

# The Nights Belong to the Woman Writer

A Meditation on Women's Writing Practices in  
Elizabeth Jolley's *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*

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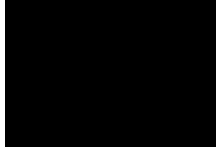
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## **STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION**

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.



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## ABSTRACT

Elizabeth Jolley's *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* is a novel overtly concerned with women's writing practices and the conditions most conducive to creative expression. The first line of the narrative, "The nights belonged to the novelist,"<sup>1</sup> signals a recurring motif throughout the text and presents an opportunity to analyse fictional representations of the night and writing. Night writing is a practice that appears in many variations across Western women's literary history; in Jolley's novel, the night fosters a time of literary and sexual experimentation in which women can explore their desires. Although *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* is widely acknowledged for its subversive female characters and exploration of lesbian desire, it is yet to receive substantial criticism on the significance of the night. Jolley scholarship considers the imaginative landscape of Miss Peabody's evenings; the magical, enchanting time so starkly juxtaposed with the mundanity of clerical work and oppressive domestic chores. Yet the complications and nuances of the night – both liberating and restrictive, fraught with contradictions – demand further attention. This study adopts a feminist critical perspective to analyse Jolley's novel as a meditation on women's writing practices and literary cultures. By applying a close, textual reading combined with biographical criticism, I consider the ways in which Jolley reflects on the tension between gender and writing within her fiction. In addition to proposing a new way of reading Jolley's novel, this study contributes to feminist literary scholarship on women's writing spaces. There is potential for this research to be extended by reading Jolley's work alongside other women writers, both local and international, who similarly draw upon the motif of night writing. Moreover, the themes on which Jolley meditates on in the novel have resonance with contemporary discussions on women's unpaid domestic labour, and this research has potential to contribute to ongoing feminist, political and economic discussions on gender disparity.

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<sup>1</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 1.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **WOMEN OF THE NIGHT**

A NIGHT OF ONE'S OWN

Make a wish and a dandelion explodes.

There is no precedent for this.

I smoked my annual cigarette in January. Virginia rolled her own.

Some words can only be written at night.

Two boys tucked in a redwood cathedral. Slow breaths on the cliff of sleep.

Paper sucks ink like blood into sand. The process.

Dark chocolate. Pinot noir. More please.

I could drink a case of Joni.

Candlelight viewed through a steamy shower door. Midnight lantern.

A clutch of barn owls clamors for food. My basset hound sleeps.

I take odd comfort reading even pages.

Virginia wrote only in purple ink that even the Ouse could not fade.

I ache for sex, as night moves over bodies entwined.

This is what I tell myself whistling in the dark, singing to the moon.

Why would I ever erase this?

## NIGHT WRITING AS A PRACTICE IN WOMEN'S LITERARY HISTORY

Sparked by an interest in the opening line of Elizabeth Jolley's *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* (*MPI*) – “The nights belonged to the novelist” – I began exploring night-writing as a practice for women writers.<sup>2</sup> In “A Night of One's Own,” Kelly Cressio-Moeller encapsulates the aspects which intrigue me most about this practice in *MPI*; the quality of silence and stillness which fosters the imaginative process, the knowing of complete solitude as all (even the basset hound) sleep and your words come alive. Although night-writing is solitary, Cressio-Moeller implies this is a practice shared by a collective of women across generations. Just as she and Virginia (Woolf) have their cigarettes in common, so too do other women share this practice of writing during the night. There are further affinities with Cressio-Moeller's poem and the practice of night-writing as explored in *MPI*: the explosion of creativity that stems from the single dandelion, as ideas are able to flourish in this time; and the sense of lasciviousness which defines these hours – the night is for writing, drinking, seduction. Dimly lit in the glow of candlelight, the time is romanticised but the process is arduous. “Paper sucks ink like blood into sand”; the body is depleted of mental and physical energy, craving stimulants to keep awake and depressants to relax.<sup>3</sup> Cressio-Moeller muses “some words can only be written at night,” and I wonder what it is about the night that fosters this sense of imaginative release. The title and content of this poem alludes to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.<sup>4</sup> Whereas Woolf's room is a tangible space, complete with a lock and symbolising the freedom to think independently, Cressio-Moeller's is metaphorical, a time which best “set[s] free whatever is in the brain.”<sup>5</sup> Woolf's room has often been conceptualised in metaphorical terms and, while I do not wish to do the same here, my research stems from this idea of women searching for the time and space which is most hospitable to their writing.<sup>6</sup> *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, so overtly concerned with women's writing practices and the conditions most conducive to creative expression, presents a unique opportunity to study a fictional representation of the night as a time for writing. Through the

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<sup>2</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cressio-Moeller, “Night of One's Own.”

<sup>4</sup> Woolf, *Room of One's Own*.

<sup>5</sup> Woolf, *Room of One's Own*, 52.

<sup>6</sup> Woolf's ‘room’ has taken many forms since its conception, from virtual online spaces to a “metaphysical space that merges with the Lacanian ‘Real’ (being both infinite and indescribable).” Zimmerman, “The Politics of Writing,” 38; Sheikh, “The Walls that Emancipate,” 19.

motif of the night, Elizabeth Jolley meditates on women's writing conditions and illuminates a practice of writing at night – a practice that she, the women within her novel, and many women throughout literary history have participated in.

Considering the socio-cultural conditions of women's writing, night-writing in the context of this research is seen as a gendered practice. This is not to disregard the long history of male writers preferring late hours, but to acknowledge a practice born out of necessity for women negotiating competing demands.<sup>7</sup> Speaking of women writers in the early twentieth century, Drusilla Modjeska notes, "writing requires time, and time is frequently at a premium in women's lives."<sup>8</sup> This sentiment just as easily applies to women today. The Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency released figures in 2016 which demonstrate a disparity in "the time women spend on unpaid care or domestic work as opposed to men," referred to as a "gender time gap in unpaid work."<sup>9</sup> This is also acknowledged in feminist critical discourse. Revisiting Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* in 2009, Wendy Gan explores the continuing domestic oppression women writers negotiate. Gan considers Woolf's polemic a continuation of Florence Nightingale's "Cassandra," which was written in 1852 and circulated widely a year prior to *A Room of One's Own* publication.<sup>10</sup> Woolf quotes Nightingale directly in her essay yet omits a clause which is integral to my argument on women's night writing:

Women never have an half-hour in all their lives (excepting before or after anybody is up in the house) that they can call their own, without fear of offending or of hurting someone.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of male night-writers include Franz Kafka, Samuel Johnson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Voltaire, Gustave Flaubert, Karl Marx, and Henry Miller. For further examples, see Currey, *Daily Rituals*.

<sup>8</sup> Modjeska, *Exiles at Home*, 1. Modjeska explores the intersection of gender and writing throughout this book, and notes the relevance of these discussions for contemporary women's writing. She writes:

Being a woman intersected at every point with being a writer. Being a wife, a mother, even a daughter could not easily be laid aside; these were constant conditions grounded in the needs of family, of husband, of children and, not least, of the women themselves. So that even when there was someone to take over the chores, responsibility and involvement remained. Writer-women were, as they still are, frequently caught between their professional needs and capacities and their desires as well as their duties as women." Modjeska, *Exiles*, 191

<sup>9</sup> A report by the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency in 2016 found on average, for every hour men spend on caring for their house and family, women spend an hour and 48 minutes. Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market*.

<sup>10</sup> Gan, "Solitude and Community."

<sup>11</sup> Florence Nightingale, "Cassandra," quoted in Gan, "Solitude and Community," 70.



My argument follows Nightingale's in identifying the night hours as a reprieve for women. Time is of direct relevance for both Nightingale and Woolf, a topic on which Gan extends: a "woman's time is too much subject to familial demands and the expectations of a conventional society to fulfill her trivial but time-consuming domestic duties."<sup>12</sup> Being primarily responsible for the caring of a house and family, there is an ever-present tension between a woman's professional and familial life. Tillie Olsen draws on Woolf's theories to study the intersection of gender and writing, noting the silencing of women's voices throughout history – a silencing which is in part due to the social roles which confine women to the domestic sphere.<sup>13</sup> Extending on Woolf's concept of the 'angel in the house,' Olsen identifies a figure who is often invisible yet necessary to the maintenance of daily life.<sup>14</sup> The essential angel, whose role encompasses a range of menial, unnoticed tasks, is often a wife, mother, or unmarried daughter. She is responsible and responsive – her supporting role enables her family's productivity and often restricts her own. The identities of 'woman' and 'writer' are often at odds with each other, as each demands time, effort and sacrifice of the person. The time spent caring for one's family necessarily requires time away from the desk; likewise, the effort one exerts to write has the potential to drain a person of energy that would otherwise have been directed towards their family. However, an interesting pattern begins to emerge. In the silence that is fostered only while the rest of the household – seemingly, the rest of the world – sleeps, many women writers seek refuge in the obscure hours between dusk and dawn.

Night-writing manifests in many variations across Western women's literary history. Generations of women have found solace in the night, an escape from domestic and familial responsibility.<sup>15</sup> Letters between Australian women writers of the twentieth century, compiled

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<sup>12</sup> Gan, "Solitude and Community," 70.

<sup>13</sup> Olsen, *Silences*.

<sup>14</sup> Olsen, *Silences*, 34-36.

<sup>15</sup> In her review of Currey's book, *Daily Rituals*, Schulte considers women's domestic and familial obligations:

Unlike the male artists [featured in Currey's book], who moved through life as if unfettered time to themselves were a birthright, the days and life trajectories of the handful of female artists featured in the book were often limited by the expectations and duties of home and care. George Sand always worked late at night, a practice that started when she was a teenager and needed to take care of her grandmother... Even Anthony Trollope, who famously wrote 2,000 words before 8am every morning, most likely learned the habit from his mother, who began writing at age 53 to support her sick husband and their six children. She rose at 4am and finished work in time to serve the family breakfast. Schulte, "A woman's greatest enemy," *The Guardian*, July 21, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/21/woman-greatest-enemy-lack-of-time-themselves>

in *As Good as a Yarn with You*, illustrate what Carole Ferrier describes as the “deleterious effects” domestic responsibilities can have on their writing capacities.<sup>16</sup> Miles Franklin laments the “external infernal nagging chores that sap our strength and rob us of self-expression,”<sup>17</sup> echoing the weariness Sybylla Melvyn feels in Franklin’s novel *My Brilliant Career* (1901). This is a theme that resonates throughout the collection of letters, as each woman struggles to find time of her own. Both Marjorie Barnard and Eleanor Dark consider the night as the only free time they have to write. Barnard refers to housework, writing/research, and political activities as “three incompatibles,” each competing for her time, effort and energy.<sup>18</sup> She describes the blossoming ideas she has for a novel, seeing its potential, but loses the stamina needed for night-writing upon falling ill. Dark, too, acknowledges the willpower one must have to write in these hours.<sup>19</sup> This raises an important and yet to be explored question: What exactly does the night *do* to women’s writing? One way this practice is meditated on is through the recurring theme of night-writing in women’s literature. Weary from manual labour, the only time Sybylla Melvyn is free from her chores is during the night; the same is said of Morag Gunn in Margaret Laurence’s *künstlerroman* novel, *The Diviners* (1974). Although Morag struggles with writing in the obscure hours – “the only trouble is that she feels too tired and lousy most evenings to do any writing at all” – it is the only time that presents itself as available for her creative expression, especially upon becoming a mother.<sup>20</sup> Emily Starr of Lucy Maud Montgomery’s *Emily of New Moon* (1923), Alma Porch of Elizabeth Jolley’s *Foxybaby* (1985), Jo March in Greta Gerwig’s recent movie adaptation of *Little Women* (2019) – all write at night. Night-writing is a theme that manifests in art and is recognised as a practice that has roots in women’s literary history.

The obscure hours also present an escape from maternal responsibility as mothers crave the solitude that comes as their children sleep. Tillie Olsen comments on the additional obstacle writer-mothers face: the primacy of a child’s needs owing to the fact that they are performed as acts of love rather than duty.<sup>21</sup> Sylvia Plath’s “still, blue, almost eternal hour

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<sup>16</sup> Ferrier, *As Good as a Yarn*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Miles Franklin to Katharine Susannah Prichard, Carlton, October 21, 1940, in Ferrier, *As Good as a Yarn*, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie Barnard to Eleanor Dark, Longueville, September 5, 1940, in Ferrier, *As Good as a Yarn*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Eleanor Dark to Miles Franklin, September 8, 1943, in Ferrier, *As Good as a Yarn*, 105.

<sup>20</sup> Laurence, *The Diviners*, 242

<sup>21</sup> Olsen, *Silences*, 33.

before cockcrow, before the baby's cry" lyricises the tranquillity of the obscure hours,<sup>22</sup> one that cannot be replicated upon being consciously responsible for another person.<sup>23</sup> Plath adopted this practice following her separation from Ted Hughes in what her biographer considers the most productive period of Plath's life.<sup>24</sup> Waking at 4 a.m., Plath had a blissful four hours until her children needed attention. This forced structure allowed the newly single mother to channel her energy and focus into a limited timeframe; in a letter, she writes, "I have never been so happy anywhere as writing at my huge desk in the blue dawns, all to myself, secret and quiet."<sup>25</sup> Toni Morrison similarly formed her writing habits as a young, single mother, finding the pre-dawn hours a time that allowed her to give undivided attention to her work. In a footnote to *Silences*, Tillie Olsen acknowledges the "long tradition of early rising, an hour here and there, or late-night mother writers... necessarily fitting in writing time in accordance with the maintenance of life, and children's, needs."<sup>26</sup> Yet to my knowledge, night-writing as a practice (for all women, regardless of whether they are mothers) is contained to footnotes, mentioned as an aside in interviews or biographies, and lacks an in-depth study of its consequences for women's literature. The scope of this thesis does not allow for a comprehensive study of night-writing in women's literature, nor does it seek to make broad assumptions or claims of that nature. I will, however, take an individual example of a fictional text to study one author's meditation on the practice. The night-writing in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* is illuminated further by the author's personal experience; Jolley, too, embraces the solitude that the obscure hours provide and often speaks about the night hours as integral to her writing practice.

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<sup>22</sup> This is reported as a quote by Sylvia Plath in an interview for the BBC which was recorded prior to her death but never broadcasted. Plath quoted in Erica Jong, "An Art Like Everything Else," *The Times*, December 12, 2004 <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/12/books/review/an-art-like-everything-else.html>

<sup>23</sup> "That Still Blue Hour Before the Baby's Cry" is a chapter title in Drusilla Modjeska's *Exiles at Home*, in which she alludes to Plath's writing practice and notes the productivity of the pre-dawn hours for Eleanor Dark. Modjeska writes:

'There was never enough *time* for writing', [Dark] told me. She could only be sure of uninterrupted hours by rising before dawn, in 'that still blue almost eternal hour before the baby's cry' which Sylvia Plath has described so well. Once she was a mother, she, too, wrote many of her poems before the children woke. Even with domestic help Eleanor Dark relied on that interval, but help was not always available and without a maid she was virtually unable to write at all. Modjeska, *Exiles*, 195-196.

<sup>24</sup> Middlebrook, *Her Husband*, 186.

<sup>25</sup> Middlebrook, *Her Husband*, 185.

<sup>26</sup> Olsen, *Silences*, 36.

## ELIZABETH JOLLEY AND MISS PEABODY'S INHERITANCE

Elizabeth Jolley (1923 – 2007) is one of Australia's most well-known women writers, rising to prominence in the late 1970s after a lifetime of writing letters, diaries and stories. Author of 15 novels and four short story collections, and recipient of many literary prizes including the Miles Franklin and NSW Premier's Literary Awards, Jolley's position is firmly cemented as one of the major Australian writers of the twentieth century. The scale of existing Jolley scholarship is testament to this, as evidenced in Curtin University's Elizabeth Jolley Research Collection which contains an immense bibliography of works by and about Jolley. *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* has been selected as the subject of this thesis for its explicit preoccupation with women's writing practices. The centrality of the night to women's writing throughout this novel is further illuminated by Jolley's autobiographical reflections on her personal experience with night-writing.

A recurring theme in interviews with Jolley is the tension between her profession as a writer and duty as a mother and wife. In *Rooms of their Own*, Jennifer Ellison comments on the "social role" of writing as a woman, one which "inevitably affects their lives, and, consequently, their work."<sup>27</sup> The reality of negotiating one's personal responsibilities, a minefield of duty and love, invariably has consequences for women's writing. Frequently questioned on her identity as a feminist or 'woman writer,' Jolley was hesitant to define herself by either politics or gender. "I just think of myself as a writer,"<sup>28</sup> she would insist, echoing a sentiment shared by many female writers of her era who, while appreciative of the feminist movement, did not wish to align themselves directly or attribute their success to it.<sup>29</sup> Some variation of 'how do you find the time?' is often asked of women in interviews, a question which Susan Sheridan identifies as particularly gendered; child-raising and domestic responsibilities are rarely considered when discussing the careers of prominent male authors, yet for women like Jolley they are "crucial."<sup>30</sup> Jolley repeatedly discusses her work/life balance in interviews; she describes her habit of making a "quick note" during the day, jotting down ideas she will return to at night. "You see, I was a housewife with three children," she

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<sup>27</sup> Ellison, *Rooms of their Own*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, "An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley," interview by Ulla Jousen, 41.

