

TRAVELLING TO TOMORROW:
AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN THE UNITED
STATES, 1910–1960

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THESIS CERTIFICATION

I declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of History at the Australian National University, is wholly my own original work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged and has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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February 2016

ABSTRACT

'I always find a visit to the United States exhilarating,' wrote Dorothy Jenner in her autobiography. 'They are light years ahead of us, sometimes on the wrong foot, but more often on the right one.' For this Sydney-born actress and journalist, who visited America on five occasions between 1915 and 1967, venturing across the Pacific was not just a physical journey but an exercise in time travel, an opportunity to launch herself into a new and better world to come. An unorthodox but far from unique figure, Jenner was one of thousands of twentieth-century Australian women who headed abroad in search of wider horizons but chose to deviate from the well-worn path to London. Travelling instead to the United States, they pursued study, work and adventure in a nation that many, like Jenner, saw as charging ahead along an imagined highway into the future.

This thesis tells the story of these transnational Australians and positions them as actors in the development of Australian-US relations. Drawing upon correspondence, diaries, oral history, periodicals, travel writing and institutional archives, it argues that such travellers were among the greatest beneficiaries and most zealous agents of Australian engagement with the United States throughout the first half of the twentieth century. During an era in which few Australians moved outside the British world, America's modernity—and, in particular, its modern gender relations—drew career-minded women to its shores and offered them persuasive evidence that the American model was worthy of emulation. Part of a growing body of scholarship concerned with Australia's engagements with the Asia-Pacific region, these findings illuminate the density of transpacific ties during an era of sustained imperial sentiment, and point to a significant but little recognised gendered dimension to the turn towards the United States. At the same time, this research speaks to the emergent reorientation of transnational American history towards the Pacific world, demonstrating that the US-Asian connections highlighted in recent scholarship were accompanied by myriad interactions with the Antipodes.

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This thesis, and the debts it has incurred, date back to an email sent in August 2009. Midway through my Honours year at the University of Melbourne, I contacted Angela Woollacott about the prospect of applying for a Summer Research Scholarship at the ANU. When she replied at length only hours later, full of enthusiasm for my professed interest in transnational women, it was clear I had found a supervisor with a difference. In the years since, that initial assessment has been more than validated. Angela displays an astonishing level of care for her students. She gave me hours of her time that first summer, stayed in contact while I completed a Masters in London, and enticed me back to Canberra for a PhD. From her forensic examination of drafts and quick response to emails, to her willingness to linger over coffee and host annual Christmas celebrations, Angela has guided my development as a historian with unfailing dedication and kindness. Her intellect is fearsome, but just as impressive are her generosity, tact, rigour and industry. She manages the academic juggling act with unusual grace, remaining committed to teaching, supervision and service alongside the demands of research and administration. It has been a privilege to work alongside such an eminent and well-rounded scholar, and learn my trade from among the best in the business. Thank you.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAUW	American Association of University Women
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AFUW	Australian Federation of University Women
ANZUS	Australian, New Zealand and the United States
AWRF	Anzac War Relief Fund
CCNY	Carnegie Corporation of New York
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSL	Graduate School of Librarianship
JCW	J. C. Williamson
KTC	Kindergarten Training College
LAA	Library Association of Australia
MBE	Member of the British Empire
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NFSA	National Film and Sound Archive
NGV	National Gallery of Victoria
NLA	National Library of Victoria
NYPL	New York Public Library
OCR	Optical Character Recognition
PLNSW	Public Library of New South Wales
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales
SLV	State Library of Victoria
SLWA	State Library of Western Australia
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USC	University of Southern California
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force

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INTRODUCTION

Light Years Ahead

Dorothy Jenner traversed the Pacific five times during her career. Born to New South Wales station manager William Gordon and his wife Dora in 1891, she spent most of her childhood in Sydney but soon found the harbour metropolis too ‘colonial’ for her taste.¹ After a stint in London in the early 1910s, Jenner set her sights on a Hollywood career and sailed to San Francisco on the *Niagara* in 1915. She resided in California for the following decade, where she found and discarded two husbands, though stardom remained elusive. By 1925 her reduced finances necessitated a return to Australia, where she went on to pursue a successful career in journalism and broadcasting under the pseudonym ‘Andrea’. Yet she retained a lifelong affection for the United States. Jenner returned for lengthy visits in 1934, 1947, 1960 and 1967, and her autobiography, *Darlings, I’ve had a Ball*, stressed how ‘exhilarating’ she found the nation and its people. ‘They are light years ahead of us,’ she wrote. ‘Sometimes on the wrong foot, but more often on the right one.’²

For this modern Australian woman, venturing across the Pacific was not just a physical journey but an exercise in time travel, an opportunity to launch herself into the world to come. Although the fledgling Antipodean nation had pioneered progressive reforms in the years around Federation, Australia’s moment as a global trailblazer was not destined to last. By the time Jenner set sail in 1915, these reforming impulses had already begun to dissipate, and throughout the decades that followed America appeared to be well and truly charging ahead. New York was at once fourteen hours behind Sydney, and ‘light years’ into the future.

¹ Dorothy Gordon Jenner, *Darlings, I’ve Had a Ball* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1975), 41.

² *Ibid.*, 242.



*Figure 1: Dorothy Jenner (far right) 'having a ball' in 1945.
State Library of Victoria (SLV), H98.103/3518.*

Jenner was a woman at once typical and uncharacteristic of the society in which she came of age. Her decision to travel abroad in search of wider horizons was one shared by thousands of her contemporaries, both men and women, many of whom were driven by a desire to escape what was regarded as a provincial outpost of the civilised world.³ Women in particular departed in surprising numbers, an exodus historians have attributed to the pervasive masculinism of

³ The literature on Australian travel and expatriation is increasingly vast. Some key studies include Charles Higham and Michael Wilding, eds., *Australians Abroad: An Anthology* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1967); Ros Pesman, David Walker, and Richard White, eds., *The Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996); Ian Britain, *Once an Australian: Journeys with Barry Humphries, Clive James, Germaine Greer and Robert Hughes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Stephen Alomes, *When London Calls: The Expatriation of Australian Creative Artists to London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Andrew Hassam, *Through Australian Eyes: Colonial Perceptions of Imperial Britain* (Carlton South, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2000); Richard White, "Cooees across the Strand: Australian Travellers in London and the Performance of National Identity," *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116 (2001): 109–27; Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford, and David Dunstan, eds., *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009); Peter Morton, *Lusting for London: Australian Expatriate Writers at the Hub of Empire, 1870–1950* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Bruce Bennett and Anne Pender, *From a Distant Shore: Australian Writers in Britain, 1820–2012* (Clayton, Vic: Monash University Publishing, 2013).

Australian society.⁴ Yet the vast majority of these colonial globetrotters confined themselves to the well-worn path to the metropole. Jenner and her peers had been raised in a society that modelled itself on Britain, where the young were nourished on Shakespeare and Dickens and learnt to trace the geography of London. When they imagined a larger world, their thoughts flew across the Indian Ocean towards Europe. As Melbourne playwright Doris Hayball noted as late as 1940, ‘all good Australians hope to go to London before they die.’⁵ Preoccupied with dreams of the ‘Mother Country’, few paused to remember the hub of industry and innovation on the other side of the Pacific.

By including the United States in her travels, Jenner set herself apart. In 1915, the year she sailed for San Francisco, less than seven hundred Australian women made the same journey, whereas nearly four thousand headed to Britain. This disparity only increased during the decades that followed. Yet Jenner was also far from alone in choosing to cross the Pacific. In 1920, the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics reported that a thousand women had departed for America during the previous twelve months, a figure that remained steady over the next two decades, aside from a dip during the Depression (fig. 2). By 1940, more than twelve thousand Australian-born individuals were resident in the United States, fifty percent of whom were women.⁶ Civilian transpacific traffic slowed to a trickle during World War II (WWII), but was transformed into a flood in the aftermath of the conflict, when fifteen thousand war brides emigrated to America.⁷ Although this

⁴ Ros Pesman, *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996); Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁵ Doris Hayball, *Strawberries in the Jam: Being Intimate Notes about Interesting People* (Melbourne: Sunspire Press, 1940), 11

⁶ This figure is based on the digitised record “United States Census, 1940,” available through the genealogical website FamilySearch. A search for Australian-born individuals yields 12,512 results, of whom 6273, or 50.1 percent, were women. This figure is unlikely to represent the actual number of Australian-born residents, as digitisation technologies are notoriously inaccurate, but it nonetheless provides a sense of the scale involved (familysearch.org, assessed 3 December 2015).

⁷ For a detailed account of these war brides, see Robyn Arrowsmith, “Australian WWII War Brides in America: Their Memories and Experiences,” (PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 2010). The term ‘transpacific’ can, of course, be used in reference to a host of different Pacific Rim locations. In this thesis, however, the term is used almost exclusively to describe movement and contact between Australia and the United States.

mass exodus was short-lived, the number of Australian women who crossed the Pacific climbed steadily throughout the 1950s. By 1960, annual departures were close to three thousand. Thousands more, not included in these figures, would take the transatlantic route to America after visiting Britain or Europe (fig. 3).⁸ A further cohort would sail first to Vancouver, using the ‘All Red’ transpacific steam route, and then travel south to America at a later date.⁹ Between 1895 and 1956, over fifteen thousand Australian-born women crossed the land border between Canada and the United States.¹⁰

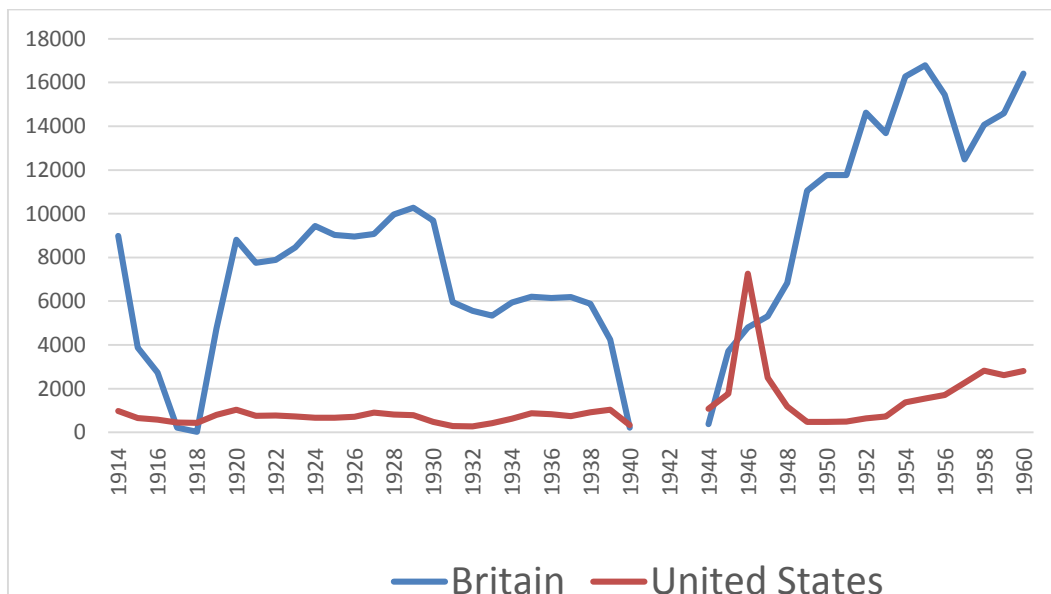


Figure 2: Overseas departures of Australian women, 1914–1960. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Australian Demography Bulletin (no figures available 1940–1944).

Like the war brides, some of these women were propelled by familial ties and obligations, while others merely transited through the United States en route to or from Britain. But many, like Jenner, ventured stateside of their own volition, and took the time to look around. Unlike the pilgrimage to London, the decision to visit

⁸ “New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1925–1957,” (familysearch.org, assessed 24 November 2015).

⁹ For an account of the ‘All Red’ route between Sydney and Vancouver, established in 1893, see Frances Steel, “The ‘Missing Link’: Space, Race, and Transoceanic Ties in the Settler-Colonial Pacific,” *Transfers* 5, no. 3 (2015): 49–67.

¹⁰ “United States Border Crossings from Canada to United States, 1895–1956,” (familysearch.org, accessed 3 December 2015).

America tended to be driven by specific opportunities or happenstance rather than long-harboured travel fantasies. Some won scholarships to the University of Chicago; others heard that money could be made selling short stories to New York publishers. Others again were drawn by the presence of relatives, and found themselves waylaid by promising work or new friends. Often travelling solo, and rarely flush with cash, these sojourners used their time abroad to pursue work, study and adventure. Although their motivations and experiences varied, most would come to share Jenner’s sense that America was a portal into the future. Having proved themselves modern women through the bold step of travelling abroad, they now found themselves in a modern nation *par excellence*. Librarians and actresses, milliners and aviatrixes, teachers and artists all reported that America was more ‘advanced’ and ‘up-to-date’ than Australia. It moved faster, produced and consumed on a fantastic scale, and was home to new social mores. In sailing seven thousand miles across the ocean, they also appeared to have traversed ‘light years’ of time.

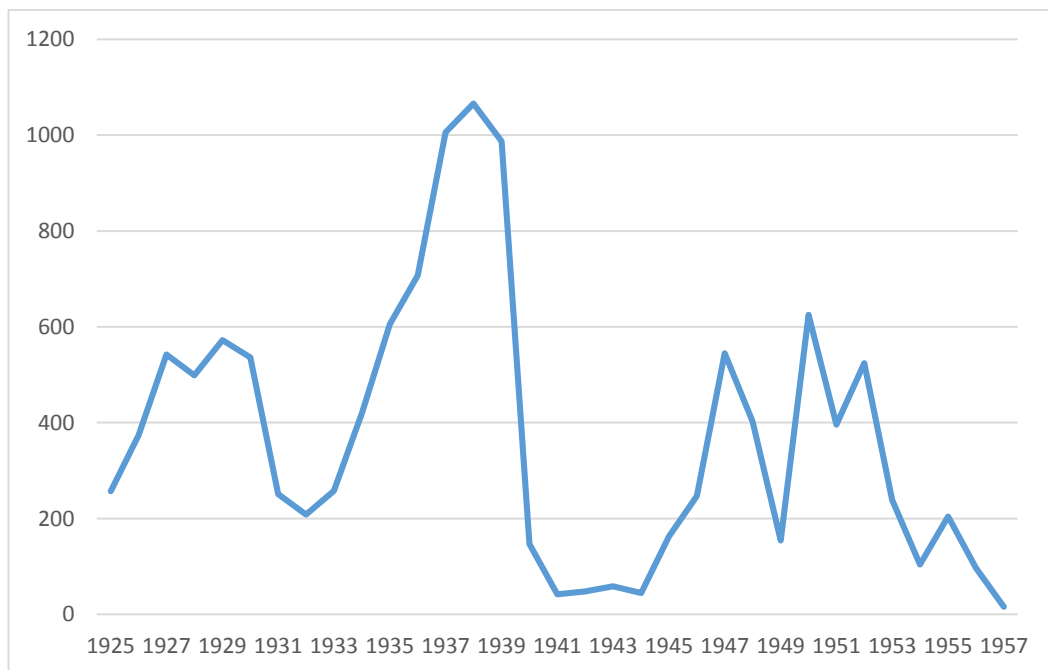


Figure 3: Arrival of Australian-born women in New York Harbor, 1925–1957. “New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1925–1957,” familysearch.org.

These women and their engagement with American modernity form the subject of this thesis. Part of a growing body of scholarship concerned with Australia's engagements with the world beyond the British Empire, the following pages follow the women who observed and partook in this world of tomorrow, and returned home with tidings of what was to come. While their own modernity often bred sympathy towards progressive ideas, these transnational Australians were far from fawning worshippers of the new. Like Jenner, who acknowledged that Uncle Sam sometimes sped ahead on the 'wrong foot', her contemporaries on occasion regarded the American modern with disquiet. But on the whole, the United States exerted considerable appeal—not least because it offered a comparatively congenial environment for women with ambitions beyond the domestic sphere. The future on display across the Pacific was, in other words, a future that involved greater equality between the sexes, and one that held particular appeal for women. Although pragmatic incentives formed the backdrop to much transpacific travel, Australian women who encountered the States rarely failed to be seduced by the nation and its people. They lingered for months or years, made efforts to return, and arrived home full of new ideas and eager to initiate local reform, all of which occurred during an era of entrenched allegiance to Britain. More than just pleasure-seeking travellers, these career-minded women were early progenitors of transpacific relations. Throughout the half-century prior to 1960, they were among the greatest beneficiaries and most zealous agents of Australian engagement with America. By retracing their footsteps, this thesis illuminates the density of transpacific ties during an era of sustained imperial sentiment, provides further evidence of the remarkable mobility of Australian women, and points to a significant but little recognised gendered dimension to Australia's turn towards the United States.

To claim that little-known women travellers could act within the lofty sphere of international relations would have once seemed a preposterous suggestion. Historians long regarded this sphere as the preserve of men and high politics, an assumption reflected in the early historiography of transpacific ties. Focused upon diplomatic, defence and trade relations, this scholarship was concerned with documenting the 'special relationship' that developed between Australia and the

United States following WWII.¹¹ Such analyses of foreign policy and its (typically male) protagonists were, and continue to be, of value, but over the past two decades scholars of international relations have given serious attention to other, previously neglected actors—a development which stems from Akira Iriye’s seminal work, begun in the late 1970s, on the role of culture within the international sphere.¹² The following study joins in a growing trend, led by American scholars, to position non-elite transnationalism as a significant component of international engagement and exchange. As historians such as Brooke Blower, Whitney Walton and Kristin Hoganson have shown, relations between nations are not only determined by diplomatic policy and trade agreements, but are also constituted by the mobility, consumption and encounters of ‘ordinary’ individuals, including students, women and tourists.¹³ Much of this scholarship focuses upon transatlantic relations, but Australian historian Agnieszka Sobocinska has recently applied these insights to the Antipodean context. Focused upon the latter half of the twentieth century, her research emphasises that travel and tourism were dominant modes through which Australians encountered Asia, and must be taken seriously when examining Australian perceptions of its northern neighbours.¹⁴

¹¹ See, for example, John Hammond Moore, ed., *The American Alliance: Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1940–1970* (North Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1970); Norman Bartlett, *Australia and America through 200 Years, 1776–1976* (Sydney: The Fine Arts Press, 1976); Norman Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian-American Relations Between 1900 and 1975* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1987); Joseph M. Siracusa and David G. Coleman, *Australia Looks to America: Australian-American Relations since Pearl Harbor* (Claremont: Regina Books, 2006).

¹² Akira Iriye, “Culture and Power: International Relations as Intercultural Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 3, no. 2 (1979): 115–28.

¹³ Brooke L. Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris: Transatlantic Politics and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890–1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Daniel Aaron Rubin, “Suitcase Diplomacy: The Role of Travel in Sino-American Relations, 1949–1968,” (PhD thesis, University of Maryland, 2010).

¹⁴ Agnieszka Sobocinska, “Innocence Lost and Paradise Regained: Tourism to Bali and Australian Perceptions of Asia,” *History Australia* 8, no. 2 (2011): 199–222; Agnieszka Sobocinska, “Visiting the Neighbours: The Political Meanings of Australian Travel to Cold War Asia,” *Australian Historical Studies* 44, no. 3 (2013): 382–404; Agnieszka Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbours: Australians in Asia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014).

Equal seriousness is warranted when considering the significance of women's transpacific mobility. These travellers were fewer in number than those who visited Asia, but their outspoken enthusiasm and reforming zeal did much to compensate for the relative slimness of their ranks. Far from mere bystanders to the machinations of high politics, they practised a politics of their own. By placing this 'bottom up' politics on centre stage, different narratives and themes begin to emerge. Although there is already a sizeable and sophisticated literature on Australia's 'Americanisation', including the work of Philip Bell, Roger Bell and Jill Matthews, the domestic framework of this existing scholarship tends to position the local populace as recipients—sometimes enthusiastic, often ambivalent—of a process driven from above and without.¹⁵ When the turn to America is viewed through the lens of women's mobility, we begin to see that this process was more feminised and more self-directed than a nationally bound analysis may suggest. It was consciously spearheaded by non-elite women alongside male powerbrokers, and driven by individual desires as well as cultural imperialism and geopolitical exigencies.¹⁶ Rather than constituting a slavish imitation of metropolitan modernity, the appropriation of American products and ideas could constitute a deliberate and often controversial attempt to challenge some of the more sexist and parochial elements of Australian culture. These appropriations also extended far beyond the

¹⁵ See, for instance, Philip Bell and Roger Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Philip Bell and Roger Bell, eds., *Americanization and Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1998); Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency Press, 2005); Richard White, "Americanization' and Popular Culture in Australia," *Teaching History*, no. 12 (1978): 3–21; Richard White, "A Backwater Awash': The Australian Experience of Americanization," *Theory, Culture & Society*, no. 3 (1983): 108–22; Robert Freestone, "The Americanization of Australian Planning," *Journal of Planning History* 3, no. 3 (2004): 187–214; Robert Crawford, "Selling or Buying American Dreams? Americanization and Australia's Interwar Advertising Industry," *Comparative American Studies* 3, no. 2 (2005): 213–36; Robert Crawford, "Differences ... in Dealing with the Australian Public': Australia as a Foreign Market in the 1920s," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 30, no. 3 (2010): 317–35; Murray Goot, "A Worse Importation than Chewing Gum': American Influences on The Australian Press and Their Limits—The Australian Gallup Poll, 1941–1973," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 30, no. 3 (2010): 269–302; Hsu-Ming Teo, "The Americanisation of Romantic Love in Australia," in *Connected Worlds*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2005), 171–92.

¹⁶ As Mel Van Elteren has written of a broader international context, 'Americanization may be consented to, and deliberately embraced by its recipients'. Mel Van Elteren, "Rethinking Americanization Abroad: Toward a Critical Alternative to Prevailing Paradigms," *Journal of American Culture* 29, no. 3 (2006): 360.

realm of Hollywood and mass culture, and can be uncovered in librarianship lectures in Sydney, bakeries in Perth and art galleries in Melbourne. Americanisation, in other words, was not always or only a process imposed by the powerful, but could also represent an instance of ‘intercultural transfer’ enabled by female agency, and driven by a commitment to a more progressive future.¹⁷

Although its approach is drawn from a largely international scholarship, this examination of women’s transpacific mobility builds upon a growing Australian interest in transnational engagements beyond the confines of the British Empire. Led by historians such as Sobocinska, Fiona Paisley, Ian Tyrrell, Marilyn Lake, Desley Deacon, Sophie Loy-Wilson and Frances Steel, much of this scholarship focuses upon the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁸ Within the last five years, this groundswell of interest in Australian connections within and across the Pacific Ocean has inspired several symposia and edited collections, while the September 2015 issue of *Australian Historical Studies* features a ‘Pacific Forum’ showcasing six important articles on topics ranging from steamship routes to imperial visions of New Guinea.¹⁹ This local scholarship is related to a broader interest, largely stemming from North America, in the Pacific Rim connections that existed alongside the much-studied Atlantic world. Tyrrell’s 2007 injunction to reorient the ‘transnational

¹⁷ For a discussion of ‘intercultural transfer’, and the role of individual agency within this process, see Thomas Adam, “New Ways to Write the History of Western Europe and the United States: The Concept of Intercultural Transfer,” *History Compass* 11, no. 10 (2013): 880–92.

¹⁸ Key instances of this scholarship include Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women’s Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009); Ian Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Marilyn Lake, “‘This Great America’: H. B. Higgins and Transnational Progressivism,” *Australian Historical Studies* 44, no. 2 (2013): 172–88; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Sophie Loy-Wilson, “‘Liberating’ Asia: Strikes and Protest in Sydney and Shanghai, 1920–39,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 72 (2011): 75–102; Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbours*; Desley Deacon, “Cosmopolitans at Home: Judith Anderson and the American Aspirations of J.C. Williamson Stock Company Members, 1897–1918,” in *Impact of the Modern: Vernacular Modernities in Australia, 1870s–1960s*, ed. Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008), 202–22; Frances Steel, “Re-Routing Empire? Steam-Age Circulations and the Making of an Anglo Pacific, c.1850–90,” *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 3 (2015): 356–73.

¹⁹ Prue Ahrens and Chris Dixon, eds., *Coast to Coast: Case Histories of Modern Pacific Crossings* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); Kate Fullagar, ed., *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes: Effects and Transformations since the Eighteenth Century* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

reappraisal of the American past' towards the Pacific has been taken up with considerable enthusiasm by American scholars, most of whom have fixed their gaze upon US engagements with Asia.²⁰ The work of Paisley, Steel and other Australians is situated within this broader 'transpacific turn', but can also be characterised as an attempt to look outside the 'British race patriotism' versus 'Australian radical nationalism' binary that has informed so much Australian historiography.²¹ Beyond the overlapping frameworks of nation and empire, this new scholarship reminds us, there was an entire world to contend with.

Like other work concerned with these questions, my research documents the extent to which Australians have long been drawn to people, places and ideas that lacked the imperial seal of approval, and were far more proximate than London. Part of an emergent 'people's history of the transpacific', it foregrounds Australian women's cosmopolitanism, their self-conscious modernity, and their eagerness to position themselves within a Pacific Rim Anglophone sphere.²² But it also stresses that these same individuals often continued to venerate Britain and visit its storied shores, helping to highlight that engagement with the imperial metropole and the Pacific world was far from mutually exclusive. At the same time, this history speaks to the burgeoning American interest in the Pacific, demonstrating that the US-Asian connections highlighted in recent scholarship were accompanied by myriad interactions with the Antipodes.

²⁰ Ian Tyrrell, "Looking Eastward: Pacific and Global Perspectives on American History in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Japanese Journal of American Studies* 18 (2007): 41. This growing US interest in the transpacific was given recognition in a 2014 special issue of *Pacific Historical Review*, edited by Lon Kurashige, Madeline Y. Hsu and Yujin Yaguchi. See also Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease, eds., *American Studies as Transnational Practice: Turning toward the Transpacific* (Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2015); Ruth Barraclough, Heather Bowen-Struyk, and Paula Rabinowitz, eds., *Red Love Across the Pacific: Political and Sexual Revolutions of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Reed Ueda, *Crosscurrents: Atlantic and Pacific Migration in the Making of a Global America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). For further discussion of the emergent international preoccupation with the transpacific, see Damon Ieremia Salesa, "Opposite Footers," in *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes*, 283–300.

²¹ Marilyn Lake, "British World or New World? Anglo-Saxonism and Australian Engagement with America," *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 36–50.

²² This phrase is drawn from Lon Kurashige, Madeline Y. Hsu, and Yujin Yaguchi, "Conversations on Transpacific History," *Pacific Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (2014): 187.

The story told here begins in 1910, a time when female travellers proliferated worldwide and tales of America multiplied on Australian streets. Yet transpacific mobility and exchange was not a phenomenon unique to the twentieth century. People and ideas flowed between California and the Australian colonies for much of the 1800s. This process began in earnest during the 1840s and 50s, when, as David Goodman and others have related, the discovery of gold in California and Victoria sent fortune seekers and their followers back and forth across the ocean.²³ Among these itinerants were American minstrel performers, whose presence on the Victorian goldfields established a local taste for blackface entertainment, making the southern continent a lucrative destination for US minstrel troupes for the next half-century.²⁴ Vaudevillians and thespians followed in their wake. As transnational theatrical circuits proliferated throughout the Pacific Rim, entrepreneurs such as J. C. Williamson would fashion careers out of bringing the latest American entertainments to the Australian stage.²⁵

From the 1870s, the Pacific became a busy thoroughfare. Following the completion of the American transcontinental railroad in 1869, shipping companies vied to establish a transpacific mail and trade route. After several false starts, regular steamship services between Sydney and San Francisco began in 1875, under the aegis of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. The ports of call included Auckland, Suva, Pago Pago and Honolulu, and the journey lasted a mere twenty days—less

²³ David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994); E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Young America and Australian Gold: Americans and the Gold Rush of the 1850s* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1974); Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka* (Melbourne: Text, 2013).

²⁴ Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage, 1788–1914* (Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1990); Richard Waterhouse, “Ripping Yarns of the Pacific: American Minstrel Performers Travel to Australia, 1850–1914,” in Ahrens and Dixon, *Coast to Coast*, 89–101; Melissa Bellanta, “Leary Kin: Australian Larrikins and the Blackface Minstrel Dandy,” *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 3 (2009): 677–95.

²⁵ Desley Deacon, “Location! Location! Location! Mind Maps and Theatrical Circuits in Australian Transnational History,” *History Australia* 5, no. 3 (2008): 81.1–81.16; Veronica Kelly, “A Complementary Economy? National Markets and International Product in Early Australian Theatre Management,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (2005): 77–95; Veronica Kelly, “An Australian Idol of Modernist Consumerism: Minnie Tittell Brune and the Gallery Girls,” *Theatre Research International* 31, no. 1 (2006): 17–36.

than half the travel time to London via the Suez Canal.²⁶ This steamship route allowed Australia to, as Steel writes, ‘imagine and situate itself in a transpacific sphere’, providing a counterbalance to the ties of Empire.²⁷ A new transpacific imaginary manifested in journalistic ventures such as *News of the World*, a short-lived California newspaper published for an Antipodean readership, as well as the growth of tourism, the proliferation of literary conversations, and the thickening of economic ties.²⁸ Between 1871 and 1890, trade between California and Australia would increase fivefold.²⁹

Growing recognition of the climatic and social parallels between these Pacific Rim societies also fostered the exchange of ideas about environmental management, architecture, and racial ‘science’.³⁰ By the turn of the century, Australia and America would regard each other as sibling societies, a pair of New World ‘white men’s countries’ together forging a more enlightened future.³¹ During these years, as Lake, Diane Kirkby and others relate, Australian progressives such as Alfred Deakin, H. B. Higgins, Alice Henry and Miles Franklin would develop strong ties to their counterparts in the United States. The former looked to emulate American republicanism and imperial outreach, while the latter took inspiration

²⁶ Frances Steel, “Lines Across the Sea: Trans-Pacific Passenger Shipping in the Age of Steam,” in *The Routledge History of Western Empires*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 315–29.

²⁷ Steel, “Re-Routing Empire?” 356–57.

²⁸ Peter Putnis, “Shipping the Latest News across the Pacific in the 1870s: California’s *News of the World*,” *American Journalism* 30, no. 2 (2013): 235–59. On tourism, see Frances Steel, “An Ocean of Leisure: Early Cruise Tours of the Pacific in an Age of Empire,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 14, no. 2 (2013): n. p.; Frances Steel, “Cruising New Zealand’s West Coast Sounds: Fiord Tourism in the Tasman World, c.1870–1910,” *Australian Historical Studies* 44, no. 3 (2013): 361–81. On literary connections see Paul Giles, *Antipodean America: Australasia and the Constitution of US Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Robert Dixon and Nicholas Birns, eds., *Reading across the Pacific: Australia-United States Intellectual Histories* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2010).

²⁹ Steel, “Re-Routing Empire?” 369.

³⁰ Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*; Erika Esau, *Images of the Pacific Rim: Australia and California, 1850–1935* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2011); Gregory D. Smithers, *Science, Sexuality, and Race in the United States and Australia, 1780s–1890s* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009).

³¹ On ‘white men’s countries’ see, Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

from Australia's experiments with the minimum wage, social welfare, women's enfranchisement, and immigration restriction.³²

The years around 1910—the moment when my study begins—witnessed two major shifts to this burgeoning transpacific bond. On the one hand, a transpacific outlook was popularised. Although Antipodean society and culture remained chiefly oriented towards Britain, America was on the lips of ordinary Australians like never before. The 1908 visit of President Roosevelt's Great White Fleet prompted an outpouring of fraternal sentiment between the two nations, while Hollywood film, jazz and Ford cars introduced American people, products and vernacular into daily life.³³ Some expressed concern about the vulgarising effects of Americanisation, but others—especially young women—were enraptured by the glamour and affluence of the world depicted on screen.³⁴ Hot on the heels of this mass culture came, in the 1920s, American philanthropic largesse, largely from Carnegie and Rockefeller sources, and American-led Pacific organisations such as the Institute for Pacific Relations. Together these developments ensured that the

³² Marilyn Lake, "The Australian Dream of an Island Empire: Race, Reputation and Resistance," *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 3 (2015): 410–24; Lake, "British World or New World?" 36–50; Lake, "This Great America," 172–88; Marilyn Lake, "The Brightness of Eyes and Quiet Assurance Which Seem to Say American': Alfred Deakin's Identification with Republican Manhood," *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 32–51; Clare Wright, "A Splendid Object Lesson': A Transnational Perspective on the Birth of the Australian Nation," *Journal of Women's History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 12–36; Diane Kirkby, *Alice Henry: The Power of Pen and Voice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Diane Kirkby, "Those Knights of the Pen and Pencil': Women Journalists and Cultural Leadership of the Women's Movement in Australia and the United States," *Labour History*, no. 104 (2013): 81–100; Jill Roe, *Stella Miles Franklin: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (London, New York, Sydney and Auckland: Fourth Estate, 2010).

³³ For a recent analysis of the Great White Fleet and transpacific relations, see Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 191–204.

³⁴ On the reception of American popular culture in early twentieth-century Australia, see Diane Collins, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movie, 1896 to the Present* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1987); Joy Damousi, "The Filthy American Twang': Elocution, the Advent of American 'Talkies,' and Australian Cultural Identity," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (2007): 394–416; Kirsten McKenzie, "Being Modern on a Slender Income: 'Picture Show' and 'Photoplayer' in Early 1920s Sydney," *Journal of Women's History* 22, no. 4 (2010): 114–36; Jill Julius Matthews, "Which America?" in Bell and Bell, *Americanization and Australia*, 15–31; Jill Julius Matthews, "Beatrice Maude Tildesley Goes to the Pictures," *Screening the Past*, no. 16 (2004): n. p.; Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*.

States also began to loom large in the consciousness of academics, educators and policymakers.³⁵

At the same time, what had been a transpacific conversation between two vocal participants shifted into a more one-sided exchange. The outbreak of war in 1914 marked the demise of Australia's trailblazing progressivism, a moment Lake has termed the 'death of a nation'. Once '[m]ilitarism had trumped idealism', social reform stagnated, and the nation ceased to attract admiring glances from abroad.³⁶ Only a handful of Americans, led by doughty Australianist C. Hartley Grattan, would profess serious interest in the southern continent during the interwar decades.³⁷ Just when Australia lost the gaze of the world, the United States began to attract attention than ever before. As proclaimed by media magnate Henry Luce in 1941, the twentieth century was the 'American Century'.³⁸ Having first eclipsed the economic heft of Britain in 1872, its ascendancy as a global superpower would be guaranteed in the first years of the new century by imperial expansion into the Pacific and a crucial late-stage intervention into the Great War.³⁹ Arm-in-arm with this geopolitical strength went cultural clout. As Emily Rosenberg has detailed, during the interwar decades and beyond legions of businessmen and film directors sold the 'American Dream' to the world.⁴⁰ From 1918 on, although London and Paris retained their reputation as breeding grounds of modern culture, few doubted that the nerve centre of the future was now located in the United States. In the decades that followed, Australians grew less inclined to offer home-grown

³⁵ For a detailed discussion of these philanthropic organisations, and an overview of recent scholarship on their presence in Australia, see Chapter Three.

³⁶ Marilyn Lake, "1914: Death of a Nation," *History Australia* 12, no. 1 (2015): 22.

³⁷ Laurie Hergenhan, *No Casual Traveller: Hartley Grattan and Australia-US Connections* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1995).

³⁸ Henry Luce, "The American Century," *Life*, 17 February 1941.

³⁹ Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: Historical Statistics* (Paris: OECD, 2003), 49.

⁴⁰ Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Emily S. Rosenberg, "US Mass Consumerism in Transnational Perspective," in *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, ed. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 307–37.

innovations to the world, and increasingly sought inspiration from the American modern.

As consciousness and emulation of America proliferated, so too did the mobility of Australian women. This is not to say that the female population was immobile prior to the 1910s. Recent transnational scholarship by Australian feminist historians has emphasised that white women's appetite for new horizons extended back into the nineteenth century.⁴¹ Female settlers in colonial Australasia did not, as once assumed, 'wait and cope' while their menfolk wandered the empire, but were remarkably restless themselves. Driven by business opportunities, economic travails and family dramas, they travelled throughout the colonies and beyond.⁴² They also, as Angela Woollacott and Ros Pesman have illustrated, lusted for London. Once the Suez Canal opened in 1869, creating a new transport corridor between Europe and the Asia-Pacific, Australian women sailed to the imperial metropole in their thousands. By 1911, more than half the Australian-born individuals living in England and Wales were female.⁴³

But it was in the first decades of the twentieth century that female travel became a mass phenomenon, a development driven by improvements in transport technology and softening attitudes towards women in the public sphere.⁴⁴ As modernist Virginia Woolf insisted, it was in 1910 that 'human character changed', and the stifling mores of the nineteenth century began to give way to the liberalising impulses of the twentieth. Woolf was talking of London, where she moved in select circles, but her periodisation does ring true elsewhere.⁴⁵ Although still tinged with

⁴¹ Marilyn Lake, "Women's and Gender History in Australia: A Transformative Practice," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 190, 200–02.

⁴² Catherine Bishop, "Women on the Move: Gender, Money-Making and Mobility in Mid-Nineteenth Century Australasia," *History Australia* 11, no. 2 (2014): 38–59; Catherine Bishop, *Minding Her Own Business: Businesswomen in Colonial Sydney* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015), ch. 8.

⁴³ Pesman, *Duty Free*; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 5.

⁴⁴ For a recent account of the dramatic changes in attitudes towards women in public between the 1880s and 1910s, see Jessica Ellen Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890–1915* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

⁴⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown* (London: Hogarth Press, 1924), 4. For a discussion of Woolf's claim and its wider context, see Peter Stansky, *On or About 1910: Early Bloomsbury and Its Intimate World* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996).

the danger of sexual impropriety, unchaperoned female travel was fast transforming into a respectable, even enviable, pursuit.⁴⁶ This pursuit found adherents throughout the Western world, but was taken up with particular enthusiasm by Australian women. Throughout the half-century prior to 1960, they could be found studying art in Paris, reporting from war zones in the ‘far East’, meeting comrades behind the Iron Curtain, and networking with Japanese feminists in Waikiki. Thousands more were content to stroll through Kew Gardens and catch a glimpse of Buckingham Palace.⁴⁷

Then there were those who sought their fortune in the United States. Little-studied to date, aside from a handful of biographies and a smattering of articles, these female transpacific travellers reflected and enacted Australia’s growing willingness to look beyond the Old World to the New.⁴⁸ Although tourists and, in

⁴⁶ Emma Robinson-Tomsett, *Women, Travel and Identity: Journeys by Rail and Sea, 1870–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁴⁷ Angela Woollacott, “Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women’s Internationalist Activism in the 1920 and 30s,” *Gender & History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 425–48; Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific*; John McNair, “Visiting the Future: Australian (Fellow-) Travellers in Soviet Russia,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 46, no. 4 (2000): 463–79; John McNair, “Mary Poppins and the Soviet Pilgrimage: P.L. Travers’s *Moscow Excursion* (1934),” *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 1–12; Jeannine Baker, *Australian Women War Reporters: Boer War to Vietnam* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015); Sarah Paddle, “The Limits of Sympathy: International Feminists and the Chinese ‘Slave Girl’ Campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 3 (2003): n. p.; Marilyn Lake, “Women’s International Leadership,” in *Diversity in Leadership: Australian Women, Past and Present*, ed. Joy Damousi, Kim Rubenstein, and Mary Tomsic (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), 71–90; Pesman, *Duty Free*, 49–63.

⁴⁸ Pesman and Woollacott both include a brief discussion of the US in their monographs on Australian women’s travel. Pesman, *Duty Free*, 110–24; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 199–206. Paisley’s *Glamour in the Pacific*, a study of the Pan-Pacific Women’s Association, likewise documents Australian women’s transpacific travel, but her gaze is focused upon Hawai’i. See also Jill Roe, “Australian Women in America, from Miles Franklin to Jill Ker Conway,” in *Approaching Australia: Papers from the Harvard Australian Studies Symposium*, ed. Harold Bolitho and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Committee on Australian Studies, 1998), 139–58; Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson, “Against Provincialism: Australian-American Connections, 1900–2000,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 36, no. 3 (2012): 291–307. Biographical accounts of Australian women who lived in the States include Diane Langmore, *Glittering Surfaces: A Life of Maie Casey* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1977); Audrey Tate, *Fair Comment: The Life of Pat Jarrett, 1911–1990* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1996); Desmond Zwar, *The Dame: The Life and Times of Dame Jean Macnamara* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1984); Desley Deacon, “Celebrity Sexuality,” *Australian Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012): 45–60; Desley Deacon, “Outlaw Fan: Judith Anderson, International Star, Grows up in Adelaide,” *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 40 (2012): 66–80; James Murdoch, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Transposed Life* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2002);

the 1940s, war brides constituted a significant proportion of those who sailed for San Francisco, the focus here is on the subset of transpacific travellers who pursued professional or educational activities during their time abroad. Often but not always unmarried, these women were united by a commitment to forge lives for themselves beyond the kitchen sink, and an inclination to do so beyond the bounds of Australia and the British embrace.

This was a motley cohort, full of strange bedfellows. It includes a television actress who overdosed on sleeping pills, an elderly temperance campaigner who stormed cocktail bars, and a painter who romanced a Japanese cabinetmaker in wartime Greenwich Village.⁴⁹ Their career choices, to some extent, reflect patterns stressed in feminist labour historiography: there was preponderance of ‘caring professionals’, such as nurses and social workers, as well as a large cohort who worked in the visual and performing arts.⁵⁰ But botanists, lawyers, architects and surgeons were also represented, as were businesswomen, playwrights, diplomats, dentists and many other professions.⁵¹ Their itineraries were no less variable. Some women spent three months in America; others lingered for three decades. Most gravitated towards Manhattan, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco, where

Angela Woollacott, *Race and the Modern Exotic: Three “Australian” Women on Global Display* (Clayton, Vic: Monash University Publishing, 2011).

⁴⁹ “Sleeping Pills Kill Movie-TV Actress,” *New York Times*, 7 February 1957; “Woman, 87, Leads ‘Light’ Crusaders Into Bars,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 May 1947, 1; Anne Wienholt interviewed by Anne Rees, 14 July 2012.

⁵⁰ Key works that explore women and work in Australia, especially beyond the working class, include Patricia Grimshaw and Lynne Strahan, eds., *The Half-Open Door: Sixteen Modern Australian Women Look at Professional Life and Achievement* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982); Margaret Bevege, Margaret James, and Carmel Shute, eds., *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982); Madge Dawson and Heather Radi, eds., *Against the Odds: Fifteen Professional Women Reflect on Their Lives and Achievements* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1984); Alison Mackinnon, *The New Women: Adelaide’s Early Women Graduates* (Netley, SA: Wakefield Press, 1986); Alison Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom: Professional Women and the Reshaping of Personal Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates, *Women at Work in Australia: From the Gold Rushes to World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵¹ Sportswomen would also, as early as the 1910s, cross the Pacific for professional competition. In 1919, for example, Australian swimmers Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie participated in races throughout the US. Such women, however, receive scant attention here as their brief and focused travels left little archival trace. “Fanny Durack Visits City with Mina Wylie,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 June 1919, 11; *Argus* (Melbourne), 19 August 1919, 5.

employment and excitement seemed most abundant, but others found themselves in the Deep South, industrial Detroit or small town New England.

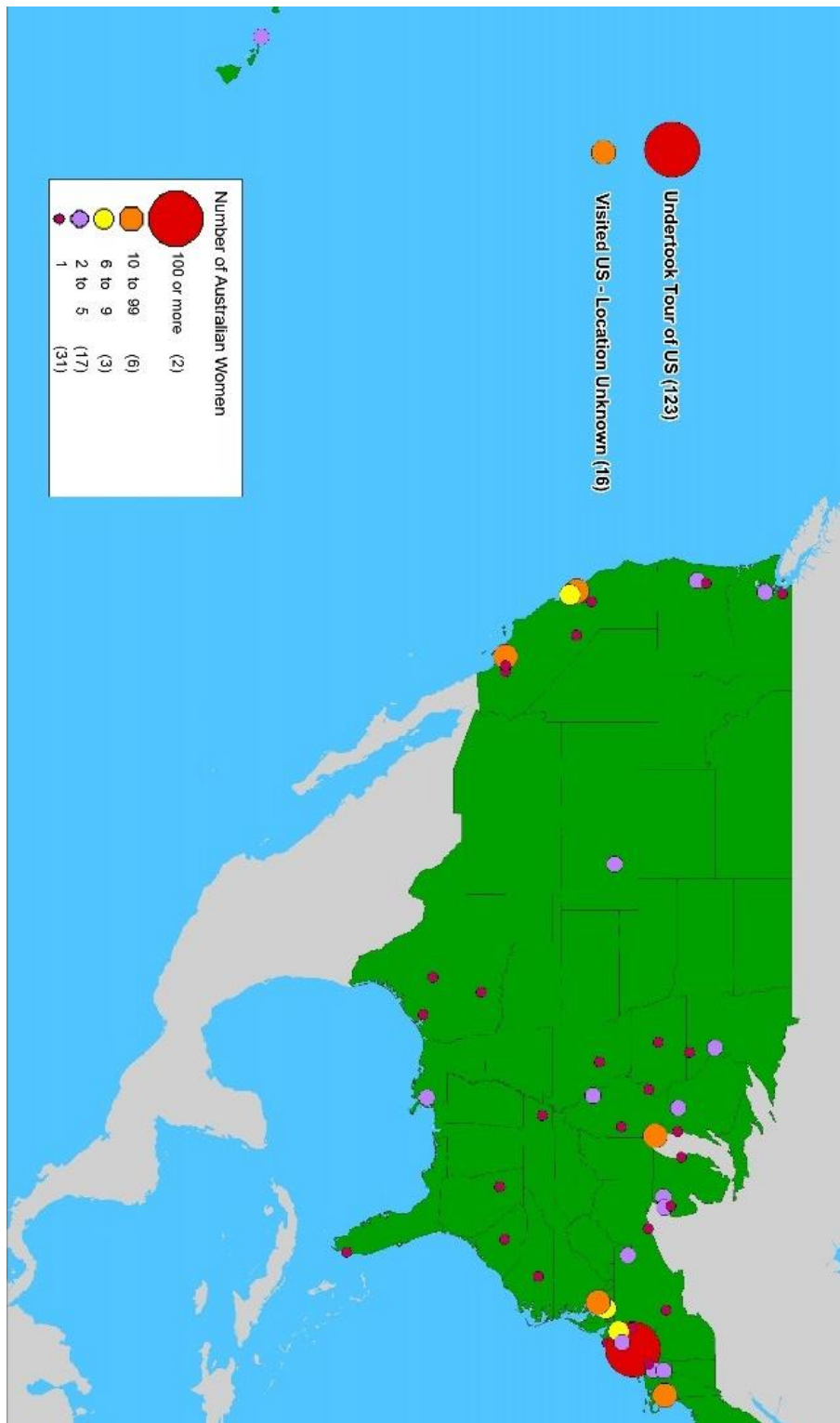


Figure 4: This map indicates the US destination of 629 Australian women, highlighting that most visitors gravitated towards the east and west coasts—although a significant proportion toured the country and some based themselves in lesser-populated states.

The vast majority were of British descent, a reflection of the near universal ‘whiteness’ of Australia during the decades in which the immigration restrictions of the White Australia policy were strictly enforced.⁵² Yet a handful of Chinese-Australian women also sojourned in America. Melbourne-born Rose Quong, for instance, enjoyed a prominent career as a performer in New York between the 1930s and her death in 1972.⁵³ Rose Yee, meanwhile, the daughter of a Chinese shopkeeper from Tamworth, made her way to California in 1948, where she enrolled in the Adventist College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda, and later wed a Chinese missionary on the NBC television program ‘Bride and Groom’.⁵⁴ At least one indigenous woman appears to have joined them. In 1952, an Aboriginal singer was ‘discovered’ by visiting African-American soprano Dorothy Maynor, who hatched plans to cultivate her protégée in an American conservatorium.⁵⁵ Whether this unnamed woman appreciated Maynor’s attentions, and what became of her abroad, is unclear. What is clear, however, is that her travels were at once exceptional and all too typical—both a rare example of opportunistic Aboriginal transnationalism and one of countless instances of indigenous relocation driven more by maternalism than individual agency.⁵⁶

While transpacific travellers tended to be—aside from the above examples—ethnically homogenous, they were otherwise quite diverse. Hailing from all corners

⁵² As late as 1949, according to the Commonwealth Census, the non-Aboriginal Australian population remained 99 percent British. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. I (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1947), 786–87.

⁵³ Angela Woollacott, “Rose Quong Becomes Chinese: An Australian in London and New York,” *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 16–31.

⁵⁴ Rosemary Annable, *Biographical Register: The Women’s College within the University of Sydney*, vol. II (Sydney: Council of the Women’s College, 1995), 110; “TV Pastor Marries Chinese Couple on Network Telecast,” *Australasian Record* (Warburton), 9 December 1957, 10.

⁵⁵ “Native to be singer,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 21 August 1952, 3.

⁵⁶ For discussion of the constraints upon Aboriginal mobility, see Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune*, 13; Fiona Paisley, “No Back Streets in the Bush,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 12, no. 25 (1997): 119–37; Victoria Haskins, “From the Centre to the City: Modernity, Mobility and Mixed-Descent Aboriginal Domestic Workers from Central Australia,” *Women’s History Review* 18, no. 1 (2009): 155–75; Georgine Clarsen, “Mobile Encounters: Bicycles, Cars and Australian Settler Colonialism,” *History Australia* 12, no. 1 (2015): 165. One of the few documented instances of self-willed Aboriginal transnationalism during the early twentieth century is the case of AM Fernando, an Aboriginal rights activist in 1920s London. Fiona Paisley, *The Lone Protestor: AM Fernando in Australia and Europe* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2012).

of Australia, from the suburbs of Perth to the remote homesteads of far north Queensland, these women also came from across the social spectrum. They ranged from the indulged daughters of prosperous squatting dynasties to women raised in Sydney slums where hunger was a familiar threat. Well-heeled and well-educated women did represent a large proportion of this cohort but, as Woollacott has demonstrated, Australian women's travel was less of an elite phenomenon than is often assumed.⁵⁷ Steamship fares remained expensive, but not prohibitively so, and even those from humble backgrounds managed to save or borrow the cost of a one-way ticket. In 1926, the Sydney nurse Stella Pines set sail with only twenty pounds to her name, aiming to work her way through several years of study and travel in the States.⁵⁸ Far from inhibiting transpacific travel, lack of funds could even constitute the prime motivation for leaving home: many impoverished artists, as we shall see in Chapter Four, visited the States with aspirations to exploit its rumoured riches. For women without deep pockets, a travelling scholarship or bursary could also bring the New York skyscrapers within reach. Among these less privileged travellers, transpacific mobility carried the hope of class mobility: not only were Australian markers of class less legible and hence less prescriptive abroad, but international experience conferred prestige that could allow returned travellers to transcend their social origins.

Even those with deep pockets could not roam at will. Although Australian women's transpacific mobility continued, largely unabated, throughout the Great War, it was checked by the US immigration laws introduced in 1921 and 1924. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, this legislation set an annual Australian quota of 121 migrants, and dictated that all other arrivals—aside from students and several others exceptions—refrain from remunerative employment and depart within six

⁵⁷ Angela Woollacott, "Australian Women in London: Surveying the Twentieth Century," in Bridge, Crawford, and Dunstan, *Australians in Britain*, 3.4.

⁵⁸ Midwives & Nurses Miss Stella Pines' Activities, 1930–1935, A1928, 660/9, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Canberra.

months.⁵⁹ These restrictions, although flouted by many, formed a stark contrast to the untrammelled movement white colonials enjoyed within the British Empire, and helped ensure that New York's allure could little compete with the charms of London. Had this legislation not been introduced, or contained more generous provision for Australians, it is probable that the numbers heading to America throughout the prosperous 1920s would, like the British figures, have risen instead of plateaued.⁶⁰ The economic hardships associated with the Great Depression also slowed transpacific travel, though to a lesser extent than the slump in departures to Britain (fig. 2)—perhaps because America, being more proximate, was more affordable. Steamship fares to San Francisco were certainly much cheaper than those to London.⁶¹ A far more significant constraint was the 1941 outbreak of war in the Pacific, which brought civilian travel to a near standstill for the duration of hostilities.

The war created obstacles to transpacific travel, but it also marked the beginning of a new era of intimacy between the two nations. In 1939, driven by fears of Japanese militarism, Australia initiated formal diplomatic relations with America. An embassy was established in Washington DC, and prominent parliamentarian Richard Casey was appointed Australian Minister for the United States, replacing the New York and San Francisco-based trade commissioners who had long assumed a quasi-diplomatic role.⁶² Casey, alongside his charismatic wife Maie and her redoubtable secretary Pat Jarrett, would rapidly emerge as a popular figure in Washington, and the trio enjoyed great success in their efforts to raise the

⁵⁹ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 48–57; “Immigration: America’s System,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 1924, 13.

⁶⁰ As indicated in fig. 3, the incidence of Australian women’s transatlantic travel did increase in the 1920s, but many of these travellers were likely to be transiting through the States on their way home.

⁶¹ In 1931, the Matson Line offered first-class fares between Sydney and San Francisco for £67/10, while second-class fares cost £50/10. By contrast, a first-class fare to London with P&O cost £100–£136, while a second-class fare was £84–£88. *BP Magazine* (Sydney), June 1931, 90.

⁶² M. Ruth Megaw, “Undiplomatic Channels: Australian Representation in the United States, 1918–39,” *Australian Historical Studies* 15, no. 60 (1973): 610–30.

profile of Australia abroad.⁶³ From late 1941, this transpacific courtship morphed into a formal alliance. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, war erupted on Australia's doorstep, and the once distant prospect of invasion became an imminent threat. Several weeks later, troubled by British disinterest in the Pacific theatre, Prime Minister John Curtin made the statement since immortalised as Australia's 'turn to America'. 'Without any inhibitions of any kind,' he declared, 'I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.'⁶⁴ In the years that followed, Australian and US servicemen fought side-by-side against Japanese forces, and almost a million American GIs would pass through Australia. These men, as is well-documented, caused quite a stir. As the first flesh-and-blood Americans experienced by the vast majority of locals, they were regarded as Hollywood heroes come to life. Young girls swooned, local swains bristled, and both brawls and romances ensued. The upshot was that fifteen thousand war brides emigrated to the States, while the population at large nurtured vivid—if not always fond—memories of American manhood.⁶⁵

The heightened transpacific mobility begun by soldiers and their brides continued into the postwar years, when the Fulbright program began funding hundreds of Australian and American students and academics to taste life on the opposite side of the Pacific.⁶⁶ Some of these grant holders would take advantage of

⁶³ W. J. Hudson, *Casey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 113–21; Langmore, *Glittering Surfaces*, 66–85; Tate, *Fair Comment*, 52–76; Bridget Griffin-Foley, "The Kangaroo is Coming into Its Own": R. G. Casey, Earl Newsom and Public Relations in the 1940s," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 23, no. 2 (2004): 1–20.

⁶⁴ John Curtin, "The Task Ahead," *Herald* (Melbourne), 27 December 1941, <http://john.curtin.edu.au/pmportal/text/00468.html>, accessed 7 May 2014.

⁶⁵ Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Marilyn Lake, "The Desire for a Yank," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 4 (1992): 621–33; Marilyn Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60–75; Kay Saunders, "In a Cloud of Lust: Black GIs and Sex in World War II," in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, 178–190; Arrowsmith, "Australian WWII War Brides in America."

⁶⁶ Alice Garner and Diane Kirkby, "Never a Machine for Propaganda? The Australian-American Fulbright Program and Australia's Cold War," *Australian Historical Studies* 44, no. 1 (2013): 117–33.

the new transpacific air route, a twice-weekly service established by British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines in 1946. Flying between Sydney and San Francisco, with refuelling stops in Fiji, Canton Island and Honolulu, the DC-6 airliners crossed the ocean in a mere twenty-nine hours. The airfare, however, was close to double the cost of a second-class steamship berth.⁶⁷ That same year, the Australian-American Association, founded in 1940, began publishing *Pacific Neighbors*, a magazine dedicated to dispelling popular stereotypes about the two nations and maintaining the fellow feeling of the war years.⁶⁸ Improved communication was also facilitated by a transpacific cable link, completed in 1941, and the Australian News and Information Bureau, opened in New York the same year.⁶⁹ The outbreak of Cold War tensions, meanwhile, gave renewed import to the strategic alliance initiated during war, which was formalised in 1951 via the Australian, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty, known as the ANZUS Treaty.

But while the late 1940s and 50s were marked by an upsurge in transpacific friendship and mobility, much remained unchanged. In many respects, as revisionist historians have demonstrated, the war was less of a ‘turning point’ in Australia’s global outlook than has long been assumed.⁷⁰ As Sobocinska has argued, to characterise 1941 as the moment when Australia turned from Britain and Europe to Asia and America ‘belies a good deal of continuity.’⁷¹ After 1941, the nation was

⁶⁷ H. M. Moore, *Silver Wings in Pacific Skies: Australia’s First Trans-Pacific Airline* (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1993), 13. In 1949, a second-class berth on the *Aorangi*, which ploughed the Pacific between Sydney and San Francisco, cost £118. In the same year, the equivalent airfare was £200. Folder of papers re: 1948–49 overseas study trip, box 4, Papers of Jean Fleming Arnot, 1890–1995, MLMSS 3147, State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW), Sydney.

⁶⁸ “The Story of the Australian-American Association,” *Pacific Neighbors*, April 1946, 7.

⁶⁹ Peter Putnis, “International News Agencies, News-Flow, and the USA-Australia Relationship from the 1920s till the End of the Second World War,” *Media History* 18, no. 3–4 (2012): 1–19; Griffen-Foley, “The Kangaroo is Coming into Its Own,” 6–8.

⁷⁰ Examples of this scholarship include Philip Bell and Roger Bell, “Cultural Shifts, Changing Relationships: Australia and the United States,” *Australian Cultural History* 28, no. 2–3 (2010): 283–97; David McLean, “From British Colony to American Satellite? Australia and the USA during the Cold War,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 52, no. 1 (2006): 64–79; David Lee, “Australia, the British Commonwealth, and the United States, 1950–1953,” *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History* 20, no. 3 (1992): 445–69.

⁷¹ Agnieszka Sobocinska, “Overturning the Point: Exploring Change in Australian–Asian Relations,” *History Compass* 12, no. 8 (2014): 645.

strategically reliant on the United States, but remained embedded in the affective, political and economic ties of Empire. Australians saluted the Union Jack, ate marmalade for breakfast and played cricket on weekends.⁷² They watched Hollywood films and danced to American tunes, as they had done before the war, but aspired to speak the Queen's English and flocked to see the Queen on her visit in 1954.⁷³ As late as 1961, the nationality section of the Australian census asked respondents to identify themselves as either 'British' or 'Foreign', a binary that constructed Australianness and Britishness as one and the same.⁷⁴

Women's postwar mobility reflects these broader trends. Although the numbers heading to America leapt upwards after 1945, this quantitative shift cannot be equated with any great qualitative change. More women elected to visit the States, but their experiences abroad often replicated interwar patterns. They travelled the same routes, saw the same sites, and drew similar conclusions. Although postwar shifts in gender and race relations certainly filtered their gaze—as will be explored in Chapters One and Two—these changes were subtle and developed over a number of years. Nor can this postwar growth in transpacific mobility be taken as evidence of declining imperial sentiment. Not only was the increased traffic between Sydney and San Francisco dwarfed by the postwar exodus of Australians to London (see fig. 2), but those who were seduced by Manhattan's skyscrapers did not necessarily reject Big Ben. Some women did travel to America instead of England but many spent lengthy periods in both countries, and moved back and forth across the Atlantic with alacrity. Well into the 1950s, meanwhile, most transpacific travellers would profess to be Britons. Despite choosing to live and work in America, they remained embedded in the imagined community of

⁷² On the persistence of Britishness in postwar Australia, see Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2001); David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of the British Empire* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Karen Fox, "An 'Imperial Hangover'? Royal Honours in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, 1917–2009," *Britain and the World* 7, no. 1 (2014): 6–27.

⁷³ On the importance of English speech within Australia, see Damousi, "The Filthy American Twang," 394–416. On the rapturous reception the Queen received in 1954, see Jane Connors, "The 1954 Royal Tour of Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 25, no. 100 (1993): 371–82.

⁷⁴ "Census Bulletin No. 27 – Nationality of the Population of Australia," *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1961), 5.

Britishness. As Chapter Six will highlight, the bond with Britain could even be foregrounded by a visit to the States.

Far from receding after 1945, postwar transpacific travellers experienced this bond as more conspicuous than ever. During these years, Australia's economic ties to Britain, expressed through membership of the sterling zone, would present considerable difficulties for women who sought to sojourn in America. The sterling zone referred to a group of countries, led by Britain and largely from the Empire, who pegged their local currencies to the pound sterling and operated as an economic unit. During the 1940s and 50s, the entire sterling zone experienced a shortage of dollars, a situation caused by wartime disruptions in trade and exacerbated by the demands of postwar reconstruction.⁷⁵ As a result, US currency was difficult to obtain in Australia. Women who aspired to visit America could rarely secure sufficient dollars to keep them afloat for the duration of their visit.

To circumvent this issue, some pre-purchased travel and accommodation in sterling prior to departure, but accomplishing this task by letter was no mean feat.⁷⁶ Others arrived in America with a perilously short supply of dollars, and pinned their hopes on finding work before the well ran dry.⁷⁷ For many, these financial restrictions acted as a disincentive to remain stateside for any extended length of time. In 1955, when Marie Coleman left Sydney, she could obtain only a 'very small amount of American dollars', which made 'travel in the States very, very, very difficult indeed.' Faced with these challenges, alongside the ongoing immigration restrictions, she had no thoughts of lingering longer than the six months allowed by her tourist visa.⁷⁸

The continuities that characterised the immediate postwar decades faltered in the early 1960s, the point at which my story draws to a close. As much recent

⁷⁵ Lee, "Australia, the British Commonwealth, and the United States, 1950–1953," 446–47; Paul L. Robertson and John Singleton, "The Commonwealth as Economic Network," *Australian Economic History Review* 41, no. 3 (2001): 241–66.

⁷⁶ Marie Coleman interviewed by Anne Rees, 6 August 2014.

⁷⁷ See for example, Shirley Ann Richards interviewed by Mark Juddery, 2001, 570456, National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), Canberra.

⁷⁸ Coleman interview.

scholarship has emphasised, it was in this decade, not during the war in the Pacific, that Australia would drift away from Britain and realign itself towards the United States. There were several factors responsible for this shift. Foremost among them was Britain's 1961 application to enter the European Economic Community, a move which signalled that the 'Mother Country' was spurning its offspring in favour of closer ties to Europe.⁷⁹ Another blow came the following year, when the British parliament passed the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*, which revoked Australians' rights to live and work in Britain for an indefinite period.⁸⁰ These two perceived rejections had a momentous impact. The 'psychological shock of being dumped', to quote prominent journalist Donald Horne, did much to hasten Australia's 'dramatic reorientation'.⁸¹ In 1963, that reorientation found expression in the lacklustre reception given to the Queen, who was greeted by crowds far smaller than the admiring throngs of 1954.⁸²

At the same time, relations with the States entered into a more intense yet ambivalent phase. It was the apex of the 'American Century', and Australia was eager to be involved. The first troops were deployed to Vietnam in 1962, and by 1966 Prime Minister Harold Holt had committed to go '[a]ll the way with LBJ'. As the decade progressed, the escalation of military involvement in Vietnam prompted an outbreak of anti-American sentiment, especially among left-leaning youth, while public intellectuals such as Robin Boyd and Geoffrey Serle denounced the scourge of 'Americanisation'.⁸³ But among these critics were also a growing number of fans. In *Dancing on Coral*, Glenda Adams' autobiographical novel set in the early 1960s, Manhattan threatens to supplant London in travel fantasies of young Australians.

⁷⁹ Stuart Ward, "Sentiment and Self-Interest: The Imperial Ideal in Anglo-Australian Commercial Culture," *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116 (2001): 91–108.

⁸⁰ James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010), 40–42.

⁸¹ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965), 88.

⁸² Peter Spearritt, "Royal Progress: The Queen and Her Australian Subjects," *Australian Cultural History*, no. 5 (1986): 89–91.

⁸³ Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1960); Geoffrey Serle, "Godzone: Austerica Unlimited?" *Meanjin Quarterly*, no. 4 (1967): 237–50. For a fictional rendering of the anti-American sentiment that began to flourish among Australian youth in the late 1960s, see Frank Moorhouse, *The Americans, Baby* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972).

The middle-aged Anglophile Henry Watter can proudly recite the ports visited en route to London, but his daughter Lark memorises the American states in preparation for her departure to New York.⁸⁴

Just as Australia shifted its global outlook, the globe became smaller than ever. Although commercial aircraft had transported Australians to London since 1935, and traversed the Pacific since 1946, it was not until the 1960s, when the jet age began, that the aeroplane usurped the steamship. As both fares and flight times plummeted, young Australians headed to the airport. Gone were the days when international travel was a leisurely affair, typically contemplated only once or twice a lifetime. The vast expanse of the Pacific could now be crossed in a matter of hours, and a visit to New York could be squeezed into an annual vacation. The long bemoaned isolation of the Antipodes had been overcome by the jet engine, and a new age of mass mobility had begun.⁸⁵

The women who took advantage of these affordable airfares also differed from the generations that had gone before. Women's Liberation came late to Australia, not bursting into flower until the early 1970s, but even during the 1960s a new expansiveness entered into women's lives and aspirations.⁸⁶ As the baby boomers came of age, social mores loosened and old verities came unstuck. Higher education, careers and travel were no longer the preserve of a fortunate few, and women began to lose patience with masculinist norms. The generation that crossed the Pacific in the 1960s and beyond, which includes journalist Lillian Roxon and writer Kate Jennings, demonstrated an outspoken identification with feminist politics and a willingness to shun social convention that was more muted among their

⁸⁴ Glenda Adams, *Dancing on Coral* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1987), 18, 77.

⁸⁵ For a discussion of the impact of air travel upon Australian mobility, see Andrew Taylor, "From Sea to Air: The Impact of Jet Travel on Australia's 'Australia,'" in *The Making of a Pluralist Australia, 1950–1990: Selected Papers from the Inaugural EASA Conference, 1991*, ed. Giovanna Capone and Werner Senn (Bern and New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 11–24; Jon Piccini, "Travel, Politics and the Limits of Liminality During Australia's Sixties," *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 1–20.

⁸⁶ On the emergence of Women's Liberation in Australia, see Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 214–30. On the mid-1960s as a turning point for women and their aspirations, see Alison Mackinnon, *Women, Love and Learning: The Double Bind* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 14–17.

predecessors. Less concerned with respectability, they denounced patriarchy, took lovers and abandoned undergarments, all in full view of the world.⁸⁷ They were a different breed, emblematic of a different era.

The stories of their predecessors are hidden away in archives large and small, digital and dust-filled, on both sides of the Pacific. In clipping files in Hollywood's Margaret Herrick Library, there are tales of actresses who enjoyed a brief moment in the spotlight before plummeting towards career oblivion.⁸⁸ In the Dee Why municipal library, a stone's throw from the surf, lie the letters of a local who taught the beach wisdom of her childhood in 1920s San Francisco.⁸⁹ And in the virtual archive of digitised newspapers, accessible via any internet connection, we can uncover the murky doings of actress Nellie Elsing, who gained notoriety in 1914 as New York's first female 'auto thief'.⁹⁰ These archives, alongside others in cities ranging from Adelaide to Carbondale, have been plumbed for the jottings and ephemera of career-minded women whose ambitions took them stateside. To research mobility is, almost inevitably, to become mobile oneself. Organisational records, novels, autobiography, travel memoirs, photographs, non-digitised periodicals, oral history transcripts and oral history interviews have also offered glimpses of lives and travels hitherto forgotten.

Together these sources have offered up the stories of over 630 women, most of whom have previously escaped the attention of historians. This group is at once too capacious to be featured in full, and—given the departure figures cited above—too small to be regarded as any more than the tip of the iceberg. It encompasses a mix of hazy figures, whose stories must be pieced together from a press clipping or two, and more vivid historical subjects, who left behind a rich and often untapped archive. As tends to be the case, the latter group contains a disproportionate number

⁸⁷ For more detail on these women and their feminist politics, see Robert Milliken, *Mother of Rock: The Lillian Roxon Story* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2002); Kate Jennings, *Trouble: Evolution of a Radical* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2010).

⁸⁸ See, for example, Nancy Nash, Biography file, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.

⁸⁹ Papers of Isabel Letham, 1860–1995, Warringah Local Studies Collection, Dee Why Library, Sydney.

⁹⁰ "Woman Held as Auto Thief," *New York Times*, 3 November 1914.

of elites. Yet while neither a perfect nor a complete sample, this storehouse of lives nonetheless provides rich insight into the spectrum of women who sought their fortune in the United States. A large but still manageable database, it speaks of the diverse range and common threads of their experiences, and the shifts and continuities over time.

Of all sources used to amass this database, digitised periodicals have been among the most important. Given the relative rarity of transpacific travel in the early twentieth century, the departure of career women to the United States would often rate a mention in local newspapers, while journalists in America regarded Australian visitors as a curious novelty. Thanks to the development of online tools such as Trove and newspapers.com, researchers can now reap the benefits of this journalistic attention to the comings and goings of female travellers. Even a generic search term such as ‘Australian woman’, entered into the *New York Times* digital archive, garners hundreds of hits, at least some of which will bear fruit. More specialised searches, focused around a particular individual, location or profession, glean even richer rewards.

In conducting research with such tools, there is, as Bishop notes, ‘a degree of serendipity involved’.⁹¹ A paragraph about a recent Harvard graduate in the *Australian Women’s Weekly* may sit above a photograph of an aspiring film star waving farewell at the dock. Following the tracks of the Hollywood hopeful might lead to an article in the *Los Angeles Times* that mentions her sister’s recent arrival in New York. Following the sister may uncover a friend, and so on. Such detective work has brought many travel tales to the surface, but untold others remain hidden in the digital depths. Chance also reigns in the digital archive in other ways. Each list of search results reflects numerous variables beyond a historian’s control: the periodicals chosen to be digitised, the quality of the optical character recognition (OCR) technology used to generate searchable text, and the algorithm used to rank

⁹¹ Bishop, “Women on the Move,” 43.

results.⁹² The patterns that emerge from such data must be read with an eye to these often invisible influences. It is difficult to know, for instance, whether the abundance of Perth-based travellers uncovered in this research reflects a pronounced Western Australian engagement with the United States, or is merely a product of the thorough and accurate digitisation of the *West Australian* newspaper.

Yet these digital tools, idiosyncratic as they may be, have contributed much to this project. Although periodical research certainly pre-dates the digital era, the newfound ability to search hundreds of publications makes it far easier to follow transnational subjects across decades and continents. The onward mobility of Australian women, both within the United States and throughout the Atlantic world, is made visible like never before. We can now reliably track secretary Yvonne Abdy from Sydney, to London, to Montreal, to Washington DC, and back to Sydney, a journey that extended from 1947 to 1974, when we might otherwise have lost the trail.⁹³ In particular, the abundance of regional newspapers featured within online databases, many of which are little available in hard-copy, has placed the spotlight on non-metropolitan sites. The profusion of travel tales that have emerged from the *Picton Post*, the *Kalgoorlie Miner* and the *Fort Wayne Daily News* make it clear that transpacific mobility often began and ended outside urban centres. Rather than a single artery running between Sydney and San Francisco, the movement of women and ideas across the Pacific was instead a web of connections that lay between myriad destinations, metropolitan and regional, in both Australia and the US.

But even in the digital era, when all manner of travels and travellers are rendered newly visible, silences and elisions remain. The issue of sexuality, and in particular lesbianism, is a conspicuous gap, as will be discussed further in Chapter One. Transpacific travellers also tended to be circumspect about questions of

⁹² For a discussion of the impact of OCR technology upon historical research, see Carolyn Strange et al., “Mining for the Meanings of a Murder: The Impact of OCR Quality on the Use of Digitized Historical Newspapers,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (2014): n. p.

⁹³ “Hundred Australian girls work in Washington,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 21 May 1949, 17; Patty Cavin, “Aussie is Happy in Indian Post,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, 30 April 1954, 66; “Yvonne Abdy—Charles McVay,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, 6 June 1954, S2; “People and Fashions,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 16 January 1974, 13–14.

money, politics and religion. The use of oral history, which has included both original interviews and archived transcripts, presents its own challenges. When women are asked to recall travel undertaken decades prior, the attitudes of the past and those of the present can be difficult to distinguish. In discussing encounters with African Americans, for instance, these travellers often profess anti-racist convictions that, while unremarkable today, were far from commonplace six decades ago. These progressive racial politics cannot be wholly attributed to twenty-first century sensibilities, as similar views abound within letters and diaries written at the time, but may well be inflected by subsequent experience. Even if the core sentiment existed at the original moment of interracial encounter, the unabashed confidence with which interview subjects denounce racial inequality can seem more a product of the 2010s than the 1940s.⁹⁴

Although travellers' scribbles, published and unpublished, appear throughout the following chapters, this is not a study of travel writing. In the pages that follow, people rather than texts remain the primary subject of analysis. This is not to claim to bypass the layers of textual mediation that muffle our relationship with the past, or to ignore the mutually constitutive relationship between representation and experience. But it does reflect a desire to avoid the 'sensation of abstraction' that emerges when, as Michael Roper has noted, 'signification is the start and the end point of study' and 'experience is placed at the edge of historical analysis.'⁹⁵ The primary concern here is to evoke the thrill of a first glimpse of the New York skyline, not to analyse the discourse of discovery. That thrill can only be passed down to us and given historical meaning via language, and was no doubt influenced by readings of other texts, but it should not be forgotten that there was once the thrill itself.⁹⁶ We cannot but fail to understand and recreate that predawn

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the potential impact of subsequent experience on the language and analysis adopted by oral history interview subjects, see Alistair Thomson, "A Crisis of Masculinity? Australian Military Manhood in the Great War," in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, 133–47.

⁹⁵ Michael Roper, "Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History," *History Workshop Journal* 59, no. 1 (2005): 62.

⁹⁶ For further discussion of the relationship between language and feeling, or emotion, see Jan Plamper, "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns," *History and Theory* 49, no. 2 (2010): 237–65.

hour, that quickened heartbeat, and the hazy outline of towers in the distance, but we must and do try nonetheless.⁹⁷

Both the skyline itself and the steamship which brought it into view were icons of modernity, the concept which frames the story told here. It was the modernity of the United States that beguiled Australian women, and it was their own modernity—and indeed, that of Australia—that made it possible for them to encounter America in the first place. But what does modernity mean? Thousands of pages have been dedicated to this question, but a simple definition has proven elusive. The term ‘modern’ can be used to invoke reason, efficiency and order, or fragmentation, flux and chaos. It can refer to the ‘masculine’ sphere of technological advancement and bureaucratic control, or a ‘feminine’ realm of passivity, consumption and spectacle. The ‘modern era’ can be traced back hundreds of years, or it can refer to several decades in the twentieth century.⁹⁸ The meaning of the modern has been further complicated, in recent years, by a raft of new scholarship on what Tani Barlow and others have termed ‘colonial modernity’.⁹⁹ Contesting the long-held assumption that modernity emerged from London, Paris and New York, and was disseminated to more ‘backward’ parts of the world, numerous scholars have demonstrated that indigenous incarnations of the modern also arose in colonial and provincial sites. As part of broader moves to ‘provincialize Europe’, the notion of a singular ‘modernity’ has been replaced by a new paradigm of ‘multiple modernities’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ For a recent survey of the potentialities and pitfalls of using travel writing as historical evidence, see Daniel Kilbride, “Travel Writing as Evidence with Special Attention to Nineteenth-Century Anglo-America,” *History Compass* 9, no. 4 (2011): 339–50.

⁹⁸ On the multiple meanings of modernity, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983); Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 9–37; Susan Stanford Friedman, “Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism,” *Modernism/modernity* 8, no. 3 (2001): 493–513.

⁹⁹ Tani E. Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); Robert Dixon, *Photography, Early Cinema and Colonial Modernity: Frank Hurley’s Synchronized Lecture Entertainments* (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000); Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Muddle of

This paradigm has particular significance for Australia, where geographical distance from Europe and North America has long been equated with ‘cultural belatedness’. Since colonial settlement, ‘the fact that we are a long way away’ has, in the words of literary scholar David Carter, been ‘converted into the sense that we are or we were a long way behind.’¹⁰¹ Modernity, according to this logic, came late to the southern continent, and was inevitably derivative and out-of-date. But over the last two decades, in dialogue with the emergent ‘multiple modernities’ literature, Australian scholars have mapped both local engagements with international currents in modernity and vernacular expressions of the modern. The work of Carter, Robert Dixon, Jill Matthews and others has done much to establish that, in Matthews’ words, Sydney was not ‘the last station on the line, a backwater ten years behind Europe and America’, but ‘a busy port of call in the ceaseless international ebb and flow of commerce and ideas that underpin cosmopolitan modernity.’¹⁰²

Although an invaluable corrective to the Eurocentrism and stadial logic of earlier theorisations of modernity, this scholarship also raises questions of its own. What distinguished these multiple modernities? What united them as modern? And did the modern ever differ in degree, or only in kind? In other words, what was similar and what was different about the modernity of Sydney and New York, and

Modernity,” *American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 663–75; S. N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29; Björn Wittrock, “Modernity: One, None, or Many? European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition,” *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 31–60; Carol Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now,” *American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 676–87. The most extensive explication of this paradigm to date is Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). In this recently published monograph, Friedman argues that the critique of Western-centric models of modernity must also extend to the recognition of modernities dating from the so-called ‘premodern’ era prior to 1500.

¹⁰¹ David Carter, *Almost Always Modern: Australian Print Cultures and Modernity* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013), viii.

¹⁰² Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*, 8; Dixon, *Photography, Early Cinema and Colonial Modernity*; Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly, eds., *Impact of the Modern: Vernacular Modernities in Australia, 1870s–1960s* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008); Philip Goad, Andrew McNamara, and Ann Stephen, eds., *Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia, 1917–1967* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2008); Neil Levi, “Time, Culture, Nation: Australian Perspectives on Modernism, Modernity and Modernisation,” *Australian Cultural History*, no. 25 (2006): 1–9; Peter Beilharz, “Two New Britannias: Modernism and Modernity across the Antipodes,” *Australian Cultural History*, no. 25 (2006): 145–58.

were they equally modern? These questions, so far, remain largely unresolved. The likes of Jenner, who deemed America ‘light years ahead’, would no doubt insist that the latter was more modern, but the contrasts she and others noted could also be attributed to different kinds of modernity rather than different levels.

To navigate this terrain, it is helpful to turn to Marshall Berman and David Harvey. In their seminal expositions of modernity, these scholars emphasise its dynamic of constant reinvention. Modernity, they stress, is always looking forward, and repudiating what has gone before. It is, in Berman’s words, ‘a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal’, or, as Harvey puts it, ‘[t]he only secure thing about modernity is its insecurity.’¹⁰³ Understood in these terms, the ‘modern’ can have no fixed meaning, but refers to what was understood to be ‘new’, ‘up-to-date’ and the ‘latest’ in a particular setting. As Matthews puts it, modernity is ‘a chameleon term whose colouration comes from its context.’¹⁰⁴ What was ‘new’ in Melbourne would often differ from what was ‘up-to-date’ in Chicago—and may well resemble the ‘latest’ Chicago craze from five years ago—but that meaning was derived from local conditions rather than an international gold standard of modernity.

What counted as ‘modern’ may have been specific to each place, yet its association with novelty and progress ensured that it often seemed to come from elsewhere. Modernity was global instead of local, cosmopolitan instead of national, an international wind of change both celebrated and reviled for its foreignness. This wind flowed along many routes and blew in many directions, but throughout the first half of the twentieth century it most often appeared to come from the United States.¹⁰⁵ In Australia and elsewhere, new currents of thought and behaviour were often labelled ‘Americanisation’, and processes variously described as ‘Americanisation’ or ‘modernisation’ could be said to be synonymous.¹⁰⁶ It is this imagined fusion of the American and the modern that buttresses my title and

¹⁰³ Berman, *All That is Solid*, 15; Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8–12.

¹⁰⁶ Roger Bell, “American/Global: Australian/Local,” in *Australia and the United States in the American Century: Essays in International History* (Perth: Network Books, 2006), 326.

argument. To characterise transpacific mobility as ‘travelling to tomorrow’ is not to imply that Australia was locked in the past, but rather to evoke the contemporary perception that new ideas, technologies and behaviours proliferated on the other side of the Pacific. The following chapters foreground the sense that modernity was ‘out there’, a foreign artefact to be found, seized and brought home, yet are nonetheless underpinned by the recognition that it was also home-grown.

In each of the first six chapters we glimpse this world of tomorrow from a different angle. By ranging from automobility to abstract expressionism, skyscrapers to scientific management, they trace how Australian women responded to and participated in American modernity, in its numerous guises, throughout the half-century prior to 1960. They document how forces such as the two world wars, the decline of the British Empire, and the expansion of higher education altered Australian women’s engagement with the US. But they also note the presence of significant continuity throughout this period, differentiating my research from earlier scholarship which tends to envisage the 1940s as the beginning of a new epoch in Australian-American relations.

Chapter One, focused on modern womanhood, explores how Australian women perceived and experienced the ‘woman’s paradise’ they professed to discover in the United States. From the 1920s onward, these visitors coveted the college degrees, helpful husbands and labour-saving devices that American women seemed to have at their fingertips. After witnessing a more progressive model of gender relations they also became newly conscious of the opportunities they lacked back home. This chapter reveals the ways in which Australian women took advantage of the professional and educational opportunities on display, and concludes that the congenial atmosphere encountered in the United States paved the way for a more sustained engagement with the nation and its people.

Chapter Two, which examines the cosmopolitan character of the United States, foregrounds the modern preoccupation with race. For women born and raised during the heyday of White Australia, travelling in the States entailed an unfamiliar level of exposure to racial difference. Thrust into close proximity with African Americans, migrants from Asia and Europe, and fellow visitors from around

the world, these women were compelled to grapple with racial hierarchies, come to grips with their own whiteness, and ponder the possibilities and limits of kinship between so-called 'white men's countries'. Travelling to America, in short, provided an education in race, one that tested the prejudices of their upbringing against the lived complexities of racial difference.

The opening chapters' discussion of gender and race is followed by two chapters concerned with Australians' professional activity in the States: one dedicated to the modernisation of 'women's work', and a second which examines the modern cultural industries. With a focus upon librarianship and early childhood education, Chapter Three argues that from the 1930s the United States became a mecca for Australian career women eager to extend their professional expertise, coming to equal and even supplant the more established allure of London. These women were impressed by the US emphasis upon university degrees and scientific method, and often went on to reform Australian training and practice along American lines. Rejecting what they saw as the backwardness of British professional culture, they became among the first to question whether the 'Mother Country' was indeed the best model for Australia.

Chapter Four takes the story from modern professions to modern culture, from the hushed expanses of the public library to the film sets of Hollywood. Although much existing scholarship has depicted Australians as voracious consumers of American entertainments, this chapter reveals that the import of mass media from the US was accompanied by the large-scale export of local talent. Actresses, writers, painters and musicians all crossed the Pacific with dreams of fame and fortune, and some went on to become active and even celebrated producers of the modern and modernist culture emanating from the United States.

America may have been streamlined and glistening with possibility, but could also feel rather exhausting. Chapter Five highlights the brisk tempo or 'hustle' of daily life in the States, which Australian women believed far exceeded the more leisurely pace back home. While braving the nation's crowded sidewalks and highways, they blanched at a vision of the future divorced from nature, driven by self-interest and inimical to rest. Focused on cities such as New York and Chicago,

these critiques injected a note of caution into an otherwise enthusiastic embrace of American modernity, and led Australia's perceived provincialism to be reimagined as a barricade against the worst excesses of modern life.

Not only did America promote speed, it also celebrated motion. Chapter Six foregrounds the restlessness of the modern age, suggesting that America's culture and geography encouraged Australian women to remain mobile throughout the forty-eight states and the broader Atlantic world. With little incentive to come to a halt, many women adopted a globetrotting existence, seeking out opportunities and adventures across Australia, America, Britain and beyond. In an age when self-interested mobility remained a largely masculine privilege, they dared to acquire many homes and none, reinventing themselves as modern cosmopolitans and helping to reshape Australia's ties to the world.

Yet most eventually came home, as noted in Chapter Seven. While some women who visited the States spent the rest of their lives abroad, heading back to Australia was the norm. All too often, this was a reluctant homecoming, prompted by lack of funds, family responsibilities or visa problems, and beset by alienation and regret. But despite these difficulties, many managed to pursue successful careers back home, and often used their positions of influences to become agents of Americanisation and modernisation in Australia.

This is a history grounded in the minutiae of women's lives, women who were remarkable enough to deviate from the conventional trajectories of their generation, but who were also sufficiently commonplace to have largely vanished from the historical record.¹⁰⁷ Yet it is more than a project of recuperation. I am also following these travellers for the fresh perspective they provide on more familiar narratives: Australia's reorientation towards the United States, the decline of imperial sentiment, and the progress of modernity. Looking through the eyes of Australian women—women who influenced and were influenced by these

¹⁰⁷ In this respect, these women are reminiscent of the 'exceptional typical' category formulated by practitioners of microhistory. As Matti Peltonen notes in his discussion of this concept, 'a marginal or extreme case is in the some respects typical of a larger area or a group, but in its extremeness differs from the typical case in significant ways.' Matti Peltonen, "Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research," *History and Theory* 40, no. 3 (2001): 357.

processes—enables us to tell a different, more intimate story of Australia’s place in the world. If transnational history is revealing that the world has long been a web of interpersonal connections, this study is an attempt to reconstruct the network of threads that women once spun across the Pacific.

