

Modernity, Film and Romance

9. 'Films as foreign offices': transnationalism at Paramount in the twenties and early thirties

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Film scholar Miriam Hansen argues that American mainstream cinema developed a 'global vernacular' – what she calls elsewhere 'an international modernist idiom on a mass basis' – whose transnational appeal derived from diverse domestic traditions, discourses, and interests, including those of the cosmopolitan Hollywood community. 'Hollywood did not just circulate images and sounds', she argues, 'it produced and globalized a new sensorium; it constituted ... new subjectivities and subjects.'¹ Although Hansen refers to the 'cosmopolitan Hollywood community', American mainstream cinema was created as much in New York as in Hollywood during the 1920s and early 1930s, when the American film industry consolidated its global reach.² This chapter examines some of the ways in which the New York office of Famous Players-Lasky (Paramount), America's leading producer and distributor of films during the 1920s, consciously fostered 'cosmopolitanism' or 'transnationalism'.³

Walter Wanger, Paramount's New York-based general manager of production in the 1920s and early 1930s, had a very clear idea of film's international role from the beginning of his career. 'While the representatives of the nations of the earth sit in conference at Washington searching for formulas which ... will guarantee to the world everlasting peace', the 27-year-old Wanger wrote in the London *Daily Mail* in December 1921, 'the great masses of those nations are meeting daily or nightly ... in kinema houses to see films that will eventually render Washington conferences unnecessary.'

Universal peace will come only when there is between all nations and all peoples universal acquaintanceship. And by means of the moving

¹ Miriam Hansen 1999, 'The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 59-77; reprinted in Linda Williams and Christine Gledhill (eds) 2000, *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Edward Arnold).

² For global reach see Victoria de Grazia 1989, 'Mass Culture and Sovereignty: The American Challenge to European Cinemas, 1920–1960', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 61, no. 1, pp. 53-87.

³ For FPL's dominance of domestic production and distribution see Matthew Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger: Hollywood Independent* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press), [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994], pp. 42-3. In 1926 FPL's New York studios made 40 per cent of their films. See Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 60.

picture we are gaining a knowledge of what the rest of the world knows, what it eats, and, what is more important, *how* it eats; what it wears and, what is of greater importance *how* it wears it ... The written word, the spoken word, have failed to accomplish in a big way what the kine is now accomplishing for the very good and simple and true reason that ... seeing is believing ... *Nations have never known each other as thoroughly as they are now coming to know each other by means of the moving picture* ... heretofore knowledge has been the possession of the few and the Foreign Office; but henceforth the Foreign Offices of the world will be the picture houses of the world. For they offer the best means of producing greater world knowledge, world acquaintanceship, and hence, world peace.⁴

Walter Wanger (1894–1968) was, in December 1921, a theatre manager in London. But he had worked briefly, the previous year, as assistant to Jesse Lasky, vice-president for production, then as general manager of production at Famous Players-Lasky based in New York; and he returned to that position in July 1924, where he oversaw all FPL productions, selecting story properties, scouting talent, and supervising the company's studios at Astoria, Long Island, on the West Coast, and overseas in London, Paris and Bombay.⁵

Wanger's faith in cinema's 'foreign office' role stemmed most immediately from his experience in the Great War, when he served first of all as Secretary of the Recruiting Committee of New York mayor John Mitchel's Committee on National Defense, which oversaw all propaganda in the city 'on a scientific basis under a system similar to that evolved in England', then in the Signal Corps, which used aviation to collect intelligence, and finally in the Rome office of the Committee on Public Information (CPI).⁶ Led by political scientist Charles Merriam, this office attempted to persuade 'as many [of the Italian] people as possible, in as vivid a way as possible' to continue their war efforts. Wanger edited and distributed newsreels and films that he was convinced were 'tremendously' influential in swaying the feelings of the Italian people. As his

⁴ Walter Wanger 1921, 'Films as Foreign Offices', *Daily Mail* (London), 10 December, p. 6, quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 37-8. Italics in original.

⁵ Matthew Bernstein 2000, 'Wanger, Walter', *American National Biography Online* (American Council of Learned Societies: Oxford University Press). For overseas studios see Jesse L. Lasky 1920, 'Future Productions of Famous Players to Prove Value of Sound Organization', *Moving Picture World*, vol. 12, June, p. 1469; and Jesse Lasky with Dan Weldon 1957, *I Blow My Own Horn* (New York, NY: Doubleday), pp. 131-2.

⁶ 'City Leads Nation in Recruiting Work. Mayor's Committee Takes Over All Propaganda for Army, Navy, and Marine Corps', *New York Times*, 9 April 1917, p. 6, quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 30-1.

biographer Matthew Bernstein put it, Wanger's experience at the CPI provided him with 'a crash course in shaping public opinion' and the conviction of 'the international scope of the movies' potential influence'.⁷

Wanger developed his conviction that more effective, up-to-date forms of diplomacy were essential in the immediate aftermath of the war when he served as an aide to Wilson adviser James T. Shotwell at the Paris Peace Conference. He did briefly consider a career in the Foreign Service and he used the foreign service analogy all his life, referring to movies as '120,000 American Ambassadors' in an article in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in October 1939.⁸

Walter Wanger was applying to cinema, in 1921, a pervasive idea among young American intellectuals concerning the connection between transnationalism, or cosmopolitanism, and world peace. Born in San Francisco in 1894 into a wealthy German Jewish family, his aunts Carrie, Ettie and Florine Stettheimer were accomplished artists and writers who formed one of New York's most interesting avant-garde salons. His sister Beatrice was a modern dancer based in Paris. As a child he went regularly to Europe with his family; and after his father died in 1905 they lived for two years in Switzerland, then settled in Manhattan, where he was part of his family's wealthy, cultured, cosmopolitan world. During his years at Dartmouth College from 1911 to 1915 he saw the Abbey Theatre on tour in New York, attended Max Reinhardt productions in Berlin and Ballets Russes productions in Paris. He became familiar with the New Stagecraft pioneered by Gordon Craig.⁹

Eagerly gathering anything that was new and original, no matter what its provenance, under the inspiration of Diaghilev, Wanger was also no doubt open to the ideas of his contemporary Randolph Bourne, who articulated a new code for the young intelligentsia in his 'Trans-National America', published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1916. A response to the hysteria about 'hyphenated Americans' fuelled by Woodrow Wilson's preparedness speech in December 1915 and congressional debate on the preparedness bill in March 1916, Bourne's article advocated a fluid and dynamic approach to culture and argued that: 'In

⁷ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 33-4.

⁸ Walter Wanger 1929, '120,000 Ambassadors', *Foreign Affairs*, December, cited in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 35, 139. For contemporary commentary see Virginia Wright 1939, 'Cinematter', *Los Angeles Daily News*, 14 October.

⁹ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 3-22. For Florine Stettheimer see Barbara J. Bloemink, 'Crystal Flowers, Pink Candy Hearts and Tinsel Creation: The Subversive Femininity of Florine Stettheimer', in Bridget Elliott and Janice Helland (eds) 2003, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts 1880-1935: The Gender of Ornament* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate), pp. 197-218; and 2000, 'Stettheimer, Florine', *American National Biography Online* (American Council of Learned Societies: Oxford University Press).

a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all unawares been building up the first international nation.'

America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun ... It is for the American of the younger generation to accept this cosmopolitanism, and carry it along with self-conscious and fruitful purpose.¹⁰

In an address to the Harvard Menorah Society in December 1916 he elaborated on this further in a way that was particularly pertinent to the Jewish-American Wanger: The only thing that kept American culture from aggressive nationalism was the 'hyphenate', Bourne argued. Accordingly the task was to find a way to a 'cultural self-consciousness' that was pluralistic enough to avoid 'the price of terrible like-mindedness'. In Bourne's opinion, the cosmopolitanism of Jewish Americans (such as Horace Kallen, Walter Lippmann and Louis Brandeis) were concrete examples of the way the hyphenate American could help turn America into the first international nation.¹¹

Accompanying this cosmopolitan vision for Bourne was a sophisticated 'modern' approach to sexual relations, articulated most effectively by his friend, the feminist anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons. For Bourne and Parsons, being modern involved the avoidance of classificatory thinking, whether of nation or of sex. The urge to classify, fear of social change, and structures of social control are closely related, Parsons contended in her *Social Rule* in 1916. 'Social categories are an unparalleled means of gratifying the will to power. The classified individual may be held in subjection in ways the unclassified escapes.' As a feminist, Parsons called, therefore, for 'the declassification of women as women, the recognition of women as human beings or personalities ... The *new woman* means the woman not yet classified, perhaps not classifiable'; and as a pacifist she called, as Randolph Bourne did, for a diminution of national consciousness and the encouragement of a transnational perspective.¹²

¹⁰ Randolph Bourne 1916, 'Trans-National America', *Atlantic Monthly*, July, pp. 86-97.

¹¹ Randolph Bourne 1916, 'The Jew and Trans-National America', *Menorah Journal*, December, pp. 277-84; reprinted in Carl Resek (ed.) 1965, *War and the Intellectuals* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks), pp. 124-33. See Desley Deacon 1997, *Elsie Clews Parsons: Inventing Modern Life* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. 165-89, for the influence of this feminist anthropologist on Bourne's thinking.

¹² Elsie Clews Parsons 1916, *Social Rule: A Study of the Will to Power* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons), pp. 2, 54-5. See also Parsons 1915, *Social Freedom: A Study of the Conflicts between Social Classifications and Personality* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons).

After Wanger returned to Famous Players-Lasky in 1924, his career was devoted to reconciling making a profit with the production of 'greater world knowledge, world acquaintanceship, and hence, world peace'. He did this in several ways: through his support of films with a strong documentary component; by setting films in foreign locales; after sound was introduced in 1927, by making simultaneous versions in other languages, either for a large United States minority audience such as Spanish speakers, or for foreign markets; and by developing a cosmopolitan, transatlantic style that was not identifiable as American, French, German, or British, though it borrowed elements from each of these.

Wanger's project to encourage 'world acquaintanceship' through film was supported by Jesse Lasky (1880–1958), the vice-president for production who had snapped up this debonair young entrepreneur in 1920 after meeting him at a dinner party.¹³ In 1920 Famous Players-Lasky was expanding its production activities worldwide, with studios in New York, Hollywood, London and Bombay.¹⁴ After a brief period as Lasky's personal assistant, Wanger was appointed general manager of production, with control over the company's far-flung production units from his base in New York.¹⁵ Apart from Wanger's organisational vision, Lasky was impressed by Wanger's cosmopolitanism. Here was a man of the world, Lasky decided, who could ensure that the details of Famous Player-Lasky films were faithful to life, whether they portrayed events in American history, everyday life on a Pacific island, or the manners and morals of New York upper-class society.

The best of Famous Player-Lasky films already did this. In an interview with Louella Parsons in January 1922, the young Ernst Lubitsch, fresh from Germany, expressed great admiration for the care taken by the studio with 'the little things', giving as an example their 1921 film *Forbidden Fruit*.¹⁶ By the time Wanger had returned to Famous Players-Lasky in July 1924, Lasky had produced *The Covered Wagon* (1923), which told the story of the wagon trains that crossed the continent in 1848–1849 in such convincing detail that the *New York Times* applauded the idea of the film being preserved in the Smithsonian Institution as an historical

¹³ Lasky 1957, *I Blow My Own Horn*, pp. 133, 173-5, 196-7; Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 41-2.

¹⁴ Lasky 1920, 'Future Productions of Famous Players to Prove Value of Sound Organization'.

¹⁵ 'Walter F. Wanger Now General Manager of Production of Famous Players-Lasky', *Moving Picture World*, 13 November 1920, p. 236; 'Famous Players Sign Wanger as Special Representative', *Moving Picture World*, 1 May 1920, p. 678; 'Jesse Lasky Appoints Walter Wagner [sic] to Position of F.P.-L. Production Head', *Moving Picture World*, 12 June 1920, p. 1448.

¹⁶ Ernst Lubitsch 1922, Interview with Louella Parsons, *New York Telegraph*, 1 January.

record of the event.¹⁷ *North of 36* (1924), the highly documentary story of a cattle drive by a female rancher across Texas in the 1870s, was in production.¹⁸ Even more adventurously, he was also backing a second film, *Moana* (1926), by documentary pioneer Robert Flaherty, whose *Nanook of the North*, about the daily life of an Inuit hunter and his family, had captured his imagination when it was released to considerable acclaim in 1922.¹⁹

Soon after Wanger's return to Famous Players-Lasky in 1924, he and Lasky began their association with Merian Cooper (1893–1973) and Ernest Schoedsack (1893–1979). These two young adventurers are best known for the enormously successful *King Kong* (1933). But in 1924 they had filmed, with Marguerite Harrison (1879–1967), the annual migration of the Baktiari people from the Persian gulf over the snow-clad Zardeh Kuh mountains to the grassy plains where they spent the summer months.²⁰ They were attempting to market their film to the educational market in New York when Lasky saw it at a private dinner party

¹⁷ 'Screen. Film as Nation's Historical Record', *New York Times*, 25 March 1923, p. X3. See also Lasky 1957, *I Blow My Own Horn*, pp. 159-64; 'The Screen. A Movie of the Prairies', *New York Times*, 17 March 1923, p. 9; 'Story of a Great Film', *New York Times*, 16 March 1924, p. X5.

¹⁸ Mordaunt Hall 1924, 'The Screen. *North of 36*', *New York Times*, 8 December, p. 23; Charles S. Sewell 1924, 'Newest Reviews and Comments: "North of 36"', *Moving Picture World*, 13 December, p. 625.

¹⁹ Lasky 1957, *I Blow My Own Horn*, pp. 187-8; 'The Screen. *Nanook of the North*', *New York Times*, 12 June 1922, p. 18; Fritz Tidden 1922, "'Nanook of the North': An Epic of the Eskimo Produced by Robert J. Flaherty, F.R.G.S., and Released by Pathe", *Moving Picture World*, 24 June, p. 735; Mordaunt Hall 1927, "'Nanook" Still a Masterpiece', *New York Times*, 20 February, p. X7; Rex Ingram 1927, 'Art Advantages of the European Scene', *Theatre Magazine*, p. 24. For *Moana* see 'Flaherty to Film Samoan Islanders. Producer of a Notable Picture Showing Life of the Eskimo Sails Tomorrow', *New York Times*, 11 April 1923, p. 36; "'Nanook" Producer Finds Samoan "Mary"', *New York Times*, 6 January 1924, p. X5; "'Nanook" Producer Here with Samoan Film Study', *New York Times*, 1 March 1925, p. X5; 'The Screen. *Moana*', *New York Times*, 8 February 1926, p. 24; *New York Times*, 8 Feb 1926, p. 8; *Variety*, 10 Feb 1926, p. 40; *Film Daily*, 21 February 1926; Forsyth Hardy 1979, *John Grierson: A Documentary Biography* (London: Faber and Faber), pp. 41-3. For Robert Flaherty's work see Arthur Calder-Marshall 1963, *The Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World).

