

*'Nova Magazine 1965 – 1975: A History'*

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fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Declaration**

**I, Alice Beard, hereby declare that the material contained within this thesis is my own work.**

## ***Nova* 1965-1975: A History**

### **Abstract**

This thesis provides an original case history of *Nova* magazine from 1965-1975, and analyses the magazine's construction, content and consumption through material culture. *Nova* made a distinct offering to the world of women's magazines in the Sixties and Seventies and can be defined by its unique synthesis of editorial breadth and visual innovation.

The study considers the correlation between a magazine's intended, implied and realised meanings. In my analysis of *Nova*, *intended* meanings are revealed through an examination of the production process; *implied* meaning is found within the magazine as an object and text; and *Nova's realised* meanings are those articulated through oral history by its readers.

Interviews with staff cover the four key areas of *Nova's* production; Caroline Baker, Fashion Editor 1967-1975; Gillian Cooke, Editor 1970-1975; David Hillman, Art Director 1969-1975; Maggy Meade-King, Features Writer, 1970-1975. Analysis of these interviews and the design and content of *Nova* reveals the motivation and ambitions of individual production staff, and evaluates the crucial collaborative practice, creative conflicts and networks of production at the heart of *Nova's* making. To better understand magazines, their histories and their futures, it is time that these individuals, working practices and creative networks are both acknowledged and critically evaluated.

Recognising the nature and importance of the magazine as *composite* I adopt a holistic approach as a methodological model for *Nova's* analysis. In this thesis I examine the magazine as a whole entity; I analyse its design and contents, alongside a narrative of the processes of its production from its staff and contributors, and consider the use and value of the magazine by its contemporary readers. The agenda for this work, is to plot the processes of production *and* consumption of *Nova* in order to reveal the various elements and practices that construct the identity and history of the magazine as a visual, textual and material object.

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**Introduction: Photo Essay**

**Images REDACTED**

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## Introduction

This is a magazine for women who make up their own minds. It is dedicated to the startling proposition that women have more to think about than what to do about dinner. Our theme is that a woman's life in 1965 is more interesting and more exciting than any escapism, so let's sit out the fantasy and make our entertainment out of reality. (*Nova*, Issue 1, March 1965).<sup>1</sup>

*Nova* magazine was launched in Britain in March 1965. Its first issue advertised itself as 'a new kind of magazine for the new kind of woman' and made its appeal to 'women who think magazines don't understand.' *Nova* represented a new type of 'features' magazine which sought to address readers by their interests and attitudes rather than their age, class or socio-economic groupings. Its publisher IPC hoped to capture an affluent and socially mobile female consumer; women with a sense of enquiry, intelligence, humour and ambition.

*Nova's* difference to other women's magazines was marked in both content and design; *Nova* was modern, socially responsive, intellectually challenging and visually sophisticated. *Nova* was also a luxurious product; a larger than average format measuring ten by thirteen and a half inches. It was printed in colour and black and white on thick, semi-matte quality paper and weighed in at nearly two pounds.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the decade of its publication from 1965-1975 *Nova* would push the boundaries of what a women's magazine could be, and challenged conventional ideas of 'women's interests'. Editorial for example, addressed racism, sexual discrimination, the ecology, population growth, censorship, adultery, education and marriage. *Nova* broke taboos about what could be discussed publically and the manner in which they were discussed. Its tone was frank and opinionated and it wasn't afraid to 'tackle' any subject. The magazine also deliberately courted controversy and challenged its readers, with unconventional approaches to a range of topics, and provocative covers which aimed to both shock and delight.

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial Address in *Nova*, Issue 1 (March 1965), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Due to budget constrictions the size of *Nova* was shrunk to 9.5 x 12 inches in March 1975, and further reduced to 10 x 8 inches for its final six issues from May to October 1975. See Chapter One for a discussion of *Nova's* format.

*Nova's* production team enjoyed a relatively radical freedom of expression, garnering both acclaim and criticism for their investigative journalism, coverage of social issues and sexual politics, innovative design and daring fashion editorial. However, this freedom was gradually curtailed by the more conservative and commercially minded concerns of its publishers and advertisers. Sales were buoyant during the first two years of publication starting at around 150,000 in 1965 and rising to just under 160,000 in its first year. However these figures would gradually decrease as the decade wore on, and at its closure in October 1975 *Nova* had lost more than half of its initial sales.<sup>3</sup> Falling circulation, reduced advertising and a loss of confidence by IPC signalled *Nova's* demise. Management efforts to make the magazine more commercial were defied by production staff, but a series of cuts to its financing and format were the final contributors to the magazine's collapse. The small, thin magazine that hit the news stands for the last time in October 1975 was unrecognisable from the prestigious glossy of its launch.

Despite its demise *Nova* has had a clear impact on the readers who enjoyed the magazine and working practices of its editorial staff. This thesis re-evaluates the relationship between production and consumption by providing a focused case history of the life cycle of a single magazine during the decade of its publication. In reconstructing *Nova's* production history I will examine the roles and responsibilities of its editorial staff and explore their collaborative working practices. Interviews with *Nova's* readers will reveal how the magazine was used, and evaluates the effect it had on their lives.

My introduction to *Nova* magazine was in 1996 whilst I was studying for an MA in Design History at the Royal College of Art. My thesis subject was an evaluation of the *Sunday Times Magazine*, Britain's first newspaper colour supplement launched in 1962.<sup>4</sup> Out of this research I became fascinated by the intersections between graphic design, text and photography that are at the heart of magazine making and developed an interest in using oral history to reconstruct design production and consumption

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<sup>3</sup> Last recorded figures by the Audit Bureau of Circulations were 74,972 for January – June 1975.

<sup>4</sup> Alice Beard, *Design for Living: The Sunday Times Magazine 1962-1975*, MA (RCA) History of Design, Royal College of Art and Victoria and Albert Museum. Unpublished Thesis, 1997

histories. During my research I had read about *Nova* in William Owen's excellent survey Magazine Design, and heard about it in discussions with the producers and readers of Sunday supplements who mentioned *Nova* as an exciting and innovative development in the field of women's magazines. My first close examination of the magazine arrived later that year with the purchase of a large format, glossy book published by Pavilion entitled *Nova 1965 - 1975: THE style bible of the 60s and 70s.*<sup>5</sup>

Edited by David Gibbs and compiled by *Nova*'s art directors and editors David Hillman and Harri Peccinotti, the book provided the first visual review of the magazine and it served to resurrect *Nova* for its original readers and contributors but also to introduce it to a new generation of readers like myself. The Pavilion book is undoubtedly primarily a visual celebration of the magazine; its opening pages detail the entire run of *Nova* covers spread across twenty-two consecutive pages. But for Art Director David Hillman, the publication was also an opportunity to 'set the record straight'; this involved reprinting an exhaustive index of the table of contents and contributing staff of each of its 127 issues, a resource which has been invaluable in this research.

Just six months later Jarvis Cocker hit the headlines for, as the *Sun* newspaper revealed, paying £2700 for 'some old women's magazines.'<sup>6</sup> At auction in Bonhams, a full run of *Nova* magazines, plus 'dummy issue' realised three times their original estimate.<sup>7</sup> The price of a complete bound set of *Nova* is significant in that it clarified the magazine's contemporary cultural, and economic value. Now a new generation of *Nova* readers compete to bid against each other to secure yellowing and torn copies of the original magazine on eBay, vintage magazine specialist retailers such as 'Elegantly Papered' sell individual copies for £60.00 and the 'rare' Pavilion book demands up to £250 at specialist second hand book shops.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> David Gibbs (Ed.) *Nova 1965-1975: THE Style Bible*, London: Pavilion, 1993. Purchased for £19.99

<sup>6</sup> Jaques Barber, 'Super *Nova*' in *Things*, No. 7, Winter 1997/8, pp., 117-119.

<sup>7</sup> The lot was estimated at £500 - £800. The catalogue entry reads; '*Nova*'s editorial was written by leading journalists of the day and covered a whole range of radical subjects which no other women's magazine had touched upon. Just as provocative was the sophisticated design layout and use of photography and illustration. The influence of *Nova* on magazine publishing was reflected directly and indirectly in a whole generation of magazines which followed in the 1970s and 80s'. Bonhams Knightsbridge 'Design', 'Lot 114 *Nova 1965 - 1975*' Saturday 8th February 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Elegantly Papered holds the entire print run of *Nova*, some of which are for sale. See <http://elegantypapered.com/collections/vendors?q=NOVA> for examples. The Pavilion book is now out

My first hands on experience of *Nova* was in viewing and photographing Jarvis Cocker's collection which included the only remaining copy of the magazine's 'dummy issue', discussed in detail in Chapter One. Compared to the edited highlights I had seen in the graphics press and Pavilion book I was astonished by the amount of dense text and full colour advertising contained in its early issues. As my interest in developing *Nova* into a research project grew, I began the process of acquiring my own copies of the magazine. This thesis has drawn on my own personal archive of the entire run of *Nova* from March 1965 to its last published copy in October 1975.

### **Analysing Women's Magazines**

If we are to begin to comprehend the kinds of messages transmitted and the reasons for the medium's enormous appeal this century, we need to develop new methods of conceptualising the content and construction of the modern women's magazine.<sup>9</sup>

Studies of women's magazines have been concerned with four broad areas: textual analysis to determine their ideological content; how readers consume and understand magazines; the business of women's magazines, and to a lesser extent, examinations of the production of magazines and the roles of editorial staff. The aesthetic motivations of women's magazine production: composition, design and photography, and their link to editorial content, have largely been marginalised and overlooked. This is an area I will redress in this study.

These studies have focussed on distinct areas, 'formal textual features' such as 'layout, the tone of address to the reader, the distribution of advertising'<sup>10</sup> and the exploration of the 'theme' or subject of the magazine's editorial and advertising

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of print so does enjoy an increasing rarity value. See Abe Books <http://www.abebooks.co.uk/book-search/title/nova-1965-1975/> for examples.

<sup>9</sup> Sally Stein, 'The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernisation of a Middle Class Women's Magazine, 1919-1939' in Bolton, R., Ed. *The Context of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Mass. MIT Press, 1989), p.145.

<sup>10</sup> R. Ballaster, M. Beetham, E. Frazer & S. Hebron, S., *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991) p. 8.

content.<sup>11</sup> Extensive analysis of the advertising in women's magazines by, for example Judith Williamson (1987) and Janice Winship (1983) has argued that these images encourage insecurities whilst at the same time offering women ways of bettering themselves by consuming the products and messages contained within.<sup>12</sup>

Janice Winship (1987) approaches the women's magazine as a didactical text informing readers of who they could, and importantly, should be. Inside Women's Magazines provides historical contextualisation for an examination of the publishing industry taking into account domestic weekly magazines of the early 1950s through to specialist magazines of the 1980s where her study ends. Winship approaches her subject first and foremost as a reader, combining a personal response with textual analysis and circulation and readership data. As she describes:

I tell these personal anecdotes of my relation to women's magazines neither for their intrinsic interest nor for their uniqueness, but rather for what I imagine, at least in parts, is their typicality. My story is 'yours'; at heart it is a history of growing up as a woman.<sup>13</sup>

Winship's concern is rooted in searching out the possibilities of an 'ideal' kind of magazine born out of her 'simultaneous attraction and rejection' of the form.<sup>14</sup> The first part of Winship's study traces the changing shape and role of magazines in women's lives. In the second half, contemporary case studies of editorial content map out the shifting constructions of gender and feminine identity in *Woman's Own*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Spare Rib*. Her method provides a useful comparison and context for my study of the form and content of *Nova*, launched in the midst of the varying successes of these magazines. Winship's discussion of *Nova* finds its place in a section on 'The New Woman: A Case of Mistaken Identity'<sup>15</sup> in which she considers

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<sup>11</sup> Janice Winship, Inside Women's Magazines (London, Pandora, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Judith Williamson, Decoding Advertisements: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression (London, Marion Boyars, 1978). Janice Winship, 'Femininity and women's magazines', in The Changing Experience of Women, U221 (Milton Keynes, The Open University, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> Winship, 1987, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Winship, 1987, p. xiii 'For all my magazine reading,' Winship reveals, 'I cannot say that I have found my ideal magazine. But then my desires for reading magazines, like my desires for the kind of woman I want to be, are perversely contrary'. Winship, 1987, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 3 'Selling and Buying' in Winship, 1987.

the impact of new marketing techniques employed within magazine publishing in the post war period.<sup>16</sup> As Winship describes:

*Nova* aimed to shock, to intellectually provoke and to be witty ... it luxuriated in empty space, bold print and experimental photography ... *Nova* was for the design gourmet and chic progressive middle classes.<sup>17</sup>

### **Reading Women's Magazines**

The pleasures of reading are explored in a number of magazine studies. Ellen McCracken (1993) positions the magazine as a commodity imbued with cultural meaning and seeks to deconstruct its signification through textual and ideological analysis.<sup>18</sup> McCracken's study focuses on a critical decoding of magazines, and an exploration of how these texts generate pleasure for their readers whilst simultaneously inducing anxiety. McCracken takes the magazine as a form of mass culture, her concern is with how and why these forms are attractive, positing for example, the magazine's fusion of the real and the imaginary, the transition between the desired and the acquired, and the process of pacification through gratification.<sup>19</sup> For McCracken these processes help explain the medium's massive appeal. She suggests the pleasures of reading a magazine finds parallels with other mass communication forms such as television, just as a viewer can flick through channels selecting what to watch, so too, the magazine reader is able to browse through the text.

McCracken isolates three reading patterns in order to discuss how pleasure is generated; Firstly the quick perusal of the magazine's main editorial features and inter dispersed advertising matter - which, by their design, act as dominant eye-catchers, secondly an engaged reading of selected articles, and finally sustained interest in a combination of both specific advertisements and editorial material. McCracken identifies the formula of 'delay' (saving a 'good' article) and 'interruption' (in stage

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<sup>16</sup> See Chapter One for a discussion of these techniques.

<sup>17</sup> Winship, 1987 p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen McCracken, Decoding Women's Magazines: From Mademoiselle to Ms. (London, Macmillan Press, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> McCracken makes use of definitions in Stuart Hall's 'The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': The Return of the Repressed in Media Studies,' in Michael Gurevitch, et al. (eds.) Culture, Society and the Media. London: Routledge, 1983, pp., 56-90.

one flicking through the text which is interrupted by ads, and in stage two adverts disrupt the chronology of editorial material) as the determinants of generated reading pleasure:

The numerous levels of women's attraction to this form of mass culture frequently disguise the fact that the attractive experiences are ideologically weighted and not simple arenas of pleasure ... along with the pleasure come messages that encourage insecurities, heighten gender stereotypes, and urge reifying definitions of the self through consumer goods.<sup>20</sup>

As I demonstrate in this thesis, a magazine's editorial objectives, content and graphic design determines the method by which a magazine is read or looked at and used.

### **The 'New Woman' Audience**

Ballaster et al. (1991) draw on their combined previous research trace to changes in the publication of women's magazines from the eighteenth century to the late 1980s, examined against shifts in both technological and social contexts. Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine challenges previous studies which have criticised the magazine as a source of escape – they argue the magazine is a form of pleasure that should 'be celebrated' rather than condemned. Ballaster et al. re-evaluate the magazine as a valuable object by proposing that its significant cultural currency lies in its stages of production and consumption:

By virtue of the fact that they define their readership in the first instance in terms of gender, women's magazines have ... been involved in wider changes in women's social role, whether related to demographic shifts, political campaigns, legislation, developments in contraception, or more general shifts in attitudes to sexuality and gender roles. Women's magazines have not only responded to all these changes, they have also played a significant part in shaping some of them.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> McCracken, 1993, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Ballaster, 1991, p. 109.

Ballaster et al. make an important observation here and one that is borne out by my own reader interviews, that the magazine itself shapes and defines its readership. Interviews with *Nova*'s readers clearly demonstrate this relationship:

*Nova* was different. It felt so relevant to women of my age and generation, and it also fed our fantasies and aspirations. I felt I was one of *Nova*'s 'new kind of woman'.<sup>22</sup>

A central defining premise of *Nova* was this address to 'a new kind of woman'. Whilst it is generally recognised that these women were not new but simply 'newly discovered' by the magazine market, any consideration of *Nova* must be concerned with an assessment of the formation of her construction and representation through the magazine.<sup>23</sup> Winship (1987) observes that these re-definitions of female readership were inherently problematic because notions of femininity are not static. However, my oral history interviews with *Nova* readers reveal these tentative shifts in defining one's identity through the magazine:

I don't know if I was a *Nova* type ...but I certainly think I aspired to that. For example looking through the pages of *Vogue*. I was nowhere near that, I'm not that sort of person, but looking in *Nova* you thought, well possibly ... I could be part of this.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Reader: Real & Imagined**

Among the studies of women's magazines, very little has been said about the real women who bought and read these publications. As we have seen Janice Winship (1987) puts herself forward as the reader in question, and studies three magazines that she regularly enjoys.<sup>25</sup> Ballaster et al. do reassess the historical and contemporary reader, whom they recognise has been largely neglected in favour of an examination of an intended or implied reader, discernible and constructed by editorial content and

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<sup>22</sup> Mary Rayner, *Remembering Nova* Questionnaire (2005).

<sup>23</sup> The magazine launch publicity came under criticism for implying that intelligent women did not exist before 1965, as Cynthia White acknowledges, 'such women are not new, only newly discovered.' Cynthia White, *Women's Magazines: 1693 – 1968* (London, Michael Joseph, 1970), p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> Mu Warner, *Interview by Author* (2000).

<sup>25</sup> Winship, 1987, p.1 -5 & p. 14.

advertising. 'It is time,' they propose, 'that the relation between the reader constructed in and by the text (the *implied*) reader and the actual historical reader who paid her two pennies in 1788 or her one pounds in 1988 was properly theorised.'<sup>26</sup> Their method is to examine a three-month sample of a range of contemporary magazines issued in 1988 and to interview a selection of contemporary readers. Like Winship they acknowledge including themselves in this selection.<sup>27</sup> Their findings reveal reader knowledge of magazine conventions, but as Joke Hermes (1995) suggests, the overall conviction that magazines 'harm' their readers undermines their aims to respect and 'celebrate' reading pleasures.<sup>28</sup>

Joke Hermes' study Reading Women's Magazines (1995) is concerned with the consumption of magazines as the media of 'everyday life.'<sup>29</sup> Her aim is to examine the 'everyday nature of reading women's magazines for the majority of readers.'<sup>30</sup> Hermes' main motivation is that many previous feminist critiques 'show *concern* rather than *respect* for those who read women's magazines.'<sup>31</sup> For Hermes, these critics distance themselves from 'ordinary women' by suggesting that readers need enlightening, thereby implying that: 'they need good feminist texts in order to be saved from their false consciousness and to live a life free of false depictions as mediated by women's magazines, of where a woman might find happiness.'<sup>32</sup> Hermes' own approach to the reader and the role of these magazines is respect and 'celebration', as she outlines:

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<sup>26</sup> Ballaster et al., 1991 p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 126, see their Chapter 6 'Contemporary magazines, contemporary readers', pp., 126-168

<sup>28</sup> Joke Hermes, Reading Women's Magazines, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995) p.3. Hermes suggests Ballaster et al acknowledge their own pleasures of reading women's magazines but that this is tempered by a measure of guilt. Hermes cites Ballaster *et al*: 'it is not our view that the construction of femininity we find in the magazines is harmless and innocuous.' Ballaster *et al*. 1991, p. 131. Cited in Hermes, 1995, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> This approach can be aligned with media and cultural studies, and methodologies for audience reception, specifically studies of other 'women's genres' including the romance and the soap opera. See Janice Radway's analysis of romance readers Reading the Romance: women patriarchy and popular culture, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 1984), and Ien Ang's study Watching 'Dallas': soap opera and the melodramatic imagination, (London, Methuen, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Hermes, 1995, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Hermes cites Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963) and Gail Tuchman's 'The symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media' (1978) as two readings which suggest that women's magazines oppress their readers.

...it needs to be accepted that readers of all kinds (including we critics) enjoy texts in some contexts that we are critical of in other contexts ... it is more productive to respect the choices and uncritical acceptance of some readers of genres such as women's magazines than to foreground a distancing criticism or concern towards them all.<sup>33</sup>

Pivotal to her approach is also the 'appreciation that readers are producers of meaning rather than the cultural dupes of the media institutions.'<sup>34</sup> I would agree with Hermes that readers are creative and active in producing their own meanings from the text. Importantly, Hermes also acknowledges 'the local and specific meanings we give to media texts and the different identities any one person may bring to bear on living our multi-faceted lives in societies saturated with media images and texts of which women's magazines are a part.'<sup>35</sup> By using a range of different interviews and individual reader profiles, Hermes' analysis of women's magazines lets 'readers speak for themselves.' Her central proposal is that, 'texts acquire meaning only in the interaction between readers and texts and that analysis of the text on its own is never enough to reconstruct these meanings.'<sup>36</sup> As she explains:

The certainly unintended consequences of these condensations - isolating specific texts from everyday media use and taking the knowledgeable reader for an average reader - is that popular culture is given the status of high culture. It is made into a discrete text that offers a unique and possibly liberating perspective on the world ... general, everyday media use is identified with attentive and meaningful reading of specific texts, and that is precisely what it is not.<sup>37</sup>

For Hermes the lack of impact or significance these magazines had on her readers led her to outline what she termed the 'fallacy of meaningfulness' - the assumption that media texts must mean something to their readers:

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 2. Hermes is also critical of Ballaster et al. (1991)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp., 14-15.

... the unwarranted assumption that all use of popular media is significant. Although readers may recognise the codes of a given text and accord it limited associative meaning, they do not always accord it generalised significance, that is, a distinct and nameable place in their world views and fantasies.<sup>38</sup>

Hermes expressed initial surprise at the lack of meaning and value her readers seemed to place on their relationship with the magazines they read. In this way her findings are in direct contrast to other reception studies, such as Radway's (1984) romance readers, or comparable magazine studies like McRobbie's (1991) discussion of *Jackie* with teenage girls. As with my own *Nova* readers, the distinction is that these groups form a captive, knowledgeable audience.

### **Remembering *Nova*: Reader Interviews**

Friends of my age still talk about it - rather as if it was a club: 'Do you remember *Nova*?' followed by a knowing look and a sigh if the answer is 'Yes'.<sup>39</sup>

Oral testimony plays a pivotal role in my own reading of *Nova*. To reconstruct the history of *Nova* I have interviewed the staff who produced the magazine as well as its readers. I began this research by conducting an introductory series of interviews with four readers who had read *Nova* during its publication from 1965-1975, these readers were found through the networks of family, friends and colleagues. In order to access more readers an oral history project was undertaken with the helpful assistance of The Women's Library, then held at London Metropolitan University.<sup>40</sup> A questionnaire entitled 'Do you Remember *Nova*?' was devised and posted on The Women's Library website and distributed through mailing lists in the spring of 2005. It asked readers to recall their first introduction to the magazine, to describe its visual and editorial qualities and to reflect on whether they considered themselves to one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women.' Forty completed responses were submitted and these reflected a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Ms Liz Willis, *Remembering Nova Questionnaire* (2005)

<sup>40</sup> The Women's Library is now held at the London School of Economics

breadth of *Nova*'s extended readership. Whilst most responses were from the UK, submissions were received from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The next stage of research was to conduct a series of oral history interviews with women who lived in London or who had moved to London during the decade of *Nova*'s publication.<sup>41</sup> These in depth interviews have produced close portraits of seven of these readers, their memories and experiences have informed my reading of *Nova* and are explored in detail in Chapter Three. Whilst my initial interviews were loosely structured, conversational and led by issues I wanted to explore, the seven 'extended' interviews were approached very differently with the explicit purpose of letting these readers speak for themselves and expand on the role the magazine had played in their lives.

In contrast to *Hermes*' readers who had less to say about the magazine (or even what they remembered) than she'd anticipated, *Nova* readers have been more forthcoming.<sup>42</sup> Compared with the reading practises of *Hermes*' respondents, *Nova* was not 'easily put down'<sup>43</sup> but rather something to be saved, re-read and kept. Instead of, for example, watching television as just 'something to do', reading *Nova* was not a time filler. Rather, time would be set aside to savour it, to read and re-read, cut out pictures and articles, and even make collages.

My oral history research has more in common with Jackie Stacey's interviews with women who remembered reading film and fan magazines during the 40s and 50s. As with Stacy's approach I asked readers to think back to what was meaningful for them. These subjective reflections of their reading habits may be tainted by the vagaries of memory and nostalgia, but this is less important as my interest lies in what they felt and thought about *Nova* and the role these readers believed *Nova* had in shaping their

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<sup>41</sup> Five of these interviews were edited and broadcast in a sound installation titled '*Remembering Nova 1965-1975*' that was on display at The Women's Library from 27<sup>th</sup> March – 26<sup>th</sup> August 2006. A study day, '*This Magazine will Change your Life*' was held at The Women's Library on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006. As well as providing a lively discussion the study day served as a meeting point for past readers and magazine staff. The 'Do you remember Nova?' questionnaire distributed through The Women's Library network was an invaluable stage of research. Having a projected public outcome in the form of a study day and exhibition drew attention to my research enquiry provided a focus for the drawing together of readers, staff and their experiences.

<sup>42</sup> This is of course, in part due to the self-selecting nature of the readership I interviewed.

<sup>43</sup> *Hermes*, p. 29.

lives.<sup>44</sup> Importantly in many cases *Nova* was coincident with their own young womanhood.<sup>45</sup> In conducting these oral history interviews my interest is in finding the meaning the respondents gave to the reading experience and to their own enjoyment and use of *Nova*.

Interviewees have described *Nova* in enthusiastic and celebratory terms. It was for these readers a defining moment in their personal development. However, a blurring of the boundaries between ‘real’ and mediated experience is evident in how readers have described *Nova*, as Catherine Horwood’s interview demonstrates:

It was very exciting to feel, well, that somebody finally understood that you wanted to be a thinking girl as well as a Swinging London girl, and that it was all part of the new freedom that the pill was bringing and how clothes were changing so much. So yes, you felt you wanted your white Courreges boots, your Mary Quant mini skirt and your copy of *Nova* under your arm and down Kings Road on a Saturday – and that was it! ...If you wanted to sort of set the scene of a Swinging London house with beautiful women in mini skirts and Vidal Sassoon haircuts you’d expect there to be a copy of *Nova* on the table.<sup>46</sup>

Reader descriptions of *Nova* have been informed by both the mediated collective memory of a mythologised Sixties as well as their own experiential recollections. Joan Sangster suggests that ‘cultural values shape our very ordering and prioritising of events, indeed our notions of what is myth, history, fact or fiction.’<sup>47</sup> Evidently the decade of *Nova*’s publication also carries with it its own set of mythologies, as Linda Sandino has explained, ‘accounts of the 1960s which circulate through various media

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<sup>44</sup> Lou Taylor cautions that the oral historian needs, ‘to be aware that interviewees may also have been influenced by opinions and images gathered or seen later.’ Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 260.

<sup>45</sup> For example, three of the readers, Susan Holder, Sue Teddern and Catherine Horwood were teenagers when they started reading *Nova*.

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Horwood, *Interview by Author* (2005). When Catherine started reading *Nova* in 1965 she was still living at home with her parents in Belsize Park. She went to school in the heart of the West End, and later studied in Kensington and Notting Hill. Swinging London was right on her doorstep and Catherine felt she was very much part of the scene.

<sup>47</sup> J. Sangster, quoted in Taylor 2002, p.260

including television programmes, retro fashion and interiors, art exhibitions and films ...all contribute to keeping alive a shared social, 'collective' memory.'<sup>48</sup>

Readers' oral testimonies weave together the memories of individual life experience with the collective, popular myth of the period, thereby illustrating Raphael Samuel's claim that these personal stories can become; 'a vital document to the construction of consciousness, emphasising both the variety of experience in any social group, and also how each individual story draws on a common culture: a defiance of the rigid categorisation of private and public just as of memory and reality.'<sup>49</sup>

### **Material Memories**

Oral history is by its nature personal and subjective, for these reasons I follow Joanna Bornat and value the 'recollection of experience (as opposed only to the written word) as valid evidence.'<sup>50</sup> I place these memories amongst further evidence from the contemporary reader by examining contributions to *Nova's* letters page, visual evidence such as respondent's own photographs and of course the material remains of the magazine itself. (Fig. 1). Importantly, if the recollected meanings gleaned from oral history have romanticised or mythologised the magazine then this implies and reveals the powerful and symbolic meanings *Nova* has generated.

*Nova's* difference from other magazines is clearly marked in the interviews in terms of the visual and sensory qualities that seem to engender memory response. What emerges through these interviews is both an empirical knowledge of the magazine as a remembered material object, set alongside an articulation of its symbolic function in marking an important stage in the reader's own life.

As a teenager living in Rochdale in the heart of the industrial North West in the Sixties, *Nova* reader Deborah Jaffé yearned to escape Lancashire and go to art school in London, and as her interview reveals, *Nova* represented a passport to that new life.

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<sup>48</sup> Linda Sandino, 'From Objects to Subjects: Design History and Oral History', conference paper presented at *Show/Tell: Relationships between Text, Narrative and Image* (University of Hertfordshire, September 2005).

<sup>49</sup> R. Samuel, quoted in Taylor, (2002) pp., 246-7.

<sup>50</sup> J. Bornat, quoted in Taylor, *Ibid*, p. 242.

In its design and content *Nova* offered the promise of a new world of both opportunity and sophistication:

It was a hot summer, that's all I can remember, whether it's because all the happy things in childhood happen on nice sunny days I don't know. But I remember my mother appearing with this huge magazine, thick magazine, heavy, called *Nova*. She was a great reader, a very eclectic reader and she quite frowned upon the women she knew who read *Woman*, and *Woman's Own* and things like that, to her it was much more important to read a book. But suddenly here she was with a magazine, and it was just so very different, I mean the colour ...there were lots and lots of pictures and I remember I think my Mother liked it because it sort of proved to her that it was ok to be different, and that it was ok to discuss sex and the pill and all those sort of women's issues that were coming to the fore in the Sixties ... But it was those graphics on the front, I think it was a white *Nova* typeface, a lower case typeface at the top, and then this big colour picture. And then the smell of it, it was much thicker paper, it was glossy. We didn't buy *Vogue*, *Vogue* wasn't for us, but *Nova* was. For me it was the future of being this sophisticated, cosmopolitan woman.<sup>51</sup>

Deborah's memory of *Nova* places her mother as the primary reader and reveals that for her the magazine was about aspiration; it represented the women she could be. Her description of *Nova's* editorial content highlights how a shared enjoyment of *Nova* cemented their relationship and how their readership acted as a symbolic marker; it differentiated them from readers of other magazines. Deborah describes in detail *Nova* magazine's material qualities; its physical dimensions, graphic design, typography, and the colour of visual images. In addition she recalls a more tactile and sensory experience of the magazine; its feel, smell and weight. This oral testimony conveys the process of remembering as story telling; Deborah's opening words set the scene of what might be a recognisable nostalgic image gleaned from a nation's collective memory, the hot summer's day of everyone's imagined childhood. What follows as her narrative unfolds, pulls focus on this faded snapshot of the past and

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<sup>51</sup> Deborah Jaffé, *Interview by Author* (2005).

reveals the powerful role that objects might perform in the construction of an individual's identity.

Two readers have provided photographic evidence of their use of *Nova*. These photographs and accompanying contemporary letters have provided a crucial insight into how *Nova* was used. A chance discovery of a photograph taken in my parents' first house in 1968 led me to think about the further uses of *Nova*'s fashion pages. (Fig. 2) The photograph depicts the morning after a New Year's Eve party. It pictures two men; one grappling with a vacuum cleaner, the other seated at a breakfast table. The magazine lying open on the table dates this photograph exactly. The magazine was the *Sunday Times Magazine* colour supplement, and the article displayed features the death of Che Guevara from the magazine's 'Faces of '67' Review of the Year, published on Sunday 31st December 1967. On the wall behind the kitchen table a large cork board displays a collage of pages sourced from contemporary magazines, and within this I recognized pages cut out from *Nova*: Harri Peccinotti's photomontage for '12 pages to make you think about colour' from August 1966 and a spread from Molly Parkin's 'Undressing on the Beach' from June 1967.<sup>52</sup> This reader's photograph is discussed in detail in Chapter Two where I use it as evidence that *Nova*'s fashion pages and treatment of design encourage a use beyond the purchase of the featured clothes. As oral history interviews with *Nova*'s production staff revealed, this creative use of the magazine by its readers was actively encouraged by *Nova*'s editorial team, as I explore in Chapter Two.

As my reader interviews progressed I came across many further instances of readers re-using pages from *Nova*. Catherine Horwood remembered her enjoyment of sharing the magazine with her Mother and pinning up *Nova* covers on her bedroom wall:

Well, they looked so good! ... I didn't rip off the cover straight away, because we both had to devour it and go through it page by page. But after a week or so, then it was acceptable to ... I can't remember any that I didn't put on. It

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<sup>52</sup> I was particularly interested in how this montage had been extended by my Father in his own collage, and analyse this in detail in Chapter Two.

was a systematic thing round the room, like a frieze. And it looked good because the covers were always interesting.<sup>53</sup>

Importantly in displaying pages cut out from the magazine in a cork board collage or pinned up onto a bedroom wall *Nova*'s readers wished to be seen and understood as a part of its context.<sup>54</sup> As my Father recalled:

We all did these notice boards. You would pin up nice post cards, interesting pictures, cut out bits from magazines, add things, change them around. With *Nova* I remember it was a magazine that was good, it was visually stylish, smart. It was about style and image, I suppose by buying it and having it you thought you were more exclusive, part of the fabric of the whole thing.<sup>55</sup>

For readers living far away from the centre of Swinging London, and their imagined 'Nova World', *Nova*'s pages took on even greater significance. An interview with graphic designer Suzanne Perkins turned up further material evidence of the use of *Nova* in the form of a photograph taken in 1967, and a handful of letters she had written to her mother in the same year.<sup>56</sup> (Fig. 3).

Suzanne Perkins had moved to Madison, Wisconsin as the young wife of an English post-graduate teaching assistant in the mid Sixties. Upon arrival she took up a part-

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<sup>53</sup> Catherine Horwood, Interview by Author (2005).

<sup>54</sup> Collage can be understood as a cultural form which appropriates imagery from mass culture, re-presents it, then and feeds it back into the mainstream as both process and aesthetic. In his analysis of art and culture in sixties Britain, Robert Hewison has stressed the importance of the technique of collage as a medium constructed of 'material that has come from anywhere, and may return to anywhere ... The work is an object ... it asks to be taken as an object in itself without deeper allusions. You are expected to take an object as it is, and enjoy it for itself, without associations.' Robert Hewison, Too Much: Art and Design in the Sixties, 1960-1975. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp.,51-52. However, in these instances it was in no small part the inherent associations of *Nova* and its content that seemed to motivate its reuse. As Roger Cardinal has argued: 'Both [collage and collecting] ultimately exist to be shown, and implicitly to be shown to impress. We can say that both aspire to be noticed, inspected, admired, even envied.' Roger Cardinal, Cultures of Collecting. London: Reaktion, 1994, p. 71

<sup>55</sup> John Beard, Personal Communication with Author (2000). My Father studied Fine Art at Swansea College of Art and then moved to London where he qualified as an art teacher before completing his MA at the Royal College of Art. In 1968 he was a practicing artist and taught at a number of schools and colleges in London.

<sup>56</sup> Suzanne Perkins did not wish to be recorded in interview so there is no transcript of this meeting. However she did provide written correspondence describing this photograph. Suzanne had a trunk full of letters she had written in the Sixties which her mother had kept. In advance of our meeting she had carefully read these and marked with post-it notes where she had mentioned *Nova* magazine to her mother.

time job in the advertising offices of ‘Yost’s Department Store’. Decorating her little desk space with images from *Nova* was an attempt, in her words, ‘to try single-handedly to inculcate Swinging London into the Midwest!’<sup>57</sup> In a letter to her mother dated 5<sup>th</sup> February 1967, Suzanne writes:

We’re practically up to our necks in snow, and no mail is coming through Chicago. ... Our radio is bust, so we are in silence, with no papers, nothing. It’s rather blissful. Just miles of snow, the hissing of the curlicued old radiators and ding-ding-ding-ding of the level crossing as endless freight trucks creep over it. What a swinging town. ...P.S. ... The *Women’s Mirrors* came – thanks a lot! Thanks for the *Nova* pages too. I’ve got them up at work.<sup>58</sup>

Suzanne’s description of her physical environment is in marked contrast to the frenetic capital city she yearned for. These pages torn from the magazine, some taken with her in her suitcase, and others later sent on to her by her mother, were in her words ‘a lifeline’ to the identity she sought to construct and maintain, in a location which was yet to feel the force of the Sixties from ‘the wilder shores, via New York and San Francisco’. In October of 1967 Suzanne posted this request to her mother:

For My Birthday: don’t give me anything on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, but either buy *Nova* every month and post it to me, or get them to send it to me, whichever is cheaper. It may be pretentious but I like the fashions and stuff. I hope it isn’t too expensive, (if it is, a slippery (not cotton) waist-slip to stop mini skirts riding up over tights would be most welcome.)<sup>59</sup>

Looking at her photograph, Suzanne explained to me:

To keep my spirits up, I pinned up battered pages from *Nova* and *Woman’s Mirror*, which was a good weekly at the time. These images, probably packed

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<sup>57</sup> Suzanne Perkins, *Personal Correspondence with Author* (2005)

<sup>58</sup> Suzanne Perkins, *Unpublished Letter* (5<sup>th</sup> February 1967)

<sup>59</sup> S. Perkins, *Unpublished Letter* (15<sup>th</sup> October 1967).

the previous year, and brought with me to the USA, were a lifeline. I felt that American fashion was elderly and ossified. I had to make signs to go on the dress rails using a small printing press! I used *Nova* colours, hot oranges and pinks, acid blue and green for the background paper, and made Mary Quant daisies out of paper and stuck them on. "Cool for summer" "Swinging skirts" ... This was all barely tolerated, I was seen as a loose cannon, too "kooky" by Young Mr Yost, as he sat with his phone on a special shoulder rest, with his feet on the desk, on the phone to *Women's Wear Daily* in New York.<sup>60</sup>

Oral history can uncover the secrets locked away in images and objects: that a mini skirt might not have been so daringly short as it appears in a photograph for instance, but simply twisted up around the waist awkwardly. Or that a magazine could instil both comfort and excitement, providing an opportunity for individual self expression during a time of isolation from family, friends and familiar places.

Oral history interviews with *Nova*'s readers provide an important and vivid portrait of the social and cultural climate in which the magazine was circulated and consumed. Set alongside these reader's memories, interviews with the magazine's editorial and production staff reveal how *Nova* was *a new kind of magazine* in its formal construction and how the magazine's ideological content defined and addressed *the new kind of woman*.

### **Production Studies**

The actual process of magazine production is an area largely overlooked in cultural analysis. Brian Braithwaite and Joan Barrell draw on their own experience in the industry to offer a chronological and narrative history of magazine publishing in

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<sup>60</sup> Suzanne described her appearance in the photograph to me: 'Get the black eyeliner and concealer as lipstick. The sweater was my best, rust red, from Rodier in Paris. The skirt was off-white, and a bit longer than it looks, it's twisted. The following summer my friend came over from England wearing one that really turned heads. A 'pussy pelmet'. Men stuck their heads out from doors and said, "Can this really be?" We loved the attention but felt strong and androgynous because of our bright coloured tights and low heels, not at all how older men saw us. We thought we were liberated, because we had got rid of suspender belts. What did we know?' Suzanne Perkins, *Personal Correspondence with Author* (2005).

Britain.<sup>61</sup> Both the enthusiastic overview The Business of Women's Magazines (1979), and Braithwaite's more historically sweeping Women's Magazines: The First 300 Years (1995), are primarily concerned with the 'births marriages and deaths' approach, based primarily on trade press.<sup>62</sup> This material is engaging, but largely made up of anecdotal evidence with few references and is sometimes factually incorrect.<sup>63</sup> In these histories Braithwaite and Barrell chart industry 'successes' and 'tragedy', telling the story of the rise and demise of a range of titles and provide a useful compendium of titles and their comparable circulations. However as Ballaster *et al.* (1991) recognise, this analysis 'ignores the politics of the textual world of these magazines, and takes for granted, when it does not actually celebrate, the economic context of the industry.'<sup>64</sup>

Cynthia White's path breaking study Women's Magazines 1693-1968, was published in 1970 in the middle of *Nova's* decade of publication and offers far more reliable information drawn from a range of sources including staff interviews, readership survey statistics, and governmental reports. White also charts the successes and failures of Britain's magazine industry but contextualises this more rigorously against economic and social change. In her historical account of the development of the history of women's magazines White discusses *Nova* as an indication of 'The Little Woman Becomes Big Business.'<sup>65</sup> Mapping the development of women's magazines against the rise in post war consumerism, White maintains that 'the proportion of mentally stimulating (magazine) content (had) dwindled to nothing pushed out by ... the demands of advertisers who want every available space devoted to selling.'<sup>66</sup>

Much of the material for White's analysis of *Nova* is gleaned from the trade press and interviews with editorial and publishing staff. In its contemporary context White considered *Nova* to be 'the embodiment of the 'intelligent' approach to women's

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<sup>61</sup> Joan Barrell worked for IPC and was President of the National Magazine Company helping to launch *Honey* (1960) *Fashion* (1968) and British *Cosmopolitan* (1972). Brian Braithwaite worked with Associated Newspapers and Hulton Press and launched *Harpers and Queen* (1970) and later published *Cosmopolitan*.

<sup>62</sup> Brian Braithwaite & Joan Barrell, The Business of Women's Magazines (London, Associated Press, 1979). Brian Braithwaite, Women's Magazines: the First 300 Years (London, Peter Owen, 1995).

<sup>63</sup> Braithwaite & Barrell state *Nova* closed in 1974, a year earlier than it did.

<sup>64</sup> Ballaster *et al.*, 1991, p.5.

<sup>65</sup> See White, C. 1970, Chapter 6, pp., 179-215.

<sup>66</sup> White, *Ibid*, p. 203.

publishing.<sup>67</sup> However, her appraisal of the magazine's success is less confident, as she suggests:

Finding the appropriate formula has been a matter of trial and error. In its early issues *Nova* took the radical step of throwing overboard all the traditional ingredients of a women's magazine, replacing them with a slick brand of 'intellectualism' ...coupled with highly sophisticated art work and striking sans serif text.<sup>68</sup>

As early 1968 when her research was undertaken, White was cautious about the real achievement of *Nova* (measured here only by comparative circulation figures), and pointed to the relative newness of its content and approach by suggesting that the magazine needed 'a period of grace in which to gain acceptance.'<sup>69</sup>

One of the most important texts to consider editorial roles and objectives is Marjorie Ferguson's *Forever Feminine* (1983).<sup>70</sup> Her study of women's magazine editors as 'high priestesses' propagating a 'cult of femininity' is gleaned from oral history interviews with production staff and set against a content analysis of *Woman*, *Woman's Own* and *Woman's Weekly*.<sup>71</sup> Ferguson considers the sales, readership and demographic data of a sample of 84 magazines taken from the period 1949-1974.<sup>72</sup> Interviews form Ferguson's foremost method of research and she acknowledges the

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<sup>67</sup> White, *Ibid*, p. 224.

<sup>68</sup> White, *Ibid*.

<sup>69</sup> White, *Ibid*, p. 24. I am very grateful to Cynthia White for completing my 'Remembering *Nova*' questionnaire. White read *Nova* regularly from 1965-1969. As she recalled to me: 'I was very aware of the controversy surrounding the magazine, and the challenge it represented to orthodox women's journalism. It was also beautifully produced and interesting to flip through as well as to read. Its large page format was arresting ... visually very different ... lots of white space, realism, progressive artwork'. *Nova* presented 'challenging features which departed totally from the previous formulaic content of women's magazines.' White also considered herself to be a 'new kind of woman', as she explained, during the late Sixties she was 'making a career, not married, no children, interested in politics and social issues rather than an un-relieved diet of Furnishing, Fiction, Fashion, Food.' Dr Cynthia White, 'Remembering *Nova* Questionnaire' (2005)

<sup>70</sup> Marjorie Ferguson, *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity* (London, Heinemann, 1983).

<sup>71</sup> Ferguson uses a range of interview structures to explore the editor's role including 'observation' whereby subjects continued their job of magazine production whilst conversations took place.

<sup>72</sup> Ferguson randomly chose four issues of each magazine at five-year intervals to map the impact of social and cultural shifts and chart any significant changes in content. *Ibid*, p. 119, 214.

‘degree to which oral history has enriched this study as a whole.’<sup>73</sup> However she is somewhat apologetic about the lack of documentary evidence which prevents the testing and checking of her findings; ‘...the historical dimension here was often an oral one, with all the accompanying risks of randomness, selective perception, personal bias, vendetta, nostalgia, post hoc rationalism, exaggeration or inaccuracy.’<sup>74</sup>

Magazine histories have laid as much emphasis on *Nova*’s ‘sudden’ demise as they have on its achievements. By 1983, eight years after the magazine’s collapse, Ferguson discusses *Nova* as an example of one of the ‘premature or short lived babies’ launched in the 1960s and is wholly dismissive of *Nova* and its impact on both magazine publishing and women’s lives.<sup>75</sup> It was, in her view, a ‘commercial failure’ that had attempted to be a new kind of magazine for a new kind of woman but had ‘merely served to reinforce existing conventions of editorial wisdom ... the comfort of the already known, the familiar and predictable was as soothing a mixture for editors and publishers as it was believed to be for their readers.’<sup>76</sup>

However my own oral histories and interviews have revealed that *Nova* did hit its mark in appealing to women and in defining and shaping women’s lives. With an eleven year run, arguably *Nova* was not ‘short-lived’ and as I will map out in Chapter One, its demise was due to a number of contributing factors including the contemporary political, economic, social and cultural contexts of its production and the overarching financial drive of the advertising and publishing industries.

It is an acknowledgement of the importance of these ‘economic sites’ that concerns Anna Gough-Yates (2003) in *Understanding Women’s Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships*. Gough-Yates recognises the gap in studies of the production of women’s magazines, which she argues has resulted in previous scholarly activity focussed on textual analysis of magazine content which ‘disregarded aspects in the “life” of women’s magazines that are crucially important

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<sup>73</sup> Ferguson, 1983, p. 217.

<sup>74</sup> Ferguson, 1983, p. 22. As discussed earlier, I encounter the same potential risks but am less apologetic. Further evidence from a close analysis of magazine itself, published records, (i.e. Audit Bureau of Circulations), press reviews and trade publications are used to contextualise these accounts.

<sup>75</sup> Ferguson, 1983, p. 28.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

in the generation and circulation of their meanings.’<sup>77</sup> Using trade journals and press reports Gough-Yates argues ‘for an account of women’s magazines that gives close attention to the ways their meanings are produced and consumed at “economic” sites.’<sup>78</sup> These sites are located within the publishing, marketing and advertising industries and constitute the ‘business’ of women’s magazines. Gough-Yates’s interest lies in examining the expertise and knowledge of magazine producers and how this is used to understand and target women readers. Her contribution to the understanding of women’s magazines is this consideration of the social and economic dynamics of magazine production.

Gough-Yates’ approach builds on studies by White and Ferguson in exploring the cultures of magazine production. She offers a way into understanding women’s magazines by exploring the changes in their production, advertising and marketing in the second half of the twentieth century. Focussing on the development of titles from the 1980s and 1990s she proposes that these changes contribute both to the development of the industry and ‘the formation of new representations of young, middle class femininities.’<sup>79</sup>

Anna Gough-Yates points out the advantages of a methodology combining both production and consumption studies, however I would argue that while attention is paid in her work to the ideal and targeted reader, the *real* reader is notably absent from this work. There is then, still room for a study that considers the correlation between a magazine’s intended, implied and realised meanings.<sup>80</sup> In my analysis of *Nova* intended meanings are revealed through an examination of the production process and interviews with its staff; the magazine’s, *implied* meaning is found within the magazine as an object and text; and *Nova*’s *realised* meanings are those articulated by readers and consumers themselves, both historically and contemporarily.

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<sup>77</sup> Anna Gough -Yates, *Understanding Women’s Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships* (London, Routledge, 2003) p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p.153.

<sup>80</sup> Fiona Hackney’s in depth study of women’s magazines published between 1919-1939 provides an excellent model for an approach to the study of women’s magazines. Fiona Hackney. *They Opened up a Whole New World: Feminine Modernity and the Female Imagination in Women’s Magazines, 1919-1939*. Unpublished PhD, Goldsmith’s College, University of London, 2010

This analysis necessitates a study of the magazine as a ‘unified cultural artefact’<sup>81</sup> and responds to Angela McRobbie’s (1999) earlier calls for a reappraisal of the magazine form that re-conceptualises ‘the social relations of production and consumption.’<sup>82</sup> It is a drive to re-evaluate the relationship between magazine production and consumption that particularly interests me, as it suggests the need for an understanding of the magazine as an object produced in certain conditions and distributed through particular channels, its meaning circulating through readers’ thoughts and actions as well, as we have seen, the uses they made of the magazine. McRobbie recognises the lack of research in this area, ‘nobody, it seems’ she points out, ‘has thought to study the people who put these pages together, who argue about lay-out, captions and emphasis.’<sup>83</sup>

### **Production Staff Interviews**

In addition to reader oral history I have interviewed four key members of *Nova*’s staff who represent the different areas of *Nova*’s editorial production, Gillian Cooke, Editor (1970-1975); David Hillman, Art Director (1969-1975); Caroline Baker, Fashion Editor (1967-1975); and Maggy Meade-King: Features Writer (1971-1975).<sup>84</sup>

These interviews provide previously untold detail about the ambitions and aims of the editorial team and the decisions and strategies undertaken in producing the magazine. Creative conflict was central to the production of *Nova*, and as my analysis of staff interviews reveals, this was fought between IPC management and *Nova*’s editorial team, and amongst the art department and features department over the balance between word and image.

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<sup>81</sup> Stein, 1989, p. 146.

<sup>82</sup> Angela McRobbie, *In the Culture Society: Art Fashion and Popular Music* (London, Routledge, 1999), p. 58. According to Angela McRobbie feminist studies of women’s magazines have followed three stages; ‘First, there was the ‘angry repudiation’ stage. Second, the ‘theory of ideology’ replaced this earlier more polemical approach. This then gave way to the third stage, the focus on ‘women’s pleasure’, which in turn led to a ‘return of the reader’ p.47. McRobbie also emphasises the need for more research to be undertaken on magazine journalism ‘as a career for women’, a call taken up by Anna Gough Yates (2003) and explored in this thesis in an evaluation of the early career development of Caroline Baker, Maggie Meade-King and Gillian Cooke.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59.

<sup>84</sup> For the purposes of this research Gillian Cooke agreed to be interviewed for the first time since *Nova*’s closure in 1975.

Other members of *Nova*'s staff team were harder to reach: Molly Parkin, Brigid Keenan, and Harri Peccinotti for example, were approached numerous times.<sup>85</sup> To extend my knowledge of the work of these individuals I pieced together vital information concerning collaborative working practices provided by my staff interviews, read across records of their careers and gleaned information from autobiographies and published interviews. Molly Parkin's autobiography Moll: The Making of Molly Parkin provided an engaging and lively account of her experiences at *Nova* but was marked with factual inconsistencies when measured against the actual content of the magazine, however the piecing together of her work for *Nova* was achieved through a careful analysis of the issues she contributed to. Her misremembering perhaps highlights the importance she placed on particular editorial achievements during her time at the magazine.

More recent personal communication with the illustrators David Pocknell and Mike McInnerney, who regularly produced work for *Nova*, has provided valuable insight into the role of the freelancing contributor to *Nova* and my analysis of their work reveals the stages of commissioning artwork and the creative processes of design dialogues and decision-making at *Nova*.<sup>86</sup>

## **Design History and Magazine Design**

Magazine design, like other forms of industrial design, may be considered in two ways: in terms of its immediate function, which is what the designer is paid for, and in terms of what it looks like later. Some magazine design, like some magazine writing, is too good to be lost.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> It is with most regret that I was not able to interview Harri Peccinotti. Whilst his official role as art editor on *Nova* was brief (March 1965–November 1966) he continued to provide considerable influence and contribution throughout the decade of *Nova*'s publication, not least in his collaboration with Molly Parkin, Caroline Baker and David Hillman for *Nova*'s fashion pages. I was fortunate that in their interviews, Hillman and Baker were able to construct an illuminating portrait of his vision and working methods provided through their memories and interpretations of working with him. Further details of Peccinotti's working practices have been reconstructed from Harri Peccinotti, H.P. Harri Peccinotti Bologna: Damiani, 2008.

<sup>86</sup> Mike McInnerney, Personal Correspondence with Author (2013), and David Pocknell, Personal Correspondence with Author (2013)

<sup>87</sup> Ruari McLean, Magazine Design, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 3

Although White, Ferguson and Gough-Yates study the history of magazine production, they pay little if no attention to the area of magazine design. With a few notable exceptions, the role of art direction is ignored in most analysis of women's magazines.<sup>88</sup> Previous studies of women's magazines have largely dealt with the magazines in terms of explicit and implicit readings that view content as an ideological construct thereby subsuming form (structure and graphic design) as the vehicle for this reading. As a consequence the aesthetic motivations of typography, layout and composition have been marginalised. Addressing this gap is William Owen's *Magazine Design* (1992) which presents a history of the production and design of the contemporary magazine.<sup>89</sup> This approach focuses on form rather than content and treats the design of magazines as valuable in itself, rather than just as a means to explore issues that may be provoked by its content. Owen's discussion of post-war magazine design surveys the revival of the market in the nineteen fifties and traces the development of the professionalisation of graphic designers and art directors as products of the reappraisal of the art and design education system.<sup>90</sup>

*Nova's* reputation has always been partly earned by its commitment to design and form. As Braithwaite & Barrell explain, '*Nova* represented an art director's show place, a walking breathing dossier of their art work which would amuse and impress their friends in NW2 and perhaps advance their careers.'<sup>91</sup> It is precisely this kind of promotion and celebration of design, and the encouragement of this from readers through the inclusion of pull-out posters, that secured *Nova's* place on the walls of *Nova's* fans and admirers, professional and public alike. In 1975 regular contributor

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<sup>88</sup> Martha Scotford's overview of Cipe Pineles offers an interesting insight into the art director's working life and design processes at *Seventeen* magazine. See Martha Scotford, *Cine Pineles: A Life in Design* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999). The unisex 'style' magazines have garnered more attention, for example Paul Jobling uses Roland Barthes' (1983) semiotic analysis of the design and content of fashion pages (*The Fashion System*, London: Cape) to examine the relationship between text and image in the fashion editorial of style magazines in *Fashion Spreads: Word and Image in Fashion Photography Since 1980* (London and New York: Berg, 1999). Dick Hebdige also offers a very useful analysis of fashion pages in *The Face in Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London, Routledge, 1988).

<sup>89</sup> William Owen, *Magazine Design* (London: Lawrence King, 1992). See also, Chris Foges, *Magazine Design* (London: Roto Vision, 1999).

<sup>90</sup> In the pre-war period the Art Director was an American phenomenon, established by the Art Director's Club of New York founded in 1920. In Britain in the post-war period the Society of Industrial Artists (established in 1930) awarded both recognition and professional identity to the graduates of graphic and commercial design courses. By the 1960s the professionalisation of the Art Director was conferred with the establishment of the British Designer and Art Director's Association in 1963, now called D&AD.

<sup>91</sup> Braithwaite, B. & Barrell, J. 1979, p. 34.

Irma Kurtz recognised this when she described how: ‘Art directors all over the world ... pin *Nova*’s fashion pages right up there on the pressed cork next to the Peter Blake ‘Babe Rainbow’, and under the silver sign of ‘Cocaine’ in Coca-Cola script.’<sup>92</sup>

The magazine’s design did have a distinct and recognisable visual identity, which according to my interviews had the added benefit of marking you out as a reader, as Sue Teddern remembered:

It was one of those magazines you made sure people saw you carrying around because it looked quite grown up and flash and the graphics were so lovely and the mast head was so big people would know you were reading *Nova* so there was a slightly showy-offy element to it.<sup>93</sup>

This was an experience shared by a number of readers. Liz Mason recalled her first sighting of *Nova* when she was an art student in Lincolnshire:

I first saw *Nova* at Grimsby station, I was going home from college foundation at Grimsby Tech and it stood out on the table ... it was a different format and it was very striking and it just looked like something very special and very different and I felt quite special buying it, nobody else did up in Grimsby ... I felt I was avant-garde having that on the train.

The graphic and visual construction of *Nova* is therefore an area of crucial importance to understanding the magazine and its appeal. The examination of aesthetic and stylistic motivation is central to my own study of *Nova*’s design practice. As well as creating a running portrait of the ‘new woman’ through its editorial, *Nova* can be defined by its commitment to a deliberate visual aesthetic, located in treatments on

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<sup>92</sup> Irma Kurtz, “A View of My Own” *Nova*, March 1975, p. 98. In 1993 David Hillman, *Nova*’s art director and graphic designer Harri Peccinotti published a visual survey of *Nova*. Its pages include a photograph of every cover published from 1965-1975 and a useful appendix that details the table of contents of each magazine over its eleven-year publication. See, Gibbs, David, Hillman, David and Peccinotti, Harri (eds), *Nova 1965 – 1975* (London: Pavilion 1993).

<sup>93</sup> Sue Teddern, *Interview by Author* (2005). Sue left school at 16 to study window dressing at college in Watford. She was still living with her parents during this time and moved into a shared house in about 1975. *Nova* inspired her to become a journalist and writer.

pure typography, or in playful re-workings of the fashion spread, detailed in Chapter Two.

### **Fashion Photography**

For the most part, critical writing concerned with fashion photography during this period emphasises the photographer, and much interesting analysis has been carried out on the work of, notably, the ‘terrible three’; David Bailey, Brian Duffy and Terence Donovan – working class photographers who represented the new ‘classless’, cultural aristocracy of Sixties London, and later Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin – whose photography signalled increasing sexualisation and implicit violence in high resolution colour fashion images.<sup>94</sup> In contemporary examinations and in retrospect, it was these photographers who seemed to epitomise the shift in fashion photography at this time. What is emphasised in critical analysis is the photographer, or the auteur, thereby removing the image from its original context between the pages of a magazine. The glamour of fashion photography had been popularised as early as 1956 with Stanley Donen’s film *Funny Face* starring Audrey Hepburn as an ingénue cover girl and Fred Astaire as a glossy magazine photographer modelled on Richard Avedon. But the light hearted gentle humour of this narrative of the world of women’s magazines was in sharp contrast to the darker and more sexually charged version of the fashion industry offered a decade later in Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blow Up* (1966). In this film David Hemmings plays a photographer (modelled on David Bailey) who navigates the creative tensions between art and commerce that his industry represented in the mid Sixties; Hemmings’ character makes his living reluctantly photographing high fashion, and spends his free time on the ‘real’ work of documenting London’s social deprivation. Pamela Church Gibson’s analysis of fashion media in the Sixties recognises the powerful role magazines and film played in constructing and disseminating ‘myths of the swinging city’.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See Martin Harrison, *Appearances: Fashion Photography since 1945*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1991. *The Eyes of Laura Mars* directed by Irwin Kershner (1979) cast Faye Dunaway in a horror film as a fashion photographer whose images depicting sexual violence are re-enacted on her models and colleagues. The photographs were provided by Helmut Newton.

