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The power and the passion: Representations of single motherhood in contemporary Australian literature

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Abstract

This paper discusses the often vilified yet increasing prevalence of single-mothers and their representation in contemporary Australian literature. Historically, single motherhood has signalled disadvantage and adversity for both mothers and their children. However, as identity and gender politics since the 1990s have become so hotly contested and since notions of what 'a family' means are changing – especially since the recent legalisation of gay marriage in many states and countries – single motherhood *per se*, provides a fertile space for feminist exploration. As a socially constructed site, single motherhood represents fluidity, one in which women can reclaim power, creativity and sexuality outside of normative-nuclear-family dominance.

By investigating the fictive worlds of single mother protagonists in *Caddie* (Edmonds, 1953), *Monkey Grip* (Garner, 1977), *Honour and Other People's Children* (Garner, 1980) and *Camille's Bread* (Lohrey, 1995), this paper will reflect on how single mothers and their lived experiences have been depicted in contemporary Australian literature. As single mothers are doubly Othered, 1 first by nature of their sex, and second by their dislocation from the normative family, I draw on the theories of seminal feminist philosophers, Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray as well as Australian feminist historians and literary critics including Anne Summers, Jill Julius Matthews, Kerry Goldsworthy and Bronwyn Levy.

Despite the gains of second wave feminism and the rise in SMC (single mothers by choice), the paper will contest that 'the family' as an ideological construct together with the predominance of phallogocentric logic continues to inhibit single mothers' rights, equality and agency. It will also tease out the great contradiction of single motherhood: that patriarchy both enforces gendered and repressive values upon single mothers and their opportunities for transcendence, yet as a liminal, 'in-between' space, single motherhood represents an escape; a chance for re-imagination.

Introduction: Femininity ... patriarchally speaking

Helen Garner and Amanda Lohrey, like Kate Grenville, Elizabeth Jolley and many other Australian women writing in and after the 1970s, could be said to express, or at least be influenced by, Australian feminism which Susan Sheridan describes as a 'blend of home grown, French and American feminism' (Margery & Sheridan, 2002, p.140). While Garner refused to be drawn into what she labelled the 'academic discourse on feminism' (Brennan, 2019, p. 135), she noted that she also 'felt alienated by it; a feeling that seemed to confirm her belief that the gulf between contemporary academic feminism and the lived experience of many women remained immense.' (p. 135). Both Garner and Lohrey, with their concentration on female subjectivity, desire and agency, however, reimagine a *feminist* kind of feminine that is a stark departure from mainstream romantic tropes that posit marriage and children as the ultimate quest for women. As poet, Fiona Wright (2016, p.17) observes reflecting on fictional depictions of Australian suburbia and women's place in it:

... from 1970s onwards, women writers including Thea Astley, Helen Garner and Jessica Anderson began to re-inscribe these older suburban narratives with female characters, often both frustrated or stymied by suburbia and equally able to inhabit it differently, as what Belinda Burns describes as 'a realm empowered by the imagination' (2011, n.p.).

Representations of single motherhood in literature, typically and traditionally, revolve around and reflect on domestic spaces, personal relationships and how the single mother and her children manage their social, emotional and material worlds. In this way, they are an examination of how women as single mothers navigate the private and the political. Because of this focus on home, children, and the everyday, such novels tend to fall into the often-criticised, broad

category of 'women's writing' 2 which has historically been considered less accomplished than 'great men's authoritative stories' (Jacobs, 2001, p. 6). As Lyn Jacobs asserts, referring to the fluidity that now exists between literary genres, notably the intersection between fiction and autobiography:

Within competing realms of private and public revelation autobiography is a political act and it has been suggested that texts which stem from life or express a life have traditionally been received in gendered ways: that beyond the histories of great men's authoritative stories, women have been permitted the memoir...which supposedly catered for the domestic and the personal whence introspective unhealthiness like vanity and morbidity emanated (2001, p. 6).

While none of the novels discussed in this paper is a memoir, all 'cater to the domestic and the personal'. In fact, Helen Garner was controversially accused of publishing her diary when she wrote *Monkey Grip* (1977) 3, to which, years later, she responded, 'I did publish my diary. That's exactly what I did. I left out what I thought were the boring bits, wrote bridging passages, and changed all the names' (Daylight, 2012, p. 18), – an irony considering that 32 years later she did publish her diaries, titled, *Yellow Notebook Diaries 1978-1987* (2019), the content of which spans the decade following the publication of *Monkey Grip*.

One of the main barometers society uses to gauge the fitness of single mothers to mother and the quality of their mothering is 'morality' 4. Yet, as they usually have the children most of the time, it begs the question: why are fathers not similarly scrutinised? 5 I suggest that it is because the perceived 'natural' bias of 'women as caregivers' is still exploited by patriarchy. Similarly, cultural norms assume that men's sexual needs are greater, or more justifiable, and that women, once inculcated into motherhood, should prioritise nurturing:

[A] woman is never far from 'mother' (I mean outside her role functions: the mother as non-name and as source of goods). There is always a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink (Cixous, 1976, p. 881).

Yet, if patriarchal society is so sure that women's place is in the home, and that her primary role is to nurture, it remains puzzling that female-headed households continue to threaten the dominant ideology so. Perhaps it is because when single mothers are no longer tied to or dependent upon the father of their biological children, they are able to separate the breeding aspect of their life from the sexual. Meaning, that once a woman has given birth, she is then free – within the practical constraints of running a home – to re-imagine and reconstruct her life as a woman and a mother.

As Virginia Woolf observed, women's subjectivity has been historically mythologised by men. And as much of that mythology centres around male desire and the role of women to facilitate that desire – with procreation its 'natural' outcome – it is therefore, also 'natural', that the existence and, in fact, persistence of single mothers, especially as independent women continues to disturb the patriarchal status quo. In *A Room of One's Own* (1977 but first published in 1929), Woolf, a middle-class, woman writer and therefore a woman with agency, famously lauded the benefits of a private income and a room of one's own. A woman's access to a private space and enough money to live on (in Woolf's case £500 a year), was seen as giving a woman time to write and philosophise about the plight of womankind.

The plight that Woolf identified has undergone many shifts and reforms in the 91 years since she wrote the novel, a plight that, nonetheless, is still contingent on class, money, and education. Illuminating the stark contrast between women's 'real' lives and how they have been depicted fictionally she observed:

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact, she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell and was the property of her husband (1977, p. 43).

This last assertion, that 'she was the property of her husband', is what the single mother effectively escapes, notwithstanding that women's agency can regress, and that misogyny and violence towards women, across class and race are still pervasive. 6 Other celebrated literary examples of anti-heroines who depict the anguish of being at the mercy of variously unreasonable husbands include Dorothea Brooke in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2) and Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* (1847-48). Set a century before the advent of the second wave of feminism, both novels depict the extent to which women's agency was dependent on class and marriage.