<sup>29</sup> Ellison, *Rooms of their Own*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Sheridan, *Nine Lives*, 15.

says, “I used to write at night when everyone had gone to bed.”<sup>31</sup> Jolley later adopts the practice of rising at 4.30 a.m., finding herself being most productive in the hours before her husband Leonard calls for his morning cup of tea.<sup>32</sup> Writing for Jolley is intertwined with the domestic; her notes are scrawled in between chores, while her fiction explores women’s interior spaces such as the home, school, or hospital setting. Negotiating time and domesticity is of direct significance in her working life and it is a preoccupation on which she meditates in her fiction. *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, so overtly concerned with women’s writing practices, working conditions and domestic interior spaces, is a prime example of this preoccupation.

From the outset, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance* is a novel explicitly concerned with the conditions which best nurture women’s writing practices. Through multiple layers of storytelling, Jolley explores the significance of the 24-hour clock for women’s literary and sexual practices. The night is liberating in many ways and is starkly juxtaposed with an oppressive daily reality – it is a time of experimentation. Miss Dorothy Peabody is an emerging reader and writer, who uses the night to explore her literary self and develop her writing practice. Diana Hopewell, the novelist from Australia who writes to Miss Peabody, transmits an image of herself as strong and powerful from the confines of her hospital room. Diana’s letters contain the developing narrative of Dr Arabella Thorne – known only as Miss Thorne, the implication being that her unmarried status carries greater weight than any academic or occupational achievement. A figment of Diana’s creation, Miss Thorne is adventurous and exuberant yet still suffers the oppression of having her lesbian sexuality contained to the night. The frame story is that of Miss Peabody, deciphering Thorne’s narrative through fragmented letters and disrupted reading time. Whereas Miss Peabody’s life is wearisome, and her duties to her elderly mother and home stifle her opportunities for creativity, Diana initiates possibilities of adventure, sexual and literary experimentation, and freedom. This thesis will explore the ways in which Jolley meditates on women’s writing practices and literary cultures throughout *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*. This meditation is enabled through the motif of the night; by alluding to a tradition of night-writing in the female

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<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Yacker*, interview by Candida Baker, 218.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Speaking Volumes*, interview by Ray Willbanks, 116.

literary tradition, Jolley considers the circumstances which restrict women's creativity and relegate their desires to the darkest corners of the home.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The night in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* manifests as both a theme of subversion and a time of creative practice; my research seeks to connect the two. Offering a reprieve from stifling conformity, heteronormativity, and the mundanity of everyday chores, the night is romanticised as a time of creativity as women can experiment with their sexuality and the written word. Despite the prominence of the night in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, the connection between the night and the novel's themes and structure is yet to receive in-depth critical attention. The night itself has received some critical consideration; similarities are drawn between Jolley's writing practice and the practices explored within the novel, as alluded to in the playful film title, *The Nights Belong to the Novelist*.<sup>33</sup> This film consists of interviews with Jolley and dramatised segments of her writing, and contains one of the many mentions of Jolley's own night-writing practice. The night is also acknowledged as a metaphor for freedom, both sexual and imaginative. Drawing on Jolley's imagery of the night as a magical realm, Helen Daniel acknowledges the imaginative possibilities that arise in this time. As Daniel notes, "Miss Peabody's days are static reality, the dreary routine... but the nights open up strange new territories, 'a world of magic and enchantment', dynamic and mobile, shifting through time and space freely."<sup>34</sup> Joan Kirkby, too, explores the imaginative world Jolley transmits through Diana in her aptly titled article, "The Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley: Modernism and the Sappho-Erotic Imagination of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*." Kirkby views Jolley's novel as distinctly modernist, considering the spaces Jolley creates for women "outside the gender system," specifically through Miss Thorne.<sup>35</sup> Kirkby is interested in how lesbian desire is explored through Miss Thorne which, although confined to Diana's fictional narrative, nevertheless exposes elements of society which are otherwise silenced.<sup>36</sup> In these examples, the night is associated with imaginative freedom and release, and there is a focus primarily on the novel's representation of lesbian sexuality. The

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<sup>33</sup> Wilcox, Christina, dir., *The Nights Belong to the Novelist*. (Documentary, Yowie Films, 1987, Australia).

<sup>34</sup> Daniel, *Liars*, 285.

<sup>35</sup> Kirkby, "Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley," 485.

<sup>36</sup> Kirkby, "Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley," 489.

oppression of Miss Peabody's daily routine has been discussed and juxtaposed with the liberating practices in the evening.<sup>37</sup> Scholarly criticism on Jolley identifies the subversive activities and themes of *MPI*, and makes references to the imaginative freedom of the night. But the night is not seen as an integral concept in permitting the woman author this exploration. My argument poses that there is a quality of the night itself which fosters the experimentation of *MPI*, and thus considers the night in a way that has not yet been explored in Jolley criticism. I consider the night to be central in a reading of women's literary and sexual experimentation. The motif of the night allows Jolley to reflect on the restrictions placed upon women's writing, as she explores the relegation of desire (literary and sexual) to the obscure hours between dusk and dawn. Moreover, Jolley considers the consequences of writing in this time and the effect it has on women's writing. Thematically, she explores the sense of entrapment and madness that arises as women's desires are relegated to the socially and culturally unproductive hours of the 24-hour clock.<sup>38</sup> Yet the night also allows women to express themselves more freely, and Jolley considers this relationship between time and textuality in the structural and technical aspects of her text. Under the cover of the night in Jolley's novel, I argue, women adopt a more experimental and self-reflexive style of writing.

Despite Jolley's resistance at being categorised a 'woman writer,' her writing has often been considered stylistically feminine in nature. Elizabeth Campbell draws on Hélène Cixous' concept of *écriture féminine* as she considers modern women's epistolary fiction as distinctly feminine in style.<sup>39</sup> Campbell analyses the structural and technical aspects of Jolley's text. She considers the use of fragmentation, subjectivity, and a focus on writing rather than plot as subverting the dominant, masculine, linear narrative structure. Similarly, Bronwen Levy characterises the displacement, silencing and self-referentiality of Jolley's writing as thematically and stylistically feminine.<sup>40</sup> Even the novel's experimentation can be considered gendered. In examining the relationship between metafictional writing and gender, Molly Hite suggests experimentation in women's writing is often overlooked due to it being

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<sup>37</sup> Dorothy Jones also makes comment on the night in *MPI*; "The book's opening sentence – 'The nights belonged to the novelist' - identifies night, time of darkness, dreams and leisure, with the realm of fiction." Jones, "The Goddess, the Artist and the Spinster," 81.

<sup>38</sup> As Helen Daniel writes, "entrapment and enclosure are recurring themes" in Jolley's work. Daniel, *Liars*, 276.

<sup>39</sup> Campbell, "Epistolarity."

<sup>40</sup> Levy, "Jolley's Women."

characteristically different than men's.<sup>41</sup> Using Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* as an example, Hite argues women's metafiction is often not identified as such because their use of mimesis is considered a form of realism rather than experimentalism. However, Hite believes it is through mimesis that women experiment with a metafictional style of writing, reflecting social and political concerns. Linda Hutcheon similarly believes, "metafiction is less a departure from the mimetic novelistic tradition than a reworking of it."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Hutcheon characterises metafiction as having two main focuses: linguistic and narrative structures, and the role of the reader.<sup>43</sup> Both of these concerns are evident in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. Helen Daniel acknowledges the way Jolley's novel plays with the artifice of fiction across the narrative layers of the text and identifies an experimental style of writing.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Kerryn Goldsworthy draws on various models of narrative theory to analyse the complex and disruptive narrative mode of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*.<sup>45</sup> Goldsworthy is particularly interested in the sentence structure, ambiguity and punctuation (or lack thereof) throughout Jolley's text, all contributing to a destabilising effect where there are multiple writers, readers and levels of narration, often deliberately unidentifiable. Drawing on this body of scholarship, I also explore the way female-centred experiences such as the negotiation between domesticity and writing manifest in the novel. I am interested in the way the night is linked to the structure and style of the novel; the fragmented narratives are reflective of the disruptions within the night, and the self-conscious experimentation suggests a sense of instability within a literary culture. Building on readings of *MPI* as either (or both) feminine and experimental, I aim to extend this body of scholarship to illustrate the night as intricately connected to both of these writing styles.

*Miss Peabody's Inheritance* is situated within the feminist discourse of the 1980s. This is illustrated partly through frequent allusions to the Women's Liberation Movement but more so in Jolley's representation of complex and contradictory female characters. Images of domesticity pervade Jolley's fiction as her novels are often set in the home or school, traditional spaces of female oppression and confinement. John O'Brien considers this novel

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<sup>41</sup> Hite, "(En)gendering Metafiction."

<sup>42</sup> Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel, *Liars*, 281.

<sup>45</sup> Goldsworthy, "Voices in Time."



an “attack on domesticity,” an exaggerated illustration of the stifling nature of the family home.<sup>46</sup> This sentiment is shared by Sue Gillett who identifies a recurring theme of confinement and restriction in Jolley’s female writer characters, not only in *MPI* but throughout her oeuvre.<sup>47</sup> My reading is consistent with both that of O’Brien and Gillett; domesticity is certainly pervasive in the text. Mrs Peabody, who restricts her daughter’s freedom and confines her to the home, is an active agent of oppression. Indeed, the ending of *MPI* suggests the tension between gender and writing is an unresolved issue in the novel; Miss Peabody is unable to reconcile domesticity and her desire to write, and she leaves behind her dead mother and family home for the possibilities Diana offers her in Australia. Coral Ann Howells applies a feminist and post-colonial perspective to consider Jolley’s novel in relation to an Australian cultural and literary tradition. Howells argues that Miss Peabody writes her way out of displacement and dispossession by finding her lost literary mother, Diana, and claiming a literary inheritance that is both “Australian and female.”<sup>48</sup> *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance* is “a novel about fiction making and the secret life of fantasy,” Howells claims, but she considers Jolley’s text to focus more so on the “process of reading novels than of writing them.”<sup>49</sup> In connecting Jolley’s work to an Australian post-colonial tradition, Howells draws similarities between the mythmaking of the Australian outback in *MPI* and the works of Miles Franklin, Henry Handel Richardson, and Joan Lindsay. There is a sense of displacement that Howells identifies in Miss Thorne; repeatedly, Thorne attempts to identify with the predominantly male figures of a patriarchal literary tradition but is ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>50</sup> My research draws on similar themes to Howells’, in that I examine the female literary cultures and inheritances of Jolley’s novel. However, Howells considers *MPI* in relation to an Australian women’s cultural and literary tradition, whereas my research looks at the relationship between *MPI* and Western women’s literary practices and cultures more broadly. More specifically, I consider Jolley’s representation of night-writing as a practice in *MPI* – a practice which exists in interviews and biographies of writers but remains critically unexamined in women’s literature. Another perspective is that of Dorothy Jones, in which the figure of Diana as a goddess is central to her reading. Diana is, according to Jones,

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<sup>46</sup> O’Brien, “Myths of Domesticity,” 134.

<sup>47</sup> Gillett, “Breaking the Realist Mirror,” 116.

<sup>48</sup> Howells, “In Search of Lost Mothers,” 60.

<sup>49</sup> Howells, “In Search of Lost Mothers,” 64.

<sup>50</sup> Howells, “In Search of Lost Mothers,” 59-60.

“an image both of creative energy and of the restorative power of nature – a power manifest both in the land and in the lives of individual human beings.”<sup>51</sup> Jones considers *MPI* as a feminist reimagining of the landscape; whereas the Australian literary tradition has often figured the land as female, in the sense that it is harsh, barren and uncultivated, Jolley presents the landscape as a fertile space that encourages the growth of artists and creativity. The image of Diana, Jones argues, is an embodiment of the landscape in the sense that she nurtures Miss Peabody’s literary growth. Jones notes that the characters in *MPI* encounter “strange [territories] – spiritual and emotional as well as geographical,” and she discusses the relationship between landscape and creative development.<sup>52</sup> There are similarities to be found in my own argument about the night, and Jones’ statement here presents a case for me to frame the night as more than a time of convenience on the 24-hour clock. I argue that these obscure hours offer women an internal state of creativity, a psychic territory which nurtures their need for solitude and silence and allows them to access their imaginative potential.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NIGHT IN *MISS PEABODY’S INHERITANCE*

There is an intricate connection between literature and the evening which has always existed for Miss Peabody. It is at bedtime as a child that she discovers the “dusty magic” concealed within the pages of a story and the ability to lose herself wholly in someone else’s narrative. Although both parents read to her as a child, after her father’s death Miss Peabody loses access to this fictional realm. Patriarch of the Peabody home, her father acts as literary gatekeeper; to use terminology consistent with Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, Miss Peabody is ‘locked outside,’ without the means or knowledge to access the stories her father allowed during his lifetime. The ability of those in power to grant or restrict access to literature and knowledge is explored in *A Room of One’s Own*. Using the example of Mary Beton being refused from the library, Woolf demonstrates the ways women have historically been denied entry to male spaces. Literature – so intricately bound with voice, autonomy, and power – has, as Woolf demonstrates, historically been one of these male-dominated arenas. A powerful example of this is enacted in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Stripped of autonomy in a regime which categorises women into wives, breeders, caretakers, or prostitutes, Offred serves as Handmaiden to her Commander, Fred. Women are forbidden to

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<sup>51</sup> Jones, “The Goddess, the Artist, and the Spinster,” 87.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, “The Goddess, the Artist, and the Spinster,” 77.

read or write because to do so would restore some of the power that was so forcefully taken from them when Gilead was formed. Yet Fred allows Offred into his study, voyeuristically observes her as she reads his books and engages in word games. Never as an equal, and with the certainty that Fred maintains control, Offred participates in this act of treason and seems at times to even enjoy it. Interestingly, it is during the night that these transgressions occur in *The Handmaid's Tale* as they do in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. The darkness of the night seems to foster a type of covert exploration and experimentation that is shunned in the light of day. The magic of the night for Miss Peabody does not find true value until she begins engaging with Diana and finds a literary foremother to guide her development to authorship. Under the secrecy the night provides, Miss Peabody is exposed to a tradition of writing which subverts the values of her father and his literature.

We know, from the first sentence and many repeated references, the night belongs to the novelist in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. The night belongs to many novelists, many women writers who seek solace and embrace an escape from maternal, familial, or gendered responsibilities. Looking at women's literary history, this practice is widespread yet generally considered unremarkable. It is a practice formed by necessity, the result of a careful negotiation between expectation and desire, responsibility and aspiration. That this practice is so prevalent yet understudied is in itself remarkable, and *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* – being so overtly concerned with the night and writing practices – presents a unique opportunity to study one manifestation of the night in literature.<sup>53</sup> Although we understand why female novelists within the text lay claim to this window of time, I want to explore this idea further. How does the night support her creativity? What does the night permit, and what does it restrict? And how does the night, this major preoccupation and defining feature in the novel, manifest in other ways throughout the text?

Chapter One explores broader modes of the night as a metaphor for creativity. The night in *MPI* is a time women seek as a reprieve; they eagerly anticipate the evening, wait for the sun to set and responsibilities to be bundled away. Of course, there are problems in laying claim to a time so easily disturbed, that is fleeting in the 24-hour cycle and, like the women

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<sup>53</sup> While this thesis will not explore other writers or their writing in-depth, and will make no claims as to the night as a practice that works for *all* women writers, it is significant to acknowledge that it is a practice that holds true for many. This suggests potential to extend this thesis to a more comprehensive study, accounting for a wider representation of writers across cultures, age and circumstances.

writers themselves, responsive to competing needs. Chapter One also considers problems which arise in the night, not least of which being the pervasive threat of interruptions. Though the night itself symbolises freedom, Miss Peabody occupies a physical room within a patriarchal home and is hence subject to disturbances. This chapter will thus explore the night as existing within, rather than beyond, patriarchy; it is not a ‘room of one’s own,’ but merely a window of time which offers relative freedom. By relegating women’s desires to the darkest and most socially unproductive time on the 24-hour clock, Jolley explores themes of entrapment and isolation. Miss Peabody’s frustration at having her desires unable to transgress into the daylight manifests in a type of madness. This madness is compounded more so by the unsustainable hours of writing in the night, and Jolley explores the consequences of women who sacrifice their sleep – and sanity – to write.

Building on Chapter One which explores the night as a thematic concern in *MPI*, Chapter Two will consider the ways in which the night fosters a type of literary experimentation for its female writer characters. However, like the themes of entrapment and madness which arise out of the night’s complications, the experimentation of the night remains confined to its patriarchal barriers. Both the narrative disruption and lingering sense of authorial anxiety are attributed to the night; the fragmented narratives mimic the interruptions of the night, and the authorial anxiety suggests a sense of instability within a predominantly male literary culture. The experimentation with, development of, and eventual claim to authorship is tied to the night; its darkness nurtures the secrecy of women’s writing and allows a covert time to explore and develop their craft. Just as the night is that of the novelists’, the novels themselves – *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, and the untitled, collaboratively crafted manuscript of Diana and Miss Peabody – are informed by and reflective of the night.