<sup>95</sup> Pamela Church Gibson, ‘Myths of the swinging city: The media in the Sixties’, in Christopher Breward, David Gilbert and Jenny Lister (eds), *Swinging Sixties: Fashion in London and Beyond 1955-1970*, London: V&A Publications, 2006, pp., 80-99.

During the Sixties and Seventies a new style of fashion feature emerged due to the growing artistic autonomy of the photographer who now had greater freedom and space to display individual style, supported by the backing of an editorial body. An increase in readership figures, more lucrative advertising budgets and the competition of television created the need to design more eye catching images, as Nancy Hall - Duncan recognised, 'since fashion photography is intended to create interest in its subject, new ways of creating memorable material had to be found.'<sup>96</sup> Increasing numbers of fashion photographers were moving into advertising because they achieved relatively more creative freedom with larger working budgets, and in response editorial fashion needed to reinvent itself to compete.

In accordance with design change, the representations of fashion were transformed, a new angle and a new perspective was sought to attract attention and to signify design as desirable to the consumer. Advertising highlighted this shift emphasising the 'product image' rather than the product itself. Rosetta Brookes recognised a shift in fashion representation 'from the product to the product-image.' and offers an explanation for the shift in fashion representation as a reflection of consumer attitudes and the economic climate.<sup>97</sup> The criticism from designers was that their clothes were assuming a second-rate position to the styling of the photograph. For the cause of reinvention, it was the image of fashion and of being fashionable that was being promoted, and not specifically clothes themselves. Ernestine Carter *The Sunday Times Magazine* fashion editor described the state of fashion photography by the end of the sixties as imbued with a 'mood of decadence.'<sup>98</sup> Controversial fashion photography of the 1970s posed 'the invitation to look',<sup>99</sup> and as a result the clothes were often secondary to the prioritisation of style and image.

My intention in this thesis is to shift analysis away from the de-contextualised nature of readings which centre on the creative practices of individual photographers, as

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<sup>96</sup> Nancy Hall-Duncan, *The History of Fashion Photography*, New York: Alpine Books, 1979, p. 184

<sup>97</sup> Rosetta Brookes, "Sighs and Whispers in Bloomingdales: A Review of a Mail-Order Catalogue for their Lingerie Department". In Angela McRobbie, ed. *Zoot Suits and Second -Hand Dresses: An Anthology of Fashion and Music*. London: Macmillan, 1989, p 188

<sup>98</sup> Ernestine Carter quoted in Nancy Hall-Duncan, *The History of Fashion Photography*, New York: Alpine Books, 1979, p. 146.

<sup>99</sup> Martin Harrison. *Appearances: Fashion Photography since 1945*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1991, p. 256.

encapsulated by the sixties ‘photographer - hero’ identified in Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* (1966) and to move forward to consider the production networks at the heart of fashion image making. This analysis will focus on the work of *Nova*’s two Fashion Editors: Molly Parkin (1965-1967) and Caroline Baker (1967-1975) and their collaborations with photographers such as Harri Peccinotti, Saul Leiter, Hans Feurer and Sarah Moon. This analysis of *Nova*’s fashion editorial forms a case study for Chapter Two.

A double page photographic spread from *Nova* magazine picturing a host of fashion editors arriving at the 1969 Autumn / Winter Paris collections (Fig. 4), suggests an interest in fashion’s ‘backstage’ that perhaps pre-empted today’s mood of fascination, where stylists are held up as celebrities and fashion editors are the subjects of feature films. The recognisable names are there, among them, Diana Vreeland (*American Vogue*), Ernestine Carter (*Sunday Times*) and a young Grace Coddington (*British Vogue*). And maybe less well known, editors such as Meriel McCooley (*Sunday Times Magazine*) who were working for a new generation of fashion media - the Sunday newspaper colour supplements. *Nova*’s second Fashion Editor, Caroline Baker (bottom row, third from the right) represents the changing face of British fashion media, perhaps the first true ‘stylist’ who would be responsible for picturing a ‘street style’ now so resonant a part of our fashion identity. Her outfit reveals an eclectic and individual style; she wears, ‘a brown dyed vest, Civil war belt and scarf from Kensington Market, beige shorts by her dressmaker.’<sup>100</sup> The face-to-camera, head-to-toe shot, framed against the backdrop of a city street, and captioned with the details of the subject’s ‘look’ signals the ‘straight-up’ reportage popularised by the style magazines of the 1980s, for which Baker would provide a key influence.

Caroline Baker is an important figure in the history of British fashion media, and has enjoyed a career as a fashion editor and stylist spanning over forty years, yet few outside of the industry will be familiar with her name. Our contemporary understanding of the profession of a fashion stylist is a relatively recent one, and the origin of the job as we now understand it can be traced back to the sort of work Baker was undertaking for *Nova* in her role as Fashion Editor from 1967 - 1975, in this

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<sup>100</sup> Keenan, Brigid, “The Cardigan is Borrowed but the Shoes are Mine . . .”, *Nova*, (September 1969), p.59.

sense Baker is perhaps one of the first true stylists.<sup>101</sup> After learning her craft on *Nova* magazine in the late Sixties and Seventies Baker went on to style for Vivienne Westwood and Benetton and create innovative fashion pages for, *Deluxe*, *i-D*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*.<sup>102</sup>

Whilst critical attention has been given to the medium of fashion photography and the creative practises of the photographer, less has been said about the fashion editors, and stylists who dress the models, narrate the story and fashion the pictures on the page.<sup>103</sup> Also generally less discussed, are the production networks at the core of fashion media.<sup>104</sup> Fashion image making extends beyond and behind the photographer and is a collaborative project that depends on the interplay between photographer, model, fashion editor, stylist, art director and designer, to name a few. To better understand fashion media, its histories and future, it is time that these individuals, working practices and creative networks are both acknowledged and critically evaluated.

## Structure

In her essay ‘The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernisation of a Middle-Class Women’s Magazine 1913-1939’, Sally Stein (1989) provides an exemplary analysis of the designed construction of the *Ladies Home Journal* during the inter war years, by examining the relationships between the magazine’s format and editorial and advertising layout. The publication as a whole is studied a ‘unified cultural artefact’, rather than in its constituent parts of for example, cover image, photograph, editorial text or advertisement.<sup>105</sup> Crucially, this approach recognises the importance of the magazine’s context as the determinant of meaning. As Stein outlines:

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<sup>101</sup> Godfrey, J. (1990), *A Decade of i-Deas: The Encyclopaedia of the ‘80s*, London: Penguin, 1990, p. 208

<sup>102</sup> See my conclusion for an evaluation of Baker’s career post *Nova*.

<sup>103</sup> See Penny Martin *When You’re A Boy: Men’s Fashion Styled by Simon Foxtan*, London: Photographers’ Gallery, 2009

<sup>104</sup> However a growing interest in the processes of contemporary fashion image making is seeking to redress this, and is evident on a number of different platforms, notably as the interest that drives the creative remit of online broadcasting company SHOWstudio. See Alice Beard, “Show and tell: an interview with Penny Martin, editor in chief of SHOWstudio”. *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress Body & Culture*, Volume 12, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 181-195

<sup>105</sup> Stein, 1989, p. 146.

Studies of magazines have usually treated lifestyle texts, or editorial images, or ads, as independent entities and have proceeded to analyse their meanings divorced from their original context. This strategy flattens our conception of the way magazines came to be assembled and then received. For these elements certainly are not apprehended in isolation; rather, images and texts, editorial matter, are designed to work off each other within the larger ensemble of the magazine.<sup>106</sup>

Indeed writing in 1969, graphic designer, educator and author, Ruari McLean makes the same important point regarding the production of magazines:

Successful magazines do create their own world for their readers, and they do this principally by the initial editorial conception, and by consistency in maintaining that conception. For this reason, magazines which attempt to create a world, or at least establish a personality of their own, should be designed as a whole, not as a series of isolated individual pages. Features are chosen to be editorially and visually complementary: certain pictures are helped by, or contrasted with, other pictures; the proportion of photographs to drawings to text is planned, not haphazard.<sup>107</sup>

In his study Magazine Design, McLean reminds us that ‘a magazine is ... a whole entity, and is designed as such, even though it consists of a lot of separate, different-looking ingredients.’<sup>108</sup> Recognising the nature and importance of the magazine as *composite* I adopt this more holistic approach as a methodological model for *Nova*’s analysis. In this thesis I examine the magazine as a ‘whole entity’; I analyse its design and contents, alongside a narrative of the processes of its production from its staff and contributors, and consider the use and value of the magazine by its contemporary readers.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ruari McLean, Magazine Design, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) p.120. Ruari McLean (1917-2006) was a renowned typographer and graphic designer and wrote extensively on modern book design, magazines and typography.

<sup>108</sup> McLean, 1969, p.1. Maclean’s study aimed ‘to provide some help for editors, editorial staff, and others without design training who work on the production of magazines, and who either tackle design problems themselves or brief professional designers to solve them. McLean, 1969, p.2.

The discipline of design history is particularly appropriate to the study of magazines because it combines the ‘analysis of objects with considerations of manufacture and consumption.’<sup>109</sup> Aynsley & Forde’s edited volume Designing the Modern Magazine (2007) fills a notable gap in the literature on magazine design and forms an important set of essays analysing a range of publications in terms of the ‘circumstances of production, the design process’ the relationship between magazines and the consumer and ‘the material qualities of the magazine.’<sup>110</sup> In their introduction Aynsley and Forde remark that magazines have been overlooked in academic analysis because they are:

...designed to be ephemeral. They are not repositories of knowledge to be pored over, reflected on and kept as treasures. Like newspapers their outsize pages testify to a more interrupted flow of reading, they are not meant to be treated with seriousness, and their political content is often covert.<sup>111</sup>

However testimony from *Nova*’s readers is counter to this. *Nova* was often treated as a treasured and precious object; readers waited with excitement for each month’s issue, pored over the pages, saved good reads, and have kept ‘dusty piles’ of them for over thirty years. In addition interviews, with *Nova*’s staff reveal that the magazine was intended to be taken seriously; in providing a service to its readers, in informing and in educating through editorial content. Aynsley and Forde make an important point when they acknowledge the appeal of magazines as research material ‘because they are about the experience of consumption ... Buying products and using them contributes to our sense of identity.’<sup>112</sup>

Arjun Appadurai (1986) and Jules David Prown (1988) have both articulated an approach that acknowledges the designed artefact as the ‘objectification’ of material culture.<sup>113</sup> Material culture provides a useful framework for magazine analysis as it

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<sup>109</sup> Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde (eds.) Design and the Modern Magazine (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>110</sup> Aynsley & Forde, 2007, p 9.

<sup>111</sup> Aynsley & Forde, Ibid, pp., 2-3.

<sup>112</sup> Aynsley & Forde, Ibid, p.3.

<sup>113</sup> Arjun Appadurai, ‘Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value’, in The Social Life of Things (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986). J.D. Prown, ‘Mind in matter: an introduction

recognises the magazine as an object imbued with symbolic value and inscribed with a culture's beliefs and ideals. As Prown outlines, object analysis reveals the 'values, attitudes and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time.'<sup>114</sup> These studies move beyond more typical content analysis by arguing that objects 'are direct evidence of underlying cultural beliefs',<sup>115</sup> and indeed as this thesis will demonstrate, objects may also help shape these cultural beliefs. The study of *Nova* as material culture allows me to consider the relationship *between* the processes of magazine production, circulation, reception and consumption. The agenda for this work is to plot the processes of production *and* consumption in order to reveal the various elements and practices that construct the identity of *Nova* as a material object.

The very nature of the magazine as 'composite' raises fundamental issues in structuring an analysis. As McLean and Stein point out, the magazine is not designed to be experienced in its separate parts, but an analysis, by its nature, necessitates a deconstruction. Therefore the organisation of a discussion of these findings is inherently problematic; should the author simply offer a descriptive chronological narrative at the expense of analysis, or risk de-contextualising content by anchoring discussion around themes and issues? My solution to this dilemma is to analyse the construction, content and consumption of *Nova* across three chapters beginning with a production history of the magazine, followed by a case study of its fashion pages, and finishing with an analysis of *Nova*'s editorial content and design. This research draws on a detailed object analysis of the entire run of the magazine and I have also read *Nova* through the memories of its production staff and readers.

In this thesis images are employed both as visual reference and as the subject of in-depth analysis. Since the analysis and discussion of visual material is central to my study of *Nova*, I have organised these images as photo-essays, which precede each chapter.<sup>116</sup> My aim is that these visual essays will provide a sense of both the

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to material culture theory and method', in R. Blair St George (ed), Material Life in America 1600-1860 (Boston: North Eastern University Press, 1988).

<sup>114</sup> Prown, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>115</sup> Blair St George, 1988, p.17.

<sup>116</sup> I use the term 'photo-essay' as a deliberate reference to the format of sequences of images found in magazines, as well acknowledging the thematically curated collection of images created by John Berger (1972). The photo-essays in this dissertation act as collections of images that tell a story and visually explore a theme. Each individual image serves as example, evidence and vehicle for analysis.

innovative visual culture of the magazine and the dynamic relationship between its content and design. A case study of fashion is presented as the middle chapter of this thesis and reflects Art Editor Harri Peccinotti's ambition to contain *Nova's* fashion pages in the centre of magazine in order to afford the reader a 'block' of colour, and a visual experience which is uninterrupted by editorial text.

Chapter One, 'A New Kind of Magazine for the New Kind of Woman', reconstructs a production history of the magazine from its inception in 1964 through to its closure in 1975. This opens with a detailed analysis of the magazine's 'Dummy Issue' circulated to advertisers and distributors and containing vital information about the magazine's rationale, editorial objectives and an outline definition of the intended *Nova* reader. The life of the magazine will be mapped out using information drawn from interviews with staff, circulation and distribution figures, evidence gleaned through the trade press and contemporary newspaper reviews and criticism. The reception of the magazine will be explored through the memories of readers drawn from oral history and questionnaires. How was *Nova* 'a new kind of magazine' in its formal construction? How did the magazine's content seek to define, address and shape the 'new kind of woman'?

Chapter Two, 'All Dressed and Made Up': Fashion in *Nova*, focuses on the production, design and content of *Nova's* fashion pages through the work of its two key fashion editors: Molly Parkin (1965-1967) and Caroline Baker (1967-1975). This case study of fashion editorial includes the formal analysis of photography, illustration, typography, text and the graphic design and layout of the magazine. Distancing itself from traditional and mainstream fashion publications, *Nova's* aim to be 'a new kind of magazine' in part involved a new take on fashion, beauty and the body. By analysing fashion editorial, this chapter will consider how the 'new woman', was represented visually across *Nova's* pages. Molly Parkin and Caroline Baker were encouraged to explore an alternative approach to fashion to distinguish *Nova* from other magazines. By measuring Parkin's autobiographical recollections against the evidence of the fashion pages she created, I will explore her approach to representing clothing on the page, and unpick her strategy for prioritising clothing in terms of its formal graphic qualities. Information and ideas gleaned from a series of interviews

with Caroline Baker, set against an examination of the editorial text and images of Baker's fashion spreads for *Nova*, reveal that Baker's styling operated as an intrinsic part of both achieving a particular 'look' and as a signifier of the new young fashionable consumer who read the magazine. The design of *Nova*'s fashion pages by Art Director David Hillman and Art Editor and photographer Harri Peccinotti served to focus attention on the process of image making, and as I will explore, these strategies had a discernable effect on how readers used the magazine.

Chapter Three, 'Making Raids on the Real World': Editorial Content and Design, examines the editorial content of the magazine set against *Nova*'s promise to 'make entertainment out of reality'. Through its editorial content *Nova* constructed and reflected a new and different world of opportunity and experience. A defining feature of *Nova* was its frank and often controversial take on sex, politics, science and society in editorial writing, photography and illustration. As such the magazine can be understood as an important medium in conveying and constructing contemporary attitudes and debates of the period. Oral history interviews reveal how readers came to find an identity within the pages of the magazine and, as such, within a wider community of like-minded women. Interviews with *Nova*'s production staff provide an insight into the aims and ambitions of the individual practitioners who made the magazine and explain *Nova*'s overarching editorial philosophy.

**Chapter One: Photo Essay**

**Images REDACTED**

**Figures 1- 53 (pages 61-92)**

## Chapter One:

### Production History: 'A New Kind of Magazine for the New Kind of Woman'

#### A New Concept: The Dummy Issue, Advertisers and Trade

There's a *new* younger generation of women with us. New in *kind*. A generation that won't fit into the old socio-economic groupings. Women with new standards, new ideas, new spending patterns and new power ... *Nova* is a new kind of magazine for women. It starts from the proposition that there is a new kind of woman. She's young, alive, and aware, a product of the changes in the material and social conventions of the post-war world. She's a woman with a wider horizon of daily living, and with a little more knowledge, a little better taste, and wider interests than ever before ... *Nova* will be her magazine. It will help her to live a more satisfying life, for it will understand her outlook, reflect her way of life, and refuel her interests. It will be modern, like her; frank, like her. It will set demanding standards, like her. It will look as up to the minute and arresting as she does.

(*Nova* Magazine: Statement of Editorial Intent)<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the history of magazine publishing the industry has defined and marketed a variety of magazines and periodicals specifically at and for the female reader, with newspapers and supplements also separating out and serving a 'woman's section'. During the 1950s technological advances in mass media produced a rise in the circulation of text and images.

Whilst female readership of magazines had grown rapidly in the post war-period the number of different titles and range of different types of magazines available for women had been in decline since the 1930s, and arguably readers were left with less choice.<sup>2</sup> In the 1950s magazine publications became more diverse, offering a variety

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<sup>1</sup> 'Statement of Editorial Intent', *Nova Dummy Issue*, (George Newnes / IPC, unpublished, 1964)

<sup>2</sup> See R. Ballaster, M. Beetham, E. Frazer & S. Hebron, S., Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991), pp., 110-111

of titles aimed at specific age groups and classes, as well as special interests. These have ranged from fiction story magazines and domestic weeklies to features titles and glossy fashion monthlies. *She* magazine for example was launched in 1955 by the National Magazine Company as a new format, monthly 'features' magazine. It was cheaply produced, packed full of content and aimed to appeal to a wider range of interests and topical issues than the women's weeklies. The 1960s witnessed a boom in magazine production and the creation and reinvention of fashion and lifestyle titles reflected the spending power of the emerging youth consumer with publications launched specifically to appeal to a teenage market such as *Honey* (launched in 1960).<sup>3</sup> These magazines responded to demographic changes, there were now more young working women in Britain with more money to spend but less time to spend it.<sup>4</sup> A growing recognition amongst advertisers that women readers had become 'spenders in their own right', created a lucrative business prospect for publishers, advertisers and the fashion and cosmetics industries.<sup>5</sup>

In 1964, the year of *Nova*'s inception, most women in Britain read at least one women's magazine a week, '60% of the upper and middle class, 71% of the lower middle class and 63% of the working class.'<sup>6</sup> However this year also marked an acceleration in the decline in circulation figures of weekly magazines as the monthly publications became more popular. The bigger budgets of these monthlies, generated by large page colour advertising, and newly available printing technology resulted in more modern formats, glossier pages and more visually exciting copy. This overall slump in magazine sales set against a general increase in consumer spending provoked publishers to question and redefine their concepts of femininity. Ballaster et al. recognise that: 'In the 1960s ...declining sales in a context of increasing prosperity and perhaps even more important, the belief that the contraceptive pill had revolutionised women's relationship to their own sexuality, all forced magazine publishers to look again at their definitions of femininity.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Honey* was launched in April 1960 by Fleetway and edited by Audrey Slaughter. Its cover announced 'for the teens and twenties.'

<sup>4</sup> As Cynthia White shows by the Sixties there were more working women in Britain, and by 1962 married women made up 54% of the female labour force. White, 1968, p. 155

<sup>5</sup> White, p. 155

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia White, *Women's Magazines: 1693 – 1968*, (London, Michael Joseph, 1970) p. 169.

<sup>7</sup> Ballaster, et al. 1991, p.111-112

Responding to a climate of readership disinterest and circulation decline, the publishing house IPC attempted to target magazines at ‘new’ audiences. As sociologist Marjorie Ferguson explains, what was recognised in the 1960s was that ‘the world of women was not an undifferentiated totality, but a collection of target groups.’<sup>8</sup> IPC commissioned Dr Ernest Dichter of the Institute of Motivational Research in New York to investigate the state of British women’s magazines and a projected future for their title, *Woman’s Own*.<sup>9</sup> Dichter had been successfully consulted by American advertisers and publishers and his research had informed changes to the re-launch of the Canadian *Chatelaine* magazine.<sup>10</sup>

Dichter’s findings would be influential; he recognised that women’s lives and expectations had shifted and changed, fed by improvements in education, affluence, employment, and the media. In his report he identified ‘an inexorable movement towards greater independence, responsibility and social mobility’ producing ‘the kind of woman who can combine, adjust and compromise femininity with independence, personal fulfilment and family responsibilities, and modesty with basic human values as she perceives them.’<sup>11</sup> Dichter made proposals for a new kind of magazine which would be able to meet the reader’s needs and tastes ‘professionally, culturally, decoration wise and food-wise.’<sup>12</sup> Magazines would need to respond to contemporary culture and society; to address reader’s changing attitudes, interests and concerns and be better designed and more visually exciting. Dichter’s recommendations were taken seriously by IPC. In 1964, Under Clive Irving’s new Editorial Directorship, IPC set about designing their new title *Nova* and redesigning old ones such as the weekly *Woman’s Mirror*.<sup>13</sup> Clive Irving brought to this task his own knowledge of editing

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<sup>8</sup> In 1963 Fleetway Publications, George Newnes and Oldhams Press merged together with the Mirror Group to form IPC (The International Publishing Corporation). Marjorie Ferguson, Forever Feminine: Women’s Magazines and the Cult of Femininity, (London, Heinemann, 1983), p. 35

<sup>9</sup> Dichter, Ernest ‘A Motivational Research Study on the British Woman in Today’s Culture’, Vol.1 (Unpublished, Institute for Motivational Research Inc., NY 1964), presented to George Newnes Ltd. Dichter’s research methods included a detailed survey of in depth interviews with current and potential readers which were analysed within his own ‘socio-psychological’ framework. See Cynthia White for an extensive analysis of Dichter’s findings and their implementation by IPC, Chapter 7, ‘New magazines for the ‘New’ woman’ especially pp., 219-242. White, C. 1970.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion of *Chatelaine* see Valerie J. Korinek Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties, University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2000

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Dichter, 1964, vol 1 p.29 & p. 33, quoted in White, C., 1970, p. 220.

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Dichter, 1964, vol 2 p.231, quoted in White, C., 1970, p. 220.

<sup>13</sup> *WM* is discussed later in this Chapter

serious news for intelligent readers on the *Sunday Times*, and he was keen to apply this approach to women's magazines:

The idea that a woman's magazine has to place a genteel filter between a subject and its reader must be hopelessly out of date at a time when any other medium ... can open up an issue for adult discussion. Women's magazines have been wearing their skirts too long.<sup>14</sup>

This new journalism meant 'breaking a lot of taboos about which things can be discussed, and the manner in which things can be discussed in women's magazines' and as Irving explained to *The World's Press News*, editors now had to be prepared to address a much wider range of subjects that concerned women's lives:

...to tackle issues like the morality of living on the H.P., explaining how supermarkets work, taking a deep look at the birth pill and all its implications... the strain of living with a successful husband ... and sexual impotence... the Other woman – the kind of things which until now have been only dealt with as brief footnotes to reader's letters in old- agony columns.<sup>15</sup>

In 1965 *Nova* magazine was launched by IPC and made a direct appeal to the 'new woman' market. Writing in 1968, Cynthia White suggested that Dichter's recommendations 'formed the blue-print for new developments throughout IPC's group of women's magazines.'<sup>16</sup> She considered *Nova* to be 'the embodiment of the 'intelligent' approach to women's publishing' and 'a direct outcome of Dichter's findings.'<sup>17</sup> His suggestions for a magazine to be modern, socially responsive,

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<sup>14</sup> Clive Irving, "Women's Magazines: The Thinking that is Opening up Their New Frontiers." *The World's Press News*, (September 17<sup>th</sup> 1965), p.12

<sup>15</sup> Irving, C., Ibid

<sup>16</sup> White, C., p.221

<sup>17</sup> White, C., p.224. Janice Winship agreed that Dichter's recommendations can be seen to be addressed by *Nova* in three ways; firstly by adopting 'a more realistic approach' in its recognition and treatment of contemporary social issues and problems, secondly by paying more attention to the design of the magazine and visually modernising its format and finally by directing the magazine's content towards the reader's 'attitudes and interests.' Winship, J. (1987) *Inside Women's Magazines*, London: Pandora, However, Marjorie Ferguson is more sceptical about these claims and suggests that Dichter's role in 'influencing, or not influencing, the mainstream development of women's magazines in Britain is a matter of debate.' She suggests this may have been a 'post-hoc rationale'. Marjorie Ferguson, *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity*, (London, Heinemann, 1983) p. 198. In my interviews with production staff no-one expressed knowledge of Dichter's research. However there is

intellectually challenging and visually sophisticated could be seen to be fully realised in *Nova*. However, the initial editorial team seemed largely unaware of Dichter's research, as co-founder and Art Editor Harri Pecinotti later explained:

It started as just an idea, there was no research, just the feeling that there was room for a magazine that treated women as intelligent human beings - but no one really knew [how we would do it], so it was like putting a toe in the water. There was a change in magazines generally at the time. We were given a free hand; no one was expecting instant success.<sup>18</sup>

The development team included Harry Fieldhouse who was appointed as *Nova*'s first Editor and who brought with him experience editing *Tatler*, graphic designer and photographer Harri Peccinotti who was appointed Art Editor, Fashion Director Jill Butterfield and Editorial Advisor Alma Birk.<sup>19</sup> For Fieldhouse, it was a simple equation: 'new readers, new requirements'.<sup>20</sup> Statements of editorial philosophy published in *The World's Press News* suggested that this new reader should not be classified by age or class, but rather by attitude:

*Nova*'s slogan calls her 'a new kind of woman.' But she is many kinds too. She could be 28 or 38, single with a job, or married with children (and perhaps a job too), a girl with a university degree, or a girl who never took school seriously. The social permutations are endless. What remains constant is that our new kind of woman has a wide range of interests, an inquiring mind and an independent outlook - not to mention that her numbers are multiplying.<sup>21</sup>

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an uncanny match between pre publicity and Dichter's findings so the report almost certainly influenced the launch rationale. There is no doubt however that initial development was influenced by the editorial team who brought with them extensive experience of the women's magazine market. Once in motion the magazine took on a life and a direction that was fed and influenced by its staff, notably after the appointment of Dennis Hackett from September 1965.

<sup>18</sup> Janet Fitch, "Here comes the supernova", *Design Week*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (January 2000), p. 24

<sup>19</sup> Harry Fieldhouse was a writer for the *Daily Express* before becoming Editor on *Tatler* in 1960. Jill Butterfield had previously been Fashion Editor of the *Daily Express*. Alma Birk was one of *Nova*'s founding editors, she had journalistic experience as a columnist on the *Daily Herald*. She was married to lawyer and IPC Director Ellis Birk. Birk's career and editorial philosophy are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Harry Fieldhouse, "Nova: the thinking behind the novelty", *The World's Press News*, (12<sup>th</sup> March 1965), p.44

<sup>21</sup> Fieldhouse, H. Ibid.

In recognising and addressing a perceived gap in the magazines market, IPC had marked out *Nova* as an ‘entirely new concept in the field of large scale women’s publishing’, as promotional launch material explained:

The need arises as a result of one of the most far reaching sociological changes of the past 15 years. This has been the emergence of a large, still growing class of younger women totally unlike her predecessors. *She is better educated, more socially assured; well informed, inquiring and youthful in her outlook. Nova* will win her loyalty because it is the first - and only - magazine designed exclusively for her. It will address her as an equal in her own language and will be as much a product of its time as she is. *Nova* will crystallise the market represented by today’s new kind of woman.<sup>22</sup>

The ‘Dummy Issue’, a mock up of the magazine sent out to retailers and advertisers in 1964, was wrapped in a promotional folder containing key facts, advertising rates and rationale.<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 1). The design of the wrapping was at odds with the modernity of the magazine promised within; its pictorial representation of the ‘new kind of woman’ was a sketchy illustration, more reminiscent in style and appearance of fashion plates from the 1950s than of an image for 1965. However the mock up cover inside the folder presented a different story. (Fig. 2). Here was the 1965 woman; posed coffee cup in hand as if in mid conversation with the viewer. She was confident, engaging and glamorously attired in pearls and fur.

Inside the folder a bold ‘Statement of Editorial Policy’ distinguished *Nova* from other current publications: (Fig. 3).

More than a home making magazine, more than a fashion magazine. *Nova* will bring spirited treatments and authoritative writers to tackle all the topics that fascinate the new kind of woman; people, holidays, houses, education, the new morality, beauty, health, religion, travel, eating out, sport, social

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<sup>22</sup> *Nova* Dummy Issue, Ibid

<sup>23</sup> *Nova* Dummy Issue, Ibid. See Illustrations. The Dummy Issue and a box of promotional matches were acquired with the purchase of a complete bound set of *Nova* at auction in Bonhams, Knightsbridge in 1997 by British musician Jarvis Cocker.

problems, shopping, the future, art, politics, films, theatre, what's cooking, what's on, what's new...<sup>24</sup>

In large capital letters the Dummy Issue proclaimed; 'NOVA WILL SPAN, WITH INSPIRATION, URGENCY AND EXCITEMENT, THE BROAD NEW RANGE OF INTERESTS OF TODAY'S NEW KIND OF WOMAN.' (Fig. 4). These interests were explained in enthusiastic terms; she would enjoy travelling, gallery visits and current affairs, she would prefer 'the more serious Sunday papers to the populars and watches *Panorama* rather than *Double your Money*.' She would care 'about social problems' and have 'views on painting, or literature, or music' and casts her vote thoughtfully at election time.'<sup>25</sup>

*Nova* would also be a new advertising medium; '1965 will be a big year for selling to today's new kind of woman.' (Fig. 5). To make the most of this important market advertisers were urged, 'you should make all your bookings in the all new magazine now.'<sup>26</sup> If the *Nova* woman was actively engaged with the wider world, and possessed a mind of her own and an enquiring outlook, importantly she also had discerning taste, a disposable income and enviable status; 'She and her husband are not trying to keep up with the Joneses' the launch publicity explained, rather, 'they are the people the Joneses would like to be', the *Nova* reader 'knows the value of Marks and Spencer as well as Harrods – but has no need to be cheese paring.'<sup>27</sup> The new kind of woman belonged to the 'AA Market' these were 'women of Above Average income and intelligence' and she was undoubtedly an advertiser's dream, possessing new spending patterns and new spending power. (Fig. 6). Inside the Dummy Issue folder, key publication facts, specific copy deadlines and advertising rates were detailed.

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<sup>24</sup> *Nova* Dummy Issue. Ibid

<sup>25</sup> 'A topical trend magazine for the wide awake, intelligent woman, leading, advising, prompting, stimulating and informing'. *Nova* Dummy Issue, Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> 'Cover price 2/6. Publishing date 26th February. Initial print order in excess of 200,000. Production gravure full colour. Covers 4-colour letter press. Copy deadlines; full colour December 30th, mono January 6<sup>th</sup>. Press dates full colour January 13th, mono January 20<sup>th</sup>. Standard advertisement rates are £380 a page mono £540 a page full colour. Advertisers who book six spaces of the same size in the first six issues will qualify for the special launching discount which gives them six insertions for the price of four. These are the savings which the launching discount offers. Mechanical data and rates for other sizes and special positions which also qualify for the special launching discount are given on the standard advertisement rate card.' *Nova* Dummy Issue, Ibid. (see Fig 7).

<sup>27</sup> This also acknowledged that the magazine marked a deliberate appeal to the couple and signalled an enduring bi-sexual readership. *Nova* Dummy Issue, Ibid

(Fig. 7). With its large format and abundance of thick, glossy coloured pages this quality magazine would be also be an advertiser's showcase:

She wants to know about whatever's new, whatever's being bought she wants to be the first to buy. Today there is no magazine specifically for this new kind of woman. Advertisers reach her only as a fraction of other readerships. *Nova* will change all this because *Nova* will be her magazine.<sup>28</sup>

*Nova's* pre-launch publicity had certainly attracted advertisers; Issue 1, March 1965 contained a balance of 60% advertising to 40% editorial.<sup>29</sup> The magazine's editorial address revealed that 'so many firms wanted to put colour advertisements in *Nova* that it took several extra presses to cope. It took carefully planning too to arrange easy reading, with no maddening searches for ends of articles tucked between ads.'<sup>30</sup> *Nova* luxuriated in colour and this first issue was an advertiser's showcase; the magazine's first sixty-four pages were uninterrupted advertisements, followed by a straight run of thirty pages of editorial.

In the first issue advertising clearly addressed the 'new woman' who had been sketched out in promotional material; she was modern, independent, sexually confident and financially comfortable; Sunsilk recognised her distinction and autonomy asking 'who says all women are alike?'<sup>31</sup> And a Harrods advertisement styled a 'Career -girl' in a suit made of 'wool and mohair boucle ...designed by Louis Feraud and made in London.'<sup>32</sup> A four page promotional tie in between car manufacturer Austin and clothing manufacturer Dereta featured a striking, confident young woman standing astride the roof of a car: 'She's not there to stop the traffic. She's there to make a point... about Dereta Dandycoats. Austin cars. And why they were meant to travel together (Fig. 9).'<sup>33</sup> The 'new woman' was also understood by some advertisers to be married, and old enough to worry about ageing; Reaffirm facial treatment offered her a 'firmer lovelier, younger looking' complexion, and Poly

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<sup>28</sup> *Nova* 'Dummy Issue', Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> *Nova's* first issue contained one hundred and ten pages of advertising and seventy-seven pages of editorial.

<sup>30</sup> Editorial address, *Nova*, (March 1965) p. 1

<sup>31</sup> Colour advertisement for Sunsilk, *Nova*, (March, 1965), p.20

<sup>32</sup> Colour advertisement for Louis Feraud for Harrods, *Nova*, Ibid, p. 5

<sup>33</sup> Colour advertisement for Austin Motors and Dereta Dandycoats, *Nova*, Ibid, pp., 21-24

hair colouring was more explicit, asking; ‘You’re his wife. Who’s his girl-friend? Answer: YOU – because you shampoo away grey the Poly way. It’s so natural – your husband only knows you look younger’ (Figs. 10 & 11).<sup>34</sup>

Fashion and cosmetic brands occupied the majority of the advertising pages.<sup>35</sup> Big fashion houses Jaeger, Dolcis, and Viyella sat alongside luxury international cosmetic houses such as Estee Lauder. But most notable were promotions for the new acrylic fabrics.<sup>36</sup> Splashed across six consecutive pages, Courtaulds promoted its new nylon, Ceylon; ‘Out of the blue comes a new kind of whiteness...the super-white whiteness of Ceylon.’ (Fig. 12). The text made a direct appeal to the desires of the reader for durable newness; ‘Yes, you’ll want it. Yes, you’ll have it, month after month. For what you buy is what you keep – that’s the way Ceylon is. And now that Ceylon has come into your life its going to be on with Ceylon and into an exciting future.’<sup>37</sup> In addition six separate full page ads featuring a promotional tie in between Orlon and Air India were placed throughout *Nova*’s first issue and promised the adventure of foreign travel alongside the versatility of modern artificial fibres. (Fig. 13). The ads adopted the style of a magazine front cover, deliberately taking advantage of the excitement of the launch. The ‘March 1965 Air India Edition’ featured glamorous, single women exiting the aircraft wearing clothing manufactured in a new acrylic and flax fibre by Du Pont. The strap lines exclaimed; ‘How to travel light, pretty & uncrushable: Travel in Orlon and Air India.’ ‘Orlon says this year – Embroidery!’<sup>38</sup>

### **Issue One: March 1965**

I have the uncanny feeling that somebody has been along to ask me for my choice of articles, stories and writers in my ideal magazine and then produced *Nova* to my requirements.

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<sup>34</sup> Black and white advertisement for Reaffirm Facial Treatment, *Nova* Ibid, p.25. B&W Colour advertisement for Poly Hair Colour, *Nova*, Ibid., p.15

<sup>35</sup> The first issue contained thirty-eight pages of advertising for fashion and nine for beauty products

<sup>36</sup> The March 1965 issue also contained advertisements for Bri Nylon and Crimplene

<sup>37</sup> Six page colour advertisement feature for Ceylon, *Nova*, Ibid., pp., 9-14. The advertisement recalls the potential of scientific advance and modernity in Harold Wilson’s ‘White Heat of Technology’ election speech two years prior. Wilson proclaimed; ‘The Britain that is going to be forged in the white heat of this revolution will be no place for restrictive practices or for outdated methods on either side of industry.’

<sup>38</sup> Orlon/Air India ads appear interspersed throughout the first issue on pages 17, 28, 99, 127, 135 and 175

(Letter to the Editor from Mrs Margaret Bristow, Surrey. *Nova*, May 1965) <sup>39</sup>

On Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup> 1965 *The Observer* contained an advertisement for the first issue of *Nova*, with the banner, in bold type declaring; ‘NOVA – the new magazine for the woman who isn’t afraid of Virginia Woolf.’ (Fig. 14). The caption referenced to Edward Albee’s play, selected for the 1963 Pulitzer Prize but later withdrawn because of criticisms of its provocative questioning of the institution of marriage.<sup>40</sup> The startling accompanying image offered a contemporary take on the original fairy tale of the ‘big bad wolf’; cloaked in a shaggy fake fur hooded coat and defiantly gripping *Nova*’s first issue in her gloved hand, the model seemed to embody both the boldness and daring of the wolf and the curiosity and sharp wittedness of Little Red Riding Hood. The text running underneath explained what the magazine would offer:

NOVA GIVES YOU SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT – ARGUE ABOUT – EVEN DISAGREE WITH. New points of view from Eve Perrick on ‘A One-Woman Occult Enquiry.’ Anne Scott-Jones on ‘The Reading Revolution for Tots.’ Brian Inglis on ‘Doctors and Adultery.’ Sir Julian Huxley starting a series on ‘The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Isms.’ The Jill Butterfield column. Also articles by the sort of people who have new ways of looking at fashion, art, cooking.<sup>41</sup>

*Nova*’s first issue appeared in newsagents in March 1965 priced at three shillings. Its difference was immediate as readers recall, ‘it stood out on the magazine stand. It was new and fresh the printing was different, different typefaces, some sans serif stuff ... pictures right to edges.’<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Mrs Margaret Bristow “Letter to the Editor” *Nova*, Issue 3 (May 1965) p.130

<sup>40</sup> The play’s title ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf.’ was a reference to the song ‘Who’s afraid of the Big Bad Wolf’ from Walt Disney’s 1933 film ‘The Three Little Pigs’. Writer Edward Albee explained that he saw the words ‘Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf’ scrawled in soap on a bathroom mirror in a bar. He explained that it meant ‘who’s afraid of the big bad wolf ... who’s afraid of living life without false illusions.’ (William Flanagan, “The Art of Theatre No 4: Edward Albee.” *The Paris Review*, Issue 39. (Fall, 1966) The play was adapted into a film in 1966 starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton who appeared together on *Nova*’s October cover that year.

<sup>41</sup> Advertisement for *Nova*, ‘For the woman who isn’t afraid of Virginia Woolf.’ *The Observer*, (Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965) p.29.

<sup>42</sup> John Maclachlan, [Interview with Author](#) (2003)

Visually, its front cover signalled a clear departure from the format of conventional women's magazines. The page was divided into three sections; the central panel made the radical break from traditional cover girl by offering its audience four framed photographs to illustrate the content within. A portrait of Italian actress Claudia Cardinale sat alongside a photograph of children reading, a Happy Families playing card featuring 'Mr Sofa the Psychiatrist' and a red tinted portrait of arts critic Robert Robinson. The four images suggested a diversity and balance of content not seen before on the cover of a woman's magazine. Underneath the images an editorial address declared: 'This is No.1 of the British monthly with the 1965 approach' and continued with a five line description of its pages in heavy white text set on black background, visually emphasising the density of the reading material to be found within the magazine's pages. On the top third of the cover the magazine's title appeared; bold, black, lower case and in simple sans serif font, bleeding to the margins of the page. The choice of a modern font was deliberately innovative and daring according to Harry Fieldhouse and it stood out as the only women's magazine set entirely in this style. As he explained in *The World's Press News*, 'women readers are much less resistant to novelty than men are held to be, and their benefit in this instance is big clear text.'<sup>43</sup>

The title '*Nova*' would convey 'femininity and novelty', and appeal to 'the right level of above-average intelligence.'<sup>44</sup> Whilst 'adventuring with various flights of fancy that defy accepted precepts', the novelty would be in *Nova's* newness and daring - not

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<sup>43</sup> Fieldhouse, H. Ibid. (1965). In *The Feminine Mystique* Betty Friedan argues that the large fonts used in American women's magazine's in the early 60s, like *Redbook* and *McCalls*, looked like the style of writing found in children's books; 'Does the size of the print mean that the new young women, whom all the magazines are courting, have only first-grade minds? Or does it try to hide the triviality of the content?' In her judgement Friedan ignores issues of clarity and legibility – central modernist concerns emerging in graphic design of this period. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1963, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> A letter from the editor in *Nova's* second issue tried to make sense of the name or readers: 'Before we go any further, let's get a point settled. Some people want to know what we mean by calling this magazine NOVA. ... if you look it up you'll find its an English word for a star that flares out of nowhere, ... A few wags have looked it up and found that in *their* astronomical definitions a Nova's brightness fades rapidly. Did we know this, they ask innocently? Well, we did know and our riposte is that in the cosmos time is relative. Not that it matters, because we aren't naming Nova after any star, though we mean to keep it shining. Its Nova because all over the world the name means new - and that seems like a good enough reason.' (*Nova* April 1965). However Art Director David Hillman asserts that it was a more strategic decision: 'The reason it was called *Nova* was because, at the time it was launched, everything that was successful was Italian. The Italian song that was ... in the Top 10 was 'Volare'. There were Italian cars, Italian ice-cream. The coffee bar bit was really happening. Everything was Italian, Italian shoes, Italian suits.' David Hillman, *Interview with Author*, (2003)

in extravagant escapism, as Fieldhouse pointed out: ‘*Nova* is a down to earth enterprise. It is not out to explore new planets, but to break new ground on this one. Its particular territory is the better –educated, better-informed, better-off younger woman.’<sup>45</sup>

## Rivals

*Vogue*, published by Conde Nast in Britain in 1916 on the success of its American counterpart, enjoyed a steady circulation of 140,000 during the mid Sixties. *Vogue* was instrumental in the promotion of London boutiques and emerging young designers. Fashion Editor Beatrix Miller, had arrived from *Queen* in 1964 bringing with her Marit Allen who would be responsible for *Vogue*’s ‘Young Ideas’ pages. Allen’s pages would revitalise *Vogue* and lend it a youthful enthusiasm, championing young designers such as Tuffin and Foale, Mary Quant and Zandra Rhodes. Highlighting the fashionability of individuals involved in the production of fashion media, Allen would also be the subject of the camera’s lens herself, photographed David Bailey and Norman Parkinson. Coinciding with *Nova*’s launch *Vogue*’s March 1965 issue contained a balance of approximately three quarters editorial to one quarter advertising, and of that editorial 62% was fashion coverage.<sup>46</sup> (Fig. 15). These fashion pages included the cover article ‘*Vogue*’s eye view of le Style Anglais’ which showcased British design modelled by singer Marianne Faithful, and a beauty editorial ‘Girls like roses’ presenting ‘new varieties’ of make up looks.<sup>47</sup> ‘Blondes’ showcased furs of the palest pelts modelled by actresses Hayley Mills, Britt Eckland and Susannah York who between them demonstrated that: ‘A blonde is a blonde. Blonde girls, blonde furs. Silent screens, silent sirens. Man’s favourite dish served in woman’s favourite dressing, what could be more delicious?’<sup>48</sup> (Fig. 16). A further eight fashion features filled the magazine offering looks ranging from ‘School style’ and, ‘Mary Poppins’, to a collection of overcoats for rainy and dry weather, and the

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<sup>45</sup> Fieldhouse, H., p. 44

<sup>46</sup> *Vogue* (March 1965) was edited by Beatrix Miller with contributing editors including Antonia Fraser. The magazine was 94 pages in length. Its editorial content made up sixty-nine and a half of these pages (74%), and direct advertising consisted of twenty-four and a half pages (26%). of the editorial pages 62% of these were fashion (forty-three pages).

<sup>47</sup> *Vogue*, Ibid “Young Idea” featured Marianne Faithful ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ modelling British fashion, pp., 80-83. ‘Girls like roses’, pp., 118-119.

<sup>48</sup> *Vogue*, Ibid ‘Blondes’, pp., 104-107.

'Paris look in London' introducing new flares, pleats and bias cuts by Dior, Ricci and Cardin.<sup>49</sup>

The features section ran reviews on theatre, ballet, films, books, art, happenings and records in the 'Spotlight' pages. The most lengthy editorial article was Cecil Beaton's travel photo journal 'Beaton in Turkey' running across eleven pages.<sup>50</sup> Further reading was cursory and promotional in nature, advice on wine storage was offered and a double page spread on the 'Cake' detailed Robert Carrier's favourite recipes. An 'Entertainment Guide' detailed information and services on flower arranging, making cheese fritters, recipes for spicy gammon and where to buy Chinese pillows. In the last pages of the magazine a 'Getaway Guide to East Europe' offered holiday and flight information for trips to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Russia, and *Voguescope* offered readers their monthly astrological predictions.<sup>51</sup>

*Queen* magazine offered its readers considerably more reading content than most glossy women's magazines. *The Queen* had begun life as a society paper in 1862, but with its purchase by Jocelyn Stevens in 1957 it underwent modernisation. (Fig. 17). He changed its title to '*Queen*' published it weekly and under the editorship of Beatrix Miller the magazine made its appeal to a younger, more fashion conscious reader whilst still retaining its society-led bias.<sup>52</sup> This was a talent she took with her to *Vogue* in 1964. The issue which coincided with *Nova*'s launch in March 1965 had a cover featuring a smiling young woman in matching hat and jacket with the fashion by-lines 'Spring Fashion', and 'Sporting White', and the feature article 'Labour Moves In' by Anthony Sampson.<sup>53</sup> *Queen* had an almost 50/50 division of advertising

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<sup>49</sup> *Vogue*, Ibid 'School style looks', pp., 86-87. 'Style, Mary Poppins', pp., 84-85. 'Paris look in London', pp., 108-109

<sup>50</sup> *Vogue*, Ibid. The photo-essay accompanied Cecil Beaton's story of travelling in Turkey, pp., 96-103, 149,150,151

<sup>51</sup> *Vogue*, Ibid. Advice on wine storage, pp., 132, 134. "Cake" by Robert Carrier, pp., 128-29. "Entertainment Guide" p. 136. "Getaway Guide to East Europe", pp., 138, 140.

<sup>52</sup> Beatrix Miller devised a style sheet for writers outlining the *Queen* reader as a long haired, young girl named 'Caroline' who had left school at 16 and slept with intellectuals. For a history of the magazine see Quentin Crewe, 'The Frontiers of Privilege: A Century of Social Conflict as Represented in *The Queen*'. Forward by Jocelyn Stevens. Stevens Press 1961.

<sup>53</sup> *Queen*, (10<sup>th</sup> March 1965). *Queen* was published fortnightly.

and editorial and the editorial text features were clearly distinguished from the rest of the magazine by their presentation on thicker and matte, buff coloured paper.<sup>54</sup>

*Queen* magazine was most renowned for its coverage of society life; ‘Debs ’65: Playmates and where to meet them’ occupied six consecutive pages containing portraits of the year’s young debutantes by Cecil Beaton and details of their ‘coming out’ engagements; a list of cocktail parties and dances filling up London’s social diary for the season of 1965.<sup>55</sup> *Queen*’s ‘Social’ pages also boasted the infamous ‘Jennifer’s Diary’, created by Betty Kenwood. In this issue from 10<sup>th</sup> March 1965, ‘Jennifer’ chronicled her week of parties and social engagements across Europe.<sup>56</sup>

The magazine’s ‘Features’ section contained an article by Ruth Inglis, a survey of current property for sale, and political perspective offered from the Labour camp by MP Dick Taverne, and from the Tories by Conservative MP Humphrey Berkeley. This was balanced by a profile of actress Vivien Leigh, serialised fiction and the substantial article ‘A Question of Quality’ offering readers a consumer’s guide to the Sunday newspapers:

The posh Sunday papers thud with ever increasing weight through the letter box, bringing with them the burden of choice – to spend the whole day reading them, to skim through and miss the best things, or to ignore them completely and go through the week unenlightened and unread and feeling that everybody else is well up on all that news, comment, criticism, insight, profiles, memoirs and gossip.<sup>57</sup>

The article concluded in summary, that for their readers *The Observer* had the ‘best writers and can be compulsively readable on their special subjects.’ *The Sunday*

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<sup>54</sup> This issue from 10<sup>th</sup> March 1965 contained seventy-two and a half pages of advertising and sixty-eight and a half pages of editorial.

<sup>55</sup> “Debs ‘65”, photographs by Cecil Beaton, *Queen*, Ibid pp., 123-129

<sup>56</sup> As this extract demonstrates: ‘Sunday: Woke at 7:45 am. Had my breakfast and wrote quietly in my room. 1pm: Went to a delightful luncheon party at Les Ambassadeurs given by Monsieur Lucien Barriere in honour of Mrs Harkness Kean and those running the ballet as well as ballet critics who had come from all over the world to see the first performances in Europe. 2.45 pm: Left for Cagnes where I saw 3 races including the Grand Prix won by Monsieur Feron’s Cagneur.’ Betty Kenwood, “Jennifer’s Diary”, photography by David Montgomery *Queen*, Ibid. pp., 130-132.

<sup>57</sup> “A Question of Quality”, *Queen*, Ibid, p.85

*Telegraph* was ‘value for money and saving time but painfully dull and badly presented’ and *The Sunday Times*, ‘best if you are fascinated by the news and what goes on behind it.’<sup>58</sup> Further content was provided under the regular columns; Fashion, Beauty, Travel, Motoring, Wine and Food and Reviews of plays, music, books, television, art and, the ‘Pop Scene’ by celebrated writers such as Anthony Burgess, David Thompson and Patrick Kerr. Privately funded by Jocelyn Stevens *Queen* could operate autonomously from corporate publishers, and justify its small circulation, estimated at just 57,000.<sup>59</sup>

Whilst the Glossies took fashion and society as their focus, the weeklies like *Woman* and *Woman’s Own* were concerned with more domestic issues surrounding marriage and the home. *Observer* columnist Katherine Whitehorn acknowledged that a woman could find intelligent content in other magazines, but these had their limitations:

[*Nova*] is new territory indeed ... Not of course that this is the first or only magazine to address the intelligent woman, common though it is for the newspaper reading woman to say she can’t tell one magazine from another ... The sound stuff is there: its just a question of how many knitting patterns and interviews with the Queen’s corgis you have to wade through as well.<sup>60</sup>

For the ‘new kind of woman’, what was there to read? *Nova* Editor Gillian Cooke suggested that it was as a choice between ‘mumsy-cosy or glossy-fey or go without.’<sup>61</sup> In contrast, *Nova*’s editorial content was characterised by a fascination with sex, social issues and politics intermixed with witty and well designed articles on health, fashion and design. Inside the magazine’s contents were divided into five themes: information, diversions, appraisal, controversy and stimulants. The traditional mainstays of the women’s magazine: fashion, beauty, travel, home decoration, were there, but they were treated in a new and different way. Readers agreed with the magazine’s difference and many quickly identified themselves as a *Nova* ‘type’:

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<sup>58</sup> *Queen*, Ibid p.85. *Queen* even offered a guide to the ‘situations vacant’ pages; *The Observer* was best for architects and technologists, *The Sunday Telegraph* for engineers, and *The Sunday Times* was best for executives.

<sup>59</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulations. 1965

<sup>60</sup> Katherine Whitehorn, “The Reading Age of Women”, *The Observer*, (Sunday, March 7 1965), p.31

<sup>61</sup> Gillian Cooke, “Nova for the 100<sup>th</sup> Time”, *Nova*, (July 1973), p. 74

*Queen, Harper's, Tatler, ... weren't for me, I saw them as for another kind of person ... they were ... for people who led a different kind of life and were doing different things, probably had a house in the county and a flat in town, travelled a lot, maybe the wife didn't work, or have to work, it was not within... the society that I knew. I could actually do and be in tune with some of the stuff in *Nova* whereas stuff in *Tatler* and those magazines ...were for the hunting and fishing and shooting set, having parties and looking incredible-beautiful, but not for the person who buys a £3.50 Biba dress every Friday to go out on Saturday night and get pissed.<sup>62</sup>*

*Nova's* first fashion feature offered a change to the usual glossies' coverage of society life, celebrity and haute couture and made a deliberate reference to the 'new woman' it sought to address: (Figs. 18 & 19).

One woman in her day plays many parts... and the silly thing is that the more she does, the harder it is for her to get any kind of notice taken of it at all. Even five years ago a girl who left her children with an au pair and went out to work found herself at the receiving end of a lot of heavy criticism ...but she did get a lot of grudging admiration as well. People told her crossly that they didn't know how she did it, and certainly didn't expect to be asked to dinner, or to see her at the hairdresser's. Now it has become more or less acceptable, it's suddenly no longer clever, and the poor girl is expected to entertain lavishly, have fascinating hobbies, and probably build a house with her bare hands in the long empty evenings. So here follows, in eight parts, presented with enormous admiration, one woman's (fairly) average day, and a small selection of the parts she plays in it. Full costume details given throughout.<sup>63</sup>

In this fashion feature the story unfolds act-by-act, a 'Working Girl tears off' to work, 'businesslike' in a white coat. Next she adopts a 'Handyman' pose, up a ladder in a denim boiler suit before enjoying a horse ride in her 'Sportswoman' role. In acts four, five and six our protagonist 'goes all romantic and stays at home' taking up the role of

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<sup>62</sup> June Thornton, *Interview with Author*, (2000)

<sup>63</sup> *Nova* (March 1965), p.74

Wife, in ‘pink crepe skirt and an extra skimpy, nearly-nothing sweater’ followed by Mother in a cotton dress to match her daughter’s, before our ‘girl turns Gardener’ decked out in Wellington boots for a spot of raking. The final image sees our heroine stretched out in repose on a velvet sofa, she is in her final hours of the day, a ‘Hostess’ turned ‘seductive in printed voile harem dress.’<sup>64</sup>

This was a visual articulation of *Nova*’s new reader, the independent woman whose day might involve a number of different roles.<sup>65</sup> Whilst this feminine ideal remained aspirational (a woman with the time and means for a career, childcare, hobbies and entertaining?) it was nonetheless, an image of woman in her infinite variety that spoke directly to its readership, as this letter to the editor enthusiastically demonstrated:

You have certainly kept your promise to cater for ‘the woman who has more to think about than what to do about dinner’ ... I would unhesitatingly recommend *Nova* to any woman interested in what is going on around her. (Letter to the Editor from Miss M. L. Sunley, Hereford. *Nova*, June 1965).<sup>66</sup>

*Nova*’s first issue did offer its reader ‘more to think about’. Its editorial content included arts coverage with a lengthy review of developments in European cinema by Christopher Booker, and Frank Whitford’s survey of British painting in the 1930s. (Figs. 20 & 21). The features were both informative and educational, ranging from an article on new methods for improving children’s literacy and an investigation into medical ethics to Julian Huxley’s guide to Humanism, and MP Alma Birk’s chronicle of the life and death of a marriage. (Figs. 22 - 24). Alongside articles on cookery, interior decoration and health, more humorous visual diversions were offered by a satirical take of a modern Happy Families card game, and a guide to what your legs reveal about your personality. (Figs. 25 - 27). Towards the back pages a ‘Further Reading’ section provided a bibliography of useful literature for those who wanted to pursue featured topics in greater depth.

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<sup>64</sup> Penny Vincenzi, “One woman in her day”, *Nova*, (March 1965), pp., 74-78

<sup>65</sup> This detailing of ‘costumes’ anticipates the performativity of Caroline Baker’s fashion pages for *Nova* in the 1970s, discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>66</sup> Miss M. L. Sunley, “Letter to the Editor”. *Nova*, (June 1965) p.136. The ambitions and aspirations of readers are discussed fully in Chapter Three.

However, reviewing the launch for *The Guardian* in March 1965, Labour politician and journalist Lena Jeger MP was less convinced.<sup>67</sup> She welcomed the idea of a new kind of magazine for women but found nothing new in *Nova*'s editorial contributions:

Who is the new kind of woman? ... She isn't expected to read other papers much, otherwise she would wonder what on earth was new about that cherished cook Elizabeth David writing about cooking; label expert Elizabeth Gudry writing about labels; moralizing expert Monica Furlong on, of course, morality; that lay antagonist of the medical profession Brian Inglis writes (surprise, surprise) on doctors and adultery. ...are there no new writers for the new woman and no new subjects? The more serious content comes from Julian Huxley and magistrate Alma Birk. Perhaps the trouble is that as soon as we are really serious, there is no subject which men cannot share with us? ... But there ought to be a place for "*Nova*" ... and I hope it will soon find that elusive combination of sense and concern with diversion and sociability which the contesting Marthas and Marys in us all can do with.<sup>68</sup>

But for Harry Fieldhouse this was precisely the point of the magazine; this kind of writing may have already existed, but as he argued, it did not exist in a women's magazine. In *The World's Press News*, *Nova*'s editorial rationale was explained:

What is there for women like this to read? No end of housekeeping and fashion items, escapism unlimited, and reliably happy endings. The standard explanation is that an intelligent woman can always read what an intelligent man reads - but does she always have to digest the *New Statesman*, skim through the *British Medical Journal*, fillet *New Society* and wade through *The Times* just because her horizons don't stop at furnishing hints or royal gossip? ... we believe she is hungry for a magazine of her own, one that looks at life

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<sup>67</sup> Lena Jeger (1915-2007) was MP for Holborn and St Pancras South from 1953-1959 and again from 1964-1979 when she became a Life Peer. Jeger sponsored David Steel's Abortion Law Reform Act of 1967. She also campaigned extensively for equal rights and pay for women, and independence for Cyprus, against capital punishment and apartheid, and wrote about the health risks of smoking.