CHAPTER 1

A Woman's Paradise: Gender Relations and the Modern American Woman

In September 1949, the theatre producer Theresa Moore left her home in Canberra and boarded a plane bound for San Francisco. Her scientist husband Milton had received a fellowship to conduct research in the United States, and Theresa had decided to accompany him abroad. Over the following year, while Milton studied plant genetics in Texas, California and Minnesota, Moore investigated local theatre groups and undertook secretarial work. She also maintained a regular correspondence with her mother and sister, in which she documented her impressions. On 27 September, three weeks after arrival, Moore penned a missive announcing that America was a 'woman's paradise'. Her initial assessment was confirmed by subsequent experience, and two months later she repeated her claim. '[I]t's nice to be a woman in America,' she wrote. These letters, and others that followed, reported that American women were saved from the drudgery of household toil by labour-saving devices and helpful husbands, allowing them to retain the energy of youth and pursue interests outside the home. After years of dedicating the bulk of her energies to housework and childcare, Moore was amazed to find mature matrons active in colleges, clubs and workplaces. By late 1950 she concluded that 'our ancestors migrated to the wrong country. This sho' is a woman's country [sic].' Yet despite her enthusiasm for the US model of gender relations, Moore held little hope of finding a receptive audience for these ideas in Australia. 'I know I won't be able to change anything when I get home,' she reflected on the eve of departure, 'it just makes me sad to realise what we are missing.'¹

¹ Theresa Moore to mother, 27 September and 15 November 1949; 22 November and 2 December 1950, box 3, Papers of Theresa Moore, c. 1940–1988, MS ACC02.093, National Library of Australia (NLA), Canberra.



Figure 5: Theresa and Milton Moore in Berkeley, 1950. Image courtesy of Philip Moore.

Moore's belief that women in Australia missed out on liberties and pleasures that were commonplace across the Pacific was shared by many of her contemporaries. During the 1900s and 10s, Australian women visiting America could boast of trailblazing female enfranchisement, but by the interwar decades their successors began to covet the college degrees and professional careers that local women seemed to have at their fingertips. Even wives and mothers appeared able to join this busy brigade, thanks to the combination of washing machines and husbands willing to use them. To be sure, this idealised vision of women's lives in the United States reflects the fact that Australian visitors largely interacted with a white, urban elite. Yet even women from the equivalent elite in Sydney or Melbourne found much to envy in the life of their American sisters, whose freedom and status seemed to eclipse those of even the most privileged representatives of

Australian womanhood. This disparity disposed female visitors to speak highly of the nation and its people, and also became central to the appeal of the United States among women with professional ambitions, many of whom were sufficiently impressed to prolong their stay or regret their departure.

This chapter explores how Australian women perceived and experienced the ‘woman’s paradise’ they professed to discover in the United States. The following pages trace the persistent belief that life held greater possibilities and pleasures for women in the ‘land of liberty’, and discuss how this belief was borne out by the experience of individual Australians abroad. In the absence of a comprehensive comparison of women’s lives in the two countries—a subject for another thesis—we cannot conclude that white American women were more emancipated than their Australian counterparts. Yet the research presented here does point in that direction. For many women who travelled across the Pacific, America opened the door to unprecedented educational and professional opportunities: some enjoyed the benefits of a university system uniquely open to women; some climbed the career ladder in professions that remained male enclaves at home; and others found a reprieve from the sexism of the Australian workplace. Even those who did not personally benefit from this more egalitarian climate often returned home with an enlarged vision of the possibilities of female endeavour, and a growing discontent with the constraints placed upon women in Australia. These constraints had certainly been a factor motivating many to travel abroad, but the full extent to which Australia was a ‘man’s country’ only became apparent once they encountered a ‘woman’s paradise’. Tasting life as a woman in the United States could, we shall see, both open up new horizons for career development and prompt a form of feminist awakening.

The visibility of emancipated women in the United States not only advertised the nation’s unusual regard for female endeavour, but also evoked its modernity. As many scholars have shown, the woman in the public sphere was a key signifier of the excitements and anxieties of modern life. While the concept of the modern woman or girl could be used in reference to a range of female types—from the serious-minded doctor to the frivolous flapper—she was typically associated

with freedom, consumption and mobility. Appearing in magazines, on the silver screen and the street itself, the woman who worked, smoked, drove or dated evoked the emancipatory potential of earning a wage, as well as the new urban pleasures of romance, spectacle and shopping. Yet her penetration and subsequent feminisation of urban space also unsettled the boundaries between the male world of the city and the feminine sphere of the home, a process which undermined the distinction between the virtuous woman and the prostitute, and threatened to pollute the serious work of the city with hedonistic mass culture.²

The emergence of modern womanhood occurred from Copenhagen to Tokyo, but was, in the early to mid-twentieth century, particularly associated with the United States, the nation at the forefront of consumer capitalism and industrial modernisation.³ During the period of this study, therefore, the concepts of modernity, female liberty and America were closely intertwined.⁴ The nation seemed a ‘woman’s paradise’ because it was modern, and it seemed modern because it was a ‘woman’s paradise’. The keen interest that Australian women displayed towards their American counterparts hence constituted part of a broader engagement with the modernity of the United States. Not only did the abundance of career women provide compelling evidence that America was more advanced than Australia, it also generated considerable enthusiasm for the brave new world being forged across the Pacific. The future glimpsed in America was not all bright, but it certainly seemed fertile ground for women to reach their full potential.

² Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*; Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004); Penny Tinkler and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “Feminine Modernity in Interwar Britain and North America: Corsets, Cars, and Cigarettes,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 3 (2008): 113–43; Leigh Ann Wheeler and Jean H. Quataert, “Modern Womanhood: Unusual Sites of Twentieth-Century Women’s Empowerment in Europe and the United States,” *Journal of Women’s History* 27, no. 2 (2015): 7–13.

³ On modern womanhood in Denmark and Japan, see Birgitte Søland, *Becoming Modern: Young Women and the Reconstruction of Womanhood in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Vera Mackie, “Gender and Modernity in Japan’s ‘Long Twentieth Century,’” *Journal of Women’s History* 25, no. 3 (2013): 75–77.

⁴ Emily S. Rosenberg, “Consuming Women: Images of ‘Americanization’ in the American Century,” *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 3 (1999): 479–97; Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., eds., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 26–27.

The land of matriarchs

The association between the ‘land of liberty’ and female freedom has a long lineage. Throughout the nineteenth century, visitors from Britain and Europe—including early feminist Harriet Martineau—remarked upon the elevated status of women in the United States.⁵ As the century drew to a close, the figure of the emancipated American woman was introduced to an international audience by the global outreach of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). From the 1880s onwards, the American-based WCTU dispatched travelling lecturers such as Jessie Ackermann throughout the Pacific region, including the far-flung Australian colonies, where they acted as ‘models of womanly independence’ among the local population.⁶ Federation-era visitors to the United States confirmed that these lecturers were characteristic of American womanhood. In 1902 Victorian suffragist Vida Goldstein reported from Chicago that the nation’s women were the most liberated in the world.⁷

Despite this ongoing admiration of their sisters across the Pacific, there was a brief moment at the dawn of the twentieth century when Australian women were themselves heralded as trailblazers of female emancipation. After the *Commonwealth Franchise Act* was passed in 1902, the federal franchise was extended to all white Australian women, a right not enjoyed by American women until 1920 and British women until 1928. During these decades Australian feminists enjoyed considerable esteem abroad, and a number contributed their progressive energies to reform movements within the United States. Goldstein was feted by President Roosevelt and leading feminist Susan B. Anthony during her 1902

⁵ Henry Steele Commager, *America in Perspective: The United States through Foreign Eyes* (New York: Random House, 1947), xvii; Richard Rapson, *Britons View America: Travel Commentary, 1860–1935* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), 113; Lesa Scholl, “Mediation and Expansion: Harriet Martineau’s Travels in America,” *Women’s History Review* 18, no. 5 (2009): 827–29.

⁶ Ian Tyrrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 75, 139. See also Ian Tyrrell, “International Aspects of the Women’s Temperance Movement in Australia: The Influence of the WTCU, 1882–1914,” *Journal of Religious History*, no. 12 (1983): 284–304.

⁷ Pesman, *Duty Free*, 115.

American lecture tour, while Alice Henry and Miles Franklin assumed a central role within the Chicago trade union movement.⁸ In 1915 they were joined by the future feminist leader Jessie Street, who spent six months in New York as the undermatron of Waverley House, a reception house for women accused of soliciting.⁹ May Manning, the former secretary of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales, was even recruited to spearhead the Maryland suffrage campaign during the summer of 1910.¹⁰ During this period, transpacific travellers were also apt to conclude that Australian women enjoyed greater autonomy in addition to, or perhaps as a consequence of, their superior legal rights. When writer Katharine Susannah Prichard arrived in New York in 1908, she was shocked to be advised against walking alone through the streets, as she had been accustomed to ‘go about when and where I pleased’ back home.¹¹

But the moment in which Australian women could boast of their superior rights soon came to an end. In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment granted American women the federal franchise, and during subsequent decades visitors from Australia marvelled at the powerful position of the ‘weaker sex’ in the United States. American feminist historiography has tended to paint the period between the extension of the franchise and the emergence of Women’s Liberation as a period of backlash against the emancipatory politics of the Progressive Era. These were the ‘doldrums’, the ‘decades of discontent’, a trough between the first and second feminist waves.¹² Yet contemporary Australian visitors were blind to the setbacks

⁸ Kirkby, *Alice Henry*; Roe, *Stella Miles Franklin*, 117–94; Lake, “British World or New World?” 46–47; Wright, “A Splendid Object Lesson,” 12–36.

⁹ Lenore Coltheart, ed., *Jessie Street: A Revised Autobiography* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2004), 44–49.

¹⁰ M. L. Manning, “Organizing the Movement in Australia,” *The Independent*, 20 May 1909, 1067; *The Dawn* (Sydney), 2 July 1894, 23; “Plan Suffrage Campaign,” *Sun* (Baltimore), 10 July 1910, 8; “Australian Suffragist Here,” *Sun* (Baltimore), 13 July 1910, 7; “Suffragists on Plaza,” *Sun* (Baltimore), 26 July 1910, 8; “Miss Manning in Hagerstown,” *Sun* (Baltimore), 29 July 1910, 14; Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001), 51.

¹¹ Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Child of the Hurricane: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1964), 174.

¹² See, for instance, Lois Scharf, *To Work and to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston: Twayne, 1982); Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen, eds., *Decades of Discontent: The Women’s Movement, 1920–1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press,

and slow progress long associated with these decades, and found much to envy in local women's lives. In 1921, only a year after the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, one returned traveller reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that 'Australia is still very much a man's country when compared with the United States of America.'¹³

The most conspicuous sign of this disparity was the abundance of female professionals in the States, and the apparent ease with which women combined marriage and a career. One of the first to document this phenomenon at length was Queensland journalist Harrie Nowland, who departed for California in 1921, where she tried her hand at business and journalism.¹⁴ Upon her return in 1923, she reported that 'in America the extent to which the wife as well as the husband works outside the home is almost limitless....Many women hold industrial or professional appointments throughout their married lives.'¹⁵ This vision of American womanhood was echoed by Sydney welfare inspector May Matthews, who found women mayors, jurists, bank managers and newspaper editors throughout her 1927 American tour.¹⁶ Matthews concluded that 'every position (except, perhaps, that of President) is open to women to fill in the United States.'¹⁷ Schoolteacher L. O. H. Heyne made a similar assessment: 'Women do not want to be confined to the role of mere housekeepers,' she announced in 1926 on her return from the States.¹⁸

1983); Leila J. Rupp and Verta A. Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 218; Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994); Lynn D. Gordon, "Education and the Professions," in *A Companion to American Women's History*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 242–45; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Nancy F. Cott, *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³ "Women in the Antipodes," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 December 1921, 5.

¹⁴ "America To-Day," *Cairns Post*, 2 August 1923, 3.

¹⁵ Harrie Nowland, "American Domesticity," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1923, 17.

¹⁶ "A Working Nation: Impressions of America," *Mercury* (Hobart), 1 October 1929, 13.

¹⁷ May Matthews, "Notable Women in Public Life of USA," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 9 September 1933, 10.

¹⁸ "Americans Just Children," *Mail* (Adelaide), 25 September 1926, 1.

American scholars have long recognised that the incidence and public discussion of working wives ballooned in the 1920s, but the above comments highlight the international novelty of this trend. For these Australian visitors, the married career woman was a phenomenon unique to the United States, a figure near absent from the social landscape back home. This perceived disparity, moreover, continued into the 1930s, a decade more commonly associated with a return to conventional gender roles.¹⁹ When Sydney's Edith Glanville passed through Washington DC in 1936, a local journalist pressed her on the status of her countrywomen. By way of response, Glanville complained that few Australian women took an 'active part in public life' and most remained 'concerned with domestic duties.' 'Compared with American women we are still in a pioneer state,' she concluded.²⁰

Although derived from first-hand impressions, these assessments are borne out by statistical evidence. In 1920, only 16 percent of Australian women participated in the workforce, compared to 24 percent in the United States. By the early 1930s, those figures had risen 18 and 25 percent. As contemporary travellers intuited, this gap was even greater among married women. Throughout the interwar decades, American wives were twice as likely to engage in remunerative employment. By 1940, nearly fifteen percent contributed to the family income.²¹ Of course, not all these working wives were middle-class women in quest of professional fulfilment. These figures also encompass instances of menial labour driven by financial necessity. Yet the transpacific disparity in female employment nonetheless suggests that career-minded women could find a more congenial

¹⁹ On the increase in working wives in 1920s America, and the reversal of this trend in the 1930s, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 229, 250–51.

²⁰ Hope Ridings Miller, "Women of Australia Follow Lead Set by US," *Washington Post*, 1 July 1936, 15.

²¹ In 1920, the proportion of wives in the workforce was 4.1 percent in Australia and 9 percent in the US. By the end of the decade, those figures had risen to 4.9 percent and 11.7 percent respectively. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. I (Melbourne: J. Green, Government Printer, 1921), 496–97; *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. II (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1933), 1118–19. For the US figures, see Sandra Opdycke, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Women in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 132.

environment in the United States. For women who sought to combine the pleasures of wifehood and work, America did indeed resemble a (relative) land of opportunity.

Faced with this rising tide of career women, Australian feminists who sojourned in America began to seek rather than dispense advice. Unlike the triumphant suffragists of the early 1900s, the next generation of feminists could boast few tangible victories, and were quick to admit that the status of American women eclipsed the downtrodden state of their compatriots. Although American women themselves, disheartened by domestic inequalities, were looking to Soviet Russia for 'models of female empowerment', visiting Australian feminists deemed female empowerment an abundant commodity in the United States.²² Linda Littlejohn, founder of Australia's League of Women Voters, became a vociferous proponent of American attitudes. In 1938 Littlejohn embarked upon a lecture tour of the States, convinced that the legal rights of Australian women surpassed those of Americans.²³ Yet after she had lived in the States for several years, and married Yale academic Charles Tilden, Littlejohn changed her tune. By 1944, she started to emphasise 'Australia's shortcomings', and proclaimed the US a 'land of matriarchs'. Littlejohn claimed, somewhat dubiously, that America had 'three women to every man', and that 'more than half of the great wealth of the country is in the hands of women'.²⁴ Less hyperbolic, though just as admiring was Bessie Rischbieth, founding president of the Australian Federation of Women Voters. During her 1936 American tour, Rischbieth found the female population 'so vital & alive', and was impressed to discover 'so many qualified women' exerting influence in Washington. With leading

²² On the widespread interest in Soviet Russia among American feminists, see Julia L. Mickenberg, "The Red Taboo in American Women's History: On Not Seeing Revolutionary Russia," *American Communist History* (2016): 2, doi: 10.1080/14743892.2016.1133784; Julia L. Mickenberg, "Suffragettes and Soviets: American Feminists and the Specter of Revolutionary Russia," *Journal of American History* 100, no. 4 (2014): 1021–51; Julia L. Mickenberg, "'To Be His Storm over Asia': American Women, Sex, and Revolutionary Tourism in Russia, 1905–1945," in Barraclough, Bowen-Struyk and Rabinowitz, *Red Love Across the Pacific*, 1–22.

²³ Crete Cage, "US Women Urged to Save Democracy," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 November 1938, A7; "Feminist Lifts Women's Eyes To Example of Australia," *Washington Post*, 30 December 1938, 3.

²⁴ "Women Should Tell Australia's Story to Woman-Ruled US," *Argus* (Melbourne), 17 October 1944, 7.

feminists such as Littlejohn and Rischbieth taking notes on US gender relations, it was clear that the days in which Australian women could claim an advantage over their American counterparts had receded into the past.²⁵

By the end of WWII, career women had proliferated to such an extent that visitors began to portray full-time homemakers as the exception. For Mavis Riley, author of *In the Lap of the Yanks* (1949), stumbling upon a housewife in Ohio was akin to finding a rare butterfly. Weary of encountering women who dared to ‘take up careers...belong to clubs, attend lectures’ and ‘seek an outside world of their own’, she was relieved to meet Mildred, whose ‘life was full of the usual suburban wife’s chores as we know them.’²⁶ Peggy Warner, another travel writer, was also astonished to discover ‘unsophisticated, capable and home-loving’ women walking the streets of suburban Boston, where she spent a year in the mid-1950s. Although the ‘average American woman’, she noted, ‘very often...has a job’, it nonetheless remained possible to encounter ‘good housewives’.²⁷

These approving portraits of happy homemakers reflect the international postwar resurgence of domestic ideologies, but also point to significant national differences regarding the extent to which women’s lives conformed to these conservative ideals. Both writers imagined the American housewife as an endangered species, but neither expressed concerns about the long-term viability of her Australian counterpart. Riley took for granted that her Australian readers would ‘know’ the contours of Mildred’s housebound existence, while Warner noted that her ‘home-loving’ Boston neighbours were ‘just like us’.²⁸ Once again, this firsthand reportage was not too far from the truth. As of the late 1940s, when Riley made her comments, the percentage of working wives in the United States, at 23.8 percent, was triple that in Australia—a much larger disparity than before the war.

²⁵ Bessie Rischbieth to sister, 13 March 1936, item 62, series I; and Bessie Rischbieth, “Across America,” typescript, 1936, item 49, series II, Papers of Bessie Rischbieth, 1900–1967, MS 2004, NLA.

²⁶ Mavis Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks* (Sydney & London: Angus & Robertson, 1949), 73, 142.

²⁷ Peggy Warner, *Don’t Type in Bed: Life with a Roving Journalist* (Melbourne: W. F. Cheshire, 1958), 241.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.

By 1960, that gap had begun to diminish, but the 30 percent of US wives at work still eclipsed the Australian figure of 17 percent.²⁹ By positioning housewifery as the norm back home and one option among many in the States, Riley and Warner pointed to an all too real and persistent gulf between women's lives on opposite sides of the Pacific.

The secrets to her success

The unusual prominence of women in American public life can be attributed to a range of factors, many of which were noted by Australian visitors themselves. Perhaps the most important, but least recognised, secret to this flurry of female endeavour was white privilege. The archetypal 'American woman' depicted by Australian visitors was, like the visitors themselves, implicitly white and well-heeled, or at least middle-class. Australian visitors did encounter black, Asian and indigenous women, but they excluded racial minorities from their representations of American womanhood. Despite the evidence to the contrary, 'Americanness' was equated with whiteness, an assumption that mirrored the prevailing logic among Americans themselves.³⁰

Although race was rendered all but invisible within these discussions of gender, racial hierarchies certainly contributed to the enviable freedoms noted among the female population. This relationship was most explicit in the case of domestic service. In many cases, white women from middle-class and elite households were free to pursue interests outside the home because servants were hard at work in the kitchen. By the 1920s, the majority of these maids and cooks

²⁹ *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. I, 1947, 604–05; *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. III, 1961, 26; Opdycke, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Women in America*, 132.

³⁰ As a number of historians have contended, nineteenth and early twentieth-century European migrants to the United States were initially excluded from the racial category of whiteness, but were later permitted to enter the white fold as they adopted full citizenship. As James Barrett and David Roediger write, the 'processes of "becoming white" and "becoming American" were intertwined at every turn.' James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 3 (1997): 6. For a survey of the literature on whiteness and American identity, see Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (2002): 154–73.

were African American, as white working-class women had largely spurned servanthood in favour of factory or office jobs. The white career woman was thus to some extent a product of the black domestic servant.³¹ In interwar and postwar Australia, by contrast, where the pool of non-white labour was much smaller, fewer households employed home help and servants tended to be white. In the absence of a sizeable racial underclass, middle-class women in Sydney and Melbourne could not rely upon the luxury of domestic assistance, and more often shouldered the burden of housekeeping themselves. Kept busy mopping floors and chopping vegetables, they had less opportunity to engage with the world beyond the home.³²

Australian women who visited America rarely drew an explicit connection between white career women and black domestic labour, but their travel accounts nonetheless reveal evidence of this dynamic. References to ‘coloured’ maids and laundresses pepper these texts, and in many cases represent the only mention of the non-white population.³³ The resulting implication was that women of colour had no role or identity beyond their menial position within prosperous homes. Their clear, if unacknowledged, social function was to ease the domestic burden from white elites. The greater prevalence of domestic labour also attracted attention. In 1923 visiting journalist Harrie Nowland was startled to discover that domestic assistance was so commonplace that even an ‘average American family or couple living in apartments calls in the aid of hired labour.’ Most of this labour was performed by ‘Asiatic, island or coloured’ women. Although Nowland’s account, published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, went on to discuss the ‘almost limitless’

³¹ On the relationship between non-white domestic labour and white women’s public activities, see Heidi Tinsman, “The Indispensable Services of Sisters: Considering Domestic Service in United States and Latin American Studies,” *Journal of Women’s History* 4, no. 1 (1992): 37–59; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor,” *Signs* 18, no. 1 (1992): 1–43.

³² On the incidence and racial character of domestic service in Australia and the US, see B. W. Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Enobong Hannah Branch and Melissa E. Wooten, “Suited for Service: Racialized Rationalizations for the Ideal Domestic Servant from the Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century,” *Social Science History* 36, no. 2 (2012): 169–89; Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

³³ See for example, Alexandra Hasluck, *Portrait in a Mirror: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 197; Mary Perry Diary, 4 July 1923, folder 6, Papers of Mary Beatrice Perry, 1922–1924, MS 9085, NLA.

employment of married women, she did not think to mention that the two phenomena may have been related.³⁴



Figure 6: A black servant shoulders the burden of childcare and housework in a white Atlanta family, 1939. New York Public Library (NYPL), no. 1260095.

The novelist Joan Lindsay was one of the few visitors to acknowledge, albeit obliquely, that black women's domestic labour bolstered the enviable freedoms of the white population. While touring the States in 1952, Lindsay was invited to dine with Charles Nagel, director of the Brooklyn Museum, and his wife Lucie, also employed in the art world. The evening meal, at the Nagels' Brooklyn home, was served by 'coloured help.' At one point during the dinner, the mistress of the household confessed that this servant was the secret to her ongoing career. 'Lucie told us she couldn't have carried on a full-time gallery job but for this girl with the sweet serious face,' Lindsay recalled. As this admission makes abundantly clear, the gender equality that received such high praise from Australian visitors was dependent upon racial and class inequalities that were often taken for granted.³⁵

³⁴ Nowland, "American Domesticity," 17.

³⁵ Joan Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard* (Melbourne: W. F. Cheshire, 1964), 187.

Yet even American women without the luxury of servants appeared to enjoy a life of relative ease, thanks to the proliferation of vacuum cleaners and washing machines. Australian visitors were convinced that widespread access to labour-saving devices had slashed the time and energy required to maintain a household, creating space in the day for the women to pursue interests beyond the home. As the top-selling *Australian Women's Weekly* proclaimed in 1935, 'Australian tourists...rarely fail to comment upon the comparatively small amount of time which the American housewife spends on her household duties.' Armed with the 'electric cake-mixer' and 'electric washing machine', American women could 'enjoy a greater mix of freedom and leisure', and possessed 'a broader and more intellectual conception of life'.³⁶ Modern women, according to this logic, were the product of modern machines. This analysis was echoed by Meg McSpeerin, who toured America in 1949 as a representative of Sydney's Business and Professional Women's Club. On her return she reported that mass ownership of labour-saving devices enabled American women to belong to four or five clubs. The United States, according to McSpeerin, was 'the home of the club woman', an assessment that, as subsequent historians have shown, was not too far from the truth.³⁷

The artist Stella Bowen offers a poignant illustration of the perceived link between domestic technologies and female endeavour. Bowen left Australia in 1914 to study art in London, and in 1919 became the mistress of English novelist Ford Madox Ford. During the following decade, Bowen gave birth to a daughter and struggled with the conflicting roles of artist and helpmeet. Preoccupied with motherhood and the fractious Ford, her career failed to take flight.³⁸ By 1932, the couple had separated, and the cash-strapped Bowen travelled to America, where she bolstered her finances by painting portraits on commission. In the course of this

³⁶ "American Women Lead the Way," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 7 December 1935, 26.

³⁷ "America Home of Club Women," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 November 1949, 9. On American women's clubs, see Sarah Deutsch, "Learning to Talk More Like a Man: Boston Women's Class-Bridging Organizations, 1870-1940," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 2 (1992): 379-404; Stephanie J. Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 2 (1991): 11-25.

³⁸ Drusilla Modjeska, *Stravinsky's Lunch* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1999), 34-118.

employment, Bowen gained access to numerous households in New York and its surrounds, and began to covet the domestic technologies on display. If only her own kitchen had been equipped with ‘gadgets and ice-boxes’, Bowen reflected, she would have been better able to focus upon her career. ‘I saw that in the right hands they meant freedom and leisure for people like me,’ she wrote. ‘Their possession could have saved me years of time and strength, which might have been used for painting.’³⁹

This faith in the emancipatory potential of domestic technology has since been disputed by US scholars, who have shown that the introduction of labour-saving devices was accompanied by the decline in the use of servants and rising standards of household cleanliness.⁴⁰ In her classic analysis of household labour, Ruth Schwartz Cowan concluded that ‘the labor saved by labor-saving devices was not that of the housewife but of her helpers.’⁴¹ As a result, a well-heeled interwar housewife would spend more time than her mother on household chores, despite boasting ownership of a vacuum cleaner. This situation, Cowan argued, only worsened in the postwar decades, when private servants became the preserve of elites but the kitchen floor still accumulated grime.⁴²

Given this scholarship, it is tempting to dismiss the perspectives cited above as instances of the widespread but incorrect assumption that labour-saving devices saved female labour. Yet when viewed alongside statistical data on the dissemination of household technology, Australian women’s tendency to covet American gadgets point to crucial differences between domestic life on opposite sides of the Pacific. Existing research has demonstrated that electrical devices were not adopted by middle-class Australian households until the 1940s and 50s, nearly two decades after they became widespread in the United States. In 1923, for example, only 2 percent of wired Australian households possessed a vacuum

³⁹ Stella Bowen, *Drawn from Life* (Maidstone: George Mann, 1974), 207, 215.

⁴⁰ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Suellen M. Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 151–78.

⁴¹ Cowan, *More Work for Mother*, 178.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 197–201.

cleaner, compared to 33.5 percent in the United States. Even by 1955, washing machines could be found in only 40 percent of Australian households, in contrast to 77 percent of American homes.⁴³ Domestic servants, meanwhile, became a scarce commodity in Australia from the dawn of the century, and were almost impossible to attain by WWII.⁴⁴ These disparities had profound implications for women's lives. Whereas middle-class Americans transitioned from directing a servant to operating a washing machine during the interwar decades, the equivalent Australian housewife may have been boiling sheets in the copper all along, and continued to do so into the 1950s.

This contrast was vividly illustrated by Marie Coleman, a Sydney university graduate employed at a Chicago-area camp for 'underprivileged' women and children during the summer of 1954. One afternoon, Coleman led the mothers in a baking session. As cake preparations got underway, she realised the participants were 'astonished that the camp didn't have electric mixers'. These welfare-dependent women had never before seen—let alone used—the manual alternative, a 'hand egg beater'. In contrast, Coleman recalled, 'there weren't too many women I knew in Sydney who had electric cake mixers in the fifties, let alone washing machines.'⁴⁵

Deficient in all forms of domestic assistance, Australian women had good reason to covet American household gadgets. Despite the new domestic ideologies and consumer desires that placed limits on the freedom engendered by the washing machine, the ability to press a button instead of battling the wringer may have indeed been liberating. Although loading a washing machine is more strenuous than instructing a servant, Coleman and others held no doubt that the machine was preferable to scrubbing the sheets by hand. At the very least, the labour saved by

⁴³ On the adoption of domestic technology in Australia, see Tony Dingle, "Electrifying the Kitchen in Interwar Victoria," *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 57 (1998): 124–25. For the US figures, see Sue Bowden and Avner Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s," *Economic History Review* 47, no. 4 (1994): 745–46.

⁴⁴ Kerreen Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family, 1880–1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 50; Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia*.

⁴⁵ Coleman interview.

the device would have been her labour, not that of a servant. America may not have offered a release from domestic toil, but it did at least provide the electric washer.

Some visitors even reported that American women not only possessed the luxury of washing machines, but had husbands prepared to use them. Far from appearing threatened by the presence of women in public life, white middle-class American men seemed to embrace what historian Margaret Marsh has called ‘domestic masculinity’.⁴⁶ According to visitors’ reports, they laboured alongside women in the office and assisted with housework at home, all without fear of emasculation. ‘The American husband is a phenomenon not equalled in all the rest of Christendom,’ declared Sydney journalist Helen Jerome in her 1923 treatise *The Secret of Woman*. He was the ‘cleanest, wholesomest [sic], and sweetest of husbands’, a ‘patient Adam’ who ‘carried home the bundles of fig-leaves for Eve’. Unlike the ‘man’s world’ that prevailed elsewhere, America was a ‘matriarchate’. ‘Nowhere in the world are men so kind to women, nowhere are women taken so seriously, nor treated on such terms of mental equality,’ Jerome concluded.⁴⁷

In 1932, Stella Bowen even encountered one couple who had reversed conventional gender roles. With the wife working at an advertising firm, the unemployed husband assumed ‘every scrap of the housework’. When the wife returned home, she was ‘waited on’ by her attentive spouse, who was ‘too sensible and too realistic to allow any notions of false pride spoil this arrangement.’ Only an American man, Bowen averred, would countenance performing ‘women’s work’ with such good grace.⁴⁸ The Depression-era female breadwinner has long been painted as an embattled figure, condemned for desexing her menfolk, but this portrait suggests that some husbands did not begrudge their spouses’ earning potential. Two decades later, Theresa Moore reported that an equitable distribution

⁴⁶ Margaret Marsh, “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870–1915,” *American Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1988): 165–86. For a more extended discussion of mid-century domestic masculinity, see Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 204–69.

⁴⁷ Helen Jerome, *The Secret of Woman* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 21, 56, 62, 67–68.

⁴⁸ Bowen, *Drawn from Life*, 217.

of home duties was now the norm. ‘I’ve seen the happiest homes in America,’ she wrote in 1950, ‘and all because it is a “joint enterprise”—if Mother enjoys cutting the lawn and father enjoys cooking—that’s OK and they do it that way.’⁴⁹

In addition to domestic servants, vacuum cleaners and housetrained husbands, the white women of mid-century America also enjoyed unparalleled access to higher education. During the early 1920s, women represented 47 percent of the American undergraduate population. At the same time, only 29 percent of Australian and 24 percent of British university students were female.⁵⁰ In addition, a much larger slice of the female (and male) population acquired tertiary education in the States: in the early 1920s, only eight in ten thousand Australian women attended university, in contrast to fifty in ten thousand American women.⁵¹ In short, women were six times more likely to obtain a degree in the United States.⁵² Female university attendance declined in both countries during the Depression and after the war, but American campuses continued to welcome a higher proportion of women. In 1952 the principal of the University of Melbourne Women’s College Myra Roper even estimated ‘there are probably 10 to 12 times as many girls going to college [in America] as, proportionately, in England or Australia.’⁵³

The abundance of female college graduates was hailed as both a symptom and a cause of the ‘land of matriarchs’. Australian visitors acknowledged that a degree was no guarantee of a career, but nonetheless suggested that women’s

⁴⁹ Theresa Moore to mother, 2 December 1950, box 3, Moore Papers.

⁵⁰ Patricia Albjerg Graham, “Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education,” *Signs* 3, no. 4 (1978): 766; Carole Hooper, “The University of Melbourne’s First Female Students,” *Victorian Historical Journal* 81, no. 1 (2010): 103; *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. I, 1921, 472–73.

⁵¹ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 63; *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. I, 1921, 8, 472–73; *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States*, (Washington DC: Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1920), 120.

⁵² American did not just eclipse Australia in this regard, but was far ahead of all other nations. As the American Association of University Women noted in 1923, the annual graduate cohort of American women was greater than the combined number of total female alumnae within all seventeen other member nations of the International Federation of University Women. Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women’s Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood between the World Wars* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 123.

⁵³ “Seeking New Sense of Values,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 24 January 1952, 7.

presence on campus encouraged mutual respect between the sexes and gave women access to intellectual fulfilment. Of particular note was the number of mature-aged female students. The presence of wives and mothers within the student cohort provided tantalising evidence that life after marriage need not descend into an endless cycle of meal preparation and dirty nappies. Theresa Moore was astonished to meet a mother of five at the University of Michigan, and believed that a similar return to study would be inconceivable back home, where ‘everybody...sneers at a woman if she tries to do anything with herself after her children grow up.’⁵⁴

Aside from differences in attitude, there were also structural reasons why American women enjoyed greater access to the ivory tower. Since 1821, when Troy Female Seminary was founded, the daughters of the American middle-class had enjoyed access to academically rigorous institutions that were the sole preserve of women.⁵⁵ In Australia, meanwhile, women were barred from universities prior to the 1880s, and thereafter co-education prevailed. The first generations of university women had to brave lecture theatres full of men, who could be less than welcoming.⁵⁶ By mid-century, women were no longer anomalies on Australian campuses, but the elite and well-endowed American women’s colleges continued to spark yearnings among those who paid a visit. Travel writer Mavis Riley became green-eyed after a student guided her through the Wellesley College grounds. ‘How I envied her and the other students for being able to conclude their schooling in this glorious setting with its first-rate educational facilities,’ she admitted in 1949.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Theresa Moore to mother, 28 March and 18 July, 1950, box 3, Moore Papers.

⁵⁵ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 47–50.

⁵⁶ On the hostility experienced by early Australian university women, see Farley Kelly, *Degrees of Liberation: A Short History of Women in the University of Melbourne* (Parkville, Vic: Women Graduates Centenary Committee, University of Melbourne, 1985); Robert Moorhead, “Breaking New Ground: The Story of Dagmar Berne,” *Health and History* 10, no. 2 (2008): 8–12; Hooper, “The University of Melbourne’s First Female Students,” 101–03.

⁵⁷ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 116.

A pilgrimage to paradise?

Given that female education, employment and leisure seemed to abound in the United States, it is no surprise that growing numbers of ambitious Australian women made their way to America. Yet, more unexpectedly, this ‘woman’s paradise’ tended to be stumbled upon rather than deliberately sought out. Australian women often became keen proponents of American gender relations, but there is little evidence that their travels were motivated by prior knowledge that female professionals and vacuums were more plentiful across the Pacific. Such knowledge, indeed, was thin on the ground. Thanks to the British orientation of early twentieth-century Australian culture, local women possessed hazy and often unfavourable impressions of women’s lives in the United States. Prior to the installation of a transpacific cable link in 1941, Australians received only the scanty—and much sensationalised—supply of American news that arrived via the cable link with London.⁵⁸ American periodicals such as *The Saturday Evening Post* were available for purchase, but were swamped by the more popular British magazines.⁵⁹ Australians also had limited exposure to American literature, as books published in the States were barred from circulation in the former British colonies, considered part of the British publishing market.⁶⁰

In the absence of other impressions, the most influential source of information about America was Hollywood film. During the 1920s, when the Australian population was approximately six million, over two million cinema tickets were sold each week. By the late 1930s, 75 percent of films shown were American.⁶¹ This saturation in Hollywood cinema left an indelible mark upon Australian imaginings of the US, and women who visited America often confessed that cinema formed the basis of their preconceptions about the nation and its

⁵⁸ Putnis, “International News Agencies, News-Flow, and the USA-Australia Relationship,” 1–19.

⁵⁹ Roger Osborne, “A National Interest in an International Market: The Circulation of Magazines in Australia during the 1920s,” *History Australia* 5, no. 3 (2008): 75.1–75.16.

⁶⁰ Mary Nell Bryant, “English Language Publication and the British Traditional Market Agreement,” *Library Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (1979): 371–98.

⁶¹ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, 17, 66.

people. Even the more intellectually inclined, such as novelist Christina Stead or historian Jill Ker Conway, arrived with a head full of film scenarios.⁶²

These film-derived impressions held little allure. Although the glamour of the movies inspired many a young cinema devotee to hunger for Hollywood stardom, those hailing from the Australian educated classes were more inclined to see cheap vulgarity in the America depicted on screen. By all reports, women with the means and ambition to travel abroad tended to be left cold by the sexualised female types presented by Hollywood. Joan Lindsay recalled that youthful excursions to the cinema left her convinced that America was peopled by ‘dumb, but always beautiful blondes’ who ‘spent their time falling in and out of passionate love’ and ‘preparing meals in streamlined kitchens.’⁶³ Lindsay, who was far from dumb, had no wish to pursue such a future for herself.

Labouring under the misapprehension that Hollywood held a mirror to American society, few if any Australian women developed a desire to taste the fruits of American womanhood. The impetus to travel typically came from specific opportunities within America, not from whispers that America was a paradise for women. Yet although not a conscious source of attraction, the progressive gender politics of the United States were indeed responsible for bringing scores of Australian women to its shores. For many, the decision to pursue study or professional development in America was determined by the nation’s willingness to invest in the talents of women, in the form of scholarships, grants and patronage. This generosity stemmed from the nation’s prodigious wealth and culture of private philanthropy, and sometimes betrayed an odour of cultural imperialism, but it also indicates a level of regard for women’s development that was less evident in Australia or Britain. When an Australian woman who was short on funds but eager to see the world discovered she was the beneficiary of this largesse, she more than likely booked a passage to San Francisco when she might have otherwise listed London as her first preference. Such women chose America because it granted

⁶² Christina Stead, “America,” folder 79, box 11, Papers of Christina Stead, 1919–1996, MS 4967, NLA; Jill Ker Conway, *True North* (London: Vintage, 1994), 4.

⁶³ Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 3.

them funds, but the funds were only available because its citizens deemed it proper to support ambitious women.

There is no doubt, meanwhile, that the experience of sex discrimination was a factor prompting women to depart Australian shores. The gender imbalance of the penal settlements and the violence of indigenous dispossession had produced a colonial society oriented around male conquest and combat. By the 1890s, as the colonies moved towards Federation, the rugged ‘bushman’ had come to symbolise the emergent national culture. The later heroisation of the ‘Anzac digger’—the doomed protagonist of the 1915 Gallipoli campaign—ensured that this masculinism lingered long into the twentieth century. As the decades wore on, it became clear that Australian women’s trailblazing voting rights had not translated into equal status in the home and workplace. A 1938 survey of women graduates found that ‘higher positions’ in government, medicine, education and law were ‘closed to women’. British and American graduates, by comparison, found ‘employment commensurate with their qualifications much more easily’ and received ‘more equitable salaries’.⁶⁴ Well into the postwar decades, women journalists were ‘confined to the women’s pages’, while female science graduates remained clustered in ‘modest positions of lower status’.⁶⁵ In the arts, women struggled to contend with male gatekeepers such as Norman Lindsay, an unapologetic misogynist renowned for casting aspersions upon female talent.⁶⁶ The political realm was no less dire, and it was not until 1943 that the first women were elected to the federal Senate and House of Representatives. Sex discrimination was also woven into the fabric of economic and public life: the basic wage, established by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in 1907, was premised upon a male breadwinner and set female wages at roughly half the male rate (increased to seventy-five percent in 1950), while

⁶⁴ *Bulletin of Australian Federation of University Women*, no. 6, 1938, 30.

⁶⁵ Jeannine Baker, “Australian Women Journalists and the ‘Pretence of Equality,’” *Labour History*, no. 108 (2015): 1–16; Claire Hooker, *Irresistible Forces: Australian Women in Science* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 39.

⁶⁶ Jeanette Hoorn, “Misogyny and Modernist Painting in Australia: How Male Critics Made Modernism Their Own,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 16, no. 32 (1992): 7–18; Drusilla Modjeska, *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers, 1925–1945* (London: Sirius, 1981), 16–40.

the Commonwealth Public Service prohibited the employment of married women until 1966.⁶⁷

This limited scope for female endeavour led many to seek wider horizons abroad. Not only were these women, like men, often seeking escape from the perceived provincialism of the Antipodes, but were also fleeing a society which gave limited recognition to the talents of their sex. ‘More constrained at home,’ writes historian Ros Pesman, ‘women had more reason to flee and more to gain by flight.’⁶⁸ Most took flight to Britain and Europe, but domestic constraints also propelled some women to America. The writer Kate Jennings, a long-term resident of New York, recalled in a 2010 lecture that she and her predecessors, novelist Shirley Hazzard and historian Jill Ker Conway, chose to expatriate themselves to the United States because ‘Australia was an inhospitable place for women’. Throughout the 1940s and 50s, when Hazzard and Conway made their departure, the ‘barriers for women’ could appear insurmountable. Even by the 1970s, when Jennings joined them, she found a welcome reprieve from the ‘misogyny’ that prevailed at home. ‘I shall never forget my early years in New York and finding for the first time that I didn’t have to defend my ambitions or be on either the defensive or the offensive as a woman,’ she noted.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ On Australian masculinism, see Marilyn Lake, “The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context,” *Australian Historical Studies* 22, no. 86 (1986): 116–31; Marilyn Lake, “Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation – Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts,” *Gender & History* 4, no. 3 (1992): 305–22; Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984); Mark Hearn, “Securing the Man: Narratives of Gender and Nation in the Verdicts of Henry Bourne Higgins,” *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (2006): 1–24.

⁶⁸ Pesman, *Duty Free*, 77. See also Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women*, 7. A similar point has recently be made by Marilyn Lake, who notes that ‘Australian women, the first in the world to win full political rights at the national level, were more likely to feel at home when abroad, and to find opportunities to exercise political influence and leadership in the international domain.’ Lake, “Women’s International Leadership,” 75–76.

⁶⁹ Kate Jennings, “Everywhere and Nowhere,” *National Library Magazine*, December 2010, 24. Hazzard initially left Australia for the US because her father received a posting at the newly established United Nations. However, she later became an outspoken critic of Australia—which she termed a ‘male-dominated society’—and chose to make her adult life in New York, first as an employee of the UN and later as a novelist. Meanwhile, in her celebrated memoir, *The Road from Coorain*, Ker Conway wrote that she ‘didn’t fit in’ in Australia, because she ‘was a woman who wanted to do serious work and have it make a difference.’ In its sequel, *True North*, which describes her doctoral studies in Harvard, Ker Conway explained that she became a scholar of history because all other ‘interesting careers’ were ‘not open to women’ in Australia. Jill Ker

If the prospects for women in Australia could appear dire into the 1970s, it comes as no surprise that they also inspired angst during the interwar years. The memoirs of Janet Mitchell offer an evocative account of the despair that could precipitate flight abroad. Newly returned from university studies in London, in 1923 she set out to ‘do something in the way of social work, something constructive.’ After a period of job hunting, however, Mitchell discovered that her eagerness and qualifications could not overcome the handicap of her sex. ‘Did Australia really want educated women with overseas degrees?’ she asked. ‘I looked about for a job. But there seemed to be nothing. Australia did not want me.’ Seeking an escape, she spent free moments ‘pouring over books of travel’. The following year, when Mitchell was appointed to the Australian delegation to the Institute of Pacific Relations Conference in Honolulu, she leapt at this opportunity to set sail.⁷⁰ In this case, as in many others, the destination of her travels seemed less important than the act of departure. The journey eastwards across the Pacific could be as much, if not more so, a flight from Australia than a pilgrimage to the United States.

New career horizons

Regardless of why America beckoned, it did prove to be a paradise of sorts for Australian women with their eyes on a career. A visit to the United States often opened the door to qualifications and accolades that were, by Australian standards, little short of exceptional. Sex discrimination still sometimes reared its head, but was more of an irritation than an insurmountable obstacle. The most common manner in which Australian women furthered their careers in the States was via university study, often at postgraduate level. Although historians of Australian-American student exchange have focused upon the experience of male students during the 1950s and 60s, the US tertiary system also attracted Australian students,

Conway, *The Road from Coorain* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 236; Conway, *True North*, ix. J. D. McClatchy, “Shirley Hazzard, The Art of Fiction No. 185,” *The Paris Review* no. 173, Spring 2005, <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5505/the-art-of-fiction-no-185-shirley-hazzard>, accessed 5 July 2012.

⁷⁰ Janet Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity* (London: Methuen, 1938), 58–60.

male and female, throughout the first half of the twentieth century.⁷¹ During these decades, Australian universities offered a limited array of postgraduate degrees, and graduates who sought further qualifications often had no choice but to venture abroad.⁷² For men, the obvious destination was Oxford or Cambridge, and candidates clamoured for the Rhodes and similar scholarships that allowed the best and brightest of the colonial universities to prove themselves in the intellectual heart of the British Empire.⁷³ For women, the path ahead was more vexed. With the Rhodes and most other scholarships restricted to men until the 1970s, funding for Australian women to study in Britain was ‘virtually non-existent’.⁷⁴ If the family purse could not pay for several years in Oxbridge, or perhaps the University of London, Australian women were denied access to the ‘dreaming spires’.

In contrast to the fortified bastions of British learning, the United States college system proved both accessible and appealing to female foreigners. Not only did American women, as noted above, enjoy an unusual degree of access to college campuses, but the generous provision of scholarships allowed women from around the globe to join them. The women’s colleges and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) provided funding targeted at international female students, while the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation also funded Australian women to complete American degrees.⁷⁵ Yet simple economics was not the sole reason to choose Chicago in preference to

⁷¹ Sally Ninham, *A Cohort of Pioneers: Australian Postgraduate Students and American Postgraduate Degrees, 1949–1964* (Ballan, Vic: Connor Court Publishing, 2011); Garner and Kirkby, “‘Never a Machine for Propaganda?’”

⁷² Prior to WWII, Australian universities were oriented around undergraduate teaching, rather than graduate study and research. The University of Melbourne only began to offer the PhD in 1945, followed by the Australian National University in 1946 and the University of Sydney in 1947. Hannah Forsyth, *A History of the Modern Australian University* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), 26–28.

⁷³ Tamson Pietsch, “Many Rhodes: Travelling Scholarships and Imperial Citizenship in the British Academic World, 1880–1940,” *History of Education* 40, no. 6 (2011): 723–39.

⁷⁴ Ninham, *A Cohort of Pioneers*, 37.

⁷⁵ On American philanthropy, see Ruth W. Tryon, *Investment in Creative Scholarship: A History of the Fellowship Program of the American Association of University Women* (Washington DC: American association of University Women, 1957); Patricia L. Rosenfield, *A World of Giving: Carnegie Corporation of New York – A Century of International Philanthropy* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 117–25.

Cambridge. Australian women were also attracted by America's growing reputation for research excellence and innovative training programs, particularly in nascent 'women's professions' such as social work, dietetics and librarianship. Those drawn by this combination of dollars and degrees include Frances Penington, a University of Melbourne graduate awarded a Smith College fellowship in 1936 to study 'advanced American methods in social work'; Muriel Crabtree, another Melbourne alumna brought to Bryn Mawr on a biochemistry fellowship in 1932; and Sydney's Carmen Jerome, who sailed to San Francisco in 1920 to commence a course in postgraduate bacteriology at Stanford.⁷⁶

By the late 1940s and 50s, when Australia and America became Cold War allies, the trickle of women students heading across the Pacific turned into a steady stream. One Queensland family even lost all three of its daughters to the University of Southern California (USC). Carmel Montgomery, who had been working at the Sydney Red Cross, initiated the exodus in 1948. Although the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* deemed Carmel best suited to working as a 'pin-up', the USC fellowship committee was impressed by her research into blood groups, and extended an invitation to commence a Masters degree. By 1950, Carmel was working on her doctorate, and had been joined at USC by her two siblings. Camille Montgomery, a former employee of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), enrolled in a postgraduate program in radio and television broadcasting, while Berenice, a pianist, began working towards a degree in music.⁷⁷

By all accounts, women such as the Montgomery sisters revelled in college life. Not only were the academic programs stimulating, but the convention of housing the student population on site—less common in Australia—produced a rich

⁷⁶ On Penington, see "To Do Research in USA," *Argus* (Melbourne), 18 June 1936, 3; "Problems of Juvenile Behaviour," *Argus* (Melbourne), 14 August 1937, 19; "Won American Award," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 4 July 1936, 27. On Crabtree, see "USA Scholarship: Melbourne Girl Wins," *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 19 June 1932, 3. On Jerome, see "Australian Girl, Degree Winner, To Attend Stanford," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 April 1920, 7.

⁷⁷ "Pin-up girl who pins down facts," *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 12 March 1948, 2; "America Honours Q'lander," *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 12 June 1948, 3; "Australian Girl Technician Takes Fellowship at SC," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 August 1948, 9; "Australian Girl Scientist, 22, En Route to SC," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 September 1948, A7; "Miss Carmel Montgomery," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 18 September 1948, 10; "The Montgomery Sisters," *Pacific Neighbors* 5, no. 3 (1950): 13.

campus culture. Once semester commenced, life became a whirlwind of classes, football games, bonfire nights, and sorority rituals. ‘The Americans are so young and eager that somehow one feels young and eager too,’ was Nancy Grasby’s summation of 1930s college life.⁷⁸ After sampling this thrilling atmosphere, some proved reluctant to return home. Two of the Montgomery sisters were among those enticed to remain: in 1952 Camille Montgomery married Thomas Lundell of New York, and two years later Carmel—now Dr Montgomery—accepted a position on the staff of USC.⁷⁹

Dr Montgomery was not alone in her ascent to the ivory tower. Not only did Australian women enjoy world-class educations in America, but they also reaped the benefits of the Progressive Era assault upon male hegemony in the professions. When Montgomery was still a child in Queensland, her predecessors were making headway in law, academia and the medical sciences, decades before these elite occupations became open to women in Australia. Like Montgomery, these women professionals tended to be graduates of US universities. Having acquired an American degree—and in doing so, developed a professional network—the path was then open to launch a career in the associated line of work. One of the earliest and most notable instances of this trajectory was the legal career of May Darlington Lahey. Born near Brisbane in 1889, Lahey would be the first female Queenslander to practise law.⁸⁰ According to family legend, Lahey had a youthful aptitude for spirited debate, and was encouraged to put these skills to work in the courtroom by an uncle living in Los Angeles.⁸¹ Regardless of the truth of this tale, by 1910 she had arrived in Los Angeles and enrolled at USC Law School, where

⁷⁸ “American Impressions,” *West Australian* (Perth), 1 February 1938, 7.

⁷⁹ “Miss Montgomery to be Bride,” *New York Times*, 15 August 1952, 13; *Cairns Post*, 4 October 1952, 6 and 21 September 1954, 6.

⁸⁰ “Letter from Brisbane Girl in America,” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1911, 7; *Cairns Post*, 14 October 1929, 14.

⁸¹ Shirley Lahey, *The Laheys: Pioneer Settlers and Sawmillers* (Taringa, Queensland: Shirley Lahey, 2003), 198–201. Some later newspaper reports claimed that this move was prompted by the death of May’s father James William Lahey, but Queensland government records indicate that he was alive until 1925.

she became a star student.⁸² In 1913 she ‘beat all the boys in her year’ and even scored one mark of 100 percent.⁸³ After graduating in 1914, Lahey was admitted to the Californian bar, where she began specialising in probate law.

During the 1910s, it was still unusual for American women to pursue legal careers, but the female lawyer was not quite the exotic creature she remained in Australia. Women had studied and practised law in the United States since the 1870s, and by 1913 there were thirty-five women law students at USC.⁸⁴ Although in 1920 women represented a mere 1.4 percent of the American legal profession, Lahey’s home state of Queensland did not yet have a single woman lawyer.⁸⁵ Lahey was quick to recognise the greater opportunities that awaited her in the States, and she adopted American citizenship in 1916.⁸⁶ The presence of female colleagues, however, could not inoculate Lahey against an enduring culture of sex discrimination, and she ‘almost starved’ as a fledgling lawyer because male clients proved reluctant to provide recompense for her services.⁸⁷

Obstacles to equality remained, but the talents of women lawyers were being rewarded. In 1929 Lahey became the second female judge appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court—an honour achieved thirty-six years before Australia

⁸² *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, 16 March 1984.

⁸³ “Letter from Brisbane Girl in America,” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1911, 7; *Queenslander*, 8 March 1913, 4–5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; Virginia C. Drachman, *Sisters in Law: Women Lawyers in Modern American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 9–63.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2. A female solicitor would not be admitted in Queensland until 1926. The southern states were slightly quicker to allow women to enter the legal profession: the first woman to practise law in Victoria (and Australia) was Flos Greig in 1905, and Marie Byles became the first female lawyer in New South Wales in 1924. *Brisbane Courier*, 4 October 1929, 24; Ruth Campbell and J. Barton Hack, “Greig, Grata Flos Matilda (1880–1958),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/greig-grata-flos-matilda-7049/text11103>, accessed 6 December 2013; Heather Radi, “Byles, Marie Beuzeville (1900–1979),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/byles-marie-beuzeville-9652/text17027>, accessed 6 December 2013.

⁸⁶ “California, Southern District Court (Central) Naturalization Index, 1915–1976,” index and images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/KX3G-4QR>; accessed 19 Mar 2013), May Darlington Lahey, 1916.

⁸⁷ *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, 16 March 1984.

appointed a woman to the bench.⁸⁸ By all reports none dared question whether an Australian-born woman was fit to preside in the courtroom. ‘This is the first appointment I’ve made while I’ve been in office, of which I’ve heard no objection by anyone!’ Governor C. C. Young announced during her investiture.⁸⁹ After fourteen years in this role, she was elected to the position of Presiding Judge.⁹⁰ Lahey served on the bench until retirement beckoned in 1947, but was convinced to return for a further fourteen-year stint in 1951.⁹¹



Figure 7: Hollywood star Jean Harlow appeared before Judge May Lahey (left) in November 1932. Lahey appointed Harlow executor of the estate of her deceased husband, Paul Bern. Cornell Daily Sun, 15 November 1932.

⁸⁸ The first female judge at the Los Angeles Municipal Court was Georgia Bullock, who was appointed in 1926. W. W. Robinson, *Lawyers of Los Angeles: A History of the Los Angeles Bar Association and of the Bar of Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Bar Association, 1959), 249–50, 329. The first female judge in Australia was Roma Mitchell, who in 1965 was appointed to the Supreme Court of South Australia. Susan Magarey and Kerrie Round, *Roma the First: A Biography of Dame Roma Mitchell* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 2007), 153–64.

⁸⁹ Cited in “Our Only Woman Judge,” *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 20 October 1934, 9.

⁹⁰ “Queensland Girl becomes judge in USA,” *Daily Mercury* (Mackay), 2 June 1943, 5.

⁹¹ “Famed Woman Judge Retires from Municipal Court Amid Plaudits,” *American Law and Lawyers*, 4 March 1947, 1; *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, 16 March 1984.

Lahey's judicial appointment is a powerful testament to the possibilities for career development in America. But her example also hints that, for women, career and family often remained mutually exclusive. Like the 'independent women' of the late-nineteenth century, Lahey was unwilling or unable to combine her 'passion for meaningful work' with the roles of wife and mother.⁹² Perhaps she had no romantic interest in men, but it is equally feasible that marriage and family life seemed incompatible with her legal work. This solo trajectory was all too common among Lahey's contemporaries. Although Australian visitors stressed that American wives and mothers remained active in the workplace, those who lingered to ply their trade seldom pursued this fraught path themselves. The culture of 'domestic masculinity' attracted fulsome praise, but few put it to the test.

Some women, however, did manage to climb the professional ladder with spouse and offspring in tow. Persia Campbell, a pioneer of consumer economics, even managed to become a senior academic and political advisor while singlehandedly raising two children. Campbell first visited the United States in 1922, when she received a research fellowship from Bryn Mawr, after completing degrees in Sydney and London. During the late 1920s, she worked as a research economist in Australia, before returning to America in 1930 on a Rockefeller Fellowship.⁹³ Two days before she was due to return home, Campbell announced she had consented to marry local engineer Edward Rice and make her home in New York.⁹⁴ The couple wed in 1931, had two children in quick succession, and Campbell embarked upon a PhD in Public Law at Columbia University. In 1939, however, Rice died of a heart attack, leaving Campbell to feed their young family. Her family

⁹² Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850–1920* (London: Virago, 1985), 1.

⁹³ For biographical details, see Susan Hogan and Heather Radi, "Campbell, Persia Gwendoline Crawford (1898–1974)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-persia-gwendoline-crawford-9682/text17087>, accessed 5 May 2015; Paul C. Taylor, "Campbell, Persia Crawford," American National Biography Online, accessed 5 May 2015; Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green, eds., *Notable American Women: The Modern Period* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), 132–33.

⁹⁴ Persia Campbell, "Neva as a Person," folder 58, box 4, series V; and Neva Deardorff to Mrs Campbell, 16 October 1931, folder 2, box 1, series VI, Papers of Persia Campbell, n. d., Consumer Union Archives, Yonkers, New York.

was ten thousand miles away, and the income from her husband's estate soon dried up.⁹⁵ Faced with little support and less money, in 1940 she commenced full-time work as an Assistant Professor in Economics at Queens College, New York. Over the following years, she would later confess, the 'pressure of circumstances' was often 'frustrating'. As she struggled to get 'established professionally in a new field', whilst raising her children 'without much help', Campbell's life was characterised by the 'management of precious resources'.⁹⁶

Despite these challenges, Campbell not only survived, but thrived. Her doctoral dissertation had considered consumer representation during the New Deal, and she went on to become an active figure in the emerging consumer movement. By 1955, when Averell Harriman, the newly elected Democrat Governor of New York, decided to appoint the nation's first Consumer Counsel, this Australian-born widowed mother seemed the obvious candidate for the job. In this position, Campbell was tasked with ensuring that 'the consumer point of view would be taken into account in policy-making'.⁹⁷ Consumer education was also a large part of her role, and she developed a national profile through her efforts to highlight the economic significance of the humble act of spending. In practice, this meant that Campbell spent her days urging women to dedicate their energies to the intelligent management of the family income, a job which, ironically, left her starved for time to manage her own household. 'I don't shop as carefully as I should...I suppose it's because I have so little time from my work,' she admitted to the New York *World Telegram* in 1957.⁹⁸ Campbell returned to Queens College after Harriman was ousted by his Republican opponent in 1959, but remained a figure of considerable influence. In the 1960s she went on to advise President Kennedy on consumer

⁹⁵ Mr and Mrs Howard M. Morse to Barnard College, 16 February 1951, folder 5, box 1, series VI, Campbell Papers.

⁹⁶ Persia Campbell to daughter, n.d., folder 5, box 1, series VI, Campbell Papers.

⁹⁷ Persia Campbell, "Consumer Politics in Action: A Case Study of Consumer Representation, State of New York, 1955-1958," folder 69, box 5, series V, Campbell Papers.

⁹⁸ "How to Make \$\$\$ - AND Be Honest," *World Telegram* (New York), 18 September 1957.

economics, became Chairman of the Queens Economics Department, and held numerous roles at the United Nations.⁹⁹



Figure 8: Campbell (front row, second from right) at a White House meeting of President Kennedy's Consumer Advisory Council, 16 July 1962. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, JFKWHP-AR7366-A.

Campbell was a woman of exceptional talent and ambition, who attracted accolades wherever she worked, but it is improbable that she would have accrued such an impressive resume had she remained in Australia.¹⁰⁰ It is certainly revealing that she did not return home after her husband's death. During the great crisis of her life, when she was in urgent need of a salary, New York appeared more of a safe harbour than Sydney. Her later appointment as Consumer Counsel also indicates that her sex and family commitments were no impediment to a position in public life in the United States. In the wake of this appointment, some were

⁹⁹ Allis R. Wolfe, *Persia Campbell: Portrait of a Consumer Activist* (Mount Vernon, NY: Consumers Union Foundation, 1981), 68–84; “Remarks of Colston E. Warne, President, Consumers Union of US, at the Memorial Service held for Persia Campbell at Queens College, Flushing, New York, March 23, 1974,” folder of biographical sketches, box 1, series VI, Campbell Papers.

¹⁰⁰ Helen Bourke, “Intellectuals for Export: Australia in the 1920s,” in *Australian Cultural History*, ed. S. L. Goldberg and F. B. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 105–06.

perturbed to see a grey-haired matron raising the price of milk as an issue of national concern, but on the whole Campbell received little hostile commentary over the course of her career. One journalist even likened her to beloved former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt.¹⁰¹ Unlike Roosevelt, Campbell was cautious in her feminism, but both figures flourished in a society that could stomach mature women with outspoken views.

The transpacific disparities in women's prospects highlighted by Campbell and Lahey are only further emphasised when we examine careers that moved between Australia and the US. In many cases, the collegial atmosphere encountered in America formed a stark contrast to the blatant discrimination that persisted in Sydney or Melbourne well into mid-century. This difference in attitude came to the fore when micropaleontologist Irene Crespin undertook a lecture tour of the United States during the early 1950s. Since 1936, Crespin had been employed as the Commonwealth Palaeontologist in Canberra, where she received half the salary of her male predecessor and worked in primitive conditions.¹⁰² Despite these challenges, her work acquired an international reputation, and in 1951 she was invited to address the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the first Australian to receive this honour. Crespin was eager to meet with international colleagues, but it transpired that the Commonwealth Government had a policy against sending women overseas. For a period it appeared that she may have to decline the invitation. After prolonged negotiation, however, Crespin was permitted to embark on a brief visit to the States.¹⁰³

During this three-month tour of conferences and college campuses, Crespin was feted by her American colleagues. The scientific community of Washington DC flocked to hear her speak at the Paleontological Society of America, while the

¹⁰¹ "A Better Deal for the Housewife," *Westchester News*, 2 August 1956, folder 332, box 31, series I, Campbell Papers.

¹⁰² Margaret E. Bartlett, "Crespin, Irene (1896–1980)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/crespin-irene-9863/text17451>, accessed 24 January 2014.

¹⁰³ Irene Crespin, "Memoirs of a Micropalaeontologist," 1980, box 1, Papers of Irene Crespin, 1921–1980, MS 6441, NLA.

Geology Department of Princeton University invited her to address the faculty. To ensure that she felt at home, the Princeton academics even swapped their afternoon coffee break for an ‘Australian Tea’.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, Crespin was engaged in ongoing negotiations with the Australian authorities, who sought to curtail her planned itinerary. Such economising, she believed, ‘was due to the fact that I was a woman’.¹⁰⁵ This prejudicial treatment caused Crespin considerable distress, and must have appeared all the more galling in light of the warm reception she enjoyed in America. These indications that the United States could offer Crespin a more hospitable professional environment were compounded by the abundance of female colleagues encountered during her tour. In Australia, Crespin was ever conscious that she remained a pioneer in the profession, with all the challenges and isolation that pioneering entails. Throughout the States, meanwhile, she was hosted by a network of women geologists and paleontologists, who took pains to ensure Crespin was welcomed into the local scientific community.¹⁰⁶ Female scientists in America continued to face obstacles, but at least they no longer struggled alone.

Even women who settled in the United States could receive frustrating reminders that Australia remained comparatively hostile to female enterprise. Isabel Letham, whose attempt to bring Australian life-saving savvy to California was undermined by the sexism of Sydney’s surf clubs, experienced this hostility first-hand. A Sydney-born doyenne of the surf, Letham established a career as a swimming instructor in 1920s San Francisco.¹⁰⁷ By 1925, she had realised that ‘opportunities in the States were high for women’, and adopted American citizenship.¹⁰⁸ Two years later, concerned by the number of drownings on San Francisco beaches, Letham approached the Sydney lifesaving community with a

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Isabel Letham interviewed by Roslyn Cahill, March 1986, Letham Papers. Letham first rose to fame after she surfed with Hawai’ian Duke Kahanamoku on Sydney’s northern beaches in 1915. Phil Jarratt, *That Summer at Boomerang* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2014).

¹⁰⁸ Isabel Letham interviewed by Terry Eldridge, 1980; Statement by US Attorney Frank J. Hennessy, June 1944, Letham Papers.

plan to bring Australian-style beach safety patrols to California. To her dismay, this proposal was foiled when Sydney's surf clubs refused to grant Letham membership.¹⁰⁹ 'We do not teach ladies the work', decreed the president of the national Surf Life Saving Association.¹¹⁰ Without any formal affiliation to the lifesaving movement, Letham found it nigh impossible to carry its message overseas, and her plan to export Australian expertise and reduce Californian fatalities came to naught. Even reaching a tentative hand back across the Pacific had confirmed that America was a better home for career women. It is little wonder, therefore, that Letham resented her premature return to Sydney in 1929, a homecoming enforced by a serious back injury.¹¹¹



Figure 9: Isabel Letham (left) teaching at the Mission Playground, San Francisco, early 1920s. Papers of Isabel Letham, Dee Why Library, Sydney.

¹⁰⁹ "Sex Ban on Girl Life-Saver: So Australia Loses Advertisement," *Sydney Sun*, 8 February 1927.

¹¹⁰ C. D. Paterson, President of Surf Life Saving Association of Australia, to M. P. Hagan, Executive Secretary of San Francisco Playground Commission, 30 September 1925, Letham Papers.

¹¹¹ Isabel Letham interviewed by Roslyn Cahill, 30–31.

Love in paradise

Although transpacific travel would often enhance Australian women's professional lives, its influence upon their relations with men is more opaque. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the local male population held considerable appeal for heterosexual women. Celebrated for their domestic abilities, American men were also renowned for their expertise in the art of courtship. By the 1940s, their reputation as gallant lovers had reached Australian shores, thanks to the influx of dashing GIs during the war in the Pacific, who generated much enthusiasm among young pleasure-seeking women.¹¹² By all reports, the eligible bachelors of America were no less alluring when at home. The Australian women who participated in American dating culture commended the local swains for bestowing gifts and conversation of a quantity and quality far beyond what could be expected in Sydney or Melbourne.¹¹³ But as mentioned above, this general regard for American manhood did not often translate into serious attachments. Aside from the actresses embroiled in the fervent coupling of Hollywood—many of whom married and divorced with impressive haste—only a handful of Australian career women would wed American men.¹¹⁴ Even in a putative 'matriarchate', the stigma of spinsterhood remained an occupational hazard for women with professional ambitions.

Yet among the career women who did become wives abroad, marriage rarely marked a retreat into domesticity. Some became full-time homemakers, but a high proportion of married women remained active in the workforce. We know little about the inner workings of these relationships, but this pattern of continued professional achievement suggests that American husbands did prove willing to contribute to the home. A notable example was Eileen Cumming, formerly of Sydney, who enjoyed a star-studded career in design and advertising before and after her 1923 marriage to New York doctor Russell Cecil. After serving as decorating editor at *Vogue* magazine, and advertising and fashion director at Saks

¹¹² Lake, "The Desire for a Yank"; Lake, "Female Desires"; Teo, "The Americanisation of Romantic Love in Australia," 171–92; Arrowsmith, "Australian WWII War Brides in America."

¹¹³ See for example, Jon Witcomb, "Speed Record for Stardom," *Cosmopolitan*, August 1957.

¹¹⁴ On Hollywood couplings, see Angela Macdonald, "Hollywood Bound: A History of Australians in Hollywood to 1970," (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2001), 265.

Fifth Avenue, she was appointed advertising manager for exclusive department store Bonwit Teller in 1933.¹¹⁵ A generation later, Hazel Mansell also found America a congenial setting to combine marriage and career. A University of Sydney medical graduate, Mansell arrived in New York on a research fellowship in 1951. She married colleague Ira Gore and went on to pioneer the sub-discipline of gynecological pathology from the University of Alabama, whilst also raising two children.¹¹⁶ As a resident of the South, Mansell's home duties were likely lightened by black servants, but it is improbable that she would have become a world-renowned pathologist had her husband not also been supportive of her work.

The meagre archival record regarding the pursuit of love in America was also driven by the moral codes of the era. Young women who travelled alone teetered on the edge of respectable behaviour, and often went to great pains to avoid any suggestion of improper relations with the opposite sex.¹¹⁷ The Melbourne kindergarten director Heather Lyon, who sailed to California in 1944, emphasised her own untrammelled virtue through a prim account of her cabin mate Sadie, who 'liked to entertain lesser members of the crew in the cabin with the door locked.'¹¹⁸ But as Sadie's adventures indicate, travel is often linked to a loosening of sexual mores. In her case and numerous others, the anonymity and excitement of venturing abroad could prompt Australian women to push against the boundaries of accepted feminine conduct.¹¹⁹

Those employed in the performing arts seemed most inclined to plunge into illicit liaisons, or were perhaps less concerned about leaving a trail of evidence. Adelaide-born actress Judith Anderson recorded a prolonged affair with a married

¹¹⁵ "Society," *Vogue*, 15 September 1923, 106; Joan Kron, "Home Beat," *New York Times*, 1 September 1977, 25; "Eileen Cecil, Interior Decorator," *New York Times*, 9 September 1982, D26.

¹¹⁶ Matt Windsor, "Continuing a Teacher's Work: Hazel Gore Endowed Professorship," *UAB: A Magazine for Alumni and Friends of the School of Medicine* 31, no. 2 (2005): 22.

¹¹⁷ On the tenuous respectability of solo female travellers, see Robinson-Tomsett, *Women, Travel and Identity*, 87–90.

¹¹⁸ Heather Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes* (Kew, Vic: School of Early Childhood Studies, 1994), 53.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of the relationship between travel and female sexual experimentation, see Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 183–86.

theatre director during her days in American stock theatre during the 1920s.¹²⁰ The following decade, film star Constance Worth attracted no small measure of scandal during her years in the spotlight. Only several years after her sensational divorce from Hollywood heartthrob George Brent, the Sydney-born actress was discovered 'nude' in the bed of married film producer William A. Pierce.¹²¹ There are also clues that sexual passion could feature in the travel experience of more outwardly conventional Australian women. The librarian Jean Whyte, for example, composed an erotic poem that hints at a passionate affair during her student days at the University of Chicago in the mid-1950s.¹²²

There is little evidence, however, to suggest that the tenor of American sexual mores was responsible for facilitating such escapades. In most cases, these forays into illicit behaviour more likely stemmed from the liberating effects of travel. This certainly seems true of homosexual relationships. Margaret Jones and her female partner found a safe haven in 1950s America simply because it was far from prying eyes in Sydney. This couple encountered no particular tolerance for lesbianism in the United States and remained isolated from any broader lesbian community—though such communities did exist—but would, nonetheless, revel in the balm of anonymity.¹²³ When it came to exploring the acts of the flesh, the distance from home could be more important than the destination itself. Yet while this element of anonymity enabled sexual freedoms, it also inhibits their historical documentation. We can only presume that there were other women like Jones, with

¹²⁰ Dame Judith Anderson, *Autobiography*, 181–88, box 10, Papers of Robert Wallsten, 1920s–1960s, PA MSS 43, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

¹²¹ "Producer's Bedroom Party Ends in Divorce," *World Telegram* (New York), 10 January 1946.

¹²² The poem appears to be autobiographical but was not composed until 1962, several years after Whyte returned to Australia. However, it is stored inside an envelope from University of Chicago's International House (Whyte's US residence), which suggests an American connection. This, at least, was the conclusion drawn by Susan Magarey, in her account of Whyte within an article on Roma Mitchell. Jean Whyte, "Morning Tea," bag 1, box 2, Papers of Jean Whyte, 1881–2009, Acc02/171, NLA; Susan Magarey, "Dame Roma Mitchell's Unmentionables: Sex, Politics and Religion," *History Australia* 5, no. 1 (2008): 12.14.

¹²³ Rebecca Jennings, "'It Was a Hot Climate and It Was a Hot Time': Lesbian Migration and Transnational Networks in the Mid-Twentieth Century," *Australian Feminist Studies* 25, no. 63 (2010): 38–40. On the proliferation of lesbian communities in mid-century urban America, see Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

secret lesbian or extramarital loves in America, whose secrets went with them to the grave.

Bringing paradise home

The opportunities for women in the United States not only affected those who lingered long enough to acquire a degree or a job. Just a fleeting visit to the ‘land of matriarchs’ could cast Australian gender relations in a new and unfavourable light, leading travellers to return home dissatisfied. To paraphrase Theresa Moore, visiting the United States made Australian women realise what they were missing. Even 1940s travel writer Mavis Riley—whose gender politics were far from radical—was moved to concede that Australia was a ‘man’s country’ in comparison to the United States.¹²⁴

Having made this realisation, some transpacific travellers began to call for more equitable treatment of women back home. One of these was Dorothy Waugh, an American-trained dentist who developed a more self-conscious feminist politics during her time abroad, and condemned the lack of opportunities available for local women upon her return. Waugh departed for America in 1924, and began studying dentistry at Temple University in Philadelphia. By 1934 she had been appointed an associate professor at the same institution, and paid an overdue visit to family in Melbourne.¹²⁵ During this holiday Waugh informed the Victorian Women Citizens’ Movement that Australia should seek to emulate the enlightened attitudes that prevailed across the Pacific. ‘The fact that I was a woman had no bearing on my appointment to a University position,’ she proclaimed. ‘That is the attitude in the United States and it should be the attitude here.’¹²⁶ When Waugh made a permanent return in 1947, she found that little had improved in the thirteen years of her absence, and continued to advocate the American model. Her address to the

¹²⁴ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 99.

¹²⁵ *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 1 September 1934, 3.

¹²⁶ “Women Citizens,” *Argus* (Melbourne), 15 August 1934, 15.

National Council of Women in March 1948 inspired the headline ‘US Women Have More Freedom than Ours’.¹²⁷

Myra Roper, the principal of the University of Melbourne Women’s College, made an even franker assessment of Australian gender politics when she returned from her inspection of American colleges in 1952. In a provocative piece in the Melbourne *Argus*, Roper demanded to know ‘Why are there no women in our public life?’ Having surveyed gender relations abroad, she was eager to reveal that ‘the position of semi-professional and professional women in Australia is very much worse than in most overseas countries.’¹²⁸ Her report to the Australian Federation of University Women was no less damning of local conditions. ‘It was interesting to note the increasingly large number of women in senior political, academic and administrative posts in the educational world (Australia lags behind here quite obviously),’ Roper wrote.¹²⁹ As these examples suggest, the realisation that life offered different avenues for women abroad worked to denaturalise the status quo in Australia, opening the door to new ways of being and providing a model for change. Even a whirlwind tour of America could provide fodder for feminist agitation. Decades before Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* helped launch a new wave of Australian feminism, the example set by the modern women of the United States had already begun to politicise their counterparts across the Pacific.

Conclusion

When Theresa Moore described the United States as a ‘woman’s paradise’, she betrayed a certain blindness to questions of race and class, but nonetheless hit upon a kernel of truth. For a white Australian woman who sought a life beyond housewifery during the interwar and postwar decades, modern America was indeed a marvellous sight to behold. Girls flooded college campuses, and were taught by

¹²⁷ “US Women Have More Freedom than Ours,” *Daily News* (Perth), 13 March 1948, 8; “The Life of Melbourne,” *Argus* (Melbourne), 12 March 1948, 7.

¹²⁸ Myra Roper, “Why are there no women in our public life?” *Argus* (Melbourne), 5 May 1952, 2.

¹²⁹ Myra Roper, “Some International Trends in Education,” *Bulletin of Australian Federation of University Women*, 1952, 21.

female professors. Women presided in the courtroom and advised the nation's leaders. Machines assisted in the kitchen and laundry, and even men sometimes lent a hand. Some visiting Australian women reaped the benefits of this progressive culture, while others acquired a keener appetite for equality. It may not have been paradise, but in many respects America trumped the 'man's country' back home.

Beyond these individual experiences, the modern gender relations of the United States also had significant implications for Australian engagements with the nation as a whole. During an era in which few Australians moved outside the British world, America's unusual esteem for female endeavour drew Australian women to its shores and offered them persuasive evidence that the future on display in the United States was worthy of emulation. This mecca for modern women won converts galore, who, as subsequent chapters will discuss, often returned home with changes in mind for the home and the workplace. The congenial atmosphere discovered by women visitors hence laid the foundation for a more sustained enthusiasm for the manners and machines of the United States, which, as we shall see, both strengthened transpacific ties and hastened the pace of change within Australia.

CHAPTER 2

An Education in Race:

Colour Lines, Blood Brothers and International Community

Elaine Barry first confronted race in America. She was an Anglo-Australian woman born in 1937 to a family of well-educated professionals, and raised in Brisbane during the heyday of the White Australia policy. In the time and place of her upbringing, the ‘colour line’—W. E. B. DuBois’ term for ‘the relation of the darker to the lighter races’—was at once all pervasive and near invisible.¹ It defined the youthful nation, and loomed large in public discourse, but was kept at a remove from everyday life. With non-white immigration prohibited and the Indigenous population largely sequestered on missions and reserves, Barry had little exposure to racial difference in the urban Australia in which she came of age. She would have encountered the occasional Chinese shopkeeper or Aboriginal servant, and was educated alongside a handful of Polish and Italian classmates, but her world was dominated by Anglo-Australians with faces and voices much like her own.² In 1947, the year Barry turned ten, the non-Aboriginal population of Australia was 99 percent British. Even as late as 1961, after more than a decade of immigration from southern and eastern Europe, that figure had dwindled only to 95 percent.³

¹ DuBois quoted in Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 2.

² Elaine Barry interviewed by Alice Garner, 2010, ORAL TRC 6165/3, NLA. On the presence of Chinese shopkeepers and Aboriginal servants in interwar Brisbane, see Sophie Loy-Wilson, “Rural Geographies and Chinese Empires: Chinese Shopkeepers and Shop-Life in Australia,” *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2014): 407–24; Jackie Huggins, “White Aprons, Black Hands: Aboriginal Women Domestic Servants in Queensland,” *Labour History*, no. 69 (1995): 188–95. There were also Aboriginal performers in travelling shows, but these often sexualised entertainments may have been judged inappropriate for a middle-class girl. Kathryn Hunter, “Aboriginal Women in Australia’s Traveling Shows, 1930s–1950s: Shadows and Suggestions,” *Journal of Women’s History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 37–59.

³ According to the 1947 census, the total population was 7.58 million, of which 7.54 million identified as British. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. I, 1947, 786–87. According to the 1961 census, the total population was close to 10.5 million, of which 10 million identified as

Barry's state of innocence was ruptured when she received a Fulbright Grant to complete a Masters degree in literature at the University of South Carolina. In 1959, she flew to San Francisco, then made her way across the continent by train and Greyhound bus. When changing buses in Richmond, Virginia, Barry encountered a perplexing sight. Inside the Greyhound terminal were a pair of signs, reading 'White cafeteria' and 'Coloured cafeteria'. 'What's that all about?' she wondered. Having spent her youth within a nation that resembled a white cafeteria writ large, Barry had little inkling that the world could be explicitly bifurcated along racial lines. 'I was so naïve,' she later reflected, 'I didn't kind of get it for a while'.⁴ Only after noticing African Americans converging upon the 'Coloured cafeteria' did she comprehend the situation. It was her first glimpse of Southern segregation, but also constituted a belated initiation to what historians Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have termed the 'global colour line'.⁵ The knowledge hit her, she recalled, 'like a bombshell'.⁶

For Barry, and many of her generation, the everyday politics of race were first unmasked abroad. In the decades following the Commonwealth *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901), which barred non-white immigration via a dictation test, the diversity that had characterised the Australian colonies was vanquished by the dream of a unified White Australia. From the moment of Federation up until the slow erosion of immigration restrictions in the 1950s and 60s, whiteness became 'so normative as to be partly invisible', and race could be 'sometimes taken for granted'.⁷ Only by venturing beyond the borders of the southern continent were Anglo-Australians guaranteed to confront 'colour' and its consequences. As one 1940s traveller put it, 'the colour question was a new thing for me to face'.⁸

British. "Census Bulletin No. 27 – Nationality of the Population of Australia," *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1961, 5. These figures were 'exclusive of full-blooded Aboriginals'.

⁴ Barry interview.

⁵ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

⁶ Barry interview.

⁷ Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 35; Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbours*, 23.

⁸ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 71.

For many, this confrontation took place in colonised Asia. Australians who, in Sobocinska's terms, 'visited the neighbours' up north received what Woollacott has termed a 'crash course in imperial race relations'. By passing through Colombo and Bombay en route to London, or sampling the colonial luxury of Singapore's Raffles Hotel, travellers obtained first-hand experience of the subordination of local people, as well as an acute sense of their own whiteness and the privilege this entailed.⁹ Race relations were also seen anew by those who travelled in an easterly direction. As historian Warwick Anderson has argued, several interwar Australian liberal intellectuals—all men—found cause to 'revise some old racial verities' in the 'sensuous, hybrid' Pacific.¹⁰

Similar lessons were taught to transpacific travellers. In modern America, an immigrant nation beset by fraught racial politics, Australian women received an education in race, one that tested the prejudices of their upbringing against the lived complexities of racial difference. To the surprise of many, raised to consider the United States a fellow 'white' nation—albeit one with a history of black slavery—these visitors were immersed in a smorgasbord of humanity from the moment they cleared customs in Honolulu or New York.¹¹ Black men and women peopled city streets, unfamiliar smells wafted from Chinese restaurants, and English jostled for prominence alongside a dozen other languages. As a result, they were compelled—often for the first time—to grapple with race-based 'grammars of difference', and

⁹ Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 34–35; Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbours*, 22–23. Pesman's account of this dynamic, which focuses on Colombo, is both autobiographical and historical. Recalling her own experience of travel, she writes that 'My only recollections of encounters with non-European people before I left on the ritual trip abroad in 1961 are vague memories', and stresses that, 'like most Australians before the 1970s', she needed to travel abroad 'to encounter people other than Europeans in significant numbers.' Ros Pesman, "Australian Women Encounter the East: The Boat Stops at Colombo," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 84, no. 1 (1998): 82.

¹⁰ Warwick Anderson, "Liberal Intellectuals as Pacific Supercargo: White Australian Masculinity and Racial Thought on the Boarder-Lands," *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 3 (2015): 425–39. The potential of 'face-to-face encounters in the Pacific' to 'unsettle Australians' racialist assumptions of Islander savagery and inferiority' has also been highlighted in Nicholas Halter, "'To See With Their Own Eyes': Australian Travel Writing on the Pacific Islands, c. 1880–1941," (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2015), 217–18, 281.

¹¹ On the United States and Australia as twin 'white men's countries', see Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 6–9.

encouraged to regard racial ‘others’ as individuals rather than abstractions.¹² These visitors were also forced, through a mix of legal and cultural ‘othering’, to see themselves as alien, and to ponder the possibilities and limits of ‘blood brotherhood’ between so-called ‘white men’s countries’. The privileged fraternity of whiteness was revealed to be more tenuous than imagined, and could not always be counted upon to trump competing identifications and imperatives. Much of this exposure to difference stemmed from America’s underlying racial mix, but was also occasioned by the growing geopolitical importance of the United States. Particularly after 1945, major cities such as New York and Chicago were hubs of international and internationalist activity, attracting visitors from around the globe. In this context, to encounter America was also to encounter the world.



Figure 10: A segregated bus terminal in 1940s Memphis, similar to the scene that greeted Barry in Richmond, Virginia. Library of Congress, LC-USW3- 037975-E [P&P] LOT 885.

¹² For a discussion of ‘grammars of difference’, see Catherine Hall, “Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial, Thinking the Empire,” in *Culture of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 20.

This chapter examines the racial education Australian women received in the United States, and considers the extent to which they took these lessons to heart. Most were discomfited to encounter racial difference and confront the unforeseen limits to white kinship, and some continued to espouse racist ideas. As the decades progressed, however, a growing number objected to racial prejudice, and many embraced the opportunity to encounter a broader spectrum of humanity. By the 1940s and 50s, as race-thinking came under question worldwide, such experiences could prompt a rethinking of racial hierarchies, the embrace of internationalism, and even explicit critique of White Australia. Taken together, these altered perspectives remind us that, as Woollacott writes, twentieth-century 'racial understandings were shaped transnationally'.¹³ It was through travelling abroad, as much as through grappling with race relations in their own backyard, that Australians came to imagine whiteness and blackness, self and other.

Not only did racial understandings emerge through travel, but race itself can be understood as a product of the global flows and fluxes that characterised the modern world. Race is, of course, not a fixed biological fact, but a socially constituted expression of difference, always inflected with relations of power. Little evident prior to the late seventeenth century, racial thinking rose to prominence as new technologies brought the diverse peoples of the world into ever closer contact.¹⁴ As historian Matthew Pratt Guterl writes, 'the shrinking dimensions of time and space in the modern world posed mighty problems of classification'.¹⁵ These problems first came to the fore during the imperial expansion of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the European 'discovery' and conquest of indigenous peoples throughout Asia, the Americas, Africa and Australia was accompanied by what Anne McClintock has called the 'invention of race'.¹⁶ During

¹³ Woollacott, *Race and the Modern Exotic*, xx.

¹⁴ On the absence of racial thought prior to the seventeenth century, see Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Matthew Pratt Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 184.

¹⁶ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 5.

the fin-de-siecle and beyond, a precipitous increase in global communication and mobility occasioned a concomitant rise in exposure to difference. As the world got smaller, so too did the space between people of different languages, cultures, religions and skin tones, ensuring that racial thinking was situated at the core of twentieth-century modernity. This nexus between race and the modern took many different forms, ranging from the scientific racism of Social Darwinism and eugenics, to an ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ expressed through the consumption of exotic goods, to the fascination with the ‘primitive’ that saturated modernist art, dance and music.¹⁷

In this context, the cosmopolitan character of the United States became central to its modern credentials, another reason to believe that travelling across the Pacific was akin to travelling to tomorrow. The jazz clubs of Harlem, the bureaucratic apparatus at Ellis Island, and the internationalist aspirations of the United Nations (UN) were all, in different ways, evocative of the new and the up-to-date. But like the hustle and bustle to be discussed in Chapter Five, this aspect of American modernity was not always greeted with open arms. To be in the presence of such diversity may have been educative, but it was often far from comfortable. In this instance, as in several others, the American vision of the future elicited both thrills and chills from the daughters of White Australia.