## CHAPTER ONE

### HURRY UP AND WRITE: NAVIGATING DOMESTIC STRUCTURES IN ELIZABETH JOLLEY'S WRITING PRACTICE

In an interview for *Scripts* in 1985, Elizabeth Jolley speaks to Stephanie Trigg about the negotiation between interpersonal relationships and the solitude that writing necessitates. This is a conversation which traverses female sexuality, familial duty, and the tension between developing a fictional world through writing and the “real world” which beckons with responsibility.<sup>54</sup> Jolley begins with an anecdote about Virginia Woolf being unable to orgasm during periods of sustained creative output, and comments, “this is what happens when you’re writing, all your energy goes.”<sup>55</sup> There is a reduction in mental, emotional, physical, even sexual energy during the writing process, which requires total immersion within a created world so that, as Jolley continues, “you become almost incapable of a relationship with child, parent, person, because your capacity to relate is working towards your writing.”<sup>56</sup> Writing is not an easy process Jolley argues; it is physically and emotionally draining and it requires substantial personal sacrifice.<sup>57</sup> She continues:

So you’re standing back from everything, and observing. I find that quite painful, and the greatest pain is if you have the chance to be writing in the daytime and then it’s approaching 3.30, 4 o’clock, and you’ve got to be thinking about getting the dinner, especially if you’ve got an evening class and you’ve got to come out of your writing and face the real world. And that’s quite hard; people who don’t write may not know what that feels like. You are in another world. It could destroy your relationship altogether with someone;

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<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 263.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 263.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 263.

<sup>57</sup> Here I am reminded of the arduous task Kelly Cressio-Moeller makes reference to in her poem, “A Night of One’s Own” – “Paper sucks ink like blood into sand. The process. / Dark chocolate. Pinot noir. More please.” The writer craves stimulants to keep awake, depressants to relax; is drained by the thoughts, feelings, words that spill onto the page. One is alone in this process.

and this is one of the difficulties, that the writer really is isolated, in the writing.<sup>58</sup>

Jolley identifies two distinct types of pain and alternate sides of an internal struggle. First, she is frustrated at having to emerge from an interior world and have her creative process disrupted. It appears that she is trapped by time; the hours on the clock dictate upcoming responsibilities, and this has the potential to madden a writer. Perhaps there is resentment – “when you’ve got little children, of course, you’re forced out [of this creative space], and that’s quite painful” – or else simple resignation that this is what is required, hard though it may be.<sup>59</sup> Aside from the pain at being kept away from her writing, Jolley is acutely aware of the sacrifices she makes in her personal life. To be isolated “in the writing” – a desirable and perhaps necessary state for creativity – is to be isolated from her family, and this is described as equally painful.<sup>60</sup> Concerns such as these are repeatedly returned to in Jolley’s interviews, which illustrates a persistent tension between the personal and professional in her life. My argument suggests that Jolley then meditates on these issues in her fiction, exploring themes of entrapment and isolation, as well as the problems that arise when working creatively within a domestic setting.

For Jolley’s own writing practice, the night proves to be a temporary resolution to this otherwise painful conflict between the need for solitude and connection. Writing either past her children’s bedtime or before her husband’s morning cup of tea, the obscure hours between dusk and dawn allow Jolley to occupy space for creativity within the family home. During these hours, Jolley is able to utilise the kitchen or bedroom – spaces traditionally associated with women’s domestic labour – to write. As the only person awake in her home, this time allows her to embrace the solitude that writing necessitates, without the sense of guilt or responsibility to tend to others’ needs. After discussing the conflicting tension that arises when writing during the day, Jolley says to Trigg:

The best thing is to work late at night and then fall into bed and go to sleep.  
It’s when you have to face the outside world that it’s very hard. That’s why I

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<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 263-264.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 263.

<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 264.

often do work at night. And if I can't sleep then I read. I have the room to myself so I can keep the light on till three [am] if I want to.<sup>61</sup>

Outside the strictures of her daytime routine, the night is a writing haven for Jolley. Whereas 3 p.m. signals impending dinner responsibilities, the night hours stretch luxuriously before her – she can read until 3 a.m. if she so wants, without a husband or child to cater to.<sup>62</sup> Jolley often comments on the necessity of creating time for a writing practice. “A lot of people could write,” she says, “but it’s the persistence to go on writing that they don’t have. That’s true of many women who can write, and who want to be writers: they’ll use every excuse under the sun, that they are too busy as housewives or they’ve got a job. But everyone’s busy, everything takes time.”<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere, Jolley makes similar comments about the processes of writing and making time to write: “As a housewife and mother you don’t have a lot of time for writing. But I would squeeze in the time... I would often write late at night and early in the morning... You have to make time, for anything. If you want to weave, or make pottery, you’ve simply got to hurry up with shopping and cooking or whatever.”<sup>64</sup> In considering the gendered negotiation between household chores, caring responsibilities, and her personal desire for artistic creation, Jolley demonstrates her resolve to make time that would not otherwise be available to her as a housewife and mother. In these interviews, Jolley does not challenge the patriarchal, heteronormative structures which confine women to the kitchen and bedroom and insist upon their compliance. Rather, she adopts a practice that allows her to fulfil these gendered responsibilities while also finding time of her own during the night. Unlike Jolley’s direction in these interviews, her depiction of night writing in *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance* is not so simplistic. The night, although liberating to an extent, is far from an ideal solution and it does not permit women within the novel the same extent of privacy that Jolley says she is afforded during these hours. Whereas Jolley herself may be content navigating these social structures to find time of her own to write (the purpose of this thesis is not to determine whether this is the case), her meditation on women’s writing practices in

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<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 264.

<sup>62</sup> Following this discussion, Jolley notes that she kept a separate bedroom to her husband, Leonard Jolley, since 1970. She argues, “It was rather murderous when we shared a room – we stopped sharing a room about 1970 and that made a big difference to me – I had to take a sleeping pill to get to sleep, because I couldn’t disturb Leonard. I would write in the kitchen, and then creep into bed and then disturb him, and then he couldn’t get to sleep again, and that was very bad because he has arthritis.” Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 264.

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “The Love Song of Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Gardiner, 12.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Rooms of the Own*, interview by Jennifer Ellison, 179.

*Miss Peabody's Inheritance* offers a more nuanced reflection than simply telling women to “hurry up” and get on with their chores.<sup>65</sup> It is through the motif of the night in *MPI* that Jolley considers the intersection between gender and writing, and what conditions – either within or outside of the home – are most conducive for women’s creative expression.

In *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* the night functions as a motif and as a recurring allusion of the transient moments of female creativity and expression. During this window within the 24-hour cycle, women occupy space that is not otherwise accessible to allow them to experiment with their desires. Yet the night is also fraught with contradictions. This Chapter explores the sense of entrapment that emerges as a result of relegating desire – both literary and sexual – to the night. There is an underlying tension which simmers beneath the surface of *MPI*, one which stems from constant interruptions and yet, in some ways, fuels the literary and sexual experimentation within the narratives (Miss Peabody’s, Miss Thorne’s and Diana’s). As much as Miss Peabody looks forward to her creative evenings, she resents the hours of “long enforced wakefulness” throughout the day.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the interruptions that encroach upon her serve as a reminder of her place within a patriarchal home and culture. Although she psychically accesses a state of freedom during these obscure hours, she remains physically within the walls of her family home and cannot escape its laws. The same contradictions are evident in Miss Thorne’s narrative, which contains the most adventurous sexual exploits to the night. Despite the lesbian sexuality that is prevalent across the multiple narratives, an attitude of heteronormativity prevails. Through the motif of the night as a symbol for creative and sexual expression, Jolley explores the ways women negotiate their conflicting desires within a culture which actively oppresses them. In doing so, she also considers the consequences of suppressing or restricting creative expression which, in Miss Peabody, manifests in a type of madness.

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<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Rooms of the Own*, interview by Jennifer Ellison, 179.

<sup>66</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 23.



“BEING LIBERATED WAS WHAT PEOPLE CALLED IT”: THE IMAGINATIVE LANDSCAPE OF THE EVENING<sup>67</sup>

The first line of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* – “The nights belonged to the novelist” – immediately signals the relationship between writing and the night that Jolley explores throughout the text.<sup>68</sup> Variations of this sentence are repeated in the novel, recalling the reader to the imaginative landscape of the evening and the possibilities which emerge here.<sup>69</sup> Early references establish Diana Hopewell as the novelist and Miss Peabody her reader, but as the novel develops so too does Miss Peabody's identity as a writer. She begins to explore her literary self with the support of Diana's carefully detailed instructions on curating literary ability. It is this exploration that is at the heart of Jolley's meditation on women's writing practices. Miss Peabody transforms from reader to writer, and this process is enabled because of the time afforded to her to immerse within a literary world at night. During these hours she consumes Diana's letters and crafts her own, inventing fictitious lovers and experiences to make her life sound more exciting. “Perhaps it is in the writing,” Diana muses to Miss Peabody, “that the writer remakes himself and his world.”<sup>70</sup> As often happens in *MPI*, this metafictional statement is applicable to multiple characters – to Diana, who projects an image of herself which transcends her reality and the hospital bed she is confined to, and to Miss Peabody, whose literary experimentation enables her to not only invent excitement but open herself to new experiences. Admittedly, Miss Peabody has far more enthusiasm than literary skill. Her writing is derivative, and she is seemingly ignorant to Diana's warnings against the use of clichés. As the narrator of her frame ironically highlights, Miss Peabody's thoughts and writing continues to lack originality. The following passage demonstrates an example of Diana's self-reflexivity, followed by Miss Peabody's inability to comprehend the instruction:

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<sup>67</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 20.

<sup>68</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> A variation of this line is repeated on page 8 of *MPI*, and another example is on page 24: “in the chilly quietness of the bedroom, the novelist took over the night.” Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. As Bronwen Levy points out in “Jolley's Women,” “‘The nights belonged to the novelist’ (1), the novel begins, and this is repeated... so that reading and writing of a fictional kind become associated with feminine night-time imaginings. On the basis of her night-time reading, Miss Dorothy Peabody strikes up a fan-mail correspondence with the author Diana Hopewell...” Levy, *Jolley's Women*, 117. The night is significant for its associations with women's creativity.

<sup>70</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 15.

I am afraid that this is a very crowded canvas, the novelist started a fresh sheet of paper, that is a frightful cliché but a true one, she wrote. The thing about clichés is that often there is not a better way of expressing oneself. I am sure you will agree. Though, as a writer, I should avoid them.

Miss Peabody whose life, not from her own fault at all, had become a series of clichés and platitudes, agreed. It takes all sorts to make the world go round, she started her own reply on the blue writing paper.<sup>71</sup>

Sitting in her bedroom in the evening, Miss Peabody writes with the confidence to experiment with these phrases. Elsewhere, feeling “brave and daring and even cheeky,” she makes similarly banal statements to her co-workers.<sup>72</sup> “When Mr Bains accused her of having lost an important file, she clasped her head in both hands, saying, “I’d lose my head if it wasn’t screwed on!” and felt that she was saying something bright and original.”<sup>73</sup> The significance is not that Miss Peabody is a good writer by any means, but that she develops her practice and simply puts pen to paper.<sup>74</sup> In the interview with Stephanie Trigg, Jolley emphasises the importance of Miss Peabody’s literary empowerment, regardless of innate ability or skill. “I think one feels a *little* bit anxious about the thing [Miss Peabody’s] now going to sit down and write,” worries Trigg, to which Jolley replies, “Oh she’s going to ruin it. [Laughter] But it doesn’t matter.”<sup>75</sup> Although physically separated by continents – Diana in Australia, Miss Peabody in England – the imaginative evenings they share through epistolary correspondence empowers Miss Peabody to experiment with her writing and develop a new identity for herself, outside of the role of dutiful daughter and inept office clerk.

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<sup>71</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 68.

<sup>72</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 84.

<sup>73</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 84.

<sup>74</sup> Thoughts of writing consume Miss Peabody’s waking hours. Another example of her experimentation with language is demonstrated in the following passage:

Dorothy thought about the letter and about her reply. The magnificent oak tree is the monarch of the English forest...she loved composing fine sentences for her replies. The magnificent oak tree is the monarch of the English forest ... she could hardly wait to write it down.

Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 84.

<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley,” interview by Stephanie Trigg, 253.

Miss Peabody's liberation is traced throughout the novel, as her life transforms through these imaginative evenings. Stephanie Trigg notes in her interview with Jolley that Miss Peabody "becomes the writer," and asks if Jolley considers that "as a kind of ideal?"<sup>76</sup> In response, Jolley says:

Oh, no. But I was quite pleased with the way it turned out, that she would then be creating, as it were, instead of just flatly going to and fro, leading a very unenriched life. She does become enriched. Even getting drunk and having to be pushed through a window is better than not doing something like that.<sup>77</sup>

Earlier in the novel, in response to Diana's request to "tell me all about yourself," Miss Peabody "timidly" responds with an account that summarises the bleakness of her life.<sup>78</sup> She contemplates her daily return trip to London which consists of a "short sedate train journey," part of a routine which "never varied."<sup>79</sup> Later in the novel, as Jolley references in this interview, Miss Peabody begins joining her colleagues for Friday evening drinks at the local tavern, where she consumes too much brandy and feels "pleasantly cheeky" in her steel stockings, deliberately chosen to imitate her colleague.<sup>80</sup> On one occasion, her boss, Mr Bains, has to rescue the drunken Miss Peabody from the police station and accompany her home, pushing her through the window when she (mistakenly) thinks she has lost her house keys.<sup>81</sup> These adventures are comedically awkward, but they illustrate the ways in which Miss Peabody's life has been enlivened through her correspondence with Diana. Miss Peabody's liberation is illustrated elsewhere in the novel. Her acts of rebellion are, on the surface, small: "Miss Peabody in the lasting pleasure of the new letter took a hot bath. It was not her night for a bath."<sup>82</sup> But for a woman "on the wrong side of fifty,"<sup>83</sup> whose existence has previously been defined by her mother's list of chores and following the "same drab pattern" of her

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<sup>76</sup> Trigg, "An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley," 252.

<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, "An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley," interview by Stephanie Trigg, 252-253.

<sup>78</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 7.

<sup>80</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 99.

<sup>81</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 127-128.

<sup>82</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 20.

<sup>83</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 12.

father's daily commute to London,<sup>84</sup> these are quite powerful acts. Miss Peabody imagines herself "growing wild and free," singing lyrics of the "Little Prairie Flower" song.<sup>85</sup> Despite Mrs Peabody lamenting her daughter's inability to find a husband, Miss Peabody sings about her independence: "Nobody cares to cultivate me... So-o I'm as wild as wild can bee – bee – be."<sup>86</sup> Unaccustomed to the sound of her daughter's joyful singing, Mrs Peabody assumes her daughter has taken ill in an ironic moment which highlights the stifling oppression of the Peabody home. Through the sanctuary of the night though, Miss Peabody develops a new identity for herself as a liberated, literary woman.

*Miss Peabody's Inheritance* explores the spaces within patriarchy which allow women a sense of release and relief. This is a topic much discussed in Jolley criticism; Miss Peabody's life is remade through her correspondence with Diana, and I am certainly not alone in identifying the evident sense of liberation that arises in the novel. As noted earlier, Helen Daniel also identifies the "static reality" of Miss Peabody's days and the world of "magic and enchantment" that is opened up for her at night.<sup>87</sup> According to Daniel, Jolley merges day and night, time and space, and all "contestant possibilities" through the "artifice of fiction."<sup>88</sup> This is typical of Jolley criticism, in that the night is "diametrically opposed" to the oppression of the day,<sup>89</sup> and Miss Peabody is awakened to alternative possibilities through Diana's fiction.<sup>90</sup> Daniel considers the opportunities for gender and sexual experimentation outside traditional binary structures in *MPI*; it is through fiction – Diana's manuscript in this instance, but Daniel also considers Jolley's other fiction including *Foxybaby* – that possibilities for female exploration and creativity are permitted. Paul Salzman similarly considers the ways in which women symbolically displace patriarchy in Jolley's fictions, "finding in its interstices spaces for female voices."<sup>91</sup> Salzman focuses particularly on the sexual liberation of Jolley's women, the representation of female stories, experiences and voices that permeate her texts. In a reading which draws upon theories of Luce Irigaray, Salzman notes:

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<sup>84</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 9.

<sup>85</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 20.

<sup>86</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* 20.

<sup>87</sup> Daniel, *Liars*, 285.

<sup>88</sup> Daniel, *Liars*, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Daniel, *Liars*, 285.

<sup>90</sup> Daniel, *Liars*, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Salzman, *Helplessly Tangled*, 24.

... it is possible to see *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*... as a shifting collage of female disruptions and reinscriptions... This is most apparent in the intersection between Diana Hopewell's novel and Miss Peabody's life... it seems to me to be the fundamental way in which Jolley empowers women in the margins. The point is not that Diana Hopewell is crippled and far from the figure created initially in Miss Peabody's imagination, but that she transmits a world of female desire so powerfully that Miss Peabody is transformed: 'The writer creates the imagined land from fragments of the real things.'<sup>92</sup>

For Salzman, the power of Miss Peabody's transformation and Diana's projection – an image of herself as a strong, capable, independent woman of the bush, a figure she once embodied prior to an accident and subsequent confinement to a hospital bed – lies within the fiction they create. Salzman and Daniel see the subversion and exploration of *MPI* enabled through layers of fiction; they consider this an alternate world of possibility and enchantment, so unlike Miss Peabody's "dreary routine."<sup>93</sup> Joan Kirkby also attributes the social transgressions of *MPI* to Diana. She argues, "Diana's writing gives Miss Peabody a concept of other possibilities, alternative modes of being, new ways of living."<sup>94</sup> In their respective arguments, Daniel, Salzman and Kirkby consider the spaces women occupy to explore alternate possibilities outside the heteronormative family structure and socially prescriptive roles for women. Each identify the integral role of fiction in *MPI*, and the imaginative power of the female literary consciousness which is contained to Diana's narrative and unable to transgress into Miss Peabody's reality. Yet Diana's narrative is not free from homophobia, and it does not escape the patriarchal power structures which condition women for marriage and motherhood and stifle their creativity. Nor is Miss Peabody's narrative solely one of oppression; she acknowledges her desires, experiments with new modes of writing, engages with people, and journeys across the world to enter her literary inheritance. Whereas these arguments consider the instances of liberation enabled solely through Diana's fiction, my argument poses that it is the quality of the night *itself* which fosters Miss Peabody's literary development and allows her to engage in this practice of writing. Through the shared, imaginative nights, Jolley alludes to a tradition of women's writing which relies on the respite of the obscure hours. By

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<sup>92</sup> Salzman, *Helplessly Tangled*, 24.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel, *Liars*, 285.