<sup>68</sup> Jeger's review was sharply critical of the design and format of the magazine as well 'Who is the new kind of woman? She is obviously very strong because "*Nova*" on my kitchen scales weighs one pound ten ounces. She doesn't go to work standing up on the bus or train, because "*Nova*" is too slippery to hold.' Lena Jeger, "New Magazine", *The Guardian*, (Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1965), p. 18

from her own attitude, and ranges over her many interests between two covers ... It is not an implied criticism of existing women's magazines, but an assertion of the emergence of readers with new requirements.<sup>69</sup>

Reviewing *Nova*'s first issue a week later in her *Observer* column, journalist Katherine Whitehorn congratulated *Nova*'s approach:

It brings up the whole question of what women's journalism really is - apart from the technicalities of pudding and polish. I think it is not a matter of writing, but of attitude; and that any magazine that is going to succeed with women must know what intrigues women ... I don't really know what they mean by the new magazine for the new woman, but it might be a magazine for the woman who doesn't read magazines.<sup>70</sup>

Whitehorn agreed with Jeger, that in part *Nova* did present the usual round up of names on their favourite subjects, but also pointed out the very necessary relationship between known writers, advertisers and editorial space. In fact it was the inclusion of 'good writers' that had attracted many readers. Catherine Horwood was introduced to *Nova* by her mother and they shared their enjoyment of the magazine:

We knew that the people who were writing for them were very good. Maybe I picked that up from my Mother, but a lot of the writers that they used were names that she knew and respected as writers. So that contributed to the feeling that this was something special. That the by-lines were by good, solid journalists ... The sort of women you'd expect to write on the Women's Page of the *Guardian*.<sup>71</sup>

That *Nova* should be *read* and not just flicked through was crucial in a magazine for 'intelligent' women. Letters to the Editor in the first few months expressed enthusiasm:

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<sup>69</sup> Harry Fieldhouse " 'Nova': The thinking behind the novelty", by, *The World's Press News*, (12 March 1965), p. 44

<sup>70</sup> Whitehorn, K., p.31

<sup>71</sup> Catherine Horwood, *Interview with the Author*, (2005)

My 13-year old daughter asked me to buy last month's issue and we both agreed it was the best thing we'd read ... For me one of the nicest things about the magazine is that it really needs *reading* and thinking about.

(Letter to the Editor from Mrs P. Hall, Oxon. *Nova*, July 1965).<sup>72</sup>

Lengthy and well researched articles would be central to *Nova's* editorial policy. *Nova's* editorial had significant freedom of expression and writers were given space for articles up to five thousand words in length a factor which itself would later attract such key cultural commentators as Germaine Greer and Susan Sontag writing on male pin-ups and the construction of ideal beauty in the media.<sup>73</sup> Readers were quick to identify and celebrate *Nova's* difference, as this letter to the editor, published in the fourth issue of the magazine demonstrates:

It's terrific, it's stupendous, and to think I might have missed it had I not changed my hairdresser! *Nova* has finally convinced me that I am not odd, queer or peculiar. At 53 ... I am a grandmother ... mother ... and have a job ... Your magazine is the answer to the intelligent woman's need for the kind of reading she wants ... it has given me fresh courage to continue doing all the things I still want to do, but had begun to feel discouraged about.

(Letter to the Editor from Mrs Hilda Kitson, Lancs. *Nova*, June 1965).<sup>74</sup>

Despite the warm reception detailed in reader's letters, and a largely positive critical response, IPC Deputy Chairman Hugh Cudlipp was less impressed with the *Nova's* first issues; sales had not grown and the magazine needed a stronger visual and editorial identity.<sup>75</sup> In September 1965 Harry Fieldhouse was removed from position and Dennis Hackett was appointed *Nova's* new Editor. Dennis Hackett arrived with an excellent pedigree as Deputy Editor of *Queen* magazine and under his creative leadership *Nova* perfected its particular formula; striking and unusual cover design,

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<sup>72</sup> Mrs P. Hall, "Letter to the Editor" *Nova*, Issue 5 (July 1965) p. 128. See Chapter Three for further discussion of a shared reading between mothers and daughters.

<sup>73</sup> Germaine Greer "What do we want from male pin-ups?" *Nova*, (October 1973) and Susan Sontag "Have you lied about your age today?" *Nova*, (September, 1973). See Chapters Two and Three for further discussion of these articles.

<sup>74</sup> Mrs Hilda Kitson, "Letter to the Editor", *Nova*, (June 1965) p.136

<sup>75</sup> Sales dropped from an estimated 152,000 to 146,136 in 1965. Audit Bureau of Circulations

controversial issues and in depth articles, sexy and innovative fashion features, bold graphic design, and luxurious pages of full colour advertising. Writer Irma Kurtz recalled the impact of Hackett's appointment:

It was he as editor who understood that like every new woman before, the new woman of the 1960s saw herself as sexy as hell and spiritually at odds with every other magazine in the prosperous IPC group, heavy on knitting patterns and 100 original things to do with Cox's Orange Pippins.<sup>76</sup>

But by this time IPC had re-launched another of its titles to appeal to the 'new woman' under Ernest Dichter's guidance. *Woman's Mirror* was a failing weekly magazine published by Fleetway. *Woman's Mirror* was initially launched in 1958 and was re-launched in its modernised 'WM' title in September 1965 as the magazine that 'respects, understands, entertains'.<sup>77</sup>

Printed in colour and black and white on low cost newsprint paper *WM* contained an interesting combination of topical journalism, comment and serialised fiction, set against the staple fare of fashion, cookery and advice. Pictured on the cover of an issue published on November 13<sup>th</sup> 1965, sat a young girl dressed in blue jeans, anorak and headscarf and perched on top of her suitcase with a newspaper clutched in her lap as she studied a London 'A to Z'. (Fig. 28). 'What happens to girls when they go to London?' ran the headline and inside author Andrea Newman's article 'The Bedsit Jungle' reported on the two weeks she spent interviewing young women living in the Earls Court area of London.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Irma Kurtz, *Dear London: Notes from the Big City*, London: Forth Estate, 1997, p. 105

<sup>77</sup> The magazine was formerly known as *Woman's Sunday Mirror* from 1955. Cynthia White argues it was chosen as 'a testing ground for new ideas and approaches which it was hoped ultimately to introduce into the weekly section of the women's press'. White quotes Clive Irving who commented in the *World's Press News* at the time of its re-launch 'What is happening to *Woman's Mirror* is a good indication oh how we see the future women's market.' Irving, Clive, *World's Press News*, (September 17<sup>th</sup> 1965), pp., 10-12 Quoted in White, C., p. 224

<sup>78</sup> 'There is something about bed sitter life, with its freedom and scope for meeting people, which, if you're young and single, is almost irresistible. Maybe not for my daughter when I have one (we are all cowards at heart), but certainly for all my friend's daughters. It's a challenge. It's rough. It's fun. It's worth a try.' Andrea Newman, "The Bedsit Jungle", *WM*, (13<sup>th</sup> November 1965), p. 15. Photographs by Peter Pugh-Cook. See Chapter Three for a discussion of reader mobility and the lure of London.

The regular 'Comment' column gave voice to a range of viewpoints, under the banner 'Something to Say.'<sup>79</sup> In this issue journalist and campaigner Wendy Cooper argued for reforms in the law on legal abortions which were, she argued, a case of 'Man's law, woman's life.'<sup>80</sup> The following pages contained a two page illustrated instruction on how to give artificial resuscitation, advice from Agony Aunt Marjorie Proops and a knitting pattern for a sweater dress with contrasting stockings and hood.<sup>81</sup> A subscription ad on the back page announced *WM* as 'Your window on the world.'<sup>82</sup> Alongside regular fashion and beauty features, profiles of theatre and the arts and the miscellany of 'swop shop' listings, recipes and tips on home decoration, *WM* gave the reader a diverse and substantial reading content for the week ahead.<sup>83</sup> The magazine's central pages were occupied by the first serialised instalment of 'Dibs: In Search of Self', the case study of the treatment of an emotionally deprived and extremely withdrawn child by psychotherapist Virginia M. Axline.<sup>84</sup> Fiction was provided by the final instalment of Mary Howard's novel 'The Interloper.'<sup>85</sup>

The advertisements inside *WM* for soap, girdles, and baby food belied the journalistic content of the publication, but they may have been a good marker of the magazine it became, for just two years after its re-launch it was effectively closed in an merger

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<sup>79</sup> The "Something to Say" column ran with the caveat; 'the views expressed in this column are not necessarily those of the Editor'. It demonstrated a commitment to airing both sides of the debate; 'Next week: The case against reform of the abortion laws.' *WM*, Ibid, p. 7

<sup>80</sup> 'This 104 year-old law drives some 100,000 women every year to seek illegal abortions, which very often are carried out under appalling conditions and sometimes result in permanent ill-health, or permanent sterility and occasionally even death ... It is time to replace an outmoded law, evaded so safely by the rich and so dangerously by the poor. A law which forces ordinary, decent women to resort to crime, and doctors to something very like conspiracy.' Wendy Cooper, "Something to Say: Man's law, woman's life", *WM*, Ibid, pp. 5-7.

<sup>81</sup> *WM*, Ibid. "Can you give the kiss of life?" Illustrated instructions with pencil drawings by Bill Banks, pp., 18-19. "Fireworks!" 'Knitting patterns 'to kindle a blaze of warmth and approval whenever you wear them.' Pp., 16-17, 60

<sup>82</sup> *WM* subscription advertisement, p. 63

<sup>83</sup> *WM*, Ibid. "Comeback" by C Robert Jennings, pp., 20-21. "Faces Here & Now" by Ray Nunn pp. 57. 'Herring-Bone Harvest' fashion and beauty by Prudence Glynn, drawings by Barbara Hulaniki, pp.,22-23. "Striped for Action" by Prudence Glynn, photography by Michael Cooper pp., 50-51. "Woman's World" by Margaret Melrose, pp., 26-27. "In a Wonderful Stew" by Katie Stewart, photography by Frank Coppins, pp., 24-24. Horoscope by Francesco Waldner pp., 46-47. "Swopshop" by Elizabeth Allen pp., 48-49. "Miss Secretary" and "The things you say!" pp., 62-63.

<sup>84</sup> Virginia M. Axline, "Dibs: In Search of Self", *WM*, Ibid, pp., 28-29, 31, 40, 42, 44-45, 46-47, 48-49. Axline is broadly recognised as the originator of non-directed 'play therapy'. *Dibs: In Search of Self* was originally published in 1964 by Penguin.

<sup>85</sup> '...their kiss, their clinging encirclement of each other's bodies was a passionate reassurance'. Mary Howard "The Interloper", illustration by Walter Wyles. *WM* Ibid, pp., 34-35, 37. 39, 52-53, 55, 59,. Published in 1967 by Collins.

with *Woman* in 1967.<sup>86</sup> Whilst the magazine clearly had readers, there were not enough of them to secure its independent future. *WM*'s closing six monthly circulation figure of 858,000 can be compared with *Woman*'s sales for the same period of 3,005,000.<sup>87</sup> Contemporary analysis by journalist Katherine Whitehorn suggested that the format had been too 'modern' for the intended domestic weekly market and that the young housewife *WM* tried to address had sought her domestic advice elsewhere. Its re-launch cover, from 18<sup>th</sup> September 1965, featuring a close up of an embryo in the womb, proved too shocking in both concept and image.<sup>88</sup> (Fig. 29) Whilst the issue sold out in three days, criticism from the trade press ensued with one Editor remarking that 'women are certainly more knowledgeable than they were – but this does not mean they want to see pictures of dead babies on the covers of their magazines.'<sup>89</sup>

### Designing the Magazine: Content and Image

The following points deserve particular praise: the good paper, clear print and artistic layout, clear sections of uninterrupted reading matter, the absence of any coyness, variety of content and the acknowledgement that the modern woman has a brain beneath her hairdo.

(Letter to the Editor from Mrs Valerie H. Howard, N2. *Nova*, May 1965).<sup>90</sup>

*Nova*'s own editorial difference was signalled by its visual distinction to other magazines on the newsstands and its monthly format allowed for more radical experiments. Harry Fieldhouse had stated early on that *Nova*'s cover design would offer an alternative to other women's magazines with their 'perpetual smiling female face.'<sup>91</sup> Many readers responded to the impact of its front covers recalling that,

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<sup>86</sup> *WM* closed with its merger into *Woman* in 1967.

<sup>87</sup> Circulation figures (000's) for the period January – June 1966, from White, C. Appendix IV.

<sup>88</sup> Katherine Whitehorn, "Of Mags and Men", in *The Observer*, Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 1970, p.26

<sup>89</sup> Anonymous 'Editor' quoted in C. White, p. 225. In fact the photographs published on the front cover of the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1965 issue of *WM* detailed the development of a living embryo 'How a baby grows in the womb' and had been previously published in the American *Time* magazine. Christopher Booker, "Mirror Images", in *The Spectator*, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1965, p.5

<sup>90</sup> Mrs Valerie H. Howard, "Letter to the Editor", *Nova*, Issue 3 (May 1965) p.130

<sup>91</sup> Fieldhouse, H., p.44. Of all 127 issues published from 1965-1975 women appear in some form on 72% of them, however, unlike the traditional women's magazines these representations vary greatly. As the sole subject of the cover, images of a woman make up only 60% of all covers, images of men make up 16%, images of couples, comprise 8%, children 7% family units 5%, and of inanimate objects

‘visually, it was different to all the other magazines available at the time, especially the cover ... it stood out on the magazine stand, it was new and fresh.’<sup>92</sup> A magazine’s wrapping signals the promise of a certain type of content, and the editorial treatment of it, *Nova*’s often daring and unconventional take on cover design proved to be an effective selling point.

*Nova*’s January 1966 issue presented a typically provocative cover; on its empty white page we gaze down on the photograph of a young black girl in a party dress shyly looking out to the audience. (Fig. 30). Underneath the image, in bold type, ran the message: ‘You may think I look cute but would you want to live next door to my Mummy and Daddy?’ Inside an eight page feature explored race relations and immigration in Sixties Britain accompanied by a photo story and a ‘Test your Misconceptions’ quiz.<sup>93</sup> *Nova* presented its view on colour prejudice:

It could be that on the threshold of 1966 you are still in need of a good resolution and the one we suggest is in fact good for all years: face the facts. The little girl on the cover is one of them. She represents a particular problem about which much has been said but little done ... there is colour prejudice in Britain and it is of an order which requires a Race Relations Bill to legislate against it.<sup>94</sup>

The article inside explored race relations in Bradford, which in 1966 had an immigrant population of one in twenty, compared to the national average of one in sixty-eight. The accompanying ‘Test your misconceptions quiz’ probed its readers: ‘A black man is more virile than a white man: True or False? Coloured people have lower IQs than white people: True or False?’ The results column suggested that with a winning score the reader was ‘unprejudiced and very well informed’ compared to the losing reader who was ‘so full of prejudice and misconceptions that you need to see a psychiatrist.’ The quiz offered all readers some hope however: ‘You may now realise

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4%. Regardless of gender images of celebrities occupy 17% of the total covers. For more detailed discussion of examples of cover design see Chapter Three.

<sup>92</sup> June Thornton, *Interview with the Author*, (2000)

<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 2 : Editorial for further discussion of this article

<sup>94</sup> Anon., ‘Well would you want to live next door to her Mummy and Daddy?’ *Nova*, January 1966, p.14

that you're prejudiced. If you face up to these prejudices, they will weaken. That way lies progress.'<sup>95</sup> Whilst the intention of the quiz was, as its title suggested, designed to 'pinpoint misconceptions, which, logically arise from incorrect or inadequate information. Prejudice, after all, stems from ignorance – accidental or wilful', reader response was critical.<sup>96</sup> In a review of *Nova's* achievements published in the magazine's 100<sup>th</sup> issue, Editor Gillian Cooke reported that response to the article was 'seismic: half outraged, half in support.'<sup>97</sup> An examination of 'Letters to the Editor' in the months following the article's publication reveals that the quiz seemed to have missed its mark for those readers who wrote in to complain that it was misleading, factually incorrect and even trivial. As this letter to the editor from Mr J F Sweeney encapsulates:

You commendably devoted your main feature to the serious problem of race relations in Britain today. Your treatment, by and large, is frank and to the point, and it is therefore the more distressing to see the gimcrack test with which you conclude your study. Its most serious shortcoming is that it is a test of knowledge, whereas racial prejudice is an attitude.<sup>98</sup>

The editorial defence published two months later offered reassurance to readers, some of whom were perhaps uncomfortable with their results, explaining that:

...the quiz was never intended or claimed to be a psychological gauge. The facts given are well documented (we quoted reference books); the statistics, based on available figures, were taken from Richard Hooper's scrupulously fair book, 'Colour in Britain.'<sup>99</sup>

However the reader had expressed a legitimate criticism and it was one that demonstrated his engagement with the issues raised by the article; the ultimate objective for *Nova's* editorial staff.

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<sup>95</sup> Anon., 'Test your misconceptions', *Nova*, January 1966, p.21

<sup>96</sup> Editor in 'Letters', *Nova*, April 1966, p.137

<sup>97</sup> Cooke, G. 'Nova for the 100<sup>th</sup> time', *Nova*, July 1973, p.74

<sup>98</sup> Mr J F Sweeney, London, in 'Letters', *Nova*, April 1966, p.137

<sup>99</sup> Editor in 'Letters', *Nova*, April 1966 p.137)

1966 was a stabilizing year that had included a number of staff changes and a price increase.<sup>100</sup> *Nova*'s circulation had peaked at nearly 160,000 in the first half of 1966, gradually declined until its closing figures of 75,000 in 1975.<sup>101</sup> This audience of readers included some men, who were also attracted to its innovative design and the diversity of its content. Figures from the National Readership Survey of 1967 reveal that with 28.5% *Nova* had at that time the highest proportion of male readers of any women's weekly or monthly magazine.<sup>102</sup> One such reader was Michael Desmond. Desmond was an art student studying in Canberra, Australia when he started reading *Nova* in 1967, he was drawn to the 'look' of the magazine and felt it addressed him as a male reader:

It had a hip and modern approach to stories in tandem with the visual approach. It was more inclusive than customary women's fare, mostly I think because it was contemporary and issue based more than just fashion. [It was] inclusive generationally as well as current and of the moment.<sup>103</sup>

Attracting this male readership was a deliberate strategy because *Nova*'s early editors and contributors did not believe in separating out 'women's interests.' Associate Editor Alma Birk described *Nova* as 'a general magazine with a feminine bias' and pointed out her work was aimed at men as well because:

writing for women only would be preaching to the converted ... its natural for women to be interested in social reform, but it is all part of society's structure.

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<sup>100</sup> In 1966 the £500 million copies of women's magazines sold in Britain generated approximately £30m of advertising for publishers. In 1967 with an expected shortfall in advertising revenue, publishers took advantage of new laws allowing for greater pricing freedom and by November the prices of 74 magazines, journals and newspapers were raised. Mostly affecting women's magazines, the price hike was justified in response to higher production costs and increases in the price of paper and printing services, rates for advertising space also raised. IPC increased the price of 11 of its publications resulting in an estimated £30,000 - £40,000 increase in revenue however this was set against a drop of approximately £2m in advertising revenue. At a circulation of 153,778 for the first half of 1967 *Nova* raised its price from three shillings to three shilling and sixpence. Warwick Brophy, "Why magazines are costing more", *The Times*, (Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 1967), p.23

<sup>101</sup> See Appendix. White, C., Appendix V, based on Audit Bureau of Circulations, and Braithwaite, B. & Barrell, B. 1979, Appendix III for last published circulations for deceased titles.

<sup>102</sup> This male readership was second only to the music magazine *Rave* which had a 35.8% share and in comparison *Vogue*, similarly priced has 13.7% male readership, and the cheaper *Honey* with only 8.5% See White, C., p. 224

<sup>103</sup> Mr Michael Desmond. Remembering Nova Questionnaire (04/05/05)

I do not approve of the tendency to put things in separate compartments which ends by then being downgraded.<sup>104</sup>

Alma Birk was instrumental in shaping *Nova's* editorial remit and after co-founding *Nova* and fulfilling her appointment as Editorial Advisor she continued to hold the position of Associate Editor until 1968. She admitted that she was herself, not a reader of women's magazines, preferring instead the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator*. As Linda Grant explains:

She had realised was that between the agony columns of *Woman* and the fashion pages of *Vogue* were thousands of women in desperate straits, for whom marriage was not working out as a story with a happy ending. They were educated women stuck at home and they were women who had never realised they had any potential at all. It was to these readers that *Nova* was dedicated, in her own mind.<sup>105</sup>

As Labour MP Alma Birk was, at age 42, the youngest person to hold a life peerage. Her article 'Why I am angry' published in *Nova's* August 1967 issue, could be seen as a political manifesto, identifying issues such as divorce laws, child welfare, corporal punishment and poverty. Birk acknowledged the 'difficult dichotomy' of the working mother and suggested that 'equality in sexual behaviour is no more a fact than equal pay.'<sup>106</sup> However she revealed in an interview with *The Times* in the same month that she did not consider herself a feminist because 'to be an old-fashioned feminist today would be stepping up to the sex war and putting us back to segregation.'<sup>107</sup>

*Nova's* second Editor Dennis Hackett reinforced *Nova's* 'strong bi-sexual personality' with his belief that 'at this level there can be no distinction between editing for male and female readers', he treated the magazine not as a women's periodical, but instead

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<sup>104</sup> Alma Birk, interviewed in Valerie Knox, "Latest Ladies of the House", *The Times* (7<sup>th</sup> August 1967), p.9

<sup>105</sup> Linda Grant, *Sexing the Millenium*, London: Harper Collins, p. 100

<sup>106</sup> Alma Birk, interviewed in Valerie Knox, "Latest Ladies of the House", *The Times* (7<sup>th</sup> August 1967), p.9

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

‘a serious magazine aiming at a high literary standard which would be acceptable to both sexes.’<sup>108</sup>

Key to *Nova*’s difference as a women’s magazine was its distinct art direction. Harri Peccinotti, a French photographer and designer who had previously been involved with German avant garde arts magazine *Twen*, was appointed Art Editor until 1966 when he took over as consultant, contributing significantly to layout and fashion photography until the magazine’s closure in 1975. With its large format and dedication to the design of both words and pictures on the printed page *Nova* earned itself a reputation for being visually stylish and innovative.<sup>109</sup> (Fig 31 & 32).

*Nova* was not simply reporting fashion it was creating it. *Nova*’s first appointment of Fashion Editor was original and ambitious; Molly Parkin was a painter with no previous experience of editing. (Fig. 33). Parkin injected a distinct visual aesthetic to the magazine’s fashion pages with a trademark emphasis on colour, pattern and shape, often relegating the actual clothes to a secondary position.<sup>110</sup>

In her autobiography Parkin recalls: ‘I had been allowed, indeed encouraged, at *Nova* to approach fashion with some degree of humour. I didn’t feel *Vogue* had its tongue sufficiently in its cheek’<sup>111</sup> Due to irreconcilable creative conflicts Parkin was fired in 1967, but her influence, and legacy were critical. She established *Nova*’s fashion pages as cutting edge and dynamic and these objectives were continued by her successor, Caroline Baker who, as a result of another unconventional appointment, made the leap from ‘Home Assistant’ to Fashion Editor in October 1967. (Fig. 34).

Baker continued to explore fashion with the same experimental outlook and visual impact by creating forward thinking eclectic fashion features sourcing material and ideas from second hand markets and lesser known young designers.<sup>112</sup> From her initial

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<sup>108</sup> White, C., p. 224

<sup>109</sup> Harri Peccinotti’s design strategies are analysed in Chapter Two.

<sup>110</sup> See Chapter 2: Fashion & Design for further analysis of Parkin’s fashion editorial.

<sup>111</sup> Molly Parkin, *Moll: The Making of Molly Parkin, An Autobiography* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993), p. 182.

<sup>112</sup> Caroline Baker, *Interview with Author* (2007). See Chapter Two for a full account of Baker’s work and an in-depth analysis of *Nova*’s fashion pages

appointment Baker's remit from her editor Dennis Hackett was to do something 'different':

At that time it was very early days for magazines and Fashion Editors. The word 'Stylist' hadn't been coined ... and most of the Fashion Editors were rather society women because fashion was very society-driven. And I think, in retrospect, that *Nova* was very, what is now known as 'street'. My editor Denis Hackett said to me 'I do not want you to do what is in *Vogue* or *Queen Magazine* ... or what's in *The Times*. I just want different fashion'. Which actually, because I wasn't wealthy, I really was into.<sup>113</sup>

Baker's fashion features demonstrated wit and originality. The successful relationships between fashion editor, art director and photographer resulted in original looks and ideas which caught the mood of the moment and predicted fashions before they hit the catwalk or shops. As I explore in Chapter Two, 'The Army Surplus War-game' from September 1971 for example, featured 'battlefield chic' cheaply sources from surplus stores and pre-empted the khaki craze by at least a year.

### **Developing Readers**

In May 1969 and after a number of staffing changes, Dennis Hackett relinquished his role as Editor to take a more senior position on the board at IPC. Whilst Hackett would continue to have oversight of *Nova* he was replaced as Editor by Peter Crookston, who made the immediate decision to appoint David Hillman as Art Director.<sup>114</sup> Both had made their names on the path breaking *Sunday Times Magazine*, Britain's first colour supplement published in Britain from 1962.<sup>115</sup> Like *Nova*, the *Sunday Times* supplement was an important and influential publication, which reflected contemporary shifts in attitude and culture and served to crystallise this period in both images and text. Its mixed gender readership was young, educated, middle class and left of centre, precisely the same readers *Nova* aimed to attract. *The*

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<sup>113</sup> Baker, C. (2007)

<sup>114</sup> Peter Crookston is first named as editor on the May 1969 issue. David Hillman joined him on the combined June/July issue.

<sup>115</sup> David Hillman had graduated from the London College of Printing in the July of 1962 and was working for the Sunday Times Magazine by September of that year, employed by Mark Boxer to art direct and to edit the environmental section.

*Sunday Times* supplement did not separate out ‘feminine interests’ in a women’s page, but offered a ‘Design for Living’ features where readers could find pages of fashion, contemporary design and cookery ideas. As Art Director Michael Rand acknowledged, glossy magazines such as the *Sunday Times Magazine* and *Nova* were ‘unashamedly a vehicle for attracting a new rich vein of colour advertising’ for it was the income generated by this that allowed for the pages of illustration and documentary photography and provided space for detailed features on political and cultural events of the day.<sup>116</sup> With the appointment of Peter Crookston *Nova*’s pages reveal a noticeable shift towards intricately type set, text-only articles and political reportage, clearly demonstrating both this newspaper heritage, and a love for the look of words on a page. (Fig. 33).

In 1969 the novelist AS Byatt was appointed as literary advisor to Crookston, a role which involved contributing to, and commissioning work for the ‘Appraisal’ section, which gave a space of 9000 words to new writing and reviews.<sup>117</sup> In its first airing Mary McCarthy reappraised George Orwell and Byatt wrote a piece on ‘the anxiety of middle class liberals’, who were, as *The Times* was quick to quip in its announcement of Byatt’s post, ‘the backbone of *Nova*’s readership.’<sup>118</sup> Indeed, according to figures from the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising the majority of *Nova*’s readers fell into the ‘A/B’ social grade category, as *Nova*’s ‘Dummy Issue’ had anticipated; they were upper middle class or middle class and in the higher or intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupational category.<sup>119</sup>

However whilst the model for a ‘bi-sexual’ readership was taken on board enthusiastically by the *Nova* team, IPC management were also looking for ways to increase readership and expand advertising expenditure. A readership of both sexes may have been desirable in principle, but it meant that advertisers had trouble

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<sup>116</sup> Michael Rand, *Interview with Author*, (1997). See Alice Beard, “Design For Living: the Sunday Times Magazine 1962-1975” (Unpublished MA Thesis, Royal College of Art, 1997). This commitment to photojournalism created a showcase for photographers such as Don McCullin.

<sup>117</sup> AS Byatt (b. 1936) published her first novel ‘The Shadow of the Sun’ in 1964. Byatt was appointed as Literary Advisor in February 1969 and her first listing as editorial staff appeared on the joint May/June issue.

<sup>118</sup> PHS, “A S Byatt’s fresh appointment” *The Times*, (18<sup>th</sup> February 1969), p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> I.P.A. Readership Survey January-December 1967. For further use and analysis of these figures see Trevor Millum, *Images of Women: Advertising in Women’s Magazines*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1975

targeting their products to a specific audience - should they be promoting cars, tobacco and luxury holidays as they did in the Sunday supplements, or the hosiery, cosmetics and domestic appliances which could be found in other women's magazines? The combined May/June issue from 1969 contained editorial features and a number of advertisements aimed directly at male readers. (Fig. 36).<sup>120</sup> In keeping with the heady controversy *Nova* aimed at, the cover featured a bare chested man, the black actor Jim Brown, star of action films such as *The Dirty Dozen* (1967) and *Riot* (1969).<sup>121</sup> However the cover line was explicitly addressed to a female reader: 'If you find this man attractive you have been exposed to what psychiatrists call role confusion. But be not afraid. It simply means you're all woman.'<sup>122</sup> Inside Catherine Storr's feature 'The age of the hard man' probed: 'Why are we so eager to reject decades of impeccable gentleman-heroes for a new generation of iron-fisted uglies? ... Diagnosis by a psychiatrist: It's the heterosexual backlash.'<sup>123</sup> (Fig. 37). Demonstrating the magazine's mixed gender readership, Peter Martin addressed his article 'What's a man worth?' to the male reader and presented him with a portrait of the value of work being undertaken by men in their professions as doctors, teachers and probation . (Fig. 38).

The majority of the advertising in this issue was for cosmetics, beauty products, hair colorants and fragrance.<sup>124</sup> These adverts were clearly targeted at a female readership, as Gala cosmetics demonstrated, to 'a girl like you.'<sup>125</sup> (Fig. 39). However the issue also contained a series of advertisements aimed at the male consumer. For example, a Lancome promotion for Balafre aftershave pointed out to the male reader: 'You choose your own cigars... so buy Balafre for yourself.' And a full page ad for

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<sup>120</sup> The May issue was delayed due to industrial disputes and was finally combined and published with June as a joint issue. It included a revised "Contents" page as a card insert, expanded content and even two horoscopes so that "Astra Nova" devotees could check what happened to them in May as well as looking to the future for June. Although David Hillman is not credited as Art Director this was the first issue he worked on.

<sup>121</sup> *Dirty Dozen* directed by Robert Aldrich (1967), *Riot* directed by Buzz Kulik (1969).

<sup>122</sup> *Nova* (May/June 1969), Cover

<sup>123</sup> Catherine Storr, "The age of the hard man", *Nova* Ibid, pp., 62-67

<sup>124</sup> Forty advertisements for beauty and cosmetics products can be found in the May/June 1969 issue. Also contained within this issue were thirteen advertisements that could be considered gender 'neutral', including those for G-Plan and Ercol furniture, and a number of different tobacco and alcohol brands.

<sup>125</sup> 'Gala is a girl like you. Gala is a girl who knows where she is going, and how she's going to get there. Knows the look she wants, and how she's going to get it. (Knows she looks terrific.) Who needs a diagram? We just make the make-up - you make the face.' Colour advertisement for Gala, *Nova* May/June 1969, pp., 38-39

Whitbread beer delved into the late night drinking behaviour of the male reader. (Fig. 40).<sup>126</sup> Most notable however were the advertisements for men's fashion that ran across three separate full colour pages of the magazine. The first advert for Austin Reed featured a young man 'at work' standing in front of camera equipment wearing an Austin Reed 'Hathaway' striped shirt and a cameraman's eye patch.<sup>127</sup> The second advert to appear played to men's body insecurities: (Fig. 41).

All knitwear looks fine on a fine figure of a man. So most knitwear makers kid themselves into thinking that we all look like Greek gods, because it's easier that way. But the fact is; most of us don't look like Greek gods, most of us were not in the front row when looks were given out...<sup>128</sup>

Featuring an assortment of differently aged and differently sized men the advert offered a solution by promising that 'Kilspindie gives every man a fighting chance.' Finally, in a role reversal of the male gaze, a promotion for 'Tonik' by Dormeuil presented a sober suited man scrutinised under the appraising eye of a female musketeer attired in feathered hat and ruffled shirt and armed with a sword.<sup>129</sup> (Fig. 42).

A subscription advertisement a few months later acknowledged *Nova's* male readership explicitly: 'It expands the mind of the woman with a mind of her own (and her man reads it too).'<sup>130</sup> The representation of the 'new woman' as confident and dominant in these images might have offered fleeting alternative views of femininity, but overall advertising continued to perpetuate old stereotypes. Trevor Millum's Images of Women (1975) offered a systematic, contemporary account of advertising in women's magazines from his sample taken in 1969. In his conclusions he acknowledges that whilst *Nova* was the only magazine to offer an alternative view of women's roles, its editorial representation of the 'independent woman' was often in

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<sup>126</sup> The late night Whitbread drinker, pictured in pyjamas and dressing gown, is encouraged to save his marriage by investing in his own fridge, tucked away behind a book panelled wall of his library. In text?! Colour advertisement for Whitbread Beer, *Nova*, Ibid p.169

<sup>127</sup> Colour advertisement for Hathaway by Austin Reed *Nova*, Ibid, p.5

<sup>128</sup> Colour advertisement for Kilspindie knitwear, *Nova*, Ibid, p.10

<sup>129</sup> '...cool male unruffled Tonik, this impeccable Mohair foils every ruffled situation: thrives on them. Parries the rude thrusts of jet-age living with aristocratic detachment...ask your tailor about Tonik Colour advertisement for Tonik by Dormeuil, *Nova*, Ibid., p. 151

<sup>130</sup> "Never be without Nova." Subscription advertisement, *Nova* (December 1969), p. 118

conflict with the more conventional images of hostess and mannequin to be found in the magazine's advertising: 'In this instance the advertising is acting clearly to bring into line an unusual attitude (self-consciously 'liberated') which the magazine's content – in part – attempts to offer. This adds ... conflict ... in *Nova* and makes its world even more precarious.'<sup>131</sup> I would argue that readers can actively navigate their course through such apparently contradictory terrain, and what my interviews have revealed is the delight in the new and more varied versions of femininity that *Nova* offered them, as I discuss in Chapter Two.

*Nova*'s mixed readership continued to provoke concern for IPC, but it wasn't a simple equation between readership figures, circulation and advertising revenues. As previously discussed, *Nova*'s launch had coincided with the surge in newspaper colour supplements; they shared the same readers, and often the same contributors, but by contrast the supplements reached much higher audience numbers. As *Nova* Editor Gillian Cooke explained:

They were aimed at very much the same audience, but couples. We were doing almost 50:50 men and women reading the magazine, and the supplements were doing the same thing. ...[but] their numbers were the same as the newspapers - they had huge circulations! ... A lot of their writers and artists worked with us as well; there was a huge cross over. But it did us no good at all because we simply couldn't match it in any way. They were influenced by us so they were doing some of the things that we were doing, we were doing some of the things that they were doing – obviously because we were using some of the same people, we were in the same territory. So it was bad for advertising.<sup>132</sup>

At IPC an Editorial Director could be in charge of two or three very different titles. *Nova* was managed by Jude Rogers, who was also responsible for *Woman's Own* magazine. David Hillman explained that this inevitably resulted in a clash of ideas and interests:

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<sup>131</sup> Millum, T. p.177

<sup>132</sup> Gillian Cooke, *Interview with Author*, (2008)

We were on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor and *Woman's Own* was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, and [Rogers] would have a morning Editorial meeting with *Woman's Own* and it would be: 'We're going to do 6 pages on the Queen's Hat', or 'What the Queen Mum and the Corgis do at the weekend'. Then he'd come upstairs and we'd say: 'Oh, we're going to do a woman having a breast op' ...because he was ex Editor of *Woman's Own*, it was actually in his blood to do this commercial magazine.<sup>133</sup>

This creative conflict between editorial and management would be fought for the duration of *Nova's* publication, as I discuss in Chapter Three.

In 1967 *Nova* boasted a readership of nearly 160,000 but by the first half of 1970 this figure had dropped to 116,000.<sup>134</sup> In 1970 more changes were put in place to address this loss of revenue and the magazine was shifted to the management of Patricia Lambert, Publishing Director of IPC's 'Young Interest' division. Lambert's views were clear: magazines were 'a continuous and strongly influential determinant of social behaviour' and customer loyalty was reflected in sales:

It is a direct, alone, one-to-one relationship. A consumer magazine for women is uniquely strong in its personal influence, in which the reader has demonstrated her belief by regular purchase.<sup>135</sup>

It wasn't until 1970 that a woman was appointed to edit *Nova*. Gillian Cooke was enjoying a successful run as Editor of the popular teen magazine *Honey* also published by IPC and was consulted to advise on ways to improve *Nova's* circulation.<sup>136</sup> As an educated young professional Cooke was the embodiment of the 'new kind of woman' that *Nova* had sought to address, but with a full time career and a young family she confessed not to have time to, 'sit down and read the small print

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<sup>133</sup> Hillman, D, (2003)

<sup>134</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulation figures for *Nova* for the period July – December 1967 were 158,389 and January – June 1970 were 115,849. See Appendix.

<sup>135</sup> Patricia Lambert quoted in Sue Puddlefoot, "Continuous and strong influence on social behaviour", (*The Times*, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1971) p. 1

<sup>136</sup> Gillian Cooke's first job in journalism was aged sixteen as a 'Junior' in the Fashion Department at *Vanity Fair*. She worked there for eight years and was promoted to running 'Young Fashion'. She then edited *Woman and Home* for one year before being appointed Fashion Editor on *Honey* and eventually became its Editor for the final three years of her decade with the magazine.

... I flipped though it but at that time it was acres of solid text. I was interested in it obviously, and in theory I followed it, but I just didn't read it.' Asked to review the magazine, her advice to management was that *Nova* was too 'masculine' and that the dense pages of text were 'very daunting and uninviting.'<sup>137</sup>

Cooke was offered the job of Editor immediately after her first meeting with IPC but she declined, telling them she was very happy with her role on *Honey* and didn't want either the change or a new commitment. During this period staff were contracted to work for the publishing company, not a specific title and so IPC had the authority to move its staff to different magazines. After this initial consultation with management Cooke returned from holiday expecting to write up her report on *Nova* only to find she had been appointed its Editor, a position she held until the magazine folded five years later.<sup>138</sup> Results, in the form of increased circulation and advertising revenue, were expected very quickly. Initially IPC expected her to spread her working week between both magazines, editing them simultaneously. For Cooke this showed that 'that the management had no idea of what was involved in producing a magazine'.<sup>139</sup>

Associate Editor Alma Birk had expressed similar grievances during her tenure at *Nova* and explained how her work was constantly undermined by the opinions of managers (and their wives), with little respect for her professionalism:

The managing director would say to me, my wife says this, and that was hell. If you're an engineer or a doctor no one tells you their wives' opinions. It was as if running a magazine didn't need any particular skills at all and any old amateur could knock it and it would be given equal weight with everything else. I got really fed up with what people's wives thought of *Nova*.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Gillian Cooke, *Interview with Author* (2008). For example Catherine Storr's article on orgasms (January 1969) appears as full double pages of tense serif texts set in wide black border so that it reads like a book,

<sup>138</sup> Cooke, G. (2008). Gillian Cooke's appointment as editor of *Nova* made the news and was announced in Anon, "Latest Appointments", *The Times*, (Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 1970), p. 12.

<sup>139</sup> Cooke, G. (2008).

<sup>140</sup> Alma Birk quotes in Linda Grant, *Sexing the Millennium*, London: Harper Collins, p. 106. In her autobiography Irma Kurtz recalled similar experiences, describing her confrontation with an IPC 'big shot': "My wife..." Stone me, if she wasn't there with us, an apparition in Wellington boots, twin-set and granny's pearls. "...My wife was very upset by your piece in *Nova* last month, the one on sec-sue-ell stereotypes. Found it a bit strong..." Kurtz, Irma (1997) *Dear London: Notes From the Big City*, London: Fourth Estate, 1997, p.,107

Gillian Cooke took over after her predecessor, Editor Peter Crookston had been at the helm for just over one year. During his tenure *Nova* had seen its sales drop by nearly 19,000.<sup>141</sup> Cooke felt that under Crookston *Nova* had become ‘a very literary magazine with a very fine standard of writing, but it didn’t appeal to women, and it wasn’t presented as a women’s magazine.’<sup>142</sup> Art Director David Hillman who had arrived with Crookston from the *Sunday Times Magazine*, came to the same conclusions after his experiences working under Crookston:

We ended up both wanting to do a different magazine. He wanted to do *American Esquire* ... which was very wordy and usually had an illustration or photograph opening up the article, and then it would be page after page of text. And I just knew that, although the articles were good, you can’t sustain that. I mean, no one is interested in flicking through that many words ...it was too serious and too wordy. And I wanted to do something that was much more outrageous and flamboyant.<sup>143</sup>

Crookston and Hillman’s relationship had become ‘very stormy’ with Hillman adamant that he didn’t want to continue with what had become *Nova*’s recognisable visual style, defined by the distinctive font called ‘*Nova*’ that Harri Peccinotti had created in 1965 specifically for the magazine. This attention to the formal qualities of design in *Nova* had received criticism, with one journalist complaining in 1969 that the magazine had ‘pictures and type-patterns subduing the words on every page.’<sup>144</sup> Hillman was ‘much more interested in making the images working harder with the text rather than just trying to fill pages with enormous type.’<sup>145</sup>

In his study of the production techniques of Magazine Design (1969), Ruari McLean had also noted *Nova*’s tendency to treat the text as an image in its early issues,

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<sup>141</sup> Peter Crookston was Editor from May/June 1969 to November 1970. Audit Bureau of Circulation figures record sales of 129,475 for January - June 1969, and 110,730 for July – December 1970. See Appendix.

<sup>142</sup> Cooke, G. (2008).

<sup>143</sup> David Hillman, Interview by Author (2003).

<sup>144</sup> Allen Hutt, “The First Word on Magazine Design,” in *Penrose Annual*, Volume 63, 1970 (London: Lund Humphries), p. 224

<sup>145</sup> Hillman, D. (2003). See Chapter Three for further examples and analysis

explaining that ‘the initial impact of the pages is terrific: but for the magazine to be successful the text must also be good.’<sup>146</sup> McLean emphasised the important dynamic between the processes of designing and editing, as he suggests:

... designing a magazine is an extension of editing it. Both editing and designing are creative functions: ... they are a parallel or simultaneous process, and the more closely they can be integrated, the better will be the results. A magazine designer must, therefore, be something of an editor, just as an editor should be something of a designer.<sup>147</sup>

David Hillman found a like-minded vision for the magazine in new Editor Gillian Cooke. Cooke understood the important relationship text and image, and focussed her commitment to ‘designing editorial’. But whilst Cooke would initiate a period of growth and then stabilisation for the magazine, initially *Nova* staff were very sceptical about her appointment, as Hillman recalls:

I was getting these phone calls from the Features Editor saying: ‘the new Editor’s from *Honey* magazine. She’s going to be a disaster. She’s already talking about doing window boxes. What are you going to do?’ ... And you know, she came with an amazing pedigree. She’d made *Honey* really successful ... she really understood her craft. She had that kind of commercial streak.<sup>148</sup>

In fact far from window boxes and other feminine clichés, Gillian Cooke began by prioritising the reader and the reading experience, paying close attention to the design of words on the page. In reducing the dense pages of type without losing editorial content by creating more ‘readable’ text, she achieved a crucial balance between words and images:

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<sup>146</sup> McLean, 1969, p. 237. McLean concluded that ‘*Nova*’s standards are unusually high’ but his evaluation suggested a criticism, if the articles were good, he argued then ‘its typography (almost) doesn’t matter.’ McLean, 1969, p. 145

<sup>147</sup> McLean, 1969, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> Hillman, D. (2003).

I just didn't want pages of tiny text, but sometimes you ended up having to cut the size of the type, and I always felt if you cut the size of the type you cut by a third the number of people who were prepared to read it, so you lost your feature – that's what I always tried to impress upon them, that if the type size was too small you lost the point of having the article in the first place.<sup>149</sup>

Cooke also recognised that the visual quality of the magazine was a unique selling point, both for its readers and advertisers:

We got advertising because it was printed so well, it was beautifully produced and printed. A lot of art directors loved it for the art and the layout and the presentation, and it was a wonderful showcase for their ads, so a lot of the art directors in the advertising agencies loved putting advertisements in it because their ads looked wonderful. But they had to justify it with readers, and that's difficult if you're not building circulation, so they needed to build circulation to justify it. And we did, we built circulation over the first couple of years, it went very well.<sup>150</sup>

Under her leadership from 1970 to 1975, the Editor, Art Director and Features Editor were allowed to be 'equally important'. This freedom and shared responsibility garnered respect by the team as Hillman explained:

She knew – and I think that's what makes a good Editor – she knew how to let people have a run in their own rein and then, when it got out of hand, she'd kind of pull them in. And we hit it off immediately ... and she was great because she was the one who pushed up the production values.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> As she continued, '1800-2000 would have been a feature that would give you three pages – it was 1000 words for a page really, but if you wanted good illustrations a three page article would have been about 2000 words, and if you wanted a lot of photographs then we had to go to four pages. The balancing act was always quite difficult' Cooke, G. (2008).

<sup>150</sup> Cooke, G. (2008). Cooke maintained circulation at around 109,500 for both halves of 1971 and increased sales up to 113,320 for January – June 1972. Audit Bureau of Circulations. See Appendix. David Hillman explained that *Nova's* quality printing and production provided a very effective showcase for photographer's work: 'that's why we could get these guys to work for £50 a page. They knew they were going to get a £20,000 advertising campaign' Hillman, (2003).

<sup>151</sup> Hillman, D. (2003).

Cooke's formula was careful planning and a balance of well-researched editorial, lighter humorous articles, innovative fashion and beautifully designed pages:

We'd work on about three issues at a time. You'd have the one that was going to press that was going through last minute. You'd have one that was gathering together, and you'd have one that was being commissioned, and sometimes you'd be commissioning ahead of that. About a third of the magazine would be set by the design. We'd be working ahead to do some sort of creative work, a big illustration that had to be worked on ahead, then there'd be features that had to be commissioned some months in advance because of the work that was needed. And then there'd be smaller things that could be done at the last minute and those you could fit into this issue or maybe the next issue, they would be some lightweight sort of stuff in the middle.<sup>152</sup>

The core features team included: Peter Martin, Ann Leslie, Maggy Meade-King, Bel Mooney and Carolyn Faulder. Many of these journalists started out at *Nova*; Maggy Meade-King joined *Nova* at age 20 as secretary to Brigid Keenan and David Jenkins. When Gillian Cooke took over as Editor she urged Meade-King to join the National Union of Journalists so she could expand her career, and then promoted her to a researcher role on a three-year training programme. Meade-King was soon working on features and edited the 'Community Action' pages. Bel Mooney began her career in journalism on *Nova*, and her first staff credit appeared in the magazine in April 1971 where she worked in the Features Department with Stella Bingham, Carolyn Faulder and Peter Martin. Mooney's first by-lined article was published in *Nova* in July of that year with the article; 'Where do teachers go from here: the classroom revolution.'<sup>153</sup> Carolyn Faulder also began her career at *Nova*, starting out as a researcher in 1969. One of her first jobs was to establish the 'Careers Advisory Service' for readers who often had married soon after graduating from university and

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<sup>152</sup> Cooke, G. (2008).

<sup>153</sup> Bel Mooney graduated from University College London in 1969 with a first in English Language and Literature. She married the broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby in 1968 whilst still a student. Mooney was Features Writer from April 1971 to May 1971, Assistant to Editor: from July 71 – August 72, "Feedback" Editor September 1972- October 1972 and Contributing editor: September 1973 until the magazine's close.

who wanted to use their academic qualifications once their children had started school. Her first credited by-line appeared in August 1969 with the article ‘A Pill for Men’ which explored the possibilities of male contraception. Later she became a regular features writer contributing articles which directly reflected her interests such as, ‘A marriage certificate and a bulge turn you into a non-person... If you want to work and breed, what do you do about the children?’ (Fig. 43). In interview Faulder recalled that working for *Nova* she had been ‘given many opportunities to write ground breaking articles on an eclectic range of subjects, usually but not invariably with a feminist slant.’<sup>154</sup>

*Nova* continued to address the social climate of change in editorial articles and fashion features. Editorial included articles on impotence, Britain’s ghettos, child support, divorce, racism, homosexuality and science.<sup>155</sup>

With a now stabilised staff team the magazine perfected its brand of innovative style and editorial breadth. In October 1971, Art Director David Hillman took on the additional role of Deputy Editor, it was a strategic move engineered by Gillian Cooke which reinforced the magazine’s commitment to its visual design and its core belief that news and current events could be covered and reported in a visually exciting and dynamic way.<sup>156</sup>

However for all the confidence of staff and readers the management and advertisers held a more conservative approach. While the production staff were united by common editorial and aesthetic aims, management at IPC were more concerned with pulling in higher advertising revenues. This meant that the freedom the magazine had enjoyed to pursue controversial content and innovative design was gradually

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<sup>154</sup> Carolyn Faulder, ‘A marriage certificate and a bulge turn you into a non-person ...If you want to work and breed, what do you do about the children’, *Nova*, (October 1971) pp., 52-53

The article was illustrated by John Holmes who designed the cover for Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (London, Paladin, 1970) Carolyn Faulder, *Records of Women in Media*, The Women’s Library, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008,

<sup>155</sup> A full discussion of *Nova*’s editorial content is made in Chapter Three.

<sup>156</sup> David Hillman explained; ‘For me, the nicest thing that Gilly ever did was making me Deputy Editor. She divided control - and in theory, I think I was probably more powerful than she was if I think about it; control of the design and a lot of say in what was going to go in the magazine.’ Hillman, D. (2003). See Chapters Two and Three for an extensive analysis of David Hillman’s work.

curtailed. Gillian Cooke describes the constant battles that had to be fought over proposed design and content:

It upset the management. They went to cocktail parties and they would find someone who found something we'd done shocking and then on the Monday morning they'd be rearing to go ready to haul you over the coals ... I think they wanted it to be more popular, which meant not doing scientific, cutting edge pieces, not being so outspoken ... They would have liked us to have been more like *Woman's Journal* only more modern in look.<sup>157</sup>

### Troubles

During 1970 *Nova* suffered a number of publishing delays as a result of the electrician and print workers strikes at their place of production, Sun Printers in Watford (part of the British Printing Corporation).<sup>158</sup> With a 12.5% increase in printing costs threatening to limit editorial flexibility and ongoing 'production difficulties' IPC looked abroad for cheaper options. *Nova* was already expensive to produce, its abundance of full colour pages were only really economical at runs of 500,000 copies, and with a circulation of approximately 116,000 for the first half of 1970, IPC were forced to look for cheaper options. Veronese firm Arnaldo Monderi, already established as a printer of high quality colour glossy books, quoted prices at 80% less, were given the contract and printing moved to Italy from July 1970.<sup>159</sup>

Even after the many closures and mergers of magazines in the previous decade, circulation figures for women's titles continued to fall. The slump could not simply be

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<sup>157</sup> See Chapter Three for a detailed analysis of *Nova's* editorial content.

<sup>158</sup> From March 1965 – June 1970 *Nova* was printed at Sun Printers in Watford, one of Britain's most established rotogravure printers. The technique of printing gravure with a rotary press was the most effective method of producing large-scale runs of magazines and was used for newspaper production as well as the *Sunday Times Magazine* and glossy magazines such as *Vogue*. Photogravure was the most effective method for printing on a mass scale for quality reproduction as it guaranteed a consistency of image. In rotogravure printing ink was applied to hard wearing chrome electro-plated cylinders, so that the ink fills grooves making up recessed images directly onto the body of the cylinder. The depth of the recession indicated the amount of ink and depth of colour. This was then printed onto large rolls of paper. For a company history of Sun printers see, Peter Greenhill and Brian Reynolds, *The Way of the Sun: The Story of Sun Engraving and Sun Printers*. True to Type Books, 2010.

<sup>159</sup> In April after the latest issue was severely delayed in reaching the newsstands, Edward Court was quoted by the *Times* dismissing claims that the strikes were the cause of the move instead suggesting that, 'Sun Printers could no longer provide the necessary facilities for these magazines'. PHS, "Vero *Nova*", *The Times*, (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1970) p.8

explained away by printing delays, price increases and ‘production difficulties’. What had happened to the ‘New Kind of Woman?’ Was she simply a figment of marketing imagination? It was a question explored by Moria Keenan in an article for *The Times* in August 1970. The downturn in sales mostly affected ‘general interest’ magazines, those with a more specific target audience managed to stay reasonably buoyant. Titles aimed at younger women, such as *Honey* and *19* and the domestic weeklies had clung onto their readerships.<sup>160</sup> But this seemed to be in direct opposition to the forecast made by Ernest Dichter in 1964, who had suggested that magazines would need to appeal to a new type of reader by being socially responsive, intellectually challenging and visually sophisticated, and perhaps, as Keenan suggested, the new woman had ‘found her needs well catered for without compulsive magazine buying.’<sup>161</sup>

By 1971 over 3000 magazine titles appeared on Britain’s newsstands every month but circulation figures were generally declining. Largest in circulation size was the weekly ‘Service’ magazine category, consisting of titles such as *Woman*, *Woman’s Own*, *Woman’s Weekly* and *Woman’s Realm* which contained short stories, cooking knitting patterns, fashion and interiors, readers letters and advice on work and reproductive health. Second came the monthly home magazines such as *Home and Gardens*, *Good Housekeeping* and the best selling of this category, *Family Circle*. Romance magazines made up a third category and include titles such as *Jackie* and *True Romance*. Next in popularity were the ‘young interest’ magazines, which had fashion and advice as their focus such as *Honey*, *19* and *Petticoat*. The ‘quality’ market, consisting of glossy publications such as *Vogue*, *Harpers and Queen*, *Vanity Fair* and *Flair*, all shared fashion as their focus. ‘General Interest’ was harder to define and incorporated *Nova*, as well as *She*, by then a well selling monthly which had gradually gained a loyal readership.<sup>162</sup> Whilst the general trend of decline was cause for concern for publishers and advertisers IPC Publishing Director Patricia Lamburn was philosophical, citing it as:

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<sup>160</sup> *Honey* enjoyed an increase in readership from 197,996 in 1969 to figures of 201,527 in 1970 and the monthly magazine *Family Circle* saw its circulation rise from 1,155,276 to 1,202,142 during the same period. This can be measure against *Nova*’s drop in sales from 129,475 to 115,849 from 1969-1970. Moira Keenan, “Whatever happened to the New Kind of Woman?” *The Times*, (12<sup>th</sup> August 1970), p. 6.

<sup>161</sup> Keenan, 1970. Moira Keenan astutely predicted the future of women’s magazines lies in completely ephemeral trivia or in specialist and service publications.

<sup>162</sup> *She*’s end of year figures for 1969 were 296,073 and for the same period in 1973 they had risen to 326,580. See Appendix.

... a direct reflection of the increasing complexity of our society - conditioned as it is by educational and environmental progress ... we may well require more publications in the seventies, serving more varied and more specific group needs with intensively focussed circulations.<sup>163</sup>

However a shift in managerial support alongside a national recession was to inflict a conservatism of both editorial and budget that contributed to *Nova*'s eventual demise. British *Cosmopolitan* launched in March 1972 would be less 'earnest ... clenched fist'<sup>164</sup> and more fun, and at a much cheaper cost to both readers and advertisers, it heralded direct and fatal competition to *Nova*. *Cosmopolitan* was a clear commercial success and its first six months of publication drew an impressive circulation of 352,272.<sup>165</sup> But for all of management's concerns about dwindling readers and unsuitable content *Nova* still managed to stay in the press and sustain a dedicated, if small following.<sup>166</sup> In an article for *The Times* in 1972 Sue Puddlefoot praised *Nova* as integral to the development in women's magazines that marked a shift away from domestic concerns and which 'attempted ... to prove that women possess brains and bodies, not merely hands for rocking cradles and mixing puddings.'<sup>167</sup> Puddlefoot credits Gillian Cooke with stabilizing *Nova*'s faltering circulation at 110,000 in 1972, quoting her aim to produce a magazine that 'has vitality - it looks exciting, it may shock and upset but it doesn't bore.'<sup>168</sup> However *Nova* was not as commercially minded as *Cosmopolitan* and its high production values and controversial content restricted profit and sales.

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<sup>163</sup> Patricia Lamburn quoted in Sue Puddlefoot, "Continuous and strong influence on social behaviour", *The Times*, (4<sup>th</sup> May 1971), p. 1 Puddlefoot cites Audit Bureau of Circulations which showed that *Nova*'s circulation had again fallen from 119,036 in July -December 1969 to 110,730 for the same period the following year. *Honey*, *Vogue* and *Woman & Home* also lost readers, however other 'general' interest or 'features' magazines such as *She*, continued to have marginally increased sales. The move accurately anticipated by Puddlefoot in 1971 is towards smaller focussed special interest magazines as predicted by Moira Keenan in *The Times* (2<sup>th</sup> August 1970) p. 6

<sup>164</sup> British *Cosmopolitan* launch editor Joyce Hopkirk interviewed by Linda Christmas, "The Second Sex Syndrome", *The Guardian*, (Feb 16<sup>th</sup> 1972), p. 13.

<sup>165</sup> See Chapters 3 for a discussion of *Cosmopolitan*'s editorial philosophy and comparative content.

<sup>166</sup> The Audit Bureau of Circulations records *Nova*'s figures for July - December 1972 at 100,095.

<sup>167</sup> Suzanne Puddlefoot, 'Images of Women', *The Times* 16<sup>th</sup> February 1972. p. 11

<sup>168</sup> Puddlefoot, S. Ibid.