The Local Colour

The education began in Honolulu. Both the steamship journey and, from 1946, the air route between Sydney and San Francisco included a brief stopover in the Hawai’ian Islands, which had been annexed by the United States in 1898 and rapidly developed into a modern tourist playground.¹⁸ For an Australian woman

¹⁷ For a discussion of the significance of race within scientific modernity, see Nancy Leys Stepan, “Race, Gender, Science and Citizenship,” *Gender & History* 10, no. 1 (1998): 26–52; Dana Seitler, *Atavistic Tendencies: The Culture of Science in American Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). On ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ see Mica Nava, “Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no. 1–2 (2002): 81–99. On the primitive in modern culture, see for example Woollacott, *Race and the Modern Exotic*, xxi–xxiii.

¹⁸ For an account of this shipping route, see Steel, “Lines across the Sea,” 315–29. On the birth of transpacific aviation, see Moore, *Silver Wings in Pacific Skies*, 13. On the development of the

bound for America, the day or two spent in Honolulu represented both a pause on the journey and the moment of arrival. On the one hand, Hawai'i resembled an archetypal 'Pacific paradise', heavily populated by Polynesians and rich in swaying palm trees, inviting beaches and other tropical delights. In this respect, the pause in Honolulu constituted a reprise of the preceding stopovers in Fiji and Samoa, where transpacific travellers engaged in touristic pleasures that advertised and re-enacted European imperial penetration of the Pacific.¹⁹ Yet the Hawai'ian Islands also provided an introduction to American people, food and culture, as well as the bureaucratic apparatus of the American state. Hawai'i would not attain statehood until 1959, but its status as a US territory meant that the locals enjoyed full citizenship and conducted commerce with dollar bills.²⁰ Given its geographic position, the territory also functioned as a west coast equivalent of Ellis Island—a closely guarded gateway to the mainland. After facing the rigours of border control in Honolulu, few Australians harboured any doubts that they had arrived in the United States.

But this was not the America imagined from afar. To be sure, Honolulu was 'very modern and streamlined', featuring an impressive array of grand hotels, sleek automobiles and tempting shops that reminded at least one woman of a Hollywood set.²¹ 'Up to date, with its luxurious hotels and modernity,' was how Alexa Kenna described the city as early as 1927. 'Honolulu is a little bit of America.'²² It was

Hawai'ian tourism industry, see Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), ch. 2–4; George H. Lewis, "Beyond the Reef: Cultural Constructions of Hawaii in Mainland America, Australia and Japan," *Journal of Popular Culture* 30, no. 2 (1996): 123–35; Yujin Yaguchi and Mari Yoshihara, "Evolutions of 'Paradise': Japanese Tourist Discourse about Hawaii," *American Studies* 45, no. 3 (2004): 81–106; Christine Skwiot, *The Purposes of Paradise: US Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawai'i* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

¹⁹ On the relationship between tourism and imperialism in the colonised Pacific, see Steel, "An Ocean of Leisure."

²⁰ According to the *Hawaiian Organic Act* (1900), all citizens of the former Republic of Hawai'i (1894–98) were automatically granted US citizenship. The privileges of citizenship were also extended to every person born on the islands following the annexation of 1898.

²¹ "At Honolulu: Miss Montgomery's Impressions," *Cairns Post*, 24 September 1948, 6; Theresa Moore to mother, 8 September 1949, box 3, Moore Papers.

²² "A World Tour," *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 11 November 1927, 11.

instead the local citizenry that provided the jarring note. The Western doorway to this ‘white man’s country’ was, as one woman wrote, home to ‘some thirty-seven races—Caucasian, Polynesian, Mongol, Negroid’.²³ The automobile owners were Japanese businessmen, the children sporting blue jeans were Polynesian, and ‘dark brown bodies’ dotted the sands.²⁴ These were, by and large, unwelcome discoveries. It was not the mere presence of racial others that elicited concern—grass-skirted Polynesians were deemed charming—but rather their affluence, their modernity and above all their claim to be ‘American’.²⁵ Beholden to a racial taxonomy that envisioned non-white people as ‘backward’ or ‘primitive’, Australians struggled to conceive of Asians and Polynesians as true embodiments of a modern and prosperous nation.



Figure 11: ‘Dark brown bodies’ on Waikiki Beach, 1936. SLV, H96.46/3.

²³ *BP Magazine*, September 1931, 50.

²⁴ 7 September 1949, “Harkness Fellowship Trip to America in 1949,” and Theresa Moore to mother, 8 September 1949, box 3, Moore Papers; Jean Lawson, *American Holiday* (Melbourne: Hallcraft, 1954), 20–21.

²⁵ On the charm of Polynesians engaged in ‘primitive’ behaviour, see for instance, 8 August 1939, “Diary of an Overseas Trip,” MLMSS 5148, SLNSW; “At Honolulu: Miss Montgomery’s Impressions.”

Some expressed concern that Honolulu's people of colour, in particular the Japanese, had engaged in a misappropriation of Americanness, and constituted a 'menace' to be vanquished with due haste.²⁶ These fears were most pronounced during the interwar period, peaking amidst the highpoint of concerns about the 'yellow peril' to Australia's north.²⁷ During her visit in 1931, Mildred Staley took anxious note of 'the ever-increasing tide of Oriental life promising to overwhelm the whites by sheer force of numbers'.²⁸ Others mourned what was described as 'Americanisation', characterising the expansion of the US into the Pacific as a corrupting influence upon 'native' peoples.²⁹ Either way, this intermingling of 'coloured' people and 'white' nation was deemed regrettable, a form of miscegenation that sullied one or both parties.

In many respects, of course, the Hawai'ian stopover was a pleasant interlude, dominated by sunset cocktails and scenic drives. While concerns about the 'colour line' were widespread, they rarely overshadowed these touristic delights. But this brief introduction to American soil nonetheless foreshadowed the unsettling racial lessons that would follow on the mainland. For as these travellers would soon discover, the questionable whiteness of the United States was not limited to Honolulu. Although the cosmopolitanism of the nation's Pacific outpost could initially seem anomalous, it proved instead a harbinger of the racial diversity evident throughout the forty-eight states.

This diversity was impossible to ignore or avoid. Throughout the half-century prior to 1960, roughly ten percent of the US population was black. Below the Mason-Dixon Line that figure sat at 30 percent in 1910, dwindling to 20 percent by 1960. Prosperous northern cities such as New York, Chicago and Detroit were also developing conspicuous black communities, thanks to the mass exodus from

²⁶ "Japanese Menace at Honolulu: Mrs. Holman's Impressions," *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 11 April 1920, 5.

²⁷ David Walker, "Survivalist Anxieties: Australian Responses to Asia, 1890s to the Present," *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no. 120 (2002): 325.

²⁸ *BP Magazine*, September 1931, 50.

²⁹ Theresa Moore to mother, 8 September 1949, Moore Papers; Jean Arnot to Gillie, 1 February 1949, box 1, Arnot Papers; Irene F. Jeffreys, *Unforgettable Safari* (Sydney: The Church of England Information Trust, 1958), 108.

the South known as the Great Migration. The West was home to sizeable Asian and Native American minorities, and even the nation's so-called 'white' majority was a composite of peoples from all four corners of Europe.³⁰ After a lifetime in homogenous White Australia, race was suddenly everywhere, a thorny issue to be negotiated on a daily or even hourly basis.



Figure 12: Margaret Cilento, Negro woman, c. 1948, National Gallery of Australia, Acc. NGA 95.270. An artistic expression of Australian women's fascination with black Americans, etched by Cilento during her years in New York.

Of greatest salience was what was known as the 'negro question'. Australians who visited America during these decades had often never before encountered

³⁰ Frank Hobbs and Nicole Stoops, "Demographic Trends in the 20th Century," US Census Bureau Report, November 2002, 77, 85. Accessed 15 September 2015 from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf>. The Hispanic population, by contrast, remained fairly negligible prior to the 1960s, and attracted little attention from Australians. Brian Gratton and Myron P. Gutmann, "Hispanics in the United States, 1850–1990: Estimates of Population Size and National Origin," *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* 33, no. 3 (2000): 137–53.

'blackness' in the flesh. Although some postwar visitors had observed African Americans among the US soldiers posted to wartime Australia, many transpacific travellers possessed no prior experience of African or even indigenous peoples.³¹ As discussed in Chapters One and Six, these visitors typically met so-called 'negroes' in the guise of domestic servants or Pullman porters, subordinate roles which reinforced prevailing notions of black inferiority. Yet interracial contact also occurred in settings where Australians and black Americans surveyed each other on more equal footing. In city streets, at train stations, and in supermarkets, these women watched African Americans with ill-concealed fascination. In workplaces, classrooms and at social events, some even broached a tentative conversation. Such meetings were often inflected with racist attitudes, but could nonetheless allow new understandings of blackness to emerge. Throughout the forty-eight states, the respectable appearance, agreeable manners and proper diction of black Americans elicited approbation from women who had anticipated a more disreputable class of people. Audrey Lawrence, formerly of Perth, noted in 1946 that the elegant dress of black women in Cincinnati 'put us poor travel-weary women to shame.'³² Even her contemporary Theresa Moore, who refused to countenance black neighbours when apartment hunting in Berkeley, would later concede that 'an educated negro is the most charming person you could wish to meet.'³³

Moore's use of the qualifier 'educated' may have intimated that most 'negroes' were neither educated nor charming, but many of her compatriots discovered abundant evidence that black Americans had a hunger and aptitude for learning. In the 1930s playwright Doris Hayball savoured a tête-à-tête with a 'very gentlemanly and educated' black Chicago professor; in 1950 kindergarten teacher Beth Stubbs hobnobbed with a 'negro teacher' at a conference in Portland; and later that decade archivist Mollie Lukis was 'very interested' to discover university-

³¹ The artist Alison McMaugh, for instance, who was born in 1929, recalled 'seeing American servicemen swimming at Bondi Beach'. As she noted, 'I had never seen scantily dressed black men before: our own Aborigines were quite segregated at that time.' "A Fool for Art: An Artist's Autobiography," 4, Papers of Alison McMaugh, 2008, MS ACC08.202, NLA.

³² "Seeing America through Westralian Eyes," *Mirror* (Perth), 23 November 1946, 9.

³³ Theresa Moore to mother, 16 May 1950, box 3, Moore Papers.

educated black librarians throughout the country.³⁴ Detailed at length in travel accounts, such meetings left a powerful impression upon Australians. On the one hand, the novelty ascribed to educated African Americans reflected racist assumptions that dark skin and mental acuity were by and large antithetical. But these encounters also made it difficult to deny that black men and women had the potential to match the learning and employability of Anglo-Saxons. That, at least, was the conclusion reached by Mary Pope, whose visit to Harlem in the early 1950s gave her the confidence to pronounce that the ‘negro’s mind’ was ‘equal to that of the white man.’³⁵ Her contemporary Heather Lyon went one step further, interpreting the educability of black children as evidence of the equality—and indeed, the equivalence—of all races. After teaching in a Harlem nursery school during 1946, Lyon became ‘convinced’ that ‘pre-school children, wherever they live and whatever the colour of their skin, are fundamentally the same and develop in very much the same way’.³⁶

Not all shared Lyon’s willingness to collapse racial hierarchies, but a visit to Harlem did often challenge negative preconceptions about the black community. From the 1920s onwards, few Australians would depart Manhattan without making a foray uptown to the infamous black district north of 110th Street, where they ogled the locals, sidled into an evangelical church, and sometimes even braved a jazz club. Drawn by lurid tales of Prohibition-era debauchery, these women anticipated a hotbed of sin, a black ghetto where the frisson of racial otherness comingled with the illicit thrills of sex, alcohol and crime.³⁷ The reality often proved far more

³⁴ Doris Hayball, “From Coast to Coast,” folder 5, box 395, Papers of Doris Hayball, 1909–1948, MS 7067, SLV; Overseas Diary 1950–52, Papers and diary of Beth Stubbs, 1950–2000, MSPA PA BOX 55, SLV; Mollie Lukis interviewed by Erica Harvey, 1992, OH2527, State Library of West Australia (SLWA), Perth.

³⁵ Mary Pope, *We Circled the World* (London & Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1954), 149.

³⁶ “Sunshine Kindergarten,” *Sunshine Advocate*, 24 April 1947, 6.

³⁷ On white ‘slumming’ in Harlem, see David Gilbert and Claire Hancock, “New York City and the Transatlantic Imagination: French and English Tourism and the Spectacle of the Modern Metropolis, 1893–1939,” *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 77 (2006): 98–100; Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). More recent research stresses that whites also were present in Harlem as sports spectators, business owners, police officers and motorists, making the neighbourhood an important site of ‘interracial encounters’ that were characterised by ‘contestation, negotiation,

pedestrian. The artist and diplomatic wife Maie Casey uncovered a ‘spontaneous jungle scene’ when she peeked into a dance hall in 1941, but this primitivist vision of the neighbourhood was shared by few of her contemporaries.³⁸ Others were more struck by the ‘bright-eyed, gaily-clad children’, who were ‘forever singing and smiling’.³⁹ At the nearby Bronx Zoo, the black families ‘decorously walking down the broad paths’ and ‘standing in quiet groups’ also attracted attention.⁴⁰



Figure 13: Joyce Brown (left) and Julianna Nankeville enjoying a friendly encounter in Harlem. *New York Amsterdam News*, 14 June 1947, 5.

In these accounts, mid-century black New York was wholesome and aspirational, a family-oriented community reminiscent of the so-called ‘Talented Tenth’, more preoccupied with daytime uplift than night-time revelry.⁴¹ Although not devoid of racist condescension, such portraits nevertheless reveal glimmers of recognition that whiteness and blackness were not necessarily antithetical. So safe

resistance, and accommodation’. Stephen Robertson, Shane White, and Stephen Garton, “Harlem in Black and White: Mapping Race and Place in the 1920s,” *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 5 (2013): 864–80.

³⁸ Maie Casey, *Tides and Eddies* (London: Michael Joseph, 1966), 87.

³⁹ Pope, *We Circled the World*, 149; Lawson, *American Holiday*, 154.

⁴⁰ Cynthia Nolan, *Open Negative: An American Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 110.

⁴¹ The ‘Talented Tenth’ was du Bois’ term for the black educated elite. This elite community has more recently been phrased ‘Negroland’, Margo Jefferson’s term for the world of aspirational African-American professionals in mid-century urban America. Margo Jefferson, *Negroland* (New York: Pantheon, 2015).

did Harlem seem by 1947 that Sydney social workers Julianna Nankeville and Joyce Brown could countenance lodging in the neighbourhood, using a Morningside Avenue apartment as a base from which to study the ‘Negro problem’.⁴² As a fleshpot, Harlem would often disappoint, but as a site of interracial contact and understanding, it could far exceed expectations.

Similar lessons emerged from San Francisco’s Chinatown. To an even greater extent than Harlem, Chinatown was an ethnic neighbourhood geared towards tourists, who had flocked to the district in large numbers since the 1880s. These ‘slumming’ adventurers would inspect joss houses, brave dim backstreets and sample the local delicacies, instructed by tourist literature and local guides.⁴³ In the twentieth century, Australian visitors joined them, seeking out the alien ‘Orientals’ that had dominated Antipodean visions of the Chinese since the gold rushes of the 1850s.⁴⁴ As in Harlem, this quest to uncover a seedy underworld was doomed to failure. By the interwar decades, Chinatown was a thriving commercial district, a consumer-oriented leisure space more overridden with gift shops than opium dens.⁴⁵ Doris Hayball was all too conscious that she faced only ‘imaginary danger’ during her 1937 guided tour, by which time the neighbourhood’s once notorious ‘criminal infested haunts’ existed only in the minds of impressionable tourists.⁴⁶

After the war, there was no denying that Chinatown owed more to modern American entrepreneurship than ‘Oriental’ tradition. The streets heaved with automobiles, the cleanliness of the restaurants won fulsome praise, and the locals wore Western dress and conversed with American accents. ‘I had imagined

⁴² “Australian Visitors Laud Conduct of Negroes Who Served Down Under,” *Chicago Defender*, 28 June 1947, 21; “Australian Tours US,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 29 June 1947, 1.

⁴³ Barbara Berglund, “Chinatown’s Tourist Terrain: Representation and Racialization in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco,” *American Studies* 46, no. 2 (2005): 5–36.

⁴⁴ David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850–1939* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1999), 36–49.

⁴⁵ This transformation was typical of America’s ethnic neighbourhoods, which developed into modern commercial districts as a result of white ‘slumming’. As Chad Heap writes, ‘slumming became central to the emergence of the commercialized leisure industry, prompting the creation of a variety of new public amusements that promoted the crossing of racial and sexual boundaries.’ Heap, *Slumming*, 7.

⁴⁶ Hayball, “From Coast to Coast.”

something far more exotic than the rows of souvenir shops whose attendants spoke such good English,' confessed Irene Jeffreys in 1958. Even when she loitered in the neighbourhood after sunset, Jeffreys found 'no particular excitement'.⁴⁷ As in Harlem, this dearth of exoticism could frustrate thrill-seekers, but also spoke volumes about the mundanity and modernity of the nation's Chinese population. The Oriental other that had done so much to inspire the White Australia policy was revealed to be scarcely more foreign than the Anglo-American, possessed of different traditions and culinary tastes yet still fundamentally 'civilised'.⁴⁸ After emerging from Chinatown unmolested and well-fed, it was perhaps possible to imagine that the 'yellow peril' to Australia's north was not so very perilous after all.



*Figure 14: The modern streets of Chinatown in 1952.
San Francisco Public Library, AAB-3815.*

⁴⁷ Jeffreys, *Unforgettable Safari*, 104.

⁴⁸ On the relationship between anti-Chinese sentiment and the White Australia policy, see Walker, *Anxious Nation*, 11.

The racial otherness Australian women saw in the United States was not limited to Asians and African Americans, but also encompassed communities with European heritage, including Italians, Germans, Scandinavians, Russians and Jews. Often mentioned in the same breath as the Chinese and black populations, European migrants and even their native-born descendants were imagined to be scarcely less alien than people of colour.⁴⁹ This tendency to look askance at non-British ‘whites’ put Australian visitors at odds with local thinking. Transatlantic migrants—especially those from Ireland and southern Europe—had been widely regarded as racial others throughout the Progressive Era, but in the decades following 1920 the concept of whiteness was expanded to encompass these marginal groups. As US historians Matthew Frye Jacobson and Matthew Pratt Guterl have demonstrated, a multiplicity of ‘white’ races were subsumed into the umbrella category ‘Caucasian’, heralding the rise of what Guterl calls ‘bi-racialism’—a strict black-white racial binary. In the process, race became a matter of skin colour, losing its turn-of-the-century associations with culture, language and religion.⁵⁰

Visitors from the southern continent proved loath to share this vision. The understandings of ‘whiteness’ that emerged in Australia and the United States were inflected by each nation’s historical trajectory and racial politics. The language of whiteness crossed borders, but its parameters differed from place to place.⁵¹ As a result, Australians would not always agree with American classifications. Coming from a nation that prized ‘ethnic solidarity’, where ‘whiteness’ and ‘Britishness’ were almost one and the same, they remained little inclined to regard southern or even northern Europeans as racial kin.⁵² As late as the 1940s and 50s, many continued

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Christina Stead, “America,” Stead Papers.

⁵⁰ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Guterl, *The Color of Race in America*.

⁵¹ Georgia Shiells, “Immigration History and Whiteness Studies: American and Australian Approaches Compared,” *History Compass* 8, no. 8 (2010): 797–98. For a more detailed account of the development of whiteness in Australia, see Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

⁵² On the importance of a British ‘ethnic nationalism’ to understandings of race and nationhood in early twentieth-century Australia, see Russell McGregor, “‘Breed out the Colour’ or the Importance of Being White,” *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no. 120 (2002): 286–302.

to regard hyphenated Americans, no matter how ‘Caucasian’ in appearance, as a people apart. This attitude was made explicit when Mavis Riley passed through Bismarck, North Dakota in 1946, where the locals were ‘predominantly of German, Russian and Scandinavian descent’. Although such a population no doubt shared the fair features cherished by Antipodean Britons, Riley was adamant that ‘[i]n racial background they were quite different from Australians.’⁵³

Drawing distinctions between ‘white’ races functioned to accent the heterogeneity of the United States. Viewed through Australian eyes, the population was not composed of a ‘white’ majority and ‘coloured’ minority, but rather consisted of a *mélange* of ‘foreign’ elements, whose presence threatened to swamp the Anglo-American ‘natives’. Seen in this light, the US was a mongrel nation, a global melting-pot that continued to function and even flourish in spite of its myriad constituent parts. The lesson here was that difference need not result in debility or discord. Although the term ‘foreign’ carries a whiff of contamination, Australian visitors did not always regard America’s ‘foreigners’ as a malign force. The supposed failures of assimilation would elicit some concern, but many spoke of ‘foreign’ communities in terms approaching appreciation, and praised the absence of bad blood between different immigrant groups.

The interwar visitor Alice Caporn is a case in point. After dwelling amid New York’s ‘melting-pot’ in early 1930s, Caporn became convinced that ‘the strong influence of other races—especially the European’ was the prime reason that ‘Americans are in the forefront of social progress’. When she returned to Perth in 1938, Caporn even proposed that Australia would do well to replicate ‘the very mixed population’ of New York. Opening the door to non-British ‘races’ would, she argued in the local *Daily News*, ‘contribute a great deal toward the civilisation which Australians are building in this sunny continent’.⁵⁴ The following August, as war clouds gathered on the horizon, Caporn once again called for Australia to emulate America’s embrace of the European multitudes, but now included an especial plea on behalf of the Jewish ‘race’. Following the example of academic Sir Walter

⁵³ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 35.

⁵⁴ “She Speaks Up for Foreigners,” *Daily News* (Perth), 30 April 1938, 8.

Murdoch, who the previous month had called for Australia to admit seventy-five thousand Jewish refugees, Caporn proclaimed the ‘intelligence, thrift and culture’ of New York’s Jews.⁵⁵ As she wrote in the *West Australian*, Jewish immigrants were ‘thoroughly domesticated’, intent upon ‘self-improvement’, and ‘loyal citizens’ who had ‘enriched the life of the American nation’. Having seen this process at work in the United States, Caporn was confident it could be replicated in the Antipodes—to the benefit of both parties. Her article concluded with a call to action: ‘if Australia at this time opens her heart and contributes some of her vast, empty space to the Jewish people, then Australia will be the gainer.’⁵⁶

Australia would largely neglect to provide refuge to Europe’s Jews at this hour of need, but the nation did open its arms to Europeans displaced in the aftermath of the conflict. In these postwar years, as the risks and merits of diversity acquired newfound salience for Australians, the American melting pot continued to draw praise. Throughout her nationwide tour in 1952, Melbourne radio host Jean Lawson was struck by the ‘large colonies’ of ‘French, Germans, Swedes, Italians, Chinese, Spanish’. Much to her surprise, such ‘substantially different races do get on together’, and viewed each other with ‘lively interest’ instead of suspicion or animosity. Although ‘the negro problem has still to be solved’, Lawson concluded that America’s diversity had spawned ‘a people to whom racial, religious and social tolerance is as natural as the air they breathe.’⁵⁷

For a visitor from a nation in the midst of its own influx of Europeans, this was a timely and heartening message to draw. At a moment when the British character of Australia was under perceived threat from migrants fleeing war-torn Europe, the example of America suggested that this was no cause for alarm.⁵⁸ It was perhaps possible for ‘racial’ diversification to breed understanding and social harmony, making what could be mourned as a loss of purity into a force to be

⁵⁵ Walter Murdoch, “Our Opportunity,” *West Australian* (Perth), 15 July 1939, 7.

⁵⁶ Alice Caporn, “Jewish Immigrants,” *West Australian* (Perth), 4 August 1939, 23.

⁵⁷ Lawson, *American Holiday*, 30–31.

⁵⁸ On the perceived threat to Australia’s Britishness posed by European migration, see Neville Meaney, “Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31, no. 2 (2003): 128–29.

welcomed with open arms. In the words of Lawson's contemporary Mavis Riley, postwar Australia could take courage and inspiration from America's 'rare genius in welcoming millions of newcomers from all parts of the world.'⁵⁹

Discrimination, Dispossession and Jim Crow

But this education in race was not all upbeat. Alongside these lessons on the modernity and amenability of 'coloured' and 'foreign' peoples, Australian women were confronted with the prejudice that dogged racial minorities throughout the United States. Although similar prejudices were central to the logic of White Australia, these visitors recoiled from the less familiar spectre of racism-in-action. An early example of this tendency comes from actress Dorothy Jenner, who arrived in San Francisco in 1915, accompanied by her Australian friend Fayette. Soon after checking in to their hotel, the pair provoked the ire of staff and guests by kissing a black doorman in thanks for rescuing a stolen jewellery case. The police were called and the doorman was arrested for his role in the interracial liaison. Jenner was appalled to see this chivalrous staff member judged a criminal, and claimed to be unaware of what she called the 'negro question'. 'I hadn't a clue what all the fuss was about,' she recalled.⁶⁰

Similar incidents abounded in the decades that followed. One visitor in 1926 was dismayed by the 'ineradicable prejudice' of a New York acquaintance who counselled against accepting the hospitality of black performer Paul Robeson. Another woman was left 'shocked and sick' in 1946 when an otherwise charming local 'violently abused' an 'elderly negro porter' in Manhattan's Grand Central Station.⁶¹ Such indignation only proliferated throughout the 1950s, as the Civil Rights movement raised consciousness of African Americans' ill-treatment worldwide. New York's widespread anti-Semitism was likewise frowned upon. Upon learning, in 1915, that a local librarian had been fired due to her 'Jewish

⁵⁹ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 55.

⁶⁰ Jenner, *Darlings, I've Had a Ball*, 61–62.

⁶¹ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 99; Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 79.

ancestry’, the feminist Ada Holman railed against the scourge of ‘racial prejudice’.⁶² As such visitors discovered, amid the much-touted modernity of New York lay prejudices fostered by the antiquated traditions of slavery and anti-Semitism—prejudices which had in fact been given a new lease of life by modern racial ‘science’.

American mistreatment of the Native American population was also liable to provoke self-righteous critique. Prior to braving the ‘imaginary danger’ of Chinatown in 1937, Doris Hayball inspected the Grand Canyon, where Native American people and culture were positioned as two of the main attractions. Visiting tourists were funnelled into the Hopi House, an ‘authentic’ Hopi dwelling constructed in 1905 by Anglo-American railroad magnate Fred Harvey, which housed a museum and shop featuring Native American handicrafts. Every evening, a ‘Feather Dance’ and ‘Eagle Dance’ were performed outside on the rim of the Canyon.⁶³ Hayball found little pleasure in these spectacles. ‘I felt unhappy about these vestiges of the dispossessed race and debased specimens who ministered to our entertainment,’ she recorded. Most distressing was the sight of fellow tourists tossing coins to the ‘poor wretches’, an act of condescension made all the more poignant by the eagerness with which the paltry sums were collected.⁶⁴ Hayball’s acknowledgement of indigenous dispossession was echoed by Jean Lawson who, in 1952, reflected upon the ‘bitterness’ caused by the ‘loss of their ancient hunting grounds and their homes.’⁶⁵ Later that decade, the more radical Cynthia Nolan, wife of artist Sidney Nolan, was left ‘sick to the stomach’ by the violent destruction of the ‘dispossessed’ Native American community. When she later visited an ‘Indian

⁶² Ada A. Holman, *Memoirs of a Premier’s Wife* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1947), 175–76.

⁶³ On the Hopi House and the development of Native American tourism in the Southwest, see Marta Weigle, “From Desert to Disney World: The Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company Display the Indian Southwest,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45, no. 1 (1989): 115–37; Marta Weigle, “Exposition and Mediation: Mary Colter, Erna Fergusson, and the Santa Fe/Harvey Popularization of the Native Southwest, 1902–1940,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 12, no. 3 (1992): 117–50; Laura Jane Moore, “Elle Meets the President: Weaving Navajo Culture and Commerce in the Southwestern Tourist Industry,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 22, no. 1 (2001): 21–44.

⁶⁴ Hayball, “From Coast to Coast.”

⁶⁵ Lawson, *American Holiday*, 120.

Reservation’, Nolan was appalled by the tokenism of these territorial allotments. ‘How poor these vast tracts of land, these last minute guilty “gifts”, invariably are,’ she sighed.⁶⁶

In all these encounters with the American ‘colour line’, the visitor in question was unwilling or unable to acknowledge that their own nation’s past and present featured a catalogue of similar injustices, to which they themselves could be judged complicit. Some even claimed, like Jenner, to know ‘next to nothing’ about the ‘colour problem’.⁶⁷ Hypocrisy aside, such responses point to the power of witnessing to render racism unpalatable. According to available evidence, most transpacific travellers were able to turn a blind eye to the discrimination that prevailed in Australia—much of which was concentrated in regional settings—but the personalised cruelty that proliferated throughout America proved far more difficult to stomach. Amid the mundanities of daily life, both the brutality of Anglo-Americans and the suffering of racial others were placed in the spotlight. In forcing Australians to see the ugly implications of the ‘colour line’, such incidents provoked a more considered and compassionate engagement with the system of white privilege and non-white subordination that had, for the most part, been taken-for-granted. Their eyes, in short, were prised open, ensuring they would struggle to again assume ignorance of the racial violence that permeated the modern world.⁶⁸

This lesson was most difficult to ignore in the South. Although visitors from Australia tended to base themselves in the major cities of the northeast or the Pacific coast, many made brief forays below the Mason-Dixon Line. There they encountered a society governed by Jim Crow, the system of local and state racial segregation laws dating from the Reconstruction Era. In contrast to the informal—and less conspicuous—segregation that prevailed in the north, the former

⁶⁶ Nolan, *Open Negative*, 35.

⁶⁷ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 79.

⁶⁸ Australian women did not necessarily have to travel abroad to have their eyes prised open. As Fiona Paisley notes, interwar female reformers who availed themselves of the new railway lines into outback Australia were often radicalised by the ensuing exposure to ‘the starvation, disease and neglect produced by Aboriginal administrations’. Such first-hand experience of Australia’s ill-treatment of indigenous people was, however, far from widespread, and is little evident among the largely urbanised women discussed here. Paisley, “No Back Streets in the Bush,” 125.

Confederate states cherished an explicit separation of black and white. This separation met with increasing resistance in the years after 1945, leading to the desegregation of buses and public schools during the 1950s, but Jim Crow would not be fully dismantled until the passing of the *Civil Rights Act* in 1964.⁶⁹ Throughout the half-century prior to 1960, the demarcations and hierarchies of modern racial ‘science’ were made manifest in the Jim Crow South to an extent rarely seen elsewhere. It was a world engendered by the centuries-old practice of slavery, and often labelled ‘backward’, but was nonetheless validated by the classificatory logic of modernity.

As we saw in the case of Elaine Barry, Australian visitors were plunged into this bifurcated world within moments of arrival. Stepping off a train or Greyhound bus in Virginia or Texas, they found themselves in buildings split along racial lines. The restrooms, cafeterias, drinking fountains, waiting rooms and even the exits were all marked ‘colored’ and ‘white’. The ‘colored’ facilities were, needless to say, often far inferior to those allocated to ‘whites’. As would become apparent in days to come, these divisions extended to restaurants, cinemas, schools and suburbs. Initial responses to this set-up tended towards incredulity. ‘I can’t believe this,’ thought graduate student Jacqueline Goodnow.⁷⁰ The artist Anne Wienholt was ‘astonished’, archivist Mollie Lukis went into ‘shock’, while radio host Jean Lawson experienced a ‘queer sensation’.⁷¹ Once again, Australians met the murky world of US race relations in the guise of innocents abroad, their shock at once an implicit critique of the ‘colour line’ and a denial of prior knowledge of its existence. As another woman noted, ‘[s]trange how little I knew until I was actually in this southern state.’⁷²

Despite having arrived in a state of wilful ignorance, Australians proved receptive to the racial education the South had to offer. Few feigned ignorance of

⁶⁹ For an outline of this period, see David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

⁷⁰ Jacqueline Goodnow interviewed by Nikki Henningham, 2005, ORAL TRC 5547, NLA.

⁷¹ Wienholt interview; Lukis interview; Lawson, *American Holiday*, 93.

⁷² Diary entry, 11 September 1953, bag 3, box 5, Whyte Papers.

the violence and tension that permeated Southern life, and many were moved to ponder the value of segregation. Even among those reluctant to reflect upon race relations in the North, exposure to Jim Crow was apt to bring the 'colour line' to the front and centre of consciousness. The tone of these meditations was often censorious, even prior to WWII. When writer Dorothy Cottrell toured the Southern states in 1936, she was charmed by the physical landscape and repulsed by its human counterpart in equal measure. 'The Old South is so lovely that one could hardly believe it, but much in its people is ugly; ugliest the most universal hatred of and persecution of the Negro,' she wrote home.⁷³ After the war, as the spread of decolonisation and the UN's new language of equality encouraged more enlightened attitudes towards race, such critiques proliferated. The diplomat Julia Drake-Brockman, who holidayed in Virginia and Georgia while posted to New York, found the 'colour bar' a most 'paining note'. In a 1946 letter to family in Perth, she noted that it 'was quite distressing to see how real the race difference still is in the South.'⁷⁴ For Cynthia Nolan, only the strongest language would do justice to the horrors of segregation. 'Throughout the southern states,' she observed in 1959, amid the burgeoning Civil Rights movement and associated backlash, 'the air was hot with a trembling evil.'⁷⁵

Although such commentary was widespread, it rarely translated into action. To all appearances, these visitors were the very model of white decorum, obediently reproducing the segregated order as signage and convention instructed. Inwardly consumed with reproach, they betrayed little or nothing of their true feelings. Ada Holman made a rare show of defiance in 1915, when she occupied a coloured train carriage in 'protest' against Virginia's Jim Crow laws, but this deliberate transgression of Southern segregation found few imitators in the decades that followed.⁷⁶ More typical was Sydney librarian Jean Arnot, who in 1948 confessed

⁷³ Dorothy Cottrell to Doony, 31 August 1936, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Papers of Dorothy Cottrell, 1929–1970, MS 6085, NLA.

⁷⁴ Julia Moore to Henrietta Drake-Brockman, 1 January 1947, folder 46, box 6, Papers of Henrietta Drake-Brockman, 1882–1975, MS 1634, NLA.

⁷⁵ Nolan, *Open Negative*, 76, 89.

⁷⁶ Holman, *Memoirs of a Premier's Wife*, 189–90.

an urge to ‘sit in the coloured waiting room’ of a Tennessee train station, but decided it best to avoid such explicit protest. To show solidarity with the black population would be, she felt, akin to ‘intervening in a quarrel between husband and wife’, and would likely provoke resentment.⁷⁷ For Arnot and many others, the entrenched racialisation of southern space, the sense that visitors should follow local custom, and social expectations of feminine compliance, together overwhelmed any personal objections. Their inaction was also, perhaps, driven by fear of causing repercussions for the very African Americans they sought to defend.

Resistance to segregation, when it did emerge, tended to be expressed through acts of interracial sociability. The archivist Mollie Lukis, who studied in Washington DC during 1957, would accede to Jim Crow when explicitly directed, yet also contravened local norms by accepting the hospitality of a racially mixed colleague. This woman and her husband, Lukis later recounted, had a ‘delightful home’ and were ‘very cultured people’.⁷⁸ Her contemporary, the scientist Adele Millerd, even befriended the black mailman employed at the research institute she visited in Baltimore. On the eve of her departure, the mailman broke down in tears at the prospect of losing the only white colleague prepared to acknowledge his humanity.⁷⁹ Of course, our knowledge of these relationships is one-sided, and it is improbable that they were devoid of the racial hierarchies that structured Southern society at large. Yet by treating their black co-workers as worthy sources and recipients of friendship, these Australian visitors nonetheless intimated that the prejudices of their upbringing were liable to fracture in the face of interpersonal encounter. Faced with a sympathetic member of a ‘lesser’ race, it was possible to depart from prevailing assumptions that blackness signified debasement or threat. Although such relationships would have courted controversy back home, and were viewed askance by Southerners, Lukis and Millerd chose instead to heed their own impulse for human connection—an impulse that proved at least partially colour-

⁷⁷ Jean Arnot to family, 30 December 1948, box 15, Arnot Papers.

⁷⁸ Lukis interview.

⁷⁹ Adele Millerd interviewed by Alice Garner, 2011, ORAL TRC 6165/22, NLA.

blind. In doing so, they issued a subtle yet not insignificant challenge to the prevailing order, and learnt just how ‘delightful’ black companionship could be.



Figure 15: A site of ‘race-making’ in Oklahoma City, 1939. Library of Congress, LC-USF33-012327-M5.

Aside from these interracial friendships, other crossings of the ‘colour line’ were generally inadvertent, provocative acts undertaken in blissful ignorance of the segregation laws. At a Greyhound rest stop in Pittsburgh, for instance, journalist Pat Jarrett availed herself of the black restrooms, unconscious that the facilities were demarcated by race as well as gender.⁸⁰ Such blunders, and the anger they aroused in locals, can be regarded as powerful moments of what historian Thomas Holt has called ‘race-making’.⁸¹ In being expelled from ‘coloured’ zones, these women were explicitly designated ‘white’, irrespective of their self-identifications. From a position of relative race-blindedness, the fact of being raced was thrust upon them. This lesson was then retaught every time they availed themselves of a white restroom or drinking fountain, making the banal and often furtive acts of public urination and hydration a process by which ‘race is reproduced by the marking of the racial

⁸⁰ Pat Jarrett interviewed by Mark Cranfield, 1984, ORAL TRC 2661, NLA.

⁸¹ Thomas C. Holt, “Marking: Race, Race-Making, and the Writing of History,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 1 (1995): 1.

Other'.⁸² Learning about race in the South was not only a matter of confronting the injustice experienced by people of colour, but also involved coming to terms with one's own racial privilege.

Lessons for Australia?

Rarely were explicit connections drawn between the racial politics of the United States and those of White Australia. Despite the obvious parallels between the treatment of indigenous people and non-white migrants in the two nations, few transpacific travellers found cause to reflect upon the 'colour line' back home. The dominant pattern, by and large, was to look askance at the racial prejudice witnessed in America while continuing to give tacit support to Australian immigration restrictions and Aboriginal dispossession. At least one avowed critic of Jim Crow from the late 1940s would even voice disdain for the black underclass back home, describing the Aboriginal population as a 'very backward race'.⁸³ It was one thing to object to the personalised racism of America, but another matter altogether to disavow the racial hierarchies embedded within the fabric of modern Australia.

Among the minority who did regard American and Australian race relations as analogous, not all began to question the virtue of White Australia. A number of transpacific travellers, especially prior to WWII, conceptualised the relative prominence of racial others in the United States as a warning to Australia—a sign that immigration restrictions were imperative to maintain the prestige and purity of the white race. Mary Perry, a schoolteacher who visited California in 1923, found in her observation of American race relations 'a reason for voting for the continuance of "white Australia" should a vote be required'. The 'monopoly of physical labour by the non-whites' in Los Angeles was 'demoralising to the white people in a warm climate', and should avoided at all costs back home.⁸⁴ For Janet Mitchell, who represented Australia at the 1925 Institute of Pacific Relations

⁸² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸³ Untitled typescript, c. 1949, box 3, Moore Papers.

⁸⁴ Diary entry, 4 July 1923; Mary Perry to Anon, 2 September 1923, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers.

conference in Honolulu, a far graver threat was the prospect of miscegenation. Based on her observations of Hawai’ian society, interracial couplings ‘seemed to produce the worst features of both races.’ Having arrived in Honolulu ‘keenly interested’ in the ‘immigration question’ and ‘colour problem’, she returned home with a renewed commitment to the principles of White Australia.⁸⁵

The conclusions drawn by Perry and Mitchell echo the response of contemporaries travelling elsewhere. The interracial mixing witnessed in colonised Asia, for instance, could lead Australian women, such as feminist Vida Goldstein, to believe ‘more firmly than ever in the wisdom of a White Australia.’⁸⁶ Although Perry and Mitchell, not to mention Goldstein, were progressives who would elsewhere express empathy for people of colour, they saw no tension in evincing support for immigration restriction. According to the logic of the pre-WWII era, a commitment to whiteness or racial purity was compatible with a humanitarian worldview. It could even be regarded as more enlightened to prevent the supposed suffering of interracial mixing through enforced division. In the first decades of the century, then, observing the racial ‘impurity’ of the world beyond White Australia was apt to trigger self-congratulation. Whether in Los Angeles or Colombo, the sight of different races dwelling together was taken as a sign that Australia led the world in the intelligent ordering of the human race—a nation more ‘advanced’, at least in this regard, than even the United States.

From the early 1950s, however, some transpacific travellers were prompted to regard Australian racial politics with a more critical eye. By this time, a global reimagining of race relations was well under way. The lessons of the Holocaust, the beginnings of decolonisation and the civil rights movement, as well as the racial equality espoused by the UN Charter, together ensured that unabashed racism propounded within ‘white men’s countries’ since the late nineteenth century was no longer tenable.⁸⁷ In Australia, these factors—combined with the development of

⁸⁵ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 61–73.

⁸⁶ Goldstein quoted in Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 44.

⁸⁷ Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 147–49; Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), ch. 3.

trade and diplomatic relations with decolonising Asia—made it increasingly difficult to defend the blanket restrictions on non-white immigration enforced since Federation.⁸⁸ In this context, Australian women grew better able to see their own nation's capacity for racial violence reflected in distressing incidents witnessed across the Pacific.

A typical example of this more self-reflexive sensibility comes from Melbourne kindergarten director Heather Lyon. On a crowded bus in Birmingham, Alabama in 1958, Lyon offered her seat to a 'coloured woman' with a baby. She was less than a hundred miles from Montgomery where, three years earlier, a black boycott had led the Supreme Court to denounce bus segregation, but Lyon betrayed no consciousness of this recent history nor the tensions that lingered in its wake. At any event, what she regarded as a small courtesy provoked outrage in those around her. '[A]ll hell broke loose,' and other passengers 'shouted abuse' until Lyon reclaimed her seat. This incident left her 'shaken and angry', full of outrage at the 'apartheid system' that prevailed in the South. But it would also prompt a mood of reflection. It was feasible, Lyon conceded, that 'given the same set of circumstances, this incident or a similar one could have possibly occurred here in Australia.'⁸⁹ Acknowledging that Australians were no more enlightened than Southerners, she attributed the lack of racist incidents on Melbourne buses to an absence of racial others rather than an absence of racism.

A similar analogy was drawn by Jean Whyte in 1953. When this Adelaide librarian arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, the sight of 'separate schools' and 'eating places' induced 'anger & tears and a completely lost feeling.' Yet she retained sufficient self-awareness to recognise the potential hypocrisy of her outburst. Recording the occasion in her diary, she noted in parenthesis, 'has an Australian any right to criticize?' Although Whyte 'felt like a foreigner' in the South, she was also cognisant that White Australia was no less tear-inducing than segregated Charleston.⁹⁰ Such parallels would be only underscored the following month, when

⁸⁸ Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005).

⁸⁹ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 139–40.

⁹⁰ Diary entry, 11 September 1953, bag 3, box 5, Whyte Papers.

a Jordanian fellow student at the University of Chicago treated Whyte to a searching cross-examination about Australia's race segregation.⁹¹ What is most significant about these episodes is that both Lyon and Whyte appear to have given little prior thought to Australian race relations. Having left Melbourne and Adelaide as tacit supporters of White Australia, their experiences in the Jim Crow South led them to reflect upon its underlying racism. During a decade in which the White Australia policy began to face criticism from Australians who visited Asia, the travels of Australian women across the Pacific could also inspire critique of racial prejudice back home.⁹² In both Asia and the United States, and quite possibly elsewhere, postwar travellers were given cause to reconsider one of the pillars of Australian nationhood.

These new perspectives were, for the most part, circulated privately, but on occasion they were aired in the public arena. One woman who spoke out against White Australia after venturing across the Pacific was Elaine Miatt, a Sydney nutritionist who completed an MSc in Dietetics at the University of Hawai'i in 1952–53. Miatt was propelled abroad by the absence of postgraduate options within Australia, but found the most instructive aspect of an American education to be the associated exposure to racial difference.⁹³ She was impressed by the mutual tolerance between Honolulu's white, Japanese and Chinese populations, and informed the Australian Federation of University Women (AFUW) that 'no discrimination between racial groups exists in University activities, either academic or social'.⁹⁴ If interracial harmony could be achieved on US soil, Miatt saw no reason why it should not prevail in Australia. Her 1954 speech to the AFUW concluded by calling for 'the abandonment of the White Australia policy', a recommendation reported under the headline 'White policy should go'.⁹⁵ Miatt's

⁹¹ Diary entry, 2–4 October 1953, bag 3, box 5, Whyte Papers.

⁹² Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbours*, 95–101.

⁹³ "Sydney Dietician went to Hawaii to Study Nutrition," *Sunday Herald* (Sydney), 12 July 1953, 20; "Pacific Centre," *West Australian* (Perth), 18 December 1953, 19.

⁹⁴ "On Campus Life at the University of Hawaii," *Bulletin of Australian Federation of University Women*, no. 11, 1954, 33–34.

⁹⁵ "White policy should go," *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 7 January 1954, 5.

position was not entirely heretical by the 1950s, by which time the federal government had begun to dismantle the most egregious forms of immigration restriction. Yet the renunciation of this entrenched policy remained a provocative notion, one that few of her contemporaries would advocate in such bald terms.⁹⁶ In a decade when the underlying ethos of White Australia still attracted mainstream consensus, the lessons learned in the United States inspired Miatt to situate herself at the forefront of the nascent campaign against the Australian ‘colour line’.⁹⁷ Just as transpacific travel could kindle feminist politicisation, as we saw in Chapter One, so too could it occasion a more progressive and outspoken racial politics.

Blood Brothers or Strangers in a Strange Land?

As well as imparting lessons about racial others, the encounter with the American melting pot also impacted upon Australian self-identifications, especially as these related to perceptions of kinship with the United States. In this corner of the Anglosphere, where esteem of Anglo-Saxonism comingled with the realities of racial diversity and the strictures of nationalist exclusion, Australians discovered that the putative kinship between white English-speakers was far from sacrosanct. Although visitors’ Anglo-Saxon credentials conferred a base level of privilege, and transpacific friendship flourished in wartime, membership of the imagined community of whiteness did not always guarantee insider status or belonging.

This discomfiting realisation was not obvious from the outset. As a pair of British settler colonies on the Pacific Rim, Australia and America had long been imagined as sibling societies. From the first years of colonisation, New South Wales was regarded as ‘another America’.⁹⁸ Later in the nineteenth century, those

⁹⁶ The Menzies Liberal government removed the ban on Japanese war brides in 1952, permitted the naturalisation of non-Europeans in 1956–57, and abolished the infamous dictation test in 1958. Yet throughout this decade, the government and the majority of Australians remained committed to the underlying principle of White Australia. Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia*.

⁹⁷ This campaign that would culminate in the formal abolition of the White Australia policy by the Whitlam Labor government in 1973. Gwenda Tavan, “The Dismantling of the White Australia Policy: Elite Conspiracy or Will of the Australian People?” *Australian Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (2004): 109–25.

⁹⁸ Alan Frost, “‘As It Were Another America’: English Ideas of the First Settlement in New South Wales at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7, no. 3 (1974): 255–73.

campaigning for Federation drew inspiration from American republicanism, and would model the Australian constitution in part on its US counterpart.⁹⁹ These fraternal visions continued into the twentieth century, when they were increasingly expressed in terms of race. The ideal of whiteness that emerged in turn-of-the-century Australia and the United States was a transnational phenomenon, constituted through transpacific dialogue and constitutive of a new language of transpacific blood brotherhood. According to contemporary commentators such as politician Alfred Deakin and historian E. A. Freeman, the two New World nations were united by their common whiteness or Anglo-Saxonism, a racial identity defined in opposition to the Asian peoples of the Pacific, especially the militarising Japanese. In August 1908, when the US naval fleet—known as the Great White Fleet—made a much-celebrated visit to Australian waters, this racial alliance was consummated in the eyes of the world.¹⁰⁰

These professions of race brotherhood did much to position transpacific travel as a legitimate alternative to the pilgrimage to London. For women born and raised during the heyday of White Australia, the supposed whiteness of the United States was essential to its respectability as a destination for work, study and adventure. As a white Anglophone nation, America could be regarded as almost an extension of home, an honorary member of the British world in which Australians roamed at will. This sense of belonging was reflected in the relative absence of a stateside Australian community. Unlike other groups of foreigners, who tended to band together in neighbourhood enclaves, early twentieth-century Australian women resident in America rarely had much contact with their compatriots. Although most gravitated to New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, they were dispersed within those cities, and—with the notable exception

⁹⁹ N. D. McLachlan, “The Future America’: Some Bicentennial Reflections,” *Historical Studies* 17, no. 68 (1977): 361–83.

¹⁰⁰ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, ch. 8; Marilyn Lake and Vanessa Pratt, “Blood Brothers’. Racial Identification and the Right to Rule: The Australian Response to the Spanish-American War,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 54, no. 1 (2008): 16–27; Lake, “British World or New World”; Marilyn Lake, “White Is Wonderful: Emotional Conversion and Subjective Formulation,” in *Re-Orienting Whiteness*, ed. Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey, and Katherine Ellinghaus (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 119–34.

of the two world wars—failed to establish the networks that characterised the Antipodean population of London.¹⁰¹ These assimilationist tendencies were compelled in part by the relative scarcity of Australians—in 1930 there were a mere fourteen thousand dispersed among 122 million Americans—but are also a testament to the ease with which these foreigners joined their host society.¹⁰² By virtue of their whiteness and facility with English, they could meld more or less seamlessly into the privileged world of ‘Old Stock’ Americans. In the words of long-time Washington DC resident Shirley Duncan, ‘Australians don’t really seek each other out here because they’re happily integrated.’¹⁰³

Yet transpacific kinship only went so far. Narratives of race brotherhood, although widespread in travel accounts of this period, were in tension with a pervasive undercurrent of alienation. For Anglo-Australian women, the United States was at once homelike and profoundly other. ‘Foreign’ was the adjective of choice. Marjorie Quinn, who moved from Sydney to San Francisco in 1912, found the States ‘much more foreign (to our notions) than we had expected.’¹⁰⁴ The following decade, Winifred Sanders felt ‘amongst Foreigners’ when a crowd of Americans boarded her transpacific steamer in Honolulu.¹⁰⁵ Her contemporary Marie Byles deemed the States a ‘foreign land’, while Margaret Callaghan, in 1959, ‘felt a foreigner in a very strange land’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ In 1901 an Australian Society was established in New York, but this was an exclusively masculine outfit intended to promote transpacific trade, which foundered by around 1910. On Antipodean networks in London, see Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 73–103; Simon Sleight, “Reading the British Australasian Community in London, 1884–1924,” in Bridge, Crawford and Dunstan, *Australians in Britain*, 7.1–7.14.

¹⁰² “United States Census, 1930.” Database with images. FamilySearch. <http://FamilySearch.org> : accessed 2015. Citing NARA microfilm publication T626. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002.

¹⁰³ Shirley Duncan interviewed by Anne Rees, 10 June 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Marjorie Quinn, *The Years That the Locust Hath Eaten: The Memoirs of Marjorie Quinn* (North Melbourne: Arcadia, 2011), 75.

¹⁰⁵ Winifred Sanders, “My Trip Abroad, 1928–29,” MLMSS 7446, SLNSW.

¹⁰⁶ Marie Beuzeville Byles, *By Cargo Boat & Mountain: The Unconventional Experiences of a Woman on Tramp Round the World* (London: Seeley, Service, 1931), 175; Margaret Callaghan, “Letters from Abroad,” *Per Litteras Lumen* 1, no. 2 (1959): 28.

This foreignness derived in part from the presence of racial and ethnic others. As Jean Lawson made clear in 1952, what she termed the ‘foreign-ness’ of the United States was a product of its many ‘different nationalities’, each of which remained ‘distinct’.¹⁰⁷ But racial and linguistic diversity were not the only factors at play. A number of visitors stressed that the nation and its people were unremittingly alien in spite of their white Anglophone credentials. ‘Americans are, after all, not Britons,’ reflected Quinn in 1917, after spending five years in San Francisco and New York. ‘Though speaking the same language one has only to live among them to be aware of the difference.’¹⁰⁸ Winifred James agreed. ‘One would feel that there would be a certain average resemblance between white people of the same tongue,’ she mused in 1916. ‘But the Americans seem to have invented a type quite separate...from any other yet existing.’¹⁰⁹ In the decades that followed, others would refer to the ‘American race’, a phrase which cast doubt upon assertions that Australians and Americans bore the same blood.¹¹⁰

There were at least several factors responsible for the apparent gulf between these ‘white people of the same tongue’. Prominent among them was, as Quinn hinted, the issue of British race patriotism. Australians’ self-conscious identification with Britain (further discussed in Chapter Six) constituted a conspicuous source of difference between these visitors and even Anglo-Americans well into the 1950s. Faced with local antipathy towards Britain and a form of English peppered with foreign idioms, there was no escaping the realisation that to be British was to be ‘other’ in the United States. In this ‘white men’s country’, Australians’ Britishness was at once the ultimate proof of their whiteness and the major expression of their difference. It guaranteed social (if not legal) inclusion, but also set them apart.

A related factor was American isolationism. It was perhaps no accident that both Quinn and James made their comments as war raged in Europe. The

¹⁰⁷ Lawson, *American Holiday*, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Quinn, *The Years That the Locust Hath Eaten*, 111.

¹⁰⁹ Winifred James, *Out of the Shadows* (London: s.n., 1924), 152.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, “Americans Food Conscious,” *News* (Adelaide), 3 May 1938, 8; Stead, “America.”

alienation experienced by Australian women peaked during the First and Second World Wars, when America's reluctance to join the Allied cause made it impossible to forget that fraternity between the US and the British Empire was far from inevitable. During the years 1914–17 and again in 1939–41, when the States remained neutral while the British dominions took up arms, the gulf between visiting Australians and the local population was placed in stark relief. The former had compatriots and perhaps kin on the front line; the latter could view the conflict as none of their concern. The nation's sizeable Irish and German communities even expressed hopes for an Allied defeat. As Sydney writer Dulcie Deamer recalled of America during World War I, 'currents of anti-British feeling...ran strongly underground.'¹¹¹ This difference in loyalties provoked resentment and accusations of betrayal, especially amidst the unprecedented bloodshed of the Great War. According to Quinn, Australians resident in New York during 1916 'hurt with the sight of a wealthy nation going its way unfeelingly while their country suffered and bled.'¹¹²

Just as they despaired of securing American support, stateside Australians bolstered their ties to other Britons and each other. In both conflicts, the Australian community of New York, normally so fragmented, threw itself into an orgy of fundraising. Although often directed by prominent businessmen, much of the practical work fell to wives and single women. Over three weeks in 1916, a 'little band of exiles' ran the Australian booth at New York's Allied Bazaar, a group that included singers Marie Narelle, Eva Mylott and Amy Castles, as well as the 'Australian mermaid' Annette Kellerman.¹¹³ Following the outbreak of war in 1939, the Australian Society of New York was established within the month. It issued a monthly newsletter, the *Coo-ee Clarion*, organised annual Anzac and Australia Day dinners and, in coordination with the local New Zealand Society, raised hundreds

¹¹¹ Dulcie Deamer, "The Golden Decade," 1965, 52, MLMSS 3173, SLNSW.

¹¹² Quinn, *The Years That the Locust Hath Eaten*, 101.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 97–100.

of thousands of dollars via the Anzac War Relief Fund (AWRF).¹¹⁴ A Pacific coast AWRF branch was formed in 1941 under the patronage of pseudo-Australian actress Merle Oberon, and branches were later established in Boston and Chicago.¹¹⁵ The following year, an Anzac Club for soldiers on leave was opened in Midtown Manhattan, an institution renowned for serving the best cup of tea in New York.¹¹⁶ According to the *Coo-ee Clarion*, however, the ‘finest and most lasting’ of these good works was the shipment of 12 million cigarettes to ‘Anzacs abroad’.¹¹⁷ Although a nationalist organisation, the Australian Society also cultivated links to the broader British community. It coordinated its efforts with the British Social Club and Bundles for Britain, and in 1942 the AWRF was amalgamated with the British War Relief Society. In the midst of war, faced with a common enemy and distanced from locals who would brook no part in the conflict, the tug of nation and empire eclipsed the bonds of transpacific blood brotherhood as never before.

Once the United States entered the fray, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction. In both 1917 and 1941, impassioned expressions of transpacific kinship proliferated overnight. Ada Holman, who happened to be in New York the day President Wilson declared war on Germany, was ‘seized upon by perfect strangers who told me they were with me now and for ever.’¹¹⁸ Twenty-four years later, in the wake of Pearl Harbor, the Australian Legation in Washington DC was flooded with fraternal sentiment. In the weeks following 7 December 1941, staffer Pat Jarrett was on the phone day and night as Americans clamoured to announce

¹¹⁴ For a detailed summary of these fundraising efforts, see *Anzac War Relief Fund* (New York: Anzac War Relief Fund, 1966).

¹¹⁵ Oberon was an Anglo-Indian film star, born in Bombay in 1911, who later concealed her Indian heritage and purported to be Tasmanian. The interwar Australian public colluded in this fantasy, and claimed Oberon as a home-grown Hollywood star. For further discussion see Woollacott, *Race and the Modern Exotic*, 93–132.

¹¹⁶ *Coo-ee Clarion*, no. 25, 25 November 1942. A detailed account of this Club can be found in the biography of one of its founders, the New Zealand woman and Hollywood actress Nola Luxford. Carole Van Grondelle, *Angel of the Anzacs: The Life of Nola Luxford* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2000), 146–86.

¹¹⁷ *Coo-ee Clarion*, no. 19, 13 January 1942, 7.

¹¹⁸ Holman, *Memoirs of a Premier's Wife*, 191.

‘We are proud to be with you.’¹¹⁹ The Australian community was no less eager to celebrate the newfound military alliance, which it deemed the consequence of an underlying blood bond. In March 1942 the *Coo-ee Clarion* waxed lyrical on the theme of ‘nations clasping hands under the bloody batterings of a grim and merciless adversary.’ After ‘Nippon’s foray in Hawaii’, the US and Australia had realised that ‘blood is thicker than even seven thousand miles of water’, and ‘forged a mighty bond which shall outlast all the storm and the tumult’.¹²⁰

The *Clarion*’s prediction contained more than a grain of truth. While the fellow feeling of wartime did not long survive the Armistice of 1918, it did linger for some years after 1945. Having been ‘saved’ by Uncle Sam after John Bull fumbled the role, Australians had good reason to consolidate relations with their new and more effective protector.¹²¹ Some stateside women even made this objective into a career. Doreen McArthur Berry, a long-term booster of transpacific friendship, seized the role of publicity director of women’s affairs at the new Australian News and Information Bureau in 1945.¹²² Based in New York, but a popular figure at lecture podiums nationwide, she spent the next four years proclaiming that ‘the two nations are bound to one another by a chain of 20,000 links’; namely, the ten thousand ex-GIs who had migrated or hoped to migrate to Australia, and the ten thousand war brides who travelled in the opposite direction.¹²³ Australians were the lead instigators of this flurry of transpacific engagement, but they did find a receptive audience for their ideas. Berry drew thousands to her lectures, and in 1948 leading women’s magazine *Mademoiselle* featured a lengthy article on the ‘Young women

¹¹⁹ Pat Jarrett, “Life in the United States Changed Overnight,” undated news clipping, box 3412, folder 1, Papers of Lord and Lady Casey, n. d., MS 12565, SLV.

¹²⁰ *Coo-ee Clarion*, no. 20, 4 March 1942, 7.

¹²¹ Horne, *The Lucky Country*, 92.

¹²² “Friendship with the United States,” *Argus* (Melbourne), 11 January 1941, 7; “Australia-America Are Linked Strongly, Doreen Berry Says,” *Post-Standard* (Syracuse, NY), 31 January 1948, 5.

¹²³ *Ibid.* For a more detailed discussion of these war brides, see Arrowsmith, “Australian WWII War Brides in America.”

of Australia'.¹²⁴ As late as 1952, one visitor found that having 'been in the Pacific war together' gave Americans a 'warm feeling of fellowship with all Australians'.¹²⁵



Figure 16: So highly regarded was Rose Manson's commitment to the transpacific family that she was presented with a 'sparkling white new washer', a device that few of her compatriots then owned. Having proved herself the ultimate mother, she was rewarded with the ultimate tool of the trade. Los Angeles Times, 11 May 1948, 2.

This postwar mood of Australian-US kinship was also reflected in a number of Pacific crossings that re-staged the blood ties forged through the suffering of war. In 1947 a group of American women who had lost sons in the conflict 'clubbed together' to bring Queenslander Rose Manson to the States. Manson had spent the previous five years tending their sons' graves at the war cemetery in Ipswich, and the mothers wished to thank her in person.¹²⁶ A similar though less morbid journey was undertaken two years later by Amy Perkins, a Brisbane woman who served as 'mother-away-from-home' for US servicemen during the war.¹²⁷ After raising funds

¹²⁴ "She Told American Women about Life in Australia," *Sunday Herald* (Sydney), 8 May 1949, 13; Harry Roskolenko, "Young women of Australia," *Mademoiselle*, March 1948, 160, 249-53.

¹²⁵ Jean Lawson, "Once it was like this!, or who remembers when-: autobiographical reminiscences," n. d., MS 12089, SLV.

¹²⁶ "Ipswich Mother Going to US," *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 30 May 1947, 5; "Kin of Dead US Airmen Repay Australian Woman," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 May 1948, A1.

¹²⁷ "'Mother' to Many GI's Will Visit Boston 'Sons'," *Daily Boston Globe*, 12 December 1949, 1.

in an Oregon cannery, she visited dozens of her adoptive sons and their families across the nation.¹²⁸ Both women were celebrated by the US and Australian press as exemplars of maternal love and virtue, whose willingness to care for American servicemen in lieu of their biological parents was emblematic of the familial affections unleashed by war. In return, and to cement the bond, Manson and Perkins were now embraced by the soldiers' next of kin. At such a moment, the imagined bonds of blood brotherhood came as close as ever to trumping the alienation that could otherwise dog Anglo-Australians in the United States.

This alienation was, however, not just a product of the nation's 'foreign' peoples and its associated wartime isolationism. The want of fraternal feeling between these putative 'blood brothers' also stemmed from the foreignness ascribed to Australians themselves. In contrast to the freedom of movement and sense of belonging these British subjects enjoyed within the Empire, in America they found themselves legally classed as 'aliens'. The discourse of race kinship notwithstanding, Australians were excluded from the national community as firmly as all other foreigners. For women who had sailed through life as confident insiders, born into race and often class privilege, it was unsettling to be 'othered' in this way. As Doris Hayball grumbled in 1937, after being shunted into the 'alien' customs queue in New York, 'this designation always affronts the English and Australian as we are apt to regard the American as our blood brother'.¹²⁹ 'It was certainly startling to be called "aliens" in an English-speaking country,' agreed Mary Pope two decades later.¹³⁰

Beyond its symbolic import, this designation made Australians subject to the restrictive immigration regime introduced in the early 1920s. Part of the system of 'mobility regulation' that developed from the late nineteenth century, when states began policing national borders, this regime was a nativist response to the millions

¹²⁸ "Australian Who Befriended GIs Visits Here on Tour," *Hartford Courant*, 14 March 1950, 1.

¹²⁹ Hayball, "From Coast to Coast."

¹³⁰ Pope, *We Circled the World*, 146.

of transatlantic migrants who had poured through Ellis Island since the 1890s.¹³¹ Under the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1921, each nationality was allocated an annual immigration quota equal to 3 percent of the number of foreign nationals from that country listed in the 1910 US census.¹³² Using this metric, the Australian quota was calculated as 279 persons, of whom no more than 56 were eligible to enter in any one month.¹³³ From 1924, when the quota system was tightened to admit only 2 percent of the total listed in the 1890 census, the Australian quota fell to 121. Special provision was made for students and some professionals, but all other Australians were required to depart the country within six months.¹³⁴ Although Australians' own *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901) formed an influential precedent for this American legislation, they also found themselves numbering among its victims. The 'gospel of whiteness' may have crossed borders, as Lake and Reynolds argue, but it could also close borders to fellow 'whites'.¹³⁵

The implications of this legislation were profound. Not only did it curtail migration to the United States, but also erected metaphorical walls across the Pacific. Australians protested that the laws were out of step with the recent tightening of bonds between the two nations, and warned that rigid application of the quota system would hamper the growth of transpacific relations.¹³⁶ The issue of whiteness was not always made explicit, but it hovered beneath the surface. To many, it was an outrage that 'English-speaking peoples' be subject to the same treatment as 'doubtful' foreigners.¹³⁷ As one Adelaide newspaper snarled in 1923, the 'American door of "welcome"' had been 'slammed in the face of "popular" Australians',

¹³¹ On 'mobility regulation' see Tim Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 1 (2010): 27.

¹³² Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 48–49.

¹³³ "Limiting Immigration," *New York Times*, 17 September 1922.

¹³⁴ "Immigration: America's System," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 1924, 13; Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 51.

¹³⁵ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 310–15.

¹³⁶ See for example, "Limiting Immigration," *New York Times*, 17 September 1922.

¹³⁷ "American through Austral-American Eyes," *Daily News* (Perth), 3 August 1923, 13.

making a mockery of claims that the two nations were ‘so much alike’.¹³⁸ The system of ‘nationalist exclusion’ that now greeted Australians at Ellis Island was no less a product of modernity than the skyscrapers that rose across the water in Manhattan, but this bureaucratic manifestation of the American modern won far fewer fans.¹³⁹

This ill-will was magnified by the difficulties of negotiating the quota system. With a three-week voyage separating Sydney from California, it was impossible to predict whether Australia’s monthly quota would still be open on the day of arrival. If the prescribed limit had been reached, any further prospective migrants would be detained for several days before being released under bond with a tourist visa. As a result of poor timing and bad luck, Australians could be deprived of their liberty in the manner of criminals.¹⁴⁰ Given that the quota system determined nationality according to place of birth, it could also separate members of the same family. In August 1922, Australian-born Mrs Cooper was denied entry to the United States, having attempted to migrate from England, because the monthly Australian quota had been filled. Her English husband and child, with whom she made the journey, were granted entry under the more generous British quota, leaving a distraught Mrs Cooper stranded alone at Ellis Island.¹⁴¹

Mrs Cooper’s story was an extreme example, but harrowing tales of the rigours of border control became commonplace in the decades following 1921. Many transpacific travellers, such as 1923 arrival Mary Perry, were ‘awfully nearly’ sent home due to an irregularity in their documents or finances, and gained access to the States by the ‘narrowest squeak’.¹⁴² Problems also arose when attempting to re-enter the forty-eight states from Canada or Mexico, as stateside Australians often embarked upon a brief sojourn to those neighbouring nations without preparing

¹³⁸ “Australian or American,” *Register* (Adelaide), 30 October 1923, 9.

¹³⁹ On the relationship between modernity and border control, see Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁰ “Australians in America,” *Argus* (Melbourne), 7 November 1921, 7; “America: The Immigration Law,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 18 August 1922, 9. See also Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 60.

¹⁴¹ “Three Woman Deportees Again Ask Entrance,” *New York Times*, 22 August 1922, 8.

¹⁴² Mary Perry to Anon, 7 July 1923, box 1, folder 4, Perry Papers.

the appropriate permission to return. Even those with impeccable paperwork were not immune from the humiliations reserved for ‘aliens’ at the border. In 1925, when Melbourne scientist Gwynneth Buchanan arrived in New York for a brief professional visit, she was bombarded with ‘most embarrassing questions’ about her political beliefs and sexual activity. This ‘searching cross-examination’ was followed by the confiscation of her travel documents, leaving Buchanan with ruffled feathers. As she later informed the *Adelaide Register*, it seemed ‘ludicrous’ that a respectable Anglo-Australian be subjected to the depersonalising procedures of border control.¹⁴³ The lesson here was that in the modern world of mobility regulation and implacable bureaucrats, the privileges of whiteness only went so far.

In numerous cases, such border travails were only the beginning of an extended battle between these visitors and the state. Of the hundreds of Australian arrivals who exceeded the annual quota, many violated the conditions of their visa. According to one 1925 account, Australians who came ‘to have a look’ at New York often fell for ‘the bright lights of Broadway’, and ‘were reported absent without leave at the end of their term.’¹⁴⁴ By staying longer than six months or seeking remunerative employment, Australian women on tourist visas thumbed their nose at federal immigration law, risking imprisonment or deportation. This was no idle threat. Even in the late 1940s, when transpacific kinship was never more impassioned, stern sanctions were meted out to undocumented Australians. In 1947, when it was discovered that Betty Tossell Mather was illegally employed as a nurse in St Louis, Missouri, a warrant was issued for her arrest. It was only when her cause was taken up by the *St Louis Post Dispatch*—which protested that Mather had helped alleviate a nationwide shortage of nurses—that immigration officials retreated from the case.¹⁴⁵

Others were not so lucky, and were instructed or compelled to leave the country. In one sensational case, also from 1947, three Australian women—Norma

¹⁴³ “Australian Woman Scientist,” *Register* (Adelaide), 24 March 1925, 5.

¹⁴⁴ David Worrall, “Lights of Broadway,” *Mercury* (Hobart), 17 October 1925, 16.

¹⁴⁵ “Australian Woman in Visa Trouble,” *Daily News* (Perth), 19 November 1947, 12; “‘Heavy-Handed’ Action: Arrest of Australian Nurse,” *West Australian* (Perth), 28 November 1947, 14.

Hughes, Elma Mitchell and Wanda Sauverin—entered America as stowaways on a ship that berthed in New Orleans. Once discovered, the trio was placed on a Pan-American flight bound for Sydney. When the plane refuelled in Honolulu, they were permitted to disembark for a cup of coffee—and never returned. It took a week-long manhunt to locate Mitchell and Sauverin in a Waikiki apartment, while Hughes was apprehended at a US Army airfield several days later.¹⁴⁶ Although far from typical, these heavily publicised cases dramatise the potential for America’s immigration regime to induce mutual resentment between these supposed ‘blood brothers’. Aggrieved by their alien status and limited quota, Australians flouted the law and invited the rancour of the state. The law deemed them ‘other’, and their very attempts to resist that categorisation proved them worthy of the label. As long as Australians were denied the special treatment to which they felt entitled as members of the white race, they would struggle to feel at home in the United States.

That race underpinned this sense of entitlement is made clear within Cynthia Reed’s autobiographical novel *Lucky Alphonse* (1944). Alphonse, the Australian protagonist, enters America on a tourist visa in the mid-1930s, and illegally embarks on a nursing qualification. When this irregularity is discovered, prompting a visit from an ‘emigration official [sic]’, Reed casts her heroine as the wronged party. Alphonse is portrayed as a latter-day Florence Nightingale, pure of heart and fair of skin, whereas the official boasts an ‘unpleasant accent’, ‘odour of garlic’ and ‘surly’ demeanour. Not only is he ‘suspicious’ of Alphonse’s paperwork, but racially suspect himself.¹⁴⁷ Although presumably an American citizen, he remained alien to Australian eyes. It was a cruel irony, the reader is invited to conclude, that this ‘foreign’ official was empowered to embody the state, while lily white Alphonse faced imminent deportation.¹⁴⁸ For all that the two nations claimed

¹⁴⁶ “Stowaway Girls Missing,” *Mercury* (Hobart), 4 August 1947, 6; “Honolulu police find two girl stowaways,” *Argus* (Melbourne), 8 August 1947, 5; “Yanks Find Missing Girl,” *Mirror* (Perth), 9 August 1947, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Cynthia Reed, *Lucky Alphonse* (Melbourne: Reed & Harris, 1944), 26.

¹⁴⁸ It is likely that, in American eyes, this official would have been symbolically whitened as a result of his naturalisation. As mentioned in Chapter One, US historians such as James Barrett and David Roediger have argued that early twentieth-century European migrants could adopt a white identity through the acquisition of American citizenship. It clear, however, that Alphonse did not

to be united by ties of blood, Australians in the States were legally subordinate to non-Anglophone and even non-white residents. In the disconcerting logic of the modern American state, as Alphonse and others discovered, racial others could be insiders while blood brothers could be alien.¹⁴⁹

A Stage for Internationalism

If the United States was a classroom in which Australian women received lessons about self and other, their teachers were as likely to be fellow visitors as local residents. As a rising global superpower, hotbed of progressivism, and geographical bridge between East and West, America became an important centre of the internationalism that flourished throughout the twentieth century. Despite its self-imposed exclusion from the League of Nations, the nation was a major proponent of what Akira Iriye has termed ‘cultural internationalism’, the ‘fostering of international cooperation through cultural activities across national boundaries.’¹⁵⁰

The United States was the headquarters of prominent international organisations such as the Institute of International Education (established 1919) and Institute of Pacific Relations (established 1925), and cities such as Chicago, Washington DC and San Francisco hosted international conferences and events.¹⁵¹ New York, in particular, was a hub for internationalist activity, and after 1945, when it was named the headquarters of the UN, the metropolis could claim to have usurped London and Paris as the capital of the world.¹⁵² Such internationalist endeavours were initially Western-centric, but from the 1920s on they became ever more racially

subscribe to this view, and remained unable to view such a ‘foreign’ individual as a bona fide American. Barrett and Roediger, “Inbetween Peoples,” 6.

¹⁴⁹ Cynthia Reed, the author of this racist account, would in the late 1950s pen scathing critiques of Southern segregation and Native American dispossession, quoted in the discussion above, under her married name Cynthia Nolan. The evolution in her attitudes towards race mirrors a general tendency, noted throughout this chapter, for Australian women to become more conscious and critical of the ‘colour line’ in the decades following WWII.

¹⁵⁰ Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, 3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 2.

¹⁵² Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 98–99.

inclusive, and attracted extensive participation from Asia, Africa and the Pacific.¹⁵³ To visit America in this era was to be thrust into a global meeting place.

For many Australian women, this well-intentioned cosmopolitanism proved one of the prime attractions of the United States. It was both a cause and a symptom of the nation's modernity, a dream of a better tomorrow that befitted the clean slate promised—in disregard of indigenous dispossession—by the notion of the 'New World'. Some travelled across the Pacific specifically to meet with colleagues from across the globe, while others fell into the international arena through happenstance upon arrival. Yet whether by accident or design, the US often became a stage for internationalism, and the cross-cultural encounters that ensued provided powerful lessons about the meanings of race and otherness.

This stage held many scenes and actors, but one of the spotlights lay on International House, a co-educational residence for international students in upper Manhattan, affiliated with New York's Columbia University. Established in 1924, International House was a Rockefeller-funded initiative which evolved from the Cosmopolitan Club founded by YMCA official Harry Edmonds in 1909.¹⁵⁴ By bringing together kindly domestic students—who constituted a third of residents—and friendless foreigners from around the globe, John D. Rockefeller combined high-minded idealism with hard-nosed geopolitics. The House was to be a 'miniature of the world' and an 'experiment in social reform', but was also to protect the United States from enmity in years to come.¹⁵⁵ Following the success of the New York venture, International Houses were constructed in the vicinity of the University of California at Berkeley (1930) and the University of Chicago (1932).

¹⁵³ Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, 62–63.

¹⁵⁴ Lee Hall, *Living in the Future: International House New York* (Boston: Vernon Press, 2000), 8–23.

¹⁵⁵ Liping Bu, "Cultural Understanding and World Peace: The Roles of Private Institutions in the Interwar Years," *Peace & Change* 24, no. 2 (1999): 156–58; Liping Bu, *Making the World Like Us: Education, Cultural Expansion and the American Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), ch. 3. For a broader discussion of 'foreign student migration' to the US as an instrument of soft diplomacy, see Paul A. Kramer, "Is the World Our Campus? International Students and U.S. Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 5 (2009): 775–806.



Figure 17: Deep in conversation over dinner at International House Chicago, 1932. University of Chicago Library, apf2-04415.

The establishment of these Houses coincided with the moment when, as discussed in Chapter Three, dozens of Australian women professionals began enrolling in graduate courses at Columbia and Chicago. The local International House was the obvious accommodation choice for these students, and many would remain in residence for the duration of their degree. In some respects, Australians were far from the vulnerable foreigners envisaged as typical International House residents. As white Anglophones, they were largely immune from the racism and isolation that beset foreign students with darker skin or limited English, and tended to have little difficulty making contact with locals. For these women, the main significance of International House was not that it facilitated entrée to American society, but rather that it offered exposure to the human diversity excluded from White Australia. In 1945, for example, when only one percent of the Australian population was non-British, Melbourne graduate student Elwyn Morey found herself living alongside sixty-seven nationalities at International House Berkeley.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ "US Education," *West Australian* (Perth), 9 March 1948, 17.

From an Antipodean perspective, these residences functioned less as portals to the United States than as portals to the world.

Upon arrival at International House, bewildered and fatigued after a long journey, Australian women might be expected to gravitate towards other Anglophone students, and shrink from contact with residents whose ‘foreignness’ was a palpable reminder of the distance from home. By all accounts, however, enthusiastic cross-cultural mixing was the rule. ‘I have met so many people—at each meal at IH you sit with someone different,’ reported Beth Stubbs, a Melbourne kindergarten teacher who enrolled at Columbia in 1950. Her arrival on a bleak February afternoon was brightened by a welcoming committee of Chinese students who carried her luggage upstairs. During the following months, in between lectures and assignments, Stubbs perfected her square-dancing moves with ‘Kim from Korea’, lingered over lunch with two Indian engineers, and sampled eggplant and honey pastry with Dr Bakwin from Armenia.¹⁵⁷ Over in Chicago, Red Cross social worker Dorothy Davis also plunged herself into the cosmopolitan melee. While resident at the local University House during the 1956–57 academic year, Davis made the acquaintance of ‘leading scholars, scientists and social workers from many lands’. All in all, International House was a ‘particularly exciting place in which to live,’ no less stimulating than the academic programs responsible for bringing the residents together.¹⁵⁸

As the International House founders intended, the intercultural sociability that flourished in these residences did more than disseminate the delights of eggplant and square-dancing. Sharing a roof with men and women from around the world also tended, at least among Australian women, to promote greater tolerance and appreciation of racial difference. This tendency was especially pronounced during the years surrounding the establishment of the UN, an era described by historian Glenda Sluga as the ‘apogee of internationalism’.¹⁵⁹ Heather Lyon, who

¹⁵⁷ 8 March 1950, 2 July 1951, *Overseas Diary 1950–52*, Stubbs Papers.

¹⁵⁸ Dorothy Davis, *Report on Overseas Study Leave, 1956–57* (Sydney: Red Cross Welfare Service, 1957), 6.

¹⁵⁹ Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, ch. 3.

arrived at Riverside Drive in 1944, was convinced that ‘living in the house did bring about a change in one’s thinking’. Through her friendship with fellow resident Phyllis Wilson, a ‘black Jamaican physiotherapist’, the arbitrary logic of white privilege was unmasked. Although ‘no more cultured or educated than Phyllis’, Lyon was ashamed to find herself showered with kindnesses withheld from her ‘black’ friend.¹⁶⁰ She also learned much from Indian students, whose eloquent arguments in favour of independence convinced a sceptical Lyon that these colonial subjects deserved ‘the right to rule their own affairs.’ She left New York the close friend of Zillah Soule, an Indian headmistress and ‘great ambassador for her country.’¹⁶¹ For Stubbs, meanwhile, the memory of pleasant hours with Kim from Korea left her with newfound qualms about racial prejudice. Upon realising, during a visit to the South, that her ‘very gifted, charming’ International House friends would be sequestered into ‘coloured’ facilities, she found cause to ‘wonder’ at the wisdom of segregation.¹⁶² Stubbs and others became, in effect, accidental internationalists, students drawn to International House by the promise of convenient lodgings who emerged converts to its ethos of interracial friendship and understanding.

Among the more zealous of these converts was Dorothy Riddle, a librarian employed at Cornell University during the 1920s and 30s, where she became an active member of the campus Cosmopolitan Club.¹⁶³ Inspired by the success of International House New York, in the early 1930s this Club began expanding its services for students from abroad.¹⁶⁴ Riddle joined the board of directors and also served as adviser to women students. This work led her to develop close links with

¹⁶⁰ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 70.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² 19 September 1950, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.

¹⁶³ Cosmopolitan Clubs proliferated on American university campuses during the first decades of the twentieth century. An offshoot of the YMCA and YWCA, the clubs aimed to promote the ‘spirit of Cosmopolitanism’ on campus by facilitating interaction between international and local students. L. H. Pammel, “Cosmopolitan Clubs,” in *The Foreign Student in America*, ed. W. Reginald Wheeler, Henry H. King, and Alexander B. Davidson (New York: Association Press, 1925), 268–72.

¹⁶⁴ “Cosmopolitan Club Plans Reorganization,” *Cornell Daily Sun*, 2 May 1933, 6; “Cosmopolitan Club Has Reorganization Dinner,” *Cornell Daily Sun*, 9 May 1933, 1.

the university's sizeable Chinese community, and she also befriended the 'very first Thai student ever to come to...America'. These relationships opened her eyes to the 'racial prejudice' experienced by Asian students, prejudice that often kept them 'lonely' and 'isolated'.¹⁶⁵

When, in 1942, Riddle returned to South Australia, she came to recognise that these problems were even more acute at the University of Adelaide. In the absence of international residences or associations, the 'handful' of foreign students had 'nowhere to go'.¹⁶⁶ Although not formally affiliated with the university, Riddle decided to take matters into her own hands. She lived only a short distance from campus, and began to invite students to her flat, pursuing a form of what historian David Lowe terms 'vernacular internationalism'.¹⁶⁷ Over the years her home was transformed into an 'open house', a 'place where [international students] were welcome and where they belonged'.¹⁶⁸ Up to sixty students would congregate to celebrate national holidays, listen to gramophone records or 'thrash out' questions of the day.¹⁶⁹ From these ad hoc beginnings, Riddle would become a national leader in the promotion and administration of international student exchange during the decades in which the Colombo Plan brought over twenty thousand Asian students to Australia.¹⁷⁰ She was appointed to the Executive of the Co-ordinating Committee for Overseas Students—a federal government umbrella body—and

¹⁶⁵ Dorothy Riddle interviewed by Mary Rose Griggs, 1972, OH 561/2, J. D. Somerville Oral History Collection, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ David Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no. 4 (2015): 449.

¹⁶⁸ Riddle interview.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid; "Loneliness is Ended," *Mail* (Adelaide), 22 May 1954, 48; Helen Caterer, "She makes Asian students feel at home," undated newspaper clipping, Papers of Dorothy Riddle, n. d., Cornell University Archives, Ithaca, New York.

¹⁷⁰ Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans," 452. For a detailed account of these Colombo Plan students, as well as the thousands of private Asian students who arrived during the same period, see Lyndon Megarrity, "Regional Goodwill, Sensibly Priced: Commonwealth Policies towards Colombo Plan Scholars and Private Overseas Students, 1945–72," *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 88–105; Nicholas Brown, "Student, Expert, Peacekeeper: Three Versions of International Engagement," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 57, no. 1 (2011): 34–52.

named Patroness of the Malaysian-Singapore Association.¹⁷¹ In 1969, Riddle was awarded an MBE for ‘services to education and youth welfare’.¹⁷² Nearly four decades after embracing internationalism at Cornell, Riddle was still in the business of providing hospitality and friendship to visiting students.

Not everyone was so enamoured of the cultural internationalism promulgated on American campuses. Ruth Fink, whose residence at International House New York in the late 1950s coincided with the height of Cold War tensions, was dismayed by the ‘pressure for people to avoid controversial issues’. With serious discussion of political or religious questions repressed beneath a barrage of pleasantries and smiles, life at Riverside Drive proved ‘terribly disappointing’. It was instead at an international student seminar over the summer that Fink tasted the ‘frank discussion’ of ‘controversial questions’ she deemed necessary for ‘future peace’.¹⁷³ This 1958 seminar was representative of a second form of internationalism that thrived in interwar and postwar America: the international meeting or conference. These high-minded events, typically intended to promote world peace and cross-cultural cooperation, often included Australian women delegates, some of whom travelled to America specifically for the talks.¹⁷⁴ In the northern summer of 1938, for instance, Margery Cardwell made her way from Melbourne to the World Youth Congress in New York, adding an Antipodean voice to what would be a vain attempt to stave off a second world war.¹⁷⁵

The international seminar Fink attended two decades later was, by contrast, intended as a summer diversion from her PhD studies at Columbia. Yet it proved a ‘tremendous experience’, ‘one of the greatest highlights’ of her time abroad. Held in Woodstock, New York, this event was organised by the American Friends Service

¹⁷¹ Riddle interview.

¹⁷² *Canberra Times*, 1 January 1969, 6.

¹⁷³ Ruth Fink Latufeku interviewed by Alice Garner, 2010, ORAL TRC 6165/8, NLA.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific*, Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919–45* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁷⁵ “World Congress of Youth Opens,” *New York Times*, 16 August 1938, 3; “Youth of 14 Lands Tell Peace Steps,” *New York Times*, 18 August 1938, 17.

Committee, one of many international organisations that ‘kept alive the vision of global community’ throughout the most fraught years of the Cold War.¹⁷⁶ The Committee brought together forty students from twenty-five countries, including communist China and the Soviet Union, for four weeks of study and debate. Speakers included UN delegates, the USSR cultural attaché, and a Pakistani economist. Discussion topics ranged from Marxist philosophy and economic development, to trade unionism and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Debate of the latter question held particular significance to Fink, whose Zionist upbringing in a Jewish household had left her a strong proponent of Israel. At this seminar, which saw Israeli and Arab students engage in ‘heated discussion’, Fink was ‘exposed to the other side of the issue’. By the month’s end, she could acknowledge that the displaced Palestinians had a ‘very genuine grievance’.¹⁷⁷

She and the other participants did not bring about world peace, but Fink at least returned home with a newfound awareness that racial and religious others were not as alien or hostile as they appeared from a distance. This was a recognition formed in the United States and enabled by progressive impulses arising from the nation’s modernity, but one which stemmed less from the locals than her encounter with fellow visitors. America provided the stage, but Fink and other foreigners acted the drama. In this case and many others, the racial education Australian women received in the US was more a function of American internationalism than American diversity.