Feminist takes on motherhood: Some theoretical context

de Beauvoir and The Second Sex

In a similar way to Woolf, writer and philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir defined the fundamental problem between the sexes succinctly, asserting that from 'patriarchy's earliest times' men have used their power 'to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes were set up against her; she was thus concretely established as the Other' (1949, p. 159). To escape this 'fundamental' bind, she argued for transcendence:

Woman is not a fixed reality but a becoming; she has to be compared with man in her becoming; that is, her *possibilities* have to be defined: what skews the issues so much is that she is being reduced to what she was, to what she is today, while the question concerns her capacities; the fact is that her capacities manifest themselves clearly only when they have been realised: but the fact is also that when one considers a being who is transcendence and surpassing, it is never possible to close the books (de Beauvoir, 2010, pp. 45-46).

De Beauvoir's foundational feminist arguments – some of which have been refuted by later feminists 7 – remain relevant today. Contemporaneously, a more integral sense of self, of 'becoming', is seen to be derived from a conflation of transcendence and immanence, an idea that resonates with a consideration of the private lives of women – especially women as mothers – as being both personal and political, with both aspects being equally valid. Nevertheless, I concur that 'it is never possible to close the books' because women's becoming is constantly in flux and her freedoms are yet to be fully conceptualised, mainly, in that she is still negotiating how to exist as *other than* 'other' to man. As well, because there are always detractors, conservatives wishing to take back rights such as abortion and impose essentialised femininity by re-enforcing 'masculine values'.

Cusk on de Beauvoir, Woolf and 'masculine values'

Novelist, Rachel Cusk, reflecting on de Beauvoir and Woolf, comments on the pervasiveness of these so-called 'masculine values' and how the contemporary face of feminism 8 may not be as progressive as it seems:

Feminism as a cultural and political crisis is seen to have passed. Marriage, motherhood and domesticity are regarded as so many choices, about which there is a limited entitlement to complain. If a woman feels suffocated and grounded and bewildered by her womanhood, she feels these things alone, as an individual: there is currently no public unity among women, because since the peak of feminism the task of woman has been to assimilate herself with man. She is, therefore, occluded, scattered, disguised. Were a woman writer to address her sex, she would not know who or what she was addressing. Superficially this situation resembles equality, except that it occurs within the domination of 'masculine values'. What today's woman has gained in personal freedom she has lost in political caste. Hers is still the second sex, but she has earned the right to dissociate herself from it (2009).

According to Cusk, the 'masculine values' of dominant patriarchal discourse continue to obfuscate women's identity 9 as well as their equality. Additionally, neoliberalism with its focus on individuality and assimilation, has rendered women 'occluded', 'scattered' and 'disguised'. Cusk's assessment, that the 'crisis' has *not* passed – despite that it is now 50 years since the second wave of feminism – suggests a need to re-focus on the personal as political 10, what constitutes 'women's values' and how these are reflected in 'women's writing' contemporaneously. Arguably, by unshackling from the normative nuclear family, with its 'suffocations', 'bewilderment' and gendered codes the single mother unties herself from *some* 'masculine values'. Bearing in mind that it is not as easy to separate from the public sphere of patriarchy 11, the sphere that controls most areas of life.

Goldsworthy: The collision of desire and patriarchy

One of the ways a woman might arrive at single motherhood is through acting on her passion or desire. Kerry Goldsworthy describes the conflict inherent within desire as being 'on a direct collision course with the thing in which it so often results, the family – an inescapable patriarchal institution' (1996, p. 12). This conflict, whether or not to succumb to the urge to become a mother, traditionally has not included (except perhaps for a few wealthy women), the choice between accepting or rejecting the 'patriarchal institution'. Before the single mother's pension was introduced in Australia in 1973 12, few women had the choice of motherhood without it being one controlled by men, meaning Goldsworthy's pithy irony is still relevant, especially its conflation of power and desire. And while desire often resulted in pregnancy, especially when contraception and abortion were harder to access, many single mothers were forced to give their babies up for adoption, a practice that has been in force until as late as 1969 (Sebastian & Ziv, 2019), with single mothers being ostracised and stigmatised as social pariahs for not adhering to the patriarchal marriage model.

Rosi Braidotti contends that 'the exchange of women as socio-symbolic merchandise that circulates among men lies at the core of the patriarchal social contract' (2011, p. 199) and Irigaray locates the source of women's repression as being resultant upon the bartering/trading of women, who are 'marked phallically by their fathers, husbands, procurers ...' (1985, p. 31). Both clearly denote that women's 'currency', like most commercial activity – for example, breeding – has historically been supervised, controlled and profited by patriarchal organisation and establishments. Yet if the single mother aspires to the goals set out by the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s – a decent and equal education, access to childcare, control over one's fertility and financial independence, all of which equate to a stronger sense of self and the wherewithal to manage her material world – she is better placed to further enhance her agency and desire, and unshackle herself from at least some aspects of the 'patriarchal social contract'.

Heterosexuality and its discontents

My discussion, like that of much of Irigaray, is predicated on an assumption of heterosexuality, with a caveat that heterosexuality is not the problem *per se* when trying to untie women (and men) from the dominance and repression of phallogocentric logic. Matthews acknowledges that the 'existence of some distinctions between people on the basis of gender seem inevitable' (1984, p. 200) but describes the 'landscape of Australian femininity' (1984, p. 200) to be a maze in which compulsory heterosexuality is part of the entrapment. She argues that 'only when the path of feminine sexuality is widened to accommodate the choice of, for example, lesbianism and celibacy as validly as that of heterosexuality will the precondition of genuine sexual happiness exist' (1984, p. 200).

Queer theory and feminist theory are equally concerned with removing repressive gender roles and mobilising subjectivity. Both dismantle myths of femininity and masculinity, and argue for agency, becoming and the reconstruction of stereotypically binary-repressed identities. I propose that – drawing on a combination of these theories – once a woman has become a single mother, either through a conscious decision to parent singly, or as a result of the dissolution of a partnered relationship, she is then free to re-imagine and re-define her subjectivity, as *both* a woman and a mother (within the constraints of the public sphere of patriarchy and the private spheres of her own materiality).