In July 1973 *Nova* published its 100<sup>th</sup> issue.<sup>169</sup> Inside two double-page spreads celebrated the magazine's visual and editorial achievements and reproduced its one hundred cover issues thumbnail sized as a decorative border. (Fig. 44). The article claimed *Nova*'s editorial achievement lay in its investigative journalism, fact seeking, and truth reporting and it felt satisfied with some clear achievements in editorial that was groundbreaking. The article demonstrated key moments of coverage of current events and political debate: it highlighted the May 1966 cover story on Vietnam, which was written 'in the days when more pigeons than people were familiar with Grovesnor Square', revealing it had lost the magazine 15,000 sales but subsequently won them an award. And when they examined the status of women in society on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the right of women to vote in the February 1968 cover story, the editorial points out, 'you will not find the phrase 'Women's Lib' in that article: it wasn't common currency then.'<sup>170</sup> Such prescient, and often controversial content was unconventional for a woman's glossy magazine, as the editorial explained:

The most common response to the magazine was – and still is, so help us all – incredulity. When the Flying Squad visited the Editor about our photographs of the inside of Durham Maximum security Prison; or when we put a writer into a ghetto for three months or a photographer up a tree for a week; or when we were summoned to the Home Office by Lord Stonham because of a swingeing article about Holloway Prison (Pull It Down); or when we quizzed scientists – around the world and at length – about genetic engineering; or when we published 19 pages on breast cancer, came the familiar response: 'Do women want to read about that?'<sup>171</sup>

Some women *did* want to read about this. One of the pleasures of reading *Nova* was that it treated both its subjects and its readers intelligently. Janet was an 18 year old student living in New Zealand when she started reading *Nova* in 1970. She moved to London to run a business with her partner for a few years and had two children before

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<sup>169</sup> "Nova for the 100<sup>th</sup> Time", *Nova*, (July 1973) p. 74

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. The article reviewed the controversial and groundbreaking editorial of the magazine in a self-deprecating tone: 'That a new magazine for women didn't have to ignore the intellect now seems, as hunches go, not too inspired - only patronising' Ibid p. 74

<sup>171</sup> Nova for the 100<sup>th</sup> Time', *Nova*, July 1973: p. 74. See Chapter Three for a discussion of how *Nova*'s editorial could deliberately provoke its readers.

returning home. She thought that *Nova* addressed the changing and often multiple roles of women in society:

*Nova* addressed subjects intelligently that mattered to me as a young woman trying to find herself as a feminist, wife and mother – it was the first glossy magazine that saw women in those roles and didn't see these roles as being mutually exclusive; it was witty; it was never earnest or patronising.<sup>172</sup>

However, economic recession, power cuts and strike action dented consumer confidence and spending power. In March 1974 the mood was sombre, in a fashion editorial entitled 'Dressed Overall' Fashion Editor Caroline Baker warned: (Fig. 45)

Clothes, like everything else, are going to become scarcer and dearer. Fashion as we know it, with its bi-annual change of mood and style, will come to an end. A new approach to dressing will be needed. Clothes will have to be worn until they wear out.<sup>173</sup>

The cover article offered a *Nova* guide to surviving the hard times and how to tighten your belt and keep smiling through, with advice on 'recycling, home economics, making do and mending, grow-it-yourself, eating on the cheap' and recalled 'nostalgic reminders of the more stirring war-time slogans.'<sup>174</sup> (Fig. 46). A review in *The Times* however suggested that *Nova* was deliberately missing the point, it must have its 'elegant tongue in glossy cheek' it pointed out, to suggest making napkin rings out of empty toilet rolls.<sup>175</sup>

Hit again by an increase in paper prices, the magazine had decreased its trademark large format 10 x 13.5 size to 9.5 x 12 inches. By the magazine's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue in March 1975, *Nova* was seriously diminished in size, page numbers, content and reputation. (Fig. 47). No cover fanfare announced the birthday and only Irma Kurtz marked the occasion in her regular 'A View of My Own' feature by describing

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<sup>172</sup> Janet Carlyle, 'Remembering *Nova*' Questionnaire, (2005)

<sup>173</sup> Caroline Baker, "Dressed Overall" in *Nova* (March 1974), p.39

<sup>174</sup> Anon, "Its fun to make do" *Nova* (March 1974), pp., 25-38

<sup>175</sup> Anon, "Save it" , *The Times*, (28<sup>th</sup> Feb 1974), p.18

*Nova* as ‘the magazine world’s soufflé mixture: it is constantly being folded, never expected to come out and yet for ten years it has always risen to the occasion.’<sup>176</sup>

By May of 1975 as a result of inflation and yet another increase in paper prices the format was again reduced, this time to an almost pocket-sized 8 x 10 inches and printed on thin slippery paper for the remainder of its last six issues (Fig. 48). Gillian Cooke recalled the difficulties of the last year of publication:

[IPC] started worrying so much about its profitability and because the costs of printing and paper were going up so much they started tinkering with the page size ... they took away the thing that made it different. In a way it should have closed a year before. ... they were trying to make money out of it, but I don’t know what it was they wanted, they must have seen – I could see it wasn’t going to work like that. David Hillman and I discussed the first change and thought ‘well we could make that work’, and there was a whole staff and freelance people who were all rooting for it and wanting it to go on so we thought well we can make this work, but when it went to what I called ‘Sunny Stories’<sup>177</sup> that was it and none of us wanted to go on ... I’d never had anything fail on me. I’d lie awake thinking ‘there must be something we can do’, as though something magic would come out of the air.<sup>178</sup>

For features writer Maggy Meade-King the final size reduction was a ‘disaster’, and symptomatic of a total loss of confidence from management:

It took away the feeling of having this really luxurious product in your hand with its wonderful graphics and design and really that couldn’t be done with this small little magazine. ...at the time it felt like it had lost its ‘Unique Selling Point’ really and I suspect IPC closed it with some relief.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Irma Kurtz, “A View of my Own”, *Nova* (March 1975), p. 98 Kurtz’s review of ten years of publication maps out a range of content and successive editorial staff.

<sup>177</sup> As Cooke explained; ‘Sunny Stories was a little magazine from the war time that was all Enid Blyton stories – it looked just like that to me and I hated it,’ Cooke, G. (2008)

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Maggy Meade-King, *Interview with Author*. (2005).

Unable to sustain itself in the faltering economy IPC considered *Nova* economically unviable and consequently the magazine folded in October 1975. The last issue had a cover featuring Morecambe and Wise and the appearance and feel of the *Radio Times* (Fig. 49). By this stage the magazine had lost most of its ‘quality’ advertisers so instead of the full pages of glossy colour they had afforded, *Nova*’s back pages were filled with small ads for mail order catalogues. In weight, size, paper quality and design it was indeterminate from the ground breaking design, and provocative covers of its earlier existence. Investigative journalism was sustained until the end with a discussion of the Abortion Amendment Bill. (Fig. 50). And opinion pieces still mattered, shown in John Mortimer’s enquiry ‘Have the moderates gone too far?’ (Fig. 51). But editorial such as James Hamilton-Peterson investigation into the baldness business (with quips provided from the cover star duo) and Liz Gould’s ‘Why your feet are killing you’ had the look of a cheap newspaper giveaway (Fig. 52). The effect of Nationwide belt tightening was certainly apparent in tips on ‘Brew it yourself’ tipples and Caroline Baker’s ‘real value for money’ fashion knit separates. (Fig. 53).

When *Nova* closed many journalists felt the loss of ‘an important outlet for ideas and good writing’ as freelance journalist and *Nova* contributor Carol Dix reported in the *Guardian*:

They put the nails in the coffin of *Nova* yesterday which was like a stake in the heart for a lot of people. It’s not so much the end of an era but the first tremor of portent of bad times to come. *Nova* hasn’t been killed off because it’s an anachronism and no longer any use to anyone. It has been killed off because of economy. There isn’t the revenues, there isn’t the advertising, so there are less pages, less readers, and again even less advertising – it is a deathly twist that binds fast spiralling downward and taking people with it. It’s as if *Nova* has been run over in a fatal accident, mown down by a machine much larger than itself. As a journalist the news hits even harder ... What magazine is left in this country that aims at the intelligent reader whether male

or female and doesn't dress its intelligence down by playing on sex, cars, furniture or fashion?<sup>180</sup>

Interviewed by Dix in *The Guardian* days after IPC had announced its closure, Cooke spoke frankly of her feelings:

The management has been threatening *Nova* with closure ever since it began. It was always a gamble as a prestige magazine. Recently of course it suffered with a falling circulation and reduced advertising. Then we produced the final cure, making the magazine much smaller in size today, more down to earth and topical. We reckoned that the day of the big glossy, and flash colour adverts was over anyway, and the important thing was survival. So we changed our image along, we hoped, with our readers' expectations ... In fact we did not even lose the readers with the change, which is remarkable. But the management just did not give us a chance. They spent no money on promotion. It does not take much to attract advertising back. You just have to convince people you have the confidence.<sup>181</sup>

In article running in the same month in *The Spectator*, Robert Ashley concluded:

It may have carried articles that were unlikely to be reprinted in the parish magazine, but it also carried other articles which were masterpieces of investigative journalism. It was extremely intelligent, it was not afraid of controversy, it was aimed at educated men and women ... it made an enormous initial impact, and could, by any standards, be called a very important element in the creation of that odd animal, the climate of public opinion.<sup>182</sup>

Cooke revealed that the IPC spokesman who had informed her of the decision to close *Nova* had offered assurance that it was not to do with a fall in editorial quality, but a

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<sup>180</sup> Carol Dix, "Carol Dix mourns the death of a magazine" *The Guardian*, (2<sup>nd</sup> August, 1975), p. 11. Ironically that same month Dix had published an article on turning your back on the 'Big Boss' amidst 'rumours of mergers, redundancies, and the dread spectre of the idle dole queue.' See, Carol Dix, "Fresh start: make the break and go it alone", *Nova*, August 1975, pp. 56-59

<sup>181</sup> Gillian Cooke quoted in Dix, C., p. 11

<sup>182</sup> Robert Ashley, "Sudden Death" *The Spectator* (15<sup>th</sup> August, 1975), p. 19.

simple matter of declining advertising revenue. Indeed, the magazine's losses were running at approximately £80,000 a year, or about £7000 an issue.<sup>183</sup> However Cooke believed the reason for these losses was that IPC were no longer offering the financial backing the magazine needed to attract advertisers and promote sales. In effect IPC had lost faith in *Nova*. Cooke concluded that the real reason for *Nova*'s failure was that, '*Nova* is a minority magazine being sold by a company orientated to mass sales.'<sup>184</sup> Features writer Maggy Meade-King took a broader view:

There was a problem in that we didn't have this very focussed, easy to pin down readership ... The second problem was IPC never really having any faith in us and never putting their money behind it – I think that was very important. And not really understanding it – I think that's the vital bit. ... But also there was a recession ... the three day week ... there was a time when we used to work with little camping lamps and walk down the stairs in the dark because all the electricity was turned off. They became difficult times in an economic sense and I think that's the main thing we became a casualty of.<sup>185</sup>

Without continuing investment from IPC, loss of advertising revenue and higher production costs, *Nova* faltered and failed.<sup>186</sup> In the context of a rapidly declining circulation and the acknowledgement that the 'new woman' term was simply a marketing label, Irma Kurtz asked: 'Who is the Average Nova Reader?' reiterating the numerous enquiries she had encountered, her reply, far less confident than the launch publicity: 'Whoever happens to be reading *Nova* on an average day.'<sup>187</sup> The key ingredient to a successful magazine – its readers – was clearly acknowledged:

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Meade-King, M., (2005). Whilst Gillian Cooke wouldn't work in magazine journalism again, the closure of *Nova* did allow Maggy Meade-King and others like her to further develop their careers: 'It was very sad but ... I did feel it was of its time and in a way it was better to go out as we had been, with only a couple of those little tiny issues that really didn't have the same feel, rather than just to limp on or be turned into something else. And we all went on to very successful freelance careers, and in a way there was a sort of freeing there that I felt well, you got a bit of redundancy money and that could help you build up your freelance practise and so on. And I think it was very liberating in one way'.

<sup>186</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulation figures record *Nova*'s closing circulation of 74,792. By comparison *Cosmopolitan*'s readership figures were 391,189.

<sup>187</sup> Kurtz, *Nova*, March 1975, p. 98. And she adds: It is easy to know who does not read *Nova* or at least to know that it has been frequently forbidden in those countries which have private and unyielding attitudes about sex and about black model girls. (Kurtz, I., p. 98) A closer examination of 'real' *Nova* readers will be explored in Chapter Three

‘No magazine of course can exist merely to warm the egos of its staff and contributors. Readers, their number and their quality, do count for a great deal, for everything in fact.’<sup>188</sup> And although the magazine had played an instrumental part in their lives, clearly some readers had moved on:

It was a totally new magazine - true to the title. All the other 'women's mags' were full of beauty hints, recipes, gossip - like the ones so popular today. I was shattered to hear of it closing, although I have to admit that after marrying and living in a real house, and then having two children I turned to *Good Housekeeping* because I had to learn different skills, so somehow I didn't have time for *Nova*.<sup>189</sup>

Production staff had been informed of *Nova*'s closure in August of that year but due to the forward planning of each issue they had worked on the last issue without knowing its fate, but they all felt they were fighting a losing battle, as Cooke recalls:

There was a huge team spirit and loyalty and they were all worried, a lot of them were men with families and it was very difficult to see what *Nova* people were going to go on and do ... It was time and costs and things, but its not something that I will ever feel comfortable about ... I still feel very bad about it dying on my watch.<sup>190</sup>

For some staff *Nova* had hung on a year too long. But for all of her misgivings about the final year of publication, Gillian Cooke's editorship had cemented *Nova*'s reputation, it was her approach to the construction of the magazine that marked it out on the newsstands and in the hearts of its readers. Cooke's achievement as an editor was in fostering the relationships between design and content that allowed the magazine to develop its unique synthesis of editorial breadth and visual excitement. However this editorial achievement could also be seen to be the reason for *Nova*'s

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<sup>188</sup> Kurtz, I. Ibid

<sup>189</sup> Anonymous 10, Remembering Nova Questionnaire (22.04.05)

<sup>190</sup> Cooke, G. (2008). Maggie Meade King explained that 'nearly everyone went freelance afterwards because, although we were offered jobs in IPC, I don't think any of us particularly wanted to do that.' Meade King (2005)

failure, without the financial investment from its publishers it was unable to sustain its distinct offering to advertisers, or its readers.

*Nova*'s first editorial address to its readers in March 1965, explained that it would be a magazine for 'women who made up their own minds', and for those whose interests extended beyond 'what to do about dinner.' *Nova*'s overarching belief was that real life was more exciting than the escapist fantasy worlds constructed in other women's magazines. As I will explore in the following two chapters, the aim to 'make entertainment out of reality' was to direct both the form and content of the magazine, and as a consequence, would inform how the magazine was understood and used by its readers.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> "Editorial Address" *Nova*, Issue 1, (March 1965), p.1

## **Chapter Two: Photo Essay**

**Images REDACTED**

**Figures 1- 53 (pages 144-178)**

## Chapter Two

### ‘All Dressed and Made Up’: Fashion in *Nova*

#### Introduction

In *Nova*, January 1966, Cherry Farrow’s article ‘The Fashion Editors’ defined and reviewed the spectrum of fashion reporting in contemporary British press. The feature included photographs of fashion’s ‘grand dames’; the formidable Clare Rendlesham then at *Queen*, who championed Courreges and Mary Quant, and Ernestine Carter from *The Sunday Times* who sought to raise fashion writing to the same level as reviews of ballet, theatre and literature. The fashion editors of the daily press were represented by Felicity Green of the *Daily Mirror*, who would break Barbara Hulaniki’s career with a mail order dress and matching scarf, and Judy Innes of the *Daily Mail*, who sought to offer her readers fashion that was fun, accessible and affordable. By contrast *Nova*’s own fashion editor, Molly Parkin, then ‘new to fashion’, demonstrated a desire to break through the conventions of ‘rarefied’ fashion reportage.<sup>1</sup> She is pictured wearing a lace top, which she shrank in washing-up liquid to make the sleeves tight fitting and describes the delight she finds in holey stockings and Wellingtons. (Fig. 1). As she explained: ‘I think it’s essential to look terrible occasionally. If you feel horrible and ugly you should go out looking horrible and ugly.’<sup>2</sup> Parkin revealed her ambition was to ‘do something for women with bosoms and bottoms – not the ready-made-mistress type’, this was exemplified by her editorial published in the same issue, ‘Feeling Kinda Swell’, which showed her readers how maternity wear could be fashionable and not simply concealing.<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 2). *Nova*’s defiance of conventional ideals of feminine youth and beauty continued in the ‘Living’ section of this issue, in an editorial entitled ‘Looking Glass War’ which celebrated being a woman of thirty.<sup>4</sup> As Cherry Farrow’s article suggests, *Nova* was aware of its difference to other women’s magazines, it aimed to offer readers a take

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<sup>1</sup> Molly Parkin had been in place as Fashion Editor for just three issues at the time of the article in January 1966

<sup>2</sup> Molly Parkin, quoted in Cherry Farrow, “The Fashion Editors”, *Nova*, January 1966, p. 55

<sup>3</sup> Molly Parkin, quoted in Cherry Farrow, “The Fashion Editors”, *Nova*, January 1966, p. 55. Parkin’s editorial on maternity wear explained; ‘A woman surely needs the aid of fashion most during maternity ... The assumption seems to be that it is shrouds rather than clothes she should be wearing...’ Molly Parkin, “Feeling Kinda Swell” *Nova*, January 1966, pp., 44-47.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Although thirty is the moment of truth when it looks as if there will be a losing battle on between you and the mirror, things are looking brighter. For now is the time to be thirty and like it, because there is a firm move away from the pop image and tomorrow’s girl will be a woman.’ Elizabeth Williamson, “Looking-Glass War”, *Nova*, January 1966, pp., 49-50

on fashion that would be distinct and innovative. Throughout the decade of its publication *Nova* would challenge fashion's hierarchies and conventions and offer alternative, and sometimes controversial, images of fashionable and desirable feminine identities.

*Nova*'s fashion pages were marked by the contribution of its two key editors: Molly Parkin who was appointed from 1965-1967, and Caroline Baker who took over the role in 1967 and continued until the magazine's closure in 1975.<sup>5</sup> These two women would ensure *Nova*'s fashion pages were eye catching, visually dynamic and daring. Both Parkin and Baker were afforded the freedom and encouragement to create 'different' fashion pages by their editors. Because *Nova* was never simply a fashion magazine, its fashion pages offered readers a unique perspective. Its choice of editors who were arguably inexperienced at appointment meant that their craft of fashion editing was learnt at the magazine and supported through collaborative practices with art directors, editors and photographers. This chapter will provide an insight into the editing strategies and networks of working processes at the heart of *Nova*'s fashion pages.

*Nova*'s fashion editorial actively encouraged readers to use the magazine to fuel their own creative projects; from pinning up pictures from its fashion pages, customising their own clothing, sourcing garments from second hand markets, or in simply creating their own unique 'look'. This creative directive to readers was initiated by the collaboration between Molly Parkin and Harri Peccinotti whose fashion pages focussed on colour and shape, and would later be taken up enthusiastically by David Hillman and Caroline Baker whose daring and inventive strategies urged readers to start 'rethinking fashion.'

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<sup>5</sup> *Nova*'s first Fashion Editor was Jill Butterfield who had previously worked for the *Daily Express*. She held the position for the magazine's first issues from March - August 1965. She was supported by Penny Vincenzi as Fashion Editor from March - October 1965. Vincenzi would continue to contribute beauty editorial and was listed as staff Beauty Editor from April 1971 to October 1971 when Caroline Baker took over the joint role as Fashion and Beauty Editor until the magazine's closure in October 1975.

## **Fashion Pages to ‘Make you Think about Colour’: Molly Parkin, Fashion Editor 1965-67**

Despite her art school training and professional experience as a designer, Molly Parkin was by her own reckoning, ‘in no apparent way qualified’ for the job of *Nova*’s Fashion Editor in 1965, however she clearly brought to the role a painter’s knowledge of colour, artistic sensibilities and creative design experience. The appointment would secure *Nova*’s fashion pages as innovative and distinct.<sup>6</sup>

Parkin studied painting at Goldsmiths and Brighton College of Art where she received her degree in Fine Art.<sup>7</sup> She went on to teach art at a comprehensive secondary school in Elephant and Castle and during this period she developed her practice as a painter. After her divorce from her first husband, the art dealer Michael Parkin, Parkin supplemented her career as an artist by taking up shop work in small London boutiques. Increasingly frustrated by the fact that she couldn’t buy clothes she liked Parkin was compelled to design herself, first supplying boutiques such as Biba with hats and accessories and then setting up in her front room before finding commercial premises in Chelsea.<sup>8</sup> On her first weekend of opening, ‘The Shop’ sold out its entire stock, and a matching outfit comprising ‘orange mini skirt, long jacket, handbag on chains and matching hat’ featured on *Newsweek*’s pages illustrating their article on Swinging London.<sup>9</sup>

Molly Parkin was offered the job of Fashion Editor on *Nova* ‘in a roundabout route’ after meeting IPC Editorial Director Clive Irving at a dinner party hosted by novelist Len Deighton.<sup>10</sup> She spoke to Irving about her training as a painter and her interest in fashion and revealed how she had been applying her ‘colour know-how to clothes and

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<sup>6</sup> ‘How did I actually become a top-ranking fashion editor since those jobs were like gold dust and surely demanded experience of fashion? ...I was in no apparent way qualified for the job. I stormed into the fashion arena with none of the necessary armour ... And it worked splendidly. It seemed that within five minutes, having come from nowhere, my name as fashion editor of *Nova* was now familiar in that tight hallowed circle which comprises Fashion with a capital F. My fashion pages were making waves from London to Paris to New York’. Molly Parkin, *Moll: The Making of Molly Parkin. An Autobiography* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993), p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> In 1949 Parkin was awarded a scholarship to study Fine Art at Goldsmiths, she moved to live in Brighton with her family where she was awarded another scholarship and she completed her degree at Brighton College of Art

<sup>8</sup> Her premises ‘The Shop’ were located on Radnor Walk, near the Kings Road in Chelsea

<sup>9</sup> Parkin, 1993, p. 168.

<sup>10</sup> Among the guests were broadcaster David Frost and model Paulene Stone. Ibid, p. 166.

design instead of canvas.’<sup>11</sup> Impressed, despite, or perhaps because of her lack of editing experience, Irving offered her the job.<sup>12</sup> For Parkin, used to working on her own terms, the immersion into the world of women’s magazines was a stark contrast:

It was not a world then with which I was over-familiar. Nobody told me how to go about things. I had four assistants and two secretaries, none of whom apparently knew that I had no idea of what was expected of me.<sup>13</sup>

Parkin’s first fashion editorial was a feature on furs and jewels titled ‘Taking the Rough with the Smooth’ published in November 1965.<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 3). In her autobiography she recalls Editor Dennis Hackett’s directive for the feature:

It’s that time of year, the advertisers expect to see furs and jewels. We work three months in advance, like all the glossies, so by the time this issue comes out women will be thinking about buying their new furs for the winter. And their husbands will be choosing the jewels to go with them.<sup>15</sup>

For her first editorial Parkin was assigned to work with art director and photographer Harri Peccinotti. It was a relationship built on the foundations of a shared interest in the creative and aesthetic possibilities of representing fashion. For this first shoot Parkin drew on her knowledge of colour and tone, and made the decision to colour block her content into red, black, white, brown and ‘patterned’. She issued clear directions to her assistants who were tasked with sourcing materials, as she recalls:

Whoever chooses red will visit the leading jewellers and bring me garnets and rubies, pink diamonds, etc. I want earrings and bangles and bracelets and rings and brooches and beads. And to match up with these I’d like the same in red furs. Red fox, dyed rabbit. The same applies to the other colours. White

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 167

<sup>12</sup> In her autobiography Parkin reveals that two months after their initial meeting she began an affair with Clive Irving which lasted five years and exceeded her time on *Nova*: ‘There is something deeply erotic about sitting in an editorial meeting, exchanging cool glances and differing opinions, knowing that the whole issue will really be worked out later between hot sheets and heady bouts of passion.’ Parkin, Ibid, p. 169

<sup>13</sup> Parkin, 1993: 176

<sup>14</sup> Molly Parkin, “Taking the Rough with the Smooth”, *Nova*, (November 1965) pp., 63-74

<sup>15</sup> ‘Will they?’ I was astonished. Did this world really exist?’ Parkin 1993, p. 175

diamonds and white mink. Brown beaver, fox and sable with amber, for instance. Leopard skin, zebra and lynx and all the other patterned stones like onyx, and tiger-eyes.<sup>16</sup>

The shoot was staged on the rooftop of the *Sunday Times* building, attendant with paid security to guard the furs and jewels. The items featured were a mix of real and costume jewellery, and the most expensive item appearing on the final pages was a 12.32-carat diamond ring costing a staggering £12,870.

My assistants were white and shaking with tension. I couldn't understand why. This was only make-believe wasn't it? It was just a fantasy that anybody actually read what fashion editors wrote, nobody in their right mind then went out and bought their winter or summer, or autumn or spring wardrobe – did they...? These people obviously thought that they did. Their livelihood depended on them believing so!<sup>17</sup>

Peccinotti and Parkin took an unconventional approach to the presentation and display of the jewellery and rather than photographing each item in detail they piled the jewellery on the models, as she described: 'Two on each finger, fingers linked together. Three models, ten fingers, twenty rings each, equals sixty rings in one shot. In close up.'<sup>18</sup> Parkin dressed wrists loaded with bracelets, and a décolleté heavy with the weight of overlapping amber and beads. (Fig. 4). The arrangement of the jewellery on the models hands and bodies reveal her interest in it the details of their surface, tone and shape, as she explained in the accompanying editorial to the feature: 'there is a feeling for rough textures, large, single, sculpted stones, great lumps of blazing colours...using the colours singly so that the cold brilliance of one stone doesn't cancel out the hot brilliance of another.'<sup>19</sup>

For Peccinotti, framing the visual and material qualities of the furs took precedence over photographing their function as fashion, and in each image the model's faces are

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<sup>16</sup> Parkin, *Ibid*, p.176.

<sup>17</sup> Parkin, *Ibid*, p.177.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Parkin, *Nova*, November 1965 p. 63

cropped off the top of the page or absent completely. Parkin explained their concept to readers in her editorial:

We've concentrated as little as possible on the models and just shown fur as clothes, which is the last thing most people think of it as, But that's what it is or should be, something to be chosen with all the personal taste and know-how about colour, shape and your own individual needs.<sup>20</sup>

For all the risk, and cost of the fur and jewells feature, Parkin's first fashion pages were a success with Dennis Hackett. Her second editorial on sun and ski wear 'H&C' (Fig. 5) from January 1966 continued her zoning approach with an instruction to readers to colour code their clothes for hot and cold climates:

Hot intense colours and vivid design can seem disturbingly bright, even garish in our cold winter light ... Pastels in these conditions would only keep you firmly in the fashion shade. So go for colours bold and strong. Apply the same principle in choosing clothes for colder climates. Aim for intensity there too.<sup>21</sup>

Parkin was disappointed by the final pages, recalling Hackett's criticism that they 'could have graced *Woman's Own*.'<sup>22</sup> She had quickly faced the reality of the constraints of fashion editorial, involving as it could: the pressure of advertisers, unsuitable models and being limited by the stockists she could borrow from.

In her autobiography she describes the selected garments dismissively as items of 'refinement' and 'good taste' supplied by Harrods and Fortnum and Mason. In fact many of the garments were widely available through mail order, local department stores or sports suppliers such as Lillywhites. The 'failure' of the spread was perhaps less to do with the clothing featured, and more as a result of the predictable studio photography by Michel Certain.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Parkin, *Nova* November 1965, p.63

<sup>21</sup> Molly Parkin, "H & C", *Nova*, (January 1966) p.37

<sup>22</sup> Parkin, 1993, p. 178

<sup>23</sup> Parkin resolved to trust her own judgments in future, no matter what trouble ensued, and whilst this approach inevitably resulted in a short tenure at *Nova* it did win her much acclaim and award.

Parkin's first experiences reporting at the Paris couture collections for *Nova*'s February and March 1966 issues would determine her fate on the magazine. For 'How Paris sees you this Spring' (Fig. 6a) published in February 1966, Parkin worked again with Harri Peccinotti as Art Director and photographer, to present French ready-to-wear collections and the make-up looks to go with them. Parkin made the decision to focus not on traditional haute couture shows, but instead to explore the prêt-a-porter collections by designers such as Maxine Leighton, Jean Cacharel, V de V and Paco Rabanne, all of which would be available to British readers on their high streets that month. (Fig. 6b). In her editorial she emphasises the designers' accessibility and availability:

The look is prettier, less aggressive; colours are clear and bright ... fabrics are easy – pale corduroy and brilliantly striped cotton jersey for day; shiny, slithery satins for evening – and tailored into slick little suits and trousers.<sup>24</sup>

For the second instalment published the following month, Parkin's editorial announced, 'Paris repeat after me: Cardin, Ungaro, Paco Rabanne.' (Fig 7). Parkin bought on board established French photographer Jean-Loup Seiff and hairdresser du jour Vidal Sassoon. She eschewed the headlining Courreges show and instead searched out designers Pierre Cardin, Ungaro and Paco Rabanne. She described them as 'original, creative and least inclined to sacrifice design for commercialism... designers who have inventiveness ...with a colour sense well above the others. They're creative artists rather than expensive dressmakers.'<sup>25</sup> In his editing and art direction of Seiff's photographs Peccinotti emphasised the contrasting textures of space age fabrics and textures such as plastic, PVC and metal and the architectural forms in their designs. The fashion editorial won *Nova* the Design and Art Directors Gold Medal Award.

For Parkin and Peccinotti, colour as a graphic visual element took priority over the content of the garments and accessories on the page. We can see evidence of this in *Nova* from 1965 – 1967 in the division of fashion pages into what Parkin has termed

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<sup>24</sup> Molly Parkin, 'How Paris sees you this Spring', *Nova* February 1966, pp., 38-49

<sup>25</sup> Molly Parkin, 'Paris repeat after me: Cardin, Ungaro, Paco Rabanne,' *Nova* March 1966, p. 49

‘colour zones.’<sup>26</sup> Clothing played only an incidental role in Harri Peccinotti’s fashion pages; what was important to him as a photographer and designer were the visual possibilities the fashion spread offered. According to Peccinotti, *Nova* ‘was never a fashion magazine,’ as he explains:

It had twelve pages of fashion which was my idea to put in just for pictures. So when you flicked through the magazine, you would hit some pictures, somewhere - a block of colour. The Fashion Editor had free rein ... The fashion photography in *Nova* was completely new compared to what was done in other magazines ... At *Nova*, [the fashion pages] were almost an insult to fashion at times ... the decision was made to put a twelve-page section of photographs in the magazine which could be outlandish. We chose fashion because it was an easy way to make a splash of colour.<sup>27</sup>

‘12 Pages to Make you Think about Colour’ from August 1966, exemplifies Peccinotti’s claim in both title and design. (Fig. 8). Fashion edited by Parkin and photographed and art directed by Peccinotti, the editorial presented a sportswear theme and the clothing featured was explicitly chosen for its graphic qualities, as the accompanying editorial makes explicit: ‘The design and cost of these clothes are extremely good, but they are featured mainly as an exercise in exciting colour combinations.’<sup>28</sup>

The opening pages establish intersections between photographic image, colour, shape and typography. The theme and pattern of repetition is introduced in the typographic presentation of the title: ‘1222...p-p-p-pages to make you think about c-c-c-colour’ and visually articulated in the layout of the photographic images and their design on the page. The layout contains distinct sections made up of composite images constructed of single photographs, which have been cut up and repeated on the page.

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<sup>26</sup> The use of colour as form which subsumes content was returned to in May 1974 with the publication of a *Blue Nova*, containing twelve blue themed editorial features, twenty four pages actually printed in blue ink (editorial text, images and advertising), and a ten page fashion spread entitled ‘Blue Chip Investments’. The cover simply declared, ‘It’s time you were thinking blue thoughts’, and as the editorial address revealed: ‘Once in a *Blue Nova* ... Yes, once and once only, we present, for your entertainment and delight, a blue magazine’ (May 1974). There seemed little justification as to the choice of colour theme other than the brief explanation that ‘Blue is our favourite colour.’

<sup>27</sup> Harri Peccinotti interviewed in Williams, V 1998, p. 108

<sup>28</sup> Molly Parkin, ‘12 Pages to Make you Think about Colour’ *Nova*, August 1966, p. 39

On the left hand side an image of three smiling girls in cycling vests is cropped and layered underneath three times, this repetition accentuates the broad horizontal stripes of the racing vests. On the next double page (Fig. 9) the models sit leaning back displaying their boxing boots, here the narrow shape and long length of the girls' legs and laced up boots are highlighted, appearing elongated in triplication. On the right hand side of the spread repetition draws attention to the graphic shapes created by the contrasted lettering on the models' cycling shorts. These clothes have been chosen for their graphic qualities and their design is foregrounded by the repetition of specific motifs and patterns.

In this feature Parkin's 'colour zones' determined even the casting of the models, as Art Director David Hillman has subsequently revealed: 'It was meant to be twelve pages of black girls in colour clothes.'<sup>29</sup> The contemporary editorial text itself also made this explicit: 'strong colours need living up to; they can easily dominate the woman inside unless she herself is as vivid in personality or colouring. For this reason we photographed the following sportswear on dark-skinned girls.'<sup>30</sup>

In Molly Parkin's fashion pages clothes were often subservient to the image; the aesthetic of the spread was prioritised over a representation of the featured garments. Often, as in the composite images of '12 Pages', page space was filled with repetitions and distortions of a single outfit, manipulated and cropped, which called attention to the surface of the image and the design of the page. (Fig. 10). Peccinotti's claim that fashion in *Nova* was 'put in just for pictures ... an easy way to make a splash of colour' can be demonstrated in his prioritisation of image over product and form over content.

It is the composite image that seems to most conform with the magazine's early editorial objectives to make 'entertainment out of reality.' Photomontage and the manipulated image within *Nova*'s fashion editorial accentuate realism by acknowledging their own material medium and making. This is in contrast with more conventional fashion editorial which avoids drawing attention to the surface of the picture plane or its physical construction. The themed seamless images of a 'photo

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<sup>29</sup> Gibbs 1995, p. 54.

<sup>30</sup> Parkin, *Nova*, August 1966, p. 39

story' function as a window opening into a fantasy world. Whereas, the 'composite image' of fashion photomontage creates a screen or layer which separates the viewer from the product, disrupting the viewing process, by calling attention to its construction and thereby, its existence, as a 'construct'.

An emphasis on the formal qualities of clothing, and a focus on colour, pattern and shape, established by Peccinotti and Parkin had an effect on how readers responded to these pages and encouraged them to follow in kind. In the photograph of a reader's living room taken in 1968, we can see evidence that the '12 pages' fashion feature has been taken a step further. (Fig. 11). Photographs from these pages have been cut out and reused to form a new 'spread' that is displayed on a corkboard above the dining table. If we look closely we can see that the image from the first page of the *Nova* feature has been cut up and cropped so it reveals just two of the models and omits the editorial caption. The montage of the girls in boxing boots has been cut out following the white seam of the original spread. These new montages accentuate the original repetition and result in a visual emphasis on the patterns constructed by shape, line and colour.

One reader recalled that *Nova's* particular attention to design and layout encouraged her to cut it up, and pin it up:

It encouraged you to be more experimental, or even, to carry it a step further people might look at some of the photographs as art forms ... they were beautiful ... I'd cut out photos from the magazines simply because the photographs were stunning or because the photographer had captured a certain mood, or because of the colours, it doesn't necessarily have to be what he's photographing that makes the picture, and that came over in the magazine.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst fashion photography can be described simply as the photographic depiction of clothing, in composite image or montage spreads such as '12 pages' the photograph is only one element of the overall design of the spread. Peccinotti and Parkin's collaboration produced pages for *Nova* where both the fashion photograph and the

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<sup>31</sup> Muriel Warner, *Interview with Author*, (2000).

fashion product are in effect subordinated to an element of graphic design. Rather than this design existing merely as a tool for information disclosure it emerges as an autonomous aesthetic, foregrounded in its layout and importance, and becomes in effect, both content and subject.

Techniques in *Nova's* composite fashion images such as the use of intermediate space and a focus on imagery with no product value, the deployment of colour as an object, and the inclusion of empty or insignificant space, result in an 'uneconomical' use of the page which is not motivated by content (in this case the garment product). The formal aspects of the design are prioritised and exist as autonomous structures within the spread.

These formal preoccupations appeared to have been overreached by Molly Parkin, with the proposal for a fashion story she credits for her final dismissal. Her theme, as she described it was:

White on white - white-skinned models with bleached blonde hair flown in from Scandinavia, preferably albinos, wearing all-white clothes. White linen suits, white cotton frocks, white satin chemises, white chiffon dance-dresses, white marabou mufflers. We'll fly them to the Alps and photograph them against the snow, just before dawn when the light is pure white.<sup>32</sup>

Parkin's editor Dennis Hackett immediately expressed his concerns about legibility: 'Will we see anything at all if everything is white, or would that be asking too much?' Parkin's response was provocative: 'Distinguishing one white from another was not uppermost in my mind. The stunning *effect* is the thing, surely.'<sup>33</sup>

Hackett allowed Parkin her freedom, and the final photographs for 'Turn White' published in May 1967 were restrained and beautiful. (Fig. 12). Photographed by Jean-Loup Seiff, the white on white clothing printed in monochrome take on a luminous, silvery quality and the rationale articulated in the accompanying editorial was as straightforward as the outfits pictured:

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<sup>32</sup> Parkin, 1993, p. 181

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

A complete wardrobe in a colour that suits you is obvious logic... This year there are some super white clothes, from towelling beach wear and crisp cotton coats, suits and trousers to feminine bloomer dresses and party clothes. White... remains one of the most effective scene-stealers for arrivals and exits. Worried it'll make you look larger than life? ... but that's good – so why worry? Just get on with it.<sup>34</sup>

However, as Parkin has acknowledged, the colour theme (and her editorial copy) was perhaps proving repetitive, and her lack of interest in fashion became increasingly apparent. In 'Swings and Roundabouts' from October 1966, Parkin suggested readers should save their money for better things than clothes, as the subtitle suggested, 'what you gain on shoes you can spend on stockings or cigarettes.'<sup>35</sup> (Fig. 13). The photographs by Saul Leiter pictured a young woman sitting on the pavement smoking coloured Sobranie cigarettes that a caption reveals cost as much as her serge jumper bought from Lawrence Corner, the army surplus shop on Warren Street in London. The choice and sourcing of garments from surplus suppliers and menswear outfitters undoubtedly influenced Parkin's successor Caroline Baker who would later champion the look, not merely as cost effective but as a political and aesthetic fashion statement.

Parkin's reign as *Nova's* Fashion Editor came to an end in 1967 when she was fired by her editor, Dennis Hackett. According to Parkin her departure was engineered, as she explained, 'I'd had enough of it on *Nova*; I felt I was repeating myself and it was time for a change.'<sup>36</sup> However, Hackett was being placed under increasing pressure by IPC management about the commercial viability of the magazine's fashion pages, as Parkin recalls:

My pages had become so unfathomable, so obscure, so utterly 'way-out' according to them that they could never be certain of getting any fashion advertising at all. I was informed that the wives of management had long since ceased to look at my fashion pages: there was nothing on them, such as dainty

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<sup>34</sup> Molly Parkin, "Turn White", *Nova*, May 1967, p. 81

<sup>35</sup> Molly Parkin "Swings and Roundabouts", *Nova*, October 1966, p. 94

<sup>36</sup> Parkin, 1993, p. 180

cocktail gowns or spring suits with white cuffs and collars, that they would ever wish to wear.<sup>37</sup>

Uninterested and increasingly uninspired, according to her account, Parkin's reported plans for future issues were deliberately obtuse. For Parkin displaying clothing clearly was secondary to achieving an overall 'stunning *effect*.'<sup>38</sup> However Hackett's growing concern was for legibility and a greater degree of accessibility:

He ranted on and on about how he had been carrying me for months, that my pages were incomprehensible to anyone other than the most effete, that it was time to regularise, to come down to earth, to offer a 'service' to ... readers .... He was asking me to compromise.<sup>39</sup>

This argument about fashion's 'visibility' would continue to be debated at *Nova* over the next decade, as I discuss later in this chapter. Molly Parkin maintains that she had never been interested in fashion, as she explained, 'I only ever saw clothes in terms of shape and colour, not as status symbols and evidence of social standing.'<sup>40</sup> However the experience was formative, for both Parkin and *Nova*, and Parkin's uncompromising, if short lived input established *Nova*'s fashion pages as innovative, daring and different, a remit that Caroline Baker would shape and develop during her subsequent tenure.

After her dismissal from *Nova* Parkin continued to be in demand as a fashion editor, she joined *Harpers and Queen* in 1967 and was appointed Fashion Editor of *The Sunday Times* from 1969 where her reluctant career as a Fashion Editor was marked with the award of 'Fashion Editor of the Year' in 1972. In her autobiography Parkin reflects on her experience at *Nova*:

It was on *Nova*, the magazine above all others which is nearest my heart, that Dennis Hackett and Harri Peccinotti encouraged me to follow my instincts. And, because the combined hostility from those two proved an equal match to

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<sup>37</sup> Parkin, 1993, p. 181

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Parkin, 1993, p.199.

my own when it came to fighting for what we believed in, I have never known such a creative conflict before or since – nor seen a better women’s magazine than *Nova* was at the height of that tempestuous period.<sup>41</sup>

### **Rethinking Fashion: Caroline Baker, Fashion Editor 1967-1975**

Caroline Baker made the leap from Home Assistant to Fashion Editor in October 1967 by way of a brief stint helping out her predecessor, Molly Parkin. She was employed by her editor, Dennis Hackett because she ‘looked like she was into fashion’ and from her initial appointment Baker’s instruction from Hackett was to continue Parkin’s remit in providing an alternative view of fashion to the pages offered by *Vogue*, *Queen* and *The Times*.

Baker had initially trained as a secretary and her first magazine job came in 1965 when as a temp she was sent to be assistant to Shirley Conran, then the Home Editor for the *Observer* magazine.<sup>42</sup> Baker stayed at the *Observer* for a year enjoying a good working relationship with Conran, and the mentorship and encouragement of its Presentation Director Ray Hawkey.<sup>43</sup> In 1966 Hawkey recommended Baker to Dennis Hackett for the job of assistant to Molly Parkin who was expanding her fashion remit into ‘Home’ design. After a successful introduction by Hawkey, for which he prepared her by sending her to Vidal Sassoon for a ‘five-point bob’, Baker was taken on as Parkin’s second assistant for the Home department.<sup>44</sup> One of her first assignments was working with Parkin and photographer Brian Duffy on a series of coloured interiors sets. Baker task was to source the requisite coloured items, such as

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<sup>41</sup> Parkin, 1993 p.196

<sup>42</sup> Baker explained ‘I had absolutely no previous experience on anything to do with journalism or design at all, but was obviously very interested and it was a natural arena for me. And in many ways I regret that I wasn’t sent to fashion school. The problem was that in the 50s, if you were female, you didn’t really get encouraged into University and I had to earn my money. So, I went to secretarial school.’ Caroline Baker. *Interview with Author* 2010a. The *Observer* magazine was Britain’s second newspaper colour supplement launched in Britain in 1964 two years after the success of the groundbreaking *Sunday Times Magazine*.

<sup>43</sup> Ray Hawkey (1930-2010) was an innovative and highly influential graphic designer. He was Design Director on the *Daily Express* from 1959 and then from 1964 Presentation Director for the *Observer* magazine. He designed award winning covers for Ian Flemming’s Bond series and Len Deighton’s *The Ipress File*. See David Crowley and Rick Poyner, *Communicate!: Independent British Graphic Design Since the Sixties*. London: Laurence King, 2004

<sup>44</sup> Interiors specialist Jo Wood was the first assistant

silver bathroom tiles.<sup>45</sup> Baker found Parkin both inspirational and terrifying. She recalls her appointment as Fashion Editor:

Molly was very volatile ... artistic, the most amazing woman I've ever met in my life. I'd never met anybody quite so independent ... but fiery, and she had this massive row with the Editor ... and she walked out, or he fired her... We never really knew what happened there. And the next thing is that the Editor... Dennis Hackett sat me down and said 'you look like you're very interested in fashion, would you like to see if you can do Molly Parkin's job?' .... So I went from never having been a fashion assistant straight into being Fashion Editor ... I had never been to a fashion show. I had no knowledge of fashion whatsoever. [It was] very daunting. Very nerve-racking. It took me quite a while I think, to find my feet.<sup>46</sup>

Dennis Hackett's brief to Baker was to 'do something different'. Her first fashion editorial appeared in October 1967 entitled 'Hey, remember what we used to look like when we were women?' and offered a nostalgic version of femininity which referenced Gainsborough and Botticelli.<sup>47</sup> (Fig. 14). The photographer was the renowned David Hamilton, whose style was characterised by soft focus, hazy lighting and in Baker's words 'soft porn styled' imagery.<sup>48</sup> A mansion in Normandy had been chosen as the location, and Baker's task was to contribute the theme. She decided on the new length 'Maxi' as her wardrobe, a trend picked up from her rapid immersion into the 'rag-trade'. Baker mixed the 'granny -length' dresses by Gina Fratini with shorter skirts, and inspired by the 'virginal type ... catholic' looking models Hamilton portrayed, Baker added fine gold chains and crosses around their necks.<sup>49</sup> The choice

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<sup>45</sup> According to Hillman Caroline Baker's first fashion job was as Molly Parkin's Fashion Assistant on 'Prepare to meet thy maker' from November 1966.

<sup>46</sup> Caroline Baker *Interview with Author* (2010a). 'Dennis Hackett, calls me into the room and says, "you look as though you're very into fashion", and I must say I looked like Twiggy in those days, because that was the look; a sort of cross between Twiggy and Mary Quant. ... I had all my eyelashes, and really short skirts and it was quite cute really'. Baker, (2010a)

<sup>47</sup> 'There are designers who are designing clothes with a woman in mind, using soft fabrics in granny colours that show off the body, a little reminiscent of those Botticelli women, those Gainsborough ladies and the luxury days of wine and roses. Just for a change then, let's go feminine.' Caroline Baker, 'Hey, remember what we used to look like when we were women?' *Nova*, (October 1966), p. 95

<sup>48</sup> David Hamilton was born in Britain in 1933. Before developing acclaim and controversy as a photographer renowned for his soft focus portraits of young women, Hamilton worked as a graphic designer under Peter Knapp for French *Elle* and was later Art Director at *Queen*.

<sup>49</sup> Baker, (2010a).

of a photographer best known for stylised, erotic images served to dispel any notion that the new romantic style couldn't also be sexy.

The working relationship between Caroline Baker and Editor Dennis Hackett developed very well. Baker was supported in her job and encouraged to experiment with the fashion pages:

As my confidence increased ... I became stronger in my styling and understanding what I was doing in the job, and I was very lucky that everybody supported me at the magazine. They were obviously very happy with what I was doing. I was a much easier character to get on with than Molly had been ... Little by little, with Dennis' encouragement; 'let's do new looks, explore new avenues', and meeting photographers ... I learnt how you work as a team.<sup>50</sup>

Caroline Baker undertook Dennis Hackett's directive to produce innovative and unique fashion pages enthusiastically. *Nova's* fashion editorial differed from other contemporary British magazines in a number of ways. On the cover of *Nova's* February 1970 issue readers were told: 'Fashion Needs Re-Thinking: Start Here.' (Fig. 15). The cover image offered a real alternative to other women's magazines with their 'perpetually smiling' faces by featuring only the lower legs of a black model 'dressed' from knee to toe in ropes of multi-coloured tassels.<sup>51</sup> Inside the magazine, Caroline Baker's editorial feature mapped out the context, and cited fashion historian James Laver's predictions of fashion's relentless cycles.<sup>52</sup> Baker embraced fashion's

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<sup>50</sup> Baker, (2010a)

<sup>51</sup> Fieldhouse, H., 1965, p.44. In fact the cover was almost rejected because according to Hillman, it didn't have a 'pair of eyes', but was saved by Dennis Hackett. As David Hillman recalls: 'For me, one of the best covers I ever did was the one with the legs on. The fringes. I nearly got fired for that. ... Hackett happened to walk through the office one day and came into my office and said: "What are you doing?" And I said: "I'm about to throw myself out of the window ... I've just had this cover rejected!" And he said: "Why? It's fantastic!" And I said: "Well, because it hasn't got a pair of eyes". And he said: "Well, I'm gonna sort him out..." and he went downstairs and gave [the IPC Editorial Director] a bollocking and the cover went through.' Hillman, (2003)

<sup>52</sup> 'A dress will be indecent if worn 10 years before its time, daring a year before, smart the year it comes to age, and hideous 10 years after ... it becomes amusing 30 years after its vintage year, and ultimately may become romantic or even beautiful.' Caroline Baker, 'Head for the Haberdashery' *Nova*, February 1970, p. 41. Baker references James Laver. [Taste and Fashion: From the French Revolution to the Present Day](#), London: G. G. Harrap, 1937.

opportunities for self expression and performativity, and heralded the accessory as the marker for individuality:

Fashions will go on changing endlessly. Except that now we have a complete freedom in fashion. There is no one definitive 'look' that can be said, with certainty, to be the 1970 look. Getting dressed has never been so much fun as it is now. One day you can make yourself into Jean Harlow, the next a Victorian tragedienne and yet another day you can look as much like a man as you dare. And every one of those days you will be as fashionably dressed as the other. Today it is the accessory that gives you away ... that indicates fashionability, individuality. You need that very much as clothes become more mass-produced. The way you wear your clothes, the belts and jewellery you add, has become the most important part of today's look.<sup>53</sup>

The title of the fashion editorial, 'Head for the Haberdashery', revealed for readers the source of the accessories used in the feature. The six-page spread, photographed by Hans Feurer, presents the model almost naked, dressed only in ropes, tassels and fringing. (Figs. 16-18). Trained in Fine Art in Switzerland, Feurer practiced as a graphic designer and illustrator in his early career and drew on these skills in the creation of his fashion photographs.<sup>54</sup> To prepare for each shoot he would meticulously plan out and draft a sketched plan of each frame before photographing. In this editorial the model's body cut up and positioned length ways, across three consecutive back-to-back, double-page spreads. By buying two copies of the magazine and pulling out and pinning up the pages together an almost life-sized poster could be made. (Fig. 19). As readers were instructed:

On the following pages we show, on three sections of the body, the accessories you can play around with. And if you want to see them worn

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<sup>53</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Head for the Haberdashery', *Nova*, February, 1970, p.41

<sup>54</sup> Swiss photographer Hans Feurer was born in 1939. He studied fine art and in his early career worked as a graphic designer and illustrator before developing his career as a photographer. As well as regular collaborations with Caroline Baker and David Hillman on *Nova*, Feurer photographed fashion for British and French *Vogue and Elle* during the late 1960s and 1970s and created memorable advertising campaigns for Kenzo in the 1980s. He continues to photograph for fashion advertising and editorial internationally. Gianni Jetzer. [Hans Feurer](#) Italy: Damiani, 2013

almost life size, buy another *Nova* and join the pages together for a superb poster.<sup>55</sup>

Whilst the reader may or may not have been daring enough to sport the accessories as modelled, Baker also offered further ideas, for example to add long silky fringing to the seams of trousers and shirts to create a '*Midnight Cowboy*'<sup>56</sup> look, and doubling up curtain cords and tassels around the waist, as a cheap and personalised alternative to the Yves St Laurent tassel belt.<sup>57</sup>

So, as well as providing visual and textual ideas on what to look like, Baker offered advice on how to achieve these looks and encouraged an active participation in self-styling, through a constructive 'Do-It-Yourself' approach that promoted bricolage and experimentation in making, customising and sourcing clothing and accessories. In interview Baker recalled her inspiration:

I love rope and string, and strips of leather ... I didn't have those rules and restrictions around me telling me it was ridiculous ... I have a more 'out there' streak in me ... to have a go at this or that and inspire people to do it ... I got famous for tying things around the waist to make it fit ... I always used to have fun with ... pins and rope.<sup>58</sup>

Readers, like young art student Deborah Jaffe, responded enthusiastically:

Developing your own style was hugely important, what was there for women if they couldn't afford couture? Because fashion was so dramatically different you didn't have to go out and buy an outfit, just to shorten your skirt was enough. It was terrific fun.... You could use Sellotape and glue, it was breaking all sorts of boundaries, it wasn't just about the finished article it was about the ideas and the process of manufacture, knitting bags, sticking felt,

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<sup>55</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Head for the Haberdashery', *Nova*, February 1970, p.41

<sup>56</sup> *Midnight Cowboy*, directed by John Schlesinger, 1969

<sup>57</sup> 'leather and suede belts, tied around waist neck and arms, curtain cords and tassels as belts, wrapped around as many times as they will go, or plaited together and tied with a large tassel. Fringing anywhere and everywhere you fancy' Caroline Baker, 'Head for the Haberdashery', *Nova*, February 1970, p.41

<sup>58</sup> Caroline Baker, *Interview with Author*, (2007)

making jewellery, it was about questioning ... developing your own style, debasing it.<sup>59</sup>

For readers, *Nova's* influence was quite different from the sometimes prescriptive fashion advice offered by *19* or the 'out of reach' clothing in *Vogue*. *Nova's* fashion spreads provided inspiration and encouraged improvisation, experimentation and importantly, action. This approach to fashion representation encouraged readers to embark on their own creative projects. As reader Jeannie Davison recalls:

I loved the fashion ...it was about using things you could find, very multi – ethnic influences, great fabrics from India, little bits of material you'd find in a junk shop and put on a dress. So the whole fashion thing was about the pleasure of making clothes ...it was about creativity, I would make dresses and hang them on the wall while they were in production, and you'd think, what would be nice there? A nice little bit of embroidery – so it was almost like a sculpture.<sup>60</sup>

### **Anti-Fashion: A Fashion Statement**

As *Nova's* Fashion Editor, Caroline Baker was encouraged to explore alternative fashion and different ways of presenting it in order to mark out the magazine from other women's titles. Collaborating with Hillman, Peccinotti, and regular photographers such as Hans Feurer, Saul Leiter and Sarah Moon, *Nova* created fashion pages which 'were almost an insult to fashion'<sup>61</sup> and the result of this was often what appeared to be an 'anti-fashion' statement. As she describes:

I was always interested in fashion media, a compulsion to follow fashions mixed with the fact that there wasn't the money to buy designer clothing, meant me having to resort to DIY interpretations – this led me into finding a new way to dress myself and using clothing which I then introduced to my

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<sup>59</sup> Deborah Jaffe, *Interview with Author*, (2005)

<sup>60</sup> Jeannie was in her late 20s when she read *Nova*. In her late 20s Jeannie designed for and ran a clothing shop in Edinburgh with a group of other women. Jeannie Davidson, *Interview by Author*, (2005)

<sup>61</sup> Harri Peccinotti interviewed in Val Williams, (ed.), *Look at Me: Fashion Photography in Britain 1960 to the Present*, London: British Council, 1998., p. 106

fashion pages ... I think, in retrospect, that *Nova* was very, 'street'. Street style came about because I started using elements of what people on the streets were actually wearing and dressing models appearing on my fashion pages in clothing inspired by what I had seen.<sup>62</sup>

With a radically open remit from her editor and working on a limited budget, Caroline Baker clothed and styled her models as she chose to dress herself, sourcing menswear, ethnic jewellery, uniforms and second-hand clothing from Portobello and Kensington Market and the Kings Road. From the many second hand shops and stalls to be found in these London streets Baker sourced baggy, pin stripe zoot suits, uniforms and ethnic jewellery. Army surplus stores like 'Lawrence Corner' and 'Badges and Equipment' were filled with US uniforms from Vietnam and these provided the raw materials for spreads like 'Dressed to Kill: The Army Surplus War Game', photographed by Harri Peccinotti in September 1971. (Figs. 20a & 20b). Baker looked to contemporary music, film and television, and what young people were wearing on the street. The inspiration for the photo story came from the film *M\*A\*S\*H* and to a contemporary new consumer these clothes looked very different, exciting and sexy.<sup>63</sup> This was 'alternative fashion', not versions of the surplus look produced by designers such as Katherine Hamnett and Kenzo and featured on *Nova*'s pages some years later<sup>64</sup> but authentic drill uniforms which were pre-worn and cheap to buy, and then customized by Baker who cut up and dyed the garments for the shoot. For Baker this way of dressing was articulated an act of 'rebellion':

I was going against fashion at the end of the Sixties and early Seventies ... I began to fight this thing of always having to be groomed and wear lipstick and have your hair set, and to look like this woman - a really girly look ... I was breaking this down. The 'Ban the Bomb' protests were going on and people were beginning to wear army surplus jackets, and I was picking up a lot of references and looking at alternative fashion as well ... I really got into shopping from places where maybe waiters bought their clothes, or second-

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<sup>62</sup> Baker, C. (2007) and Baker, C., Personal Communication with Author, (2010)

<sup>63</sup> *M\*A\*S\*H*, Dir Robert Altman, 1970

<sup>64</sup> See for example, Caroline Baker, 'Khaki Koloured Kraze', photographed by Helmut Newton for March 1975. Baker writes of the designer versions 'they're not as cheap as army surplus but they'll fit better and they're classics which will remain wearable for years.' Baker, *Nova*, March 1975, p. 60

hand shops, and putting women into menswear. *Nova* was a really interesting magazine in that you were quite free to do all these things.<sup>65</sup>

One of Baker's aims was to challenge established notions of ideal femininity, in particular the sort of conformist, 'dolled up', girlish look that she saw as dominating the pages of other women's magazines.<sup>66</sup> In 'Dressed to Kill' a group of young women are pictured relaxing on the sand dunes at their Army base camp.<sup>67</sup> The styling of clothing on the body, the hair, make up and accessories, all construct of a 'natural' look; models wear their hair loose, their skin bare, sun tanned and freckled. The colour palette is carefully considered; a dull wash of khaki greens interrupted with splashes of bright red. Make-up is used minimally to accessorise key details of the clothing; red painted lips and varnished nails are perfectly colour matched by a simple star shaped enamel brooch and fine coral bead bracelet. The use of men's wear operates to both conceal and reveal the models' bodies; the garments are soft, creased, worn in and frayed and the fit is loose and large, but by folding up sleeves, cutting off trousers into short shorts and tying the oversized shirts tightly on the model's body, this masculine attire serves to emphasise feminine attributes rather than disguising them. In this image the round swell of the model's belly is revealed by the tightness of her shorts and the worn in softness of fabric against her skin. In 'Dressed to Kill' the styling of clothing, hair, make up and accessories add feminine intrigue to the androgyny of work wear and inject army surplus clothing with a distinct sexual tension. In adopting both men's clothing and a 'cool' stance, seen here for example, with the elegant yet casual gesture of the model smoking a cigarette gripped between her finger and thumb, these women convey a challenging and very modern image of femininity.<sup>68</sup> The detail of styling transforms the look from a soldier's old uniform into a cool new chic, it presents an image of contemporary, cutting edge fashion and a portrait of *Nova*'s new kind of woman.

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<sup>65</sup> Baker, (2007).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> The models adopt masculine acts of behaviour and gesture; one woman wipes her nose with the back of her sleeve, another uses a brush to apply shaving foam to her face from a tin mug.

<sup>68</sup> Arguably a particularly fashionable image of femininity that has endured, seen for example on Kate Moss in cut off denim shorts and wellington boots at Glastonbury, or in the current appeal of the 'boyfriend' jean.