Conclusion

It is no easy task to measure the ripple effect of confronting race in the United States. In most cases, we can only guess at the long-term influence of these lessons upon

¹⁷⁶ Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 65. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a humanitarian organisation first established by Quakers in 1917 to ‘provide alternative tasks for pacifists’ during the Great War. It survived the war years, and still exists today. Over the twentieth century, its primary goals have been ‘to repair the ravages of war and to create the conditions for peace with justice.’ On the history of the AFSC, see J. William Frost, “‘Our Deeds Carry Our Message’: The Early History of the American Friends Service Committee,” *Quaker History* 81, no. 1 (1992): 1–51.

¹⁷⁷ Fink interview.

the hearts and minds of transpacific travellers, not to mention the hearts and minds of the friends, family and broader public with whom they shared their experiences. We do know that Elaine Barry, whose 1959 encounter with Jim Crow began this chapter, would come to personify the more inclusive Australia of the 1960s and beyond. Instead of teaching the ‘three Rs’ to schoolchildren in conservative Queensland—her former life plan—Barry shared her passion for American literature with undergraduates at Monash, the nation’s youngest and most radical university. Living in a Melbourne transformed by postwar European immigration, she revelled in the diverse student cohort and embraced the campus counterculture. Hers was a world in which the offspring of non-British migrants attended lectures on the racially charged fictions of James Baldwin and Flannery O’Connor, while protests against the war in Vietnam raged outside.¹⁷⁸ Although more an academic than an activist, she was among the first Australians to live a new racial politics, one predicated upon the principle of equality and the repudiation of White Australia. It is possible that Barry would have adopted these attitudes had she remained in Brisbane, but an American education no doubt accelerated her progress down this path. In her words, it ‘opened up’ a whole new world, a world in which women could be professors instead of schoolmams, but also one in which racial constructs demanded interrogation instead of casual disregard.¹⁷⁹

What was true for Barry may also have been true for others. This is not to pretend that every Australian woman who ventured to the United States returned a champion of racial equality, but rather to suggest that confronting the lived complexities of race abroad provided cause to question the verities of White Australia. This questioning could be as subtle as a vague consciousness that white privilege and race brotherhood were not inviolable, or it could be as profound as the explicit acknowledgement that Europeans did not possess an inalienable right to rule over people of colour. Just as the logic of American modernity could both

¹⁷⁸ On the radicalism of Monash in the 1960s and 70s, see Graeme Davison and Kate Murphy, *University Unlimited: The Monash Story* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2012), 89–143. For an account of the English department in the early years of Monash, see Brenda Niall, *Life Class: The Education of a Biographer* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 104–06.

¹⁷⁹ Barry interview.

validate black subordination and inspire internationalist futures, there was no one lesson to be gleaned from the encounter with difference across the Pacific. It is notable, however, that an education in race did often lead to more compassionate engagement with racial others, even prior to the postwar era of desegregation and anti-colonial protest. There is no guarantee that this pattern would hold true beyond the largely well-educated women discussed here, but it does raise the possibility that the dearth of interracial contact within Sydney and Melbourne contributed to the widespread endorsement of White Australia into the 1950s. By almost erasing racial difference from the nation's cities, the White Australia policy may have helped engender its own survival.

CHAPTER 3

Bursting with New Ideas: Modernising the Professions

One morning in 1944, the Melbourne kindergarten director Heather Lyon happened upon an opportunity to continue her education in New York. While perusing *The Age* newspaper over breakfast, she noticed an advertisement for a Travelling Scholarship to study at Columbia University. The scholarship was the brainchild of Alice Creswick, former president of the Free Kindergarten Union, who was convinced Australia needed more university-educated kindergarten teachers to assume the mantle of expanding early childhood services during the anticipated postwar ‘baby boom’. There were no suitable degrees on offer in Australia or Britain, so Creswick created a scholarship to send local teachers to America. After competing against a nationwide pool of applicants, twenty-seven-year-old Lyon became the inaugural recipient, and set sail across the Pacific to supplement her Australian kindergarten diploma with an Ivy League degree.¹

This visit to the States would prove to be the seminal influence upon her professional development. After only days in the country, spent at a state-of-the-art kindergarten in Oregon, Lyon was ‘bursting with new ideas’.² Her exposure to new ideas continued apace over the next two years, as she completed a BSc in Education at Columbia, and visited Yale, Vassar and Detroit’s Merrill-Palmer Institute. Upon her return to Melbourne in 1946, she joined the staff of the local Kindergarten Training College, where the Principal Madeline Crump encouraged her to teach the methods she had studied abroad.³ By 1952 Lyon had herself become Principal,

¹ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 1–3.

² *Ibid.*, 60–63.

³ *Ibid.*, 98.

and used her influence to bring Victorian early childhood education into line with American practice.

For Lyon, and for many of her contemporaries, the United States beckoned because it was home to the most ‘up-to-date’ professional expertise. Thanks to an impressive array of vocational degree programs, pioneering specialists and a commitment to ‘scientific method’, early twentieth-century America developed a reputation as the best place in the world to study and observe modern methods of professional practice. As a result, from the 1920s onwards, dozens of Australian career women undertook ‘study tours’ of the United States. Traversing the country by train and Greyhound bus, they sought to familiarise themselves with the most advanced practice in their field. They visited renowned institutions, met eminent colleagues and, in many cases, completed degrees, adding new threads to what Emily Rosenberg describes as a golden age of transnational professional networks, or ‘circuits of expertise’.⁴

American expertise proved particularly attractive for women who worked in the emergent female-dominated professions of social work, nursing, librarianship, dietetics and early childhood education. During the 1930s and 40s, these professions had a fragile foothold within Australia, and local practitioners were compelled to travel abroad for the qualifications necessary to prove themselves as experts. The United States, meanwhile, had pioneered the professionalisation of what had once been amateur ‘women’s work’, and was often the only English-speaking country to teach these pursuits within universities. The Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation and other philanthropic organisations played a crucial role in raising awareness of these developments in Australia, awarding travel grants that encouraged local pioneers in the ‘women’s professions’ to look to America for training and practical experience.

Study tours of the United States were often combined with study or travel in Britain, but Australian professionals were apt to conclude that the American commitment to efficiency and university education was preferable to the more

⁴ Emily S. Rosenberg, *Transnational Currents in a Shrinking World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 127.

‘primitive’ techniques and apprenticeship-style training that predominated across the Atlantic. This disenchantment with the ‘Mother Country’, combined with the condescension that greeted Australians in London, planted seeds of doubt about the wisdom of emulating British professional culture, seeds that would later sprout into a widespread cutting of imperial ties. Upon their return to Australia, meanwhile, these travellers tended to be disparaging about the backward state of local professional training and practice. Through their influence as educators and institutional leaders, many went on to initiate reform and disseminate new approaches acquired abroad.

By using examples from librarianship, early childhood education and several other occupations, this chapter argues that transpacific mobility had a significant influence upon the modernisation of ‘women’s work’ in Australia, and points to the role of women professionals in the development of transpacific networks. Just as male academics and policy makers engaged with colleagues in the United States through the Pacific Science Association and the Institute of Pacific Relations, so too did librarians and kindergarten teachers build bridges across the world’s largest ocean.⁵

America beckons: degrees, dollars and directives

The backdrop to the rise of the American study tour was the professionalisation of ‘women’s work’. During the nineteenth century, the tasks of ministering to children, the sick and the destitute had been regarded as natural extensions of maternal nurturing instincts, and these unremunerated labours were largely undertaken by amateurs or partially trained volunteers. Towards the end of the century, women also came to dominate the rank and file of librarianship—once a male occupation—and the work of tending to readers was reimagined as a quintessentially feminine pursuit, with an associated decline in salary and prestige.⁶ In the twentieth century,

⁵ Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*, 5; Roy MacLeod and Philip Rehbock, “Developing a Sense of the Pacific: The 1923 Pan-Pacific Science Congress in Australia,” *Pacific Science* 54, no. 3 (2000): 209–25.

⁶ Debra Gold Hansen, Karen F. Gracy, and Sheri D. Irvin, “At the Pleasure of the Board: Women Librarians and the Los Angeles Public Library, 1880–1905,” *Libraries & Culture* 34, no. 4 (1999): 311–46; Jane Simon, “The Construction of Femininity in Discourses of the Woman Librarian:

however, these caring occupations were transformed into recognised professions that required specialised training and demanded greater status and remuneration. The outward signs of professionalisation included new barriers to entry, such as university qualifications and professional accreditation, as well as efforts to become more ‘scientific’, such as conducting and publishing research, developing ‘efficient’ work practices and drawing upon modern technologies. Professionalisation was hence also a form of modernisation, and gave the unglamorous business of caring for the vulnerable a streamlined new image.

Yet professionalisation was as much an ideological position as a tangible shift in vocational training and practice. The actual labours of the modern librarian, social worker or kindergarten teacher could be near indistinguishable from those of her amateur predecessor, but the former defined herself as an expert and felt entitled to the associated rewards.⁷ All too often, however, professionalisation was a mixed blessing for women themselves. The increased status of ‘women’s work’ attracted more men to these professions, who usurped the leadership roles once occupied by women. But the diminution of female authority and autonomy did little to tarnish the allure of joining the ranks of more established professions, and women’s resistance to this process rarely extended beyond occasional expressions of disquiet.⁸

As befitted its reputation as a ‘woman’s paradise’, the United States pioneered the professionalisation of ‘women’s work’. This process can be dated to the five decades following 1880. By 1930 the battle for professional status had largely

1890s to 1940s,” *Australian Library Journal* 43, no. 4 (1994): 257–71; Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876–1920* (New York: Macmillan Information, 1979), 173–95.

⁷ Daniel J. Walkowitz, “Women With(out) Class: Social Workers in the Twentieth-Century United States,” *Women’s History Review* 14, no. 2 (2005): 325.

⁸ On the ambiguous legacies of professionalisation, see Jane Carey, “A Transnational Project? Women and Gender in the Social Sciences in Australia, 1890–1945,” *Women’s History Review* 18, no. 1 (2009): 45–69; Ann Taylor Allen, “Gender, Professionalization, and the Child in the Progressive Era: Patty Smith Hill, 1868–1946,” *Journal of Women’s History* 23, no. 2 (2011): 112–36; Daniel J. Walkowitz, “The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920s,” *American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (1990): 1051–75; Helene Silverberg, ed., *Gender and American Social Science: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3–32; Alison Bashford, “Domestic Scientists: Modernity, Gender, and the Negotiation of Science in Australian Nursing, 1880–1910,” *Journal of Women’s History* 12, no. 2 (2000): 127–46.

been won, though women's professions remained less prestigious and less remunerative than the male-dominated fields of medicine and law.⁹ In Australia, meanwhile, the shift 'from moral to professional authority' only made its first tentative steps in the 1920s, and did not take hold until after WWII.¹⁰ Given this disparity, kindergarten teachers, librarians, dieticians or social workers in the United States appeared more 'advanced' than their counterparts in Sydney or Melbourne, and American training and practice attracted the scrutiny of Australian women eager to forge a modern professional culture of their own. At least 147 women from these professions visited the States between 1920 and 1960, and the true figure is probably much higher. As Sydney nurse Stella Pines recalled, during the 1920s 'to go to America was the goal of all those who wanted to progress.'¹¹ Each woman who visited the States also had the potential to influence others on her return, ensuring that the pool of professionals affected by these travels extended far beyond those who made the journey.

Some ventured across the Pacific just to observe their American colleagues at work, but the prospect of obtaining a university degree was a particular drawcard. By the late 1920s, both Columbia University and the University of Chicago offered qualifications in library science, while Columbia also taught early childhood education and dietetics, and Chicago specialised in social work.¹² These subjects

⁹ There is an extensive literature on the professionalisation of women's work in the United States. Some notable examples include Allen, "Gender, Professionalization, and the Child in the Progressive Era"; Kristen Dombkowski, "Kindergarten Teacher Training in England and the United States, 1850–1918," *History of Education* 31, no. 5 (2002): 475–89; Silverberg, ed., *Gender and American Social Science*; Mary Ann Dzuback, "Women Scholars, Social Science Expertise, and the State in the United States," *Women's History Review* 18, no. 1 (2009): 71–95; Walkowitz, "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity."

¹⁰ Angela Woollacott, "From Moral to Professional Authority: Secularism, Social Work, and Middle-Class Women's Self-Construction in World War I Britain," *Journal of Women's History* 10, no. 2 (1998): 85–111; Carey, "A Transnational Project?"; M. K. Rochester, *Education for Librarianship in Australia* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1997), 4–31; R. Lynette Russell, *From Nightingale to Now: Nurse Education in Australia* (Sydney: W. B. Saunders, 1990); Jane Miller and David Nichols, "Establishing a Twentieth-Century Women's Profession in Australia," *Lilith* no. 20 (2014): 21–33.

¹¹ Midwives & Nurses Miss Stella Pines' Activities.

¹² Columbia established its school of library science in 1887, and Chicago followed with the Carnegie-funded Graduate Library School in 1928. Columbia began teaching education in 1898 when it incorporated Teachers College, and moved into early childhood education when it appointed kindergarten teacher Patty Hill Smith to the faculty in 1905. Dietetics entered the Teachers College Curriculum in 1910. The University of Chicago began teaching social work in

were all absent from the curricula of Australian universities. During this decade, a kindergarten teacher in Sydney or Melbourne would have to content herself with a diploma from a Kindergarten Training College, while a librarian, dietician or social worker went without formal qualifications altogether. Columbia and Chicago therefore became hubs for career women hungry for the challenge and prestige of a university education, drawing dozens across the Pacific during the 1920s, 30s and 40s. The hope of securing a larger salary post-graduation may have also created added impetus to study. This economic incentive was, however, not explicitly discussed, and it remains inconclusive whether the better educated women professionals of the United States were also better paid.

Even by the 1950s, the options for specialised professional education in Australian universities were few and far between. Professional women eager to acquire graduate qualifications were often faced with the choice of decamping to America for a year or more, or abandoning their educational ambitions. One of those who chose the former option was Marie Aitchison. A high school teacher in Brisbane, Aitchison began considering a further degree in the States because the University of Queensland did not offer specialised training in her field. In 1954 she secured a grant from the AAUW, and began graduate studies in social science education at the University of Texas.¹³

The paltry wages typical of women's professions made self-funded travel difficult. Without large savings to fall back on, Australian women keen for further study abroad were often dependent upon the assistance of their employers or, more commonly, a generous third party. As mentioned in Chapter One, philanthropic largesse abounded in mid-century America, and there were numerous grants available to international students and visitors. The most prominent source of funding was the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY). Founded by

1924 when it incorporated the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (thereafter entitled the School of Social Service Administration). Lawrence Cremin, *A History of Teachers College* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954); Dzuback, "Women Scholars," 76-79; Elizabeth Hall, *Education for Librarianship* (Canberra: Library Association of Australia, 1949), 1-4; Dombkowski, "Kindergarten Teacher Training in England and the United States," 483.

¹³ "International Grants, 1954-55," *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, October 1954, 31.

industrialist Andrew Carnegie in 1911, the philanthropic activities of the CCNY initially had a domestic focus. Its overseas influence began to expand under the leadership of Frederick Keppel, a committed internationalist who was elected President of the Corporation in 1923. Keppel pushed for the Corporation's Special Fund—intended for unspecified international commitments—to be allocated to the British dominions, and in 1926 this pool of money was recast as the Dominions and Colonies Fund (DCF).¹⁴ The work of the DCF was spearheaded by James Russell, a former Dean of Columbia University Teachers College, who made a reconnaissance visit to South Africa in 1926.¹⁵ Two years later, Russell made a second journey to the southern hemisphere, this time scouting the potential for Carnegie influence in Australia and New Zealand. After Russell concluded that Antipodean educators remained beholden to the antiquated methods of the 'Mother Country', the CCNY established the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and began pouring funds into local modernisation initiatives.¹⁶

Over the next twelve years, the CCNY awarded close to a hundred travel grants to Australian applicants, including a sizeable minority of women.¹⁷ As historian Jenny Collins has demonstrated in the New Zealand context, the CCNY demonstrated an uncommon willingness to recognise and reward female expertise during the interwar decades, a progressive attitude which helped foster broader acceptance of women's role as 'professional social reformers'.¹⁸ In Australia, at least 26 women visited the States on Carnegie grants between 1932 and 1960, including kindergarten teachers, librarians, social workers, dieticians, educationists and

¹⁴ Richard Glotzer, "A Long Shadow: Frederick P. Keppel, the Carnegie Corporation and the Dominions and Colonies Fund Area Experts, 1923–1943," *History of Education* 38, no. 5 (2009): 627, 631–35.

¹⁵ For an account of CCNY activities in interwar South Africa, see Richard Glotzer, "The Influence of Carnegie Corporation and Teachers College, Columbia, in the Interwar Dominions: The Case for Decentralized Education," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue D'histoire de L'éducation* 12, no. 1 (2000): 93–111.

¹⁶ Michael White, "Carnegie Philanthropy in Australia in the Nineteen Thirties – A Reassessment," *History of Education Review* 26, no. 1 (1997): 4–6; Rosenfield, *A World of Giving*, 117–25.

¹⁷ White, "Carnegie Philanthropy in Australia," 8.

¹⁸ Jenny Collins, "Creating Women's Work in the Academy and Beyond: Carnegie Connections, 1923–1942," *History of Education* 38, no. 6 (2009): 791–808.

psychologists, most of whom were rising stars handpicked by local powerbrokers with Carnegie connections.¹⁹

Carnegie grant holders would be awarded sums ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars to fund a study tour of leading American universities, libraries or research institutes. Their itineraries were developed in close consultation with Carnegie staff, who had strong opinions about where and when international visitors should travel. Upon arrival in New York, these Australians would be welcomed—and scrutinised—by Keppel and his staff at Corporation headquarters. On occasion their tours were combined with a more prolonged period of study, but in general the Corporation avoided funding full degrees, believing that a broad overview of international trends was preferable to a prolonged stint in one location.²⁰

It is tempting to characterise this unsolicited wave of Carnegie largesse as an instrument of American cultural imperialism. There is, however, little evidence to support such a conclusion. The recent historiography of Carnegie influence in the dominions has determined that Keppel and his associates had no intention to supplant British influence. Indeed, in many instances, Carnegie-funded study tours would also include Canada or Britain.²¹ Instead of immersing Australian talent in American methods, the Corporation intended to expose future leaders and educators to the latest international trends in professional training and practice. Modernisation, not Americanisation, was the prime concern. In practice, however, the most ‘up-to-date’ methods often tended to be American and, as we shall see, the professional women who visited both sides of the Atlantic were apt to draw greater inspiration from the United States. Although the CCNY had no explicit agenda to

¹⁹ This figure is based on research conducted by the author in the CCNY Records, 1900–2004, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

²⁰ Charles Dollard to Professor Whitfeld, 6 October 1938, folder 3, box 288, series III.A.7, CCNY Records.

²¹ White, “Carnegie Philanthropy in Australia,” 20; Glotzer, “A Long Shadow,” 645; James Cotton, “Rockefeller, Carnegie, and the Limits of American Hegemony in the Emergence of Australian International Studies,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 12, no. 1 (2012): 161–92; Kate Darian-Smith, Glenda Sluga, and Julie McLeod, “Philanthropy and Public Culture: The Influences and Legacies of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in Australia,” *Dialogue* 29, no. 2 (2010): 86.

weaken the weave of imperial loyalty, its philanthropic endeavours did indeed work to challenge a default preference for British methods.

The Carnegie Corporation was the most generous supporter of Australian career women, but other philanthropic programs also facilitated professional development in the United States. The Rockefeller Foundation, founded in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller, Senior and Junior, had a smaller but still significant presence in Australia from the late 1920s, and likewise granted fellowships to women with the drive and influence to initiate reform. These included Fairfield Hospital Matron Gwendolen Burbidge, who toured university-based nursing schools in Canada and the States during 1949, a trip followed by a zealous but unsuccessful campaign to replicate this educational model in Australia.²² From the 1940s onwards, the AAUW and Fulbright exchange program also began to fund American study tours and degrees, and their support for librarians, dieticians and teachers further fostered the growing awareness of ‘advanced’ American methods.²³

Given these unparalleled educational and funding opportunities, the United States would seem an obvious destination for Australian women looking to boost their professional credentials. Yet, in reality, the career women of British-oriented Australia often remained oblivious to the attractions of a US study tour unless an American or American-trained colleague happened to cross their path. For many individuals, the appearance of a mentor with American connections was the catalyst which metamorphosed vague career aspirations into concrete travel plans. This was the fortune of Joan Woodhill, a Sydney dietician. Woodhill was the first student trained by Ruth Gordon, an American recruited to establish the dietetics department at Sydney’s Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1936. After several years, Gordon became eager to return home, and went on the hunt for a successor. Deciding that Woodhill was the best candidate for the job, Gordon encouraged her

²² Fellowship Files – Burbidge, Gwendolen Norah, Series 410E, Record Group 10.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter RAC), Sleepy Hollow, New York. For a fuller account of Burbidge, see Judith Godden, *Australia’s Controversial Matron: Gwen Burbidge and Nursing Reform* (Burwood, NSW: College of Nursing, 2011).

²³ Tryon, *Investment in Creative Scholarship*, Garner and Kirkby, “‘Never a Machine for Propaganda?’”

former student to obtain the necessary qualifications in America. In 1938, Woodhill successfully applied for a Carnegie grant, and the following year undertook an intensive course at Columbia, before travelling around the country. Upon her return to Sydney, needless to say, Woodhill was appointed Gordon's replacement.²⁴

Although Woodhill was, in effect, instructed to take further study in the States, interest in American methods was also fostered by more subtle means. Given the scant encouragement offered to female professionals in Australia, a few kind words from a visiting American expert could be all the stimulus required for a local woman to begin composing applications to Chicago or Columbia. Jean Whyte was butting against the glass ceiling at the Public Library of South Australia when, in 1952, she met Professor E. H. Behymer of Bethany College, West Virginia. Behymer, who was conducting a seminar series for the Library Association of Australia, shared Whyte's belief that Australia was in urgent need of professionally trained librarians, and suggested she apply to Chicago's Graduate Library School.²⁵ Without this chance meeting, Whyte later reflected, she never would have left Australia.²⁶

Male colleagues who had studied in the States could also plant the seed that American methods might be worth investigating. Not only were such men allied to the American profession, but tended to be more sympathetic towards female endeavour than their locally educated counterparts.²⁷ According to psychologist Jacqueline Goodnow, the encouragement of Cecil Gibb, a Sydney-born graduate of the University of Illinois, was central to her decision to embark upon doctoral studies at Harvard. In 1944 Goodnow graduated from the University of Sydney with

²⁴ Folder 12, box 372, series III.A.9, CCNY Records.

²⁵ Letter of application to the American Association of University Women, 3 November 1952, box 2, and letter of application to University of Chicago Graduate Library School, 18 June 1952, bag 1, box 1, Whyte Papers.

²⁶ Coralie E. J. Jenkin, *Jean Primrose Whyte: A Professional Biography* (Clayton, Vic: Monash University Information Technology, 2010), 02.08.

²⁷ For example, University of Adelaide Librarian William A. Cowan became renowned for advancing his female colleagues after returning from his Carnegie-funded studies at the University of Michigan during the mid-1930s. Michael J. Birkner, "The Wisest Help": Frederick Keppel and His Consultants' Impact on Australia and New Zealand Libraries," *Library & Information History* 29, no. 4 (2013): 263–64.

a University Medal and Honours in psychology, and for the next four years was employed as a temporary lecturer at the same institution. Given her academic laurels, she assumed that a tenured appointment would soon eventuate. At this point Gibb, a senior lecturer who had returned from Chicago with ‘a rather different view of women’, intervened to nudge Goodnow in a different direction. Conscious that female talent was rarely recognised within Australian academia, Gibb advised that she instead pursue a PhD in the United States. As a result, by 1953 Goodnow would be a graduate and faculty member of Harvard University.²⁸

In a similar fashion, US-trained Australian women went on to encourage students and colleagues to follow in their footsteps. On occasion, this process repeated for generations, producing lineages of American-trained professionals. One lineage began in 1916, when pioneering Perth psychologist Ethel Stoneman studied intelligence testing and abnormal psychology at Stanford.²⁹ By 1926 Stoneman had been appointed the first State Psychologist in Western Australia, and was responsible for establishing psychology education at the University of Western Australia.³⁰ Two of her students—Constance Moffit and Norma Parker—showed particular promise, and Stoneman suggested they seek further education in America. By 1928, Moffit and Parker had both won scholarships to commence Masters degrees at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC.³¹ After graduating, Parker went on to play a pivotal role in the professionalisation of Australian social work. She was founding president of the Australian Association of Social Workers, established in 1946, and a long-term director of social work

²⁸ Goodnow interview.

²⁹ Jan Wilson, “Stoneman, Ethel Turner (1890–1973),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stoneman-ethel-turner-8681/text15185>, accessed 15 June 2012.

³⁰ Alison M. Turtle, “The First Women Psychologists in Australia,” *Australian Psychologist* 25, no. 3 (1990): 249–52.

³¹ Norma Parker, “Early Social Work in Retrospect,” *Australian Social Work* 32, no. 4 (1979): 17; “Psychology Scholarships,” *West Australian* (Perth), 24 July 1928, 5; “Child Welfare: West Australian Graduate’s Work,” *West Australian* (Perth), 11 August 1932, 10.

education at the University of Sydney.³² Parker also maintained connections with the United States—studying psychiatric social work at the University of Chicago in 1944—and, according to a former colleague, ‘turned the eyes of most Australian social workers towards America.’³³ Among those who had their eyes turned stateside was Red Cross social worker Dorothy Davis. With Parker’s encouragement, Davis commenced a Masters degree at the University of Chicago in 1956, continuing the tradition of American study into a third generation.³⁴

From charity worker to child expert

Thanks to one or a combination of these three factors—the allure of professionalised training and work methods, the prospect of funding, or the encouragement of a mentor—mid-century America played host to an increasing number of career women from Australia. Several professions developed particularly strong ties to their colleagues across the Pacific, and foremost among these was early childhood education. The kindergarten was a German invention, developed by Friedrich Froebel in 1840, but the concept soon spread across the globe. Froebel’s principles were brought to America by German emigrants in the 1850s, and were later adopted by leading Progressives, who conceptualised the kindergarten as a tool of citizenship building and immigrant assimilation. During the late nineteenth century, kindergarten classes became commonplace throughout the United States, and, as Ann Taylor Allen writes, ‘the center of gravity of the international kindergarten movement shifted from Germany to America.’³⁵ In Britain, by contrast, kindergartens did not flourish to the same extent, due in part to the poor

³² For a recent discussion of Parker’s contribution to Australian social work, see Damian J. Gleeson, “Some New Perspectives on Early Australian Social Work,” *Australian Social Work* 61, no. 3 (2008): 207–25.

³³ Mildred Scoville to Helen Wright, 3 May 1944, folder 168, box 11, series 25.2, The Commonwealth Fund, RAC; Millie Mills, “Professor Norma Parker CBE,” *Australian Social Work* 39, no. 2 (1986): 3.

³⁴ Davis, *Report on Overseas Study Leave*, 1–15.

³⁵ Ann Taylor Allen, “The Kindergarten in Germany and the United States, 1840–1914: A Comparative Perspective,” *History of Education* 35, no. 2 (2006): 186.

professional standards that stemmed from the comparatively undeveloped state of women's higher education.³⁶

As a result, the birth of the Australian kindergarten movement owed more to American influence than to guidance from the 'Mother Country'. Although the first Australian kindergartens, opened in Sydney during the 1880s, were similar to private institutions in Britain, the large-scale establishment of free kindergartens modelled on Froebelian beliefs was fostered by transpacific mobility and exchange. In 1895 Sydney philanthropist Margaret Windeyer returned from California with a copy of the Golden Gate Kindergarten Association annual report, and soon after helped form the Kindergarten Union of New South Wales. By 1907, there were eight kindergartens in Sydney, and the free kindergarten movement had spread to other states. To further reinforce this emulation of the US model, the first three principals of Sydney's Kindergarten Training College (KTC), established in 1897, were each recruited from America. The influence of these educators ensured that early Australian kindergartens bore a close resemblance to those in Progressive-era Chicago and New York, in which genteel young women aimed to nurture the minds and bodies of working-class children whilst offering protection from the dangers lurking in city streets.³⁷

American influences continued into the twentieth century, when scores of Australian early childhood professionals crossed the Pacific for further study. This trend extended nationwide, but was most pronounced in Melbourne, where every KTC principal between 1922 and 1976 studied in the States either prior to or during their term of office.³⁸ Mary Gutteridge was the first of this lineage. Appointed principal in 1922, six years later Gutteridge was given sabbatical leave to visit

³⁶ Roberta Wollons, ed., *Kindergartens and Cultures: The Global Diffusion of an Idea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 12; Dombkowski, "Kindergarten Teacher Training."

³⁷ Laurence Wayne Prochner, *A History of Early Childhood Education in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 203–11; Margaret Clyde, "The Development of Kindergartens in Australia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Kindergartens and Cultures: The Global Diffusion of an Idea*, ed. Roberta Wollons (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 100–06.

³⁸ Lyndsay Gardiner, *The Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria, 1908–80* (Hawthorn, Vic: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1982).

Columbia University Teachers College, an institution where early childhood education was held in such high esteem that kindergarten teachers such as Patty Hill Smith were welcomed into the eminent faculty.³⁹ Soon after arriving in New York, Gutteridge was awarded a ‘fellowship in child study and parent training’ worth over two thousand dollars from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, a grant that funded a full degree.⁴⁰ In 1929 Gutteridge graduated from Columbia with a Bachelor of Science, and travelled back to Australia via Europe, arriving in January 1930 to resume her position at the Melbourne KTC.⁴¹

During her studies at Columbia, Gutteridge became an acolyte of a new approach to early childhood education. In interwar America, the philanthropic and moralising impulses of the Progressive-era kindergarten had given way to the logic of science. The ‘Lady Bountiful’ kindergarten teachers of yesteryear had been replaced by armies of college-trained ‘experts’, who used the principles of psychology and sociology to shine a torch on the mysteries of the juvenile mind and body. ‘Problem’ children came under the microscope, and the child-rearing techniques of parents were also brought under scrutiny. The spiritual leaders of this movement were Yale’s Arnold Gesell, Columbia’s John Dewey and G. Stanley Hall of Clark University, whose research on child development and educational philosophy brought child’s play into the pages of academic scholarship.⁴² Their concern with ‘correct’ emotional, physical and intellectual development shifted the

³⁹ Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, folder 303, box 23, series 3, RAC; Allen, “Gender, Professionalization, and the Child.” For a detailed discussion of Gutteridge’s transnational career, see Kay Whitehead, “Mary Gutteridge: Transnational Career in the Field of Early Childhood Education,” in *Women Educators, Leaders and Activists: Educational Lives and Networks, 1900–1960*, ed. Tanya Fitzgerald and Elizabeth M. Smyth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Kay Whitehead, “Women Educators and Transnational Networking in the Twentieth-Century Nursery School Movement,” *Women’s History Review* 23, no. 6 (2014): 957–75.

⁴⁰ Folder 303, box 23, series 3, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

⁴¹ Ada a’ Beckett, *A Historical Sketch* (Melbourne: Hart Printing Co, 1939), 13.

⁴² Emily Cahan, “Towards a Socially Relevant Science: Notes on the History of Child Development Research,” in *When Science Encounters the Child: Education, Parenting and Welfare in 20th Century America*, ed. Barbara Beatty, Emily Cahan, and Julia Grant (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), 16–34; Donna Varga, “Look – Normal: The Colonized Child of Developmental Science,” *History of Psychology* 14, no. 2 (2011): 137–57.

focus of early childhood specialists towards the needs of younger children, and the nursery school—originally an English invention—was brought to America to ensure that children were set on the ‘right path’ even before entering kindergarten.⁴³ Like many branches of progressive thought, the child development movement also had strong links to eugenics.⁴⁴ Gutteridge returned to Melbourne convinced of the merits of this modern approach to preschool education, and, as we shall see, used her influence to reform the local kindergarten movement along American lines.

As news of nursery schools and child development research began to spread, kindergarten teachers from around Australia felt compelled to view American methods for themselves. Columbia’s Teachers College became a particular site of pilgrimage, attracting around a dozen Australians between 1932 and 1952, most of whom were senior educators sent abroad to observe new trends in preschool pedagogy.⁴⁵ Sydney’s Marion Fell toured American nursery schools and viewed the ‘latest methods of education’ at Columbia in 1932. Two years later she was followed by Brisbane KTC vice-principal Edith Kent, who spent a year studying nursery school education at the same institution.⁴⁶ The CCNY funded some of these interwar visitors, but others financed their travels through Australian awards such as the Catherine Helen Spence Scholarship, granted to Adelaide kindergarten teacher Doris Beeston in 1937.⁴⁷ Australian interest in US early childhood education received a further boost in the late 1930s, when two Columbia-trained Americans—Christine Heinig and Margaret McFarland—served as successive principals of the Melbourne KTC. By 1940, Heinig and McFarland had

⁴³ Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 132–36.

⁴⁴ Frederic Weizmann, “From the ‘Village of a Thousand Souls’ to ‘Race Crossing in Jamaica’: Arnold Gesell, Eugenics and Child Development,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 46, no. 3 (2010): 263–75.

⁴⁵ This was also true of foreign educators more broadly. Columbia Teachers College had a strong international focus in the interwar period, and established an International Institute in 1923 to facilitate dialogue and educational exchange between American and foreign educators. For an account of this Institute, and the College’s role as a vehicle of American educational influence in Asia and the Middle East, see Bu, *Making the World Like Us*, 115–41.

⁴⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 January 1933, 7; folder 4, box 51, series III.A.1, CCNY Records.

⁴⁷ “Kindergarten Worker Chosen as Spence Scholar,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 1 December 1937, 8.

both returned to the States, and many of their former students and colleagues soon followed.

One of these was Ada Stephens, an Adelaide KTC graduate and the newly appointed principal of the Brisbane KTC, who enrolled at Columbia in 1946 to better equip herself to train Queensland's kindergarten teachers. Stephens planned to remain abroad for two years, but in 1947 she was awarded Columbia's prestigious Ayer Scholarship, which funded a Masters and a doctorate.⁴⁸ In 1951, as Stephens was making plans to return to Brisbane, she was recruited to join the teaching staff of Ohio's University of Toledo. In an era in which Australian universities would brook no association with pre-schoolers, such an appointment was too good to refuse. Stephens decided to make her home in Toledo, and was promoted to a full professorship in 1958. Despite settling abroad, Stephens remained in close contact with her Antipodean colleagues, and would act as an important link between the Australian and American professions.⁴⁹

A similar role was played by Gutteridge, who returned to the States in 1937, and also completed a doctorate at Columbia. She graduated in 1939 and, after briefly teaching at Columbia and the University of Minnesota, was appointed a lecturer at Detroit's Merrill-Palmer Institute, a leading centre of research on child development and nursery-school education.⁵⁰ After Gutteridge commenced work in Detroit, this institute became a regular stop for Australian visitors. In 1950, Beth Stubbs even interrupted her studies at Columbia to spend eight months at Merrill-Palmer. Under the guidance of Gutteridge and others, she measured, weighed and x-rayed newborn babies in the Infant Laboratory, emerging from her visit as a data-driven professional *par excellence*.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "University Post for Dr Ada Stephens," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 22 August 1951, 11.

⁴⁹ Betsy Gross, biographical notes on Ada Stephens, n.d., Ada Stephens Staff File, University of Toledo Archives, Toledo, Ohio.

⁵⁰ Whitehead, "Mary Gutteridge," 138. For further background on the Merrill-Palmer Institute, see Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 152–53.

⁵¹ Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.

A land which believes in libraries

Australian librarianship also developed strong links to the United States from the 1930s onwards, a relationship facilitated in large part by the Carnegie Corporation. The provision of public libraries had long been a special interest of the CCNY, and in 1934 the Corporation sponsored Ralph Munn, the Director of Pittsburgh's Carnegie Library, in conjunction with Ernest Pitt of the State Library of Victoria, to survey Australia's libraries. The resulting report was a scathing indictment of the current system, concluding that Australia had 'failed to grasp the social value of public book services.'⁵² In the wake of these findings, a Carnegie-funded modernisation project commenced, a core priority of which was sending Australian librarians overseas.

Although several historians have previously examined American influences upon the modernisation of Australian librarianship, this scholarship has focused upon the work of a handful of male reformers.⁵³ Yet women were also important actors within this story: not only did they constitute the vast majority of the profession—though men remained over-represented within the senior leadership—but many ventured stateside with Carnegie support.⁵⁴ In 1935, only a year after Adelaide's William Cowan became the first librarian sent abroad by the CCNY,

⁵² Ralph Munn and Ernest R. Pitt, *Australian Libraries: A Survey of Conditions and Suggestions for Their Improvement* (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1935), 24, 112.

⁵³ M. K. Rochester, "American Philanthropy Abroad: Library Program Support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York British Dominions and Colonies Fund in the 1920s and 1930s," *Libraries & Culture* 31, no. 6 (1996): 342–63; Mary Carroll, "The Impact of Overseas Agencies on the Development of Education for Australian Library Workers," in *Collections, Characters & Communities*, ed. B. J. McMullin (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010), 95–106; Mary Carroll, "Republic of the Learned: The Role of Libraries in the Promotion of a US Democratic Vision," *History of Education* 38, no. 6 (2009): 809–23; Birkner, "The Wisest Help'," 258–71.

⁵⁴ The first woman employed as a librarian in Australia, Nita Kibble, did not commence work until 1899. Over the following decades, women came to dominate the profession. By 1936, eighty-five percent of professional library staff at the Public Library of New South Wales were female. Yet male librarians retained most senior administrative roles. In one notorious episode in 1932, the reportedly mediocre John Metcalfe was appointed Deputy Library of the PLNSW to prevent the talented Ida Leeson from becoming 'heir apparent' to State Librarian William Ifould. Peter Biskup, "Gender and Status in Australian Librarianship," *Australian Library Journal* 43, no. 3 (1994): 165–79; David J. Jones, "Unfinished Business: John Metcalfe and His Professional Association," *Australian Library Journal* 56, no. 3–4 (2007): 454; Sylvia Martin, *Ida Leeson: A Life* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 51–66.

the Corporation sponsored one of his female colleagues. Malvina Wood, librarian at the University of Western Australia, received a \$200 grant to study overseas developments in library practice. In her eight months abroad she visited Europe and America, but spent the bulk of her time in the States, where she was ‘amazed at the beauty and magnificence of both public and university libraries, their excellent staffing, and the high standard of service that they are able to offer their readers.’⁵⁵

Over the next two decades, Wood’s investigations of American librarianship were replicated by more than twenty of her female colleagues. Some travelled under their own steam, but a significant proportion received CCNY funding. After a brief hiatus in Carnegie sponsorship during WWII, there was a new surge of interest in 1948–49, when six female librarians and one archivist were awarded travel grants to obtain a ‘glimpse of what Australian libraries of the future may be.’⁵⁶ Most of these grant recipients undertook whirlwind tours of the American library scene, visiting the grand reading rooms of the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress, as well as regional libraries that better approximated the scale of Australia’s more humble book repositories. Jean Arnot, from the Public Library of New South Wales (PLNSW), spent a mere two months in the States yet managed to visit forty libraries in fifteen different cities.⁵⁷ The points of interest she observed en route filled two notebooks, and included a school book van in New Jersey, Shakespearean manuscripts in Washington DC, and a first-rate library manual in Baton Rouge.⁵⁸

Few of these women would have disagreed with National Library cataloguer Lilian Foley, who told the *Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1938 that ‘America leads

⁵⁵ M. E. Wood, “Report on a Visit to Europe and America,” folder 9, box 372, series III.A.9, CCNY Records.

⁵⁶ Nancy Booker, “Report of a Visit to the United States,” folder 5, box 60, series III.A.1, CCNY Records.

⁵⁷ Jean Arnot, “Visits to Libraries in the United States and British Columbia,” folder 4, box 44, series III.A.1, CCNY Records.

⁵⁸ Diaries 1948–49, box 1, Arnot Papers.

the world in library science.’⁵⁹ The modern American library, visitors reported, was no forbidding graveyard of forgotten tomes, but a streamlined factory of knowledge. New-fangled microfilm readers and ‘book talking machines’ jostled for space in the reading rooms; sound-proof music rooms were tucked away in spare corners. Daylight streamed through the windows, and armchairs invited visitors to settle in with a book. Children would discover entire rooms dedicated to their needs, while bookmobile services ensured that rural residents kept up-to-date with the latest fiction.⁶⁰ After more than a year studying this system, Jean Whyte could only conclude that ‘America is a land which believes in libraries.’⁶¹

Even more tantalising than the libraries themselves, however, was the discovery that, since the 1880s, America’s librarians had learnt their trade at university. This training model formed a stark contrast to Australia, where librarianship education was almost non-existent. State libraries only began to formally educate their staff in 1938, and professional accreditation examinations were not instituted until 1944. The first university-based library science school was only established in 1960.⁶² Without degrees of their own, Australian visitors deemed university education the most novel feature of American librarianship, and most concluded that it produced a higher calibre of librarian. Melbourne librarian Barbara Johnston reported in 1948 that university study gave rise to both ‘more standardized methods throughout the libraries’ and ‘greater efficiency’.⁶³

Such was the esteem for the university model that Australian librarians began to enrol in American degrees. In 1947, Wilma Radford was able to leverage her role as a PLNSW Library School lecturer to win Carnegie support to study at Columbia for a full year, becoming the first Australian to receive a degree in

⁵⁹ *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 8 October 1938, 19.

⁶⁰ *West Australian* (Perth), 12 May 1936, 5; Elizabeth Hall, Notebooks 1948–49, MS 5629, NLA; *Border Watch* (Mount Gambier), 15 May 1945, 2.

⁶¹ “Libraries in the United States,” n. d., bag 1, box 2, Whyte Papers.

⁶² M. V. Keane, “The Development of Education for Librarianship in Australia between 1896 and 1976, with Special Emphasis upon the Role of the Library Association of Australia,” *Australian Library Journal* 31, no. 2 (1982): 12–23; Rochester, *Education for Librarianship*, 13–31.

⁶³ Barbara Johnston, *Special Library Practice* (Melbourne: CSIRO, 1949), 58.

librarianship.⁶⁴ Others soon followed in her wake: in the early 1950s Adelaide librarians Stephanie Fountain and Jean Whyte, and Nora Miller from Tasmania, all studied at the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago, then regarded as the world's preeminent school of library science.⁶⁵



Figure 18: This photo, dated 1952, was included by Jean Whyte in her application for the University of Chicago. Papers of Jean Whyte, AC 02/171, NLA.

⁶⁴ Folder 2, box 305, series III.A.7, CCNY Records; David Jones and Neil Radford, "Wilma Radford: Librarian, Educator, 1912–2005," *Australian Library Journal* 54, no. 4 (2005): 333. The first Australian to receive an American education in librarianship was also a woman: Margaret Windeyer arrived at the New York State Library School in 1897, and later worked at Sydney's Mitchell Library. Jim Cleary, "Women Librarians at the Public Library of New South Wales: The First Generation," *Australian Library Journal* 40, no. 1 (1991): 7–11.

⁶⁵ "3,000 Miles by Bus through US," *Mail* (Adelaide), 13 October 1951, 34; Travel Diary 1953–54, bag 3, box 5, Whyte Papers.

Fusty Britisher places

The burgeoning interest in American training and expertise did not displace a lingering loyalty towards British methods, and professional women often combined study tours of the United States with a visit to colleagues and institutions in the 'Mother Country'. Yet, more often than not, the women who visited both sides of the Atlantic returned home convinced that the highlights of an American study tour eclipsed the revered institutions of London. In 1937, kindergarten teacher Jean Wyndham admitted that the child welfare centres in New York were the 'most perfect' she had encountered, while 'nothing so good' was to be found in England.⁶⁶ The year before, when librarian Malvina Wood returned to Perth, she revealed that even the greatest library of the British Empire was no match for American efficiency. At the Columbia University library, patrons could obtain a required book within five minutes, whereas at the British Museum you could spend hours waiting while a hapless attendant trudged the stacks in search of the volume in question.⁶⁷ Two decades later, librarian Jean Whyte found the situation little changed. After completing her Masters degree in Chicago in 1956, Whyte crossed the Atlantic to survey library methods in the Old World. She returned home underwhelmed by the glories of English librarianship, and spent the remainder of her career asserting that American libraries were superior to 'fusty, staid Britisher places.'⁶⁸

A particular target of criticism was the professional education on offer in Britain, where apprenticeship-style training remained the norm. Most librarians, for example, entered the profession by working within an approved library for twelve months and passing exams administered by a centralised Library Association. The minimum prerequisite for undertaking these exams was the School Certificate, which could be obtained after only four years of secondary schooling.⁶⁹ In the United States, by contrast, where graduate librarianship qualifications were

⁶⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 January 1937, 22.

⁶⁷ "A Student Abroad: American Libraries Praised," *West Australian* (Perth), 13 May 1936, 5.

⁶⁸ "And she was mistress of her trade," n. d., box 2, Whyte Papers.

⁶⁹ Wilma Radford, *Training for Librarianship* (Sydney: W. Radford, 1950); Elizabeth Hall and Wilma Radford, *Library Staff: Composition and Training in Great Britain, USA and Australia* (Sydney: Library Association of Australia, 1951).

widespread, students were taught the theory of library science for a year or more, having already completed an undergraduate degree. The typical American librarian, in other words, had spent at least five years at university, while her English counterpart may have barely scraped through high school before beginning to minister to library patrons. The American model was also associated with high salaries. Although wages paid in different currencies and contexts are difficult to compare, the available data suggests that a British librarian in 1920 would receive, on average, a mere forty percent of the salary she could earn in New York.⁷⁰

After undertaking a comparison of these two systems in the late 1940s, Elizabeth Hall and Wilma Radford both concluded that the British model had few redeeming features. ‘Standard of general education in English libraries too low [sic],’ Hall recorded in her notebook. In some cases, apprentice librarians received next to no instruction, and spent their days making tea and stamping circulation cards.⁷¹ As a result, even ‘the British themselves frequently deplore the low standard of general capacity and knowledge of many librarians,’ noted Radford and Hall in 1951.⁷² Without a firm grounding in the theory of librarianship, the staff of English libraries had less confidence in their professional identity, and were sometimes dubious that they belonged to a profession at all. Hall, writing in 1949, characterised English librarians as mere technicians, who ‘refuse to believe that librarianship has a philosophical basis’.⁷³ The implication of these findings was clear: Australia would be ill-advised to emulate the British model of librarianship education.

⁷⁰ In 1920, a woman public library employee in Britain would be paid, on average, £170 per annum. A female branch librarian at the New York Public Library, meanwhile, would receive up to \$1680. Given that, in 1920, one British pound was worth roughly four US dollars, the British librarian could be said to receive \$680, or forty percent of the salary she could earn in New York. These figures are drawn from Evelyn Kerslake, “‘They Have Had to Come down to the Women for Help!’ Numerical Feminization and the Characteristics of Women’s Library Employment in England, 1871–1974,” *Library History* 23, no. 1 (2007): 32; Catherine Shanley, “The Library Employees’ Union of Greater New York, 1917–1929,” *Libraries & Culture* 30, no. 3 (1995): 241; William D. Craighead, “Across Time and Regimes: 212 Years of the US-UK Real Exchange Rate,” *Economic Inquiry* 48, no. 4 (2010): 952.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Hall, Notebook 8 (Britain), Notebooks 1948–49.

⁷² Hall and Radford, *Library Staff*, 5.

⁷³ Hall, *Education for Librarianship*, 8.

Kindergarten teachers tended not to engage in such explicit condemnations of British professional training, but nonetheless voted with their feet. Although many early childhood professionals visited both sides of the Atlantic, most tours were heavily weighted towards the United States. A typical itinerary would commence with two or more years in America, time often dedicated to university study, followed by only several months in Britain and perhaps elsewhere in Europe. Few sought formal qualifications in the UK, where the training of kindergarten teachers was concentrated in private colleges similar to those back home.⁷⁴ For many women, the prime objective of the study tour was obtaining a degree, and appropriate degrees were only available in the United States.⁷⁵ By the 1940s and 50s, some leading members of the Australian profession, including Isla Stamp and Helen Carr, eliminated the British leg entirely.⁷⁶ These women may have been British in heritage, but their professional sympathies had become decidedly American.

The low standards of British professional training also offended Cynthia Reed, who documented her overseas nursing education in the autobiographical novel *Lucky Alphonse* (1944). Alphonse, the Australian protagonist, commences her training at St Joseph's Hospital in Chicago during the mid-1930s. She is fed mountains of medical information and spends long hours in the wards, but the gruelling workload is mitigated by a shared belief in the nobility of the nursing profession.⁷⁷ When it emerges, however, that Alphonse has overstayed her visa, she is forced to make an abrupt departure and start afresh at St Thomas' Hospital in London. To her dismay, it soon transpires that English nursing training largely consists of cleaning and kitchen duties, while any interest in medicine itself is firmly discouraged. When Alphonse poses a question about anatomy, the senior nurse

⁷⁴ Kay Whitehead, "Gipsy Hill Training College Graduates," *History of Education* 41, no. 5 (2012): 617–36; Kevin Brehony, "Lady Astor's Campaign for Nursery Schools in Britain, 1930–1939," *History of Education Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2009): 203–04.

⁷⁵ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 3.

⁷⁶ "For Overseas," *Sunday Times* (Perth), 21 April 1946, 6; "Travel Scholarship: Kindergarten Work Abroad," *West Australian* (Perth), 4 December 1945, 9.

⁷⁷ Reed, *Lucky Alphonse*, 34.

responds: ‘You are not in America now, Nurse. In England we do not believe in all this theoretical knowledge for nurses.’⁷⁸ Ground down by the menial work and hierarchical atmosphere, Alphonse sinks into a deep depression. She is no longer training to be a professional, but earning her stripes as a hospital drudge. As a result, once qualified, Alphonse retreats across the Atlantic to supplement her St Thomas’ training with a postgraduate course in New York.⁷⁹ On the eve of departure from England she concludes, ‘As a nation these people were slipping.’⁸⁰



Figure 19: Cigarette in hand, Cynthia Reed advertises her credentials as a modern woman, 1945. National Gallery of Australia, 86.1384.250.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 124.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 214–15.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 186–87.

The uncongenial atmosphere that Alphonse encounters at St Thomas' was in part a response to her Antipodean origins. The hospital matron harbours a prejudice against 'impudent' Australian nurses, and the other nurses are likewise inclined to view Alphonse and her compatriots with no small measure of distaste.⁸¹ This condescending stance towards 'colonials' was a common gripe of Australians in the metropole, but caused particular resentment among professionals who had enjoyed a courteous reception in the United States.⁸² Elizabeth Hall, who toured America and Britain as a representative of the National Library in 1948, was outraged by the offhand welcome she received in London. The local library staff 'lack[ed] the courtesy & helpfulness of American librarians', and fobbed off enquiries into English librarianship with 'a quick view of dusty bookshelves & antiquated catalogues'. After the librarian of the Victoria & Albert Museum kept her waiting for nearly an hour, Hall fumed that 'Americans treated me as a colleague from another country who understood librarianship—English as a colonial visitor to whom they must give some time.'⁸³ The 'backwardness' of British professional culture evidently extended to a dated disdain towards the scions of empire, an attitude that thrust even British-minded Australians into the embrace of their more democratic American colleagues.

The pilgrimage to discover the best the British Empire had to offer could, therefore, when combined with a visit to New York or Chicago, lead some to question whether the Empire had a great deal to offer at all. These accounts add a fresh dimension to our understanding of the erosion of British influence within Australia, a process often attributed to geopolitical 'turning points' such as the 1951 ANZUS Treaty or Britain's application to join the European Economic Community in 1961.⁸⁴ Behind these symbolic moments of rupture, however, we can uncover a

⁸¹ Ibid., 47.

⁸² On the condescension experienced by Australians in London, see Anne Rees, "'Australians Who Come over Here Are Apt to Consider Themselves Quite Large People': The Body and Australian Identity in Interwar London," *Australian Historical Studies* 44, no. 3 (2013): 405–22.

⁸³ Elizabeth Hall, Notebook 8 (Britain), Notebooks 1948–1949.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*; Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket*; Curran and Ward, *The Unknown Nation*.

longer tradition of questioning whether Britain was indeed the best model for Australia, a tradition in which travellers exposed to different lands played a pivotal role. The experience of these women professionals indicates that the modernity of American universities, kindergartens and libraries could make the long-esteemed 'Mother Country' seem aged indeed, even before the financial and physical costs of WWII took their toll. Imperial loyalty was not blind loyalty, and Australian professional leaders were not shy to admit that America had more to offer. These episodes also reveal that disenchantment with the greatness of Great Britain extended beyond political culture and popular discourse, into the minutiae of library science and kindergarten pedagogy. While such quibbles with English methods may seem isolated and technical, their cumulative effect was profound. Not only did they contribute to a broader sense that Britain remained bogged in the past, but, as the following section outlines, also fed the growing Americanisation of 'women's work' within Australia.

Carrying on the movement in Australia

Upon their return from an American study tour, Australian women professionals often condemned the stunted development of local professional training and practice. If the United States was home to the most 'advanced' and 'up-to-date' thinking, Australia was characterised as a primitive backwater. The librarian Malvina Wood was one of the most outspoken in this regard. 'The Australian library system is so far behind the system of England and the United States that...it can scarcely be called a system at all,' Wood told reporters when she returned to Perth in 1936.⁸⁵ Even by the mid-1950s, Perth archivist Mollie Lukis still felt that 'work in Archives in Australia is at present at the stage of development reached about 20 years ago in the United States.'⁸⁶ A particular source of grievance was the limited recognition afforded to these 'women's professions'. 'You still have to explain to most people in Australia what you mean by a trained social worker,' complained

⁸⁵ "Library Practice: University Official's Tour," *West Australian* (Perth), 21 March 1936, 21.

⁸⁶ Mollie Lukis, "Report of American Tour," December 1957, folder 14, box 661, series III.A.4, CCNY Records.

Kate Jacobs in 1940, 'whereas in America there is a very big recognised body of professional workers'.⁸⁷

Having decided that Australia had much to learn from ideas and methods pioneered across the Pacific, these women began advocating the necessary reforms. This agenda met with a mixed response. Local colleagues often resisted modernisation, and clung to established patterns of training and practice. At the same time, however, overseas experience was a virtual guarantee of professional advancement, and returned travellers were often handed the authority to enact major pedagogical or administrative change. This trend was especially pronounced among kindergarten teachers, several of whom—including Jean Wyndham, Madeline Crump and Isla Stamp—were given responsibility for a Kindergarten Training College soon after their return.⁸⁸

These returning travellers assumed positions of authority and influence because, in many instances, they had long been regarded as future leaders. Only those marked out for greatness were encouraged or funded to seek further training abroad, so it is small wonder that greatness awaited them on their return. In some instances, women ventured overseas with the knowledge that a particular teaching position was reserved for them at home. Having acquired the necessary qualifications or experience, they returned to instruct the next generation. Yet the professional recognition granted to women with American experience was also a sign of Australia's self-conscious provincialism. Painfully aware of local shortcomings, hiring committees tended to give precedence to anyone with a whiff of metropolitan expertise. Even the most hardworking graduate of the Melbourne KTC was no match for a Columbia alumna who had been taught to administer Gesell development tests by Professor Gesell himself.⁸⁹

From their newfound positions of influence, these American-trained women worked to bring the local profession 'up-to-date'. In the field of early childhood

⁸⁷ Kate Jacobs to Charles Dollard, 1 July 1940, folder 6, box 188, series III.A.4, CCNY Records.

⁸⁸ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 31 December 1938, 40; *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 7 December 1939, 13 and 2 February 1948, 4.

⁸⁹ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 74.

education, Mary Gutteridge led the charge, introducing her colleagues to the value of nursery schools and child development research after she resumed her post as principal of the Melbourne KTC in 1930. These modern notions initially met with 'much opposition and indifference'.⁹⁰ By the following year, however, Gutteridge had succeeded in opening a Demonstration Nursery School in Collingwood, where she 'undertook Child Research, kept scientific records' and 'conducted a Parent Group on scientific principles.' At the same time, Gutteridge established a one-year postgraduate training course based upon the nursery school methods promoted by Arnold Gesell. Within several years, the course attracted students from Sydney, Perth and Brisbane, who hoped to establish nursery schools in their home states.⁹¹ By January 1932 Gutteridge was able to send an enthusiastic progress report to Edna Noble White, director of the Merrill-Palmer Institute. 'Since my return to Australia,' she wrote, 'my position of Principal of this College has given me much opportunity of forwarding the movement of Child Research...I shall never cease to be grateful and to endeavour to carry on the movement in Australia.'⁹²

By 1936, however, Gutteridge had once again ventured abroad, and would reside in the United States for the rest of her career. Yet the work of spreading the nursery school gospel was soon taken up by Jean Wyndham. That same year Wyndham had returned to Sydney with a Columbia degree, and promptly established a Demonstration Nursery School in Surry Hills.⁹³ Within a further three years she was appointed principal of the Sydney KTC, and set about making radical changes to the curriculum. The most significant of these was the introduction of a postgraduate child development course, which emphasised 'new values and new

⁹⁰ Mary Gutteridge to Edna Noble Knight, 19 January 1932, folder 303, box 28, series 3, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

⁹¹ Ibid; Rosemary Kerr, *A History of the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia, 1911-1973* (Perth: Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation, 1994), 61.

⁹² Gutteridge to Knight, 19 January 1932.

⁹³ Ruth Harrison, *Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College, 1897-1981: A Pioneer in Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia* (Waverley, NSW: Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College Graduates Association, 1985), 63.

methods in child education'.⁹⁴ Similar developments were underway across the Nullarbor. Gladys Pendred had been at the helm of the Perth KTC since 1928, but her thinking was transformed by an American study tour in 1938–39. Upon her return, she established parent education groups modelled upon those organised by Merrill-Palmer and added a child development course to the KTC curriculum.⁹⁵ As a result of such efforts, when Gutteridge visited Australia in 1947, she was moved to declare that 'enormous strides' had been made in local child development work.⁹⁶

No doubt one of the most appealing aspects of the child development movement was the prestige it conferred upon the unglamorous business of wrangling small children. The kindergarten was no longer a mere antechamber to the schoolroom, but a pivotal site for placing citizens-in-making on the correct path. In the pre-school years, according to theorists such as Gesell, a child was either steered towards 'normal' development or fell by the wayside, making the work of early childhood specialists crucial to the wellbeing of society as a whole. This theoretical justification for reimagining the kindergarten teacher as a skilled professional was reinforced by the introduction of new types of labour. In addition to the practical work of child supervision, the modern nursery school or kindergarten instructor also aspired to do science. Gutteridge, as we have seen, maintained detailed records and undertook research in her nursery school, giving this institution the image of a laboratory. Melbourne University Press even deigned to publish her investigations into the benefits of nursery school attendance, bringing Gutteridge into the ranks of academic researchers.⁹⁷ Through such initiatives, kindergarten teaching began to shed its reputation as a philanthropic vocation for the daughters of the well-to-do and develop the appearance of a modern profession.

⁹⁴ Sydney Kindergarten Training College, *Annual Report* (Waverley, NSW: The College, 1939), 10.

⁹⁵ "Parent Education: Miss Pendred's American Impressions," *West Australian* (Perth), 9 March 1940, 12; Kerr, *A History of the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia*, 220–21.

⁹⁶ "Enormous strides' in child work in Australia," *Argus* (Melbourne), 30 December 1947, 6.

⁹⁷ Mary Gutteridge, *The Story of an Australian Nursery School* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1932).

This cultural shift paved the way for the creation of professional bodies such as the Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development, established in 1938, as well as postwar salary increases.⁹⁸

American influences continued to drive the professionalisation of Australian early childhood education after WWII. In the late 1950s, a period of graduate study at the University of Maryland inspired Jean Adamson and Phyllis Scott to establish *Australian Pre-School Quarterly*, the first Antipodean journal dedicated to the theoretical underpinnings of pre-school education.⁹⁹ The inaugural issue, published in 1960, was a testament to the Americanisation of the local profession: not only were the contents almost entirely penned by women educated or based in the States, but the issue also included profiles of teachers who had recently undertaken American study tours, as well as a letter of support from the editor of the equivalent US publication.¹⁰⁰

Despite their enthusiasm for Columbia Teachers College, this network of graduates refrained from advocating the establishment of similar degree programs in Australia. Local initiatives such as the Alice Creswick Scholarship point to a widespread faith in the benefits of university training, making it curious that no campaign was launched to replicate the American model of professional education. Although efforts were made to increase the status of local Kindergarten Training Colleges, there is no evidence that local Columbia alumni sought to transform these colleges into university departments.¹⁰¹ This silence may have constituted a tacit acknowledgement that the sexism of local universities formed an insurmountable obstacle to bringing early childhood educators into the ivory tower, or it may have stemmed from a disinclination to enter the male-dominated world of academia. The latter explanation was not without precedent. In 1909–10 the principal of the Adelaide KTC Lillian de Lissa resisted a proposed amalgamation with the

⁹⁸ Gardiner, *The Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria*, 82, 150.

⁹⁹ "History of the Alice Creswick Scholarship," n. d., folder 98, box 109, Records of the Australian Early Childhood Association (AECA), 1928–2005, MS 7526, NLA.

¹⁰⁰ *Australian Pre-School Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1960).

¹⁰¹ These efforts included a 1956 attempt to be recognised as 'approved institutions' within the prestigious Fulbright exchange program. Folder 19, box 104, series 12, AECA Records.

University of Adelaide because she feared ceding authority to male administrators.¹⁰² Perhaps this later generation of US-trained educators was thinking along similar lines, and preferred presiding over small feminised institutions to becoming subordinate actors within male-dominated university campuses. At any rate, although the University of Sydney introduced a 'Pre-Primary' stream into its Bachelor of Education in 1966, the KTC-model of teacher training remained largely unchallenged until the 1970s, when the higher education reforms of the Whitlam government integrated kindergarten colleges into the general system of advanced education.¹⁰³

While Gutteridge and her colleagues nudged local parents and kindergarten teachers towards 'scientific' childrearing, another group of American-trained women helped drag Australian librarianship into the modern era. This campaign had two components: the modernisation of library services and the professionalisation of library science training. The first of these was, by and large, a story of ad hoc reforms and incremental change, pursued behind closed doors. Malvina Wood's great victory was the 1946 unveiling of a modern extension to the University of Western Australia library building, modelled on the spacious and well-lit institutions she had observed abroad.¹⁰⁴ Down the road at the State Library, the transpacific travels of archivist Mollie Lukis bore fruit in 1961 when she scrounged together the funds for a tape-recorder. Equipped with this device, she began interviewing local notables. From these humble beginnings emerged one of Australia's first oral history programs, an initiative inspired by Lukis' 1957 inspection of the pioneering scheme at the Ford Motor Archives in Detroit.¹⁰⁵

The push for American-style libraries made more of a splash in South Australia, where Dorothy Riddle attracted state government support. Riddle, who we met in the previous chapter, worked as a librarian at Cornell University in the

¹⁰² Kay Whitehead, "A Decided Disadvantage for the Kindergarten Students to Mix with the State Teachers," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 1-2 (2010): 85-97.

¹⁰³ Folder 17, box 104, AECA Records; Deborah Brennan, *The Politics of Australian Child Care* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 123.

¹⁰⁴ "Library Extension," *West Australian* (Perth), 13 June 1946, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Lukis interview.

1920s and 30s. Shortly after she relocated to Adelaide in 1942, Riddle's expertise attracted the attention of the Director of Education, who assigned her the task of establishing libraries in local schools. As Australia's first Organiser of School Libraries, Riddle spent the following decade providing instruction on library services around the state and the nation.¹⁰⁶ Armed with an official title and a vivacious personality, Riddle treated her audiences to passionate addresses on the value of modern furnishings, the Dewey cataloguing system and enticing book displays. Accompanied by a film of American school libraries, her talks brought local educators face-to-face with the 'gold standard' of library design.¹⁰⁷ Yet Riddle's campaign had a more ambitious goal than mere library provision. She also aspired to foster a culture of civic-mindedness and entrepreneurship like that which flourished across the Pacific, a culture she attributed to the prominence of books and libraries within American public life. More than just a champion of American librarianship, Riddle was a champion of the United States. Her mission to expose local children to well-stocked libraries was, above all, intended to help the Australia of tomorrow better approximate the America she had grown to love.¹⁰⁸

Few could quarrel with the merits of child literacy, but the notion of adopting American-style librarianship education represented a more radical departure from the status quo. In the late 1940s, as outlined above, Wilma Radford and Elizabeth Hall both concluded that American librarianship education was superior to the British model, and began campaigning for the training of Australian librarians to be transferred to universities. In a paper read to the Canberra branch of the Library Association of Australia (LAA) in 1949, Hall called for the University of Melbourne to establish a School of Librarianship.¹⁰⁹ Two years later, at the LAA

¹⁰⁶ Riddle interview; "A Library in Every School: Organiser's Ambition," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 1945, 6; "Organiser of School Libraries: Mrs Dorothy Riddle Coming Here," *Border Watch* (Mount Gambier), 1 May 1945, 7; "Children's Book Faire: Mrs Dorothy L. Riddle Arrives," *West Australian* (Perth), 7 October 1947, 17; "Library Expert Addresses Mothers," *Centralian Advocate* (Alice Springs), 16 July 1954, 4.

¹⁰⁷ "Development of Libraries," *Border Watch* (Mount Gambier), 15 May 1945, 2.

¹⁰⁸ "American Films Not True to Type," *Border Watch* (Mount Gambier), 20 March 1947, 5; "Women Play Important Role in USA," *Border Watch* (Mount Gambier), 22 March 1947, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Hall, *Education for Librarianship*, 13.

Conference in Melbourne, the pair joined forces to outline the anticipated benefits of university-based education, which included better teaching facilities, the opportunity to study cognate disciplines, and enhanced professional status.¹¹⁰ In 1956 Jean Whyte added her voice to this embryonic chorus. In her Chicago Masters thesis, Whyte set out to investigate the question: ‘Can Australian education for librarianship benefit from lessons learned in the United States during seventy-five years of education for librarianship?’¹¹¹ After two years of research, she answered in the affirmative. Her thesis echoed the thinking of Radford and Hall, arguing that Australia would do well to emulate the American emphasis on library science degrees because this model both enhanced the skills of individual librarians and raised the status of the profession as a whole.¹¹²

The urgings of these women and likeminded colleagues did not go unheeded. The august University of Melbourne proved ill-inclined to offer cataloguing courses and library history lectures, but the newly established University of New South Wales was less resistant, and opened a library science school in 1960.¹¹³ Radford joined the staff in 1962, and by 1968 had been appointed Head of School and Professor of Librarianship.¹¹⁴ Whyte’s commitment to professional education was to be likewise rewarded. In 1975 she was recruited to establish the nation’s second university-based library school at Monash University, becoming Professor of Librarianship and Director of the Graduate School of Librarianship (GSL).¹¹⁵ Whyte intended to model this School on her alma mater, the Chicago Graduate Library School, and headed across the Pacific to update herself on the latest American trends.¹¹⁶ Over the following decade, Whyte developed a graduate

¹¹⁰ The potential for salary increases did not, however, receive mention. Hall and Radford, *Library Staff*, 26–27.

¹¹¹ “Proposal for a Master’s Thesis,” 1954, Bag 1, Box 1, Whyte Papers.

¹¹² Jean Whyte, “Education for Librarianship in the United States and in Australia,” 1956, MS ACC03.006, NLA.

¹¹³ Rochester, *Education for Librarianship in Australia*, 64.

¹¹⁴ Jones and Radford, “Wilma Radford,” 333.

¹¹⁵ Jenkin, *Jean Primrose Whyte*, 02.10–06.11.

¹¹⁶ See the correspondence in bag 1, box 3, Whyte Papers.

professional qualification with high academic standards, only admitting students with an honours degree, and insisting upon the completion of two years of coursework and a dissertation.¹¹⁷ Remaining at the helm of the GSL until her retirement in 1988, her work did much to cement the influence of American librarianship education in Australia.

Fresh stimulus and new lines of interest

As Whyte's career trajectory indicates, her youthful encounter with American librarianship did not fade into the mists of time. Instead, decades after she first set sail, Whyte remained in dialogue with colleagues and institutions in the United States. This was a common outcome of American training. More often than not, a period of study or career development across the Pacific marked the beginning of a lifelong engagement with the American profession. Some lacked the funds to return abroad, and had to content themselves with personal correspondence and American publications. Others were fortunate enough to traverse the Pacific once more. The kindergarten teacher Isla Stamp, who acquired a BSc from Columbia and a Masters from New York University in the late 1940s, had not yet satisfied her appetite for study, and returned to New York the following decade to complete a doctorate in child psychology.¹¹⁸ A similar path was followed by Joan Woodhill, the pioneering Sydney dietician. Following her Carnegie-funded travels in 1939, Woodhill returned stateside a decade later to complete a Masters at the University of Minnesota and a doctorate at the Harvard School of Public Health, writing a thesis on pregnancy and nutrition.¹¹⁹

For women without the means or desire to pursue a further degree, even a brief trip across the Pacific could provide an update on the latest developments in the American scene. Two former students of the University of California at Berkeley both felt compelled to reconnect with their alma mater several years after

¹¹⁷ Ross Harvey, "Losing the Quality Battle in Australian Education for Librarianship," *Australian Library Journal* 50, no. 1 (2001): 17.

¹¹⁸ Isla Stamp interviewed by Carol Lovegrove, 1985, OH1321, SLWA.

¹¹⁹ "Diet of Expectant Mothers Studied by Sydney Expert," *Sunday Herald* (Sydney), 3 September 1950, 11; "Motherhood and Diet," *West Australian* (Perth), 23 June 1952, 8.

graduation. The University of Adelaide geography lecturer Ann Nicholls, who had completed a Masters degree at Berkeley in the mid-1930s, returned to the States on a study tour in 1949–50. Concerned that Australian geography education ‘lagged behind overseas developments’, Nicholls applied for a Carnegie grant to help ‘bring the Adelaide course more into line with modern work’. After teaching a course at Berkeley and visiting other universities, Nicholls returned home with ‘fresh stimulus and a dozen new lines of interest’.¹²⁰ Fond memories of northern California also lured back psychologist Elwyn Morey, who returned to Berkeley on a Carnegie-funded study tour in 1954, seven years after completing an award-winning PhD.¹²¹ Morey had been lecturing at the University of Western Australia since graduation, but now yearned to ‘exchange ideas with fellow-workers’ in America.¹²² Eleven months later, she arrived back in Perth ‘refreshed and full of new ideas’, and began to consider the possibilities for transpacific collaborative research and postgraduate student exchange.¹²³

In many cases, American-trained professionals made efforts to extend their own bridge-building efforts into a broader transnational conversation. Among the most ambitious was Aileen Fitzpatrick, a pioneer of Australian social work education and the director of Sydney’s Board of Social Study and Training. In 1932 Fitzpatrick received a Carnegie grant to tour American social work schools. Having found this visit fruitful, the following year Fitzpatrick concocted a scheme to return with a group of students. After securing a second Carnegie grant, in November 1934 Fitzpatrick set sail on the *Monterey* with fifteen students, all women.¹²⁴ This visit was intended to give some of Australia’s first social work students a taste of American training, and Fitzpatrick also hoped to establish a lasting transnational

¹²⁰ Grant application, May 1949, and CCNY internal memorandum, June 1950, folder 10, box 212, series III.A.5, CCNY Records.

¹²¹ “Past Students—Janet Clarke Hall,” *Fleur-de-Lys*, 1948, 30; “Doctor Elwyn Morey,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 15 January 1949, 18.

¹²² Grant application, 23 December 1952, folder 6, box 229, series III.A.5, CCNY Records.

¹²³ Elwyn Morey to John Gardner, 5 December 1954, folder 6, box 229, series III.A.5, CCNY Records.

¹²⁴ “Social Service,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 1934, 4.

exchange of ideas.¹²⁵ ‘As a definite result of this visit,’ she promised the Carnegie Corporation:

we expect that students will continue to enjoy correspondence and exchange of publications, friendly relations with those people whom they have met in your country. Moreover, we feel confident that this is the best way to plan for a system of regular exchange between social workers in USA and Australia.¹²⁶

Fitzpatrick would maintain her interest in American social work, and even applied for a third Carnegie grant in 1939. Before these funds could be approved, however, the Corporation got wind that Fitzpatrick had become ‘*persona non grata*’ within the Sydney social work community. After learning that her professional competency had been questioned by both students and colleagues, the CCNY abruptly withdrew their support.¹²⁷

This widespread desire to remain *au fait* with developments in the States reflects the enduring appeal of the more professionalised work culture enjoyed by American women. The prospect of acquiring tertiary qualifications and learning ‘modern’ methods not only drew Australian librarians, kindergarten teachers and others across the Pacific, but kept them coming back for more. These refresher trips abroad also point, however, to the effort required to sustain professional status. Given that professionalism implied the possession of specialised and ‘up-to-date’ expertise, it was imperative not to rest on one’s laurels. The advanced thinking of one decade could become the debunked wisdom of the next, meaning that a professional identity demanded the perpetual renewal of expertise. For a

¹²⁵ “Social Service: American Advancement,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 March 1935, 4.

¹²⁶ Aileen Fitzpatrick to John Russell, 28 May 1934, folder 7, box 145, series III.A.3, CCNY Records.

¹²⁷ Charles Dollard to Kenneth Cunningham, 20 March 1940, folder 7, box 145, series III.A.3, CCNY Records. In the late 1930s, Fitzpatrick came under attack from both students and colleagues, who claimed that she was ill-qualified to teach social work. For a detailed account of this episode, see Norma Parker, “The Beginnings of Social Work in New South Wales, a Personal Account,” *Australian Social Work* 57, no. 3 (2004): 217–22. Fitzpatrick remained active in social work after her fall from grace. In the early 1950s, when she was director of the Australian Council of International Social Service, Fitzpatrick would play a pivotal role in reuniting Greek child refugees with their families in Australia. Joy Damousi, “The Greek Civil War and Child Migration to Australia: Aileen Fitzpatrick and the Australian Council of International Social Service,” *Social History* 37, no. 3 (2012): 297–313.

kindergarten teacher or librarian in mid-century Australia, this process of professional development had both especial significance and unique challenges. It was significant because, as discussed, these women's professions had only a tenuous claim to professional status, and could, without proper vigilance, revert to the backwoods of amateur labour. Yet, at the same time, the pioneering state of the Australian profession circumscribed local options for advanced training, making it necessary to seek out 'up-to-date' thinking overseas. While these ongoing relations with the American professions stemmed in part from sympathy towards their modern approach, they also constituted one aspect of the unending labour of fashioning a professional identity.

Conclusion

For Australian women with career ambitions, the microfilm machines and infant laboratories of America promised a future where 'feminine' work was an expert, scientific endeavour, on par with the lofty labours of medical men and bewigged barristers. This was a promise destined to be broken—the work of men remained pre-eminent, and the work of women came under male direction—but it was a compelling promise nonetheless, and one which fostered the conceit that the United States was indeed a paradise for women. From the late 1920s until well into the 1950s, Australian librarians, kindergarten teachers, social workers, dieticians and others all traversed the Pacific eager to learn the secrets of the modern woman professional, and often returned zealous converts to the wisdom of machines, theory and data.

This emulation of America's modern professional culture also had ramifications that extended beyond kindergarten training curricula. It gave women who had pursued 'womanly' careers the confidence and credentials to choose more unconventional futures for themselves, futures that involved doctorates, leadership, reform and travel. It provided Australian women with a concrete imperative to develop ongoing relations with America and its people during an era of entrenched allegiance to Britain. And perhaps most significantly, it prompted direct comparison between London and New York, comparisons which shone an unflattering light on

the long-esteemed 'Mother Country' and foreshadowed the collapse of British hegemony in years to come. From their strongholds in book stacks and play rooms, these travellers were among the first to deviate from the unquestioned emulation of British methods, and nudge Australia into the American orbit. But as we shall see in the next chapter, they were not alone in doing so. The steamships that carried these librarians and kindergarten teachers also transported hundreds of women who favoured the brighter lights of the screen and stage. In their pursuit of fame and fortune in Hollywood and New York, this even larger group of creative professionals would enact some powerful nudging of their own.

CHAPTER 4

Standing up in the Great World: The Highs and Lows of Modern Culture

The good news arrived by telegram. ‘Glad to publish your novel in *Ladies’ Home Journal*,’ the cable read, ‘and pay you 5000 dollars for all American and Canadian serial rights’.¹ The recipient, a young woman named Dorothy Cottrell, could scarcely believe her eyes. Convinced that the telegram had been mistakenly transcribed, she wired for confirmation.² But there was no mistake: this unknown Australian writer had sold her first novel for a fantastic sum, and was poised to become a publishing sensation in America. The date was April 1927 and Cottrell was a twenty-four-year-old Queenslander. Although confined to a wheelchair by a childhood bout of polio, she possessed an irrepressible taste for adventure. Undaunted by her disability, Cottrell’s youth was coloured by a series of jaunts including an elopement, a sojourn on remote Dunk Island, and hunting adventures on her uncle’s sheep station. These escapades provided the raw material for her first novel, ‘The Singing Gold’.³

Most literary Australians of this era sought publication in London, but Cottrell chose to send the manuscript to the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, a leading American magazine. To the astonishment of all involved, this audacious action met with unqualified success. The magazine’s editor, Barton Currie, responded with the telegram quoted above, and later described ‘The Singing Gold’ as a ‘work of

¹ Telegram to Mrs W. M. Cottrell, 16 April 1927, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

² E. C. Fletcher to ‘Doonie’, 18 April 1927, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

³ Barbara Ross, “Different Leaves from Dunk Island: The Banfields, Dorothy Cottrell and *The Singing Gold*,” *LiNQ* 24, no. 1 (1997): 56–70; Barbara Ross and Martha Rutledge, “Cottrell, Ida Dorothy Ottley (1902–1957),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cottrell-ida-dorothy-ottley-5788/text9817>, accessed 19 November 2014.

genius'.⁴ Cottrell was soon signing contracts for book publication, and Hollywood began proposing a film adaptation.⁵ In October 1928, when Cottrell and her husband sailed to California, the world seemed at her feet. She was going to America, in the words of her patron Mary Gilmore, to 'stand up in the great world', and advertise Australia's creative talent on the world stage.⁶

At first, everything went according to plan. Upon arrival in California, Cottrell received a welcome fit for a film star, and was inundated with invitations and interview requests.⁷ She was given five acres of land near Los Angeles, and set about building a handsome residence.⁸ Royalties from *The Singing Gold* were flooding in, and she published her second novel, *Tharlane*, in 1930.⁹ But such a gilded existence could not be sustained. Cottrell made, by her own admission, 'some terrible mistakes when setting out on the literary road', such as shunning publicity and refusing the services of an agent.¹⁰ *Tharlane* received mixed reviews and editors lost interest in her work.¹¹ The stock market crashed, and her earnings soon dried up. By 1932, the couple had lost their house. Cottrell continued to publish fiction in the States for over two decades, and even graced the pages of the top-selling *Saturday Evening Post*, but money worries were ever present and her

⁴ Barton W. Curries, "Editorial," *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1927.

⁵ Dorothy Cottrell, *The Singing Gold* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929); "A Queensland Authoress and Her Success," *Cairns Post*, 30 October 1928, 8; Mary Gilmore, "Dorothy Cottrell: Australia's New Writer," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1928, 13; E. C. Fletcher to George Story, 29 June 1927, 13/3/12, Ularunda and Elmina Stations Collection, 1877–1955, Deposit 14, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University, Canberra.

⁶ Mary Gilmore, "Dorothy Cottrell and Her Books," *Sydney Mail*, 7 November 1928, 17. According to Cottrell's uncle, E. C. Fletcher, this departure was also motivated by the desire to avoid the 'iniquitous taxation' of her American earnings by Australian state and federal governments. E. C. Fletcher to George Story, 4 December 1927, 13/3/12, Ularunda and Elmina Stations Collection.

⁷ Dorothy Cottrell to family, 27 July 1931, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

⁸ Dorothy Cottrell to 'Dany', 8 July c. 1929, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

⁹ Walter Cottrell, "Some explanation of the bald outline of our movement in the States," n. d., box 2, folder added 22.20.84, Cottrell Papers; Dorothy Cottrell, *Tharlane* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930).

¹⁰ Dorothy Cottrell to family, 27 July 1931, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

¹¹ E. C. Fletcher to 'Doonie', 12 November 1930, 1 January 1931 and 21 March 1931, 13/3/13, Ularunda and Elmina Stations Collection.

health was a growing concern.¹² Literary life in America promised rich desserts, but proved to be a game of snakes and ladders.



Figure 20: This image of Dorothy Cottrell hard at work in the kitchen appeared in the Saturday Evening Post on 10 June 1950, alongside an article describing her wheelchair-bound life.

In standing up in the great world, women such as Cottrell took part in a time-honoured Australian pastime. Since the colonial era, Antipodean-born women—and men—had travelled to a foreign metropole to prove they could write, sing, act, dance and paint with the best of them. Although most of these ambitious Australians headed to London or Paris, a growing cohort tried their fortune in Los

¹² Cottrell's first story in the *Saturday Evening Post* was entitled "Hurricane, North Atlantic," and appeared on 24 May 1947. Over the next few years she published at least a further five stories in the *Post*, as well as an article about her life in a wheelchair. On Cottrell's money problems, see Dorothy Cottrell to 'Boss', 20 August 1934, and Dorothy Cottrell to 'Dooney', 12 August 1938, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

Angeles, Chicago or New York. Performing artists had travelled between Sydney and San Francisco from at least the mid-1800s, but this steady stream turned into a flood during the early decades of the twentieth century. By 1913 the Melbourne society magazine *Table Talk* published updates on the community of Australian performers in New York; soon after the Los Angeles press began to comment upon the spate of stage and screen actresses ‘From the Antipodes’ (fig. 21).¹³ Over the decades that followed, creative professionals—including actresses, musicians, artists and writers—would represent the highest proportion of Australian women pursuing careers in the United States. These women, like Cottrell, were enticed to visit and linger in America by dreams of stardom and prosperity, by the opportunity to engage with modern technology and, from the 1940s, by the emergence of a modernist *avant-garde*. Yet even in the land of opportunity such dreams would often go unrealised; many transpacific careers ended in disappointed hopes, and some even culminated in financial ruin or suicide.

These creative aspirants had varying relationships with ‘modern culture’. Some were purveyors of what is known as modernism. Like modernity, modernism is notoriously difficult to define, but is best understood as the aesthetic response to the conditions of modern life, often characterised by the self-conscious repudiation of conventional content and form. Subversion and innovation were the *raison d’être* of the modernist writer, painter or musician, resulting in artworks that were often shocking but always undeniably ‘new’.¹⁴ Modernism, understood in these terms, is a largely elite phenomenon, more concerned with pushing the boundaries of artistic endeavour than pleasing the public. This was one form of ‘modern culture’ produced by Australian women in America, but another, more common pursuit, was what film scholar Miriam Hansen has termed ‘vernacular modernism’. Encompassing the ‘mass-produced and mass-consumed’ culture of cinema, advertising, radio and magazines, this was the modernism of everyday life. Like the modernist *avant-garde*, vernacular modernism ‘articulated and mediated the

¹³ “Australians in New York,” *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 27 March 1913, 22.

¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion of modernism, see Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy* (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2008); Susan Stanford Friedman, “Definitional Excursions.”

experience of modernity’, but was also populist, commercial, reliant upon mechanical reproduction and characterised by simultaneity.¹⁵



Figure 21: This montage of Australian actresses, featuring Mae Busch, Dulcie Cooper, Dorothy Cumming, Hazel Keane, Enid Bennett and Lydia Titus, appeared in the Los Angeles Times on 6 May 1925.

Although many women discussed here can be associated with one of these two modernisms, others appear to sit outside ‘modern culture’ altogether. These include opera singers and Shakespearean actresses, pianists and scriptwriters—women whose talents lay in the ‘traditional’ arts of theatre and classical music. Yet while their artistic output could not always be termed ‘innovative’ or ‘up-to-date’, what was modern were the industry practices they and others experienced in the United States. As Cottrell’s example highlights, America was home to a style of cultural production characterised by spectacular rises to stardom and even more

¹⁵ Miriam Bratu Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism,” *Modernism/modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 59–77.

spectacular falls. Its accelerated pace and high stakes were enabled by the mass media and mass public, and propelled by the insatiable desire for novelty and reinvention that characterised modern life. This cocktail of celebrity, money and hype was not unique to America, but was exaggerated by the nation's size and prosperity, and lent the United States much of its appeal as a destination for Australian women intent upon creative careers.¹⁶ Britain and Europe had accreted centuries of artistic tradition, generating cultural authority that was not readily displaced, but modern America promised fame and fortune on an unprecedented scale. This chapter, then, is concerned with modernism—in both its elite and vernacular variations—but is equally concerned with a way of making culture that was itself a product of modernity.

The following discussion traces Australian women's involvement in America's creative industries, going behind the scenes to examine the pleasures and the pitfalls of modern cultural production. In doing so, it offers a counterpoint to existing historiography that situates twentieth-century Australians as consumers of imported American entertainments.¹⁷ Australian women did develop a voracious appetite for US cinema, music and fashions, but also—partly as a result of this consumption—ventured across the Pacific in remarkable numbers to 'cook up' some culture of their own. More than just film fans and weekend jazz dancers, they were active and occasionally celebrated participants within the globally influential creative industries headquartered in the United States.

Routes to America

It was no simple matter to embark upon a creative career on the other side of the world. Up until the 1910s, transnational Australian performers were often born into theatrical households and travelled abroad with a family troupe, where they learnt

¹⁶ On the links between technology, commerce and mass culture in the US, see Lary May, *Screening out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*. America's status as a world leader of mass culture has more recently been surveyed in Rosenberg, "US Mass Consumerism in Transnational Perspective."