Maternal and erotic desire

Before contraception and abortion were widely available, heterosexuality literally was beyond her control, but even since their availability, the decision to have a child or not continues – for many women – to be fraught. The intersection of maternal and erotic desire, therefore, remains a pre-occupation for women and feminism. Reasons include the reluctance to take time out of careers, financial constraints, as well as concerns about the future of the planet and negotiating parenthood with a significant other. Single motherhood by choice (SMC) 13 still must contend with the first three issues, but not the fourth. As a lifestyle choice it gives autonomy to the mother, as well as providing a transitional role for women who are 'between' relationships or escaping domestic violence. Lohrey's protagonist Marita in *Camille's Bread* (1995), for example, exemplifies the SMC style of single mother, who, despite her concentration on her sense of 'self' also manages to construct the idealised mother-daughter relationship that is central to her identity. Bronwyn Cran questions what it means when a 'typically political' writer such as Lohrey engages with 'women's' subject matter: 'Does the fairy tale or the domestic romance represent a retreat from political engagement?' (2001, p. 35). In contrast, Garner's single mothers tend to be:

... survivors who tend to live their politics rather than talk about them and who cope as best they can with the consequences – the consequences usually being some version of what Simone de Beauvoir has called 'the awful tension of unsupported freedom' (Goldsworthy, 1985, p.513)

One of the main constraints of normative motherhood is the assumption that woman's needs have been met by having had a child or children, which, completely ignores a woman's ongoing erotic desire, by conflating erotic and maternal desire as one and the same – or worse – that a woman's erotic desire is only really validated by maternity. An assumption that is borne out because women's 'power' is still deemed to reside in procreation and caring, within the patriarchal marriage model. Which is something that both Garner and Lohrey's single mother protagonists resist; Garner's by prioritising the erotic over the maternal, especially in the case of Nora who has multiple lovers throughout *Monkey Grip*, and Lohrey's by repeatedly drawing attention to the fact that her new boyfriend, Stephen 'pervades the house with a masculine presence ...' (Lohrey, 1995, p.97).

Referring to Foucault's (1978) work on power and sexuality, Elizabeth Grosz attests that '[s]exuality is nothing other than the effect of power' and that 'power is able to gain hold on bodies, pleasures, energies, through the construction and deployment of sexuality' (1994, p. 154). Since the advent of SMC, women have been able to reclaim power over their sexuality by not adhering to normative nuclear family values and choose maternity under their own terms. Similarly, women have been able to leave unsatisfactory relationships, both of which augur well for the enhancement of single motherhood as a viable escape route for women experiencing domestic violence.

In this way, despite the statistics that attest to abuse, poverty and stigmatisation, I argue that single motherhood *per se* represents a respite from patriarchal oppression and control, and a significant site for 'becoming'. 14 Cixous urges that women must 'speak from and through their bodies' and exist 'in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic' (1976, p. 881) and Irigaray claims that:

Our urgent task is to refuse to submit to a de-subjectivised social role, the role of the mother, which is dictated by an order subject to the division of labour – he produces, she reproduces – that wall us up in the ghetto of a single function. When did society ever ask fathers to choose between being men or citizens? We don't have to give up being women to be mothers (1993, p. 18).

That 'we don't have to give up being women to become mothers' is the main reason I contend that single motherhood offers an escape route – not for all – but for those women who don't like being 'walled up' simply because they have given birth to a child. At least then – if Cusk's assertion that 'women are *still* the second sex and are *still* invisible as an entity in their own right' is correct – a woman can at least be both a mother and a woman. A woman *and* a mother, with a future of her own, including an ongoing love life and whatever else she might envisage, as a becoming, *not*-other to man, person/mother/woman. Freud's famously asked, 'What do women want?' question redressed by Summers (2013), contextualises Cusk's dilemma, as well as speaking to the gendered disparity of women transgressing femininity in search of success – *or worse* – wanting 'it all':

If once we were vapid creatures who, in the view of Sigmund Freud, could not decide what we wanted, now we are voracious careerists who want the lot. That the question is posed is, of course, gratuitous and demeaning, since the 'all' refers to having a job and a family. If you are a bloke, you can have it 'all' without anyone raising an eyebrow – or even asking how you manage to 'do it all' (2013, p. 1).

An historical framework: Single mothers as 'fallen' women and 'a polluting influence'

As the focus of this paper is to analyse and discuss representations of contemporary single motherhood, this historical framework 15 is presented as a gauge to compare how visibility, agency and equality have progressed – or not – for single mothers and their children. While the main literary analysis focuses on works written since the Whitlam era, textual examples from *Caddie* (Edmonds, 1953) the novel based on the life of Catherine Edmonds, will be included. In providing an historical context for single mothers in Australia, I do not claim to accurately assess the extent of the abuse against Aboriginal single mothers. What is clear, however, as Dever states, is that the 'perceived crisis of reproduction and degeneration (2005, p. 56)' buoyed by the White Australia policy 16 meant that historically 'white women' were overwhelmingly privileged as the 'mothers of the nation'.

Stigmatising the strays

In *Single Mothers and Their Children* (1995), Shurlee Swain states that in the 18th and early 19th centuries, single motherhood was 'a normative condition' and a 'risk faced by virtually every sexually active woman', and that:

... the stigma which it attracted was a powerful one with lifelong effects on both mother and child and as such was one means by which a patriarchal society policed the behaviour of all heterosexual single women (1995, pp. 5-6).

Swain also locates the stigma against single mothers as being rooted in the doctrines of Christianity that was transmitted from Britain to the Australian colony, describing its moral and economic impetus as being 'an attempt to safeguard the institution of marriage while minimising the cost of transgression for those who had an obligation to maintain the poor' (1995, p. 3). Swain's account illuminates how convenient it was – and I argue, still is – for the patriarchy to stigmatise single women as deviant for daring, or being forced to, live outside of its patriarchal ideology: the price of which has consistently proven to include discipline, punishment, the perpetuation of vilification and poverty, which compounded the risk of single mother's losing their children. That this was the case until just a century ago, is testament to how much ideology was, and still is, subject to historical, political and cultural shifts. Until as late as the 1970s many Aboriginal and 'unmarried' white women from poor and religious families were pressured into forced adoptions. 17

Post second wave feminism: One step forward, one step sideways, one step back

Reflecting on the history of Australian feminism until the 1980s, Jill Julius Matthews attests:

Every change in the patterns of the gender order brought new opportunities for women and closed off others. Across the century, the feminine dance is curiously constant: one step forward, one step sideways, one step back (1984, p. 199).

