her sexuality in practice. Jean Devanny's *Virtuous Courtesan* is a perfect example of this sexual double standard.

Virtuous Courtesan or Deviant Female?

Virtuous Courtesan (1935) offers a unique and frank female perspective on women's sexuality during the interwar period, from the antipodean perspective. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that Carole Ferrier, in numerous works (such as *As Good as a Yarn with You*), Susan Sheridan (*Among the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing, 1880–1930s*), and Drusilla Modjeska (*Exiles at Home*) all note the literary value of Devanny's work, particularly regarding radical politics. Yet few critics, except for Nicole Moore and now myself, have paid much attention to the way Devanny also took up the cause of the Modern Girl, and the Sexual Modern Girl in particular. The theme of sex in *Virtuous Courtesan* incited the censors to ban the book. The character of Sharon as a woman to be desired and a woman who desires allowed the book to explore the potential for, and social limits on, women's sexual pleasure and fulfilment in ways that intersected with many debates and tensions of the interwar period.

Virtuous Courtesan is, arguably, one of the most controversial novels that examines the sexuality of the Modern Girl in Australia during this period, particularly as it was met with censorship as soon as it landed on Australian shores. The novel's protagonist, Sharon, could easily be modelled on the images of scantily clad dancers that feature in *The Home*. Sharon was a showgirl who danced publicly in sheer outfits designed to offer the sexual

display of her body. Yet unlike the healthy women who came to represent an acceptable Australian version of decadent Europe or gauche Hollywood, the character of Sharon, in Devanny's rendering of her, is entirely transnational, cosmopolitan, and glamorous, even as the novel is set in Sydney. Through Sharon's embodiment as a Modern Girl dancer—not unlike Poppy Whetheral in *Jungfrau* and the ones pictured in *The Home* photographs—*Virtuous Courtesan* challenges traditional ideas about female sexuality, and examines how social conventions negatively affect her work, her mobility, and her sex. In this novel, Modern Girls desire sex without fear of social judgements; yet the men in the novel are the ones to pass judgement over a woman's desire for sexual freedom. To these men, women are classified as either virtuous wives and mothers, or loose dames and even whores, as the epigram at the beginning of this chapter implies. The Modern Girl in Devanny's novel, however, defies these rigid classifications, marking her as one who refuses to conform and who ultimately pays the price.

Thus, this novel is a remarkable artefact of varying attitudes toward the Sexual Modern Girl in interwar Australia; its fictional world includes a cast of characters boldly experimenting with their sexual agency. As Nicole Moore has pointed out, the novel "feature[s] heroines who eloquently assert their right to enjoy having sex with more than one person" (*Censor's Library* 92). But the novel also features a set of characters who act as censorious gatekeepers. "Devanny's focus on women's experiences distinguishes her work," Moore adds, "and the tropes and plots of romance and the then fashionable 'new woman' novel characterise it too" (92). The romance plots do not always end well, however, and not all elements of the Modern Girl's lifestyle were greeted as fashionable. Extending Moore's work on Devanny, my research contends that the women represented in the novel are significant figures of interwar feminine modernity contending for social change, particularly through their sexuality. But I also point out that not all their desires for social change are manifested positively or greeted well. Moore asserts that Devanny's novel "has the most radical sexual politics of all the Australian books banned for obscenity in the 1930s, and indeed challenges many of the books banned from around the world" (146). Arguably, it is

Devanny's inclusion of a character's self-administered abortion that most "offended [custom's officer] Brossois and the [Book Censorship] Board in 1935" (62). The fact that the ban on the book was only lifted as late as 1958 attests to the controversial nature of its topics. Among these topics, Devanny's novel raises questions regarding sex, the sexual double standard, and an individual's exploration of sexuality outside of social norms. The novel not only deals with heterosexuality, self-pleasure, pre-marital and extramarital sex, rape, and abortion, but also discusses homosexuality and lesbianism, prostitution, and contraception—all issues that deal with the politics of a woman's body, issues vehemently debated in the public domain during this time.

Carole Ferrier, who has written extensively on Devanny's oeuvre, argues that many of Devanny's novels "focused upon the figure of the new woman," and her themes "remained centrally to do with gender and sexuality" (*Hecate* 188). While *Virtuous Courtesan* does indeed focus on gender and sexuality, the New Woman is an earlier figure—as I have argued in the Introduction to this thesis—whose primary concern was suffrage; instead, it is important to understand the women in *Virtuous Courtesan* are Modern Girls, and not just in nomenclature. The women's focus in the novel is not on political issues that characterise some of Devanny's other works, such as Communism, but on the politics of the body.[9] Birth control is openly discussed between the female characters, and Poppy, the prostitute, reveals the details of her self-administered abortion. Nicole Moore argues that the novel "feature[s] heroines who eloquently assert their right to enjoy having sex with more than one person" (*Censor's Library* 92), and it is the theme of sex that is central to Devanny's novel.

Like J. M. Harcourt, Devanny held strong political convictions and possessed a keen interest in female sexuality. During the First World War, she read Marxist literature extensively (Modjeska 147), and thus developed strong communist affiliations which are evident in her work. Yet Devanny also infused her fiction with themes of sexual oppression,

[9] As a writer of communist fiction and a devout member of the Communist Party, Devanny's other novels, such as *Sugar Heaven*, often deal with class issues; however, *Virtuous Courtesan* goes beyond issues to do with just class and opens questions concerning the role sexuality plays in the class struggle through her Modern Girl protagonist.

class divides, and the situation of women—and from the onset of her writing career, the censors labelled her work as offensive. *The Butcher Shop* (1926), for example—a novel about sexual oppression in marriage and written while Devanny was still resident in New Zealand—was the first novel to be banned in Australia in 1929 for being "obscene" (Moore *Censor's Library* 91). During the interwar period, as Carole Ferrier notes, "Devanny was one of the key public faces of the Communist Party of Australia" ("Jean Devanny" 187). In 1947, *The Herald* (Melbourne) published an article under the title "Government Worried About Spies" that specifically mentioned Devanny as "one of the most notorious Communists in Australia" (*The Herald*, 7 Mar. 1947, p. 2). It also pointed out that both *The Butcher Shop* and *Virtuous Courtesan* "were under ban in Australia as obscene publications" (2). Yet Devanny's engagement with controversial political activities was not the only form of public service with which she concerned herself.

Devanny's status as a writer was solidified through her involvement with the Australian literary community. Perhaps as a form of defence from attacks like those mentioned previously, Devanny became a provisional member of the New South Wales branch of the Book Censorship Abolition League, which was established in 1934 by Melbourne University's William Macmahon Ball. In 1935, Devanny, together with Katharine Susannah Prichard, started the Writers' League, an organisation which had strong links with the Fellowship of Australian Writers. Yet Devanny was, as Drusilla Modjeska argues, "sufficiently put off by the Fellowship's conservatism […] and she had wanted to develop a Sydney-based broad front organisation of leftist writers and artists" (119). Despite Devanny's political opinion about the Fellowship, the Writer's League and the Fellowship did share a similar artistic and cultural mandate. Consequently, in 1937 the two organisations joined to form the Central Cultural Council, maintaining the Council would "'coordinate the activities of various literary, dramatic and cultural societies in matters of common concern,' such as censorship, importation of cheap magazines, tariffs and sales of Australian books" (qtd. in Modjeska, 120). So, while censors deemed Devanny's work as seditious and obscene, Devanny was well respected by and integrated into the literary community of Australia, as her

letters to notables in this community, such as Nettie Palmer convey (see Carole Ferrier's work *As Good as a Yarn with You*).