Caroline Baker's editorial for *Nova* was consciously set against mainstream fashion and her motivation was both political and aesthetic, as she describes:

Fashion had got so terribly grown-up then, so bourgeois ... the beginning of my being a fashion editor was the beginning of breaking down that ... you began to have more of a mass movement of women who were thinking for themselves when they dressed ... I was going against the status quo and against perceived ways of dressing and how one should present oneself. The magazine was my theatre ... every month I would try and bring in a relevant, up to the moment story that would be as creative and groundbreaking and original as I could make it ... Once you have an audience and a theatre to perform in, you are inspired to encourage readers to try out new ways of dressing. I suppose I became more and more rebellious as it all seemed to work.<sup>69</sup>

Notably, Baker demonstrated an irreverent attitude to the fur industry, one of the few advertisers that she was explicitly instructed to pay attention to.<sup>70</sup> In 'Every Hobo Should Have One', photographed by Saul Leiter in 1971, Baker removed fur coats from their context of glamour, wealth and couture and used them as props to dress her model as a tramp, posing her on a litter strewn city street.<sup>71</sup> (Figs. 21a & 21b). The graffiti scarred walls signified a gritty urban realism that became a defining feature of the style magazines of the 1980s.<sup>72</sup> Baker styles the model with dog at heel, pushing a pram containing all her worldly belongings. Across these pages she is pictured slumped on the pavement, bundled up in newspapers and sleeping rough in a park. The fur coat in each shot performs the essential task of keeping the woman warm; whether it is wrapped around her loosely or spread out over her body like a blanket as

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<sup>69</sup> Baker, (2007) and Baker, (2010b)

<sup>70</sup> One of Baker's first editorials used baby tigers borrowed from London Zoo as accessories to create the story of a boxing supremo and his glamour girl, lavished with all the fur that his winnings could buy.

<sup>71</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Every Hobo Should Have One', *Nova*, December 1971, 'Real fur; an expensive investment that needs a lot of thinking about, especially with today's lightening fashion changes ... above all furs must be worn as casually as clothes are nowadays – looking as if no thought had gone into that nonchalant, put-together style that takes such agonising hours to work out.' (p. 60) Coats made from animals not threatened by extinction and certified by the British Fur Trade Association.

<sup>72</sup> Rocamora, A and A. O'Neill, 'Fashioning the Street: Images of the Street in the Fashion Media', in E. Shinkle (ed.), *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), pp., 185–99.

she sleeps on the grass. Her costume constructs a bulky figure, with Baker's characteristic look of the model wearing at the same time 'thigh-high socks and socks rolled down' layered over woolly tights and thickly laced crepe-soled boots.<sup>73</sup> The furs are luxuriant in texture, colour and cut, but the proximity of the model's companion dog draws attention to the coat's function as a warm hide rather than as an ostentatious status symbol.

Baker's styling presents a provocative image of femininity; the woman is a tramp, destitute, her fingerless gloved hands clenched against the cold, her unsmiling face obscured, cast in shadow by her oversize hat and thick loose hair. Baker diffuses the glamour and the power of the fur by creating an unsettling scene. She recounts the initial concept behind the story:

I had become aware of people who were living on the streets. There was this woman in particular, who was a down and outer, and I began to see her out there with her pram and all her stuff, and her dog ... The model was Leiter's girlfriend, and I did her as if she was a tramp. I had her tied up in strings and I had socks and flat shoes on. But the fur industry were absolutely furious.... 'Sleeping in the park with the pram!' ... But it was encouraged, you see. [Nova] really liked that. ... you were pushed always to find something controversial to do.<sup>74</sup>

It was not be the first or last time that Baker and the *Nova* team would court controversy and push the boundaries of their fashion pages. *Nova* magazine earned itself an enduring reputation for its 'shocking' and 'provocative' content. What this in part appeared to represent within the magazine's fashion pages was a new take on the body. This resulted in images which were often unconventional and which continually pushed the boundaries of good taste for IPC management, and indeed some readers. Jeanloup Seiff's photographs for 'The Fairest of them All' (March 1972) explored in Baker's words 'moments of narcissism' because 'self-love is never

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<sup>73</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Every Hobo Should have One', *Nova*, December 1971, p.67

<sup>74</sup> Baker (2007) & Baker (2010a) The model also appears in Saul Leiter's photographs for 'Swings and Roundabouts' (October 1966) see figure 13. She was the model and artist Soanes Bantry and Leiter's long term girlfriend.

having to say you can't afford it.'<sup>75</sup> (Fig. 22). The images present a model dressed in Jean Muir, Pablo and Delia, and Gina Fratini, indulging in the pleasure of her own reflection, and included controversially, a shot of a model looking up her own dress in the reflective surface of a mirrored coffee table, and another in which she gazes at photographs of herself whilst seated on a toilet with her tights pulled down around her ankles. Baker remembers the photographer cautiously advising her not to go into the bathroom with him for the final shot:

He said to me, 'you don't need to come, I'm going to do this picture, you wait here' ...When the pictures got back, *Nova* would have the courage to publish them, whereas most people would never have, although that picture has followed me throughout my career, and a lot of Editors would say 'we would not publish pictures of women on toilets!' And they always remember that and the army surplus story with me.<sup>76</sup>

In a 'Letter to the Editor' in the following months one reader felt compelled to voice her complaint 'Against Lavatory Fashion':

As the ex-beauty editor of a now defunct national women's magazine I can sympathise to the full with the problems which your fashion editor and your photographers must have in finding new ideas for projecting the fashion image. In *Nova* March you ran a series of fashion pictures of a girl in narcissistic postures. They are beautifully photographed and the clothes can be clearly seen. When, however, one starts to develop the narcissus element which can be a scourge to the young in any case, and further muddles it up with sex and lavatories, you have a great big Freudian cesspool which could be truly worrying to some young people.<sup>77</sup>

But despite such criticism the *Nova* team were undeterred, and delighted in the controversy, showing as it did, the in roads they were making in pushing the boundaries of fashion editorial. Regardless of previous management reservations,

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<sup>75</sup> Caroline Baker, 'The Fairest of them All', *Nova*, March 1972, p. 49

<sup>76</sup> 'He said to me, "you don't need to come, I'm going to do this picture, you wait here"'. Baker (2007)

<sup>77</sup> Pamela Glanville, London W11, 'Letter to the Editor', *Nova* June 1972, p.6

Baker would upset the furriers again with a feature in January 1974 entitled ‘Fur-riends’ photographed by Hans Feurer. (Fig. 23). Baker used expensive fur coats to clothe her models dressed as prostitutes at the centre of a paparazzi style expose of political sex scandal.<sup>78</sup> The ‘Fur-riends’ shoot was staged at the Grovesnor Hotel with various members of *Nova*’s editorial staff playing the international dignitaries embroiled in the drama including Harri Peccinotti and David Hillman.<sup>79</sup> True to her love for uniforms, Baker herself appears as a policewoman.

However, Baker was not interested in creating shock for shock’s sake, her motivation lay in a desire to innovate and challenge the medium of fashion editorial, as she explains:

Clothes are not necessarily one of the strongest visual leads ideas wise for fashion stories - and its easy to fall into a cliché situation, so you have to think deeply into how best to portray a certain style so that it is visually arresting and extraordinary.<sup>80</sup>

### **Collage, Cut Ups and Pull-Outs: Designing Fashion Editorial**

The appointment of Gillian Cooke as Editor in 1970, and her promotion of David Hillman to extend his role as Art Director to include the responsibility of being Assistant Editor, created a strong, creatively driven editorial team which fostered and encouraged new talent. Under Cooke’s leadership, David Hillman and Caroline Baker were given the freedom to explore a new and fruitful creative partnership which would challenge the way fashion was presented on the page.

In the 1970s, Caroline Baker conceptualised a new way of dressing and an approach to styling that went beyond mere decoration and ornament. An interest in the relationship between fashion and function, articulated through both word and image,

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<sup>78</sup> The prostitute is a recognisable and an enduring symbol of femininity in visual culture. During the 1960s and 1970s she was exemplified by the glamour of Catherine Deneuve’s housewife tuned high class prostitute in Luis Bunel’s *Belle du Jour* (Dir. Luis Bunel, 1967) who wore a custom made wardrobe by Yves Saint Laurent, and the cool street style of Jane Fonda’s call girl in Ian Pakula’s *Klute* (Dir. Alan Pakula, 1971) dressed by costume designer Ann Roth.

<sup>79</sup> Caroline Baker, “Fur-riends”, *Nova*, (January 1974). Harri Peccinotti appears as a government official caught kissing a model at the hotel reception and David Hillman stars as one of the arresting officers.

<sup>80</sup> Caroline Baker, C. Personal correspondence with Author, (2010b),

was a prominent theme in her fashion editorial for *Nova*. From the 1960s developments in the technology of photography had allowed for ‘outside’ fashion and this shift in fashion photography away from the location of the studio helped construct a new feminine ideal; the woman who was dynamic and physical.<sup>81</sup> And Caroline Baker’s models were often defiantly active, an eye on clothes that were fit for this purpose led Baker to the continued use of sportswear on her fashion pages.

In ‘High as a Kite and Twice as Flighty’, (October 1971) girls jump about on a trampoline, caught in mid air by Hans Feurer’s camera and are laid out as a multiple freeze frame sequence by David Hillman. (Fig. 24). Baker’s accompanying editorial responded to what she acknowledged could be an almost overwhelming sense of freedom and choice in fashion. For those women who were ‘confused as to mood, style and trend’ Baker refused simple didactic instruction, instead she conferred the creative responsibility onto each reader by explaining: ‘its now entirely up to you to decide what you are going to wear, and how.’<sup>82</sup> Readers like Jeanie Davidson took up the challenge enthusiastically, and vividly recalled the details of this particular shoot:

The fashion images were fantastically colourful and bright - the fashion was very much around clothes you could actually wear and still looked absolutely fantastic, the fashion in *Vogue* was unreal, but in *Nova* it was clothes I actually wore, it was very much about just reflecting real women and it was good photography. I’ve got this vision of somebody in stripy legwarmers, lots of multi coloured stripes leaping around outside ... it was about some kind of liberation the fashion, and it was perfect for me because it gave me tons of ideas for clothes we were making at the time ... I remember these really vibrant shots with lots of colours.<sup>83</sup>

The task for the ‘High as a Kite’ shoot was not simply to select clothing that would look good in the air and on the page, Baker also had to work out which garments

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<sup>81</sup>Hilary Radner describes the new woman in 1960s fashion photography as ‘on the move’ Radner, Hilary, “On the Move: Fashion Photography and the Single Girl in the 1960s”, in Bruzzi, Stella and Church Gibson, Stella (eds), *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp., 128–42.

<sup>82</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘High as a Kite and Twice as Flighty’, in *Nova*, October, 1971, p.64

<sup>83</sup> Jeannie Davidson *Interview with Author* (2005)

moved, stretched and allowed for the most impressive acrobatics. (Fig. 25). Her process of styling was responsive to both the photographer's wishes and the demands of the location. As this was a story that was concept led, it was Baker's responsibility to visualise and materialise the photographer's ideas, as she recalls:

The photographer came to me with the idea, he had found these trampolines on a beach near Brighton and he wanted to do pictures of girls in the air captured when they were jumping. I knew I had to think what clothes would work best in movement - and the sportswear theme was beginning as a source of inspiration for designers, but at that time there were quite a few shops selling second hand American sportswear which I then mixed with shorts and skinny trousers and tights and leg warmers - using ideas from sports and dance and layering clothes up in a colourful way adding fluffy bolero-like jackets for richer texture. I collected suitcases full of gear that could work and then in the back of the location bus I tried outfits on the models, layering them up to make it look as interesting as I could - then once the girl started jumping you could see if the clothes were working visually for the lens or not and change things if necessary. I would stand right next to the photographer, just behind so I could see exactly what the camera was capturing.<sup>84</sup>

In *Nova*'s fashion spreads, images are tied together by the visual sequence of an unfolding picture story as well as common formal concerns like layout, design or colour. For Art Director David Hillman, the design of fashion editorial was led by a visual motif or device:

In the early days you had to kind of explain it, but when you worked with a group of photographers they understood what you wanted. I used to say: 'I think these should all be double page spreads' ... Or sometimes you would just say 'everything's going to be a close-up', and then you'd work out a sequence, and then they'd go off and photograph.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Baker (2010b)

<sup>85</sup> Hillman, (2003)

‘Get off your bike and do what you like’ from August 1971 provided David Hillman and photographer Harri Peccinotti the opportunity to explore their favourite shared obsessions: photo montage and cycling. (Fig. 26). The editorial by Caroline Baker continued her commitment to functional, sporty dress and featured knitted woollen separates by Mr Freedom that she advised readers to wear in layers:

Two or three sweaters at a time ... start off with something long sleeved that comes down to your waist, or even your hips, and pile on top of it short or no-sleeved sweaters, finishing barely under the bust. ... Altogether a gay, colourful layered look making us all look a tiny bit rounder this winter but keeping us a whole lot warmer.<sup>86</sup>

The fashion pages luxuriated in bright, saturated colour and rainbow stripes. The spreads were carefully designed and drawn out in draft before being photographed, printed up and then cut out and stripped together to form the final montage. Hillman and Peccinotti play with scale and movement; in the opening spread the entire page is taken up with a close up photograph of a model’s bottom perched on the seat of a bicycle, the angle of the lens captures the detail of the knitted texture of the woollen shorts and the contrasting mesh of her tights. In another image (Fig. 27) Hillman and Peccinotti disrupt the field of vision by cutting up and pasting together different sized versions of the same image; the perspective it creates appears to show two identical girls on bikes cycling behind an enlarged close-up. The final image (Fig. 28) presents a surprising animated montage sequence across the double page spread; small photographs of models cycling are cut up, repeated and superimposed onto a larger photograph of the arched back of a woman bent down over in racing style so they appear to be cycling across her back. The resulting effect of the montage technique draws the viewer’s attention to the visual and material detail in the design of the garments: their colours pattern, construction and shape.

David Hillman and Harri Peccinotti shared a similar visual aesthetic and a desire to create memorable and exciting fashion pages, as Hillman explained:

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<sup>86</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘Get off your bike and do what you like’, *Nova*, August 1971, p. 37

Harri and I are great friends, we had a very close relationship as he was photographer and I was Art Director. And it was good because he's less precious. If I wanted to do a montage I could go to Harri and say: 'Do you mind shooting it because I'm going to cut it up afterwards?' And he was very happy to do it. You couldn't go to Hans Feurer because the mere fact that you were going to crop it was considered to be a major sin. I mean, you found people who actually were happy to work with the ideas we were working with.<sup>87</sup>

As many readers' comments suggested, rather than being a disposable or throw-away item, *Nova* was both an object to be collected, and as we have seen earlier in this chapter, an interactive medium to be cut up and re-used. The use of a pull-out posters and the idea of the magazine itself as an 'assemblage', offered a different approach to the purpose and function of the magazine. David Hillman designed the magazine in a way which he hoped would encourage readers to take it apart, his ambition was that *Nova* could be an aesthetic resource for its readers, as he explains:

I wanted the magazine to stop being precious. I wanted people to tear things out, and that's why we did all those kinds of 'Buy two issues and you'd end up with a 6 foot black girl covered in tassels'. ... I wanted people to use it as decoration.<sup>88</sup>

The fashion feature from *Nova*'s May 1971 issue exemplifies Hillman's ambition. The magazine's cover tantalised viewers with the image of a scantily clad model perched on an OMK Rodney Kinsman 'Tractor' stool, pulling at the ties on her black knickers (Fig. 29). Above the image the by-line read: 'How to Undress in Front of your Husband' and in smaller text below: 'and a flick book to amuse him while he waits.' Inside a fashion feature photographed by Duffy ostensibly promoted trends in lingerie, but in fact gave little space to the detail of each item, instead reducing the image of most of the garments to stamp sized squares with each picturing a sequence in a strip tease. (Fig. 30). Here the products disappear from the pages as the stripper

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<sup>87</sup> Hillman (2003)

<sup>88</sup> 'There was part of me that always wanted *Nova* to be saddle stitched as opposed to perfect-bound. Because I kind of like the instant.' Hillman, (2003)

removes each item of clothing; In one narrative sequence the model is pictured fully dressed in motorcycle leathers and ends up just in her knickers. A set of instructions invited readers to pull apart the magazine to remove the fashion pages and then cut out the squares along the dotted lines, and secure with a bull-dog clip in order to ‘flick the stripper into action.’<sup>89</sup> (Figs. 31 & 32). The model was Amanda Lear, recommended to the editorial team by the Crazy Horse cabaret bar in Paris, and she may have been familiar to those in the know as a transsexual cabaret performer.<sup>90</sup> However, Cooke maintains that she didn’t realise their model was a man until halfway through the shoot when it became ‘apparent’. According to Gillian Cooke the management at IPC were outraged: ‘they didn’t know whether to drool or be affronted’.<sup>91</sup> For Cooke, the idea for the feature came out of wanting to find a new way to show underwear. Significantly, for Hillman the motivation for the ‘How to Undress’ feature was the opportunity to design a cut-out-and-keep flick book, in this case the format was not a design solution - it was the point.

Learning his craft at The London School of Communication and Graphic Arts in the early 1960s<sup>92</sup>, Hillman was influenced by European modernism in design, and in particular the art direction of Alexey Brodovitch who created *Harper’s Bazaar’s* distinctive and innovative pages of fashion photography montage from 1934-1958. Like Brodovitch, Hillman saw fashion editorial not in terms of a collection of single photographed images, but rather, a sequence. As he explained:

For me a magazine is about pace; it’s about one page, one spread [which] should lead into the next. And there should be surprises. It can be an enormous amount of white space, or it can be just an eye. And it’s one of the things I detest in *Vogue Magazine*. They have great pictures but they’re so badly laid

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<sup>89</sup> Caroline Baker. ‘How to undress in front of your husband’, *Nova* April 1971 (pull out, not numbered). The shoot includes the credit ‘styled by Marta Granger/Hair by Marcel’, p. 67

<sup>90</sup> Amanda Lear would later appear as the cover girl for Roxy Music on their 1973 album ‘For your pleasure’.

<sup>91</sup> Cooke (2008)

<sup>92</sup> Hillman graduated from The London School of Communication and Graphic Arts (now London College of Printing, University of the Arts, London) in 1962 and worked on *The Sunday Times Magazine* from 1966-68 before being appointed at *Nova*.

out. I mean, they have no relationship to each other, no sense of scale, change of pace.<sup>93</sup>

Such surprises were evident in 'Turn Another Cheek' (September 1971), a mix and match beauty feature edited by Penny Vincenzi and photographed by Hans Feurer. (Fig. 33a). The pages presented six full-face looks, from bare naturalness to full glossy make-up colour, that readers could cut up and rearrange to find their perfect look (Fig. 33b).<sup>94</sup> The sequence could run back and forth as readers determined different combinations, as the instructions explained:

By cutting through the dotted lines on the following pages you can see what one sort of eye make-up looks like with another kind of lipstick colour. You can turn the pages backwards and forwards to your heart's content and make up your own mind about what goes with what.<sup>95</sup>

In April 1972 *Nova's* readers opened their magazines to discover a pull out fashion editorial that spanned eight pages and drew on Hillman's techniques of montage and his ambition for the pages to have a second life on the walls of the magazine's readers. The feature 'Japanese Designers looking to the West' (Fig. 34) showcased the work of Kansai Yamamoto and Issey Miyake, avant-garde Japanese designers whose 'funny, colourful, pop'<sup>96</sup> clothing was emphasised by Peccinotti's imaginative stop frame motion photographs and stripped together by David Hillman to form a moving catwalk montage of marching, dancing, stretching models captured in jilted sequence across the central pages of the magazine. By purchasing two copies of the magazine and joining the pages together the reader could create a seven-foot frieze.<sup>97</sup> (Fig. 35).

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<sup>93</sup> Hillman, (2003)

<sup>94</sup> Penny Vincenzi, 'Turn another Cheek' in *Nova*, September 1971 p., 36-43

<sup>95</sup> Vincenzi, P., 1971, p. 37

<sup>96</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Japanese Designers looking to the West', *Nova*, April 1972, p. 58

<sup>97</sup> The following pages presented 'Japan Ease' an exploration of 'Western Designers looking to the East' by Caroline Baker, photographed by Harri Peccinotti pp., 68-105. Containing a selection of oriental inspired designs by Foale and Tuffin and Janice Wainright alongside original Japanese apparel such as kimonos and wooden sandals available to purchase at Mitsukiku, the Japanese Shop in London.

David Hillman's art direction of *Nova's* fashion editorial operated as a process of collaborative conceptualisation and revision in order to create memorable and striking pages. For example, in August 1972, *Nova* planned an ambitious fashion shoot to mark the occasion of the British Olympics with a series of sporting events spread across its fashion pages, photographed by Peter Knapp. Caroline Baker dressed the models in sportswear and had them competing in field and track events such as archery, hurdles and high jump. Hillman later explained that the casting for the shoot had specified agility but in reality the models chosen were not as athletic as desired, so to save the shoot he projected Knapp's images onto a television screen and re-photographed them to acquire an effect of static transmission, the result was 'TeleNova Sportacular.'<sup>98</sup> (Figs. 36a & 36b).

*Nova's* attention to innovative and exciting design in its fashion pages and its inclusion of photomontage, pin up wall murals, pull out posters and cut-out-and-make flip books actively encouraged some form of further action from its readers, as June Thornton describes:

We used to wallpaper the walls with it. Our kitchen was completely covered with pictures, really beautiful images from *Nova*, text and pictures. The layout, typography, it was lovely to look at then. We used them as art, I actually framed them ... some of the standard of layout was incredibly artistic and in a frame or used in a collage it became art.<sup>99</sup>

### **'All Dressed and Made Up': Narrating Fashion Editorial**

At its most literal level, the fashion photograph functions to advertise clothing, accessories, and make up which can then be consumed by the reader, but more than promoting specific garments, Caroline Baker's fashion editorial for *Nova* expressed the fun to be had in 'playing' with fashion and encouraged the creative activity of constructing different fashionable personas through the process of 'dressing up'. As she explained:

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<sup>98</sup> Caroline Baker. 'Telenova Sportacular', *Nova* August 1972

<sup>99</sup> June Thornton, *Interview by Author*, (2000)

A girl can dress to express her personality, the mood she feels or like her envied idol. ...The clothes are all there. And what better time than now to play the schizophrenic when there are so many opportunities for showing off, which is what dressing up is all about.<sup>100</sup>

‘In All Dressed and Made Up’ (November 1972) photographed by Harri Peccinotti, a young girl is pictured in her bedroom playing with a life-sized doll. (Fig. 37). The editorial caption discloses key information: ‘The Biba Doll ... wears all the pinks. Her clothes, accessories and make-up are all available from her very own boutique, Biba in Kensington High Street, where she can furnish parts of her house at the same time.’<sup>101</sup>

Baker’s styling offers a tone and mood; the pastel colours, soft textures and fuzzy, gauzy fabrics construct a hazy dream world emphasised by low lighting, a grainy filter and soft focus camera work. The model appearing on these pages resembles a life size peg doll, posed with stiff arms and legs and seated in a ballerina’s ‘first’ position. Her face appears painted on, with round circles of pink blush decorating her cheeks and a pretty rosebud mouth. Her hair is arranged in soft, coiled plaits and there are a few loose strands tickling the back of the neck, as if the child had arranged it herself. It is the deliberate soft ‘naturalness’ of the hair that reveals that this model is not completely doll, but *doll like*. Despite her static poses and the rigidity of her posture she is soft and yielding, compliant in the routine of being ‘All Dressed and Made Up.’

Paradoxically, whilst Baker’s fashion pages can be seen to encourage experimentation and promote creativity in the active production of a ‘look’, the Biba Doll is seemingly rendered passive by the work of the designers, photographers and stylists, who create the products and the image. Baker’s editorial text makes explicit reference to this process of transformation, proposing that for those readers:

...who would rather be dressed than dress themselves – to save themselves thinking, searching, confusion and headaches – there are two girls, designers

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<sup>100</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘Fancy Dressing’, *Nova*, December, 1970, p.64

<sup>101</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘All Dressed and Made Up’, *Nova*, November, 1972, p 63

extraordinaire, who do it all for them: from the very first layer that goes on the skin to the final one that's painted on. They are Mary Quant and Barbara Hulaniki (better known as Biba).<sup>102</sup>

If the gesture of submitting to a total 'ready-made' look has pacified the model, the process of production and of creativity here then lies in the hands of the little girl (and in turn the reader who is addressed) who dresses and styles the model by building up layers from underwear to outerwear; she is pictured across the pages pulling up tights, folding down the collar of a coat and carefully adjusting a net veil. (Fig. 38). Caroline Baker's own craft of fashion editing and styling lies in creating and communicating the detail of the look as it would appear on the magazine page. Baker describes the working processes involved in constructing a fashion image:

I'm seeing what I'm doing, I know what the camera is going to capture. As a fashion editor, as a stylist, you are completely responsible for the look of all the people in front of the camera. So you work very closely, and you stand right next to the photographer and you're watching every picture ... You have to make it perfect ... As I dress somebody I'm looking at it and thinking: 'Hmm, how can I make this more interesting, or make it more fitted, or do something with it?' So I'm getting the clothes and doing some work as a designer ... and maybe showing them a different way of wearing it.<sup>103</sup>

In 'All Dressed and Made Up' Caroline Baker conveys her task of styling through the actions of the little girl. Baker's 'work as a designer' is revealed in the snap shots at the end of each chapter of the fashion editorial where the model doll is dressed in a series of finished outfits and her body is carefully arranged with eyes closed and laid out flat on her back on the little girl's bed. (Fig. 39).

*Nova's* readers were seduced by the aesthetics of the fashion pages as well as the garments they featured. The words and pictures of fashion editorial play a crucial role in articulating the narratives of fashionable identities. Desire for the fashion image and the fashion product is shaped through the relationship between the words and

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<sup>102</sup> Baker, (November, 1972), p.62.

<sup>103</sup> Baker, (2007).

pictures on a page, and it is often the descriptions in accompanying editorial and captions give the image a context and meaning.<sup>104</sup> In *Nova*'s fashion pages text, photography, clothing and graphic design operate together to construct and convey very specific narratives. The interlinking roles of title, image and layout are crucial in introducing the theme of the photo story and in establishing tone and pace. For example, within the narrative sequence of this spread, and framed by its wide expanse of white border, each image resembles a page in a children's picture book. The progressive element of clothes accumulating on the model's body as the little girl dresses her, suggests the chronological passing of time and drives Baker's narrative forward.

At *Nova* the creation of every fashion image relied on a series of interdependent and often very personal working relationships, as Baker explains:

When you're going to produce a photographic story, you have to communicate with your photographer, explain what you want to do. Then they would have an idea, and so you'd go ahead. The clothes, the hair, the make-up, and the model, and make it happen. You'd create this story ... Quite often you'd find that a photographer and a stylist would fall in love with each other. You worked very well with each other and then you were just constantly getting ideas ... The photographer needs the fashion editor because you are giving them their photograph ... you are creating a scenario and making a story. So they are recreating their fantasies through fashion editors.<sup>105</sup>

Caroline Baker established a series of long running, close working and personal relationships with key photographers such as Sarah Moon, Jeanloup Sieff, Hans Feurer and Deborah Turberville, and she created some of her most memorable fashion pages in collaboration with Harri Peccinotti. 'A Touch of Ballet Class' from December 1973 exemplifies the collaborative working practice of the fashion shoot. (Fig. 40). Baker recalls the creative developmental process in 'setting the scene' for Deborah Turberville's Dhiagelev inspired photo-narrative:

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<sup>104</sup> Words render the image 'intelligible'. See Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984) p. xii.

<sup>105</sup> Baker (2007 & 2010a)

She had got hold of an illustrated book of the Ballet Russes and was very inspired by it, so we talked about making it work as a fashion story - found a suitable location, models and clothes and the scene would be set to do your story.<sup>106</sup>

Baker's editorial text introduces the story: 'A party dress and perfect poise. Glamorous, flamboyant, extravagant ... Make floating entrances, sensational exists - would you turn down the chance to be a prima donna for a night?' Her styling and costumes dress the dancers in evening gowns worn 'dramatically with a ballerina's stance and dancing accessories.'<sup>107</sup>

The traditional use of illustration in girl's comics and women's magazines to accompany fiction or short stories opens up the possibilities for imagination and narrative.<sup>108</sup> Sequential fashion photography operates in much the same way, offering the reader a 'photo-story'. By using clothing as a prop, and by employing the illustrative techniques of soft focus lighting and grainy filters, the reader is invited to suspend belief. In setting the scene outside of the present, and locating it in an imagined past, or fantasy setting, the images become otherworldly, removed from real time and real life and thereby further facilitating the indulgence of escapism; they look and feel like dreams or films.

The tendency toward retrospective style and styling further mystifies the more exclusive clothing ranges that feature in these types of spread. Terence Donovan's photographs for 'The Limpid Line', (June 1973) resemble stills from a film sequence, they evoke a sense of narrative or story. (Fig. 41). This element of fantasy is emphasised by: hazy effects, soft focus, a grainy image, subdued lighting, washed out colours and dramatically contrasting shadows. With a 'drift towards the twenties'<sup>109</sup> and pre-empting the *Great Gatsby's* (1974) pastels, palette and soft draped styling, Baker employs powdery colour, layering of longer lengths, translucent fabrics.

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<sup>106</sup> Baker (2010b).

<sup>107</sup> Caroline Baker, 'A Touch of Ballet Class', *Nova*, December 1973, pp., 50-57.

<sup>108</sup> See Valerie Walkerdine, Valerie, "Some Day my Prince Will Come", McRobbie, Angela and Nava, Mica (eds) *Gender and Generation*. London: Macmillan, 1984

<sup>109</sup> Table of Contents, *Nova*, June 1973, p.3

‘Retrospective’ styling here equates with dream like sequences to present an expensive clothing range featuring designer, hand made and antique clothing. Making reference to Dior’s longer line collection from 1954, the exclusive ‘specialness’ of these items is also often reinforced in the accompanying editorial, as Baker’s text reveals:

Edging into fashion: the ‘H’ line. Waists are dropping to hip level, hems to mid-calf. Willowy, limpid, tube-like, this is a natural move away from the stiffer fashions. Pablo & Delia, the two talented designers who are responsible for this new look, work independently producing small collections which are totally different from current fashions but which will have a strong influence on next season’s clothes. Before the look becomes commonplace buy the original, or anything droopy from the very few designers at present on the same wavelength. Or you can improvise with ‘antique’ clothes - for this new look, like so many, has a touch of the retrospective about it.<sup>110</sup>

If photographers were recreating their fantasies through Baker, her role was to realise their dreams and make the narrative visible and seductive to readers, through clothing, location and styling. In *Nova*’s ‘photo story’ features, fashion, even as a starting point, acts as a kind of costume.<sup>111</sup> Baker explains this working practice:

If there was a story that suited a known fashion photographer’s personal style - they would become the obvious choice to talk to about interpreting the look you wanted to achieve for your magazine. Once I had established a relationship with a photographer they might come to me and say they had found a location that suited a certain mood and style of story and could it work for me. Sarah Moon worked in this way - she had this idea and so it was up to me to find the clothes that could fit into such a story. Sarah [Moon] identified

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<sup>110</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘The Limpid Line’, *Nova*, June 1973, pp., 60-63.

<sup>111</sup> For Sarah Moon’s photographs for ‘Old Graces Never Die’ Baker encouraged her readers to ‘dress like a little old lady and bring back a little grace to your life.’ She selected fine fabric tea dresses covered up with fur capes and woolly cardigans and to complete the look ‘flapper hats, lace-up shoes, fine jewels and a handbag to hang on to for dear life.’ Caroline Baker, ‘Old Graces Never Die’, *Nova*, October 1972, p.53

with the thirties glamour of Hollywood so it was often the theme that I found for the clothes and especially if that look was establishing itself as a trend.<sup>112</sup>

In line with the revival of a thirties aesthetic exemplified by the film *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967)<sup>113</sup> and made popular by the retrospective styling of Biba, *Nova*'s fashion photography often looked back to the past and took stars of the silver screen as direct inspiration, this allusion acts as a metaphor to help the reader understand and anchor the style.<sup>114</sup> These visual references to popular culture are often made explicit in the accompanying text. In 'Old-time Favourites' (1973) photographed by Sarah Moon, for example, black and white photos replicate the image of a 1930s starlet and Baker's editorial acknowledges the influence of Garbo and Dietrich. (Fig. 42). She suggests, 'to complete 'the look: fashionably wavy hair and the heavy contrast made-up face right down to black on eyes and lips.'<sup>115</sup> Readers made similar cultural links in reference to the construction of their own changing fashionable identities. A fashion consultant interviewed in *Nova* about her latest hair cut reveals she is fond of her 'Claudette Colbert style curly fringe ... It suits all the clothes that I have and all the clothes that I have wanted.'<sup>116</sup>

Importantly, Baker's styling always moves beyond simply dressing up her models in a pastiche period 'look' and the result is looks which may have drawn inspiration from the past but are always fashion 'forward'. In 'The Heavenly Suited', photographed by Terence Donovan the models are 'divinely dressed in winter's classics' but the detail of styling transforms the picturesque.<sup>117</sup> (Fig. 43). Shot with a hazy grainy filter and very deliberately posed, the images resemble film stills. The shoot is retrospective in styling, copying the look of the 1940s, but deliberately subverted by key details: dyed pink and orange hairpieces, an over-sized pearl necklace, and fluorescent pink socks. As Baker's editorial points out: 'Altogether, winter's look is one of studied elegance,

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<sup>112</sup> Baker (2010b)

<sup>113</sup> *Bonnie and Clyde* Directed by Arthur Penn, 1967. Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty wore Academy Award nominated costumes designed by Theadora van Runkle.

<sup>114</sup> Laird Borrelli points out that the use of metaphor in fashion illustration, 'aids in the visualization of style by linking a look or a garment to a point of reference outside of the world of fashion'. Laird Borrelli, 'Dressing Up and Talking about It: Fashion Writing in *Vogue* from 1968–1993', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress Body and Culture*, (1/3, 1997), p 255

<sup>115</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Old-time Favourites', *Nova*, December, 1973, p 72.

<sup>116</sup> Nerrida Piggin, Fashion Consultant, quoted in Caroline Baker, 'Ahead of Hair', *Nova*, February 1974, pp., 60-63.

<sup>117</sup> Caroline Baker 'The Heavenly Suited', *Nova*, September, 1972, p.61

carried through to the well-coiffured hair, which is made more unusual by the use of coloured fringes, and crowned with a beautifully made-up face.’<sup>118</sup> Set against the seductive visual and textual imagery of these soft focus fantasy worlds, the stock list details offer the reader a very real solution to achieving the look themselves ‘Hair, including coloured fringes (obtainable from Joseph, £3.50), by Paul Nix.’<sup>119</sup>

### ‘Adding up The Look’: Fashion as a Mannerism

Fashion in the 1970s can be marked out by the choice of styles and looks on offer,<sup>120</sup> and Caroline Baker encouraged a fashionability that was defined by individuality and freedom. Her fashion pages for *Nova* demonstrated that style was less a matter of *what* to wear and more *how* to wear it. As she explains, ‘this notion highlighted the way clothes were worn by the individual as being the most important aspect of getting dressed, as opposed to doing what was the done thing and wearing clothes to be accepted in society.’<sup>121</sup>

In an editorial for *Nova* in March 1973, ‘Adding up to Something Good’ Baker writes: ‘fashion depends more upon the way an outfit is put together than upon the clothes themselves. The bits and pieces added make the look.’<sup>122</sup> (Fig. 44). In Baker’s styling this could be perfectly illustrated by the ideas that subvert conventional notions of good taste and sartorial commonsense.<sup>123</sup> In ‘Safety Last’ for example, she proposed ‘letting a safety pin do the work of a button or a zip.’<sup>124</sup> (Fig. 45). Baker advocated a loosening up of fashion’s rules, encouraging readers to experiment by, ‘wearing a shirt un-tucked, and leg warmers over trousers, showing off your underwear or putting on more than one brooch.’<sup>125</sup> She offered suggestions for customising existing wardrobes, and subverting design function, readers could experiment by:

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 68

<sup>120</sup> Valerie Steele has argued that during this decade ‘fashion was not in fashion’ but became ‘optional’. Valerie Steele, ‘Anti-fashion: The 1970s’, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, Volume 1, Number 3, 1997, p. 280

<sup>121</sup> Baker (2010b).

<sup>122</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘Adding up to Something Good’ *Nova*, March 1973, p.88

<sup>123</sup> For example in ‘Good Ghastly Taste’ from May 1972 Baker advises her readers: ‘Don’t be afraid to let your bad taste out for an airing ... Controlled style and controlled vulgarity together make perfect bad taste.’ Caroline Baker, ‘Good Ghastly Taste’ *Nova*, May 1972, p. 50

<sup>124</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘Safety Last’, *Nova*, March 1972, pp., 66–67.

<sup>125</sup> Baker (2010b).

... putting the veiling on first and then the hat, or vice versa ... dressing up figure hugging suits with no blouses ... bow ties, large and floppy ... worn with men's shirts ... tying pieces of veiling around your neck ... mixing jade with clear and plastic bangles ... in large quantities of course, sometimes on both arms.<sup>126</sup>

The words and pictures of Baker's fashion spreads inform the reader not simply *what* to wear, but *how* to wear it: how to move, how to stand, how to style your hair and at what angle to tip your hat. As this editorial text describes:

The only way to wear these clothes is to realise that they demand their own accessories ... You need to stand and move around exaggeratedly: smoke coloured cigarettes (rather wickedly), lean dramatically ... Wear your hair curly and your hat at just the right angle. Then you will love the feeling they evoke.<sup>127</sup>

*Nova's* fashion pages articulate styling as crucial to the achievement of not just of an overall 'look', but also of a way of dressing as a means to a *way of being*. In an article on the enduring feminine ideal of 'The Blonde', singer Linda Blazer described the creation of her own look:

I knew there was no use in just plonking blonde hair on top of my head and leaving it at that – I thought the whole thing through and arranged my hair, quite deliberately, in a Forties style. Then I found one of my mother's old outfits: black pencil skirt, jacket nipped-in at the waist ...and it's just right for me. It adds up to not exactly a sexy look, more a kind of 'mannerism'.<sup>128</sup>

We can see an example of how make-up, hair, clothing, posture and attitude adds up to a 'mannerism' in 'Tight is Right' photographed by Helmut Newton from April

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<sup>126</sup> Baker, March 1973, p.88

<sup>127</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Once Too Divine... Now Groovy Baby', *Nova*, December 1970, p. 50

<sup>128</sup> Pat Baikie, 'Ladies Prefer Blondes', *Nova*, January 1975, p. 40

1973.<sup>129</sup> (Fig. 46). This fashion spread tells the story of girls getting drunk at a cocktail party and typical of Newton's repertoire, the photographic images seem highly staged. The models have an extraordinary appearance: a statuesque beauty which is polished and 'made up'. Their hair, complementing the cut of the suits, makes explicit reference to styles from the nineteen forties: smoothed into a long blonde glossy bob, or carefully curled and folded under, or pinned up under a veiled pillbox hat. Newton's models were often posed so artificially they appear almost literally life-less.<sup>130</sup> However, it is the detail of styling that animates this stasis. Whilst the bodies in this example retain an impression of rigidity - as if the models are holding their poses, in one image the model's hair is caught in a moment of movement - escaping beyond the boundaries of the picture frame and enlivening both the wearer and the image.

Despite their haute couture attire, the models in 'Tight is Right' demonstrate a playful, irreverent 'mannerism'. The fashions may be chic, sleek and sophisticated but their behaviour is at odds with this glossy and controlled appearance. These women are not concerned with looking elegant and composed, instead they jump in the air, steal each other's food and, as the story progresses and they get drunker, throw glasses of wine around the room. They turn away from the viewer and photographer and appear more interested in what's going on amongst themselves. Whilst there are obvious differences in the scale of the two sets of women, the double page spread format and the common acid green background colour invites us to consider the separate photographs as a whole event –indeed the model on the centre right appears to be distracted by the hair spectacle on the left, and her companion takes advantage of this moment to cheekily steal a bite of her canapé. The text running along the far side of the page is cropped into a narrow column, echoing the 'tight fit' of the clothing with its nipped in waists and long narrow pencil skirts. Accessories may 'add ... the fun' to clothes which 'have gone back to black – strict classic: the little black dress, the two-piece skirt suit,'<sup>131</sup> but it is the actions and movement of the models and the positioning of their bodies that transforms these forties style dresses from picturesque, retro pastiche into contemporary cutting edge design.

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<sup>129</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Tight is Right', *Nova*, April 1973, pp., 52-59

<sup>130</sup> See Rosetta Brooks, 'Fashion: Double-Page Spread'. In Jessica Evans (ed.) *The Camerwork Essays: Context and Meaning in Photography*. 1997, London: Rivers Oram Press.

<sup>131</sup> Baker, (April 1973), p. 53

With their striking appearance and uncontrolled behaviour the models here seem uncontained by the photographs and unconstrained by their own glamour. These women are offered up as examples of *a way of being*. Fashion photography does not only reflect the ideals of the context in which they were originally produced, but also serves to present new versions of femininity and fashionable identity; in this way the effects of fashion photography extend beyond the details and stitches of the garments it displays. These beautiful but badly behaved models are depictions of *Nova*'s 'new kind of women' who are bold and rebellious, who don't take fashion too seriously but instead enjoy the fun of fancy dressing and the creative performance of glamour and sexuality.

David Hillman's approach to narrative led art direction was a defining feature of *Nova*'s fashion editorial and allowed Caroline Baker space to explore concept led fashion features creatively with photographers such as Deborah Turbeville and Sarah Moon. Hillman explains his approach:

I used to write little scripts and then the Publishing Director would say: 'why have you got a man with a wheelchair in it?' And we'd say: 'Oh, it's all to do with the *story*.' I'd rather that than say: 'Here's 10 frocks, go and photograph it.' I felt there ought to be a kind of context.<sup>132</sup>

In 'Peasantly', photographed by Sarah Moon for *Nova*, September 1974, Caroline Baker introduces the context of the story and explains the details of the look. (Fig. 47). Here the fashion is primary yet it is the overall *effect* that is emphasised:

The Russian peasant look is one of winter's loveliest fashion stories. It means layers and layers of clothes in flower prints and geometric patterns all mixed together. The effect is bulky, whether top-to-toe or bottom-half bulky ... the beauty of it is that you might not have to buy one single new thing to achieve this look: just wear all you own clothes together.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Hillman (2003)

<sup>133</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Peasantly' *Nova*, September 1974. YSL's 'Russian Peasant' collection 1976, inspired interest in 'ethnic' fabrics and folk fashions.

Baker dressed up her models in layers, like the women she had seen in images of East European refugees, but clothing them in ready-to-wear- collections by French designers Cacharel and Daniel Hecter.<sup>134</sup> She was attracted by the prints, shape, texture and colours of the designs and drawn to the concept that the range dressed both women and children. In the first spread Sarah Moon captures three women escaping into the night carrying suitcases and wearing bulky clothing: blanket-check wool smocked jackets, a brown tweed jacket with peplum, full gathered skirts and soft knitted hats all create a rounded silhouette. Baker uses layers and contrasting natural fabrics: Liberty print wool crepe pleated skirts worn with fair isle jumpers, cotton aprons and head scarves made up from Liberty tana lawn all in shades of fawn, beige, cream and dusty pink. The models are pictured running, hiding, squeezing awkwardly through the doors of a train carriage, anxiously moving along the platform as they try to jump on the train, and in the last image, with their daughters curled up sleeping across the seats of a carriage. Baker describes the ideas behind the concept:

...the refugee thing had started to happen, with people running away from Europe ... and Sarah Moon was really intrigued by it, and it was very dark. So we did this peasant look ... it was Cacharel, and ... a mixture of Liberty and fair isle. ... We did the girls like they were refugees, she always liked working with bunches of girls. It's like they're running away, with suitcases and things. It's very beautiful. ... quite often, with Sarah, shoots would take about three days, something you just couldn't do cost-wise today.<sup>135</sup>

The resulting images are beautiful, yet dark and almost impenetrable. The women and children pictured appear tired, anxious and frightened. As Baker explained, Moon would take days to complete her assignments, waiting until the end of the day when the light was fading and at the moment when the exhausted models would soften their postures and slump their shoulders she would begin to shoot.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Sarah Moon enjoyed a long collaboration with Maison Cacharel and Biba and developed a recognizable 'house' style and visual identity for both fashion houses. Moon began her career as a model and her photographers show a visual complicity.

<sup>135</sup> Baker, (2007)

<sup>136</sup> Baker (2007)

In acting as costume for the narrative of the image, it could be argued that the actual clothing here is subservient to aesthetic and visual form. In these images garments are not displayed clearly, and in some instances they are even rendered impenetrable. Moon explained her use of clothing in such photographs by suggesting that ‘it was enough merely to show the sweaters - I was not required to emphasise them ... You can see the product ... but its not at all what the photograph is about.’<sup>137</sup> In these images the clothing is unclear and the detail of the garments is lost under the hazy, darkened surface of the image.<sup>138</sup>

It was a mood of fashion and a way of looking and being of that was being explored through these photographs. As David Hillman makes clear, this approach to the representation of fashion on *Nova*’s pages was very deliberate, ‘because *Nova* wasn’t a fashion magazine, Caroline Baker’s attitude was it was not a catalogue, it was not *Vogue* Magazine, we weren’t interested in seeing the stitches.’<sup>139</sup> However some readers were unsure how to understand these images.<sup>140</sup> As Gail Romanes complained in a letter to the Editor a few months after the publication of ‘Peasantly’:

Having been a regular reader of *Nova* for some years, I feel I have a right to criticise as well as admire. Whilst I am sure your choice of clothes in the fashion section is impeccable, I never seem to be afforded the exciting opportunity to judge since the photographs are always almost completely indecipherable. In September, you say the fashions shown are after the style of Russian peasants but they are all photographed in pitch darkness through an out-of-focus camera.<sup>141</sup>

The legibility of the clothing featured on Baker and Hillman’s pages was also of some concern to editor Gillian Cooke:

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<sup>137</sup> Pat Booth, ‘On The Border’ <http://www.photoicon.com/piinterviews/108/>

<sup>138</sup> ‘the clothes themselves are undefined and unclear, leaving only impressions of a way to “be”.’ Ellen-Jane Opat, ‘Stalking the Wild Fashion Photography’, *Print* (July/August 1975), p. 56

<sup>139</sup> Hillman (2003)

<sup>140</sup> The criticism from designers and was that their clothes were assuming a second-rate position to the styling of the photograph. See Hall-Duncan, Nancy *The History of Fashion Photography*, New York: Alpine Books, 1979

<sup>141</sup> Gail Romanes, Dorset Letter to the Editor, *Nova*, January 1975, p.8. In addition to the dark pages and ‘indcipherable’ photographs the printing of this shoot in the copy I examined was also offset, making a the presentation of the clothing even more difficult to discern.

I would have liked the fashion to be more visible. I didn't see why we couldn't have fabulous pictures *and* see the clothes ... Caroline was incredibly inventive with fashion and it was wonderful and David would then want to get in – he was longing to use new photographers and then give them their head and obviously the pictures that came out were stunning, but you very often couldn't see the clothes! I felt there was a place in the magazine for the two. If we wanted to appeal to women a little more, we could have given them more.<sup>142</sup>

### **Dressed Overall: Fashion, Function and Reform**

At *Nova* Caroline Baker began an innovative project of dress reform by tackling hands on the fashion system's hierarchical structure, conventions and restrictions. Work wear and uniforms offered Baker the ultimate antidote to fashion's relentless cycle and provided a response to the deepening economic recession faced by Britain in the Seventies. In 'Dressed Overall', photographed by Terence Donovan in 1974, Baker announced that:

Fashion as we know it, with its bi-annual change of mood and style, will have to come to an end. A new approach to dressing will be needed. ... That universal, uniform look must be a practical one ... The changes will have to be rung by each individual.<sup>143</sup>

The black and white photographs reveal a bleak urban landscape in which a solitary woman cuts a striking figure. (Fig. 48). The setting for the shoot may be dystopian but the clothing is beautiful in its simplicity: 'classic classics in lovely shadowy camouflage colours, muted and un-extravagant, but very chic.'<sup>144</sup> The garments construct the narrative: fatigue jacket, blue-black velour sweatshirt, green gabardine Oxford bags, cobalt-blue cotton skirt and a striped cotton sheered waist blouse, whilst accessories add key details: a gentlemen's divers watch, a tiny antique pearl choker, an ebony bangle, gold identity tags. Baker's styling transforms the wearer from

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<sup>142</sup> Cooke (2008)

<sup>143</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Dressed Overall', *Nova*, (March 1974,) p.39.

<sup>144</sup> Baker, (March 1974) *Ibid*.

standardised and uniformed factory worker into an original modern chic. In her work for *Nova* Baker's commitment to core functionality of dress and a revision of fashion's conventions kept her questioning the limitations of women's clothing:

I was looking at menswear, and thinking 'why don't we wear what men wear? We don't need handbags ... we can put our hands in our pockets. We don't need lipstick, we don't need hairdos ... I don't have to wear heels to get myself a guy, or to keep my husband. I want to wash my clothes, I don't want to have to have them all dry-cleaned. I don't want stiff clothing, I want loose things. I have to run for the bus!' ... All these kind of feelings surfaced into my styling work.<sup>145</sup>

Baker's continuing interest in developing her concept of the 'natural woman' would result in styling for *Nova* that embraced practical clothing, looser cut designs and unisex fashions. In 'Lady on the Loose' photographed by Hans Feurer, from 1974 Baker abandoned the hair and make-up artist all together and created a story set around the idea of 'a shared wardrobe for all the family.' (Fig. 49). As her text describes: the look was 'big and baggy, borrowed from the male – which means more to spend on the holiday and less on the clothes ... no problem with the fit, the bigger the better.'<sup>146</sup> The 'oversize' look would continue to inspire Baker well into the 1980s and is notable in the styling she contributed to Vivienne Westwood's 'Nostalgia of Mud' collection (1982-3).

Baker's interest in the aesthetic and practical qualities of a more functional way of dressing would also develop in to her 'Layered on Thick' approach.<sup>147</sup> (Fig. 50). It was a look inspired by at least two very different sources: ballerina's warm up clothing and traditional Peruvian knitwear and she put together layers of legwarmers worn over tights and thick, loose cardigans worn over chunky jumpers. Baker's styling transforms the bulky into the sublime: she turned the jumpers and gloves inside out to reveal the abstract patterns of their knits and snipped and sewed together

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<sup>145</sup> Baker (2007)

<sup>146</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Lady on the Loose', *Nova* July 1974, pp., 60-61. '...which means more to spend on the holiday and less on the clothes, because if he hasn't already got it, it can be bought cheaply from army surplus stores, sports shops, and chain stores ... If it's just a fad, let him have the lot next year.'

<sup>147</sup> Caroline Baker 'Layered on Thick', *Nova*, (November 1974 ) p.79

football socks to create extra long legwarmers which she showed worn over jeans and pulled right up to the bottom.

In 1975, the final year of *Nova*'s publication run, Baker dedicated a number of features to the philosophical premise and aesthetic qualities of the 'smock-shape' which represented 'the end of fashion and the start of something new.' (Fig. 51). As she explained to her readers: 'The smock-shaped shirt-dress fits fat and thin, young and old and goes with everything. If we women don't want to be judged on sex appeal, why don't we adopt enthusiastically the one practical uniform we've been offered?'<sup>148</sup>

By her final issues on *Nova* Baker appeared to dismiss the fashion system altogether, and positioned *Nova* as distinct to other 'fashion magazines'. Her article on denim from July 1975 entitled 'You can take a blue jean anywhere' revealed a firm anti-fashion sentiment. (Fig. 52). Baker argued that:

...couturiers and fashion magazines report po-faced on this and that look, and we waver between what we think we should like and what we know we do like ... The only thing that changes year to year is the gimmickry, and even that is of no great importance.<sup>149</sup>

A double page spread of a close up of a woman's bottom tightly clad in a pair of worn in Lee jeans celebrated denim as a sartorial solution, a default way of dressing which stood outside of fashion's waxing and waning. The following pages profiled Baker's favourite denim looks and offered a taste of the images she would construct for *Deluxe* and *i-D* magazines a few years later. (Fig. 53). For Baker denim offered the ultimate solution, it was all at once: uniform, practical, comfortable, affordable, versatile, unisex and sexy, and importantly it allowed the individual wearer to dress and stage their own identity.

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<sup>148</sup> Caroline Baker, 'Is This the End of Fashion and the Start of Something New?' *Nova*, September 1975, p.67

<sup>149</sup> Caroline Baker, 'You can take a blue jean anywhere' *Nova*, July 1975, p. 29.

## Conclusion

Baker's fashion editorial for *Nova* changed the way fashion appeared on the magazine page and inspired a generation of young women to dress as they pleased. As reader June Thornton described:

They put together looks, it would be second hand stuff - Portobello Road, street markets... it was a good mix ... a thinking woman's wardrobe if you like ... There I was in the sticks in Plymouth, I'd come up to Bond Street and buy a pair of boots that would cost me all my wrapping cheese money on Saturday in the supermarket for a year, blow the lot on a pair of boots then put it together with second hand clothes and I felt like a million dollars ... [*Nova* encouraged that] you saw it in print and thought 'Oh this is what I do, I like that, this is a good look, I'll buy a bit of fur and wrap it around my ear', or whatever it was. Looking through the pages of *Vogue*, I was nowhere near that, I'm not that sort of person, but looking in here you thought, 'well, possibly' ... and you thought ... 'I could be part of this.'<sup>150</sup>

For Baker, the privilege that came with her role as a fashion editor at *Nova* lay in her ability to show by example, as she explains:

Somehow or other it's quite brave to make that decision by yourself –to say 'I'm just going to go out wearing my pyjamas and my sneakers!' But if you see it somewhere, you think 'yes, I could wear my clothes like that' and I think that that is the power of the fashion editor ... I always used to think I did a service to people ... you actually were saying to women like yourself: 'Yes, this is what I feel like wearing now'.<sup>151</sup>

This case study of *Nova*'s fashion pages has provided an insight into the working methods and collaborative practices of fashion editing through extended profiles of the magazine's two key fashion editors. Both Parkin and Baker were unconventional and visionary. Parkin approached clothing as design element and prioritised its colour,

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<sup>150</sup> Thornton, (2000).

<sup>151</sup> Baker, (2007).

texture and shape. Baker was inventive, and excited by the opportunities of presenting fashion on a page. Whilst the detail of the garments was sometimes subservient to the exploration of narrative and image in *Nova*'s fashion spreads, For Parkin clothing was 'incidental' the means to create a 'stunning effect, for Baker the attention to the details of dressing and constructing individual style was always of primary importance.

Caroline Baker's fashion pages for *Nova* reveal that styling is integral to the achievement of an overall 'look', but equally significant, encourages a way of dressing as a means to a *way of being*. In effectively defining the activity of styling through her work as Fashion Editor on *Nova* and approaching this as both ideologically and aesthetically driven, Baker was able to communicate a series of fashion statements. The words and pictures of her fashion editorial play a crucial role in articulating the narratives of new and desirable feminine identities.

## **Chapter Three: Photo Essay**

**Images REDACTED**

**Figures 1 -75 (pages 227-278)**

## Chapter Three

### ‘Making Raids on the Real World’: Editorial Content and Design

#### Introduction

In an age where attitudes are elusive there is a temptation to adopt them for the sake of appearances. This magazine has encountered them quite often; over childbirth, frigidity, the colour bar, homosexuality. It has been suggested that such topics are not appropriate for public discussion. But all these topics are intrinsically vital, and have been debarred from conversation by the language of repression. The feeling is that they are not nice, or genteel. How else to improve communication, therefore, between people inhibited by traditional taboos than to tackle such subjects front on and thereby make communication possible?<sup>1</sup>

During its decade of publication from 1965-1975 *Nova* maintained a commitment to ‘making raids on the real world.’<sup>2</sup> *Nova*’s editorial aimed to improve knowledge, understanding and communication by tackling topical issues and current affairs head on. Its frank approach and often controversial content addressed a wide range of subjects and extended the possibilities of what women’s interests could be. Editorial realism was a driving force for the duration of its publication and informed its treatment of gender politics, work, education, science and technology, this content steered the magazine away from what had been traditionally considered ‘women’s subjects’.

*Nova*’s editorial content provided a service to its readers by opening up lines of enquiry and communication, it fuelled women’s ambitions and aspirations and provided a consensus about who they could be. The process of editorial production drew on a network of creative decision making, investigative journalism and opinion. At the heart of this was a desire to push boundaries, court controversy and challenge conventional thinking. Central to this editorial objective was a carefully crafted

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., ‘How far can you go? *Nova*, June 1967, p. 53

<sup>2</sup> Anon., ‘*Nova* for the 100<sup>th</sup> time’, *Nova*, July 1973, p. 74

balance between different kinds of content and its design on the page. In *Nova* 'opinion' was constructed and expressed through both image and text. The particular balance of the magazine was formed by a close relationship between words and pictures.

In June 1967 *Nova* used the reactionary TV character Alf Garnett on its cover, to voice the question on many lips 'How far can you go?' (Fig. 1). Inside Molly Parkin's fashion pages were filled with seemingly covert scenes of a young couple 'Undressing on the Beach.'<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 2). This provided an astute visual interpretation of Alma Birk's article, 'Sex: One law for sons, another for daughters' in which she argued against the double standards of sexual morality that punished female sexuality.<sup>4</sup> It was to the representation of Parkin's young lovers, embracing in various states of undress (a narrative device to justify a selection of underwear and swimwear) that the concern was focused.<sup>5</sup> Inside the feature article explored the issue of increasing sexual content in the media and made a clear argument to open up lines of communication for more discussion and debate. It followed a number of provocative covers concerned with relationships and sexual behaviour, demonstrating that *Nova* wasn't afraid to 'tackle' any subject.<sup>6</sup> The magazine deliberately courted controversy, out of all the national newspapers only the *Observer* and the *Guardian* accepted *Nova*'s promotion of its February 1967 issue on homosexuality and the new Sexual Offences Act.<sup>7</sup> Featuring two pyjama-clad men on its cover above the headline 'They consent in private' the issue sold out in two days. (Fig. 3). The 'How far can you go' issue made references to the two opposing forces involved in the debate, moral crusaders like Mary Whitehouse whose social conservatism called for a return to

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<sup>3</sup> Molly Parkin. 'Undressing on the Beach', *Nova*, June 1967, pp., 80-89

<sup>4</sup> Alma Birk. 'Sex: One law for sons, another for daughters', *Nova* June 1967, pp., 60-61

<sup>5</sup> As Carrie Tarr suggests a 'moral panic, [was] directed above all at young people whose supposed decline in sexual standards was perceived as threatening the nation's values and interests.' Carrie Tarr. "Sapphire, Darling, and the Boundaries of Permitted Pleasure" *Screen* Volume 26, Issue 1, 1985, p. 51. However, according to Michael Schofield's 1965 study of The Sexual Behaviour of Young People, the young couple making out on the beach in Parkin's fashion shoot were more likely to be married than single and promiscuous.<sup>5</sup> His research revealed that whilst young adults were maturing sexually much earlier, they were doing this within the confines of marriage. Schofield, Michael, The Sexual Behaviour of Young People. London: Pelican, 1965.