And as so many of the changes that occurred during the 1970s constituted progress, you could, understandably, have believed that as the century drew to a close, such progress would continue. But reforms and advances for Australian women have not always proceeded in a positive, linear trajectory. Anne Summers distinguishes and elaborates on the difference between progress and success in *The Misogyny Factor* (2013, pp. 72-103), noting that once activist women – pejoratively described in the 1980s as 'femocrats' 18 – were no longer pervasive in government, subsequent activism and reform were short-lived, and not to be revitalised – at least not to any extent – until the introduction of the Hawke-Keating government in 1983. And then again, in 2012, largely in response to the vilification of Julia Gillard by Tony Abbott 19, provoking her famously cited and received anti-sexism speech in parliament. 20

I suggest that this is because the rhetoric and stereotypical expectations of being a woman, especially one of child-bearing age, remain inherently essentialist, as attested to by the high cost and unavailability of child-care, and the lack of wage parity and flexible working conditions for women. And, that it is the same gendered and sexist attitudes that stigmatise all women, whether they are poor single mothers or women of means. Consciously or unconsciously the ideology still pervades that a woman's *real* job is to be a mother and her place is to conform to a patriarchally defined, and in this country, capitalist order.

And even if women choose to avoid the constraints of motherhood, by 'remaining childless' they still risk being rejected as 'unnatural' for not having – or not having satisfied – the 'correct' biological desires. Considering women's historical vilification in literature, for example, *Madame Bovary* (Flaubert, 2012, orig.1856), *Jane Eyre* (Bronte, 1847) and *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoy, 2014, orig 1877) 21 through a modern lens, tends to imply that, contemporaneously, things have changed. But how much, and for which women, is debatable. Women are still marked off as man-haters, hags, lesbians, cronies, spinsters, and described as frigid, selfish and 'barren' if they choose *childlessness* over procreation. One of the most prescient recent examples of gendered discrimination in the workplace, was in 2007, when Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan, addressing fecundity and referring to Julia Gillard, said that 'anyone who chooses to deliberately remain barren ...They've got no idea what life is about' (cited in Summers, 2013, p. 121).

Herein lies the trap of exclusion for woman – she is damned both ways for daring to pursue a career *and* 'remaining' childless. Yet no matter how qualified or able she may be for her chosen profession, she is still potentially unreliable in that she may *fall* pregnant. Conversely, single mothers, despite that they have obeyed patriarchy's call to reproduce, are also damned and placed in an irredeemable double bind, though a different one. They are vilified for not working, and are often negatively represented for being poor, bad role models and reliant on welfare. As recently as 2014, Anwen Crawford described 'single mothers and Aboriginal people as the proverbial canaries in the coal mine when it comes to welfare policy, in large part because so few people will stand up for them' (2014, p. 11). The gendered mythology inherent in the terms 'childlessness' and 'single motherhood' continue to stymie women, showing that neither a propensity for maternity, nor its avoidance, frees a woman from the gendered expectations of patriarchally prescribed motherhood.

Single motherhood through the lens of contemporary Australian literature

From 19th century literary greats such as Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, James and Hardy through to their 20th century counterparts such as Lawrence, Fitzgerald, Woolf and Steinbeck (to name but a few), narrative fiction has traditionally offered a powerful creative vehicle through which many contentious social and political issues such as class and gender have been examined. The following section discusses examples of these themes as explored by some of Australia's most prominent contemporary female novelists. Single motherhood provides a useful lens through which to view both the constraints of, and womens' resistance to, patriarchy. Both of which have roots in the convict/battler colonial history that shaped dominant, white, Australian culture; a culture that has been proved to be stringently patriarchal, while simultaneously mythologising a spirit of resistance.

Catherine Edmonds 'Caddie' (1953): Life before the 1973 Single Mother's pension

In the the Great Depression during which Catherine Edmonds' novel, *Caddie* (1953) was set, the constraints imposed by patriarchy on single mothers were even more stringent. Radical for its time – with feminist and class issues pointedly addressed – *Caddie* exemplifies what a young single mother had to deal with before any significant government assistance was available in post-World War II Australia. Abortion was illegal, yet 'illegitimacy' was the term that enforced the ideology that unmarried pregnant women did not fit into the patriarchal order, despite that this was one of Australia's 'population'

obsessed periods' – one in which – 'the growing consensus drew much of its power from fears about the falling birth-rate, encoded in concerns about the future of the race' (Swain, Warne, & Grimshaw, 2005, p. 23). Single mothers had even less chance than their married contemporaries of gaining employment, despite their ineligibility for welfare. 22 For, as male 'experts' agreed, *even* the employment of married women led to 'contraception, neglect of homes and husbands, abandonment of breastfeeding, farming out of babies and increased infant death' (2005, p. 23 *my emphasis*). This mention of the neglect of husbands, conflates much about the implications of the maternal role extending far beyond the care and responsibility of children.

In Edmonds' novel, Caddie's husband Jon admits he is in love with her friend Esther, then pushes Caddie against a cabinet, says he hates her and doesn't care about their children. Even so, he insists that his mother will look after them, showing a cruel and blatant use of patriarchal control, as he barter for – typically – his son:

I'll compromise with you... [...] You take Anne and leave Terry here. Then I'll pay you what the law allows for you and the baby's support, but I warn you, any funny business then you'll not get a cent and you won't even have Ann (1953, p. 43).

After Caddie responds that she doesn't have any intention of parting with her children (1953, p. 43), she muses on the veracity of Jon's mother's threat to keep her older, male child, Terry:

If I didn't give up the children without a fuss, she'd take me to court. She'd bring witnesses to prove I was an unsuitable mother. Hadn't I gone out as a wet nurse and neglected my husband and son for sheer greed? (1953, p. 46).

This typifies the plight of a woman damned both ways. Poverty drives her to sell her only asset – her milk – yet she is to be punished for 'greed' and 'neglect', by her traitorous ex mother-in-law. And a little later, Caddie reflects on her friend's abortion that was performed with a piece of wire:

I shuddered to think of all the unfortunate girls who must have lost their lives rather than face the cruel criticism and unjust treatment that would be their lot if they had an illegitimate 23 child. Not only their reputation suffers, but their chance of earning a decent living (1953, p. 87).

Despite the odds that are stacked against her, Caddie expresses and asserts her sexual desire and her right to have a lover in a moral climate that firmly dictated that the mother's happiness must be sublimated to that of the husband. When she is first going out with her new friend, Ted, she muses on the conflict of desire and propriety:

It was nice being kissed like that, but I felt ashamed, standing there, as though I had no right to let him kiss me. Then I thought to myself, why shouldn't I? Hadn't John walked out on me? Why should I act like a foolish young girl when I had been through the mill? A married woman with two children! (1953, p. 90).

Despite the fact that Caddie is unable to evade poverty, vilification, and the injustice of her ex-mother-in-law's use of patriarchal power against her, she re-evaluates her subjectivity as a woman with children and expresses her erotic desire and agency by asserting her right to an ongoing love life.