<sup>94</sup> Kirkby, "The Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley," 487

sharing this tradition of night-writing, Diana initiates Miss Peabody into a world of possibilities which are otherwise unavailable in the light of day. By demonstrating the liberation of this time, it is my argument that Jolley suggests an innate quality of the night which nurtures women's creativity. Spaces that are traditionally associated with domestic oppression, such as the bedroom in which Miss Peabody writes, are therefore transformed during these hours and allow Miss Peabody to experiment with her desires.

Through imagery of the night, Jolley further explores the capacity of the night-hours to nurture creativity and female sensuality. Jolley first draws upon conceptions of the night as scary, threatening, and hostile; the night is 'othered' in the same sense women are within a patriarchal culture, as their work and unspoken desires are relegated to the darkest corners of the home. Early in the text, Miss Peabody turns to Diana's letters and finds Miss Thorne and Miss Snowdon braving a cold and ugly evening in search of Miss Edgely. The harsh elements and "grotesque" and "sinister" landscape instil a sense of horror in the women as they navigate unfamiliar territory.<sup>95</sup> As the she-oaks moan and wind shrieks, the cold penetrates beneath their coats. Jolley describes this scene in distinctly sexualised language. And then there is stillness. A sense of quiet falls upon them, the very same quality Miss Peabody seeks in the solitude of the night, as the two women pause during their search:

The song of the wind changes; it seems to contain the voices of people talking, it swells and softens, it shrieks and laughs and disappears leaving a silence so empty that both women clutch each other.<sup>96</sup>

This passage evokes female sensuality; the softness of a woman's touch, the comfort to be found in each other's embrace. It also alludes to a collective of women who seek out the night. These are the voices of women unseen across generations, shrieking and laughing together in acknowledgement of a shared, yet solitary, practice. Although still wary of the unknown, the night transforms for Miss Thorne as she fantasises about bringing someone to sleep with her beneath the stars. Just as Miss Peabody is introduced to new ideas, styles and traditions of writing in the night, Thorne explores a sexuality which is otherwise repressed in the light of day.

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<sup>95</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 28; 29.

<sup>96</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 29.

## A COMPLICATED TIME ON THE 24-HOUR CLOCK: COMPLEXITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF THE NIGHT

Although interviews with Jolley frame the night as an idyllic escape from familial obligation, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* explores the intricacies and nuances of writing during this time. By first establishing the repression of Miss Peabody's daily routine, the night is shown to foster a sense of freedom and imaginative release. Yet what it offers in place of the day is not as simplistic as it appears, as the demands of domesticity continue to encroach upon Miss Peabody's writing time and impede her literary development. Bound to her childhood home in care of her widowed mother, Miss Peabody's narrative is one of oppression and confinement. Her domestic servitude consists of warming milk, dusting shelves, and administering affection in the form of stories, prayers and handholding. Mrs Peabody, having lost the ability of her legs upon the death of her husband, functions as an agent of oppression and actively restricts Miss Peabody's literary development. Although bed-ridden and elderly, Mrs Peabody is an unsympathetic character who exemplifies the incessant demands of domesticity. She has a seemingly omnipresent ability to sense from her bedroom whether the mantelpiece needs dusting and tinned soup is shelved in the correct order,<sup>97</sup> as if her demands merge with those of the house itself. As John O'Brien argues in a reading consistent with my own, Mrs Peabody epitomises the "repressive nature of the home," and her demands are both tedious and relentless.<sup>98</sup> Both Mrs Peabody and domestic obligation – noting the two are inseparable within the text – act as "the obstacle to be dealt with before [Miss Peabody] could have time for herself. Undisturbed."<sup>99</sup> Miss Peabody's responsibility to make sandwiches, warm milk, soothe and tend to her mother symbolise the repression O'Brien refers to and the duties which encumber an unwed daughter and only child. There is a sense of inevitability conveyed in the trajectory of her life, evident in a passage about the dollhouse she receives from her father. As a girl, she "dusted and polished the little rooms and tiny furniture every week and, when she was grown up... she vacuumed and polished number 38 Kingston Avenue every weekend."<sup>100</sup> The repetitive language and activities are cyclical, as is the course of Miss Peabody's life. Her father builds a dollhouse encoded with gendered messages of

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<sup>97</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 5-6.

<sup>98</sup> O'Brien, "Myths of Domesticity," 135,

<sup>99</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 85.

<sup>100</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 21-22.

respectable activities for girls and begins conditioning her for the responsibilities she will assume as an adult woman. This trajectory diverges through the possibilities offered in the night, as Miss Peabody resists this narrative and begins to forge a new identity outside of the prescriptive path laid out by her father. However, domesticity is pervasive in the text and not as easily escaped. Despite claiming space for creativity during the night, Miss Peabody experiences the difficulties of working within the confines of the domestic sphere. Mrs Peabody's repeated interruptions ("Dotty! Dotty!") disturb Miss Peabody's solitude and remind her of her inescapable house and caring duties.<sup>101</sup> These disturbances incite "a kind of unaccustomed impatience" in Miss Peabody, as she grows increasingly reluctant to respond to her mother's demands.<sup>102</sup> Having been introduced to the possibilities outside of the domestic sphere, the "tedium" of making sandwiches and warming milk frustrates Miss Peabody and she begins to rush through her duties.<sup>103</sup> "She poured the warm milk quickly down her mother's astonished throat and had her out on the commode and back into bed before her mother could utter another 'Dotty!'"<sup>104</sup> For all its liberties, the night is certainly not the impenetrable 'room of one's own' Virginia Woolf proposes in her seminal polemic. Indeed, two of Woolf's primary concerns, the necessity for paid employment and expectation of unpaid care work, act as the primary obstacles to Miss Peabody's writing.<sup>105</sup>

*Miss Peabody's Inheritance* explores the interiority of women's lives within the domestic sphere and the sense of entrapment which arises in this space. There is a lack of value ascribed to household chores, and the ritualised vacuuming of 38 Kingston Avenue is as implicitly trivial as the young Miss Peabody polishing her replica dollhouse rooms. Yet while Jolley critiques the structures that confine women to domesticity, she places value on the

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<sup>101</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 69.

<sup>102</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 8.

<sup>103</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 24.

<sup>104</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 34.

<sup>105</sup> Sheheryar B. Sheikh identifies a similar issue in a reading of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*; even when women claim a room of their own within a home – or, in *MPI*, claim a window of time within that home – if it is "enclosed within the walls of a house that is run along patriarchal lines... the space is not truly her own." Sheikh, "The Walls that Emancipate," 21.



experiences of women within the home.<sup>106</sup> Throughout *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, Miss Peabody believes her domestic experiences are unworthy of writing about. She invents fictitious lovers, appropriates her colleague's love affair, and imagines herself as the school girl worthy of receiving the attention of a sailor, rather than identifying value in her own lived experiences within the confines of the family home.<sup>107</sup> Jolley's novel, however, focuses explicitly on the interiority of Miss Peabody's life and the social and familial structures she navigates in order to write, and therefore places value on this as a sphere of representation in literature. Through Miss Peabody, Jolley explores the everyday, mundane activities that are so time consuming for women. She opens the home to critical interrogation and suggests an insidious underside which saps women's energy and consumes their waking hours when they are offered no alternative options. Dorothy Jones similarly comments on this, as she notes, "[MPI] takes seriously the lives and aspirations of a group of people generally dismissed as marginal and unimportant, middle-aged spinsters."<sup>108</sup> Jolley centres her novel around the domestic structures women negotiate to write and illuminates a practice of night-writing that has long been overlooked in the female literary tradition. Joan Kirkby argues, "Diana speaks the unspeakable and makes visible the invisible, that which is silenced, covered over and made absent in society."<sup>109</sup> Although Kirkby's analysis is specific to the sexual liberation of Jolley's characters, especially within Miss Thorne's narrative, this could just as easily speak of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* as a whole. Jolley explores the experiences of women so often kept in the dark and relegated to the darkest corners of the home – for some women, it is the literal darkness of the night which signifies the only time to write. Although early Jolley scholarship favours a humanist reading of her fiction – A.P. Riemer notes that Jolley is "rarely, if ever, entirely polemical" – her intense scrutiny of domesticity and the roles of

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<sup>106</sup> Victoria Kennedy discusses the ways in which women's writing has been perceived as inferior within an historically male-dominated literary tradition. Kennedy traces the development of women's writing from the mid-eighteenth century to the contemporary period, noting the figure of the 'lady novelist' which continues to haunt women's writing today. The lady novelist typically wrote about sentimental subject matters and was concerned with images of domesticity. Women adopted this identity by necessity in order to be published and accepted as a writer, yet to write as a lady novelist was – and still is – considered an inferior form of literature. Kennedy notes, "even female writers and critics internalized the idea that the feminine aesthetics and sentimental subject matter adopted by the lady novelist represented an inferior form of literature." (192). Although women no longer need to adopt the "aesthetics and narrative strategies of the lady novelist" (188), women's writing is still haunted with metafictional anxieties associated with feminine aesthetics. Kennedy argues the figure of the lady novelist continues to linger "as a figure representative of inferior feminine writing" (194). The genre of 'chick lit' is a recent manifestation of this concern in the way it is "associated with femininity, which is coded as an inferior style." (194) Kennedy, "Haunted by the Lady Novelist," 186-205.

<sup>107</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 13-14; 46.

<sup>108</sup> Jones, "The Goddess, The Artist, and The Spinster," 79.

<sup>109</sup> Kirkby, "Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley," 489.

women under patriarchy suggests a deeper investment in challenging these structures.<sup>110</sup> Interviews with Jolley highlight her personal stake in this, as she negotiates a balance between her roles as wife, mother and writer. One of the ways Jolley meditates on this struggle is through the recurring motif of entrapment in her fiction. In an interview with Ray Willbanks, Jolley reflects on this theme. She says:

I think we are all trapped. Sometimes, by something that we do, or think. Even by our own standards, by what we regard as being necessary to do, say in keeping house, or in our work. We are trapped by routine, by other people's needs. I see marriage an endless trap. I don't mean to say you're not happy in your marriage... I belong to an age in which early on there was little freedom for women in married life. I've struck out for a kind of freedom.<sup>111</sup>

The very themes Jolley discusses with Willbanks are evident in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*; Miss Peabody is trapped in a cycle of domesticity from her stifling routine and responsibility to her mother. Jolley is careful to refrain from expressing unhappiness with these circumstances, focusing instead on the "kind of freedom" that one carves from within these familial or social structures. According to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their analysis of nineteenth-century women writers, imagery of entrapment and imprisonment is pervasive in women's writing. They assert, "works in this [female] tradition generally begin by using houses as primary symbols of female imprisonment."<sup>112</sup> In Jolley's text, Miss Peabody's house is associated with her mother and the demands of female duty which confine her to the domestic sphere.<sup>113</sup> Though she exhibits some patience when recalling the care her mother gave to her as a child, Miss Peabody generally finds her mother "selfish and tiresome."<sup>114</sup> Repeatedly, Mrs Peabody's "querulous voice" interrupts her daughter,<sup>115</sup> disturbing the fantasies she entertains with Diana and her writing. Whether it is pots to be washed or shelves

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<sup>110</sup> Riemer, "Between Two Worlds," 240.

<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Speaking Volumes*, interview by Ray Willbanks, 125.

<sup>112</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 38.

<sup>113</sup> Although Mr Peabody has passed away and Miss Peabody lives under the control of the matriarch of the Peabody home, the commands placed on her by her mother represent the 'laws' of the father. The trajectory of Miss Peabody's life is established in the dollhouse her father makes for her as a child. She is confined to the domestic sphere and ascribed gendered roles from childhood, which she dutifully enacts as an adult.

<sup>114</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 21.

<sup>115</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 73.

to be dusted, the house and Mrs Peabody's demands merge as one metaphorical obstacle to Miss Peabody's desires. The tension between domesticity and writing is unresolved in *MPI*, as Miss Peabody is unable to reconcile her duties as a daughter with the desire to write. It is only upon the death of her mother that Miss Peabody escapes the structure of the family home and explores outside possibilities – namely, her literary inheritance. The description of Mrs Peabody's death is one without sorrow or grief: "Mrs Peabody stopped living quickly, in about a quarter of an hour."<sup>116</sup> The overwhelming emotion of this unsentimental statement is that of relief, a metaphorical and physical release from the demands of domesticity. Although Miss Peabody's familial responsibilities cease, she does not revert to using the daytime for her reading and writing. She continues to occupy space within the night-time hours for these practices; "Miss Peabody, from habit, saved the letter till the evening. She liked the evenings to belong to the novelist."<sup>117</sup> There is still a quality in these evening hours which proves hospitable for her writing practice, uninterrupted now without anyone to call "Dotty! Dotty! across the landing."<sup>118</sup> By continuing this practice, Miss Peabody asserts her stance against being entrapped by mother, father and home.

Miss Peabody finds the night to be empowering but suffers the frustration of having her creative potential restricted to the obscure and socially unproductive hours of the 24-hour clock. Additionally, this frustration makes her vulnerable to madness. As Jolley's novel progresses, so too does Miss Peabody's authorial identity. The evenings are "magic" but the days consist of "long enforced wakefulness" and prolonged periods of completing mundane chores.<sup>119</sup> The magic never lasts. Her desires – for women, writing, and Diana – are relegated to the night, but even within those obscure hours she is unable to find a sustained period for uninterrupted creativity. In addition to exposing the social and familial institutions that hinder women's writing, Jolley explores the practicalities of occupying space within such socially and culturally unproductive hours. Miss Peabody identifies as a novelist, yet, in her family home, is unable to reconcile this desire with her daily reality. Eventually, the madness settles in. The frustration at having such limited time for writing, compounded with the unspoken lack of sleep these obscure hours insist upon, culminates in Miss Peabody's mental instability.

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<sup>116</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 113.

<sup>117</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 130.

<sup>118</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 113.

<sup>119</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 23.

Her ascent into a literary world signals her descent into madness. She is increasingly unable to differentiate between Diana's fiction and her own reality; these two worlds collide as the identities of woman and writer are called into conflict. This slope into insanity is signalled early in the text:

Smiling brightly all day at the office and being endlessly patient with her mother every evening Miss Peabody began to suffer. She longed for a letter from Diana. She lay in bed shivering on the long bleak cold evenings after the bleak cold days. She withered. She made mistakes at work and could not concentrate.<sup>120</sup>

The mental energy Miss Peabody exerts on paid and unpaid labour begins to affect her as she waits for correspondence from Diana. She savours the letters when they arrive, embracing the liberation of the night, but suffers increasing frustration throughout the day.<sup>121</sup> Coral Ann Howells equates *MPI* with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* in the way that the narratives trace "the consequences of a woman's life of emotional deprivation to the point where her own identity disintegrates."<sup>122</sup> This argument suggests that an artist's mental state is contingent on their social and familial support; in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, this support is certainly lacking and Miss Peabody must seek solitude in the night to develop her craft. However, the night hours are ultimately unsustainable for Miss Peabody as she is both physically and emotionally exhausted. The sense of an individual caught between two worlds also recalls Jolley's interview with Stephanie Trigg, in which she describes the painful conflict between her created, fictional worlds and the 'real' world which insists upon her time and energy.<sup>123</sup> For Miss Peabody, the sacrifice of drifting between these two worlds is losing touch with her reality – the two blend together,<sup>124</sup> until she is no longer able to distinguish

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<sup>120</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 15.

<sup>121</sup> In the Introduction to *Herspace*, Jo Malin discusses *A Room of One's Own* and Virginia Woolf's assertion that women need spatial privacy to write. Malin writes that Woolf knew from her own history "that literary silences, despair, and madness are the results when a woman wants to write and is unable." Malin, "Introduction," 1-2.

<sup>122</sup> Howells, "In Search of Lost Mothers," 68.

<sup>123</sup> A.P. Riemer considers the sense of "the individual adrift between two worlds" as a theme which recurs in much of Elizabeth Jolley's work, although Riemer's article does not consider *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* in its analysis (likely because it was published the same year as *MPI*'s publication). Riemer, "Between Two Worlds," 240.

