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**AUSTRALIAN
WOMEN IN
ADVERTISING IN
THE TWENTIETH
CENTURY**

Jackie Dickenson





**Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth
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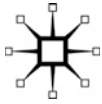
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▶ **Australian Women
in Advertising in the
Twentieth Century**

Jackie Dickenson

University of Melbourne, Australia

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AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN ADVERTISING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
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About the Author

Before completing a PhD in History at the University of Melbourne, Jackie Dickenson worked in the advertising industry, as an art director and copywriter. She is the author of *Renegades and Rats* (2006) and *Trust Me: Australians and Their Politicians* (2013). Her co-authored book (with Robert Crawford) on the impact of globalisation on Australian advertising industry practices will be published in 2016.



Abbreviations

4As (Aus.)	Australian Association of Advertising Agencies
4As (US)	American Association of Advertising Agencies
AAA	Advertising Association of Australia
ACIAA	Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists Association
AFBPW	Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs
AWB	Australian Wool Board
AWW	<i>Australian Women's Weekly</i>
BPW	Business and Professional Women's Clubs
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
IFPBW	International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
VWGA	Victorian Women's Graduate Association
WCM	Women Citizens' Movement
WVA	Women Voters' Association
WW	<i>Woman's World</i>
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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Introduction

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When did Australian women first enter the advertising industry? In the hit television series *Mad Men*, Peggy Olsen is Stirling Cooper's only woman copywriter until Megan moves from the typing pool to the creative department, having married the agency's creative director, Don Draper. Peggy's story implies that her elevation from being Don's secretary to high-flying copywriter in the late 1950s was ground breaking. This misrepresents women's contribution to the US advertising industry. Women have worked and prospered in American advertising agencies from the first years of the modern industry, in the late nineteenth century.

The same is true for Australian advertising women. The stereotypical Australian advertising executive might be a pony-tailed, Ferrari-driving, youngish man, but women have worked in advertising agencies from the first years of the modern industry and today they comprise half of the industry's workforce.¹

Australian advertising women deserve to be rescued from their obscurity. Their experiences across a century of Australian advertising provide valuable information on the role of gender in the development of this ubiquitous industry, as well as the encroachment of consumer culture. For their American colleagues, the process of recovery has already begun. Jennifer Scanlon and Juliann Sivulka have both drawn attention to the important contributions women made to the advertising industry throughout the twentieth century and to the role they played in shaping the 'modern' American woman.²

With turnover of AUD 2 billion in 2015, the Australian advertising industry comprised 7,890 businesses, employing 19,110 people: around 0.1 per cent of the workforce.³ For most of the scope of this book, however, the number of people employed in the industry is more difficult to pin down. In 1930, it was estimated that between 1200 and 1500 individuals were employed by agencies across Australia and New Zealand.⁴ By 1970, Australia's biggest agencies employed around 3,000 people between them, with 496 of those working for the largest agency, George Patterson.⁵ The proportion of women employed in these agencies was not recorded.

Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century aims to reveal the important role women have played in the development of the Australian advertising industry, to shed light on women's struggle to reach the higher echelons of the industry, and to consider why the popular image of the advertising executive is at such variance from the

reality.⁶ It does so by offering a broader definition of advertising than is usually provided. Advertising is usually understood as the activities of the advertising agency, but, given that such agencies became the central form of organisation for the Australian industry only after World War Two, this is a limited and limiting definition, obscuring the flexibility of advertising work and the fluidity of both women's and men's advertising careers.

Advertising is defined here more broadly: as the use of a set of specific skills in a range of paid and un-paid activities, including retail advertising, public relations, the creative industries, journalism, political activism and philanthropy, as well as mainstream advertising, in order to promote products, services and ideas. These skills – visual, written, administrative, organisational, psychological and performative – were sometimes but not always formally gained. Broadening the definition in this way brings more advertising women into view and enables us to rethink what 'success' in the industry might mean.

Extending the scope beyond (but still including) the narrow world of the advertising agency also helps to place advertising women in their broader social, political and economic contexts. Robert Crawford has highlighted two interconnected challenges advertising women faced in the twentieth century: to achieve realistic representation in advertisements and to be taken seriously as workers and contributors to the industry.⁷

This observation highlights the contradictions at the core of the advertising careers discussed in this book. Marilyn Lake has shown the problems Australian feminists faced, especially from the 1930s, because of the contradictions between ideas about women's 'natural' difference from men and the demands for women to have equal rights to men.⁸ These contradictions underpinned the advertising business. As the gendered division of labour was commandeered by the industry to provide a market for its clients' goods, creating women as 'natural' consumers (and men as 'natural' producers), advertising women found themselves in an ambiguous position. Required by the industry to provide 'the woman's point of view' in the production of advertising, as 'natural' consumers they could not also be the 'producers' of the sustained excellence in advertising work that would earn them executive success.

Advertising women responded to this ambiguity in diverse and complex ways. A number of the women discussed here became what Lake has called 'exemplary citizens': educated, middle-class professional

women who participated in non-party women's feminist networks, both national and international.⁹ These women responded to the issues raised by feminism in often contradictory ways, for example, using the industry's gendered division of labour to their advantage at the same time as they lobbied to abolish it from the broader community and agitating for equal pay for equal work but not for themselves or other advertising women.

Beyond this attention to women's ambiguous position in the advertising industry, *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century* offers an international perspective on the work of Australian advertising women. Australia's position as an outpost of empire has meant that, unlike American advertising practitioners, Australians have always had to look out to the world, using the networks of empire, and later, global organisations, to gain skills and experience, and explore new technologies. The effects of globalisation on the Australian advertising industry have long been debated but recent work has shown that rather than being a passive recipient in this process, Australia has, in fact, been actively engaged in the global exchange of advertising skills, knowledge and experience. By placing Australian advertising women in a global context, *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century* explores the effects of internationalism and globalisation on their careers both at home and abroad and records their willingness to seize the opportunities offered by a fledgling industry and rapidly evolving technologies.

Finally, the book is a snapshot of Australian women's involvement in the advertising industry. The women discussed here were selected because their stories demonstrate the industry's range and flexibility, but those very features mean that many more women than these have worked in and around Australian advertising since its inception. As will become clear, Australian advertising women were mostly (but not all) educated white women from the professional middle classes. Despite this shared background, the attitudes of these women towards advertising and the capitalist imperatives behind it varied greatly. Their stories reveal that, in contrast to popular belief, advertising practitioners were not all evil propagandists plotting to trick the public into buying products they did not need, but were, in fact, mostly ordinary Australians who made use of the industry to support themselves and their families.

The book begins by examining women's entry into the Australian advertising industry in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Advertising was, and is, a form of office work and most women entered

the industry as typists and stenographers before progressing into specifically advertising work, including by opening their own agencies. Chapter 1 explores the context of their entry, including popular depictions of advertising work for women and media anxieties about the high salaries of advertising women elsewhere in the world.

Scholars have traced the complex, interconnected networks, both national and international, formed by women pursuing a feminist agenda in the post-suffrage, twentieth century.¹¹ The connections between consumer culture and these networks in Australia have been demonstrated through studies of these women's consumerist activities.¹² Chapter 2 draws attention to additional connections between the rise of consumer culture and women's networks through a case study of the *Australian Woman's World* (launched in 1921) and its editor, Irene Frances Taylor, who exploited local feminist networks in Melbourne to find content for her magazine and build her audience, at the same time as she leveraged consumer culture to fund her feminist activities.¹³

As Angela Woollacott has shown, Australian women used their racial privilege to exploit colonial networks from the second half of the nineteenth century, taking modernity to the world as political citizens and technologically advanced travellers.¹⁴ Chapter 3 traces the career of one such woman, Elma Kelly, a university-educated chemist and feminist activist who left Australia for China in 1931, and built an advertising empire that would stretch eventually from Hong Kong to Singapore and beyond.

Chapter 4 continues the focus on advertising women and feminist networks, turning to Clara Behrend who reached the highest levels in Australian advertising while looking out to the world through her activities in a global women's organisation, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (IFBPW). Formed in 1930, the IFBW aimed 'to *protect* and to *promote* the economic and professional interests of business and professional women, and to *secure* limited action by them.' This included agitating for equal pay, which, as the chapter shows, was an ambiguous aspiration for an advertising woman such as Behrend.¹⁵ The theme of Australian women's global networking is extended in Chapter 5 with the investigation of the careers of women who took advantage of networks – colonial and advertising – to travel the world, learning new skills and gaining experience with emerging technologies but who returned to Australia to build, using their newly acquired skills, successful careers in the local industry.

The diversity and flexibility of advertising work meant that the skills women learnt in the industry could be exploited in related but separate activities. Chapter 6 draws attention to a small cohort of left-wing women activists who supported themselves by working for lengthy periods in the advertising industry. It also shows Australian advertising women successfully using their skills in creative endeavours outside the advertising industry, including fine art, fiction writing and television script writing, and considers women's shift from advertising to the emerging discipline of public relations after World War Two.

In Australia, as elsewhere, women learnt to consume from other women. American women shaped home economics as a women's profession, deploying gendered ideas of domestic expertise combined with an appeal to modern scientific method.¹⁶ Chapter 7 traces this process in Australia, as women employed in and around the Australian advertising industry – by advertising agencies, retail stores, manufacturers and commercial broadcasting stations – guided women consumers through the complexities of ever-expanding choice, showing them how to incorporate brands and products into their lives. Chapter 8 extends this discussion, looking closely at the cohort of women who were employed to show women how to shop for clothes in the decades immediately after World War Two, when Australian tastes began to outgrow that of the British Empire. These women used their artistic and organisational skills to carve out influential careers around the fashion industry, running fashion accounts for advertising agencies and, in one case, using the expertise gained in advertising to establish Australia's foremost fashion magazine. Through their work on the Australian Wool Board, they also helped embed a new kind of consumption, one that was closely linked to a more assertive Australian nationalism.

The final chapter of *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century* explores the impact of the 1960s and 1970s women's movement on advertising women. By the end of the 1960s, women had been working in the modern advertising industry for more than 60 years. Better educated than any previous generation of women, they were now employed in every department of the advertising agency. Yet, with few exceptions, they were yet to reach the higher echelons of agency life.

Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century presents what the sociologist Sean Nixon has called 'a lumpy history' of Australian women's engagement in the advertising industry.¹⁷ Women were a continual presence in Australian advertising throughout the twentieth

century, sometimes in sharp focus (when a woman achieved a ‘first’, for example, or the press had space to fill) but mostly hidden from view. Their contribution resists neat periodisation, supporting scholarship that questions the notion of first, second and third wave feminisms.¹⁸ By broadening the definition of the advertising industry beyond agencies and including women working in related areas using advertising skills, their previously untold stories recast the history of the advertising industry in Australia and help to explain their absence from most of the boardrooms of advertising agencies today.