Naturally Garner, politically Lohrey

Until the latter part of the 19th century, far fewer women than men writers were published, and of those who were, for example; Miles Franklin, Barbara Bayton and Dorothea Mackellar, most were white. The first Aboriginal woman's writing to appear in print was a book of poems in 1964 by Oodgeroo/Kath Walker's: 'We are Going' (Sheridan 2011, p. 3). While fictional representations of single motherhood in Australian literature are still comparatively few, they have steadily increased, in line with the social and political changes that have occurred since the 1970s. I will discuss how Garner and Lohrey reflect on the subjectivity of single mothers, their material lives and sexual desire while challenging patriarchal norms and values. Helen Garner and Amanda Lohrey's fictional single mothers – heeding Irigaray – don't 'give up being women to be mothers' (1993, p.18). Nor do most Australian women writers who discuss single motherhood, 24 rather, they ruminate on their subjectivity and their political, social and sexual positions. Perspectives on single motherhood in Australian writing since 1973, therefore, range from presentations of it as 'natural', to awareness of it as a political position, to dark and – in the case of Elizabeth Jolley – comedic reflections on how the constraints of motherhood and the family conflate with female desire and its repression.

Helen Garner: 'A kind of grant'

In Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip* (1977) and *Honour and Other People's Children* (1980), single motherhood is represented as 'naturalistic', an agentic alternative to the nuclear family, in a social climate that endorsed 'breaking down old structures' (1980, p. 80), inferring that the disembling of monogamy, and by extension, patriarchy, is a given. And it is in these fictive households, typically populated with 'usually educated men and women of Melbourne's inner suburbs, not especially well off, often intellectual or creative in bent' (Richardson, 1997, p.97) that Garner illuminates the:

... fault lines in feminist theory – the places where, in actually trying to manage their lives and language, women must choose among conflicting theories and strategies: how to interpret; how (and whether, and what) to utter; how to act. Victim or agent? (Goldsworthy, 1996, p.6).

As well as remarking that Garner was on the single mother's pension while writing *Monkey Grip* and referring to it as 'a kind of grant' (p. 12), Kerry Goldsworthy observes that Garner's fiction explores the degree to which romantic love is constituted by female desire, the degree to which it is perceived as a cultural construct; and the degree to which by

definition, it limits feminine agency (p. 30).

The fact that Garner's single mother protagonists have children, doesn't seriously impede their sexual desire or agency, and although they discuss the politics of parenting and the dilemmas of love, sex and relationships, their positionality, behaviour and subjectivity depict an aware, if not a strident, demonstration of the personal as political. Her single mother characters, Ruth and Nora, treat single motherhood as 'natural' in that they ruminate on aspects of it, *but not* its existence, and express their private and political concerns, across a backdrop of Melbourne's ramshackle collective households, music venues, pubs and the odd playhouse. In *Monkey Grip* (1977) Nora jokes:

Help!' I thought vaguely. 'I'm too young to be a mother. I don't know enough. I can't bring up a kid. I'm not a real grown-up. One day the real mother will come back, and I'll only have been babysitting and then I can go home (1977, p. 34).

The narrative drive of *Monkey Grip* hinges on Nora's irrepressible desire for Javo, *not* single motherhood. Nora is a natural confident mother who takes single motherhood as a given, though she does ruminate on negotiating the two disparate parts of her life: the maternal and the erotic: 'People like Javo need people like me, steadier, to circle around for a while; and from my centre, held there by children's needs, I stare longingly outwards at his rootlessness' (1977, p. 7). In this way Garner's single mothers express a concrete sense of their subjectivity and their right to love and sex, even if they don't always get what they want. Nora fluctuates between her obsession with Javo and pragmatically, having sex with several men other than Javo:

Lou was going to come and stay with me, but he didn't show up...He walked in at lunchtime, when Gracie and I were sitting eating an artichoke. He came straight over and kissed me on the mouth, and hugged me. He said nothing about not coming around the night before. I didn't care at all. There's a warning in there somewhere (1977, p. 116).

Aside from drawing attention to the often, unreliable nature of the man as lover, Garner addresses the more subtle aspect of sexual conquest: namely, that if the requisite power of attraction, made material by 'caring' is lacklustre or non-existent, the liaison is doomed to fail. A wry, but ever so honest assessment of one of the functional aspects of desire, and typical of one of the intricacies that women talk about when discussing relationships, which Garner's protagonists regularly do. In the next refrain – in which Nora tentatively asks Bill's sort-of girlfriend, Bonny, if he mentioned sleeping with her after Paddy's party – and if she's alright about it – Garner philosophises about the contingencies of jealousy.

'Of course it is. It's not a matter of jealousy – not with you, anyway, because I love you. It's just that he's given me the bum's rush...'

'Why are they like that?' I said...'

'It's that old thing about 'having room to move'' she said.

'They're afraid of being emotionally pressured...you know, the old fears of manipulation, of moral pressure – because of course for centuries women have been the conscience of the world' (1977, pp. 122-123).

In this instance, Garner conflates the 'sisterhood' with jealousy – because Bonny *loves* Nora, and this makes her the *right* kind of woman with whom to share her man. In fact, so much so that Bonny is even willing to discuss his unwillingness to commit to her with one of his recent conquests. Yet together they lament the status quo – while liberation and contraception have made 'free love' de rigueur, the nature of male sexuality still demands that women need to be the 'conscience of the world'. Clearly the political here overrides the personal, though throughout the novel Nora's angsts mainly focus on the personal. '*Giving it all away*' (pp. 102-103) is one of her repeating refrains in this novel – which reflects on both the effects the women's movement has had on sexual relationships and her private struggle with Javo. Garner's Nora, as befits her age (early 30s), comments on the collision between her sense of self and her addictive love:

I thought about the patterns I make in my life: loving, loving the wrong person, loving not enough and too much and too long. What'll I do? How much of myself will be left hanging in tatters when (*if: I don't want to end it*) I wrench myself away at this time? I have this crazy habit, a habit as damaging as his, of *giving it all away* (1977, pp. 102-103).