<sup>124</sup> Riemer, "Between Two Worlds," 240.

between Miss Thorne's fictional European travels and the streets of London Miss Peabody walks down every day. To properly embrace her identity as a writer, Miss Peabody eventually escapes the confines of the family home. She travels to Australia and, upon finding Diana Hopewell dead, claims the author's manuscript as her own.<sup>125</sup>

The novel's preoccupation with relegating women's writing practices to the night unveils another preoccupation of the author's to do with women's homosocial and homosexual bonds.<sup>126</sup> Longing between women, a major theme in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* as in much of Jolley's fiction, is restricted to the night.<sup>127</sup> Darkness provides a refuge for women to explore and embrace their sexuality: Thorne enjoys encounters with her travelling companions Miss Edgely and Miss Snowdon; young Gwendaline Manners spends a sensual night with Headmistress Thorne; and Miss Peabody becomes aroused by Diana's fiction and fantasises about the novelist herself. Yet in daylight, these thoughts and actions are repressed, spoken of in hushed tones and refused identification. Miss Peabody "boldly" thinks of Diana by her name, murmuring and repeating this as she fantasises about her as a "Goddess of the Hunt."<sup>128</sup> There is evident power associated in the act of naming things, yet lesbianism in the novel is never identified as such. It is alluded to, certainly. Thorne invites Edgely to "come away to bed";<sup>129</sup> Thorne and Snowdon enjoy an erotic water fight in the shower;<sup>130</sup> Miss Peabody feels "disturbed" as she contemplates a water fight on her own;<sup>131</sup> and Debbie dances seductively in her Headmistress's bedroom, offering to "teach [Thorne] what to do with your hands."<sup>132</sup> The reader understands these euphemisms and innuendos to imply sexual intercourse and fantasy between, and about, women, yet we are denied the validation of having this lesbian representation labelled as such. Women's desire is silenced

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<sup>125</sup> As Elizabeth Campbell summarises, the novel ends with Miss Peabody in the "dead writer's chair, in the dead writer's room, about to finish the dead writer's novel. Reader has become writer." Campbell, "Epistolarity," 341.

<sup>126</sup> In "Jolley's Women," Bronwen Levy considers this relationship, noting "Jolley shows how longing for women can be related to the figure of the female artist; she shows how the gaze and the body are implicated in what is seen and written about, and that this view is inherently unstable." Levy, "Jolley's Women," 119.

<sup>127</sup> As Bronwen Levy notes of Jolley's oeuvre: "Jolley represents women's longing for other women ... this longing is central to her representation of female characters and the feminine condition." Levy, "Jolley's Women," 112.

<sup>128</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 8.

<sup>129</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 139.

<sup>130</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 11.

<sup>131</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 11.

<sup>132</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 39.

in this sense, unable to transgress the night-time it has been relegated to. This “deferral of lesbianism,” as Bronwen Levy calls it,<sup>133</sup> is a contentious point in representations of queer women in Australian literature and has been the subject of much debate. Dean Kiley is quite critical in his review of what he refers to as “OzLitCriture” continuing to “occlude, defuse, diffuse, evade and domesticate queer issues.”<sup>134</sup> Speaking specifically about Jolley, he condemns her use of the figure of the lesbian as a metaphor for something else, rather than a figure in and of itself.<sup>135</sup> Michael Hurley also considers this problematic and feels “uneasy about how lesbianism is represented and how it functions in several of [Jolley’s] narratives.”<sup>136</sup> In a 1992 article on sexuality and desire in Australian women’s writing, Bronwen Levy writes that Jolley “does not succeed in creating lesbian space.”<sup>137</sup> In 2009 though, Levy revises this stance on Jolley by adding to her original statement: “nor does she intend to.”<sup>138</sup> Consistently othering queer woman is certainly worthy of interrogation, as is the continuous deferral of lesbianism in the Australian literary canon, but Levy’s analysis also invites further consideration. Jolley is not seeking to create a space explicitly for lesbians, but seeks to focus on predominantly female institutions, such as boarding schools for women, to explore the homosocial and homosexual bonds that are “encoded ... beyond the official view.”<sup>139</sup> In exposing the secrecy enforced upon their desire, I see Jolley acknowledging the position of lesbians as marginalised in society, relegated to the night in the same way the female author is. The clandestine encounter between Thorne and young Gwendaline Manners perhaps best exemplifies this point. After fantasising about the girl and taking pleasure in initiating her to fine European culture, the two share an “idyllic, tender, hilarious and ludicrous night” – what is later referred to as the “Night of the Thunderstorm,” an appropriately symbolic title for what is both monumental and earth shattering (literal in this sense as their encounter ends with a broken bed).<sup>140</sup> Gwenda subsequently develops a sort of crush on her Headmistress, yet it is with a heavy heart that Thorne is reminded of the

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<sup>133</sup> Levy, “Jolley’s Women,” 113.

<sup>134</sup> Dean Kiley, “Un-Queer Anti-Theory,” *Australian Humanities Review*, 1998, <http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/1998/02/01/un-queer-anti-theory/>

<sup>135</sup> Dean Kiley, “Un-Queer Anti-Theory,” *Australian Humanities Review*, 1998, <http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/1998/02/01/un-queer-anti-theory/>

<sup>136</sup> Hurley, “Introduction: Writing the Body Positive,” 37.

<sup>137</sup> Levy, “Now What’s Erotic?” 233.

<sup>138</sup> Levy, “Jolley’s Women,” 113.

<sup>139</sup> Levy, “Jolley’s Women,” 115

<sup>140</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 61; 77.

“purpose of her body to which Miss Thorne knows she has no right.”<sup>141</sup> This reminder comes in the form of Gwenda’s menstrual blood, soaking the girl’s virginal white dress and signalling the fertility of her young body, one which the post-menopausal Thorne understands she can no longer enjoy. In a letter to the girl (written late after Edgely falls asleep), Thorne writes:

I want to explain to you, Gwenda, that the Night of the Thunderstorm was in a sense a night on its own. The night can be treasured but, at the same time it is something to be put away, tucked safely in the memory as something belonging to those things which are not within the power of repetition.<sup>142</sup>

Their encounter (albeit problematic on many levels, not least of which being the exploitative power Thorne wields as Headmistress) is reserved in memory as the Night of the Thunderstorm, a powerful culmination of female desire exploding in their intimacy yet, ultimately, forbidden and “not within the power of repetition.”<sup>143</sup> Despite Thorne’s best attempts at educating her “gels” in her own tradition of European culture and travel,<sup>144</sup> Gwenda insists on wanting a husband and four babies and, after Thorne’s rejection, is set to wed the father of her classmate. Jolley explores women’s sexuality as a similarly transgressive act to that of writing; the two are intertwined in the novel and are confined to the night.

## CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER ONE

The night functions as a time of meditation on the writer’s part. Throughout *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, Jolley considers the practicalities of the night as a time for writing. That women are relegated there in the first instance is symptomatic of wider social structures

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<sup>141</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 95. Miss Thorne later reflects on Gwenda’s crush and, though Thorne knows she should not encourage it, allows herself in the evening to enjoy her desire: “She knows she should not encourage Gwenda in this devotion. She knows too that her own feelings should not be encouraged. This evening, however, Miss Thorne allows herself, without constraint, to watch Gwenda and her pleasant clumsy body as she attempts to imitate and learn what Debbie can do so easily.” Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 108.

<sup>142</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 77.

<sup>143</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 77.

<sup>144</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 2.

which confine and repress their creativity, and though the night becomes synonymous with liberation and subversion, it exists within, rather than beyond, patriarchy. Looking at Jolley's biography provides further insights on her use of the night in *MPI*. In Jolley's practice, the night provides respite – a time that exists outside of domesticity and familial obligation, providing solace which enables creativity and the imaginative process. Yet, speaking with Candida Baker in an interview for *Yacker*, Jolley notes the change in her writing habits upon receiving a Literature Board Fellowship at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT). During this residence, Jolley does not need the obscure hours to write. "I leave the house at eight in the morning," Jolley says, "taking my teaching work and my writing – and that's very nice indeed. I can work without the usual interruptions which present themselves to the housewife."<sup>145</sup> Although her autobiographical materials often depict the night as an idyllic time of creativity, it is one chosen in lieu of a room of her own. The luxury of a private room outside of the family home, as Jolley enjoys during her years at WAIT, negates the need to write into the late hours. Moreover, although Jolley refers to writing *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* at night, she expresses thanks to WAIT in the acknowledgement of the novel: "The final draft of this novel was completed during my time of being Writer in Residence at the Western Australian Institute of Technology."<sup>146</sup> Though the night provides inspiration and in some ways fuels women's writing, the hours are perhaps ultimately unsustainable. Jolley suggests as much in the themes of entrapment and madness which arise in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*.

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<sup>145</sup> Jolley, *Yacker*, interview by Candida Baker, 219. In the dedication to *Foxybaby*, Jolley expresses thanks to the Western Australian Institute of Technology for the "provision of a room in which to write." Jolley, *Foxybaby*.

<sup>146</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, acknowledgement.



## CHAPTER TWO:

“I AM NOT NEEDED IN THEIR DREAMS”: INSPIRATION STRIKES AS THE LIGHTS GO OUT<sup>147</sup>

In an essay collected in *Central Mischief*, Jolley contemplates the conflicts of her childhood; her mother’s “moods,” her father’s dislocation, and the sense of intergenerational exile which permeated her home.<sup>148</sup> With the caveat that she is “not attempting a self analysis,” Jolley nevertheless considers the ways in which this environment conditioned her to be responsive to the needs of others – a sense of responsibility which, in turn, shapes the writing practices she adopts as an adult.<sup>149</sup> In the essay, she argues at length:

The household which presented itself to me as both strange and normal encouraged me to observe. My mother was given to moods. Storms blew up unexpectedly, were savage and disappeared again as quickly... I became by nature and circumstance a placator and learned to read every change in the eye, every crease in the brow. I am still a placator. Other people’s households, if I am a guest, inadvertently trouble me and in my own house I am not able to work if there is some problem or unhappiness which needs sorting out or comforting. The best time for me to write is when other people are asleep. I am not needed in their dreams. I have developed the habit of writing for some hours during the night, working from the quick notes made during the day.<sup>150</sup>

As her family sleep, Jolley’s sense of accountability is suspended. Without anyone to soothe or comfort, without the restlessness that accompanies one’s mind when on constant alert for disturbances, Jolley uses the night hours to delve into the bursts of creativity she contains to “quick notes” during the day. In *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, as in Jolley’s personal practice, the night is chosen by necessity; the “best time” to allow a pause on all other duties and enter a creative space of one’s own. Chapter One explored this relationship between time and creativity at length, considering the ways in which Jolley meditates on women’s writing

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<sup>147</sup> Jolley, “What Sins to Me Unknown,” 6.

<sup>148</sup> Jolley, “What Sins to Me Unknown,” 6.

<sup>149</sup> Jolley, “What Sins to Me Unknown,” 6.

<sup>150</sup> Jolley, “What Sins to Me Unknown,” 6.

practices through the motif of the night in *MPI*. The night is framed as a significant time which allows a reprieve from the otherwise unrelenting demands of the domestic sphere, yet it is fraught with complications. Connotations of the night lend themselves to Jolley's metaphoric conception of this time; secrecy is nurtured under the cover of darkness, whispers of lust and desire – for writing, and women – are exposed, only to be hushed in the daylight. These contradictory elements are significant for Jolley's representation of the night, as she considers the possibilities that emerge and the restrictions of this time. Building on the core focus of Chapter One in which I consider the night as a thematic concern which permeates *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, Chapter Two explores the ways in which Jolley's meditation on the night as a time that offers up a space to write is evident at a structural and technical level within the text. Just as the night is reflected in the thematic preoccupations that arise in *MPI*, so too can we see this as a concern which informs the textual aspects of this novel.

Jolley's biographical materials suggest her investment in the night extends beyond a time of convenience. In addition to providing respite, the night nurtures an internal state of creativity that is beneficial to her writing. It allows Jolley to experiment with form and style. In *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, this experimentation manifests in the form of letters as a mode of narration. Speaking to Stephanie Trigg, Jolley describes the process of writing *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* and the realisation of how to combine two initially separate narratives into one. She argues at length to Trigg:

Well, for me it was the best one to write, in the method of telling. I had the separate stories, you see, and the method of telling really fell into my lap at this very table one night. I got the idea of the novelist, and then I got a letter from England, actually, from a woman who read *Palomino* and I wrote back to her, rather a stiff, polite little note, but I was obviously very touched to receive her letter; and then I found that I was going on with the letter, but I was joining Peabody to these people in the novel, in the other story, and from then on I just went straight ahead and of course I switched, in the middle of a sentence, sometimes, from the one to the other, you know, and it seemed to go so easily. I've not had that experience before or since.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, "An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley," interview by Stephanie Trigg, 253.

The epistolary form lends itself to Jolley's experimentation with narrative point of view, enabling her to alternate between the two narratives and experiment with the boundaries of truth and fiction.<sup>152</sup> It appears that there is something freeing in the act of letter writing, but also that it is deeply personal and a somewhat confronting experience for the writer. Elizabeth Campbell explores the conventions of the epistolary genre and how this is reworked in modern women's epistolary fiction. Including *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* in her analysis, Campbell notes the ways in which the letter acts as "a subversive and freeing agent."<sup>153</sup> "Women find their freedom and their selves in the act of writing," argues Campbell, and this is certainly true of Miss Peabody's experimentation with letters in *MPI*. The recollection of having this structure fall into Jolley's lap one evening is particularly significant, as it suggests the clarity of mind and inspiration which strikes during the solace of the night hours.<sup>154</sup> This sense of lucidity is moderated only by an awareness of the restrictions of writing in the limited timeframe of the night. Trigg further asks if Jolley wrote the novel quickly. Once the method of writing became clear, Jolley explains, "I wrote it out and that was it. I was here all night, every night, to put it down."<sup>155</sup> She urgently rushes to cement her words on the page, and returns to this state of mind each night – a process which Jolley replicates in Miss Peabody's approach to the letters in *MPI*. Alone, occupying space within the home but appropriating it for creative practice during the obscure hours, Jolley writes. The introspective nature of letter writing allows Jolley to explore themes of isolation and connection throughout *MPI*. "The loneliness and the harshness of the Australian countryside," Miss Peabody writes in her first letter to Diana, "fitted so exactly with my own feelings."<sup>156</sup> As Campbell notes of epistolarity in modern women's literature, the writer feels as if their addressee is present, "at the same time the writer still feels alone and must feel alone in order to write letters. What writers enact in their seclusion is at the core of the epistolary novel: 'a self-conscious, self-perpetuating process of emotional self examination which gathers momentum and ultimately

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<sup>152</sup> This is especially true of the metafictional dialogue in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, as Jolley experiments with the layers of 'truth' and 'fiction.' This, too, is conventional of epistolary fiction, as Elizabeth Campbell writes: "The reader of the epistolary novel is aware that within its boundaries there is another reader... the form dictates to the writer how to write and the reader how to read." Campbell, "Epistolarity," 336.

<sup>153</sup> Campbell, "Epistolarity," 332.

<sup>154</sup> Elsewhere, speaking to Dagmar Strauss, Jolley recounts this experience in a similar way. "Sometimes when you're writing," she says, "something – a method of presenting the material – literally falls onto the page at around midnight or one in the morning, and it's quite exciting when that happens." Elizabeth Jolley, *Facing Writers*, interview by Dagmar Strauss, 15.

<sup>155</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, "An Interview with Elizabeth Jolley," interview by Stephanie Trigg, 253.

<sup>156</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 5.

becomes more important than communicating with anyone outside the room in which one sits alone writing letters' (Perry 117)".<sup>157</sup> Epistolarity insists on private time and space, both mental and physical, to write. By using this form, Jolley reflects on writing as a necessarily solitary practice and thus meditates on women's writing conditions through this form.

In Jolley's practice, as in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, the night provides a much-needed release from duties and an opportunity to create. As interviews with the author demonstrate, the practice of night-writing is adopted by necessity – a solution to the gendered negotiation of personal and professional responsibilities. Yet there is more to the night than a time of convenience. Perhaps it is a quality about the night that fosters experimental ideas, provides clarity and inspiration, and/or motivates writers with a sense of urgency. Certainly, the night is liberating in *MPI* and permits exploration in this subversive time. Could it be that it also fosters a type of literary experimentation for women's writing? It is in the night-time that Jolley recalls having the inspiration to adopt an experimental style of writing for *MPI*. She combines two separate narratives in one novel, and rapidly switches between the two in a way that destabilises the reading process.<sup>158</sup> The addition of metafictional commentary throughout the text further serves to disrupt the reading experience, in much the same way as women's creative practices are interrupted throughout the novel. Having established the reasons women's desires are relegated to the night in Chapter One, this Chapter thus seeks to consider what happens to the writing itself during these obscure hours. Here, I argue, the night has a significant effect on the writing and raises all sorts of questions to do with who is able to write, what is said, and how it is expressed. I consider the fragmentation of the narratives as a reflection of the night's transience, in that they are both fleeting, fractured, interruptible and responsive to competing needs. Additionally, by adopting a style of writing that is metafictional, Jolley considers the anxieties which pervade women's writing within a male-dominated literary tradition. Miss Peabody tentatively explores her literary identity, guided by Diana's instructive letters. Although the night is a subversive time, it does not escape the presence of paternal values which continue to haunt women's writing. Elizabeth Jolley's meditation on women's writing extends to a consideration of women's literary cultures in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. The historical anonymity of women's writing is

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<sup>157</sup> Campbell, "Epistolarity," 338.

<sup>158</sup> As Joan Kirkby summarises, the structure of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* "is a disconcerting delight with rapidly alternating frames which sometimes leave the reader floating out of frame." Kirkby, "Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley," 485.

alluded to in the secrecy of the night, but it is also the time which fosters Miss Peabody's need for privacy and allows her to develop her authorial identity.

