**SECTION 2: THE WOMAN MOVEMENT’S ISSUES**

**Chapter 4**

**Sex**

A preoccupation with health – of individuals, sexes, workers, economies, armies, nations – necessarily brought into prominence the sexual differences between women and men in their most intimate relationships with each other. For women, these relationships offered a persisting dichotomy between pleasure and danger, one we have already seen in the concerns of the feminist journals of the period. In this chapter, I will consider that dichotomy, and another – between pleasure and fear – for men, and the results for the whole population, women and men both.

In the first section of this chapter, I will consider some ‘scientific’ exhortations to heterosexual union and marriage and their effects particularly on men, producing an expectation that male sexuality will be ‘hydraulic’. This section also considers some moments when masculinity was more nervous than hydraulic. The second section will focus on feminist responses to such exhortations, and the alternatives they developed. In the final section, I will discuss the effect of all three: the first sexual revolution in settler-Australian history. My argument is that the most distinctive characteristic of the Woman Movement in Australia is the coincidence of feminism’s demand for women’s sexual autonomy with a dramatic fall in the rates of both marriage and child-bearing. So dramatic was this fall that it has since been dubbed the Australian ‘family transition’. I am not arguing that feminism *caused* the family transition. But I *am* arguing that both the Woman Movement and the Australian family transition manifested a widespread desire for something different in sexual relations between the sexes, and that that desire arose from the same broad source – discontent with the current discourse on health.

*Hydraulic Male Sexuality and Some Hesitations at the Heart of Masculinity*

Being perverse, I will begin this discussion of science with a moment of romance.

On a summer night in 1891, Nellie and Ned are walking together through the streets of Sydney, the oldest of settler-Australian cities. They reach the point they know as Mrs Macquarie's Chair, hesitate for a moment, then together, as of one accord, plunge down the grassy slope by the landing stairs and out along the wave-eaten fringe of rock to the edge of one of the most beautiful harbours in the world. They are alone together, alone in Paradise.

Above them, almost overhead, in the starry sky, the full round moon was sailing, her white glare falling upon a matchless scene of mingling land and water, sea and shore and sky. Like a lake the glorious harbour stretched before them ...

The keen sense of its loveliness, its perfect beauty, its sublime simplicity, stole over Nellie as she stood silently by Ned's side in the full moonlight and gazed ... Startled, she found herself thinking that it would be heavenly to take Ned's hand and plunge underneath this crystal sheet that alone separated them from peace and happiness ...

Then she heard Ned, who was standing there, rigid, except that he was twirling his soft straw hat round and round in his fingers, say in a tremulous husky whisper:

‘Nellie!’

Then she knew.

She was loved and she loved. That was what the stars sang and the little ripples and the leaves ... And she, who had vowed herself to die unmarried, she loved, loved, loved ...

They stood there side by side, motionless, silent, waiting, Ned suffering anguish unspeakable, Nellie plunged in that great joy which comes so seldom that some say it only comes to herald deeper sadness ...

‘Nellie!’ said Ned, at last, humbly, penitently, hopelessly. ‘I'm not a good man. I haven't been just what you think I've been.’ He stopped, then added slowly and desperately as if on an afterthought: "If – your own heart – won't plead – for – me – it's not a bit of use my saying anything.’

Nellie at the moment did not care whether he had been saint or sinner. She felt that her love was vast enough to wash him clean of all offending and make amends in him for all shortcoming ...

‘But you will be good now, will you not, Ned?’ she asked, not looking at him, dropping her hand against his, stealing her slender fingers into the fingers that nervously twirled the hat.

From bitter despondency Ned's thoughts changed to ecstatic hope. He swung round, his hand in Nellie's, his brain in a whirl. Was it a dream or was she really standing there in the strong moonshine, her love-lit eyes looking into his for a moment before the downcast lids veiled them, her face flushed, her bosom heaving, her hand tenderly pressing his? He dropped his hat, careless of the watery risk, and seizing her by both arms above the elbows, held her for a moment in front of him, striving to collect himself, vainly trying to subdue the excitement that made him think he was going to faint.

‘Nellie!’ he whispered, passionately, his craving finding utterance. ‘Kiss me!’ She lifted up the flushed face, with the veiled downcast eyes and soft quivering lips ... The rose shattered, threw its petals as an offering upon the altar of their joy.[[1]](#endnote-1)

It is a moment of disruption, emotional intensity and physical excess: the first fine careless rapture. Romantic passion produced whirling brains, heaving bosoms, quivering lips; it was beyond the boundaries of the ordinary and everyday. It is almost possible to hear surging strings accompanying the awful prose of labour leader William Lane.

Young women understood their emotions in the same language. 'My dearest one,' wrote young Caroline Henty from Cattlemaddie, Tyrendarra, in western Victoria, to her fiancé, Alexander MacLeod, in Mt Gambier in South Australia: 'How strange it seems to write to you today and think of all that has taken place in the last few weeks. Such a short time it seems like a dream.' Such unreality is also disorientation. 'Oh! Alex,' she continued:

I do wish I could talk to you again there are such lots of things I cant [sic] write about ...You must excuse any mistakes as I don't think I am quite right in the head yet. I feel bewildered & restless & everything seems so strange.[[2]](#endnote-2)

So, too, young Roberta Stewart, a pioneering medical graduate of the infant University of Western Australia, wrote to Martin Jull, 'You must have magnetised my ring I cannot keep it away from my lips, did you do it on purpose?' And less than two weeks later:

My darling – Your wonderful letter has just reached me; it is wonderful; was ever woman loved as I am? It fills me with awe. Did I not know that I am yours body, soul & spirit as far as one human being can be another's, it would fill me with fear. Love such as ours is sweet beyond words, but it is also very terrible, bringing with it the most solemn responsibilities one can undertake ... I cannot write more, there are no words to say what I would ...

If romance was excess, unworldly elevation, disorientation – Mrs Erskine's *Etiquette in Australia* warned against the 'bad taste' of the 'selfish absorption in each other which some engaged couples betray' – then marriage was the means by which it was all to be tamed and rendered socially useful. 'I am so glad, so very glad,' wrote Roberta Stewart, 'that we shall soon be together never to part if it be God's will ... Sweetheart, will it not be wonderful to live such a complete and perfect life; it seems too good to be true.'[[3]](#endnote-3) The medical profession whose authority lies behind that of the popular advice manuals was matter-of-fact about such moments. ‘The origin and basis of love,’ wrote one doctor, ‘is the sexual instinct.’ The writer was the evocatively-named Walter Balls-Headley, the leading gynaecologist in Melbourne in the 1890s: lecturer on Midwifery and the Diseases of Women at the University of Melbourne; honorary physician to the Women’s Hospital; president of the Medical Society of Victoria in 1889; president of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology section of the Intercolonial Medical Congress in Sydney in 1892; and vice-president of the British Gynaecological Society of London in 1897 and 1898. He was an authoritative and influential figure. In 1894, he published a book called *The Evolution of the Diseases of Women*.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Its language was, of course, different from that of Lane’s romance. But it shows science positioning women and men as compulsorily heterosexual breeders just as incontrovertibly as did romance. It was a scholarly and well-written work, the bulk of it devoted to descriptions of diseases occurring in women’s reproductive organs, and the ways of treating them – useful to a professional readership. Other doctors would not have been shocked by the treatment recommended for gonorrhoea, even though it could not have avoided extremes of pain for their patients: it included washing out the bladder with ‘boric acid solution’ and subsequent injections of a solution of potassium permanganate, and injecting the uterus with no less than a pint of perchloride solution three or four times a day.[[5]](#endnote-5) This was a standard treatment of the time. But Balls-Headley’s book was more than a technical exposition, for its first two chapters explain, in thoroughly Spencerian vein, why the diseases which fill his other 20 chapters have evolved. And those chapters brought him a far wider audience.

Beginning with the uncompromising statement, ‘Evolution is the mode of progress of the world’ (p.vii), he set about explaining why he thought ‘the present ... sexual relations of woman’ to be ‘wretched’ (p.viii). But even though his argument joined hands with those of the feminists in its strident condemnation of wearing corsets (pp.23-29), the case he advanced was for recognition of sexual difference as the ‘natural’ foundation of sexual relations, and for further evolution which would eliminate all of the current conditions contributing to the emancipation of women. He gave the sexual double standard the authority of science: ‘In woman the sexual instinct – that is, the natural, unreasoning impulse by which she is guided to the propagation of the race – is usually more pronounced; in man, the sexual appetite – that is, the desire of gratification in the act of union.’ (p.2)

The ‘ideal of marriage’ he proclaimed,

... is the formation of unity, a perfect whole, a complete sexual body able and willing, healthily and happily, to perpetuate the race. It is woman’s work to produce the next generation, and to maintain its vitality and further development; and the well-being of the other half of her complete system, her husband. That women are otherwise mentally and physically qualified is nothing to the point; for it remains that there exists no woman who has not been honestly willing, and indeed anxious, at some time to pay her ancestral debt; if she do so her time is fully occupied. It is man’s business to complete sexual unity, and to provide sustenance, bodily and mental, for these two halves and the product of their union, the child; in doing this with the increased requirements of civilisation, he assists the progressive evolution of the human race. (p.8)

But that ideal could not be achieved in the ‘defective civilisation in which we live’ (p.31) because, in conservative Balls-Headley’s view, strikes had dislocated the peaceful development of industry (pp.31-2, 34). ‘State-socialism, as exemplified in Victoria, and indeed in Australasia’ had resulted in ‘the burdening of the taxpayers, the repression of the old British energy, the pauperisation of the country, and deficiency in marriage’ (p.32). Men, faced with the burden of ‘supplying the increased requirements of living’ were postponing marriage, so that ‘prostitution is rampant’, and when they did marry ‘the tendency is to limitation or avoidance of pregnancy’ (p.9).