²⁰ Lasky 1957, *I Blow My Own Horn*, pp. 188-9; Merian C. Cooper 1924, 'Barefoot Nation Migrates Through Snow to Find Food', *New York Times*, 31 August, p. X14. See Kevin Brownlow 1979, 'Grass', in *The War, the West, and the Wilderness* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf), pp. 515-29; Orville Goldner and George E. Turner 1975, *The Making of King Kong: The Story Behind a Film Classic* (South Brunswick, NY: A. S. Barnes), pp. 26-8; Rudy Behlmer 1966, 'Merian C. Cooper is the Kind of Creative Showman Today's Movies Badly Need', *Films in Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 17-34; Paul M. Jensen 2000, 'Cooper, Merian Coldwell', *American National Biography Online* (American Council of Learned Societies: Oxford University Press).

and acquired it for Paramount in January 1925.²¹ The *New York Times* acclaimed this 'Persian "Covered Wagon"' as a 'remarkable' film that contained 'drama which is trenchant and stirring'.²² When it was premiered before a celebrity audience in March 1925, Mordaunt Hall, again in the *Times*, called it 'instructive and compelling', filled with drama and 'captivating comedy' despite its lack of a conventional story.²³ Lasky and Wanger immediately commissioned another film from Cooper and Schoedsack, who set off for Siam (modern-day Thailand) to make what was becoming known as a 'natural drama' – a film that constructs a story, usually of a family, using native actors and animals in their natural setting.²⁴ *Chang*, which featured tiger hunts and an elephant stampede, was hailed as 'vivid' and 'thrilling' when it was released in April 1927. Richard Watts, in the New York *Herald Tribune*, considered it had 'some of the most thrilling moments any dramatic form has been able to encompass'. Cooper and Schoedsack are shrewd showmen, Watts observed, 'who have not been content to rely merely on the bald camera journey through the Siamese jungle'. Instead they had produced a film 'in which comedy and drama are mingled with a showman's conscious skill', and the whole is put together with 'high technical skill'. 'The film has many of the admirable uses of tempo that *Potemkin* and *The Big Parade* employed to such effect', Watts concludes. 'In addition, it is filled with pictorial beauty and photographed superbly.'²⁵ *Chang* received critical acclaim from all over the world, film historian Kevin Brownlow tells us, as well as one of the first Academy Award nominations.²⁶

Wanger and Lasky were responsible for several other 'natural dramas' before they were dismissed from what was by then Paramount in 1931 and 1932 respectively: *The Vanishing American* (1926), made on location in Monument

²¹ Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, pp. 528-9.

²² 'Persian Tribes Filmed on Brave Mountain Trudge', *New York Times*, 8 March 1925, p. X3.

²³ *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (Famous Players-Lasky Paramount, 1925), New York premiere, 30 Mar 1925; 'Grinding Out Entertainment for the Millions', *New York Times*, 29 March 1925, p. X5; Mordaunt Hall 1925, 'The Screen. A Persian Epic', *New York Times*, 31 March, p. 17; *New York Times*, 12 April 1925, p. RPA2 (photo). See also *Film Daily*, 12 April 1925, p. 8; *Life*, 4 Jun 1925, p. 35.

²⁴ *Chang* (Paramount Famous Lasky, 1927), New York premiere, 29 April 1927; release 3 September 1927. See 'Thrills of Making Jungle Film', *New York Times*, 10 April 1927, p. X7; *Film Daily*, 17 April 1927, p. 8; *New York Times*, 30 April 1927, p. 25; *Variety*, 4 May 1927, p. 20; *Photoplay*, June 1927, p. 20; 'Chang', in Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, pp. 529-39.

²⁵ Richard Watts, quoted in Behlmer 1966, 'Merian C. Cooper', p. 22, in Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, p. 539. See also Mordaunt Hall 1927, 'The Screen. Thrilling Jungle Study', *New York Times*, 30 April, p. 25.

²⁶ Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, p. 539.

Valley and the Betatakin Cliff Dwellings, as the *New York Times* put it, ‘with infinite pains’;²⁷ *Redskin* (1929), filmed on the Navajo reservation in north-eastern Arizona about ‘the conflict of the modern red man, educated at the white man’s schools, seeking to fit himself into the present-day scheme of life’;²⁸ *The Silent Enemy* (1930), a reconstruction of the Ojibwa people’s struggle for food in the time before European settlement;²⁹ *Rango* (1931), made by Ernest Schoedsack in Sumatra;³⁰ *With Byrd at the South Pole* (1930);³¹ and *Tabu* (1931) directed by F. W. Murnau and produced by Robert Flaherty in Tahiti, with ‘only native-born South Sea islanders [and] a few half-castes and Chinese’, according to the film’s opening credits.³² Most extraordinary of all, and the most successful, according to both contemporary and modern sources, was *Stark Love* (1927), a film about gender relations among the isolated mountain people of North Carolina. Produced by Karl Brown, who had been the cameraman on *The Covered Wagon*, *Stark Love* used untrained actors from the region to make what Kevin Brownlow calls ‘one of the most unusual films ever made in America’.³³ As Mordaunt Hall wrote in the *New York Times*:

By adhering closely to his subject and scorning to permit any stereotyped movie spasms to interfere with its natural trend, Mr Brown reveals a feeling akin to that of Robert J. Flaherty in ‘Nanook of the North’ and ‘Moana of the South Seas’ ... This is another notch on the production gun of Famous Players-Lasky.³⁴

²⁷ See ‘The Vanishing American’, in Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, pp. 344-8; Mordaunt Hall 1925, ‘The Screen. The American Indian’, *New York Times*, 16 October, p. 18; *Moving Picture World*, 24 October 1925, p. 652; Ralph and Natasha Friar 1972, *The Only Good Indian*. . . *The Hollywood Gospel* (New York, NY: Drama Book Specialists), p. 133.

²⁸ ‘Mr. Dix’s Color Film’, *New York Times*, 10 February 1929, p. 117; ‘Redskin’, in Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, pp. 348-50.

²⁹ ‘The Silent Enemy’, in Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, pp. 545-60; Mordaunt Hall 1930, ‘The Screen. Indian Hunters of Old’, *New York Times*, 20 May, p. 36.

³⁰ ‘“Rango”, A Tiger Film’, *New York Times*, 1 January 1931, p. X6.

³¹ *With Byrd at the South Pole* (Paramount-Publix, 1930), New York premiere, 19 June 1930. See *Film Daily*, 22 June 1930; *New York Times*, 20 June 1930, p. 6; *Variety*, 25 June 1930, p. 109.

³² American Film Institute Catalogue.

³³ ‘Stark Love’, in Brownlow 1979, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*, pp. 499-507; ‘Primitive Mountaineers Filmed in Native Nooks’, *New York Times*, 20 February 1927, p. X6; ‘Where Man Is Vile. “Stark Love” a Realistic Reproduction of Life of Mountaineers’, *New York Times*, 6 March 1927, p. X7.

³⁴ Mordaunt Hall 1927, ‘The Screen. Primitive Mountaineers’, *New York Times*, 28 February, p. 22. See also Edward Kern, Film and Photo League 1934, ‘Reviving Distinguished Films’, Letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 16 December, p. X4.

Lasky's and Wanger's documentary sense was not confined to American history and what newspaper commentators referred to as 'primitive' cultures.³⁵ Based in New York, and closely associated, economically and personally, with the worlds they depicted, they encouraged the production of films dealing with 'modern' New York manners and morals, especially the mixture of society, show business and journalism that was creating a sophisticated transatlantic culture. This was especially the case after July 1926, when B. P. Schulberg was appointed associate manager in charge of production in the company's Hollywood studio. Although Wanger was still technically in charge of production in both studios, Schulberg's immediate success at the box office placed the two coasts in competition with each other, and Wanger, the 'European-oriented American', concentrated on a studio style described by his biographer as embodying 'the sophisticated tone and look rooted in continental dramas and fashions as exemplified by the work of directors Lubitsch and Josef von Sternberg'.³⁶ Wanger's competitive advantage was enhanced in 1928 with the introduction of sound, when his close links with Broadway gave him ready access to actors with acceptable voices.³⁷ Over the next few years he signed up actors, directors and writers who came to epitomise New York and transatlantic sophistication: actresses Jeanne Eagels, Claudette Colbert, Kay Francis, Ruth Chatterton, Miriam Hopkins, and Tallulah Bankhead; actors Maurice Chevalier, Frederic March, Walter Huston and Herbert Marshall; directors George Cukor, Rouben Mamoulian, and Robert Florey; writers Noel Coward, Preston Sturges, and Donald Ogden Stewart; and those exemplars of sophisticated comedy, the Marx Brothers.³⁸ From 1929 to 1931 Paramount's New York studio was known for its

³⁵ Many other films had a strong documentary flavour. Richard Koszarski calls *The Canadian* (1926) 'one of finest of silent films about modern life in remote farming communities'; Koszarski 1983, *The Astoria Studio and Its Fabulous Films: A Picture History with 227 Stills and Photographs*. With a Foreword by Rochelle Slovin. (New York, NY: Dover), pp. 44-5. Published in association with the Astoria Motion Picture and Television Foundation.

³⁶ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 60-1.

³⁷ Paramount's first all-talking picture, *Interference*, starring Clive Brook, Doris Kenyon and William Powell, premiered in New York 16 November 1928 and went on general release 5 January 1929. See *Variety*, 30 April 1930, p. 11 for Astoria's use of plays.

³⁸ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 63-5. For Kay Francis see *Gentlemen of the Press*, with Walter Huston May 1929; *Dangerous Curves*, July 1929; *The Marriage Playground*, with Fredric March, December 1929; *Behind the Make-Up*, January 1930 and *Street of Chance*, February 1930, both with William Powell; *The Virtuous Sin*, with Walter Huston, November 1930; *Scandal Sheet*, January 1931; *The Vice Squad*, May 1931; *Ladies' Man*, with William Powell and Carole Lombard, 1931. For Miriam Hopkins: *Fast and Loose*, November 1930. Fredric March: *The Royal Family of Broadway*, December 1930. *Man of the World*, William Powell and Carole Lombard's first film together, March 1931. Wanger's most memorable production during his tenure at Paramount was Rouben Mamoulian's

'sophisticated' films, the best of which dealt intelligently with modern gender roles and sexual mores.³⁹ Producers ought to be encouraged to make more such intelligent films, Mordaunt Hall wrote in the *New York Times* of Ruth Chatterton's December 1929 *The Laughing Lady*, which dealt with rape, divorce and hypocrisy in New York's high society.⁴⁰ 'They are real people', he wrote of the characters played by Claudette Colbert and Ginger Rogers in *Young Man of Manhattan* in April 1930, 'persons who are engaging in something of a battle with life.'⁴¹

Ernst Lubitsch's appointment as supervising producer at the New York studio in August 1930 confirmed Paramount's commitment to 'the sophisticated and indoor types of story'.⁴² *Ladies' Man*, with William Powell, Kay Francis and Carole Lombard, was 'intelligent' and had 'comparatively grown-up dialogue', Mordaunt Hall wrote in May 1931;⁴³ and 'London's favorite American actress', Tallulah Bankhead, made her talking film debut that same month 'with considerable distinction' in *Tarnished Lady*, written by leading playwright of modern New York life, Donald Ogden Stewart, and directed by George Cukor.⁴⁴ Many of these films were produced simultaneously in foreign languages.

innovative musical *Applause*, October 1929. The Marx Brothers premiered in *The Cocoanuts*, with Kay Francis, May 1929; their *Animal Crackers*, September 1930, featured William Sautler's moderne setting; see Koszarski 1983, *Astoria*, pp. 68-9.

³⁹ *Variety*, 11 September 1929, p. 18; 4 April 1930, p. 4; 13 August 1930, p. 2; 20 August 1930; 25 March 1931, p. 4. For an account of this genre see Mick LaSalle 2000, *Complicated Women: Sex and Power on Pre-Code Hollywood* (New York: St Martin's Press).

⁴⁰ Mordaunt Hall 1930, 'Love And The Lawyer. Excellent Entertainment Afforded by the Film of "The Laughing Lady"', *New York Times*, 12 January 12, p. 114, cited in Koszarski 1983, *Astoria*, p. 64. Before Wanger's dismissal Chatterton also appeared in *The Doctor's Secret*, January 1929; *The Dummy*, with Frederic March, March 1929; *Charming Sinners*, August 1929; *Sarah and Son*, with Fredric March, March 1930; *Anybody's Woman*, August 1930; *The Right To Love*, December 1930; *Unfaithful*, March 1931; and *The Magnificent Lie*, July 1931.

⁴¹ Mordaunt Hall 1930, *New York Times*, 27 April, p. 121. For *Young Man of Manhattan*, April 1930, see Koszarski 1983, *Astoria*, pp. 66-7. Colbert's other films of the period are *The Hole in the Wall*, April 1929; *The Lady Lies*, with Walter Huston, September 1929; *The Big Pond*, with Maurice Chevalier, May 1930; *Manlaughter*, with Fredric March, July 1930; *Honor Among Lovers*, February 1931; *Another Man's Wife*, with Fredric March and Ginger Rogers; *Secrets of a Secretary*, with Herbert Marshall, September 1931; and *The Smiling Lieutenant*, May 1931.

⁴² *Variety*, 10 September 1930, p. 3; 1 October 1930, p. 2; 1 April 1931, p. 7. See Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 66.

⁴³ Mordaunt Hall 1931, 'The Screen. A Lesson in Golf. A Fashionable Rogue', *New York Times*, 1 May, p. 34.

⁴⁴ Bankhead's other films at the New York studio were *My Sin*, October 1931, and *The Cheat*, November 1931, both made after Wanger's dismissal.

(French-speaking Claudette Colbert was particularly useful for this.) And from 1930 to 1933 Paramount produced French, Spanish, Swedish, German, Italian, Polish, Czech, Portuguese, Hungarian, and Romanian versions at its Joinville Studios outside Paris.⁴⁵

But Paramount's distribution wing had never liked either the 'natural dramas' or the sophisticated New York stories, which did not play well to American regional audiences.⁴⁶ As the Depression started to bite, Wanger and Lasky found themselves under attack. In November 1930 Wanger told an undergraduate audience at his old college, Dartmouth, of the choice Paramount faced between 'more sophisticated and somewhat philosophical pictures like "Holiday"' (the Philip Barry play opposing old and new values in love and money) and 'hokum' with clearcut morality and 'heart interest', such as the current hit, *Common Clay*.⁴⁷ As he put it at the end of his life, the films he promoted at the New York studio were 'a sensation in New York, but in Kansas City, they didn't know what [they were] all about'.⁴⁸

From 1930 to 1931 Paramount's net income dropped from \$25 million to \$8.7 million. In an attempt to stave off bankruptcy, distribution head Sidney Kent was appointed general manager. In May 1931 he shut down the New York studio and replaced Wanger by former newsreel director Emanuel Cohen, who was more amenable to the dictates of the distributors and exhibitors. By November 1931 Schulberg could tell *Variety* that Paramount was moving away from 'sophisticated' stories in favour of 'good old hoke tales with broader sales

⁴⁵ Harry Waldman 1998, *Paramount in Paris: 300 Films Produced at the Joinville Studios, 1930–1933, with Credits and Biographies* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press).

⁴⁶ See 'Inside Stuff on Pictures', *Variety*, 26 March 1924, p. 22.

⁴⁷ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 67.

⁴⁸ Interview with Walter Wanger, in Bernard Rosenberg and Harry Silverstein 1970, *The Real Tinsel* (London: Macmillan), pp. 80–99, especially p. 83; quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 68.

appeal'.⁴⁹ The following April, Jesse Lasky was given three months leave of absence, and in September 1932 *Time* magazine announced, 'Lasky Out'.⁵⁰

Wanger's and Lasky's determination to 'get the details right' and to educate the public about the varieties of the world's cultures, whether among the Eskimos of northern Canada or the modern sophisticates of New York, brought them into conflict with the distribution wing of Paramount as it lost its position as industry leader to MGM and the upstart Warners in the early 1930s. But their influence remained, even at Paramount, where Ernst Lubitsch perfected the transatlantic comedy of manners in the delightful *Trouble in Paradise* in 1932, starring Wanger proteges Miriam Hopkins, Kay Francis and Herbert Marshall in the sort of rich, luminous setting that became Paramount's house style in the 1930s; in the unconventional threesome of Fredric March, Gary Cooper and Miriam Hopkins in *Design for Living* (1933); and in the tangled sexual and financial plots of Carole Lombard and Fred MacMurray in *Hands Across the Table* (1935).⁵¹

Their support for 'natural dramas' had its most direct influence in Britain and Canada through their association with documentary pioneer John Grierson. In 1925 Grierson (1898–1972) took up a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship at the University of Chicago, where he was supervised by Wanger's former chief

⁴⁹ 'Sophisticated Stories Out. Hoke for Par', *Variety*, 17 November 1931, p. 3; quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 69. For Wanger's dismissal see *Variety*, 23 June 1931, p. 4; 'Par's Story Council in New York on Toes', *Variety*, 6 October 1931, p. 2. For Sidney Kent's appointment see *Variety*, 27 May 1931, p. 5. For Cohen see 'Manny Cohen Going into Al Par Film Productions', *Variety*, 29 September 1931, p. 5; 'No Personnel Changes looked for in Par-Pub Through Chicago Group', *Variety*, 3 November 1931, p. 5; 'Cohen Favors Unit System for Par', *Variety*, 17 November 1931, p. 2; 'Schulberg Proposal Changed by Zukor', *Variety*, 24 November 1931, p. 5; 'Paramount Names Seven Associates for Unit System', *Variety*, 28 November 1931, p. 13; 'Orders for Further Cuts by P-P Unofficially Aimed at Another 20%', *Variety*, 8 December 1931, p. 5; 'Cohen Set as Zukor's Par Studio Contact', *Variety*, 15 December 1931, p. 5; 'Sidney Kent Abruptly Leaves Paramount Publix, No Plans Yet', *Motion Picture Herald*, 23 January 1932, p. 13; 'Emanuel Cohen and Schaeffer Take New Posts at Paramount', *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 January 1932, p. 20; 'Katz' Studio Influence', *Variety*, 9 February 1932, p. 3; 'Keough Secretary for Paramount', *Motion Picture Herald*, 9 February 1932, p. 9. See also Peter Baxter 1993, *Just Watch! Sternberg, Paramount and America* (London: British Film Institute), pp. 39-41, 80-1.