#### FLEETING TIME AND FRACTURED STORIES

The night in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* is transient, available in short intervals and subject to interruptions. This transience manifests in the fragmentation of the narrative, as Jolley mimics the interruptions of the night and the spaces occupied at that time in the structure of her novel. *MPI* rapidly oscillates between the story of Miss Thorne, written by Diana and sent via epistolary correspondence, and that of Miss Dorothy Peabody. The abrupt shifts in narration refuse an immersive reading experience; just as the women writers within the novel (and Jolley herself) are denied extended periods of creativity, the reader of *MPI* is subject to repeated disturbances in the reading process. This has a disorientating effect as the text shifts between frames, often without any clear indication such as an ellipsis or a chapter marker. In doing so, Jolley reflects the state of consciousness upon being responsive to the competing needs of others. These shifts in narration are often attributed to care and domestic responsibilities and, as discussed in Chapter One, exemplify the problems inherent for women who write within the confines of the domestic space. At the introductory passage of *MPI*, we are invited to witness Miss Thorne's character – her literary pretensions, exploitative power, and same-sex desire for the students at Pine Heights school of which she is headmistress. The narrative then abruptly shifts in its first transition, signalled with a phrase that is as equally dreaded by the reader of Jolley's text as it is for Miss Peabody. "Dotty! Dotty!" Mrs Peabody calls, summoning her daughter away from Thorne's narrative and demanding attention to her physical surroundings within the home.<sup>159</sup> Here, Mrs Peabody demands hot milk, prepared by Miss Peabody in a "hateful little milk saucepan" – the resentment here, and often throughout the text, is palpable.<sup>160</sup> Later, Miss Peabody reads Diana's notes on Miss Thorne's character: the satisfaction Thorne takes in Miss Edgely's jealousy, and the pleasure she feels introducing people to new experiences, "to initiate a person whom one believes to be innocent."<sup>161</sup> Such

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<sup>159</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 4.

<sup>160</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 4. I have discussed Miss Peabody's resentment of domestic chores at length in Chapter One, "A Complicated Time on the 24-hour Clock."

<sup>161</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 34. This is one of the many instances of doubling within Jolley's narrative. The reader is aware that the pleasure Thorne takes in initiating the uninitiated is reflective of Diana's own pleasure as she introduces Miss Peabody to new cultural and sexual experiences.

sexually provocative descriptions both excite and disturb Miss Peabody, but she is once again interrupted by her mother's incessant call. Later still, as Diana instructs Miss Peabody to avoid clichés – a lesson to which she remains painfully oblivious – her mother's voice “[pierces] the tranquility” with the urgent need to wash the potato saucepan.<sup>162</sup> Mrs Peabody is a domineering force who exemplifies the interruptions of the domestic space, and illustrates the ways in which this encroaches on women's writing even during times (such as the night) that women writers claim as their her own. In analysing *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* as epistolary fiction, Elizabeth Campbell notes the way Jolley “represents what happens when a reader reads a letter.”<sup>163</sup> For Campbell, the fragmentation here is a reflection of the consciousness of the reader and the “polyphony of voices and a simultaneity of thought and action.”<sup>164</sup> This polyphony and simultaneity are certainly true to the making of the story, as Jolley skilfully incorporates the thoughts, interpretations and distractions of multiple readers and writers across multiple layers of the novel. Yet one cannot overlook the persistent images of domesticity that are associated with the story's fragmentation, as demonstrated in the examples above. Narrative flow is interrupted with gendered demands, as the expectation of caring responsibilities takes precedence over an immersive reading experience. Both the female writer characters *and* the structure of the text are interruptible and responsive to competing needs. Though the night presents a temporary reprieve for Miss Peabody, the space in which she occupies within the home is not impenetrable. The night, and the alternating frames within *MPI*, are embraced in short intervals with the expectation that each frame, letter, aspect of the story, or segment of time, will cease – and will later be returned to.

Readership is often identified as the primary focus of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. It is through reading that Miss Peabody is introduced to the pleasures of writing, acting as a catalyst for her to develop an authorial identity and escape the confines of a previously mundane existence. As Pam Gilbert notes, “*Miss Peabody's Inheritance* open[s] out the possibilities of reading, and through that, the practice of writing.”<sup>165</sup> While Jolley scholarship

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<sup>162</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 68-69. “Dotty! Dotty!” Mrs Peabody calls for the light to be switched off, the piano to be dusted, to ensure the soup is shelved correctly, or to quieten her daughter's singing. The instances of Mrs Peabody's interruptions are too extensive to list and are relentless streams of tedious demands that disturb Miss Peabody's reading and writing.

<sup>163</sup> Campbell, “Epistolarity,” 342.

<sup>164</sup> Campbell, “Epistolarity,” 342.

<sup>165</sup> Gilbert, *Coming out from Under*, 57.

has thoroughly explored the imaginative and dynamic processes of reading,<sup>166</sup> there remains space for further examination of the novel's writerly concerns. The construction of a manuscript and all that process involves – negotiating time and space to write, sourcing inspiration (or appropriating experiences), laboriously writing, editing, rewriting – is explored in the epistolary exchange between Diana and Miss Peabody. “It is in the construction of the narrative, in the writer's discovery of the way to tell her story, that the act of narration actually becomes the novel's focus,” writes Delys Bird.<sup>167</sup> Through a metafictional focus on writing, Jolley explores the relationship between time, space and textuality, and considers the writing that is made possible in the obscure hours. The night in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* is a recurring and reproducible time, one that is eagerly anticipated and recreated in moments of solitude. Through the structure of the novel and the competing frames, Jolley explores the cyclicity of the night. Whereas the day is for regimented routines, its light and exposure forcing a stifling conformity and adherence to gendered practices of work and domesticity, the night is for liberating practices. The predictable nature of Miss Peabody's weekdays as a secretary at Fortress Enterprises, and weekends cleaning the family home, are read in juxtaposition with the infinite possibilities and imaginative freedom she explores through Diana's letters in the evening from the sanctuary of her bedroom. Compared to the linear trajectory of Miss Peabody's narrative – in which she begins as a reader, develops a writerly identity, and inherits the role of author upon the death of Diana – Diana's letters are fragmented, sent in instalments without an overarching structure.

Miss Peabody in her airless and virginal bedroom tried to make sense out of the letter which was scrawled in red and blue ink. She tried to piece together something of the lives of Miss Thorne and Miss Snowdon. There was a lack of sequence and she realized she must take each letter as it came and hope that in the end she would reach some sort of understanding.<sup>168</sup>

As opposed to the logical sequence of Miss Peabody's narrative, Miss Thorne's (embedded within Diana's letters) resists a linear structure. Like the night itself, the fragmented letters are

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<sup>166</sup> Delys Bird summarises *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* as a novel “concerned with the dynamic interaction of writing and reading, with the social constriction and limitation of women's lives and the contrasting potential growth and freedom of their imaginative life.” Bird, “Now for the Real Thing,” 175.

<sup>167</sup> Bird, “Now for the Real Thing,” 176.

<sup>168</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 11.

embraced by Miss Peabody as she releases expectation of an overarching structure or meaning. The writing is valued in and of itself and, though Miss Peabody is deeply invested in Thorne's story, she is interested in the quality of writing and the possibilities which emerge from this. According to Elizabeth Campbell, this focus on writing rather than plot subverts the dominant, masculine, linear narrative structure.<sup>169</sup> Combined with the fragmentation and subjectivity of Jolley's novel, Campbell considers *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, as with other modern women's epistolary fiction, to be *écriture féminine*. I propose that such a distinctly feminine style of writing is enabled in the night. It is during this time that women within the novel feel liberated to explore their sexuality and desires for writing; likewise, the subversive time permits a more experimental style of writing. It is a time for introspection, as Miss Peabody resonates with Diana's literature and critically examines her own life; a time for meditation, as Jolley, Miss Peabody and Diana reflect on the processes of writing; and a time to employ more technically experimental forms and styles of writing. The self-reflexivity and complex structure of the text, I argue, are enabled because women are released from expectation during this time.

Once Elizabeth Jolley came to the structure of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, she spent "all night, every night" completing the draft of her manuscript.<sup>170</sup> The same sense of urgency is conveyed in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*; at night the women writers rush to cement their words on paper and make use of the limited time available to them. As I explore in Chapter One, Miss Peabody's writing practice is confined to the night. At the conclusion of *MPI*, we learn that Diana too was writing against the clock. She passes away mid-sentence and leaves behind a collection of letters and the manuscript which Miss Peabody inherits. The hurried tone of Diana's writing thus takes on a newfound sense of urgency as we consider her writing in the face of disability and illness. It is the immediacy of Diana's writing, the frenetic energy conveyed in present tense narration which allows us, as it does Miss Peabody, to immerse ourselves as readers in the fragmented sections of the narrative. Diana invites Miss Peabody into her fictional realm often without so much as an 'hello,' as indicated in the novel: "Am in a tearing hurry, the writing hardly stayed on the page, it's the approach to drama in the Thorne, Manners, Edgely affair..."<sup>171</sup> Interweaving Diana's letter with Miss Peabody's

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<sup>169</sup> Campbell, "Epistolarity."

<sup>170</sup> Jolley, "What Sins to Me Unknown," 6.

<sup>171</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 72.



reception, as Jolley so aptly does throughout the novel, urgency is conveyed in the immediacy of tone and personification of writing. Such techniques are considered typical of modern women's epistolary fiction, a topic which Linda Kauffman explores in *Special Delivery*. The following passage is from Kauffman's analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, but finds many similarities in my own reading of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*.

[Lessing] consciously captures the flow of desires, ideas, intensive states by reproducing acts of composition and recomposition in the notebooks, even miming the hastiness of composition with spelling errors, slash marks and emendations.<sup>172</sup>

Such techniques are evident in Diana's hastily composed letters, marked with revision notes and corrections: "I shall have to be careful, the novelist added in small writing to squeeze as much as possible on to the bottom of the last page, about the clichés; in future I shall underline them with a red pen."<sup>173</sup> As Elizabeth Campbell argues, "the letters pour out of Diana as if she cannot contain her words, and Miss Peabody reads them as frantically as Diana writes."<sup>174</sup> With the ever-present threat of her mother's interruptions looming across the landing of the Peabody home, Miss Peabody makes use of her solitude while it is available. She devours Diana's letters, and has to consciously remind herself to slow down upon rereading them; "she was reading too quickly, she would go back and reread slowly."<sup>175</sup> Time is limited during the night, but it also presumes a kind of endlessness about it as Miss Peabody loses herself in the letters. "In the chilly quietness of the bedroom," the room Miss Peabody occupies as a space of creativity, "the novelist took over the night."<sup>176</sup>

Metafictional allusions are not limited to Diana's letters; they are evident across multiple layers of narration in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, and further destabilise the reading process by highlighting the artificiality of the text/s. Emendations, whether in the form of

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<sup>172</sup> Kauffman, *Special Delivery*, 170.

<sup>173</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 70.

<sup>174</sup> Campbell, "Epistolarity," 342.

<sup>175</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 15. Miss Peabody's haste to consume Diana's letters is also referred to later in the text: "Miss Peabody gave a little gasp... in her hasty first reading she had failed to notice the novelist's thoughtfulness." Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 48.

<sup>176</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 24.

correcting Edgely's typing mistakes – “copulation in the public schools” stands out as a particularly unfortunate one – inserting explanations, or correcting clichés are abundant throughout.<sup>177</sup> These emendations capture the thoughts and writing processes of Diana, Thorne, Miss Peabody, and the narrator of Miss Peabody's frame. In *Special Delivery*, Linda Kauffman explores the way multiple framing devices challenge simple dichotomies of inside/outside the text, as well as divisions between character/author, and fact/fiction.<sup>178</sup> Jolley explores this in *MPI* through references to the physicality of Diana and Miss Peabody's correspondence, as well as the tangibility of their writing which evokes desire and brings to life the creation of their ideas. Diana's sentences plunge across the page.<sup>179</sup> Her fixation with Miss Peabody is both exciting and disturbing in the way it excites “hitherto unknown... passions.”<sup>180</sup> Our reading, too, is disrupted with allusions to the tactile and physical experiences of writing. The penmanship Diana finds so alluring, the fragrance of her letters, the coloured inks which map the trajectory of characters and stories – these descriptions destabilise the reading process and both “insist on and undercut verisimilitude,” to borrow a phrase from Elizabeth Campbell.<sup>181</sup> Reflecting on the physicality of writing in an autobiographical essay, Jolley writes:

The act of writing was a sensual pleasure and it still is this pleasure, especially if the paper is smooth and of good quality. In my hand my pen has a smoothness and a refinement, it feels like a mysterious tool, something special, something to hold delicately, to caress.<sup>182</sup>

This sensuality is evoked in Miss Peabody's desire for Diana, through the exotic smell of her letters and her handwriting.<sup>183</sup> Diana experiments with violet ink and regards it as a “different

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<sup>177</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 1.

<sup>178</sup> Kauffman, *Special Delivery*, 171.

<sup>179</sup> “The novelist's ink was black and fresh and the words raced over the page,” demonstrates the urgency with which Diana writes. Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 115.

<sup>180</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 35.

<sup>181</sup> Campbell, “Epistolarity,” 341.

<sup>182</sup> Jolley, “A Timid Confidence,” 175.

<sup>183</sup> Delys Bird also comments on the “physical presence and power of handwriting” in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. The correspondence between Diana and Miss Peabody, Bird argues, “is as urgent and immediate as any more conventional erotic adventure.” Bird, “Now for the Real Thing,” 177.

colour for Miss Thorne.”<sup>184</sup> This colour assignment metafictionally alludes to the fact that Thorne’s narrative exists solely through Diana’s letters; given that Miss Peabody later expects to see Thorne on the streets of London though, it is not an effective reminder for her. Similarly, Miss Peabody’s “neat handwriting on the blue sheets of paper, blue ink, blue envelopes” – following a similar colour-coding system of Diana’s – metafictionally reminds that Miss Peabody’s narrative is told through the lens of her unnamed narrator.<sup>185</sup> And of course, the writer outside of these frames, Jolley herself, is by extension acknowledged. Just as surely as Thorne is a figment of Diana’s imagination, so too are we aware of the fictionality of *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance* as a whole. Delys Bird considers *MPI* as Jolley’s novel “most uncannily like its manuscript.”<sup>186</sup> Describing Jolley’s archival collection at the State Library of NSW, Bird says, “the different voices, settings and stories are organised in the manuscript much as they are by the novelist”.<sup>187</sup> Bird continues to quote from the following letter of Diana’s:

The structure of my story, the novelist wrote to Dorothy Peabody, is so complicated that, in my notes, I have to use different colours, you know, green ink to remind me of what Edgely is doing, red for Thorne and blue for Snowdon. I have even got some pieces of coloured paper to write on to help me when I am sorting out the different incidents.<sup>188</sup>

The “interpolations and reminders in red and black [ink],” as Bird describes of Jolley’s manuscript pages, are replicated in Diana’s self-reflexive commentary scrawled across her letters to Miss Peabody.<sup>189</sup> “The novel,” Bird argues, “with its finely tuned exaggeration of the process of writing as it is evidenced in the manuscript, is a kind of self-parody with serious intentions. Peabody and Hopewell form a composite writer/reader figure, and their correspondence represents an important reflection on the way the imagination and creativity work.”<sup>190</sup> To this I would add the significance of Jolley, and the writer characters within the

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<sup>184</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 47.

<sup>185</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 7.

<sup>186</sup> Bird, “Now for the Real Thing,” 175.

<sup>187</sup> Bird, “Now for the Real Thing,” 175.

<sup>188</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 33.

<sup>189</sup> Bird, “Now for the Real Thing,” 175

<sup>190</sup> Bird, “Now for the Real Thing,” 175-176.

novel, writing at night and requiring these organisational systems to keep track of their complex story structures. In addition to reflecting on the imaginative process, Jolley represents the consequences of sacrificing sleep to write. In particular, the mentally taxing hours of the night affect the writer's memory and this requires them to keep track of their storylines through an organisational system like colour-coding.

The complex layering of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* allows Jolley to experiment with the boundaries of 'truth' and 'fiction.' Pam Gilbert summarises this technique in *MPI*:

The novel, on one level, shows us how Miss Peabody 'reads' Diana Hopewell's new novel. But it also shows us how Miss Peabody then writes to Diana Hopewell, constructing as she does so a character appropriate for the occasion. Miss Peabody is a constructed Jolley character as is Diana Hopewell – and Jolley as 'author' is a constructed persona just as we readers are also constructed by the frames of our reading experiences.<sup>191</sup>

There are multiple layers of narration in *MPI*, and each layer explores aspects of both the reading and writing processes. Or, as Elizabeth Campbell similarly comments, "reader, writer, text are fused. Characters are readers and writers, readers and writers are characters, and the text is both fiction and reality at the same time."<sup>192</sup> Jolley deliberately distorts the boundaries across the multiple layers of narration, as suggested in a metafictional statement by Diana: "There is too thin a line between truth and fiction and there are moments in the writing of fantasy and imagination where truth is suddenly revealed."<sup>193</sup> The blurring of these lines is most evident in instances of doubling, sometimes tripling, across the narratives. Miss Peabody's reality infiltrates Diana's fiction; her meekness and incompetence are reflected in Miss Edgely, and the overbearing presence of her mother is not unlike Miss Thorne. Miss Thorne's aversion to clichés is shared not only with Diana as her writer, but the narrator of Miss Peabody's story. As a reader, we are told Miss Peabody's life had become a series of clichés through no fault of her own;<sup>194</sup> with this, we are reminded of the fictionality of all

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<sup>191</sup> Gilbert, *Coming out from Under*, 55.