All of this meant that women were in ‘increased competition of attraction, whereby she is in greater rivalry with her sex’ in the pursuit of breadwinning husbands (p.10). Such competition led to such harmful fashions as tight-lacing (pp.23-29). Such competition meant that women were engaging in higher education, which led to imperfect development of their reproductive capacities (pp.10, 21-2). Such competition mean that a woman was ‘having to work independently for her living, contrary to earlier custom, which in her unprotected state is an increased mental as well as physical toil, for she is in competition with man and woman’ (p.10). All three contribute to disease in women, and render them ‘less fit for the healthy propagation and education of the race’ (p.10).

The selection of the fittest has resulted in a race of women of such extraordinary physical growth and beauty as has probably never before existed, but whose sexual growth is liable to be so affected by mental culture, mode of dress, and delayed or non-marriage [and, he added elsewhere, education (p.22)] and the conditions of paid employment (p.29), that never before were uterine abnormalities of development, disease, and difficulty in parturition so prevalent (pp.22-3).

The current conditions were directly responsible for a host of social evils. Among women who adopted **‘**the state of hetaerism – prostitution – for instance, ‘the tendency is toward prevention of pregnancy; in case of pregnancy, to the production of abortion; in the case of her bearing a child, to the concealment of birth; and in view of the destruction of social position and of toil of maintenance, to infanticide’ (p.10).

All of these ills, Balls-Headley maintained, were ‘an artificial and temporary disorganisation in evolution, doubtless in the direction of future more advanced social developments’ (p.21). And those ‘more advanced social developments’ must include men who work well, who are willing to marry and ‘provide well for our wives and families’, for women, as well as men, have ‘a right to the exercise of her propagative powers in marriage’. ‘Man and woman fail in health and completeness of perfection, if these demands be not supplied.’ (p.34) Indeed, he went so far as to argue that if a woman had a strong sexual instinct, but no means of satisfying it, then she may even become insane (p.324).

Balls-Headley’s text shows a familiarity with developments in gynaecology in the United States *and* – approvingly – with the work of American psychoanalyst Weir Mitchell, whose ‘treatment’ is the subject of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s fictional depiction of a woman being driven demented by her doctor, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (pp.343, 326). At least in relation to gynaecology, the United States led the world in this field of medicine in the late nineteenth century, and Balls-Headley must have known that at least one of the north American authorities whom he cited (Marion Sims) had treated women’s mental disorders by removing their ovaries.[[6]](#endnote-6) Since this is equivalent to the removal of the testes in a male, it is not unreasonable to describe it as castrating them. In his address to the Intercolonial Medical Congress in 1892, he asserted that the interference of evolutionary civilisation, and in particular of ‘high intellectuality’ and postponed marriage, would be likely to result in ‘uterine congestions and inflammations, or myomatous growths’ which could well have been seen as requiring castrating surgery.[[7]](#endnote-7)

By implicit threat, or explicit exhortation, this text was a powerful incitement to marriage for both women and men, and to child-bearing for women, especially when coupled with Balls-Headley’s invocation of the natural plenty surrounding an Australian population. In Victoria, he observed, they had ‘a country teeming with gold and mineral, pastoral and agricultural resources’, and – a comment that can only have derived from his education in rainy England – ‘a marvellous climate such as cannot be elsewhere found’.[[8]](#endnote-8)

The languages of science and of romance affirmed the transcendent and specifically sexual delights (for men) of compulsory heterosexuality and the joys (for women) of child-bearing. But there are several serpents in this paradise. Ned and Nellie do not marry, because of Nellie’s adamant resolution not to marry after her sister’s death from the disease she contracted when poverty drove her ‘“down, Ned. Right down. Down to the streets, Ned.”’ (p.163) Within a month of her engagement, Caroline Henty was writing to MacLeod in response to his calling himself ‘A Scamp’ in his letters to her: ‘If in the past you have not been all you think now you should have been you must make amends in the future.’ He must have been feeling especially guilty; she had to say it again less than a month later: ‘Let your past be past, + if you are determined to lead a good life henceforth + atone for all in the past that was not right, I believe that with Gods [sic] Help you will do it.’[[9]](#endnote-9) A feminist would have told her that her generous acceptance of the double standard of sexual morality, even if only in relation to her beloved fiancé having sown his wild oats, constituted a risk to her own health after marriage. A feminist would have told both Ned and Nellie that Nellie’s sister’s sad end was a result of the same double standard.

Sexual difference as elaborated in Balls-Headley’s works enshrined men’s lust and women’s desire for maternity at the heart of the Australian paradise, making intrinsic to it a sexual double standard within, as well as outside, marriage. It gave the sanction of medical science to the legal right that a husband enjoyed a right of access to his wife's body. It gave fresh emphasis to what had long been a grievance for women in relation to marriage: that relations between a husband and a wife could best be characterised as feudal, in which the master owns the serf, or in this case, the wife, body and soul. It allowed for men’s infection of their wives, as a result of both sexual double standards and men’s so-called ‘marital rights’. It was central to the ‘hysterisation’ of women’s bodies in the late nineteenth century. It was also a discourse that positioned men’s bodies as 'testosteronised’, representing men’s sexuality as helplessly ‘hydraulic’. This 'law of nature' maintained that in men, periodic ejaculation was essential to good health, and that once aroused, men were at the mercy of their biology until they had achieved ejaculation. What were the consequences of all this for men?

The implications of this assumption about men’s sexuality were abruptly and horrifically brought to general public attention on 9 September 1886. On that date, in Sydney, some 20 men, mostly youths, raped Mary Jane Hicks, a 16-year-old orphan, on a scrubby mound called Mt Rennie in the wastelands on the south-eastern outskirts of the city. In November that year, 11 young men and a 35-year-old cab driver were brought to trial for this offence. Nine of the youths and the cab driver were convicted. These events were voluminously reported and widely and intensively debated. Much comment focussed on the death sentences passed by Judge Windeyer – husband of Mary and father of Margaret – on nine of the convicted, and on the four executions that were eventually carried out at a public hanging before a crowd of about 2,000 on 7 January 1887. Two sets of comments highlight prevailing assumptions about male sexuality.

There were, on one hand, reports that such a deed was only one of many which 'have been the boast of work grounds and factory yards'. The youths employed there formed 'companies of twos and threes, and of 10s and 12s' and 'sought satisfaction of their lusts exactly as other parties combine and hunt for sport'. The proprietor of the Australian Rope Works, a factory near Mt Rennie which employed some of the youths involved in the trial, observed that for two years before this case he had overheard 'youths and young men describing and boasting of the way they had overcome young girls'. These reports were made much of by the pro-hanging lobby, eager to shock 'young larrikins' into a measure of respectability, and, perhaps, anxious to assert their own distance from such behaviour.[[10]](#endnote-10)

On the other hand, there were comments which blamed the victim herself, referring to Mary Jane Hicks as a 'lying little street tramp' who had 'voluntarily entered into immoral relations' with a bunch of 'dirty little larrikins'. They fastened upon a report in which a senior constable wrote that he and his wife had taken Mary Jane Hicks into their household after the rape but had found her lazy and untruthful, with a disreputable knowledge of prostitutes and prostitution. They continued to insist, even after it had become common knowledge that some of the Mt Rennie youths had been carrying knives, that this was 'an offence against which common maidenly or womanly instincts would have been a most effective guard'. The *Bulletin* referred to the rapists as 'boys', and commented:

Womanly honour must be held as precious as human life, but we don't see why men, however degraded, should be hanged to protect female vice instead of female virtue. Bring forward a case in which a really honest woman has been brutally outraged, and ... you may ... hang the aggressor ... as high as Haman.

Commentators of this ilk were vociferously opposed to Judge Windeyer's sentences. As the *Bulletin* remarked: 'If the prisoners' deed deserved so frightful a penalty, where is there a "man of the world" who would go unwhipped?' *All* men, they implied, had, at some time or other, used 'rougher than usual handling' to gain satisfaction of their lusts. And they were right.

This was but one of several outrages in Sydney at this time. Police in rural Queensland in 1898 noted that they had often heard white men boasting about ‘seducing “Gins” and reckon[ing] that they have done a clever act if they seduce a “Gin” belonging to an adjoining station’. In 1901 the *Australian Woman’s Sphere* published a list of cases of ‘criminal or indecent assault on little girls from five to 10 years of age’, as reported in the daily press. There were no fewer than seven in the space of only one month, and only one resulted in a prison sentence: George Clarke was given six months for his assault on his step-daughter. When the 10-year-old daughter of drunken widower, Thomas Young, accused him of assault, a policeman testified that the child was ‘very precocious for her age’ and that there was no medical evidence of the offence. He believed she had ‘trumped up’ the story.[[11]](#endnote-11)

As the last example indicates, the *Bulletin* was by no means alone in its willingness to invoke, explicitly, hydraulic male sexuality. Labor MLA Frank Cotton, writing to Rose Scott, inflected this discourse with anguish. 'You don't realise, you can't realise what the curse of "compulsory celibacy" means under existing economic conditions,' he protested, invoking the depression and the consequent postponement of marriage. 'We're not iron and we're not ice, and after all it's no use shutting our eyes to the fact that the laws of nature are the laws of God.'[[12]](#endnote-12) Others echoed his view. In response to a request that he support a bill to raise the age of consent for girls in New South Wales 15 years later, Labor MLA Arthur Griffith gave it a more aggressive utterance:

I have a little lad at home with light in his eyes and *red* blood in his veins. Suppose when he is 16 he is seduced by some pretty little girl his own age ... you ask if ... I will help to pass a law that will brand the lad as a criminal, my reply is No! and a much more emphatic no than I can use in addressing a lady.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Cotton believed that it had such widespread social assent that there was no social circle that would exclude a man solely on the grounds of having been 'the cause of a girl's ruin', and he had a prominent example to support his claim in the person of Henry Parkes, at the head of the New South Wales Government for so much of the late nineteenth century, the father of two concurrent families. Louisa Macdonald noted that ‘Sydney’ had not minded Parkes having both a wife and a mistress, but after his wife died and he married the mistress, Eleanor Dixon, ‘the place would have nothing to do with either him or her’. Parkes joined the *Bulletin*’s deputation to the Governor on behalf of those convicted of the Mt Rennie rape.[[14]](#endnote-14)

The testosteronisation of men’s bodies, the hydraulic character of male sexuality, were as much a dimension of the discourse on health as the hysterisation of women’s bodies. One resulting phenomenon which contemporaries called ‘The Social Evil’ – the trade in sex between prostitutes and their clients, and the likelihood of those men transmitting sexual diseases to both prostitutes and their wives – existed in direct contradiction to the object of the discourse on health: the health of the nation. It was a logical contradiction that feminists were not slow to point out.