⁵⁰ 'Adolph Zukor Tells Stockholders Story of the Paramount of Today', *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 April 1932, p. 20; 'Lasky Out', *Time*, 26 September 1932, p. 26. See Baxter 1993, *Just Watch!*, p. 45; Lasky 1957, *I Blow My Own Horn*, pp. 242-4.

⁵¹ Scott Eyman 2000, *Laughter in Paradise* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 189-96, 205-12, 225-32. Lubitsch was named production head of Paramount in place of Emanuel Cohen on 4 February 1935. He was replaced by William Le Baron 24 January 1936; see Eyman 2000, *Laughter in Paradise*, pp. 237-9.

Professor Charles Merriam.⁵² When Grierson visited New York in July 1925 he and Wanger found much in common. Both agreed that movies had a duty to educate the public by interpreting the contemporary scene in an entertaining fashion.⁵³ Wanger gave Grierson access to Paramount's distribution and exhibition reports for his study of the impact of movies on the immigrant audience's perceptions of current events, paid him a retainer to analyse film technique and production methods, and engaged him to lecture at the Paramount Theatre Managers Training School on 'The Conditions of Popular Appeal'.⁵⁴ Grierson popularised his ideas in articles in the *New York Sun* and the *Herald Tribune* and drew on his Paramount studies for a series of articles in *Motion Picture News* at the end of 1926. Film 'belongs to the strange and primitive animal with lusts in its body and dreams in its eyes which we call the mob', he wrote; but it 'belongs to the people as no other social institution that has ever appeared in the world before. It is the only genuinely democratic institution that has ever appeared on a world wide scale.'⁵⁵ The Eisenstein film *Potemkin*, for which Grierson helped write the English titles, provided the evidence he needed that film 'could be an adult and positive force in the world'.⁵⁶ In a review of Famous Players-Lasky's *Moana* in 1926, he invented the word 'documentary'.⁵⁷

When Grierson returned to Britain in 1927 and began his distinguished career as the father of documentary film making at the Empire Marketing Board, he included *Grass*, *Moana* and *The Covered Wagon* in the program he mounted at the Imperial Institute cinema to persuade members of the Board of the educative and persuasive potential of film.⁵⁸ Grierson's first film for the Board, *Drifters* (1929), about herring fishing off Scotland, was 'rapturously received by the sophisticated audience' when it was shown at the London Film Society with Eisenstein's *Potemkin*. It had 'more real art than the much-belauded Russian picture', in the opinion of the *Birmingham Post*.⁵⁹ Grierson built on this success

⁵² Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 407. For Grierson in the US see Hardy 1979, *John Grierson*, pp. 31-44.

⁵³ John Grierson, speaking at awards ceremony of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (of which Walter Wanger was president), 1942, quoted in Hardy 1979, *John Grierson*, p. 36.

⁵⁴ John Grierson, address to Paramount Theatre Managers School, reported in *Exhibitors Herald*, 26 September 1925, in Hardy 1979, *John Grierson*, p. 39.

⁵⁵ John Grierson 1926, *Motion Picture News*, 20 November to 18 December, cited in Hardy 1979, *John Grierson*, p. 36. See also p. 38.

⁵⁶ Hardy 1979, *John Grierson*, pp. 40-1. For *Potemkin*, see Mordaunt Hall 1926, 'An Old Russian Mutiny', *New York Times*, 6 December, p. 28.

⁵⁷ John Grierson 1926, 'Moana', *New York Sun*, 8 February.

⁵⁸ Hardy 1979, *John Grierson*, pp. 44-6.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

by establishing a small school of documentary film-makers, attracting such talented young men and women as Basil Wright, Arthur Elton, Paul Rotha, Edgar Anstey, Marion Grierson and Evelyn Spice. With his faith in film as a new way of teaching citizenship, Grierson built the documentary movement in Britain with public money, first at the Empire Marketing Board, where he commissioned Robert Flaherty, of *Nanook and Moana* fame, to make a film about the English countryside that became *Industrial Britain*, then at the General Post office, where his unit made the classic *Night Mail*, with text in verse by W. H. Auden. In 1938 and 1939 he advised the Canadian, New Zealand and Australian governments on setting up national film units, and served from 1939 as Canadian film commissioner. From 1948 to 1951 he was controller of the film operations of the British Central Office of Information. In 1942, during Wanger's presidency of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Grierson was invited to present the first Academy Award for documentary. In his speech, Grierson pointed out that his first discussions of the theories and purposes of the documentary film movement had been with Wanger almost twenty years before. As he recalled:

At that time some of us thought the Hollywood film ... was unnecessarily out of touch with the social realities ... We saw the growing complexity of modern affairs; and we thought that if our half-bewildered, half-frivolous generation did not master events, it was not unlikely that events would master us. We saw the enormous power of the film medium and believed it had the very special public duty to interpret the contemporary scene ... we were at first called a bunch of intellectuals and propagandists and told that the documentary idea had nothing to do with entertainment.⁶⁰

Paying tribute to Wanger, Flaherty, Schoedsack and Cooper, among other pioneers of the documentary, he pointed out that 'Without each and all of them, we would not today be celebrating the relative maturity of the documentary film.'⁶¹

Wanger continued to pursue his belief in the educative role of film through a variety of jobs after his dismissal from Paramount. Hired by the low-budget Columbia to give 'class' to its products, he produced *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1932), starring his Paramount protegee Barbara Stanwyck as an American missionary who falls in love with a Chinese warlord; *Washington Merry-Go-Round* (1932), an expose of presidential politics that prefigures Capra's 1939 *Mr Smith*

⁶⁰ John Grierson, address at the 14th Annual Awards Ceremony, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Biltmore Hotel, Hollywood, 26 February 1942, quoted in Hardy 1979, *John Grierson*, pp. 36-7.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 124.

Goes to Washington; and *Night Mayor* (1932), which did the same for New York City politics.⁶² At MGM he produced *Gabriel Over the White House* (1933), a critique of American democracy that used newsreel footage and realistic recreations of White House interiors and starred his Paramount discovery Walter Huston, and the historical drama, *Queen Christina* (1934), arguably Garbo's greatest film.⁶³ As a semi-independent, he again focused on political corruption in *The President Vanishes* (1935); and he revealed the world of the mental institution in *Private Worlds* (1935), featuring his Paramount protegee Claudette Colbert, now a major star.⁶⁴ At United Artists he produced *Blockade* (1938), a controversial film about the Spanish Civil War coauthored by Lewis Milestone with Group Theatre playwright Clifford Odets; John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939), which brought the western back to the status it enjoyed with *The Covered Wagon* (and grossed nearly a million dollars in 1939); and Alfred Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), which, as Wanger's biographer put it, dealt in a compelling way with the European conflict without propagandising directly.⁶⁵ In 1940 he joined forces again with Merian Cooper, who was now in partnership with John Ford in Argosy Pictures, on the strongly documentary *Eagle Squadron* (1942), about the American pilots who joined the British Air Force early in 1940.⁶⁶ The project, which was taken over by Ernest Schoedsack in 1941 when Cooper joined the Army Signal Corps, foundered at first on difficulties with their British collaborators and distributors' resistance to a picture 'made in England with an English cast'. But when it was finally completed in 1942 by Wanger's new employer, Universal, he considered it 'the perfect Hollywood accomplishment – please the masses and serve the country at the same time'.⁶⁷

⁶² See Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 75-81.

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 81-9.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 93-105.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 114-50; pp. 158-63, especially p. 161.

⁶⁶ Since making *Chang* in 1927 Cooper and Schoedsack had filmed footage for *Four Feathers* (1929) in the Sudan and Tanganyika; in 1927 Cooper invested his earnings in aviation stocks that led him to be elected a director of PanAm, Western Airlines, General Aviation and other commercial airlines; from 1931 to 1933 he and Schoedsack made *King Kong* (1933) for RKO, where he became David Selznick's executive assistant and succeeded him as executive vice-president in charge of production in 1933; after suffering a heart attack in 1933, he spent a year in Europe and returned to produce *She* (1935) and *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1935). In 1935 he became executive producer for Pioneer Pictures, which merged with Selznick-International in 1936. In 1937 he formed Argosy Pictures with John Ford to make *Stagecoach* (1939) and *The Long Voyage Home* (1940). From 1937 to 1941 he also produced for MGM.

⁶⁷ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 169-71, especially p. 170; pp. 178-84, especially p. 184. Wanger served as chief of staff to General Whitehead in the New Guinea invasion and deputy chief of staff for all Air Force units in the Pacific. After *Chang* (1927) Schoedsack made *Rango* (1931) in the

After the war, with ambitions of appealing to a 'world audience', Wanger joined the new British-American company Eagle-Lion; but his block-busting *Joan of Arc* (1948), starring Ingrid Bergman, was a resounding failure, perhaps because he conceived it as a 'spiritual outrider for the Marshall Plan'.⁶⁸ For the rest of his career, his best work was what he described as 'adult realism'. In 1947 he produced *Smash-Up* (about alcoholism) and *The Lost Moment* (based on Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*) for Universal-International.⁶⁹ In 1954, after serving a four-month sentence for wounding the man he accused of being his wife's lover two years earlier, he made the complex prison film, *Riot in Cell Block II*. In 1958 he produced *I Want to Live!* the story of Barbara Graham, who was executed for murder at San Quentin in 1955, starring his protegee Susan Hayward – the film that best exemplifies, according to his biographer, the combination of naturalism, message and entertainment he strove for throughout his career.⁷⁰ Screenwriter Dudley Nicholls wrote him admiringly, 'Your film doesn't say one syllable pro or con, and yet it could be the one thing that would stop capital punishment.' 'The only real propaganda against evil is the truth', he went on, 'just the cold reality, saying "here it is boys, and you're part of it too, sitting out there".'⁷¹

Always an articulate promoter of his ideas about film, the controversy over attempts to censor parts of *Blockade* led Wanger to help form the Conference on Freedom of the Screen to fight censorship of films. As he told the inaugural meeting

Let me advise you with complete honesty that the issue is far greater than the success or failure of the film *Blockade* ... It is not *Blockade* they are fighting against but the fact that if *Blockade* is a success, a flood of stronger films will appear and the films will not only talk but say something.⁷²

Sumatran jungles; shot material in India for *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* in 1931; directed *King Kong* (1933) with Cooper; directed *The Most Dangerous Game* for Cooper at RKO with Irving Pichel in 1933; directed *Son of Kong* (RKO 1933) and *The Last Days of Pompeii* (RKO 1935). He severely damaged his eyes during World War II and was incapacitated, but directed Cooper's *Mighty Joe Young* in 1949. See Behlmer 1966, 'Merian C. Cooper', and Goldner and Turner 1975, *King Kong*.

⁶⁸ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 224-33, especially pp. 233; pp. 237-46; letter from Wanger to George Marshall, 1948, quoted on p. 11.

⁶⁹ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 217, 232-6.

⁷⁰ For Wanger's shooting of Jennings Lang see Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 273-8; for *Riot in Cell Block II*, pp. 282-301; for *I Want to Live*, pp. 322-39.

⁷¹ Quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 336.

⁷² 'Freedom of the Films', *Daily People's World*, 6 August 1938, p. 2, quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 137. For censorship issue and Wanger's role see pp. 136-43.

As president of the Academy of Motion Pictures from 1939 to 1945, Wanger used his position to promote what he considered the beneficial role of film in modern society, and was much sought after to participate in conferences and media discussions of censorship and popular culture.⁷³ Writing to Office of War Information Domestic Branch chief Gardner Cowles in 1942, he argued for ‘a campaign to make the average American realize how miserably uninformed he is so that it will become unpopular to be an escapist and popular to seek information’. “‘To be a strong nation is to be an informed one’”, he urged, quoting a favourite line from Thomas Jefferson.⁷⁴ Until his death in 1968, he promoted film as the best way to inform the nation. ‘I really wanted to see our work become a respected calling’, he told Bernard Rosenberg and Harry Silverman shortly before his death. ‘I thought it was almost as important as the State Department.’⁷⁵

Walter Wanger was, in his own words, a ‘practical dreamer’ who shared with Jesse Lasky, Merian Cooper, Ernest Schoedsack, Robert Flaherty and John Grierson a vision of the power and potential of film to help build a better world.⁷⁶ Their successes were varied and partial. Flaherty remained the ‘pure’ artist, honoured by the Museum of Modern Art but living in shabby rooms at the Hotel Chelsea.⁷⁷ Grierson became the prisoner of the bureaucratic entities he had been responsible for creating.⁷⁸ Cooper and Schoedsack saw their work filming in East Africa and the Sudan reduced to ‘local colour’ in *The Four Feathers* (1929) and they parodied their earlier selves in the enormously successful *King Kong* (1933). But as John Ford’s partner in Argosy Films, Cooper oversaw the production of some of the best westerns ever made: *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) and *Rio Grande* (1950), and as part of C. V. Whitney Productions, *The Searchers* (1956).⁷⁹ Lasky never regained the influence he lost in 1932 when he was sacked from Paramount. He died in 1958 without bringing to fruition his last ‘pet project’ – to produce a film called ‘The Big Brass Band’ to honor ‘the nine million kids who spend their spare time practicing on their instruments instead of running with juvenile gangs, making music instead of

⁷³ Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, pp. 139-42, 176-8.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 177.

⁷⁵ Rosenberg and Silverstein 1970, *The Real Tinsel*, p. 92, quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 365.

⁷⁶ For ‘practical dreamer’ see *The Dartmouth*, 1930, quoted in Bernstein 2000, *Walter Wanger*, p. 395.

⁷⁷ Calder-Marshall 1963, *Innocent Eye*, pp. 240-1.

⁷⁸ Hardy 1979, *Grierson*, pp. 164-79.

⁷⁹ Jensen 2000, ‘Cooper, Merian Coldwell’.

mischievous'.⁸⁰ Wanger struggled throughout his life to reconcile his ideals with the demands of mass entertainment, and he never lost faith that this was possible. Wanger had no doubt that the films he made helped create Hansen's 'new global sensorium'. 'There is no argument on the influence of pictures', he stated flatly in 1945. 'They have influenced interior decoration, style, life, language, everything as a matter of fact.'⁸¹ As head of production of Famous Players-Lasky in the 1920s and early 1930s, and in his role as semi-independent maverick until his death in 1968, he was an important, and articulate, producer of the 'global vernacular' Hansen speaks about. Produced in New York as much as in Hollywood, this 'global vernacular' drew on the 'traditions, discourses, and interests' – to quote Hansen – of Wanger and his circle, whose hybrid, transatlantic culture and wartime experiences made them lifelong adherents of the idea of transnationalism disseminated by New York intellectuals and pacifists such as Randolph Bourne and Elsie Clews Parsons.

⁸⁰ Donna M. Paananen 2000, 'Lasky, Jesse Louis', *American National Biography Online* (American Council of Learned Societies: Oxford University Press).

⁸¹ Walter Wanger, 1945.