Notes

- 1 Communications Council, 2013 Salary Survey, quoted in n. 1, Award Media Release, 19 May 2014; ‘The Efficient Adman’, *Economist*, 4 March 1999; S. Selinger-Morris, ‘Siimon Reynolds Sheds His Playboy Image’, *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, 12 April 2012.
- 2 J. Scanlon (2000) ‘Advertising Women: The J. Walter Thompson Co. Women’s Editorial Department’, in J. Scanlon (ed.) *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press), pp. 201–25; J. Sivulka (2009) *Ad Women: How They Impact What We Need, Want, and Buy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books); J. Scanlon (2013) ‘“A Dozen Ideas to the Minute”’: Advertising Women, Advertising to Women’, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 5, 273–90.
- 3 Ibisworld: Advertising Agencies in Australia: Market Research Report, July 2015: <http://www.ibisworld.com.au/industry/default.aspx?indid=2337>; <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0>, accessed 21 July 2015.
- 4 Edwin Rose, ‘The Organisation of Professional Advertising Service’, *Newspaper News*, October 1930, p. 23, cited in R. Crawford (2008) *But Wait There’s More ... A History of Australian Advertising* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing), p. 67.
- 5 ‘Agencies Billing over \$5 Million’, *Advertising and Newspaper News*, 11 June 1971, 7.
- 6 Recent discussion about women’s role in advertising has centred on the absence of women from creative leadership roles: M. Ward, ‘The Mad Men Industry – Attracting and Retaining Women’, <http://mumbrella.com.au/mad-men-industry-attracting-retaining-women-228326> accessed 31 October 2015. This is a global problem: for a summation of the difficulties faced by creative advertising women in the United States, see K. Mallia (2009) ‘Rare Birds: Why So Few Women Become Ad Agency Creative Directors’, *Advertising and Society Review*, 10, 3.

- 7 Crawford, *But Wait*, pp. 150–67.
- 8 M. Lake (1999) *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), pp. 173–74.
- 9 Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 139.
- 10 Women's entry into the professions in large numbers from the late nineteenth century is the subject of several histories. See, for example, A. Kwolek-Folland (1998) *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers) and A. Fahs (2011) *Out on Assignment: Newspaper Women and the Making of Modern Public Space* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).
- 11 L. Rupp (1997) *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press); J. Smart (2012) 'Mainstream Women's Organisations in Australia: The Challenges of National and International Co-operation after the Great War', *Women's History Review*, 21, 61–79.
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- 14 A. Woollacott (2001) *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 207, 209–11, 215, 220.
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- 16 S. Stage and V. Vincenti (1997) (eds.), *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press). C. Goldstein (2012) extends this study in *Creating Consumers: Home Economists in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press).

- 17 'Office Works: Historical Perspectives' Workshop, University of Technology, Sydney, 16 April 2014.
- 18 K. A. Loughlin and J. L. Castledine (2011) *Breaking the Wave: Women, Their Organisations and Feminism* (New York: Routledge).

1

Advertising: A Suitable Career?

Abstract: Dickenson shows that in the first decade of the twentieth century Australian women were attracted to advertising work by the promise of personal growth, good pay and the opportunity to travel. Reports arrived from overseas of women succeeding in the industry but support for women in advertising came with heavy caveats around the potential impact of advertising work on women's 'femininity'. Despite this ambivalence, Australian women responded to the siren call of the industry from its earliest days. Most then remained in support roles but, as this chapter shows, some went on to build strong and rewarding careers.

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From the 1890s 'The Business Girl' became a familiar sight on Australia's city streets: 'Trim and wholesome in white-spotted navy print', a business girl 'invariably looked as if she had just left the morning shower, for the effect was fresh and sweet'.¹ She performed predominantly clerical work – typing, filing and stenography. These tasks required little initiative and women in Australia, as in other industrialised societies, were encouraged to be satisfied with such work, because pursuing more challenging careers might threaten the 'traditional' home. Those women who were satisfied with a support role in business could use their 'wifely' skills and 'sunny personality' to make themselves indispensable to the firm's smooth running. Increasingly, though, the modern woman was attracted by the possibility of personal growth and satisfaction a business career offered.²

For such women, the advertising industry was ideal. The division of labour in the advertising office provided opportunities beyond clerical work for women with the skills and interest in pursuing them. As part of a bohemian world of creativity – a world of writers and artists – the industry seemed glamorous and varied. It even offered the possibility of travel. Reports arrived from overseas of women succeeding in the industry, and Australian women read English novels featuring advertising agencies in which women played prominent roles. But support for women in advertising came with heavy caveats around the potential impact of advertising work on women's 'femininity'. Despite this ambivalence, Australian women responded to the siren call of the industry from its earliest days. Most then remained in support roles but, as this chapter will show, some – more than is usually accounted for – built strong and rewarding careers.

From the end of the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of educated, middle-class Australian women sought paid work.³ Advertising provided an acceptable route for many of these women to enter the workforce, and Australian newspapers encouraged women to seek careers in the industry, promoting it as 'just about the only profession in which women have equal chances to men'.⁴ This was because it was 'a comparatively new profession free from the conventions and traditions' which 'often bar the progress of women in older established callings'. In advertising, 'the clever girl' soon made her way, and once her work began 'to tell', promotion was much more rapid than in 'more stereotyped avenues of employment'.⁵

Women were advised to put aside their fears of failure and penury and embrace an interesting career; working hard at something that did

not interest you made a woman sick, wrote one advertising woman. Jane Moore had started as a stenographer in an advertising agency (it is not clear whether in Australia, Britain or the United States) but found the work dull and now worked as private secretary to the manager of the same agency, earning four times her previous salary. The shift had saved her from a nervous breakdown. The work was fun: Moore recalled entering the office of ‘one of the most enthusiastic advertising solicitors [canvassers] I ever knew’. ‘The first thing that caught my eye’, she wrote, ‘was a big, handsome motto, which read: “There’s no work in this office, because we love what we are doing. It is all play.”’⁶

America, the home of the modern advertising industry, provided the first role models for Australian women. As early as 1900, they were told of the ‘marvellous activity of American women’, especially in Boston, where women owned the two largest advertising agencies and employed only women.⁷ Two years later, Louisa Lawson’s feminist paper the *Dawn* noted that, although few Australian women were employed in advertising, in New York women were doing well in the industry.⁸ Perhaps American women were ‘more enterprising than their sisters elsewhere’, Lawson wrote, but then they did have ‘greater opportunities’. American advertising was reported to be ‘one of the best and richest fields for women’. Beatrice Hastings, the director of ‘one of the largest trade papers in New York’, was paid \$25,000 (£5,000) a year (as much as the chief executive of the largest Australian company in any industry), and there were ‘several women’ who made \$15,000 (£3,000) a year. These were known as ‘five-figure women’, and there were many of them in other businesses, too, including women bank managers in New York and directors of various trust companies.⁹ ‘One of the best paid women in the field of advertising’ was an American, Jane Johnston Martin, who earned £2,000 a year working as an advertisement manager in New York. She had started her working life as a stenographer with a ‘lace and embroidery house’, then, at 19, became a private secretary to the owner of a patent medicine firm, where she took on the role of the advertising manager.¹⁰ Reports also arrived in Australia in 1923 of the achievements of Margaret Woodrow Wilson, who was working as a partner in a national advertising agency ‘with headquarters in New York’. ‘The advertising game’ had particularly appealed to Wilson, the eldest daughter of the former American president, and she had ‘prepared herself for it by 12 months’ intensive study.¹¹

Visits to Australia by successful British advertising women were also widely reported.¹² Arriving in Melbourne in 1928, Miss J. A. Reynolds,

the managing director of Samson Clark Advertising in London, advised that: 'to the modern woman the business of advertising offers the biggest scope and makes the most picturesque appeal.' If a woman wanted to succeed in advertising she had to make her work 'the chief object of her life' and be prepared to sacrifice other things – marriage and children – for it. Women were particularly good at advertising because they were 'more original [than men] – often more venturesome too'.¹³

Women's gift for originality became a theme of this promotion. Leila Lewis wrote from London encouraging Australian women working in publicity and advertising to 'be individual' and ambitious. Her career had started in a Fleet Street advertising agency where 'everything came my way – copywriting, ordering blocks and newspaper space, making up appropriations. I had to pass the proofs, type letters and, finally – never watch the clock!' Lewis had 'set out to get to the top of the [publicity] tree, which means... that until I get the most important billet at the best salary that has ever been paid to a publicity manager I shall keep on toiling'.¹⁴ News also arrived from London of the formation of a Women's Advertising Association, and its president Miss Foster introduced her team of 'charming girls' who worked in 'an equally charming studio' in 'happy feminine activity'. According to Foster, the chances for success in advertising were 'equally divided among men and women'; 'the woman advertisement writer should prove herself a specialist' in preparing advertisements for goods that 'specially attract the woman buyer'.¹⁵ There were Australian role models, too. From Western Australia came the example of 'a woman advertising manager', Gertrude Morgan, who publicised cars and 'a well-known tea company', with the help of six assistants.¹⁶ 'Miss Australia 1926', the former Beryl Mills, found the promise of an advertising career irresistible; in 1928 that 'famous beauty' announced she was commencing business in Sydney as 'an advertising service agent'.¹⁷

This inspirational commentary was tempered by anxieties around women's participation in the industry. Australian newspapers reported, with surprise, that advertising women earned 'massive' salaries overseas. One New York advertising woman earned '£5,500 a year', but ambitious women contemplating a move to the United States were warned: 'the work is not easy and many women break under the strain': senior advertising practitioners were expected to achieve results without the security enjoyed by older professions.¹⁸ In London, some advertising women were earning more than male doctors and, in one London advertising firm, five women were 'receiving salaries in excess of that paid to any Cabinet

Minister'.¹⁹ These five women – a 'managing director, director, [company] secretary, space buyer and production manager' – had all begun 'in humble positions'. Expanding on this report, the *Kalgoorlie Times* pointed out, ominously, that four of these five women were 'unmarried'.²⁰ Even in Australia women were earning good money in advertising. May Dexter – who supported herself 'with a clever and facile pen... [combining] freelance journalism, advertising and publicity work' – made an income 'many married men with families would envy'.²¹