<sup>6</sup> The March 1967 cover featured a framed family portrait with the single caption; 'Yes we're living in sin. No were not getting married. Why? Its out of date.'

<sup>7</sup> The Sexual Offences Act on 1967 decriminalised private homosexual acts between consenting men over the age of 21

‘family values’ and the liberal stance of *Nova* which demanded more openness and frankness in discussions of sexual politics and sexual behaviour.

The body in *Nova* was commonly revealed in various states of undress in fashion and beauty editorial, however, importantly this ‘undress’ was also constructed through a whole series of editorial articles and debate within the magazine which tackled emergent issues surrounding the body and women’s sexuality. The April 1968 issue tackled this idea head-on, in an article entitled ‘The Logic of See Through.’ (Fig. 4). The editorial text read:

We are no longer shocked or even surprised when men and women expose the most private parts of their social, sexual and domestic lives to public exhibition. We have grown used to the naked intimacy in print or on television. Now ... the fashion for stripping has extended from the emotional area to the physical.<sup>8</sup>

In the feature article psychiatrist Dr Catherine Storr argued how the trend for more revealing clothing, such as Yves Saint Laurent’s transparent silk blouse, reflected a public movement towards what she described as emotional undressing.<sup>9</sup> This idea was analysed further in an article ‘See-through television: How to strip your emotions in public’ by Michael Williams which examined the popularity of American game shows such as ‘The Newly-weds Game’ which laid bare the intimacies of personal relationships for the amusement of a television viewing public.<sup>10</sup> The move towards intimate emotional exposure was also clear in the article ‘Darling, please talk to me’ by Shirley Flack, in which three wives openly and honestly discussed the problem of communication breakdown in their marriages.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Catherine Storr. ‘The Logic of See-Through’ in *Nova*, April 1968, pp., 64-68

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Storr (2013-2001) is best known as the author of children’s books, notably Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf (1955) and Marianne Dreams (1957). Storr qualified as a doctor in 1944 and practiced as a psychiatrist working as a Senior Medical Officer at Middlesex Hospital from 1950-1960.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Whether one regards it as entertainment or just so much semi-articulate drivel is a matter of taste. What is insidious in this genre of programme is its constant *evaluation* of human relationships. Enough in life is already competitive ... without us being arbitrarily assessed as winners or losers in our private life.’ Michael Williams, ‘See-through television: How to strip your emotions in public’, *Nova*, April 1968, pp., 117-119

<sup>11</sup> ‘Talk? What about?’ ‘About anything, it doesn’t matter. Just talk to me.’ For the husband there are many escape routes from this confrontation. Many are clichés: the drink in the pub, the television

*Nova* aimed to improve communication and understanding, by tackling difficult and sometimes taboo subjects head on. This emotional and physical stripping arguably provided titillation but was also part of a wider new sensibility that reflected a growing confidence in women to openly discuss and even satirise that which had previously only been uncovered in the privacy of the home. As reader Mary Rayner describes: 'It felt so relevant to women of my age and generation, and also fed our fantasies and aspirations. Sex was not a taboo subject, nor was female ambition and we were allowed to laugh at ourselves and the world.'<sup>12</sup>

### ***Nova* World**

If you have a life beyond your own four walls, *Nova* is the magazine you can't afford to miss. Its coverage of current affairs and social change; its appraisal of literature and the lively arts cannot be matched by any other women's magazine. And of course it tells you what's new in fashion, living and beauty. It expands the mind of the woman with a mind of her own (and her man reads it too).<sup>13</sup> (Fig.5).

*Nova* constructed and reflected a new and different world of opportunity and experience. Its readers have recalled the 'range and depth' of articles and describe the magazine's content as 'topical and innovative ... both entertaining and mind-broadening.'<sup>14</sup> Regular features like 'Terra *Nova*' offered readers a conceptual '*Nova* World', a new landscape where issues and ideas were carved up into the territories of Information, Diversions, Appraisal, Controversy and Stimulations. Contrary to Betty Friedan's findings that American magazines of the 1950s sought to trap women within their homes in a self-perpetuating cycle of disappointment and dissatisfaction, *Nova* magazine actively encouraged readers to look out and move out.<sup>15</sup> As one

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programme, the brief-case filled with work. But with a little practice the tactics become more sophisticated.' Shirley Flack, 'Darling, please talk to me', *Nova*, April 1968, p. 86

<sup>12</sup> Mary Rayner, *Remembering Nova* Questionnaire (2005).

<sup>13</sup> Subscription Advertisement, *Nova* December 1969, p. 118

<sup>14</sup> Miranda, '*Remembering Nova*' Questionnaire, (2005).

<sup>15</sup> Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: W.W. Norton. 1963. See Chapter Two: 'The Happy Housewife Heroine', pp., 30-60.

reader described: 'It was about bringing women out of the home and letting them be and giving them permission to enjoy the big wide world and have some fun and giving them the tools to do it.'<sup>16</sup>

Oral history accounts reveal that *Nova* did hit its mark by making an appeal to 'women who think magazines don't understand.'<sup>17</sup> These were contemporary readers, like Muriel Warner, who were living and working away from home for the first time. In 1965 Muriel was 22 and newly wed. Prior to her marriage she had travelled widely and worked for the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) in Birmingham as a bookings assistant in the reservations department. Her ambition was to become an air stewardess but with her husband's encouragement she gave up her job to become a housewife, a decision she didn't regret. *Nova* filled a much needed intellectual gap for Muriel in her new role as home maker. In interview Muriel discussed the magazine's combination and range of subject matter as a welcome addition to the realm of women's magazines:

Overall there was a serious content to it, it wasn't just knitting and cooking and problems with babies, and husbands ... In *Woman's Own*, the articles there would not have been long ... they had a more parochial subject matter... *Nova's* content ... dictated that its readers had a bit more awareness of life and what it had to offer, more than simply the home ... and that's where some magazines floundered because they couldn't adapt to this, and then *Nova* came out and it was like a star twinkling in the sky. You didn't have to learn how to make sponge cakes, to be a reader of it. I thought it was super because I was never interested in cooking and I certainly didn't knit.<sup>18</sup>

Writing in 1965, journalist Katherine Whitehorn had been insightful in her prediction that *Nova* might be a magazine for the 'woman who doesn't read magazines.'<sup>19</sup> Clare Hammond was such a reader. She had made the move to London from Yorkshire aged 19 to take a secretarial course and who found herself a few years later, married and at

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<sup>16</sup> Jaffe, Deborah. *Interview with Author*, (2005).

<sup>17</sup> This by line featured on *Nova's* cover from September – November 1965.

<sup>18</sup> Muriel Warner, *Interview with Author*, (2000).

<sup>19</sup> Whitehorn, Katherine (1965) 'The Reading Age of Women', *The Observer*, Sunday, March 7, p.31

home with small children to care for. She had felt distanced from other women's publications, but found she could identify with *Nova*:

I'm not a women's magazine reader so *Nova* was quite special to me and I did buy it every month. I remember looking forward to it coming out ...there were things in *Nova* that appealed to me ... it seemed to me to be the first intelligent women's magazine. I never read *Good Housekeeping* or any of those other magazines so there was obviously something a bit different about *Nova*. It was quite a meaty read, quite thick, it would last me, I used to read the articles quite carefully.<sup>20</sup>

For Clare the magazine offered real alternatives for the sort of life she wanted to live:

I always contemplated getting married and having children. That was one of my plans. But I also wanted something bit more indefinable, I wanted to be my own person and not get subsumed into some sort of domestic nether-land. But I'm not sure I could have actually verbalized it then. ...Settle down was never vocabulary that I used because I didn't particularly see it as settling down. It was just another aspect of your life I suppose ...I felt my mother didn't have a life of her own at all, I didn't feel that was for me. The magazine offered alternatives ... talked about different sorts of jobs, changing careers, further education, higher education.<sup>21</sup>

*Nova's* September 1968 cover presented the troubles and concerns of the mid sixties modern woman embodied in the figure of a despondent looking, dark haired, well groomed young woman dressed in a fashionable red trouser suit and positioned leaning casually against the side of the cover, with a cigarette loosely held between wedding ringed fingers. (Fig. 6). She speaks from the cover as the voice of the Modern Woman: 'I have taken the pill. I have hoisted my skirts to my thighs, dropped them to my ankles, rebelled at university, abused the American Embassy, lived with

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<sup>20</sup> I'd always been keen on reading anything to do with ... the new woman. I read the *Guardian* and I used to read Jill Tweedie ...and I always liked her 'Letters from a Faint Hearted Feminist'. Clare Hammond. *Interview with Author*, (2005)

<sup>21</sup> Clare Hammond. *Interview with Author*, (2005). This reader wished to remain anonymous and so her name has been changed.

two men, married one, earned my keep, kept my identity and frankly... I'm lost'. For the reader who was 'lost', or merely looking around for something more, *Nova* offered recognition and an invitation to go 'Find yourself' inside the pages of the magazine. (Fig. 7). Here psychiatrist Catherine Storr asked:

Where in hell has Modern Woman got to? For it is no longer just the archetypal suburbanite who is looking for a new way out. If the vote was just a beginning, the pill is by no means the end of her road to a new life. Maybe she'll never really get there. Does the new freedom imply, after all, just a new and more sophisticated suffering? <sup>22</sup>

Accompanying editorial reassured lost readers they were not alone and illustrated the point with a profile of three successful women photographed under the heading 'You'd think they had it made, but...'. (Fig. 8). Broadcaster Joan Bakewell was then 34, and presenting BBC 2's 'Late Night Line Up'. She revealed that she 'absolutely adored having babies' but felt driven to return to work 18 months after the birth of each because 'it was the feeling that there were things missing that I really wanted to do and that I'd got lots of surplus energy and time to spend on something apart from nappies ... there was something absent.'<sup>23</sup>

At 29, actress Shirley Ann Field was finding the first eighteen months of married life a struggle and felt her husband expected her to be three different women: 'capable mum, efficient actress, and super-groomed wife'. She expressed her difficulty in playing out the separate roles expected of her in real life:

I'm only just finding out what being an adult female means ... You see, I'd never experienced any of this. I'd always been an independent girl in my own right who'd always been made rather a special fuss of ... then, suddenly, here I was married; suddenly supposed to cope with a baby, organise a big home, cook dinner and yet still be the polished, super swinging girl my husband thought he'd married when he came home. <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Catherine Storr. 'Lost', *Nova*, September 1968, p.38

<sup>23</sup> Bakewell, Joan, in 'Lost', *Nova*, September 1968 p.42

<sup>24</sup> Field, Shirley Ann, in 'Lost', *Nova*, September 1968, p.43

The women interviewed distinguish between the different worlds they moved between: interior life is connected to a domestic, family context where they are defined as a wife and a mother; exterior life is connected to a professional or social context where they are defined by their career status and educational achievements. All three women make explicit distinctions about the demands and expectations that they encounter in each of these separate spheres. For the interviewer Storr, Joan Bakewell was ‘without doubt the one best adjusted to home and the world outside – the one most successful in extracting the best from both worlds.’<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 9). However Bakewell remained essentially ‘Lost’, this seemingly successful balance of babies, marriage and career had, for her at least, become all too easy: ‘What’s missing? Dilemmas, really There’s no sort of ... struggle. It’s all too ... soft. There’s not enough, well ... iron about it. It’s all ... well, pillows. I don’t think life should be sitting back and thinking – my goodness, I’m so happy. ... I’ve got a real lust for seeing other parts of life.’<sup>26</sup> Bakewell’s unfulfilled desire was explained by Storr:

What is so difficult for women today is that all the pressure of society is urging them to choose from a bewildering number of possible directions, and the pressure is from outside and exerted on all of us impartially. This is fine for the dedicated, they can go ahead and achieve their goals with society’s blessing and aid. But it is disturbing for the majority of women, who haven’t this inner certainty of what they want and how to get it.<sup>27</sup>

*Nova*’s editorial responsibility went beyond simple advice with the awareness that there were many women of all ages either stuck at home or in unrewarding jobs, who were all looking for something more, as Features writer Maggy Meade-King explains:<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Storr, Catherine ‘Lost’, *Nova*, September 1968, p.42

<sup>26</sup> Bakewell, Joan, in ‘Lost’, *Nova*, September 1968, p.42

<sup>27</sup> Storr, Catherine ‘Lost’, *Nova*, September 1968, p.39

<sup>28</sup> Maggy Meade King joined *Nova* in 1971 when she was 20 as a secretary to Brigid Keenan and David Jenkins. Meade King had previously worked as the editor’s secretary on the children’s magazine *Look and Learn* published by IPC division Fleetway. She progressed onto research work for Brigid Keenan’s beauty pages and was encouraged by Gillian Cooke to formally move into a researcher role and join the National Union of Journalists and embark on an in house three-year training program which would qualify her to work as a journalist. As a trainee journalist Meade King would edit *Nova*’s ‘Community’ pages, research cover articles and write small features.

There was a lot of people who really didn't have enough mental stimulation in their day to day life ... It was for people who were enquiring, people who wanted to know about new stuff, who didn't just want knitting patterns and recipes that other women's magazines were still leading on. People that wanted to think and wanted to look at the issues and be entertained (we always tried to have something funny in it) but be stimulated. I think stimulation is probably the key word ... There were an awful lot of women out there who were very unsatisfied who were either working in jobs that were described in those days as 'pin money', which were not engaging their intellectual faculties, or who were stuck at home doing domestic stuff.<sup>29</sup>

In providing a 'service' to its readers, *Nova's* contributors felt a tangible sense of duty to these women:

You'd get an awful lot of people who'd write in saying 'thank God for you because otherwise the rest of my life is very tedious'. We were very aware of them and we felt a responsibility to keep them abreast of what was going on but also to keep their brains whizzing round. It was an important magazine, it had something important to say at a time when people really needed a magazine with something to say. And it acknowledged that they had a life and an interest which was not being acknowledged.<sup>30</sup>

Clare was one such reader, unhappy in her marriage and unsatisfied in her domestic role as homemaker she was searching for something different, in *Nova* she found, inspiration, information and alternatives:

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<sup>29</sup> 'There wasn't all the maternity leave there is now and there certainly wasn't flexible working hours so it was a bit of an either or and or. There was certainly a lot of very intelligent women at home, my mother read it and she was someone who was a fairly frustrated housewife and there was an awful lot of them in the fifties. She was a nurse and anyone in that sort of job was forced to leave when they got married ... later I worked from home because of my children' Maggy Meade-King, [Interview with Author](#), 2005. Betty Friedan expressed this discontent as 'the problem that has no name.' See Friedan, 1963, pp., 29.

<sup>30</sup> Meade-King, *Ibid* (2005).

I think I did very much read it because I felt there were things in my life I wasn't entirely happy with and I wanted to change them. And it was a source of information and stimulation actually, probably, to get off my butt and do something I suppose, in the absence of other avenues. And in a way I suppose it was almost like a sort of counselor because as you say you were getting very in-depth articles and you were getting advice which you wouldn't get from your friends or from your family or anything else.

In *Nova's* January 1969 issue an ambitious survey interviewed a hundred women in prominent or public positions across Britain at the time. These were 'women of influence, responsibility, experience or achievement.'<sup>31</sup> Actresses, designers, TV producers, athletes, religious ministers, headmistresses, journalists, MPs, writers, models and doctors were all questioned on topical subjects that intimately concerned women ranging from education, politics, money, science and relationships. (Fig. 10). The feature asked: 'Does God bother women? Does the pill? Does colour or abortion? Does anything?' and the results provided a snapshot of contemporary female opinion. According to the article, most women interviewed agreed that the idea of God was necessary, but few attended church regularly. Most were in favour of marriage and disagreed that that social and economic pressures still forced women into marriage against their vested interests and sixty two percent believed women were happier married. (Fig. 11). A quarter of women surveyed felt unhappy about the idea of a black grand child, mainly expressing their anxieties for the discrimination that child might face in an unequal Britain.<sup>32</sup> Almost three quarters felt they had a right to educate their child, as they wanted, and this meant having the choice to 'shop around', whether in fee paying or state funded provision, to match the right school with the individual needs of their children.<sup>33</sup> The availability of the contraceptive pill raised further concerns, just over half of those interviewed did not feel it should be widely available in supermarkets, even if deemed medically safe. Women voiced their fears that the accessibility of contraception could encourage underage sex, and a devaluing of sex, and even those who agreed that the pill should be more widely available worried about its safety if issued without medical expertise. The issue of the

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<sup>31</sup> Anon., 'Does God bother women? Does the pill? Does colour or abortion? Does anything?' *Nova* January 1969, p. 60

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65

criminalization of abortion in 1969 united the group of interviews in the broad agreement that it should be a matter for each individual and decided on each individual case. Seventy percent of the women interviewed were in favour of the 1967 Abortion Act, legislation and regulation was deemed crucial as Mary Appleby expressed: 'A person who decides to get rid of a baby is not a criminal. It is criminal when it is done by unqualified people.'<sup>34</sup> These were issues affecting every woman and questions that assumed readers had an interesting and valid opinion.

In a subscription advertisement from May 1970 the reader was offered a multiple choice questionnaire to test her own reactions to a range of approaches relating to typical *Nova* editorial content: sexual equality, fashion, fiction, religion, sex, abortion and the role of women in society. (Fig. 12). The magazine felt confident in defining the kinds of attitudes and opinions their readers would hold. The true '*Nova* Reader', as defined by the quiz answers, believed that a woman's magazine should 'deal with any conceivable subject as long as it is interesting.' The reader would *disagree* that abortion 'ought not to be mentioned' or that it 'should only be discussed in medical journals', instead she would *agree* the topic, 'needs all the sympathetic, intelligent airing it can get.'<sup>35</sup> The ideal *Nova* reader would recognize that Foale and Tuffin were a fashion design team and not 'two ponies in a children's circus story.' Confronted by the cover line: 'Inside every woman there's a stripper longing to get out' the *Nova* reader would not find the statement simply 'false' or 'disgusting' but would instead think it was 'a bit sweeping, but worth a second look.' Importantly, this reader would concur that it was most important for a woman to have 'a mind of her own.' The true '*Nova* Reader' is defined by her answers as 'receptive, independent, open minded, with interests which may begin at home but range far beyond the four walls of domesticity.'<sup>36</sup> The copy clearly articulates Gillian Cooke's editorial ambition for her readers: '*Nova* believes that for too long magazines have written down to women: that good writing, whether fact or fiction, good photography and illustration are as appealing to women as to men.'<sup>37</sup> Reader Catherine Horwood conferred:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 66

<sup>35</sup> *Nova* Subscription advertisement May 1970, p.119

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

It was just so different to anything else available. It was intelligent, it didn't talk down to us, [and was] not afraid to tackle issues that weren't strictly 'female' which was radical journalism at that time when we spoon-feed a diet of recipes and 'looking good for your husband' type articles.<sup>38</sup>

Whilst the world of the 'sophisticated' new woman was a world which, in editorial and illustrative content, extended beyond Britain's shores, (for example a whole issue in April 1972 was devoted to Japan) its readers felt that *Nova's* vantage point was located concretely in London, even when it was tackling issues affecting the rest of the country. As reader Sue Teddern describes:

The editorial felt quite metropolitan but the actual articles covered Britain as a whole ... there were articles about poorly paid cleaners in Yorkshire... Stuff I didn't know about unless I'd seen it on 'Play for Today', I think it gave a sense of Britain at the time.<sup>39</sup>

Despite its coverage of 'Women in the North'<sup>40</sup> (Fig.13), and portraits of different women living across the country,<sup>41</sup> (Fig. 14) *Nova* was London-centric and this was in part due to the fact that whilst its contributors were drawn from all over the country like most national newspapers and magazines its offices were located in the capital. For both staff and readers *Nova* was London.<sup>42</sup>

As a teenager living in Rochdale in the heart of the industrial North West, Deborah Jaffe had always wanted to escape Lancashire and go to art school in London. *Nova* represented a passport to that new life. (Fig. 15). In its design and content *Nova* offered the promise of a new world of both opportunity and sophistication. This

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<sup>38</sup> Dr Catherine Horwood, 'Remembering Nova' Questionnaire', (2005)

<sup>39</sup> Sue Teddern, Interview by Author (2005)

<sup>40</sup> Alma Birk. 'Are Northern Women any Different? Are Southern Women any Better?' *Nova*, October 1966 pp., 82-83

<sup>41</sup> Margaret Pringle, 'Portrait of a Lady' *Nova*, January, 1969, pp., 38-39

<sup>42</sup> 'I came from the West Country but I had to come to London to get a job in publishing it was as simple as that. ... I grew up in Plymouth and I can tell you the feeling was as a teenager growing up in Plymouth in the early sixties was that London was the place to be, suddenly it was the centre of the world. ... Suddenly London was it ... you could see it happening there – in fashion all the best ideas were coming out of London, Mary Quant and Biba, Barbara Hulaniki, and it was just all there, and we just desperately wanted to be there – so you just got yourself there. Maggy Meade-King, Interview with Author, (2005).

would be her ticket out of what she felt were the restrictions of life in a declining industrial town. *Nova* was the vehicle for this great escape:

*Nova* became a byword for excitement and sophistication, being new women ... It was about London, the great metropolis that we wanted to be part of ... *Nova* came from London it was sending out these tentacles to grab us, to draw us ... London was the centre of the world ... and [*Nova*] epitomised the sophistication of London where I knew that one day I would end up.<sup>43</sup>

Age, education, class and geography may have separated *Nova*'s readers but they were linked by a shared identification with the magazine. Many had a commonality of experience in using the magazine as a window onto a wider world, and as a means to 'move forward.' When Susan Holder started reading *Nova* she was in the sixth form at school and living at home in the London suburb of Mitcham. (Fig. 16). She described herself as an early mod and always loved fashion and music.<sup>44</sup> For Susan, *Nova* represented a way out of the physical confines of suburbia and the more symbolic social restrictions of class:

I remember going from being a teenager to young adulthood and thinking I could do what I wanted but then meeting barriers. There was no one to tell me how to do it, no real supporters, it was difficult. For someone like me, a grammar school girl coming from the suburbs, where else would you find out? You were looking for things to help you and to educate you.<sup>45</sup> I had aspirations, I was lower middle class and I wanted to be in the Chelsea Set ... middle class intellectuals. We were trying to learn that, the things that move you into the next class. I remember [*Nova*] as being challenging and definitely where I knew I should be. It was areas where I knew that's where I should be thinking ... where I should be aiming, and where I should be going. It was making me a more sophisticated intellectual young person about town. I always hated the suburbs although I grew up in them and it moved me very

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<sup>43</sup> Deborah Jaffe, *Interview with Author* (2005)

<sup>44</sup> She later went on to college to train to be teacher specialising in art and media.

<sup>45</sup> 'Once you'd been there, (been a mod for example) where do you move onto next, where do you go?' Susan Holder, *Interview with Author* (2005)

much away from the suburbs and I think *Nova* was helping me to move away.<sup>46</sup>

Susan specifically remembered an article on exotic ingredients as being part of her education into adulthood, as she explained: ‘this is what I mean by learning: “if you have this in your store cupboard, olive oil etc you can always make a meal, whoever drops in” ... this was teaching me how to live in that sophisticated way that I aspired to.’<sup>47</sup>

Part of *Nova*’s success was in being informative, but never prescriptive. Other magazines seemed to readers to be more dictatorial, whether they were instructing women on how to bake the perfect cake, or how to catch a man. *Nova* offered a particular take on food and cookery. It included features by regular contributors such as Elizabeth David, Shirley Conran and Prue Leith who were working across other magazines, but its editorial moved food journalism out of the kitchen and away from the ‘how to’ recipes towards more idiosyncratic coverage, featuring both commonplace and more unusual ingredients sourced from around the world, and always illustrated with beautiful and imaginative photography and drawings. ‘Shops with a Foreign Flavour’ from July 1973 explored local shops that stocked delicacies from overseas and explained how food from other countries could enrich the British diet.<sup>48</sup> The editorial featured Jewish, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Jamaican specialist stores across London and offered an introduction to the delights of extraordinary cuisine; okra, pak choi, yams, worsht, zamponi, man yeung ling, bollito misto and cholent. The feature was accompanied by full page black and white portraits by photographer Donald Silverstein of the shopkeepers families pictured in their stores proudly displaying their produce and offered an insight into their working lives and communities as well as their own family recipes. (Fig.17).

For girls like Sue Teddern living on the peripheries of the capital in Wembley, and aged just 15, the magazine represented something altogether more aspirational.

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<sup>46</sup> Holder, (2005). This idea was also expressed by Catherine Horwood who recalled; It certainly made me feel more grown up as a 15, 16 year old, I thought I was sophisticated reading it and maybe that was part of it, making me feel more grown up, I was always a bit precocious!’ Horwood (2005).

<sup>47</sup> Holder, (2005).

<sup>48</sup> Donald Silverstein, ‘Shops with a Foreign Flavour’ *Nova* July, 1973, pp., 64-69

(Fig.18). Sue describes her experience of reading *Nova* as ‘window shopping’ and with her nose pressed up against the glass she peered in at a desirable but seemingly unattainable way of living:

I was living in the suburbs of London with my parents. The London I was using and living in wasn't really reflected in the pages of *Nova*. Although my best friend and I would just walk up and down the Kings Road and Fulham Road and not buy things and admire things - we were sort of window-shopping *Nova* World. The London that *Nova* was portraying was not a London I inhabited but I observed it from a distance and wished I was part of it but knew I never would be, I think I knew I was too young to be part of *Nova* World, that was its appeal I think.<sup>49</sup>

‘*Nova* World’ seemed very inaccessible for Sue, it was too glamorous, sophisticated and cosmopolitan. She felt at a distance from the images presented by the magazine, but this separation from her everyday life added to its allure:

I'm sure those worlds [did] exist, they were the dinner parties you imagined going on in Kentish Town, or the world of potpourri and lumpy jumpers, and I could buy the potpourri and lumpy jumpers –but I could never be part of the world that was portrayed in some of the pages. There must have been women living that life ... its appeal was that it was a world I wasn't part of ... it seemed so grown up, and I wanted to be ... Lots of things were just completely over my head that I had no knowledge or experience of when I first started reading *Nova*. [But] you knew that even if you didn't understand the article it would look nice and it would look grown up and I think that was half the appeal to me - it was who I thought I wanted to be, eventually.<sup>50</sup>

*Nova* helped readers like Sue learn how to be the women they aspired to be, it gave them resources, information, and an attitude. A key part of this was focused on an

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<sup>49</sup>Sue Teddern, *Interview with Author*, (2005).

<sup>50</sup>‘I was a very naïve teenager so this was where I learned a lot about life, sex, women's issues and Peruvian tank tops’ ... ‘Teddern, (2008).

exchange of ideas and debating different points of view. *Nova* considered a range of viewpoints and sought to look at issues and current events from different angles. For example, in the May 1970 issue *Nova* took on the censorship debate leading with an article on ‘The Pornography of Violence’ in which Pamela Hansford Johnson argued that violence in the media had a corrupting effect. This was followed in the next issue by John Mortimer’s counter argument, ‘Censoring People is Wrong’.<sup>51</sup> As Maggy Meade-King explained:

The whole point was that this was a magazine that could tackle anything. There was a reflection of our own questioning and the fact that there isn’t an impression that we’re all coming from the same place – there’s a debate.<sup>52</sup>

*Nova* had set out its aim to challenge readers from its first issue. An advertisement appearing in the *Observer* in March 1965 declared: ‘*Nova* gives you something to think about – argue about – even disagree with.’<sup>53</sup> And for readers like John Maclachlan, a young student studying fashion at the Royal College of Art, the magazine did just that:

It was great because it led you, it informed you, it incited you, and sometimes it annoyed you. Some of the articles I didn't agree with, I think that [was] the essence of the magazine - to create a reaction, you can't agree with everything all the time.<sup>54</sup>

And whilst the editorial team shared a similar ideological viewpoint, Maggy Meade-King explained that they were very conscious of providing space for the whole debate by mapping out different points of view and perspectives:

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<sup>51</sup> Pamela Hansford Johnson. ‘The Pornography of Violence’, *Nova*, May 1970, pp. 68-71; John Mortimer. ‘Censoring people is wrong’, *Nova*, June 1970, pp., 82-84

<sup>52</sup> Maggy Meade-King. *Interview with Author* (2005)

<sup>53</sup> Advertisement for *Nova*, ‘For the woman who isn’t afraid of Virginia Woolf.’ *The Observer*, (Sunday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965) p.29.

<sup>54</sup> John Maclachlan, *Interview with Author* (2003). Another reader expressed, ‘It was ‘refreshing and stimulating’ ‘I did not agree with all of its opinions, of course, but I read and thought about the themes.’ Anonymous, *Remembering Nova Questionnaire*, (2003)

We were interested in everything and although I'm sure everybody there came from a feminist perspective we tried to be open minded ... We would have people writing for us from all political and social perspectives – the whole idea was to look at everything and not discard things just because they didn't fit ... in the end what happens if you're just coming in from a very particular perspective is then only people who are with you will read you.<sup>55</sup>

Unlike counter culture publications such as independently financed *Oz* and *IT*, or feminist publications such as *Spare Rib*, *Nova* was not operating outside of the mainstream.<sup>56</sup> *Nova*'s approach was inclusive, it sought to encompass readers openly and broadly rather than isolate them by too tightly defining political, religious or ethical bias. *Nova* was mainstream and financed by IPC, a major commercial publishing house, but it led with cutting edge content, as Meade-King explains:

*Spare Rib* was only read by people who knew they were feminist, whereas the whole point about us was that we hoped that anyone with an enquiring mind would want to read us, and I think that's more effective in the end because that's probably how you're going to make people think and change things, if nobody reads you there is no point being there.<sup>57</sup>

*Nova*'s readers, who clearly found that the magazine's tone, approach and content allowed them to further develop their own intellect, accepted this attitude gratefully.<sup>58</sup> As one reader recalled, '[*Nova*] helped me approach some topics that I might not have

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<sup>55</sup> '*Spare Rib* ... came from a certain perspective and I think as it got on and things got very political there you weren't allowed to look at things in any other way. They had a lot of political ructions there, as did all the 'left' magazines.' Maggy Meade-King. *Interview with Author*, (2005)

<sup>56</sup> *Spare Rib* magazine was launched in Britain in June 1972 and ran until 1993. *Oz* magazine was published in Australia from 1963-1969 and Britain from 1967-1973. Maggie Meade King explained their relation to these magazines: 'We were interested in it but we weren't counter culture. We were all people in regular jobs engaging with the powers that be; we interviewed cabinet ministers. We didn't reject the whole kit and caboodle, we wanted things to change, but we didn't imagine there would be a revolution and everything would be different.' Maggy Meade-King. *Interview with Author*, (2005).

<sup>57</sup> Maggy Meade-King. *Interview with Author*, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2005, London This was expressed very clearly by one reader; 'I don't think I even knew what a feminist was then but I knew I didn't want to be like my mother, I didn't want to just sort of find a man and look after him for the rest of my life'. Clare Hammond, *Interview with Author* (2005).

<sup>58</sup> 'We wanted to assert ourselves as intellectually equal to men - able to form independent views - to combat prevailing view of women as 'fluffy', unserious.' Ms Jean Burrell, '*Remembering Nova*' *Questionnaire*, (2005)

discussed before.’<sup>59</sup> Another explained, ‘*Nova* alerted me to an independent outlook. I had not seen any other magazine whose thinking was relative to mine.’<sup>60</sup>

Contributor Yvonne Roberts explained that this was a deliberate strategy:

It played to women's strengths - but it also provided information which fuelled a sense of vigilance about what was happening to girls and women in society - but without the tone of victimhood or isolation. These were articles about individual problems - these were issues about which something could be done ... the early sexualisation of childhood; the poverty of women after divorce; the absence of equal pay; the tyranny of housework.<sup>61</sup>

Jeannie Davidson was in her early twenties, living and working in Edinburgh when she first started reading *Nova* and for her it held the promise of an imagined life of change, excitement, opportunity and sophistication. (Fig.19). During the early seventies she had a variety of different jobs including designing for and running a clothing shop with a group of other women. By 1973 she had a baby and made the move to London to live and work. *Nova* would help her navigate the waters of this change:

Coming from Edinburgh, London for us was the be all and end all, I remember thinking that London women were much more sussed and aware and on the button with things than we were and I remember feeling, a bit like the wee wifey coming from Scotland and *Nova* certainly made you think about things and it helped give you a bit of a voice.<sup>62</sup>

*Nova*'s tone and content appealed to Jeannie in a number of significant ways:

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<sup>59</sup> Mrs Jill Adem, ‘Remembering *Nova*’ Questionnaire, (2005)

<sup>60</sup> Mary Flanagan was living above a newsagents with her family at the time of *Novas* launch in 1965. She recalls that ‘my leisure time was limited and (only) allowed me to read certain favourites from cover to cover, but many I felt were vacuous until *Nova* came along.’ (Mrs M Flanagan. ‘Remembering *Nova*’ Questionnaire, (2005)

<sup>61</sup> Yvonne Roberts, ‘Remembering *Nova*’ Questionnaire, (2005)

<sup>62</sup> ‘London had a glamour about it, and it was very far away at that time. London had a terrific sense of ‘this is where its at’ and *Nova* did do quite a lot to promote that image, but maybe it was just us assuming that all things sophisticated and glamorous and new were coming out of London and we just tied *Nova* in with that.’ Jeannie Davidson, (2005).

With *Nova* it wasn't immediately apparent that it was a women's magazine, it was really nice to not have that stereotype ... *Nova* was something that spoke to a lot of us, and we didn't quite know why but it reflected what was going on at the time. ... *Nova* had a depth to it and you thought 'here's a magazine for intelligent women, thank you!' ... [It was] very much wider reportage of what was happening in the world, and that was one of *Nova*'s big selling points really – it had a consciousness that there was something else going on apart from what was happening in your little domestic life, so they'd be lots of articles about political issues, or perms, an article about Keith Richards, so there was a really wide range... You got a whacking good read that you thought about ... all of the issues that were of interest to us. There wasn't this thing about your life revolving around a man which was brilliant - it was about you as an 'about to be', or 'a bit', independent woman.<sup>63</sup>

### **Editorial Focus: Driving Change**

An idea of change, topicality and the importance of moving forward was key to *Nova*'s editorial objectives and it resulted in a magazine that delivered a dynamic and a sense of momentum. One of Gillian Cooke's continuing concerns as Editor was how to keep *Nova* 'of its time', and this was a matter of how to 'redesign it and how you re-enthuse it.'<sup>64</sup> Cooke was particularly responsive to current events, cultural debates, contemporary aesthetics and developments in science and technology:

I always thought that you should *listen*, which is why we were very often printing things quite ahead, too far ahead sometimes of the rest of the publications. But I felt that we should be at the cutting edge of things, the environment we were dealing with.<sup>65</sup>

Science and technology was a prominent strand, with articles ranging from the politics of ecology, the safety of pharmaceutical drugs, animal genetics and selective breeding, to artificial insemination by donor, chemical contamination, food additives

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<sup>63</sup> Davidson, (2005).

<sup>64</sup> Gillian Cooke. [Interview with Author](#), 4<sup>th</sup> January 2008, London

<sup>65</sup> Gillian Cooke. [Interview with Author](#), 4<sup>th</sup> January 2008, London

and voluntary euthanasia.<sup>66</sup> (Figs 20 - 23). These well-researched features posed key critical questions that focused the technology on human issues and related the science directly back to the reader. The May 1972 issue presented readers with a cover image of a smiling baby wriggling in his diaper with the word 'perfect' stamped in big red letters across his tummy, and posed the critical question: 'the perfect baby or the biggest threat since the atom bomb?' (Fig. 24). The feature article, 'Genetics – how long can the race be human?' by Carolyn Faulder, demanded less secrecy and more public information about biological engineering research, asking: 'Can we remain essentially human through the next few generations? ... Who is controlling the scientists?', and touched the nerve of new scientific dystopias.<sup>67</sup> (Fig. 25). The article examined key areas of research in genetics in order that the reader could be informed of the facts from which to base their own judgments. In the same issue Stella Bingham's article 'The animals came in tube by tube' shone a spotlight on the ethical considerations of animal testing.<sup>68</sup>

Regular editorial contributor Yvonne Roberts emphasised the importance of such informed, investigative and cutting edge research and suggested that *Nova*, 'was like a glossy *New Society* - it sensed where and when and how society was changing'.<sup>69</sup> A key part of *Nova*'s distinction was that in its editorial scope and tone it recognised and addressed different kinds of reader. Roberts suggested that the magazine 'behaved as if there was as much difference between women and between men as between the genders.'<sup>70</sup> Jane Thomas for example, was an educated ex-career women living in Battersea with her barrister husband and four young children. She had a disposable income that afforded her home help and time to indulge her ambitions outside of domestic life. She had worked on BBC's *Panorama* up until the birth of her first child, and in 1961 co-founded the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital (NAWCH).<sup>71</sup> They moved to Kew in the late sixties where she

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<sup>66</sup> Jacky Gillnot, 'The Ecology', *Nova*, October 1972 p.28; Ann Shearer, 'You're testing a drug every time you reach for the medicine cabinet', *Nova*, October 1970 p. 63; Stella Bingham, 'The animals came in tube by tube', *Nova*, May 1972 pp., 34-36; 'Voluntary euthanasia', *Nova*, Dec 1972, pp., 44-49

<sup>67</sup> Carolyn Faulder, 'Genetics', *Nova*, May 1972, p. 26

<sup>68</sup> Bingham, S. 'The animals came in tube by tube' in *Nova*, May 1972, p.34

<sup>69</sup> Yvonne Roberts, 'Remembering *Nova*' Questionnaire (2005)

<sup>70</sup> Roberts, *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Originally Mother Care for Children in Hospital founded on 1961. See Charlotte Williamson, Towards the Emancipation of Patients: Patient's Experiences and the Patient Movement, London: Policy Press, 2010

was part of the group who founded the MIND mental health campaign in Richmond. Jane was ‘utterly grabbed’ by *Nova*, from the first moment she saw it.<sup>72</sup> It offered her a consensus and confirmed her views:

I read the *Spectator* and I read the *Statesman* and I took a great interest in politics ... In a way [*Nova*] didn’t open up anything new but it was a complement to the sort of lives we lead ...we had a pretty sophisticated life and it was an adjunct to that, it suited us, it suited me. I thought yes I feel at home, I feel comfortable with this ... We were busy changing our society and making demands ... for what we wanted ...and that all came from my interest in politics ... One was changing society by making these demands, as all women were beginning to do. And in a way *Nova* would have been an extra empowering, a recognition, a sort of consensus that the world could change and you could change it.<sup>73</sup>

*Nova* was the only glossy women’s magazine that Jane read and she described it fondly as her ‘indulgence’. However like many readers interviewed, Jane made a clear distinction between *Nova*’s particular appeal and the guilty escapism offered by other magazines. The pleasure of *Nova* for readers like Jane was *because* of its cutting edge content and not despite it, as she explained:

The sophistication of the articles ... satisfied a great need. It wasn’t just that - it was also interesting, grabby reading matter that you really, really wanted to read. It appealed to me, it was my indulgence, it was my box of chocolates, I suppose you could say that I was a hell of an intellectual snob, I read the *New Statesman* and *The Times* leader, so I always felt it was a treat, as much an escape as anything, this was my heavenly escape, but it never felt guilty.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> ‘we used to share it round, we used to buy it all of us and talk about it. And I remember saying ‘the only thing they’ve got left to do is a piece on how to lay out your dead mother, and that would be all there is left now... They would have touched on almost everything else’. Jane Thomas , Interview with Author. (2005).

<sup>73</sup> Thomas, (2005).

<sup>74</sup> Thomas, (2005).

Other readers, such as Catherine Horwood also talked about how reading *Nova* was time well spent:

There was more to get your teeth into and read, it lasted longer, it would take much longer to read than a normal fashion magazine, I think I did cut articles out of it as well, you felt that the information you were getting was very good and solid, that makes it sound boring and it certainly wasn't boring, but that you were learning something from it. It was a pleasure but not in an escapist pleasure of curling up with a Mars bar and a copy of *Cosmo*, there was no guilt about it, it was more pleasure than guilt.<sup>75</sup>

This was a magazine that dismissed the simple pleasures of passive escapism for more exciting possibilities, it encouraged active participation and production, and as Jeannie explained, it empowered her as a reader:

There was a certain comfort, but what was good about *Nova* was that it wasn't about escapism ... you felt you could relate to it. It was about something that could happen, and it was up to me and other women like me to make things happen, and we did.<sup>76</sup>

The June 1972 issue on Population Growth certainly didn't look like a woman's magazine (Fig. 26). Its cover featured an exhausted Atlas resting on the globe, head in hands next to a headline warning: 'Your next child could break this man's back.' Inside a 'Nova Inquiry' informed the reader: 'Your country needs you but it doesn't need your unplanned child.' The seven-page feature by Carolyn Faulder, Bel Mooney and Stanley Johnson posed some difficult questions for its readers: 'Do we want more children than we ought to want? Are we really able to relate the population crisis to ourselves? Or is it other peoples children, like other people's cars, who cause all the problems?'<sup>77</sup> A sequence of three full-page colour photographs by Tony Evans revealed the consequences of population growth with the figure of Atlas carrying the

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<sup>75</sup> Horwood, (2005).

<sup>76</sup> Davidson, (2005).

<sup>77</sup> Carolyn Faulder, Bel Mooney, & Stanley Johnson, 'Do we want more children than we ought to want?' *Nova*, June 1972, p. 36

world on his back. As the globe increases in size and becomes too much of a load for Atlas to bear, he is brought to his knees and eventually crushed under its weight.<sup>78</sup> (Figs 27 - 29). In order to slow down this population growth *Nova* stressed the importance of reducing unwanted births. The article supported the demands of the women's liberation movement and called for further sex education including training for teachers, nurses and doctors, free contraception on the NHS, more widely available and without prescription, vasectomies as a viable addition to female sterilisation and better abortion procedural options, information and legislation.<sup>79</sup>

Gillian Cooke believed *Nova* should provide a service to the reader in educating, informing and raising awareness, and by 'bringing information back' and saying 'this is what's happening.'<sup>80</sup> Content of this kind often moved the magazine beyond traditional women's subjects, as Cooke explains:

[When] we did 'Population Growth' and 'The Ecology' those were considered outside the brief of a woman's magazine. Irma Kurtz wrote about international affairs sometimes and that was part of the mix of *Nova* and this was a very important feature. Peter Martin wrote a very powerful piece on 'The Helot Society' about the sub-class that was forming of immigrants and blacks, it was very, very good, it was probably more Sunday supplement but if you took the bracket of all the things that went into *Nova* – fashion, beauty, cooking and this was politics and society – it still had a very important place.<sup>81</sup>

Key to *Nova*'s editorial character was its variety of articles and range of approaches to different subjects. In this same issue David Jenkins wrote about his experiences on tour with Frank Zappa, and Harriet Barker interviewed three wives about the effects of their husbands unemployment on their marriage. The consequences of unemployment on a single salary household led Barker to argue for the 'two-career'

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<sup>78</sup> The Atlas model was the body builder Roy Parrot who was coated with gold paint and posed holding a flat polystyrene cut out. A scaled down globe was then made and stripped onto the photographs later to create the effect of Atlas burdened with the increasing size of the world. David Gibbs, David Hillman & Caroline Edwards (eds). *Tony Evans: Taking His Time*, London: Booth Clibbons, 1998, p. 67

<sup>79</sup> Four years after the enforcement of the Abortion Act 1967. See Madeline Simms and Keith Hindell, *Abortion Law Reform*, London: Peter Owen, 1971

<sup>80</sup> Cooke, (2008)

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

family: 'its not a natural law that a man must bear the whole, or even the chief, burden of support.'<sup>82</sup> More diversions were offered by a profile of Spike Milligan; Patrick Walker's 'Astra Nova' star sign predictions; poetry; an illustrated portrait of English village life; and recipes for chilled soups by Caroline Conran. In the fashion pages Caroline Baker offered her vision of how to 'Act like a lady – even if you can't look like one.'<sup>83</sup> For the shoot, photographed by Helmut Newton at a French resort, Baker dressed her model in 'silky floppy suits' with 'black-stockinged' legs and added humour to the look with the addition of outlandish 'crazy shades' shaped like tennis rackets and Gitane cigarette packets by French sunglasses designer Pierre Marly. In the 'Living' section an article by Janet Fitch on controlled colour revealed the latest interior design, and beauty editorial presented readers with a double page spread of glistening topless bronzed bodies photographed by Peter Knapp for Penny Vincenzi's piece on safe tanning. Further reading was provided by Gillian Tindall's short story; advice by author Leila Berg from her book on 'What children can tell you if you only learned to listen'; and John Carters uncovering the 'bent' chartered flying business.

In extending the remit of women's interests the reader could be defined and addressed by her attitudes and ambitions, rather than simply by her age or marital status.<sup>84</sup> This was an aspect of the magazine that particularly appealed to Catherine Horwood, who had started reading *Nova* in 1965 when she was still living at home with her parents in Belsize Park. (Fig. 30). She went to school in the heart of the West End, and later on studied in Kensington and Notting Hill where she found Swinging London was right on her door step. For Catherine, *Nova* addressed a clear and wide gap in the market:

The articles and features seemed to be far more controversial, they were touching on subjects that wouldn't have been in the run of the mill women's magazine, the other magazines of my mothers generation tended to have far more domestic and yet the clever thing was that it appealed to both of us, even with that 35 year age gap ... it was stimulating you to think about the features, think more carefully about social issues, health issues ... and these issues all

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<sup>82</sup> Harriet Barker. 'When it's the boss's family on the dole', *Nova*, June 1972, p.52

<sup>83</sup> Caroline Baker. 'Act like a Lady' *Nova*, June 1972, pp., 36-38

<sup>84</sup> Another reader explained; 'Although probably older than the target readership, I still felt it was for me - neither mumsy or excluding. And I felt I was living a have-it-all, do-it-all life, quite different from my mother's generation. Pat, 'Remembering *Nova*' Questionnaire, (2005).

seemed very relevant to me living in almost the heart of London, these were things that I cared about, the arrival of the pill, that sort of thing you just wouldn't have read about it anywhere else. We just knew it was something special so you waited, you were very anxious to see what are they going to do next month, can they keep this standard up, and for how long?! ... It certainly made me feel more grown up as a 15, 16 year old, I thought I was sophisticated reading it and maybe that was part of it, making me feel more grown up, I was always a bit precocious.<sup>85</sup>

Many readers shared their enjoyment of the magazine with their mothers. Catherine suggested that it defied age exclusions: 'It wasn't just for young people - it was for women. My mother who was 50 in 1965 was just as much of a fan as I was aged 15.'<sup>86</sup> Other readers remembered being introduced to *Nova* by their mothers, Deborah Jaffe also explained a shared enjoyment of the magazine: 'I was 13 when my mother bought the first copy. She was very excited by it ... My mother read no other women's magazines and looked on the majority of them with disdain. It was something we were part of together.'<sup>87</sup>

In an article for *The Times* in 1972, IPC Director Patricia Lamburn described the magazine as its readers' 'ideal friend' and stressed the importance of the sense of dialogue that is bought in to existence through a regular and loyal purchase.<sup>88</sup> As she described:

A woman's magazine can be likened to an intimate conversation between two people – editor and reader ... A magazine is also a mirror, which reflects the aspirations and interests of its readers ... Readers find in their magazine a

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<sup>85</sup> Horwood, (2005).

<sup>86</sup> 'She was a very young and with it mother, she didn't disapprove of the clothes that I wore too much and in fact we had many similar interests, and the arrival of *Nova* was even more of a mutual interest because she wasn't interested in looking at other magazines I was buying at the time'. Horwood, Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Jaffe, Deborah. 'Remembering *Nova*' Questionnaire, (2005). For reader Jill, the fact that her mother read it was a mark of good journalism: 'I know Mum wouldn't have bought it unless it was a good read. Her favourite pastime was to have her nose in a book.' Jill remembered the first time she set eyes on the magazine as a young girl; 'I thought it was exciting. I remember my mother leaving it for my cousin who was babysitting for us. He was probably interested in the photos of women, but also its newness and difference. I was intrigued by the kinds of lives represented in its pages. Jill, 'Remembering *Nova*' Questionnaire, (2005)

<sup>88</sup> Patricia Lamburn. 'The future: Aggressive search for new pastures', *The Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1972 p. 111

sharply focused reflection of their own attitudes ... From this friendship, renewed with each issue, and the confidence shown by the reader putting money down regularly, a sense of trust is created. A good magazine never behaves capriciously or irresponsibly. It performs in an anticipated and reassuring manner, which is the epitome of good friendship. ... The appearance of a piece on population crisis in *Nova*, an explicit sexual maneuver in *Cosmopolitan* or a blunt piece of factual information in *19* is no less reassuring to their readers than the knitting pattern supplement in *Woman* or a hospital romance in *Women's Weekly*.<sup>89</sup>

Young student June Thornton, who had moved from Plymouth to London to study art, expressed this sentiment exactly:

I felt I was a 'Nova Type' I felt I was in tune with it ... you thought it made you more modern, you thought you were part of a new stream of thinking ... I'd agree with a lot of things, you tend to do that with magazines, they're like your friends, they're like minded.<sup>90</sup>

It was the expectation of a certain type of material or a specific tone of editorial voice that readers found reassuring. For Lamburn this relationship was secured by an absolute 'editorial focus':

Out of it evolves the living thing that is a viable communicating force. It is this, which gives the magazine character and a personality that creates a sympathetic bond with its readers. Readers choose their magazine because it represents the way they want to look, to feel, to think, the emotions they want to experience, the life they would like to lead.<sup>91</sup>

Whilst *Nova* incorporated the mainstays of women's magazines such as fashion, interior design, beauty and cookery into their regular sections, their approach to such content, and the inclusion of science and technology led features, moved the

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<sup>89</sup> Lamburn, *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Thornton, (2000).

<sup>91</sup> Lamburn, 1972 p. 111

magazine away from traditional ‘women’s subjects.’ Managers at IPC contested that this sort of content wasn’t suitable fare for a women’s magazine, as Cooke explained:

They wanted it to be more popular, which meant not doing scientific, cutting edge pieces, not being so outspoken. They would have liked us to have been more like *Woman’s Journal* only more modern in look. They really would have been happier if we were much more mainstream.<sup>92</sup>

Unrepentant and determined in their convictions to challenge management opinion on what constituted appropriate material to address ‘women’s interests’ the *Nova* editorial team planned an issue on breast cancer which proved to be highly contentious with IPC. It was a subject ‘they didn’t think women would want to read about’, but the article was published because Gillian Cooke believed that her readers could ‘handle it.’<sup>93</sup> The March 1973 cover declared ‘Your Breasts – the most important 19 pages you’ll ever read on the subject.’<sup>94</sup> (Fig. 31). The cover photograph featuring a cartoonish, fifties styled couple sipping a milkshake was taken from Caroline Baker’s fashion pages printed in the same issue, and styled on the American *Archie* comic books. Cooke had originally wanted to produce a cover with a photograph from the fashion shoot which pictured a boy with his hand down a girl’s blouse to emphasise the idea of women’s breasts, and not simply breast cancer, but the idea was vetoed by IPC. (Fig.32).<sup>95</sup> The final cover image gave no clues as to the nature of the groundbreaking editorial within the issue. (Fig. 33). Inside was a nineteen-page feature by Caroline Nicholson on living with breast cancer based on a year’s research and months of planning. It covered every aspect of the disease and its effect from symptoms and early diagnosis, treatment types, mastectomy and its alternatives, the screening debate, counseling, after care and contributions by patients, survivors and health professionals. (Figs. 34-38). Accurate information was fundamental, and forward planning necessary, as the editorial team wanted to be sure

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<sup>92</sup> Cooke, (2008)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> Caroline Nicholson, ‘Your Breasts – the most important 19 pages you’ll ever read on the subject’ *Nova*, March 1973, pp., 53-71

<sup>95</sup> Cooke (2008)

the women featured in the article had come through their operations and treatment and survived their illness.<sup>96</sup> Gillian Cooke recalls that reaction to the feature was seismic:

It was quite interesting, people were a bit scared of it and *then* people wanted copies - they'd heard about it, doctors sent for it ... People were saying 'my doctor said they'd been something' or 'I saw this in the surgery'. And then women's groups got it and it sort of snowballed.<sup>97</sup>

Reader reaction to the article reflected a mixed but impassioned response. The letters page printed a predictable criticism from the owner of a hairdressing salon who complained that her customers 'didn't want to read about things like that'<sup>98</sup>, however this was balanced by a response from The British Cancer Council who wrote in to commend the article pointing out that 'the whole handling of the material was done in just the right way to encourage a more positive, optimistic and realistic attitude to the subject and we are all most indebted to you for doing this in such an expert way.'<sup>99</sup>

Continuing debate about the feature also reached the national news. A BBC Radio One commentator suggested that 'they may be the most important [pages] on breast cancer but I wonder how many woman will actually last through the ghastly, unzipped, squelching, bloody breast pictures of a surgeon removing a woman's tumour.'<sup>100</sup> However not all agreed that the material was too visceral, in the *Daily Mirror* journalist and campaigner Marjorie Proops suggested: 'It's really beautifully done – if such an adjective can apply to such a difficult subject. Its bound to reassure and help countless women.'<sup>101</sup> And many readers agreed with this: 'It was hard-hitting but not alarmist, informative but not gruesome, encouraging but not complacent.'<sup>102</sup> Dr John Wakefield, a leading cancer educationalist was adamant: 'It is a thousand pities that there was not more widespread publicity for the piece because it is only

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Cooke explains; 'We should have gone on and produced maybe a leaflet or a booklet or something like that. It was something that I was very pleased with'. Ibid

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in 'Letters', *Nova* July 1973, p. 6

<sup>99</sup> The British Cancer Council, quoted in 'Letters', *Nova*, July 1973, p. 6

<sup>100</sup> BBC Radio One, quoted in 'Letters', *Nova*, July 1973, p. 6

<sup>101</sup> Marjorie Proops, quoted in 'Letters', *Nova*, July 1973, p. 6

<sup>102</sup> Readers quoted in Letters, *Nova*, July 1973, p. 6

once in several years that one gets the opportunity for this sort of responsible cancer education to a wide public.’<sup>103</sup>

Some readers recognised that a magazine could also bear a responsibility to educate and inform. A London borough medical officer who commended the breast cancer feature, wrote that ‘you really are taking your health education function and your role as a spokesman for the community seriously, and you have succeeded most admirably.’<sup>104</sup> An editorial in the July 1973 issue prepared in response to the public debate surrounding the breast cancer report clarifies *Nova*’s editorial objectives:

...our belief [is] that magazines have a crucial role to play in modern society. Most people are prepared to accept that it is the vital function of serious newspaper journalism to probe the reality behind the facts ... but, publishers and readers alike, we are all much more ambivalent about the role of magazines. Are they for fun, or should they, at least some of the time, take themselves and their readers seriously? And if so, how do they do it? Should they risk sacrificing their undeniable function as entertainers, glamorisers, dispensers of escapist fantasies? Magazines are, after all, luxury items, unlike the daily newspaper; they rely heavily on their looks to sell, yet, paradoxically if the information they provide doesn’t live up to expectations they are equally penalised because they are dependant on a steady, satisfied readership.<sup>105</sup>

### **‘Women’s Affairs’, Sex and the Body**

The Women’s Liberation Movement defined women’s affairs as politics, and *Nova* could be seen to address the ‘proto-feminist.’ In 1970 comedy writer Sue Teddern had left school at age 16 to study window dressing at college in Watford where she was introduced to *Nova* by an older student. She was still living with her parents during this time and moved into a shared house in 1975. As Sue recalled: ‘It probably politicized me a bit, but not in a scary way ... I don’t think *Nova* was strident, *Nova* just pointed me in the right direction. It didn’t feel that it was hitting you over the

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<sup>103</sup> Dr John Wakefield, quoted in ‘Letters’, *Nova*, July 1973, p. 6

<sup>104</sup> Anonymous Reader, quoted in ‘Letters’, *Nova*, July 1973, p. 6

<sup>105</sup> Editorial, *Nova*, July 1973, p. 6

head.’<sup>106</sup> The key component for Sue was *Nova*’s tone, it was, ‘sometimes serious, but never po-faced,’<sup>107</sup> or as one reader described: ‘feminist but still feminine.’<sup>108</sup> Sue was very influenced by this:

*Nova* put its finger on where Britain was in the early seventies politically as far as gender politics were concerned and it was really quite ahead of its time without being scary or humourless, which wouldn’t have appealed to me at all, the humour was a big part of *Nova* as far as I was concerned - in the fashion spreads, the headlines, the people they chose to interview and the way they chose to cover certain subjects ... There was irony in *Nova* and that was probably my first exposure to irony, It covered subjects from slightly different angles, it interviewed interesting writers ... It seemed to go into areas I didn’t know anything about and even if I was none the wiser at the end of it I did feel that I was being educated, but not in a sort of patronising way.<sup>109</sup>

*Nova* defined a whole range of issues as ‘women’s affairs’ and as Editor Gillian Cooke explained, ‘there was women’s affairs - not relationships but politics - in some form or another in every issue, whether it was vaginal deodorants or contraception or wages and women’s work, and profiles of women.’<sup>110</sup> In *Nova*, women’s issues were dealt with as political issues and many readers recall how the magazine tackled topical concerns in a serious way but didn’t ‘talk down’, ‘trivialise or patronise’ the reader, and importantly ‘didn’t use euphemisms for words that had not been seen in print before.’<sup>111</sup> A defining feature of *Nova* magazine from its first issue to its last was its ‘front on’ tackling of sex in both editorial articles and fashion features. As such the magazine can be understood as an important medium in conveying and shaping contemporary attitudes and debates.

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<sup>106</sup> Teddern, (2008).

<sup>107</sup> I read *Spare Rib* in later years, but remember *Nova* as more exciting, more 'me'. (Anonymous Female, ‘[Remembering Nova](#)’ Questionnaire’, (2005)

<sup>108</sup> Ms Jane Muir, ‘[Remembering Nova](#)’ Questionnaire’, (2005)

<sup>109</sup> *Nova* inspired Sue to become a journalist and writer and she has kept her collection of the magazine dating from 1971 to its last issue in October 1975. As she explained: ‘I think when I started writing articles I copied that tone, I’m sure I nicked the style or it was a homage to *Nova*, I sure I was influenced by that ... maybe I absorbed them and they came out later.’ Sue Teddern, [Interview with Author](#), (2008)

<sup>110</sup> Cooke, (2008).