Apart from the reviews of *Sugar Heaven*, which were discussed in Chapter Three, Devanny's work was often met with ambivalence. Despite some of her earlier fiction being well-received and well-reviewed, Carole Ferrier notes that,

> [h]er work with the new emphasis [on sexuality that] it took on in Australia was much less readily marketable or generally well received than the earlier fiction, and continued to be reliant to some extent upon overseas publishers since local opportunities remained very limited. ("Jean Devanny" 188)

The Townsville *Daily Bulletin*, for example, claims that her 1938 novel *Paradise Flow*, published by the British firm Duckworths, included issues that "prevent[s] a novel from being received as that of an artist and keen observer" (Barrymore "Books Received," *Daily Bulletin*, 1 June 1938, p. 11). *Virtuous Courtesan* is another example that was either not reviewed or viewed critically. This, of course, could be because the novel was banned when it reached Australian shores, even though it was acknowledged as a new Australian novel in some publications. *The Bulletin* did not review *Virtuous Courtesan*; however, it did name Devanny in the Red Page's list of "Australian authors under "Who's Who" (Henry *The Bulletin*, 12 May 1938, p. 8). *The Butcher Shop* and *Virtuous Courtesan* were mentioned in this "Who's Who" article as "two banned books in Australia" (8). Jean Devanny and Dymphna Cusack were listed in *The Bulletin's* article under women writers of "interest" (8). It would seem that Devanny was regarded more as a curiosity than a firmly well-regarded author. In this, Devanny's ambiguous literary status with reviewers and censors alike—not unlike the ambiguous reputation of the titular character of *Virtuous Courtesan*—seems to have potentially tainted her reputation both in her own day, and even subsequently.

Because critics, such as Nicole Moore, have mentioned that *Virtuous Courtesan* was censored shortly after it hit Australian shores, one could assume that this novel was, subsequently, not widely read. For the purpose of accessing this novel for this thesis, it was

necessary to obtain a copy through a New York antique bookseller, who was charging over two hundred Australian dollars for the copy—a signal of the book's rarity. Potentially, this copy could be part of the leftover stock from her American publisher, Macaulay, although such a claim would be difficult to prove. The only copies available in Australia are accessible through library reading rooms and are not able to be borrowed. Despite the scarcity of this book, however, Nancy Paxton argues that there were Australian readers during the interwar period who did manage to obtain a copy (par. 15). It would appear that there were copies available in Australia before the censorship ban took place, even though subsequently, the novel became extremely hard to obtain.

It is unlikely that the novel received any publicity in England, unlike her other novels, such as *The Butcher Shop*, which was published by the English firm Duckworth. Duckworth refused to publish *Virtuous Courtesan* because of its frank discussion on sexuality. Duckworth's refusal of the novel seems telling, given that its large market, the British public, were reading all kinds of sexually charged novels at this time, such as D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930), and Dale Collin's *Race the Sun* (1936). Duckworth, it seemed, foresaw the way Australian censors would view the novel as obscene. Certainly, Devanny understood the repercussions of her frank writing: she wrote to her agent in New York that it potentially "might be banned" ("Correspondence" JD/CORR (8)/77). Given that the Australian market was only a small part of the British book trade, Duckworth's rejection of *Virtuous Courtesan* implies that the self-administered abortion discussed in the novel was potentially too controversial even for the British, although novels featuring abortion—such as *Gilgi* (1931), *Return to Coolami* (1936) and even *Jungfrau* (1936)—were certainly around in the period.

Although Devanny herself was obviously aware of the severity of Australian censorship, *Virtuous Courtesan* was not uncertain or coy in its sexual themes, themes that aligned with her publisher's idea of what should be included in the novels they published. Devanny's publisher for *Virtuous Courtesan*, the New York company Macaulay, had a directive to publish the "modern sex novel" (Carter and Osborne 135). The company

understood that "Devanny […] has become famous the world over for her frank and fearless stories of women in love" (qtd. in Carter and Osborne 137), and as such *Virtuous Courtesan* was enthusiastically taken up by the company. Macaulay also published other works from Devanny, including *The Butcher Shop* (1926), *Unchastened Youth* (1930), and *All for Love* (1932), all dealing with sexual themes. It seems that American publishers and their reading publics were, perhaps, more accepting of modern sex novels by Australian authors than British publishers and their reading publics, or perhaps that censorship was harder to enforce in America at the bookselling end.

This link to America did not bode well for Devanny in Australia. The themes and sexuality represented in *Virtuous Courtesan* incited the censor, Robert Garran, to remark, "I don't know if the authoress is an Australian trying to be American, or an American trying to be Australian" (qtd. in Moore *Censor's Library* 146). Her book, then, was categorically banned. What Garran's remark indicates is the transnational aspects of the novel, and, perhaps, a contemporary distaste for American literature in Australia, especially a distaste for the way American fashions and trends were seen to be influencing Australian womanhood in corrupting ways. As Jill Julius Matthews argues, national elites "condemned the effects of imported American culture: moving pictures, jazz music and dancing, radio serials, advertising styles, cheap magazines and novels" (*Dance Hall* 11). Devanny's link with an American publisher who published the modern sex novel would have immediately flagged it with the censors. The question remains: would Australian elites, and even readers of magazine such as *The Home*, have regarded the novel as distasteful as well?

Virtuous Courtesan itself remarks on the censorship that Devanny perhaps anticipated, when a male sculptor in the novel, Foyer, advertises his art exhibition on the radio. The announcer narrates, "Mr. Lindwell Norman, the famous artist and author, will doubtless be at his best in a short disquisition on the morality of censorship" (27). This is a clear reference to Norman Linsday, who—albeit otherwise politically and aesthetically Devanny's opposite in almost every respect—shared Devanny's status of having two books banned: *Redheap* in 1930 and *The Cautious Amorist* in 1934. *Redheap* and *The Cautious*

Amorist could also be categorised as modern sex novels, yet they are clearly written from the male perspective. This is what gives Devanny's work such a unique value; the novel deals with female sexuality from a female perspective—a perspective that is rare in Australian novels of the interwar period.

* * *

In *Virtuous Courtesan*, Devanny tells the story of Sharon Armand. She is the virtuous courtesan of the novel, and is a professional dancer and artists' model, living on her own in one of Sydney's more affluent suburbs. She is married with a child, but her husband, Armand, is an idler who lives elsewhere. Her daughter lives with relatives due to Sharon's unstable work situation and her inability to take on a stay-at-home role. Sharon begins a sexual relationship with a working-class man, Jack Powell, who also models for artists occasionally, but is basically unemployed. He, in turn, has enjoyed a previous sexual relationship with a young prostitute, Jo, whom he rescued off the streets and bought into the care of his older friend Poppy—also a prostitute. Sharon and Powell take on the *Pygmalion*-like artistic and moral development of Jo. Rather than merely engaging in sordid sex work, all three attach themselves to artistic work and modern, arty circles of bohemian friends. All three model for a sculptor called Foyer and are part of a friendship circle that also includes a lesbian couple: Rosa is a Jewish heiress and Faith is a cello player for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Edith is Rosa's maid who marries Bill—who is also unemployed and lives off her wage. The focus of the novel is this group of women whose youth, views, and aesthetics position them as Modern Girls, much like the Modern Girls we have already encountered in the novels *Jungfrau*, *Upsurge*, and *Race the Sun*.