There were limits, though, if only on the outskirts of the lunatic fringe. A New Zealander of Irish ancestry named Arthur Desmond, in Sydney in the early 1890s, showed where they lay. A radical anarchist, journalist, poet and political agitator, he was also known as ‘Ragnar Redbeard’. Between about 1893 and 1895, he produced a weekly paper called *Hard Kash*, in which he listed the personal financial holdings of prominent statesmen who were on record for having exhorted the population to restraint and belt-tightening during the economic depression of the early 1890s. Pursued by the Ministry of Justice, he had to keep his means of production underground, quite literally. The press on which *Hard Kash* was printed was hidden in a ‘cave’ in Paddington. At the same time, he was writing a Nietszchian work called *Might is Right*, which included such chapter headings as ‘Love and Women and War’, ‘Female Animals Love the best Fighting Males’, ‘Sexual Selection and the Necessity of Unmerciful Conflict’, ‘History, Biology and Contemporary Events – All Unite in Demonstrating that Might is Right’. But even in the *Bulletin*’s Sydney, Desmond was unable to find a publisher for a work in which the ‘denunciation of women, and the glorification of the doctrine of Force’ was ‘so vitriolic and vehement’. His Chicago publishers later claimed that ‘Redbeard’s teachings were responsible for the great European war since they taught William of Germany, Roosevelt, d’Annunzio – and W. M. Hughes – all to be strenuous and ruthless’. Desmond left Sydney in about 1895, to escape arrest.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Further, there were hesitations at the heart of the hydraulic version of masculinity, hesitations which suggest that such apparently widespread confidence in male sexuality may sometimes have been misplaced.

Between 1888 and 1896, the evangelical Baptist Reverend Henry Varley – an Englishman who had also spent time in the United States, and in Australia in the 1870s, lecturing on ‘The Social Evil’ – travelled around Australia giving lectures on ‘a vitally important subject’ to boys and men. His subject is encapsulated in his first sentence: ‘In a very important sense the seed is the life.’ One of these lectures, which ran to 40 pages, printed in Melbourne, announced that it had been given to no fewer than 300,000 men in various parts of the world. It was an extended exposition of what historian Barker-Benfield has called ‘the spermatic economy’: the importance of semen to the vitality of all aspects of a man’s physical being. It was ‘the sap of the whole man’, and determined ‘the strength of the brain, the richness of the blood, the brilliance of the eye, the vigour of the mind, the hardness of the muscle, and the firmness of the flesh’.[[16]](#endnote-16) Accordingly it needed to be preserved, not spent. Varley inveighed against masturbation (solitary or in company), visits to prostitutes, sexual excess in marriage (and he assured his listeners that he spoke as a man ‘of like passions with yourselves’) (7), contraception (32), adultery (26), even ‘involuntary emissions at night’ which were, he asserted, ‘a result of past sin’ (21). There was a ‘commonly expressed opinion’, he exclaimed, ‘that it is a natural relief, and for the health of a man to indulge ... [in] fornication!’ Wrong! ‘This statement is not only utterly untrue, but it is a dastardly lie.’ (11)

Varley was but one of 14 authors of late nineteenth-century Australian tracts, pamphlets and treatises concerned with masturbation and seminal loss listed by social and cultural historian, David Walker, in an article which also examines the extent of the sub-medical traffic in Sydney in cures for spermatorrhoea and nervous debility. That traffic was extensive: Walker estimates that it may have been worth about **£**100,000 in peak years in the 1880s and 1890s, and involved at least 193 unregistered persons acting as medical practitioners, a third of whom claimed special knowledge of nervous disorders. On these figures, he notes, ‘there were almost as many unregistered as registered practitioners in the colony’. And they had a lucrative market, particularly, among the inhabitants of Sydney’s 300 boarding houses and almost 2,500 lodging houses, distributed around the waterfront, the railway station and the central business district. The most prominent of the sub-medical businesses located themselves within easy walking distance of this population. But the tidelands of the city were not the only locations of sexually anxious men. At least three of the principal sub-medical establishments catering for such anxieties ran mail-order businesses as well as consulting practices, and they addressed bushmen – neighbours? husbands? of those bushwomen writing to the *Dawn* – who were, in the words of one regular medical practitioner writing to the *Stock and Station Journal* in 1899, easy prey to the ‘nervous debility swindle’. Walker’s article opens with an example of both anxiety and cure (the nineteenth-century’s version of viagra!).

For several months George Thompson of Goulburn, New South Wales, had been feeling off-colour. He was troubled by a persistent, slight headache, would wake unrefreshed and often felt drowsy. There was also something wrong with his testicles: one hung lower than the other and he wondered how dangerous this was. Worst of all were the wet dreams. A friend claimed that ‘nocturnal emission’ was a minor problem which marriage would soon cure, but George was not so sure. He wrote to the Marston Remedy Company of Castlereagh Street, Sydney, early in February 1887 seeking their specialist advice. The verdict was grim: ‘more or less deep-seated debility of the whole sexual apparatus’. Still, the company promised that their pills would restore George Thompson to ‘full sexual power, vigour and continence’. In due course, Thompson received a prescription advising a fully-graded course (triple strength) and a specially made-to-order course of pills costing £10 in all. If the case proved more difficult, there was the heavy artillery in the Marston armoury:

One improved sexual electric intonator, single potency

Enlarge-invigorator, double (testicles and penis)

Enlarge-invigorator, single (penis only).

**Insert here**

**Domestic battery for intonating or invigorating**

This case was invented by a registered medical practitioner, as part of the profession’s battle against quackery. But its author maintained that both the symptoms and the treatment were similar to those of a real case.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Of course, both anxieties and quackeries can be seen as a local version of what Foucault described as ‘the war against onanism, which in the West lasted nearly two centuries’. Their emergence in the late nineteenth century in Australia was, Walker suggests, closely linked to both fears of national decline, and aspirations for greatness for a new nation.[[18]](#endnote-18) To these explanations, I would add the pressures of the ‘testosteronisation’ of men’s bodies and the widespread assumption that male sexuality was – or at least should be – hydraulic, a consequence of the discourse on health and its positioning of men, as well as women, as breeders. What was believed to be sexual pleasure for all men might have seemed very alarming to those who were afraid that they would not, quite literally, measure up.

Soon after the quack sex-cure institutions had begun to succumb to attacks from the registered medical – and the legal – profession, people in Sydney were growing accustomed to the sight of William James Chidley getting about the streets dressed in a brief Grecian-style tunic and sandals, a symbol of his call to Australians to dress more appropriately for their sub-tropical climate. But Chidley provoked attention for more than his unusual dress. Having spent much time in the public library reading the works of such late nineteenth-century English social and sexual critics as Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter, he developed a theory about the origins of pain and evil, and the cures necessary to remedy the human condition. One of his arguments concerned the centrality of masturbation in male youth culture. Another, crucial to his theory, concerned the sexual abuse of women by men, such abuse consisting simply in the use of an erect penis in sexual intercourse. 'Civilised coition', maintained Chidley, who was strongly opposed to ‘civilisation’, was characterised by male force exercised against the often unwilling or unready female. He described the penetration of an inert vagina by an erect penis as the 'crowbar' method of sexual intercourse. He argued that such a form of copulation should be replaced by an act grounded in love and mutual attraction, in which the woman would be the initiator, for, he argued, in mutual sexual excitement, the vagina formed a vacuum which would draw into it the flaccid or semi-erect penis. He offered these views to anyone who would read his pamphlet, *The Answer*, or listen to him. He gave several lectures in the Domain around Christmas time, 1913, and he addressed a large number of well-dressed women assembled outside the Mitchell Library on Boxing Day 1914.