<sup>111</sup> Janet Carlyle, ‘[Remembering Nova](#)’ Questionnaire, (2005). *Nova* ‘presumed you had a brain’ and ‘treated women as human beings with a huge range of interests’, Mrs Mary Flanagan, ‘[Remembering Nova](#)’ Questionnaire, (2005)

*Nova* was committed to an opening up of the lines of communication in matters relating to women's sexuality and relationships. Over the decade of its publication it investigated pornography, contraception, vasectomy, childbirth and surveyed the causes of and treatments for a loss of libido.<sup>112</sup> (Figs. 39 & 40). Features questioned why women have affairs, the physiology of the female orgasm, underage sex, sexually transmitted disease, pedophilia and rape.<sup>113</sup> And despite serious objections from the management they published articles on the cultural value of pubic hair, and vaginal politics.<sup>114</sup> (Fig. 41). These issues were dealt with in a frank and informative way and founded on research, opinion and debate. The use of photography and illustration provided opinion, explanation and interpretation.

The difference in the approach to sexual matters made by other women's magazines was clear and defined by *Nova's* attitude, tone and frankness. As Editor Gillian Cooke explains:

I don't think we considered there were any areas we couldn't go to. ... the ideas were out there, about sex, about liberation and about being frank - I felt that the women who read *Nova* could take it. One of the best things was Irma (Kurtz') piece on vaginal deodorants, what a stink that caused! That was practically a resigning matter, because the advertising people went to management and said they were going to lose all this advertising and I was told to take it out and I said absolutely not. It killed vaginal deodorants for many, many years. But that was the sort of thing that I thought our readers could take.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Lee Langley and Audrey Whiting. 'Childbirth can be fun' *Nova*, October 1965, pp., 52-5. Lyn Owen. 'What makes a woman go off sex?' *Nova*, August 1973, pp., 62-63

<sup>113</sup> Michael Wynn Jones, 'The Pioneers', *Nova*, August 1969, pp., 34-35; Catherine Storr, 'Is the orgasm really necessary?' *Nova*, January 1969, p. 40-43; Susan Griffin, 'Rape: the man-made myth' *Nova*, December 1971, p., 68-71 Robert Leigh, 'Motherhood at 15, after all, why not?' *Nova*, June 1971, pp., 74-7; Paul Pickering, 'What does the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment forbid?' *Nova*, August 1971, pp., 46-49; Mavis Nicholson, 'Of witches, wizards and dirty old men' *Nova*, August 1971, pp., 62-63

<sup>114</sup> Irma Kurtz, 'A view of my own', *Nova*, June 1971, p.98; Wendy Cooper, 'Keep your hair on, all of it...', *Nova*, October 1971, pp., 76-78. IPC wanted to censor this image of a close up of public hair, but the editorial team managed to convince them the photograph was of an armpit.

<sup>115</sup> Cooke (2008).

Kurt's argument against vaginal deodorants ran in June 1971 issue under her regular 'A View of My Own' column that occupied the magazine's last page.<sup>116</sup> Kurtz was writing in part as a response to an article from US trade newspaper *Women's Wear Daily* entitled 'Spray it with Flowers' which promoted a new line of feminine hygiene products. She implored her readers:

We must take a stand at the door to our vaginas. Tampons, contraceptives and the gynecologist's refrigerated speculum go far enough; vaginal deodorants go too far ... My vagina is no ear-lobe or arm-pit. It is a source of pleasure and it can be a source of life. I for one will not allow my sexuality, my very own vagina, to be a source of profit for anyone else.<sup>117</sup>

Ironically the *Nova* issue itself contained two advertisements for feminine hygiene products, Bidex spray mist and Freshett feminine dry spray.<sup>118</sup> But the article had force and impact. Less than a year later *Which* magazine produced a report and the Public Interest Research Center responded in a statement that: 'The £2 million spent each year on these deodorants is at best money wasted and at worst could buy you trouble.'<sup>119</sup> In July 1973 *Nova* reported that as an effect of these enquiries the sale of vaginal deodorants had seen a significant downturn in the last quarter of 1972.<sup>120</sup> However the very same issue contained a full page advertisement for Bidex demonstrating the commercial strength of these products and the lucrative nature of their advertising within the pages of women's magazines.<sup>121</sup>

Whilst necessarily tied to the funding advertising secured, one of *Nova's* continuing and primary aims, was to question images of women in the media, by revealing how

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<sup>116</sup> The column title made a deliberate reference to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* first published as an essay in 1929.

<sup>117</sup> Irma Kurtz, 'A view of my own', *Nova*, June 1971, p.98

<sup>118</sup> Bidex advertised itself as the spray 'that removes the everyday risk of feminine odour completely. Who uses Bidex? Girls like us'. Bidex Advertisement, *Nova*, June 1971 p.21. Freshette's advertisement explained, 'no woman is perfect ... you know there are times when your body beautiful can give you away. Freshette takes tender care of the most intimate part of you.' Freshette Advertisement, *Nova*, June 1971, p.40

<sup>119</sup> 'Nova for the 100<sup>th</sup> Time', *Nova*, July 1973, p.28

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27

<sup>121</sup> Bidex Advertisement, *Nova* July 1973, p. 28. Bel Mooney returned to the subject in her 'A view of my own' column in August 1974 where she argued that 'as soon as evidence of womanhood is there it must be brassiered, tamponed, deodorised into attempted neutrality.' Bel Mooney, 'A view of my own', *Nova*, August 1974, p. 98

beauty rituals brutalised the female body by highlighting the artificiality of made up constructions of beauty and by attempting to convey wider images of femininity.<sup>122</sup> (Fig. 42). During its decade of publication from 1965 to 1975 *Nova* defined and refined its image of the new kind of woman and this often included a critical and satirical take on the media stereotypes of femininity that circulated in contemporary visual culture.

In January 1970 for example, *Nova* explored the construction of false glamour in 'How to Create a Playmate' which showed readers the artificial processes by which such images are created.<sup>123</sup> Photographed by Rayment and art directed by David Hillman the photographs also include a credit to the studio who provided the crucial retouching.<sup>124</sup> (Fig.43). The feature was an attempt to question and expose how glamour images are made and used. In the accompanying articles Irma Kurtz provocatively claimed that every woman held a deep rooted desire to strip naked and Gerry Bryant exposed the techniques employed in making up a playmate (Fig. 44):

Careful camera angles hide appendix scars and bad proportions. Skin flaws, freckles, mosquito bites and birthmarks disappear beneath body make-up. Red filtered bulbs turn skin the peachy tone of billboard flesh and where the lighting misses, gleam is flicked in with body powder and thick grease. The aim is a plastic-perfect model of young womanhood.<sup>125</sup>

However readers were still presented with a choice of natural versus 'artificially enhanced' pin ups to judge.<sup>126</sup> And the article afforded the team an opportunity for a typically risqué cover featuring a naked model (save for a frilly apron) looking back

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<sup>122</sup> Brigid Keenan 'A hundred years ago the cure for wrinkles was a raw beef bandage', *Nova*, February 1970, pp., 66-67

<sup>123</sup> Gerry Bryant, 'How to Create a Playmate', *Nova*, January 1970, pp., 36-38

<sup>124</sup> Retouching by Sinclair Studio Ltd.

<sup>125</sup> Gerry Bryant, 'How to Create a Playmate', *Nova*, January 1970, p. 38

<sup>126</sup> The *Nova* team seemed to prefer the 'natural' version of the pin-up as she appears (pre touch up) as a pin up in the background of an editorial photography in *Nova* March 1970, p46. This was a feature remembered by Michael Desmond, then an art student living in Canberra, Australia. Michael Desmond, Remembering *Nova* Questionnaire (2005)

over her shoulder next to the headline: 'Inside every woman there's a stripper longing to get out'<sup>127</sup> (Fig. 45).

*Nova* features did attempt to make real lives, real bodies and real fashion relevant by regularly representing a range of femininity in articles from 'Proving Pregnant is Beautiful' to a survey of some women's 'bra rebellion' and a feature 'In praise of older women' which admired the fashionable appearances of a range of over forties.<sup>128</sup> (Figs. 46 - 48). *Nova*'s Beauty and Fashion Extra pages, edited by journalists Penny Vincenzi and Brigid Keenan provided a clever antidote to the images of ideal femininity that circulated in other women's magazines. *Nova* was not afraid to challenge accepted notions of beauty in articles such as 'This is your face' (January 1969) 'Plump can be pretty' (October 1970) and 'Its an ugly business being beautiful' (July 1971).<sup>129</sup> (Figs. 49 & 50).

A rhetoric of naturalness was also explored through *Nova*'s fashion pages. For example in Caroline Baker's fashion editorial on bras: 'Your body is soft and round and comes without seams' from February 1971, Celestino Valenti's hand drawn illustration replaces the conventional photograph. (Fig. 51). Baker's accompanying text promotes a more realistic attitude to the body, with a range of 'natural' underwear that is:

Seamless, made of a soft, soft, stretchy fabric that moulds itself to your body gently supporting and making you look as if you weren't wearing a bra at all. Which is the way to look nowadays. Gone are the ice-cream cone projections and the push-up wire baskets of yesteryear. Today's soft bras are not flatteners, they make you look natural. It may take a while to get used to the new rounder,

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<sup>127</sup> The naked model on the front cover, who was a professional stripper is undoubtedly 'peachy' but displays her TB vaccination scar rather defiantly.

<sup>128</sup> Caroline Baker and Brigid Keenan, 'Proving pregnant is beautiful' *Nova*, August 1970, pp., 58-61; Brigid Keenan, 'A bra rebellion is doing your own thing...' *Nova* November 1969, pp., 70-71; Brigid Keenan, 'In Praise of the Older Woman', *Nova* July 1970, pp., 40-41

<sup>129</sup> Brigid Keenan, 'This is your face', *Nova*, January 1969, pp., 46-47; Brigid Keenan, 'Plump can be pretty', *Nova*, October 1970, pp., 88-89; Penny Vincenzi, 'Let's twist and pout', *Nova*, July 1971, pp., 50-51

slightly floppier, you, but that is the way you were built, and anything natural is lovely.<sup>130</sup>

However, as well as offering a critique of contemporary images of ideal femininity and providing its own wider range of representations of women, *Nova* undoubtedly reveled in its function as an ‘entertainer’, ‘glamoriser’ and provider of the occasional ‘escapist fantasy’ played out across its fashion pages and iconic cover designs.<sup>131</sup> A defining feature of *Nova* was visual humour and the creation of images that offered a frivolous pastiche of a visual genre. Editorial use of humour indicated a knowingness about contemporary concerns and issues, and the use of parody worked to question popular images of gender and sexuality. For example, Christa Peter’s photograph for ‘A Little Knit Doesn’t go a Long Way’ from February 1971 played on the notion of a ‘Pin Up’ with a special pull-out poster featuring an almost life sized photograph of a highly stylised model in a tight sweater pictured suggestively sucking on a rocket shaped lollypop. (Fig. 52).

The model here is very obviously ‘made up’: she wears noticeably false, spidery eyelashes and her lips are painted with thick, glossy colour. She is photographed in an interior space, and whilst her body extends off the page her frame appears tightly contained within it. The editorial text is squashed into the curve between her waist and arm and emphasises the shape of her figure which stretches out from the confines of the tight cropped jumper. ‘A little knit doesn’t go a long way...’ the caption reads, ‘... It’s not meant to. Sweaters now come in mini proportions, barely ending at the waist.’<sup>132</sup> The girl adopts the coded body posture and facial expression of the ‘pin – up’ to indicate and provoke sexual arousal, self consciously acting out, it seems, categories of model poses established through other forms of visual culture, from soft pornography to chocolate advertising.<sup>133</sup>

With her lips parted, eyes closed and head thrown back, the phallic lollypop the model in ‘A Little Knit’ sucks on seems to be the source of her pleasure, and the juices

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<sup>130</sup> Caroline Baker. ‘Your body is soft and round and comes without seams’, *Nova* February 1971, pp., 32-37

<sup>131</sup> Editorial, *Nova* July 1973, p. 6

<sup>132</sup> Caroline Baker, ‘A Little Knit Doesn’t go a Long Way’, *Nova*, February 1971, p.27

<sup>133</sup> See Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*. New York: Harper, 1979

trickling down her arm direct the viewer's eyes across the model's body. Like the artificial colours of the lollypop and the bright styling of the page, she is a totally contrived camp stereotype.<sup>134</sup> This aesthetic prioritises gloss, surface and artifice over a rhetoric of naturalness. Her sexy, obviously styled, but 'just-got-out-of-bed' hair: tousled, curled and falling across her face, constructs the erotic, but it's a self-conscious 'come on' – a typical 'saucy' performance designed for the knowing pleasure of the audience. The falsity of the 'Pin Up' girl contrasts clearly with that of the Army Surplus girl's natural look discussed in Chapter Two, and plays into another kind of *Nova* image which is defined here by a performance of sexuality, glamour and consumerism.

Whilst the soft focus photographic techniques adopted by pornography naturalises the subject by inviting the reader to suspend belief, *Nova*'s images of pin-up pastiche, are about a heightened glossiness and glamour which are exposed as spectacularly false.<sup>135</sup> This form of tongue-in-cheek glamour emphasises the artificial over the natural - the 'constructed-ness' of the subject is made clear - the knowing reader recognises the falseness of the image and is flattered to be *in* on the joke. The obvious artificiality of these images seems to make what is being represented *less* erotic and *more* entertaining.

*Nova* credited its readers with experience and intelligence, and a sense of humour and believed that this resulted in a confidence that ensured they could both understand and appreciate a more humorous approach to sexual subjects and a light hearted and often ironic tone. The front cover of *Nova*'s February 1972 issue presented readers with a naked model hiding behind a silk negligee posed in a saucy performance of pouting lipped surprise. (Fig. 53). The cover challenged its readers: 'So you think this picture exploits women. Don't you know it also exploits men? Remember: Your overweight,

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<sup>134</sup> See Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*. London: Vintage, 1994.

<sup>135</sup> Rosetta Brooks discusses Helmut Newton's staged glamour as 'spectacularised as falsity ... The glossiness and glamour seem to merge in the image as attributes of opacity and as points of closure, rather than as transparent openings upon the desired object'. Rosetta Brooks, 'Sighs and Whispers in Bloomingdales: A Review of a Mail-Order Catalogue for their Lingerie Department'. In Angela McRobbie, ed. *Zoot Suits and Second-Hand Dresses: An Anthology of Fashion and Music*. London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 186

overstressed, sexually oppressed, economically enslaved man needs liberating too! On the other hand, being exploited has its lighter side'.<sup>136</sup>

Playing on the notion of the *Playboy* centre-fold with two special 'pull-out posters' ran the twelve-page fashion spread 'More flesh for exploitation – underwear exploiting whom?' (Fig. 54). These pages presented a frivolous pastiche of the Vargas pin-up genre.<sup>137</sup> Fashion Editor Caroline Baker extolled the appeal of the 'camp, but consummate, glamour of the vamping woman' in her pages featuring a mix of sporty underwear basics and lacy lingerie complete with the 'coily aggressive joke-line' a *Playboy* staple: 'Do try and keep it on the table Mr Bottomly!'<sup>138</sup>

Framing and contextualising the colour extravaganza of camp pin-ups accommodating the magazines central fashion pages, a series of editorial articles explored the theme of 'masculinity in crisis': Reports of the men's liberation movement were investigated by David Jenkins in his article 'Masculinity – the inevitable failure to meet its demands.'<sup>139</sup> This was supported by Peter Martin's feature on the male orgasm and conquering premature ejaculation, and interviews with 'five older women' on 'the joys of younger men' including a profile of former fashion editor Molly Parkin and her second husband, the artist Patrick Hughes.<sup>140</sup> *Nova's* editorial was controversial and sometimes contentious and frequently pushed the boundaries of acceptable content for IPC management, as Cooke explains:

I'd go down and do battle with this managing editor because we'd come up with an idea and then he'd criticise it and pick holes in everything and simply didn't have an idea of what it was that we were trying to do. He thought that

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<sup>136</sup> Cover, *Nova*, February, 1972

<sup>137</sup> Caroline Baker. 'More flesh for exploitation – underwear exploiting whom?' *Nova*, February, 1972 pp., 32-39. Alberto Vargas's paintings of pin-up girls were published in *Esquire* in the nineteen forties and *Playboy* in the nineteen sixties.

<sup>138</sup> 'We are glad to pay tribute to Vargas, who at least kept us laughing at exploitation. In the meantime, if you're still in the fray, we'll also tell you where to buy the underwear.' Baker, February 1972 p.32

<sup>139</sup> David Jenkins. 'Masculinity – the inevitable failure to meet its demands', *Nova*, February 1972, pp. 18-21

<sup>140</sup> Peter Martin, 'Lo, the conquering heroine', *Nova*, February 1972, pp., 40-41. Ann Leslie 'Older women in praise of younger men', *Nova*, February 1972 pp., 56-60

because it was very forward looking, or open, it (was) lewd ... he wanted it to be less outrageous or less outspoken.<sup>141</sup>

In this same issue an illustration by Mike McInnerney to accompany Catherine Storr's article on male impotence was initially censored, but finally allowed through after fierce interjection by David Hillman.<sup>142</sup> (Fig. 55). McInnerney eschewed a descriptive, literal response, instead he conveyed the theme with a visual interpretation which referenced the idea of a 'soft screw'. McInnerney's rationale for the illustration demonstrates the multilayered meanings the balance between image and editorial could generate:

I drew a visual slang idea for the article in order to create a pictorial slap at the tenderness of the articles title, 'Impotence is a cry for help'. I wanted to highlight the cultural gap existing between common expression and nuanced understanding of the subject.<sup>143</sup>

Whilst the approach to issues of sexuality was informed, thoughtful and sensitive, *Nova's* provocative covers sometimes belied the serious journalism found within the magazine. One reader, the author Gillian Tindall, writing in response to a series of 'sexy covers' published in early 1972 (Fig. 56), complained that *Nova's* sometimes sexually suggestive covers did not match the serious content of the magazine:

Why dress up your magazine to look as if it contained sub-pornography at a time when there are so many other publications which are genuinely devoted to just this? You cannot compete with them and – obviously – do not really want to since most of your contents caters for quite other tastes. Those casual buyers, therefore, who pick out *Nova* because they imagine, from the cover, that it will be full of articles on trendy perversions, are bound to be disappointed and will not buy it again. Meanwhile you have, I would think,

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<sup>141</sup> Cooke, (2008)

<sup>142</sup> Catherine Storr. 'Impotence is a cry for help. But are you there when he calls?' *Nova*, February 1972, pp., 52-55. Illustrator Mike McInnerney recalled that initially 'the editor, Gillian Cooke, did not 'get' the soft screw image as she was not familiar with the sexual slang "screwing".' Mike McInnerney, Personal Correspondence with Author, 2013

<sup>143</sup> Mike McInnerney, Personal Communication with Author, 2013

many potential readers who do not think that perceptive or intelligent articles are likely to lurk behind such jaded stereotypes as leathery ladies with whips ... Others will know from the past that yours is something more than a skin-rag, but will feel disinclined either to buy or to carry about a magazine which looks like one.<sup>144</sup>

In conversation with me 30 years later, features writer Maggie Meade-King, agreed that such sexually charged images, even if heavily cloaked irony, were inherently problematic:

I think there's a real dilemma if you create a climate where you assume everyone is a grown up and everyone reads it in the same way as you do, I've always felt that we needed to take some *care*. So you can say 'its just all fun and what the hell' but I think you can also say 'well, what is the message you're giving out to girls?' And is this the way women are supposed to be? ... [But] I always feel with *Nova* that there was always a discussion, so it wasn't unthinking.<sup>145</sup>

For Cooke humour was crucial to their approach, and satire and irony served as a way of unpicking and questioning contemporary sexual stereotypes:

I think you need a lighter touch with it. If you're going to be angry or forceful you also need to see the funny side of it. And you need to bring in the men's side of it too, because their reaction is also part of the picture, so there was male coverage in there as well.<sup>146</sup>

*Nova's* approach to sex was in sharp contrast to how the subject was handled in other magazines. In *19* and *Honey*, the emphasis was on facts and information, a sexual education of sorts for its young and inexperienced readers. *British Cosmopolitan*

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<sup>144</sup> Gillian Tindall, 'Letter to the Editor', *Nova* April 1972 p.14 (Tindall was the author of the short story 'Return Match' published in *Nova* June 1972). *Nova* actively embraced both supporters of its editorial and more and dissenting voices and demonstrated its enjoyment of the debates arising from editorial content by providing space for them each month on its letter's page. The ongoing exchange that ensued between *Nova* and its readers was the measure of the magazine's impact.

<sup>145</sup> Meade-King, (2005)

<sup>146</sup> Cooke, (2008)

would instruct women in the art of sex and its role in the ultimate goal of getting and keeping a man. More typical to *Nova* were articles on understanding and questioning supposed knowledge about women's sexuality.<sup>147</sup>

Cooke has explained that she was 'not editing for women but for people.'<sup>148</sup> As she explains, by contrast *Cosmopolitan* was 'women and men, men and women ... We did relationships but it could be 'women and women', 'women and children' not just, 'men and women.'<sup>149</sup> A defining difference in *Nova*'s handling of sexual and marital issues is that its editorial encompassed and incorporated a male viewpoint, from the experiences of house husbands, the effects of divorce, or going through childbirth together.<sup>150</sup> (Fig. 57). In an interview for an article in *The Times* in March 1972, the month of the British launch of rival magazine *Cosmopolitan* Gillian Cooke explained *Nova*'s approach to sex as a subject:

Everyone has taken sex too seriously for far too long. I think communications generally have been going through a sexy and sensual phase but that looking ahead, the provocative issues seem to be in other areas, more towards the whole life-and-death syndrome.<sup>151</sup>

Gillian Cooke was especially critical of rival *Cosmopolitan*, she suggested that the new magazine represented 'a backward step that could make women more obsessed with their bodies and their clothes.'<sup>152</sup> In comparison *Nova* magazine actively questioned versions of ideal femininity that circulated in the media

For example a lengthy polemic by Susan Sontag from September 1973 asking, 'Have you lied about your age today?' analysed images of women in contemporary visual

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<sup>147</sup> For example, Lyn Owen, 'What makes a woman go off sex?' *Nova* August 1973, pp., 62-65

<sup>148</sup> Gillian Cooke quoted in Suzanne Puddlefoot, 'Images of Women', *The Times* 16<sup>th</sup> February 1972, p. 11

<sup>149</sup> It changed again and it moved on – Irma went to write for them! The view of *Cosmo* in *Nova* conferences was totally at odds with us but once the magazine closed a couple of our writers and Irma went to *Cosmo*! But they probably influenced it for the better, it probably was good for them.' Cooke, (2008)

<sup>150</sup> For example, 'House Husbands' by Ruth Inglis in *Nova* November, 1973

<sup>151</sup> Gillian Cooke quoted in Puddlefoot, S. 16<sup>th</sup> February 1972, p. 11

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*

culture in an attempt to unpick the cult of youth.<sup>153</sup> (Fig. 58). However at the same time *Nova* provided versions of ideal of femininity in its own pages of advertising. A reality not missed by some of its readers:

*Nova* is filled with advertisements which stress the need for women to pay intricate attention to their appearances. If they do not actually persuade us to use their products, they do persuade us that it is normal to emulate the lovely girls that smile from the pages. I know *Nova* needs advertising to survive commercially; but why is it advertising largely concerned with products that aim to beautify women? We also read, eat, travel, work and drive cars ...the magazine does little to help with its young, slim fashion models, who do not represent typical women in ordinary life. They may help to sell clothes but they also perpetuate the system Ms Sontag rightly condemns. If *Nova* genuinely cares to advance the position of women in society, it should be helping to discard the pointless pursuit of the perfect appearance.<sup>154</sup>

*Nova* luxuriated in its colour pages and clothed and unclothed bodies in editorial and advertising were a key part of the magazine's visual appeal. The new woman may have been active, single and financially independent but her freedom was arguably constrained by having to symbolise an ideal of youth. Whilst these images appear to represent a more progressive and independent figure, she is at the same time tied to an adolescent appearance which must be maintained through make-up, grooming regimes, diet and exercise.<sup>155</sup>

Beauty editorial and advertising separates out different areas of the face and the body by focusing on their care and maintenance. Ideal femininity is cut up and presented as areas for concern and scrutiny. Beauty editorial can be read as an encouragement of the notion of the body as a 'project'. The body then becomes dislocated from the self,

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<sup>153</sup> Susan Sontag, 'Have you Lied About your Age Today?' *Nova*, September, 1973, pp., 40-48

<sup>154</sup> Pip Bignell, 'Letter to the Editor', *Nova*, December 1973, p.6

<sup>155</sup> Hilary Radner identifies a tension in 1960s fashion photography between pleasure seeking and self control. She suggests that the 'Single Girl' might define femininity outside patriarchy but she 'establishes consumerism as the mechanism that replaces maternity in the construction of the feminine' Hilary Radner, 'On the Move: Fashion Photography and the Single Girl in the 1960s, in Bruzzi, Stella and Church Gibson, Stella (eds), *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 128

as the reader considers, ‘my hair’ ‘my hands’, or ‘my hips’ as objects to be worked on. We can see a representation of the notion of the body as a project in Pat Baikie’s ‘Beautiful bodywork’ from October 1973.<sup>156</sup> (Fig. 59). Commissioned by Art Director David Hillman, the set of drawings took illustrator Celestino Valenti over six months to complete. The beauty editorial consisted of eight separate double page spreads, which when taken out of the magazine and pinned up together made up an eight foot reclining nude. On the back of each of the sections of the body came an exercise plan with advice on improving and maintaining that specific body area. Mirroring women’s own body dissatisfaction, the illustrator revealed that of his own ‘body project’ he was only ever completely satisfied with the arm and the hand.<sup>157</sup>

The detail of the surface of the body is also prioritized though such examples of fashion and beauty editorial; because of the very scale of some of these images, it is presented in extreme close up and in minute detail. This further fragments the female body – encouraging the reader to view it as separate parts to be scrutinised and studied and to be improved or maintained by the purchase and consumption of products and services.

However it could be argued that *Nova*’s prioritisation of formal devices which construct fashion editorial, such as the use of Celestino Valenti’s illustrative techniques, and by the devices of photomontage, cropping and image manipulation, point to an accentuated realism by acknowledging their own material medium, in contrast, to perhaps more conventional photo stories which avoid drawing attention to the surface of the picture plane or material construction, instead focusing resolutely on the subject.

Published in the same issue in October 1973 *Nova* also offered men’s bodies for scrutiny and appraisal. A naked and dripping wet man, barely concealing his genitals in joyful mock modesty exclaimed from the front cover: ‘Lucky you – now you can ogle me. That’s what I call liberation ... do you?’<sup>158</sup> (Fig. 60). Inside two feature articles unpicked the phenomenon of the male pin-up, thrust into the news domain by

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<sup>156</sup> Pat Baikie, ‘Beautiful bodywork’, *Nova*, October 1973, pp., 95-125

<sup>157</sup> Gibbs, 1998, p. 165

<sup>158</sup> Cover, *Nova*, October 1973

the arrival of the first pin-up calendar aimed at women launched in America, the *Ladies Home Companion*, the arrival of *Playgirl* magazine in 1973 and British *Cosmopolitan*'s monthly male pin up poster.<sup>159</sup>

In 'Lust Lib', Gillian Freeman, author of *The Undergrowth of Literature* a study of pornography published in 1967, questioned whether women 'have the same voyeuristic desires as men.'<sup>160</sup> In the second article Germaine Greer questioned 'What do we want from male pin-ups?'<sup>161</sup> In her essay Greer discussed Burt Reynolds' appearance on the gatefold of Helen Gurley Brown's American *Cosmopolitan*, the first male pin up in a women's mainstream magazine.<sup>162</sup> She analysed the differences in images for women and those designed for men, critiquing the appearance of her first husband Paul du Feu as a British *Cosmo* pin-up, who had appeared in its second British edition in April 1972 as a center-fold; spray painted buff coloured with hair lacquered and 'as thoroughly camouflaged as any Playmate.'<sup>163</sup> Greer unpicked the range of available 'play-males' available for the viewing pleasure of women, from the 'savage' Charles Bronson, to the erotic exhibitionist Marc Bolan. And concluded that for women, 'erotic appeal is not strictly genital, and its not strictly controlled by considerations of gender. Its part of the aesthetics of everyday life ... we need not coy males clutching their genitalia in glossy gatefolds, but a whole new erotic art.'<sup>164</sup>

### **Designing Editorial: Image and Text**

In appointing David Hillman as Deputy Editor in October 1971 Gillian Cooke had extended his role as Art Director and cemented *Nova*'s commitment to design. This drew on and developed a legacy of 'visual editing', as Cooke explains:

[Hillman] was given a much greater voice than art editors ... on the other magazines, they just fitted what you gave them into the pages and made it look

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<sup>159</sup> Anon., 'Modern Living: Turning the Calendar' in *Time*, Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1972

<sup>160</sup> Gillian Freeman, 'Lust Lib', *Nova*, October 1973 pp., 46-49

<sup>161</sup> Germaine Greer. 'What do we want from male pin-ups?' *Nova*, October 1973 pp., 51-54

<sup>162</sup> Burt Reynolds appeared as a centerfold in US *Cosmopolitan*, April 1972

<sup>163</sup> Germaine Greer. 'What do we want from male pin-ups?', *Nova*, October 1973 p.51

<sup>164</sup> Greer, p.54. Between these two articles an illustrated survey 'What is sauce for the goose' drew upon the responses of fifty women aged 18-45 to help construct, 'Exhibit A: The Turn Off' (described as - over developed, hairy chested, ginger haired or balding with dirty bitten nails) versus 'Exhibit B: The Turn On' (who would be - well-balanced broad-shouldered tanned torso on 'long, slender, not too hairy, legs clothed in tight trousers and skinny jeans ... a glint of bold jewellery). *Nova*, October 1973, p. 53

nice... It had been part of the history of *Nova*. Dennis Hackett was a very visual editor, he would think of the idea and then work backwards. I think *Nova* was a very visual concept.<sup>165</sup>

Humour was a defining feature of the magazine, *Nova*'s launch objective to 'sit out the fantasy' and make 'entertainment out of reality' was achieved through its use of satire and irony.<sup>166</sup> As Gillian Cooke explained:

The ideas came out of what we were talking about and the fun came out of what we were doing in editorial terms ... You can always find a witty way of doing something but it doesn't have to be funny 'ha ha', it should be funny smart and sharp funny ... There was a mixture of irony, whimsy. That came out of conferences usually, or sometimes I'd hear this huge laughing going on in the features department and David Jenkins would come in with an idea for a feature and David Hillman would pick up that and do a cartoon or something with it or there'd be a visual idea that David would come up with. But very often it was just out of our editorial meetings, something would strike us as humorous. There was a lot of fun going on at *Nova* so I think a lot of the humour actually came out of the people that were working there and we commissioned writers who were funny.<sup>167</sup>

David Hillman conceived much of *Nova*'s humour as a formal design concept. Some of the magazine's most visually exciting pages were borne out of the creative collaboration between David Hillman and still life photographer Tony Evans, and produced, often at great expense. An example of such ambitious design appeared in *Nova*'s September 1971 issue with an article on pickling entitled 'How to Double-Crosse Blackwell' by cookery writer Caroline Conran.<sup>168</sup> (Fig. 61). Hillman explained the production process behind the idea:

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<sup>165</sup> Cooke, (2008).

<sup>166</sup> 'Our theme is that a woman's life in 1965 is more interesting and more exciting than any escapism, so let's sit out the fantasy and make our entertainment out of reality.' Editorial Address, *Nova*, Issue 1, March 1965

<sup>167</sup> Cooke, (2008).

<sup>168</sup> The play on words of the title makes reference to food brand Crosse-Blackwell, famous for their 'Branston Pickle'. Caroline Conran. 'How to Double-Crosse Blackwell', *Nova*, September 1971, pp., 80-81

Tony and I one night said: ‘Wouldn’t it be great to have a glass onion made, just filled with pickled onions’. And then we went to Caroline Conran and said: ‘Can you do a piece on pickling?’ And she said yes.<sup>169</sup>

Like Hillman, Tony Evans had an eye for detail and a meticulous working method. Evans constructed the glass jar himself using perspex and filled the onions through a plugged whole hidden at the back of the jar. Evans’ scrutiny to the detail of the finished look involved him rejecting traditional cooking onions which were coloured brown by the pickling vinegar, replacing them instead with raw giant spring onions which he carefully peeled, cut and shaped in order to create his desired effect in the jar.<sup>170</sup>

‘Sharp ... smart’ humour was intelligent and flattered the reader who understood the joke. Jokes were just as often visually driven, notably in the astute political satire of Roger Law’s plasticine puppetry.<sup>171</sup> His model for an article on Lord Longford, author of the 1972 Longford Report on pornography, saw his subject caricatured as an erect penis scrutinising a printed pamphlet entitled ‘Lezbe Friends’.<sup>172</sup> (Fig. 62). The accompanying diary entries by broadcaster (and later Conservative MP) Gyles Brandeth revealed the astonishing activities of the Pornography Commission ‘Study Group’, and consequently got him fired from the committee. The unpublished version of Law’s illustration, rejected by IPC management, showed him in a less flattering ‘flaccid’ state, seemingly spent and exhausted by his reading. Cooke admitted that even she found Law’s creations to sometimes be ‘a little crude for the sharpness of the rest of the humour.’<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Hillman, (2003).

<sup>170</sup> In ‘Hot Air Rises’ from April 1973 Prue Leith promised her readers that making a soufflé was ‘child’s play’. However in production the dish pictured on the page by Tony Evans and his wife Caroline was perfected only after the nineteenth baking in order to achieve just the right rise and depth of colour the team required. Prue Leith, ‘Hot air rises,’ *Nova*, April 1973, pp., 78-80. See Gibbs, 1998, p. 185

<sup>171</sup> As well as regular contributions to *Nova* Roger Law worked as a cartoonist for the *Observer* and the *Sunday Times Magazine*. He later created *Spitting Image* with Peter Fluck in 1984.

<sup>172</sup> Gyles Brandeth. ‘A secret diary on Lord Longford’s committee’ *Nova*, January 1972, pp., 24-28.

<sup>173</sup> Cooke, (2008).

David Hillman recognized that the crucial and dynamic relationship of text and image was central to the editorial philosophy of *Nova*, as he explains:

There was a strong bond between what the magazine said and actually how it looked and how it said it. Attention to the way a piece, a short story was laid out, got the same amount of energy expended as a fashion shoot.<sup>174</sup>

This sometimes meant that even a well researched and lengthy editorial text would be revised, or rejected if a more visually effective solution could be found. In order to keep *Nova* up to date and as visually distinct and cutting edge as possible the editorial production team would ‘find something or invent something, do something a different way.’<sup>175</sup> As David Hillman expands:

One of the big discussions we used to have was that writers can solve problems with words, and art directors will solve problems with pictures. And I was always saying that just because a writer comes up with an idea, it doesn’t necessarily have to be solved in words. In the same way, photographers used to come up and say: I’ve got this idea I’d like you to do, and you’d think yes, a really nice idea but I think it would be better if it was written.<sup>176</sup>

A notable example of this process of editorial production and revision is demonstrated by the May 1973 article ‘Those Little Black Lies’ illustrated by David Pocknell.<sup>177</sup> (Fig. 63). The idea originated with staff features writers, Sally Vincent and Peter Martin who had drafted a 25,000 word piece on the unspoken truths and concealed criticisms hidden behind what couples say to each other. Hillman offered Gillian Cooke an alternative idea in the form of two double page spreads and commissioned Pocknell to do the illustration with just two days to go before the print deadline.

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<sup>174</sup> Hillman, (2003).

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Hillman, (2003).

<sup>177</sup> David Pocknell began his career working for the industrial and graphic design partnership Nicholson Brothers in 1960 and by 1965 had established his own independent practice designing graphics, illustration, interiors and architectural space. Pocknell explained: ‘I considered myself as Graphic Designer/Ilustrator but at the time also designed shops and exhibitions. This broad spread of work helped in idea generation and some of it ended up in *Nova*’. David Pocknell, Personal Communication with Author. (2013)

Pocknell produced a complete visual conceptualization of the themes and issues the article explored. The resulting pages were a captivatingly clear interpretation of the authors' original premise, and reveal in detail the cruelties inflicted by a husband and wife in their strategic misrepresentation of the truth: 'How are you?' says the husband to his wife, but what he is really thinking is revealed underneath: 'I am bright and friendly because I do not want you to know that I'm still hostile from this morning. I am testing your mood so I can decide on my response.'<sup>178</sup> Each set of lips were carefully hand drawn by Pocknell and the dialogue text overlaid by hand by Hillman. The design intervention transformed an interesting but overly long and complex text into a concise and dynamic graphic solution. David Pocknell recalled that *Nova* innovated in editorial illustration and encouraged collaborative practice and creative dialogue:

*Nova* was very advanced in its attitude to magazine layout and editorial and as a consequence people like me, who could take a different view on the things it published, were allowed to help in the editorial decision making - hence 'Little Black Lies' ... That job was complex and because of its time there was virtually no computer design programs and so everything was produced by hand to a size bigger than the final one with all the type positioned by hand on an overlay to the artwork! Deadlines were tight and we had three of us sticking type down to meet the print courier deadline.<sup>179</sup>

According to Gillian Cooke, whilst these negotiations between the art department and editorial teams were creative and fruitful they were also the cause of ructions, specifically between Art Director David Hillman and Features Editor David Jenkins who would each defend their own medium. As Cooke explains:

They were a match for each other. David Hillman would obviously always put the visuals first and then try to squeeze the type in as much as he could so he could get his picture, and then David Jenkins would say 'you're not to cut it!

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<sup>178</sup> David Pocknell, 'Those Little Black Lies', *Nova*, May 1973, pp., 66-69.

<sup>179</sup> David Pocknell, Personal Communication with Author, (2013).

This is important!’ And so they were well balanced, and they were both prepared to fight their corner, which was good.<sup>180</sup>

In securing Hillman as Deputy Editor in October 1971, Cooke demonstrated her recognition of the importance of designing editorial content. However creative differences argued over the prioritisation of image and text would characterize *Nova* throughout the decade of its publication. In her column ‘A View of my Own’ published on the 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of *Nova*’s launch, Irma Kurtz refers to the ‘creative conflicts’ between the art department and editorial ‘each of which believes itself much more important than the other and more entitled to page space’. As a writer Kurtz believed that ‘creative conflict is vigorous and healthy; at least as long as editorial triumphs ... editorial must triumph or *Nova* could become one of the world’s loveliest calendars.’<sup>181</sup>

The May 1973 issue demonstrated *Nova*’s editorial balance very clearly. The theme of marital discord, visually explored in ‘Little Black Lies’ defined the theme of the issue. The front cover featured a bride and groom clothed in traditional wedding attire, but looking less than jubilant and posed shaking hands to illustrate an editorial on ‘Britain’s first Marriage Contract.’ (Fig. 64). Inside the feature article offered nine pages exploring the state of marriage in Britain circa 1973:

For better and for worse, marriage is still our favourite institution. Just on one million Britons a year make their solemn promise and hope they will live happily ever after. Is the wedding day the beginning or the end of their dream? The rising divorce figures give cause for concern, but it’s a fact that more marriages break down than break up....<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Cooke (2008). Maggie Meade King also spoke about the tension between the art department and features writers: ‘There would be rows between the art department telling the feature writers that the copy had to be cut by enormous amounts because they wanted a spread with lots of white space ...Hillman wanted it to be this very beautiful magazine. And the copy was totally secondary as far as he was concerned ... and the subs would be in between having mediate between the two ... people cared about what they were doing and they cared about their pieces being cut to ribbons just as he cared about what it looked like.’ Meade King (2005).

<sup>181</sup> Irma Kurtz, ‘A View of my Own’, *Nova* March 1975, p. 98.

<sup>182</sup> Carolyn Faulder. ‘After the wedding – making sense of the marriage’, *Nova*, May 1973, pp., 42-43.

Features writer Carolyn Faulder offered insight into the legislation of relationships, suggesting that a marriage contract could protect a wife and preserve her identity and could also defend the right of both man and woman to better enjoy an equal partnership. The article drew on the romantic reminiscences of interviewees' wedding days, and contrasted this with examples of legally binding contracts from America and Britain where couples had devised their own set of 'ideals, rights and duties.'<sup>183</sup> The design of the pages distinguishes different content and perspectives, the marriage contracts for example, are printed in typewriter font to indicate their statutory nature. (Fig. 65).

The central pages of the May 1973 issue were taken up with full colour photography and illustration, and were clearly design led. Commissioned illustration for example was provided by Jean Lagarrigue to open Russell Miller's profile of prolific investment banker Jim Slater.<sup>184</sup> (Fig. 66). David Jenkins' regular consumer guide was offered supplement style as a 'tactical guide' printed on matt pink paper and illustrated by Chris McEwan. (Fig. 67).<sup>185</sup> Longer length, well researched articles included Ruth Inglis' feature 'Children in hospital' - an eight page investigation on the attempts made to humanise the hospital experience for children and drawing on patient interviews, drawings and essay writing. The research was supported by Peter Hoare's sensitive photography of the children in their wards.<sup>186</sup> (Fig. 68).

At *Nova* editorial illustration was explored to develop the idea of 'image as opinion.'<sup>187</sup> Illustrator Mike McInnerney enjoyed a long running relationship with Art Director David Hillman who would regularly commission him to produce drawings to

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<sup>183</sup> Carolyn Faulder. 'The case for a contract', *Nova*, May 1973, p. 45

<sup>184</sup> Russell Miller, 'The £10,000,000 four-day week, City king from the suburbs. A profile of Jim Slater', *Nova*, May 1973, pp., 70-74. Further commissioned illustration was provided by Jeannie Baker in a collage for Pat Barr's recollection of her childhood neighbourhood. Pat Barr, 'Nice quiet people', *Nova*, May 1973, pp., 80-83.

<sup>185</sup> Further full colour pages were found in Janet Fitch's interior design section, and Christa Peter's high resolution photograph for Pat Baicke's beauty pages Janet Fitch, 'Your designer and what to do with him', *Nova*, May 1973, pp., 76-79. Pat Baikie, 'In search of the slim line', *Nova*, May 1973 pp., 84-85. And a 'block' of colour was evident in Caroline Baker's fashion editorial 'Fast and Loose' where she advised readers to explore the comforts of relaxed fit and easy to wear garments, drawing on the shapes and fabrics offered by pyjamas and dressing gowns in pale peach and clotted cream colours and sumptuous, silky textures: 'Wear the real thing if you dare, borrow ideas if you don't.' Caroline Baker, 'Loosely fashionable' *Nova*, May 1973, pp., 56-65

<sup>186</sup> Ruth Inglis, 'Children in hospital: The body is cared for but what about the mind?' *Nova*, May 1973, pp., 96-103.

<sup>187</sup> Mike McInnerney, Personal Correspondence with Author, (2013).

visually conceptualise editorial features. As McInnerney explained, Hillman was ‘at the forefront of commissioning new talent’ and was always ‘prepared to take a risk, briefing in an open manner.’ These commissions drew on a creative dialogue between the artist and editorial team and offered the illustrator a privileged role, as McInnerney describes:

David Hillman and Gillian Cooke were a dream team to work for. The quality of writing was matched by a fine use of images. *Nova's* journalism, at the sharp end of developing personal political attitudes of the time, found acute visual expression in David Hillman's thoughtful commissioning of conceptual images driven by ideas.<sup>188</sup>

McInnerney's illustration for ‘If at first you don't succeed’ (December 1973) sensitively visualized the issues explored by Judy Froshaug's article on infertility.<sup>189</sup> (Fig. 69). McInnerney contrasts the idea of the artificial interior space of the greenhouse set amongst the vigor and vitality of the nature surrounding it. His illustration highlights the profound loss and isolation of childlessness for women who are unable to conceive. His work for *Nova* moved beyond simple illustrative description of editorial content, as he explains:

At the time I was working for *Nova* there had been a shift in mass communication. Illustration developed from being a mirror held to text to a conceptual window on words as issues, arguments and subject matter became more complex. In the expanding magazine market of the sixties, image making sought pictorial ideas with a distinct individual voice and played with verbal and visual language to create a wide range of expression.<sup>190</sup>

Significantly whilst Mike McInnerney and David Pocknell found regular editorial work producing illustrations for information led publications such as *The Sunday*

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<sup>188</sup> Mike McInnerney, *Personal Correspondence with Author*, (2013).

<sup>189</sup> Judy Froshaug. ‘If at first you don't succeed’, *Nova*, December 1973, pp., 66-70.

<sup>190</sup> ‘Technical advances in full colour gravure (offset Litho printing) technology meant that colour reproduction became faster and cheaper with subsequent growth in the use of full colour images beyond advertising and fashion pages.’ Mike McInnerney, (*Personal Correspondence with Author*, (2013).

*Times Magazine, The Times Education Supplement, New Scientist, and British Clinical Journal, Nova* was the only women's magazine they collaborated with.

Gillian Cooke bought a holistic approach to editing *Nova* as a total work by measuring pace, rhythm and depth, as well as content and style:

I think I always tried to balance an issue, there must be something with a very human or relationship emphasis, I liked something that was more pioneering, I liked some humour. You should have different length reads, and different styles of reading within an issue, but there should always be something that's moving forward, but then you don't have to frighten the horses with every article that goes in, some of it must be just fun or just pleasant.<sup>191</sup>

*Nova's* November 1973 issue illustrates this balance very well. Its cover story ran on a warning of 'what inflation could mean by 1976'. The cover girl sported: 'Fairisle pullover ...£1130, Levi's button fly jeans, £440 ...Mary Quant Choosy Cheery lipstick, £55.' Inside a pink-papered supplement called the 'Inflationary Times' explained how to cope, how to avoid debt, and how to best invest £100.<sup>192</sup>

Science and medical technology was addressed in 'Patient Heal Thyself', an in depth study of the uses and abuses of 60 million pounds worth of over the counter medicines.<sup>193</sup> (Fig. 70). A full-page information graphic shaped like a medicine cabinet colourfully demonstrated the percentage of different preparations available, next to a comprehensive three-page guide by Dr Clive Wood and Betka Zamoyska. Overleaf a double page spread of illustrations by David Pocknell matched body parts to available medicines. (Fig. 71). The feature concluded with a simple but clear 'How and when to treat yourself' offered as a doctor's guide to common ailments.

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<sup>191</sup> 'There was some the man from the *Sunday Times* who wrote a little bit on a boy scout and it was absolutely charming, now those are delightful reads for anybody, men or women. So you need some lighter weight stuff in there as well.' Gillian Cooke, (2008).

<sup>192</sup> Francis Cairncroft and Hamish McRae, 'Inflationary Times' *Nova*, November 1973, pp., 127-134. Frances Cairncroft was Economic Correspondent for the *Guardian*.

<sup>193</sup> Dr Clive Wood and Betka Zamoyska, 'Patient Heal Thyself' in *Nova* November 1973 pp., 48-54.

Elsewhere in the magazine the science led research was balanced by two features on modern relationships: Carolyn Faulder investigated the role of the sex therapist,<sup>194</sup> and an article on ‘House Husbands’ by Ruth Inglis, revealed the men for whom staying at home meant leisure and liberation.<sup>195</sup>

In this issue visual humour was provided in the cookery pages. In Prue Leith’s resurrection of the apple pie in ‘As English As...’ the actual recipes (gleaned from France, Germany and Italy as well as the traditional ‘Old English Apple Pie’) were relegated to second place in favour of a full double page spread illustration by Charlie White who chose to depict the surprisingly unappetizing image of a table laid out with an abandoned slice of pie on a plate, complete with a small black fly tucking into a crumb.<sup>196</sup> (Fig. 72). With issues such as this month’s, carefully balanced with a range of diverse design and content, and the opportunity for different kinds of viewing and reading pleasures, *Nova* fulfilled its promise to subscribers that it would make its readers; ‘look, read, dream, argue, listen, laugh.’<sup>197</sup>

A key editorial objective for Gillian Cooke was to keep *Nova* ‘of its time’ and to ‘move forward’ with each issue both editorially and visually. This meant keeping up to date with current events, contemporary culture, aesthetics, political and popular opinion and public debate. As she explains:

I’ve always liked to keep up with absolutely everything that was going on, and those sorts of ideas were there, they were just beginning. I didn’t want to go over the same territory. Every time you moved a little bit further and took on how those ideas were going.<sup>198</sup>

This meant that there was no subject that had been ‘done’ as long as advancements in the area were being made. In August 1974 *Nova* offered its readers ‘The Heart Issue.’

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<sup>194</sup> Ruth Inglis, ‘House Husbands’, *Nova* November 1973, p.57-61. Carolyn Faulder, ‘Who Can Make Bad Sex Good?’ *Nova*, November 1973, pp., 83-88.

<sup>195</sup> In this issue ideal images of femininity were examined by Maggy Meade-King who took a view of beauty contests in ‘A Miss’, marking the annual Miss World contest and uncovered the other world of ‘champion beauties’ such as Miss Plumber’s Mate 1973, Miss Department of Trade and Industry and Miss Steel of Scunthorpe Maggy Meade-King, ‘A Miss’, *Nova*, November 1973 pp., 120-121.

<sup>196</sup> Prue Leith. ‘As English As...’, *Nova*, November 1973 pp., 136-139.

<sup>197</sup> Subscription Advertisement, *Nova*, December 1970, p103.

<sup>198</sup> Cooke, (2008).

The cover didn't give much away; and was deliberately provocative and looked a top shelf men's magazine with its image of a woman open lipped, bearing her breasts, naked but for the small red heart painted on her chest. (Fig. 73). Its headlines tempted the reader with the content to come, and made a small attempt to justify the visual theme: 'How Donald Zec lost his heart to the Queen Mum. How a bachelor lost his heart to a small boy. How Roamaine lost his heart to the circus. Why you may lose your heart to a total stranger.'<sup>199</sup>

Inside the feature article took another look at the developments in the technology of human transplantation in a ten-page section 'Transplants: Are our hearts in it? By Russell Miller and Fiona Grafton.'<sup>200</sup> The subject was first explored in an issue on cryogenics in January 1969.<sup>201</sup> The feature is a good example of *Nova's* editorial strategy; it included innovative design strategies, imaginative information graphics, investigative journalism, real life stories, expert opinion and clear and informative photography. The cover article opened with a double page illustration by John Bavosi which offered the reader another female nude to scrutinize - however his centre fold took the form of a medical diagram and depicted a detailed cross section of the human body indicating which body organs were transplantable and the medical developments and resulting success and failure rates of these procedures. (Fig, 74). On the following pages profiles of patient experiences were inset into an informative context of the history and future of human organ transplanting. A black and white film noir style photo story: 'Case History of a Kidney Transplant' spread across a double page varied the pace and dramatised the procedure and negotiations of a successful operation. (Fig. 75). This was followed by an opportunity for debate; Michael Bewick, a surgeon at Guy's Hospital, argued in favour of organ transplantation maintaining that even with its high failure rates experimental surgery was the future of lifesaving procedures.<sup>202</sup> In opposition, Donald Gould, medical correspondent for the *New*

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<sup>199</sup> Cover. *Nova*, August 1974

<sup>200</sup> Russell Miller and Fiona Grafton. 'Transplants: Are our hearts in it?' *Nova*, August 1974, pp., 40-49.

<sup>201</sup> The January 1969 issue looked more science fiction than fact with its cover image of a mannequin dummy laid out and half covered in foil. The headline read: 'If you want to stay alive freeze: £4000 will keep you on ice'. Inside a feature on Cryogenics investigated the facts and debates through three articles: 'This is Steven Mendell, twenty-four, dead, and trying to buy immortality' by Russell Miller. January 1969, p.26 – 9; 'Heart Transplants' by Alma Birk , p.30-32;. 'Refrigeration, maybe. Heart transplants, yes...but head transplants...? By David Tribe, p.33-35

<sup>202</sup> Michael Bewick. 'The case for transplants.' *Nova*, August 1974, p.48

*Statesman*, put forward his case against radical procedures by arguing that too much resource, energy and expertise was being diverted from developing preventative medicine and treatments which should be made more affordable to all.<sup>203</sup> This feature had a multi-layered editorial approach and varied design structure that afforded the subject full and nuanced attention and provided the reader with a wide-ranging scope of the debates and developments surrounding the issues raised.

## **Conclusion**

The reward in making raids on the real world is in the knowledge that the plunder must have some effect on public awareness ... to write and to be read, to photograph or to illustrate and to be looked at, is a privilege. Thank you.<sup>204</sup>

*Nova* was committed to opening up the lines of communication and debate for its readers. Its initial editorial aim to 'sit out the fantasy and make entertainment out of reality' would be a central objective for the duration of its publication.

This was a magazine that offered more than a service to its readers in 'bringing information back', by opening up the possibilities for new and alternative ways of living and thinking. For its readers *Nova* provided both a window onto a wider world of opportunity and possibility, and a mirror in which their attitudes, ambitions and anxieties were reflected. For some, *Nova*'s form and content proved irresistibly sophisticated and this fuelled their desires and dreams, for others it reflected their life and views and provided a consensus. *Nova*'s tone and content allowed readers to develop their interests and intellect, it challenged their views and provided a way of thinking that was relative to their own. In *Nova* these readers found a like-minded vision for their present and their futures, it shaped and defined its generation of readers.

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<sup>203</sup> Donald Gould. 'The case against transplants', *Nova*, August 1974, p. 49

<sup>204</sup> Editorial. '*Nova* for the 100<sup>th</sup> time', *Nova*, July 1973, p. 74

However, these editorial achievements were hard fought. Creative conflict defined the production of *Nova* during the decade of its publication - battled between production staff who argued the balance of image and text, and in the editorial ambitions censored and curtailed by IPC. *Nova* was provocative in editorial scope, attitude and design. In pushing the boundaries of acceptable content for a women's magazine *Nova* courted controversy, incited its publishers, and at times provoked its readers. However this effect was a measure of editorial impact in the minds of its production staff, and has secured its legacy beyond its closure.

## Conclusion

This thesis has furthered existing research in the field of magazine studies by analysing the construction, content and consumption of *Nova* magazine.

My study has charted the history of *Nova*'s production, its design process, its visual and textual qualities and its consumption by readers through the 127 issues of its publication from March 1965 – to October 1975. This history drew on information provided by; interviews with staff and the magazines' readers, circulation and distribution figures, and evidence gleaned through the trade press and contemporary newspaper reviews and criticism.

This research has analysed the magazine as a 'unified cultural artefact'<sup>1</sup> and reflected its composite nature by mapping themes and issues across a selection of magazine examples. Furthermore, this thesis has re-evaluated the relationship between magazine production and consumption by analysing the production networks involved in creating *Nova* and considering the correlation between the magazine's intended, implied and realised meanings through the study of the magazine as designed object and its consumption by readers.

### **A New Kind of Magazine for the New Kind of Woman?**

IPC's market research had identified a new target group of readers for the magazine market; women who would be identified through their attitude and interests rather than socio-economic grouping as had been previously understood. Whilst it has been agreed that such women were not new, only newly discovered, for publishers IPC this was a case of new readers with new requirements.<sup>2</sup> *Nova* offered a distinct offering to women's magazines; by adopting a more realistic attitude to contemporary social and political issues, by addressing its reader in terms of their attitudes and interests and by designing the magazine to be modern and arresting.

According to statements of editorial intent, women's horizons had changed and it was no longer necessary for a magazine to place a 'genteel filter' between a subject and its

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<sup>1</sup> Stein, 1989, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> White, 1970, p. 223.

reader.’<sup>3</sup> As I have explored, *Nova* was ‘more than a home making magazine, more than a fashion magazine’<sup>4</sup> and as such responded to a perceived gap in the women’s magazine market. *Nova*’s pre-launch publicity had identified their ideal reader as ‘a product of the changes in the material and social conventions of the post-war world’, she was a woman with ‘a wider horizon of daily living, and with a little more knowledge, a little better taste, and wider interests than ever before.’<sup>5</sup> However this ‘new kind of woman’ was harder to pin down than the promotional material had suggested, and the social permutations were seemingly diverse: she might be ‘28 or 38, single with a job, or married with children (and perhaps a job too), a girl with a university degree, or a girl who never took school seriously.’<sup>6</sup> Figures from the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising reported that the majority of *Nova*’s readers fell into the ‘A/B’ social grade category, as *Nova*’s ‘Dummy Issue’ had anticipated, and publishers and advertisers had hoped for; they were upper middle class or middle class and in the higher or intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupational category.<sup>7</sup> The female readers I interviewed represented a broader spectrum; from girls of 15 and 16 who shared their enjoyment of the magazine with their mothers (or stole furtive looks from older siblings) to undergraduate students, young housewives and unhappy wives, affluent ex-career women and successful professionals.

Whilst pre-launch publicity emphasized that *Nova*’s reader would possess both discerning taste and a disposable income, for many of the readers I spoke to *Nova*’s ‘world’ was aspirational, but readers could clearly navigate their course through its editorial and commercial terrain. In its early life *Nova* was certainly a new advertising medium, and as my study shows its large format and thick glossy pages provided the opportunity to be a photographer’s showcase.

My research also revealed the magazine’s male readership, estimated at almost a third

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<sup>3</sup> Clive Irving, “Women’s Magazines: The Thinking that is Opening up Their New Frontiers.” *The World’s Press News*, (September 17<sup>th</sup> 1965), p.12

<sup>4</sup> *Nova* Dummy Issue. Ibid

<sup>5</sup> ‘Statement of Editorial Intent’, *Nova Dummy Issue*, (George Newnes / IPC, unpublished, 1964)

<sup>6</sup> Harry Fieldhouse, “Nova: the thinking behind the novelty” *The World’s Press News*, (12<sup>th</sup> March 1965), p.44

<sup>7</sup> I.P.A. Readership Survey January-December 1967. Trevor Millum, *Images of Women: Advertising in Women’s Magazines*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1975

of its sales by industry readership surveys. Furthermore, my analysis of the magazine suggested there were many more ‘secondary’ readers at home; the ‘husbands’ and ‘fathers’ directly identified on covers, editorial and targeted by advertising and often visible on its ‘letters’ page. The male reader was welcomed by the magazine as this subscription advertisement clearly demonstrated, ‘*Nova* expands the mind of the woman with a mind of her own (and her man reads it too).’<sup>8</sup> In my findings these male readers (my Father included) were creative young men, largely drawn to the visual qualities of the magazine.