Sharon's social set reflects the picture of Sydney's bohemian scene that Peter Kirkpatrick provides in *The Sea Coast of Bohemia* (1992); that is to say, "a large coterie of energetic, intelligent, often eccentric, and sometimes outrageous people," whom, he argues, "have been overlooked or wilfully disregarded by cultural historians" (2–3). This group, Kirkpatrick details, comprised of artists, authors, poets, journalists, and eccentrics of the likes of Norman Lindsay—to whom, as we have seen, Devanny gestures in the novel. Kirkpatrick's

scholarship centres on the 1920s, the period Dulcie Deamer—the so-called "Queen of Bohemia" (5)—called Sydney's "Golden Decade" (5). In much the same way that Kirkpatrick has argued that Sydney's interwar bohemia has been disregarded and overlooked by cultural historians, Devanny's novel concerning this social scene has also been overlooked by literary scholars. Tellingly—and like some of the other works of fiction discussed in previous chapters—Devanny infuses this bohemian set with the social realities of the Great Depression. Many of her working-class male characters are out of work and reliant on the women in their lives to provide an income. While this chapter focuses on sexuality, the themes of work and mobility will be briefly explained to highlight how they also are evident in this novel.

The characters of Edith, Sharon, and Faith illustrate the tensions and benefits women experienced in new fields of work during the interwar period. In seeking economic power, Sharon and Edith attempt, both implicitly and explicitly, to contest the ways men have traditionally enjoyed economic advantages. Yet the novel also makes clear that a change in economic status alone is not enough to disrupt traditional gender hierarchies. Once again, marriage seems the only option for a young and single woman of the period. In this way, *Virtuous Courtesan* presents marriage as a form of legal prostitution and an economic institution rather than an authentic emotional union. Part of Devanny's committed communism was, as we can see here, a commitment to revealing the gender inequities of modern life in ways that complicate simplistic communist ideals that tended to favour the wellbeing of working-class men. Devanny highlights men's poor treatment of women and exposes the precariousness of the lives of working women who remained under the oppression of a male-dominated social and economic system. So, while work opportunities could present women with more economic and social freedoms, *Virtuous Courtesan* presents the harsher reality of some women's working lives, including the increased responsibilities their work requires of them without conferring significant advantages.

Mobility is another theme Devanny presents in her novel. Like the negative realities she presents for working women, Devanny also presents the dangers of female mobility. As a

dancer, the character of Sharon is imbued with mobility in all the ways this thesis has already discussed, connoting both freedom and precarity. She describes her own dancing as "poetry of motion" (24). Free, fluid, and devoid of restrictions (including clothing), Sharon dances according to her own rhythm, her own emotions, and her own movements. She does not dance according to formal styles like ballet, instead drawing inspiration from folk dance traditions of Europe, America, Africa, and South America. In one of her dance performances, she appears to embody movements that transcend both time and space, as well as conventional attitudes towards race, gender, and sex. Becoming one with music that she calls "spirituals" (210),

> [h]er body began to sway rhythmically, her hands crossed upon her breast. She began to croon and Powell's heart seemed to turn over as the old black Mammy materialised before his eyes…she rose and with the infinite grace of the primitive woman in the fields, improvised the dance she subsequently names, the Dance of the Mammies. (210)

Sharon can be compared to Isadora Duncan, a quintessentially iconic Modern Girl of the interwar years, whose "dancing bought shape to some of the fundamental feelings of modernity: dislocation, alienation, desire for Other, pleasure and freedom" (Nicholas 2). Sharon, likewise, reflects these elements in her dancing where her gestures towards so-called primitive cultures and their movements brings together a sense of desire for Other, a dislocation from her own body and self, and a pleasurable freedom of movement that transcends cultural, racial, and age barriers. In this way, Sharon also embodies the transnational subject, even while remaining firmly in place in bohemian Sydney. Certainly, this character would have been contentious for Australian censors avidly protecting an imagined idea of Australian purity. Through exploring how the Sexual Modern Girl is met with censorious disapproval from men in the novel who encounter her, Devanny seems to anticipate the way her own novel will be met with the same reaction.

As is typical in Devanny's work, the mobility of the Modern Girl in this novel, however free and uninhibited Sharon seeks to become, is met with resistance from the men who surround her and who attempt to put limits on her. Another dance she performs in front of her working-class lover Powell is one she calls "the Annihilation of Shame" (75). She takes off her clothes and puts on a see-through sheath that covers her body. Through her free-flowing movements, she experiences a form of climax where language such as "thrust," "palpitating," "climax," and "glorious release" (75) is used to describe her dance and her emotions. This fluid type of dance imagery represents an unrestricted type of sexual freedom that revels in self-pleasure in ways that do not require the involvement of a male partner. As a spectator, Powell becomes jealous that she experiences a sexual climax through her rapturous movements without him. Even though her dance announced an annihilation of sexual shame, he vehemently shames her for such an erotic act: "Do you think a man could watch you at that game and not be affected?" he rages at her; "You're not so raw. If I didn't know you to be on the level I'd have to think you had bought me here for—for" (76). The em dash in the novel clearly implies sex. Powell's accusation suggests that Sharon's dancing has been intended to provoke him sexually. He does not want to understand that dancing, to Sharon, is a form of her own self-expression, creativity, and pleasure, not merely a "game" purely for the benefit of men. Criticising her for being nothing but a "flash dame" (76), he ignores her passion for her craft and her skill and makes her talent all about sex. After Powell's abusive and censorious reaction to her, readers are told that "[a] shadow fell upon her" (76), and subsequently her explorations of self and creativity are destroyed. The stripping of Sharon's sexual agency and selfhood is emphasised by Powell's rape of her—an attempt, it would appear, to remove the freedom and joy she previously exhibits in her own sexual freedom.

Virtuous Courtesan, therefore, comments on the way women's mobility is insecure, suggesting that new forms of leisure culture and pleasure for women were infused with sexual complexities and double standards. The novel explores the potential for dance to signify the possibilities of liberation available to women in the new fluid social spaces of modernity. Yet, as a showgirl who earned a very good wage dancing for "business men, fathers, husbands

[and] aged bachelors" (38), Sharon's work remained constrained by the male gaze and by men's custom. Despite the freedom she enjoys in her own body's movement, the received meaning of her dancing is always regarded as sexual in ways intended for the pleasure of men. She is described from the male perspective as "hung above them for their delectation, glittering with the crystal above her loins and breasts, the only covering she had worn" (38). However, the spectacle of her sexuality on display allows Sharon to afford a relatively luxurious lifestyle. She is lavishly paid for her exhibition due to the way it fulfils masculine appetites and desires.

In this way, a male-dominated sexual double standard continues to determine how titillating bodies might be acceptable while female sexuality in practice was not. Juxtaposing the terms "virtuous" and "courtesan" the novel challenges traditional labels used to define female sexuality, and brings the double standard—still in place, long after the nineteenth century—into focus. The novel, thus, lays bare unjust unspoken codes that underpin societal frameworks, particularly ones policed by men.