¹⁷ For examples of this scholarship, see McKenzie, "Being Modern on a Slender Income"; Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*; Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*.

the tricks of the trade under parental protection.¹⁸ This practice, however, receded as the century wore on, and later generations of would-be creative professionals typically had to go it alone. From the 1920s onwards, as a career in the arts acquired greater respectability, aspiring artistes more commonly hailed from white-collar or land-owning families, and headed across the Pacific of their own volition. To have any hope of success, these women required—at the bare minimum—sufficient cash for the journey and a basic knowledge of the American industry. The best prepared had mentors to provide advice and facilitate introductions to teachers, impresarios, agents or editors in the States. It was also preferable to acquire patrons to assist with living expenses, further training and, for musicians, the ‘staggering’ cost of organising a debut.¹⁹ Given these dynamics, professional contacts and networks established prior to departure had a significant impact upon both the inception and trajectory of an American career. Behind almost every musician, actress or artist who crossed the Pacific, we can uncover a small army of supporters back home.

For many creative professionals, the first step on the road to an international career was an Australian competition or scholarship. Claiming first prize propelled the winner into the spotlight, stimulated her professional ambitions, and paved the way for future patronage and support. The opera singer Florence Austral, who went to study in New York in 1919, first emerged from obscurity by winning a Ballarat singing contest.²⁰ Hollywood actresses Judith Anderson, Sylvia Bremer and Enid Bennett, meanwhile, all got their start from elocution competitions in Australia.²¹ For some competition winners, the associated prize money was sufficient to fund

¹⁸ Examples of this trend include Dulcie Cooper, Mae Busch, Lydia Titus and Mavis Villiers. *Boston Daily Globe*, 27 February 1927, 42; Murray Summers, “A Tribute to Mae Busch,” *Filmograph* 1, no. 1 (1970): 23–32; Interview with Mavis Villiers, c. 1966, Mavis Villiers Clipping File, NYPL, New York; “Lydia Yeaman Titus to act in picturization of ‘The Lily’,” unknown publication, 16 May 1926, Lydia Titus Clipping File, NYPL.

¹⁹ In 1927 Adelaide violinist Ray Fox estimated the cost of musical education and a debut recital in New York as £13,600. “Miss Ray Fox Returns,” *News* (Adelaide), 30 September 1927, 8.

²⁰ Thérèse Radic, “Austral, Florence Mary (1892–1968),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/austral-florence-mary-5084/text8483>, accessed 21 January 2015.

²¹ Desley Deacon, “From Victorian Accomplishment to Modern Profession: Elocution Takes Judith Anderson, Sylvia Bremer and Dorothy Cumming to Hollywood, 1912–1918,” *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 18, no. 1 (2013): 40–65.

overseas travel or study, and the woman in question set sail without delay. More often, however, the monetary winnings were token, and the real benefit of first place was the associated publicity, which attracted the attention of local patrons and fostered speculation that the winner had the makings of an international star.

Other women came to prominence after winning compliments from an international luminary. Given the perceived provincialism of Australian culture during this era, many questioned whether actresses and musicians praised in Sydney or Melbourne could compete on the world stage. Local performers and audiences were all too conscious that a big fish in a small pond may well become small fry in more open waters.²² A word of praise from a visiting star, however, helped put these doubts to rest. Such endorsements carried the message that Australians could equal the best and brightest in Hollywood or New York, a vote of confidence that would often stimulate ambition and convince sceptical bystanders to get on board.

Having won a prize or received a nod of approval, aspiring creative professionals were in many cases assisted to further develop their talents overseas. Actresses tended to be reliant on family and acquaintances, but promising musicians often attracted patronage from a broader pool of supporters who were keen to be seen encouraging the prestigious pursuit of classical music. The example of Nellie Melba, who took the transatlantic operatic world by storm in the 1890s, also created a precedent for Australian musical success on the world stage, convincing the public that every local girl with a fine voice could become the ‘next Melba’.²³ In 1937 Melbourne singer Kathleen (later Katrina) Castles attracted the patronage of local elites after she won praise from German soprano Lotte Lehmann. Once Lehmann’s comments were broadcast, the state Governor’s wife Lady Huntingfield deigned to attend Castles’ recitals and invited her to sing at

²² In 1950 Australian critic Arthur Phillips famously named this proclivity the ‘cultural cringe’. Arthur Phillips, “The Cultural Cringe (1950),” in *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture, 1917–1967*, ed. Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, and Philip Goad (Carlton, Vic: The Miegunyah Press, 2006), 623–27.

²³ On Melba’s career, see Ann Blainey, *I Am Melba: A Biography* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2009).

Government House.²⁴ A fundraising committee was established to send Castles abroad, and by 1939 she had followed Lehmann to New York.²⁵

The following decade, Brisbane music-lovers mobilised in support of local contralto Sybil Willey. In June 1946 Willey was awarded an ABC scholarship to study at Juilliard, the renowned music school in New York.²⁶ Because this scholarship only covered tuition fees, the *Courier-Mail* encouraged its readers to ‘Give a Queensland girl a chance’, and began collecting donations to cover Willey’s expenses.²⁷ A week after the campaign was launched, the paper had raised £1364.²⁸ Contributors ranged from school students and Railway Department employees to the Musical Association of Queensland. Within months, Willey had sailed for San Francisco, and went on to a transatlantic opera career.²⁹

While money was always appreciated, other forms of assistance could be just as significant. Many women collected references and letters of introduction in hopes that praise from a local notable would open doors in America. Kathleen Castles, like several others, left Melbourne with a letter of endorsement from the Lord Mayor.³⁰ The most valuable letters were written by supporters able to provide a personal introduction to influential figures in the States. When actress Irene Dillon headed across the Pacific in 1909, she carried a letter of introduction from J. C. Williamson, the American-born Australian impresario, to leading Broadway theatrical agent Walter Jordan. This document succeeded in winning Dillon an audience with Jordan, who helped her secure a part in ‘The Yankee Mandarin’.

²⁴ Lady Huntingfield to Kathleen Castles, October 1937, folder 2; Lady Huntingfield to Kathleen Castles, January 1938, folder 3, Papers of Katrina Castles, 1932–1956, JPB 97-1, NYPL.

²⁵ Telegram, August 1939, folder 3, Castles Papers.

²⁶ “Brisbane Singer’s Big Win,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 26 June 1946, 3.

²⁷ “Help Sybil Willey Fund,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 3 August 1946, 3.

²⁸ “Pupils Help Sybil Willey,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 12 August 1946, 3; “Sybil Willey Leaves Today,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 22 August 1946, 2; “Sybil Willey Takes Two Trunks of Songs,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 11 September 1946, 3.

²⁹ “Sybil Willey Says Thanks & Good-Bye,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 9 September 1946, 3; “Sybil Willey in Big Roles,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 1 March 1950, 6.

³⁰ Letter of introduction from Lord Mayor of Melbourne, September 1938, folder 5, Castles Papers.

Thanks to Williamson's assistance, Dillon was able to make a seamless transition from the Australian theatrical circuit to the New York stage.³¹

Dillon was far from the only actress to use J. C. Williamson (JCW) as a stepping stone to a transpacific career. Australian denizens of the American stage and screen had often first walked the boards with Williamson's eponymous firm, which dominated Australian theatrical life from its formation in 1882 until the mid-twentieth century.³² Williamson's roots in the States, where he had been a successful actor, led him to establish an extensive transpacific theatrical network. American actors were imported to headline Williamson productions, and local companies often performed recent Broadway hits. Securing a contract with JCW therefore gave Australian actresses access to the world of American theatre.³³ Adelaide-born Broadway star Judith Anderson recalled that the US actors at JCW 'stirred my imagination about America'. From these imported American performers she received an education in 'theatrical conditions', 'agents' and the 'reigning stars', acquiring the nous necessary to later establish a foothold in New York.³⁴ For other women, the Australian film industry formed the launching-pad for an American career, providing an apprenticeship in film production and, in some instances, Hollywood contacts.

American contacts were also acquired by reaching out to fellow Australians already established in the States. A friend from home with industry connections could make all the difference when it came to getting a job in the competitive worlds of theatre, film and music. Although the Antipodean clusters in New York and Los Angeles were dwarfed by the extensive London networks, stateside Australians

³¹ "Miss Irene Dillon," *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 22 August 1909, 18; "Mainly About People," *Daily News* (Perth), 25 August 1909, 3; *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 19 August 1909, 25.

³² Other J. C. Williamson alumnae to find work in the States included Enid Bennett, Sylvia Bremer, Dorothy Cumming, Ivy Scott, Ida Bernard, Christine Brunton, Dolly Castles, Nellie Strong, Agnes Deery, Ada Stirling, Diana Hartt, Sylvia Clifton, Mona Barrie, Elwyn Harvey and Lucille Lisle, to name just a few.

³³ Deacon, "Location! Location! Location!"; Deacon, "Cosmopolitans at Home"; Veronica Kelly, "A Complementary Economy?"; Veronica Kelly, *Empire Actors: Stars of Australasian Costume Drama, 1890s-1920s* (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency House, 2010).

³⁴ Anderson, *Autobiography*, 119, Wallsten Papers.

were known to exchange professional support.³⁵ Lillie Leslie, who in 1914 claimed the title of Australia's first US film star, became known for the 'kindly offices' she extended to compatriots who also aspired to succeed in 'the wonderful world of films'.³⁶ The same decade, Sydney-based writer Dulcie Deamer was given entrée to New York's publishing circles by fellow Australian wordsmith James Francis Dwyer. 'He thought extravagantly highly of my cave-ma stuff,' Deamer recalled, 'told an editor friend that I was a "crackerjack"; so I placed half a dozen stories.'³⁷

Even armed with money and contacts, it was still a daunting prospect to cross the Pacific alone. Life in a new land would be lonely, while mixing in foreign artistic circles could imperil a woman's good reputation. For these reasons, many creative aspirants left Australia with a companion. This could be a mother or a friend, but a sister was a popular choice. Edna and Mascotte Ralston sailed to Hollywood together in the late 1920s, film star Mary Maguire was joined in Los Angeles by her sisters Patricia and Joan in 1937, while pianist Allison Nelson shared an apartment in 1940s Philadelphia with her sister Kathleen.³⁸ One explanation for the prevalence of sibling groups is the tendency for artistic talent to manifest in several members of the same family. If one daughter was given opportunity to dance, act, paint or sing, it is probable that her sisters received similar treatment. Having developed the same artistic inclinations, the adult siblings may then both elect to pursue a career overseas. Yet it is also possible that a sister was an especially desirable travel companion, offering the ideal balance of respectability and freedom. Her familial companionship could lend real and symbolic protection from

³⁵ On the London networks, see Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 73–103; Sleight, "Reading the British Australasian Community in London."

³⁶ "First Australian Girl to Star in USA," *Picture Show* (Sydney), 28 June 1919, 11. Lillie Leslie was the screen name of Lila Carmichael, who started her career on the stage with J. C. Williamson. She headed to London in 1909, and was working in New York by 1913. "Australian is Screen Star," *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 6 December 1914, 16; "At the Movies," *Mirror of Australia* (Sydney), 26 September 1915, 16; "Australians in New York," *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 27 March 1913, 22; "The Strutter's Page," *Newsletter* (Sydney), 22 May 1909, 3.

³⁷ Deamer, "The Golden Decade," 46.

³⁸ "Miss Edna Ralston: Australians in Hollywood," *Argus* (Melbourne), 27 May 1933, 11; *Los Angeles Times*, 19 April 1937, 3; "Young Australian musicians do well in USA," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 8 February 1947, 17.

the moral hazards of solo travel, and provide comfort in times of struggle.³⁹ But a sister was also an equal of sorts, with limited authority to censure or command. When accompanied by a parent or husband, a young woman could be bound by convention to subordinate her own desires; with a sister, the door was open to greater autonomy.

Although many undertook considerable preparation before setting out across the Pacific, some creative professionals stumbled upon an American career. When an Australian woman passed through the States en route to Britain, for instance, forces sometimes conspired to induce her to remain. This was the fate of actress Agnes Doyle, who became an unexpected Broadway sensation in 1936. Doyle was bound for London, with no intention of working stateside. This plan was derailed in New York, where she learnt that ‘Fresh Fields’, a play Doyle had performed in Melbourne, was about to be staged on Broadway. Unable to resist reprising her role, Doyle successfully auditioned for the part. Her performance was widely acclaimed, leading to offers that kept Doyle in America for several years.⁴⁰ Such unintended sojourns across the Pacific became common during the First and Second World Wars, when civilians struggled to obtain passage to Britain. Rose Cumming left New South Wales in 1917 to join her fiancé in England, but was waylaid in New York by wartime travel restrictions. Bored by the long wait for a transatlantic passage, Cumming tried her hand at interior decoration, and developed a passion for mirrors and upholstery.⁴¹ The fiancé was abandoned, and Cumming went on to open a Madison Avenue boutique and attract celebrity clients such as Mary Pickford. Although her American career was more a matter of happenstance than design, she remained in New York until her death in 1968.⁴²

³⁹ Emma Robinson-Tomsett also notes that siblings were popular travel companions for women, providing a ‘natural form of chaperoning’. Robinson-Tomsett, *Women, Travel and Identity*, 160.

⁴⁰ George Ross, “So This is Broadway,” *World Telegram* (New York), 18 February 1936, Agnes Doyle Clipping File, NYPL.

⁴¹ Rose Cumming, “A Door Always Open,” in *The Finest Rooms by America’s Great Decorators*, ed. Katharine Tweed (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965), 44; Jeffrey Simpson, *Rose Cumming: Design Inspiration* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012), 24.

⁴² Allen Tate and C. Ray Smith, *Interior Design in the 20th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 318; “Rose Cumming, 81, Decorator of ‘Ancestral’ Interiors, Dead,” *New York Times*, 23 March 1968.

For other women, the road between Australia and the United States meandered through the capitals of Europe. Despite the growing consumption of American mass culture, educated Australians still venerated the cultural traditions of the Old World, and creative professionals continued to seek the imprimatur of a European education. Yet, after making a debut on a West End stage or in a Paris concert hall, many women decided that better opportunities awaited in America. The Wagnerian soprano Marjorie Lawrence, for instance, who studied in Paris and made her operatic debut in Monte Carlo, went on to become a fixture at New York's Metropolitan Opera.⁴³ This transatlantic route to America, while circuitous, was hardly a waste of time; the cultural cachet of Europe was also recognised in the States, and gave Lawrence and others a considerable career boost. Instead of arriving as an unknown from Australia, they sailed into New York armed with a resume of prestigious European engagements. But while this trend was pronounced, it did abate over time. By the interwar decades, the peace and prosperity of the States began to usurp the cultural leadership long held by the Old World. From the late 1930s, when war clouds gathered over Europe, and America poached its leading artists and intellectuals, there was more and more reason to sail direct from Sydney to San Francisco.

Visions of fame

Above all, it was dreams of stardom that lured performing artists across the Pacific. As Sydney-born actress Louise Lovely declared, when asked why she sailed to California in 1914, 'I was going to be an American star and that was that.'⁴⁴ The pursuit of fame was not unique to the twentieth century nor the United States, but modern America had become the epicentre of a new culture of celebrity and spectacle, oriented around the exhibition and visual consumption of the female

⁴³ Marjorie Lawrence, *Interrupted Melody: The Story of My Life* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1949), 127–36. See also Richard Davis, *Wotan's Daughter: The Life of Marjorie Lawrence* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Louise Lovely interviewed by Ina Bertrand, 1978, 218318, NFS. In this interview Lovely (born Louise Carbasse) claims that she was in America by 1912, but a January 1915 news article mentions that she 'went to America last month', making a December 1914 departure date more likely. *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 24 January 1915, 6.

body.⁴⁵ During the first decades of the century, in the words of historian Liz Conor, modernity ‘intensified the visual scene and spectacularized women within it.’⁴⁶ Victorian conceptions of modesty were rapidly eroded, and the female form went on public display like never before.⁴⁷ What film theorist Laura Mulvey termed women’s ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ was at the heart of twentieth-century culture.⁴⁸ Not all ‘spectacular’ modern women were famous—a secretary in flapper fashions was also a spectacle of sorts—but figuring oneself as spectacle was a hallmark of modern celebrity. To be a screen star, mannequin or beauty contestant, types of celebrity that emerged during the 1910s and 20s, was to invite the spectator’s gaze. For these women, a comely face and attractive figure were forms of currency that could be exhibited in exchange for fame. The driving force behind this international culture of female display was the mass media emanating from the United States. Billboard advertising, magazines, photography and, most of all, cinema combined to create a new visual landscape, which, in Conor’s terms, ‘both relied upon and incited feminine spectacle.’⁴⁹ By virtue of its enthusiasm for the mechanically reproduced image, America also became a mecca of feminine spectacle and stardom.

Australian women were well-positioned to exploit this hunger for female flesh. Imagined to be svelte, athletic and white—female embodiments of a virile, modern nation—they seemed ideal candidates to dance, romance, swim and sing their way into the affections of the public.⁵⁰ The example of Sydney-born performer Annette Kellerman, whose aquatic feats and streamlined physique attracted

⁴⁵ Celebrity culture can be dated back to mid-eighteenth century England. Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 8.

⁴⁶ Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, xv.

⁴⁷ Catherine Horwood, “‘Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions’: Women and Bathing, 1900–39,” *Women’s History Review* 9, no. 4 (2000): 653–73; Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, “The Making of a Modern Female Body: Beauty, Health and Fitness in Interwar Britain,” *Women’s History Review* 20, no. 2 (2011): 299–317; Tinkler and Warsh, “Feminine Modernity in Interwar Britain and North America.”

⁴⁸ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 11.

⁴⁹ Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 78.

⁵⁰ On early twentieth-century imaginings of Australian womanhood, see *Ibid.*, 167–73; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 188–89; Judith Smart, “Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia: Contesting the Meanings of Citizenship, Femininity and Nation in the 1920s,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 71 (2001): 1–15.

worldwide celebrity during the 1900s and 10s, also provided compelling evidence that Australian physicality offered a route to stardom.⁵¹ This belief was encouraged by news articles which emphasised the athleticism of Australian stars and encouraged hopefuls at home to cultivate their physical talents. ‘If you wish to attain success as a picture actress,’ Hollywood veteran Gwen Nelson instructed Sydney film fans in 1919, ‘learn to dance, ride, swim, and drive a car, you can never tell when it might be handy.’⁵² Confident that the imagined characteristics of Australian womanhood doubled as qualifications for American stardom, hundreds of women ventured to the States with, as one put it, ‘fifty pounds in my pocket and visions of fame and fortune.’⁵³

Fame could be won on a theatre or opera stage, but Hollywood was the preeminent star factory. The modern screen star was invented by the American film industry—then based in New York—around 1910, when the studios began publicising actors’ names and personalities. Public fascination with these figures was whipped up by the trade press and fan magazines, which published an endless sequence of interviews and photographs.⁵⁴ By the 1930s, Hollywood was a well-oiled ‘star machine’, a factory that transformed real women—and men—into the bankable commodities known as stars.⁵⁵ Central to appeal of Hollywood stardom was the mythology that any woman with a comely face had the potential to become a screen sensation. This myth was promulgated in the Australian context by breathless reports of local women who had been ‘discovered’ by Hollywood agents and propelled into instant celebrity. A typical example comes from the Perth *Mirror* in 1955, which proclaimed that model Jeanette Elphick, renamed Victoria Shaw, had become ‘Hollywood’s Cinderella’ within days of arriving in the States.⁵⁶ Although often countered by warnings of the film industry’s competitiveness, such

⁵¹ Kellerman’s career is discussed at length in Woollacott, *Race and the Modern Exotic*, 1–48.

⁵² “An Australian Girl in American Films,” *Picture Show* (Sydney), 7 June 1919, 12–13.

⁵³ Jenner, *Darlings, I’ve Had a Ball*, 59.

⁵⁴ Richard DeCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

⁵⁵ Jeanine Basinger, *The Star Machine* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

⁵⁶ “She Does the Impossible: Girl in a Million,” *Mirror* (Perth), 10 September 1955, 12.

tales nonetheless fed the sense of possibility that kept dreams of screen celebrity alive. As a 1919 photomontage from *Picture Show* makes clear, stardom seemed a democratic aspiration, a path open to any number of ‘Australian girls’.



Figure 22: A wide array of ‘Australian girls’ had the potential to become Hollywood stars, according to this 1919 photomontage from Sydney’s *Picture Show* magazine.

The reality, of course, was very different. Some Australian women, whether through good fortune or industry contacts, did secure long-term contracts with a major Hollywood studio such as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Universal or Twentieth Century Fox. Louise Lovely, Enid Bennett and Sylvia Bremer all became silent screen stars, while Mary Maguire, Constance Worth and Shirley Ann Richards won leading parts during the sound era.⁵⁷ Most of their contemporaries, however, were condemned to a long stint of minor parts and stunt work, at which ‘athletic’ Australians were believed to excel.⁵⁸ This was not necessarily a dire fate: such

⁵⁷ Macdonald, “Hollywood Bound”; Jeanette Delamoire, “‘Styling a Star’: Call Her Louise Lovely,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 58 (1998): 48–55; Jeanette Delamoire, “The First ‘Gum-Leaf Mafia’: Australians in Hollywood, 1915–25,” *Screening the Past*, no. 16 (2004): n. p.; Jeannette Delamoire, “Louise Lovely, Bluebird Photoplays, and the Star System,” *Moving Image* 4, no. 2 (2004): 64–85; Deacon, “From Victorian Accomplishment to Modern Profession”; Andree Wright, *Brilliant Careers: Women in Australian Cinema* (Sydney: Pan Books, 1986).

⁵⁸ See for instance, Jenner, *Darlings, I’ve Had a Ball*, 66.

women still adorned the silver screen and, if the work was steady, could partake of Hollywood's 'glamour' at parties and restaurants. Los Angeles was a spacious and leafy city, and the warm climate and outdoor lifestyle reminded Australians of home.⁵⁹ But even so, the hours were long and the financial situation precarious, and most women who failed to secure a contract gave up after several months or years.

Even the actresses who attained star status did not live a fairy-tale existence. In accordance with standard industry practice, names were changed—Louise Carbasse became Louise Lovely, Ena Gregory became Marion Douglas—and biographies rewritten to emphasise any exotic features, often resulting in clichéd accounts of a wild upbringing in 'the land of the kangaroo and the duck-billed platypus'.⁶⁰ The studios allowed actresses little or no input into this star persona, which they were contractually obliged to adopt.⁶¹ Jocelyn Howarth, for one, 'never particularly liked' her screen moniker Constance Worth, and tried to persuade Universal Studios in 1939 to use her real name.⁶² The confusions of assuming a new self were compounded by loneliness and long periods of enforced idleness between film roles.⁶³ Salaries were high, but did not always compensate for such stresses, and a number of 'nervous breakdowns' were reported.⁶⁴ At least one Australian

⁵⁹ Deamer, "The Golden Decade," 51; "The Stage of the Present," *Magazine Programme*, 20 May 1935, Carol Coombe Clipping File, NYPL.

⁶⁰ Harry Brand, "Biography of Mary Maguire," c. 1937, Mary Maguire Biography File, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles. For an account of these name changes, see "Thirteen-Letter Name Gives Luck," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 October 1927, A1; Delamoire, "Styling a Star." For a more detailed discussion of the 'Australianness' ascribed to Australian-born actresses in Hollywood, see Macdonald, "Hollywood Bound," 280–309.

⁶¹ For a discussion of standard star 'makeover' practices, see Basinger, *The Star Machine*, 20–56.

⁶² "Wants Real Name - Joy Howarth," *Mail* (Adelaide), 1 April 1939, 3.

⁶³ Shirley Ann Richards interviewed by Neil MacDonald, 1984, 427900, NFSA; "Mary Maguire makes Hollywood sit up and take notice," *Journal American* (New York), 29 January 1938. On hasty marriages see "Bob Hope Discovery Victoria Shaw Weds Actor Roger Smith," *Boston Daily Globe*, 19 July 1956, 17; "Australian Film Girl Marries George Brent," *Daily News* (Perth), 20 May 1937, 1.

⁶⁴ Summers, "A Tribute to Mae Busch," 23–32; "Actress Collapses," *Daily Mirror* (New York), 21 April 1937. The salaries earned by contracted stars could be enormous. According to the contract nineteen-year-old Mary Maguire signed with Twentieth Century Fox in 1938, she could be earning up to \$130,000 a year by the time she was twenty-six. This sum would be worth around two million dollars today. "Australian Miss Faces \$130,000 Salary Prospect," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 April 1938, A2; Samuel H. Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S.

actress, Phyllis Gibbs, was so repelled by this ‘artificial life’ that she broke her coveted five-year contract with leading director Cecil B. DeMille to return home after only six months.⁶⁵



Figure 23: Phyllis Gibbs won the First National Screen Star Quest in 1927, receiving a free trip to Hollywood and a screen-test with DeMille. Western Mail (Perth), 28 April 1927, 1.

Fame was also apt to be fleeting. Although numerous Australians made well-publicised debuts on the American screen or stage, few achieved lasting celebrity. There are countless stories of women who appeared on Broadway for one season or starred in a single film, before more or less disappearing from sight. Their reviews may have been promising, even laudatory, but no amount of press hype could guarantee a lasting place in the spotlight. Jean Love, a soprano from country Victoria, was one of many who enjoyed a mere five minutes of fame. Her 1947 debut concert at the New York Town Hall received enthusiastic reviews, and Love

Dollar Amount, 1774 to present,” <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php>, accessed 18 December 2014.

⁶⁵ “Phyllis Gibbs Returns,” *Daily News* (Perth), 16 September 1927, 11; “Miss Phyllis Gibbs: An Australian Screen Star,” *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 26 November 1928, 3.

reportedly ‘quite captivated’ the audience with her ‘natural simplicity and charm’.⁶⁶ Yet despite these good omens, Love’s debut seems to have doubled as her farewell, as no evidence of a subsequent New York appearance remains.⁶⁷ A similar tale can be told of Sydney’s Margaret Dare, who rose to prominence in 1936 after appearing in *Rangle River*, a Hollywood production filmed in Australia.⁶⁸ Emboldened by this sudden fame, she sailed off ‘to try her fortune in Hollywood’, but never appeared on screen again.⁶⁹



Figure 24: One-time Hollywood actress Margaret Dare, photographed after she shot to fame in 1936. NLA, nla.pic-vn4740464.

⁶⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 October 1947; untitled clipping, c. 1947, Jean Love Clipping File, NYPL.

⁶⁷ The *Australian Women’s Weekly* reported on 11 December 1948 that Love had plans to undertake a US concert tour the following year, but there is no evidence that this ever came to pass. This article also mentions that Love lived in Florida with her American composer husband and two small children, so perhaps she chose to give up her singing career in favour of motherhood. Yet the significant financial investment required to make a New York debut suggests that Love did hope to establish herself as a professional musician, but proved unable to do so.

⁶⁸ “Margaret Dare finds Romance and a Career,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 18 July 1936, 2, 55.

⁶⁹ “Sydney Actress for Hollywood,” c.1937, news clipping from Ethel Walker Scrap Album, 1933–1937, MS 3737, NLA; “Our Stolen Film Stars,” *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill), 25 March 1937, 6. On 9 April 1937 American film magazine *Variety* reported that Dare was ‘here for a lookaround’, but no further trace of her Hollywood career (or lack thereof) can be found. The Internet Movie Database also lists *Rangle River* as her sole film credit.

In extreme cases, such disappointments could lead to acts of self-destruction. Several suicides were reported among Australian performers who fell short of stardom. The actress Henrietta Tilghman consumed a fatal overdose of sleeping tablets in her New York apartment in 1931, four years after arriving with hopes of a stage career.⁷⁰ According to the *Kansas City Star*, Tilghman was '[d]espondent because unable to obtain theatrical contracts'.⁷¹ The most notorious tale of frustrated ambition belongs to Lotus Thompson, who journeyed from Sydney to Hollywood in 1924 with aspirations to become a serious actress. She soon discovered, however, that American directors were more taken with her 'marvellous' legs than her acting skills. Told that her legs were the 'shapeliest in films', Thompson was typecast as a bathing beauty, instructed to don bathing suits in a series of light comedies. Rather ironically, in an industry that fetishised the female body, Thompson's uncommon physical charms led her to be relegated to second-class status.⁷² After enduring a year of this 'leg show', Thompson took drastic action 'in quest of fame'. She used nitric acid to disfigure her lower limbs, hoping to create permanent scars that would re-direct directors' attention towards her 'talent for histrionic achievement'. 'I decided to mar them so no one would ever want to look at them anymore,' Thompson told journalists. 'The uglier they are the better I'll like them.'⁷³ At first, resorting to self-harm appeared to have the desired effect. After news of the incident was broadcast, Rudolph Valentino sent Thompson a telegram promising her a role in his next film.⁷⁴ Interest in her story soon receded, however, and while Thompson was given a few leading roles, she never attained star status.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ "Australian Actress Here," *New York Times*, 25 July 1927; "Former Actress Found Dead in her Apartment," *Washington Post*, 26 January 1931, 4.

⁷¹ *Kansas City Star*, 26 January 1931, 13.

⁷² Thompson's relationship to the visual culture of modernity is also discussed in Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 1-2, 92-94.

⁷³ "Girl Drenches Legs with Acid," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 1925, A1.

⁷⁴ "Acid Girl's Wish May Come True," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 February 1925, A10.

⁷⁵ "Beautiful Legs," *Recorder* (Port Pirie), 22 January 1927, 3; "Given Lead in Universal Picture," *Sun* (Baltimore), 10 June 1928, MR5.

More commonly, those who failed to win fame on the stage or screen either returned home or found other employment. Some second jobs did no more than keep hunger at bay, but others opened the door to alternative vocations. While true stars were few and far between, the modern culture industries had no shortage of career opportunities. The stars were sustained by an army of ancillary workers, including scriptwriters, make-up artists, music teachers, publicists and journalists. Australian women who fell short of stardom would often pivot into one of these professions, drawing upon existing industry contacts to cultivate a behind-the-scenes career. Although most gravitated towards 'feminine' support work, such as teaching, at least one Australian woman established herself as a Hollywood *auteur*. Elsie Jane Wilson, a former actress, directed and produced numerous pictures for Universal during the 1910s and 20s, a time before film direction became an almost exclusively male profession.⁷⁶ More typical was Ivy Crane Wilson (no relation), who spent several years as a dancer in 1920s New York and Hollywood, but never quite cracked the big time. She found her true niche as a journalist and publicist. In the 1930s Wilson handled publicity for Warner Brothers' Studios, and was later Hollywood correspondent to the London *Star*, becoming president of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and Hollywood Women's Press Club.⁷⁷ She may not have attracted fan mail or news headlines but instead won the esteem of industry insiders. By 1937 Wilson was known as 'the best-loved Australian in Hollywood.'⁷⁸

An unsuccessful assault on Hollywood could also open the door to professional opportunities in Australia. Even women who returned without a film

⁷⁶ Elsie Jane Wilson Biography File, Margaret Herrick Library; "Miss Wilson Directs for Universal," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 May 1923, II8. Accounts of Wilson and other women directors of her era can also be found in Anthony Slide, *The Silent Feminists: America's First Women Directors* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996); Mark Garrett Cooper, *Universal Women: Filmmaking and Institutional Change in Early Hollywood* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

⁷⁷ E. G. Bonny, "Behind the Scenes in Hollywood," *Daily News* (Perth), 24 August 1934, 6; "Gossip from the Studio Lots," *Mail* (Adelaide), 15 September 1934, 15; "Ivy Crane Wilson's Death Told," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 1977; "Ivy Crane Wilson," *Variety*, 9 December 1977.

⁷⁸ "Hollywood Roundabout," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 3 April 1937, 13.

contract were keenly sought after by journalists eager to feed the public hunger for tales of Hollywood glamour. The Australian fascination with cinema was exploited to good effect by Helen Jean Beegling, who went to America in 1925 and appeared in several silent films. After returning home the following year, she recounted her experiences on Sydney radio station 2FC. This exposure propelled Beegling into a job as inaugural host of the women's session on the same station. By the 1930s Beegling was a 'well-known radio announcer', heralded as a 'pioneer' of women's broadcasting in Australia.⁷⁹ In this instance, as in many others, missing out on stardom was no barrier to a rewarding career in the world of modern entertainment. Both in the States and Australia, Hollywood 'also-rans' continued to participate in film, radio and journalism, finding alternative avenues for creative endeavour that were perhaps even preferable to the harsh glare of centre stage.

Great wealth in American writing

If fame was America's biggest lure, fortune came a close second. The prospect of earning a decent or even bountiful income from the creative industries prompted many women to try their luck across the Pacific. In the early twentieth century, the United States was the world's leading economic superpower: the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) first outstripped Britain in 1872, and by 1910, America's GDP was valued at \$460 billion, more than twice that of Britain and twenty times greater than Australia's economy. Forty years later, United States GDP was close to \$1.5 trillion.⁸⁰ Although not all received an equal share of these riches, especially not racial minorities, there is no doubt that women with creative talent and entrepreneurial tendencies could prosper in such an affluent nation. It was common for the wealthiest members of society to devote sizeable sums to philanthropic

⁷⁹ "Miss Helen Beegling," *Brisbane Courier*, 5 June 1930, 20; "Radio Announcer," *West Australian* (Perth), 11 May 1938, 5. Beegling also became a travel photographer, selling her photographs of the Pacific to publications such as *BP Magazine*. Max Quanchi, "To the Islands: Photographs of Tropical Colonies in *The Queenslander*," paper presented at the 18th Pacific History Association Conference, December 2008, University of the South Pacific, Suva.

⁸⁰ Maddison, *The World Economy*, 49, 51, 84–85.

endeavours, and these private benefactors often smiled upon the arts.⁸¹ In addition to this financial support from elites, the sheer size of the US population—which numbered 106 million in 1920—also created a mass-market for popular entertainment, opening up professional and economic opportunities in radio, journalism, popular fiction, film and later television.

The financial benefits of producing for a mass-market were particularly enticing for writers. Given that royalty payments were determined by the quantity of book sales, publishing in the United States was a sound financial move. Not only was the American book-buying public significantly larger than the Australian or British markets, but US publishers also pioneered the practice of selling huge print runs of affordable paperback editions.⁸² Dorothy Cottrell, whom we met at the beginning of this chapter, enjoyed several years of prosperity after publishing *The Singing Gold* with Houghton Mifflin.⁸³ ‘There is very great wealth in American writing,’ she noted in 1931, estimating that a best-seller could earn the author \$70,000, an amount worth over a million dollars today.⁸⁴

Australians who attempted to access this ‘great wealth’ faced a number of significant obstacles. The first was Australia’s ties to Britain, which ensured that the local literary world was oriented towards London publishers, a relationship that continued long after Federation.⁸⁵ The second factor militating against American publication was the British Traditional Markets Agreement, which divided the publishing world into British and American spheres. This agreement, formally enforced from 1947 but in practice decades earlier, barred any book published in the United States from distribution in Australia, considered part of the British

⁸¹ Daniel M. Fox, *Engines of Culture: Philanthropy and Art Museums* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995).

⁸² David Carter, “Transpacific or Transatlantic Traffic? Australian Books and American Publishers,” in Dixon and Birns, *Reading Across the Pacific*, 350–51. On the history of cheap paperback publishing in America, see Paula Rabinowitz, *American Pulp: How Paperbacks Brought Modernism to Main Street* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁸³ Walter Cottrell, “Some explanation of the bald outline of our movement in the States,” n. d., box 2, folder added 22.20.84, Cottrell Papers.

⁸⁴ Dorothy Cottrell to family, 27 July 1931, box 2, folder added 6.7.81, Cottrell Papers; Williamson, “Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount.”

⁸⁵ Carter, “Transpacific or Transatlantic Traffic?” 339.

publishing market.⁸⁶ For an Australian author, pursuing the great American book-buying public meant foregoing a home audience. Unless the book could also be sold to a British publisher, friends and family back in Australia would be unable to purchase a copy.

The third and perhaps most significant barrier, however, was American disinterest. New York publishers were convinced that local readers had little taste for eucalypts and koala bears. This ‘strange dislike of the Australian setting’ would prove a major obstacle in Cottrell’s career.⁸⁷ Although Houghton Mifflin also published her second novel *Tharlane*—another work of Australiana—this book won scant praise, and in the years thereafter Cottrell struggled to find a home for her tales of the Queensland bush.⁸⁸ A decade later, this ‘strange dislike’ would be suspended by war in the Pacific, when American publishers sensed that the local market had become curious about America’s new ally. In the window of opportunity that followed, Queensland novelist Joan Colebrook and Sydney children’s author Elizabeth MacIntyre would both publish Australian-themed work in New York.⁸⁹ Yet the wartime market for Australian fiction proved temporary, and for most of the century disinterest prevailed.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Bryant, “English Language Publication and the British Traditional Market Agreement.”

⁸⁷ Dorothy Cottrell to E.C. Fletcher, 8 April 1937, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

⁸⁸ Dorothy Cottrell to family, 27 July 1931, box 2, folder added 6/7/81, Cottrell Papers.

⁸⁹ “Among the New Books for Younger Readers,” *New York Times*, 7 November 1943, BR24; Fanny Butcher, “Vivid Family Chronicle of Queensland,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 December 1948, K7; “Little Man against Big Nature,” *New York Times*, 14 November 1948; Elisabeth MacIntyre interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1965, ORAL TRC 1/106, NLA. Roger Osborne, “Australian Literature in a World of Books: A Transnational History of Kylie Tennant’s *The Battlers*,” in *Resourceful Reading: The New Empiricism, eResearch and Australian Literary Culture*, ed. Katherine Bode and Robert Dixon (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 108–11. An account of Colebrook’s life up until World War II was published in her memoir *A House of Trees* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988).

⁹⁰ Australian-authored books did appear in the States, but most were works of genre fiction that had first appeared in Britain and then sold on to the American market by the original publisher. Roger Osborne, “New York City Limits: Australian Novels and American Print Culture,” in Dixon and Birns, *Reading Across the Pacific*, 299–308; Carter, “Transpacific or Transatlantic Traffic?” According to Helen Bones, this pattern was also true of New Zealand writers. Helen Bones, “A Dual Exile? New Zealand and the Colonial Writing World,” (PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 2011), 81–83. It is also important to note that many Australian writers published in London or New York never left the comfort of home, as overseas publication rarely required the author’s presence. Osborne, “Australian Literature in a World of Books,” 105–18; Helen Bones, “New Zealand and the Tasman Writing World, 1890–1945,” *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 129–48.

But despite these obstacles, Cottrell was far from the only Australian woman of her era to pursue a literary career in America. Two of Australia's most esteemed modernist writers—poet Lola Ridge and novelist Christina Stead—settled in New York prior to WWII, and their experience of the modern metropolis will be discussed in Chapter Five. But while these women are celebrated by literary scholars, their writing was too high-brow to appeal to the mass-market. More successful at obtaining a large readership were Constance and Gwenyth Little, Australian-born sisters who co-authored detective fiction from their homes in New Jersey.⁹¹ In a publishing career spanning from 1938 until 1953, the Little sisters exploited the public hunger for genre fiction, releasing twenty-one 'immensely popular' murder mysteries.⁹² They published with Doubleday, the nation's largest press, and their mysteries were reviewed in the *New York Times*, an honour bestowed upon a tiny proportion of new fiction.⁹³ The sisters' earnings are unknown, but money was a core motivation for their prolific output. When book sales declined in the early 1950s, as television began to dominate leisure time, the pair even decided to cease publication altogether.⁹⁴

Book sales were not the only way to survive as a wordsmith in America. From the first decade of the century, Australian women were also drawn to the States by the prospect of selling short-fiction to magazines. The novelist Miles Franklin, who spent over a decade in Chicago, was first lured across the Pacific in 1906 by rumours of the opportunities available in the American magazine market.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Constance and Gwenyth Little first came to the US with their parents and siblings, and both settled in New Jersey after marriage. Constance Little and Gwenyth Little, *The Black Gloves* (Boulder, Colorado: The Rue Morgue Press, 1998), 6.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁹³ Isaac Anderson, "New Mystery Stories," *New York Times*, 11 December 1938; "The Black Paw," *New York Times*, 16 February 1941; "Tales of Mystery and Murder," *New York Times*, 4 October 1942; "Crime Corner," *New York Times*, 23 January 1944; "Crime Corner," *New York Times*, 26 November 1944; "Criminals at Large," *New York Times*, 23 February 1947; Isaac Anderson, "Reports on Criminals at Large," *New York Times*, 21 November 1948; "Danse Macabre," *New York Times*, 10 December 1950; Anthony Boucher, "Criminals at Large," *New York Times*, 27 September 1953, 370. On the difficulty of getting reviewed in the *New York Times*, see Osborne, "New York City Limits," 304.

⁹⁴ Little and Little, *The Black Gloves*, 7.

⁹⁵ Roe, *Stella Miles Franklin*, 113–14.

Such rumours also reached the ears of novelist Katherine Susannah Prichard, whose career began in the periodical press. Frustrated by the meagre sums she earned from Melbourne newspapers, Prichard's interest in the States was piqued when she met an American journalist who regaled her with tales of the 'high prices paid for short-stories in the USA.' Armed with a 'swag' of stories, Prichard set off for New York in 1908 with hopes to make a 'fortune'.⁹⁶ This plan was not as fanciful as it seems; by the 1920s, the *Saturday Evening Post* was rumoured to pay \$25,000 for a new story by a leading novelist.⁹⁷ Lesser-known writers could also prosper from freelance publication, earning hundreds or thousands of dollars from a single piece of short fiction.⁹⁸ Cottrell was rescued from near financial ruin during the Depression by selling four stories for \$500 apiece. This princely sum enabled Cottrell and her husband to pay off their debts and purchase a houseboat, which provided a roof over their heads until economic conditions improved.⁹⁹

Not all those who sought publication were successful. At least several women came home with deflated funds and low spirits. The most dramatic tale of publishing misadventure belongs to Mary Ling, also known as Mary Ann Moore-Bentley, a 'compulsive writer' and aspiring politician. In 1917, while living near Sydney, Ling found a Boston publisher for a manuscript entitled *A Psychological Interpretation of the Gospel*.¹⁰⁰ Emboldened by this success, she sailed for America later the same year, aged fifty-three, with plans to publish a second work. Her hopes were soon dashed, however, and within months Ling was alone and penniless in New York, unable to pay her hotel bill. By February 1918, she flung herself on the mercy of the British Consul General. Claiming to be 'on her last shilling', Ling was repatriated at Commonwealth expense on the proviso that she would repay the

⁹⁶ Prichard, *Child of the Hurricane*, 168.

⁹⁷ Upton Sinclair, *Money Writes!* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1927), 18.

⁹⁸ Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 171–72.

⁹⁹ Walter Cottrell interviewed by Barbara Ross, 1979, ORAL TRC 986, NLA.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Bettison, "Ling, Mary (1865–1953)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ling-mary-13048/text23595>, accessed 17 November 2014.

\$300 at a later date. Once safely home, Ling began to attribute her ignominious failure to government interference—an act of retribution, she believed, for anti-conscription activities—and refused to reimburse the cost of her return passage. An irate correspondence ensued, and by February 1919 the Department of Treasury had elected to ‘write off’ the sum.¹⁰¹

Although most writers, like Ling, gravitated towards the publishing houses of New York, California’s film studios were another drawcard for literary Australians who yearned for a steady income. Serious writers were often scornful of the film industry, but churning out screenplays for Hollywood studios tended to be more remunerative than either journalism or fiction.¹⁰² Opportunities for women were particularly good during the silent era, when up to ninety percent of screenwriters were female. This gender balance was reversed after the arrival of sound, as studios began recruiting male playwrights and novelists, but women writers continued to have a small but steady presence in Hollywood.¹⁰³ In 1937, Sydney journalist Marjorie Quinn became one of the hopefuls who set sail in pursuit of screenwriting work. After several lean Depression years, she sold her house and used the proceeds to purchase passage to California. Once in Hollywood, however, she struggled to break into the industry, and returned home after nine months.¹⁰⁴

Christina Stead had better luck. Trading on her reputation as an established novelist, she was appointed a screenwriter for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1942.¹⁰⁵ An experimental and highly imaginative writer, Stead found little satisfaction in churning out film scenarios pitched at the sentimental tastes of the wartime public. The work was ‘not creative’, and felt like a ‘dreary sort of office job’.¹⁰⁶ Yet the financial compensations of office work could be considerable: her fictional

¹⁰¹ Mrs Mary Ling - Repatriation, 1918–1919, A1, 1919/1567, NAA.

¹⁰² Ian Hamilton, *Writers in Hollywood, 1915–1951* (London: Heinemann, 1990).

¹⁰³ Denise D. Bielby and William T. Bielby, “Women and Men in Film: Gender Inequality among Writers in a Culture Industry,” *Gender & Society* 10, no. 3 (1996): 252–54.

¹⁰⁴ Quinn, *The Years That the Locust Hath Eaten*, 169–78; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April 1938, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Hazel Rowley, *Christina Stead: A Biography* (Carlton, Vic: The Miegunyah Press, 2007), 267–69.

¹⁰⁶ Ann Whitehead, “Christina Stead: An Interview,” *Australian Literary Studies*, no. 6 (1974): 244.

rendering of this experience features a screenwriter protagonist who earns \$80,000 per year.¹⁰⁷ Stead herself admitted to being quite ‘well paid’ in Hollywood, no small consideration for a woman otherwise dependent upon fluctuating royalty payments.¹⁰⁸

Writers were not the only creative professionals who aspired, and sometimes cases succeeded, to ward off penury in America. Australian visual artists also tapped into both the mass market and elite taste, earning healthy sums from commercial art and the sale of original work. One who pursued the former path was Edith Grieve, a graduate of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) art school who carved out a career in interwar Detroit. Grieve settled in the prosperous industrial city in 1922, alongside her two siblings, and found work as an illustrator for advertising firm The Gillespie Company. She also received occasional commissions from the *Dearborn Independent*, Henry Ford’s anti-Semitic weekly (fig. 25). Although much of her artwork, including the example below, was conservative in subject and form, its mass production and consumption was resolutely modern. For Grieve, this massification translated into financial comfort. By 1924 her annual income, at over \$4000, was triple the amount earned by female social workers and approximated an academic salary.¹⁰⁹ Most remarkably, her earnings remained steady for several years, even weathering the storm of the Great Depression.

As Grieve’s example emphasises, United States was indeed a nation where modest fortunes were up for grabs, accessible even to women skilled with a pen or brush. Although a creative career in the States could be, as anywhere, financially insecure, and only rarely generated vast wealth, the financial rewards enjoyed by those who found an audience were far from insignificant. Widely reported abroad, these economic opportunities ensured that an American career was an enticing

¹⁰⁷ This fictional scriptwriter, Emily Wilkes, also feels creatively stifled by her work. In one early scene, she exclaims, ‘I want to be a writer. I don’t want to write cornmeal mush for full-bellied Bible beltters.’ Christina Stead, *I’m Dying Laughing* (London: Penguin, 1989), 51–52.

¹⁰⁸ Whitehead, “Christina Stead,” 244.

¹⁰⁹ Ralph Davis to Edith Grieve, 4 November 1925 and 26 February 1926, Box 4, Folder 8; Records of income, box 9, folder 1, Papers of the Grieve Family, 1885–1977, MS 21, National Gallery of Australia (NGA), Canberra; Walkowitz, “The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity,” 1063.

proposition for creatively inclined Australian women—especially those with little or no independent income.

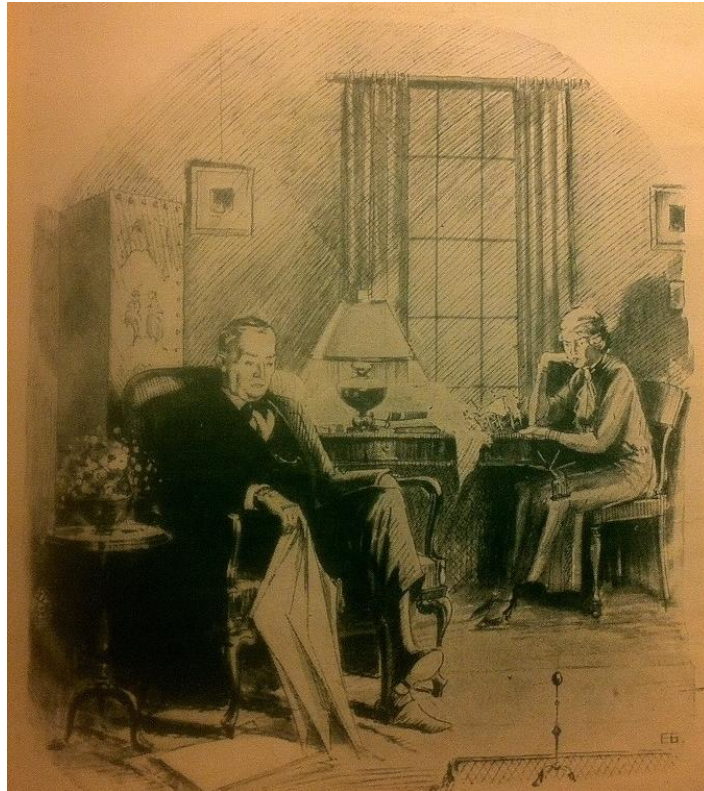


Figure 25: An example of Grieve's work for the Dearborn Independent, published in December 1925.

Singing to the whole country

The fame and fortune available to creative professionals in America was enabled, to a significant extent, by modern technology. As cultural theorist Walter Benjamin noted in 1936, 'mechanical reproduction' was the defining characteristic of art and entertainment in the twentieth century.¹¹⁰ Machines projected the flickering image of film stars, machines printed cheap magazines and paperbacks, and machines transformed an original artwork into an advertisement seen by millions. If not for these devices, even the most talented actresses, artists and writers would be unable to reach the huge American public and reap the associated rewards. The mechanical apparatus of modern culture was, of course, not unique to the United States, but many of these technologies developed strong associations with America.

¹¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, ed. Francis Francina and Jonathon Harris (London: Phaidon, 1992), 297–307.

The most obvious example is cinema, which became synonymous with Hollywood from the 1920s, but there were also several others, including radio and television.¹¹¹ The thrill of working with these new media contributed to the appeal of a creative career in the US, inducing many Australian actresses and musicians to linger across the Pacific.

Radio was one technology these women embraced with great enthusiasm. From the early 1920s, radio broadcasting revolutionised communication and entertainment around the globe, but nowhere was radio more popular than the United States. By the mid-1930s, around eighty percent of American households possessed a radio, and the country was home to twice the radios per capita than Australia or Canada.¹¹² There were hundreds of stations and millions of listeners nationwide, all hungry for voices to beguile and educate. In a strange twist of history, among the first Australians to engage with this new mass audience were women whose talents lay in the rarefied sphere of classical music. During the interwar decades and into the 1940s, leading American stations such as NBC and CBS featured a remarkable quantity of orchestral and operatic broadcasts.¹¹³ Metropolitan Opera productions were broadcast live from 1931, and some stations even created their own opera companies.¹¹⁴ Opera and commercial radio may seem an unlikely coupling, but the relationship benefited both parties: the opera community expanded its audience and received an injection of cash, while the stations became associated with the prestige and moral authority of classical

¹¹¹ On the links between America and mechanically reproduced mass culture, see Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses"; Rosenberg, *Transnational Currents in a Shrinking World*, 196–204.

¹¹² Douglas Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920–1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 12.

¹¹³ David Goodman, *Radio's Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 116–61.

¹¹⁴ Jim McPherson, "Before the Met: The Pioneer Days of Radio Opera: Part 1, An Overview," *Opera Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2000): 5–23; Jim McPherson, "Before the Met: The Pioneer Days of Radio Opera: Part 2, The NBC National Grand Opera Company," *Opera Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (2000): 204–23; Deborah S. Petersen-Perlman, "Opera for the People: The Metropolitan Opera Goes on the Air," *Journal of Radio Studies* 2 (1993–1994): 189.

music.¹¹⁵ In the process, classical music was brought into the sphere of modern mass culture.

This vogue for classical broadcasting lured numerous Australian singers into radio. Having travelled to the States to try their luck in the New York concert scene, many ended up spending more time in broadcasting studios. Several of these radio performers were renowned divas, who took to broadcasting after establishing an operatic career. Victorian soprano Florence Austral was among the ‘25 world’s leading opera singers’ featured in a series of Sunday evening concerts broadcast by NBC in 1925.¹¹⁶ Four years later, Frances Alda, a soprano from Melbourne, ended a twenty-year career at the Metropolitan Opera to dedicate herself to radio (fig. 26).¹¹⁷ Marjorie Lawrence, meanwhile, became a habitu  of radio studios after contracting polio at the height of her operatic career. Paralysed from the waist down, she was no longer able to perform her trademark Wagnerian roles on stage, and shifted to broadcasting in 1942.¹¹⁸

These singers discovered that radio could offer rewards above and beyond those available in a conventional operatic career. The first and most obvious benefit was financial. Classical broadcasts were funded by major corporate sponsors such as Coca-Cola, and performers themselves were richly rewarded.¹¹⁹ According to one 1929 report, the fees commanded by operatic stars on radio far exceeded the remuneration offered by the Metropolitan Opera.¹²⁰ Money was certainly the prime motivation for wheelchair-bound Lawrence to turn to radio, though this was less of a calculated choice than an act of desperation driven by the loss of her normal income.¹²¹ The second and perhaps even more seductive pleasure of radio was the prospect of reaching an audience of millions. In the decades prior to 1920, opera

¹¹⁵ Goodman, *Radio’s Civic Ambition*, 118–19; Petersen-Perlman, “Opera for the People,” 192.

¹¹⁶ “Broadcast Concerts: Australian Soprano in US,” *Queensland Times*, 23 September 1925, 6.

¹¹⁷ Frances Alda, *Men, Women and Tenors* (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 281.

¹¹⁸ Lawrence, *Interrupted Melody*, 209.

¹¹⁹ See correspondence in folder 2, box 6, Marjorie Lawrence Collection, 1926–1977, 1/3/MSS 127, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; Alda, *Men, Women and Tenors*, 282–83.

¹²⁰ “Broadcasting in New York,” *Register News-Pictorial* (Adelaide), 4 August 1929, 28.

¹²¹ Lawrence, *Interrupted Melody*, 209.

was by and large an elite art form in the United States, and even the most celebrated divas sang to only a sliver of the population. With the coming of radio, however, opera was thrust from the concert hall into living rooms nationwide. The audience was no longer dominated by jewel-clad matrons from New York's Upper East Side, but also extended to suburban housewives, school children and small-time businessmen. Although this workaday mass audience potentially detracted from the glamour of grand opera, it brought individual performers unprecedented fame.¹²²



*Figure 26: Frances Alda singing to the 'whole country' via a radio microphone, c. 1930s.
Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-48270.*

¹²² For a discussion of the democratisation of opera via radio broadcasting, see Goodman, *Radio's Civic Ambition*, 139–43; Petersen-Perlman, "Opera for the People," 198.

For notoriously ambitious Frances Alda, this prospect was irresistible. Her move from opera stage to radio studio was, she later recounted, driven by a desire to ‘sing to the whole country’. The radio microphone gave her the ‘greatest thrill’ of any audience, because this device represented ‘uncounted thousands of human beings’.¹²³ Her performances no longer ended with applause, but she was instead rewarded with sacks of fan-mail. ‘It was for letters like these that I gave up the applause of the Metropolitan,’ Alda told journalists. ‘These letters from people in all walks of life are more precious to me than the applause that fashionable opera-goers granted me’.¹²⁴ Lawrence was also inundated with letters from around the country after a series of live broadcasts in 1942. One admirer in Pennsylvania complimented her ‘grand’ voice; fellow Australian Elizabeth Kenny wrote from Minneapolis to request further performances.¹²⁵ Broadcasting technology, these letters make clear, could elevate a diva into a fully-fledged celebrity. Alda and Lawrence were already firm favourites with opera buffs, but radio transformed them into household names.

Radio was also embraced by lesser musical lights. For talented singers who never managed to reach diva status, broadcasting work offered an attractive career pathway, providing income and exposure that could supplement or even replace conventional stage appearances. Myndelle Isaacs, a Jewish-Australian soprano who adopted the stage name Myndelle Louis, enjoyed an American radio career that spanned almost a decade. A protégée of celebrated Melbourne soprano Evelyn Scotney, Louis descended upon New York in 1924, but her debut concert received lukewarm reviews, and the Metropolitan did not come calling.¹²⁶ Despite these setbacks, Louis developed a solid career in broadcasting. By 1929 she was an ‘outstanding contributor’ to Sunday radio concerts, and later sang alongside world-

¹²³ Alda, *Men, Women and Tenors*, 281.

¹²⁴ Untitled news clipping, c. 1931, Frances Alda Clipping File, NYPL.

¹²⁵ Sister Kenny to Dr King, 29 September 1942, folder 12; Anonymous to Marjorie Lawrence, 6 September 1942, folder 5, box 6, Lawrence Collection.

¹²⁶ “Ambitious Australian,” *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 31 July 1924, 13; “Debut by Myndelle Louis,” *New York Times*, 10 December 1927.

famous tenor Richard Tauber.¹²⁷ Like most of her US contemporaries, Louis had few qualms about this intermingling of elite and mass culture. In her mind, commercial radio had not debased the sacred sounds of Mozart and Wagner, but rather given ‘an incalculable stimulus to good music’. As a result, when she returned home in 1937, Louis was eager to stress that, contrary to much local opinion, modern machines could be friends rather than foes of elite culture.¹²⁸

This constellation of radio careers highlights the extent to which the United States had, by the 1920s, assumed leadership across the cultural spectrum. Louis and her fellow singers were originally drawn to America by its high culture credentials, hoping to study with and perform alongside world-renowned musicians. New York, in particular, had begun to resemble ‘the music centre of the world’, home to the star-studded Metropolitan Opera and many of the ‘best teachers’.¹²⁹ Yet during their time abroad, a number of New York-based singers were drawn into the latest craze in mechanically reproduced culture, allowing their disembodied voices to pour forth from radio sets around the nation. By broadcasting their vocal gifts, these classically trained singers helped give rise to the ‘new sensorium’ produced by modern reproducing technologies.¹³⁰ In the process, some also became unlikely evangelists for modern technology and mass culture. At the cutting edge of both elite and mass culture, modern America also fostered a cheerful disregard for the boundaries between the two.

¹²⁷ “Among the Outstanding Contributors to Sunday Network Broadcasts,” *Hartford Courant*, 1 December 1929, E12; “Americans Like Our Songs,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 1 February 1937, 15.

¹²⁸ “High Standards of Music in America,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1937, 18; “Broadcasting and Good Music,” *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate*, 10 February 1937, 6. Interwar Australian elites were often hostile towards American mass culture, and believed that new forms of popular entertainment threatened high culture traditions inherited from Europe. Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*, 191–238.

¹²⁹ “Merle Robertson Back Home,” *Mail* (Adelaide), 27 April 1935, 15; “Effort to Help Pianist,” *News* (Adelaide), 3 September 1936, 11. On the international significance of the Metropolitan, see Marsha Siefert, “The Metropolitan Opera in the American Century: Opera Singers, Europe, and Cultural Politics,” *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 33, no. 4 (2004): 298–315.

¹³⁰ Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses.”

Sprightly and talented modernists

The United States was at the forefront of vernacular modernism, but it also became an important incubator for modernist art. Given its heretical agenda, modernism was slow to win acceptance during the first half of the century, and many creative artists ventured little or no engagement with the modernist *avant-garde*. This resistance to change was particularly pronounced within the Australian art world, then dominated by reactionary male gatekeepers who dismissed modernism as an ‘imported and perverted art’.¹³¹ Due to this institutional conservatism, a modernist aesthetic was largely relegated to advertising, commercial art and design. Once pushed to the sidelines, modernism came to appear trivial and feminine, a state of affairs that provided further ammunition for anti-modernist discourse.¹³² Not until the 1940s, when ‘Angry Penguins’ painters such as Sidney Nolan and Albert Tucker entered the scene, did modernism begin to shed these pejorative connotations, though hostility towards *avant-garde* aesthetics remained commonplace into the 1950s.¹³³

This situation had two important consequences: first, women did much to pioneer modern art in Australia, and second, Australian artists only tended to become fully-fledged modernists overseas. The history of Australian modernism is littered with transnational women artists, whose travels abroad and attempts to introduce modernist art back home have, since the mid-1990s, been resurrected by a band of feminist scholars.¹³⁴ Prior to the 1940s, most of these artists headed to Europe, the traditional destination for culture-hungry Australians and the

¹³¹ J. S. MacDonald, *Australian Painting Desiderata* (Melbourne: Lothian Publishing, 1958), 135.

¹³² Hoorn, “Misogyny and Modernist Painting in Australia.” The artist Lionel Lindsay epitomised this attitude. In his 1942 anti-modernist polemic *Addled Art* he proclaimed, ‘[t]o-day there are more women than men painters. They have more leisure, and the superficial nature of modern painting attracts their light hands: picture or hat, all is one.’ Lionel Lindsay, *Addled Art* (Sydney & London: Angus and Robertson, 1942), 52.

¹³³ This hostility is discussed in Joseph Burke, “Art and the Australian Community (1959),” in Stephen, McNamara, and Goad, *Modernism & Australia*, 641–47.

¹³⁴ See for example, Helen Topliss, *Modernism and Feminism: Australian Women Artists, 1900–1940* (Roseville East, NSW: Craftsman House, 1996). A survey of this scholarship can be found in Jane E. Hunt, “‘Victors’ and ‘Victims’?: Men, Women, Modernism and Art in Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 80 (2003): 65–75.

undisputed centre of the modernist *avant-garde*. From the 1930s, however, modernism's centre of gravity shifted towards the United States, as leading European artists began to seek refuge from fascist oppression in New York and California. The traumas of WWII and the Holocaust increased this flow of émigrés, and had a catastrophic effect upon artists unwilling or unable to flee Europe.¹³⁵ These factors, combined with the ascendancy of American-born modernists such as Jackson Pollock, put America on the agenda of Australian women eager to learn about the latest developments in contemporary art.

The origins of this Antipodean interest in American modernism can be traced back to 1927, when Mary Cecil Allen arrived in New York. Allen was not the first female Australian artist to settle in the States, but she did pioneer a serious engagement with the American *avant-garde*.¹³⁶ Born into an academic Melbourne family in 1893, Allen received a conservative art education at the NGV before launching a career as an artist and critic. She toured Europe in 1926 as the personal guide of a wealthy American woman, and headed across the Atlantic after receiving an invitation from the Carnegie Trust to lecture in New York. The city soon became her permanent home. Allen settled in bohemian Greenwich Village and made a rapid conversion to modern art. She published two book-length expositions of modernism, painted abstracted scenes of city life, and established an art school that taught impressionism, post-impressionism and cubism.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Stephanie Barron, *Exiles & Émigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997).

¹³⁶ Allen was preceded during the 1910s by Stella Marks, Daisy Dowse, Beatrice Minchin and Constance Macky. Alan McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art* (Richmond: Hutchinson, 1986), 363; "A Visiting Artist," *Brisbane Courier*, 25 January 1927, 16; "Art Student Abroad," *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 10 August 1918, 17; "Reminiscences of Eric Spencer and Constance Macky," oral history transcript, 1954, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, <https://archive.org/details/remericspencer00mackrich>, accessed 27 September 2012. For a discussion of other twentieth-century Australian artists who had careers in the United States, including a number of men, see Butler and Donaldson, "Against Provincialism," 291–307.

¹³⁷ Mary Cecil Allen, *The Mirror of the Passing World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1928); Mary Cecil Allen, *Painters of the Modern Mind* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1929); Exhibition Catalogue of Mary Cecil Allen at the Fine Arts Society Gallery, 1935, Mary Cecil Allen: Artists and Artists file, SLV; Flyer announcing the opening of the Mary Cecil Allen School of Painting, 903 Madison Avenue, October 1940, folder 2, Papers of Mary Cecil Allen, 1928–1970, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC.

Allen found rich stimulus in New York's museums and art studios, and believed that the city had become the international centre of modern art by virtue of its unparalleled modernity.¹³⁸ Yet she was concerned that the United States had yet to develop its own language of visual expression. American artists, she argued in 1928, were 'too easily influenced by Europe', remaining content to mimic the latest fashions from Paris or Berlin.¹³⁹ It is no surprise, then, that she greeted the emergence of abstract expressionism in 1940s New York with great enthusiasm. As a close friend of German émigré Hans Hofmann, a founding figure of the movement, Allen was intimately involved with the emergence of this first American *avant-garde*. She was a regular visitor to Provincetown, the Cape Cod town where Hofmann attracted a circle of acolytes, and later settled in this seaside art colony.¹⁴⁰ Her own work veered towards abstraction, and she was among the first to discuss abstract expressionism in Australia. During visits to Melbourne in 1950 and 1959–60, Allen delivered well-attended lectures on the new 'action painting'.¹⁴¹ Long before the 1967 exhibition 'Two Decades of American Painting'—often regarded as Australia's first exposure to postwar American art—Allen presented Melbournians with richly illustrated discussions of Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Robert Motherwell.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ "Art in America: As Miss Mary Allen Saw It," *Age* (Melbourne), 20 July 1935, 24; "New York is now Mecca of Artists," *Herald* (Melbourne), 19 July 1935, 5.

¹³⁹ Allen, *The Mirror of the Passing World*, 101.

¹⁴⁰ On the emergence of abstract expressionism, and Hofmann's influence, see William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff, *New York Modern: The Arts and the City* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 289–314.

¹⁴¹ Frances Derham, "Biography of Mary Cecil Allen," n. d., box 1, Papers of Frances Derham, 1946–1987, Ref. 93/163, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne.

¹⁴² The belief that Australians were oblivious to American abstract expressionism during the 1950s and early 60s was influentially voiced in Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1970), 159–61. This view has recently been echoed in Charles Green and Heather Barker, "The Watershed: Two Decades of American Painting at the National Gallery of Victoria," *National Gallery of Victoria Art Journal* 1, no. 50 (2011): 64–77. For more on Allen, see Anne Rees, "Mary Cecil Allen: Modernism and Modernity in Melbourne, 1935–60," *Emaj*, no. 5 (2010): 1–36; Eileen Chanin, "Pioneering Cultural Exchange: Two International Exhibitions 1931–1933, Initiated by Mary Cecil Allen and Alleyne 'Clarice' Zander," in Dixon and Kelly, *Impact of the Modern*, 137–53; Andrea Lloyd, "The Mary Cecil Allen Story," *Meanjin* 55, no. 3 (1996): 480–86; Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, *Awakenings: Four Lives in Art* (Mile End, SA: Wakefield Press, 2015), 128–67.

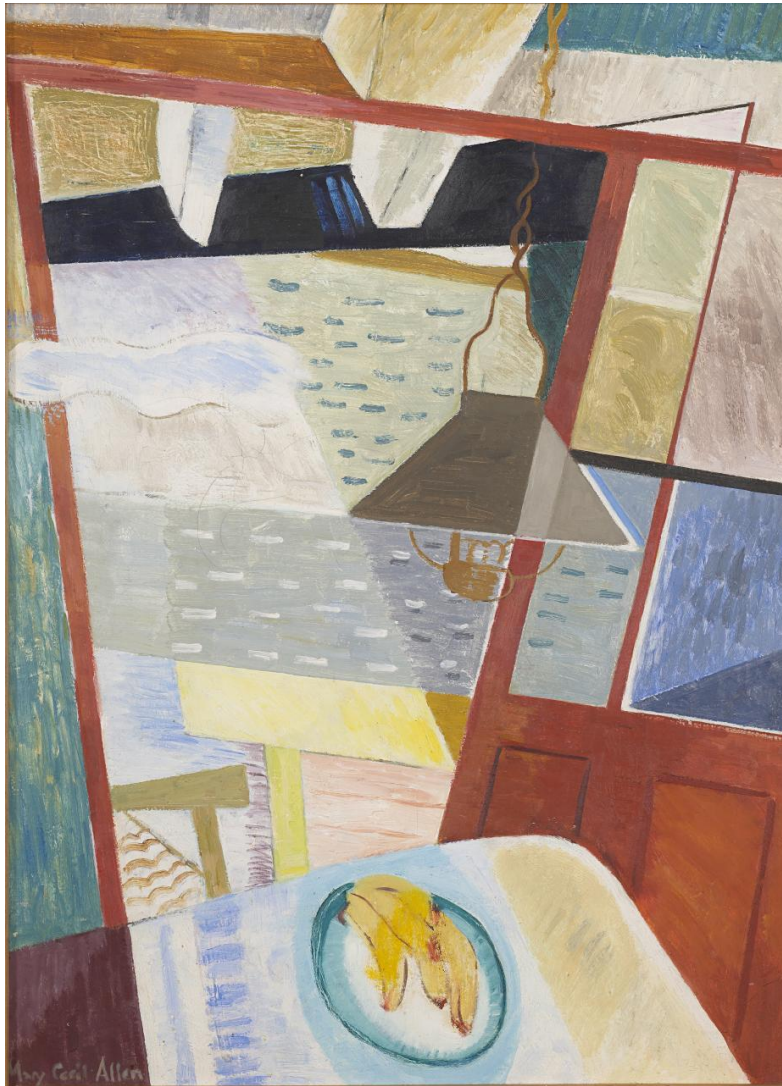


Figure 27: Mary Cecil Allen gestured towards abstraction in Sea, studio: winter (1949). National Gallery of Victoria, Acc. 2243-4.

Allen's engagement with abstract expressionism in the 1940s overlapped with the growing interest in the New York art scene among a younger generation of Australian women. Sydney artists Elaine Haxton and Anne Wienholt both set off to Manhattan in 1945, and two years later were joined by mutual friend Margaret Cilento. Wienholt and Cilento, who had studied together at East Sydney Technical College, were both recipients of travelling scholarships, coveted awards conventionally used to finance a trip to Europe. Their decision to head to America instead was partly pragmatic; the war blocked Wienholt from reaching Europe, while Cilento's father Sir Raphael Cilento had begun working for the UN in New York. But this choice was also driven by a sense that exciting developments were

afoot in Manhattan. Wienholt was eager to study with Yasuo Kuniyoshi, a Japanese-born modernist who taught at the city's Art Students' League, and her enthusiastic letters home whetted Cilento's appetite for an American art education.¹⁴³

The expectations that drew these women across the Pacific were well and truly met in New York. Their life revolved around Greenwich Village, the lower Manhattan neighbourhood that was home to much of the city's artistic life. Wienholt had a studio in Mott Street, where Haxton and Cilento often painted, while Haxton studied design at the nearby New School.¹⁴⁴ Over on East 8th Street, Cilento and Wienholt worked alongside legendary European modernists and up-and-coming American painters at William Hayter's Atelier 17, one of the birthplaces of abstract expressionism.¹⁴⁵ In 1948 Cilento also enrolled at The Subjects of the Artist School, a short-lived hub of the *avant-garde* founded by Robert Motherwell.¹⁴⁶ Frequenting these studios brought her into contact with Joan Miro and Salvador Dali, and sparked an acquaintance with Mark Rothko.¹⁴⁷ In addition, there were non-Western influences to absorb: as planned, Wienholt was taught calligraphy by Kuniyoshi, and both she and Cilento studied with Rufino Tamayo, an important Mexican artist.¹⁴⁸

New York's stimulating atmosphere transformed their own artistic practice. On the eve of Wienholt's departure from Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* dismissed her work as 'safe' and 'arranged to a formula'.¹⁴⁹ By 1949, however, when she had her second New York exhibition, leading art publications *ARTNews* and

¹⁴³ Wienholt interview; Nancy Underhill, *Margaret Cilento* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1983), 6–7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10. Interview with Elaine Haxton, 1978, National Gallery of Australia, <http://nga.gov.au/Research/Gleeson/artists/Haxton.cfm>, accessed 15 September 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Wienholt interview.

¹⁴⁶ This School later evolved into 'Studio 35' and 'the Club', becoming the 'primary arbiter of what would be called abstraction expressionism'. Caroline A. Jones, "Finishing School: John Cage and the Abstract Expressionist Ego," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (1993): 638.

¹⁴⁷ "Run away to paint the circus," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Underhill, *Margaret Cilento*, 7. Conspicuously absent from this gallery of teachers and acquaintances is Mary Cecil Allen, who, although also interested in abstract expressionism, appears not to have crossed paths with these younger Australians.

¹⁴⁹ "Travelling Art Scholarship," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 July 1944, 5.

Art Digest hailed Wienholt as a ‘sprightly and talented modernist’, whose ‘sophisticated abstractions’ demonstrated the influence of Hayter and Tamayo.¹⁵⁰ Cilento underwent a similar transformation. Her early paintings in Sydney group exhibitions were deemed unremarkable, attracting neither compliments nor criticism from the press, but by 1949 her ‘highly experimental’ work was singled out for praise by the *New York Times*.¹⁵¹

By the early 1950s, Haxton and Cilento were back in Australia, and Wienholt had become a wife and mother. In their stead came Yvonne Audette, a younger Sydney artist who headed to Manhattan in 1952, where she spent several years at the Art Students’ League. The rich stimulus of New York in the heyday of abstract expressionism had a lasting impact upon Audette, inspiring a passion for abstraction that has continued for over six decades. *Allegro serata* (1957) (fig. 28), a richly layered abstract painted during a subsequent sojourn in Europe, is typical of her mature *oeuvre*. Audette returned to Sydney in 1966 and became one of Australia’s preeminent abstract painters, with works in the NGV, the National Gallery of Australia and the Queensland Art Gallery.¹⁵² Like her predecessors, Audette was transformed into a committed modernist in the studios of New York, and bore the imprint of this experience for the duration of her career.

In contrast to many Australian women engaged in cultural production in America, Audette was more preoccupied with formal innovation than mass appeal. She and her compatriots in Greenwich Village produced art that was complex and challenging, a creative output with little contemporary market value and only a slim chance of attracting notice beyond a select crowd of gallery-goers. Yet despite the manifold differences between these *avant-garde* modernists and the film stars and crime novelists discussed above, all saw great potential for career advancement in

¹⁵⁰ “Reviews and Exhibitions,” *ARTNews*, January 1949, 44; “Anne Wienholt’s Second,” *Art Digest*, 15 January 1949, 20.

¹⁵¹ Howard DeVree, “Diverse Modernism,” *New York Times*, 20 January 1949, X8. Cilento received only cursory mention in Australian exhibition reviews prior to her departure for the States. “Young Artists,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 March 1945, 6; “Show by Under 30 Group,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 1945, 4.

¹⁵² Christopher Heathcote and Bruce Adams, *Yvonne Audette: Paintings and Drawings* (Melbourne: Macmillan Art Publishing, 2014).

the States. Although sometimes equated with Hollywood, modern culture in America was instead a broad church, capacious enough to attract Australian aspirants across a wide spectrum of modernisms, from the vernacular to the abstract.



Figure 28: Allegro serata, a 1957 painting by Yvonne Audette that exemplifies the abstract tendencies she acquired in New York. Queensland Art Gallery, Acc. 1994.042.

A bitter draught to drink

The actresses, musicians and artists who did establish careers in the States often crowned their victory with a triumphant tour of Australia. By returning home as an international star, armed with a new repertoire of talents and tinged with the glamour of the metropole, these women came full circle. They reconnected with friends and family, gratified early patrons, and proved the naysayers wrong. They also brought news of the latest cultural happenings, and gave concerts, performed

plays and held exhibitions. The press met them at the dock and reported their every move, announcing to all and sundry that the prodigal daughter had returned. These much-publicised homecomings brought moments of joy, but were often tinged by barely contained resentments. Although feted by many, such women frequently encountered undercurrents of hostility. The naysayers were difficult to silence; critical reviews and accusations of hubris abounded. Returning stars, in turn, could be repulsed by local cultural conservatism and tended to bristle when home audiences were lukewarm. Having stood up in the great world, some women teetered towards collapse at home.

These tensions stemmed from the fact that much bigger issues were at stake than an individual career. Instead of being judged on their own merits, Australians who won success abroad became symbols of the nation's fraught relationship with the outside world. On the one hand, their overseas achievements were hailed as evidence that Australia's supposed isolation was no barrier to nurturing world-class talent. Yet their expatriatism could also be judged a form of abandonment, a rejection that fed the niggling anxiety that the Antipodes were hopelessly parochial after all. A home-grown international star, in other words, at once refuted and confirmed Australia's provincialism, and could rarely be greeted without ambivalence.¹⁵³ This uneasy terrain was further muddied by the involvement of the United States. Given popular associations between America and popular entertainment, winning fame and fortune in Los Angeles or New York did not carry the same prestige as a British career. It was often difficult for creative professionals returning from the States to prove their high-culture credentials.¹⁵⁴ In addition to facing accusations of spurning Australia, these women also risked scorn for appearing to forsake British cultural traditions in favour of American mass culture.

Australian snobbery towards American culture was especially pronounced during the interwar era, and injected a sour note into several homecomings during

¹⁵³ For a discussion of these issues in relation to post-WWII Australian expatriates in Britain, see Alomes, *When London Calls*, 253–73.

¹⁵⁴ Fiona Gregory, "Chasing Modernity: An Expatriate Star's Return Home," in Dixon and Kelly, *Impact of the Modern*, 227–29.

the 1920s and 30s.¹⁵⁵ In 1927, when actress Judith Anderson brought her recent Broadway success 'Cobra' to Australia, both the press and public howled in disapproval. Anderson had not set foot in her birthplace since 1918, but was convinced by J. C. Williamson that the time was ripe for an Antipodean tour. Although 'Cobra' and its star both received positive press prior to opening night, Anderson's vampish role startled local audiences. Her portrayal of a modern femme fatale had gone down a treat on Broadway, but in Sydney the production was quickly replaced by the more conventional 'Tea for Three'.¹⁵⁶ 'Perhaps the goings-on in faraway New York seemed shocking,' Anderson later reflected, attributing the play's failure to Australian conservatism.¹⁵⁷

'The Green Hat', based on Michael Arlen's 1924 novel of jazz age sexual escapades, provoked an even more prurient response when it opened several months later. It was 'not a play for children', the *Sydney Morning Herald* warned, while the Adelaide *Mail* deemed it 'unpleasant and verging at times on the sordid'.¹⁵⁸ By starring in these Broadway imports, full of modern women and sexual impropriety, Anderson declared her allegiance to the 'vulgar' American culture that coloured the nightmares of local elites, ensuring that disapproval would be hard to avoid.¹⁵⁹ For her own part, she felt 'rejected by my native land'. Her visit was further tarnished by a serious illness. After being released from hospital, Anderson was only too eager to head back to New York. 'Let's go home', she told her mother.¹⁶⁰ For this erstwhile Adelaidean, Australia was home no longer.

Similar antipathy towards the American modern can be discerned in the reception Mary Cecil Allen encountered several years later. Allen, as we saw above, embraced modern art after moving to New York in 1928. These modernist credentials were frankly displayed during her 1935 visit to Melbourne, which

¹⁵⁵ Matthews, "Which America?" 15–31.

¹⁵⁶ Anderson, *Autobiography*, 220–22, 270, Wallsten Papers.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ "The Green Hat," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 June 1927, 8; "Art of Judith Anderson," *Mail* (Adelaide), 28 May 1927, 10.

¹⁵⁹ On anti-American sentiment during this visit, see Gregory, "Chasing Modernity."

¹⁶⁰ Anderson, *Autobiography*, 269, 282, Wallsten Papers.

featured an exhibition of her recent artwork and a series of public lectures about cubism and other *avant-gardes*. As a member of the Melbourne establishment, Allen demanded a modicum of respect, and was guest of honour at some of the most exclusive parties of the season.¹⁶¹ Yet her modern paintings and opinions were nonetheless eviscerated by local critics. Harold Herbert's exhibition review, which concluded that Allen's 'distorted forms' were 'completely detached from my sphere of interest', constituted a typical assessment.¹⁶²



Figure 29: Mary Cecil Allen looking chic but rather predatory in a cartoon featured in Melbourne society magazine Table Talk on 8 August 1935. The accompanying text likened Allen to Katherine Hepburn, another androgynous modern woman.

¹⁶¹ Rees, "Mary Cecil Allen," 7-12.

¹⁶² Herbert Brookes, "Art," unknown publication, c. 1935, folder 3, Allen Papers.

This hostility derived in part from the anti-modernism mentioned above, but was also inflected by concerns that Allen herself had become too modern, too worldly and—worst of all—too American. Press reports stressed her ‘Yankee’ credentials, while her chic attire, confident persona and abstracted paintings of Manhattan skyscrapers were taken as a deliberate affront to local sensibilities. A review of the Society of Women Painters exhibition noted that Allen’s contribution formed an ‘almost bizarre and mocking note’, as though intended to ridicule the ‘conservative still lifes’ that dominated the exhibition. In the same defensive tone, the reviewer mentioned that ‘Yankee-tutored’ Allen was ‘showing us Philistines a point or two in other ways’. Worst of all, her opening night outfit ‘made the rest of us feel a little out of date’.¹⁶³ This unflattering portrait was echoed in a cartoon published in society magazine *Table Talk* during the same visit. The image (fig. 29) depicts an almost masculine Allen, dressed in pants and cropped hair, with severe cheek-bones and a maniacal grin. ‘Mary Cecil Allen...is let loose in local society’ warns the caption. After seven years in New York, this cartoon makes clear, Allen was no less ‘distorted’ than her art, transformed into a flesh-and-blood version of the alarming modern women Anderson impersonated on stage.

The mood was more respectful during soprano Marjorie Lawrence’s 1939 Australian tour, but this homecoming was no less revealing of interwar anxieties about cosmopolitan modernity.¹⁶⁴ Lawrence was something of a Cinderella figure, who had transformed herself from a humble farmer’s daughter into a diva at the Metropolitan Opera. As a Wagnerian opera singer, who had trained in Paris, Lawrence was embedded in European high art traditions, and therefore presented little challenge to Australian cultural hierarchies. Although she lived and worked in New York, where she had embraced modern mass culture as the face of Lucky Cigarettes, Lawrence nonetheless still embodied the classical musicianship associated with the Old World.¹⁶⁵ Ebullient and buxom, with abundant blonde

¹⁶³ Untitled news clipping, c. 1935, folder 3, Allen Papers.

¹⁶⁴ For an account of this tour, see Davis, *Wotan’s Daughter*, 126–33.

¹⁶⁵ Contract with American Tobacco Company, c. 1937–38, folder 17, box 1, Lawrence Collection.

curls, she was also a far stretch from the unfeminine career woman personified by Allen.

**Noted Metropolitan Opera Star
finds Luckies easy on her precious throat—**

Marjorie Lawrence says:



"You must have a big voice to sing Wagner. My favorite role of 'Brunnhilde' in Wagner's 'Götterdämmerung' is a very exacting one. Yet—when I am back in my dressing room after I have finished singing, there is nothing I enjoy more than lighting up a Lucky. It is a light smoke—so gentle—so smooth—that it does not irritate my throat in the least. I agree with the others at the Metropolitan that a light smoke is a wise choice."

Marjorie Lawrence
BRILLIANT SOPRANO OF THE
METROPOLITAN OPERA COMPANY

An independent survey was made recently among professional men and women—lawyers, doctors, lecturers, scientists, etc. Of those who said they smoke cigarettes, more than 87% state they personally prefer a light smoke.

Miss Lawrence verifies the wisdom of this preference, and so do other leading artists of the radio, stage, screen and opera. Their voices are their fortunes. That's why so many of them smoke Luckies. You, too, can have the throat protection of Luckies—a light smoke, free of certain harsh irritants removed by the exclusive process "It's Toasted". Luckies are gentle on the throat.



THE FINEST TOBACCOS—
"THE CREAM OF THE CROP"

**A Light Smoke
"It's Toasted"—Your Throat Protection**
AGAINST IRRITATION—AGAINST COUGH

Copyright 1937, The American Tobacco Company

Figure 30: Marjorie Lawrence plunged herself into American modernity by using her face to sell the ultimate symbol of modern womanhood—the cigarette, c. 1930s. Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, tobacco.stanford.edu/tobacco.

Yet the fan-letters received during this tour reveal that Lawrence still brought latent fears and resentments bubbling to the surface. A remarkable quantity of these letters mentioned that Lawrence was 'unspoiled', invoking a language of contamination that constructed the international sphere—and modern, cosmopolitan America in particular—as inherently unclean. Nancy from Clifton Hill wrote that Lawrence was 'still the same charming unspoiled girl', and Daisy Mountjoy found her 'sweet & unspoilt'. Madge Lyons in Sydney was 'glad that you are not spoiled with your trips abroad', while the Swan Hill Caledonia Society wrote that '[s]uccess

has in no way spoiled you'.¹⁶⁶ Despite her years in the muck of the great world, Lawrence remained unsullied. She had held true to her wholesome rural upbringing in White Australia, and retained the purity claimed by her race and nation. Instead of 'spoiled goods', Lawrence was a 'natural' woman.¹⁶⁷ 'You are still the same little country maid who was reared in our midst', the Caledonia Society enthused.¹⁶⁸

But not even a 'little country maid' was spared the ill-will directed towards those who had forsaken the Antipodes. Lawrence returned with some trepidation, wary of the 'stern critical standards' imposed on 'Australians in any field of endeavour when they come home after having been abroad'.¹⁶⁹ As it transpired, 'stern critical standards' were less of a problem than wilful disregard. Lawrence received a rapturous welcome from audiences in Victoria, her state of origin, but ticket sales in Sydney were woeful. At a concert on 29 July, the large number of empty seats caused her voice to 'echo and reverberate'. Two days later, the evening's concert was cancelled when it became apparent that Lawrence would not even attract a 'reasonable house'.¹⁷⁰

Although some commentators attributed this failure to external factors, such as high ticket prices and competing concerts, the symbolism of the Sydney cancellation was hard to ignore.¹⁷¹ The world-famous diva had graced the Australian public with her presence, but the public did not want her. As one fan wrote the following day, 'to be rebuffed by the people of your own country is indeed a bitter draught for you to drink.'¹⁷² The debacle escalated when Lawrence voiced her disappointment in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. 'It is heartbreaking,' she

¹⁶⁶ Nancy to Marjorie Lawrence, 13 July 1939 and Daisy Mountjoy to Marjorie Lawrence, 14 July 1939, folder 15, box 2; Swan Hill Caledonia Society to Marjorie Lawrence, 4 July 1939, folder 13, box 2; Madge Lyons to Marjorie Lawrence, August 1939, folder 5, box 3, Lawrence Collection.

¹⁶⁷ Swan Hill Caledonia Society to Marjorie Lawrence, 4 July 1939 and Mona Marion to Marjorie Lawrence, 5 July 1939, folder 13, box 2, Lawrence Collection.