Anxieties about women's financial success in advertising emerged from a broader context of deep concerns about women's 'invasion' into 'man's provinces'.²² Faced with accusations of their alleged expropriation of men's public space, advertising women felt obliged to justify their presence in the nascent industry. Annie Merloo, who ran 'one of London's largest advertising agencies', told journalists that, as 'the chief purchasers' in a household, women were 'naturally the cleverest disposers of goods'. A woman knew best how to 'appeal to a woman' and that was 'one point in favour of a woman advertising agent'.²³ The *Australian Women's Weekly* (AWW) agreed. Launched in June 1933 and pitched precisely at this expanding market, the new journal argued that custom had given men 'a sort of pre-emptive right to this kind of labour' but 'the fact that something like 80 per cent of buying decisions were made by women or influenced by them' gave women 'a natural advantage' in the business.²⁴ The Australian advertising industry press concurred. *Ink* reprinted an article from the US industry press, arguing that advertising agencies were 'medieval' compared to retail advertising departments in their reluctance to hire women. Didn't they realise that women were the 'Buying Sex', asked the author. Women even influenced the purchase of automobiles.²⁵

The argument that women were the 'chief purchasers' of goods could be twisted to show women's unsuitability for advertising work. One (probably male) scribe observed that women were yet to achieve 'any very notable position in [American] advertising' and 'no woman [had] yet made a speech to the [American advertising industry's] National Convention'. The explanation was biology. Women, he argued, were 'the natural buyers of the world' and they were not 'good sellers'. Selling was 'conquest' and 'fighting'. Buying was 'diplomacy' and 'a man's dignity [was] all against it'.²⁶ This simplistic formulation would have significant consequences for women's success in the advertising industry.

Advertising's possibilities for women's independence and self-expression were also explored in popular fiction in the first half of the twentieth

century. Susan Smulyan has shown how the advertising agency provided novelists with an ideal site for the expression of middle-class anxieties about mass culture in America.²⁷ Such novels were also read in Australia, and Australian newspapers published numerous short stories set in and around advertising. Most protagonists were men but not all, and the industry was portrayed as a suitable environment for women to meet their future partners, men who were urbane and fascinating, if overly driven.²⁸ A stream of novels and, later, movies used the advertising industry and the relationships between the men and women who worked in it as shorthand for the problems of modernity.²⁹ Popular English authors Ethel Mannin and Margaret Storm Jameson, both former advertising copywriters (and, interestingly, both, for a time at least, left activists, a combination that was seen in Australia too),³⁰ wrote bestsellers in this vein, using the advertising industry as a backdrop for their explorations of issues of modernity, including class and the growth of consumer society, as well as the position of women.³¹ Widely read in Australia, their work presented a complex picture of the suitability of advertising for women: in their formulation the environment was both rewarding and dangerous.

Storm Jameson's *Three Kingdoms* (1926) was, perhaps, the most overtly concerned of this genre with the choices faced by modern women, based, as it was, on the author's own experience.³² The novel told the story of a young English mother determined to pursue a career in advertising during World War One. The protagonist Laurence Storm leaves her seven-month-old son with his grandmother and sets off for London to find a job. She is soon employed as a copywriter by 'the only London advertising house that rivalled the half dozen biggest American ones.'³³ Fuelled by ambition, Laurence spends the next decade 'becoming an over-driven advertising man [*sic*]', 'a cynical hard-bitten ad man.'³⁴ In this world, 'nothing talks sense but money':

[Advertising agencies] overwork you. Half the staff is at war. They've discovered I'll work twice as hard as any men in the place. They think: oh, she's a woman: work her for all she's worth. Hard work is all she's really good for. It's not true. I can do better than that and I'm going to prove it to them.³⁵

But Laurence decides she won't ask 'them' for money – 'they've already given me that. I shall ask for responsibility'. She aims to be the perfect businesswoman and the perfect mother.³⁶ The first she achieves, becoming 'the only woman in London who's got herself to the top of an advertising house'. Her singularity is explained thus: 'most women are not in

love with their jobs ... and will stay where the Lord put them, which is in subjection. Women are mostly interested in marrying, some in independence (heaven help them).’ Laurence writes ‘good selling copy’, ‘better than anyone on the Napier staff’, and gains an industry-wide reputation.³⁷

The bulk of the novel records Laurence’s struggle to become the perfect mother, which she eventually achieves but at the expense of her career. On the way, we are given insights into the advertising world Jameson had encountered when she entered advertising in 1913. A day in an advertising office consists of ‘hours of grinding concentrated drudgery, broken by little flurries of excitement’. Laurence’s work for a canned goods brand is described with cynicism. The gifted copywriter employs ‘all the catch-words made familiar by popular science’; ‘vitality is the buzz word.’ ‘Why grow old?’ she asks her readers, appealing to their ‘terror of the effects of old age on health and beauty’ and ‘Readers gape with wide mouths for more life, more beauty, more happiness and success.’³⁸

Published in the same year, Ethel Mannin’s novel *Sounding Brass* also presents the British advertising industry as a cut-throat, masculine environment. The tropes of later popular representations are foreshadowed here. The book’s protagonist, James Rickard, falls in love with the industry, seduced by the thrills of capitalism. ‘Advertising!’ he declares, ‘The throbbing thunderous music of the word!’ The industry is ‘the great power of the Press put to the building up of a nation’s trade.’ Mannin likens James’ love and passion for advertising to ‘his first sex passion’, and we are shown how he chooses success in the industry over personal relationships. Higher ambitions are thwarted; Jim had aspired to be a journalist but settled instead for advertising. The industry offers him social mobility. Born into a family of coal miners, Jim becomes James and he founds his own agency, Premier Publicity (‘The only publicity service that Guarantees Success’), and is able to purchase a Rolls Royce car. But his transformation is never assured: he is ‘either a successful ideas man, an artist in a very powerful profession or a tawdry little vulgarian.’³⁹ There are six women in his agency’s typing pool, but it is left to a young female character to describe an anonymous ‘advertising woman’. ‘Slightly grim, in green, with the badge of the Advertising Convention on her flat breast, lean of jaw, hard of mouth, snappy of speech’. ‘But she at least’, thought Pearl, ‘did not sit back and wait for some man to deck her with pearls and diamonds as the outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual vulgarity.’ Financial independence had cost this advertising woman her femininity.⁴⁰

Mannin's novel *Ragged Banners* (1931) is concerned only briefly with the advertising industry but its portrait of an agency differs greatly from that offered in her earlier novel. As the anti-hero enters an advertising firm in central London for an interview, he hears 'the click of several typewriters'. The agency foyer features thick pile carpet and bowls of roses, and 'a young woman dressed for a garden party rather than the business office' rises from the desk to greet him. In an example of a woman employee 'extending women's home functions to the work-place' the agency has a 'mother': Miss Hilda Brenson.⁴¹ The only female copywriter in the firm, Miss Brenson is 30 years old and has been with the firm since she was 15. She is 'an office wife': too loyal to the firm to go ahead with her wedding, which would mean leaving her job.⁴² Like Moore's real life agency, Mannin's agency is full of self-help signs, 'a more emotional place' than the dry accountancy firm owned by the anti-hero's father. This is an agency run by and for women, at least at the everyday level. Women at management level are more problematic: the company secretary is described as 'an elderly sex-starved virgin with horn-rims and a masculine taste in dress': she too has sacrificed her femininity for financial success.⁴³ This ambivalence towards successful businesswomen reflected contemporary anxieties. Sir Charles Higham, the advertising magnate, and Mannin's former boss and close friend, had recently observed: 'Women will dominate the business world in 20 years time if the men do not pull themselves together. Women are better employees than men, more energetic, more reliable, more thorough, neater and more cheerful.'⁴⁴

Dorothy L. Sayers' tenth novel the bestselling *Murder Must Advertise* (1933) is also set in a London advertising agency.⁴⁵ Sayers famously worked as an advertising copywriter and produced the legendary campaign 'Guinness is Good for You'. Beyond the book's murder mystery, reviews noted its account of 'the everyday mode and manners among advertising experts'.⁴⁶ Fifty per cent of the staff at Pym's Publicity is female, but the copywriter Miss Meteyard is the most fully drawn female character. Oxford-educated, bright and cynical, she enjoys writing vulgar limericks. Sayers has fun with the lazy pigeonholing and consequent marginalisation of women copywriters: Miss Meteyard 'could write about practically anything except women's goods'. Male colleagues see her as 'a decent sort of female' who 'makes no allowances'. Female colleagues find her 'callous': a 'funny woman' who has 'no use for people's private feelings'.⁴⁷ Unperturbed by Miss Meteyard's abrasive character, one Australian

reader told the *AWW* that reading *Murder Must Advertise* had 'made her decide to become a copywriter'.⁴⁸

She was not alone. Despite these ambiguous messages about the industry's suitability for women, Australian women with skills valued by the advertising industry – writing, drawing and administrative – found their way into the advertising business in its three forms: the advertising agency, the retail advertising department and the manufacturer's advertising department. They did this through a variety of paths, including through the newspaper industry.

Violet Bawden took this path. Born in 1895 in the Central Victorian town of Bendigo, Bawden began her career aged 16 as a cartoonist at a local newspaper. Neither of the two local papers – the daily *Bendigo Advertiser* and the weekly *Bendigonian* – featured political cartoons or 'funnies', so Bawden must have learnt her craft drawing visuals for the many illustrated advertisements. After moving with her family to Melbourne in the early 1920s, she worked with two (unknown) advertising agencies before starting her own agency in 1925.⁴⁹ This she probably did through necessity: the 1924 electoral roll lists her occupation as home duties, which indicates a period of unemployment. Known as Vee Bee Advertising, Bawden's agency survived for at least ten years. She continued to work as a writer, although it is unclear in what capacity, and died, unmarried, in 1986.

Bawden used her sex as a point of difference to promote her agency. In 1925 she claimed to be 'the first woman' to open an advertising agency in Melbourne. She told *Woman's World* that she employed only women, although her father seems to have worked for her as a canvasser, which involved approaching advertisers for work.⁵⁰ Ten years later, Bawden was performing all the tasks required in an agency, from writing her own copy and designing the advertisements to acting as her own telephonist and stenographer, as well as specialising in the new 'wireless advertising and continuity'.⁵¹ Her multi-tasking was most likely a result of limited funds but she turned this into a positive, demonstrating to potential clients her virtuosity in the art of advertising.