Helen Garner: Ruth's harness of gloom ... Scotty's maternal dilemma

In *Honour and Other People's Children* (1980), two novellas that centre on domestic life, children and relationships, Garner's protagonist Ruth, (*Other People's Children*) 'enjoyed starting sentences with 'us deserted wives', 'us single mums' invoking with a sniff and a twisted grin the sisterhood of adversity' (1980, p. 101) whilst juggling her love-life and single motherhood. And despite that Ruth is a less robust character than Garner's Nora, she takes single motherhood and her access to the recently instituted, Single Mother's pension as a given. When her pension cheque arrives and she says, 'Whacko! Pension day' with the cigarette hanging from her bottom lip, as she rips open the narrow envelope, scanning the cheque for deductions' (p. 76), her friend and housemate, Scotty, who is 'drowsy in the sun and late for work', jokes, 'Money for nothing...I should have had a kid after all. Given up teaching' (p. 76). To which, Ruth – described by Bernadette Brennan as a single mother weighed down by a 'harness of gloom' (2017, p. 62) – snaps 'You call that nothin'? Being a mother in this society?' (Garner, 1980, p. 76). Garner as narrator then informs that 'Scotty, who didn't like being corrected', in her wry voice, muses:

Hmmm...Just the same. It would have been different for me, if I'd had a kid now. It's a different kind of decision these days from what it was before the women's movement, when you had yours. If you had kids before the penny dropped, you're in the clear aren't you. Proved yourself both ways (1980, p. 77).

Here, Scotty expresses exasperated ennui about her dilemma. She is forced – courtesy of her political awareness (feminism) – to adhere to distinct moral obligations. Motherhood has become contingent, meaning Scotty would now be obliged to make it a political act, rather than blundering through, as she – somewhat obliquely – infers that Ruth does.

Brennan (2017, p. 62) also comments on the fragility of loving other people's children and the collective responsibility of parenting in share houses, and Scotty's, sometimes, brittle character: 'Scotty embraces that responsibility with Laurel, Ruth's daughter. She has had two abortions and a tubal ligation. She is bossy and short-tempered, but she loves Laurel' (p. 62): 'in the tentative way in which we love other people's children, fearful of rejection, even of mockery, loving without rights, thanklessly' (Garner 1980, p. 73).

After a lengthy conversation with Laurel, in which Scotty reassures her that she is neither fat nor ugly, Scotty, quite candidly, states that her little brother, Wally 'is a shit' (p. 74), to which Laurel explains that Wally doesn't want her to be her sister when there are other kids around, and that he's not proud of her. When Scotty insists that she is proud of her, Laurel replies, 'But you're not in my family' and 'no matter how much you love me' 'you can never be my real mother' (p. 75).

Yet this was not the case a few years earlier, when the kids 'were everybody's kids' as Scotty explains to Alex, reminiscing about their previous household, in which Ruth had started a new women's group:

It was a big household. Rosters. Telling life stories. Signs! When was the last time you saw a man round here with a broom in his hand? Revolution begins in the kitchen...the kids were everybody's kids. We thought everything we'd theorised about was coming true. Breaking down old structures (p. 80).

Another indication from Garner that by the end of the seventies, the political zeitgeist has shifted, away from revolution. Looking back – as both the narrative and a forty-year later reading does – there is a naive quality about the era, but also a sense that people; men and women, had energy, agency, and enough belief in the future to warrant 'breaking down old structures'.

Amanda Lohrey: Romanticising single motherhood in 'Camille's Bread'

In contrast to Garner's depictions, the central character Marita in Amanda Lohrey's *Camille's Bread* (1995), foregrounds and romanticises single motherhood, making it a central motif. The opening scene depicts Marita and her eight-year-old daughter, Camille, dancing in the kitchen, 'just the two of them, gambolling in a playful embrace, like lovers; the feminine principle, triumphant, ecstatic, cut loose in its own dream' (1995, p. 2). The kitchen, thus established as maternal, becomes a contested site that Stephen has difficulty penetrating, both literally and symbolically. The rest of the novel pivots on Marita's oscillation between her daughter and Stephen's needs. Stephen is obsessed with Marita's natural grace, emphasised by his repeated references to her 'poise' 25 a poise he desires for himself, which hints at both her impenetrability, and his desire to colonise her, or – if not her – her sense of self. This could also be read as a fascination with the other. From Marita's viewpoint, Lohrey muses on Stephen's otherness as a lover, in relation to the female figures in his family:

Perhaps this is her hold over him: that she is not at all like his mother, or his sister; that she is uniquely foreign to him: that he cannot *explain* her. Love is supposed to be a recognition, some mirror image of the self, but then again, it is just as likely to be a recognition of the non-self. A distinctly other form of enchantment (1995, p. 85).

In reflecting on 'her hold over him', on how and why she is desired, Marita reflects on the nature and quality of her desirability, not *if she is* desirable. Much feminist discussion is about prioritising the female gaze. Here, Lohrey clearly makes Marita's subjectivity central. And, in deciding that attraction can be attributed as easily to recognition as difference, Lohrey again contrasts the recognition of maternal love with the 'difference' of the unknown, the erotic. Six weeks later in narrative time, Marita comments on her resistance to desire:

Who is this cuckoo in her garden? Who is this blackbird of desire? It's been six weeks and, mostly, Stephen has been on his best behaviour, yet in some way he pervades the house with a masculine presence... (1995, p. 97).

Again, conflating desire and single motherhood, and the darker aspects of Stephen's 'masculine presence'. Despite that she acknowledges the 'blackbird of desire' aspect of his attraction she is also repelled by, and wary of, his cuckoo-like qualities. Considering that the cuckoo is regarded as a parasite that lays its eggs in other's nests and tends their young, it could be read as a metaphor for Stephen as both a 'parasitic' lover and a false father to Camille. Yet, Stephen also offers an escape from one of single motherhood's more negative aspects – the relentlessness of responsibility:

She'd forgotten how invasive men are, how *there* they are, even when they're out. She had let him into her bed too suddenly, overwhelmed by desire, eager to feel the hot rush of it once again and to let go, yes, that's it, to just let go, and stop being in control for once, to stop being *responsible* (1995, p. 97).

Here, Lohrey draws a link between sex and orgasm, as a means of escape; not only bodily release, but a mental, if short-lived, reprieve from always having to be in control.

Marita's quest centres on a reconstruction of self, reflecting the social shifts that occurred after the post-Pill, pre-AIDS era. In stark contrast to Nora in *Monkey Grip* who approaches life head-on, sweeping Gracie up in her wake, Marita prioritises her private life, taking a year off work to re-group and focus on Camille. What is less stated, but also becomes clear as the novel develops, is Marita's desire to get her love and creative lives back on track. Thus, while her quest is primarily domestic and private, she is also seeking re-engagement in other areas.