10. Modern nomads and national film history: the multi-continental career of J. D. Williams

Jill Julius Matthews

In its technology, production, marketing and reception, film has been both modern and global from its very beginnings in the late nineteenth century. So there are strong empirical and epistemological claims for a transnational approach to its history. But, paradoxically, most film histories have been decidedly focused on the notion of national culture and industry. In this chapter, while I will make a case for film history to broaden out and at least establish the transnational context for their national stories, I will also explain my pessimism that this approach will not be widely adopted.

My account begins with the story of a neglected film pioneer – the story of both the pioneer and the neglect. James Dixon ('Jaydee') Williams was a 'pushful American',¹ whose adventures in the film trade across three continents in the early decades of the twentieth century make him a prime subject for transnational treatment, as much for the historiographic complexities of his story as for the bravura of his performance.

Not much is known of Williams' early years. Various calling him James or John or J. D., American histories assert he was born in West Virginia in the late 1870s.² On leaving school, he worked first in live theatre, selling tickets and later playing house-organ. He then set himself up as a travelling picture showman and from around 1897 until 1908 he took his show back and forth across the continent, ending up in the north-west, where he established a number of storefront picture houses in Spokane, Seattle, and in Vancouver. Exhibition history is very much the poor cousin of production history, so Williams' early career is barely mentioned in either American or Canadian historiographies.³

¹ 'Colonial Pictures, Limited', *Theatre*, 1 July 1910, p. 22.

² Terry Ramsaye 1986 [1926], *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture Through 1926* (New York, NY: Touchstone), p. 679; Gertrude Jobses 1966, *Motion Picture Empire* (Hamden, CT: Archon), pp. 53-4; 'James D. Williams', 4 September 1934, *Variety Obituaries, 1929-1938*. He is called John D. Williams by Benjamin B. Hampton 1970 [1931], *History of the American Film Industry: From Its Beginnings to 1931* (New York, NY: Dover), p. 176; and by Allan Ellenberger 1998-99, 'A History of First National Pictures', *Films of the Golden Age*, vol. 15, Winter.

³ Peter Morris 1978, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema 1895-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), p. 322, fn. 142.

As the shape of the fledgling film business changed, J. D. sought new territory. He looked out across the Pacific and determined to try his luck in Sydney. At this point, his story is taken up within Australian film historiography where he is variously identified as Canadian or American.⁴ In 1909 he arrived in Australia alone; or with Leon Phillips;⁵ or with 'a small party of Americans'.⁶ He came with a nickelodeon collection of 'old films and junk pictures',⁷ a few hundred pounds capital,⁸ and 'Yankee ideas of expansion'.⁹ His new career began in Sydney sideshows, selling kewpie dolls on canes. It was a surprisingly successful venture that soon had him employing a retinue of sales boys both in Sydney and in Brisbane where he also hawked films of Jack Johnson's heavyweight championship fights. Within a year he had moved from outdoor to indoor amusements. In 1910, he acquired a theatre at the busy downmarket end of Sydney's George Street that he transformed in the American style – luxury for the masses. Most importantly, he introduced modern scientific management to the theatre's operations, developing the continuous picture show. At the Colonial Theatre No. 1, then across the road at the Colonial No. 2 (later the Empress), he sold cheap seats for a film show that lasted about an hour and a half, and was screened continuously from 11am to 11pm. Here, in the words of his publicist, 'people of all classes could find regular and frequent enjoyment at prices that would not make their pleasure a drain on their resources'.¹⁰ Until then, '[t]he great mass of people had not been catered for, and [J. D.] propose[d] to make

⁴ Williams is identified as a Canadian by: Ina Bertrand and Diane Collins 1981, *Government and Film in Australia* (Sydney: Currency Press), p. 15; Ruth Megaw 1968, 'American Influence on Australian Cinema Management 1896–1923', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, June 1968, reprinted in Albert Moran and Tom O'Regan (eds) 1985, *An Australian Film Reader* (Sydney: Currency Press), p. 26; Katharine Brisbane (ed.) 1991, *Entertaining Australia: An Illustrated History* (Sydney: Currency Press), p. 158; and Diane Collins, 'Shopfronts and Picture Showmen: Film Exhibition in the 1920s', in James Sabine (ed.) 1995, *A Century of Australian Cinema* (Sydney: Mandarin), p. 34. He is identified as American by Diane Collins 1987, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies 1896 to the Present Day* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson), p. 9.

⁵ 'The Romance of a Great Industry', *Film Weekly*, 16 December 1926, p. 32.

⁶ Greater J. D. Williams Amusement Co., Publicity Department, *A Story of Success*, Sydney, n.d. [1912].

⁷ Ramsaye 1986, *A Million and One Nights*, pp. 679-80.

⁸ C. A. Jeffries 1912, 'The Gold Bug', *Lone Hand*, 1 March, p. xxxviii.

⁹ Franklyn Barrett, quoted in Isadore Brodsky 1963, *Sydney Takes the Stage* (Sydney: Old Sydney Free Press), p. 80.

¹⁰ C. A. Jeffries 1911, 'The Greater J. D. Williams Banyan Tree. The Astounding Development of the Photo-Play Industry', *Lone Hand*, 1 July, p. 275.

money by catering for them'.¹¹ By early 1912, J. D. claimed his picture theatres were patronised by 60 000 people weekly.¹²

J. D. had a passionate commitment to the possibilities of the new medium. It 'heralded the dawn of a new era in the social life of the people – the inauguration of a new and as yet untried system of relaxation, and rest, and instruction, and entertainment.'¹³ The picture business would enter 'into more intimate relation with daily life' and 'to a large extent supplant the evening newspaper'. But it was 'in the education department that cinematography is bound to make its next greatest and most important movement', teaching youngsters about their country and leaving an historical record 'of the great events of our time for the benefit of those who come after us'.¹⁴ After a whirlwind tour of the United States, England and Europe, he returned to Sydney in late 1911 with a scheme to realise this vision.

[I]t is my intention to regulate the [picture] shows, and put them on a high and sound basis, and this is to be accomplished by placing the film-renting business in the hands of a few people. The principle we intend to adopt is similar to that followed in the theatrical business; and it is the only way to conduct an enterprise successfully. In America the film business is in the hands of two different concerns. Something similar is to be adopted throughout England on January 1, the managers of the various enterprises having come to an agreement to work under one head. It is the same principle that I intend introducing in Australia. It will mean the proper and effectual control of the business, it will raise the standard, keep out the penny shows, and prevent film 'duping' that is, making and copying and using pictures without authority ... I intend to open in all the large cities on an elaborate scale.¹⁵

Williams' commercial strategies set the standard for corporate empire building for the next two decades in Australia and his feats were the stuff of tall tales among film-men in New York and Hollywood.¹⁶ In December 1910, he consolidated his holdings into the Greater J. D. Williams Amusement Co. Ltd,

¹¹ Jeffries 1912, 'The Gold Bug', p. xxxviii.

¹² Advertisement for Lyric and Colonial Theatres, *Footlights*, vol. 5, no. 31, 3 January 1912.

¹³ Greater J. D. Williams Amusement Co., Publicity Department, *A Story of Success*, [1912].

¹⁴ Jeffries 1911, 'Banyan Tree', p. 284.

¹⁵ 'What Australia Needs. Lessons from America', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 December 1911,

p. 4.

¹⁶ Jobs 1966, *Motion Picture Empire*, pp. 53-4.

with a capital of £200 000.¹⁷ Besides his Sydney theatres,¹⁸ this company controlled a circuit of fifteen picture theatres in Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and New Zealand. It ran five film exchanges, had agents in London and America and a distribution outlet in China.¹⁹ While the general opinion of film historians is that J. D. 'contributed very little to the creative side of local activity',²⁰ in 1912 he set up his own camera crews to cover dramatic events across eastern Australia for the first Australian newsreel, *Williams' Weekly News*. Later, in 1916, he formed an independent syndicate with Stanley Crick and John C. Jones to finance the wartime feature, *The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell* (1916), and the historical saga, *The Mutiny on the Bounty* (1916).²¹

In this early period at least, moving pictures were not insulated from the rest of the amusement business, as implied by most film historians.²² A jump into another historiography reveals J. D. as the champion of a wide sweep of popular entertainment. His earliest sideshow enterprise is mentioned only in passing, but in 1911 and 1912, when the film historians have him building and opening the Melba and Britannia Theatres in Melbourne, popular amusement and local historians identify him as the great impresario of Luna Park at St Kilda.²³ Directly

¹⁷ Greater J. D. Williams Amusement Co., Publicity Department, *A Story of Success*, [1912].

¹⁸ Capitol, Empress, Lyric, and Crystal Palace Theatres.

¹⁹ *Theatre*, 1 September 1910, p. 13, cited in Ina Bertrand and William D. Rout, 'The Big Bad Combine', in Albert Moran and Tom O'Regan (eds) 1989, *The Australian Screen* (Melbourne: Penguin), p. 6.

²⁰ Eric Reade 1970, *Australian Silent Films. A Pictorial History 1896–1929* (Melbourne: Lansdowne), pp. 53, 58, 61; John Tulloch 1981, *Legends on the Screen: The Narrative Film on the Screen 1919–1929* (Sydney: Currency), p. 155.

²¹ *The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell*, directed by John Gavin and C. Post Mason, produced by Australasian Famous Features Company, 1916; *The Mutiny on the Bounty*, directed by Raymond Longford, produced by Crick and Jones, 1916: see Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper 1998, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production*, 2nd edition (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), pp. 59–60, 64.

²² But see, Anne Bittner, 'Spectacle and Narrative Aspects of the Relationship Between Live Performance and Film in Australia in the 1920s', in Jeff Doyle, Bill van der Heide and Susan Cowan (eds) 1998, *Our Selection On: Writings on Cinemas' Histories* (Canberra: National Film and Sound Archive/Australia Defence Force Academy), pp. 61–72; Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (eds) 2000, *Visual Delights: The Popular and Projected Image in the Nineteenth Century* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books).

²³ Anna Moo 1991, 'Luna Park', http://home.vicnet.net.au/~hsosk/articles/Luna_Park.htm (Aug 2003); Robert Lashmore 2004, 'Melbourne Luna Park's Ghost Train', <http://www.elvision.com/tunneloflaffs/ghosttrain/gtindex.html>; Australian Heritage Database, 'Luna Park', <http://www.deh.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl> (March 2005).

emulating its namesake on Coney Island, Luna Park was built by a largely American team of amusement park designers and technicians.²⁴ J. D.'s partner, Leon Phillips, with his two brothers, took over the enterprise after its spectacular opening in December 1912. J. D.'s fascination with Coney Island as the pinnacle of integrated entertainment had already been given form in Sydney. At the June 1912 opening of the second largest²⁵ and most lavish of the Williams' theatres, the Crystal Palace Theatre and amusement complex,²⁶ a *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter described it as 'a kind of miniature Coney Island transferred, as if by the Slaves of the Lamp, to Sydney, and fitted with all sorts of means of amusement'.²⁷ Beyond the world of cinema and amusement parks, J. D. also had interests in motorbike and motorcar racing and sales, and revived track-bicycle racing, introducing both Sydney and Melbourne to the American sport of six-day racing in 1912.²⁸ As his publicist recorded: 'The object of the democratic-minded J. D. W. is to revolutionise the motor and motor-bike trade, just as he has revolutionised the photo-play business, and make motors popular and cheap.'²⁹

J. D. Williams' empire was built in a world of cutthroat competition, of constant manoeuvring to undermine rivals and to advance one's own position. J. D. understood that the future belonged to the efficient and the consolidated: the whole film business should be in the hands of only a few well-conducted enterprises. But a well-conducted enterprise was not easy to create or sustain. Throughout the period, 1910 to 1913, he faced disunion in the control and management of his own company and sharp competition in the field. Emerging on top after an intricate play of mergers, takeovers and court cases, in 1913 he engineered an amalgamation with his chief competitors and became the dominant

²⁴ The consulting engineer was T. H. Eslick.

²⁵ The Britannia Theatre in Melbourne, with 1200 seats, was at the time the largest in the world.

²⁶ The complex contained a picture theatre, dance hall, wintergarden café, slot-machine amusement arcade, novelty photography hall, gymnasium, and professional child-care centre: Greater J. D. Williams Amusement Co., Publicity Department, *A Story of Success*, [1912]; Katharine Brisbane (ed.) 1991, *Entertaining Australia*, p. 166; Ross Thorne, Les Tod and Kevin Cork 1996, *Movie Theatre Heritage Register for New South Wales 1896–1996* (Sydney: Department of Architecture, University of Sydney), p. 37.

²⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 1912, p. 3, quoted in Ross Thorne 1981, *Cinemas of Australia via USA* (Sydney: Architecture Department, Sydney University), p. 115.

²⁸ 'Romance of a Great Industry', p. 32; Terry O'Brien 1985, *The Greater Union Story* (Sydney: The Greater Union Organisation), pp. 12, 23; Reade 1970, *Australian Silent Films*, pp. 68-72; Jeffries 1911, 'Banyan Tree', pp. 275-84.

²⁹ Jeffries 1912, 'Gold Bug', p. xxxviii.

partner in what was called 'the Combine'.³⁰ This was a distribution and exhibition company known as Union Theatres/Australasian Films, which stood as a colossus astride the Sydney moving picture field with a capital of well over £1 000 000. As with all his enterprises, J. D. did not manage the new company, but left it to others. His publicist explained the system 1912:

He creates a company, which is an organization, to do a certain work. He creates the machine, chooses a man or men to run it, and then he leaves it to them. Auditors keep a check on them, and the balance-sheet tells him at a glance how the machine is working. If the results are not good, the man who made the machine calls around to see why it isn't doing the work it was designed for.³¹

This machine worked well and Union Theatres dominated the national field for decades, and still exists in a hybrid form today.

In 1912, following the opening of the spectacular Crystal Palace, the leading theatrical magazine *Footlights* had proclaimed J. D., 'the greatest showman that Australia has ever seen', and anointed him the 'Napoleon of Amusements'.³² It declared that, 'The present generation sound his praise, and by posterity, he cannot be forgotten.'³³ Its prediction was, however, vain. Within a year, the fabulous J. D. Williams disappeared from the pages of Australian film history. The contemporary papers and later historians simply abandon this hero and turn to others. There is some mention of more travels in America; there are hints of a 'very spectacular crash'.³⁴ Then silence.

But Williams was irrepressible. Australian historiography might forget him, but he did not abandon his dreams to be and make the biggest and best. So we need to turn our attention from Australian to American film historiography, which picks up the story from 1916. What happened before that date is left rather vague. Benjamin Hampton, for example, off-handedly introduces Williams as 'a West Virginian who had been selling and exhibiting American films in various parts of the world for a number of years'.³⁵ In these American works, the story of J. D. begins anew. Terry Ramsaye, presents the rebirth boldly:

The exhibitors were coming! Their lances gleamed in the starlight and their eyes lusted for treasure.

³⁰ 'Romance of a Great Industry', pp. 32, 34; John Tulloch 1982, *Australian Cinema. Industry, Narrative and Meaning* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin), p. 63.

³¹ Jeffries 1912, 'Gold Bug', p. xl.

³² *Footlights*, vol. 6, no. 3, 12 June 1912; 19 June 1912.

³³ *Footlights*, 19 June 1912.

³⁴ Brodsky 1963, *Sydney Takes the Stage*, p. 82.

³⁵ Hampton 1970, *History of the American Film Industry*, p. 176.

The leader of that menacing column had risen out of the sea and the other end of the world. J. D. Williams, former assistant treasurer of the Parkersburg opera house, was home again from Australia, looking for something to do.³⁶

He found plenty. First he set up a national distribution company based in New York. From there he locked horns with Adolph Zukor's Paramount company, which had become a commanding force in the film business through its control of the most popular stars and the most profitable pictures. With Thomas L. Tally, J. D. co-founded First National Exhibitors' Circuit in 1917 and became its general manager.³⁷ The American histories make much of the industry politics and machinations of First National in combat with the other industry giants: 'The moves were intricate, rapid and continuous.'³⁸ But they make no mention of J. D.'s earlier and similar battles to create the Combine in Sydney.