One significant way men attempt to moderate women in the novel is through their insistence on the inherent virtue of femininity, which closely parallels Professor Glover's insistence on labelling Thea as "virginal" in *Jungfrau*, and the judge's obsession with Theo as "unspoiled" in *Upsurge*. It is men who insist upon these labels, and it is men who regulate them. As Alys Weinbaum and colleagues explain,

> the Modern Girl threatened male authority, the elite's privileged claim to "being modern," and she polluted the elite marriage market. Overall, the Modern Girl's "girlness" could work to trouble or shore up social conventions and raced and gendered hierarchies. (12)

Sharon's girlish figure as a dancer, her innocence, and her status as a Modern Girl illustrate Weinbaum and colleagues' claim. She is a figure who complicates male perceptions of sexual relations. Even women like Rosa who take on these male perceptions and standards describe Sharon as "virtuous" and "impregnable" (42). Rosa also characterises Sharon's appearance as

youthful: "[h]er face was perfectly round, the mouth pink and delicate, the nose pure Grecian, the eyes violet, wide and black fringed" (36). To the men, and to Rosa—as a woman who has taken on their values—Sharon is a figure of "loveliness and desirability" (36). Here, the perceptions of the woman and her virtuous standing seem at odds with her occupation as a showgirl, as does the knowledge that she has sex with at least three other men in the novel, including Inez's husband, Foyer, an act that Rosa knows about. Sharon's desire for a freer and pleasurable form of sexuality detached from childbearing, and her tutelage of Jo from prostitute to protégé, is a source of contention among those of a certain social standing in the novel's 1930s' Sydney, particularly the male characters. Those who desire Sharon cannot accept that the one she desires is her own self. Like *Jungfrau* and *Upsurge*, *Virtuous Courtesan* demonstrates how institutionalised male values create dynamics that seek to control the Modern Girl and determine her future.

Drusilla Modjeska claims that the novel's combination of sex and class was unusual at this time. Although, as I have argued, *The Home* managed to combine these two elements successfully. "In *Virtuous Courtesan*," Modjeska writes,

> Jean Devanny addresses herself to the conjuncture of class and sex, one of the few novels of the time to do so […]. While marriage and sexual relations are a game for the bourgeoisie, a way of maximizing and maintaining class privilege, for the working class marriage is either serious, entered for love, or simply a means of survival. (268)

Certainly, Devanny's novel focuses on class issues, as her work always does, but this novel centres more on issues of gender and sexual politics. As if in an early anticipation of the issues of intersectionality, Devanny's sympathies are always drawn toward characters whose lives take place at the intersection of the working-class and the female lived experience, such as Edith's. But Devanny also shows the insecurity of the lives of bourgeois women, particularly through her portraits of characters like Sharon and Rosa. Sharon, for example, evidently does not make a game of her marriage. Her marriage is one that drains her both

financially and emotionally. Rosa, moreover, is not merely bourgeois but also a queer female. She is a lesbian who has been married once but who could not tolerate heterosexual sex. The woman she now desires, Faith, does not reciprocate her affection, and her anxiety about this is certainly not a game either, but an experience fraught with emotional unsettlement. Rosa demands that Edith explain to her why Faith will not commit to their relationship, questioning Edith while standing naked in front of a mirror: "Anything wrong with me, Edith?" (23). Her questioning suggests she is self-critical and analytical about her relationship, and that her very identity and wellbeing are at stake. This implies that she does not engage in a relationship as a mere game.

Only Edith and Bill are typical working-class characters in the way Modjeska describes. Yet Devanny is committed to showing that the relationship between these characters is not on equal ground either; it is a relationship complicated by Edith's romantic views of love and marriage and Bill's view of marriage as a sexual and economic contract. Edith admits that sex is "disgusting […]. I hate that part of [relationships]" (139). Knowing she must placate Bill with sex, she asks for advice from the women. Faith warns her, "I hope you know about birth control" (138). This subject of birth control was not an unusual topic in novels of the interwar period, as my discussion on *Jungfrau* and *The Mirror* reveal. *Virtuous Courtesan*, undoubtedly, as Modjeska observes, "shows how women are exploited by men regardless of class, but emphasizes the variation of class response" (268). Indeed, men do exploit the women in the novel economically, and they also exploit them sexually by not only insisting on controlling their sexuality but also by demanding sex.

* * *

Open discussion of women's sexual issues was not easy, even in modern, bohemian cities such as Sydney, as the chapters on *Jungfrau* and *The Mirror* have outlined. As respectable periodicals like *The Home* began to feature nudity and hint at women's increasing sexual liberties, they carefully framed these issues and narratives to centre on marriage and childbearing. *The Home*, like other print culture of the time, often implied that women were to be frowned upon for discussing such matters openly. Therefore, Devanny's project in

Virtuous Courtesan was a bold one. She deployed the figure of the Modern Girl to engage with discussions on sexuality from a female perspective and to challenge societal constructs of normative behaviour. Novels published in the 1930s like *Virtuous Courtesan* and *Jungfrau* indicate that female writers were actively exploring the Modern Girl's sexual identity, even though the consequences for her doing so were often negative.

Virtuous Courtesan presents some sexually active Modern Girls; however, they encounter barriers to their supposed sexual liberty. That the men in the novel have an underlying attitude that aligns "good" women with chaste behaviour remains a prominent theme. Even though the Modern Girl's image, as Liz Conor describes, was very much a spectacle in consumer culture, one that was laced with sexual meanings and connotations, to act on that perceived sense of sexual freedom, as Sharon does, was to invite reproach—from women as well as men. The Modern Girl's body is a sexualised artefact to be looked at and desired, like the images presented in *The Home*. However, social codes required such an unruly and complex body to be hidden and contained. This message even comes through in Sharon's self-talk, as she chastises herself: "There's something wrong with you…Some deadly weakness" (37). As Devanny's novel reveals, the actual deadly weakness in the Modern Girl was her dependency on a flawed and inequitable social system that extended beyond and permeated sexual relationships. The sexual double standard Devanny exposes in her novel ultimately relates to economics, as sex became not a route to freedom, but a form of control exerted on the Modern Girl. In fact, Devanny exposed the way the Modern Girl's newfound and newly explored sexuality was no freedom at all. *Virtuous Courtesan* reveals how society at all levels insisted on continuing to control, curate, prohibit, and punish the Modern Girl's attempts to explore her own sexual agency. These attitudes arise not only from the novel's characters but also in the novel's reception.

Censorship, Public Opinion, Moderation, and Gatekeepers

It did not take the censorship board long to ban *Virtuous Courtesan.* When it reached Australian shores in 1935 from its publishing house in America, censors labelled the novel as

"pernicious tripe" (Moore *Censor's Library* 146) and categorised it as a "sex book" (92). Yet Devanny was not one to give up without a fight. She was avidly vocal in her anti-censorship views and wrote several opinion pieces on the issue. In an undated and unpublished manuscript held in the Devanny papers at James Cook University, Devanny insisted that,

> [c]ensoring is a job that appeals to the meddler, the prig and the sneak…Censors may be drawn from many classes, from the stupid, the humourless, the fanatical, and the prurient—but the one class from which they cannot be drawn is the class of decent and intelligent men. ("Personal Papers" 8, JD/PP/118)

Similarly critical of censorship, many other segments of the writing and reading public suggested that the tastes of many Australians did not align with the puritanical censor. An article from *Smith's Weekly* (1919–1950), a mainstream Australian broadsheet, demonstrates this view. The article discusses the censoring of Norman Lindsay, who the writer sees as "a genius whose name is known throughout the world!" ("Will the Police Arrest Norman Lindsay?" *Smith's Weekly*, 13 June 1931, p. 2). It also expresses upmost dismay at the prospect that Lindsay may possibly be prosecuted for the publication of his drawings and paintings featured in a December issue of *Art in Australia* (1916–1942). The police, who took it upon themselves to censor the issue, subsequently labelled Sydney Ure Smith's arty magazine an "obscene publication," and a "filthy book" (2). In protest, the article berates the bureaucracy of government officials, such as the police commissioner, and maintains that,

> [a]nybody with the slightest claim to intelligence knows the difference between the ordinary pornographic publication, the 'snappy' post-card, and the 'hot' magazine, and the genuinely sincere and enormously valuable publication of 'Art in Australia.' The police department, apparently, cannot or is not allowed to distinguish between these two poles. (2)

To both Devanny and the writer of this article, censorship, whether by police or the censorship board, was based on an unintelligent set of regulations and unintelligent

government agents unable to discriminate between edifying art and unedifying "hot" magazines. Presumably given the prominence of this article in a mainstream magazine like *Smith's Weekly*, these sympathetic anti-censorship attitudes were also shared by many members of the general public.