<sup>192</sup> Campbell, "Epistolarity," 341.

<sup>193</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 15.

<sup>194</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 68.

layers of the narrative, including the story of Miss Peabody which is otherwise set as the ‘real’ frame story within which Diana’s ‘fictional’ story exists. ‘Fiction’ and ‘reality’ work together in the novel, although of course there is the metafictional awareness that one version of reality – whether it be Thorne’s, Diana’s, Miss Peabody’s or Jolley’s – is another’s fiction.

#### SELF-REFLEXIVITY AND AUTHORIAL ANXIETY

There are lasting implications of having one’s desires and aspirations relegated to the night; in *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, one such manifestation of this is the ‘anxiety of authorship’ which pervades women writers across multiple layers of the framed narrative and that we have already seen is explored in the domains of fictionality. ‘Anxiety of authorship’ is a concept proposed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their influential feminist text, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979).<sup>195</sup> Focusing on nineteenth-century women writers, this text seeks to explain the lasting implications of an historically male-dominated writing tradition on the female literary consciousness. Gilbert and Gubar consider this an issue of the past, as women writers have since overcome their anxieties through the process of inverting stereotypes of women as perceived by men, and writing their way into a tradition which subsequent female writers will benefit from. This process itself is demonstrated in *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*. Educated by her father and his paternal values, Miss Peabody’s early access to literature reinforces gendered messages about acceptable activities for girls and women, and their role within the domestic sphere. Through Diana’s writing, Miss Peabody is introduced to a new tradition, one of female experimentation and adventure, and receives instructions from Diana about how to become her beneficiary. Coral Ann Howells explores the process by which Miss Peabody comes into her literary inheritance. She writes, “[Miss Peabody] is actually serving her apprenticeship as a novelist through writing letters to Diana, inventing the persona of the female novelist as powerful liberated woman and sharing through her questions and suggestions in the creation of the novel’s plot.”<sup>196</sup> Diana inserts explanations and background information into her letters to Miss Peabody, providing her recipient with the knowledge to inherit this manuscript. This is demonstrated in the following passage from Diana’s letter: “Incidentally, in parenthesis, though this will not be in the novel itself, it is not irrelevant to say here that Mrs Bales does the kitchen for Miss Thorne. This is

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<sup>195</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

<sup>196</sup> Howells, “In Search of Lost Mothers,” 65.

just one of those details which is absolutely necessary for the writer to know but which does not always reach the reader.”<sup>197</sup> Yet despite this, the very sense of “self-doubt, inadequacy, and inferiority” which characterises authorial anxiety in *The Madwoman in the Attic* is evident in the self-reflexivity of *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*.<sup>198</sup> There remains a lingering presence of paternal values by which women’s writing is held to standard in the novel, and this manifests itself as insecurity for the fictional writers in their literary identities.

The self-reflexivity across multiple layers of the framed narrative is one way this authorial anxiety manifests. Both Diana and Thorne criticise the use of clichés in their writing: Diana notes that writers should avoid such phrases, using a red pen to mark sentences she is unhappy with in her letters to Miss Peabody, and Thorne is similarly critical of herself and others using language which lacks originality. Miss Peabody, on the other hand, is ironically oblivious to her own use of such a convention: “When Mr Bains accused [Miss Peabody] of having lost an important file, she clasped her head in both hands, saying, “I’d lose my head if it wasn’t screwed on!” and felt like she was saying something bright and original.”<sup>199</sup> Miss Peabody’s writing remains painfully derivative, despite Diana’s warnings against the use of clichés. This, I argue, could be attributed to the constant source of interruptions even during the night. Diana’s letters contain instructions on the codes and conventions of writing, but Miss Peabody is unable to receive the full effects of this education as she is repeatedly summoned to tend to her mother. The interruptions stunt her literary growth and refuse her the time she needs to craft her replies in a unique way. Meanwhile, Diana is hesitant, even apologetic, about her own use of clichés; she says that “often there is not a better way of expressing oneself.”<sup>200</sup> Yet she consistently reverts to this style. Jolley also comments on the ease of writing in Diana’s “first person, present tense, cliché-ridden style,” which was, as she tells Paul Kavanagh, “very nice to write.”<sup>201</sup> Diana is mindful of the literary standards by which her writing may be judged, and her apologies and notations to excuse the clichés are reflective of this awareness. Nevertheless, she asserts a stance by using the

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<sup>197</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 33.

<sup>198</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman*, 60.

<sup>199</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 84.

<sup>200</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 68.

<sup>201</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, “The Self the Honey of all Beings,” interview by Paul Kavanagh, 438.

language which best serves her at the time of writing it – writing can be edited later on, but when working against the clock it is easy to revert to platitudes which best express your ideas.

Prior to reading Diana's novel, Miss Peabody's exposure to literature is of a predominately male literary culture. Reading to Miss Peabody as a child, Mr Peabody's bedtime stories enforce paternal values in both literature and gendered behaviour. The adventures of Robinson Crusoe are so unlike the gendered experiences of Miss Peabody. As noted earlier in Chapter One, she is confined to her father's household. Tending to her wooden dolls and her rose-adorned dolls' house as a child, Miss Peabody prepares for the responsibilities she will assume as an adult. Although both parents read to her as a child, after her father's death, Miss Peabody has no one to discuss books with. Therefore, all literary practices cease: "No one ever spoke to her now about Dickens or about Charlotte Brontë or Nathaniel Hawthorne or Defoe and gradually these things had slipped from her mind which became more and more the receptacle for office gossip."<sup>202</sup> The literature of her father is primarily, albeit not exclusively, written by male authors, and certainly of a 'high culture' status. This is a concern that is also explored in Miss Thorne's narrative. Thorne aspires to be like her notably male cultural influences, and there are often allusions to the highbrow European culture of which she (unsuccessfully) attempts to be a part. Coral Ann Howells comments on Thorne's inability to identify with these figures:

Miss Arabella Thorne... is a devotee of European culture represented by Wagner, Goethe, Shakespeare and Wilde. These male images of creative power and glamour surely represent the displacement of Miss Thorne's own aspirations to be part of a patriarchal tradition which she can enter only in fantasy.<sup>203</sup>

Consistently and clumsily throughout the text, Thorne attempts to identify with this cultural tradition. This is marked with a certain amount of awkwardness; she often misquotes or misremembers the author of a text, trying but ultimately failing to impart significance and assert her status as a cultured, literary woman. There is a sense of insecurity evident upon Thorne's reading of a structuralist passage in a literary journal, full of jargonistic terminology

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<sup>202</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 21.

<sup>203</sup> Howells, "In Search of Lost Mothers," 59-60.

which confuses Thorne and makes her “doubt her own position... because of not understanding what was being discussed.”<sup>204</sup> While the passage in question is undeniably a parodic and exaggerated example of the type of literary criticism Jolley so strongly opposed, perhaps functioning in part to make a mockery of the type of structuralist criticism that was common at the time of her writing, it nevertheless serves a second function in highlighting Thorne’s precarious position as a woman within a predominantly male literary tradition. Sitting at her kitchen table, Thorne reflects on reading the passage and “remembers her extraordinary feelings, extraordinary because she is unaccustomed to being unable to understand anything she reads.”<sup>205</sup> Peter Monaghan offers an alternative perspective. Monaghan considers Jolley’s use of intertextuality as a tool to impart significance and suggest the affinities between her work and that of those, such as Oscar Wilde’s, that Jolley references: “Comically, Diana Hopewell says that her work is, ‘I hope, a novel of existence and feeling.’ Jolley takes pain to suggest the same of hers.”<sup>206</sup> There is certainly an element of inscribing significance within the text; Thorne’s cultural references are undoubtedly about asserting her status as a cultured, literary woman. Speaking of Debbie Frome’s father – Debbie is the girl who dances seductively for her Headmistress, and her father is the man Gwendaline Manners will marry – Thorne says, “He knows he is not *comme il faut*, he does not even know the phrase.”<sup>207</sup> She insists on her superiority because of what she perceives to be her cultural refinement. Elsewhere, in one of the many instances of Thorne looking for similarities between herself and Othello, she waits to welcome Debbie into her room and thinks of her own dressing gown as “reminiscent of what Othello might have worn when

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<sup>204</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 151. The passage I am referring to in full (with original emphasis) is:

... *The discussion falls on the concept of a structuralist reading and the exposure of the artistic process as being an achievement, on semantic levels, of harmonious surfaces built on insoluble conflicts, for example, the lexical, the grammatical and syntactic levels, with an ideological solution to the contradictions in the mode of discourse, the angle of narration and the symbolic structure of a culture.*

The layers of metafictional commentary and duplications within Jolley’s novel often enable multiple perspectives or readings. Although deliberately parodic, this passage in question could also be seen to be reflective of *MPI* as a whole. The inhospitable space of the domestic sphere is the grounds of the “insoluble conflict” that is the tension between a woman’s personal and professional life. Jolley’s “exposure of the artistic practice” – exposing the practice of writing at night that has, for generations, been kept in the dark – is an achievement built on these insoluble grounds. Jolley brings attention to women’s writing practices through an exaggerated and parodic representation of the craft.

<sup>205</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 151.

<sup>206</sup> Monaghan, “Miss Peabody’s Inheritance,” 1119.

<sup>207</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 2.



celebrating his nuptials.”<sup>208</sup> Rather than attribute this evidence to Jolley’s own attempts to validate her literary significance, I see this as a tool to demonstrate the way her female author characters feel compelled to do so. It is a recognition of the culture and literary tradition within which Diana, Thorne, and even Miss Peabody’s narrator write; the pervasive, male dominated tradition by which women are held to standard. Even under the cover of the night, these women write within patriarchy and cannot escape its gaze, one which haunts their writing and sees their repeated attempts to live up to a tradition which is not their own.

As opposed to the paternal lessons Mr Peabody’s bedtime stories held, or even the maternal lessons Mrs Peabody tries to bestow, each encoded with their own set of gendered messages of what women should and should not do, Diana’s writing is that of female exploration and adventure; she represents women as “indomitable, voyaging, powerful,” as Joan Kirkby says.<sup>209</sup> Empowered by this new tradition of writing, Miss Peabody begins to experiment with the possibilities of imaginative freedom and escape in the night. One of the ways Miss Peabody experiments with writing is in mythologising the figure of Diana. She immerses herself in literature, and borrows a book from the library about the Diana of Greek mythology to assemble her own version:

– Diana. –

The Lord of Free Nature. She goes hunting on the mountains... She is related to the cultivation of trees and is the Goddess of Fertility...

She appears in Sculpture as an armoured young woman; a Huntress with a short pleated skirt and a bow and arrow... She is both the Goddess of Virgins and the Goddess of Birth.

She is the sister of Apollo.

She is also Goddess of the Moon.

All this was Diana. Miss Peabody was amazed and full of admiration.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 38.

<sup>209</sup> Joan Kirkby, “Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley,” 488.

<sup>210</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 73.

Through Diana, Miss Peabody is introduced to a female literary culture that she had previously been denied; just accessing the library (for all its Woolfian significance) is outside of her routine, yet she is inspired to research, learn and write. Her description of Diana evokes the feminine imagery of fertility, birth, virgins, and the moon, presenting this as strong and powerful as opposed to the representations of women in literature she previously read with her father.<sup>211</sup> The Goddess Diana is not merely beautiful or passive – she is an active hunter, and a source of life. Diana the novelist perpetuates this mythologised version of herself, encouraging Miss Peabody’s fantasies with descriptions of her on her own farm riding a horse. Of course, that the actual Diana is confined to a hospital room, crippled in a riding accident, only further demonstrates the power of the female literary consciousness to project an image so full of life. Upon arriving in Australia, Miss Peabody finds the author is dead, leaving behind her an unfinished manuscript. Miss Peabody, thinking of her bundle of letters and all she knows of the story so far, makes the decision to source a typewriter (her incompetency at typing aside): “All she really needed to enter into her inheritance was a title.”<sup>212</sup> With this final sentence, the trajectory of Miss Peabody’s journey is complete. Having once signed her name to a letter in secrecy, timidly written and read under the cover of darkness the night provides, she now stakes a claim to authorship.

Taking ownership of Diana’s manuscript does raise questions about the nature of authorship and the right to inherit another’s work. Miss Peabody previously tries to appropriate her co-worker’s affair and pass it off as her own, but resolves not to use this story: “She tore up the blue sheets of paper; Miss Truscott owned Mr Bains.”<sup>213</sup> Yet perhaps the epistolary correspondence between Diana and Miss Peabody can be thought of in terms of a collaborative female authorship; the nights, belonging to the two of them, are where they exchange ideas, impart wisdom, and draw upon each other to create their fictions. Just as Miss Peabody’s version of Diana is based in reality and myth, Miss Peabody’s reality informs Diana’s fiction: as noted earlier, her meekness and incompetence are that of Miss Edgely’s and her mother’s overbearing presence is not unlike Miss Thorne’s. By providing Miss Peabody with the tools needed to become a writer, sharing the stories and expertise as part of

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<sup>211</sup> Kelly Cressio-Moeller employs similar imagery in the poem I refer to at the start of this thesis, as she writes about “whistling in the dark, singing to the moon.” The night conjures imagery of women’s connection to the moon, the ways in which the female body replicates its cycles. Cressio-Moeller, “A Night of One’s Own.”

<sup>212</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 157.

<sup>213</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 14.

an initiation, perhaps Diana resists the linear narrative of a patriarchal publishing tradition and presents an alternative. Diana does allude to the stakes of the publishing industry in one of her letters, describing what is sacrificed in an attempt to remain ‘topical’ (and hence publishable). A novella of hers, *Love at Second Sight*, originally a story about “two utterly abject women, both post menopausal, who have a brief and unexciting love affair” – and comically reminiscent of the sexual tension in Diana and Miss Peabody’s own relationship – is almost entirely rewritten to be adapted for film and published in paperback.<sup>214</sup> The ludicrous changes she has to make demonstrate Jolley’s adept humour and suggest a playful mocking of the extent to which art is sacrificed in a patriarchal publishing culture. “I’ve had to practically rewrite the book,” Diana tells Miss Peabody, “and large chunks of it are devoted to the major wars and to the depression and to mass production, unemployment, computers, space travel, the nuclear weapon scene, drugs and, at the end, inflation so you see it’s very topical. It will be serialized in our local newspaper.”<sup>215</sup> Yet in the collaboration between Miss Peabody and Diana, stories are passed between the two women, not necessarily seeking outside validation and publication. Together they have created a novel of possibilities and experimentation for women and, in doing so, stake a claim to their own tradition of writing in the night.

The night in *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance* is a time shrouded in secrecy. Women’s desires are identified and expressed yet, as I explore in Chapter One, are contained to the night. This is one of the primary ways Elizabeth Jolley explores women’s literary cultures in *MPI*, as she meditates on the circumstances which restrict women’s writing. The silencing and anonymity of women’s writing has been extensively discussed in feminist critical discourse, and the relevance of this topic remains today. Male pseudonyms continue to be adopted, lending credibility to female authors within a publishing culture which favours male

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<sup>214</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 47.

<sup>215</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 47-48. Dorothy Jones offers an alternative perspective. The setting of Diana’s original novella is “mainly in a flat boring street in an incredibly dull suburb.” Jolley, *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*, 47. Although this is perceived to be quite a mundane topic, it is significant that it is the source of inspiration from which Diana’s rewriting takes place. Jones writes:

While Jolley mocks popular notions of what constitutes interest and topicality in a work of fiction, it is significant that the boring uneventful lives of the two women in Diana Hopewell’s novel should have generated so much creative activity. In *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance* the lives of the principal characters are related not to events of social and political significance, but to major works of art, *Othello*, Goethe’s *Faust*, Wagner’s opera *The Valkyrie* and Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. Society may deem these women trivial and inconsequential, but from another point of view the events which befall them have the magnitude, intensity and heroic scope of Shakespearean tragedy or Wagnerian opera, even though at the same time considerable humour is derived from contrasting such disparate visions of their lives. Jones, “The Goddess, The Artist, and the Spinster,” 79.

titles.<sup>216</sup> Women's literary history is pieced together with the voices of those privileged enough to be heard and recorded, yet the silences – of those unable to write, without the means or cultural capital to do so; those forbidden from writing, doing so covertly and never having their words see the light of day; or the stories passed down through generations in the long history of oral storytelling, so often between mothers and their children, yet overlooked in Western canon – are overwhelming. In an article considering this theme in relation to Jolley's novel, Bronwen Levy notes that silencing "of character, narrator, author, language" is a "common topic in feminist, including lesbian, discussions of women's writing, where women's access to speech and story-telling is a familiar theme."<sup>217</sup> Through allusions to the secrecy of women's writing, Jolley meditates on this concern in *MPI*. Throughout the text, Miss Peabody writes under the cover of darkness. This is literal in the sense that she is writing at night, but also an allusion to the secrecy of her actions: she posts her letters to Diana without anyone's knowledge; hides bundles of envelopes in her stocking and hanky drawer;<sup>218</sup> always writes "quietly" or "timidly" so as not to disturb her mother.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, by reason of her age, or circumstances, or gender – perhaps a combination of all three – Miss Peabody remains for the large part unseen. She is a woman "on the wrong side of fifty,"<sup>220</sup> considered an incompetent typist in her office, and a disappointment to her elderly mother (her inability to find a husband is a constant source of distress for Mrs Peabody). Miss Peabody's desires and aspirations are not only hidden by her, they are unexamined by those around her, except Diana. Diana – novelist, goddess, literary mother, mythologised in Miss Peabody's mind – is the source of Miss Peabody's longing and is instrumental in her education. The nights belong to Diana, but, by extension, also belong to Miss Peabody –

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<sup>216</sup> Tracing the 'lady novelist' of the eighteenth-century as a figure who continues to haunt women's writing today, Victoria Kennedy comments on the historical use of pseudonyms. Kennedy notes, "the fact that women writers perceive a need to distance themselves from their own work maintains the notion that women's writing is unrespectable and subpar. Thus, the lady novelist was permitted to exist and flourish professionally but only insofar as she manifested a certain shame or anxiety about her profession by disavowing her work through apologetic notes and pseudonymous publication." Kennedy, "Lady Novelist," 192.