First National was 'essentially a national organization of states rights franchisees',³⁹ but J. D. soon developed it into a production/exhibition Combine and one of the most powerful film companies in the country for many years.⁴⁰ The first contract he signed was with Charlie Chaplin, paying over a million dollars for eight two-reel pictures a year. The second was with Mary Pickford. Always cosmopolitan, he 'created a motion picture sensation in the United States'⁴¹ when he introduced the first postwar German picture on to the First National circuit, Ernst Lubitsch's *Madame Dubarry* (retitled for commercial reasons as *Passion*).⁴²

There is a photograph from 1922 showing J. D. as a foundation member of the most important regulatory agency for the film industry for the next half century, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America.⁴³ He is sitting next

³⁶ Ramsay 1986, *A Million and One Nights*, p. 789.

³⁷ Jobs 1966, *Motion Picture Empire*, p. 159.

³⁸ Ramsay 1986, *A Million and One Nights*, p. 793.

³⁹ Richard Koszarski 1994, *History of American Cinema*, volume 3: *An Evening's Entertainment. The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915–1928* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), p. 72.

⁴⁰ Andrew Higson 1999, 'Polyglot Films for an International Market', in Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby (eds), *Film Europe' and 'Film America': Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange 1920–1939* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press), p. 276.

⁴¹ Thomas J. Saunders 1994, *Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), p. 60.

⁴² *Madame Dubarry* (US title: *Passion*), directed by Ernst Lubitsch, produced by Union, 1919; 'James D. Williams', 4 September 1934, *Variety Obituaries, 1929–1938*.

⁴³ Reproduced in Hampton 1970, *History of the American Film Industry*, Plate 75.

to the soon-to-become Movie Czar, Will Hays. In that same year, *Motion Picture News* listed him as one of the twelve greatest people of the motion picture industry.⁴⁴ Twelve years later, his *Variety* obituary noted the innovation that First National originally represented: 'Had Williams been more of an executive and less the promoter he might have revolutionized the industry's set-up.'⁴⁵

In late 1922, J. D. was pushed to resign as general manager of First National over policy differences. At this point he drops out of American film history. His demotion also affected his standing within that history, which is largely an account of the winners and their success stories. So Williams is treated as somehow present, but unimportant, simply one wheeling dealer among many. The industry histories give no explanation for his innovative projects, no indication of his vision of moving pictures as anything other than commodities. There is no discussion of his ideals or motivation.

From 1922, the trail again goes cold, except for the minor mention that in 1925 he set up Ritz-Carlton Pictures. That company made only one picture, *Cobra*⁴⁶ with Rudolph Valentino. But when J. D. disappears from the American historiography, he resurfaces in yet another. From 1925, he is remade as a British film producer. As if born anew, his American past is only vaguely recognised by British film historians, encapsulated in the brief statements that he 'was known for his grandiose schemes on both sides of the Atlantic' – but not of the Pacific – and that 'he had already been beaten in the battle of the American film giants before coming to this country'.⁴⁷ Such language implies the inflated ambition of a mere 'pushful American', rather than the persistence of the democratic vision that was first expressed in his Australian days: to provide the broad public with 'absolutely the pick of the world's very best things in the moving-picture line' at 'the minimum rates'.⁴⁸

Rachel Low in her magisterial *The History of British Film*, mentions in passing that J. D. Williams was a director in the British public company Stoll Picture Productions, registered in 1920,⁴⁹ but she gives no explanation nor mentions him again until 1925, when he established and became managing director of British National Pictures. He initially signed up leading American star Dorothy Gish and British director Herbert Wilcox for three British pictures, followed by

⁴⁴ 'Screen. The Greatest', 31 December 1922, in *New York Times Encyclopedia of Film 1896–1928*.

⁴⁵ *Variety Obituaries* 1929–38, 4 September 1934.

⁴⁶ *Cobra*, directed by Joseph Henabery, produced by Ritz-Carlton, 1925.

⁴⁷ Rachael Low 1971, *The History of the British Film 1918–1929* (London: George Allen & Unwin), p. 177. Andrew Higson devotes 12 lines to Williams' earlier career: Higson 1999, 'Polyglot Films', p. 274.

⁴⁸ 'The J. D. Williams Amusement Co.', *Theatre*, 1 September 1910, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Low 1971, *History of the British Film 1918–1929*, p. 123.

contracts with German director E. A. Dupont and the up-and-coming Alfred Hitchcock. To fund his films he made 'remarkable' deals for financial backing from the United States giants Paramount and Famous Players-Lasky. In 1926, he bought a forty-acre site and began to develop a film city, or huge super-studio – a British Hollywood – at Elstree.⁵⁰

His aim in these projects seems to have been the same as it had been fourteen years earlier in Australia: to foster the possibilities of film as the pre-eminent modern medium of 'relaxation, and rest, and instruction, and entertainment'.⁵¹ Now, in England, his project was not to exhibit, but to make quality films that would compete with the best that Hollywood could offer in technical polish, but that also reflected 'the very Soul of England'.⁵² That Soul, he asserted, lay in English drama, not in its landscapes. His long-term plan was to rationalise the highly fragmented British film industry and develop the size of the available market in order to finance quality production.⁵³ Again, this plan was already present in his Australian days: 'the ambitious mind of Mr. Williams cannot see why, if we can produce good films in Australia, we should not send them all over the world.'⁵⁴ For a third time, he put the strategy of the Combine into play, but British historians have not recognised his accumulated experience.

In part, this was because his experience was not enough to win the game. In 1927, he fell out with the other backers of British National Pictures, who took over the company and the studio, creating an even bigger company, British International Pictures.⁵⁵ J. D. faded away, again. In 1928, he popped back up, in America, floating World Wide Pictures Corporation, an international distribution organisation which attempted to break into the parochialism of the American market, handling thirty or forty European pictures a year.⁵⁶ In his own words, what he proposed was 'a film conversation between nations instead of the present Hollywood monologue'.⁵⁷ Almost the last reference I have found to J. D. places him in Canada in 1931, where he picked up a film abandoned by Paramount because it didn't fit its formula. He distributed *The Viking* internationally, establishing it as one of the keystones of Canadian cinema.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 176; Higson 1999, 'Polyglot Films', pp. 274-8.

⁵¹ Jeffries 1911, 'Banyan Tree', p. 284.

⁵² Document 14: J. D. Williams 1999, 'Two Keys to the American Market', in Higson and Maltby, *Film Europe' and 'Film America'*, p. 389.

⁵³ *ibid.*, pp. 387-9.

⁵⁴ Jeffries 1911, 'Banyan Tree', pp. 280, 282.

⁵⁵ Low 1971, *History of the British Film 1918-1929*, pp. 177, 186.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 188; Higson 1999, 'Polyglot Films', p. 277.

⁵⁷ Williams 1999, 'Two Keys', p. 392.

⁵⁸ Morris 1978, *Embattled Shadows*, pp. 321-2.

Between 1926 and 1929, J. D. elaborated on his vision of a transnational film industry in a series of speeches and articles, proposing schemes, 'either to establish British cinema as a force to be reckoned with on the world stage, or to develop a pan-European film industry'.⁵⁹ He developed a scheme for multi-language film production.⁶⁰ He proposed the formation of an Academy of Motion Pictures with a teaching staff, preferably attached to Oxford or Cambridge University.⁶¹ Behind all these schemes was not just the desire for profit, although that certainly mattered. He was committed to the making, distribution and exhibition of quality pictures rather than genre films because he still nurtured the ambition for films that he had propounded in Sydney in 1910. Sixteen years later, in England, J. D. wrote the preface to one of the first books to address film seriously and theoretically, Gerard Fort Buckle's, *The Mind and the Film: A Treatise on the Psychological Factors in Film*.⁶² In it, he reflected on the power of the cinema:

Never before, in the history of the world has there existed an instrument even remotely approaching in influence the motion picture as we know it. There has never before existed any means by which the genius of a people could be expressed and presented dramatically to all other peoples ... Because of its power the film should be taken seriously. It is a great weapon. It should be greatly used. It cannot be greatly used unless it is established as an art.⁶³

Making quality pictures took huge amounts of money, which could only be provided by a world market. But, in turn, quality pictures would realise their full power and destiny within such world market.

In 1934 James Dixon Williams died in New York. After a number of years in Canada, seven years in Australia, and five years in England, his eleven paragraph obituary in *Variety* devoted a mere half paragraph to his activities in Australia, and another half paragraph to his time in England. In the later film histories of each of the four countries in which he played a significant part, his moment there is acknowledged. But what happened before or after, where he came from and where he went, and what experience and influence he carried from one

⁵⁹ Higson 1999, 'Polyglot Films', p. 277.

⁶⁰ *Bioscope*, May 29, June 19, 1929, cited in Low 1971, *History of the British Film 1918–1929*, p. 227; Higson 1999, 'Polyglot Films', pp. 289-10.

⁶¹ *Bioscope*, 24 April, 1929, p. 15, cited in Low 1971, *History of the British Film 1918–1929*, pp. 36-7.

⁶² Gerard Fort Buckle 1926, *The Mind and the Film: A Treatise on the Psychological Factors in Film* (London: George Routledge & Sons); Low 1971, *History of the British Film 1918–1929*, pp. 20-5.

⁶³ Buckle 1926, *The Mind and the Film*, pp. xii-iii.

country to the others, all is ignored or dealt with through anecdote and supposition.

My title for this chapter hails J. D. Williams as a nomad. I do not use this term to invoke Deleuze and Guattari's appropriation of it as a certain mode of critical inquiry.⁶⁴ Rather, I am impressed by John Brinkerhoff Jackson's discussion of the verb '*To dwell* [which] like the verb *to abide* simply means to pause, to stay put for a length of time; it implies that we will eventually move on.'⁶⁵ Film historians, like most others, have been seduced into thinking that staying still is the normal condition, rather than being a mere moment's pause. They have defined their subjects in terms of an identity, especially a national identity, which is the quality of a stationary people in a bounded space, rather than understanding them as mobile and multi-dimensional, as nomadic. Just as the physiological phenomenon of persistence of vision makes possible the movement of moving pictures, so too does the social phenomenon of persistence of memory make possible the fiction of the unity of personality and group identity, and the stability of place. In memory, the people we have met do not change, but stay as they were and belong where they were.

It is these fictions that are at the heart of national historiographies, most particularly for my purpose, national film histories. These histories inevitably constitute their subjects through an appeal to national identity and pride. So, how is transnational history to engage with the tyranny of the national? How is it to constitute its subject so that it is coherent, has epistemological legitimacy, and will gain acceptance from publishers and the reading public?

One answer is to adopt the mode of biography. In biography, the fiction of the continuous self, if not the unitary self, provides the coherence of the subject. Biography allows the transnational historian to prise their subject out of the death grip of the national. There are plenty of deracinated officials and entrepreneurs and proselytisers roaming across the empires of the world. The chief problem, apart from the fiction of coherent identity, is whether one's person is already or can be made interesting enough to attract a readership. Celebrity or notoriety helps. In the case of film history, this is provided by stardom. Directors are sometimes granted celebrity status (for example, Cecil B. deMille and Alfred Hitchcock), but never producers, distributors or exhibitors.

A second answer is a model of analysis based in economic history, dealing with the global movement of goods, services, and people. Immigration history also fits this model, as does the history of disease. It is the preferred approach of

⁶⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari 1987, *A Thousand Plateaus*, translator Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).

⁶⁵ John Brinkerhoff Jackson 1984, 'The Moveable Dwelling and How it Came to America', in his *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), p. 91.

World History and is much employed in the history of globalisation. The subject here is already constituted, or can be shown empirically to be constituted, by its inter- or multinational connections. The connections between J. D. Williams' organisational projects in each of his four nations have not been noticed before, but I doubt there will be much resistance to the idea. But nor will there be much interest.

The international dominance of the American film industry since the Great War has meant historical focus is chiefly on American expansion, a sort of imperial history, whether viewed from Hollywood as metropolis or from a specific colonised province. Often conceptualised as the threat of Americanisation to national culture, movement is followed one-way along a single track, from the centre to the provinces.⁶⁶ Very rarely do historians look at the continuous and multi-directional flow of people, technology and ideas around the whole circuit, treating America as simply another province, or perhaps as several provinces. The 'Hollywood monologue', in Williams' phrase, is film history orthodoxy. Nonetheless, there is here a recognisable field for transnational history, which has been developed by writers such as Kristin Thompson, Ruth Vasey, Richard Maltby and Andrew Higson.⁶⁷

In terms of readership, unfortunately, the place of economic and more particularly business history in the hierarchy of historical genres is pretty low. Its status is linked to that of its subjects – the middlemen, the profit-takers who are neither producers nor creators nor end-users, and who suffer the curious prejudice against trade. Historians have typically shared this prejudice. In addition, many present-day historians as well as their readers see globalisation as the enemy of the producers and workers of the national culture and they turn their backs on business history.

A third model for a transnational approach to film history derives from the dual nature of moving pictures, as both commodities and cultural products. Certainly, film culture and its audience can easily be shown to have been transnational from the beginning. But there is very limited enthusiasm for a transnational approach to culture, and I cannot see that changing soon. Cultural nationalism was dominant throughout the entire twentieth century and remains so in the

⁶⁶ e.g., Victoria de Grazia 1989, 'Mass Culture and Sovereignty: The American Challenge to European Cinemas 1920–1960', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 61, no. 1, pp. 53-87; David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes (eds) 1994, *Hollywood in Europe. Experiences of Cultural Hegemony* (Amsterdam: VU University Press); Saunders 1994, *Hollywood in Berlin*.

⁶⁷ Kristin Thompson 1985, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907–1934* (London: BFI); Ruth Vasey 1997, *The World According to Hollywood 1918–1939* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press); Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby (eds) 1999, 'Film Europe' and 'Film America': *Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange 1920–1939* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press).

twenty-first. It has been fuelled by reaction to global modernity and to American economic monopoly of popular culture. Cultural nationalists everywhere have championed local culture, particularly locally made pictures that represent an idealised, often pre-modern, essential, unitary, national character. As J. D. Williams wrote in 1926:

The desire to see fine films made in Britain is, I hope, very laudable, since I possess it and am now in process of putting it into practice; but I think it is unfortunate that this very important movement should in some way have attracted to itself the Little Englander.⁶⁸

The history of such cultural nationalism and its imagery is complex and much studied. For my purposes here, I want only to stress its longevity in Australia, as elsewhere. It took on new life in the 1960s and 1970s, when the film renaissance changed the content of the imagery but not its significance. Like the term Little Englander, its equivalent, White Australian, no longer has currency, but similarly exclusive and protective concepts of national identity still prevail and are democratically spread throughout the broad reading public. That readership, and its close relation the movie-going audience, is acknowledged to be cosmopolitan and to have great curiosity and catholic taste. International books and films are eagerly consumed. But when the subject matter is Australia, different standards and values seem to come into play. There is something sacrosanct about certain aspects of culture, as with sport and foreign policy, that triggers the protective, exclusive, mutual embrace; that constitutes a settled 'us' against the nomadic hordes of 'them'. And film history as a genre has been seduced, or recruited, to tell that story. Most film historians continue to hold a strong allegiance to cultural nationalism, and hold the transnational elements in their accounts to be alien intrusions. The central purpose of their histories is to write into existence an authentically and uniquely national film culture. Foreign influences on that history, like foreign films from the archive, must be repatriated.

So, regrettably, I must conclude that, although there are strong empirical and epistemological arguments for a transnational film history, there are even stronger political investments in keeping film history national – even nationalist. Both the economic and the cultural sub-genres share these investments, although the history of film as culture is most thoroughly in thrall. National film history is an account of moving pictures with the pause button stuck, and histories of film culture's transnational nomads find little welcome. This inhospitable outlook will not change until the larger political discourse changes.

⁶⁸ Williams 1999, 'Two Keys', p. 387.

11. The Americanisation of romantic love in Australia

Hsu-Ming Teo

This chapter explores the transnational influence of consumer capitalism on the culture of romantic love in Australia during the twentieth century, particularly as it has been manifested through advertising. I want to utilise Benedict Anderson's well-known argument about how print capitalism created the 'imagined community' of the nation to argue that if the circulation of texts throughout society can foster feelings of nationalism,¹ they can also create or affect emotional experiences of romantic love.²

These ideas and expectations take root across national boundaries precisely because love is often assumed to be self-evidently universal; an unchanging part of the human condition, reaching beyond the boundaries of a specific nation or culture. Particular notions and practices of romantic love have become increasingly transnational because of the global reach of Anglophone culture, fostered by the prevalence of the English language throughout the former British empire and reinforced when hegemonic American popular culture piggybacked on this colonial legacy to find new markets for products and practices of romantic consumption in Anglophone societies.