**Insert here**

**William James Chidley, from the *Sun* 19 August 1912, State Library of New South Wales**

Chidley presented a version of male sexuality which was diametrically opposed to the hydraulic. Feminists liked it: it was Belle Golding who proposed the first public motion for a deputation to the government in his defence in 1912, and Rose Scott made private representations on his behalf to the Chief Secretary, though she was careful to let that gentleman know that she had not discussed Chidley’s ideas with him.[[19]](#endnote-19) But Chidley was far more alarming than any nervousness about being able to live up to expectations of the discourse on health’s positioning of men. His treatment by men of authority made it clear that they found his challenge to hydraulic male sexuality not only offensive, but terrifying. The police took Chidley to court more than 20 times between March 1912 and February 1916. The courts declared *The Answer* obscene and prohibited its dissemination. Some members of the medical profession defined him as insane. He died in the Callan Park lunatic asylum in 1916.[[20]](#endnote-20)

*Feminists and Sex: the Personal and the Political*

Feminists were critical of science’s incitements to heterosexual congress. The *Woman’s Voice* carried a review of Balls-Headley’s work over two issues, by ‘Alexa’, who was politely outraged at ‘the teachings given forth in the holy, but oft desecrated, name of Science’. ‘Everything we had thought to be of importance,’ she exclaimed, ‘the higher nature of man or woman, the sacredness of individuality ... are all to be seen as nothing in comparison with a rabbit-like fecundity on the part of woman and unrestrained indulgence for the superior sex ... The woes and sufferings of woman are pitied in the true manner of the soft-tongued ladies’ doctor the world over,’ but among the causes adduced for them, ‘the commonest cause of all, what I may style being too much married’ is entirely ‘slurred over’. ‘If woman is to be ONLY a breeding machine, won’t she make rather a poor one?’ she expostulated.[[21]](#endnote-21) Rose Scott took on the belief in the helplessly hydraulic nature of male sexuality directly. ‘Science’ has ‘come to our rescue’ she declared in 1903, after a scientific congress of eminent medical authorities in Brussels in 1902 had affirmed that men could be perfectly healthy as celibates, and that intellectual and physical vigour ‘are maintained even better in Purity of Life’.[[22]](#endnote-22)

All feminists, in various ways, protested against the dangers for women of the sexual double standard that was a direct consequence of the depiction of male sexuality as helplessly hydraulic. 'Can anything be more revolting to a pure-minded girl,' wrote feminist Bessie Harrison Lee to the *Melbourne Herald* in 1888:

... [than] to find after the words of Christ Himself have joined her to the man she loves and reveres that he at once claims sole right over her body, whether she wills it or no.[[23]](#endnote-23)

A poem by Ada Cambridge, called 'A Wife's Protest', exclaimed against the 'smouldering shame' and 'inward torment of reproach' induced by each night's enforced suffering: 'No dumb brute from his brother brutes/ Endures such wanton wrong.'[[24]](#endnote-24) Louisa Macdonald, writing to a much-loved friend in England, observed: ‘Marriage at home did not interest me personally but I used to be interested in others marrying and their action in so doing was intelligible. Here it isn’t. There is as much apparent soul in the matches as in the promiscuities of the lower animals.’[[25]](#endnote-25) As Henry Hyde Champion argued, the 'true meaning' of the Australian women's 'movement' was to achieve recognition that women were human beings, rather than 'child producers and the satisfiers of a distorted primal appetite'. Their goal, he wrote, was to change

... the double standard of morals for the two sexes that turns upon her a raging appetite where she looked for sacred aspiration: the knowledge that love ... has disappeared with the honeymoon: the chilling assurance that her function is certainly not to be a comrade and a helpmate: enforced maternity that turns the crown and glory of womanhood into a degradation that crushes the mother and blights the child.[[26]](#endnote-26)

The ways of achieving that change were varied, but they depended on one crucial decision – that, like industrial labour, the sexual labour of wives and mothers *was* *labour* and could be considered in the same light. Such a decision became possible from consideration of the alternatives to marriage and compulsory maternity. They were two.

For want of bread to eat and clothes to wear –

Because work failed and streets were deep in snow,

And this meant food and fire – she fell so low,

Sinning for dear life's sake, in sheer despair.

Or, because life was else so bald and bare

The natural woman in her craved to know

The warmth of passion as pale buds do blow

And feel the noonday sun and fertile air.

And who condemns? She who for vulgar gain

And in cold blood, and not for love or need,

Has sold her body to more vile disgrace –

The prosperous matron with her comely face –

Wife by the law, but prostitute in deed,

In whose gross wedlock womanhood is slain.

This sonnet was included in Ada Cambridge's *Unspoken Thoughts*, published in 1887. The view of marriage that the poem expressed – that a wife's sexual contract with her husband was analogous to that of a (female) prostitute with her (male) client – was a view expressed widely by feminists throughout the English-speaking world at this time. Maybanke Wollstenholme quoted Olive Schreiner: 'A woman who sold herself, even for a ring and a new name, need hold her skirt aside for no creature of the street,' declared the heroine of *A Story of an African Farm*. ‘They both earn their bread in the one way.'[[27]](#endnote-27) Of course, Cambridge and Schreiner were condemning marriages made for financial gain or respectability rather than love. Rose Scott apostrophised the mothers of Australia in the same vein: 'Wd I cd persuade you that one ought to show your girls that marriage without love is a degradation as great for them as for the poor women in the Streets.'[[28]](#endnote-28) North American feminist theorists, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Russian-born Emma Goldman, and English feminist Cicely Hamilton, too, drew direct parallels between wives and prostitutes trading possession of their bodies for a livelihood.[[29]](#endnote-29)

But there were others in Australia who made it clear that they considered all marriages to be economic contracts, fundamentally, for women, a means to a livelihood. And there were alternative means to livelihoods opening up. Catherine Spence, observing the 'widespread movement which is going on all over the world for the admission of women to new fields of labour', commented as early as 1878 that economic independence for women would eliminate the double standard of sexual morality, and enable the woman of the future to *choose* 'not between destitution and marriage but between the modest competence that she can earn and the modest competence her lover offers'.[[30]](#endnote-30) In 1893, Louisa Lawson quoted ‘one of the most intelligent young women of the age’ observing that ‘if all the women when they marry have to put up with what mamma and my married sister do, the best thing for me is to be able to take care of myself and stay single’.[[31]](#endnote-31) In 1901, Vida Goldstein reported a lecture given by Alexander Sutherland in which he expressed the opinion that ‘the willing celibacy of women who prefer work to an uncongenial life-partner tends to purify and ennoble marriage’.[[32]](#endnote-32) In 1909, Annie Golding, at that time president of the Women's Progressive Association in New South Wales, told the Third Australian Catholic Congress that 'the comparative economic independence of women has removed the incentive to marry merely for a home, and will eventually place marriage on a higher plane'.[[33]](#endnote-33)

In observing that changes in the labour market were opening up the possibilities for women to gain paid employment, thereby reducing the economic imperative for women to marry, they were both right and wrong at the same time. Alternatives to marriage *were* appearing for women between around 1880 and the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, but not as extensively or permanently as they hoped (this is the subject of Chapter 5). Nevertheless, by depicting these developments as presenting women with a choice over whether to marry or not, feminists put into discourse an understanding of the sexual labour of wives and mothers *as labour*. And that understanding brought into the marriage bed the possibility of negotiation, of differing – indeed competing – rights and responsibilities. It presented the possibility of marriage being a contractual relationship, even if still – as in contracts between masters and men, employers and workers – a contract between unequal parties. And that was the beginning of a slow end to understandings of marriage which depicted women as the legal and sexual property of their husbands – a relationship characteristic of a time several centuries earlier, a feudal relationship.[[34]](#endnote-34)

What kinds of marriage-bed negotiations did feminists advocate? What kinds of relationships did they form themselves? I will consider three. Probably the most common form of negotiation was that suggested by Wollstenholme when she proclaimed that ‘woman must be the monarch of the marriage-bed’. Usually, this was a requirement for men to exercise temperance, self-control, and consideration in their relations with their wives. ‘Marriage should be a union of souls,’ declared Bessie Harrison Lee, suffragist and campaigner for temperance in Victoria – it should be ‘a mutual help and sympathy’. Men who failed to recognise this and insisted on sexual congress could, literally, kill their wives. Lee recounted in 1893 the tragic end of a young mother whose husband had been warned by their doctor that 'her life would pay the forfeit of any indiscretion of his part'. Pregnant again, the woman died, said Lee, 'as surely murdered as any other victim of man's passion'.[[35]](#endnote-35) Less dramatically, some argued simply that constant maternity was bad for women, as anyone purchasing 'Ladies Abdominal Belts', 'Obstetric Binders' and 'Womb Supports' knew only too well. Constant maternity was grindingly hard work. 'Every child that a woman bears,' wrote Clara Weekes to the *Woman's Sphere* in 1903,

entails on the majority of them nine months of misery, more or less acute, with a culminating period of agony at the end. When this is repeated from ten to sixteen, or even twenty times ... is it to be wondered at that many mothers die quite young from sheer exhaustion.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Of course, one way of preventing such labour was the 'preventive population check' – contraception. It was not a popular option with feminists like Bessie Harrison Lee, arguing for women to gain the right to say no to unwanted intercourse in marriage. Contraception would diminish this right by removing the argument that sex automatically meant more children. But it was an option that found favour with a far wider range of feminists than has previously been recognised.

Wollstenholme’s determination to avoid licence did not prevent her advertising information about contraception.[[37]](#endnote-37) Aileen Goldstein may have added her own coded endorsement of contraception when, during the time she was editing the *Australian Woman’s Sphere* while her sister was in the United States, she placed on its front page photographs of Mr C. V. Gerritson and Dr Aletta Jacobs. They were a Dutch couple whose marriage offered an ideal of ‘what the union of a man and a woman may be in the future’ when ‘the woman’s era ... will form the next stage in the evolution of the human race’. Aletta Jacobs was also known as a leading advocate of birth control.[[38]](#endnote-38) Spence made ‘the preventive population check’ the centrepiece of her vision of the future.[[39]](#endnote-39) After all, feminists as different in their engagements with the Woman Movement as Maybanke Wollstenholme and Alice Henry had no doubt that women felt sexual passions just as men did.[[40]](#endnote-40) It followed that contraception could also offer to women a means of saying yes, without incurring the possibility of another pregnancy, without such utterance being acceptance of compulsory maternity. It was a choice for pleasure, without danger. As we will see, there were women – a great many women – for whom contraception was the preferred option. One woman for whom women's access to this option became a life's mission was Brettena Smyth.