Intellectually, she records casual interviews and re-arranges the words. She keeps the tapes – which she claims are 'meant to be random, a morass, like the unconscious. Dark matter under the bed' (Lohrey 1995, p. 53) – in a box of her grandmothers – quite literally, under the bed. Creatively, she bakes, dances and gardens. Socially, she engages with friends and neighbours and emotionally, she takes a leap of faith with Stephen, despite his rigidity and the fact that she's been single for seven years. Her concentration on her development of 'self' does not, however, sideline her protectionist and idealistic attitude to her relationship with Camille, which, we come to realise stems from a desire to reverse the lack of nurture that she perceives she received from her own mother. For most of the novel – except when they are having sex – Stephen and Marita remain locked in their separate existential anxieties; with Stephen never fully able to captivate Marita, or understand her symbiotic relationship with Camille. From his default, outsider position he observes:

... that distracted air mothers have, a part of them always watching the child; wanting to be separate, wanting too to draw the child back to them. He finds this erotic, the ambivalence of women; the co-existence of the loving heart alongside the evil eye, like two sides of Picasso's face; the nurturing smile that dips into the leer (1995, p. 80).

Stephen is not only at a loss to conquer the ambivalent maternal, but he must also accept that it is Marita who holds the patriarchal position of head of the family and that he is living in her home. This becomes ironic on many levels. Firstly, because Stephen's main goals are to rid himself of his origins and his ego. Secondly, because, as he avers, he is not particularly fond of mothers. And thirdly, because, despite his aim to achieve poise and harmony in his life, he proves himself to be a man of very 'masculine' values, from his phallic knives to his readiness to resort to violence when provoked.

Bronwyn Levy argues that Lohrey 'writes maternal plots, and that maternal desire and what to do about it is the key question facing the characters in her fiction' (2015, p. 48), and that she asks how 'modern women aged thirty-something seek and claim the maternal sphere, thus placing the maternal body as an erotic body and maternal desire as erotic desire at the centre of her plots' (p. 48). This conflict between the maternal and the erotic, lies at the heart of all the novels discussed. However, where Lohrey's *Camille's Bread* differs is in its privileging and reverence of motherhood, and in that it is Marita who ultimately triumphs. She maintains control of her domain; the home she has established as a sanctuary, despite that she succumbs to her erotic desire. Whereas, Garner's Nora in *Monkey Grip*, while aware that she has agency and choice, remains prey to her desire.

Conclusion: Rattling the cage of the patriarchy

Discussing the fiction of women writers in the 1970s and 1980s, Levy, as well as observing a tendency to 'present personal and domestic politics as the chief focus' (1987, p. 225), notes the predominance of 'a central female character (sometimes an artist or writer) who 'achieves self-realisation' in a way that allows her to make crucial decisions about the future running of her life' (1987, p. 225). In this sense the material world of the single mother previously portrayed as scary, intimidating and unmanageable outside of the patriarchal marriage model, becomes a site for adventure and change, the subjectivity shifting to the management of her material world.

Irigaray's consideration of the limitations that maternity imposes on women's creativity and her theorising about the meaning of the word 'mother', are also expansive, disinhibiting and provocative when advocating for single motherhood as a site for agency and reimagination:

We also need to discover and declare that we are always mothers just by being women. We bring many things into the world apart from children, we give birth to many things apart from children: love, desire, language, art, social things, political things, religious things, but this kind of creativity has been denied to us for centuries. We must take back this maternal creative dimension that is our birth right as women (1993, p. 18).

This taking the literalness out of mothering – that we do not need to actually conceive to mother – is an idea also expressed by Kristeva, who, while she is aware of the restrictions 'imposed upon mothers by the symbolic systems and economic limitations' believes that 'motherhood is not an obstacle but a tool for creative production' (Cunha, 2012, p. 228).

Leading by example, single mothers show that women can in fact run the home, an irony for many women who do most of the work within it anyway. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Social Trends notes in 2009 that:

By remaining single, mothers are released from the role of cook, cleaner and laundress for husbands who, even in 2009, contribute vastly less housework and childcare compared with their working wives. Women enduring a 'double shift' are increasingly intolerant of their labours being exploited to support the privilege of male leisure activities. 26

To conclude, I suggest that even if Cusk's assertion 'What today's woman has gained in personal freedom she has lost in political caste' (2009) is true, single motherhood at least presents a contested space; one that interrogates 'masculine' and 'feminine' values and persists in rattling patriarchal values and control. A control that must be constantly interrogated,

challenged and fought against, for as Matthew's keenly observes, 'the feminine dance is curiously constant: one step forward, one step sideways, one step back (1984, p. 199).

Notes

1.

See Rosi Braidotti for explanation of Othering (footnote 14).

2. Since the 1970s, a wide range of feminist writers have made a significant contribution to scholarship by uncovering the lost histories of real women as well as revealing the subversive zone occupied by women's imagined reconstructions of reality. Another aspect of the critical project has been to reveal the complex operation of patriarchy, or to recover dissident readings lurking within traditional texts. In these terms, the literary canon has been challenged, both from within, and from the outside – from the position of exclusion, silence, and oppression (McCormick, 2016, p. 1).

3. Peter Corris stated that 'she had 'published her private journal rather than written a novel'(1977, p.12).

4. The early capitalist period in the United States produced an ideology of the "moral mother" – bourgeois women were to act as both nurturant moral models to their children and as nurturant supporters and moral guides for husbands on their return from the immoral, competitive world of work. While the ideology of the moral mother has lost some of its Victorian rigidity, it has also spread throughout society. Women of all classes are now expected to nurture and support husbands in addition to providing them with food and a clean house (Chodorow, 1978, p. 5).

5. The majority of single parent families with resident children aged 0 to 17 years were lone-mother families (85%). Australian Bureau of Statistics, Family Characteristics, Australia, 2009–10, Catalogue No 4442.0. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4442.0> viewed 27/7/2020

6. The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia' May 2016, p.4. Prepared by KPMG for the Australian Department of Social Services. We estimate the cost of violence against women and their children at \$22 billion in 2015–16. We have separated the costs into seven categories. These relate to the economic and non-economic impact of pain and suffering, and the impacts of violence on the health system, production and consumption, children, the justice and service system, and transfer payments. [summary_report_may_2016.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_summary_report_may_2016.pdf) https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_summary_report_may_2016.pdf viewed 27/7/2019

7. Toril Moi demonstrates that transcendence can be revisioned as non-violent and not phallic and immanence, rather than representing passivity and suppression, can symbolise 'rest, recollection and tranquillity'(1994, p. 154), and that 'Repetitive, circular, cyclical, erratic or random modes of activity, ranging from flirtation to housework, can never hope to be classified as authentically transcendent' (1994, p. 152).

8. Yet both Deleuze and Foucault have praised feminism as the only social movement that has re-connected life to thought, politicising the living, the private, all that which Marxism left unquestioned. Far from being behind the times, feminism proved, for Deleuze's generation, a true laboratory of ideas, concepts and practices (Braidotti, 2011, p. 277).