Another front-page article in *Workers' Weekly,* appearing in 1937 ("Morality Moguls" *The Worker's Weekly*, 14 May 1937, p. 1) also impugns the Australian censorship regime as one guided by stupidity and narrow-mindedness. In it, "I. K. Sampson, a member of the Writers' League," explains, "this week has the distinction of being the only 'private' citizen to have obtained a full list of the books banned for reasons of 'blasphemy, indecency, and obscenity'" (1). Both *Virtuous Courtesan* and *Upsurge* appear on Sampson's list, and Sampson is quoted as saying that "[n]one of the books in this list is banned in England…[and] [i]t is apparent that there has been absolutely no consideration of literary merit […]. We must now do all we can to smash the present barbarous censorship" (4). These examples illustrate that censorship and moderation was a public concern and that it did not win the support of all members of the public. Moreover, both articles decry the arbitrary rules that governed the acceptance or rejection of culture and showcase ways that the limits of sexual respectability were often debated across print culture of the time. Both articles defend the display of nudity and sexually suggestive material if literary or artistic merit was acknowledged. Both articles also show that anxiety about this material was stoked by the government's censorship regimes, more so than emerging from the sentiments of the general public.

Given that novels such as *Virtuous Courtesan* were banned and likely not widely read, it is no wonder that there has been a negative attitude towards the interwar period and its literary production. At the very least, this material has largely escaped scholarly attention. Censorship, it would seem, has framed the subsequent view of the literary output of this period. Nicole Moore argues that "[c]ensors read for the nation, on behalf of a polity and its government, and they set out to make national readers, whose sensibilities are shaped by territorial limits on what they read" (*Censor's Library* 341). The national readers that the censors imagined, Moore goes on to argue, consisted of certain types. These included

> the ‘responsible’ reader, closest to the censors themselves in his (definitely his) ability to read with rational dispassion, employing his expertise…Women readers were a broadly present category on whose behalf the censors read…Women remained at once the primary object of obscenity and the majority of readers; this seeming paradox a reflection of their relative lack of power. […] ‘Sexually unstable’ readers…were adult readers regarded as especially vulnerable to deviance, liable to lapse into homosexuality or worse if unprotected. These readers could not be exposed to the suggestion that same-sex desire might be pleasurable, for example, without the danger of corruption or contagion. A morally and medically constructed phantasm, this category of reader had a crucial role to play in the restriction of obscene material of many kinds. (342–43)

What is apparent here is that the category of woman, both as sex object and reader, was troublesome for the national values the censor was trying to moderate. But what my thesis, and this chapter have revealed, is that the censor was not alone in moderating women’s behaviour, extolling censorious attitudes, or judging—on weak grounds—appropriate or inappropriate standards of conduct and display, especially where the Modern Girl’s sexuality was concerned.

As the anti-censorship articles that emerged in mainstream print culture of the interwar period conveyed, not everyone agreed with these attitudes. In fact, many magazines included erotic or glamourous images of the increasingly sexualised Modern Girl in the interwar period. But as Moore further points out, many pundits dismissed sexual material as simple fodder for the general public—popular readers—whose “reading could be dangerous because it was least rational and the books at issue not literary; the possible corruption was cultural as well as moral, since mass appeal was itself suspect” (343). Novels like Devanny’s were not, in the words of the writer of the article in *Smith’s Weekly* “the ordinary pornographic publication, the ‘snappy’ post-card, [or] the ‘hot’ magazine,” (“Will the Police Arrest Norman Lindsay?” *Smith’s Weekly*, 13 June 1931, p. 2). Yet, nor were they as clearly

or passionately defended for their literary merit as Norman Lindsay's work was, which was characterised as "the genuinely sincere and enormously valuable publication of 'Art in Australia'" (2).

The censors of the time were not the only gatekeepers of novels such as *Virtuous Courtesan*. Librarians and archivists subsequently have not valued Devanny's work. According to WorldCat data, a data set that shows the libraries that house the novel in their collections, the novel is scarce, with only three editions available (a hardback, softback, and a digital version that a James Cook librarian could not locate and assumes is not available). The novel is only available internationally in St Pancras Library in Britain, the Auckland Library, and two universities: Cornell University and Harvard University. In Australia, *Virtuous Courtesan* is only available in four universities and the National Library. These libraries hold one copy each and are available in reading rooms only. By comparison, the data from WorldCat on Norman Lindsay's *Readheap* shows there are twenty editions of this novel and that it is available at one hundred and fifty-six libraries. These large holdings of Norman Lindsay's work exist even though the novel was banned in the same decade as *Virtuous Courtesan*, and even though the ban on his novel was lifted in the same year as Devanny's (1958). The lack of library holdings for *Virtuous Courtesan* suggests, then, that librarians were another set of cultural gatekeepers who in this case—whether in the novel's time or subsequently—appear to have made the consensual decision that Devanny's novel was too racy or undeserving of artistic merit.

Given that *Virtuous Courtesan* has not been retained in the archive helps to answer the question that first impelled this study: what happened to the Modern Girl and novels about her? Cultural gatekeepers did indeed prevent the Modern Girl's full expression, or they disposed of novels that featured her. In the case of *The Weekly* and the way it radically altered *Race the Sun*, gatekeepers also heavily moderated her. It is telling that the censor, Robert Garran, accused Devanny of either being an American writer trying to be Australian or an Australian trying to be American. According to this gatekeeper, Devanny's work did not register as authentically Australian, even for censors who were also acting as an established

paradigm of cultural reception. Despite this accusation of Devanny and the novel being transnational and America, American audiences also did not regard the novel highly.

The Macaulay publishers wrote to Devanny two years after they published *Virtuous Courtesan* explaining that "Regrettably we find that the sales of your book, VIRTUOUS COURTESAN, have recently dropped to such an extent that we are having difficulty in disposing of the large stock we have on hand" ("Correspondence" JD/CORR (B)/92, capitals in original). The fact that the publisher still had many copies on hand also indicates lack of sales. Thus, even American booksellers found *Virtuous Courtesan* to be unsellable—though it is unclear why. Perhaps American audiences regarded the novel as too risqué or too Australian (and therefore too parochial for their taste). In any case, the novel sat in a precarious position in both countries, with gatekeepers judging the novel as either too sexy or too unpopular. It is again, this issue of negative judgement that seems to closely follow the Modern Girl and works about her.

As I argued in relation to *The Home*, even magazines that featured more sexualised images of women, or apparently more unhindered female sexuality or characters in stories, were often judged if they engaged too freely in the liberal sexual mores of the Modern Girl. It is also telling that what was deemed acceptable as a Sexual Modern Girl in *The Home* was one who was white, young, nubile, and sporty, and could, therefore, be closely associated with Australian nationalism—that is, a nationalist version of an international phenomenon such as the body culture movement. It was one thing to embody an image of erotic vitality; it was another for a woman to actively embrace her own sexuality. Indeed, given that the Modern Girl was the object of what Jill Julius Matthews calls "the game of truth about the Modern Girl" (*Dance Hall* 74), where her "interest in modern things and in making [herself] modern was commonly treated in such sexualised ways" (74), the sexual aspect of the Modern Girl was, of course, her most troublesome and debated feature of all.