Bawden's competence across the full range of advertising skills is not surprising. Australia's small industry has always demanded less specialisation than the larger industries in the United States and the United Kingdom. With the exception of radio advertising skills, Bawden would have picked up these all-round skills at the Bendigo newspaper where she worked in her teens. Before the 1940s, Australia had few full-service

advertising agencies, and newspaper editors and their art staff wrote and illustrated many advertisements.⁵² Many newspapers ran their own advertising agencies; the father of the renowned journalist and editor Ada Kidgell (the future Ada Holman, whose husband was the New South Wales Premier William Holman) was just one prominent example.⁵³

Sydney also had its 'first woman advertising agent'. Aileen A. N. Small opened her agency in 1918. She may have been the first woman to do so in Australia, certainly earlier than Bawden and far earlier than has previously been suggested.⁵⁴ Small's path into the industry seems to have been through promotional work she performed during World War One, including organising a campaign to collect 'Clothes for the Destitute Belgians' through Farmer's department store in Sydney. Her knowledge of nascent marketing techniques is clear in these appeals, including addressing the target audience directly as 'you' and using subheads to draw attention to the 'call to action.' Small later wrote a book to raise funds for the Fifth Australian Division, which had suffered heavy losses in France, and marketed it extensively.⁵⁵ As we will see in later chapters, she was something of a path-breaker in this regard, as women increasingly used new promotional and marketing techniques for charitable causes, especially during World War Two and afterwards, in the development of social marketing. Like Bawden, Small seems to have preferred working with women; she advertised regularly for a 'smart girl' to help with messages and office work.⁵⁶ In 1930 she was chosen by 'a Sydney journal' as one of nine women who had 'achieved at least a modicum of renown in various and interesting occupations in Australia': Small believed the advertising field offered 'tremendous scope for woman.'⁵⁷ Not tremendous enough, however, to prevent Small finding herself in the bankruptcy court in 1938, where she informed the court that she had recently refused a lucrative job offer carrying a salary of £1,500 a year 'because she valued her independence and freedom more'. She owed £3,711 with assets of £86.⁵⁸

In the earliest decades of the Australian industry, advertising agencies employed few women, and those few worked in administration and as artists. As we will see in a later chapter, women also found work as designers and writers in the advertising departments of manufacturing firms. Perhaps the most common path for women to enter advertising in the first decades of the twentieth century, however, was via the advertising department of the large retail stores in the capital cities.⁵⁹ Eleanor Donaldson, who joined David Jones' Sydney department store in 1914

aged just 16, would become the most powerful woman in the Australian advertising industry. She left secretarial college with strong typing and shorthand speeds and glowing references and joined DJs as a junior in the manager's department. Soon after, she won an in-house advertising competition, and, recognising her potential, the manager instructed her to write a trial advertisement every week until he judged she was ready to be transferred to the advertising department. Thrust into the 'hard-boiled male-dominated world of advertising', Donaldson gradually worked her way up to advertising manager. Until her retirement in the mid-1960s, she managed a large department of copywriters, artists and trainees; in 1954 she oversaw 45 staff, 38 of them women. Interviewed in that year, Donaldson explained that she loved her work because 'retail advertising is always varied – because of the great assortment of merchandise, and your work is among the things that every woman loves'. She influenced a generation of advertising women and men, and the Eleanor Donaldson Creative Writing Scholarships, which provided budding copywriters with three months' work experience at David Jones, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and advertising agencies, were named after her.⁶⁰

Women also contributed to the advertising industry as freelance writers and artists, as well as lecturers and teachers. Edith M. Loudon, a notable Sydney artist, worked as a freelance illustrator for the advertising industry and, in 1903, delivered a lecture to the Arts and Craft Society on 'Art as Applied to Advertising'.⁶¹ By 1923 Loudon was running her own advertising service.⁶² Her contemporaries, Thea Proctor and Margaret Preston, also produced advertising art.⁶³ In 1930 two women taught in the advertising course at Melbourne's Swinburne Technical College and, a decade later, the Art Training Institute in Melbourne – 'Australia's Foremost Commercial Art School' – employed nine women amongst its 'galaxy of stars', including the copywriters Phyllis Cameron and George Patterson's 'Expert Descriptive Writer', Wynwode MacDonald.⁶⁴

From the advertising industry's inception, representations of its suitability for women were contradictory. It provided safe, clean work that was closely aligned with women's 'natural' duties. Women brought particular, gendered qualities to advertising but working in the industry also threatened to distract women from their proper duties as wives and mothers. 'De-sexed', advertising women became cynical and acquired disturbing masculine qualities. They were encouraged to achieve in the industry, but not too well, in case they outflanked men, the industry's 'natural' inhabitants. Despite this message, women did pursue advertising

careers, mostly in retail advertising or by opening their own agencies, setting aside any contradictions between their 'natural' and commercial roles, and in some cases, using their sex as a point of difference. In the next chapter we will meet another woman who used her sex as a selling point, combining advertising and journalism in order to educate women consumers and advance the feminist cause.

Notes

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- 5 'In the Woman's World', *Daily News*, 15 January 1927, 10.
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- 8 'A New Business for Women', *The Dawn*, 1 April 1903, p. 14.
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2

Educating Shoppers in the 1920s

Abstract: *Scholars have called for more attention to the role gender played in the development of consumer culture. In this chapter, Dickenson responds to this call by examining Australian advertising women's impact on the creation of Australian women as a market category, using a case study of the journal Australian Woman's World (founded 1921) and its editor, Frances Taylor. The chapter examines the relationship between the journal's editorial and advertising content, the practices and processes involved in putting the paper together, and the feminist ideas and worldview that lay behind the editor's choices and decisions.*

Dickenson, Jackie. *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
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In the first decades of the twentieth century, women taught advertising at art schools and technical colleges, worked in advertising agencies and the advertising departments of retail stores and factories and even ran their own agencies. They also joined professional advertising associations. In June 1925 the Ad Club of Victoria invited a group of advertising women to its weekly luncheon because it had 'realised that a number of [the women] were making good in the advertising line'. Organisers asked the women to discuss among themselves the question of linking up with the Ad Club, by first forming an individual organisation and then affiliating with the men. Led by Miss Frances Taylor, the women informed the men that they did not want affiliation. They wanted 'direct membership, sharing the same club privileges and responsibilities as the men.' The suggestion was 'hailed with delight and the matter was settled over braised chops and a cup of tea.'¹

Irene Frances Taylor was 'a shining example of what a woman can achieve in this line of business'. Midge – as she was affectionately known in journalistic circles – had 'a persuasive way with her'.² Four years earlier she had launched her illustrated monthly journal – *Australian Woman's World: A Town and Country Journal for Australian Women* – and had since 'kept it filled with payable advertisements, doing the canvassing [for advertisers] herself'. As the editors of influential commercial publications, women such as Frances Taylor were advertising educators of a different kind, teaching middle-class women how to consume the new products that flooded the Australian market after the First World War, guiding them through the multiplicity of choices that threatened to expose their judgement and challenge their status.

The rise of consumer culture around the world has attracted scholars working in a range of disciplines, including history, but in Australia there has been more limited consideration of it.³ Casey and Martens have drawn attention to the relative neglect of gender in these studies and called for more attention to women's role in making consumer culture.⁴ This chapter responds to their call by examining advertising women's impact on the making of the modern consumer, especially on the creation of Australian women as a market category through a study of Taylor and her journal. It looks at the relationship between the journal's editorial and advertising content, the practices and processes involved in putting the paper together and the political ideas and worldview that lay behind the editor's choices and decisions.



FIGURE 2.1 *Frances Taylor. MS 10726.*

Source: Frances Taylor. Diary and letter, 1916 October. Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.

As we have seen, in 1925 Taylor's journal featured Violet Bawden as an example of a young woman taking advantage of the opportunities for women provided by the advertising industry. A cosmopolitan monthly, *Woman's World*, as it was known, carried many such articles on women's professional, political and cultural achievements from Australia and around the world, supported by advertisements promoting the latest international fashions, beauty products and travel companies.

Like Bawden, Taylor gained her advertising know-how at one of Victoria's lively country newspapers. Born in Melbourne in 1890, Taylor grew up in Canterbury, New Zealand, where her father was a Congregationalist minister, before moving back to Melbourne and studying at Presbyterian Ladies College. After finishing school, she took a job as secretary to the manager and editor of the *Mildura Cultivator* in Northwest Victoria, a widely read newspaper founded in 1888.⁵ In this role, Taylor learned aspects of running a newspaper – layout, editing and advertising – and met a woman with whom she would work closely, the renowned photographer Ruth Hollick.⁶ In 1916 Taylor made headlines when she became the first horsewoman to ride from Mildura to Melbourne. Settled back in the city, she edited the trade journal of the Grocers' Association of Victoria (the *Southern Grocer*) and, later, the *Gum Tree*, the journal of the Victorian branch of the Forest League, a conservationist organisation of which Taylor was secretary, before working as a freelance journalist.⁷ In 1921 she was injured in a tram accident, and while convalescing in a 'bush hut' in the Dandenong Mountains to save money she resolved to start her own paper. Like Bawden, Taylor had found herself 'forced to start anew' and decided to make her own job.⁸

With little money behind her, Taylor needed to sell advertising space in her non-existent paper before she could commence publication. She toured Melbourne's businesses armed with 'a magazine of blank pages', a clear vision of 'what a woman's magazine' could achieve, and her gift for persuasion. Selling her vision to sceptical strangers must have been a daunting task, as the account by Ida Coffey ('Penelope' of the radio station 3UZ) recalling her own attempts to sell advertising space at this time shows:

The business people were shy of anything new. 'Radio advertising!' they would say; 'Not for me!' 'No good for my business; and anyway, what experience have you had? What makes you think you could sell my goods?' And so the old story went on... walking till I was footsore and weary, and getting pretty dispirited too; but like the British Bulldog, I had tasted blood and wouldn't let go.⁹

Nevertheless, Taylor managed to secure enough advertising to produce the first issue of *Women's World*, which appeared on 1 December 1921. She might well have leveraged contacts made while working at the *Southern Grocer*: indeed, two of her regular advertisers, Bosisto and Hoadley, also advertised in the grocers' journal. Her journal would achieve excellent circulation numbers – 10,000 subscribers and 12,000 readers in 1925¹⁰ – and continue publication into the 1950s, some 20 years after Taylor's premature death from cancer.¹¹

Taylor aimed to 'provide the intelligent Australian woman with an up-to-date paper dealing with the latest developments in the world of women.'¹² Her vision for the paper was underpinned by her own political and social commitments. Her target audience – the 'intelligent woman' – was just like Taylor and her women friends: a new type of woman, well educated, ambitious and resolutely middle class. Taylor's vision was feminist but not reformist. Although her journal aimed to show that modern women had choices, it presented this message amidst more 'traditional' fare from 'the world of women,' including articles on the monarchy, celebrities and women's domestic duties. For most of these white, middle-class women paid work was a pastime until they married well, and Taylor's journal rarely engaged with the plight of Indigenous or working-class women.