The widespread use of English makes national boundaries porous because whoever controls the means to disseminate ideas widely – especially ideas about love that are generally considered 'natural' and universal rather than socially constructed – can affect other societies' ideas, expectations, and, hence, emotional experiences of romantic love. Thus the transnational influences on Australian romantic love occur through the global circulation of Anglophone print and visual culture, and the global spread of the American practice of romanticising commodities, inextricably linking experiences of romantic love to consumption.

This chapter begins with a brief sketch of the changing culture of romantic love in the United States of America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. It then charts how, through consumer capitalism, a particular conception of romantic love which had its genesis in affluent white middle-class America has

¹ My thanks to Marilyn Lake for her editorial feedback.

Benedict Anderson 1991 [1983], *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso), pp. 6, 46.

² For a discussion of how discourse transforms desire into 'romantic love', see Jack Goody 1998, *Food and Love: A Cultural History of East and West* (London and New York: Verso), pp. 109-19. Also, Catherine Belsey 1994, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 81.

become transnational, influencing the way Australian women, in particular, conceived of romance especially in the mid-twentieth century. Of course it may be argued that the culture of romantic love in Australia has always been transnational because non-indigenous Australians began as 'transplanted Britons', and this British heritage has had deep and long-lasting influences in mainstream Australian culture.³

It should be noted, however, that this inherited culture of romantic love was not necessarily consonant with the national boundaries of the imperial metropole. John Gillis's work on romantic love in Britain, for example, demonstrates the fragmented nature of romantic rituals and attempts at intimacy throughout the British Isles where different regions and classes were concerned. Gillis argued that although certain ideals of romantic love might have been widely shared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its practical outworking differed significantly between classes and generations, with, for instance, homosocial developments in some regional working-class young adult cultures forming a barrier against emotional intimacy and mutual understanding or sympathy between the sexes.⁴

This is a timely reminder to Australian historians belonging to an older imperial historiographical tradition that insists on first knowing British in order to understand Australian history,⁵ or to those who would write transnational Australian history, that, as Antoinette Burton has warned, in drawing connections between cultural or other traditions, the reified nation can still creep in through the backdoor:⁶ vide discussions (even in this chapter) of 'British' or 'American' cultural influences in Australia when these are hardly monolithic or cohesive

³ For discussions of the Britishness of Australian society and culture see, for example, Stuart Ward and Deryck Schreuder (eds) forthcoming 2006, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Tara Brabazon 2000, *Tracking the Jack: A Retracing of the Antipodes* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press); Hsu-Ming Teo 2004, 'The Britishness of Australian Popular Fiction', in Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, Kiera Lindsey and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Exploring the British World: Identity – Cultural Production – Institutions* (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing), pp. 721-47.

⁴ John R. Gillis 1985, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), pp. 258-9.

⁵ See Ann Curthoys' discussion of W. K. Hancock and J. A. La Nauze in 'We've Just Started Making National Histories, and You Want Us to Stop Already?', in Antoinette Burton (ed.) 2003, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation* (London and Durham, NC: Duke University Press), pp. 72-4.

⁶ Antoinette Burton 2003, 'Introduction: On the Inadequacy and the Indispensability of the Nation', in Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn*, p. 8.

cultures within their own geographical boundaries.⁷ Even the homogeneity in ideas of romantic love spread by print capitalism through mass-market publications – magazines, advertisements and genre novels – manifested class and gender differences, and did not necessarily translate into a common lived experience of love. In the same way, the mainstream ‘American’ culture of romantic love could exclude or subsume differences in class, geographical regions, ethnic origins, educational and/or religious background.⁸ Nonetheless, there is still a case to be made that a specific commercialised mass-market romantic culture, produced by American corporations and globally disseminated throughout the twentieth century, has become transnational in its reach. I argue in this chapter that Australian popular culture demonstrates transnational influences in its representation of romantic love, increasingly instituting white, educated middle-class Americans as authorities on romantic love by importing or reprinting American advice columns, articles, lectures and advertisements in magazines and self-help books. In the interwar years, Americans jostled alongside traditional British authorities on love and marriage; by the postwar period Americans had won the war of romantic expertise in Australia.

The culture of romantic love in the United States

The United States of America has one of the most well-documented histories of romantic love over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ellen K. Rothman, Karen Lystra, Steven Seidman, Francesca Cancian, David Shumway and Eva Illouz, among many others, have examined diaries, love letters, medical journals, etiquette and advice manuals, magazines, popular literature and film to chart the changes in American understandings of romantic love.⁹ Generally speaking,

⁷ See, for example, the discussion of British people in James Jupp, ‘The Making of the Anglo-Australian’, James Jupp (ed.) 2001, *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (Melbourne: Australian National University and Cambridge University Press); also L. Brockliss and D. Eastwood (eds) 1997, *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c.1750–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); and Marjorie Morgan 2001, *National Identities and Travel in the Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave).

⁸ Steven Seidman, for example, takes particular care to limit his discussion of romantic love to non-immigrant white middle-class Americans in the north-eastern United States. See Steven Seidman 1991, *Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1830–1980* (New York, NY and London: Routledge), p. 4.

⁹ Ellen K. Rothman 1987, *With Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); Karen Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press); Francesca M. Cancian 1987, *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); David R. Shumway 2003, *Modern Love: Romance, Intimacy and the Marriage Crisis* (New

this body of work identifies two significant and interrelated broad changes in the culture of romantic love that affected emotional experiences of love. Firstly, in the nineteenth century Americans understood romantic love as an intensely private, spiritual experience – exalted to the point where romantic love practically became a new religion in itself.¹⁰ The ultimate aim of romantic love was the complete disclosure of the individual self to the beloved in order to achieve intimacy in marriage.¹¹ By the early twentieth century, this had changed to a secularised notion of love that conceived it as inseparable from sexuality, pleasure and consumption.¹² Marriage or long-term partnership was no longer the ultimate fulfilment of love; rather, happiness and the experience of ‘romance’ became goals in themselves.

Secondly, the ritualised forms of romantic gender relations changed from nineteenth-century courtship to the twentieth-century practice of dating. Courtship took place in the private sphere and was controlled by the woman, who, in order to assure her security and happiness in marriage, placed obstacles in the relationship to test the love, patience, and faithfulness or loyalty of her suitor. Men occasionally tested women’s affections as well. Therefore pain, endurance and the postponement of pleasure was an expected and accepted part of the experience of romantic love as well as the more pleasurable emotions.¹³ The practice of dating turned this upside down. Dating replaced courtship among middle-class white Americans between 1870 and 1920. It was controlled by men who took women ‘out’ and ‘bought’ them a good time. Dating depended on practices of consumption and new technologies of transport and mass-market entertainment – the car, dance halls, movie theatres, restaurants, and the nascent hotel and tourism industries.¹⁴ It taught men and women to commodify each other as well as the experience of ‘romance’, which was increasingly separated from ‘love’.¹⁵

By the early twentieth century, therefore, romance had acquired an exchange value in dating, one which was reinforced by advertising which romanticised as well as glamorised consumer goods, so much so that romance eventually came to refer to consumption practices – gifts of chocolates, corsages, candlelight

York, NY: New York University Press); and Eva Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradiction of Capitalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

¹⁰ Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart*, p. 249.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 31-9.

¹² See Illouz’s main argument in her 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*.

¹³ Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ Rothman 1987, *With Hands and Hearts*, pp. 289-94; Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, pp. 54-6.

¹⁵ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 35.

dinners, cruises at sunsets, romantic holidays – rather than to the disclosure of feelings, as was the case in the nineteenth century. Where working-class women were concerned, sexual favours were often expected and dispensed in return for dating, but this was not necessarily the case among the middle-classes who took for granted gift-giving and consumption practices on dates.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as the twentieth century wore on, sexual activity became part of dating, not because it was expected or because it had been ‘bought’, but because consumption reinforced the message that dating was about sensual pleasure and the goal of romance was feelings of happiness.¹⁷

Dating thus inverted the understanding and goals of nineteenth-century romantic love, which was experienced through the rituals of courtship and which viewed marriage as its inevitable goal. Where courtship encouraged patience and a focus on the future and surveillance by others – family members as well as the community – dating was immediate, focused on the present and comparatively free of social surveillance and control. It took place in ‘islands of privacy’ in the public sphere, rather than in the private sphere.¹⁸ It had a secular, consumerist understanding of love rather than a spiritual one. Where expensive gifts had been looked on suspiciously in the nineteenth century, and personal gifts such as a lock of hair, a sketch portrait of the beloved, or hand-made cards were favoured instead, by the early twentieth century, gift-giving had become an expected part of the expression of romantic love. Dating was controlled by men rather than by women. It was focused on consumption rather than production (that is, marriage and the production of family). It was hedonistic in that pleasure was the goal, and pain was increasingly an unacceptable part of the experience of romantic love. And above all, the same limited script of romantic consumption was widely broadcast and reinforced by advertising, films, romance novels and magazines which commodified romance and romanticised commodities – especially what Eva Illouz has called ‘ego expressive’ commodities such as shampoo, perfume, deodorant and cosmetics.¹⁹

The promotion of consumerism through advertising directly impacts emotional states and our sense of well-being because, as Peter Stearns has observed, people stake ‘a real portion of their personal identities and their quest for meaning – even their emotional satisfaction – on the search for and acquisition of goods’.²⁰ The aim of advertising and consumer capitalism is to foster an increased sense

¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 59-61.

¹⁷ Seidman 1991, *Romantic Longings*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 56.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁰ Peter N. Stearns 1997, ‘Stages of Consumerism: Recent Work on the Issues of Periodization’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 69, no.1, p. 105.

of yearning, the feeling 'that one's life cannot be complete without this or that acquisition'.²¹ Stearns argued that the coincidence of mass literacy and new print technology leading to dramatic changes in advertising in the 1890s, transformed the way Americans expressed their emotions. Not only did the look of commercial advertising become more visually arresting or appealing – dull newsprint gave way to 'screaming headlines, illustrations, and lavish use of color'²² – but the style of advertising copy changed from a matter-of-fact description of content, durability and price to an appeal to the senses and emotions as products became associated with pleasure and sensuality.²³

By the turn of the century, Americans had not only been socialised into consumption from a very young age, they had also imbibed the notion that emotions could be expressed and/or managed through consumption. For example, in the 1880s 'American girls were able to buy caskets and mourning clothes for dolls, to train in the proper expressions of Victorian grief', while children were increasingly given gifts to ameliorate jealousy upon the birth of a sibling or as emotional substitutes for fathers who were now working longer hours.²⁴ Inevitably, feelings of love and experiences of romance became inextricably intertwined with the consumption of commodities and services, fostered, as Seidman noted, by giant corporations grabbing local as well as non-local mass markets in the first two decades of the twentieth century.²⁵ Illouz, too, argued that:

At the turn of the century, cultural entrepreneurs and established industries began promoting commodity-centered definitions of romance to further their own economic interests ... Since then, consumption and romantic emotions have progressively merged, each shrouding the other in a mystical halo. Commodities have now penetrated the romantic bond so deeply that they have become the invisible and unacknowledged spirit reigning over romantic encounters.²⁶

Early twentieth century advertising featured romantic couples who are 'made-up, well dressed, and expensively bejewelled',²⁷ engaged in acts of consumption such as dancing, dining at an expensive restaurant, drinking at sophisticated cocktail lounges or bars, going to the theatre or movies, on holiday at 'romantic' destinations and so forth. These have become clichéd images of romance, yet,

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 105.

²² *ibid.*, p. 110.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁵ Seidman 1991, *Romantic Longings*, p. 67.

²⁶ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 11.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 37.

as Illouz's cross-class interviews in the 1990s demonstrate, they still have resonance and meaning for large sections of American society.²⁸ American practices of romantic consumption became increasingly widespread in the twentieth century because of the transnational reach of American capitalism – the export of its consumer goods and cultural products, and the adoption or imitation of American advertising and marketing strategies in other countries.

The culture of romantic love in nineteenth-century Australia

The culture of romantic love in nineteenth-century Australia shared many similarities to that in the United States, Canada and Britain.²⁹ Romantic love was an emotional, moral, physical and spiritual attraction believed to be a necessary prerequisite to courtship, with companionate marriage as its ideal goal. It was bound up in class consciousness and the demonstration of 'gentlemanly' or 'ladylike' behaviour.³⁰ Love was supposed to have an ennobling, morally and spiritually uplifting effect, especially upon the male lover. This notion was both a result of the greater spiritualisation of love in the nineteenth century as well as being part of a wider nineteenth-century belief in progress and perfectibility in all aspects of society, including love and moral character. Physical attraction was enhanced by a lover's 'character' and shared moral and/or religious values.³¹ Yet while physical attraction was important and lovers wrote of their yearning for contact, kisses and embraces, the focus of courtship was on the mutual and exclusive disclosure of the self. This process was understood to be the very foundation of romantic intimacy.

In sharing their 'essence' with each other, it was expected that romantic love might produce great unhappiness, bitterness and despair as well as ecstasy and a feeling of empathy and completeness. Because marriage was taken for granted as the sole aim and fulfilment of romantic love, almost everything that accompanied married life could potentially be interpreted as an aspect of romantic love. Thus some lovers wrote that they did not necessarily expect love to produce constant happiness after marriage because they distinguished between the

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 112-52, 247-87.

²⁹ See above references for the United States and Britain. See Peter Ward 1990, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press). For Australia, see Hsu-Ming Teo 2005, 'Love Writes: Gender and Romantic Love in Australian Love Letters, 1860–1960', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 20, no. 48, November 2005, pp. 343-61.

³⁰ See Penny Russell 1988, 'For Better and for Worse: Love, Power and Sexuality and Upper-Class Marriages in Melbourne, 1960–1880', *Australian Feminist Studies*, nos 7/8, Summer, pp. 11-26. Also, Marilyn Lake 1990, 'Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 5, p. 271.

³¹ Katie Holmes 1995, *Spaces in her Day: Australian Women's Diaries, 1920s-1930s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), p. 4.

emotional elation and physical thrill of 'infatuation' in courtship and the steadier, more mundane serenity of married love in which bouts of boredom or apathy might well be expected in the cycles of domestic life.³²

Much of this was similar to white middle-class British as well as American culture. However, there were a few crucial differences between the United States and Australia. Unlike nineteenth-century American lovers who viewed romantic love as something highly mystical or mysterious,³³ Australians generally tended to have more concrete and prosaic ideas about love. This was partly due to the fact that, unlike American culture, romantic love was not sacralised in Australian culture. The rhetoric of romantic love among Australians was never as intense, sublime or spiritualised as in the United States, neither was romance transformed into a new religion in Australia. Moreover, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where the private correspondence among Australians reveal an eloquence of emotional feelings, the public rhetoric of romantic love has been characterised by awkwardness, self-deprecation and even bathos, in stark contrast to public romantic rhetoric in the United States.

These differences in the rhetoric of romantic love are still recognisable today, but in other respects, Australians have come to develop an increasingly American understanding of romantic consumption as a critical expression of love. This is demonstrated in an article, 'Money Can Buy You Love', in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 February 2005, which argued that 'Valentine's Day ... has become less about intimacy than the grand, expensive gesture: the jewellery, the mink coat, the impromptu hot air balloon ride'.³⁴ In this article, RMIT marketing lecturer Con Stavros observed that:

Marketing has turned Valentine's Day into the celebration that it is ... If you go back even a decade, people used to just exchange private cards and have some kind of romantic [dinner]. These days the gift has to be public, conspicuous – people [at work] ask each other: 'What did you get?'³⁵

The practice of romantic consumption may have become more extravagant in conspicuous ways at the beginning of the twenty-first century, yet this was something which developed in unevenly gendered ways in the first half of the twentieth century as consumer culture in Australia became Americanised.

³² Teo 2005, 'Love Writes'.

³³ Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart*, p. 6.