As well as censors, other cultural elites, including the readers of *The Home,* vetted the acceptability of the Sexual Modern Girl. Indeed, *The Home's* cosmopolitan embrace of modernity included an embrace of erotic art, but not actual sexualised women. In contrast,

where women were sexual, they needed to be fertile future mothers of the nation, and healthy Australians most of all. This rising tide of nationalism may also have subsequently flattened and corseted the more interesting and risqué aspects of Australian print culture to the extent that, even when work was of clear literary merit, it was less likely to be judged so, especially if it was written by a woman like Devanny. Critics of the interwar period curated what could be considered 'proper national literature', overlooking the popular, the modern, and the transnational. It is no wonder the Modern Girl has been sidelined for other more nationalistic stereotypes. This era, replete with interesting forms of print culture, has, instead, been mislabelled barren and puerile.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to address my curiosity about the absence of Flapper figures from established literary histories of Australia. In the process of searching for images of the Australian Flapper during the time my grandmother was dancing to Roaring Twenties jazz tunes and wearing drop-waist dresses, I discovered much more. My research revealed the Modern Girl's signature bobbed hair, lip-sticked face, and fashionable figure was displayed spectacularly across a wide range of print culture that circulated through interwar Australia, of all qualities and for a variety of audiences. As I encountered these images and stories, I eagerly sought to restore the Modern Girl to our understanding of the Australian literary and cultural past. To recover the Modern Girl from the archives of interwar Australia, my thesis took a broad print culture approach—revisiting the magazines and novels that people read in their own day, rather than publications that scholars of Australian literature have subsequently highlighted. This project also considered, in the cases of *Upsurge* and *Virtuous Courtesan*, novels that were important literary artefacts of interwar Australia that featured the Modern Girl, but which were subject to censorship and other modes of gatekeeping in ways that prevented them from finding the wider audiences and critical appreciation they deserved. Ultimately, the three types of Modern Girls that I uncovered—the Working Modern Girl, the Mobile Modern Girl, and the Sexual Modern Girl—aroused gatekeepers everywhere they appeared.

In the print culture which featured the Modern Girl, especially those included in this thesis, the world within each text often highlighted the way she fuelled anxieties and fantasies. She was routinely subject to double standards, even in cases where the Modern Girl was seriously exploring new lifestyles and liberties that would later become widely acceptable. This project also asked why the images and narratives of the Modern Girl that were uncovered did not appear in critical histories of Australian literature. Here, I discovered that the world outside the novel was often unwilling to take seriously novels that featured the

Modern Girl. It also became clear that, even when these novels did find welcome reviews in their own time, such as Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau,* they failed to achieve longevity through longer-term critical appreciation. Ultimately, it is little wonder the Australian Modern Girl has been overlooked in more ways than one, and that texts that featured her often suffered the same fate. Her work, her mobility, and particularly her sexuality were issues that troubled different audiences in her own day, and which have continued to trouble literary scholarship even during periods of feminist revisionism, undertaken by critics such as Drusilla Modjeska or Susan Sheridan. This project has read texts that revealed the complex "truth" about the Australian Modern Girl, in part to illuminate her complex reputation in her own time, but also to raise questions about her absence from established narratives of literary history. I also want to restore this figure and the texts that featured her to understandings of Australia's rich literary past.

In my quest to track the "literary footprints" of Flappers in Australia, I uncovered an abundance of print matter that featured the more broadly conceived Modern Girl. Widening the search for the Modern Girl beyond typical canonical texts (the interwar period is often reduced to social realist texts that represent the Depression) demonstrated how valuable magazines and print culture are as archives and as literary artefacts in and of themselves, especially for literary scholarship of the interwar period. While the Depression was a significant facet of interwar culture everywhere, and especially in Australia, literary histories that focus only on this dimension of the interwar period often, as Anne Summers points out, "convey almost exclusively the male experience of the Depression" (549). "We have been told little about what it was like for women," Summers argues, "during the 1930s" (549). Reading across women's magazines of the time, and even some men's magazines for the Modern Girl, presents a more nuanced picture of the 1930s, where women and men were engaging in modern leisure culture and pleasures—a picture considerably at odds, as Jill Julius Matthews also noticed (7), with nationalist histories of the 1930s which focus on hardships and unemployment.

Magazines of the time provide a vital window into social and cultural attitudes toward the Modern Girl. The different magazines that were canvassed in this thesis not only showcased the complexity of interwar print culture in Australia but also uncovered its variety in ways that provided a useful means to analyse different segments of the Australian reading public, and their responses to the Modern Girl. *The Mirror*, for example, was a highly popular mass weekly targeted at a broad feminine readership, including working women and housewives. This publication offered an array of feminine attitudes to the sassy and controversial Modern Girl, even while the periodical prominently featured her as an alluring cover girl or in cameo roles positioned front and centre across its pages. It became clear by reading *The Mirror* that the periodical used the Modern Girl's spectacular visual appeal to sell products, including the magazine itself, even as narratives within it also revealed how various anxieties concerning the modern world could be displaced onto this highly visual and attractive figure. While *The Mirror* dispensed advice for working women, women's newfound presence in the workforce was, according to some narratives in *The Mirror,* a signal of their worrying neglect of their domestic duties.

MAN capitalised even more on masculine anxieties toward the figure of the Working Modern Girl, making the most of the opportunity to make the figure the target of satire or titillation where she was perceived as encroaching on masculine domain of work and men's perceived sexual prowess. To mitigate the threat she posed, cartoons and stories in *MAN* highlight the Working Modern Girl's vacuity and exaggerate her sexuality, rendering her less threatening as a figure who could be easily controlled and dismissed at work and at home. In this example of Australian print culture, the Modern Girl could not be taken seriously anywhere she appeared, in much the same way she has not been taken seriously in Australian cultural or literary histories since. Indeed, the Modern Girl's link to commercial culture and spicy magazines such as *MAN*, her perceived fickleness, and her portrayed over-sexualisation have made the appearance of more realistic renderings of the Modern Girl almost unrecognisable to cultural historians and literary scholars by distorting her features. The questionable nature of the Modern Girl was not, however, only an issue for her male

contemporaries or for subsequent historiographies. During her own time, the troublesome aspects of the Modern Girl which made her seem unseemly or unruly were tamed for certain female members of the Australian reading public as well.

The editors of the mass-magazine *The Weekly*, for example, appear to have understood the troubling nature of the Mobile Modern Girl and works that featured her. The challenge for a magazine like this was to appeal to a younger, potentially progressive audience while avoiding alienating their older and perhaps more conservative readers—all the while retaining their steady stream of advertising revenue. To balance these sets of challenges, the magazine included Dale Collins' popular novel *Race the Sun* as a supplement in 1937 in ways that carefully excised the more titillating and controversial aspects of the London-published novel. In so doing, the editors crafted an image of the novel's Modern Girl that was palatable to a broad, domestic Australian readership. What *The Weekly's* editorial curation reveals is how successful mainstream women's magazines actively repackaged works of fiction in ways that were attuned to certain standards of taste—in this case, a predominantly lower middle-class readership, and readers of all ages and attitudes. It also showed how the Mobile Modern Girl in Dale Collins' London-published *Race the Sun* did not fit into the framework of what constituted a "good" Australian girl for their broad set of Australian readers, advertisers, or adjudicators. She was too sexual, too career-focused and too mobile in her volatile and unstable traversing of fixed boundaries of geography, class, and gender to be acceptable to an imagined mainstream readership such as that of *The Weekly*. Even still, stories that featured her were attractive and appealing, albeit finely *finessed*. But it was her sexuality that seemed to cause the most concern.