In the 1920s and 1930s, educated, middle-class women such as Taylor were drawn to women's feminist and political organisations.¹³ White Australian women had received the vote at federal level in 1902, but in 1920 no woman had secured a seat in parliament. Women stood for election (notably Vida Goldstein) but usually as independents because the organised political parties favoured the pre-selection of men.¹⁴ Taylor was a prominent member of Melbourne's Lyceum Club, a social club for professional and tertiary-educated women, which had been founded in 1912. At the Club's rooms in Collins Street, women gathered for lunch and afternoon tea, and to hear lectures from overseas and interstate visitors.¹⁵

The founders of the Lyceum Club insisted that women could not qualify for membership simply because of wealth or social standing; members needed to be interested in a 'serious' pursuit, such as philanthropy, community service, education, medicine, science, writing, music or the arts. Taylor's membership supports this aspiration, as she had little money of her own. Membership of the Club, as well as feminist organisations such as the Victorian Women's Citizen Movement (WCM), were invaluable, however, for an ambitious businesswoman such as Taylor

because of the access these organisations provided to women with powerful connections. Her Lyceum Club friends – fellow members of ‘the Press Gang’, as they were known – included Stella Allen (‘Vesta’ of the *Argus* whose articles Taylor’s journal closely resembled),¹⁶ Anna Brennan, the path-breaking lawyer and sister of Bill Brennan, the editor of the *Argus*, and the journalist Kathleen Syme of the *Age*.¹⁷ These friends gathered for social events and political talks, many of which dealt with issues Taylor would tackle in her journal. Taylor and Syme were both present, for example, when the British journalist Lady Burnham, visiting Melbourne for the 1925 Imperial Press Conference,¹⁸ spoke to the Club on the ‘ever-present problem of dealing with young people today’. According to Burnham, ‘home influence’ had weakened since the Boer War, and a dearth of ‘duty and discipline’ led to girls whose ‘mothers were too preoccupied with their own amusement’ going out ‘every night un-chaperoned with their men friends’. Burnham linked this louche behaviour to the ‘growth of communism in our midst’, finishing her talk with the observation that ‘the saddest thing in the world is when all are at each other’s throats and class is set against class’.¹⁹

As a member of the non-party Women’s Citizen Movement, which worked to get women elected to parliament, Taylor was a feminist activist. In 1926 the WCM selected Taylor, along with Kathleen Gilman Jones, the headmistress of Melbourne Girls’ Grammar, to represent the organisation at two important international conferences, which were scheduled to take place in Europe that year: the Tenth International Woman Suffrage Alliance Congress in Paris in May, and the Empire Conference of Women in London the following month.²⁰ Interviewed on her return to Australia, Taylor observed that the Paris conference had shown her ‘how little the women of different countries knew about each other’s conditions’. The British delegation was ‘suspicious of protective legislation’, standing for equal conditions in industry and arguing ‘anything else is not feminism’. The Germans, on the contrary, showed pictures of women doing heavy manual work and supported protective legislation: ‘Not a single unanimous resolution could be submitted, except on the general question of equal political rights.’ The conference had resolved in favour of equal conditions with a clause that ‘unless women wished it no protective legislation should be made in their favour.’ Taylor supported this broad principle.

She had participated more actively at the London conference, delivering ‘a rousing speech on migration’.²¹ ‘The migration propaganda issued

from Australia House' was, she argued, 'responsible for the delusion that only domestics were wanted in the Commonwealth'. Australia 'wants educated women, especially county family girls of grit and initiative, not just domestic servants, Taylor told the assembly, suggesting that 'women with small capital should go out in couples on account of the loneliness and should obtain employment while learning local conditions before going on the land'.²² While in London, Taylor worked on Fleet Street for a month: she hoped to meet Lady Rhondda – the feminist activist and proprietor of the journal *Time and Tide*, which in its early years also had a feminist impulse and had been entirely run by women – but it is not clear if this meeting took place.²³ Taylor then travelled around England and Wales in 'a Ford lorry' with her friend from the Lyceum Club, Kathleen Syme.

Taylor's activism found expression in her journal, which became an exemplar of inter-war feminists' inclination to use advertising and consumer culture to advance their political culture. In its pages, 'New Woman' advocacy for social and political reform blended seamlessly with the 'frivolous consumption' of the 'Modern Girl'.²⁴ Reports of women's activities and achievements – individual and collective, across the political spectrum, and from around the globe – were interspersed with the latest fashions and celebrity gossip from home and abroad.²⁵ The focus on women's domestic work was juxtaposed with a cosmopolitan vision, in which even local businesses were presented with a European feel.²⁶ Behind Taylor's presentation of the New Woman and her daughter, the Modern Girl, lay awareness of broader anxieties about women's newfound confidence, and Taylor was unafraid to explore this. One feature article asked five local headmistresses for their estimations of the 'Modern Maid'. 'Restless, independent, capable, somewhat undisciplined, courageous, loveable and wholly difficult, she represents one of the greatest problems of the day,' replied one headmistress. Despite these reservations, the article's anonymous author (most likely Taylor) found the 'Modern Maid' to be 'frank and unaffected, quick, intelligent, capable and merry living in the age of competition'.²⁷ Another, written by 'D. M. Shaw', opened a series that asked 'What to do with our girls?' The first instalment considered girls working in offices at 'the beginning of the commercial age for women'. Office girls' 'lack of responsibility' could be traced, Shaw argued to 'that bane of business life, the girl who need not work, but takes a pleasant billet for "pocket money" – usurping the place of others [who need to work]'. 'All girls do not marry', the author

reminded readers, and 'the single woman has to provide for the bad years ahead'.²⁸

Little information remains about the conditions under which Taylor produced the *Woman's World*, but what there is makes it clear that she was able to turn her hand to a range of journalistic tasks.²⁹ At the beginning, she was 'the entire staff, editor, business manager and advertising manager'. With 'hardly a penny to her name' but with 'courage, talent and conviction of what a woman's magazine could be', she built an outstanding success. Taylor sold space in her magazine herself and, with her team, exploited and adapted her knowledge of advertising skills and techniques, including copywriting, design and layout to develop a modern magazine, all skills picked up at the newspaper and the trade journals, as well as 'in her library [of] the best books on newspaper management, colour printing, effective lay-outs and advertising', each of which had 'been read, and reread'.³⁰ She also produced feature articles, interviews, short stories and poems for the journal, her stories often reflecting her knowledge and love of the Australian bush.³¹ According to a later editor of *Women's World*, Taylor wrote the magazine at night and secured advertising during the day. In the lead-up to publication, she worked on the journal until the small hours and then took the copy from her rooms in the city to the printers. She leveraged her women's networks to produce and promote her journal and promulgate her feminist message. The honorary treasurer of the WCM and Taylor's fellow Lyceum Club member, Elma Kelly (who, as we will see, went on to carve out her own career in advertising) learned her craft during evenings spent at Taylor's apartment, helping the editor to lay out *Woman's World*. Taylor's connection with the Brennan family proved particularly useful: the *Argus* regularly promoted the *Woman's World*, quite possibly at a reduced rate, and continued to publish the journal after her death.

For one shilling, readers were provided with 40 elegant pages of prose, illustrations and advertisements.³² The cover of the first issue signalled the paper's direction. It featured a photograph of Dame Nellie Melba, the famous Australian singer who had attained international success, taken by Taylor's friend, Hollick, whose work appeared regularly in early issues of *Woman's World*.³³ Inside the front cover, the first advertisement – a full-page ad for the department store – the Myer Emporium, featuring affordable women's fashions.³⁴ On the next page, Taylor set out the journal's aims and objectives. 'Neither a fashion journal nor a society paper, controlled by no association or society, non-sectarian, non-political',

Woman's World aimed to 'serve Australian Women.'³⁵ The paper's ideal was 'first and always to provide the intelligent Australian woman with an up to date newspaper dealing with the latest developments in the world of women.' It would 'record the movements of prominent women, the doings of women's societies, and the achievements of individual women in work and sport'. There would be 'interviews with prominent women and men visiting our shores' and 'articles dealing with women's work in each profession, trade and craft'. The paper would provide 'practical advice on careers from women who have made good,' as well as 'fashion articles, well illustrated, forecasting the season's styles, practical articles – home decoration and home economics'. Promotions of her journal emphasised its fine illustrations and its 'diverting articles', which were of 'special interest to thinking women.'³⁶ Hers was a journal for women by women; with very few exceptions, women produced the journal's content, although it is difficult to ascertain how many of the articles Taylor published pseudonymously.³⁷ Her sex became a selling point, although perhaps not in the way she might have approved of; one promotion observed that 'The sphere of this paper [*Woman's World*] has widened wonderfully in recent months, and from both journalistic and production view-points it is a credit to the girl editor... and to the publishers.'³⁸

The journal's feminist mission was clear from the first issue, which carried a report from the Congress of the National Council of Women and items on a convention held by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, a Housewives Association exhibition, and the prospects of women standing for parliament in the United Kingdom and Australia.³⁹ A piece on cooperation between Americans and Australians signposted the journal's cosmopolitan mission.⁴⁰ The rest of the pages were taken up with the social and cultural concerns of middle-class women: the latest fashions, music and the arts, books, gossip about the monarchy and other (mostly women) celebrities and advice for the home.