9. It has become difficult to name one's feminism by a single adjective – or even to insist in every circumstance on the noun. Consciousness of exclusion through naming is acute. Identities seem contradictory, partial, and strategic. With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity. There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as 'being' female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices. Gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism (Haraway, 2016, p. 16).

10. From Carol Hanisch's 2006 introduction to her 1969 essay: 'The personal is political': Recognising the need to fight male supremacy as a movement instead of blaming the individual woman for her oppression was where the Pro-Woman Line came in. It challenged the old antiwoman line that used spiritual, psychological, metaphysical, and pseudo-historical explanations for women's oppression with a real, materialist analysis for why women do what we do. (By materialist, I mean in the Marxist materialist (based in reality) sense, not in the 'desire for consumer goods' sense.) Taking the position that 'women are messed over, not messed up' took the focus off individual struggle and put it on group or class struggle, exposing the necessity for an independent WLM to deal with male supremacy. <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html> viewed 11/11/2019, and:

'The private as political: women's writing and political fiction' (Cran, 2001).

11. Calhoun articulates the difference that exists between heterosexuality and male dominance, which she terms as 'hetero-relations' or 'heterosexualism', both of which 'refer to the patriarchal nature of relations in both the public and private spheres' (1994, p. 575) and that 'heterosexuality and patriarchy are analytically distinct social systems, just as capitalism and patriarchy are distinct' (1994, p. 572).

12. Original Enabling Legislation: *Social Services Act (No 3) 1973* (No 48 of 1973) From July Supporting Mother's Benefit (SMB) was payable to unmarried mothers, deserted de facto wives, women whose de facto husbands were in prison and other separated wives not eligible for Widow Pension Class A (WPA). A beneficiary had to have the care, control and custody of at least one qualifying child. A biological child of the beneficiary or a child of whom she had the custody, care and control prior to the date on which she became a single mother, including an adopted child, was a qualifying child. However, in the case of an unmarried mother, only a biological child could be a qualifying child.

13. SMC *Single Mothers by Choice* (SMC) was founded in 1981 by Jane Mattes, L.C.S.W., a psychotherapist and single mother by choice.

14. The generalised becoming-woman is the starting point for the deconstruction of phallogocentric identities precisely because sexual dualism and its corollary – the positioning of woman as a figure of Otherness, are constitutive of Western thought (Braidotti, 2003, p. 50).

15. The single mother came to be seen as a 'polluting influence' (Swain 1995, p. 10) and 'potentially a danger to her child' (Swain 1995, p. 10) and when the N.S.W Family Endowment Act of 1927 – the year after the N.S.W Widow's pension Act was instituted—introduced regular payments of child endowment to go to the mother, "illegitimate" children were ineligible to receive it (Summers 2002, p. 551).

16. White Australia policy, formally Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, in Australian history, fundamental legislation of the new Commonwealth of Australia that effectively stopped all non-European immigration into the country and that contributed to the development of a racially insulated white society. It reflected a long-standing and unifying sentiment of the various Australian colonies and remained a fundamental government policy into the mid-20th century. <https://www.britannica.com/event/White-Australia-Policy>

17. The Senate Inquiry Report estimated that between 210,000 and 250,000 adoptions took place between 1940 and 2012; 1940 was the first year for which the Committee found records. These records came from New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. The records of other states and territories were not available. The Committee found that the records they examined had been poorly kept – for example, they did not include details of how or why an adoption took place or whether consent to the adoption was given willingly. This means it is impossible to determine exactly how many forced adoptions took place. Nonetheless, it is known that tens of thousands of mothers, fathers, adopted persons and their families have been affected, with the consequences of forced adoptions continuing to ripple through the generations. <http://forcedadoptions.naa.gov.au/content/overview-forced-adoption-practices-australia>

18. The 'femocrat' was an 'Australian phenomenon', described by Sheridan and Margery as 'a feminist taken into the bureaucracy to work on programmes that would advance the cause of women. Formally, her responsibilities were defined by the male bureaucrats or politicians who appointed her. Informally, she held herself answerable to feminists outside the bureaucracy, and they, in turn, could regard her as either accountable to the women's movement, or as having sold out the movement's revolutionary and therefore anti-state, goals...because the women's movement goals and those of state or national bureaucracies might be very different, femocrats have necessarily suffered from occupational schizophrenia (Magarey & Sheridan, 2002, p. 141).

19. Tony Abbott consistently called Julia Gillard 'Juliar' (meaning she was a liar, [first coined by Alan Jones]) ostensibly for 'back-flipping' on carbon tax making him the first opposition leader to be thrown out of the House since the mid-eighties. As Summers claims: 'Calling her 'a liar' might not be gender specific, although as I have pointed out, it was not a term used against back-flipping male Prime ministers.

20. And in so doing I say to the Leader of the Opposition I will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man. I will not. And the Government will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man. Not now, not ever. October 10, 2012 'Transcript of Julia Gillard's speech' *Sydney Morning Herald* on-line <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/transcript-of-julia-gillards-speech-20121010-27c36.html>

21. *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte, 1847.: Smith, Elder & Co; Anna Karenina, Leo Tolstoy, 1877.: *The Russian Messenger*

22. When the N.S.W Family Endowment Act of 1927, the year after the N.S.W Widow's pension Act was instituted, introduced regular payments of child endowment to go to the mother, 'illegitimate' children were ineligible to receive it (Summers, 2002, p. 551).

23. Before 1973, under the Commonwealth Consolidation Act (1947-1970) the mother of an illegitimate child did not qualify for any pension, benefit or allowance other than special benefit for twelve weeks before birth and six weeks after, and maternity allowance on the birth of a first child (which was non-means tested and meagre).

24. Kate Grenville's *My Mother's Story* (2015), Roanna Gonsalves *The Permanent Resident* (2016), Deborah Forster's *The Meaning of Grace* (2012), Melissa Lucashenko's *Mullumbimby*, (2013) Antonia Hayes' *Relativity* (Hayes, 2015), Julia Leigh's *Disquiet*, (Leigh, 2008) and Carrie Tiffany's *Mateship of Birds* (2012) Deborah Robertson's *Careless* (2006), Elizabeth Jolley's *Cabin Fever* (1990) *My Father's Moon* (1989) and *The Georges Wife* (1993), *The Sugar Mother* (1988),

25. The prevalence of 'poise', which, by page 104, has been referenced thirty-two times, cannot be overstated; defined at the end of the chapter 'Him', as 'to be prepared for a change of state'. (Lohrey, 1995, p. 35).

26. ABS. (March 2009). Trends in household work. 4102.0 – Australian Social Trends Retrieved from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/4102.0Main%20Features1March%202009?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4102.0&issue=March%202009&num=&view=>

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