The Australian Modern Girl was both a symbol and constant victim of the way in which international modernity was repackaged for the domestic Australian audience. Her sexuality was perhaps the most potent and threatening bearer of this international modernity, and, as such, it was carefully shaped and deployed for particular Australian audiences. As tastemakers, quality magazines like *The Home* played an important role in representing international art and modernity to Australian readerships who sought to be edified as well as

entertained. *The Home* had an upmarket appeal to readers who wished to keep up with the latest. It engaged Australians as active and savvy co-participants in the project of international modernity, allowing the magazine to be more experimental with sexually explicit images than those that appeared in mass mainstream magazines like *The Mirror* and *The Weekly*. What was most surprising in my search for the Modern Girl was the way *The Home* showcased her naked figure on spectacular display. Photographs gestured toward the status of the female nude in modernist art, unexpectedly appearing on pages following tasteful home decoration, or photographs of society families and their children. In reading across issues of *The Home* throughout the 1930s, clues began to form into a broader picture of feminine nudity and vitality that suggested the way the magazine embraced the body culture movement originating from Germany. The philosophies in this movement promoted an idealised and perfected feminine body; the healthy, nubile, and thoroughly white young woman became an emblem of the body culture movement and an icon of the kind of nationalism *The Home* began to evince.

Careful readings of text surrounding the nude photographs of women in *The Home* suggested that the magazine's cosmopolitan embrace of modernity included an embrace of eroticised art, but that the magazine did not in fact embrace or endorse a Sexual Modern Girl's actual sexuality. Women's sexuality was only acceptable, the magazine seemed to carefully imply, so long as young women kept themselves in perfect shape to be positioned as unblemished specimens of the nation's fertile future, procreating healthy Australians. Indeed, the burgeoning nationalism that registers in *The Home* at this point was beginning to register across many aspects of Australian print culture, especially in the curating of the nation's literature. P. R. Stephensen and Nettie Palmer separately took aim at commercial culture, and magazines in particular, in well-intentioned cultural nationalism that sought to expunge exogenous influences on Australian literature, especially from Hollywood and more commercial magazines. The Modern Girl's embrace of sexual liberty became, in this way, a symbol of her tendency to be an impure and corrupted symbol of international modernity. As Jill Julius Matthews observes, even as and perhaps because the modern woman was the most

celebrated and contested figure of international modernity, a veneration of masculine aspects of modernity that conveyed a sense of virile nationalism led to a denigration of the feminine aspects of modernity as amoral, commercial, and corrupted by Americanisation (*Dance Hall* 6–7). The Modern Girl's sexuality was not her only feature, but it played a significant role in how the cross-class, vibrantly modern, sometimes overseas-published Australian novels that featured her were also sidelined or censored, even if they were well-received in their own time.

Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau* was central to my discussion of these novels. It also offered a heuristic for reading across a range of Australian print culture by presenting a triptych of Modern Girls who reflected the Working Modern Girl, the Mobile Modern Girl, and the Sexual Modern Girl. While *Jungfrau* itself, like the Australian Modern Girl more generally, has become largely invisible to literary history, it provided an imagined "social documentar[y]" (Cusack, qtd. in Freehill 9) that drew focused attention to new feminine modes of work, mobility, and sex in early twentieth century Australia, often absent from mainstream understandings of the Australian cultural and literary past. As such, Cusack's first novel offered a way, in the Australian context, to take up Rita Felski's proposition of undertaking a reassessment of modernity and modernism by taking seriously women who engage with "feelings, romantic novels, shopping, motherhood [or sexuality], [and] fashion" (22). The novel's three female protagonists—Thea, Eve, and Marc—included three-dimensional images of Australian modern womanhood, and, thus, became a centrepiece of this thesis. By revisiting this novel and its reception in the print culture of its own day, and contrasting this to its subsequent reception history, this chapter also opened up ways of considering attitudes toward the place of the Modern Girl in Australian literature, and to begin to understand her subsequent dismissal from view. The Modern Girl's appearance in other Australian novels of the time formed a vibrant, complex portrait; but alongside this three-dimensional image, another picture came into view. Her place regarding the intellectual project of Australian literature or a broader program of intellectual respectability was also unstable, insecure, and troublesome.

While offering a communist imagining of the plight of shop girls and Working Modern Girls, J. M. Harcourt's *Upsurge* offered another avenue for exploring this subsequent project of intellectual respectability that sidelined some aspects of the Modern Girl—and literature regarding her—while highlighting other aspects that were perceived as politically more serious or commanding. *Upsurge* is typically read as a socialist novel, or—when its portrayal of sex is taken up—it has been discussed considering its notorious status as a book that was banned in Australia. As a novel focused on work, politics, and corruption, it is suffused with portraits of all kinds of workers, including Working Modern Girls. In this way, *Upsurge* has been regularly relegated to the status of a censorship "museum piece" (Cowan 97) while a contemporaneous novel that takes up related topics, Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven*, has been resurrected and reprinted by critics several times over. In Harcourt's novel, Modern Girls are both antagonists and protagonists. Perhaps most conspicuously, however, within the world of the novel, the type of Modern Girl who is associated with buying and selling and who never achieves class-consciousness or becomes radicalised is ultimately cast aside. *Sugar Heaven* is celebrated by feminist critics, I argue, at least in part because its main character achieves a political awakening alongside her sexual awakening and distances herself from commercial culture. Yet in this arc of development, the Modern Girl in Devanny's novel becomes a politicised woman fighting for the socialist cause in ways that render her portraiture as a Modern Girl, at least in the beginning of the novel, all but invisible to later readers. What the juxtaposition of the two novels highlights is the troubled relationship of the Working Modern Girl associated with commercial culture in Harcourt's novel—which is subsequently overlooked entirely as a novel about women or Working Modern Girls at all. Contrastingly, a latter-day cast of feminist critics eagerly celebrates Devanny's *Sugar Heaven,* whose heroine relinquishes her unawakened, vapid status as a Modern Girl distracted by leisure and romance who comes to successfully embody the working-class struggle.

Dale Collins' *Race the Sun* is a novel that presents the precarious position of the Mobile Modern Girl in ways that highlight the ambiguous status of texts which featured her,

and texts that coalesced commercial culture and Hollywood success. This novel thematises the number of ways the Australian Modern Girl's newfound mobility attracted cultural anxiety as well as fascination in relation to a range of related issues she embodied. Indeed, the anxieties and fantasies associated with the very commercial and popular Modern Girl also surrounded novels that depicted her, like *Race the Sun*, not only when they were first published, but also subsequently. Collins' novel is highly entertaining with commercial, popular, and Hollywood appeal. Furthermore, Collins' book found success in emerging markets for new, clever, polished, and witty novels (especially overseas) and was even sold to a Hollywood film company, which often flaunted the Modern Girl and was hungry for entertaining storylines appealing to a mass market.