The advertising in *Woman's World* reflected these concerns, too. Each issue ran to 40 pages with about 8 pages, or 20 per cent, consisting of advertisements. There were advertisements for a local interior decorator, then the national brands Hutton's Hams, and Gran-bits, a breakfast cereal from the Melbourne manufacturer Hancock's Golden Crusts. Ads for local fashion boutiques and other local businesses were clearly written and illustrated by Taylor, using her trademark airy typefaces and 'white space'. Local department stores such as Myer and Incleys produced their own ads, and Australia's relatively few advertising service agencies⁴¹

– just 40 of them paid to be listed in the 1923 directory⁴² – produced the ads of the big national and international brands, for example, the regular small-space ads for Helena Rubinstein's Valaze face cream.⁴³

The boundaries between advertisements and editorial were blurred in *Woman's World* from the beginning. Baby pages were juxtaposed with advertisements for Johnson's Baby Powder;⁴⁴ and fashion pages featured ads for local boutiques. One spread carried a promotion of 'Electric Servants' (toasters, percolators, 'hot pads', sewing machines and ovens) on the left, and an article by 'Jane Townsend' on the right, which advised women on how to halve their housework and recommended 'labour saving devices that help'. These included the Thor Electric Washer, vacuum cleaners and dishwashers.⁴⁵ By the middle of the decade, Myer products appeared regularly in feature articles, but without the 'advertorial' disclosure that would later become commonplace in Australian magazines.⁴⁶ The occasional alphabetical indexation of advertisers (with relevant page numbers) in the first pages of the journal highlighted the importance of advertising to Taylor's venture, although it is likely that this appeared only when the editorial material fell short. This might be something she learnt at the *Southern Grocer*, which used a similar technique. Categories included Art Needlework; Banking; Biscuits; Building, Home decoration; Cafes; Cars; Cereals; Cheese, and Combs, and the list was accompanied by the reassurance that 'every line advertised in *Woman's World* carries our guarantee [of quality]'.⁴⁷

Taylor's journal engaged Australian women in consumer culture in less direct ways, too. The first issue introduced two sections that extended the journal's capacity as a selling tool beyond the display of advertisements and advertorials, and rendered the journal 'of real practical service to Australian women'.⁴⁸ These sections were market devices by which the journal could establish itself as a friend and helper to its readers by building a relationship of trust between readers and the editorial team. This trust could then be used to attach the women to the journal and to its advertisers.

The first of these market devices was a section aimed squarely at middle-class women's anxieties about domestic work. Taylor promised to introduce Australian women to 'improved domestic architecture and labour-saving devices'. She presented this service in the context of 'one of the greatest problems of the Australian woman', the shortage of 'domestic help'. Young working-class Australian women preferred the autonomy of factory work to domestic service and middle-class Australian women

complained about the problem of securing domestic help, especially when compared to their British counterparts. Most women's publications published items on this topic, though few would be as amusing as the observation from the headmistress of Church of England Girls' School (CEGS) that working-class girls preferred factory work over domestic service because in factories they were addressed by their surnames rather than by their 'Christian' names, as was common in domestic service.⁴⁹ Identifying a marketing opportunity, Taylor proposed to help 'solve' the problem of domestic service, assuring her readers that 'labour-saving devices were the only solution.' She promised to 'undertake exhaustive inquiry of a practical nature,' then 'publish the names of firms manufacturing good appliances and the prices of their lines,' and in subsequent issues Taylor kept this promise.⁵⁰

The second marketing device that Taylor introduced in the first issue of her paper was aimed at 'the women on the land.' On her (two-week) ride across Victoria, Taylor claimed to have acquired 'intimate knowledge of the problems and trials of the women outback' and had identified as 'one of the greatest deprivations' suffered by countrywomen that they could not personally conduct their shopping. This made it difficult for a countrywoman 'to stretch a pound as far as her city sister,' so *Woman's World* would provide a special buying service to readers 'to advise and assist the countrywoman in her shopping' and 'describe the goods available in stores.' The journal provided women with a coupon to complete, cut out and send in, requesting help in finding a particular item: 'You know you want something but haven't been able to locate it yet,' the coupon read. 'Don't give up. Aren't the nicest, most individual things often hidden away in tiny shops with unobtrusive windows? Why not let the *Woman's World* buying service help you?' There was no charge for this service, just the cost of a stamp-addressed envelope, and the journal had 'the assurance of the whole-hearted support of the best stores in Australia in this scheme.'⁵¹ The system had the added benefit of providing the journal with a database of readers' names and addresses. There is no evidence that this database was ever used, but Taylor's service to countrywomen became a signature feature of her journal, which suggests that it provided a very clear insight into the readership and that she continued to appeal directly to it.⁵² Her obituary in the *Argus* observed that she had 'always' been 'a keen lover of the Australian practical help to rural women.'⁵³

Taylor subsequently introduced items that built on the relationship with her readers, for example, literary competitions for readers to write

short stories and even to compose a telegram to the prime minister, Stanley Bruce.⁵⁴ At one stage, she recruited children to sell subscriptions, tempting them with a fountain pen.⁵⁵ From 1925 she extended this contact through ‘morning tea talks’ on Melbourne’s first commercial radio station, 3UZ. She was arguably ‘the first person to realise the value of wireless talks to women’ and ‘her clear voice, her lively sense of fun and her humanity won her many listeners.’⁵⁶ As the 1920s progressed, her journal’s continuing success meant that Taylor no longer had to pound Melbourne’s streets canvassing for advertisers. Now she could afford to promote her journal in publications such as the *Advertiser’s Monthly*, which she did on a regular basis, promising advertisers that an ad in *Woman’s World* would ‘double your clients’ returns’. Her target audience had not changed. ‘We don’t reach the masses’, she explained to potential advertisers, ‘but we do go to the women you seek – the women with discernment to know a good line – the Australian mother who appreciates the value and economy of quality.’⁵⁷

Taylor’s story highlights the intricate links between feminist politics and consumer culture in the first decades of the twentieth century. She and her team acted as intermediaries between advertisers and a new type of woman, the arbiters of taste for educated middle-class women, doing the legwork for them to seek out the best new products at the best prices. Taylor applied intelligence and taste to consumption. In the process, she helped the market in its task of creating women as a market category but she used the market, too, to promote and support her feminist activities. Taylor helped educate women to be the best consumers they could be. As we will see in the next chapter, her acolyte Elma Kelly took the lessons she had learnt from Taylor and applied them on the global stage.

Notes

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- 4 E. Casey and L. Martens (2007) 'Introduction' in E. Casey and L. Martens (eds), *Gender and Consumption: Domestic Cultures and the Commercialisation of Everyday Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate). One Australian exception is G. Reekie (1993) *Temptations: Sex, Selling, and the Department Store* (St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen and Unwin).
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- 7 *WW*, 1 May 1926, 1 February 1934; 'Woman's Realm', *Argus*, 21 September 1926, 22; *The Southern Grocer of Australasia: A Review of the Grocery and Allied Trades*, Melbourne: Grocers' Association of Victoria; *The Gum Tree: The Official Organ of the Australian Forest League (Victorian Branch)*, see issues from March 1919 to December 1920.
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- 15 Gillison, *History*, p. 1.
- 16 K. M. Reiger (1985) *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880–1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), p. 59.
- 17 Gillison, *History*, pp. 58, 59; 'Mary Grant Bruce', *The Australasian*, 22 January 1927, 50; 'Social Events', *Argus*, 25 April 1924, 11; 'Vesta', 'Woman to Woman', *Argus*, 20 April 1932, 13, 14; 'The World of Women', *Argus*, 3 May 1938, 7.
- 18 'Women of the Empire', *Australasian*, 3 October 1925, 54.
- 19 'Lady Burnham', *Australasian*, 3 October 1925, 54; Kingsbury, 'Adventures', 7.
- 20 'The Women's Citizen Movement', *Age*, 17 March 1926, 13; 'World Problems', *West Australian*, 27 March 1926, 8; 'Women in Conference', *Register*, 15 July 1926, 12; 'Women's Congress', *West Australian*, 23 April 1926, 8; 'Differing Women', *The Mail*, 19 June 1926, 3.

- 21 'Of Interest to Women', *Observer*, 2 October 1926, 54.
- 22 *WW*, 1 May 1926, 305; 'Differing Women', *Mail*, 19 June 1926, 3; 'Big Sisters', *Northern Star*, 25 June 1926, 7; 'Rich Husbands', *Evening News*, 23 June 1926, 1; 'Empire Women's Meeting', *Examiner*, 24 June 1926, 5.
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- 29 J. C. Eldred (2012) *Literate Zeal: Gender and the Making of a New York Ethos* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press), p. 4.
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- 31 F. Taylor, 'Back Stage', *WW*, 1 April 1924, 234.
- 32 This was relatively expensive: for comparison, a decade later the first issue of *Australian Women's Weekly* cost 2 pence (or 8 pence a month), 'A New Paper for Women', *South Coast Times*, 2 June 1933, 12.
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- 46 *WW*, 1 September 1923, 16, 24, 30, 34, 36.
- 47 *WW*, 1 March 1924, Index to Advertisers, 170.
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- 49 *WW*, 1 February 1922, 5; B. Kingston (1975) *My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson), pp. 22, 30, 55; B. W. Higman (2002), *Domestic Service in Australia* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press), pp. 3, 20, 30, 33-34, 44.
- 50 *WW*, 1 September 1923, 521.
- 51 *WW*, 1 January 1922, 38; 1 September 1923, 521.
- 52 *WW*, 1 December 1921, 18.
- 53 'Miss Frances Taylor', *Argus*, 27 December 1933, 11.
- 54 'Literary Competition', *WW*, 1 April 1924, 263.
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3

Elma Kelly's Empire: An Australian in Asia

Abstract: This chapter uses the remarkable story of Melbourne-born Elma Kelly and her Asian advertising empire to explore Australian advertising women's education and training, their engagement with feminist politics and women's networks and their relationship to colonialism and globalisation. Dickenson shows that Australian women used the relatively new and flexible advertising industry to carve out positions of influence beyond the reach of most of their sex. They were brave, entrepreneurial and single-minded. Prepared to take advantage of the new opportunities for education and travel, they pushed the boundaries for white, middle-class women, sometimes paying a hefty price.

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In 1964 the American advertising giant Ted Bates took a pragmatic approach to its expansion into Asia. Rather than starting from scratch in a region it knew little about, Bates bought into a network that could provide it with an instant presence: George Patterson, Australia's oldest and largest advertising group.¹ The previous year, Patterson had acquired an interest in a pan-Asian advertising network with offices in Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. That network, Cathay Advertising, became part of Ted Bates through its acquisition of Patterson. Two years later Patterson bought the rest of Cathay Advertising for a song. When the network's founder left the room after agreeing to a price, Patterson's negotiators are reported to have burst into derisive laughter.² Their satisfaction at bagging Cathay Advertising for a bargain price and scornful dismissal of the naivety of its owner gains an additional dimension when we learn that the owner and founder of Cathay Advertising was a woman, Elma Kelly.

Kelly's contribution to the development of the modern advertising industry in Asia has yet to be properly acknowledged.³ This chapter uses her remarkable story to further explore Australian advertising women's education and training, their engagement with feminist politics and women's networks and their relationship to colonialism and globalisation. Australian women used the relatively new and flexible advertising industry to carve out positions of influence beyond the reach of most of their sex. They were brave, entrepreneurial and single-minded. Prepared to take advantage of the new opportunities for education and travel, they pushed the boundaries for white, middle-class women, sometimes paying a hefty price.