Michelle Smith similarly discusses the use of female pen-names in an article for *The Conversation*, noting the way the usage has changed overtime. Whereas British women once hid their names because it was considered inappropriate for women to write, they now do so to avoid negative perceptions associated with women's fiction (at both an industry and reader level). Michelle Smith, "The Evolution of Female Pen-Names from Currer Bell to J.K. Rowling," *The Conversation*, August 9, 2015, <https://theconversation.com/the-evolution-of-female-pen-names-from-currer-bell-to-j-k-rowling-46864>

<sup>217</sup> Bronwen Levy, "Jolley's Women," 114.

<sup>218</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 4.

<sup>219</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 6; 7.

<sup>220</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 12.

separated by continents, the two women unite in their solitary practice and Miss Peabody is initiated to possibilities and complexities of this time. At the conclusion of the novel, Miss Peabody flees her oppressive English home and travels to Australia to meet the novelist. Upon finding the author dead, Miss Peabody takes ownership of Diana's manuscript and *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* closes with the significant line: "All she really needed to enter into her inheritance was a title." As Bronwen Levy notes, this sentence functions as a "superb double entendre," as the title could be to land or to the novel.<sup>221</sup> Having developed her writerly identity in the secrecy of the night, supported through the collaborative correspondence with Diana, Miss Peabody also lays claim to her title as a novelist.

## CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER TWO

In an essay, Elizabeth Jolley describes the ways in which her life experiences and various occupations have inadvertently informed her fiction. Although she does not set out to "get material" in her personal life, interacting with or observing other people gives her "little pictures of human life" and sparks her creativity.<sup>222</sup> She writes:

My work, as it turns out, is knitted closely into my fiction – household, nursing, selling door to door, flying domestic, teaching, workshops and leisure classes too, all have been useful. Although fiction demands imagination, it must be based on some kind of genuine experience.<sup>223</sup>

Jolley scholarship often explores the autobiographical aspects of Jolley's fiction; the synchronicities between her fictional characters and her own life are well acknowledged. This makes it all the more significant that Jolley is a night-writer, whose fiction explores women's night writing. Throughout *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, Jolley explores the relationship between an experimental style of writing and the time in which it is produced. The night is not just a thematic concern in *MPI* – although, as I argue in Chapter One, it certainly is a defining aspect of this novel. The night is also a structurally and technically informing motif;

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<sup>221</sup> Levy, "Jolley's Women," 117.

<sup>222</sup> Jolley, "Only Connect," in *Central Mischief*, 26.

<sup>223</sup> Jolley, "Only Connect," in *Central Mischief*, 26.

it is a time that is of importance to Jolley as the author of the text, and it is “knitted closely into [her] fiction.”<sup>224</sup> For Miss Peabody, the night-hours afford her the time to engage in literary practices. Yet Jolley replicates the interruptions that disturb Miss Peabody in the fragmentation of *MPI*, as well as the urgency to cement words on paper in the limited time frame. The epistolary form lends itself to such experimentation and, notably, it was during the night that Jolley had the clarity and inspiration to combine her narratives in this way. As Joan Kirkby summarises, Jolley’s writing is “formally complex, anti-linear, self-conscious experimentation.”<sup>225</sup> I consider the characteristics Kirkby describes as reflective of the subversive time of the night – the night is cyclical, returned to in moments of solitude, and it allows the women within the novel to experiment with their writing, albeit self-consciously. Miss Peabody develops her craft under the protection that darkness provides, guided by Diana. Although Diana’s self-reflexive writing suggests a lingering authorial anxiety, haunted by the expectations and standards of a patriarchal culture, she takes a stance and does not conform to all expectations. Just as Miss Peabody initiates small rebellions against her mother – having a bath on the wrong night, and singing songs of liberation as discussed in Chapter One – so too does Diana make attempts to resist these oppressive standards. She continues to express herself in clichés as it is the best style that allows her to say what she needs to Miss Peabody. Through their collaboration, Miss Peabody and Diana – both of them novelists – lay claim to the night and to their authorship. The night, I argue, is not just the time women write within the novel; the night is a time which informs the writing they produce.

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<sup>224</sup> Jolley, “Only Connect,” in *Central Mischief*, 26.

<sup>225</sup> Joan Kirkby, “Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley,” 485.

# CONCLUSION

## MY NIGHTS

As I am writing this, my computer illuminates the study in the form of my personal sunrise. It is 9 p.m. My partner, exhausted after eight hours of managing warehouse staff, brings me a tea and a kiss goodnight. We've settled into this routine now, although the hours stretch in front of me and I long to be with her. Even within our same-sex relationship we assume traditionally gendered roles; she provides, and I nurture. Her 9 – 5 work affords me the time I need to study, and I would not have this luxury if I was in full-time employment. Instead, I find myself embodying the characteristics of *wife*, those learned at my mother's knee as I watched the love for her family bleed into our home. Now I plan the weekly meals, hang washing in the sunshine, and punctuate breaks with a call to organise an appointment or order a birthday gift. I created so much space for this thesis. We moved into a rental property with a spare bedroom, lined the walls of my study with bookshelves and mind-maps. Although reading, analysing, and endless notetaking are completed during the day, the nights are for writing. It is during this time that I am able to enter a creative headspace, synthesise and express the ideas I scrawled on post-it notes during the day. I know my phone will not buzz in the evening – it is safely tucked away in a desk drawer, without the unconscious expectation of awaiting a call or being needed. I take pride in being a reliable partner, daughter, granddaughter, sister, friend – I have the support and encouragement so necessary to undertake Master's research, and the expectations placed upon me are mine alone. It is not that I need to be responsive during the day, but that I want to. To show appreciation for this room of my own, and offer the support and assistance that my flexible working arrangements allow. To connect and overcome the loneliness that higher degree research entails. So I take calls during the day, make lists for upcoming responsibilities and carry my share of the mental load. But the nights are mine.

What does the night allow? For me, the stillness of this time quietens the mind and allows me to focus purely on the writing. The nagging of my internal to-do lists cease at night; I do not need to run out and buy milk, reschedule an appointment, check my e-mails, eat. I am present, I am focused, I am here and I am writing. But the nights offer more than silence. Time is fleeting, and I am tired. These hours feel unsustainable, yet, somehow, they

work. Perhaps this is because they simply have to – I don't have the luxury of agonising over sentences (is this the best word to use? Could I be more succinct?). The hours tick by and I will soon need rest. Tomorrow I will sweep through the Word document, ruthlessly tracking changes in that anxiety-inducing red font. I will tidy my grammar and correct my references, but the process will be made easier because of the writing that comes to me in the night. So now, I sit in this room, silence interrupted only by the low hum of a computer, and words appear on the page without the judgement that accompanies this process in the daylight. Free from the expectations I impose on myself, I refuse to over-analyse my writing – that will come, tomorrow, but for now I enjoy the ease with which my words flow. I know I will not sleep until these ideas are out of my mind and here on the page. I adopt a stream-of-consciousness style because that is how I best express these thoughts, using lengthy sentences which contain too many clauses because, suddenly, after labouring over concepts throughout the day, they finally make sense. I disregard the academic convention of writing in third person and insert myself into the narrative: I am a woman, writing at night, about women who write at night. These experiences are mine as they are Jolley's, Miss Peabody's, Sylvia Plath's, Sybylla Melvyn's. The women who came before me, who will come after, weary from domestic labour and desperate for solitude. The days are still needed though, as they are in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*. The days are for linear, productive time – Miss Peabody's post is delivered, bringing with it new instalments of Diana's letters. I wake up feeling recharged and am able to complete the editorial changes necessary in between ticking off my to-do list. Jolley writes in an essay, "I have come to believe that the habit of work and the habit of art can both be cultivated and proceed side by side peacefully for a good deal of time."<sup>226</sup> It is not a matter of sacrificing one for the other – family for writing, work for art, day for night. "I have often felt sorry for people who feel they must give up their work or be spared completely from the tasks of daily living for the sake of their art, their writing," Jolley continues. To alter one's life, to avoid a formal occupation, or a relationship, or domestic obligation, Jolley argues, "[removes] the experience of people and places and these, in my opinion, are necessary for the writing of fiction and poetry."<sup>227</sup> The experiences of Jolley's daytime activities are necessary for her writing as they provide sparks of inspiration to explore in her fiction. The night, too, is necessary because it provides the time that is available to delve into that exploration.

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<sup>226</sup> Jolley, "Only Connect," in *Central Mischief*, 20.

<sup>227</sup> Jolley, "Only Connect," in *Central Mischief*, 20-21.



## OUR NIGHTS

Jolley scholarship acknowledges the magical landscape of Miss Peabody's evenings, as well as the tension between day and night, confinement and exploration, that Jolley explores in the competing frames of the novel. Yet the imaginative freedom explored during these evenings is attributed to the transformative power of fiction. According to these readings, Miss Peabody remakes her world through the possibilities Diana offers her in the form of letters – tales of a sexually adventurous Headmistress, refined European culture, and knowledge about writing conventions.<sup>228</sup> I do not dispute this reading as such; Miss Peabody's life is certainly enlivened through her correspondence with Diana and the possibilities offered to her through literature. I do, however, believe current scholarship lacks critical attention to the significance of the night in enabling this transformation. There is a quality of the night which enables Miss Peabody to experiment with literary practices, just as it has done for other women writers throughout literary history. The inheritance of Miss Peabody is the claim to a writerly identity, and this is enabled through her experimentation in the night. As Chapter One explores, the night is a powerful time in that it liberates women within the novel – and Jolley herself – from the oppression of a domestic routine. The nights belong to the novelist, because the days do not – paid employment and unpaid care work insist upon women's time during the daylight hours, and the night is chosen by necessity as women seek respite from these chores. The night, when everyone else is asleep, is claimed by the novelist. It is a time that belongs to her, and this claim to ownership illustrates how empowering the night is for women within *MPI*. Despite the social and familial structures which relegate women's creative practices to the obscure hours, they embrace this time as their own. Even upon the death of Mrs Peabody (who is the embodiment of domestic oppression), Miss Peabody continues to save Diana's letters until the evening.<sup>229</sup> In doing so, she makes the night – despite its contradictions and complexities – her own. Chapter One explores the intricacies of the night as a time for writing at length. Although the night is liberating, women occupy space within a patriarchal, heteronormative culture and they struggle with expectations and conforming to social norms during the daytime. Through metafictional allusions, Jolley also demonstrates the phallogentric literary tradition within which women write, and she explores the lingering anxieties and the self-reflexivity that

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<sup>228</sup> See Helen Daniel, *Liars*; Paul Salzman, *Helplessly Tangled*; and Joan Kirkby, "Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley."

<sup>229</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 130.

manifest in women's writing. Through her meditation on women's writing, Jolley explores the relationship between an experimental style of writing and the time in which it is produced. This is a time which women may or may not choose to occupy, but it is one they embrace as it is all they have access to. This fuels their writing, adding urgency in the limited timeframe, but also allows an experimental style of writing in the subversive space. As Joan Kirkby summarises, Jolley's writing is "formally complex, anti-linear, self-conscious experimentation",<sup>230</sup> these are characteristics which I consider reflective of the experimental time of the night. In her meditation on women's writing practices and literary cultures, Jolley's use of the night is not just thematic, but a structurally and technically informing motif which results in an experimental style of writing – for both women writers within the novel, and Jolley herself.

"The nights," we understand, "belonged to the novelist."<sup>231</sup> Both Diana and Miss Peabody lay claim to this time, just as Jolley herself does, and others have before and since. The nights belonged to Sylvia Plath, Toni Morrison, Eleanor Dark, Sybylla Melvyn, Morag Gunn – just a fraction of what I believe to be a much wider cohort, a tradition of women, fictional and otherwise, claiming creative space within these night-time hours. This study is limited by the scope of a Master of Research. Opting for depth rather than breadth, I have taken *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* as a unique opportunity to study a fictional representation of night writing. It is a study that is illuminated by the novel's metafictional exploration of women's writing practices and the author's own autobiographical preoccupation with the times that best support her creative practice. Focusing on a singular text afforded me the opportunity for a close, textual reading that a wider selection of novels and authors would not have allowed. As such, claims about the nature of night writing are limited to the scope of this thesis – to the experiences of women within Jolley's novel, and the conditions of writing on which Jolley is meditating. These claims introduce new ways of reading Jolley's novel, by identifying the night as central to Jolley's exploration of women's writing practices. The night, I argue, shapes women's writing within *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*; the writing is fractured, fragmented, and self-consciously aware of the restrictions enforced upon women and the relegation of their desires. Yet the night also permits a sense of liberation, albeit within a limited timeframe, and nurtures women's sexual and literary experimentation under

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<sup>230</sup> Kirkby, "Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley," 485.

<sup>231</sup> Jolley, *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, 1.

the protection of this time. Although the constrictions of a patriarchal society encroach on women's writing in the night, the sense of release and relief that this time provides for Jolley is also true for the women within the novel. Future research into representations of the night across a wider selection of texts – essays, poetry, prose – would provide further insight to this practice and its function in women's literature. Preliminary research indicates the female night-writer has been explored in other works of fiction – will the night, as it does in *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*, manifest in the themes or structure of these texts? How do other women night-writers meditate on their practice and the significance of this time on the 24-hour clock? Are there wider trends to be indicated, or themes which will begin to emerge? As night writing is so often acknowledged as a necessary – yet unremarkable – practice, it seems there will be an abundance of literature and authors to study. This research would also invite opportunity for Jolley's novel to be read alongside other women's writing, both locally and internationally, that explore the night.

Although *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* was published in 1983, the concerns on which Jolley meditates have resonance today. The motif of the night enables Jolley to explore the conditions of women's writing and the circumstances which confine and repress their creativity. This topic is relevant in wider discourses on gender disparity in contemporary Australian society. The expectation of unpaid care and domestic work is a burden that continues to disproportionately affect women, and this is heightened even more so in light of the current COVID-19 climate. Australian Unions released a report on "Leaving Women Behind: The Real Cost of the Covid Recovery," in which the impact on women's unpaid labour is addressed.<sup>232</sup> Unemployment, working from home, and restricted access to childcare are some of the circumstances which have directly affected both men and women's unpaid care and domestic responsibilities during COVID-19. Although survey data illustrates an increase in the amount of unpaid domestic labour of men, the total amount of time women spend on these tasks has been disproportionately affected. Men now spend an average of 3.6 hours a day caring for children, whereas women have reached a daily average of 5.1 hours.<sup>233</sup> Similarly, the average time men spend on household tasks has increased to 2.4 hours per day, but the average for women increased at a higher rate to 3.1 hours per day.<sup>234</sup> The relevance of this topic also transcends disciplinary boundaries. Susan Close analyses the physical spaces

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<sup>232</sup> Australian Unions, *Leaving Women Behind: The Real Cost of the COVID Recovery* (2020)

<sup>233</sup> Australian Unions, *Leaving Women Behind: The Real Cost of the COVID Recovery* (2020), 9.

<sup>234</sup> Australian Unions, *Leaving Women Behind: The Real Cost of the COVID Recovery* (2020), 9.

that women writers occupy through the lens of cultural criticism. She makes the claim that “often, what we write is influenced by where we write.”<sup>235</sup> Close uses different methodologies to my own research: her key concepts are place-making and mis-en-scene, and she analyses images of various rooms she herself has occupied for writing. The insights she provides, though, have relevance for the themes explored in *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*. As Close notes, “women often have to fit writing into empty spaces in their schedules and must write in places that are less than suitable.”<sup>236</sup> This is a point that I have acknowledged of the women in *Miss Peabody’s Inheritance*; though Miss Peabody longs to write during the day, her schedule of competing demands does not allow time for this until the evening. Close draws on *A Room of One’s Own* throughout her article and comes to the conclusion that “women are still searching for a place of their own and not just one in which to pursue their own writing.”<sup>237</sup> Women’s voices continue to be silenced within a patriarchal culture, subject to political agendas or institutional structures which confine and repress their creativity. Although Close’s argument is specific to the spaces women write, I argue that the significance of this extends to the times they write. For women writers to have agency and share their narratives, they need sufficient time and space to foster an internal state of creative and critical thinking. This research has potential to open a dialogue about night-writing in women’s literary practices, which will contribute to ongoing feminist, political, and economical discussions on gender equality.

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<sup>235</sup> Close, “Writing Rooms,” 43.

<sup>236</sup> Close, “Writing Rooms,” 48.

<sup>237</sup> Close, “Writing Rooms,” 52.

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