Yet, I argued that the Mobile Modern Girl figure represented by the aviatrix of this novel is a feature that makes her both attractive to some readers and distasteful to others, making fiction about her troublesome to paradigms of Australian literature that were emerging in the interwar period. In *Race the Sun,* the female protagonist and aviatrix Kay—through the various ways her mobility signifies both possibilities and precarity—not only functions as a mediator of modernity, but also an emblem of all that is wrong with it, as she traverses across the world, achieving success amongst both British high society sets and the American mass media. Clever and polished novels that took up transnational themes like Dale Collins' *Race the Sun* may have fit with understandings of what was culturally acceptable for an emerging British or American middlebrow audience. They might even have been acceptable for some segments of the Australian public. However, they—like the Modern Girl they featured—were indeed troublesome for building up an authentic Australian literature and culture, which favoured serious novels and tended to look inward, rather than favour clever satires of international modernity that looked outward, like Collins' *Race the Sun*.

Another novel that took up transnational and controversial themes was Jean Devanny's *Virtuous Courtesan*. This novel, I argued, is valuable to this project as it offered a candid perspective on Australian women's sexuality during the interwar period from the rare perspective of a female writer. Situated front and centre of this notorious novel is the Sexual

Modern Girl. Devanny's novel intersected with many debates and tensions of the interwar period, concerning the ways the Modern Girl was attempting to break free from restrictive and increasingly out-dated notions of sexual propriety. Devanny explored the Modern Girl's sexuality in ways that incited the censors to immediately ban the book as soon as it reached Australian shores. Its inclusion of a self-administered abortion, self-pleasure, birth control, sex outside marriage, prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism, and nudity caused the censors to describe it as a sex novel, and therefore American "tripe." But what my thesis, and the last chapter, has revealed is that the censor was not alone in regulating what was considered appropriate for the Australian reading public, extolling censorious attitudes, or judging—on weak grounds—appropriate or inappropriate standards of conduct and display, especially where the Modern Girl's sexuality was concerned. The lack of library holdings for *Virtuous Courtesan* suggests that librarians and archivists were another set of cultural gatekeepers who failed to differentiate between a genuine Australian literary artefact devoted to a frank discussion on women's sexuality and unworthy ephemera from overseas. *Virtuous Courtesan* is an important record of the attempts young modern Australian women were making in carving out new ways of living. Nevertheless, these attempts were clearly inscrutable to censors, librarians, and likely others as well. Certainly, not all Australians endorsed the tastes and judgements of the censor. As I showed in this chapter, while the public was more than willing to defend Norman Lindsay, figures like Jean Devanny were rarely defended. While Lindsay's work was lauded as clearly artistic and his reputation was one of a rakish male genius, Devanny's literary reputation amongst the public appeared more unstable in its own day, even if she was embraced by the literary community and subsequently celebrated for her socialist politics. Cultural gatekeepers prevented the Sexual Modern Girl's full expression. Furthermore, these more subtle attitudes made the Australian Modern Girl and novelists who took up her cause inscrutable, especially within emerging paradigms of what was considered good and true Australian literature. I have outlined a series of different attitudes that primped, shaped, excised, or censored the figure of the Modern Girl so that she was appropriate for her

Australian audiences. But ultimately, and perhaps most ironically, emerging paradigms of Australian literature in the interwar period further tainted the Modern Girl's reputation.

Perhaps most revealingly, these paradigms that shaped the canon of Australian literature have also been ones that dismissed the interwar period as an era that did not produce literature worthy of attention. To reiterate what I have mentioned in the Introduction, Russel Ward labelled the period as an "uncertain, cautious and shabby era" (Ward qtd. in Strauss 110) and Chris Wallace-Crabbe as the "saddest phase of Australian culture" (Wallace-Crabbe qtd. in Nile, "Literary Democracy"132). But, as this thesis has argued, tracking the footprints of the Modern Girl across the pages of magazines and novels that circulated through interwar Australia reveals a far more interesting and vibrant literary landscape than critics like Ward or Wallace-Crabbe have characterised. In this thesis, I have taken up the invitation from critics like Rita Felski, Drusilla Modjeska, Susan Sheridan, Maryanne Dever, and Jill Julius Matthews to ask more questions of this era and to position women as front and centre, recognising that women may occupy and speak from different positions within Australian culture previously overlooked in cultural and literary histories. This thesis goes some way to restoring the story of the Australian Modern Girl to Australian literary history. In so doing, it adds to work by scholars, such as Nicole Moore and Carole Ferrier, by contributing a significant Australian nuance to what Felski called "the gender of modernity." This thesis has made a case for re-reading the literary archive of Australia alongside, and in vibrant exchange with, the magazine archive of the past.

I sought to consider the gender of modernity across a range of issues and a range of Australian interwar print culture. In doing so, I noted modern Australian women engaged in or made incursions on the previously regarded male territories of work, mobility, and sex. The Modern Girl was rendered both as most glamorous and most troublesome in magazines and within the world of the novels I engaged with. While Wallace-Crabbe regarded the Australian interwar period as "uncertain, cautious and shabby" (Ward qtd. in Strauss 110), ultimately, the Sexual Modern Girl—the most controversial and overly represented version of the Modern Girl—could hardly be described in these terms. Instead, she embodied cultural

debates about women's sexuality that were helping to renegotiate sexual mores and values in ways that were distinctly not uncertain or cautious. Jill Julius Matthews explains that during the interwar period "Australians found the modern exotic, and sexualised it" (*Dance Hall* 63), and as I have argued in this thesis, the Modern Girl was the quintessential icon and representation of modernity. Most significantly, her exotic and erotic body was highly significant to this project of modernity. The Modern Girl flouted established mores and traditional values of class, race, and gender through her recalcitrant attitude and her bodily display. Furthermore, she did so during the very period when Australian literary nationalists sought to establish a firm understanding that Australia had a proud, authentic, literary tradition, grounded in the soil. Matthews notes that the early twentieth century saw "women's bodies [as] the battlefield," and issues to do with female sexuality were "out of the secrecy of the confessional and on to the pages of glossy magazines," where this issue was especially fought out (*Good and Mad Women* 112). Even though magazines were essential outlets for interwar Australian writers of all levels and varieties, magazine culture was perceived by many cultural elites as the enemy of serious national literature. I argue that it is because of this very association between the Modern Girl and magazine culture that her image, once so spectacularly present in interwar print culture, became subsequently invisible to the national literary record.

Even though the Modern Girl attracted attention of both positive and negative kinds during her time, her notoriety overshadowed her potential for agency and her vibrant expression of vernacular Australian modernity. I have argued that novels which feature her, and which also may have won positive critical attention in their own day (as in the case of *Jungfrau*), have also troubled paradigms of what constitutes an organic national literature. The Australian Modern Girl vibrantly appeared in both magazines and novels during an era when cultural commentators like Nettie Palmer and P. R. Stephensen positioned the development of an authentic Australian literature in direct antagonism with and in defence against the influence of magazine culture arriving from overseas. This is not insignificant. The novels that featured the Modern Girl were of ambiguous literary worth because they

straddled commercial fiction and serious writing, and their fascination with the Modern Girl—so thoroughly associated with consumer culture, with America, with Hollywood, and with the gender of modernity—is what generated their ambiguous literary worth. These novels, I argue, became troublesome in their value to emerging paradigms of Australian literature. This is precisely because of their engagement with the Modern Girl figure, who represented cosmopolitanism, capitalism, and contemporaneity. However, scholarly attention to these neglected aspects of interwar print culture, such as the attention this thesis has attempted to cultivate and capture, contributes to a more inclusive, complex, and nuanced picture of the Australian literary past: a past where women were not simply kept in their place, and where women's images, contributions, and complex lives can contribute to representations of Australian place and cultural identity.

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