¹⁶⁸ Swan Hill Caledonia Society to Marjorie Lawrence, 4 July 1939, folder 13, box 2, Lawrence Collection.

¹⁶⁹ Lawrence, *Interrupted Melody*, 150.

¹⁷⁰ "Miss Marjorie Lawrence: Concert Cancelled," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 1939, 11.

¹⁷¹ Gwen Powell to Marjorie Lawrence, August 1939, folder 5, box 3, Lawrence Collection; "Cancellation of Concert," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1939, 13.

¹⁷² Brian Maxwell to Marjorie Lawrence, 1 August 1939, folder 3, box 3, Lawrence Collection.

declared. 'I gave up a great deal to come to Australia, and this is the reception I get in her biggest city...My audience on Saturday night was the smallest I have ever had.' Convinced that the poor turn-out was due to her Australian origins, Lawrence suggested that a foreign star would have received better treatment. 'I am proud of being an Australian,' she insisted, but 'Australians are not proud of me.'¹⁷³ This blunt indictment of local attitudes did not go unanswered. Local music-lovers sympathised with her position, but the writer Miles Franklin, a former expatriate herself, scolded Lawrence for having 'complained [sic] in the papers', and suggested she would do better to 'develop self-respect'.¹⁷⁴

Taken together, these examples illustrate the pitfalls associated with an Australian tour. Anderson, Allen and Lawrence were each renowned practitioners of their art in the United States, and each received a disappointing reception in Australia. The art that won acclaim in New York was greeted with jeers or desultory applause in Sydney and Melbourne. They also each became the focus of anxieties about American modernity, and its potential to corrupt Australian womanhood and elite culture. Yet this ambivalence was not one-sided. None of the three women considered making a permanent return to Australia, and Anderson at least was relieved to return to New York. While the difficulties associated with return will be further examined in Chapter Seven, this brief discussion indicates that a homecoming tour could indeed be a 'bitter draught to drink'.

Conclusion

Standing up in the great world was, as Cottrell and others discovered, a hazardous exercise, replete with unforeseen obstacles and cut-throat competition. Of the boatloads of creative Australian women who sailed to America fired with ambition, only a minority achieved notable and lasting success. Dozens more established viable, if unspectacular, careers, but many returned defeated. Yet if the promise of

¹⁷³ "Miss Marjorie Lawrence: Concert Cancelled," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 1939, 11.

¹⁷⁴ Miles Franklin to Marjorie Lawrence, 3 August 1939, folder 4, box 3, Lawrence Collection. On expressions of sympathy, see "Marjorie Lawrence," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1939, 3; "Cancellation of Concert," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1939, 13.

fame and fortune was a mirage of sorts, it was a mirage with very tangible effects. It was a promise that sparked a wave of opportunistic transpacific mobility, transforming the lives and aspirations of hundreds of women who might otherwise have remained at home. Some set down roots and remained for decades, while others came back within months, but all reflected and further cultivated a turning towards the United States.

Although the contribution of modern culture to Australia's Americanisation is well-recognised, much existing literature has focused upon cultural consumption. In Australia, as elsewhere, scholarly examinations of Hollywood, the *Saturday Evening Post* and US-style advertising have tended to remain domestic in focus, concerned with the local importation, reception and adaptation of these foreign cultural artefacts. But there is another side to this story. The import of American mass media was accompanied by the export of local talent, many of whom would help shape the culture consumed by their compatriots at home. This is not to dismiss the importance of film fans in Sydney or Melbourne, whose numbers far eclipsed the film fans who headed to Los Angeles, but rather to highlight that modern American culture generated transpacific traffic in both directions. Film reels and magazines travelled west from California; actresses and writers headed east from Sydney. Giving recognition to this reciprocal, if still unequal, exchange enables us to reimagine what could appear to be cultural imperialism as a transnational cultural dialogue, albeit one dominated by the larger nation.

Focusing upon eastward-bound Pacific traffic reminds us that America's early twentieth-century cultural dynamism extended far beyond mass media. Although the transnational reach of American culture is often equated with new forms of populist entertainment, the transpacific mobility of classical pianists, budding painters and published novelists indicates that the US was renowned abroad for fostering a diverse array of creative industries. This diversity would come to be reflected, moreover, in the social class of Australian women who pursued an American career. The States certainly attracted legions of 'screen-struck girls' intent

on stardom, many of whom had more pluck than money, but it also proved alluring to well-educated and affluent women with more ‘refined’ artistic tastes.¹⁷⁵

Australian women’s assaults on Hollywood, Broadway, and Greenwich Village also provide further evidence that this era of transpacific relations was highly gendered. Young women dominated the consumption of American culture in Australia, and it seems probable that they constituted a majority of the creative professionals who crossed the Pacific.¹⁷⁶ Although there was no shortage of male actors, writers and musicians who made the same journey, both the public demand for female spectacle and the locally entrenched feminisation of modern art and culture suggest that women represented the bulk of this outbound traffic. If true, Australia’s engagement with modern American culture—often regarded as the most noteworthy aspect of transpacific dialogue prior to WWII—becomes an altogether feminine affair, one of the few arenas of international relations in which women played a starring role.

¹⁷⁵ Conor uses the phrase ‘screen-struck girl’ to describe women with ‘screen ambitions’, who were often believed to be unfeminine and ‘morally lax’. Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 78–79.

¹⁷⁶ On the female-dominated consumption of American culture, see Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*, 63–99; McKenzie, “Being Modern on a Slender Income.” For a discussion of the British context, see Jeanine Basinger, *A Woman’s View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930–1960* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

CHAPTER 5

A Season in Hell: The Hustle of Modern America

Christina Stead had a bee in her bonnet. It was October 1936, and the Australian-born novelist was grumbling about the strain of life in New York. She and her American partner Bill Blake had moved from London to Manhattan the previous year, but Stead had failed to acclimatise to the city's blend of speed, clamour and money-making fever. The unceasing hustle, she wrote to poet Stanley Burnshaw, left her anxious, morbid and too distracted for creative work. 'New York is all noise,' she complained, 'and is therefore opposed to the interior rhythms which a poet must hear very loud if he is to write.'¹ Over the following decade, Stead spent most of her time in Manhattan, but was never reconciled to the city's nervous pulse. In 1937 she informed her brother that New York was a 'boiler-factory' that induced 'nervous breakdown' or suicide.² Even after returning to Europe in 1946, Stead continued to harp on the same theme. 'N. Yorkers are a very nervous people...life is torment in NY,' she wrote from Switzerland in 1948.³ Finally, in 1949, her tirade reached its climax. In a letter to a childhood friend, she contrasted her current contentment with the anguish of her New York years. 'I often wished Rimbaud had not invented the expression "A Season in Hell,"' she reflected, 'for then I should have invented it about NY.'⁴

America's preeminent metropolis was a veritable inferno, or so Stead would have us believe. Its skyscrapers may reach towards the heavens, but the city itself

¹ Christina Stead, *A Web of Friendship: Selected Letters, 1928-1973*, ed. R. G. Geering (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1992), 67-68.

² *Ibid.*, 73

³ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

better approximated the abode of the damned. Stead's metaphor, though hardly devoid of hyperbole, is not just a piece of poetic licence from a writer known for her extravagant prose. It also paints, in vivid strokes, a picture of the apprehension fostered by the hustle of the United States. During the first half of the twentieth century, Australian women—even sophisticated urbanites like Stead—would recoil from the brisk American tempo, which reached a crescendo on the sidewalks of New York. There was more to see, more to do, more to buy, and there never seemed to be enough time. The streets hummed with traffic day and night, as people strained to keep pace with machines and outrun each other. Modern America may have been streamlined and glistening with possibility, but it was also rather exhausting.

Of the many facets of modernity that Australian women encountered in the United States, the culture of hustle was the most pervasive and the most troublesome. In contrast to more tangible modern phenomena such as the career woman or the emergence of new professions, hustle was more a matter of perception. Also known as 'busyness' or the 'modern tempo', it encompassed the haste and agitation that followed in the wake of urbanisation, mechanisation, rationalism and capitalism. As the grand forces of modernity changed how men and women worked, slept, ate and enjoyed themselves, hustle became a fact of life.⁵

The first great leap forward in the busyness of daily life took place during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The proliferation of watches and standardised time-zones placed increased emphasis on punctuality and clock time, while the spread of factory shift-work fostered awareness that time equalled money.⁶ At the same time, the development of new transportation and communication technologies accelerated the movement of people and ideas. In America, the east and west coasts were first linked by train in 1869, while Australia's transcontinental

⁵ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 229–40.

⁶ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 11–14; Michael O'Malley, *Keeping Watch: A History of American Time* (New York: Viking, 1990), 145–62; E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present*, no. 38 (1967): 56–97.

railway was completed in 1917.⁷ By 1902, the telegraph had ringed the globe, doing much to temper the ‘tyranny of distance’ that plagued Australia and other outposts of the British Empire.⁸ In consequence, from the 1880s, the pressures associated with living by the clock became commonplace throughout the industrialised world.⁹

The rise of ‘hustle’ provides one indication of this shift. An American colloquialism used to denote aggressive or hasty action, ‘hustle’ was a word of the times. Rarely used for much of the nineteenth century, its incidence within English-language books skyrocketed between 1880 and 1920, and remained high throughout the following decades.¹⁰ Although the term can be associated with a number of activities—from pushing and shoving to theft and prostitution—‘hustle’ here refers to a particular rhythm of existence, an accelerated temporal culture oriented around competition and productivity. This new culture of hustle was felt most keenly in the swelling cities of Europe and the English-speaking world, where the incessant pulse of traffic and commerce had replaced the more leisurely cycles of nature. As the urban crowds ballooned, and department stores, billboard advertising and street cars became fixtures of city life, speed and ‘hyperstimulus’ were heralded as defining characteristics of the modern metropolis.¹¹

To some extent, the strain of dashing for a train and battling the rush-hour crowds was a global phenomenon, familiar to a woman from Sydney or Melbourne. As historian Graeme Davison details, by the 1910s Australians had developed a

⁷ Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 37; Agnieszka Sobocinska and Richard White, “Travel and Connections,” in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, vol. II, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 478.

⁸ Sobocinska and White, “Travel and Connections,” 473; Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1975).

⁹ Graeme Davison, *The Unforgiving Minute: How Australia Learned to Tell the Time* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 96; O’Malley, *Keeping Watch*, 145–99; Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 109–30.

¹⁰ This conclusion has been drawn from the Google Books “Ngram Viewer,” which allows users to search the frequency of particular words or phrases over time within Google’s corpus of digitised books. These search results should not be taken as definitive, as digitisation technologies are notoriously inaccurate, but they do provide some sense of general trends.

<https://books.google.com/ngrams>

¹¹ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 59–67.

'heightened awareness of time as a commodity'. Just as elsewhere in the industrialised world, a newfound concern with punctuality and clock-time infiltrated both private and public settings.¹² Yet in the half-century prior to 1960, Australia still clung to an idea of itself as a so-called 'working man's paradise', a land inoculated from the time pressures of the northern hemisphere by virtue of geographical isolation, progressive social policy and ample sunshine.¹³ Although a nation of city-dwellers, home to the technological apparatus of accelerated movement and communication, there remained—at least in principle—more incentive to ride the waves or perfect a batting stroke than to burn the candle at both ends.¹⁴

The United States, by contrast, was making conscious efforts to move faster than ever before. During the 1910s, Henry Ford and Frederick Taylor both developed systems of industrial organisation intended to increase the rate of production by rationalising work processes. As would be satirised in Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times* (1936), the spread of the assembly lines and time-and-motion studies in the factory soon gave rise to a broader fixation with speed. Taylorism, in particular, also known as scientific management, had significant social implications, responsible for transforming 'efficiency' from a technical engineering term into a human ideal.¹⁵ Busyness, then, did not just thrive in early twentieth-century America as a by-product of modern cities and machines, but was also cultivated by a nation always seeking to do more in less time.

¹² Davison, *The Unforgiving Minute*, 124.

¹³ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity, 1688–1980* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 111–19.

¹⁴ Cameron White, "'Save Us from the Womanly Man': The Transformation of the Body on the Beach in Sydney, 1810 to 1910," *Men and Masculinities* 10, no. 1 (2007): 22–38. On bodily fitness and modernity, see Charlotte Macdonald, "Body and Self: Learning to Be Modern in 1920s–1930s Britain," *Women's History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 267–79; Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Jennifer Karns Alexander, *The Mantra of Efficiency: From Waterwheel to Social Control* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Evelyn Cobley, *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency: Ideology and Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Suzanne Raitt, "The Rhetoric of Efficiency in Early Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 13, no. 1 (2006): 835–51.

Americans themselves believed that this culture of hustle was particular to the United States and potentially problematic. As early as 1881, physician George Beard identified a new malady, ‘American nervousness’, also known as neurasthenia, which had arisen from the mechanical products of ‘modern civilization’. The nervous system, Beard explained, had been overstimulated by the noise and speed of the telegraph, omnibus, steam train and pocket watch, leading to ‘deficiency or lack of nerve-force’. Such concerns about nervous health were also rife in Europe and Australia, but Beard insisted that nervousness was indigenous to the north-eastern United States, where modern civilisation had reached its apex.¹⁶ By the 1910s and 20s, concerns about America’s pace of life had spread beyond medical literature, developing into what historian Joel Dinerstein has called a ‘tempo-of-life-discourse’. Commentators ranging from esteemed academics to the popular press noted that the increasing prevalence of machines was hastening the tempo of activity and thought, often with dire consequences.¹⁷ In *The Tempo of Modern Life* (1931), James Adams diagnosed an ‘immense speeding up in the process of living’, responsible for increased rates of nervous disorders, divorce and homicide.¹⁸ Like Beard before him, Adams’ account of the modern tempo was infused with American exceptionalism. The United States, he concluded, was ‘pre-eminently the land of hustle’.¹⁹

Australian women tended to agree that America was ‘the land of hustle’, and expressed reservations about the local fetish for speed, wealth and relentless productivity. Although historians have located America’s romance with efficiency in the idealism of the Progressive era, visiting Australians continued to find evidence

¹⁶ George Miller Beard, *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Putnam, 1881), vi–viii, 13–14, 93, 103–09, 192.

¹⁷ Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African-American Culture Between the World Wars* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 29–47; Michael O’Malley, “That Busyness That Is Not Business: Nervousness and Character at the Turn of the Last Century,” *Social Research* 72, no. 2 (2005): 371–203.

¹⁸ James Truslow Adams, *The Tempo of Modern Life* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1931), 77–78, 91–92.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

of this love affair throughout the interwar decades and beyond.²⁰ At times, the American passion for productivity could inspire admiration and even a degree of awe. Yet on the whole it was judged a dubious virtue, particularly for visitors who struggled through long working days. Australians noted a quickened tempo throughout the United States but, unsurprisingly, identified New York and to a lesser extent Chicago as the nucleus of the hubbub. The perceived temporal disparities between Australia and the United States also remained remarkably constant throughout these decades, despite the urbanisation, immigration and technological change that transformed daily life on both sides of the Pacific.

This chapter suggests that Australians' aversion to the hustle of the United States introduced a note of caution into an otherwise enthusiastic embrace of American modernity. Unlike Stead, most Australian women did not see shades of the underworld on Fifth Avenue, but many began to adopt a more wary stance towards the future on display in the United States, and develop a newfound appreciation for the gentler existence they had left behind. If plunging into the American tomorrow meant chasing the dollar and watching the clock, some women concluded they would prefer a different future altogether.

The national habit of hustle

In July 1923, Queensland 'lady journalist' Harrie Nowland, fresh from an eighteen-month sojourn in the States, reported that idleness was anathema to the American way of life. Businessmen subscribed to the 'national habit of hustle', women were driven by 'restlessness', and even the leisured class was 'vigorously rather than vapidly fashionable'.²¹ Her compatriots agreed. 'From the President down to the smallest bell-boy,' declared welfare inspector May Matthews in 1929, 'American men glory in work.'²² Faith in the moral and social worth of ceaseless toil—what

²⁰ Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 74; Jennifer Alexander, "Efficiencies of Balance: Technical Efficiency, Popular Efficiency, and Arbitrary Standards in the Late Progressive Era USA," *Social Studies of Science* 38, no. 3 (2008): 323–49.

²¹ Harrie Nowland, "American Domesticity," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1923, 17.

²² "A Working Nation: Impressions of America," *Mercury* (Hobart), 1 October 1929, 13.

Max Weber called the ‘Protestant work ethic’—seemed the national religion, practised by young and old alike.²³ ‘You would certainly have to look very hard,’ Jean Lawson observed in 1952, ‘to find a lazy or apathetic American.’²⁴

Of course, the image of the industrious American has a long history, dating back to the Puritan settlers of the seventeenth century. In the twentieth century, however, this time-worn figure came to personify capitalist modernity.²⁵ Americans once laboured for the glory of God, but their busyness now also seemed driven by the need to keep pace with an unending sequence of technological innovations. As Australian visitors noted, the ideal modern American worker was an efficient worker, someone whose labour approximated the streamlined output of a well-oiled machine.²⁶ Once this paradigm took hold, exertion came to evoke productivity instead of sober faith, and the hardworking American was reinvented into a symbol of the nation’s modernity, evidence that mechanical imperatives had begun to set the rhythms and standards of human action.

The ‘national habit of hustle’ not only produced effective workers. It was also noted in late-night cafeterias, the dizzying pace of automobiles, and the restlessness of bedridden invalids. All were taken as signs of a culture addicted to action, suspicious of repose, and forever fearful of ‘wasting’ time.²⁷ The skyscraper—America’s indigenous architectural form—also reflected the prevailing ethos: playwright Doris Hayball saw ‘smooth efficiency’ in the clean lines of the Empire State Building, and Jean Lawson observed that New York’s skyscrapers possessed

²³ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1930), 155–83.

²⁴ Lawson, *American Holiday*, 103.

²⁵ On the long history of American industry and time consciousness, see Thomas Allen, “Clockwork Nation: Modern Time, Moral Perfectionism and American Identity in Catharine Beecher and Henry Thoreau,” *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 01 (2005): 65–86; Michael O’Malley, “Time, Work and Task Orientation: A Critique of American Historiography,” *Time & Society* 1, no. 3 (1992): 348–50.

²⁶ See for instance, Elsa Chauvel, *My Life with Charles Chauvel* (Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1973), 28; Davis, *Report on Overseas Study Leave*, 13; Theresa Moore to mother, 30 September 1949, box 3, Moore Papers.

²⁷ Nolan, *Open Negative*, 144; Theresa Moore to mother, 31 May 1950, box 3, Moore Papers; Marjorie Quinn, “Going Places in Los Angeles: Speed and Spend,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1937, 13.

an ‘air of efficiency that invests them with a kind of beauty’.²⁸ During the Prohibition era, the (ostensible) repudiation of intoxicating liquors was also regarded by at least one Australian as further evidence of a national aversion to idleness. Alcohol and its associated carousing appeared to have fallen victim to the cult of efficiency.²⁹

This cult was, by all reports, subject to regional variation. The atmosphere was brisk on the west coast, the arrival point of most Australians, but the pace intensified as they ventured further east. The inhabitants of Midwestern cities seemed born workhorses, but the most ardent clock-watchers could be found in New York.³⁰ It is important to note, however, that a brisk tempo was reported almost nationwide. Hustle could be found in Texan suburbs, the factories of North Carolina, and Yosemite National Park.³¹ Only the rural Deep South seemed immune. Those who ventured below the Mason-Dixon Line commented on the quaint sleepiness of the southern countryside, which had evidently failed to keep pace with the rest of the nation.³² Southerners were ‘quite two hundred years behind the rest of the world’, noted novelist Dorothy Cottrell in 1938.³³ Boston—and New England more broadly—was also believed to offer reprieve from the prevailing tempo, an observation that possibly stemmed from the reputed ‘Englishness’ of the region.³⁴ Yet the sleepiness of the rural South, and to a lesser extent New England, was notable primarily because it provided such a contrast to the hustle evident elsewhere. These quiet regions were the exceptions that proved the rule, striking because they were anomalous.

²⁸ Hayball, “From Coast to Coast”; Lawson, *American Holiday*, 157.

²⁹ Dorothy Cottrell to family, 8 July c. 1930, folder added 6.7.81, box 2, Cottrell Papers.

³⁰ Hayball, “From Coast to Coast”; Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 85; Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 5–6, 51–52.

³¹ Theresa Moore to mother, 27 September 1949, box 3, Moore Papers; “A Visit to Raleigh,” 4392A/15, Papers of Mollie Lukis, 1926–2002, SLWA; Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 254–55.

³² *Ibid.*, 188; Barbara Toy, *Columbus Was Right! Rover around the World* (London: John Murray, 1958), 236; Nolan, *Open Negative*, 8; 10 April 1950, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers; Hayball, “From Coast to Coast.”

³³ Dorothy Cottrell to ‘Dooney’, 12 August 1938, folder added 6.7.81, box 2, Cottrell Papers.

³⁴ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 99; Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 112–14; Warner, *Don’t Type in Bed*, 240–41; Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 128; 17 February 1950, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.

This productivity ethos met with an ambivalent response. Australian women would often discuss the local work ethic in tones of admiration, and attributed the nation's unparalleled wealth to its prodigious appetite for exertion. The hustle habit seemed most commendable whenever visitors themselves reaped the benefits. Weary travellers revelled in the efficient service and late hours typical of American hotels, restaurants and shops.³⁵ They also applauded the 'military precision' of the synchronised dance routines performed by the Rockettes at New York's Radio City Music Hall, a triumph of mass organisation that Siegfried Kracauer identified as the aesthetic counterpart to Taylorist factory production.³⁶

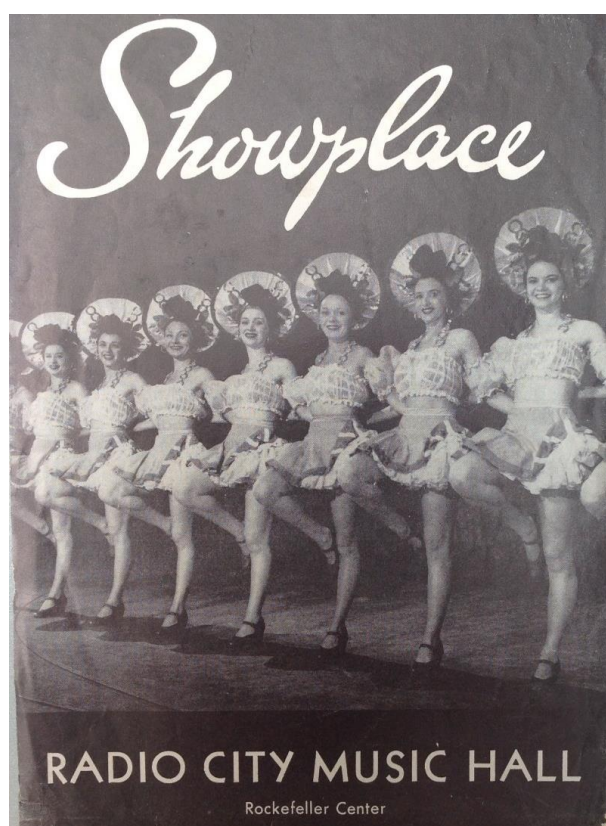


Figure 31: The Rockettes displaying their coordinated kicks on the front cover of a Radio City Music Hall program, 1948. Arnot Papers, box 4.

³⁵ Pope, *We Circled the World*, 153–54.

³⁶ Kracauer's seminal 1927 analysis of coordinated dancing spectacles was focused on the Tiller Girls, an English dance troupe, but his comments are equally applicable to the Rockettes, an American troupe founded in 1925 which became a regular act at Radio City Music Hall. According to Kracauer, the 'hands in the factory correspond to the legs of the Tiller Girls'. Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 78–79. For Australian responses to the Rockettes, see, "Above the Clouds," 1936, item 84, series II, Rischbieth Papers; Lawson, *American Holiday*, 161.

The encroachment of Taylorist principles into the private sphere could likewise generate enthusiasm. In 1926, Janet Mitchell, the new Thrift Service Director of the Government Savings Bank of New South Wales, embarked upon a tour of American banks. In the course of her travels, Mitchell became a convert to the ‘Gospel of Thrift’, which, in her mind, constituted a philosophy of life. More than just financial prudence, it also encompassed ‘the wisely planned and proportionate use of energy, time, and materials.’³⁷ Thrift was, in essence, a route to personal and domestic efficiency. Having realised these broader implications, Mitchell decided that thrift education would become her life’s work, and, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, returned to Sydney afire with evangelical zeal.³⁸

Although the utopianism of scientific management won some converts, most Australian women were not altogether convinced that America’s busyness was commendable. Their concerns coalesced on two main critiques, both of which echo the broader ‘tempo-of-life’ discourse.³⁹ The first was that the pursuit of efficiency was soulless and dehumanising; it converted workers into machines and stripped the joy from life. This line of thinking most often emerged after a visit to an actual factory, where the drear sight of workers toiling on assembly lines made the human cost of streamlined production difficult to ignore.⁴⁰ In 1959, however, Cynthia Nolan would rail against rationalisation after observing the prevalence of lawns in the suburban landscape. ‘Driving through America one misses flower-gardens,’ she wrote, ‘There are neither hedges nor fences between the homes, just efficient houses and strips of lawn; everything neat, conforming, foolproof, labour-saving.’⁴¹ A nation that lacked time for flowers, Nolan suggested, had lost something of its soul.

The second critique questioned whether such ceaseless exertion was indeed efficient. Much activity that purported to be productive was held to be mindless

³⁷ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 90–91.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 101–23.

³⁹ Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine*, 34–40; O’Malley, “That Busyness That Is Not Business,” 377–78; Adams, *The Tempo of Modern Life*, 89.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, 4 February 1951, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers; “A Visit to Raleigh, North Carolina,” 4392A/15, Lukis Papers.

⁴¹ Nolan, *Open Negative*, 43.

busyness, which strained the mind and body without proportional gains in output. This was the conclusion reached by Theresa Moore during a four-month visit to the University of Texas in 1949. The campus culture, Moore discovered, dictated that her scientist husband would join his colleagues on weekend research trips. Moore herself, facing a lonely weekend and a weary husband, regarded this extension of the working week as a waste of time and energy. Americans, she decided, were 'Eager Beavers' who 'make a great show of being busy'. They failed to 'get any more done than the average Australian', but made 'a bigger splash'.⁴² Her contemporary Mavis Riley agreed. '[A] more civilized tempo', she wrote, 'would accomplish just as much'.⁴³ And though the benefits of busyness were dubious, the costs were all too plain. Swept up in this commotion, Americans appeared to have fallen victim to chronic restlessness and anxiety, forever fearful of falling behind.⁴⁴

One sign of this fretful culture was a widespread pre-occupation with time. When, in 1936, Christina Stead first settled in New York, she was informed, 'You'll have to work faster, you haven't got much time left'. Aged only thirty-four, Stead had given little thought to mortality, and felt confident that time was on her side.⁴⁵ Two decades later, Joan Lindsay had her own bewildering confrontation with modern time-consciousness. Lindsay, the author of a memoir entitled *Time without Clocks*, was not known for her close attention to times and dates, and proved ill-suited to the tight scheduling of life in the States.⁴⁶ When she and her husband visited San Francisco in 1952, a local gallery director, Dr Heil, offered to spend an afternoon showing the couple the sights. The climax of the tour was a visit to the famous redwood forests north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Upon reaching their destination, however, Lindsay had only begun to sense the 'secret magic of the forest', when Heil started 'looking anxiously at his watch.' 'What time do you folks

⁴² Theresa Moore to mother, 29 October 1949, box 3, Moore Papers.

⁴³ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 95.

⁴⁴ See for example, "America," folder 79, box 11, Stead Papers.

⁴⁵ Stead, *A Web of Friendship*, 66–67.

⁴⁶ Joan Lindsay, *Time Without Clocks* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1962).

make it?’ he asked the Australian couple, before bundling them back into the car.⁴⁷ This urgency, Lindsay made clear, was not compelled by a specific deadline, but rather stemmed from an addiction to clock-watching that prevented even a ‘passionate sequoia fan’ such as Heil from savouring the beauty of nature.⁴⁸

Joining the rat race

Such misgivings about the national tempo were confirmed by visitors who were incorporated into the rhythms of American life. When Australians commenced study or employment in the United States, they often struggled to adopt the strenuous schedules of their local colleagues. During the 1920s, white-collar workers could be found beavering away as early as 8.30; by the 1940s and 50s, 8am had become the norm in many cities.⁴⁹ For Australians more habituated to clocking-on at 9am or later, adjusting to this early start proved difficult. To ensure a punctual 8am arrival, they would either set their alarms an hour earlier—and perhaps lose an hour’s sleep—or dress and breakfast in a frantic rush. Theresa Moore complained that Houston’s working schedules had introduced an unfamiliar element of stress into her morning routine. ‘I never thought I’d have to wait till I got back to Australia to sleep in!’ she wrote home in October 1949. ‘Honestly, Americans get up so early! Their shops, schools, offices start at 8am...we are flat out even if we rise at 6.30am.’⁵⁰

These early starts did not necessarily translate into early bedtimes. Since the nineteenth century, Americans had been notorious for judging sleep a hindrance to productivity, and celebrating those capable of functioning on limited rest.⁵¹ Australian visitors were, to their dismay, sometimes press-ganged into this sleep-deprived culture. The feminist Ada Holman, who toured the States in 1915, was

⁴⁷ Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18–20.

⁴⁹ On business hours in the 1920s, see Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 101; Nowland, “American Domesticity.” On the 1940s and 50s, see “American Films not True to Type,” *Border Watch* (Mt Gambier), 20 March 1947, 5; Millerd interview.

⁵⁰ Theresa Moore to mother, 7 October 1949, box 3, Moore Papers.

⁵¹ Alan Derickson, *Dangerously Sleepy: Overworked Americans and the Cult of Manly Wakefulness* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1–26.

kept awake till the wee hours but expected to rise bright and early the next morning. In San Francisco, she was allowed only five hours' sleep each night. When she confessed her fatigue, the locals were unmoved. 'Didn't you have a good sleep on the *Sonoma* coming over?' her host replied.⁵²

Nor did an early start mean an early finish. In most cases, despite commencing work at 8am, workers were expected to remain at their post until 5pm or later. Theresa Moore, for one, found such a routine difficult to stomach. 'I found the hours a bit tough,' she confessed of her secretarial job at the University of Minnesota. '[T]he 8am starting time is pretty grim', and '[f]our hours in the morning and four hours in the afternoon is a bit steep.'⁵³ The diplomat Julia Drake-Brockman, who was posted to New York in 1946, was also taxed by her work hours. Although permitted to arrive at 9am, she remained in the office long after 5pm, and did occasional work on weekends. Drake-Brockman was no stranger to full-time employment, but was soon run ragged by the long days in New York, which were exacerbated by a one-hour commute each morning and night.⁵⁴ On the surface, these schedules were not dissimilar to those in Australia, where an eight-hour day, excluding lunch, was also accepted convention.⁵⁵ Yet statistical data does suggest that, in practice, a full-time job tended to be more exacting in America: in 1929, the average working week was 48 hours in the United States and 45.5 hours in Australia, while in 1950 these figures were 42.4 and 39.6.⁵⁶ Moore and Drake-Brockman certainly insisted that the hours of labour and level of focus required in an American workplace were foreign to their experience, and occasioned an uncommon degree

⁵² Holman, *Memoirs of a Premier's Wife*, 158.

⁵³ Theresa Moore to mother, 23 October 1950, box 3, Theresa Moore Papers.

⁵⁴ Julia Drake-Brockman to Henrietta Drake-Brockman, 4 July 1946, folder 44, box 6, Drake-Brockman Papers.

⁵⁵ Archibald A. Evans, *Hours of Work in Industrialised Countries* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1975), 22.

⁵⁶ Michael Huberman and Chris Minns, "The Times They Are Not Chargin': Days and Hours of Work in Old and New Worlds, 1870–2000," *Explorations in Economic History* 44, no. 4 (2007): 542.

of fatigue. After several weeks in New York, Drake-Brockman and her husband were both ‘too tired to talk or read or do anything but go to bed and sleep [sic]’.⁵⁷

The struggles of Australian women who completed graduate degrees in the States further underscore such disparities. Unlike the British PhD model, which was based around a thesis, American doctoral candidates completed several years of coursework in addition to a dissertation. In some programs, competency in two foreign languages was required. For Australian students, this intensive course of study was stimulating, but the workload also proved a strain.⁵⁸ The local students devoted long hours to their research, setting a standard that was difficult to follow. On one occasion in the early 1950s, Katie Helms, a doctoral candidate in plant pathology at the University of Wisconsin, checked on her experiments on Christmas Day, only to discover a group of students hard at work in the laboratory.⁵⁹ The standard of effort and brilliance expected was especially high for women. According to Jill Ker Conway, an Australian-born and Harvard-educated historian, a female graduate student’s work ‘had to be just that much better’ to win acceptance within the male world of academia.⁶⁰ This culture of ‘constant pressure, competition, no time to relax’ proved unbearable to Ruth Fink, who commenced a PhD in anthropology at Columbia University in 1957. After only a month in this ‘rat race’, she became mired in anxiety and self-doubt, resulting in a debilitating bout of depression.⁶¹

If work and study were more demanding in the United States, the hours of leisure could not be relied upon to provide respite. During the first half of the twentieth century, a culture described as the ‘Protestant leisure ethic’ flourished in the United States. In their quest to maximise efficiency, middle-class Americans rushed to fill idle moments with ‘productive’ forms of leisure, such as hobbies and

⁵⁷ Julia Drake-Brockman to Henrietta Drake-Brockman, 4 July 1946, folder 44, box 6, Drake-Brockman Papers.

⁵⁸ Ninham, *A Cohort of Pioneers*, 99–123.

⁵⁹ Katie Helms interviewed by Anne Rees, 21 August 2014.

⁶⁰ Conway, *True North*, 31.

⁶¹ Latukefu interview.

sports.⁶² Australians found themselves likewise expected to dedicate evenings and weekends to ‘worthy’ pursuits, and could receive censure for favouring relaxation above self-improvement. This was the fate of nursing student Alphonse, the Australian protagonist of Cynthia Reed’s autobiographical novel *Lucky Alphonse*. Towards the end of the novel, in 1940, Alphonse commences graduate studies in psychiatric nursing in New York. Stimulated by this entrée into specialised medicine, she revels in the packed schedule of lectures, ward rounds and private study. In the evenings, however, Alphonse is well and truly spent, and seeks nothing more than rest. This attitude was unacceptable to her fellow-students, who ‘were rather shocked by what they termed Alphonse’s “lack of ambition.” They thought she should take more part in extra-curriculum [sic] activities.’ Despite this admonition, Alphonse refuses to be shamed into more ‘productive’ forms of leisure, and upholds her right to relaxation. Others could go ‘rushing out into New York’ of an evening, but Alphonse ‘preferred going to bed with a book’.⁶³

From this comfortable perch, she viewed her squash-playing and library-going peers with dismay. All this ‘bustle and business’, Reed wrote,

gave Alphonse an uncomfortable feeling that one must throw oneself into the unrest, pounding, and hurry of the waves, or be left stranded and disconsolate upon a barren shore. You must be doing things and going places, continually, or you are lost, an outcast and a failure.⁶⁴

In this formulation, the productive leisure beloved by Americans becomes no more than mindless busyness, a ceaseless treadmill of ‘doing’ and ‘going’ that wearied the individual and revealed a cut-throat individualism within society at large. Adopting the leisure habits of the United States, Reed suggests, could be no less objectionable than following the tempo of its workplaces.

⁶² Gelber, *Hobbies*, 4–49.

⁶³ Reed, *Lucky Alphonse*, 223.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

A scramble for boodle

Not only was the United States home to inordinate hustle, but it also seemed a nation of hustlers, or persons adept at obtaining wealth. Although the products of American affluence were often greeted with admiration, Australians were less kindly disposed towards the avaricious attitudes that underpinned the proliferation of modern homes, fashions and consumer goods. Christina Stead concluded soon after arriving in 1935 that American life was ‘a scramble for boodle and nothing else’. This ‘acute worship of Mammon,’ she noted, ‘is something marvellous, incredible as the gold halls of Babylon.’⁶⁵ As a Communist sympathiser writing in the aftermath of the Depression, Stead could be expected to disdain the culture of capitalism. Yet her aversion to this ‘love and need of money’ was also voiced in similar terms by conservative women who visited at times when capitalism had fewer critics.⁶⁶

An early critique comes from writer Winifred James, who married a scion of Louisiana in 1913, becoming a resident of Panama and a frequent visitor to the States.⁶⁷ Unlike the left-leaning Stead, James was a proud imperialist, but had equal contempt for American money worship.⁶⁸ In her memoir *Out of the Shadows* (1924), James identified materialism as the national religion. ‘They have but one love, one hope, one faith,’ she wrote, ‘and it is money, more money and still more money.’ This hunger was never satisfied, and had given rise to an epidemic of physical and spiritual degeneration. ‘Men lose their virility early here’, James warned, and ‘their souls go hungry because of gold’.⁶⁹ Thirty years later, during the era of postwar prosperity, the conservative travel writer Mavis Riley echoed these concerns. She railed against the ‘excessive rushing to accumulate dollars’ and speculated that dollar signs, not blood, flowed through the veins of New Yorkers.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Stead, “America.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Sally O’Neill, “James, Winifred Llewellyn (1876–1941),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/james-winifred-llewellyn-6826/text11813>, accessed 13 August 2014.

⁶⁸ On James’ imperialism, see James, *Out of the Shadows*, 94–95.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 152–54.

⁷⁰ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 89, 95. For a discussion of Riley’s conservative gender politics, see Chapter One.

The most objectionable aspect of the ‘scramble for boodle’ was its nakedness. Money was discussed at the dinner table, and total strangers were apt to disclose their income.⁷¹ When the nurse Leila Bowen worked in San Francisco hospitals during the mid-1920s, she was appalled to discover that local nurses scrutinised the income of incoming patients and distributed their attentions accordingly. They fawned upon wealthy patients with hopes of receiving monetary gifts, while invalids without deep pockets were given the bare minimum of medical attention. Bowen was proud to inform the Adelaide public that she had eschewed such mercenary behaviour, and concluded that the ‘most distasteful aspect of American society is the worship of money’.⁷² Bowen’s compatriots were likewise confronted by the American habit of reducing the succour of life—home, education, culture—to a monetary value. ‘One has to literally learn to think in dollars,’ Mary Perry noted in 1923. Back home, one would refer to a ‘50 acre property’, whereas an American would describe the same piece of land as a ‘10,000 dollar ranch’. Even a fine educational institution was a ‘250,000 dollar school’.⁷³

In some respects, these critiques constitute a conventional restating of the antipathy towards American materialism that has infused travel writing about the United States since the publication of Alexis De Toqueville’s *Democracy in America* (1835).⁷⁴ They are also, in many cases, rooted in class prejudice and privilege. For Australians such as Perry, a woman of independent means, money could be fastidiously avoided in conversation because it had always been there, throughout her own life and for generations past.⁷⁵ The brazen talk of dollars in America, by contrast, smacked of ‘new money’ and social mobility, of immigrants

⁷¹ Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 37–38; 29 June 1923, Travel Diary, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers.

⁷² “Nursing in America,” *Register* (Adelaide), 22 March 1927, 5.

⁷³ Mary Perry to family, 30 September 1923, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers.

⁷⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 153–55; Rapson, *Britons View America*, 166–69; Commager, *America in Perspective*, xvii.

⁷⁵ Although Perry ‘courted hardships’ during her American travels, even working as a domestic servant in Los Angeles, she was also a philanthropist who had funded the establishment of Frensham School, an elite girls’ boarding school in New South Wales. E. L. Tuckey, “Mary Perry,” *Frensham Chronicle*, 1938, folder 7, box 1, Perry Papers; Esther Tuckey, *Fifty Years at Frensham* (Mittagong: Winifred West Schools, 1963), 19.

and workers ascending into prosperity without heed for the conventions of polite society. To a certain extent, then, this aversion to money hunger can be characterised as the snobbery of genteel Britons recoiling from the rough edges of American democracy in action. For visitors whose family fortunes were on the decline, meanwhile, the materialism of the States may have disturbed because it threatened their social status. In the British imperial world, 'good breeding' continued to afford cachet, regardless of personal income, but in America, where the dollar reigned supreme, a respectable family was little compensation for empty pockets.

Yet at the same time, the 'scramble for boodle' also caused offence because it was a 'scramble'. The pursuit of wealth, Riley noted, caused 'excessive rushing' and required, in James' words, 'all your life and strength'.⁷⁶ Materialism, from this perspective, was abhorrent because it gave rise to unseemly striving, not because material wealth was inherently offensive. To Australian visitors, in other words, the culture of haste and the love of dollars went hand-in-hand. Much of the rushing and competition was in pursuit of riches, making materialism a chief enemy of relaxation and well-being. It was also noted that widespread prosperity sparked new consumer desires that only exacerbated the frenzy of money-making and spending. As travel writer Barbara Toy observed in 1958, 'No wonder Americans set such store by money: they have invented so many marvellous things to do with it.'⁷⁷ In these accounts, hustle and hustlers were tarred with the same brush, both coming to represent the dark underside of America's glossy vision of the future.

Central heating, cans and cosmetics

If modern life in the States appeared divorced from 'natural' rhythms of work and rest, it was equally detached from the 'natural' environment. The technological innovations that promised to maximise efficiency had drawn a veil between humans and nature. Air-conditioning vents replaced fresh breezes, canned foods supplanted fresh produce, and the burgeoning make-up industry allowed women to

⁷⁶ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 95; James, *Out of the Shadows*, 154.

⁷⁷ Toy, *Columbus Was Right!* 215.

manufacture youth and beauty at the cosmetics counter. The proliferation of man-made products and environments was, Australians insisted, far from wholesome. A particular target of their ire was artificial ventilation and temperature control, technologies developed in the States during the first decade of the century. Air-conditioning remained rare in private homes until the 1950s, but was introduced into cinemas, department stores and other public spaces from around 1917.⁷⁸ Although intended to achieve ‘mastery over the weather’, this modern method of regulating heat and humidity won few Australian admirers.⁷⁹ Instead they complained about the lack of fresh air, and often went to considerable pains to open a window. While travelling through Texas by train in 1923, Mary Perry was quite overcome by the ‘stifling’ conditions. ‘Ventilation means fresh air and cool air and the American from East to West has no use for the first and loathes the second,’ she complained. Over the course of her journey, Perry discovered that sitting at the rear of the car could create opportunity to open a window, though her efforts were often undone by the objections of fellow-travellers.⁸⁰

For Perry and others, the American aversion to fresh air posed a vague yet ominous threat to physical health, a stance which reflected the contemporary belief that vitality was dependent upon close communion with the great outdoors.⁸¹ ‘I don’t think they live wholesomely,’ Perry noted of the interior-loving locals.⁸² Even in California, where the mild weather was no barrier to stepping outside, ‘[o]ne lives in one’s house or office or in one’s car—there seems to be no place in between’.⁸³ By the 1940s, the overuse of light-bulbs appeared to be exacerbating this alienation

⁷⁸ Jeff Biddle, “Explaining the Spread of Residential Air Conditioning, 1955–1980,” *Explorations in Economic History* 45, no. 4 (2008): 402–23; Gail Cooper, *Air-Conditioning America: Engineers and the Controlled Environment, 1900–1960* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 80–109, 153–57.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁰ Mary Perry to family, 29 December 1923, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers. A similar episode is narrated in Hasluck, *Portrait in a Mirror*, 174–75.

⁸¹ Kate Murphy, *Fears and Fantasies: Modernity, Gender, and the Rural-Urban Divide* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 19–26.

⁸² Mary Perry to family, 30 September 1923, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers.

⁸³ Mary Perry to family, 2 September 1923, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers.

from the natural world. During her nationwide library tour in 1948, Jean Arnot was troubled by the widespread use of venetian blinds to block out daylight, necessitating electric illumination around the clock. Americans seemed ‘frightened of the sun’, and the whole tenor of life was ‘very artificial’. In a reference to ‘pale faced children’ and caffeinated ‘pick-me-ups’, Arnot hinted at the dire consequences of shunning sunshine.⁸⁴ ‘After all,’ she insisted, ‘no man-made light can compare with the sun.’⁸⁵

Concerns about the synthetic quality of American life also extended to the food. From the 1880s, when the agricultural industry first adopted technologies such as refrigeration, canning and preservatives, ‘industrial foods’ entered the American diet. The factory began to inveigle itself between farmer and consumer, a process that created new products such as margarine, and also altered the shelf-life, packaging and taste of fresh produce.⁸⁶ At the same time, the proliferation of cafeterias, diners and ‘Automats’ transformed restaurant dining into an affordable luxury, bringing the convenience of ‘eating out’ to a mass public.⁸⁷ These developments were met with considerable ambivalence by women from Australia. From the 1910s onwards, visitors recognised that a quick meal from a can or cafeteria had an undeniable element of convenience, especially for wives and mothers who would otherwise be sweating over a hot stove. Yet prepared foods were also deemed less wholesome than fresh produce and home cookery, an anxiety no doubt fuelled by the poor regulation and health scares that characterised the first decades of industrial food production.⁸⁸ Brisbane writer Kathleen Unmack

⁸⁴ 31 December 1948 and 8 January 1949, Travel Diary, box 1, Arnot Papers.

⁸⁵ Jean Arnot to family, 30 December 1948, box 15, Arnot Papers.

⁸⁶ Uwe Spiekermann, “Redefining Food: The Standardization of Products and Production in Europe and the United States, 1880–1914,” *History and Technology* 27, no. 1 (2011): 11–36; Gabriella M. Petrick, “Larding the Larder: Designing Taste for the Modern Age,” *Senses & Society* 5, no. 3 (2010): 382–87; Gabriella M. Petrick, “Industrial Food,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, ed. Jeffrey M. Pilcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199729937.001.0001

⁸⁷ Andrew Peter Haley, “Turning the Tables: American Restaurant Culture and the Rise of the Middle Class, 1880–1920,” (PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2005), 108–19; Nicolas Bromell, “The Automat: Preparing the Way for Fast Food,” *New York History* 81, no. 3 (2000): 300–312.

⁸⁸ See for instance, Mary Perry to family, 26 August 1923, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers. On the anxiety stemming from the initial poor regulation of industrial food, see Gabriella M. Petrick, “An

betrayed this aversion to processed cuisine when she visited the Niagara Falls Shredded Wheat factory in 1909. When offered a free sample of the popular breakfast cereal, Unmack declined to partake of more than a few mouthfuls, and opted instead for the accompanying fruit and cream—‘natural’ foods she judged superior to factory products.⁸⁹

Twenty years later, ‘natural’ foods had themselves become suspect. Cynthia Reed expressed reservations about the raw foodstuffs for sale in 1930s California, correctly recognising that, by the interwar decades, even much fresh produce was adulterated by modern preserving techniques before arriving in store.⁹⁰ ‘[T]here was the greatest imaginable variety of food,’ she wrote in her autobiographical novel, ‘but it had been put through so many processes of air conditioning, sterilising, and frigid airing, that it tasted of nothing so much as the inside of an autoclave’. Although intended to improve food safety and shelf-life, these industrial processes appeared to have stripped nature’s bounty of its life-force, creating an end product that was less flavoursome and also, perhaps, less nourishing. As Reed concluded, ‘the satisfaction of knowing there were no bacteria present was small compensation’ for such enervated produce.⁹¹

Reed’s concerns were to be echoed by her counterparts from the 1940s and 50s, when the rise of supermarkets lent a further layer of mechanisation to the consumption of household cuisine. The supermarket was an American invention, which swept through the retailing landscape during the 1930s. By 1940, there were over six thousand nationwide. For visitors from Australia, where the supermarket would not usurp the neighbourhood grocer until the late 1950s, these stores offered

Ambivalent Diet: The Industrialization of Canning,” *OAH Magazine of History* 24, no. 3 (2010): 35–38; Gabriella M. Petrick, “‘Purity as Life’: H.J. Heinz, Religious Sentiment, and the Beginning of the Industrial Diet,” *History and Technology* 27, no. 1 (2011): 37–64.

⁸⁹ Mrs Theodor Unmack, *Across Two Continents: America and Europe* (Brisbane: Telegraph Newspaper Company, 1910), 15–16.

⁹⁰ On the industrialisation of interwar agriculture, see Gabriella M. Petrick, “‘Like Ribbons of Green and Gold’: Industrializing Lettuce and the Quest for Quality in the Salinas Valley, 1920–1965,” *Agricultural History* 80, no. 3 (2006): 269–95.

⁹¹ Reed, *Lucky Alphonse*, 18.

a staggering cornucopia of choice.⁹² In 1952, Jean Lawson fell into a dazed reverie as she wandered through ‘deep-freeze cabinets stocked with frozen strawberries, garden peas and sweet corn’, ‘racks of tinned and bottled soups and jams and pickles’, and ‘counters piled with dozens of different kinds of bread, rolls and cakes and pies’.⁹³



Figure 32: The interior of a Seattle supermarket in 1955. Both the large product range and the freedom to wander the aisles excited Australian women. Seattle Municipal Archives Photograph Collection, 1802-OP, 168286.

Yet as she discovered, these tantalising displays did not translate into flavoursome food. The meat was a ‘queer colour’ and had a ‘disappointing’ taste, while the bread was distinctly unappetising: ‘soft, crustless and flabby and slightly sweet’.⁹⁴ Later in the decade, Columbia University student Ruth Fink was likewise unimpressed by the quality of supermarket products. Her aunt, a long-term New Yorker, was habituated to pre-sliced cheese, but Fink insisted upon a virgin block.

⁹² Kim Humphery, *Shelf Life: Supermarkets and the Changing Cultures of Consumption* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40, 68–70; Beverley Kingston, *Basket, Bag and Trolley: A History of Shopping in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 86–88.

⁹³ Lawson, *American Holiday*, 46–47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

She also, like many Australians, had contempt for tea-bags, and continued to prefer loose tea brewed in a pot.⁹⁵ Industrial food, according to these women, was sub-standard food, a discovery that further bolstered the suspicion that the technological marvels of modernity did not always enhance the pleasure of everyday life.

A concomitant source of disquiet was the manufacture of youth and beauty. From the 1920s, when make-up was transformed from a sign of questionable virtue into a mainstream consumer good, Australians marvelled at the sophistication of America's beauty culture.⁹⁶ The local women, they reported, were expert in the application of cosmetics, ardent followers of fashion, and habitués of the hair salon.⁹⁷ This careful cultivation of beauty started young, and, particularly in the 1940s and 50s, when the modern teenager was born, the womanly grooming of adolescent girls was often remarked upon.⁹⁸ At its most extreme, this eagerness to augment the female body manifested in plastic surgery, which attracted notice from as early as 1915.⁹⁹ During an era when a woman's beauty was a key measure of her worth, this attention to grooming won considerable admiration. Several representatives from the Australian beauty industry even travelled across the Pacific to acquaint themselves with American expertise. As early as 1919, Brisbane retailer Jeanne Shaw visited Chicago to investigate 'US aids to pulchritude'.¹⁰⁰ By 1945 it was deemed imperative for *Australian Women's Weekly* journalist Maisie

⁹⁵ Latukefu interview. On the dislike of tea-bags, see also Theresa Moore to mother, 8 September 1949, box 3, Moore Papers.

⁹⁶ Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 97–133.

⁹⁷ See, for instance, Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 141; Lawson, *American Holiday*, 203; "Adelaide Girl Goes Round World: Experiences in America and England," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 15 January 1932, 9; "Beauty Aids in USA," *Argus* (Melbourne), 17 August 1937, 3; "Modern Beauty Culture," *West Australian* (Perth), 23 May 1934, 9.

⁹⁸ See, for example, 12 December 1948, Travel Diary, box 1, Arnot Papers; "America's Second Largest Industry," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 7 August 1946, 5; "Shiny Nose is To Be Envied!" *Advocate* (Burnie), 17 July 1946, 8.

⁹⁹ Holman, *Memoirs of a Premier's Wife*, 178; Jenner, *Darlings, I've Had a Ball*, 284.

¹⁰⁰ "Beauty First," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 June 1919, 6.

McMahon to study ‘the latest methods in America’s leading beauty salons’ before taking charge of the magazine’s beauty department.¹⁰¹

Yet lurking behind this enthusiasm were persistent misgivings about physical charms which were so patently manufactured. The prevailing assumption that beauty required artifice was a problematic proposition for Australian women, who hailed from a nation that prided itself on the beautifying effects of the great outdoors.¹⁰² Australian actresses and pin-ups would often advertise their sparing use of cosmetics, and make snide remarks about the beauty aids required by American starlets.¹⁰³ For the inaugural Miss Australia, wholesome Beryl Mills, American women’s love of cosmetics was far from commendable, suggesting, as it did, the type of elaborate self-fashioning she herself had repudiated. Throughout her 1926 US tour, Mills’ disdain for powder and penchant for exercise made her a novel figure in the eyes of the local press. ‘I’m just me,’ she told a California shop assistant who advised that Mills don a more glamorous get-up, a statement which insinuated that women who did cultivate glamour were leaving their authentic selves behind.¹⁰⁴

Mills’ suspicion of man-made charms voiced was echoed by visitors who had less personal investment in beauty and its sources. When a middle-aged Mary Perry went flaneuring through Los Angeles on Independence Day 1923, she concluded that the local women were ‘good looking’ and ‘dress very well’, but were apt to preen. They sported hairstyles so elaborate that no hat would sit on top, and ‘quite unnecessary’ layers of make-up. Such self-conscious displays of feminine allure lent support to Perry’s growing suspicion that ‘much in this country seems to

¹⁰¹ “Make-up is Natural, but Hats are Mad,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 2 March 1946, 9.

¹⁰² On the link between beauty and artifice, see Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 274. On the belief that the Australian climate enhanced womanly charms, see Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 167–70.

¹⁰³ “Miss Australia Scorns Contests,” *New York Times*, c. 1926, Beryl Mills Scrapbook, Papers of Marion Brooke and Beryl Mills, 1900–1997, MN 2564, SLWA; Harry Brand, “Biography of Mary Maguire,” 20th Century Fox, c. 1930s, Mary Maguire Biography File, Margaret Herrick Library; “Sylvia Breamer Uses Costumes Rather than Cosmetics to Accent Her Loveliness,” *Film Forecast* (Pittsburgh, PA), 7 June 1924; Harriet Parsons, “Keyhole Portrait,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, 13 August 1944.

¹⁰⁴ “Beauty Goes Swimming on Tour of SF,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 August 1926, Beryl Mills Scrapbook, Brooke and Mills Papers.

be done for effect.¹⁰⁵ Drawing upon entrenched associations between ‘making up’ and deceit, her account implies that the prevalence of cosmetics bespoke a broader culture of performance and simulacra, in which ersatz products displaced the ‘authentic’ and the ‘natural’.¹⁰⁶ Not only did the women of modern America breathe adulterated air and consume industrial food, but had themselves become constructions of the machine age.



Figure 33: As this photograph of Beryl Mills indicates, ‘bathing beauties’ who actually bathed were quite a novelty in the US. New York Evening Journal, 25 August 1926.

¹⁰⁵ 4 July 1923, Travel Diary, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers.

¹⁰⁶ On cultural anxieties about the artifice of cosmetics, see Kathy Peiss, “Making Up, Making Over: Cosmetics, Consumer Culture, and Women’s Identity,” in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. Ellen Furlough and Victoria De Grazia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 311–36.

A Monstrous City

The culture of haste and mechanisation observed throughout the United States reached its apotheosis in New York, the ‘machine city of the future’.¹⁰⁷ By 1901, the city was already so hectic that American physician John Girdner reported that a majority of residents suffered from ‘Newyorkitis’, a disease of the ‘body, mind, and soul’ caused by fast-paced urban living.¹⁰⁸ Twenty-five years after Girdner made his diagnosis, the city had become a modern metropolis without peer. Due to a flood of immigration, it had overtaken London to claim the title of largest city in the world.¹⁰⁹ With a population of almost eight million, New York had more inhabitants than the entire nation of Australia.¹¹⁰ It boasted the world’s fastest subway and its tallest skyscraper, the 60-storey Woolworth Building.¹¹¹ According to local writer James Truslow Adams, such technological marvels had caused interwar New York to also become the most hectic metropolis on earth—at least ten times faster than London and Paris.¹¹²

The factors responsible for New York’s hectic pace were also the source of its allure. Towering buildings and busy streets gave the city a reputation for glamour and excitement, and enabled it to become a leading creative and intellectual hub. Australian students and creative artists were drawn by Broadway, the Metropolitan Opera, Columbia University and Greenwich Village, while pleasure-oriented travellers hungered for a glimpse of the Manhattan skyline and the shop-fronts of Fifth Avenue. The city could, in fact, be difficult to avoid. It is impossible to ascertain the exact number of Australian women who visited New York between

¹⁰⁷ Gilbert and Hancock, “New York City and the Transatlantic Imagination,” 93.

¹⁰⁸ John H. Girdner, *Newyorkitis* (New York: The Grafton Press, 1901), 31, 119–20.

¹⁰⁹ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 48–57; Joanne Reitano, *The Restless City: A Short History of New York from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 83, 108.

¹¹⁰ Tertius Chandler and Gerald Fox, *3000 Years of Urban Growth* (New York and London: Academic Press, 1974), 335; *Australian Demography Bulletin*, no. 43 (1925): 9.

¹¹¹ George H. Douglas, *Skyscrapers: A Social History of the Very Tall Building in America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), 36; Clifton Hood, “Subways, Transit Politics, and Metropolitan Spatial Expansion,” in *The Landscape of Modernity: Essays on New York City, 1900–1940*, ed. David Ward and Olivier Zunz (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1992), 195.

¹¹² Adams, *The Tempo of Modern Life*, 77–78, 91–92.

1910 and 1960, but we know that the vast majority of transpacific travellers included Manhattan in their itineraries. This was due in part to the city's famed attractions, but can also be explained by its large port, which was the point of entry or departure for the bulk of travellers who visited America's east coast. Whether by necessity or design, few Australian women farewelled America without sighting the Statue of Liberty. Yet despite its magnetic appeal, the city proved difficult to love. While surveying the crowded sidewalks and subway, Australian women blanched at a vision of a future divorced from nature, driven by self-interest, and inimical to rest. New York, as Julia Drake-Brockman concluded, seemed a 'monstrous city', where 'life is far too hectic'.¹¹³ In the world's most iconic modern metropolis, these travellers found compelling evidence that American modernity carried ill winds.

Seen from a distance, New York was stunning. For writer Winifred James, approaching by ship in 1918, during the first wave of skyscraper construction, the city was 'like a giant's toy with its slim steel towers racing each other to reach the sky'.¹¹⁴ Thirty years later, when the Empire State Building had sprung up, Sydney librarian Jean Arnot likened her first glimpse of Manhattan to 'a fairy palace in the distance'.¹¹⁵ This tone of admiration tended to falter, however, when visitors penetrated the city itself. The skyline had been elegant and monumental, but the streets were congested, cacophonous and often tawdry. 'Walking in the streets in broad daylight,' James noted, 'New York comes down to earth. She is a handsome slut with a rich dress, torn petticoats, and holes in the heels of stockings.'¹¹⁶ When Arnot entered her 'fairy palace', she found 'cigarettes lying about on the streets' and 'frightful litter'. The people were 'rude' and the advertisements 'crude'.¹¹⁷

Indeed, for most Australian women, the excitement of arriving in the famed metropolis soon gave way to bewilderment. In the tradition of modernity's early theorists, such as Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer, these visitors insisted that

¹¹³ Julia Drake-Brockman to family, 4 July 1946, box 6, folder 44, Drake-Brockman Papers.

¹¹⁴ James, *Out of the Shadows*, 241.

¹¹⁵ 6 December 1948, Travel Diary, box 1, Arnot Papers.

¹¹⁶ James, *Out of the Shadows*, 241.

¹¹⁷ 8, 9 and 10 December 1948, Travel Diary, box 1, Arnot Papers.

modern life in New York was characterised by ‘hyperstimulus’.¹¹⁸ The sensory onslaught of flashing advertisements, incessant traffic and rushing pedestrians proved disconcerting at best and intolerable at worst, prompting fears for the health of mind and body. When Beryl Mills visited New York in 1926, she was ‘overwhelmed by the huge skyscrapers, the crowded thoroughfares, and the whirling traffic’. The city was ‘constantly moving in the maddest whirl of “hustle and bustle”’, and she felt unable to withstand the ‘high pressure of life’.¹¹⁹ ‘New York is a city of rush and noise’, agreed 1950s traveller Mary Pope.¹²⁰ Travel writer Mavis Riley, who arrived in 1947, had ‘never heard such a din in all my life’. The ‘frenzied tempo’, she continued, ‘quite overwhelmed me...I was dazzled and bewildered...How could I possibly stay here and remain sane!’¹²¹



Figure 34: The New York riverfront in 1909, when skyscrapers were beginning to dominate the skyline. Unmack, Across Two Continents, 26–27.

Insanity could usually be averted, but alienation proved harder to avoid. Like Simmel, who reflected that ‘one nowhere feels as lonely and lost as in the metropolitan crowd’, Australian women concluded that friendly faces were a rare commodity on New York’s streets.¹²² In 1927 Sydney’s Alexa Kenna reported that New York was the ‘loneliest, hardest, and most unfriendly city in the world’. The lone stranger felt ‘a mere atom of humanity, lost in the wild hurry and scurry for

¹¹⁸ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 62–67.

¹¹⁹ “A Chat with Miss Beryl Mills,” *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*, 17 August 1927, 12.

¹²⁰ Pope, *We Circled the World*, 150, 152.

¹²¹ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 78, 80–81.

¹²² George Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1950), 409–24.

existence.¹²³ Solo travellers found the lonely crowds most difficult to bear, but even visitors who faced the rigours of New York alongside friends and family were not immune from the atomised culture. The Sydney-born novelist Shirley Hazzard, who moved to Manhattan with her parents as a twenty-year-old, described her first months in the city as ‘a blast of very cold air’. Hazzard was already well-versed in the hardships of expatriatism, having resided in Japan and New Zealand, but discovered that building community in New York was a unique challenge. In October 1951, when the family moved stateside, ‘the immense change of what you might call the modern world descended on me, the anonymity of it, the facelessness’.¹²⁴

The corollary of this dearth of fellow feeling was an overabundance of physical intimacy, most often in the crush of the subway. Opened in 1904, the subway epitomised the genius and the horror of modern technological innovation. It offered swift transportation to all corners of the city, even across the East River, but also required its passengers to brave a dank subterranean world. The platforms were littered with gum and discarded newspapers. The trains hurtled along with disconcerting speed. The noise was incessant and the air was far from fresh. Even the act of boarding posed risks, as the automated doors threatened to crush any laggards.¹²⁵ Most alarming of all, the passengers were jammed together like sardines, bringing white women into close contact with men and racial others. Although Australian women, as we saw in Chapter Two, often professed to be well-disposed towards New York’s non-white population, such progressive attitudes did not always survive the enforced proximity of a subway journey. Like New Yorkers themselves, who recognised that the ‘subway crush’ had forged a new breed of human interaction, these visitors concluded that the greatest hazard of the subway

¹²³ Alexa Kenna, “A World Tour,” *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 11 November 1927, 11.

¹²⁴ Shirley Hazzard interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1976, ORAL TRC 1/932, NLA.

¹²⁵ 7 December 1948, Travel Diary, box 1, Arnot Papers; “Advocate for Single Control of Blind Education,” *Nepean Times* (Penrith), 30 June 1960, 3; Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 185; 17 February 1950, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.

was not the technology itself, but its effect on interpersonal relations.¹²⁶ In the rush through the train doors, passengers pushed and shoved without regard for rank, and a well-heeled white woman was not necessarily afforded special treatment.

As a result, invasive intimacies abounded. Mavis Riley testified that women were ‘buted and banged’ by men, while Janet Mitchell complained of riding alongside malodorous ‘fat negroes’.¹²⁷ In the 1950s, Irene Jeffreys found herself wedged between strangers who were not only male, but also non-white and working class. While travelling uptown from Wall Street, she was caught in the evening rush hour, and spent the journey clutching a pole ‘amongst half-a-dozen factory workers, who looked as if they had originated in Puerto Rico.’¹²⁸ After disentangling themselves from such encounters, Australian women often concluded that riding the subway was a ‘dehumanising experience’, evidence that the city’s penchant for efficient transportation endangered the civility and order of public space.¹²⁹

These visitors, full of fears for the health of mind and body, were, in many instances, equally concerned about the wellbeing of New Yorkers. After taking note of the restless energy evident in the streets and workplaces, Australian women were apt to conclude that the locals were also suffering under the strain. Adelaide student Margaret Callaghan, writing home in 1960, noted that ‘New York people look tired, pale and unhealthy and tense.’¹³⁰ This opinion was shared by Adelaide educationist Mavis Wauchope, who visited New York during 1938 as part of a Carnegie-funded tour of American early childhood education. To the chagrin of her benefactors, Wauchope took a dim view of the city and its inhabitants. The people of New York, she reported, were under ‘intense strain’ due to the ‘immense buildings’, ‘unnecessary glare of hundreds of brilliant lights’, the ‘shrieking of sirens’ and ‘time-

¹²⁶ Sunny Stalter, “The Subway Crush: Making Contact in New York City Subway Songs, 1904–1915,” *Journal of American Culture* 34, no. 4 (2011): 321–31. See also Sunny Stalter-Pace, “Underground Theater: Theorizing Mobility through Modern Subway Dramas,” *Transfers* 5, no. 3 (2015): 4–22.

¹²⁷ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 88; Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 142.

¹²⁸ Jeffreys, *Unforgettable Safari*, 96.

¹²⁹ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 69.

¹³⁰ “Letters from Abroad,” *Per Litteras Lumen* 1, no. 2 (1959): 28.

saving fetish'.¹³¹ Children were most vulnerable to these irritants. During a meeting with Carnegie staff, Wauchope announced that 'the children she observed seemed to be under a terrific nervous strain'.¹³²

Further evidence that the modern metropolis exacted a human toll could be found amidst the tenements of lower Manhattan. During the early decades of the century, foreign visitors began following social reformers into less salubrious parts of the city, supplementing the conventional window-shopping pilgrimage along Fifth Avenue with a spot of flaneurie on the Bowery, a notorious haunt of indigent men.¹³³ Historians David Gilbert and Claire Hancock suggest that touristic 'slumming' was motivated by voyeurism, but in practice, among Australian women, it tended to generate sympathy and even ripples of indignation.¹³⁴ When, in August 1951, the kindergarten teacher Beth Stubbs took a break from classes at Columbia to walk the length of the Bowery, she was more saddened than titillated. Expecting to see a spectacle of 'sordidness', she was instead chastened by the 'utter hopelessness you see in the faces of the men sitting around in the streets', many of whom were 'quite young men'.¹³⁵ The Bowery, she realised, was not a den of iniquity, but a site of quiet despair where the men left behind in the 'scramble for boodle' eked out a mean existence.

One of Australia's daughters even became a famed chronicler of the plight of New York's masses. The poet Lola Ridge was born in Ireland and raised in Sydney and New Zealand. She migrated to the United States in 1907, at the age of thirty-three, and settled in New York's Greenwich Village the following year. Ridge soon emerged as a respected figure amongst the city's modernist writers, co-editing the literary journal *Broom*, and also became a staunch anarchist, friends with Emma

¹³¹ Mavis Wauchope to Charles Dollard, 25 February 1939, folder 16, box 365, series III.A.9, CCNY Records

¹³² CCNY memo, 23 November 1938, folder 16, box 365, series III.A.9, CCNY Records.

¹³³ As discussed in Chapter Two, the black neighbourhood of Harlem was another risqué area that attracted Australian visitors in search of thrills.

¹³⁴ Gilbert and Hancock, "New York City and the Transatlantic Imagination," 89.

¹³⁵ 9 August 1951, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.

Goldman and Alexander Berkman.¹³⁶ These leftist politics infused her creative work, much of which documents contemporary life in New York. She was, as literary scholar Nancy Berke suggests, an ‘immigrant flaneuse’, who brings the reader on her wanderings ‘in the shadow of modernity’s terrible beauty’.¹³⁷ Ridge’s collections *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (1918) and *Sun-Up and Other Poems* (1920) are both polemical texts, grounded in the daily struggle for existence in the Lower East Side. ‘The Ghetto’, her most celebrated poem, is a detailed rendering of the immigrant community of Hester Street, where ‘life is flattened and ground as by so many mills’.¹³⁸ Other poems feature homeless men sheltering from the cold, the innocent play of slum children, and the ‘rancid life’ of a Bowery afternoon.¹³⁹ Ridge also evoked, on several occasions, the dehumanising experience of factory work, where men toiled amidst demonic machines to bolster the wealth of ‘fat American merchant men’.¹⁴⁰ In the published volumes, these raw accounts of New York’s underprivileged are juxtaposed with other poems detailing the glamour of uptown Manhattan, where chic women promenaded alongside soaring towers and the lights of Broadway twinkled in the night sky.¹⁴¹ The effect, no doubt intended, is to bring the reader to the sobering truth that skyscrapers and slums were two sides of the same coin, both signs of a city addicted to progress at any cost.

Faced with the onslaught of New York, Australian women fled or adapted.

¹³⁶ Michele Leggott, “Verses and Beyond: The Antipodean Poetry of Lola Ridge,” *Ka Mate Ka Ora: A New Zealand Journal of Poetry and Poetics*, no. 12 (2013): 68–70; Caroline Mann, *Mosaic of Fire: The Work of Lola Ridge, Evelyn Scott, Charlotte Wilder, and Kay Boyle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 16–29.

¹³⁷ Nancy Berke, “‘Electric Currents of Life’: Lola Ridge’s Immigrant Flaneuserie,” *American Studies* 51, no. 1 (2010): 30.

¹³⁸ Lola Ridge, “The Ghetto,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2008), 11.

¹³⁹ Lola Ridge, “Flotsam,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 21–22; Lola Ridge, “Spring,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 24; Lola Ridge, “Bowery Afternoon,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 26.

¹⁴⁰ Lola Ridge, “In Harness,” in *Sun-Up and Other Poems* (Gloucester: Dodo Press 2008), 51. See also Lola Ridge, “The Song of Iron,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 33–36; Lola Ridge, “The Legion of Iron,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 41.

¹⁴¹ See, for instance, Lola Ridge, “Manhattan,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 18; Lola Ridge, “Broadway,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 19; Lola Ridge, “Promenade,” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 27; Lola Ridge, “Electricity,” in *Sun-Up and Other Poems*, 36; Lola Ridge, “Skyscrapers,” in *Sun-Up and Other Poems*, 37.

In 1929, Catherine Robinson, formerly of Bendigo, decided that she required a lengthy stint in the Amazon to recover from the rigours of the metropolis.¹⁴² Five years in Manhattan had left her a ‘nervous wreck’. She was ‘weary of watching masses of people hurrying by’, ‘weary of the everlasting hoot of motor cars’, and quite fatigued by ‘the overwhelming skyscrapers and the breath-taking rapidity of the elevators.’ The only antidote, Robinson concluded, was to seek refuge from the urban jungle in the jungles of South America.¹⁴³ Others took less extreme measures to obtain respite. The Turkish Bath Club, one 1920s traveller reported, was a sanctuary, the only place in the city of guaranteed ‘peace, quiet and comfort’.¹⁴⁴ The Aquarium and Central Park were other islands of stillness, beloved by 1930s actress Mona Barrie because they were ‘the quietest places in New York’. Yet even frequent visits to the Park were not sufficient to calm her nerves, and by 1937 Barrie had relocated to the Los Angeles hills. She told a journalist from the *Journal American*, ‘Sorry, but I don’t like New York. I simply abhor noise.’¹⁴⁵

Creative artists, like Barrie, were particularly prone to retreat. The city’s wide array of art museums, theatres and concert halls offered rich stimulus, but also made it difficult to focus. In 1939, the artist Elaine Haxton left Sydney for New York, but after only two months decided she ‘didn’t like the tempo there’. The city was full of interest, but it was not a place ‘in which an artist finds it easy to live, or live and work.’¹⁴⁶ After the war, when Manhattan had become the epicentre of the modernist *avant garde*, she returned for a longer visit.¹⁴⁷ But again, despite the ‘new ideas’ and ‘stimulation’, after two years Haxton concluded that the city remained ‘too hectic’ for her taste.¹⁴⁸ Following this second abortive attempt to become a New

¹⁴² “An Australian in the Jungle,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 14 November 1936, 10.

¹⁴³ Catherine Robinson, *The Green Paradise: The Story of a Woman’s Journey in the Amazon and the Argentine* (London: Arthur Barron, 1936), 13.

¹⁴⁴ “Baths I Have Been In,” *The Home*, 1 September 1927, 71.

¹⁴⁵ Untitled clipping, *Journal American* (New York), 15 August 1937, Mona Barrie Clipping File, NYPL.

¹⁴⁶ Elaine Haxton interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1962, ORAL TRC 1/2, NLA.

¹⁴⁷ On New York as a centre of modernist art post-1945, see Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 348–54.

¹⁴⁸ Haxton interview, 1962; Haxton interview, 1978.

Yorker, Haxton made a permanent return to Sydney, where conditions were more conducive to concentrated work.

Those who resisted the temptation to flee, however, tended to find that their nerves could adjust to the quickened tempo. Youthful visitors were perhaps the quickest to acclimatise, having had less time to develop fixed notions about the 'correct' pace of life. The actress Diane Cilento, who moved to Manhattan as an adolescent, made a rapid transition from wide-eyed newcomer to street-wise local. When she first arrived in 1948, fresh from the seclusion of a Queensland boarding school, Cilento was 'intimidated by everything—the noise, the smells, the giant high-rises, buses belching black smoke'. After only several weeks, however, she adapted to her environs. During long rambles around the streets, Cilento began to appreciate 'the frenetic energy'. 'I wandered the city,' she recalled, 'in a daze of delighted shocks, devouring every impression'. Before long, she was 'hooked on the streets of New York.'¹⁴⁹ For the numerous visitors, like Cilento, who did become habituated to the barrage of sensation, their initial distaste for New York's speed and aggression was often tempered by a more appreciative regard for the architecture, the theatres and department stores. On the eve of departure, some Australian women could concede that the city, despite first appearances, had its charms.¹⁵⁰

Those who visited Chicago were less forgiving. America's 'second city' also attracted a large complement of Australians: students flocked to the prestigious University of Chicago, while transcontinental train and bus journeys typically included a stopover in the Midwestern hub. Although only half the size of New York, Chicago—home to 3.5 million by 1925—was still an imposing modern metropolis three times larger than Sydney.¹⁵¹ Yet it won few fans. Beholden to its Prohibition-era reputation for crime and gangster violence, Australian women had

¹⁴⁹ Diane Cilento, *My Nine Lives* (London: Penguin, 2006), 32–33.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Kenna, "A World Tour"; Bowen, *Drawn from Life*, 214; Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 82, 155.

¹⁵¹ Chandler and Fox, *3000 Years of Urban Growth*, 335; "Sydney's Population: Now Exceeds 1,000,000," *Argus* (Melbourne), 3 February 1925, 10.

scant praise for the city.¹⁵² As Beth Stubbs noted in 1950, Chicago was ‘noisy and dirty’, with ‘none of the interest and thrills of New York’.¹⁵³ ‘Vulgar’ was an oft-used term to encapsulate the city and its residents.¹⁵⁴ Visitors took pleasure in the famed Art Institute, but the bitter winds and extremes of wealth and poverty constituted the dominant impressions.¹⁵⁵ The growing African American community—a product of the Great Migration—was deemed an additional source of menace. In Chicago, far more than in New York, Australians shrank from the black population and resorted to racist language. Already on the lookout for gun-wielding gangsters, visitors discovered they must also confront a so-called ‘terrible Army’ of African Americans, who had ‘forced’ the white population to ‘vacate’ entire districts.¹⁵⁶

For writer Joan Lindsay, the city even assumed the dimensions of a futurist dystopia, a bleaker version of the Fordist civilisation depicted in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932). Lindsay arrived in Chicago late one day in 1952, when the evening rush hour was in full swing. From her vantage point inside a bus, she watched locals ‘pouring out of the shops and factories and offices, their faces death masks of pallid green under the street lights’. The sound of shop-owners pulling down their shutters evoked ‘the ominous rumbling of a distant thunderstorm’. Even more disturbing was the ‘sense of urgency, of almost frantic haste’ as workers grabbed a snack from street stalls and ‘ran off with it like stray dogs, still munching, to board a moving street car at the kerb’.¹⁵⁷ The hustle of the modern world, Lindsay’s portrait suggests, had debased human life. People had become wild animals, food was now mere fuel, and the threat of calamity was omnipresent. This dark image of what could otherwise be construed as a benign urban scene became, if anything, even dimmer by the eve of her departure, when Lindsay had more fully

¹⁵² David E. Ruth, *Inventing the Public Enemy: The Gangster in American Culture, 1918–1934* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 120–22.

¹⁵³ August 1950, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.

¹⁵⁴ Hayball, “From Coast to Coast”; Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 55.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 52–32; Hayball, “From Coast to Coast”; Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 45–48; Nolan, *Open Negative*, 103.

¹⁵⁶ Hayball, “From Coast to Coast.”

¹⁵⁷ Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 42.

grasped the indignities suffered by Chicago's 'troglodyte' masses. With its tableaux of urban misery, the city was to 'haunt' her thoughts for years to come.¹⁵⁸

The strains of modern city living were, of course, not unique to New York or Chicago. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anxieties about urban hyperstimulus straddled both sides of the Atlantic. London, in particular, was often envisaged as a whirlwind of sensation, and Australians who made the pilgrimage to the imperial metropole were sometimes overcome by the 'din and bustle'.¹⁵⁹ Yet when Australian women visited Britain after sojourning in New York, London could seem no busier than a country hamlet. Instead of reeling at the crowds surging along the Strand, these veterans of Times Square found Westminster rather sedate. Janet Mitchell, who spent four exhausting months studying New York banking practices in 1926, found the respite she craved across the Atlantic. 'London—the peace and quiet of it!' she exclaimed upon arrival. Walking down Regent Street, she was delighted that 'you could hear yourself speak'.¹⁶⁰ Mitchell's contemporary, Alexa Kenna, agreed that any busyness London possessed paled in comparison to the bustle of Manhattan. 'After New York,' Kenna reported in 1927, 'in spite of the size of its population, [London] seems a haven of peace and rest.'¹⁶¹ Although the English capital, in the 1920s, was only marginally smaller than New York, the gap between their respective tempos appeared as wide as the Atlantic. In this instance, at least, transatlantic comparison shone a flattering light on the 'Mother Country', and reminded Australians that the Old World had its virtues.

The Australian disdain for work

Implicit within these critiques of America's busyness was the notion that work and play in Sydney or Melbourne assumed a more relaxed tempo. If Australians were wearied by the pace of the United States, then presumably life back home followed

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 59–60.

¹⁵⁹ Rees, "Australians Who Come over Here Are Apt to Consider Themselves Quite Large People," 413–14.

¹⁶⁰ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 100.

¹⁶¹ Kenna, "A World Tour."

gentler rhythms, more conducive to physical and mental wellbeing. For women who recoiled from the frantic Manhattan, Australia became an imagined bastion of sun-soaked ease. As Theresa Moore recalled from her desk in Minnesota, ‘the Australian disdain for work is a healthy thing’.¹⁶²

The idea that Australia offered refuge against the pathologies of modern civilisation has deep historical roots. Since the 1820s, when English visitors to the colonies noted the fine physiques of native-born men, it was widely believed that the ample sunshine, open spaces and fresh food of the southern continent promoted a wholesome existence, closely attuned to natural rhythms.¹⁶³ By the 1920s, when the Anzac digger and bronzed lifesaver became national icons, Australia’s claim to be an outdoor nation of abundant leisure seemed beyond question.¹⁶⁴ Australians were ‘proud of being outdoor folk’, observed CCNY president Frederick Keppel in 1935, and favoured ‘out-of-door recreation’ to more industrious pursuits.¹⁶⁵

Although the twentieth-century ‘drift to the metropolis’ gave lie to this arcadian image, there is reason to believe that it was more than nationalist rhetoric.¹⁶⁶ Australia was a world leader in the struggle to shorten working hours, and the principle of the eight-hour day—first established in Melbourne in 1856—soon acquired mythic status. By the twentieth century, the combination of a strong union movement and progressive social policy and industrial laws had enshrined the right to relaxation.¹⁶⁷ Australians also repelled attempts to accelerate work

¹⁶² Theresa Moore to mother, 23 October 1950, box 3, Moore Papers.

¹⁶³ Karen Downing, “Behold, There Is a New Man Born!': Understanding the Short-Lived Optimism about Australia’s First Generation of ‘Native-Born’ White Men,” *Men and Masculinities* 17, no. 2 (2014): 195–217.

¹⁶⁴ Kay Saunders, “‘Specimens of Superb Manhood’: The Lifesaver as National Icon,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 56 (1998): 96–105.

¹⁶⁵ Keppel cited in Rosenfield, *A World of Giving*, 118–19.

¹⁶⁶ By 1901 the majority of Australians resided in urban settings, two decades before the same could be said of the United States. On the urbanisation of twentieth-century Australia, see Graeme Davison, “Country Life: The Rise and Decline of an Australian Ideal,” in *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, ed. Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2005), 01.1–01.15; Graeme Davison, “The Exodists: Miles Franklin, Jill Roe and the ‘Drift to the Metropolis,’” *History Australia* 2, no. 2 (2011): 35.1–35.11.

¹⁶⁷ For recent discussion of Australia as a world pioneer in labour rights, as well as other progressive state experiments, see Marilyn Lake, “Challenging the ‘Slave-Driving Employers’:

processes, proving hostile to the system of industrial efficiency developed by American Frederick Taylor in 1911. Although an overnight success in the States, a 1910s trial of Taylorist reforms at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory in New South Wales was scuppered by opposition to ‘American hustling methods’.¹⁶⁸ Resistance to workplace hustle continued in the following decades, and scientific management would not gain traction in Australia until after WWII.¹⁶⁹ This tradition of opposition to excessive toil invites the conclusion that early twentieth-century Australians were, as Richard White argues, possessed of ‘a kind of Mediterranean attitude to work and life’ without parallel in the English-speaking world, a people ‘privileged in being able to work to live rather than living to work’.¹⁷⁰

Australian women’s confrontation with the hectic pace of New York helped them better appreciate that privilege. These travellers had, in many cases, ventured abroad due to dissatisfaction with Antipodean life, and were wont to resent the masculinist parochialism of their homeland.¹⁷¹ Yet after flocking to the bright lights of the American future, some began to cast longing glances at the world left behind. Jean Lawson, in 1952, was so perturbed by the materialism and competition of New York and other US cities that she began to think ‘it is not so bad to belong to a small, friendly community that is a bit behind the times and rather muddle-headed!’¹⁷² Her contemporary, travel writer Mavis Riley, reached much the same conclusion. After an acquaintance sought her impressions of New York, she launched into a ‘vitriolic outburst’ against the ‘rudeness, soullessness, and excessive rushing to accumulate dollars’. ‘In Australia,’ she noted by way of contrast, ‘no matter what time of day, a funny set of circumstances or a good joke will always

Understanding Victoria’s 1896 Minimum Wage through a World-History Approach,” *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 1 (2014): 87–102; Lake, “1914.”

¹⁶⁸ Greg Patmore, “‘American Hustling Methods’: The Lithgow Small Arms Factory, 1912–1922,” *Labour History*, no. 67 (1994): 42–56.

¹⁶⁹ Chris Wright, “Taylorism Reconsidered: The Impact of Scientific Management within the Australian Workplace,” *Labour History*, no. 64 (1993): 34–53.

¹⁷⁰ Richard White, *On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005), xiii, 56.

¹⁷¹ Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 7; Pesman, *Duty Free*, 75–77.

¹⁷² Lawson, *American Holiday*, 54.

rate a hearing or laugh'.¹⁷³ Back in Sydney, Riley implied, the innocent pleasure of human connection had not yet been swept away by the modern efficiency fetish.

This newfound esteem for Australian ease also infiltrated the poetry of Lola Ridge, the chronicler of New York's immigrant slums. Ridge, like many of her contemporaries, migrated abroad to escape the 'too provincial atmosphere of the Commonwealth'.¹⁷⁴ Yet after a decade of shunning her Antipodean origins, Australia entered her verse in the guise of a premodern idyll. In 'The Dream' she recalled 'the emerging sun / spurting up gold / over Sydney', while 'A Memory' describes 'the tender fumbling of the surf / On the sulphur-yellow beaches'.¹⁷⁵ Set against the grim New York of her other poems, these accounts of innocent seaside pleasures make it clear that Australia's 'provincialism' had its consolations.

Conclusion

Modern America was nothing if not a land of extremes. It had been dubbed a 'paradise', as we saw in Chapter One, and could also, as this chapter has shown, be likened to 'hell'. In a strange twist of history, both descriptions date from 1949. These bipolar epithets reflect the diversity of the United States and the Australian women who ventured therein, but also highlight that modernity was a multivalent force, capable of generating fear and wonder in the same instant. Previous chapters indicate that Australian women showered praise on many facets of America's vision of the future. Yet most also recognised that this future was far from utopian. Alongside the technological marvels, the professional expertise and the opportunities for women, these visitors found strain, worry and artifice on a scale that was unfamiliar and deeply unpalatable. From San Francisco to New York, and in many places in between, daily life seemed hard work.

¹⁷³ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 95.

¹⁷⁴ Evelyn Scott, "Something of Lola Ridge and Her Poems," *Pasadena Post*, 1 February 1930, box 2, Papers of Lola Ridge, 1900–1941, MS 131, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁷⁵ Lola Ridge, "The Dream," *Sun-Up and Other Poems*, 27; Lola Ridge, "A Memory," *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, 64.

This recognition injected an undercurrent of ambivalence into the encounter between Australian women and modern America, and raised questions about the wisdom of emulating the United States. The ‘Mother Country’, meanwhile, though less frenetic than the States, was also far from a shining example of repose. Instead, from an American vantage point, it was Australia itself which emerged as the frontrunner in the art of living well. As it became apparent that America’s modernity could come at the cost of health and happiness, the characteristics of Australia that were often a source of grievance—the isolation from the northern hemisphere, the provincial cities, the emphasis upon sport—were reimagined as precious barricades against the worst excesses of modern life. The journey across the Pacific, while often a path towards a better and brighter future, could also divulge the value of home.