Elma Mary Kelly exemplifies this courage and spirit of adventure. Born in Melbourne in 1895, she was the youngest child of William Trench Clifford Kelly, an Irish-born barrister and local politician, and his wife Catherine (née Kildahl) who was active in the Victorian Women's Franchise League in the late 1890s.⁴ Growing up in Carlton, Elma enjoyed a privileged education; as the only remaining child of a family of four, her father's hopes for the future rested with her. After matriculating in 1913, she enrolled in medicine at the University of Melbourne, then switched to science and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1918.⁵ She worked as a chemical analyst in Melbourne and Sydney before setting sail for China and beginning her advertising adventure.⁶ She took with her to China deeply held convictions about the position of women in society, ideas she had pursued assiduously in her spare time back in Australia, and which were influenced by the opinions and activities of her parents.

Kelly joined the Victorian Women Citizens' Movement (WCM), attracted by its insistence that a modern, rational state should include women in its lawmakers: interviewed in 1968, Kelly expressed regret that her father had not allowed her to study law.⁷ She became the organisation's honorary treasurer and represented it at various meetings of women's networks.⁸ Kelly took every opportunity to outline the WCM's aims and objectives on her travels around Australia. On a visit to her cousin in Adelaide, she offered an update on the organisation's activities to a local newspaper: it had selected 'an able ... pretty, charming' woman as a Parliamentary candidate, was fighting for the appointment of women justices and had revised marriage and divorce laws. She also addressed the lack of job opportunities for women chemists. Most women chemistry graduates in Melbourne were teaching rather than working in business, partly as 'a result of prejudice' but also because most of the chemical jobs were in factories 'which are necessarily very grubby places and full of the strangest smells'.⁹

It is not entirely clear why Kelly moved to Sydney in January 1928 but the shift involved a change in employment from the public service to a commercial business, as this report revealed:

Miss Elma Kelly, one of the most brilliant science graduates of the Melbourne University, invented the formula for making the gum which is used to stick the labels on practically all the beer and wine bottles in Australia...She was the first and only woman analyst appointed by the Commonwealth Government, and her arrival at the Customs House, Melbourne, caused considerable consternation among the men in the laboratory. Now she is in Sydney ... attached to a firm which manufactures face creams and soaps.¹⁰

Kelly was building a solid reputation as an innovative chemical analyst and had been active in Australian science networks for a number of years.¹¹ Indeed, like many young women of her time, she was an inveterate joiner. Besides campaigning for women's political and legal rights, and joining science organisations, she was also interested in women's education, becoming a member of the Victorian Women Graduates Association (VWGA), perhaps because of her friendship with a fellow science graduate Kathleen Sherrard (née McInerney), who served as honorary secretary of the association from 1920 to 1928.¹²

Kelly's interest in women's rights extended into increasing their business and professional opportunities; she attended the first meeting of the Melbourne branch of the Business and Professional Women's (BPW)

Club in July 1925.¹³ Formed in the United States in 1919 by a group of women from the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) led by Lena Madasin Phillips, the BPW Clubs reached Australia via the United Kingdom, where members of the Women's Advertising Club of London had been instrumental in the network's establishment.¹⁴ In February 1926 Kelly was one of the five speakers at the Club's monthly dinner, held at the Rivoli Tearooms. The women were asked to present thumbnail accounts of their work, and press reports of the meeting again drew attention to Kelly's achievements as a pioneer for women working in the science discipline.¹⁵ After working for some years in the Federal Analyst's Department, she was now engaged in industrial chemistry in a large factory, where her research work included waterproofing cardboard so that it could replace tin plates, as there was a shortage of tin. Interestingly, given her future achievements in advertising management, Kelly 'had charge of several men employees.'¹⁶ In Sydney she continued her feminist activities. At the first meeting of the Women Voters' Association (WVA), she was elected honorary secretary and she later represented the association in a debate with the Society for Debating Vivisection, supporting the proposition that 'Vivisection is a Step Forward in Human Development'.¹⁷

Kelly's engagement in these extensive feminist, professional and business networks would eventually contribute to her path-breaking and enduring career success. Kelly probably forged her friendship with Frances Taylor through the Lyceum Club.¹⁸ The friendship influenced Kelly's direction in life in ways that could not be anticipated. Kelly later recalled how she had learnt magazine design and layout from helping Taylor to assemble issues of *Woman's World*, and that she had drawn heavily on this experience in the next phase of her life.¹⁹

In October 1931 Kelly embarked for China 'in pursuit of a young man', an unhappily married naval officer.²⁰ Landing in Hong Kong, she travelled on to Shanghai where she found a large expatriate community.²¹ She immediately began looking for work, requesting help from the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce. When he asked if she could run a magazine, she replied 'of course' because of her experience helping Taylor back in Melbourne. She was sent to meet with Frank Millington, the British proprietor of Millington Limited, one of China's biggest agencies. The years between 1930 and 1937 were lean for advertising agencies: sales were 'stationary and dropping' and advertisers unwilling to spend.²² Given the unfavourable economic conditions, Kelly was fortunate to be hired by Millington.²³

She joined a well-established industry in Shanghai.²⁴ Advertising in the modern sense had arrived in China in the mid-1850s with the establishment of the first newspaper, the *North-China Herald*. Foreign advertising men had established agencies from the turn of the century and, by the late 1920s, the market was dominated by the Big Four: three run by foreigners and one by a local man, Lin Zhenbin (C. P. Ling), 'the father of Chinese advertising'. The oldest of these was the Oriental Advertising Agency.²⁵ Next was Carl Crow Inc., established in 1919, whose American proprietor was well known for his popular travel guide to China.²⁶ Millington Limited, where Kelly started work in 1931, had been established in 1927 to handle British clients in China.²⁷ Through its partner company, the Willow Pattern Press, the agency produced China's most important business directories.²⁸ The Chinese-run agency, the China Commercial Advertising Agency, and its subsidiary Acme Advertising were founded by Lin Zhenbin after his return to Shanghai from the United States, where he completed a major in advertising at New York University.²⁹ With around 20 agencies in the city by the 1930s, Shanghai was the centre of the advertising industry in China. A second Chinese-run agency, the Consolidated National Advertising Company (also known in translation as the United Advertising Company), was founded in 1930.³⁰ Commercial, Crow, Millington and Consolidated (replacing Bacon's 'Oriental Advertising Agency' of 1928) now comprised the Big Four in Chinese advertising.³¹

Kelly's rapid rise at Millington shows that in the first half of the twentieth century the advertising industry offered educated, middle-class women with drive and determination the opportunity to build successful business careers, despite having little training in the industry's skills and techniques. She seems to have struck up an instant rapport with Frank Millington, who had arrived in the East in 1917 aged 29 to work for the Shanghai Municipal Service.³² By 1928 his agency was producing advertisements for English brands such as G. C. Shaw & Co., as well as one of Shanghai's leading retailers, the Sincere Company department store, which was owned by a Chinese-Australian retail pioneer.³³ In 1931 Millington started the 'Millionton' radio station in partnership with Reuters. According to Singapore's *Straits Times*, Millington deserved 'most of the credit for having converted the Chinese to an appreciation of Western advertising art'. He had also 'done much to raise the general tone of British advertising in Shanghai, his billboards especially being examples to other large cities as to how these necessary but oft times abused media should be maintained'.³⁴

Kelly's limited experience of magazine production and her skill at selling media space might have impressed Millington but her modern ideas on the value of women's contribution to society would be of more use to him. Historians have shown that shopping was being transformed at this time in China from a chore into a leisure activity, and representations of 'modern' women in advertising material were at the heart of this transformation.³⁵ Especially influential in this process were Shanghai calendar posters; images of the 'New Woman' on these posters portrayed women as the conveyors of modern commercial messages, their bodies used to link the acquisition and consumption of luxury with emancipated modernity and to stimulate new forms of consumption.³⁶ With her feminist outlook and management experience, Kelly was the quintessential 'New Woman', and thus an ideal recruit for an advertising agency wishing to attain an edge in this cultural shift.

In 1934 Kelly moved to Hong Kong to head up Millington's ailing branch in that city.³⁷ She seems to have engineered this move to follow her naval officer, who had been posted to Hong Kong.³⁸ Soon after arriving she was approached by a man in the street who wished 'to shake the hand of the only person who could make Millington's pay in Hong Kong', and she launched herself wholeheartedly into this challenge by negotiating a reduced price for billboards near the Kowloon railway station.³⁹ Quieter and more formal than Shanghai, Hong Kong looked away from China and out towards the British Empire. Expatriate organisations such as the St Patrick's Society were popular: Kelly immediately joined and served as its president in 1955.⁴⁰ Taboos of race, class and gender were used to police expatriate behaviour, and these taboos were only just beginning to break down when Kelly arrived.⁴¹ At Millington, Kelly worked alongside a Russian artist⁴² and a Chinese clerk: the latter hawked constantly into a spittoon, much to Kelly's disgust.⁴³ By the time the Japanese invaded Hong Kong at the end of 1941, she had built the branch into a thriving business.⁴⁴ From January 1942 she was interned in Stanley Prison Camp. In a display of her business acumen, she had the foresight to make a list of sundry debtors to Millington's before entering the camp. The list would come in very handy after the war.

Long-term imprisonment in Stanley 'promoted self-assurance, individual freedoms, and a variety of cohesive female group identities which might never have occurred in pre-war colonial Hong Kong'. Moreover, these experiences gave military and bureaucratic wives the freedom to develop skills and organising expertise that would not have been

achievable outside of the camp.⁴⁵ Kelly did not fit into this category: she was already an independent, career-oriented woman with excellent managerial skills. Her personality comes through in the character of Grace Brown in Gwen Priestwood's book *Through Japanese Barbed Wire*. Grace is a thinly disguised Kelly, and Priestwood presents a rather unsympathetic portrayal of a woman obsessed with food and unwilling to attempt to escape from the camp (as Priestwood did successfully in the first weeks of internment).⁴⁶ Kelly spoke at length in 1968 on her years of internment, including the deprivations of life in the camp. Any impact this traumatic experience had on the second half of her life does not come through in the interview but what Kelly did next revealed extraordinary resilience, as well as a deep commitment to continuing her life in China.