Addressing male readers was a deliberate strategy because *Nova* firstly didn’t see a difference in men’s and women’s interests, and secondly didn’t believe in isolating women’s issues. Associate Editor Alma Birk described *Nova* as ‘a general magazine with a feminine bias’ but pointed out her work was aimed at men as well because writing to women only would compartmentalize women’s interests and issues and lead them to be ‘downgraded.’<sup>9</sup>

Upon his appointment as Editor in September 1965 Dennis Hackett reinforced *Nova*’s ‘strong bi-sexual personality’ with his belief that ‘at this level there can be no distinction between editing for male and female readers’, he treated the magazine not as a women’s periodical, but instead ‘a serious magazine aiming at a high literary standard which would be acceptable to both sexes.’<sup>10</sup> However whilst the model for this ‘bi-sexual’ readership was taken on board enthusiastically by the *Nova* team, IPC management were also looking for ways to increase readership and expand advertising expenditure. A readership of both sexes may have been desirable as an editorial principle, but it meant that advertisers had trouble targeting their products to a specific audience and it became increasingly problematic for marketing to pin her (and him) down.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Never be without *Nova*.” Subscription advertisement, *Nova* (December 1969), p. 118

<sup>9</sup> Alma Birk, interviewed in Valerie Knox, “Latest Ladies of the House”, *The Times* (7<sup>th</sup> August 1967), p.9

<sup>10</sup> White, C., p. 224

<sup>11</sup> Comparable publications with a mixed gender such as *The Sunday Times Magazine* fared much better, their advertising effectively paid for the content, but delivered free within the pages of the newspaper they were not required to make substantial profit.

It could be argued that *Nova*'s early editorial content was not new; readers could have certainly found comparable cutting edge political commentary, satire and investigative journalism in for example, the *New Statesman*, *New Society* or the *Guardian*, and its first roll call of journalists could also be found writing on the pages of publications such as *Queen*, *The Times*. However *Nova*'s newness, and distinct offering, was in its combination of this editorial content set alongside a new take on mainstays of a women's magazine; cookery, fashion and beauty all packaged up in a striking new format. But this was also a measure of what *Nova* was up against; *Nova* was a luxury for thinking women who could afford to buy it and who could arguably, read newspapers and other magazines for similar editorial content. But this 'elusive combination of sense and concern with diversions and sociability',<sup>12</sup> as MP Lena Jeger described, was what readers were waiting for, and as readers expressed, why couldn't the intelligent women have an interest in both fashion and politics?

Journalist Katherine Whitehorn described *Nova* was the magazine 'for the woman who doesn't read magazines'<sup>13</sup> My readers had certainly read other magazines but demonstrated an ambivalence towards the glossy fashion formats like *Vogue* describing them as presenting an idea of a way of living and looking that was not akin to their own experience or desires. Also apparent was an outright dismissal of the women's weeklies, described as magazines that their mothers might have read. So an idea of an identification between *Nova* and its readers has clearly emerged, June Thornton for example felt she was a '*Nova* type' and articulated this clearly. This characterisation was more confidently understood than the more opaque notion of 'a new kind of woman'.

### **Editorial Contribution**

This study has shown that *Nova* provided information, debate and opinion and fuelled an awareness about what was happening in society and encouraged its readers' desires for both personal and more political change. It led by questioning convention and opened up areas of discussion for debate.

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<sup>12</sup> Jeger, 1965, p. 18

<sup>13</sup> Whitethorn, 1965, p.31

*Nova's* novelty and innovation was in its daring nature and newness, not as it was emphasized, in extravagant escapism. An emphasis on *realism* was made very early on, *Nova's* first editorial claimed: 'Our theme is that a woman's life in 1965 is more interesting and more exciting than any escapism, so let's sit out the fantasy and make our entertainment out of reality.'<sup>14</sup> I have argued that this philosophy was retained throughout the life of the magazine. *Nova's* commitment to 'making raids on the real world' was demonstrated through its focus on social and political issues and close attention to developments in science and technology. It categorised a whole range of issues as 'women's affairs' and extended the remit of women's magazine content. *Nova's* frank and provocative editorial aimed to improve communication and open up debate. For readers this provided an important source of information and inspiration. *Nova* magazine showed a way of alternatives, providing information and education on a series of issues that intimately concerned women. Its call for realism also extended to its representation of women on its pages - fashion and beauty editorial offered alternative images of women, celebrated real bodies, and unpicked images of ideal femininity circulating in contemporary visual culture. Its design drew on modernist techniques of photomontage and drew attention to the processes of image making revealing the way images are made up.

*Nova* would break down barriers and open up discussions to encompass a range of political, social and cultural debates. Oral history has shown that readers used the magazine as a consensus, a window onto a wider world, and as a means to 'move forward.'

### **Controversy and Conflict**

Creative conflict was at the heart of *Nova*, frequently fought between the editorial team and IPC management who increasingly attempted to curtail and censor content and dictate ideas about what a women's magazine should be. *Nova* wasn't afraid to tackle taboo subjects, addressing and publically exploring issues which had previously been the domain of private conversation. Its open and frank approach to matters of marriage and sex for example, encouraged discussion and debate and provided the space for readers to think, and a platform to argue and even disagree.

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<sup>14</sup> Editorial Address in *Nova*, Issue 1, (March 1965), p. 1

*Nova* led on controversial items with a science and technology interest, and attempted to bring these issues back home to their readers, but as I have shown, for IPC and indeed some readers *Nova* pushed this content outside of what was acceptable. However *Nova's* staff believed that its magazine had a vital function to play, and that it was not just the role of serious newspapers and specialist publications to provide investigative journalism and leading political commentary. Creative conflict was also a key part of driving design and content within the magazine. Arguments about the balance between word and image were fought passionately between the magazine art and features department. Gillian Cooke's interview revealed the complex processes of magazine making and the tensions, and solutions negotiated by staff. Her success in editing the magazine was to recognize its visual importance and to combine this with a more commercial minded approach. Cooke's achievement was in fostering the relationships between design and content that allowed the magazine to develop its unique balance of editorial breadth and visual excitement.

### **Designing *Nova***

*Nova's* launch objective was that the magazine would present an up to date and visually modernized format. Arguably *Nova* moved far beyond this simple remit with cutting edge graphic design, photography and fashion editorial. This was due to the successes of a production team who understood the crucial dynamic between the design of visual and editorial content. *Nova* enjoyed a distinctive visual identity and whilst this ensured its appeal on the newsstands, it also signaled issues that would arise from the prioritisation of design. For example, under Peter Crookston's Editorship the magazine was characterised by experimental typography and pages of dense text. My research has mapped the development of *Nova* through successive staff changes and provided an insight into the working practices of its production and the aims and ambitions of individual practitioners and the results of their collaboration. From its conception *Nova's* attention to the design of content on the page was prioritised and emphasised by editors who valued the role of design. As Gillian Cooke revealed, *Nova* was always a visual concept, and this commitment to design was further cemented when she appointed Art Director David Hillman to the additional role of Deputy Editor. As Editor Gillian Cooke's remit was to make the

magazine more commercially viable. Cooke bought more 'readable' words to the page by carefully considering the balance between image, text and design. Her appointment of David Hillman as Deputy Editor saw her effectively handing over some of the power in editorial decision making. Hillman would champion the idea of the image as opinion and his commissioning of illustration, information graphics and photography set the magazine apart from other women's titles. Cooke and Hillman created a magazine which was both outrageous and flamboyant, and whilst sales continued to drop an editorial focus was achieved.

### **Rethinking Fashion Editorial**

Because *Nova* was never simply a fashion magazine, its fashion editorial allowed a distinct approach and its editors were afforded the freedom to challenge the conventions of fashion editing and the way clothing was pictured on the page. Its two key editors, Molly Parkin (1965-1967) and Caroline Baker (1967-1975) were daring appointments, both were arguably inexperienced at appointment and both were issued with the same creative directive to produce 'different' fashion pages.

My analysis of Molly Parkin's fashion editorial established her practices as innovative, risk taking and cutting edge. By her own admission Parkin was never really interested in fashion and valued clothing for its formal graphic qualities. Parkin's fashion pages are defined by her trademark emphasis on colour, shape and pattern. Colour as a graphic visual element would often take priority over the content of the garments and accessories on the page. In Art Director Harri Peccinotti, Parkin found a like-minded vision, Peccinotti dismissed clothing as playing 'only an incidental role' in *Nova*'s early fashion pages and what was important for them were the visual possibilities afforded by the fashion spread. In Molly Parkin's fashion pages clothes were often subservient to the image, and as I have shown, the overall aesthetic of the spread was prioritised over a representation of the featured garments. I argue that this strategy shifts attention away from the content of the photograph towards the process of its production. Oral history accounts and documentary evidence has shown that Parkin and Peccinotti's collaboration resulted in visually innovative pages that had a direct impact on how readers would use them; pinning them up on their kitchen walls and extending them into their own collage projects.

This suggests a function of fashion editorial that moves its significance beyond the promotion of the clothing it might initially represent.

*Nova's* second Fashion Editor, Caroline Baker, was appointed by Editor Dennis Hackett with a remit to define her pages as 'different' to the offerings made by other fashion titles. I would argue that Baker continued Parkin's alternative presentation of fashion but did so because of interest and passion for clothing, and not despite it. My analysis has shown that under the direction of Caroline Baker, fashion in *Nova* became less about *what* was worn and more about *how* it was worn. Baker showed her readers how fashion could be a mannerism, and instilled in her readers the idea of a way of dressing as a means to a way of being. Baker's task of 'styling' a model through clothing, accessories, hair and makeup was critical – her pages were presented to magazine readers as a means to achieve both a complete 'look', and as a way of adding an important mark of individuality.

Baker's editorial also expressed the fun to be had in 'playing' with fashion and encouraged the creative activity of constructing different fashionable personas through the process of 'dressing up'. Collaborating with art director David Hillman and photographers such as Harri Peccinotti, Sarah Moon, Hans Feurer, and Saul Leiter, Baker produced fashion pages which were, according to Peccinotti 'almost an insult to fashion' at times. Baker was offered relative 'free reign' and her pages challenged ideal images of femininity and subverted conventional notions of good taste and sartorial commonsense. My analysis has revealed that Baker's editorial for *Nova* was consciously set against mainstream fashion, and as her interview revealed, her motivation to create an 'anti-fashion' statement was both political and aesthetic. Baker's interest in the aesthetic and practical qualities of clothing developed into a concern for the relationship between fashion and function, articulated through both word and image. My analysis of Caroline Baker's pages for *Nova* demonstrates that fashion editing is more than simply dressing a model on a page.

Both Parkin and Baker's work raised issues of the visibility and legibility of fashion photography for readers and their editors. However whilst the detail of the garments was sometimes secondary to the prioritisation of narrative and image in *Nova's*

fashion spreads, unlike Parkin's approach, Baker's attention to the details of dressing and constructing individual style was always of primary importance.

I have argued that *Nova's* fashion editorial did not only reflect the ideals of the context in which they were originally produced, but also served to present new versions of femininity and fashionable identity. As well as a continuing agenda towards the promotion of a 'natural' look, Caroline Baker produced provocative images of femininity; her depictions of models dressed up as tramps, prostitutes, refugees, strippers, and drunk party girls certainly offered a challenge to conventional images of glamour, but these images were arguably a more honest and direct acknowledgement of the seductive images of femininity that circulated through other forms of visual culture, (i.e. *Klute*, and *Belle du Jour*). This defiance of 'dolled-up' prettiness was taken up by the street style of *The Face* and *i-D*, and can be seen in the 'heroin chic' aesthetic of Corrine Day's photographs of Kate Moss styled by Melanie Ward for *Vogue* in 1993.

Parkin and Baker's 'anti-fashion' stance can also be extended to the notion that they both claim to have paid little attention to their imagined reader. Whilst I would agree that Parkin was clearly working on expressing her own personal view of how fashion could be used to generate a distinct aesthetic, Caroline Baker's editorial text offers far more appreciation for, and understanding of her readers. The women I interviewed clearly articulated the impact of Baker's fashion pages, some recalled in precise detail the particularities of specific fashion shoots. *Nova's* pages fuelled readers to experiment with their own projects both on and off the body; readers recalled how dress-making, customising clothing, and sourcing their own second hand finds was inspired by the magazine. *Nova's* fashion pages were clearly instrumental in the creation of these reader's own individual fashionable identities. David Hillman's ambition to make the magazine format 'less precious', and his active encouragement to readers to take the magazine apart through the design of pull out posters, wall friezes and flip-books, has meant that *Nova's* fashion pages have also enjoyed a second life outside of their role in presenting clothing on the page.

## Failure?

*Nova's* 'failure' must be understood in its commercial terms. The economic climate, rise in inflation, print strikes and paper prices all clearly contributed to its struggle for survival, yet other women's titles thrived, and indeed direct competition from *Cosmopolitan* would eventually seal *Nova's* fate. *Nova's* wider ranging readership and appeal to both male and female readers certainly signaled problems for advertisers who withdrew from the magazine as IPC pulled their financial and editorial support.

But *Nova's* difference and achievement, was also arguably a contributor to its failure. As Maggy Meade King reflected: 'we weren't just trying to provide this beautiful magazine, we were trying to make people think as well, and it was very unusual at the time ... we were trying to do everything at once.'<sup>15</sup>

Janice Winship suggested that an ambition to update the format of women's magazines in both visual design and editorial content was the result of the failure of *WM* (Women's Mirror). At *Nova* this ambitious intent would be successful only whilst the magazine received the financial and editorial support of its publishers; producing a glossy, visually innovative magazine was expensive, and *Nova's* price reflected this. However the magazine would never garner the circulation figures of more general titles, and with an eye on profitability IPC sought increased sales. This context was marked by shift from attracting enough advertising to fund the making of the magazine, towards a demand for the magazine to make profit. As Gillian Cooke reflected in an interview in 1975, '*Nova* is a minority magazine being sold by a company orientated to mass sales.'<sup>16</sup> Her struggle was the task of trying to sell a magazine that was determined not to be commercial. Once IPC stopped being prepared to fund the magazine and reduced its size *Nova* lost its distinction; the visual and material qualities of the magazine so clearly recalled by readers and articulated by Meade King as, the feeling of a 'luxurious product in your hands.' As she explained this was, 'part of *Nova's* problem because it depended on being this very glossy, beautifully designed thing which is an expensive thing to do.'<sup>17</sup> As budgets were cut,

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<sup>15</sup> Maggy Meade-King, 2005

<sup>16</sup> Ashley, 1975, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Maggy Meade-King, 2005

content was compromised and editorial squeezed; the issues produced in the magazine's final year of publication are a poor relation to their earlier counterparts in design and content.

I would conclude that *Nova*'s format was unsustainable in an industry catering for mass sales. Successive attempts to launch comparable modern day alternatives have also failed; *Frank* magazine for example, seemed to offer readers like myself that elusive mix of 'intelligent' reading and innovative fashion but was considered 'too edgy' and folded after two years, and the re-launched *Nova* lasted only thirteen issues.<sup>18</sup> The Sunday supplements continue to provide space for in depth articles, cultural review and political commentary and are aimed at a similarly mixed gender audience, but arguably their design and fashion pages are little more than editorial endorsements. More recent publications like *The Gentlewoman* which 'celebrates the modern woman of style and purpose' have captured the spirit of *Nova*'s innovative design and its call for realism, but these serve a niche market, and are often published biannually or quarterly.

### ***Nova*'s Legacy**

*Nova*'s editorial legacy was recognized even as soon as its closure was announced in the National press. Writing in *The Spectator* just two months before *Nova*'s final issue would hit the newsstands, Robert Ashley concluded that the magazine had made 'an enormous initial impact, and could, by any standards, be called a very important element in the creation of that odd animal, the climate of public opinion.'<sup>19</sup>

Features writer Maggie Meade King explained to me, 'I feel it was an important magazine, it had something to say at a time when people really needed a magazine with something to say. And it acknowledged that they had a life and an interest, which was not being acknowledged.'<sup>20</sup> *Nova*'s legacy for its readers has been clearly demonstrated through oral history; it educated them, challenged them, incited and inspired them and gave them courage and consensus.

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<sup>18</sup> *Frank* was published by Wagadon from 1997-1999. The re-launched *Nova* was published by IPC from March 2000 – June 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Ashley, 1975, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Maggy Meade-King, 2005

The legacy of *Nova* as a 'design classic' is recognisable and understandable within a historical and cultural context, in part cemented by IPC's failed re-launch of the title in 2000 which resulted in numerous reviews in the national news and design press lauding the innovative nature of the original publication.<sup>21</sup> *Nova* is often enthusiastically credited with marking a 'revolution' in women's magazine publishing by journalists, designers and cultural commentators. Graphic design criticism has suggested that it 'redefined the concept of the popular magazine and broke new ground in terms of concept, content and appearance.'<sup>22</sup> *Nova* has been given an important place in the pages of magazine design history, cited primarily for its formal design by William Owen for example, and as instrumental within the developmental of women's magazines by authors such as Rick Poyner.<sup>23</sup>

Digital media has changed the way we both access and understand historical magazines. *Nova* has garnered interest from a new generation of viewers who now share images via social networking sites. *Nova*'s fashion pages are currently enjoying a second life circulating in cyberspace, notably on websites such as 'Get some Vintage-a-Peel' a blog created by illustrator and late 20<sup>th</sup> century specialist Liz Eggleston and 'Sighs and Whispers' a blog by fashion historian and consultant Laura McLaws Helms. In both examples images sourced from vintage magazines such as *Nova* are scanned, uploaded and shared with users in order to pass on inspiration and activate an interest in the editors, stylists and photographers who created them.<sup>24</sup> Caroline Baker has also generated much discussion and respect from a new audience of fans on forums such as 'The Fashion Spot' and Susie Lau's influential 'Style Bubble'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See for example; M. Edmonds, 'Will the relaunch stay true to type?', *The Daily Telegraph*, Friday November 26 1999; M. Leapman, 'Reviving the free spirit of the Sixties', *The Times*, Friday November 26, 1999; C. Ellis, 'From super Nova to not so super Nova', *The Guardian*, Monday August 7 2000.; J. Fitch, 'Here comes the Supernova', *Design Week*, Vol. 15, No. 3, January 2000.

<sup>22</sup> C. Foges, *Magazine Design*, Roto Vision, 1999, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> W. Owen, *Magazine Design*, Lawrence King, 1991. Poyner, R. (1998) 'White Heat' in *Design Without Boundaries* Booth Clibbon, London

<sup>24</sup> See <http://emmapeelpants.wordpress.com/category/nova-magazine/> and <http://sighswhispers.blogspot.co.uk/>

<sup>25</sup> See <http://forums.thefashionspot.com/f71/caroline-baker-stylist-74890.html> and [http://www.stylebubble.co.uk/style\\_bubble/2007/07/page/9/](http://www.stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2007/07/page/9/)

## **Production Networks and Collaborative Practice**

My interviews with *Nova*'s staff team covered the four key areas of magazine production: Editorial, Design, Fashion, and Features. These stories provided valuable and previously untold insight into the working practices of a magazine and the particular concept, philosophy, design, and construction of *Nova*. Through oral history interviews with staff, this thesis has uncovered and analysed the collaborative networks of production at the heart of magazine making. It has responded to McRobbie's call for a study, which carefully considers the production process of magazine making to re-conceptualise 'the social relations of production and consumption.'<sup>26</sup>

Whilst *Nova* closed with its last issue in October 1975, the editorial philosophy and design ethos certainly lived on through the work of its contributing staff. For many young women beginning their careers in journalism *Nova* established their personal and professional interests. Features writer Maggie Meade King for example, developed her interest in helping families achieve a work-life balance. After leaving *Nova* she worked as a columnist for the *Guardian* and on Radio 4's *Women's Hour*.<sup>27</sup> Meade-King's experience at *Nova* was critical, as she explains: 'it's where I discovered that what I like to do is to give people a voice. And a lot of the rest of my journalism has reflected that. I like to just get inside people and let them speak, and to find a way for that to happen.'<sup>28</sup>

Gillian Cooke's interview provided crucial information about her role and responsibilities in editing the magazine from 1970-1975. Through Cooke's interview I revealed the creative conflict fought between the ambitions of *Nova*'s production staff and the more conservative and commercial concerns of its publisher IPC. Of the staff I interviewed, *Nova*'s demise appeared to affect Gillian Cooke the most. In interview she revealed it had felt like a personal failing, although through our discussions she was able to offer a series of explanations for the conditions that led to the magazines closure by IPC. However Cooke did not return to magazine journalism

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<sup>26</sup> 'Nobody, it seems has thought to study the people who put these pages together, who argue about lay-out, captions and emphasis' McRobbie, *Ibid*, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> Maggy Meade-King is Communications Manager at the charitable organization Working Families

<sup>28</sup>

and moved into charity work and youth arts organizations.<sup>29</sup> I would argue that Cooke's important achievement was in understanding that magazine editorial can be visually designed, and her commitment to science and technology led features would serve to educate and inform her readers. Outside of her own editorial accomplishments, Cooke's legacy was in supporting and mentoring young women like Maggy Meade-King into careers in journalism.

In interview Maggy Meade-King recalled that during the time of working on *Nova* they had felt like 'pioneers', forging their own paths in careers as journalists, in their living arrangements, in combining work and family and in the issues they were opening up and presenting for debate in a woman's magazine. These young women like Meade-King may have sometimes felt as if they were 'making it up' as they went along, but in doing so they provided the role models who had been absent for them.

Through my analysis of David Hillman's interview I have demonstrated how he approached the magazine as a visual concept. His discussion of specific design strategies illuminated the real and complex work of making a magazine, in particular by bringing design led solutions to textual editorial content. After *Nova's* closure David Hillman became a partner at Pentagram in 1978 and went on to provide the groundbreaking redesign of the *Guardian* in the 1980s. His lifetime of achievements in design were celebrated in 2012 when he was recognized as the D&AD's 'Most Awarded Art Director.' Hillman's design legacy is in his visual intelligence towards designing across both pictures and words.<sup>30</sup>

The in-depth series of interviews I conducted with Caroline Baker reveal the development of her role as Fashion Editor from 1967-1975 and explore her craft of styling fashion on the page. Through Baker's memories I have reconstructed the intricate work she did in designing clothing on a page and constructing evocative narratives through both image and text. After *Nova's* closure Caroline Baker was immediately offered a job on *Vogue* by Beatrix Miller to cover street fashion but this appointment was short lived due to Baker's rebellious attitude. She found more

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<sup>29</sup> Cooke did author a number of books including *The Health and Beauty Book* (London, Michell Beazley, 1979). Gillian Eeley (nee Cooke) is now the Greater London representative for NADFAS.

<sup>30</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> August 1912, D&AD (Design and Art Direction) 'Most Awarded Designer' <http://www.dandad.org/dandad/news/latest/most-awarded-designer>

exciting and creative work freelancing and helped to launch *Deluxe* and *i-D* magazines. She later worked as an assistant to Vivienne Westwood and styled her *Mud* collection and provided styling for Oliver Toscani's Bennetton campaigns. Baker returned to a permanent position on *Cosmopolitan* in the early Eighties and was confronted with a very different set of editorial practices, here she had to prioritise the reader and agree her ideas with an editorial team. She experienced far more restrictions at *Cosmo* than she had ever encountered on *Nova*, and eventually resigned due to irreconcilable creative differences.<sup>31</sup> After the birth of her daughter she returned to fashion journalism working at the *Sunday Times Magazine*, and later became Fashion Editor for *You Magazine*.

My research has also afforded *Nova*'s producers the opportunity to reflect on their contribution to magazine history and culture. For example, Caroline Baker considered the effect of her practice and reflected on her contribution to fashion editing as a result of my interest and enquiry, explaining to me modestly: 'you know, every now and again I think that probably a stylist does come out with a vision and a strength which might come from her own experience, to then inspire you to change the way you're wearing your clothing.'<sup>32</sup>

### **A Community of Readers**

*Nova* both reflected and defined the lives of its readers. Reader memories reveal a common thread: that wherever they were located, *Nova* magazine helped them to 'find themselves', it identified and crystallised changes in the experiences and expectations of these women in the Sixties and Seventies.

Despite differences in location, age, class and education readers shared a sense of enquiry, thirst for knowledge and delight in a magazine that seemed their own; relevant and relative to themselves. Many readers I interviewed felt they were, or at least aspired to be one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'. As Mary Flanagan explained: 'I hoped I was. I enjoyed my 3 children, I had improved my surroundings

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<sup>31</sup> For example, *Cosmopolitan*'s editorial team they did not consider Comme des Garcons appropriate for their readers

<sup>32</sup> Baker (2007). Since completing this thesis Caroline Baker has retired from her long standing role as Fashion Editor for the *Daily Mail*'s *You* magazine. She is now working on a book detailing her career and has invited my collaboration in analysing the history of her work.

but still wanted something more – a higher education, which I am pleased to say I eventually achieved – maybe thanks to *Nova*.<sup>33</sup> For readers *Nova* helped shape them into the women they became and clearly played a pivotal part in the constructions of their ambitions and identities. Janet Carlyle a local authority officer, was living and working in New Zealand when she started reading *Nova* at aged 18, she recalled:

The articles, artwork etc just stayed with me - I've still got most of the issues from 1972-1975 sitting on a shelf in my living room and I haven't looked at them for about 20 years but I went and had a look when I started doing this - and the most interesting thing is that they haven't dated (and) still have some relevance to me and my life. It was the most wonderful magazine and I hated it when I couldn't get it anymore.<sup>34</sup>

The process of remembering through oral history allowed the readers I interviewed an opportunity to evaluate the role *Nova* had played in their lives. As Clare Hammond considered:

I think I had quite a lot going on in my life during that period. I mean, I think that probably tied in with my reading it. It's very hard for me to say now how much influence it had on me ... I got married and it wasn't working out, and I actually packed a bag and left. Now, whether I'd have been able to do that if I hadn't had some sort of influences telling me that 'there's an alternative here, you don't have to put up with this sort of thing', I don't know. You can't really quantify it now ... It's an interesting point though, isn't it...? Do you buy these magazines because they reflect your own life or because you want to change your life and they're helping you to do so? I mean, I haven't really thought about that but there's a reason why people buy these things.<sup>35</sup>

For the readers I interviewed the magazine still carries with it a set of implicit readings, which are a memorial to a particular part of their life. *Nova* appealed to, and

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<sup>33</sup> Mrs Mary Flanagan, [Remembering \*Nova\*' Questionnaire. 2005](#)

<sup>34</sup> Janet Carlyle, [Remembering \*Nova\*' Questionnaire. 2005](#)

<sup>35</sup> Clare Hammond, 2005

helped construct, an outward looking community of readers who, whilst all distinct, were united through their use of the magazine.

*Nova* offered the reader alternative spaces to explore and a 'window onto a wider world'. *Nova's* emphasis on visual, formal and graphic elements encouraged the practice of collection and display; on a bedroom wall, on the coffee table, or cut out and pinned up in a cork board collage, this allowed a further physical relationship to the magazine for its readers.

In this study oral history has revealed the cultural and individualistic meanings an object might acquire. What has emerged through interviews with *Nova's* readers is the particularities of their ownership and possession of the magazine. In this way, oral history can uncover the emotional and sensory experience of an object that a historian might not be able to access by simply reading about, or viewing, or even handling the object themselves. Therefore I would suggest that the important relationships between the production and consumption of design can't be fully realised by looking at the object alone. *Nova's* particular design aesthetic and editorial scope has marked it out clearly in reader's memories and it has only been through these interviews that I have come to an understanding of how *Nova* was used, and what meanings and values the magazine generated in individual lives.

The act of participation in this oral history research cemented readers' status as *Nova's* 'New Women', whether recognised at the time or realised in retrospect. Furthermore, in buying and reading and often keeping *Nova*, the women I interviewed had a sense of being part of a community of others like themselves. For many women this sense of belonging has been reinforced through the process of oral history, as Sue Teddern concluded:

When you meet someone else who remembers it and loves it you do feel part of a club now, I don't think I did then, I think I was slightly in awe of it. If I had been in a room with a bunch of *Nova* readers then I would have probably said I had a headache and gone home. I would love to be in a room full of *Nova* readers now because I do feel I am part of a club, even though I'm a

slightly young member, I wonder if they were as intimidated and in awe of it as I was? I know I'm part of the gang now because I have the badge to prove it in that big dusty pile of magazines over there.<sup>36</sup>

This research has provided a unique study of the production, consumption and life cycle of a single magazine during the decade of its publication. Through my research I have also revealed the ways in which the 'meaning' of *Nova* magazine was not generated simply at the moment it was produced, circulated or read by its audience. *Nova's* meaning and value is not fixed but fluid and changeable in space and over time, the very process of remembering through oral history has highlighted the idea that the meaning of an object or experience can be revised, reconsidered and re-evaluated at different points in time during a person's life. I hope that this study contributes to this knowledge and furthers our understanding of the social, cultural and personal conditions of *Nova's* production, consumption and legacy.

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<sup>36</sup> Teddern, S. 2005.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **List of Appendices**

#### **Appendix 1: Table of Circulation**

March 1965 - October 1975

#### **Appendix 2: 'Remembering *Nova*' Questionnaires**

40 completed responses

## Appendix 1

### *Nova's* circulation figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulations, UK

March 1965- October 1975

Year	January – June	July - December
1965	152,000*	146,136
1966	159,496	147,983
1967	153,778	158,389
1968	146,315	132,614
1969	129,475	119,026
1970	115,849	110,730
1971	109,537	109,210
1972	113,320	100,095
1973	105,212	113,961
1974	91,182	84,065
1975	74,972	**

\* Publisher's Statement, no recorded ABC figures

\*\* No recorded ABC figures

159,496 (Jan – June 1966) Highest

74,972 (Jan – June 1975) Lowest

Comparative Circulations (000's)

Year	Period	Nova	Cosmo	Vogue	She	Queen
1965	Jan.-June	152,000		140,000	296,500	57,000
1965	July-Dec.	146,136		137,000	300,400	57,000
1966	Jan.-June	159,496		130,000	300,500	-
1966	July-Dec.	147,983		126,000	300,600	-
1967	Jan.-June	153,778		121,000	293,700	50,000
1967	July-Dec.	158,389		118,000	307,600	50,000
1968	Jan.-June	146,315		118,000	284,300	-
1968	July-Dec.	132,614		117,800	274,00	-
1969	Jan.-June	119,026				43,913
1970	July-Dec.	110,730			296,073	
1972	Jan.-June	113,320		109,794		
1972	July-Dec.	100,095	352,272	115,610		
1973	Jan.-June	105,212	336,413	121,731	302,820	
1973	July-Dec.	113,961	369,383	125,397	326,580	
1974	Jan.-June	91,182	394,248	123,263	321,641	
1974	July-Dec.	84,065		125,573	339,344	
1975	Jan.-June	74,972	391,189	120,942	313,247	

## **Appendix 2: Reader Questionnaires**

**Janet Carlyle**

**Local authority officer (New Zealand)**

### **Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I started reading *Nova* as an 18-year-old living and working in New Zealand when the role of women was changing significantly. At 21 I travelled overseas to London and had two children. I lived and worked in an off-licence with my partner and returned to NZ in 1974

### **When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

From 1970 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

### **What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Picked it up at a newsagent

### **How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was absolutely original and tended to show women who lived in the real world. It had clever and intelligent design, was witty and had creative art work

### **How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It contained in depth and intelligent articles on issues of the time and covered a whole range of subjects that weren't necessarily "women's issues". *Nova* treated women as human beings with a huge range of interests.

### **Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, *Nova* addressed subjects intelligently that mattered to me as a young woman trying to find herself as a feminist, wife and mother – it was the first glossy magazine that saw women in those roles and didn't see these roles as being mutually exclusive, it was never earnest or patronising.

### **Any other memories?**

The articles, artwork etc just stayed with me - I've still got most of the issues from 1972-1975 sitting on a shelf in my living room and I haven't looked at them for about 20 years but I went and had a look when I started doing this - and the most interesting thing is that they haven't dated - still have some relevance to me and my life. It was the most wonderful magazine and I hated it when I couldn't get it anymore.

**Victoria Glendinning**  
**Author**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was living in Southampton (husband's job) with four very young sons (born between 1959 and 1964). I did a diploma in social admin. At the university there, did part-time psychiatric social work, wrote my first book 'A Suppressed Cry', went to live in Ireland in 1970 (husband's job again).

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1967 – 1970, 4 –6 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Can't remember. Just bought it I suppose

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Not that much different, nice and glossy.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

Far less silly, more provocative and interesting and intelligent.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I wasn't self conscious enough to feel I was anything in particular. But I liked the magazine.

**Any other memories?**

The first time I ever appeared in print was in *Nova*: I sent in an article for the 'Backbite' feature on the last page, about why women like me kept on having more babies (got the kit, easier than thinking of something else to do) and they took it. I walked on air for days.

**Ms Sue Teddern**  
**Writer**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I think I was living with my parents for most of this period, then moved into a shared house in about 1975

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1970 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I must have seen someone else's. It was very cool to carry one around with you at college - I studied design & display in Watford (not exactly the cutting edge of hipness!)

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

The look, the features, the photos, the fashion... everything! You almost knew at the time that it would never date. And it hasn't.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It was definitely different. I was a very naive teenager so this was where I learned a lot about life, sex, women's issues and Peruvian tank tops.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Probably a bit too young but I so wanted to be!! I read and loved Honey too. But *Nova* was so much more grown-up and less fluffy.

**Any other memories?**

Just the excitement of buying it and flicking through it the first time. I still have a big pile, including those sad, smaller final issues. It made me want to be a magazine journalist - which I was. But too late for *Nova*...

**Ms Yvonne Roberts**  
**Journalist and novelist**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

At school and university then working on a local paper then in current affairs television covering the Middle East

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I saw it in a newsagent - I still have a few copies and they still look fresh in content

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

(I think) Woman's Mirror had tried a similar approach either after or before - *Nova* picked up and expanded on magazines like Honey - it was big and bold and striking and looked beautiful as well as expecting its readers to have a brain. It played to women's strengths - but it also provided information, which fuelled a sense of vigilance about what was happening to girls and women in society - but without the tone of victimhood or isolation. These were articles about individual problems - these were issues about which something could be done e.g. the early sexualisation of childhood; the poverty of women after divorce; the absence of equal pay; the tyranny of housework

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

All of the above - but it was like a glossy New Society - it sensed where and when and how society was changing but it also behaved as if there was as much difference between women and between men as between the genders. I also wrote for it - men in make up!

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova's* 'new kinds of women'?**

No - we were very different from our mothers - but that didn't make us a *Nova* woman - *Nova* reflected who were already shaping up to be

**Any other memories?**

It had some of the best writers around - wonderful covers and it went against the grain e.g. giving the cover to a pregnant woman who had several children and loved it. It was also - a failing - incredibly middle class of a certain type and white.

**Ms Susan Holder**  
**Mature Student**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was at school and college – then work

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1969, 7 – 9 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

As a new magazine

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It looked stunning, different, controversial, pushing the boundaries

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It seemed in tune with me and the times. Articles good, thoughtful, socially aware, like BBC documentaries and Sunday Times in style. Meaty, challenging

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes

**Any other memories?**

I tend to remember it more visually. I loved the fashion photography and often put pictures on my wall. But I can't really remember when I started to read it or when I stopped.

**Ms Robyn Daw**  
**Manager, Education (Australia)**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was going to high school, living in suburban Melbourne with my parents and older sister.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* in 1971 and 1972, up to 3 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

My sister had just left school and was attending a business college in the city where she met some very cool friends – they shopped at ‘The Inn Shoppe’ and ‘House of Merivale and Mr John’, had older brothers, were into the most amazing music and were terribly glamorous and chic. They didn’t read ‘Dolly’ or ascribe to any of those ideals. As part of my sister’s makeover from suburban girl into a fashionable 70s princess she brought home some very groovy magazines – *Nova* among them. (Pol and the first Australian Cosmo being others) Of course, being the precocious younger sister, I stole a look at *Nova* whenever I could. My sister always said ‘they’re too grown up for you, you wouldn’t be interested’. That only made it more exciting.

**How was *Nova* different visually and editorially?**

Everything about it screamed of difference, from the photography, design and fashion to the language used and the places and people depicted. It just seemed so exotically wonderful to a 13 year old girl in the ‘burbs with limited experience, that I am sure it had an impact on how I began to view the world.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*’s ‘new kinds of women’?**

I was a bit young to think of myself as any kind of woman, but even now, I recall the impact of seeing how different things could be, and how one needn’t have to ‘conform’ to the white bread image that surrounded me that everyone seemed to adopt without question. I guess, having the beginnings of a rebellious streak, *Nova* just pushed it a bit further.

**Any other memories?**

That it somehow felt naughty reading it.

**Ms Liz Willis**  
**Training Consultant**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was in my final years at school (living at home with parents in St Albans) and then an art student at various art schools in London and Oxford.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1968 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Saw it in a shop and immediately liked it. After that, bought it every month, despite being on a student grant. I was devastated when it folded.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was TOTALLY different to other magazines. Bigger. Very classy photos, clean layout, empty spaces, clean fonts, big spaces - very tasteful. Gorgeous fashion photos - close link with Biba. It was also sensually attractive - the magazines were physically gorgeous. I loved them!

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It was VERY different. Tackled real issues in a serious way. Didn't trivialise or patronise the reader. Way ahead of its time. I still have old copies and am amazed at how the articles are still relevant today. All considered a bit racy at the time!

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Definitely - YES! Because I thought of myself as being an independent, modern, intelligent, arty, slightly avant-garde, forthright young woman.

**Any other memories?**

I still have some copies and also donated some other copies to your archives a while ago. Friends of my age still talk about it - rather as if it was a club: 'Do you remember *Nova*?' followed by a knowing look and a sigh if the answer is 'Yes'. Can it be revived please!

**Ms Jean Burrell**  
**Retired lecturer**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I moved to Oxford from London in 1965 and my second child born was born in 1967. I working as a freelance editor for Penguin. I started a playgroup in 1968 and began teaching part time in further education in 1972 and in 1975 I got a job at Oxford Poly.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1970 – 1975, 4 – 6 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Seeing it on magazine shelves

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Covers, general layout more sophisticated, modern

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

More serious, in-depth treatment of issues

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, we wanted to assert ourselves as intellectually equal to men - able to form independent views - to combat prevailing view of women as 'fluffy', unserious

**Ms Jane Muir**  
**Manager (Australia)**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

Living in London

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* in 1974, about 3 times

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

A Frank Muir article by Virginia 'someone'

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was stylish, Avant-garde, captivating

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It was strong, and had something to say

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes - feminist but still feminine

**Any other memories?**

A great writer called Virginia someone or other

**Ms Deborah Jaffe**  
**Author**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was a teenager living in Rochdale and desperate to leave a declining industrial town to go to art school.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1969, 7 – 9 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I was 13 when my mother bought the first copy. She was very excited by it. *Nova* became a byword for excitement and sophistication.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

*Nova* became a byword for excitement and sophistication, being new women...it was about London, the great metropolis that we wanted to be part of. A visual feast. My mother read no other women's magazines and looked on the majority of them with disdain. It was something we were part of together.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It was thick, glossy, colour. Great photographs of fashion...Mary Quant, Twiggy etc. Articles on the pill, sex, being fat, the 60s..being independent women. It shocked and we liked that because we were surrounded by unhappy 'Stepford Wives' and their daughters, which neither of us wanted to be part of.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I hoped I would aspire to that and I think I have.

**Any other memories?**

It was great, glamorous and thought provoking and no other magazine has replicated it.

**Mrs Sue Matthews**  
**Admin Manager**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I lived at home, secretarial college, commuting to London to work, parties, got engaged, married, own house and had two children

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1966 – 1970, 10-12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I can't really remember - give me a while, I'm older now

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was so 'now'

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It appealed to my age and aspirations and intelligence

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, Young, fashionable, liberated - at least until I got married

**Any other memories?**

Irma Kurtz. There was always a good poem

**Mrs Mary Rayner  
PA and Complementary Therapist**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

From 1965 to 1968 I was a fancy-free sociology undergraduate. From 1968 to 1973 I graduated, married, had two babies, joined the Civil Service and bought a house.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* 1968 – 1975, off and on 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I was a student, but with a tremendous interest in “the glossies” (I had done fashion design and drawing as part of my art “A” level). It was a joy to find a new magazine that was so much in tune with my generation.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Exciting and fairly innovative.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It felt so relevant to women of my age and generation, and also fed our fantasies and aspirations. Sex was not a taboo subject, nor was female ambition and we were allowed to laugh at ourselves and the world.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s ‘new kinds of women’?**

Oh yes!! I was young, I was at university studying trendy sociology. That university was Hull – very much in the forefront of student rebellion (not just the LSE!!). I got pregnant whilst an unmarried undergraduate, actually had the baby and got my honours degree at the same time (in the teeth of bitter condemnation by the older generation and the establishment in a way which now seems almost laughable!!). I loved clothes and bought Biba in the good times and designed and made my own in the bad times. I even did a spot of modelling and tried (and failed!) to get into advertising.

**Any other memories?**

I think my main memory is of excitement. It was a marvellous time to be young and *Nova* seemed to accentuate all those amazing experiences and feelings.

**Mrs Margaret Flanagan**  
**Retired**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

Until 1967 I and my family lived in an area St Annes, Nottingham, above a Newsagents and general store, all of which was destined for demolition. From June of that year we moved to my present address, at Mapperly.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Being involved with a newsagents I had opportunity to riffle through a huge selection of magazines. My leisure time was limited allowed me to read certain favourites from cover to cover, but many I felt were vacuous until *Nova* came along.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

The title and everything about *Nova* was not only more imaginative but the claim by Newness that it was for the new woman designated intelligent, and educated and not entirely wishing to concentrate on domestic trivia.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

*Nova* alerted me to an independent outlook. I had not seen any other magazine whose thinking was relative to mine. This is my recall off the cuff. It is such a long time ago but I would like to research it as I have various other magazines.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I hoped I was. I enjoyed my 3 children, had improved my surroundings but still wanted something more – a higher education, which I am pleased to say I eventually achieved – maybe thanks to *Nova*

**Any other memories?**

It didn't use euphemisms for words that had not been seen in print before.

**Mrs Jane Thomas**  
**Retired**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was living in Kew and then Richmond, being a housewife and completing a family of four children. After 1969 I did lots of voluntary work in Richmond – I was founding member of local MIND campaign, Gen. Sec Richmond Council for Voluntary Service.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Word of mouth among friends

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was ravishingly NEW in all respects

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

We used to joke that the next issue would contain a piece on 'HOW TO LAY OUT YOUR DEAD MOTHER'.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes. Educated ex-career women like me were busy reforming our society. I had founded the campaign for 'Mothers in Hospital with their sick children'-NAWCH which had been won by '75, Bella Tutaev had started her campaign for pre-school playgroups, Sonia Willington had founded AIMS to reform the maternity services, Erin Pizzey had started Chiswick Womens' Aid. *NOVA* was like an 'in house' magazine for us.

**Any other memories?**

Only how much I looked forward to it every month and how much I missed it when it folded: something I never understood at the time and only remember being too busy to find out. By 1979 when I went back to work in journalism I would have been more aware.

**Mr Michael Desmond**  
**Curator (Australia)**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was a school student, then university student then art school student

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1967 – 1970 about 4 – 6 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I purchased it at local news agency in Canberra

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

*Nova* stood out by virtue of design and adventurous use of photography. I.e. fashion shots challenging rather than standard. It had a unique 'look'.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It had a hip and modern approach to stories in tandem with the visual approach. Good to be current, but fair to say mostly visuals interested me.

**Did you feel the magazine addressed you as a male reader?**

It was more inclusive than the customary women's magazine fare – mostly I think because it was contemporary and issue based more than just fashion. Inclusive generationally as well as current and of the moment. Not quite Oz magazine with higher production values but offered a contemporary cosmopolitan view of the late 60s/early70s period

**Any other memories?**

The feature on the creation of a centrefold (revealing how artificial the process and product was) stays in my mind.

**Miss Hanan Babiker**  
**Social worker**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was born in Sudan (Africa) and during this time I studied at school.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1973 – 1974, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

In my view a every year *Nova* women's magazines was different, design and fashion.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

I think fashion

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, indeed, I came from Africa, I have my one fashion and I still I'm wearing it.

**Any other memories?**

I have many memories of *Nova* magazine, for example the fashion and design.

**Miranda Morris**  
**PhD student, University of Tasmania (Australia)**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was living at home with my parents in Berne, Switzerland in 1969 (and studying fashion design), I then moved to UK- High mobility! I shared houses with students. I worked as receptionist in travel agency and wine firm, a chamber-maid, temped, I was most engaged as play leader on adventure playgrounds in Islington. I was politically engaged in anti- apartheid, peace and street theatre. In 1973 I left the UK on motorbike & came to Tasmania, went to Art School and worked for Youth Theatre

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

From 1969 – 1973, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Somebody's au pair brought a copy back from England

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was VERY different - sumptuous and bold. Great graphics. By the time I got to see it other magazines were taking up the challenge.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

The range and depth of articles is what I most remember. Very creative, both topical and innovative - and great integrated graphic/punchy style. It was both entertaining and mind broadening.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I never felt elegant - and *Nova* woman was - however outrageous. But I felt that it opened up scope for women as thinking beings unchained from sink etc. My mother was reading Nursery World and Woman's Journal.

**Any other memories?**

I especially remember a number with portraits of well-known people as they would look in old-age (now I guess).

**Ms Maggie Greaves**  
**Retired**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was a social worker in Dagenham in 1965 the year I got married. In 1966 I went to Boston, US with my husband. Our daughter was born there and we returned in late 1967. I spent the following years at home with three children. I was involved in many community projects and at the end of that time in women's groups like the NCT spin offs, Housewives register etc.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* in 1965, 1969 – 1970, about 4 – 6 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

The first edition was eagerly awaited - I think they must have run an extensive pre-publication campaign. I couldn't wait to buy the first edition, which I kept for ages.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

The cover was very simple and the layout was very elegant and modern. It tried rather too hard at times and could look a bit gimmicky for the sake of it I think. But I enjoyed being seen reading it on the train.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

There was just so much more to READ in it than other magazines.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I WANTED to be one of these new women! Whether I was one or not I'm really not sure! I was 24 when it came out so probably part of their target market, but I was very hard up and magazines really were a bit of a luxury - I think they had a market in mind that had more money, not penniless social workers? By the time I had children, I think I was even less one of their women.

**Any other memories?**

My recollection is that it lost its way a bit towards the end of its life, but I also remember clearly when it stopped publishing, feeling sorry that it hadn't been able to find a permanent niche. Good Housekeeping certainly didn't cut it and there wasn't much other competition!

**Ms Jeannie Davidson**  
**Childcare consultant**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

From 1965-66 I was in my last year at school then I had 2 years at university before joining massed ranks of dropouts? From 1968-1973- loads of different jobs, some good, some awful, and I did a bit of travelling.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1970 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I can't remember

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was completely different- hard-hitting, complete move away from cheery 60's 'Georgy Girl' image of Honey magazine (another iconic publication for me). It had great fashion and innovative photography, and I didn't feel I was being stereotyped.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

There were loads of thought provoking articles beyond cookery and clothes.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I never fitted the 60's image of the wispy blonde (Marianne Faithful) and was much more of an Anita Pallenberg fan - she had a bit of zip and funkiness that I related to much more, so the images in *Nova* were much more reflective of where I was (even although I sometimes wondered where I was in my early mothering days (1975 onwards).

**Any other memories?**

Just that there simply hasn't been another magazine like it... ever... since, and even my son's partner at 35 has never found anything like it. It had the full range of issues for me, from how perms worked (and loads of us had the in those days) to what was happening across the world. And I remember some of the fashion images to this day.

**Janet Carlyle**  
**Local authority officer (New Zealand)**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I started reading *Nova* as an 18-year-old living and working in New Zealand when the role of women was changing significantly. At 21 I travelled overseas to London and had two children. I lived and worked in an off-licence with my partner and returned to NZ in 1974

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

From 1970 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Picked it up at a newsagent

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was absolutely original and tended to show women who lived in the real world. It had clever and intelligent design, was witty and had creative art work

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It contained in depth and intelligent articles on issues of the time and covered a whole range of subjects that weren't necessarily "women's issues". *Nova* treated women as human beings with a huge range of interests.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, *Nova* addressed subjects intelligently that mattered to me as a young woman trying to find herself as a feminist, wife and mother – it was the first glossy magazine that saw women in those roles and didn't see these roles as being mutually exclusive, it was never earnest or patronising.

**Any other memories?**

The articles, artwork etc just stayed with me - I've still got most of the issues from 1972-1975 sitting on a shelf in my living room and I haven't looked at them for about 20 years but I went and had a look when I started doing this - and the most interesting thing is that they haven't dated - still have some relevance to me and my life. It was the most wonderful magazine and I hated it when I couldn't get it anymore.

**Dr Cynthia White**  
**Retired academic and author**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1969, 10-12 times a year

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was living in London researching the first history of British Women's Magazines.

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Interviewing Publisher/Editor of Magazine and analysing magazine content

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Visually very different, cover, lots of white space, realism, progressive artwork.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

Challenging features which departed totally from the previous formulaic content of women's magazines. (See my book "Women's Magazines 1693-1968; a sociological study" for more detail.)

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes - making a career, not married, no children, interested in politics and social issues rather than an un-relived diet of Furnishing, Fiction, Fashion, Food.

**Any other memories?**

I was very aware of the controversy surrounding the magazine, and the challenge it represented to orthodox women's journalism. It was also beautifully produced and interesting to flip through as well as to read. Its large page format was arresting. But it went through a period of decline and became quite thin as it battled for circulation. Advertising revenue was critical and this depended on building a strong reader base - not easy in the early-to late 60s with an entirely new publishing concept, which was arguably somewhat ahead of its time. Woman's Mirror which tried to reinvent itself on realism failed miserably.

**Dr Catherine Horwood**  
**Academic**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was living with my parents until I married in 1968 during which time I was studying at school. Then while I was married (1968-69) I was working.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1970, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Buying the first issue in 1965 and realising it was so different to anything I had seen before. It wasn't just for young people - it was for women. My mother who was 50 in 1965 was just as much of a fan as I was aged 15.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Exceptionally different. There seemed to be nothing between the 'Schoolgirl / Bunty' type and *Vogue*. The look was so dramatic that one wanted to pin it up around your room and yet it seem sacrilegious to tear anything out of the magazine. Instead we kept them almost religiously in piles because we sensed that artistically they were something very special.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It was just so different to anything else available. It was intelligent, didn't talk down to us, not afraid to tackle issues that weren't strictly 'female' which was radical journalism at that time when we spoon-feed a diet of recipes and 'looking good for your husband' type articles.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Definitely. I was 15 when it first came out, living in London and I certainly felt that to be part of the Swinging London scene I had to read '*Nova*'.

**Any other memories?**

My main memory is how it crossed generations of women. Both my mother and I fell upon it every month, and in her fifties, it was my mother who religiously kept every issue for years because she knew it was something special.

**Clare Hammond**  
**Adult Education Tutor/ part time**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

From a bookstall. I was attracted by its cover and maybe a friend had recommended it.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

The cover

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

In its coverage of alternative lifestyles of young women. It had a rather refreshing, rebellious stance. It was also fairly explicit coverage of sexual matters.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes. Or at least I aspired to be. The new feeling of freedom to do what I wanted - nothing "ruled out" for discussion.

**Anonymous 1**  
**Artist**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965-1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

Can't remember

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Very stylish. I remember an artist who drew in very hard pencil so that the images were indistinguishable from photographs, which were used as fashion shoots.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

As far as I can remember they seemed to fit what I was thinking about.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, I was young, interested in fashion, living an alternative life style, trying things out, not fitting established moulds.

**Any other memories?**

I have them confused in my head with Biba catalogues....

## **Anonymous 2**

### **Retired Physiotherapist / Administrator**

#### **When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1970 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

#### **What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

My sister in law introduced it to me on my return to UK

#### **How was *Nova* different visually?**

Exceptionally good covers - I still remember some of them. Good fashion - it was still relevant to me then! Articles that presumed you had a brain and used it and were not dumbing down.

And, yes, some very good recipes - some of which are still in my repertoire.

#### **How was *Nova* different editorially?**

Refreshing and stimulating stuff. I did not agree with all its opinions, of course, but I read and thought about the themes.

#### **Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Though probably older than the target readership, I still felt it was for me - neither mumsy or excluding. And I felt I was living a have-it-all, do-it-all life, quite different from my mother's generation.

#### **Any other memories?**

I remember being upset when it became clear that the format was not as successfully commercially as we had hoped. And I did not like the new, tabloid look - too many compromises.

### **Anonymous 3**

#### **Retired solicitor and deputy district Judge**

##### **When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

##### **What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I picked it up at Euston station newsagent, as far as I recall, on the journey to/from work commuting Hemel Hempstead to London '67 - '69

##### **How was *Nova* different visually?**

It had a striking size, layout & design and bold and simple covers, as I recall

##### **How was *Nova* different editorially?**

I can't remember details, save that I found it interesting; much more so than the then available traditional women's magazines - *Nova* felt relevant to my life, whereas they echoed my mother's very different life-style and priorities. I was sorry when it ceased publication

##### **Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, my generation were breaking the mould. Also, I was exceptional in that I carried on working after my children were born. Even most of my contemporaries had to give up (no statutory rights) but I had a contractual right to return to work (4 weeks after birth!). Even my elder sisters were more traditional in their life patterns. I felt *Nova* was for women like me; new interests combined with domestic responsibilities and still traditional occupations (cooking and knitting, but more interesting / stylish!).

##### **Any other memories?**

I still have the striped, ribbed jumper and matching socks made from a pattern in the magazine, I believe, somewhere in my attic (I've lived here for 30 years!) although I believe I threw away my old copies of *Nova* during an untypical clearing-out session many years ago. I would like to be able to see copies of the original magazine again. I bought some of the new version recently, but it was not for me, probably because I have long since moved on from women's magazine of all descriptions, and the new '*Nova*' was no doubt aiming at younger women than me.

**Anonymous 4**  
**Lecturer in Higher Education**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1975, 7 –9 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I was 12, at a traditional grammar school in 1965 and can remember the excitement and 'newness' of it through the reaction of my Mother. It was considered a bit 'boho' and very exciting. I thought it was exciting. I remember my mother leaving it for my cousin who was babysitting for us. He was probably interested in the photos of women, but also its newness and difference. I was intrigued, by the kinds of lives represented in its pages.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Very different -beautifully produced images that didn't seem to be excluding of me. It seemed to represent the promise of the Sixties, the (supposed) egalitarian future.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

I can't remember very clearly, but I know mum wouldn't have bought it unless it was a good read. Her favourite pastime was to have her nose in a book. I remember Molly Parkin as associated with it.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I hoped I would be, but it was difficult to feel this 8 miles from the nearest town and 30 or 40 from the nearest big city. It's a state I would have aspired to and helped my development as a feminist.

**Any other memories?**

Memories of the photography and typography are uppermost, but I must have enjoyed reading the articles too. Most of all it's the buzz that it seemed to produce in my mother that I remember, particularly since she died 10 years ago this year.

**Anonymous 5**  
**Hair Stylist**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1967 –1975, 10 –12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

In the Salon- we had a selection of magazines delivered every two weeks.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Photography was such a new look and the model's poses unconventional.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It was much more controversial than other magazines of the same quality.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Cannot say that I did, but it helped me approach some topics that I might not have discussed before.

**Any other memories?**

The fashion was great and affordable.

**Anonymous 6**  
**Academic**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1970, 7-9 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I remember the launch, and bought the first issue.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Absolutely different -very 'new' covers, typography, design, photography, colour. I seem to remember the size was different as well.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

*Nova* addressed to younger women, or proto-feminists, sometimes serious but never po-faced. I particularly remember agony aunt Irma Kurtz. Read Spare Rib in later years, but remember *Nova* as more exciting, more 'me'.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Definitely, or rather I wanted to be. It was aspirational. I definitely felt 'cutting edge' as a regular reader.

**Any other memories?**

I remember reading it in hospital (I was in for months because of a road accident!) and it was just out then. In later years I took out a subscription. I used to keep the issues and look at them from time to time. What happened to them? Probably got thrown out when marriage fell apart.

**Anonymous 7**  
**University Lecturer**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1970, 7 – 9 times a year

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was significantly different

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

Fairly different

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, to some extent - felt it related to me / my generation / my subculture to some degree and in a way that other women's magazines didn't at all.

**Any other memories?**

Just that I was sorry when it was no longer around

**Anonymous 8**  
**Director / Writer for Domestic Theatre**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1970, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

My mother subscribed to it or rather the paperboy delivered it - we were at least 2 miles from the shops.

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was visually exciting, photos by David Bailey, interviews with writers, actors, pop stars. Easy to read because of large format.

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

Seemed to be politically daring though I can't remember precisely how.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I was young - only 13 in 1965, but to be a *Nova* woman was what I aspired to be.

**Any other memories?**

I wish I had kept it!

**Anonymous 9**  
**Arts Funding Director**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1975, 4 – 6 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I can't remember - newsstand?

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

Bolder, more radical, challenging

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

Vividly remember a blasé article by a father about his recognition that his daughter was having sex with her boyfriend; my own family shocked by this outspokenness (realise now this as much to do with class as with liberation)

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

Yes, a little - the pill, fashion but also felt it was rather posher than my milieu

**Any other memories?**

I think there were some serious political issues, which made it, feel as if it was ok for women to be politics & fashion-conscious at the same time

**Anonymous 10**  
**Retired Secretary**

**Where were you living and what were you doing from 1965-1975**

I was living in a bed-sit in Streatham.

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

I read *Nova* from 1965 – 1970, 7 – 9 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I bought the first issue in Streatham W. H. Smiths and was hooked. How I wish I had kept those early issues!

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

It was a totally new magazine - true to the title. All the other 'women's mags' were full of beauty hints, recipes, gossip - like the ones so popular today. I was shattered to hear of it closing, although I have to admit that after marrying and living in a real house, and then having two children I turned to Good Housekeeping because I had to learn different skills, so somehow I didn't have time for *Nova*.

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

No

**Any other memories?**

I can only remember two friends who read the magazine, and that after much thought. One moved abroad, and the other, well, we exchange Xmas cards.

**Anonymous 11**  
**Retired lecturer**

**When did you read *Nova* and how often?**

From 1968 – 1975, 10 – 12 times a year

**What was your first introduction to *Nova*?**

I saw it in the newsagent's

**How was *Nova* different visually?**

It was visually striking, with arresting new ways of photographing women

**How was *Nova* different editorially?**

There were lots of new ideas in the content, examining things that weren't discussed in ordinary magazines

**Did you feel you were one of *Nova*'s 'new kinds of women'?**

I didn't look like one, I was too poor and too provincial but I felt in tune with the intellectual approach

**Any other memories?**

I particularly remember an extraordinary article on incest, a taboo subject at the time; and some ultra-realist fashion shots, which I would now think exploitative. I remember going into the newsagent and saying, I want to cancel *Nova* and order the Beano. She said, 'there's a story in there somewhere'.