These accounts, moreover, raise the possibility that Australia had won some success in developing into a modern, urban nation without falling victim to the associated rush and strain. Once believed to signify a deficit of modernity, Australia’s supposed slower pace could instead be taken as evidence that the southern continent was home to a distinctive model of modern life, one which privileged pleasure-seeking above productivity. The coastal cities of Sydney and Melbourne had arguably given rise to a modernity that placed greater premium on streamlined bodies than streamlined schedules, a modernity that idolised the tanned physiques honed during long days at the beach. The clock may have ticked in the background, but hustle, by and large, appears to have been kept at bay.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ For further discussion of this question, see Anne Rees, “‘A Season in Hell’: Australian Women, Modernity and the Hustle of New York, 1910–1960,” *Pacific Historical Review* (revised and resubmitted).

CHAPTER 6

Up in the Air:

Mobility Within and Beyond the United States

Lorna Sydney-Smith had come a long way from Kalgoorlie. It was 1951, four decades after her birth in the Western Australian gold mining town, and the renowned mezzo-soprano was making her operatic debut in New York. The journey between Kalgoorlie and downtown Manhattan was far from insignificant—numbering some eleven thousand miles—but Sydney-Smith had already travelled many times that distance by the time she debuted in America. Her first destination was Perth, the city of her youth, followed by Vienna, where she moved in 1937 to study music.¹ Caught in Berlin at the outbreak of war, she was interned by the Nazis.² In the years following her release in 1941, Sydney-Smith had a brief marriage to Austrian Baron von Ronacher, was appointed a principal at the Vienna State Opera, and embarked on an Australian concert tour. In between times, she travelled ‘all over the world’. By this point, the singer had changed her name to Lorna Sydney, a patriotic nod to her home country. In 1951, when she finally moved to America, Sydney was presented as a perpetual globetrotter. ‘The demands on her time from such widely separated continents,’ noted a press release, ‘keep Miss Sydney literally up in the air.’ She had just completed ‘her twelfth air crossing of the Atlantic’, and had made ‘repeated flights over the Pacific’. Sydney also enjoyed ‘traveling in the United States by automobile’, and there were ‘few states which the singer has not visited.’ But she was not yet weary of journeying, and had no plans to take pause; instead, her agents were planning an American concert tour.³

¹ “Perth Singer’s Progress,” *West Australian* (Perth), 12 January 1938, 13.

² *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 May 1941, C4.

³ National Concert and Artists Corporation, “Press Material on Lorna Sydney, 1950–51,” Lorna Sydney Clipping File, NYPL.



Figure 35: A poster advertising Lorna Sydney's American debut, c. 1951. Lorna Sydney Clipping File, New York Public Library.

With so many miles under her belt, it was unclear where the singer belonged. Was she Lorna Sydney, proudly Australian in name and origin; Baronness von Ronacher, 'one of the best-dressed women in Vienna'; or a newly assimilated American? The press release offered little clarification. It stressed that Sydney remained 'attached irrevocably to the world "Down Under"', was 'just as firmly attached to the musical life of Europe', yet in America had 'found the strongest tie of all'. A program of 'quick Americanization' was fast turning her into a local. Yet even within the States, Sydney had multiple homes, moving between an apartment in New York, a cottage in Connecticut, and hotel rooms nationwide.⁴ Nor was it clear how her gendered self should be characterised. Sydney was famed for her glamorous wardrobe, but this abundant femininity was belied by the confidence with which she travelled solo, handled an automobile and purchased property. And was she 'Miss Sydney', a pure-voiced maiden from White Australia, or the former Baroness, a hard-nosed cosmopolitan who had abandoned matrimony

⁴ Ibid.

for her career?⁵ Betwixt and between, she eluded easy characterisation. In a life marked by movement, the singer's identity and allegiances both remained, like her person, 'up in the air'.

As Sydney's story makes clear, Australian women's transpacific mobility was more complex than a return journey between Sydney and San Francisco. This chapter, which follows Australian women on their wanderings within and beyond the United States, stresses that arrival in America often came before or after extensive travels elsewhere, most commonly in Britain, Europe and Canada. Many approached or departed America via the Atlantic, and some managed to avoid the Pacific altogether. Within the United States, few were content to remain in one city or state. The nation's geography and modernity did much to discourage these travellers from coming to a halt, and most traversed the continent on at least one occasion, whether for work, pleasure or a combination of the two. Relocations were frequent, and the technologies and landscapes of transport—train carriages and highways, ship decks and aeroplanes—could develop into a second home. Hitting the road, in short, often involved much more than a single act of travel or migration; it could become a way of life for months or years.

For many individuals, this geographical indeterminacy generated indeterminacy of other sorts. As women like Sydney moved in space, their identities, affiliations and attitudes also entered a state of flux. Whether this wandering consisted of a few months on the American tourist trail, or extended over multiple decades and continents, onward mobility often functioned to unsettle preconceived notions about Britain and the United States, and foster more cosmopolitan and pro-American sensibilities. 'Home' could become a nebulous concept, new pasts and personae could be invented, and natal ties to the Australian nation and British Empire could come unstuck. After 1945, in particular, transatlantic mobility tended to undermine imperial loyalties. In the process, these women reinvented themselves as citizens of the world, and helped reshape

⁵ It is unclear what became of Baron von Ronacher. There is no evidence that the couple were ever formally divorced, but he appears to have slipped from Sydney's life around the time she moved to the States.

Australia's ties to the international sphere.

This insistent relocation could also unsettle norms of femininity. In an age when self-interested mobility remained a largely masculine privilege, these women dared to acquire many homes and none. Unlike much female travel in this period, which constituted a mere interregnum in an otherwise domesticated existence, the onward mobility discussed here posed a challenge to gender norms.⁶ Self-interested rather than selfless, restless rather than homebound, and reliant upon themselves rather than a male protector, Sydney and her peers upended normative understandings of 'womanly' behaviour. They were not committed homemakers or husband-seekers, and their pursuit of pleasure placed them outside the 'bluestocking' mould, but nor could they be dismissed as 'fallen women'. Unashamedly independent and entrepreneurial, yet still within the margins of respectable behaviour, they lived the type of 'experimental life' that historian Desley Deacon envisages as a 'practical working out of modernism'.⁷

The process of roving throughout America and the broader Atlantic world thus kept Australian women 'up in the air' in both flesh and spirit. Not all or even most sampled aviation, but all boarded speeding conveyances that whisked them off solid ground. Unmoored in body, so too was their personhood difficult to fix in place. Understood in these terms, this onward mobility can be regarded as quintessentially modern in two key respects: it relied upon modern transportation technologies and it produced modern subjectivities, ways of being in the world characterised by dislocation and instability. In other words, if we accept Charles Baudelaire's 1863 pronouncement that 'modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent', both the raw fact of mechanised movement and the unstable subjects such mobility engendered become equally evocative of the modern world.⁸

⁶ Robinson-Tomsett, *Women, Travel and Identity*, ch. 7.

⁷ Desley Deacon, *Elsie Clews Parsons: Inventing Modern Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), xiii.

⁸ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (London: Penguin, 2010), 17. Marshall Berman's seminal 1982 exposition of modernity, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, borrows heavily from Baudelaire, whom Berman proclaims as a 'prophet and pioneer' of the modern. Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 133.

The Makings of Mobility

The twentieth century was an age of unprecedented movement. Steamships charged across the ocean, carrying migrants, tourists and goods for sale. On land, railroads and highways traversed continents, allowing the restless to wander to their heart's content. Automobile ownership, the province of elites in 1900, became a mass phenomenon within decades.⁹ Movement even took to the skies. The invention of aeroplanes in the first years of the century heralded a new era of exploration and discovery, while the development of commercial aviation by mid-century revolutionised the speed of international travel. From 1946, it was possible to travel between Sydney and San Francisco by air, transforming what had been three languorous weeks at sea into an island-hopping flight that lasted mere hours.¹⁰ Together these technologies did much to tame the vagaries of long-distance travel, bringing the world beyond the horizon into the personal horizons of ordinary individuals, including thousands of women.¹¹

This upsurge of mechanised mobility was inherently transnational, part of a global modernity that existed above and beyond any particular national experience. As Deacon, Russell and Woollacott have noted, 'mobility and self-transformation' were 'integral to the modern'.¹² The spaces and technologies of mobility 'became iconic for modernity', according to critical geographer Tim Cresswell, while '[m]odern man, and increasingly modern woman, was mobile.'¹³ Yet while no corner of the modern world was left untouched by the cultures and technologies of

⁹ For discussion of these modern transport technologies, see Frances Steel, *Oceania under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, c. 1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); White, *Railroaded*; Robinson-Tomsett, *Women, Travel and Identity*; John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *Motoring: The Highway Experience in America* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Moore, *Silver Wings in Pacific Skies*, 13.

¹¹ On the relationship between these new technologies and women's travel, see Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth Century Women's Travel Writing* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

¹² Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 7.

¹³ Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," 27.

travel, the distinctive geography and history of both Australia and the United States were especially conducive to the proliferation of mobile subjects.

To start with the former, early twentieth-century Australia was—at least in the minds of its European inhabitants—a nation tyrannised by distance.¹⁴ It was a country the size of the continent, in which the distance between major cities extended to hundreds or thousands of miles, with inhospitable deserts and few traces of European settlement in between. In such a vast country, long journeys and transport technologies were woven into the fabric of everyday life. By the 1920s, Australia was the second most motorised nation on earth, and railways had penetrated the depths of the desert interior.¹⁵ For women raised in this environment, the fact of distance bred a familiarity with movement that could ease the transition into global travel. The writer Joan Colebrook was convinced that the ‘itinerant travels’ of her interwar childhood in northern Queensland fostered the ‘impatient curiosity’ and ‘dislike of staying in one place’ that would later propel her abroad. Endless road trips to the coast, train journeys south to Brisbane, and social calls to neighbouring townships fostered a ‘passion for the Australian distances’ and ‘the weakness of the romantic wanderer.’¹⁶

Australian women’s appetite for global mobility can also be attributed to the legacies of settler colonialism. Settler colonial societies are those in which ‘colonizers come to stay’, a definition that encompasses Australia and the United States, as well as New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.¹⁷ A curious hallmark of white colonial settlers is a lingering inability to settle in place. As Tony Ballantyne has recently noted, “‘settlers’ were typically unsettled and mobility was their defining characteristic.”¹⁸ Having made the breach with home in migrating to Australia, and

¹⁴ Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*.

¹⁵ John William Knott, “The ‘Conquering Car’: Technology, Symbolism and the Motorisation of Australia before World War II,” *Australian Historical Studies* 31, no. 114 (2000): 4; Paisley, “No Back Streets in the Bush,” 119–37.

¹⁶ Colebrook, *A House of Trees*, 69–71.

¹⁷ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999), 2.

¹⁸ Tony Ballantyne, “Mobility, Empire, Colonisation,” *History Australia* 11, no. 2 (2014): 21.

not yet at ease in this misappropriated new land, the white settler population found it difficult to return to stasis.¹⁹ Even the native-born were part of ‘a people whose history was movement’, a state of affairs that rendered relocation a fact of life.²⁰ As ‘cosmopolitans at home’, raised among immigrants and nourished on tales of ‘somewhere else’, it was no great leap to become cosmopolitans abroad.²¹ From one angle, then, the eminently modern globe-trotting performed by the likes of Lorna Sydney was also a time-honoured Australian tradition, a pastime perfected in a nation ‘born modern’, unshackled from the older and weightier traditions of Europe.²²

The ‘unsettled settlers’ thesis finds ample substantiation in the biographies of female transpacific travellers, many of whom lived transient lives within Australia. In numerous cases, the voyage from Sydney to San Francisco was not the first occasion on which they had ventured far from home, but rather the latest in a series of moves in search of work, study and adventure. These were habitual wanderers, already practised in the difficulties and delights of mobility by the time they landed in California. Many of these nomadic lives began in rural Australia, in remote properties or townships in regions such as the Adelaide Hills, Victoria’s goldfields, or far north Queensland. More than one globetrotting career woman started her schooling, like Faith Alleyne, at a ‘one-teacher school in the wheat lands of New South Wales.’²³ As young adults or adolescents, women such as Alleyne gravitated toward the nearest state capital—to complete an education, launch a career, or lose themselves in the urban crowds—joining the ‘drift to the metropolis’ that was fast

¹⁹ See, for instance, Deacon, “Location! Location! Location!” 81.1–81.16; Bishop, “Women on the Move,” 38–59; Karen Downing, *Restless Men: Masculinity and Robinson Crusoe, 1788–1840* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Catharine Coleborne, “Mobility Stopped in Its Tracks: Institutional Narratives and the Mobile in the Australian and New Zealand Colonial World, 1870s–1900s,” *Transfers* 5, no. 3 (2015): 87–103.

²⁰ Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*, 9.

²¹ Desley Deacon, “A Cosmopolitan at Home,” *Meanjin* 67, no. 1 (2007): 190–99; Richard White, “Travel, Writing and Australia,” *Studies in Travel Writing* 11, no. 1 (2007): 4.

²² Nicholas Brown, “Born Modern: Antipodean Variations on a Theme,” *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 4 (2005): 1139–54; Carter, *Almost Always Modern*, viii–ix.

²³ “International Grants, 1958–59,” *Journal of the American Association of University Women* 52, no. 1 (1958): 39.

transforming Australia into a nation of city-dwellers.²⁴ A further cohort of transpacific travellers originally hailed from New Zealand, and hopped across the Tasman at a tender age to try their luck amidst the brighter lights of Sydney.²⁵

For these women from the provinces, for whom migration to a metropole was a precondition of a larger life, venturing onward to the United States was perhaps easier to countenance than for women born and bred in Sydney, who already lived at the centre of a small universe. The former were raised with the knowledge that life in the ‘big smoke’ required travel; the latter had a good measure of smoke on their doorstep. On a more practical level, these youthful relocations within Australasia offered training in the hardships of exchanging home and hearth for an unknown future. Most women travelled alone or in the company of a sole family member, and often arrived in an unfamiliar city with few financial or human resources at their disposal. Jean Whyte overcame fierce family opposition to leave the South Australian sheep station of her childhood and move to Adelaide in 1942, aged only nineteen. Desperate to attend university, but born into a family that disdained higher education for women, Whyte was forced to fund her own studies. Finding a job at the Public Library, she spent her days cataloguing books, and her nights working towards a degree in English literature. As she wryly noted of this juggling act, ‘[t]here is no surer way of learning to concentrate than the knowledge that there will be no time for re-reading.’²⁶ Having weathered these difficulties within Australia, we can imagine that Whyte’s further leap across the Pacific—to study librarianship in Chicago—became somewhat less daunting. Establishing a new life in Chicago or New York was not so different to arriving alone and friendless in Adelaide or Sydney. Once women such as Whyte had relocated once, they could certainly do it again.

Yet even in a nation of ‘unsettled settlers’, where long and arduous journeys were a fact of life, cultural expectations of feminine immobility could be difficult to

²⁴ Davison, “The Exodists.”

²⁵ On trans-Tasman mobility, see Bishop, “Women on the Move”; Bones, “New Zealand and the Tasman Writing World.”

²⁶ Jean Whyte to the AAUW, 3 November 1952, box 2, Whyte Papers.

overcome. With the modern mobile subject and the ‘thrusting power’ of motorised transport both gendered male, women’s access to mobility was often circumscribed.²⁷ As Creswell reminds us, ‘mobilities need moorings’, and in an age when domesticated femininity remained a cultural ideal, the role of mooring tended to fall to women.²⁸ It is therefore important to recognise that not all Australian women who dreamed of crossing the Pacific proved able to set sail. During the mid-1910s, Sydney actress Lizette Parkes spent several years on the verge of setting off to America, but never quite managed to make the journey. At first she blamed the war for delaying departure—though transpacific travel continued throughout the conflict—but even after the armistice remained anchored at home.²⁹

Numerous factors conspired to prevent women such as Parkes from appropriating the masculine privilege of motion: familial opposition or obligations, insufficient funds, lack of encouragement. Other individuals only managed to sail from Sydney Harbour after overcoming significant gendered obstacles. The kindergarten director Heather Lyon came close to missing out on the life-changing course of study she pursued in 1940s New York. As sole carer to her elderly father, Lyon at first felt unable to apply for the scholarship that would take her abroad. At least one relative agreed, telling Lyon that her ‘duty was at home’.³⁰ With such ingrained notions of feminine self-sacrifice to contend with, hitting the road to pursue one’s own desires was no easy task. Escape was perhaps easiest for women with sisters, whom could be relied upon to shoulder the burden of tending to parents and other dependents.

Upon arrival in the United States, Australian women encountered another nation of vast distances and restive peoples. The local inhabitants, as Brisbane writer Kathleen Unmack noted in 1910, were beholden to a ‘restless national spirit’ which

²⁷ Smith, *Moving Lives*, 25.

²⁸ Creswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility,” 29.

²⁹ “Miss Lizette Parkes,” *Daily News* (Perth), 22 September 1916, 9; “Lizette Parkes Chats of Plays and Playing,” *Graphic of Australia*, 15 March 1918, 8; *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 20 March 1921, 18.

³⁰ Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 6.

kept them ‘ever on the move’.³¹ By the 1920s, the nation boasted the world’s highest rates of automobile ownership, while automobility—the culture, mythology and landscapes of driving—became central to twentieth-century conceptions of ‘Americanness’.³² Although an obvious expression of the nation’s modernity, this proclivity for mechanised motion can also be traced, as in Australia, to the legacies of settler colonialism. On both sides of the Pacific, automobile touring provided a new means for white settlers to ‘discover’ and ‘conquer’ territory in which they were not yet fully at home. Australia and America were united, Georgine Clarsen and Lorenzo Veracini suggest, by a common culture of ‘settler colonial automobilities’.³³ At least one transpacific traveller agreed: Sydney travel writer Mavis Riley, who toured the States by Greyhound in 1947, attributed her eagerness to undertake this iconic American experience to the lingering wanderlust of the colonial era. Although a ‘city-bred’ career woman, Riley still identified with the ‘happy pioneering throng’ of the previous century. The Greyhound bus, in her estimation, was a modern-day substitute for the ‘covered-wagon’ of settler colonial expansion, an association that entangled Australian and American colonial histories and cast road-tripping as a re-enactment of an original act of territorial dispossession.³⁴

As this imperial reimagining of the Greyhound suggests, while the rootlessness inherited from globetrotting forebears helped propel twentieth-century Australians across the Pacific, a common history of colonial conquest had endowed the people of the United States with an appetite for movement that approximated their own. In such a society, to remain on the road was to swim with the tide, and

³¹ Unmack, *Across Two Continents*, 9.

³² Knott, “The ‘Conquering Car’,” 4; Cotten Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008); Christopher W. Wells, *Car Country: An Environmental History* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2012); Jakle and Sculle, *Motoring*.

³³ Georgine Clarsen and Lorenzo Veracini, “Settler Colonial Automobilities: A Distinct Constellation of Automobile Cultures?” *History Compass* 10, no. 12 (2012): 889–900. See also Rosemary Kerr, “Through the Rear View Mirror: Landscapes, Legends and Literature on the Australian Road,” *Studies in Travel Writing* 17, no. 2 (2013): 188–206; Georgine Clarsen, “Automobiles and Australian Modernisation: The Redex Around-Australia Trials of the 1950s,” *Australian Historical Studies* 41, no. 3 (2010): 352–68; Clarsen, “Mobile Encounters.”

³⁴ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 15.

few visitors resisted the urge to fall into step with the nation's peripatetic inhabitants. With the invitation of endless highways, the blessing of likeminded locals, and Canada, Britain and Europe just hours or days away, there was little reason to cease wandering after disembarkation in San Francisco or New York.³⁵ Australia may have spawned generations of inveterate travellers, but the culture and geography of the United States aided and abetted their continued mobility.

Touring the United States

Upon arrival in San Francisco or New York, Australian women were apt to barely pause for breath. It was common to board a transcontinental train within a day of reaching dry land, going direct from ship berth to rail car. Even those who dallied at the port of disembarkation would typically go on to traverse the nation, or at least several states, before making a final departure. To some extent, this transcontinental touring was a practical necessity: many visitors from the southern continent arrived on the west coast but had business in the northeast; others made landfall in New York (often after a sojourn in Britain) but had plans to sail home from California. Yet these journeys between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts were also ends in themselves, pleasure jaunts filled with sightseeing and sociability. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a golden age of American domestic tourism, a period which saw the production of iconic tourist sites such as the Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Park, as well as the rapid growth of tourist infrastructure such as railroads, guidebooks and roadside accommodation. Especially from the 1910s, when the Great War disrupted tourist traffic to Europe and automobile ownership entered the mainstream, the nation's citizens heeded the calls to fulfil their 'patriotic duty' and 'See America First.'³⁶ Seduced by marketing material and funnelled into well-worn tourist routes, Australian visitors joined them. Even those with appointments to keep and steamers to catch tended to pause at the

³⁵ Mexico was also, of course, contiguous with the United States, but few Australian women visited this neighbouring nation, and those who did rarely stayed longer than a day.

³⁶ Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

canonical sites of the American tourist trail such as the Rockies, Chicago and Niagara Falls. Those without pressing deadlines could spend weeks or months meandering through the byways of the South or the backstreets of New England.

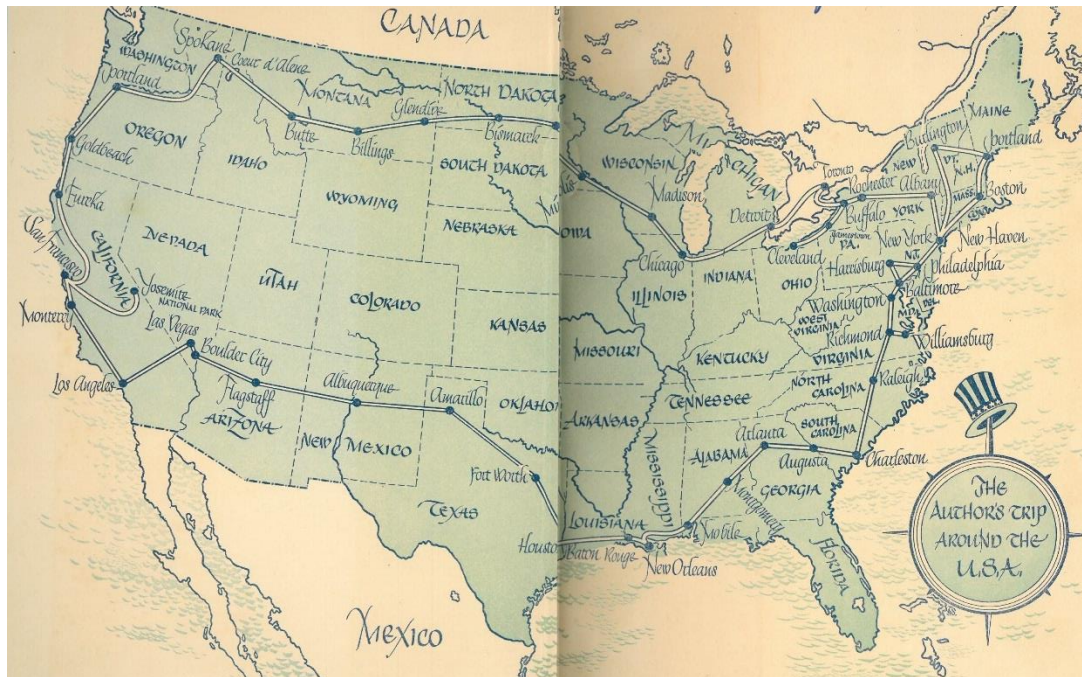


Figure 36: The route Mavis Riley travelled in 1947, a journey undertaken by train and Greyhound bus. Like many of her compatriots, she included Canada but not Mexico in her itinerary. In *The Lap of the Yanks* (Sydney & London: Angus and Robertson, 1949).

In conducting these journeys, Australian women encountered the remarkable environmental and human diversity of a nation that from a distance could appear all too homogeneous. As outlined in Chapter One, early twentieth-century Australian imaginings of the United States were dominated by what Jill Ker Conway termed ‘Hollywood images of crass modernity’, a state of affairs that obscured much of the nation’s complexity and tainted America with the pejorative associations of mass culture.³⁷ Traversing the nation itself, even when this experience was limited to tourist routes and spectacles, punctured the Hollywood image and placed in its stead a more nuanced picture, one that also encompassed poverty, immigration and regional difference. ‘America,’ Jean Whyte came to realise in the early 1950s, ‘is not just skyscrapers, factories, Conventions and movies. America is farms, and mountains, and lakes. A land with every variety of scenery,

³⁷ Ker Conway, *True North*, 12.

from the rugged Rockies in the west to the rolling cornfields of Indiana.’³⁸ In coming to ‘know’ the United States, however, the nation also became harder to define. Australian women struggled to characterise America after touring the forty-eight states, at once robbed of their preconceptions yet little able to reconcile a kaleidoscope of impressions into a coherent understanding of the nation and its people. Whyte had arrived ‘with a picture of “the American” in my mind’, but after travelling ‘eight thousand miles through the country’, she realised that ‘it is impossible to generalise about anything in the United States.’³⁹

The impressions that Whyte and others collected en route were as much a product of the transport employed as the scenery surveyed. Often travelling hundreds of miles per day, and spending the bulk of their time in motion, these visitors became far more intimate with the pleasures and pitfalls of their chosen conveyance than those of any state or city. A tour of the United States was, in large part, a tour of its transport infrastructure. This infrastructure, by and large, tended to impress. Praise was heaped on the transcontinental trains, which boasted luxuries such as air-conditioning, iced water, observatory cars, barber’s shops, beauty salons, soda fountains and cocktail lounges. The ‘magnificent streamlined train’ Mavis Riley boarded in Chicago during 1947 was a world away from ‘the prehistoric monsters that bump us to our destination here in Australia.’⁴⁰ Riley had reserved only a standard seat, but many travelled in Pullman cars, the famously opulent carriages, in use between the 1860s and the 1960s, in which passengers were assigned private sleeping berths and waited upon by black porters.⁴¹ After a restful night in a Pullman berth during the early 1950s, Mary Pope pronounced her conveyance ‘a sort of travelling hotel with A1 service.’⁴²

³⁸ “Libraries in the United States,” n.d., bag 1, box 2, Whyte Papers.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 64.

⁴¹ Janice L. Reiff and Susan E. Hirsch, “Pullman and Its Public: Image and Aim in Making and Interpreting History,” *Public Historian* 11, no. 4 (1989): 99–112.

⁴² Pope, *We Circled the World*, 163.

If the railroads were suggestive of a nation rich in worldly comforts, intercity buses evoked the democratisation of travelling in style. From its beginnings in the 1920s, the intercity bus industry—long dominated by the Greyhound Company—extended the freedoms of road transport to those without private automobiles, a demographic largely composed of women, foreign visitors, the working class and racial minorities.⁴³ Crossing the country by Greyhound was also far cheaper than travelling by train. Yet this dramatic reduction in price was not necessarily accompanied by an equal reduction in comfort. For what she regarded as the bargain price of \$57, 1930s traveller Nancy Grasby covered 600 miles in an air-conditioned ‘charabanc’ so well-designed that she remained ‘reasonably comfortable’ for forty-eight hours at a stretch. Her seat reclined to an angle of 45 degrees, and for an additional fifteen cents she was provided with a ‘clean white pillow’.⁴⁴ Helen Mary Boyce was even more enthusiastic. A night on board a Greyhound bus, she reported in 1936, was ‘really very comfortable’.⁴⁵

The bus industry went into decline after 1945, when mass automobile ownership replaced reliance on public transport, but the Greyhounds retained their allure for car-less foreign visitors, including Australian women, throughout the postwar decades.⁴⁶ The company was the obvious choice for visiting student Beth Stubbs in 1950, who found it no sacrifice to save her pennies on the bus. The Greyhound terminal in Cleveland, Ohio, was ‘very modern, with quite attractive wall murals...a good restaurant, very elegant rest rooms...It’s quite a pleasure to wait in.’⁴⁷ Such was the affluence of postwar America that even the masses could taste elegance during in-transit urination.

⁴³ Margaret Walsh, “Gender on the Road in the United States: By Motor Car or Motor Coach?” *Journal of Transport History* 31, no. 2 (2010): 210–30; Margaret Walsh, *Making Connections: The Long-Distance Bus Industry in the USA* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

⁴⁴ Nancy Grasby, “The Western States,” *West Australian* (Perth), 21 May 1938, 7.

⁴⁵ Helen Mary Boyce, “A Thousand Miles in a Greyhound Bus,” *BP Magazine*, September 1936, 5.

⁴⁶ Walsh, *Making Connections*.

⁴⁷ August–September 1950, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.



Figure 37: Getting a good night's sleep aboard a Greyhound with the aid of a pillow, 1943. Library of Congress, LC-USW3- 037681-E [P&P] LOT 884.

Few visiting Australians gained access to a private vehicle, but the small cohort who did motor through the States rarely failed to comment on the 'wonderful' roads or the 'very large number of motor cars'.⁴⁸ 'Is the whole nation speeding along on wheels?' wondered writer Marjorie Quinn in 1937.⁴⁹ The following year, this speed would prove the undoing of twenty-year-old Sydneysider Peggy Murray, who was killed near Wickenburg, Arizona after her car flew into a ditch.⁵⁰ Equally remarkable—and less dangerous—were the roadside facilities. Service stations and drive-in restaurants were dotted at regular intervals, allowing flagging motorists to restore themselves with coffee and hamburgers.⁵¹ This ready access to victuals was 'very different from home,' one woman noted in 1950, 'where you can travel for miles without any hope of refreshment.'⁵²

⁴⁸ "Woman Motorist in America," *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 2 September 1921, 40; "Sydney Journalist's Impressions," *West Australian* (Perth), 22 July 1936, 5.

⁴⁹ "Going Places in Los Angeles," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1937, 13.

⁵⁰ "Motor Tour Ends Fatally," *Mercury* (Hobart), 29 June 1938, 9.

⁵¹ *Cairns Post*, 2 January 1950, 5.

⁵² August–September 1950, *Overseas Diary 1950–52*, Stubbs Papers.

When night descended, there was no need to brave an unknown city in search of a hotel, as congenial accommodation could be found adjacent to major roadways. Interwar travellers would encounter auto camps or cabins, cheap yet comfortable lodgings designed for touring motorists.⁵³ During a 1939 road-trip between New York and San Francisco, Joan Gawler revelled in the ‘comfort factor’ of the auto camps found every ‘50 to 100 miles over the entire United States.’ For a fraction of the cost of a hotel room, she was assigned ‘air-conditioned, centrally heated’ sleeping quarters and a private ‘tiled bathroom’.⁵⁴ By the postwar era, these auto camps had been replaced by motels, more substantial structures with many of the same advantages, plus the additional boon of in-room televisions.⁵⁵

The prosperous modernity suggested by this transport infrastructure was, however, belied by scenes of indigence outside the window. Peering from a transcontinental train in 1936, Olive McConochie was ‘surprised to notice the apparent poverty of the smaller towns through which the train passed.’ The ‘miserable shacks’ were ‘far poorer than those of Australian country towns’.⁵⁶ Such penury was perhaps to be expected in the aftermath of the Depression, but also lingered into the prosperous postwar era. Barbara Toy’s 1958 account of a road-trip between San Francisco and New York juxtaposed rapturous accounts of ‘great wide freeways’ and ‘magnificent automobiles’ with comments on the ‘surprising’ prevalence of poverty, particularly in the South. ‘One would never expect to see people living in such desolate-looking shacks,’ she ruminated. ‘Because of the money Americans spend abroad, we think that everyone here must have it.’⁵⁷ It was clear, moreover, that such ‘shacks’ tended to house African Americans, whose visible privation hinted at a more complex and brutal racial politics than that displayed by the ready smiles of black porters aboard Pullman trains. Encased in

⁵³ John A. Jakle, “Motel by the Roadside: America’s Room for the Night,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 1, no. 1 (1980): 34–49.

⁵⁴ “Travel in America: Comfort of Auto-Camps,” *West Australian* (Perth), 16 November 1939, 5.

⁵⁵ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁵⁶ “Our Accent Amuses Americans,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 1936, 4.

⁵⁷ Toy, *Columbus Was Right!* 216–17, 235, 237–38, 240.

the heroic technology of the railroads and highways, Australian visitors looked out on another world altogether, a world that revealed that America's rush towards a streamlined future had left many of its citizens behind.

A further contrast emerged between the predictable sameness of the infrastructure and the astonishing diversity of the underlying physical and social landscape. During her 1938 bus tour, Nancy Grasby dined on hamburgers and Coca Cola in every rest station between California and the Gulf of Mexico, but was also struck by 'the way each State has a distinctive character.' From the gambling houses of Reno, to the deserted 'waste land' of Wyoming, to the alcohol-free hotels of Utah, in a matter of days she traversed great swathes of human experience, all the while subsisting on the standard 'national drink' and 'national dish'.⁵⁸ Grasby's experience was replicated two decades later by Cynthia Nolan, who drove westward from New York in 1959. Each day her car consumed 'endless miles of perfect highways'; each night she rested in 'near identical' motel rooms. Yet this journey also featured a 'rapid variation in landscape as though we were passing from one country to another'. Viewed from a speeding station-wagon, the United States was at once endlessly 'standardized' and constantly 'changing'.⁵⁹

This dualism was also apparent when visitors paused at the many available spectacles of the tourist trail. Each of these sites had a distinctive character: the Hopi dances at the Grand Canyon, the Spanish missions in California, the concrete slabs of the Hoover Dam, and the thundering waters of Niagara were all a world apart, both in material and in meaning. Yet at each location, particularly in the prosperous postwar decades, Australian women would reliably encounter the familiar bric-a-brac of 'rubbishy souvenirs', cafes, tour-guides and information signs, as well as 'a continual stream of sightseers'.⁶⁰ It was as though a cloak of mind-numbing uniformity had been thrown over a foundation of radical difference. In the face of such mixed messages, 'America' lost the coherence it carried prior to arrival.

⁵⁸ Grasby, "The Western States."

⁵⁹ Nolan, *Open Negative*, 7, 30.

⁶⁰ Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers; "Two Australian Women Motor across America," *Mail* (Adelaide), 7 November 1936, 18; Toy, *Columbus was right!* 228, 229; Nolan, *Open Negative*, 49–50, 86–87.

No less slippery was the ‘Americanness’ revealed during the interpersonal encounters that flourished in the semi-public spaces of mass transport. It was in the intimate confines of the train carriage and the Greyhound bus, far more than in towns and cities, that Australians found opportunity to interact with locals. The idle hours and physical proximity, combined with the curiosity aroused by a foreign accent, sparked long conversations between visitors and Americans from all walks of life. These exchanges were typically congenial, and did much to undercut the pejorative stereotypes responsible for jaundiced visions of the States. After chatting with a ‘keen Californian couple’ aboard a train in the mid-1950s, Irene Jeffreys realised that only the ‘worst side’ of the United States was projected abroad. Viewed from Australia, the nation appeared ridden with ‘abnormalities’, whereas ‘Americans in their homeland’ proved ‘a most likeable people.’⁶¹

Although Americans in the flesh were more amenable than Australians had been led to expect, they were also far less homogeneous. The assortment of citizens encountered within the nation’s trains and buses could more than equal the diversity of the physical landscape. Doris Hayball confronted this heterogeneity during a ‘friendly’ westward journey on the Santa Fe line in 1937. As ‘an object of interest to most of the passengers’, who had not previously met an Australian, she conversed with most of the ‘odd crowd’ on board. Two days and sixteen-hundred miles later, Hayball concluded that her fellow passengers constituted quite a different species of American to the specimens on display in New York. ‘The West, South and Middle West belt does contain a much less sophisticated population than does the East, from which we take our opinions of the American,’ she noted.⁶²

Hayball’s ‘odd crowd’ included African Americans, and this racial mix was a key aspect of the human diversity encountered aboard trains. In some cases, as in Hayball’s, these racial others were fellow passengers—with whom she did not deign to speak—but more commonly they were Pullman porters, an occupation dominated by black men. The unavoidable proximity of these men—who managed luggage, served food and arranged passengers’ sleeping quarters—demanded that Australian

⁶¹ Jeffreys, *Unforgettable Safari*, 107.

⁶² Hayball, “From Coast to Coast.”

visitors engage headlong with America's blackness, an issue that could otherwise be sidestepped by avoiding black neighbourhoods and the segregated South. Even many white Americans only engaged with black men in the guise of porters, making the Pullman car a crucial site for the negotiation of racial difference.⁶³



*Figure 38: Passenger and porter in front of a Southern Pacific train, 1958.
San Francisco Public Library, AAA-9980.*

Among Australian women, any initial misgivings about the intimate presence of these racial others were soon dispelled by the porters' renowned attentive service.⁶⁴ Mary Pope's 'educated negro' attendant proved 'kind and courteous', while Hayball had only praise for the 'kindly darkie porter' who 'found me a pillow and my chair'. Despite her use of the racist epithet 'darkie', she nonetheless condescended to express appreciation for this man's services.⁶⁵ Amid the opulence of the Pullman car, America's black population won recognition and

⁶³ Reiff and Hirsch, "Pullman and Its Public," 5.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Hayball, "From Coast to Coast"; Pope, *We Circled the World*, 162.

even regard from white women from across the Pacific. Yet these encounters took place against a backdrop of gross inequality, in which existing racial hierarchies were compounded by the porters' servile status. In this context, any kindness extended by a 'darkie porter' most likely did more to stroke a traveller's white privilege than to humanise the porter himself. The racial mix of America may have been highlighted within the spaces of mobility, but in a manner that largely served to naturalise rather than contest the imagined pre-eminence of whiteness.

Visitors crossed paths with a fair mix of Americans during train journeys, but an especially colourful array of characters populated the Greyhounds. Due to their low-priced tickets and regular stops, buses were the favoured transport of the non-metropolitan masses, and attracted visitors eager to discover 'the way people lived'.⁶⁶ Mavis Riley met a 'far more solid cross-section of Americans' in buses than during the five months she lived in New York. The 'friendly folk' with whom she conversed on board included Boy Scout leaders, ex-GIs, breezy Texans, Arizonan cowboys, 'restrained' New Englanders, southern farmhands, and 'a pretty school-teacher from Seattle'.⁶⁷ After such encounters, the typical American could appear just as elusive as the typical American landscape. As a result, by the end of their touring, most Australian visitors regarded the nation and its people with both more affection and greater bewilderment than they possessed on arrival. It was clear that the United States, as surveyed on a whistle-stop tour, was quite unlike the nation imagined from afar, but its true character proved almost impossible to pin down.

Good Britons Abroad

Not only did moving through America upend received notions about that nation, but also recalibrated Australians' relationship to Britain. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Britishness was a major point of difference between these visitors and the locals. The former remained, well into the 1950s, loyal members of the British clan, whereas the latter had long ago repudiated their ties to Britain in favour of republicanism. When travelling in the States, therefore, Australians' Britishness

⁶⁶ "Hollywood Stars," *West Australian* (Perth), 22 July 1936, 5.

⁶⁷ Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, 110, 112, 193, 210, 215–16, 220, 246.

acquired an element of novelty, a process that lent transpacific travellers a heightened awareness of their bonds to the 'Mother Country'. As student Margaret Callaghan wrote home to Adelaide as late as 1959, 'we've all tended to become very British here.'⁶⁸

This phenomenon dates back to the colonial era, when, according to Andrew Hassam, travellers from the Australian colonies 'seemed more certain of their Britishness in America.'⁶⁹ In the twentieth century, although a diminishing quotient of Australians could claim British birth or parentage, transpacific mobility continued to promote identification with the imperial metropole. Americans met on the road were quick to assume that an unfamiliar accent betrayed English upbringing, while Australians' unfulfilled yearnings for afternoon tea, roast lamb and 'British phlegm' provided daily reminders that Britishness ran deep within them.⁷⁰ With their thoughts turned towards England, they leapt to describe themselves as 'Britons', 'Britishers' or 'Englishwomen'. Alexandra Hasluck, for one, had 'felt very Australian' whenever she visited London, but suddenly 'felt the bond with Britain' during a 1946 stint in the States. Surrounded by hordes of Americans, she found herself drawn to any Britons who crossed her path. Recording the sensation in her memoirs, she reflected that 'it took coming to America to make me feel British.'⁷¹ An almost invisible part of her identity had been rendered strange and was, in consequence, thrust into the spotlight.

Imperial loyalties were further bolstered when such visitors caught the train north to Canada. Geographically contiguous with the forty-eight states, home to famously stunning landscapes, and a fellow British settler colony, Canada was a popular side-trip for Australians engaged on a transcontinental tour. Although the border crossing could be far from straightforward, it was nonetheless common practice to spend a few days in Toronto, Vancouver or the resort town of Banff.

⁶⁸ Callaghan, "Letters from Abroad," 28.

⁶⁹ Hassam, *Through Australian Eyes*, 140.

⁷⁰ Lawson, *American Holiday*, 38, 171; Lindsay, *Facts Soft and Hard*, 37–38; Theresa Moore to Mother, 10 August 1950, box 3, Moore Papers.

⁷¹ Hasluck, *Portrait in a Mirror*, 181.

These visits tended to be marked by professions of kinship and fellow feeling. After weeks or months grappling with the cultural differences of America, arrival in Canada resembled a homecoming. ‘Toronto is very like an Australian town,’ noted Winifred James in the 1910s. June Halliday, four decades later, also found Canada ‘much more like Australia’ than the States.⁷²

In large part, the familiarity of Canada derived from its British character. The popularity of tea, absence of central heating, ‘English style’ architecture, and ‘sight of school girls in uniform’ were among the key ingredients that made Australians feel at home.⁷³ This sense of belonging, felt some ten thousand miles from Sydney, further highlighted visitors’ own Britishness and prompted fond thoughts of the empire that had forged this global community. Jean Arnot, in 1949, revelled in the daily minutiae of imperial identity during her visit to Vancouver, buoyed ‘to see the Crown again & to see such words as “Imperial”, “Royal”, “Commonwealth.”’⁷⁴ In the first flush of relief at returning to the familiar apparatus of the British world, royal sentiment abounded. It was ‘good to see photos of the King and Queen and the Princesses—to post a letter in a familiar red letter box’, noted Beth Stubbs in 1950.⁷⁵ Distanced from the often stark realities of Britain itself, in a corner of the Commonwealth that approximated their own, and only a borderline away from a ‘foreign’ Republic, the bonds of empire felt strong indeed.

Transcontinental travel, then, at once promoted more favourable attitudes towards the United States and more self-consciousness Britishness. By coming to know and like America firsthand, Australian women were also moved to better appreciate that their own roots lay in a different Anglophone sphere—a sensation only confirmed when Canada was incorporated into the tour. Onward mobility led them to reimagine America, but also to reimagine themselves.

⁷² James, *Out of the Shadows*, 270; Halliday interview.

⁷³ Unmack, *Across Two Continents*, 19; Lawson, *American Holiday*, 211, 223, 238, 240.

⁷⁴ Jean Arnot to Mary, 19 January 1949, box 15, Arnot Papers.

⁷⁵ August–September 1950, Overseas Diary 1950–52, Stubbs Papers.

Working on the Road

Pleasure-oriented mobility was commonplace, but also tended to be short-term. Given the loss of income and high expenses associated with touristic travel, all but the wealthiest individuals found that it could not be sustained for longer than a few weeks or months. Much of the sustained mobility evident among Australian women in the United States was therefore associated with various forms of employment. In some cases, penurious victims of wanderlust picked up work that required travel. Queensland writer Harrie Nowland funded a tour of several states in the early 1920s by peddling oil stocks and soap powders door-to-door.⁷⁶ During the same decade, out-of-work Sydney actress Bernice Vert made her way from California to New York by working as a corpse-sitter, an individual employed to accompany the deceased to their burial ground.⁷⁷

A more popular option was to pursue an early form of the ‘working holiday’, alternating between short-term spells of employment and periods of pleasure-oriented travel. Secretarial work, nursing, domestic service and—in one case—tomato peeling could all furnish the cash necessary to prolong an overseas adventure.⁷⁸ Although such odd jobs were primarily intended to defray the costs of travel, they also became a formative part of the overseas experience, giving these individuals access to facets of American life beyond the tourist trail. By working on the road, Australian visitors were able to extend the pleasures of a peripatetic existence but also claimed a more authentic encounter with the United States, a claim that earned the right to ascend from the much-maligned identity of ‘tourist’ into the more prestigious caste of ‘traveller’.⁷⁹

Other Australian women carved out careers within professions that required extensive touring, ensuring a rootless existence for years to come. A career on the

⁷⁶ Harrie Nowland, “America To-Day,” *Cairns Post*, 2 August 1923, 3.

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Autobiography*, 210, Wallsten Papers.

⁷⁸ Sanders, “My Trip Abroad”; *Midwives & Nurses Miss Stella Pines’ Activities*; “Chit-Chat for Women,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 22 March 1927, 10; Editorial note, *Travel Diary*, folder 6, box 1, Perry Papers.

⁷⁹ On the distinction between the traveller and the tourist, see Paul Fussell, *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 151–76.

American stage, for instance, often necessitated lengthy periods on the road. Although the theatrical world was headquartered in New York, much of the available work lay with touring companies that brought Broadway hits to provincial towns and cities, where there was great demand for the latest metropolitan entertainments.⁸⁰ In this line of work, the appeal of the job in question was closely bound up with the travel opportunities it involved: a position in a touring company represented a valuable foothold in a competitive industry, but also provided a golden opportunity to explore the prairies and the West with a band of readymade companions. Adventures further afield could also be in the offing, as many tours extended to Canada or even Britain and Australasia. For women able to withstand the demanding schedules and makeshift conditions, life on tour could be, in the words of dancer Dorothy Slane, ‘a wonderful experience.’⁸¹

The archetypal form of itinerant entertainment was, of course, the circus. Although this performance medium assumed its modern form in eighteenth-century London, the touring circus was a product of the nineteenth-century American frontier. First imported to the Australian colonies during the gold rushes of the 1850s, the American model would be imitated by local companies throughout the following century. On both sides of the Pacific, cloth tents and a mobile menagerie became the hallmarks of circus life.⁸² Given the close parallels and ongoing relations between the two circus communities, Australian performers were well-equipped to develop a stateside career. The most notable example of this trajectory was bareback rider May Wirth. Born in Queensland to circus performers with Mauritian heritage in 1894, May was adopted by the Wirth circus family, who cultivated her equestrian talents. By 1911, she was a star ‘equestrienne’ with Wirth Bros circus, and travelled to the United States with her adoptive mother and sister. Debuting at New York’s Madison Square Garden with Barnum & Bailey circus the following

⁸⁰ Jack Poggi, *Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870–1967* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 87–88; Landis K. Magnuson, *Circle Stock Theater: Touring American Small Towns, 1900–1960* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, 1995).

⁸¹ “Success in America,” *News* (Adelaide), 28 December 1923, 6.

⁸² Mark St Leon, “Yankee Circus to the Fabled Land: The Australian-American Circus Connection,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 33, no. 1 (1999): 77–89.

year, Wirth was an instant hit with American audiences. She remained a star attraction with Barnum & Bailey and other local companies for the next quarter century.⁸³ Famed for her ability to somersault on horseback—a feat unmatched by any female performer—Wirth was known as the ‘foremost equestrienne of modern times’.⁸⁴



Figure 39: May Wirth somersaulting from one horse to another, a feat known as a ‘back across’. *San Francisco Call*, 8 September 1912.

Her life during these years was one of constant movement. A colleague recalled that Wirth and her fellow performers ‘travelled constantly’, venturing ‘all over America’ in their own ‘rail car’.⁸⁵ Over the course of a single month in the summer of 1917, she performed throughout Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Ohio, featuring on the Ringling circus program alongside sixty clowns, forty-one elephants and one rhinoceros.⁸⁶ Wirth also regularly performed in Canada,

⁸³ Mark Valentine St Leon, “Wirth, May Emmeline (1894–1978),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wirth-may-emmeline-9158/text16169>, accessed 21 May 2015; Mark St Leon, “May Wirth: An Unbelievable Lady Bareback Rider,” *Bandwagon* (May–June 1990): 4–13.

⁸⁴ *Boston Herald*, 6 June 1926, May Wirth Clipping File, NYPL.

⁸⁵ Bill Cardy interviewed by Mark St Leon, 28 July 1987, ORAL TRC 2692/2, NLA.

⁸⁶ *Fitchburg Sentinel* (Fitchburg, MA), 12 June 1917, 9; *New Castle Herald* (New Castle, PA), 15 June 1917, 3; *Fort Wayne Daily News* (Fort Wayne, IN), 3 July 1917, 7; *Lima News* (Lima, OH), 10 July 1917, 4.

Britain and Europe. Marriage did little to slow her down. She and her Australian husband Frank White—whom Wirth wed in New York in 1919—lived ‘separate lives’.⁸⁷ Wirth was on tour nine months of the year, while White maintained a business in New York. The couple, who remained childless, cohabited for only weeks at a time, and both parties were speculated to enjoy extramarital affairs.⁸⁸ Although married in name, Wirth was to all appearances a bachelorette, kept from domestic routines and wifely duties by the demands of an itinerant profession. By remaining on tour, she resisted categorisation as either married or single, living instead with a foot in both camps. For Wirth, like many women, physical mobility helped her elude gender norms. In a further departure from marital convention, Frank assumed May’s adoptive surname of ‘Wirth’, subsuming this wedded couple within a transnational circus family joined by ties of sympathy instead of blood.⁸⁹ As ‘Mr Wirth’ and ‘Miss Wirth’, the pair could resemble brother and sister as much as man and wife.

Wirth’s participation in the nomadic circus world not only confused her gendered self, but also impeded geographically based identifications. Although described as ‘Australian’ within the American press—her Mauritian heritage tended to escape mention—Wirth eschewed obvious ties to the land of her birth. One colleague recalled that she ‘never talked about [Australia]’ and ‘never went back there.’⁹⁰ She chose an Australian husband, but one whose loyalties also lay with a transnational circus world. Yet while Wirth spent the bulk of her career in America and ultimately retired in Florida, there is no evidence that she sought to align herself with the United States. To all appearances, America was more a surface over which she skated than a replacement source of identification and belonging. Her truest home was on horseback—a mobile abode from which she daily leapt through the air in a miniaturised enactment of a life defined by movement. The body hurtled across the circus arena; the life hurtled across nations and continents.

⁸⁷ Cardy interview.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ St Leon, “Wirth, May Emmeline (1894–1978).”

⁹⁰ Mickey McGeehan interviewed by Mark St Leon, 8 August 1986, ORAL TRC 2692/8, NLA.

The indeterminacy that flourished within the circus world was replicated within other spheres of itinerant entertainment. Like Wirth, whose US-based but globally mobile career plunged her nationality, marital status and kinship ties into confusion, so too were other Australian women unmoored from the anchors of nation, home and family by employment on the American entertainment circuit. A prime example here is the travelling lecture industry. Public lectures had enjoyed great popularity in the United States since the 1820s, when the first community education institution, known as a lyceum, was founded in Massachusetts. In the decades following the Civil War, the lecture circuit became a thriving industry. Speakers were represented by commercial agencies and began to demand hefty fees. Each year between October and April, lecturers would travel on the new railroad network, appearing in a different city every night of the week. Hailed as a democratic form of education and self-improvement, the popular lecture became an influential civic institution, described by Theodore Roosevelt as ‘the most American thing in America’.⁹¹ Audiences turned out to be instructed on a great range of topics, but travelogue and contemporary issues such as the women’s movement were in particular demand, creating opportunities for feminists to generate income on the lecture circuit. From the 1920s, the growth of rival forms of education and entertainment—radio, cinema and magazines—caused popular oratory to lose the cultural prominence it enjoyed during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, but the lecture circuit nonetheless remained ‘big business’ into the 1940s and beyond.⁹²

Among the hundreds of lecturers roaming the country during the mid-twentieth century were numerous Australian women. Some had lectured back

⁹¹ Roosevelt cited in Kenneth G. Hance, “The Contemporary Lecture Platform,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 30, no. 1 (1944): 41.

⁹² Ibid. On the history of the American lecture circuit, see Angela G. Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005); Donald M. Scott, “The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of American History* 66, no. 4 (1980): 791–809; Tom F. Wright, “The Results of Locomotion: Bernard Taylor and the Travel Lecture in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century,” *Studies in Travel Writing* 14, no. 2 (2010): 111–34; Lisa Tetrault, “The Incorporation of American Feminism: Suffragists and the Postbellum Lyceum,” *Journal of American History* 96, no. 4 (2010): 1027–56; Kenneth G. Hance, “The American Lecture Platform before 1930,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 30, no. 3 (1944): 273–79.

home, but many came to the commercial circuit in the States, where first-hand experience of the land 'Down Under' and the ability to hold an audience were regarded as ample qualification to become a professional orator. Janet Mitchell, who toured the States in 1926, was invited to give a full semester's worth of lectures at the University of Pennsylvania on the strength of a single address delivered at Pittsburgh's Hungry Club, entitled 'Australia and International Affairs'.⁹³ Mitchell, who had other fish to fry, declined the flattering offer, but other women needed little encouragement to exploit their Australian credentials for economic gain on the lecture circuit.

These visitors were remarkably adept at asserting themselves within an industry that, while open to women, was highly competitive and dominated by men. Although they hailed from a nation with little tradition of female lecturing, many Australian women won coveted engagements and paying audiences.⁹⁴ More concerned with self-promotion than self-effacement, they used their entrepreneurial skills and flair for performance to support themselves through the 'unwomanly' pursuit of public speech. Graccio Houlder, for instance, the stage name of former Perth resident and ardent prohibitionist Grace Holder, 'lectured in 44 of the 48 states' in a career that stretched from the mid-1920s into the early 1960s. A determined self-publicist, she spoke in major cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington DC, but also popped up in more obscure locations, including Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Zanesville, Ohio.⁹⁵

During the winters, lecturers such as Houlder lived out of a suitcase, speaking at women's clubs, Rotary clubs, high schools and colleges from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific coast. In the 1950s, Melbourne-born Shirley Duncan, hired by a Chicago-based agency to recount her Australian cycling

⁹³ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 95.

⁹⁴ On male dominance of the lecture circuit, see Shirley Duncan interviewed by Anne Rees, 10 June 2014. On female orators in Australia, see Joy Damousi, "An Absence of Anything Masculine: Vida Goldstein and Women's Public Speech," *Victorian Historical Journal* 79, no. 2 (2008): 251–64.

⁹⁵ "The Eyes, Ears, Voice of Australia: Graccio Houlder," advertising flyer, c. 1940s, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department, <http://apps.its.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=houlder/1>, accessed 22 February 2013.

adventures, delivered up to ten lectures a week.⁹⁶ Lectures were often delivered to several dozen club-members, but the audience could also fill a vast auditorium: Australian feminist Linda Littlejohn claimed that ten thousand residents of St Paul, Minnesota, paid to hear her speak in 1944.⁹⁷ Duncan, who lectured for over a decade, owned her own car and drove between speaking appointments, but other women travelled by train, bus or even aeroplane. The constant travel could be exhausting, but was also a source of delight. More than just ambitious careerists, these women were blatant pleasure-seekers. Duncan ‘loved’ the ‘terrific food’, ‘various hotels’ and ‘wonderful sites to see’.⁹⁸ Self-styled China expert Myra Roper likewise looked back on her lecturing days with ‘great respect and affection’. Her audiences extended from University of Chicago students to women’s clubs in rural Wyoming, a range that enabled Roper to ‘learn a lot about the United States’.⁹⁹ This itinerant lifestyle also promised handsome financial rewards: in the early 1940s, a lecturer represented by a commercial agency earned around \$100 per lecture, and netted approximately \$3,500 per year—triple a teacher’s salary.¹⁰⁰

In many cases, these earnings were used to fund travel beyond the United States during the off-season. Duncan headed abroad in the summer months, feeding her ‘adventurous spirit’ with trips to Europe, Asia and Africa. She travelled alone and often veered off the beaten track. One summer she volunteered at a medical clinic in Laos; another year she worked as a hotel receptionist in Mombasa.¹⁰¹ Houlder was another self-proclaimed ‘World Traveler’, who could be found in Canada, Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar or England when not lecturing in the States.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Duncan interview. She had also published an account of the bicycle tour: Shirley Duncan, *Two Wheels to Adventure: Through Australia by Bicycle* (London: George G. Harrap, 1957).

⁹⁷ “Well-known feminist lectured to audience of 10,000 in America,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 5 August 1944, 16.

⁹⁸ Duncan interview.

⁹⁹ Myra Roper interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1973, ORAL TRC 1/692, NLA.

¹⁰⁰ Hance, “The contemporary lecture platform,” 45; Scott Baker, “Testing Equality: The National Teacher Examination and the NAACP’s Legal Campaign to Equalize Teachers’ Salaries in the South, 1936–63,” *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1995): 51.

¹⁰¹ Duncan interview.

¹⁰² “The Eyes, Ears, Voice of Australia.”

Such journeys were undertaken for pleasure, but also had a serious side. Travelling during the off-season provided the steady stream of fresh content necessary to remain competitive on the lecture circuit. During the three years Sydney artist Constance Paul lectured in the States, she crossed the Atlantic ‘every two or three months’ to acquire ‘fresh material’ for her talks on modern architecture and interiors.¹⁰³ Her compatriot Winifred Walker headed south in 1944 with a similar purpose in mind. By filming the ‘picturesque’ people and ‘fascinating customs’ of Cuba, Walker generated enough material to create a ‘brand new lecture’, supplementing her existing set-pieces on ‘Australia, New Guinea and the South Seas’ and ‘New England as I See It’.¹⁰⁴



Figure 40: Graccio Houlder advertises her services in a flyer dating from the mid-1940s. Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Libraries.

Life on the American lecture circuit was therefore characterised by near perpetual motion. Half the year was spent travelling within the US, and the other half was often dedicated to adventures further afield. For years at a time, these women were veritable rolling stones. They were at once self-styled authorities on the southern continent and nomadic globetrotters, more accustomed to hotel rooms

¹⁰³ Constance Paul interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1970, ORAL TRC 1/485, NLA.

¹⁰⁴ “Winifred Walker,” advertising flyer, 1945, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department, <http://apps.its.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/walkerwi/2>, accessed 4 June 2015.

than domestic routine. Although often resident in the United States for years or decades, they tended, like Wirth, to regard the nation more as a backdrop for continued wandering than a replacement home. After more than six decades in America, Shirley Duncan had still, in 2014, ‘never got round’ to applying for citizenship.¹⁰⁵ This rootlessness was sometimes reflected in the names they gave themselves: monikers such as ‘Graccio Houlder’ and ‘Zida Sharp’ disavow any obvious connection with Australia or the British world and instead conjure up a placeless exoticism.¹⁰⁶ Although presumably a promotional device, this carefully cultivated mystique also points to the potential for personal reinvention abroad. Far from friends and family in suburban Perth, plain-old Grace Holder was able to metamorphosise into ‘Graccio Leggio Houlder’, the ‘Crimson Flame Orator of Two Continents.’¹⁰⁷

The circus arena and the lecture podium both demanded extensive mobility, but the field of aviation enabled some women to make a career out of movement itself. During the interwar decades, setting speed and distance records in the new frontier of flight was a lucrative sport in the United States, attracting scores of adventuresome young women to the skies. The most celebrated Australian to join their ranks was Jessie Maude Miller, also known as ‘Chubbie’ Miller or Mrs Keith Miller. A young woman from Melbourne, who wed a local journalist in 1919, Miller’s life took an unexpected turn in 1927, when she met English aviator Captain W. N. Lancaster during a visit to London. Lancaster was planning a flight to Australia, and Miller, although an unseasoned pilot, was determined to join him. Five months later, the pair completed the long journey, making Miller the first woman to fly from England to Australia.¹⁰⁸ Her feat brought celebrity, but also imperilled her reputation, as the public were shocked by the flagrant intimacy

¹⁰⁵ Duncan interview.

¹⁰⁶ On Sharp, see “Australian Girl to Leave for Home,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 August 1919, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Graccio Houlder, *Dryosophy and Dryology: The Wisdom and Philosophy, Science and Psychology of Prohibition* (Los Angeles: s. n., 1931).

¹⁰⁸ Ralph Barker, *Verdict on a Lost Flyer: The Story of Bill Lancaster & Chubbie Miller* (London: George G. Harrap, 1969).

between the two. Eager to escape this scandal, and attracted by rumours that riches abounded in America, Miller and Lancaster sailed to California in June 1928.¹⁰⁹

Miller could not have arrived at a better moment. The heady days of the late 1920s were a highpoint of female aviation in the United States. Celebrity aviatrices such as Amelia Earhart had emerged as glamorous symbols of a prosperous decade, and women pilots encountered a level of acceptance within commercial aviation that would not be replicated until the 1970s.¹¹⁰ The prominence given to the aviatrix during these years was in some respects a marketing strategy intended to make flying ‘thinkable’ to the general public—the underlying logic was ‘if a woman can do it, it must be easy and safe’. Yet aviation was nonetheless a space of emancipation, a realm in which women carved out new careers and freedoms for themselves.¹¹¹ Miller, exhibiting a marked entrepreneurial streak, was quick to exploit the public fascination with women in the clouds. She darted around the country in her Eagle Rock Bullet monoplane, finding work as a test pilot for the Curtis Wright Testing Company, and competing in the Women’s Air Derby and the National Flying Tour.¹¹² One week she was in Pecos, Texas; the next took her to Cleveland, Ohio.¹¹³ In October 1930, Miller broke the female record for a transcontinental flight, travelling between New York and Los Angeles in under twenty-six hours. Several days later, she also took out the record for the westward return journey.¹¹⁴ After surviving a spectacular crash in the Bahamas the

¹⁰⁹ “Americans Depart,” *Daily News* (Perth), 23 June 1928, 1; “New Sea Hop Envisaged,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 July 1928, A13.

¹¹⁰ Susan Ware, *Still Missing: Amelia Earhart and the Search for Modern Feminism* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993).

¹¹¹ Joseph J. Corn, “Making Flying ‘Thinkable’: Women Pilots and the Selling of Aviation, 1927–1940,” *American Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1979): 560, 567, 570. A similar argument has more recently been made in Emily K. Gibson, “Flying is Changing Women!?: Women Popularizers of Commercial Aviation and the Renegotiation of Traditional Gender and Technological Boundaries in the 1920s–30s,” (MA thesis, University of Massachusetts, 2010).

¹¹² “Another Record for Mrs Keith Miller,” *Aircraft* (Sydney), 30 November 1930, 11; “Mrs Keith Miller Flies Alone Across America,” *Register News-Pictorial* (Adelaide), 21 August 1929, 3; “Mrs Miller Wins Race in America,” *Register News-Pictorial* (Adelaide), 29 August 1929, 4.

¹¹³ *Corsicania Semi-Weekly Light* (Corsicania, TX), 23 August 1929, 1; “Winner in Women’s Air Derby Receives \$4,100,” *Kingston Daily Freeman* (Kingston, NY), 2 September 1929, 1.

¹¹⁴ “Mrs Keith-Miller Missing on Cuba Hop,” *New York Times*, 29 November 1930, 1.

following month, Miller became a national celebrity, a status she cultivated by selling the story of her near-death experience ‘for a large consideration’.¹¹⁵

For Miller, like her counterparts on the entertainment circuit, the United States proved an ideal backdrop for a life of movement and adventure. The public fervour for flight, the acceptance of women pilots, and the commercialisation of aviation together afforded scope for this erstwhile Australian to make a career out of conquering space and time. Her mobility was at once a source of pleasure, an enactment of female emancipation, a testament to women’s ability to master modern technology, and a lucrative line of work. At its peak, her annual earnings reached the noteworthy sum of £2000.¹¹⁶ ‘America gave me the opportunity in aviation which I was unable to get in England,’ she told journalists in 1931.¹¹⁷ By this point, Miller had left her life in Australia far behind: she divorced her long-abandoned husband, and hatched plans to apply for US citizenship.¹¹⁸ The housewife from suburban Melbourne had been reinvented into an icon of transnational modern womanhood, an archetypal aviatrix whose flying suit and goggles were offset by comely features and a lipstick-adorned smile.

This identity won fame and fortune, but also flirted with disrepute. Resolutely independent yet unfailingly feminine, Miller’s public persona walked the fine line between romantic adventurer and wanton hustler. She wore high-heels in the cockpit, but flaunted her ambition and openly relished her divorce. ‘I would rather pursue my career than settle down in married life,’ she told the *New York Times*.¹¹⁹ In an age when female technical competence and women’s sexual and economic independence remained shrouded in ambivalence—at once glamorised, but also regarded with disquiet—Miller’s respectability, like her person, was difficult

¹¹⁵ “Ships Fail to Find Mrs Keith-Miller,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1930, 4; “Mrs Keith-Miller Safe in Bahamas; Had Been Given Up,” *New York Times*, 2 December 1930, 1; “Wants to Sell Tale of Flight,” *Daily Leader Times* (Kittanning, PA), 3 December 1930, 1.

¹¹⁶ “Woman who Made £2000 a year by Flying,” *Examiner* (Launceston), 15 January 1936, 7.

¹¹⁷ “Mrs Keith Miller Wants U.S.A Citizenship,” *Northern Star* (Lismore), 20 June 1931, 7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*; “Flyer Sued for Divorce by Husband,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 June 1931, 3.

¹¹⁹ “Mrs Keith-Miller is Sued for Divorce,” *New York Times*, 26 June 1931, 9.

to pin down.¹²⁰ In January 1932, however, a scandal erupted which fixed her in the category of ‘fallen woman’. After a corpse was discovered in her Miami residence, Miller assumed a lead role in a murder investigation. Lancaster, her long-term lover, was accused of killing Haden Clark, Miller’s biographer and newly acquired fiancé. Miller and Lancaster attributed Clark’s death to suicide. The press had a field day over the messy love triangle, and Miller’s questionable visa status came under scrutiny from federal authorities.¹²¹ By October, she was hounded out of the country, and sailed to London.¹²² This fall from grace coincided with the decline of record flying, and by 1936 Miller was a ‘grounded aviator’, married to a British commercial pilot and employed as a secretary.¹²³

For the likes of Miller, Wirth and Houlder, an American life was, above all, a mobile life. By entering one of the itinerant industries that flourished in the United States during the interwar and postwar decades, these and many other Australian women were propelled throughout the forty-eight states, but also faced obstacles to putting down roots in any one corner of the nation. From one perspective, remaining on the move proved these visitors to be ‘at home’ among the restless Americans. Yet in another sense, the more they travelled in the States, the less able they were to establish themselves as bona fide locals. But nor did they remain wedded to affiliations and personae forged in their natal home. Instead their unsettled geographies came to be reflected in identities that were also slippery or

¹²⁰ The connection between these anxieties and the aviatrix is discussed within Justine Lloyd, “The Impossible Aviatrix,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 15, no. 32 (2000): 137–52. Similar anxieties coalesced around the figure of the female motorist, as discussed in Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Georgine Clarsen, *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

¹²¹ “Writer is Killed in Aviatrix’s Home,” *New York Times*, 22 April 1932, 10; “Mrs Keith-Miller Freed in Death,” *Daily Boston Globe*, 24 April 1932, A18; “Mrs Keith-Miller’s Aid Admits He Forged ‘Suicide’ Notes,” *Washington Post*, 3 May 1932, 1; “Mrs Keith-Miller Tells of Two Loves,” *New York Times*, 4 August 1932, 14; “Mrs Keith-Miller Bares Love Life to Save Lancaster,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 August 1932, 1; “Mrs Keith-Miller on Stand Today,” *Daily Boston Globe*, 8 August 1932, 20; “Mrs Keith-Miller ‘Fond’ of Flyer,” *Daily Boston Globe*, 9 August 1932, 8; “Immigration Officers Jail Mrs Keith-Miller,” *New York Times*, 23 June 1932, 6.

¹²² “Mrs Keith-Miller Eludes London Crowd By Leaving Ship in Passage Through Lock,” *New York Times*, 25 October 1932, 6.

¹²³ “Woman Who Made £2000 a Year By Flying,” *Examiner* (Launceston), 15 January 1936, 7; “Mrs Keith Miller,” *Longreach Leader* (Queensland), 18 April 1936, 4.

unresolved, a resistance to definition that afforded considerable freedom but also risked the stigma of marginality. In lives that made manifest the flux and instability of the modern age, these women stalked the shifting borderlands of Australianness and accepted feminine behaviour.



Figure 41: Jessie Miller exuding glamour on the pages of the Evening Review (East Liverpool, OH), a photo published on 23 January 1929.

Old World and New

Even as America beckoned, the Old World of Britain and Europe retained its pulling power. As the above discussion has hinted, Australian women's mobility to the United States did not come at the expense of the more well-worn route to London. Like the 'cosmopolitan progressives' featured within Daniel T. Rodgers' iconic study of 'Atlantic crossings', a significant number of Australian women

undertook a transatlantic journey.¹²⁴ Some made the crossing once, as part of a world tour or permanent migration, while others commuted between Southampton and New York—and in some cases continental Europe—unwilling or unable to settle in any one destination. With only a six-day voyage separating the Americas from the British Isles, it was not difficult to follow opportunities as they arose, spending a few months here, a few years there. For women used to the vast distances and perceived isolation of Australia, London and New York could appear close neighbours, twin cities engaged in constant exchange of ideas and personnel.

The Australians who joined these transatlantic flows often started off in Britain, having begun an overseas career by gravitating towards the imperial metropole. A typical example is Clytie Hine Mundy, an Adelaide-born soprano who headed to London in 1909 with plans to study at the Royal College of Music. In England she married and worked in opera, before an offer of work brought her to America in 1920. Over the following decades, Mundy and her cellist husband toured the States giving joint recitals, and she also became a renowned music teacher in New York and Philadelphia. The couple continued, however, to spend much of their time in Europe, and in 1970 moved back across the Atlantic to settle in Italy. Nine months later, Mundy's husband died, precipitating a final relocation back to New York, where she remained until her death in 1983.¹²⁵

An even more prolific wanderer was actress Coral Browne, whose Atlantic crossings are too numerous to recount. Born and raised in Melbourne, she also commenced a transatlantic career in London, where she moved in 1934 to further her stage career. Having won fame as a West End star, during the 1950s and 60s Browne performed Shakespeare on Broadway stages and featured within several Hollywood films, including *Auntie Mame* and *Lylah Clare*. By 1965 Browne was torn between the competing allure of London and Manhattan, telling journalists that

¹²⁴ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4, 7.

¹²⁵ Clytie Hine-Mundy interviewed by Joyce Lambert, n. d., and "Clytie Hine Mundy's Reminiscences at Age Eighty-Seven," c. 1974, Clytie Hine-Mundy Clipping File, NYPL; Wayne Hancock, "Hine, Clytie May (1887–1983)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hine-clytie-may-12640/text22775>, accessed 13 June 2012.

‘England is her home, but if she had her choice...she would live in New York.’¹²⁶ Although this particular wish would go unfulfilled, Browne would indeed soon relocate across the Atlantic. After commencing a romance with American actor Vincent Price, she spent several years moving between her flat in Belgravia and the Hollywood hills, and by 1974 had settled in Los Angeles.¹²⁷

For these two women, and many others, England and the United States were not so much competing destinations as two hubs of a broader Anglophone world in which they roamed at will. Their ‘mind maps’ encompassed Old World and New, British Empire and American republic.¹²⁸ This casual transatlantic mobility was a physical enactment of the triangular relationship between mid twentieth-century Australia, Britain and the United States, and indicates once more that the two centres of gravity were not mutually exclusive. Just as Sydneysiders developed a passion for Hollywood films yet continued to salute the Union Jack, the Australians drawn to Fifth Avenue found no need to bypass Pall Mall.

The two destinations were in many ways complementary. If the United States represented the brave new world of tomorrow, London was a home away from home. Although a vast metropolis with an alien climate, its cultural landscape and even its physical geography were well-known to Antipodean Britons raised on Dickens and Shakespeare. The city also housed an extensive and well-connected network of Australians, with their own weekly publication and community meeting places such as Australia House and, in the 1950s, the Down Under Club.¹²⁹ Familiar landmarks and friendly faces were rarely hard to find. This sense of belonging also extended to their legal status. As British subjects and, from 1948, citizens of a Commonwealth nation, Australians could live and work in England for an indefinite

¹²⁶ *New York Times*, 13 December 1965.

¹²⁷ Rose Collis, *Coral Browne: ‘This Effing Lady’* (London: Oberon Books, 2007); Barbara Angell, *The Coral Browne Story: Theatrical Life and Times of a Lustrous Australian* (Sydney: Angell Productions, 2007); Anne Rees, “Browne, Coral Edith (1913–1991),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/browne-coral-edith-19293/text30772>, accessed 11 December 2015.

¹²⁸ Deacon, “Location! Location! Location!”

¹²⁹ Sleight, “Reading the British Australasian Community in London”; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 73–103. On the Down Under Club, see Coleman interview.

period, free from the stringent immigration quotas and visa requirements that limited access to the United States.¹³⁰ These factors conspired to ensure that London remained a natural gathering point for Australians abroad, who found the city convenient if nothing else. As one globetrotting ex-Sydneysider reflected in 1958, ‘I can’t say I always liked London, but she was the place to which I inevitably returned...and so she became Home.’ In New York, by contrast, this woman found ‘a twentieth-century quality that no other city has.’¹³¹ By criss-crossing the Atlantic, then, Australian women were able to move between strangeness and familiarity, startling modernity and reassuring tradition. The yin and yang of the Anglophone world, together Britain and America provided a range of experience unobtainable in either destination alone.

The ease with which Australian women moved around the Atlantic world was also a mark of their modernity. As self-interested and often highly independent individuals, they were modern women *par excellence*. In shifting from country to country, sprouting ‘shallow roots’ across the northern hemisphere, they also embodied the cosmopolitanism and transience that did much to define the modern age.¹³² This characterisation is especially true of those who ventured beyond the English-speaking world and steeped themselves in the languages and cultures of Europe. One such woman was Myril Lloyd, a Bathurst-born artist who acquired ties and addresses throughout France and the Anglosphere. After attending the University of Sydney, she nursed in England during the Great War, studied sculpture in 1920s Paris, wed a Canadian doctor, and joined the avant-garde art scene in New York, before moving to Cannes in 1955 to work with Purist painter Amédée Ozenfant. Her twilight years were spent in London and Sydney. A

¹³⁰ Jatinder Mann, “The Evolution of Commonwealth Citizenship, 1945–1948 in Canada, Britain and Australia,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 50, no. 3 (2012): 293–313. As mentioned in the Introduction, this privilege was revoked in 1962, when Britain passed the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act* to stem the flow of migrants from the former Empire. Curran and Ward, *The Unknown Nation*, 40–42.

¹³¹ Toy, *Columbus was right!* 1, 240.

¹³² Desley Deacon, “Shallow Roots? Judith Anderson’s International Families,” unpublished paper presented at the Australian Historical Association Conference, July 2012, University of Adelaide; Nava, “Cosmopolitan Modernity,” 81–99.

consummate cosmopolitan, although she lingered in particular cities for years at a time, transnational mobility was the defining characteristic of her biography. It is therefore fitting that Lloyd's art deco designs adorned the swimming pool of the transatlantic ocean liner *Queen Mary*, a flagship of the Cunard White Star Line.¹³³ Lloyd's art, like her person, was forever at sea, modern in both its character and its geography.



Figure 42: Myril Lloyd's 1936 art deco designs in the Queen Mary swimming pool. photoshop.co.uk.

Cosmopolitan geographies resulted in indeterminate national identities. Although this study is concerned with 'Australian women', such a neat category barely existed in the transnational world these individuals occupied. The women in these pages all spent a significant portion of their life in Australia, and were described by themselves or others—at least in some contexts—as 'Australian', but this was often far from the only affiliation at their disposal. As discussed above, the lingering ties of empire led many Australian-born women to term themselves 'Britons', an identity that was often exaggerated in the United States. This catalogue of possible identities only expanded as they travelled further afield. For the many 'Australian' women who moved between the Antipodes, America, Britain and Europe, national identification tended to be fluid, multifarious and contingent.¹³⁴ It

¹³³ Rosemary Annable, *Biographical Register: The Women's College within the University of Sydney*, vol. I (Sydney: Council of the Women's College, 1995), 43.

¹³⁴ This issue has also been discussed at length within Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune*, 142–48.

could be based on their place of birth, the location of their upbringing, their current residence, current passport, or the nationality of their current husband, all of which may be different.

The operatic soprano Frances Alda is a case in point. Born Fanny Davies in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1879, to an English father and French-German mother, she spent her childhood in Melbourne. As a young woman Fanny went to try her luck in London, and soon crossed the Channel to commence a singing career in Paris. After performing in France, Belgium, England and Italy, she married the Italian opera manager Giulio Gatti-Casazza in 1910.¹³⁵ Her stage name, Madame Alda, also had Italian derivation. At the height of her career Alda began singing in New York, and ultimately settled in the States, where she divorced her husband and adopted US citizenship.¹³⁶ At various points in her autobiography *Men, Women and Tenors*, Alda described herself as ‘an Englishwoman’, ‘an Australian’, ‘a New Zealander’, ‘a British subject’, ‘a colonial’, the bearer of ‘an Italian passport’, ‘a woman without a country’ and ‘an American citizen’.¹³⁷ Overburdened with epithets, Alda was an ‘Australian’ women whose life on the road kept her nationality ‘up in the air’.¹³⁸ As her example suggests, when ‘home’ could equally refer to Sydney, New York, Paris or London, such women are perhaps better described as citizens of the world than daughters of Australia.

The transatlantic mobility common among Australian women also had implications for imperial relations. Although this pattern of movement often stemmed from an enduring attachment to Britain, which continued alongside—and was even exacerbated by—engagement with the US, the Australian women who became familiar with both London and New York tended to develop a preference

¹³⁵ “Director Marries his Prima Donna,” *Washington Herald*, 4 April 1910, 1.

¹³⁶ “Gatti-Casazza Divorced by Mme. Frances Alda,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 16 November 1928, 1; *New York Herald-Tribune*, 19 September 1952, Frances Alda Clipping File, NYPL.

¹³⁷ Alda, *Men, Women and Tenors*, 40, 86, 87, 172, 176, 265.

¹³⁸ This process was not unique to Australian women. There are striking parallels between Alda and her Canadian contemporary Margaret Anglin, an actress who juggled allegiances to Canada, Britain, the United States, Ireland and France. Cecilia Morgan, “‘That will allow me to be my own woman’: Margaret Anglin, Modernity and Transnational Stages, 1890s–1940s,” in Deacon, Russell and Woollacott, *Transnational Lives*, 144–55.

for the latter destination. As we glimpsed in Chapter Three, the imperial loyalty that propelled transpacific travellers onward to Britain could be fatally weakened by the contrast between Old World and New. The women who made the Atlantic crossing on one or more occasion found it difficult to ignore that, when it came to modernity and ease of living, England lagged far behind the States. Even those who proclaimed themselves proud Britons while in America could find this pride liable to dissipate when faced with Britain itself.

Instances of Australian preference for America are evident from the first decades of the century, when London was still basking in the reflected glory of Empire, as yet untroubled by war in Europe. In the early 1910s, Sydney-based writer Dulcie Deamer anticipated her visit to England with ‘sentimental excitement’. As it happened, she ‘hated London’. After only three days in the ‘grey’ and ‘fog-greasy’ city, Deamer ‘felt suicidal’. Instead of resorting to self-harm, she boarded the *Olympic* and sailed to New York, where conditions could not have been more different. ‘In contrast to sodden, chimney-sweep London,’ she recalled, ‘New York’s face was clean. So was the sky. Its man-made cliffs of super-natural height were white and gleaming.’ The former languished under a ‘sick, muggy sun’; the latter was ‘stridently, screamingly alive.’ Her ‘sentimental’ attachment to Britain had been poisoned by the reality of London, but the final nail in the coffin was issued by the ‘gleaming’ skyline of New York.¹³⁹

Disenchantment with Britain became particularly pronounced after 1945, when the lingering economic and physical hardships of WWII produced a stark gulf between standards of living on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Whereas wartime mobilisation had propelled the United States into an age of unprecedented prosperity, six long years of war had left Britain on the verge of collapse. London was scarred by bomb damage; rationing dragged on into the 1950s; the Empire began to crumble. Britain may have defeated the Axis powers, but it was no triumphant victor. For Australian women who sailed from New York to Southampton during these years, the ‘Old Country’ seemed old and shabby indeed.

¹³⁹ Deamer, “The Golden Decade,” 44–45.

After the supermarkets, skyscrapers and washing machines of America, the once wondrous imperial metropole was a relic from a bygone era.

An evocative account of this contrast comes from Theresa Moore, the Canberra playwright who headed to America in 1949. Moore was a self-identified Briton, who had initially felt a stranger in the States. She missed British newspapers, British tea and, most of all, British modesty.¹⁴⁰ But when the time came to sail from New York, Moore was sad to see the skyline recede into the distance. She had been seduced by America's career women and consumer goods, and now pronounced it a 'wonderful country.'¹⁴¹ The regret Moore felt upon leaving New York was magnified ten-fold when she arrived in London six days later, where conditions were cold, dirty and old-fashioned. On 15 February 1951 she wrote to her mother:

At Waterloo Station we faced English Life for the first time. It's hard to take after America. The place was cold and filthy...I went to the Ladies Room and nearly died when I saw the wooden seats and pull-chains—no soap of course—no towels.¹⁴²

Moore's dim view of 'English Life' did not improve on further acquaintance. A few days later, she reported that 'London itself takes some getting used to after American cities—it is so squat and dingy.'¹⁴³ If the streets were grim, the cuisine was abysmal. 'The food here is positively awful,' Moore complained. '[M]aybe it's because we have just come from America...they are not short of ingredients—my whole criticism is the way the food is prepared and served'.¹⁴⁴

The rigours of 'English Life' showed no signs of abating as the war receded into the distance. Throughout the 1950s, the English weather, built environment and class system all suffered from what one Australian called 'the problem of doom and gloom'.¹⁴⁵ Brisbane biochemist June Halliday struggled with the 'primitive'

¹⁴⁰ Diary entry, 21 September 1949; Theresa Moore to mother, 3 May 1950; Theresa Moore to mother, 27 July 1950, box 3, Moore papers.

¹⁴¹ Theresa Moore to mother, 9 February 1951, box 3, Moore papers.

¹⁴² Theresa Moore to mother, 15 February 1951, box 3, Moore Papers.

¹⁴³ Diary entry, 14 February 1951, box 3, Moore Papers.

¹⁴⁴ Theresa Moore to mother, 20 February 1951, box 3, Moore Papers.

¹⁴⁵ Duncan interview.

conditions of London, where she worked for a year in the mid-1950s after completing her PhD in the States. With coal strictly rationed and her flat riddled with draughts, Halliday shivered much more in the mild English winter than during three years in Wisconsin, where the sub-zero temperatures were offset by central heating.¹⁴⁶ Halliday's contemporary, Sydney teacher Marie Coleman, was more struck by London's depressed underclass, who endured conditions far worse than anything encountered during six months in Chicago and New York. Her lingering impressions of the city, where she taught in East End schools, were of Cockney poverty, 'wrecked' buildings and 'pea soup fogs'.¹⁴⁷ Fulbright scholar Elaine Barry, who travelled home via Europe in the late 1950s after studying in South Carolina, also found England 'incredibly sort of poor'. After the 'largesse' of America, life across the Atlantic felt 'constrained and contained', a 'small scale' existence characterised by rationing, bleak winters and endless penny-pinching.¹⁴⁸

To be sure, disappointment with the metropole was not the sole preserve of Australians who had visited America. With its dreary bed-sits, stiff manners and faded glory, London often proved underwhelming for travellers who arrived direct from Sydney.¹⁴⁹ Yet this species of disappointment was evidently compounded by fresh memories of Manhattan, recollections which conjured an alternative model of Anglophone society and fostered discontent with the comparative shortcomings of mother England. Had these travellers resisted the gravitational pull of London and contented themselves with an American sojourn, the imagined 'greatness' of Great Britain may have endured. Those who travelled in the opposite direction, meanwhile, for whom England came before America, could find that incipient misgivings about the 'Mother Country' burst into bloom upon landing in the States.

Australian women's Atlantic crossings therefore gave added impetus to the

¹⁴⁶ June Halliday interviewed by Anne Rees, 6 July 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Coleman interview.

¹⁴⁸ Barry interview.

¹⁴⁹ Angela Woollacott, "The Metropole as Antipodes," in *Imagined Londons*, ed. Pamela Gilbert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 86–97; Rees, "'Australians Who Come over Here Are Apt to Consider Themselves Quite Large People.'" Disillusionment with London was also common among New Zealanders. See Bones, "A Dual Exile?" 130–39.

slow decline of British race patriotism back home. Among the many factors that combined to wrest the Commonwealth from the imperial embrace, the production and dissemination of first-hand comparisons of England and America played a small but compelling role, giving credence to suspicions that Britain's glory days were ending and providing confirmation that a new Anglophone superpower waited in the wings. Transatlantic mobility not only muddied national identification, but could also shake the foundations of imperial sentiment.

Conclusion

By roving within and beyond the United States, early twentieth-century Australian women upset imagined geographies and imagined communities cherished at home. America, it transpired, was not a nation of skyscrapers, film sets and gangsters, but a conglomeration of worlds that together beguiled yet defied definition. Britain, the revered 'Mother Country', was revealed to be—especially after 1945—a parent with fast-diminishing faculties, more in need of care itself than able to bestow it on others. Australia, the nation whence these women came, could cease to be regarded as 'home', or come to be jostled by any number of competing loyalties. Some wanderers, indeed, more or less shrugged off the label 'Australian'. In short, the world and the self surveyed from a Pullman car or transatlantic steamer often little resembled that imagined in Sydney. These travels and the dislocation they aroused had ramifications for these women as individuals, granting membership to a modern tribe of transnational cosmopolitans. But they also contributed to broader geopolitical shifts, helping to forge the triangle between Australia, Britain and the United States that slowly loosened the apron strings of empire.