Born and raised near Kyneton in Victoria, Brettena Smyth married at the age of 21 and bore five or six children (the relevant certificates are obscure, reports Farley Kelly), only two of whom survived to adulthood. The family had moved to Errol Street, North Melbourne, to run a greengrocery and confectionery shop when Smyth's husband died of tuberculosis in 1873. Smyth was 31. Like Wollstoneholme, Smyth then had to find a way of supporting herself and her young children. She turned the shop into a drapery, in which, subsequently, druggist's lines predominated. Later, when she was reported as 'conspicuous in blue-shaded goggles' delivering a 'sharply constructed address in favour of women's suffrage, on the classic ground of No Taxation Without Representation, she could claim with justification that she had already performed all of the major duties of a citizen for 17 years, paying rates and taxes, running both a business and a family single-handed. By this time, Smyth had lost her faith in Roman Catholicism and joined those Melbourne centres of organised rationalism in which Dugdale had formulated her attack on religion, and the Victorian Women’s Suffrage Society. 'She became a familiar figure on the VWSS platform,' writes Kelly, 'an imposing woman, nearly six feet tall, "with a perfect disdain for a broomstick waist".' She was one of the initiators of a new suffrage society, with strong connections with organised temperance and labour politics, established as the *Australian* Women's Suffrage Society in North Melbourne in late 1888. This suffrage society, unlike most others, was explicitly associated with birth control.[[41]](#endnote-41)

Smyth began to stock her shop with an increasing number of 'artificial preventives', newly available following Windeyer’s decision in *Ex Parte* *Collins* in Sydney, and with books and pamphlets providing sex education and information about birth control. But there was a limited supply of such material, so she contributed to it herself. Her book was called *The* *Diseases of Women*. Her pamphlets – *Love, Courtship and Marriage*; *Woman and How to Train Her*; *The Social Evil*; *Stirpiculture, or the Evolution of the Sexes*; *Barrenness and Sterility*; *Embryology* – also included *The Limitation of Offspring*, a controversial work which dealt entirely with birth control. All of these works carried advertisements for the products to be purchased at Brettena Smyth's store. These ranged from 'Best Female French Preventatives or Contraceptives, 10/6', through 'French Preventatives (Male), 10/6 and 15/6 per doz; 1/- and 1/6 each', to 'Ingram's Improved Seamless Enema and Syringes, highly polished 12/6; unpolished 10/6 and 7/6', and 'Sponges, 1/-'.[[42]](#endnote-42) It is not difficult to see, in the illustrations of these advertisements, other possible and very pragmatic reasons for some feminists not wanting to advocate their use; women could do themselves very considerable damage with some of them.

**Insert here**

**Preventatives, syringes, sold by Brettena Smyth and sundry chemist shops**

Such items were by no means exclusive to Smyth's store. Indeed, they were standard issue in most chemist shops in New South Wales, and probably in the other colonies as well. They even became a feature in a store owned by Washington H. Soul and Company in Sydney. The Sydney *Daily* *Telegraph* carried an advertisement in 1898 in which the store begged ...

to announce that they made

A New Departure.

Ladies! Call and inspect the Department specially set apart

for you.

The Gem

of the whole shop is at the centre of the spacious establishment. There, like a diamond in a diadem, it glistens. The Nurse is highly trained, and is only anxious to please all who may require her skilled aid. Nurses from all institutions should call and make their purchases. You will find it worth your while to see our Nurse.[[43]](#endnote-43)

The code words here were 'gem' and 'nurse', the first evoking, vaguely, women's genitals, the second evoking associations with such other forms of birth control as abortion.

By 1893, Smyth was giving lectures to audiences solely of women in the North Melbourne Town Hall, on 'The Limitation of Offspring', lectures in which she described and compared 12 methods of contraception, commenting on their usefulness. Some of the practices she condemned as futile or dangerous included: coughing; administering arsenic to limit male potency; injections of oil; prolonged periods of breast-feeding; a curious technique of re-routing semen by squeezing the scrotum; and even withdrawal before ejaculation. Withdrawal had been the most frequently used technique of male control, but Smyth argued that it was irritating to the nerves of both parties as well as not being wholly reliable. Other unreliable techniques included: cold water douches; syringing with alum or sulphate of zinc; the French letter (condom); the sponge impregnated with vinegar; the soluble quinine and cocoa-butter pessary; and the rhythm method. Of all of the techniques available, the only one that Smyth was willing to recommend was 'The Preventif Pessaire or Contraception Check – *The best, safest and most sure check.* It has never been known to fail where instructions have been carried out'. Made of 'pure, soft rubber', 'constructed on a common sense principle ... strictly in accordance with the anatomy of the female organisation', it would ‘last for years'. It was also useful in the treatment of some other female complaints. Most important, it was, she maintained, 'the only article of the kind that can be used without the knowledge of the husband'.

So for Smyth, the monarchy of women in the marriage bed was to include the possibility of rule by stealth, rather than through an elevation of men, or explicit negotiation between husband and wife. It was still a form of rule. As we will see, a great many women heard her, or others providing information of the same ilk. But Smyth, Spence, Henry, Goldstein and Wollstenholme stood some distance from those feminists who argued that the highest state of union between the sexes rose above bodies and reproduction altogether. This is the second alternative that the feminists offered.

A self-mocking portrait of celibate feminism is to be found in Rose Scott’s papers. Here is the opening effusion.

What men are!

I was expounding my high flown ideal of a future life of love between men + women as I sat talking to a friend, a man of intellect, somehow he seemed sympathetic I had reached the seventh heaven + was looking upward talking rapidly + fervently. I was explaining that marriage as we now see it wd. only be for the half civilised that the highly civilized men + women wd. be content with Spiritual love, + wd. devote themselves to the alas too numerous children of others. Suddenly my hand was seized + my man friend was gazing loverly into my eyes. I waited breathless, what new light was this, what spiritual thought to sympathise + help me? It came at last, ‘I wish you wd. marry me!’ ‘Marry you!’ I exclaimed, ‘did you *hear* what I was saying!’ ‘Yes, but you look so nice you talk so well, why not marry me + talk to me always!’ I withdrew my hand with dignity + smothering my laughter + my tears – got up + paced up + down the room – feeling convinced that spiritually intellectual sympathy was over between us for that day at any rate! + perhaps on such a subject there cd. never be any sympathy but with women. ‘Man's love is too physical,’ I remarked, ‘+ you are too metaphysical,’ he sighed with a sad smile.[[44]](#endnote-44)

Self-mocking this may have been, but there are other moments, too, when the fair, beguiling, pink-cheeked and curly-haired Rose sounds like H. G. Wells’ Miss Miniver: ‘“Bodies! Bodies! Horrible things! We are souls. Love lives on a higher plane. We are not animals. If ever I did meet a man I could love, I should love him” – her voice dropped again – “platonically”.’[[45]](#endnote-45)

Further, the third alternative, a commitment to the spiritual dimension of love, did not necessarily exclude women from intense same-sex affections – passionate friendships. While it seems unlikely that there was any warrant for the press’s attempts to smear thrice-married Henrietta Dugdale’s enthusiasm for Elizabeth Rennick’s competence in managing a meeting with suggestions of sexual deviance, there were at least two pairs of women involved in the Australian Woman Movement who formed life-long partnerships with each other. They were Louisa Macdonald and Evelyn Dickinson, and Mary Fullerton and Mabel Singleton. Comparing the two, flourishing in different periods of the past, is also a way of considering the way in which same-sex relationships between women became pathologised.

Scottish-born Louisa Macdonald had distinguished degrees in Classics and German from the University of London; had travelled to Australia and America; had lectured at University College, tutored at College Hall, taught as a voluntary worker at Board schools around London; and had been elected a Fellow of University College London. In 1891, when she was 33, she applied for the post of first principal of the Women’s College at Sydney University, a post she would then hold for the next 27 years. Soon after she arrived in Sydney, she was joined by Evelyn Dickinson, a younger, flamboyant Irish-born woman who had lived in the same digs in London as Macdonald while she completed her matriculation, and then moved to College Hall with the Macdonald sisters, when she began studying medicine. Dickinson was an orphan and did not have enough money to complete this course. Macdonald invited her to come to Sydney to help establish the Women’s College. Her position was at first informal, as Macdonald’s ‘guest’, though Macdonald considered that she practically shared the care of the college. Later, the College Council decided that if she was going to remain, she should enrol in a course, so she completed her qualifications in medicine at Sydney University in 1908.[[46]](#endnote-46)

Luminaries who came to meet Macdonald when she arrived were relieved not to encounter a bluestocking (despite her impressive qualifications), but instead ‘a well dressed young woman, short in stature but with a healthy physique ... large expressive eyes and ... a softness about the mouth indicating warmth, sympathy and generosity’. Dickinson was another matter. She had short hair, a gruff voice, wore strictly tailored suits and starched collars (perhaps even a tie). She set up a gymnasium under the tower of the new college building, rode a bicycle, wrote novels, and even, it was rumoured, smoked cigars. The students referred to her as ‘Dick’. She was, as historian of education Marjorie Theobald has noted, ‘the flamboyant face of the “new woman” in Sydney’. Macdonald’s letters indicate that they both enjoyed a wide and active social life in Sydney, separately and together. They also indicate that, while Macdonald thought Dickinson ‘wonderful’, they had separate bedrooms and Dickinson could insist on ‘driving’ – not ‘taking’, ‘inviting’ or ‘enticing’ – Macdonald ‘off to bed’. As Theobald remarks, they were simply ‘an unselfconscious public twosome’. Dickinson returned to London in 1913, where she practised medicine and continued to write novels; Macdonald joined her when she retired in 1917 and spent the rest of her life with her.[[47]](#endnote-47) This may not have been a sexual relationship. But it was a partnership of minds and habits, a profoundly ‘joined’ companionship.