³⁴ Alan Mascarenhas 2005, 'Money Can Buy You Love', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February, viewed on-line at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Money-can-buy-you-love/2005/02/13/1108229857401.html> on 14 February 2005.

³⁵ Quoted in Mascarenhas 2005, 'Money Can Buy You Love'.

The romanticisation of consumption in Australia

The historiography of consumer culture in Australia has focused largely on women and domesticity rather than romance, with Marilyn Lake's work on the sexualisation of femininity and romanticisation of advertisements in women's magazines of the 1930s being one of the few exceptions.³⁶ Nevertheless the extant body of work on consumerism establishes a number of important findings, the most significant of which are the gendered nature of advertising, and the sophistication of Australian women where the consumption of personal and household goods was concerned. Consumer goods were advertised in distinctly gendered ways, catering to the gendered division in shopping activities whereby, for most of the twentieth century, men 'made the majority of decision for motor mowers and electric shavers – items considered men's products. They also made the majority of decisions for bottled wines and spirits, radios, radiograms, record players and television sets'.³⁷ On the whole, women shopped for men's 'ego expressive' products – shirts, soaps, shampoos – for most of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, advertisements for consumer goods bought by men tended to emphasise nationalism and men's identities as workers – collective identities, rather than individual ones. Robert Crawford has demonstrated how, until the end of the 1950s, items of personal or leisure consumption for men were advertised with images of factories: products as diverse as beer, Berger Paints, Dunlop rubber, Boomerang whisky, Australian oil and General Motors-Holden cars.³⁸ These images also emphasised men's social and economic role as producers. It was not until the late 1950s/early 1960s that advertising directed at Australian men shifted its focus to them as consumers. Although men's ego-expressive products such as fragrances and powders were available during the 1930s, advertisements targeted women, who were urged to buy these products for Australian men to enhance their physical attractiveness and sex appeal.³⁹

Mark Swiencicki has argued that the historiography of consumption in the United States has privileged women and entrenched them as primary consumers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Swiencicki contended that if the consumption of services as well as goods was taken into account, American

³⁶ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', pp. 269-74.

³⁷ *Who Decides? – A Study of the Buying Habits of Australian Men and Women*, commissioned by the Readers Digest Association Pty Ltd (Melbourne, 1961).

³⁸ Robert Crawford 2003, 'Manufacturing Identities: Industrial Representations of Australia in Press Advertisements, 1900–69', *Labour History*, no. 84, pp. 21-46, viewed on-line 14 December 2004 at: <http://historycooperative.press.uiuc.edu/journals/lab/84/crawford.html>

³⁹ Marilyn Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 630.

men can be demonstrated to have consumed at least twice as much as women between the period 1880 to 1930.⁴⁰ The same may have been true of Australian men. It may be that men were as avid consumers of goods and services as women, or even more so. Nevertheless, the point remains that in advertising material, these consumer practices were not romanticised and entwined with relationships, or infused with emotions of intimacy. The same could not be said to be true of advertising aimed at Australian women in the first half of the twentieth century.

Historical scholarship on Australian consumerism has linked practices of consumption to the sexualisation of women's bodies in advertising in the 1920s. Rosemary Pringle, for example, argued that it was during this time that "'Girlie' pictures began to appear in such newspapers as *Truth*, *Smith's Weekly* and the *Labour Daily*", while 'advertisers linked sexuality to the emotionalisation of housework and the establishment of private life as the place where we "find our real selves"'.⁴¹ The timing is significant because, as Ann Stephen's work on the marketing of soap during the interwar years demonstrated, this was the period when American magazines and American companies began to penetrate the hitherto impregnable British market for women's consumer goods. Stephen's work makes clear the link between the circulation of American women's magazines in Australia and the glamour of American products for women, demonstrating that by the time the American company Palmolive entered the Australian market in 1921, in direct competition to the British soap company Lever,

the quality of 'Americanness' already exerted a strong appeal on local audiences. This attraction was not difficult to understand, for Australian magazines, like their British counterparts could not compete with the scale and lavish colour of the two most popular US imports, the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies Home Journal*.⁴²

Moreover, as Jill Matthews has noted, the association of global American commerce with exciting modernity and Hollywood glamour contributed to the attractiveness of the American brand.⁴³

⁴⁰ Mark A. Swiencicki 1998, 'Consuming Brotherhood: Men's Culture, Style and Recreation as Consumer Culture, 1880-1930', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 773-809.

⁴¹ Rosemary Pringle, 'Women and Consumer Capitalism', in Cora V. Baldock and Bettina Cass (eds) 1988, *Women, Social Welfare and the State in Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), p. 97.

⁴² Ann Stephen 2003, 'Selling Soap: Domestic Work and Consumerism', *Labour History*, no. 61, p. 63.

⁴³ Jill Julius Matthews 2005, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press), pp. 7-11.

The interwar years were in some ways a culturally hybrid moment for advertising in Australian women's magazines, when visual layouts based on American magazines were accompanied by advertising copy with a 'British' flavour.⁴⁴ Increasingly the visual style of Australian women's magazine advertisements became more American, sometimes brazenly copied with minor adjustments to 'Australianise' the image.⁴⁵ The impetus towards Americanisation in Australian advertising styles and images thus occurred during the interwar years and was driven by the perception of American women's modernity and the glamour of romantic consumption. This was reinforced by the gradual penetration of American beauty products into the Australian market during the 1930s, advertised through images of romantic consumption.⁴⁶

The association of goods and romantic love was not new in Australian culture; by the outbreak of World War I, the Richmond Furnishing Company's advertisements in the Melbourne-based *Table Talk* magazine had already made this connection. Text advertisements for the company's wares and its store address were embedded in short love stories, play tableaux and letters purporting to be from mothers advising their daughters on marriage. What was new in the interwar years, however, was the expansion of advertisements for female ego-expressive products associated with beauty and romance in the 1920s, and, by the 1930s, youthful 'sex appeal'.⁴⁷

In the early twentieth century, advertisements for domestic products – Horlicks malted milk, dress patterns and accessories, sewing machines, chocolate laxettes for the management of the family's health – were more numerous than advertisements for shampoos, perfumes or cosmetics. The visual image was also significantly different. Advertisements for ego-expressive products in *The Australian Women's Weekly*⁴⁸ before World War I were black and white line drawings with a preponderance of informative text over pictures. The emphasis was on health and hygiene. For example, beautiful hair was a sign of good health rather than sexual allure. Whatever the subtext might have been, beauty was advertised for its own sake rather than in the context of overt romantic encounters.

⁴⁴ Stephen 2003, 'Selling Soap', p. 63.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 65, 67.

⁴⁶ Kathy Peiss 2002, 'Educating the Eye of the Beholder. American Cosmetics Abroad', *Daedalus*, vol. 131, no. 4, pp. 101-9. Viewed on-line 15 December 2004 at: <http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?DOCID=1G1:94144191&num=6&ctrlInfo=Round9c%3AProd%3ASR%3AResult&ao=1>

⁴⁷ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', p. 271.

⁴⁸ The pre-Australian Consolidated Press publication which ran from 16 November 1912 to 30 April 1921 and continued as *Home Budget* in 1922.

This began to change in the 1920s, when advertisements for ego-expressive products were set within the context of romantic love and marriage. The contrast between British and American advertising styles and techniques during this period is clearly demonstrated in the rivalry between Lever and Palmolive. In contrast to Lever's soap advertisements in Australian women's magazines, which emphasised imperial themes of racial whiteness and hygiene even in the 1920s, the American company Palmolive focused entirely on female beauty, youth and romance, telling them to: '*Live Your Romances! Keep that Schoolgirl Complexion!*' The advertisement went on to advise women that

BEAUTY, Charm, Youth may not be the fundamentals of romance, but they help. Practically every reader of a 'best seller' pictures the heroine as being possessed of those attributes. To *live* one's romances to-day, one stays young as long as she can, makes herself as *naturally attractive* as she can and trusts the rest to her womanly intelligence.

This advertisement, which first ran in women's magazines in the United States and was later carried by *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *Table Talk*, established a nexus between women, beauty, youth, romantic love and consumption – of 'best selling' romance novels and films as well as soap. Other companies followed suit in hawking glamorous or luxurious romance with beauty products. Thus a 1922 advertisement for Icilma face cream in *Table Talk* featured a sketch of an elegantly dressed woman standing on a balcony in front of open French doors leading into a ballroom where couples are dancing. She is powdering her nose while a man stands attentively behind her, and the caption underneath reads: 'Her Complexion won his attention.'

Kissproof lipstick ran advertisements in *Table Talk* in 1930 featuring a cartoon drawing of two young women talking in front of a mirror while one applied lipstick. The modernity of these women is conveyed by their bobbed and shingled hair, sports jackets, and the golf club one is carrying under her arm. The caption, part of the conversation between the two 'flappers', reads:

There's no doubt about it, dear, that Kissproof Lipstick you told me about is magic, pure and simple! I'm getting so popular – just a glorious time! Kissproof Lipstick makes my lips so small and, er, you know, so – inviting! And the way it stays on, no matter what happens!

With this and other lipstick advertisements in the 1930s and 1940s promising 'seductive' and 'provocatively appealing' lips, femininity, as Lake argued, 'was beginning to cast off its passivity as the logic of the incitement to pleasure took its course'.⁴⁹ Liz Conor has further commented upon young women's dynamic sense of 'self-mastery' or agency in presenting a 'modern' appearance through

⁴⁹ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', p. 274.

clothes as well as cosmetics: 'perhaps for the first time in the West, modern women understood self-display to be part of the quest for mobility, self-determination, and sexual identity'⁵⁰ – an identity fashioned in part from the images of screen stars in American romantic movies, to which young Australian women made up seventy per cent of the audience.⁵¹

The Americanisation of Australian women's magazines during the interwar years in terms of the promotion of romantic consumption such as dancing and dining out, as well as the romanticisation of ego-expressive commodities, was accompanied by the Americanisation of expertise on romantic love, but not without a certain measure of initial scepticism and sardonic commentary. In a 1924 issue of *Table Talk*, the social column 'What People are Saying and Doing' featured a short article on 'Love and Millions', an ironic report on how:

An attractive stranger, Miss Alfaretta Hallam, from America, of course, is lecturing in Sydney on many popular subjects including our old friend, 'Love, Courtship, and Matrimony,' only, being a modern and an American, she disguised it as 'Practical Psychology.'⁵²

This was among the first of many articles linking American expertise to romantic love as well as the psychologisation of the self. Moreover, the metaphors used by Alfaretta Hallam – the 'business of marriage', the 'training' involved in relationships, the idea that choosing a husband is like choosing a career – all emphasised the intertwining of romantic love with commerce and the market. The Australian reviewer recognised this and ended the short article with a dig at the American association between the professionalisation of love and money. Hallam's next lecture tour, the article concluded, was 'How to Make a Million Honestly'.

As with advertisements, a struggle between 'British' and 'American' styles and authority is evident in *Table Talk* magazine during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1926, *Table Talk* – which was always obsessed with romance, marriage and domestic harmony – ran a series on 'The New Wife'. Among the 'experts' it summoned to discuss and give advice on happy marriages were English and Australian social hostesses. A similar series subsequently featured in 1930, 'Making a Success of Marriage', again featured female society leaders from Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, but not from England. In the same year, however, *Table Talk* commissioned an article by the American writer Rupert Hughes on 'What is True Love?' Hughes's expertise arose from his reputation

⁵⁰ Liz Conor 2004, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), p. 29.

⁵¹ Conor 2004, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, pp. 78-100.

⁵² *Table Talk*, 31 July, no page number.

as a novelist and was described by the magazine as ‘one who has, by his outspokenness and common sense views, set all America talking’.⁵³ The Thirties saw reprints in *Table Talk* of American articles on love, romance and marriage by Kathleen Norris – ‘America’s Foremost Magazine Writer’ – as well as an increasing number of articles on Hollywood romances, divorces, and happy marriages. By 1936, the magazine turned to Eleanor Roosevelt to assure readers that ‘A Wage-Earning Wife Does Not Cause Divorce’.⁵⁴

British – and occasionally European – contributors continued to be featured as ‘experts’ on love, romance and marriage, but only if they were novelists, psychologists or philosophers: Bertrand Russell, A. A. Milne and Evelyn Waugh among them. Yet it was evident that the widespread influence of American dating rituals and practices of romantic consumption had also reached Britain. The English writer Alan Kennington, whose articles on relationships were sometimes reprinted in *Table Talk*, wrote a piece titled ‘Should Girls Go Dutch?’ and explained that “‘Going Dutch’ is an American expression, origin unknown’.⁵⁵ He opined that it was a common practice among Europeans and, presumably, Americans, but rarer in England. Kennington’s article indicates anxieties in the United Kingdom as well as in Australia over the growing practice of romantic consumption and the concomitant commodification of love inherent in ‘American’ practices of dating. Although the article seemed to be directed towards the lower middle classes whose romantic consumption was constrained by low wages, the pen and ink illustration that accompanied the article depicted the impossibly idealised image of glamorous, romantic dating among the wealthy – the man in white tie and tails, his arms around an elegantly dressed woman with a fur stole, both of them outside an up-market theatre.

These articles, still photos of glamorous film stars in romantic poses, and advertisements in women’s magazines accustomed Australian women to the idea of romantic consumption. They were calculated to provoke yearnings for beauty, youth, romance, luxurious ego-expressive products, and the experience of ‘romantic’ activities or services in the process of what Illouz has called ‘consuming the romantic utopia’. By contrast, very few (if any) of these romanticised images appeared in Australian men’s magazines, either in advertisements or as illustrations accompanying articles. It was not that men’s magazines were uninterested in romance, marriage or relationships. When *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men* was launched in December 1936, the inaugural editorial proclaimed that the magazine would ‘cater as completely as possible

⁵³ Rupert Hughes 1930, ‘What is True Love?’, *Table Talk*, 18 December, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt 1936, ‘A Wage-Earning Wife Does Not Cause Divorce’, *Table Talk*, 19 November, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵ Alan Kennington 1936, ‘Should Girls Go Dutch?’, *Table Talk*, 24 September, p. 7.

for the varied monthly reading requirements of the average male'. Moreover, it would feature '90% the work of Australian writers' and '100% Australian artists'.⁵⁶ Among the articles on fiction, business, current affairs and sports, however, were the occasional pieces on romance and marriage. The Australian writer Gilbert Anstruther wrote several articles on the subject between 1937 and 1942, such as 'Are Husbands Worth While?'⁵⁷ or 'I Know About Love'.⁵⁸ Austin Roberts analysed love and jealousy in the psychology section, while Browning Thompson did the same in the sociology column. Between the late 1930s and the late 1950s, other male authors pitched in with articles on 'Marriage and Morals of the Future', 'Why Husbands Leave Home', 'Husbands Who Hate Women', 'How to – Where to – And Why You Shouldn't – Be Unfaithful', and 'How to Get Along With Women'. Not until the late 1940s, however, did *Man* feature advertisements for ego-expressive products set within a romantic context. An advertisement for Ingram's shaving cream in 1947 featured a cartoonish picture of a man climbing over a balustrade at night – presumably invoking the figure of Romeo – and a woman stroking his smooth chin. The caption was joking in tone and clumsy in text:

Question: To what did Helen of Troy owe her fascination? The face that launched a thousand ships must have had something more than the usual complement of eyes and things. INGRAM'S, on the other hand, has launched a thousand faces. A million, maybe ...

Another advertisement for 'Be-Tall' shoes in April 1957 showed the illustration of a blissfully smiling woman clasping a man's shoulder as he towers over her. The caption read: 'Tall men get the plums.' Be-Tall shoes were spruiked as 'amazing height-increasing shoes' which 'help you grow almost 2 inches taller instantly', promising an increase not only in height, but also in poise and the confidence, presumably, to go after and 'get the plums'. Such advertisements of romanticised commodities were few and far between in Australian men's magazines, and there was something slightly awkward about them.

It was not until American magazines such as *Playboy* were imported during the late 1960s that Australian men were introduced to a culture of romanticised (and, of course, sexualised) consumption for all sorts of products. For example, an advertisement for Renault's Le Car had a photo of a woman sitting on top of the car, held in the close embrace of a man, while the caption referred to the 'passion' of driving. An American advertisement for Hennessy in the 1990s showed a

⁵⁶ Editorial 1936, *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men*, December.