Viewed within a broader context, however, the most striking feature of this wave of mobility was that it was self-directed. When historians speak of global flows and fluxes, they often refer to men and women caught in the tide of history: immigrants in search of a better life, refugees in flight from war or persecution, or indentured labourers conscripted to toil far from home. For each of these groups, transnational mobility was less of a choice than an imperative, a decision borne of historical circumstances beyond individual control. For the Australian women

featured in this discussion, by contrast, born into relative comfort and opportunity—the climate of pervasive sexism notwithstanding—both the decision to leave home and the refusal to confine their travels to a single destination was an expression of personal agency. They trotted the globe not at the direction of a higher authority but simply to please themselves, a provocative agenda for a woman in the early twentieth century. Neither tourists nor migrants, war brides nor remittance women, these transnational Australians are instead best described as individuals, self-interested women who sought out opportunities for their own gratification and betterment in the manner of men. It was perhaps this eminently modern individualism, above all, which drew them to the United States, long renowned as a nation of individuals all chasing their own version of the ‘American Dream’.

CHAPTER 7

So this is Home: Return and Reform

In early 1955, librarian Jean Whyte brought her suitcase of lecture notes and library manuals home to Adelaide. She had flown to Chicago two years before, convinced that '[Australia's] greatest need is for more professionally trained people', and now returned professionally trained herself.¹ Having fulfilled her objective, Whyte resumed work at the Public Library on North Terrace, and picked up the threads of her old life. But she proved unable to settle down, and turned to poetry to voice her discontent. 'So this is home,' she wrote, 'this half-withered vine.' What had been a place of 'joy', a world she 'loved', now appeared 'sour', 'muddied from the well of compromise.' As travel had given her new experiences and expertise, so too had it given her a fresh perspective on home. 'I've returned / From alien skies, to my appointed place, / And found it yet more alien,' she lamented. After two years at the progressive University of Chicago, Whyte now railed against her 'expected role' and 'the terms on which I'm welcome here.' The Pandora's box of a wider world had been opened, and there was no going back. 'I cannot pay / The price they ask,' was the defiant note on which the poem ended. 'I cannot forget, / And not forgetting, cannot hold my tongue.'² Hold her tongue she did not. As we saw in Chapter Three, Whyte would overcome the 'loneliness' that inspired dreams of 'going back to USA', and go on to spearhead the professionalisation of Australian librarianship.³ In her ambivalence with the home to which she returned were the

¹ Jean Whyte to AAUW, 3 November 1952, box 2, Whyte Papers.

² "The Return," 25 June 1955, box 2, Whyte Papers.

³ Whyte quoted in Jenkin, *Jean Primrose Whyte*, 02.10.

seeds of a powerful reforming zeal, a zeal that would transform her own life and impact the world around her.

The emotions that Whyte rendered in verse and her impassioned—but not always welcome—attempts to import the best of the American modern were widespread among the women who came home after a period of work, study and adventure in the United States. Although most who went did return, many did not return by choice, or would question their choice in the months that followed the excitement of reuniting with loved ones. To be sure, homecoming elicited diverse responses, and not all transpacific travellers shared Whyte’s jaundiced gaze. The frustrations she expressed permeate the archival record, which is near silent on the subject of happy homecomings, but this does not imply that Australia was ‘half-withered’ for all. It is more probable that those pleased to be home simply stopped writing. Having completed their travels, and more or less contentedly resumed a former life, there was now little reason to compose letters, diaries and journalism. Only the troubled souls, for whom return was beset by traumas large and small, may have found it necessary to unburden themselves on paper.

Yet these troubled souls cannot be dismissed as outliers. Alienation, dissatisfaction and regret were, if not universal, commonplace indeed. From the 1920s until the 1960s and beyond, the glee with which Australian women tended to greet the United States was all too often counterbalanced by the frustration and dismay with which they reappraised the once familiar landscape of home. But once settled into old routines, and faced with little prospect of further travel in the immediate future, many would channel their energies into education and reform. Having returned, like Whyte, ‘on fire with new ideas’, they fixed their gaze upon the supposed deficiencies of home and set to work.⁴ It is this work and its reception from locals, themes already glimpsed in the preceding pages, which constitutes the focus of this final chapter.

⁴ Valmai Hankel, “Pages of life an inspirational read: Jean Primrose Whyte AM,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 26 April 2003.

Returning to Yesterday?

Unless an Australian woman married during her time in America, a moment was apt to come when she was compelled to retrace her steps across the Pacific. In some cases, the pleasures of life abroad had grown stale, and the imagined pleasures of home began to issue a siren call. More often, this was a decision driven by circumstance rather than homesickness. Either a visa had expired or the money had run out; the shadow of sickness had fallen, or obligations to family could no longer be ignored. The latter was an especially common cause of homecoming. If a parent succumbed to debility or illness, the burden of tending to the invalid often fell to any daughters in the family—especially those who were single. Even a woman living abroad could find herself required to rush to the parental bedside and assume the role of nurse.

This was the fate of violinist Ray Fox, who in 1927 abandoned a promising career in New York ‘on account of the failing health of her father’.⁵ Back in South Australia after six years abroad, she re-entered the local music scene with gusto, but was soon disappointed. ‘Adelaide knows little of good music,’ she complained.⁶ Fox had succumbed to the tug of familial love and obligation, yet nonetheless resented her premature departure from the United States. ‘I have not lost my craving to return,’ she told journalists after two years back home. ‘Soon I hope to do so.’⁷ In Fox’s case, this craving would be satisfied within a further six months, but others were less fortunate.⁸ Melbourne pianist Vera Bradford, who won a scholarship in 1928 to study at the Chicago Musical College, was also recalled home by parental ill-health, but would never resume her budding American concert career. Unable to heed messages from Chicago urging her prompt return, Bradford remained moored in Melbourne. In the years that followed, she eked out a living from music

⁵ “Americans Tired of Jazz: Miss Ray Fox Returns,” *News* (Adelaide), 30 September 1927, 8.

⁶ “Likes America: Genius Unrecognised,” *Mail* (Adelaide), 21 September 1929, 19.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ “Personal,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 24 April 1930, 18.

lessons and (underpaid) performances with the ABC.⁹ Hers would be a story of unrealised potential, a story that was all too common.



*Figure 43: Vera Bradford at the piano in Sydney, 1944.
SLNSW, Home and Away – 30804.*

If return was often made with reluctance, life back home could do little to assuage these misgivings. To be sure, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the prestige of overseas experience would often have a beneficial impact upon a traveller's career. Basking in the newfound esteem of colleagues and the public, they were courted by powerbrokers and landed enviable jobs. For those working in male-dominated professions, international credentials were sometimes able to counteract the prejudice against appointing women to senior roles.¹⁰ But this local

⁹ Ivor Morgan, "A Memoir of Vera Bradford, Master Pianist," *History Australia* 3, no. 2 (2011): 53.1–53.7.

¹⁰ For example, four years after educationist Julia Flynn returned from her 1932 Carnegie-funded American study tour, the Victorian Education Department appointed her chief inspector of secondary schools. This was the first time a woman had been appointed to such a senior post within the Department. "Woman Nominated," *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 November 1936, 17. Kate Jacobs, meanwhile, became the first Australian appointed to Melbourne's Board of Social Studies after she returned from her postgraduate studies at the New York School of Social Work in 1940. "Three Social Service Appointments," *Argus* (Melbourne), 6 September 1940, 10.

success could appear lacklustre compared to potential opportunities forsaken abroad. To be a big fish in a small pond did not always compensate for an unfulfilled or aborted dream to swim the wider waters of the United States. More to the point, a rapid rise up the career ladder provided little inoculation from the other challenges of homecoming.

These challenges arose on several fronts, not least of which was the home. For young and single women in this era, travel represented one of the few respectable routes out of the family home. Once safely returned, however, unmarried women travellers were, even into the 1950s, typically expected to resume their position under the parental roof. After months or years of a more independent life abroad, settling back into a childhood bedroom was apt to evoke a sense of regression. This dynamic was not exclusive to American-bound travellers, but was perhaps especially frustrating for those who had sampled the 'woman's paradise' across the Pacific. Having been mistress of her own apartment in California, Adele Millerd found it claustrophobic to share a roof with her parents, grandparents and two maiden aunts back in Sydney. 'I should never have gone back,' she recalled of her 1953 homecoming. 'There were too many people...I needed to be out on my own.'¹¹ Up in Brisbane, her contemporary Elaine Barry shared these sentiments, but was conscious that living alone 'would have seemed insulting'. To escape this bind, she secured a job down in Melbourne, a professional opportunity that provided the perfect excuse to obtain the personal freedom she craved.¹²

Not only could re-entering the family home feel a retrograde step, but the stasis apparent within society at large also caused dismay. Just as venturing to America seemed akin to travelling to tomorrow, coming home to Australia was often likened to a return to yesterday. Any divergence between the two countries was judged a symptom of the latter's backwardness. It was a country stuck in a 'time warp', 'out of the swim of things' and 'still backward in many ways'.¹³ This 'time warp' was not always a source of grievance. Newly returned to Sydney in 1947, Julia

¹¹ Millerd interview.

¹² Barry interview.

¹³ Goodnow interview; MacIntyre interview; Latufeku interview.

Drake-Brockman rejoiced in the ‘friendliness of the so-called “man-in-the-street,”’ so unlike the brusque manners that prevailed in hustling New York.¹⁴ More often, however, genial pedestrians provided little consolation for what was characterised as nationwide sluggishness. A typical expression of these sentiments comes from Dorothy Jenner, the actress and journalist who proclaimed the United States ‘light years ahead’. Of her 1925 return to Sydney she wrote:

I had changed so completely during those ten years in the United States. Australia seemed to have stood still. It was all steak and eggs and ladies’ afternoon tea parties. I knew right from the moment I got off the ship I should not be staying long.¹⁵

By the 1940s and 50s, Jenner’s critique of the stodgy food and equally stodgy customs were joined by complaints about the absence of central heating, supermarkets and modern fashions.¹⁶ Under the thrall of American modernity and little inclined to see its local manifestations, women travellers were apt to feel ‘very let down’ after returning from the United States.¹⁷

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of the torpor discerned at home was the hostility towards women in the workplace. The enduring masculinism of Australian academia, for example, would often hobble the professional progress of women who took up local appointments after studying or working within the more feminised US tertiary system. Although an American degree was, to some extent, a golden key that unlocked the male bastion of academia to women with talent and ambition, no amount of overseas experience could counteract an internal culture of sex discrimination. This dynamic was especially pronounced during the 1950s, a decade of dramatic change in the university but continued—even exacerbated—conservatism in gender relations. These years witnessed a rapid expansion in opportunities for higher education, both within the growing Australian tertiary system and, thanks to the Fulbright scheme, in the United States. The result was a

¹⁴ Julia Drake-Brockman to Henrietta Drake-Brockman, 16 October 1947, folder 46, box 6, Drake-Brockman Papers.

¹⁵ Jenner, *Darlings, I’ve Had a Ball*, 94.

¹⁶ Millerd interview; Coleman interview; Lyon, *Through All the Changing Scenes*, 96.

¹⁷ MacIntyre interview.

sudden proliferation of female graduates, and increased demand for their labour as lecturers to the fresh undergraduate intake.¹⁸ Yet social attitudes lagged behind this educational revolution. Male academics and university administrators often accepted women into their ranks on sufferance, and were slow to offer encouragement or promotion.

This culture, which was particularly conspicuous within the sciences, would dog the career of biochemist June Halliday, who returned to Brisbane in 1956 with her husband Bill. Both husband and wife arrived home with ‘straight-A’ science PhDs from the University of Wisconsin, but the fates that awaited them were very different. Bill walked into a tenured lectureship at the University of Queensland, while June suffered the indignity of an annual appointment.¹⁹ After a year, she fell pregnant, and was informed by the University Senate that her ‘place was at home’.²⁰ Her protestations to the contrary were to no avail, and she retreated into domesticity. Back in Wisconsin, where even the male-dominated laboratories featured women graduate students and professors, June had been ‘treated very well’.²¹ At home in Brisbane, by contrast, with encouragement in short supply, she had soon ‘given up thoughts of making use of my hard-earned qualifications’.²² After two years, the University realised its loss, and invited Halliday back as a part-time lecturer. It would still be another decade, however, before this talented researcher—later appointed a Member of the Order of Australia—enjoyed the security and prestige of an ongoing appointment.

More subtle, but still distressing, forms of sex discrimination also abounded within universities. Into the 1970s, academic meetings were addressed as ‘Gentlemen’, and male pronouns predominated in university publications.²³

¹⁸ Forsyth, *A History of the Modern Australian University*, 21–45. On the proliferation of women graduates in the 1950s, see also Mackinnon, *Women, Love and Learning*.

¹⁹ Lawrie W. Powell, “A Tribute to June Halliday,” *Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology* 11, no. 9 (1996): 878.

²⁰ June Halliday, “June Halliday AM, biochemist,” *WISENET Journal*, July 1994, 7–9.

²¹ Halliday interview.

²² Halliday, “June Halliday.”

²³ Goodnow interview.

Harvard-trained psychologist Jacqueline Goodnow, who in 1972 sacrificed a professorship at George Washington University for a more junior post at Sydney's new Macquarie University, regarded this unabashed sexism as a relic of the Australia she had left in 1949. Such 'prejudice' was foreign to her experience of the States, where a series of 'major revolutions' had ensured that women were 'more accustomed to being equal'. When the University dared to surmise that her husband was disabled—employing that logic that only an invalid's wife would act as breadwinner—Goodnow was so 'taken aback' that she almost spurned the Macquarie lectureship. Although she managed to overcome such qualms, and put down roots in Sydney, the temptation to flee back to Washington lingered for years to come.²⁴

The sexism experienced by Goodnow and other US-trained women scientists was often bound up in a broader aversion towards reform, in which the homosocial traditions of the Oxbridge-inspired Australian university were pitted against the more democratic approach to science academia emanating from the United States. The experience of Cal Tech-trained Adele Millerd at the University of Adelaide's Waite Agricultural Research Institute is a case in point. The first woman appointed to the Institute's teaching staff, Millerd was viewed askance by both colleagues and the broader community when she arrived in 1957. The problem was not only her gender, but her disregard for formality and tradition. Suit-adorned academics and students were 'shocked' by her 'American' outfits of jeans and checked shirts, while her platonic friendship with an American man set tongues wagging. No sisterhood was forthcoming from the academic wives, who were 'nervous' that Millerd would 'move in on their husbands'.²⁵

Similar enmity was encountered by Ilma Brewer, who lectured in the Botany Department at the University of Sydney from 1957. Her presence in the Department was tolerated so long as she quietly ministered to the undergraduate hordes. Yet as soon as Brewer dared advocate pedagogical innovation, this forbearance was replaced by outright hostility. In the 1960s the Department stonewalled her attempts

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Millerd interview.

to introduce audio-visual teaching techniques Brewer had seen employed to great effect at Purdue University in Indiana. Although resistance to the project was ‘reluctantly’ withdrawn by 1969, such ‘antipathy toward innovation’ left Brewer ‘dismayed and astonished’.²⁶ More than sex outsiders, Millerd and Brewer were vectors of American modernity in the tradition-bound ivory tower, their femaleness just one of several ways in which they threatened established convention.

What was true of universities also held true elsewhere. In the professions, the arts, and the public service, women who had sojourned in the United States confronted obstacles that soured homecomings and encouraged fond thoughts of life abroad. To give but one example, the experience of aviator Nancy Bird was in many respects emblematic of the frustrations associated with return. After learning to fly in the early 1930s, Bird established a reputation as Australia’s leading female pilot. In 1939 she arrived home from a world tour abuzz with excitement about the proliferation of aviatrixes in the United States. Having left Sydney the year before convinced there was ‘no future in the air for women’, Bird now dared to call for Australia to ‘emulate the American attitude towards women pilots in civil aviation’.²⁷ The coming of war put paid to this suggestion. Petrol rationing and aircraft shortages curtailed opportunities for civilian aviation, and those that remained were preferentially allocated to men.²⁸ Although women were permitted into military aviation after the formation of the Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in March 1941, these servicewomen were barred from the cockpit. America’s Women Airforce Service Pilots flew military aircraft on vital missions—albeit in the face of considerable opposition—but WAAAF women were limited to administrative and technical support roles.²⁹ In 1943 Bird launched a campaign to

²⁶ “Autobiography of my Career (1932–84) in Botany,” n. d., Series 7 – Biographical material, Papers of Ilma Brewer, 1937–1986, P141, University of Sydney Archives, Sydney.

²⁷ “Women Pilots: Miss Nancy Bird’s Plans,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 July 1938, 4; “‘Camaraderie of Flying’: Nancy Bird Returns,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 1939, 5.

²⁸ Nancy Bird Walton interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1977, ORAL TRC 1/1019, NLA.

²⁹ Sheila Mann, *The Girls Were Up There Too: Australian Women in Aviation* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1986), 19–23; Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) of World War II* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998).

allow female pilots to ferry military planes, but politicians and military leaders proved unreceptive.³⁰ As a result, ‘there was next to no flying for women in Australia during the war years’. Bird herself was grounded for the duration of hostilities.³¹

By 1944, although both peace and a boom in commercial aviation loomed on the horizon, Bird held little hope for women’s future in the industry. Predicting that female pilots could not compete with the airforce training boasted by men, and would be expected to forsake the industry upon marriage, she warned that women would have ‘no chance of pilots’ jobs’ for a ‘long time’.³² Bird’s prediction proved more or less accurate, and over the following years she continued to pine for the relative acceptance and collegiality enjoyed by women pilots in America.³³ Her yearning was only intensified by a return visit in 1951, when she was ‘amazed at the number of women...who owned their own aircraft’, and sat as guest of honour at a New York dinner of two hundred ‘professional flyers who have proved themselves equal to men’.³⁴ This dinner was at once a joyous meeting of kindred spirits, and yet another reminder of what Australia was missing.

But discontent with the status quo, gendered or otherwise, also fuelled reform. In 1950, Bird’s frustration with the struggles of women pilots led her to establish the Australian Women Pilots’ Association—an organisation modelled on the Women Pilots’ Organisation of America—and numerous other transpacific travellers would likewise proselytise ideas and practices encountered abroad.³⁵ Sometimes this was a deliberate attempt to replicate aspects of the American modern at home; on other occasions, it took the form of enthusiastic reportage and

³⁰ “Survey of Women Pilots,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 1943, 5.

³¹ Walton interview.

³² “They Want to Fly: Women in Postwar Aviation,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 May 1944, 6.

³³ “Women Who Travel the Skyways,” *Age* (Melbourne), 18 August 1950, 5; Nancy Bird, *My God! It’s a Woman* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1990), 141–63. Australian women did not begin to pilot commercial aircraft until the 1960s. For an account of these years, see Australian Women Pilots’ Association, *Australian Women Pilots* (Sydney: The Association, 1995).

³⁴ “U.S. flying women like ‘shouting’,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 20 June 1951, 20; *Sunday Herald* (Sydney), 26 August 1951, 18.

³⁵ Walton interview.

public commentary. But whether consciously or otherwise, many women who sojourned across the Pacific would act as agents of Americanisation and modernisation. In the half-century prior to the more conspicuous turn to America of the 1960s, their cumulative efforts did much to tighten the threads that bound Australia to the United States.



Figure 44: The inaugural meeting of the Australian Women Pilots' Association, Bankstown Airport, 1950. NLA, PIC/14238/1 LOC Album 399.

Spreading the News

There was a remarkable diversity to these 'modern' imports, reflecting both the numerous permutations of modernity and its shifting character over time. During the interwar period, they ranged from 'up-to-date American traffic signals', to the 'modern miracle' of prohibition, to 'scientifically planned' institutions for the 'feeble-minded'.³⁶ By the 1940s and 50s, the accent was on technology, and these decades saw transpacific travellers bring back news of television, plastic eyes, and the myxomatosis virus—a pathogen that would be used to cull millions of rabbits.³⁷ And

³⁶ "Met Al Capone," *Mirror* (Perth), 8 July 1933, 14; "Prohibition," *Singleton Argus*, 25 August 1928, 4; "Workers or Wasters," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 1922, 13.

³⁷ Lawson, "Once it was like this!"; "Melbourne Woman Makes Plastic Eyes," *Argus* (Melbourne), 14 December 1948, 2; Jean Macnamara, "New Virus Tests Urged to Control Rabbits," *West*

throughout these decades, as already discussed, veterans of the United States spouted modern notions about gender relations, professional practice and personal productivity. What this assemblage of ideas and artefacts had in common was the promise of progress. Products of reason and productive of order, each was a signpost to an imagined future in which human intelligence engineered well-being and efficiency for all. Yet the supposed riches of the American modern also extended beyond the arena of ‘scientific’ living into the less orderly world of modernist art and culture. As hinted in Chapter Four, Australian women brought back from the States the turn from technique to expression that was a hallmark of modernity in the visual and performing arts.³⁸ Here the modern was signified by emotion rather than science, by the creative individual rather than the rational society. Although in some respects antithetical to the world of technology and progress, these aesthetic manifestations of modernity were just as self-consciously ‘new’, just as evocative of innovation as the laboratories in which myxomatosis was prepared and studied.

It was as communicators and educators that women travellers found greatest opportunity to share the fruits of their transpacific adventures. A handful of high-ranking professionals possessed sufficient authority to enact institutional reform, but it was more common to disseminate new ideas through talking and writing. Unable or unwilling to assume the public leadership roles from which men shaped society, women in early twentieth-century Australia were better able to make their mark from classrooms, broadcasting studios and typewriters. These were subtle forms of influence, difficult to measure and inconspicuous in effect, but could nonetheless constitute, as Jane Hunt argues, a powerful form of ‘cultural activism’. Through a process of quiet accretion, female educators and communicators were able to

Australian (Perth), 18 May 1949, 9; “Dame Jean has Saved Australia £300,” *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 29 May 1954, 7; Zwar, *The Dame*.

³⁸ News clippings, Papers of Joy Ewart, 1939–1964, MS1995.6, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives, Sydney; Marjorie Woore, *Joy to the World: A Life of Artist Joy Ewart* (Chatswood, NSW: M. Woore, 1993); Alan Brissenden, “Pioneer ballet teacher dies,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 25 October 1977, 36; Alan Brissenden and Keith Glennon, *Australia Dances: Creating Australian Dance, 1945–1965* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 2010), 126.

imprint ideas upon untold multitudes of students, listeners and readers, coming to flex considerable muscle from the so-called margins of cultural life.³⁹

The cultural activism practised by women returned from the United States was facilitated by the local appetite for news of the latest ideas from abroad. In the decades preceding the mass air travel of the 1960s and beyond, women (and men) who returned from overseas were in great demand with the public and press. They were interviewed by journalists at the dock, invited to address clubs and associations, and welcomed into radio broadcasting studios. By the interwar decades, the figure of the returned traveller bearing pearls of wisdom was so entrenched that it had begun to attract satire. In her 1931 travel memoir *By Cargo Boat and Mountain*, Marie Byles lampooned ‘high-brow’ travellers who concentrated their energies upon the accumulation and regurgitation of facts about life abroad. She herself travelled to ‘simply enjoy life’, and returned ‘without being able to deliver a single high-brow lecture, without being able to report on the status of women in a single country.’⁴⁰

More enthusiastic about public edification was Harrie Nowland, a Queensland journalist who typified the earnest traveller-lecturers of Byles’ satire. In 1923 Nowland returned home from two years in America, and embarked on a state-wide speaking tour. Positioning herself as an authority on the United States, Nowland delivered free lectures on ‘America To-day’ and ‘America under Prohibition’ along a thousand miles of Queensland coast. She began in Cairns in mid-July, before heading south via Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton, and arrived in Brisbane by late September. So great was her passion for the lecture podium—or perhaps the attendant celebrity—that she even ventured to the remote inland settlements of Charters Towers, Ipswich, Warwick and Nambour.⁴¹ The

³⁹ Jane E. Hunt, “Finding a Place for Women in Australian Cultural History: Female Cultural Activism in Sydney, 1900–1940,” *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (2004): 221–37; Jane E. Hunt, “The ‘Intrusion of Women Painters’: Ethel Anderson, Modern Art and Gendered Modernities in Interwar Sydney, Australia,” *Women’s History Review* 21, no. 2 (2012): 171–88.

⁴⁰ Byles, *By Cargo Boat & Mountain*, 11–12.

⁴¹ “Prohibition in America,” *Warwick Daily News*, 13 September 1923, 2; “Prohibition in America,” *Northern Miner* (Charters Towers), 24 July 1923, 3; “America under Prohibition,” *Queensland Times* (Ipswich), 19 September 1923, 6; “Miss Nowland’s Meeting,” *Daily Mercury* (Mackay), 11 August 1923, 9; “Prohibition at Work,” *Brisbane Courier*, 29 September 1923, 7;

enthusiasm displayed by traveller-lecturers such as Nowland was more than equalled by their public. Speakers were often greeted with capacity audiences and rapturous attention, a tendency highlighted in Dorothy Jenner's account of lecturing at Sydney's David Jones department store. 'Australians were still entranced with "Overseas" with a capital O,' she recalled. Her 1935 lunchtime address on New York attracted four hundred 'business girls', who listened with 'undivided attention'. 'You'd have thought I came from another planet bearing irrefutable words of wisdom. Sad really.'⁴² Sad or otherwise, there was no question that the local public was eager to receive instruction about the wider world.

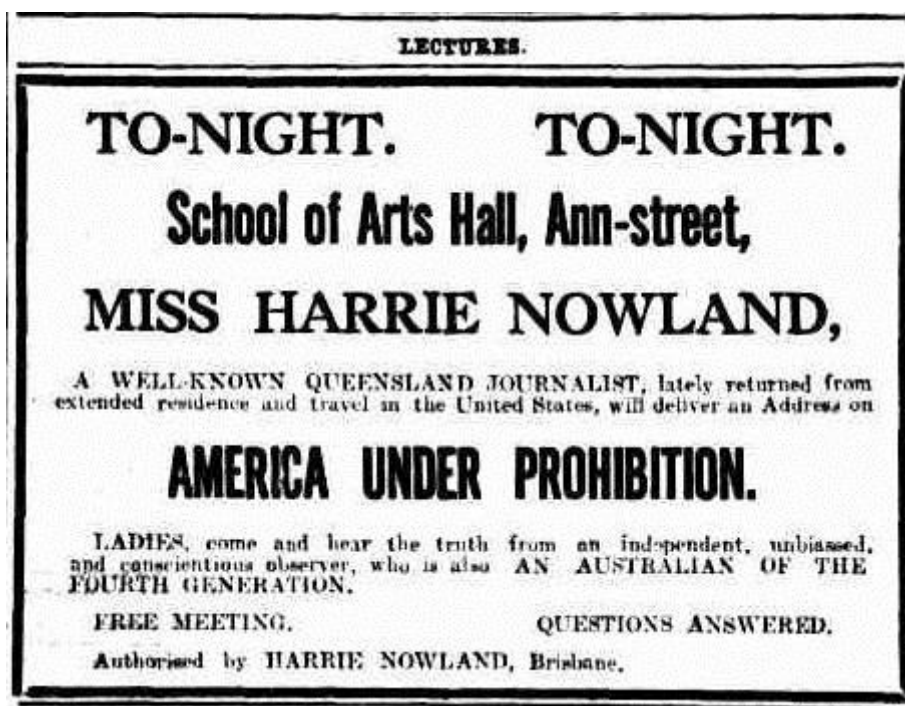


Figure 45: Nowland advertises her lectures. *Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1923, 12.

The dissemination of this message was aided by the mass media. Throughout the interwar and postwar decades, Australian women returned from the United States employed radio and print to communicate the marvels of American modernity to audiences nationwide. In 1926, when Janet Mitchell arrived

"Lecture on America," *Cairns Post*, 19 July 1923, 4; "Prohibition in America," *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 14 August 1923, 8; "America under Prohibition," *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 31 August 1923, 9.

⁴² "Importance of Manners: Address to Business Girls," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 May 1935, 4; Jenner, *Darlings, I've Had a Ball*, 140.

home from New York intent upon proselyting the principles of thrift, she not only ‘addressed women’s meetings throughout the far-flung suburbs of Sydney’, but also ‘wrote numerous magazine and newspaper articles’ and ‘spoke frequently on the air’.⁴³ The latter strategy was especially effective at reaching a broad public. Although only 125,000 radio licences had been purchased when Mitchell first took to the airwaves, the listening audience ballooned over the following decade. By 1940, over 1.2 million licences circulated within a national population of 7 million, each of which equated to an entire household of potential listeners.⁴⁴

Mitchell and her successors in the 1930s and beyond were regularly heard by this mass audience. Although historians have stressed the gender conservatism of early Australian radio—arguing that female announcers did little more than dispense domestic advice on ‘women’s programs’—the broadcasting careers of transpacific travellers indicate that radio could be a tool of women-led education and reform.⁴⁵ As historian Donna Halper has written of the US, radio gave women ‘a chance to make themselves heard in the public sphere’, enabling them to ‘advocate for the causes they cared about’.⁴⁶ ‘Under the cover of daytime’, when men toiled at work and housewives dominated the listening audience, women’s firsthand reports of American people, places and ideas were broadcast into homes around the nation.⁴⁷

From the mid-1920s onwards, these reports were featured as educational talks on both commercial and public networks. As a regular contributor to Sydney

⁴³ Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity*, 106.

⁴⁴ Wray Vamplev, ed., *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1987), 390.

⁴⁵ See for instance, Lesley Johnson, *The Unseen Voice: A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio* (London: Routledge, 1988); K. S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1932–1983* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1983); Bridget Griffen-Foley, “Modernity, Intimacy and Early Australian Commercial Radio,” in *Talking and Listening in the Age of Modernity: Essays on the History of Sound*, ed. Joy Damousi and Desley Deacon (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2007), 123–32.

⁴⁶ Donna Halper, “Speaking for Themselves: How Radio Brought Women into the Public Sphere,” in *Radio Cultures: The Sound Medium in American Life*, ed. Michael C. Keith (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 89, 91.

⁴⁷ Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 154.

station 2GB during the lean Depression years, Mitchell and her listeners found inexhaustible interest in the American ethos of thrift. On 22 January 1931 she spoke on 'Thrift and New Year Resolutions'; a week later she was back with 'Thrift and Your New Budget'. By March, she had moved on to more abstract topics, tackling 'Thrift and Courage', 'Thrift and Citizenship' and 'Thrift and Joy'.⁴⁸ Several years earlier, in less thrifty times, psychologist Lorna Hodgkinson had enthused about American approaches to 'mentally defective children' on the same station.⁴⁹ Over at competitor network 2BL, Joan Grav discussed 'The American Woman' and Sylvia Ashby spoke of travelling 'Across America by Car'.⁵⁰ During the mid-1930s, listeners tuned in to 2FC would hear Miss M. C. Davis' thoughts on 'Social Work in America' and Elsie Asher-Smith's account of 'Social Service in USA'. Those who preferred 2CH would catch Lurline Fleming's seventy minute discourse entitled 'An Australian in America'.⁵¹

Although the ephemerality of these talks inhibits analysis of their content or impact, it is probable that they mirrored the positive tone prevalent within contemporary written accounts. The sheer quantity of American reportage also points to the nation's popularity among both travellers and listeners. Australian women sojourners were eager to discuss the United States, and their homebound compatriots were eager to listen. Some broadcasts, indeed, elicited such public enthusiasm that the speaker was induced to publish her reflections in book form. Mavis Riley's acclaimed travel memoir *In the Lap of the Yanks* (1949) had its genesis in material broadcast over the airwaves, as did Doris Hayball's *Strawberries in the Jam* (1940).⁵²

The smaller but more elite ABC audience encountered similar vignettes of the United States.⁵³ Although renowned for its British outlook, the national ABC

⁴⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 January 1931, 4; 29 January 1931, 5; 12 March 1931, 5; 19 March 1931, 5; and 26 March 1931, 4.

⁴⁹ "Mental Deficiency: Radio Talks from 2GB," *Daily Examiner* (Grafton), 4 November 1926, 7.

⁵⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 November 1932, 11; and 15 July 1937, 4.

⁵¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 1935, 5; 3 May 1935, 6; and 22 December 1937, 6.

⁵² Riley, *In the Lap of the Yanks*, vii; Hayball, *Strawberries in the Jam*.

⁵³ On the composition of ABC radio audiences, see Inglis, *This is the ABC*, 75–77.

network was nonetheless swept up in the mood of transpacific friendship begun during the war in the Pacific, and broadcast an ‘American Letter’ every fortnight from 1944. Composed by Perth-born Jean Wilmot Bemis, who had settled in Boston during the late 1920s, these letters kept Australian audiences updated on American attitudes and trends. Bemis discussed children’s playgrounds, youth hostels and the public grief at President Kennedy’s death, among many other topics.⁵⁴ Broadcast on alternative Thursday mornings and repeated the following Monday evening—when men were home to listen—these missives were given an authentic ‘American’ flavour by US actress Julie Hamil.⁵⁵

Although discontinued from the national network after eleven years, the ‘American Letter’ remained a popular feature of the Western Australian ABC Women’s Session hosted by Catherine King. The daughter of academic Walter Murdoch, King was renowned for bringing serious discussion and an international outlook to women’s radio. Broadcast between 1944 and 1976, her daily program attracted a loyal audience of both sexes.⁵⁶ In addition to Bemis’ letters, which continued until at least 1963, King featured reports from several other transpacific travellers. These included the historian and diplomatic wife Alexandra Hasluck, whose 1947 broadcasts, which included a rapturous account of American ‘supermarkets’, proved a great success with listeners.⁵⁷ Heeding this audience demand, King continued her American focus into the following decade. Mrs R. Hall spoke on ‘The Pattern of American Family Life’, while Lorna Walker outlined the state of ‘Education in America’ and shared her experience as ‘An Australian Housewife in the USA’.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 26 January 1946, 3.

⁵⁵ *Age* (Melbourne), 19 January 1951, 1.

⁵⁶ Julie Lewis, *On Air: The Story of Catherine King and the ABC Women’s Session* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1979); Fred Alexander, “Murdoch, Sir Walter Logie (1874–1970),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murdoch-sir-walter-logie-7698/text13477>, accessed 30 October 2015.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *On Air*, 100; Hasluck, *Portrait in a Mirror*, 210–11.

⁵⁸ “ABC Women’s Sessions Talks,” *Beverley Times*, 14 October 1954, 10; “Women’s Sessions,” *Beverley Times*, 1 October 1959, 1; “Women’s Sessions,” *Beverley Times*, 10 September 1959, 5.

King herself never travelled to America, but numerous other female radio hosts did boast firsthand experience of the US. These included Jean Lawson of leading Melbourne network 3DB, 2BL's Helen Beegling, 2GB's Eileen Robinson, and Bessie Dunne of Sydney Catholic station 2SM.⁵⁹ Inspired by fond memories of America, and troubled by the mutual ignorance that hampered transpacific relations, several of these announcers used their regular airtime to nudge Australia into the American orbit. This project was taken up with enthusiasm in the 1930s by Muriel Valli, known to listeners of her 2GB children's program as Aunty Val. Prior to launching a radio career, Valli spent fifteen years in the States as a vaudeville performer. A fan of her adopted home, she returned to Sydney with hopes to build understanding between the two countries. In collaboration with fellow Australian Dorothy Dunstan, a radio host on Los Angeles station KFL, Valli launched 'Pen Friends of the Air' in 1935. The 1930s witnessed a vogue for radio clubs, and Valli's transpacific 'pen-friend club' proved especially popular with listeners.⁶⁰ Within months, five hundred letters had been sent from local children to their American counterparts, and the concept proved so popular that it was expanded to adults. Friendships and even romances flourished, and in 1936 Valli returned to the States to further promote her scheme.⁶¹

By mid-1941, with Australia desperate for military allies in the Pacific, the pursuit of engagement with the United States assumed a new urgency. In this wartime context, long-time 2SM announcer Doreen McKay launched a weekly program entitled 'Australia Greets America'. Having worked in American radio prior to the outbreak of war, McKay had a personal investment in the show's aim

⁵⁹ Rosslyn McCarthy, "With a Smile in Her Voice': A Life of Jean Lawson, 1908–1986," (MEd thesis, University of Melbourne, 1996); "Radio Announcer," *West Australian* (Perth), 11 May 1938, 5; "Newcomers to 2GB Train Children," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 14 September 1935, 25; "American Women," *West Australian* (Perth), 13 February 1935, 7.

⁶⁰ Griffen-Foley, "Modernity, Intimacy, and Early Australian Commercial Radio," 127–29; "Radio Pen-Friend Club from 2GB," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 13 April 1935, 20.

⁶¹ "Chain of Friendship: Will Radio Put One Round the World?" *The Progressive Journal* (Progressive Housewives Association of New South Wales), 1 August 1935, 27; "Radio Romance," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 26 October 1935, 31; "Notes and News of 2GB," *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* (Parramatta), 23 July 1936, 10.

to 'foster...Australian and American relations'.⁶² As the 1938 recipient of the *Wireless Weekly* award for 'most popular radio announcer', she also enjoyed sufficient celebrity to attract an audience beyond the station's Catholic core constituency.⁶³ Beginning in late June, McKay and her American co-host Anita Vale instructed listeners on 'Australian and American customs, habits, personalities, topicalities, geographical science features, great personalities, industrialists, musicians, literature' and 'historical aspects'.⁶⁴

As it aired on Tuesday afternoons, the audience for 'Australia Greets America' would have been dominated by housewives and children. McKay spoke to a large and appreciative public, but it was a public in which men were a minority. This was true of much cultural activism performed by female transpacific travellers. Their radio talks were typically scheduled for weekday hours, and their public lectures often took place at women's clubs or department stores frequented by a largely female clientele. Their journalism was published in mainstream newspapers such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, but it was the *Australian Women's Weekly* and the 'women's pages' of metropolitan dailies that were most inclined to advertise their doings. Even those who presided at town halls during evening hours were known to market themselves for a female public. When lecturing throughout Queensland in 1923, Nowland made it clear that 'ladies are especially invited'.⁶⁵

To stress that this cultural activism primarily addressed women is not, however, to devalue its significance. By taking to the airwaves mid-morning, transpacific travellers may have eluded the attention of most white-collar men, but nonetheless gained opportunity to sway the thinking of the 2.7 million women, or 82 percent of the female population, who, as of 1933, did not participate in the formal workforce and often used radio to accompany domestic chores.⁶⁶ These

⁶² "Australia Greets America," *Catholic Press* (Sydney), 26 June 1941, 15.

⁶³ "Doreen McKay, Radio Star, Leaves 2SM," *Catholic Weekly* (Sydney), 24 September 1942, 5.

⁶⁴ "Australia Greets America," 15.

⁶⁵ "America To-day," *Cairns Post*, 31 July 1923, 4.

⁶⁶ *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. II, 1933, 118–119. On radio in women's domestic lives, see Michelle Arrow, "Everything Stopped for *Blue Hills*': Radio, Memory and

women were political actors in their own right, and also commanded influence over husbands, fathers and sons. In speaking to this mass cohort, not to mention the men and women who read their journalism and attended their lectures, those who proselytised the American modern were capable of exerting considerable influence. They were not leading public intellectuals, but nor can they be described as marginal figures.

It is instead more useful to locate this feminised cultural activism in what could be termed an alternative public sphere. More ephemeral and hence less visible than the male-dominated world of high politics and the mainstream press, this was a sphere in which women and their concerns predominated. It was a daytime world of lunchtime receptions, afternoon classes and intimate morning broadcasts, a world projected into the domestic sphere and peopled by domestic figures but nonetheless advertised in and open to the public. It ran in parallel with the more conspicuous doings of men and industry, and had its own arbiters of taste and opinion. It was in this discrete yet far from peripheral world, as the following case-study details, that women returned from the States found greatest scope to champion their 'new ideas'.

Modern Food, Modern Bodies

The arena of modern body culture offers a paradigmatic example of transpacific travellers' pursuit of local reform. In the numerous attempts to import the latest American recipes for bodily vim and vigour we can see the characteristic elements of this cultural activism at work: tireless talking and writing about 'new ideas' from the United States, an enthusiastic reception from a female-dominated public, and institutional hostility spearheaded by men. Both celebrated and reviled, these proponents of physical wellbeing were typical vectors of Americanisation.

The health recipes they imported were part of a broader fixation with the body, dating from the turn of the century, which emerged at the intersection of modern aesthetics and modern science. The former celebrated a new lithe bodily

Australian Women's Domestic Lives, 1944–2001," *Australian Feminist Studies* 20, no. 48 (2005): 305–18.

ideal—a human counterpart to the streamlined machine—while the Darwinian preoccupations of the latter conferred additional urgency upon the pursuit of bodily fitness and supplied the wisdom to bring this new ideal within reach. Health regimes, exercise programs and eating plans proliferated, all infused with the seductive promise of human perfectibility and the confident language of scientific progress. Just as engineers worked to perfect and maintain their new-fangled machines, so too ordinary individuals now could—or even should—finesse the function and appearance of their bodies.⁶⁷ By the interwar decades, fashioning a modern body through food, movement and dress was central to the formulation of a modern self.⁶⁸ As one health reformer proclaimed in 1938, ‘[e]verybody who is really modern is interested in diet.’⁶⁹ This was true of both genders but held particular resonance for women, whose newly exposed and active physiques were among the most potent signifiers of modernity’s excitements and threats.⁷⁰

By the 1920s and 30s, the cultivation of the modern body was an international phenomenon, no less global than modernity itself. The Women’s League of Health and Beauty flourished in England; the Nazis introduced daily physical education into German schools; and national fitness schemes proliferated throughout the British settler colonies, including Australia.⁷¹ The transnational Australian Annette Kellerman was at the forefront of this global trend, establishing herself as a champion of physical culture after shooting to stardom through her

⁶⁷ There is an extensive literature on the early twentieth-century pursuit of a modern body. Key recent studies include Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*; Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935–1960* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2011); Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain, 1880–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Caroline Daley, *Leisure & Pleasure: Reshaping & Revealing the New Zealand Body, 1900–1960* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003).

⁶⁸ Macdonald, “Body and Self,” 267–79.

⁶⁹ “American Diet: Fruits and Salads Prominent,” *West Australian* (Perth), 9 December 1938, 7.

⁷⁰ Macdonald, “Body and Self,” 270.

⁷¹ Jill Julius Matthews, “They Had Such a Lot of Fun: The Women’s League of Health and Beauty Between the Wars,” *History Workshop Journal* 30, no. 1 (1990): 22–54; Arnd Krüger, “Breeding, Rearing and Preparing the Aryan Body: Creating Supermen the Nazi Way,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 16, no. 2 (1999): 48; Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern*.

swimming feats and film roles in the 1910s.⁷² But in this facet of modern life, like many others, the United States was often imagined as a breeding ground of the ‘latest’ ideas and most ‘advanced’ thinking. This was especially true in regards to the new frontier of dietary science that emerged from the 1912 discovery of vitamins. As the global hub of nutrition research and, as we saw in Chapter Three, a pioneer of the dietetics profession, interwar America was home to both a medical and popular fixation with the culinary building blocks of a well-oiled human machine.⁷³

During the 1930s in particular, this fixation was imported to the Antipodes by a wide array of Australian women. At one end of the spectrum were accredited dietitians such as Isabelle Bradshaw, who studied nutritional science in New York, and in 1935 was appointed founding president of the Dietetics Association of Australia.⁷⁴ At the other were private individuals such as Ruby Coulls, who returned to Adelaide in 1932 determined to introduce friends and family to the ‘American custom’ of daily salad consumption.⁷⁵ Falling in between these professional and amateur food scientists were a sizeable group of self-styled health gurus, who drew upon ‘expertise’ acquired in the United States to spread the gospel of dietary reform via lectures, classes and the press. Together they waged war on the Australian passion for meat, sugar and tea—staples of a cuisine inherited from Britain—and promoted the vitalising properties of spinach and orange juice.⁷⁶ Although removed from the medical establishment and easily derided as cranks, at least several would acquire impressive public profiles.

⁷² Woollacott, *Race and the Modern Exotic*, 1–48.

⁷³ Barbara Santich, *What the Doctors Ordered: 150 Years of Dietary Advice in Australia* (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1995), 68–69; Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 37–57.

⁷⁴ *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 14 September 1935, 21; *Argus* (Melbourne), 10 September 1938, 30.

⁷⁵ “Adelaide Girls Goes Round World,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 15 January 1932, 9.

⁷⁶ The high consumption of meat, tea and sugar in Australia dates from the colonial period, and continued into the twentieth century. For an extended discussion, see Tanja Luckins, “Historiographic Foodways: A Survey of Food and Drink Histories in Australia,” *History Compass* 11, no. 8 (2013): 552–53; Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic: A Gastronomic History of Australia* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 155–68.

Among them was Portia Geach, a Sydney-based artist who in 1917 established the New South Wales Housewives' Association after encountering a similar organisation in New York. Rebranded as the Housewives' Progressive Association in 1928, the organisation developed strong national and international networks, and Geach remained president near continuously until 1957.⁷⁷ By 1952, she presided over a hundred thousand members.⁷⁸ Although the Association had multiple objectives, ranging from price controls to women's political representation, food reform was the cornerstone of Geach's personal agenda.⁷⁹ She studied the subject during multiple visits to the United States, and enthused about raw milk and wholemeal bread on her return.⁸⁰ Concerned that 'devitalised and over-refined foods' were eroding national vigour, she championed the 'Seven Keys to Good Health': wholemeal grains, wheatgerm, kelp, honey, powdered yeast, alfalfa powder and molasses.⁸¹

Geach won considerable success in spreading her message. As a celebrated artist and leader of a mass movement, she was a force to be reckoned with in Sydney. Not only did she preach dietary reform to her membership (fig. 46), but gave radio talks, financed health food stores, and spoke on 'magic vitamins [sic]' interstate.⁸² Eulogised after her death in 1959 as a 'great food reformer' who 'brought a health consciousness to Sydney', Geach was the most successful mid-century exponent of American-style dietary reform—perhaps in part because she

⁷⁷ Andrée Wright, "Geach, Portia Swanston (1873–1959)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/geach-portia-swanston-6292/text10849>, accessed 14 June 2012; Ruby Duncan, "History of the Housewives' Association, 1917–1964," n. d., box 3894, Progressive Housewives' Association (PHA) Records, 1939–1970, MLMSS 4155, SLNSW.

⁷⁸ Annual Report, 1952, box 3892, PHA Records.

⁷⁹ Housewives' Progressive Association, Constitution and Rules, n. d., box 3894, PHA Records; Meredith Foley, "From 'Thrift' to 'Scientific Spending': The Sydney Housewives' Association between the Wars," *Sydney Gazette*, no. 6 (1984): 9–19; Judith Smart, "The Politics of Consumption: The Housewives' Associations in South-Eastern Australia Before 1950," *Journal of Women's History* 18, no. 3 (2006): 13–39.

⁸⁰ President's Report, 1959–60, box 3894, PHA Records.

⁸¹ *Ibid*; Portia Geach, "Seven Keys to Good Health," n. d., box 3892, PHA Records.

⁸² "Portia Geach: Champion of the Housewife," n. d., Np 920 GEA, NLA; Duncan, "History of the Housewives' Association"; "A Vitamine Tea and Vital Truths Told," *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 12 February 1925, 16.

downplayed her debt to the United States, revered the British Empire, and emphasised that women's place was in the home.⁸³ As an otherwise conservative figure, Geach possessed a unique ability to promote fringe dietary ideas without risking marginalisation or scorn. In her career we can see resonances of the 'conservative modernity' Alison Light documents in interwar England, a modernity that could 'simultaneously look backwards and forwards'.⁸⁴



Figure 46: A proponent of wholemeal bread, Portia Geach (centre, standing) supervises a bread-making demonstration for Housewives' Progressive Association members in 1934. SLNSW, Home and Away – 4502.

A likeminded figure down in Adelaide was Lurline Mayor, an exponent of the health system promulgated by the Los Angeles-based franchise of Radiant Health Clubs. Founded by American Phoebe Marie Holmes in 1928, the International Radiant Health Clubs promised to 'eradicate disease' and 'build strong, healthy bodies' through 'correct thinking, breathing, eating, and

⁸³ Ruby Duncan, "Miss Portia Geach," 1959, box 3894, PHA Records. Geach was an outspoken monarchist and in 1953 received a Coronation Medal from the Queen. PHA Meeting Minutes, 3 July 1953, box 3899, PHA Records.

⁸⁴ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 10.

elimination'.⁸⁵ First brought to Australia by Holmes herself, by 1936 this gospel was preached in local clubs from Devonport to Kalgoorlie.⁸⁶ Mayor's conversion to Holmes' creed came at age thirty, by which time she had endured years of 'semi-invalidism'. After discovering the 'radiant way of living' in the early 1930s, Mayor reported a miraculous recovery. Within months, she was a 'strong, healthy, happy person', and began expounding the principles of Radiant Health throughout South Australia.⁸⁷ By 1937 she had risen to the rank of 'Leader in Solar Plexus Breathing', and hosted a national Radiant Health conference. In September that year, she travelled to Los Angeles to meet with Holmes herself, and spent four months in intensive study with the indomitable eighty-four-year-old.⁸⁸

Once armed with the imprimatur of overseas experience, Mayor proved able to champion American health wisdom on the national stage. Returning home in early 1938, she was 'keen to pass on all her new ideas'. In the months that followed, her accounts of the Californian vogue for vegetable juices and kelp powders were detailed at length in the local press and top-selling *Australian Women's Weekly*. 'Americans were a food-conscious race', she enthused.⁸⁹ Later that year, Mayor took her new ideas to Victoria, where she spent three months addressing women's groups.⁹⁰ Back in Adelaide, she was appointed Radiant Health Club director, and conducted free classes on 'food science' and 'scientific

⁸⁵ Phoebe Marie Holmes, *Scientific Rhythmic Solar Plexus Breathing: The Elixir of Youth, Vitality, Health, Happiness* (Adelaide: Australian Radiant Health Clubs, 1933); *Hamilton Evening Journal* (Hamilton, OH), 22 January 1926, 8.

⁸⁶ "A Remarkable Achievement," *Radiant Health Messenger* (Adelaide), November 1937, 207–08.

⁸⁷ Lurline Mayor, "How I Found Health," *Radiant Health Messenger* (Adelaide), November 1936, 212–14; Mary L. Nicholls, *Radiant Health Recipes: The Open Road to Health* (Adelaide: Mary L. Nicholls, c. 1930); "Natural Health Classes," *Port Lincoln Times*, 22 June 1934, 9; "Natural Health Laws," *Northern Argus* (Clare, SA), 26 July 1935, 4; "Natural Health Laws," *Times and Northern Advertiser* (Peterborough, SA), 30 August 1935, 3; "Radiant Health Evening," *Kapunda Herald*, 4 December 1936, 2.

⁸⁸ *Radiant Health Messenger*, April 1937; *Radiant Health Messenger*, November 1937, 210; *Australian Women's Weekly*, 19 March 1938, 41.

⁸⁹ "Americans Food Conscious," *News* (Adelaide), 3 May 1938, 8; "Health Through Correct Breathing and Eating," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 18 February 1938, 8; "Impressed by Americans' Use of Kelp," *Australian Women's Weekly*, 19 March 1938, 41.

⁹⁰ *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 September 1938, 10.

breathing'.⁹¹ Following her marriage in 1939, Mayor relocated to Melbourne, where she became president of the local Radiant Health Club, established a Christian Health School, and gave regular public talks until at least 1947.⁹²

The gospel Mayor espoused exhibited a curious, but far from unusual, mix of nature worship and scientism, typical of the ambivalence with which exponents of modern body culture viewed modernity itself.⁹³ As a diligent student of the Radiant Health creed, Mayor blamed debility and disease upon an 'over-civilised world', and advocated a return to the 'simple laws of nature'; namely, abundant fresh air and unprocessed vegetarian food.⁹⁴ But while civilisation engendered disease, it had also provided the wisdom of 'food science', a discipline revered for revealing the benefits of nature's bounty. Radiant Health talks and literature were saturated with references to 'Scientific Dietetics', while housewives were instructed to view the kitchen as a 'science laboratory'.⁹⁵ In the American health regimes imported by Mayor and others, modernity was at once the root of all evil, and the route to redemption. This worldview was further complicated by the element of religion. Defying the long-held assumption that religion was modernity's 'other', Holmes and her followers taught 'modern scientific eating' while repeating the mantra 'God is my life'.⁹⁶ Just as they embraced both science and nature, they were

⁹¹ "Novel Beach Classes," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 5 February 1938, 27; "Health Club Director," *News* (Adelaide), 25 January 1939, 9.

⁹² *Argus* (Melbourne), 10 December 1942, 10; and 8 October 1947, 13.

⁹³ As historian Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska notes in her discussion of the British New Health Society, many interwar health reformers engaged in a 'critique of civilisation' yet also 'embraced modern science, technology and mass media.' Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Raising a Nation of 'Good Animals': The New Health Society and Health Education Campaigns in Interwar Britain," *Social History of Medicine* 20, no. 1 (2007): 73.

⁹⁴ "Lecture on Natural Living," *Port Lincoln Times*, 29 June 1934, 9.

⁹⁵ Holmes, *Glorious Radiant Health*; Nicholls, *Radiant Health Recipes*.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*; "Through the Year with Radiant Health," *Radiant Health Messenger*, May 1936, 57. A number of revisionist historians have recently taken issue with the assumption that modernity equalled secularisation, tracing evidence of religious activity within the most modern of contexts. See for instance, Sue Morgan, "Sex and Common-Sense: Maude Royden, Religion, and Modern Sexuality," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 1 (2013): 153–78; David Nash, "Reconnecting Religion with Social and Cultural History: Secularization's Failure as a Master Narrative," *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 3 (2004): 302–25.

at once rational reformers and ‘children of God’.⁹⁷ Theirs was a modernity articulated within the framework of Christian teachings, no less ‘up-to-date’ for its adulation of a higher power.

Mayor did not leave a conspicuous legacy, and her views were at times deemed ‘unusual’, but the modest success and longevity of her career nonetheless points to a wellspring of public interest in American ‘food science’.⁹⁸ The recipe for Radiant Health was one many Australians were eager to learn. Yet as the experience of Mayor’s contemporary Alice Caporn highlights, the male medical establishment could be less kindly disposed towards these foreign notions. After living abroad for two decades, Caporn descended upon Adelaide in late 1937, intent upon spreading ‘advanced American views’ on dietetics.⁹⁹ Advertising herself as a world expert on ‘Modern Food Science’—whose credentials included no less than four US degrees—she issued a deluge of articles, radio talks and public lectures proclaiming the benefits of vegetable juices and nuts.¹⁰⁰ Unafraid of provocative claims, Caporn boasted that her system promised to eradicate the scourge of infantile paralysis and had effected the complete ‘rejuvenation’ of her eighty-six-year-old mother.¹⁰¹

For a time Caporn basked in the glow of positive press, but problems arose when she dared to question the nutritive value of milk. Cow’s milk had been little consumed in Australia prior to 1920, but its status soared in the wake of widespread pasteurisation and the development of nutritional science. Championed by interwar medical professionals as a ‘protective food’ that promised to fortify future generations of Australians, by 1939 the Commonwealth Department of Health advised that children should drink 1.5 pints, or 700 mls, of milk per day.¹⁰² Caporn, however, thought otherwise. Her journalism labelled milk a ‘secondhand food’, while her public talks explained ‘Why Cow’s Milk Causes Mucus, Colds and

⁹⁷ Mayor, “How I Found Health,” 214.

⁹⁸ “Women’s Christian Temperance Union,” *Williamstown Chronicle*, 23 July 1943, 3.

⁹⁹ “Dietetics and Sunbathing,” *West Australian* (Perth), 10 November 1937, 7.

¹⁰⁰ “The ‘Nuts’ Believe in Me,” *Sunday Times* (Perth), 11 June 1939, 3.

¹⁰¹ Alice M. Caporn, “Infantile Paralysis,” *Radiant Health Messenger*, March 1938, 10–12.

¹⁰² Santich, *What the Doctors Ordered*, 82–83.

Tonsillitis.¹⁰³ The latest thinking among ‘medical men’ in America, Caporn reported, was in favour of raw milk. She herself favoured beverages made from almonds or soy.¹⁰⁴

Commencing Today at 2.30 p.m.
A SERIES OF TALKS
on
MODERN HEALTH SCIENCE
will be given in
BOANS
Fashion Lounge,
every Tuesday
by
the famous
American
Authority
on
Nutritional
Science



ALICE M. CAPORN, Ph.D.
This world-wide authority on nutritional science invites questions from the audience concerning diet in relation to Health. To enable sufficient time to be given to these questions from 2.30 to 3 p.m. will be devoted to that purpose, after which the following important talk will be given by Dr. Caporn.
**Today's Talk will be
"HEADACHES—Their
Cause and Prevention."**
NO CHARGE FOR ADMISSION.

Figure 47: A vibrant Caporn advertising the benefits of ‘Modern Health Science’.
West Australian (Perth), 2 August 1938, 3.

¹⁰³ Alice M. Caporn, “Healthy Children Will Combat Disease Naturally,” *Mail* (Adelaide), 25 December 1937, 4; “Dietetic Bunk Exposed,” *Sunday Times* (Perth), 4 June 1939, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Caporn, “Infantile Paralysis.”

The backlash against these heterodox ideas came in Perth. Provoked by anti-milk talks advertised for Caporn's 1939 visit to the city, the Commissioner of Public Health Dr Everitt Atkinson and the local *Sunday Times* joined forces to demolish her claims. In an article headlined 'Dietetic Bunk Exposed', Caporn was charged with spreading an 'Absurd Doctrine', that 'Misleads Mothers' and 'Flouts High Medical Opinion'. Speaking on behalf of local doctors, Atkinson issued a 'scathing condemnation of this foolish cult', which risked the health of invalids and children.¹⁰⁵ Not satisfied with this dressing down, the *Times* published a sequence of similar attacks in the weeks that followed.¹⁰⁶ When an unchastened Caporn dared to market a linseed bread, the Bread Manufacturers' Association joined the anti-Caporn crusade, warning the public against the 'pernicious virus of American "hooey"'.¹⁰⁷

As the vehemence of the Perth response makes clear, more than milk was at stake. This was a battle for the physical and racial future of the nation, but it was also a battle between male institutional authority sanctioned by Britain and female cultural activism inspired by the United States. On one side was Caporn—a 'food faddist' with 'Yankee Modern Health Letters after her name'—while on the other was an all-male league of 'recognised health authorities' whose pro-milk stance was endorsed by the 'official British Advisory Council of Nutrition'.¹⁰⁸ The *Times* was dubious of Caporn's ideas, but appeared no less troubled by her 'unwomanly' self-assurance and her disregard for accepted British wisdom. As would often be the case when women attempted to promote innovations appropriated from the United States, the backlash from Australian gatekeepers revealed deep currents of misogyny and anti-Americanism. Especially during the interwar decades, when anxieties about 'Americanisation' ran rampant, and Australia was not yet

¹⁰⁵ "Dietetic Bunk Exposed."

¹⁰⁶ "Fantastic Food Fads Further Exposed," *Sunday Times* (Perth), 11 June 1939, 3; "No Linseed Bread," *Sunday Times* (Perth), 1 October 1939, 5; "Public Advised Not to Listen to Mrs Caporn's Stupid Theories," *Sunday Times* (Perth), 18 June 1939, 11.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ "Dietetic Bunk Exposed"; "Fantastic Food Fads."

strategically reliant on Washington, to champion American ideas was to risk scorn and opprobrium.

Yet despite the best efforts of these male journalists, doctors and businessmen, such was the female appetite for Caporn's ideas that she carried on unabated. The ensuing celebrity was even a boon for her career. The Fremantle Labor Women's Organisation, the Methodist Ladies' Society, and several Perth radio stations all invited her to speak in the aftermath of the controversy. She also commenced a lecture series at Boans, the city's leading department store, which attracted hundreds of shoppers.¹⁰⁹ Undeterred by her mixed reception in the city, Caporn put down roots in Western Australia, and continued to advocate dietary reform until her death, aged seventy-six, in 1950.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Although Caporn never returned to the States, her enthusiasm for that country's food culture was unwavering. On the eve of her death she would 'congratulate America for its leadership in popularising salads'.¹¹¹ To all appearances, she had done much to popularise salads herself. Like many before and after, Caporn laboured to freshen up the 'half-withered vine' of home with what were, in her case, quite literal fresh leaves. By using the mass media, and remaining mobile within Australia itself, she and others spread the news that the United States was a nation to befriend and emulate, home to innovations that promised to enhance an Australia judged ripe for modernisation. These labours were not always appreciated, especially prior to the 1940s, and nor would they always pay dividends. Some attempted reforms met with enthusiasm, some were absorbed after initial resistance, while others fell upon deaf ears. Together they did much to seed

¹⁰⁹ "Fremantle Labor Women," *Westralian Worker* (Perth), 9 September 1938, 8; "Dr Alice Caporn," *Swan Express* (Midland Junction), 15 September 1938, 1; *Mirror* (Perth), 10 September 1938, 24; *West Australian* (Perth), 12 September 1938, 11; *Western Mail* (Perth), 8 September 1938, 42; "Headache," *Daily News* (Perth), 3 August 1938, 10; *West Australian* (Perth), 2 August 1938, 3.

¹¹⁰ *West Australian* (Perth), 3 July 1941, 9.

¹¹¹ "Uncle Sam leads with salads," *Daily News* (Perth), 16 January 1950, 8.

Australian society with American ideas, technologies and allegiances, but this was the work of many years and many hands, achieved more through persistence than political or economic clout.

Yet irrespective of their individual success, these exertions are further testament to the allure of modern America among career-minded Australian women. Not only did the United States attract Australian women to its shores, but also inspired them to proselytise on its behalf. Even the widespread concerns about America's hustle and racial mix did not prevent the outspoken endorsement of many facets of the brave new world surveyed across the Pacific. Although this work could bring monetary or reputational rewards, it was often undertaken without remuneration and in the face of public wariness or even ridicule. Silence and acquiescence would, in many cases, have constituted an easier path. Yet so exciting was the American example, and so unsatisfying its Australian counterpart, that returned travellers chose to pursue labours that were, if not thankless, certainly laborious indeed. The librarian Jean Whyte was only one of many who, once back home from the United States, proved unable to 'hold [her] tongue'.

CONCLUSION

Australia from 42nd Street

The New York Public Library is an ideal, if unlikely, location from which to better understand ‘the distinctiveness and significance of Australian history’. The snippets of the past held within this Manhattan institution, historian Marilyn Lake writes, require us to place ‘our national story’ within ‘a larger context’, a process guaranteed to give ‘new meaning to many aspects of our history and its wider ramifications’. When we ‘adopt a global frame of analysis’, ‘we can better appreciate our place in the wider world’ and even ‘re-shape our national narratives’.¹ Lake was speaking of her own research into Australian democracy, but her reflections are no less applicable to the history presented here. It relates events situated in the United States, events driven by American people and ideas, and reliant upon American money. It has occasioned visits to the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress and the Consumer Union archives in the Hudson Valley. Yet its primary purpose has been to cast new light on the southern continent. Embedded within these tales of Broadway actresses, Carnegie grant holders and Rotary lecturers are significant insights about the history of the Australian people and nation.

First and foremost, these insights relate to the web of connections that linked Australia to the wider world. This account of women’s transpacific mobility extends the growing recognition that Australian history was not confined to the nation’s territorial borders, nor the borders of the British Empire. Both the presence of Australian women in America and the Americanisation their travels engendered foreground that Australia’s past was played out in San Francisco, Syracuse and Seattle, as well as Sydney and Southampton. Long before the ‘turn to America’ of 1941–42, the United States figured large in Australian society. It was an attractive

¹ Marilyn Lake, “Researching Australian History in the New York Public Library: Reflections on Transnational History in Practice,” *Melbourne Historical Journal* 41 (2013): 4.

destination for women's work, study and adventure, and a fount of new ideas that exerted considerable appeal. Its influence was diverse, encompassing work and leisure, art and science, and so too were the women who fell into its web. They included Hollywood hopefuls from the Sydney stage, but also scientists from suburban Brisbane, entrepreneurs from rural Gippsland, and leisured pillars of the Melbourne establishment. As both a travel destination and a cultural influence, the United States remained less significant than Britain, but its impact upon early twentieth-century Australia and Australians was more profound and more complex than is often acknowledged.

This recognition recalibrates the geographies of twentieth-century Australia, but also unsettles its periodisation. As historian Matthew Pratt Guterl argued in 2013, transnational history offers the potential, so far little explored, to reconfigure conceptions of time as well as space. By looking beyond national borders and the nation state, it can query established 'temporal plot points' and 're-periodize the decades and centuries'.² This potential has, to some extent, been realised here. Extending over five decades between 1910 and 1960, these travel tales expose a tradition of transpacific mobility and exchange that belies the historiographical fixation upon the 'turning points' of 1941 and the early 1960s. Despite recent scholarship that documents transpacific connections throughout the pre-WWII decades, the Pacific war continues to be characterised as the baptism of modern Australian-American relations.³ Without seeking to deny the significance of WWII and the 1960s, this history presents an alternative chronology. It stresses continuity rather than rupture, cultural evolution rather than political accords, and looks back to the first years of the century. Even during the 1910s and 20s, when British race patriotism saturated Australian society, the United States issued a siren call.

² Matthew Pratt Guterl, "The Futures of Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (2013): 132.

³ On pre-WWII connections, see Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific*; Esau, *Images of the Pacific Rim*. For examples of recent scholarship that identifies the 1940s as the birth of Australian-US relations, see for instance, Siracusa and Coleman, *Australia Looks to America*; Ninham, *A Cohort of Pioneers*.

The appeal of Britain and America was, indeed, often intertwined. The two nations have long been imagined as largely sequential influences upon twentieth-century Australia, with a brief struggle for dominance in the middle years of the century. This account, however, suggests otherwise. From the Great War to the Cold War, Australian women engaged with both the 'Mother Country' and the United States, and saw little reason to choose between them. They were avid transatlantic travellers, and developed allegiances and identifications that encompassed both corners of the Anglosphere. Many grew to prefer America, especially as the decades progressed, but tended to remain beholden to a lingering sense of Britishness.

These transpacific engagements also depart from the binaries of taste and class mapped onto Britain and the United States. Although the former has been associated with social elites and highbrow taste, while the latter is linked to populist mass culture, the appeal of America in fact extended far beyond vernacular modernism. There were numerous modernities that Australian women pursued and appropriated across the Pacific, from modernist poetry to professional accreditation. As a mecca for showgirls and academics, operatic sopranos and commercial artists, it would be fallacious to characterise American influences as either highbrow or low. The gravitational pulls of Britain and the United States overlapped in time, but so too did they overlap on the cultural spectrum.

Yet these binaries were often invoked when transpacific travellers returned home. Those who embodied or espoused American 'new ideas' were, particularly during the interwar decades, liable to fall victim to pejorative associations between the United States and 'crass modernity'.⁴ In an era of pervasive masculinism, the war against 'Americanisation' provided convenient cause to sideline or silence women with strong views. The Old World and the New were not competing for the affections of women travellers themselves, but attempts to import American modernity could descend into a seeming battle between the two.

⁴ The reference to 'crass modernity' is taken from Ker Conway, *True North*, 12.

These unorthodox conclusions about Australia's international ties stem from unorthodox subjects. By attending to the character and consequences of Australian women's sojourns in the United States, this thesis reinstates female travellers as actors within transpacific relations. It looks beyond government offices and corporate headquarters, where suited patriarchs presided, to consider transpacific connections contrived in kindergartens, Greyhound buses and broadcasting studios, spaces where little-known women wielded agency and influence. In doing so, it uncovers remarkable lives hitherto forgotten and recasts the meaning of lives already well-known. Women who distanced themselves from Australia are here given centre stage in a chapter of its history. They make a strange grouping, united by little besides their destination and ambition, but nonetheless acted in concert. Their restless mobility and their impassioned words spun thousands of threads across the ocean that together formed ropes of considerable strength. In this 'people's history of the transpacific', in short—to return to a phrase mooted in the Introduction—we begin to see the spaces, actors and chronology of Australian-American relations anew.

Although transpacific mobility and exchange flourished throughout the early twentieth century, there were moments when that relationship faltered. Disconnection, distrust and aversion on occasion soured the prevailing mood of admiration and amity. These discordant notes were most conspicuous at the border, where, after 1921, Australians confronted strict quotas and suspicious officials. Without these immigration restrictions and the associated resentments, Australia's ties to the United States (and indeed Britain) may have developed along quite different lines. But fractures in the friendship also manifested within the nation itself. Australian women shied from the local pursuit of busyness, and begrudged obligations to likewise strain themselves. America's racial mix was another source of disquiet. The abundant non-white population could, in different contexts, provoke anxieties about miscegenation and race suicide, expose the violence of racial hierarchies, and give lie to the discourse of transpacific race brotherhood. This supposed fraternity was only further eroded in the early years of WWI and WWII, when stateside Australians discovered that American support could not be

taken for granted. Taken together, such issues and moments ensured that transpacific travellers did not, by and large, succumb to utopian fantasies about the United States. These women esteemed much in the nation and its people, with whom they sought closer relations, but remained cognisant that this admiring friendship, and the appropriations it inspired, must and did have their limits.

The Americanisation and modernisation that flowed from women's transpacific mobility was, in most cases, occasioned by careers. For all but a prosperous minority, work or study was the vehicle that transformed these women into pioneers of transpacific engagement and avowed moderns. It provided the funds and impetus to travel abroad, it promoted a preference for the United States above Britain, and it constituted a platform from which to import the American modern back home. It is even, indeed, arguable that the pursuit of careers, the appeal of the 'new', and the allure of America were, for these women, inextricably entwined. Their travel trajectories and career paths developed in dialogue, while each was constituted by and constitutive of their modernity. Although much recent scholarship on women and modernity has explored visual culture, consumption, leisure and the body, these travellers remind us that the modern woman worked as much as she played.⁵

This transnational careering was characterised by notable diversity. It encompassed the much-studied 'women's professions', such as teaching and librarianship, as well as the visual and performing arts, in which women's presence is well-known, but also extended into more unexpected terrain. Alongside these 'feminine' labours, associated with nurturing instincts or womanly accomplishments, transpacific travellers pursued employment in a wide array of more masculinised or less established professions. They were economists and interior decorators, journalists and orators, archivists and radio hosts, lawyers and swimming instructors. They were ambitious and entrepreneurial, willing to relocate abroad in pursuit of professional advancement, and unafraid to reinvent themselves if one career went

⁵ Prime examples of this scholarship include Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*; Weinbaum et al., eds., *The Modern Girl Around the World*; Tinkler and Warsh, "Feminine Modernity in Interwar Britain and North America."

sour. Decades before the changes wrought by Women's Liberation, 'the non-working-class working woman' appeared in innumerable guises, at home and abroad, a recognition that speaks to the mobility, scope and ingenuity of early twentieth-century female labour.⁶

This careerist mobility was, however, often underpinned by relationships and networks. Despite, or because of, the masculinism and 'cultural cringe' that hindered women's professional prospects in Australia, there was a small but determined army of mentors and patrons who nudged talented women overseas. Not all transpacific travellers received such assistance, and we can only imagine the hundreds or thousands of homebound women who could have shone abroad had their potential received more notice. The absence or limits of patronage, as much as its presence, must be identified as a factor in the history of women's career-oriented travel. But even so, patronage did much to enable the mobility of many women considered here. It could signal opportunities, provide funds, and open doors. Yet it could also, less obviously, give a licence to ambition—make it respectable, even dutiful, to deviate from conventional female trajectories. Once a figure of authority had given voice to the notion of overseas work or study, the woman in question was perhaps better able to acknowledge and realise her own aspirations. To hatch international career plans oneself was liable to be labelled presumption; to follow career advice issued by superiors could be excused as a display of obedience.

Alongside these insights about Australian-American relations, the view from 42nd Street also affords fresh perspective on Australia itself. To explore transpacific connections is, to some extent, to engage in transpacific comparison, a process that casts new light upon Australian (and American) society. The discussion in Chapter

⁶ These themes, prominently featured within Woollacott's *To Try Her Fortune in London* and Pesman's *Duty Free*, have also been stressed in a recent flourishing of scholarship on Australian women's work. See for instance, Bishop, *Minding Her Own Business*; Baker, *Australian Women War Reporters*; Alana Piper, "Women's Work: The Professionalisation and Policing of Fortune-Telling in Australia," *Labour History*, no. 108 (2015): 37–52; Jackie Dickenson, *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). On earlier labour historiography, see the Introduction. On the 'non-working-class working woman', see Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson, "Middle-Class Women and Professional Identity," *Women's History Review* 14, no. 2 (2005): 169.

Two, for instance, reminds us that these two ‘white men’s countries’ gave rise to divergent definitions of ‘whiteness’. In the Australian context, whiteness was near synonymous with Britishness or Anglo-Saxonism, a much narrower understanding than that which emerged amid the diverse population of the United States. Although racial categories circulated transnationally throughout the modern era, the perspective of these women travellers also underscores the extent to which conceptions of whiteness (and blackness) were a product of local conditions. This contingency, moreover, makes plain the artifice of race itself; it exposes racial categories as cultural constructs, insidious fictions—all too real in their effects—liable to fluctuate across place and time.

The most conspicuous of the contrasts to emerge here, however, relates to the status of women. As we have seen, an important backdrop to this wave of female mobility was the significant disparities between the professional and educational opportunities open to white women on opposite sides of the Pacific. Pre-1960s Australia was sexist by the standards of today, but also appeared mired in sex discrimination in relation to the United States. Although a definitive assessment of women’s lot in the two countries would necessitate further comparative analysis, there seems little doubt that Australian women faced greater barriers in the pursuit of work and study. Both the anecdotal and statistical evidence presented in these pages, especially in Chapters One and Three, brings to mind the assessment made by Miriam Dixson back in 1975, when, in her pioneering feminist history, she proclaimed Australian women ‘the Doormats of the Western World’.⁷

Yet despite—and indeed, as a result of—these constraints, Australian women ventured abroad in remarkable numbers. In a nation preoccupied with its own isolation, where heading abroad was invested with glamour and cultural cachet, international travel was one freedom that many women could pursue without hostility or censure. Although transnational careering could, as mentioned, be suggestive of ‘unwomanly’ ambition, travel itself tended to be a comprehensible, even estimable, aspiration for men and women alike. During an era when female

⁷ Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia, 1788 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1994), 11.

mobility received greater approbation than women's higher education or professional achievement, travel perhaps constituted the most viable route to forging a life of one's own.

To take the converse perspective, we have seen that the opportunities for white women in mid-century America were little short of remarkable. Although far from untrammelled, they still far outstripped those elsewhere in the English-speaking world. When viewed from Sydney, an era of American women's history often regarded as a trough between two feminist waves attains a much higher elevation. It was an era tarnished by conservative reaction, not to mention pervasive inequalities of race and class, but it also witnessed significant and rising levels of female participation in public life. It is these feminist victories, not the undeniable feminist blind-spots and setbacks, which are most conspicuous in the writings and experience of female visitors from Australia. Reputed to be a 'woman's paradise', mid-century America advertised its modernity in large part through its freedoms for women. The 'modern woman' is well-recognised as a symbolic personification of American modernity abroad; this history suggests that her flesh-and-blood counterparts also found a uniquely congenial habitat within the United States.⁸

Another fruitful comparison to emerge in these pages relates to the local character of the modern. Much recent scholarship has debunked the notion of a singular 'modernity', but this new theoretical paradigm has not been accompanied by sustained empirical research into the relative character of the world's multiple 'modernities'. As a result, although the myth of Australia's 'belatedness' has been well and truly dispelled, the distinctive qualities of the Australian modern have yet to be explicated. By examining Australian engagements with the American modern, the preceding chapters make a foray into this under-explored terrain. As hinted above, gender emerges as a key differential. By comparison to international models, Australian modernity is conspicuous for its lack of emphasis upon new freedoms and opportunities for women. Local women did adopt hallmarks of feminine modernity, and were early to receive the franchise, but their efforts were

⁸ Rosenberg, "Consuming Women"; Weinbaum et al., eds., *The Modern Girl around the World*, 26–30.

subordinated to male activities and concerns. It was instead masculine archetypes of modern life such as the lifesaver that loomed largest in the emergent national culture.⁹

The discussion in Chapter Five, moreover, raises the possibility that ‘hustle’ was little evident in the Antipodes. Australian women’s insistence that the American pursuit of efficiency was foreign to their experience suggests that Sydney and Melbourne had developed into modern cities without succumbing to the accelerated temporal culture and pervasive efficiency imperatives evident throughout the States. Australian cities would embrace new technologies, and witnessed associated increases in the speed of movement and communication, yet nonetheless appear to have placed greater stress upon modern cultures of leisure than modern cultures of work.

There were, as we have seen, no shortage of ‘modernities’, or ‘tomorrows’, to be found in early twentieth-century America. There was the tomorrow of washing machines in every home; there was the tomorrow of Broadway at rush-hour; and there was the tomorrow of internationalist dialogue and cooperation. They would often beguile, and provoke attempts at appropriation, yet could also inspire ambivalence or even trepidation. But each carried a sense of newness, a promise of progress—qualities which worked to ensure that the American and the modern would often appear one and the same.

From the 1960s onward, however, these two concepts would cease to be so readily entwined. For one thing, modernity itself lost momentum. As the century drew to a close, its forward thrust gave way to the less bombastic, more fragmented—though in many respects similar—condition known as post-modernity.¹⁰ The ‘American Century’, too, began to falter, bogged in the mire of Vietnam, internal division and economic crises. Long before it suffered its final, spectacular, collapse

⁹ On the lifesaver as a symbol of early twentieth-century Australia, see Saunders, “Specimens of Superb Manhood”; White, “Save Us From the Womanly Man”; Grant Rodwell, “The Sense of Victorious Struggle’: The Eugenic Dynamic in Australian Popular Surf-Culture, 1900–1950,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 62 (1999): 56–63.

¹⁰ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 327–28, 338–42.

on 11 September 2001, Australian women had begun to notice signs of decay.¹¹ Conscious of the nation's crumbling social fabric, pervasive gun violence and international overreach, these late twentieth-century sojourners were less inclined to see evidence of innovation and progress.¹² When Australians looked for visions of the future on the threshold of the so-called 'Asian Century', their gaze turned instead with growing frequency to Tokyo or Hong Kong.¹³

But for the half-century prior to the cataclysmic 1960s, when the Old World signified tradition and Asia was not yet ascendant, the future glittered, like a mirage, on the north-eastern rim of the Pacific. That prospect would entice thousands of career-minded Australian women to swim against the current heading to London, and try their luck in America. They were not always successful, and some sank without a trace, but their mobility would nonetheless transform their own lives and reorient the society whence they came. Driven by dreams of a better tomorrow for themselves and the world, these travels constitute a notable thread among Australia's ever shifting and remarkably complex global ties.

¹¹ On September 11 as the end of the American Century, see David S. Mason, *The End of the American Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Ivan Krastev, "The Anti-American Century?" *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 1 (2004): 5–16.

¹² See, for instance, Wienholt interview; Coleman interview.

¹³ Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbours*, 53–54.

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- MS 6085 Papers of Dorothy Cottrell, 1929–1970.
- MS 6441 Papers of Irene Crespín, 1921–1980.
- MS 7526 Records of the Australian Early Childhood Association, 1928–2005.
- MS 9085 Papers of Mary Beatrice Perry, 1922–1924.
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- ORAL TRC 1/106 Elisabeth MacIntyre interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1965.
- ORAL TRC 1/485 Constance Paul interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1970.
- ORAL TRC 1/692 Myra Roper interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1973.
- ORAL TRC 1/932 Shirley Hazzard interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1976.
- ORAL TRC 986 Walter Cottrell interviewed by Barbara Ross, 1979.
- ORAL TRC 1/1019 Nancy Bird Walton interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1977.
- ORAL TRC 2661 Pat Jarrett interviewed by Mark Cranfield, 1984.
- ORAL TRC 2692/2 Bill Cardy interviewed by Mark St Leon, 28 July 1987.
- ORAL TRC 2692/8 Mickey McGeehan interviewed by Mark St Leon, 8 August 1986.

- ORAL TRC 5547 Jacqueline Goodnow interviewed by Nikki Henningham, 2005.
- ORAL TRC 6165/3 Elaine Barry interviewed by Alice Garner, 2010.
- ORAL TRC 6165/8 Ruth Fink Latufeku interviewed by Alice Garner, 2010.
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- P141 Papers of Ilma Brewer, 1937–1986.

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MS 7067 Papers of Doris Hayball, 1909–1948.
MS 12089 Jean Lawson, “Once it was like this!, or who remembers when–: autobiographical reminiscences,” n. d.
MS 12565 Papers of Lord and Lady Casey, n. d.
MSPA PA BOX 55 Papers and diary of Beth Stubbs, 1950–2000.
AAA Mary Cecil Allen: Artists and Artists file.

University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne

Ref. 93/163 Papers of Frances Derham, 1946–1987.

State Library of Western Australia, Perth

4392A/15 Papers of Mollie Lukis, 1926–2002.
OH1321 Isla Stamp interviewed by Carol Lovegrove, 1985.
OH2527 Mollie Lukis interviewed by Erica Harvey, 1992.
MN 2564 Papers of Marion Brooke and Beryl Mills, 1900–1997.

State Library of South Australia, Adelaide

OH 561/2 Dorothy Riddle interviewed by Mary Rose Goggs, 1972.

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Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC

Papers of Mary Cecil Allen, 1928–1970.

Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY

Series 410E/RG10.1 Fellowship Files, Rockefeller Foundation Archives.
Series 3 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Rockefeller Foundation Archives.
Series 25.2 The Commonwealth Fund.

New York Public Library, New York, NY

JPB 97-1 Papers of Katrina Castles, 1932–1956.
Clipping File Alda, Frances.
Clipping File Barrie, Mona.
Clipping File Coome, Carol.
Clipping File Doyle, Agnes.
Clipping File Hine-Mundy, Clytie.
Clipping File Love, Jean.
Clipping File Sydney, Lorna.
Clipping File Titus, Lydia.
Clipping File Villiers, Mavis.
Clipping File Wirth, May.

Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, NY

Coll\Carnegie Corp. Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, 1900–2004.

Consumers Union Archive, Yonkers, NY

Papers of Persia Campbell, n. d.

University of Toledo Archives, Toledo, OH

Ada Stephens Staff File

Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA

PA MSS 43 Papers of Robert Wallsten, 1920s–1960s.

Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

1/3/MSS 127 Marjorie Lawrence Collection, 1926–1977.

Cornell University Archives

Papers of Dorothy Riddle, n. d.

Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts

MS 131 Papers of Lola Ridge, 1900–1941.

Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA

Biography File Maguire, Mary.
Biography File Nash, Nancy.
Biography File Wilson, Elsie Jane.

Oral History Interviews

All interviews were conducted by Anne Rees, and all transcripts are in the author's possession.

Coleman, Marie. 6 August 2014, Canberra.
Duncan, Shirley. 10 June 2014, conducted via telephone.
Halliday, June. 6 July 2014, Brisbane.
Helms, Katie. 21 August 2014, Canberra.
Wienholt, Anne. 24 July 2012, Sydney.

Periodicals (Australia)

Advertiser (Adelaide)
Advocate (Burnie)
Age (Melbourne)
Aircraft (Sydney)
Albury Banner and Wodonga Express
Argus (Melbourne)
Australasian Record (Warburton)
Australian Demography Bulletin
Australian Pre-School Quarterly
Australian Women's Weekly
Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)
Beverley Times
Border Watch (Mt Gambier)
BP Magazine (Sydney)
Brisbane Courier
Bulletin of Australian Federation of University Women
Cairns Post
Canberra Times

Catholic Press (Sydney)
Catholic Weekly (Sydney)
Centralian Advocate (Alice Springs)
Courier-Mail (Brisbane)
Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta)
Daily Examiner (Grafton)
Daily Mercury (Mackay)
Daily News (Perth)
The Dawn (Sydney)
Examiner (Launceston)
Fleur-de-Lys (Melbourne)
Graphic of Australia
Herald (Melbourne)
The Home (Sydney)
Illustrated Tasmanian Mail
Kapunda Herald
Longreach Leader (Queensland)
Mail (Adelaide)
Mercury (Hobart)
Mirror (Perth)
Mirror of Australia (Sydney)
Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton)
Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser
National Library Magazine
Nepean Times (Penrith)
Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate
News (Adelaide)
Newsletter (Sydney)
Northern Argus (Clare, SA)
Northern Miner (Charters Towers)
Northern Star (Lismore)
Pacific Neighbors
Per Litteras Lumen (Adelaide)

Picture Show (Sydney)
Port Lincoln Times
The Progressive Journal
Queensland Times
Queenslander
Radiant Health Messenger (Adelaide)
Recorder (Port Pirie)
Register (Adelaide)
Register News-Pictorial (Adelaide)
Singleton Argus
Sunday Herald (Sydney)
Sunday Mail (Brisbane)
Sunday Times (Perth)
Sunday Times (Sydney)
Sunshine Advocate
Swan Express (Midland Junction)
Sydney Mail
Sydney Morning Herald
Sydney Sun
Table Talk (Melbourne)
Times and Northern Advertiser (Peterborough, SA)
Townsville Daily Bulletin
Warwick Daily News
West Australian (Perth)
Western Mail (Perth)
Westralian Worker (Perth)
Williamstown Chronicle

Periodicals (United States)

American Law and Lawyers
Art Digest
ARTNews
Atlanta Constitution

Atlanta World Daily
Boston Daily Globe
Boston Herald
Brooklyn Daily Eagle
Chicago Daily Tribune
Chicago Defender
Coo-ee Clarion (New York)
Cornell Daily Sun
Corsicania Semi-Weekly Light (Corsicania, TX)
Cosmopolitan
Daily Mirror (New York)
Dearborn Independent
Evening Review (East Liverpool, OH)
Film Forecast (Pittsburgh, PA)
Fitchburg Sentinel (Fitchburg, MA)
Fort Wayne Daily News (Fort Wayne, IN)
Hamilton Evening Journal (Hamilton, OH)
Hartford Courant
The Independent
Journal American (New York)
Journal of the American Association of University Women
Kansas City Star
Kingston Daily Freeman (Kingston, NY)
Ladies' Home Journal
Life
Lima News (Lima, OH)
Los Angeles Daily Journal
Los Angeles Examiner
Los Angeles Times
Mademoiselle
New Castle Herald (New Castle, PA)
New York Evening Journal
New York Herald Tribune

New York Times
Post-Standard (Syracuse, NY)
San Francisco Call
San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco Examiner
Saturday Evening Post
Sun (Baltimore)
Variety
Vogue
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Washington Post and Times Herald
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