Mary Fullerton, the ‘little Mary Wollstonecraft’ on a selection in rural Victoria in the 1870s, had been a tomboy who gained distinction for her bowling in games of cricket with her boy cousins, but had been ‘brought low’ by having to wear a long skirt once she began to grow up. But being brought low did not prevent her from joining Charles Strong’s Australian Church (where she may have heard Catherine Spence preach), the Victorian Socialist Party and the Women’s Political Association in the late 1890s, when she and some of her family moved to Melbourne.[[48]](#endnote-48) These socialist and feminist connections were to transform her life. In the first organisation, she probably encountered Edward Carpenter’s work *Love’s Coming of Age*, and in the second she met Mabel Singleton, with whom she fell in love. Singleton, nine years younger than Fullerton, was married to a much older man, but they separated immediately after the birth of their son, within two years of her meeting with Fullerton. Mr Singleton died only two years later, at the age of 73.[[49]](#endnote-49)

The two women worked together in the WPA, Fullerton as secretary of its Central Committee and Singleton as its chairman, giving speeches in Goldstein’s 1909 campaign for election to the Australian Senate. Fullerton, who supported herself writing articles, stories and poems for newspapers, usually under pseudonyms, contributed a story to Goldstein’s new paper, the *Woman Voter*, in 1910. Despite her shyness, she continued to appear on platforms for more than a decade, speaking for both the Women’s Peace Army and the WPA in 1917, and presenting a paper to the WPA’s conference on Scientific Motherhood in August 1918. She resigned as vice-president of the WPA in February 1918, pleading ill health, and four years later went to London to join Singleton, who had returned to her homeland the previous year. They lived there together until Fullerton died in 1946. Learning of her death, their good friend Miles Franklin wrote to Singleton, urging her to write a memoir – ‘if we are not too dispersed by the atomic bomb a time may come when people will be as avid to know something about Mary as they are to-day to know about Emily Dickinson’.

You must tell about your meeting with her, all that she meant to you then, and the last heroic years when you were more than a mother and sister in one to her. It is a glorious and rare friendship, knowledge of which must not be lost to the world.[[50]](#endnote-50)

This ‘glorious and rare friendship’ had no part in Fullerton’s representation of herself to the world. In her autobiographical novel, *Two* *Women: Clare: Margaret*, published anonymously in 1923, the central character vows never to marry ‘because of the business about children’, what Franklin called ‘rabbit work’. The first poem in the collection published posthumously, called ‘Lovers’, affirms the pleasures of emotional solitude, concluding

To be unloved gives sweet relief;

The one integrity

Of soul is to be lone,

Inviolate, and free.

Her 1918 paper to the Scientific Motherhood conference depicted ‘a spiritualisation of passion’, arguing that ‘in the activity of a noble sex love there is a spiritual mingling as well as an atomic bodily mingling – an embracing of spiritual atoms’.[[51]](#endnote-51)

But feminist scholar Sylvia Martin argues convincingly that her unpublished poems, many dedicated to Singleton, disrupt her self-representation as a ‘go alone’ spinster. I will quote from just one:

Love must be perfect. Ours has known storms,

The eddy, the murk, the tempest, the gust;

Across your clear face I have mixed other forms,

And tilting at masks have wounded and thrust;

But heart of my heart, my soul clears and warms

I see you: and come to the harbour of Trust.[[52]](#endnote-52)

Martin’s analysis suggests an explanation for the contrast between the privacy, not to say secrecy, of this relationship, and the unselfconscious public coupledom of Macdonald and Dickinson. There was, first, the post-World War I backlash against feminism, part of which was the popularisation of sexological and Freudian discourses which, she writes, ‘combined to produce a terrifying vision of the predatory, neurotic female who was attracted to women’; a backlash encapsulated in the late 1920s in the prosecution of Radclyffe Hall’s novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, for obscenity.[[53]](#endnote-53) There was also, secondly, a narrative about the way in which Fullerton came to recognise the nature of her desires. Martin argues that, for Fullerton, an encounter with the work of the turn-of-the-century sexologists was enabling, rather than the reverse, because the sexologist she encountered was Edward Carpenter, rather than the more influential Havelock Ellis. Ellis’s work formed the basis for a later conception of a lesbian as a pseudo man. Carpenter’s work, by contrast, overcame such polarisation: he posited an ‘intermediate sex’, people he called 'Uranians' (following Austrian K. H. Ulrichs, who had called them ‘Urnings’) who stood midway on a continuum between the poles of heterosexual men and heterosexual women. Carpenter not only stressed the normality and legitimacy of the intermediate sex, but also gave them a special function as ‘reconcilers and interpreters’ of the two sexes to each other from their ‘double nature’ and ‘a certain freemasonry of the secrets of the two sexes’. Further, when he expanded this argument in a later work, he gave them a special part to play in evolution:

Uranian people may be destined to form the advance guard of that great movement which will one day transform the common life by substituting the bond of personal affection and compassion for the monetary, legal and other external ties which now control and confine society.[[54]](#endnote-54)

Fullerton's reading of Carpenter appears in her 1923 novel, and, strikingly, in a poem called 'From the Heart' written to Singleton in 1913.

Foolish, defiant and weak

Knowing some day you *must*,

Come to me, come to me dear

Give me your trust.

Trust me who feels the truth

Even hard difficult truth

Since the first day we met

With love and ruth,

I who have touched the heart

Of the world's old wrong

(Meekly I say it here)

*I to the* ***guard*** *belong.*

*I who heard whispers deep*

*In my very cradle come*

*And learned the things I speak*

*While I was dumb.*

*I on the 'shining side'*

(For all my lack)

*With those who unfaltering walk*

*The upward track ...*

Face to the final pole

Under the flag 'achieve',

No more uncertain dear,

Of aim, object or place

Follow the destined road

Come and live out your face. (my emphasis).[[55]](#endnote-55)

Carpenter’s version of social evolution undoubtedly was enabling to Fullerton, and perhaps Singleton too. Nevertheless, the very fact that she learned it in a work concerned with those defined as sexually deviant constituted an imperative to secrecy. Perhaps this is the reason for the silence in the archive also about Vida Goldstein and ‘her particular friend’, Cecilia John.[[56]](#endnote-56)

*The First Sexual Revolution in Settler-Australia*

If alternatives to compulsory marriage and motherhood for women were central to First Wave Feminism, they were also central to what demographers have called 'the Australian family transition' – the first sexual revolution in settler-Australia. It consists in the extraordinary change in this period in the statistics for both marriage and maternity. Between 1891 and 1901, the proportion of women aged between 25 and 29 who did *not* marry almost doubled, rising to more than 10 per cent in all colonies except Tasmania. In Victoria in 1901, the proportion of women in this age group who had not married was as high as 51 per cent.[[57]](#endnote-57) Pursuing the feminists’ analogy between marriage and labour, this could be dubbed 'a strike against marriage'.[[58]](#endnote-58) Further, during the same period, the fertility rate of those women who did marry plummeted, by 8 per cent during the 1880s, and then by a further 18 per cent during the 1890s.[[59]](#endnote-59) This constituted a very solid material challenge to a discourse of compulsory marriage and motherhood for women. It occasioned a public panic.

The Royal Commission on the Decline in the Birthrate was announced in August 1903, and reported in March 1904. Set up amid a flurry of criticism of the government over ‘the population question’, which included immigration as well as natural increase, the 12-man commission included the influential Government Statistician, Timothy Coghlan.[[60]](#endnote-60) At its head was Charles Mackellar, a doctor who, as a member of the Legislative Council and chairman of the State Children’s Relief Board, was acquiring a reputation as an authority on the welfare of children.

The commission either led or bullied the 91 witnesses they interviewed to gain the evidence they wanted. Like Balls-Headley, who had considered but dismissed ‘the influences of venereal diseases’ on the reproductive health of women [30], they simply shut their ears to anything they heard about the damage done to women by gonorrhoea, the result of the sexual double standard and the feudal relations between a husband and a wife. They ignored, too, their statistician’s figures on pre-nuptial conceptions, which stood at 49 per cent of all first births; *without* these, it could be argued, the percentages of women not marrying could have been even higher. They refused to hear arguments that it was poverty that prompted couples to contracept – even though they were surrounded, daily, with the effects of the worst economic depression that settler Australians had suffered. Highly moralistic, entirely and racistly pro-natalist, the commissioners were so horrified at the evidence of the widespread practice of contraception and abortion that they relegated all of that evidence to a separate volume and prohibited its distribution with the report. These men gave to all of the Anglo-Celtic, masculinist prejudice mobilised against Chidley a particularly concentrated expression. More aggressive than Balls-Headley, in their report they reversed his allocation of blame to men postponing marriage and focussed instead – relentlessly – on women’s ‘selfishness’.