⁵⁷ Gilbert Anstruther 1937, 'Are Husbands Worth While?', *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men*, February, pp. 32, 86, 87.

⁵⁸ Gilbert Anstruther 1937, 'I Know About Love', *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men*, November, pp. 60, 62.

woman's ecstatic, upturned face as a man kisses her. The caption read: 'If you've ever been kissed you already know the feeling of Cognac Hennessy.' Interestingly enough where transnational ideas of romance are concerned, the couple are framed by the carved arches of a stone colonnade, vaguely suggestive of Europe. In this American advertisement romance is Europeanised, generic 'Europe' signifying luxurious romantic moments and classy destinations. *Playboy* notoriously commodified women's bodies and sexuality, but it also commodified romance, as with John Stack's 1980 article, 'We'll Take Romance!' Accompanying suggestions for romantic moments were thoroughly entwined with luxury consumption:

A light and sexy Lillet with a twist of orange or lemon is our choice for a romantic aperitif ... For any occasion that seems extra-special, we recommend California Chandon, but nighttime is the right time for Cognac. Delamain (which runs from \$22 to \$100) is for foreplay, afterplay, and serious fooling around.

Investment acumen and sentiment *do* mix. Buy each other gifts that will last: lithographs, Oriental silk flowers, inlaid boxes, photographs, leather-bound books or first editions, cognac, fine stationery, personally blended scents, pottery, season tickets (to the ballet, symphony, theatre or even hockey), museum membership, dancing (or self-defense) lessons, antiques (such as handmade quilts, bits of embroidery, old china). Or a pair of sexy black pajamas.

Getting away even for a weekend is a terrific way to renew your relationship and take time off from professional stress at the same time. If you live in the country, try some bright lights/big city sight-seeing ... If, like most of us, you live in the city, look for an intimate country inn that you can make your own ...⁵⁹

My point here is that although Australian men's magazines carried articles about marriage and romantic relationships, romantic consumption did not feature widely until after World War II – and then it was introduced to Australia via imported American men's magazines and advertising techniques copied from the Americans. In the first half of the twentieth century, therefore, there was a gender disjunction where ideas of romance and courtship or dating were concerned. This came to a head during World War II.

World War II and gendered romantic consumption

As several scholars have noted, World War II saw a widespread condemnation of, and moral panic surrounding, young Australian women's relations with

⁵⁹ John Stack 1980, 'We'll Take Romance!', *Playboy*, September, pp. 91-7.

American soldiers.⁶⁰ This was in part a backlash against modern young Australian women's Americanised conceptions of consumerist dating and romantic love.⁶¹ The attitude of conservative media institutions and transnational corporations was highly contradictory in this regard. Despite the fact that *The Australian Women's Weekly* carried wartime advertisements emphasising the importance of consuming beauty products – such as the Pond's 'Lips' advertisement declaring: 'She's doing a job of national importance, but she doesn't forget the importance of looking lovely for *him*' – Lyn Finch noted that the *Weekly* ran a campaign implying that the presence of American troops exacerbated 'consumerist-driven dating practices', thereby not only subverting 'normal and correct gender relations' but also

simultaneously undermining the British character of Australian culture. While the practices and assumptions associated with courtship were conceptualised as productive and patriotic, dating was stigmatised as non-productive and neither patriotic, nationalistic, pro-Empire nor, indeed, moral.⁶²

Finch suggested that the 'competing constructions of courtship or, to be more precise, the difference between courtship and dating, lay at the centre of much of the moral panic about relations between American men and Australian women and girls'.⁶³

But it was possibly more than that. I want to propose that, as Marilyn Lake has suggested about contemporary understandings of the sexualisation of femininity in the 1930s and especially during World War II,⁶⁴ there was a gender and age disjunction in understandings of romantic love at this time, when some women, through their consumption of magazines and familiarity with commodified images of romantic love, might have been more in tune with American men's conception of gendered self-display, dating and romantic love than with

⁶⁰ Michael Sturma 1989, 'Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations Between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942–1945', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 24, pp. 4, 15–16; Gail Reekie 1985, 'War Sexuality and Feminism: Perth Women's Organisations, 1938–1945', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 21, no. 85, pp. 576–91; Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', p. 625.

⁶¹ Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', pp. 625–6; Lyn Finch Press 1995, 'Consuming Passions: Romance and Consumerism During World War II', in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (eds), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University), pp. 105–16)

⁶² Finch 1995, 'Consuming Passions', pp. 106–7.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 110.

⁶⁴ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', pp. 268, 279.

Australian men's.⁶⁵ I am by no means arguing that love relationships did not develop between Australian women and men at this time, or that ideas of romantic love were reducible to romantic consumption; clearly, they were not, as the Australian War Memorial's very moving collection of love letters written by Australian soldiers to their wives and girlfriends attests.⁶⁶ What I am arguing, however, is that for some women, the initial process of 'falling in love' depended not only on sexual attraction and liking, but that these increasingly took place within a context of Americanised romantic consumption.

This can be demonstrated, for example, in gift-giving. In the nineteenth century, the types of gifts acceptable between courting couples were those of personal sentiment and little monetary value: hand-made cards, portraits, locks of hair, flowers, cakes, books of poetry or songbooks compiled by one of the lovers.⁶⁷ More expensive presents were acceptable only after the couple were engaged. In the mid-1880s, *Australian Etiquette* declared that the man could then give his fiancée 'small presents from time to time, until they are married, but if she has any scruples about accepting them, he can send her flowers, which are at all times acceptable'.⁶⁸ Yet even at the turn of the century, gifts could indicate the purchase of a woman as a man's property, as the following excerpt written by a young man to his fiancée indicates:

I shall be able to get something nice for your birth-day this year. Perhaps the last present it [unclear] be my lot to bestow upon you or perhaps the forerunner of very many more if you become my property. Hope you will say what you would like, anything but jewelry, I will get for you.⁶⁹

The American culture of romantic consumption inverted traditional reticence over expensive gift giving because within the culture of romantic consumption, and especially in a culture where, as was argued above, emotions can be conveyed

⁶⁵ It is no doubt true that, as Michael Sturma (1989, 'Loving the Alien', pp. 3-17) has argued, many American men did not share such notions of romantic consumption and were not only sexually aggressive, but also economically exploitative of Australian women. Nevertheless, what I'm concerned with here is the idea of the romantic gift-giving American – uniformed and homogenised in the Australian female imagination, as Lake suggested – that many women entertained. See Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', pp. 631-3.

⁶⁶ See also the section on World War II in Teo 2005, 'Love Writes'.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Blackburn family papers, MS 1528, Box 1760/1 (b), La Trobe Library; Broughton family papers, MLMSS 6250, Mitchell Library; Fry family papers, ML MSS 1159, add-on 2076/Box 1 and 2076/Box 4, Mitchell Library; and Gant family papers, MS 3711, Box 13023, La Trobe Library.

⁶⁸ *Australian Etiquette, or the Rules and Usages of the Best Society in the Australasian Colonies, together with Their Sports, Pastimes, Games, and Amusements* (Melbourne: People's Publishing Company, 1885), p. 198.

⁶⁹ Gant family papers, MS 3711, Box 13023, La Trobe Library.

and managed through consumption, romantic love was increasingly expressed through gift giving. Admittedly, the mere receipt of a gift was no proof of the giver's devotion, but the understanding of romantic love was transformed to a point where it was difficult, if not impossible, to declare love for someone without giving costly gifts at some stage, or engaging in frequent romantic consumption. American men were already in the habit of romantic consumption by the early twentieth century and, as Finch recognised, during World War II, gifts 'were integral to dating for American men and usually had no connotations of buying a woman'.⁷⁰

Jill Matthews' study of young working women's leisure practices in Sydney during the 1910s and 1920s suggested that 'modern' young men were paying for 'modern' young women's cinema-going and dancing within either a heterosocial or romantic context: 'a woman who let a man pay for her to go to the pictures or to a dance was no longer necessarily a kept woman.'⁷¹ Nevertheless, more traditional Australian men and older Australian women still believed a young woman had been 'bought' even if her process of romantic dating led to love and marriage with an American man.⁷² One of the most extreme condemnations of romantic consumption during the war came from Reverend James Duhig, Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, who asserted that: 'many girls associating with Allied soldiers have shown a spirit of greed and selfishness that does little credit to Australian womanhood.'⁷³

Hollywood films as well as ego-expressive advertisements spruiking romantic consumption and the commodification of the modern, sexualised self played an important role in mediating romantic relations between modern Australian women and American soldiers. As Liz Conor has demonstrated, young women in the interwar years were accustomed to fashioning themselves as both creative subjects as well as commodified objects of the public gaze. Managing one's modern feminine appearance was achieved via film and advertising. 'Identifying with advertising promised romance; but romance was about being subject to the same intense scrutiny and appraisal as the commodity image, and this required self-surveillance.'⁷⁴ This practice of self-commodification – packaging

⁷⁰ Finch 1995, 'Consuming Passions', p. 112. See also Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', p. 275.

⁷¹ Matthews 2005, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*, p. 91.

⁷² That this fantasy was still a goal of romantic liaisons is demonstrated by the number of applications to marry American servicemen lodged with the Registrar's Office – four in the first ten days of US troop arrivals, and a total of between 12 000-15 000 contracted marriages. See Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', p. 624, and Sturma 1989, 'Loving the Alien', p. 3.

⁷³ Cited in John Costello 1985, *Love, Sex & War: Changing Values, 1939–45* (London: Collins), p. 326.

⁷⁴ Conor 2004, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, p. 116.

oneself in youthful, modern and sexually attractive ways which privileged visual effects – was also directed towards men.

Lake has argued that, during the war years, young women objectified and commodified the 'Yank' ('they were different, they were anonymous, one stood for all the rest, any one would do')⁷⁵ because they had been trained by Hollywood films to code 'American men as lovers, as sexual, and as objects to be looked at'.⁷⁶ Like these young women, American soldiers also appear to have been in the habit of managing their visual effects in a distinctly modern way.⁷⁷ Thus young Australian women again shared with American soldiers the modern practice of commodified self-display that not only located the sexual and aesthetic management of their bodies within a capitalist exchange economy, but that also meshed with consumerist practices of romance: gifts of silk stockings, flowers, a way with words that was inspired or adapted from Hollywood films – 'She's just like a baby Betty Grable', for instance.⁷⁸

There is no doubt that Australian men practised consumerist dating with the women they were courting, going to the movies, dances, and on picnics. Where gift-giving was concerned, however, some letters suggest that it was women who were in a better position to give gifts and send parcels to Australian soldiers, especially to those stationed away from major urban centres.⁷⁹ Some Australian soldiers had financial constraints; others simply had no idea of what gifts to shop for, as with the soldier who wrote in all sincerity:

I don't like accepting any further gifts from you especially when I'm so thankless in this way. I haven't given you a single thing in return yet. I've been to town a few times & window shopped but have not found anything to suit my fancy but I don't know what to appear thoughtless so you must tell me what you would like as a memento.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', p. 627.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 629.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 628, for articles in the Australian press urging Australian men to pay similar attention to their appearance; to imitate American men's attention to their uniforms, angle of hat, position of garters, etc.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 631; Costello 1985, *Love, Sex & War*, p. 312.

⁷⁹ See references to gifts received by women – either wives or girlfriends – in the letters of Sergeant Michael Billings, PR00610, Australian War Memorial; papers of Pte Albert Gerrard, PR03111, Australian War Memorial; letters of Flying Officer Ralph James, PR00661, Australian War Memorial; letters of Trooper Andrew Pirie, PR00602, Australian War Memorial.

⁸⁰ Letters of Trooper Andrew Pirie, PR00602, Australian War Memorial.

While the woman showed a confidence in gift-giving, which was obviously something she was used to, the man was clearly unaccustomed to this way of relating romantically.

Significantly, it was only after American magazines began to be imported to Australia in the postwar years, and the style of Australian advertising directed at men changed to a focus on them as consumers, that love letters from Australian men demonstrate the same notion of commodified romance that Australian women had become familiar with earlier in the century. Letters from Australian men written during the Vietnam War, for instance, are concerned with shopping and gift-giving in a way which would have been most surprising during World War II.⁸¹ These Vietnam soldiers not only bought gifts for women, they were confident and decisive in what they wanted to give.

Conclusion

Thus the gender and age disjunction relating to romantic consumption gradually disappeared in the postwar years as Australian men also became orientated to romantic consumption through American-style films, magazines, advertisements and the advent of generic self-help books with their inevitable relationship case studies⁸² which now made the verbal culture of American romantic love – previously confined to women’s magazines and romance novels – available to men, couched in the language of psychologists and stamped with the masculine authority of ‘scientists’.

With the popularisation of self-help books, another layer was added to the Western discourse of romantic love: the search for ‘intimacy’ replaced ‘passion’ as the Holy Grail of romantic love.⁸³ ‘Intimacy’ – understood as the absence of loneliness, a ‘deep communication, friendship, and sharing that will last beyond the passion of new love’ – promised to cut through the Gordian knot of consumerism and romantic love in the West, offering a ‘refuge from the social fragmentation of late capitalism’.⁸⁴ But the route towards intimacy was ‘communication’, its gateway the consumption of self-help books and its guides the American authors who traversed the world selling their new gospel of hope.

The most successful of these at the end of the twentieth century was, of course, John Gray, whose *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus: A Practical*

⁸¹ For example, see the Papers of Lance Corporal A. D. O’Connor, PR 88/75, Australian War Memorial; papers of Private Laurence Hoppner, PR00047, Australian War Memorial; papers of Private Manfred Bohn, PR00745, Australian War Memorial; papers of Corporal Ronald James Kelly, PR87/195, Australian War Memorial.

⁸² Shumway 2003, *Modern Love*, p. 149.

⁸³ *ibid.*, pp. 141, 27.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27.

Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Your Relationships (1993) sold over six million copies in the United States alone and was translated into more than forty languages worldwide, thereby claiming to be 'the highest selling commercial book in the 1990s next to The Bible'.⁸⁵ Gray's book was published in Australia in 1993 and HarperCollins Australia has kept it in print ever since, branding it a 'modern classic'. As late as 2000, *Mars and Venus* was selling over 20 000 copies a year in Australia, earning it a place on the annual 'bestseller' list.⁸⁶ Sales figures do not, of course, tell us anything about reader reception or whether Australians have embraced and put into practice the tenets of romantic relationships to be found in such books. Indeed, such self-help material might be read as a new genre of consolation rather than as revelations about romantic relationships.⁸⁷ The point, however, is that these discourses on romantic relationships have become transnational, not necessarily because of their intrinsic worth, but because they are marketed transnationally in what Karen S. Falling Buzzard has argued is a global process of 'brand marketing' that, for instance, sold John Gray as 'the Coca-Cola of self help'.⁸⁸

It is these American techniques of marketing and advertising, more than anything else, that have established the American dominance of romantic love – whether it be as expertise or entertainment – in Australia through the course of the twentieth century. By the century's end, the culture of romantic love, not just in Australia but right throughout the English-speaking world, had become transnational, shaped by new technologies and communications systems as well as advanced consumer capitalism, fed by transnational publishing and media corporations, and sophisticated methods of marketing and international distribution. As Illouz observed, 'emotions are influenced and even shaped by the volatile "stuff" of culture: norms, language, stereotypes, metaphors, symbols', which means they are also 'subject to the twin influence of the economic and political spheres'.⁸⁹ As one cultural narrative of romantic love becomes increasingly hegemonic worldwide through the American-dominated global economy, there is less and less common knowledge or understanding of alternative cultures or expressions of love.

⁸⁵ Mars Venus Franchise web site, <http://www.marsvenuscoaching.com/franchise-opportunity.html>, accessed 16 February 2005.

⁸⁶ Australian Publishers Association, '2000 Public Survey', viewed on-line on 16 February 2005 at: <http://publishers.asn.au/emplibary/ACF4E53.pdf>

⁸⁷ See Shumway's argument about self-help books in his 2003, *Modern Love*, pp. 133-187.

⁸⁸ Karen S. Falling Buzzard 2002, 'The Coca Cola of Self Help: The Branding of John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 89-102.

⁸⁹ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 3.