The birthrate had declined, they declared, principally because people were restricting their fertility. They summarised the reasons for the desire to restrict fertility as four:

i. An unwillingness to submit to the strain and worry of children;

ii. A dislike of the interference with pleasure and comfort involved in child-bearing and child-rearing;

iii. A desire to avoid the actual physical discomfort of gestation, parturition, and lactation; and

iv. A love of luxury and social pleasures, which is increasing.

They went on to comment: ‘It will be seen that the reasons given for resorting to limitation have one element in common, namely selfishness’. They dwelt upon harmful physical consequences, ‘the perversion of morals’ and the ‘decay of family life’. In a conclusion which also expressed ethnocentric fears of what was becoming known in racist white-Australia parlance as ‘the yellow peril’, they thundered:

... the people ... are neglecting ... their true duty to themselves, to their fellow countryman, and to posterity. Forgetful of the lessons of history, ignoring the teachings of science, bent on gratifying their selfish desires, and on pursuing social advancement, they are seeking to follow the dictates of a narrow reasoning ... The time must come ... when there will be a cruel awakening to a realisation of the truth ... Patriotism dictates that the people of today should consider what these facts mean to the future. It is the duty of the present generations of Australians to see to it that their patriotism is not impugned in time to come; and that the loss of this fair heritage of the British race ... is not made attributable to them by those who may, in the days to come, have to sacrifice their blood and treasure in the vain hope of defending it.[[61]](#endnote-61)

These were powerful men, giving utterance forcefully –not to say hysterically – to a discourse of health focussed upon the health of the population as breeders, giving particular prominence to biological sexual difference, and special emphasis to 'the hysterisation of women's bodies’.

But their pronouncements, and even the prohibitions on the advertising of contraceptives that followed, failed in their purpose. Never again, not even in the 1960s when the birth-rate reached its highest point for the twentieth century, did settler-Australian women bear as many children as they had before the 1880s. Small in numbers the Woman Movement may have been, but the attack of ‘the thinking women’ of the country on the sexual double standard and enforced maternity gave utterance to a widespread discontent on which far larger numbers of women were acting. The *Australian Woman’s Sphere* noted that the commission’s report had been covered in every major newspaper in the country, but it dismissed the public panic about ‘race suicide’, renewing its ‘protest against woman being regarded merely as a possible mother of children’, and quoting Olive Schreiner: ‘Marriage for love is the beautifullest external symbol of the union of souls; without it, it is the uncleanliest traffic that defiles the world.’[[62]](#endnote-62) Rose Scott observed ‘a whirlwind of talk and superficial comment’:

A commission composed of men only, a report in which the only evidence printed was such as these men approved of, a commission which like Adam of old wound up very contentedly assuring the public that everything was the fault ‘of the woman thou gavest to be with me’. My friends, so long as men keep up the demand for a supply of thousands and thousands of women in every city, who are to lead degraded lives, apart from the sphere of wife and mother, so long can they take the blame to themselves of a terrible evil which influences the birthrate not only directly but indirectly ... Quality should be placed before quantity, for population as population can be of no benefit to a country.[[63]](#endnote-63)

Socialist-feminist poet, Marie Pitt, described the fallen birth-rate as ‘The Greatest Strike in World History’.[[64]](#endnote-64)

The possibility of going on strike against what were widely seen to be the ‘natural’ conditions of womanhood depends, I have argued, on a re-definition of those ‘natural’ conditions as conditions, rather, of labour. The analogy that Louisa Lawson drew between wives and workers was one that allowed the ‘sexual labour’ of compulsory marriage and maternity to be understood as subject to a kind of negotiation equivalent to that between workers and employers. This understanding made possible both the marriage-bed negotiations that must have been a part of the Australian ‘family transition’ and the determination by so many women to eschew marriage altogether. Ironically, given his distaste for his own finding, Norman MacKenzie’s conclusion appears to have considerable warrant: the Woman Movement in Australia was ‘a public expression of private sexual revolt’.[[65]](#endnote-65)

The co-incidence of feminist attack on current conditions of marriage and enforced motherhood and the ‘Australian family transition’ is the most distinctive feature of the story of the Australian Woman Movement. In Britain, equivalent demographic change occurred at about the same time as in Australia, but the most spectacular manifestations of feminist activism were a few decades later, and the achievement of the vote, a further two decades later still. In the United States, the most marked demographic change had occurred well before the rise of the Woman Movement in the mid-nineteenth century, and long before the success of the campaigns of female suffrage. In Australia, though, the chronological co-incidence of the peak activism of suffrage-era feminism and its successes in gaining the vote for all white women with the ‘demographic transition’ makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Woman Movement’s arguments gave expression to a desire that was even more widely spread than those expressed in feminist campaigns, organisations and publications. And it was a desire that ran counter to the discourse of health, requiring women and men to relate predominantly if not exclusively as breeders.

To make this point is *not* to argue that feminism caused demographic change. Arguments against such a connection have been made, contradicted, and made again since Joseph and Olive Banks published *Feminism and* *Family Planning* in Britain in the 1960s. Moreover, historians in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first have grown extremely wary of single-cause explanations of major social changes. Other factors in the ‘family transition’ in Australia would have to include the economic depression that the birth-rate commissioners were so determined to ignore. They must also include the freshly racist commitments of white Australians in the wake of the Federation of the various Australian colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia, and their implications for the discourse on health, including the health of the nation.[[66]](#endnote-66)

I *am* arguing, though, that the widespread desire manifest in the Australian family transition for women to have sexual autonomy, and control of their reproductive capacities, and the feminist campaign for change in the double standard of sexual morality, the current conditions of marriage, and of compulsory maternity – both arose from the same source: the current discourse on health. This was inflected with a conscious modernity and nationalism, in Australia, and that nationalism – with its attendant racism – carried the seeds of the disappointment of the desires of suffrage-era feminists. For re-definition as human beings, rather than ‘the sex’, and as ‘independent’ rather than dependent on men for their livelihoods, depended on a third factor – women being able to earn independent incomes.

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2. Caroline Henty to Alexander MacLeod, 14 January 1890, Caroline Macleod, Letters. In the papers of Francis Henty of Merino Downs and his family, La Trobe Library, MS 7821, Box 489/3. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Roberta Stewart to Martin Jull, 23 August 1898, 6 September 1898, 8 November 1898, Letters of Roberta Stewart to Martin Jull, August-November 1898, Battye Library, MS 956 A, Envelope 21; Erskine, *Etiquette in Australia*, p.24. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Walter Balls-Headley, *The Evolution of the Diseases of Women* (Smith, Elder, & Co), London, 1894, p.1; Colin Macdonald, ‘Balls-Headley, Walter (1841-1918)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 3 (Melbourne University Press), Carlton, 1969. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Balls-Headley, *The Evolution of the Diseases of Women*, p.297. Further references in the text. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Barker-Benfield, *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life*, pp.81-3, 126, 286, 343, 347-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Walter Balls-Headley, President’s Address, Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia, *Australian* *Medical Journal*, Vol XIV, No 11, 15 November 1892, see especially pp.523-6, 532-3. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Balls-Headley, *The Diseases of Women*, p.33. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Caroline Henty to Alex MacLeod: 4 February 1890, 3 March 1890, Francis Henty Papers, La Trobe Library, MS 7821, Box 689/3. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. David Walker, ‘Youth on Trial: The Mt Rennie Case’, *Labour History*, No 50, May 1986; Juliet Peers, *What no man had ever done before ...* (Dawn Revival Press), Malvern, 1992; Judith Allen, *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880* (Oxford University Press), Melbourne, 1990, pp.54, 56-7; Jill Bavin-Mizzi, *Ravished: Sexual Violence in Victorian Australia* (UNSW Press), Sydney, 1995, pp.146-7, 170; Sylvia Lawson, *The* *Archibald Paradox: A Strange Case of Authorship* (Penguin Books), Ringwood, 1987, first pub. 1983, pp.50-52, 130-3, 194-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Allen, *Rose Scott*, p.116; Raymond Evans, ‘Harlots and helots’ in Ray Evans, Kay Saunders and K. Cronin (eds), *Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination* (ANZ Book Co), Sydney, 1975, p.103; *Australian Woman’s Sphere*, May 1901. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Allen, *Rose Scott*, p.116. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. *Op. cit.,* p.193. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. A. W. Martin, *Henry Parkes: A Biography* (Melbourne University Press), Carlton, 1980, pp.366, 378, 419, 421-2, 424; Louisa Macdonald to Eleanor Grove, 1 June 1895 in Beaumont and Hole, *Letters From Louisa*, p.127; Sylvia Lawson, *Archibald Paradox*, p.132; Allen, *Rose Scott*, p.56. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Geo. G. Reeve, ‘Ragnar Redbeard’, *Ross’s Monthly of Protest, Personality and Progress*, March-April 1920, pp.3-5. I must thank Suzanne Bellamy for allowing me to make notes from her research on anarchists in Australia, where I found Ragnar Redbeard. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. David Walker, ‘Continence for a Nation: Seminal Loss and National Vigour’, *Labour History*, No 48, May 1985; on Varley, see Graeme Davison and David Dunstan, ‘“This Moral Pandemonium” – images of low life’ in Graeme Davison, David Dunstan and Chris McConville (eds), *The Outcasts of* *Melbourne: Essays in Social History* (Allen & Unwin), North Sydney, 1985, pp.46-51; Henry Varley, *Lecture to Men on a Vitally Important Subject, containing invaluable information for young men, and those who are married* (Varley Bros), Melbourne, 1894, p.3. Subsequent references given in the text. See also Barker-Benfield, *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life*, ch 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Walker, ‘Continence for a Nation’, pp.2, 4, 11, 10, 1, 5, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Vol 1*, p.104; Walker, ‘Continence for a Nation’, p.2; see also Stephen Garton, *Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales, 1880-1940* (UNSW Press), Kensington, 1988, pp.122-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. *Op. cit.,* p.214. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Garton, *Medicine and Madness*, pp.124-5; Mark Finnane, ‘Sexuality and social order: The State versus Chidley’, in Sydney Labour History Group, *What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in* *Australian History* (George Allen & Unwin and The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History), Sydney, 1982, see especially pp.214-19. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Alexa, ‘The Evolution of The Diseases of Woman’, *Woman’s Voice*, 18 May and 1 June 1895, pp.255, 246. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Rose Scott, Untitled lecture on contagious diseases acts, dated by the Mitchell Library 1903, Scott Family Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS 38/23. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. *Herald*, 8 October 1888, quoted in Patricia Grimshaw, ‘Bessie Harrison Lee and the fight for Voluntary Motherhood’, in Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (eds), *Double Time: Women in Victoria –* *150 Years* (Penguin), Ringwood, p.143. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Ada Cambridge, *Unspoken Thoughts* (Kegan Paul), London, 1887 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Louisa Macdonald to Eleanor Grove, 8 October 1893, in Beaumont and Hole (eds), *Letters from* *Louisa*, p.123. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. H.H. Champion, ‘The claim of women’, reprinted from *Cosmos* (Gordon and Gotch), Sydney, 1895, pp.448-52, quoted in Katie Spearritt, ‘New Dawns: First Wave Feminism 1880-1914’ in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers), Marrickville, 1992, p.345. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (Penguin), London, Harmondsworth, first pub. 1883, p.155; *Woman’s Voice*, 6 October 1894. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Rose Scott, undated notebook entry, Scott Family Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS 38/22/9. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, ed. Carl Degler (Harper & Row), New York, 1966, first pub. 1898, p.97; Emma Goldman, ‘The Traffic in Women’ in Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other* *Essays*, with a new introduction by Richard Drinnon (Dover Publications), New York, 1969, first pub. 1910; Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade* (The Women’s Press), London, 1981, first pub. 1909, p.11. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. C.H. Spence, *Some Social Aspects of South Australian Life: by a colonist of 1839* (R. Kyffin Thomas), Adelaide, 1878. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Louisa Lawson, ‘The Coming Woman’. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. *Australian Woman’s Sphere*, May 1901. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Annie Golding, ‘The Industrial and Social Condition of Women in The Australian Commonwealth’, Proceedings of the Third Australasian Catholic Congress, 1910, quoted in Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (comps), *Uphill all the way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia* (University of Queensland Press), St Lucia, 1980, p.187. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. See Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Polity), Cambridge, 1988, ch 6. For elaboration of the anachronistic concept of marriage, and of domestic service, involving a relationship that could still be characterised as feudal at the end of the nineteenth century, see below, Chapter 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Bessie Harrison Lee, *Marriage and Heredity*, Melbourne, 1893, quoted in Grimshaw, ‘Bessie Harrison Lee and the fight for voluntary motherhood’, p.143. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Clara Weekes in *Australian Woman’s Sphere*, 10 June 1903. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. See above, Chapter 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Aileen Goldstein, ‘Woman’s Sphere’, *Australian Woman’s Sphere*, 10 April 1902; Martina G. Kramers, ‘Dr Aletta Jacobs and Mr C. V. Gerritsen’, *Australian Woman’s Sphere*, 10 April 1902; Ruth Brandon, *The New Women and the Old Men: Love, Sex and the Woman Question* (Secker & Warburg), London, 1990, p.224. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. See above, Chapter 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. See above, Chapter 3; Kirkby, *Alice Henry*, pp.44-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Farley Kelly, ‘Feminism and the Family’, in Eric Fry (ed), *Rebels and Radicals* (George Allen & Unwin), Sydney, 1983; Farley Kelly, ‘Mrs Smyth and the body politic’ in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia* (Hale & Iremonger), Sydney, 1982. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. *Ibid.* [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. *Daily Telegraph*, 9 February 1898, quoted in the Royal Commission on the Decline in the Birthrate and on the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales, 3 vols, Sydney, 1904, Vol II, p.283, Exhibit No 60. See also *Report* of this Commission, Vol I. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Rose Scott (possible beginning of a novel?), Scott Family Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS 38/22/11. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. H.G. Wells, *Ann Veronica* (The Readers Library Publishing Company Ltd), London, nd., first pub. 1909, p.129. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
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47. Beaumont and Hole, *Letters from Louisa*, pp.75, 17-19; Marjorie Theobald, *Knowing Women: Origins of Women’s Education in Nineteenth-century Australia* (Cambridge University Press), Melbourne, 1996, pp.87-9; Louisa Macdonald to Eleanor Grove: 22 June 1894, 30 September 1894, 18 August 1894, 22 June 1894. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Mary Fullerton, *Bark House Days* (Melbourne University Press), Carlton, 1964, first pub. 1921; Colleen Burke, ‘Mary Fullerton’ in Radi (ed), *200 Australian women*, pp.84-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Sylvia Martin, ‘Rethinking Passionate Friendships: the writing of Mary Fullerton’, *Women’s History Review*, Vol II, No 3, 1993 [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman*, pp.95, 102, 177, 181, 186; Miles Franklin to Mabel Singleton, 27 February 1946, in Jill Roe (ed), *My Congenials: Miles Franklin & Friends in* *Letters*, 2 vols. (The State Library of New South Wales in association with Angus & Robertson), Pymble, 1993, Vol II, p.158. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. *Two Women (Clare: Margaret****)****,* ‘by Two Anonymous Writers’(A.M. Philpot), London, nd [1923], p.37, I owe this reference to Sue Sheridan; Jennifer Strauss (ed), *The Oxford Book of Australian Love* *Poems* (Oxford University Press), Melbourne, p.34; Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman*, p.189. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Martin, ‘Rethinking Passionate Friendships’, p.397. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. *Op. cit.,* p.403. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. *Op. cit.,* pp.134, 133, 147; Edward Carpenter*: A Series of Papers on the* *Relation of the Sexes* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd), London, 1948, first pub. 1896 (reprinted 1897, 1902, 1903; enlarged edition 1906; reprinted 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1918, 1919; further enlarged edition 1923, reprinted 1930, 1948), pp.134, 133, 147; Martin, ‘Rethinking Passionate Friendships’, p.400. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. *Op. cit.,* pp.401-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Farley Kelly, ‘Vida Goldstein: Political Woman’, in Lake and Kelly (eds), *Double Time*, p.176. ‘Particular friend’ was a code, as was the rule against ‘particular friendships’ in convents. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. J.C. Caldwell & L.T. Ruzicka, ‘The Australian fertility transition: An analysis’, *Population and* *Development Review*, Vol 14, No 1, 1978, p.87. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Marie Pitt, ‘The Greatest Strike in World History’, *Socialist*, 1 December 1906, quoted in Colleen Burke, *Doherty’s Corner: The Life and Work of Poet Marie E.J. Pitt* (Angus & Robertson), North Ryde, 1985, p.37; see also below, comment by Grandma Clay in *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*, discussed in Chapter 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Peter F. McDonald, *Marriage in Australia and Proportions Marrying, 1860-1971* (ANU Press), Canberra, 1974, p.134; Gordon A. Carmichael, *With* *This Ring: First Marriage Patterns, Trends and Prospects in Australia* (ANU Press), Canberra, 1988, simply summarises McDonald on this period. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Other members included Octavius Beale, President of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures, who would later conduct a self-financed international inquiry resulting in the Report of the Royal Commission on Secret Cures, Drugs and Foods (1907), and would publish a book called *Racial Decay: A Compilation of Evidence from World Sources* (1910); the Government Medical Officer, R.T. Paton; a doctor who also had qualifications in law, had been knighted, and who sat in the Legislative Council, Charles MacLaurin; and – a late addition because the Labor Party currently held the balance of power in the parliament – William Arthur Holman, barrister, future Labor Attorney-General and Premier of New South Wales; see Judith Allen, ‘Octavius Beale re-considered: Infanticide, babyfarming and abortion in NSW 1880-1939’, in Sydney Labour History Group, *What Rough Beast?* *The State and Social Order in Australian History* (George Allen & Unwin), North Sydney, 1982; Rosemary Pringle, ‘Octavius Beale and the Ideology of the Birthrate’, *Refractory Girl*, No 3, Winter 1973. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Royal Commission on the Decline in the Birthrate, *Report*, Vol I, pp.17, 20-1, 26, 28, 52, 54; see also Neville Hicks, ‘*This Sin and Scandal’: Australia’s Population Debate 1891-1911* (Australian National University Press), Canberra, 1978. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. *Australian Woman’s Sphere*, 15 April 1904. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Rose Scott, President’s Address, Women’s Political and Educational League, 1904, Scott Family Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS 38/41, p.321; see also Allen, *Rose Scott*, p.182. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Quoted in Burke, *Doherty’s Corner*, p.37. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. See Chapter 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. J.A. & Olive Banks, *Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England* (Liverpool University Press) Liverpool, 1965; Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social* *Change* (Wheatsheaf Books/Indiana University Press), Sussex and Bloomington, 1984, ch 1; Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (Virago), London, 1985, Table 1; and, *contra*, Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women’s Emancipation Movements in* *Europe, America and Australasia 1840-1920* (Croom Helm), London and New York, 1977, pp.26-9; Pat Quiggin, *No Rising Generation: Women and Fertility in Late Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Department of Demography, Australian National University), Canberra, 1988, p.77; Susan Magarey, Sexual labour: Australia 1880-1910’, in Magarey, Rowley and Sheridan (eds), *Debutante Nation*. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)