On her release from Stanley in August 1945, Kelly learnt that her 'attachment', the unhappily married naval officer whom she had hoped to join in London, had died. Despite this, she sailed to London but was unable to settle and returned to Hong Kong alone, via Australia, in January 1946.⁴⁷ Waiting on the wharf for her at Hong Kong were 'five little drowned rats', employees from before the war: a Portuguese accountant, two Chinese men (including 'an artist') and two female typists (one Indian and one Chinese). The group gathered in a hotel to discuss their future and, after deciding they did not want to 'deal with Shanghai' (in other words, Millington), the group started their own agency naming it Guó Tàì after 'the old name for China', at the suggestion of the Chinese staff. Kelly collected £700 from the debtors' list she had compiled before she entered Stanley and, with a legacy of £600 from her deceased lover and £250 from a friend from the camp, Cathay Advertising was born.⁴⁸ The business had a very insecure start but over the next decade it flourished: with offices in four countries, Cathay Advertising would become the most significant post-war agency network in the Asia region.⁴⁹

Kelly built the business on the agency's work for the Hong Kong Telephone Company directory: Cathay updated the entries, sold advertising space and printed the directory. From the early 1950s, the network began to expand: the Singapore office opened in 1953, the Kuala Lumpur office ten years later. The former Patterson director Geoff Cousins is sceptical of Kelly's role in building the 'best network in Asia', saying he 'can't imagine her building it up'.⁵⁰ This underestimates her abilities but it also ignores the fact that she would have required a regional network to service Cathay Pacific Airlines, her agency's largest account in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1960 Kelly appointed a manager and embarked on a series of overseas trips, including to America in March 1962 where she was one of four principal speakers at 'a worldwide advertising convention'; a meeting of the 4As (United States).⁵¹ Her speech provides a valuable insight into Kelly's business model and her approach to advertising in Asia. She took the audience through a step-by-step account of how Cathay might approach a request from an American advertiser to launch a product in Southeast Asia, emphasising the network's skill at translating Western concepts into meaningful local strategies and copy, and explaining that the main campaign would be developed in Hong Kong and then adjusted for a specific market.

Kelly argued strongly for the product to be advertised to the expatriate community as well as the locals: 'You must advertise to Caucasians... Otherwise the Oriental buyers are doubtful. They think it's only a second-grade product.' She then provided a brief survey of the range of media available in Southeast Asia before listing the services provided by her network, which included campaign planning, market research, television, radio and film production, display design and construction, print work of all kinds, translations and full creative facilities, including copywriting and calligraphy in all local dialects, visualising, artwork, typesetting, production 'and all the ancillary services of an advertising agency anywhere in the world'.⁵²

Kelly struck her deal with Patterson early in 1963. 'I don't expect to work again', she told Kathleen, 'but cannot say I am retiring as these Australian chaps say I am known world-wide and they are buying my popularity!!'⁵³ In April 1966 Kelly held a dinner to celebrate Cathay Advertising's 20 years' anniversary. The dinner's theme highlighted the growing importance of global connections to the advertising industry:

Chiefly we had it because 3 firms here, 2 American and one English are always saying how they are 'international' as if that was of some great value to the Client. So at the dinner we had a map of the world 14 inches long showing America on the right side and coming through so that Hong Kong and Australia were more or less in the middle and England on the left... There are 28 offices in 16 countries and we feel we are truly international.⁵⁴

Patterson bought out the rest of Cathay Advertising in 1966 and Kelly worked on with the organisation for another seven years.⁵⁵ She died in 1976.⁵⁶ As her obituary noted, she had been a pioneer, an Australian

advertising professional (albeit self-taught) working in Asia much earlier than has usually been thought. She had built a remarkable advertising network across the Asian region. Passionate about her business and her staff, she was a strong and memorable character.⁵⁷ Alan Green, the former managing director of Ted Bates Singapore, nominated Kelly as 'the most unforgettable character I've met' for a *Reader's Digest* feature, describing her as 'larger than life in every way' with:

[a] heart big enough to take on ...the problems of a woman running an Agency at a time when advertising was very much more a man's world than today ... the problems of virtually starting her business from scratch after the war – no money, no clients, and no premises but with the responsibility of looking after pre-war staff.⁵⁸

It is clear from her description of the reunion with her staff in 1946 that Alan Green was right: Kelly did feel responsible for their welfare. But her attitude towards them was also somewhat paternalistic. She described the staff as 'five little drowned rats' and identified them by their nationality and gender rather than by their given names. The extraordinarily hierarchical photograph of Kelly and her staff taken in 1962 on the roof of her Hong Kong office records perfectly the inequalities at the heart of colonial relations.⁵⁹ It also raises questions concerning Kelly's position as a middle-class white woman in colonial society.



FIGURE 3.1 *Cathay Advertising staff – Rooftop Building Hong Kong c. 1962*

Source: Courtesy of Jerry Green.

Kelly embraced the life of an educated, modern woman in her numerous activities back in Australia, convinced that women were equal to men as political citizens. In this, she exemplifies the type of woman discussed by scholars such as Marilyn Lake. But there is no evidence that, beyond her advertising role, she continued these activities in China. As the Australian social worker Eleanor Hinder recorded, the options for continuing such activities in Shanghai were limited: the YWCA was active in the city but the National Council of Women was 'far from national' and the Chinese Women's Suffrage Association suffered from a lack of interest. A delegation from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom had visited Shanghai in the late 1920s with a view to establishing a branch but found there were not enough (white) women there to make it viable.⁶⁰ It is also unclear if or how Kelly responded to the poor working conditions of Chinese workers recorded by Hinder. She must surely have witnessed the use of child labour and unsafe work practices in the printing industry that Hinder found in 1942: printing was, after all, a significant aspect of Millington's business.⁶¹

As the following chapters will show, other Australian advertising women also looked out into the world for career opportunities and business success. Some did so by joining international women's networks whilst remaining in Australia. Others left for overseas to gain skills and experience but later returned to Australia, bringing with them their newly acquired knowledge. Kelly chose a more challenging path. Living as a single woman in colonial China could not have been easy. Colonial society was heavily gendered, with married white women representing the ideal. Even professional competence such as Kelly's failed to protect single European women from marginalisation; they occupied a liminal position 'across the boundary of coloniser and colonised' and alongside prostitutes.⁶² If her involvement with a married man was common knowledge (as it appears to have been), Kelly's position must have been even more difficult.⁶³ Beyond an admission that she was very lonely on her arrival in Hong Kong until she joined the local bridge club,⁶⁴ however, Kelly expressed no ambivalence at all about her position in colonial society and certainly offered no critique.

Like other feminist white women living in colonial societies, Kelly failed to challenge the status quo in colonial China.⁶⁵ Over 45 years she attained and embraced the privileged trappings of colonial life: even her internment in Stanley, difficult as it must have been, was a symbol of this privilege. Asked in 1968 whether she intended retiring to Australia, she

scoffed at the idea. 'Why would I?' she asked 'when I live in the lap of luxury with a boy and an amah.'⁶⁶ For Kelly, the benefits of a colonial life outweighed the challenges.

Notes

- 1 R. Crawford (2008) *But Wait There's More ... A History of Australian Advertising* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing), p. 138.
- 2 A. Hamill, interview with R. Crawford, 12 April 2013.
- 3 Crawford, *But Wait*, p. 157.
- 4 'Women's Suffrage', *Argus*, 29 September 1898, 7. W.T.C. Kelly was Mayor of Essendon in the 1880s and later Mayor of Moorabbin: 'The Increased Hospital', *Argus*, 10 September 1889, 5; 'Mayors and Presidents', *Argus*, 8 September 1916, 8; 'The General Election', *Argus*, 7 February 1883, 5; 'The General Election', 27 March 1889, 10; 'Federal Election', 4 April 1901, 6.
- 5 As Jane Carey has shown, only privileged women studied science at this time: J. Carey, 'Departing from Their Sphere: Australian Women and Science, 1860–1960', PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne 2002, p. 144.
- 6 Kelly was interviewed for Radio Television Hong Kong's (RTHK) 'Time to Remember' programme on 30 June 1968: https://mmis.hkpl.gov.hk/coverage/-/coverage/view?p_r_p_-1078056564_c=QF757YsWv58J CjtBMMIqojLr%2BwJKp773&_coverage_WAR_mmisportalportlet_log=Y&tabs1=CATALOGUE accessed 31 October 2015.
- 7 J. Smart (2001) 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia: Contesting the Meanings of Citizenship, Femininity and Nation in the 1920s', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 25, 2; Kelly, interview.
- 8 'Women's Activities', *Argus*, 17 November 1927, 20.
- 9 'Melbourne Impressions', *Register*, 6 January 1925, 4. See also Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 152.
- 10 'Women's Activities', *Argus*, 23 January 1928, 6; *Daily News*, 27 February 1928, 7.
- 11 'Science Congress', *Mercury*, 16 January 1928, 7, 8.
- 12 R. Grahame, 'Sherrard, Kathleen Margaret Maria (1898–1975)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sherrard-kathleen-margaret-maria-11681/text20875, accessed 16 December 2013; 'Women's College', *Argus*, 22 August 1936, p. 14.
- 13 'Business Women's Club', *Argus*, 16 July 1925, 13.
- 14 P. A. Deakin (ed.) (1996[1970]), *The History of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women* (London: IFBPW).
- 15 'Business Women's Club', *Argus*, 18 February 1926, 18.
- 16 'The Ladies' Realm', *Chronicle*, 6 March 1926, 69.

- 17 'Near and Far', *SMH*, 28 November 1928, 8; 13 September 1929, 4.
- 18 'Social Events', *Argus*, 13 August 1923, 12; Gillison, *History*, p. 59; M. O. Reid (1960) *The Ladies Came to Stay: A Study of the Education of Girls at the Presbyterian Ladies College Melbourne 1875–1960* (Melbourne: Council of the PLC), pp. 199–200.
- 19 Kelly, interview.
- 20 'Personal', *SMH*, 14 October 1931, 10; J. Green, 'Elma Kelly Founder of Cathay Advertising', cathayadvertisingltdhongkong.blogspot.com.au/2013/11/elma-kelly-founder-of-cathay-advertising.html, 19 December 2013.
- 21 The British population in Shanghai peaked 'at around 10,000' in 1935, the year after Kelly left the city for Hong Kong; R. Bicker (2010) 'Shanghaianders and Others: British Communities in China 1845–1957', in R. Bickers (ed.) *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 270.
- 22 C. Crow (1938) *My Friends the Chinese* (London: Hamish Hamilton), p. 326.
- 23 Kelly, interview. Jerry Green recalls: 'the only job she could get to keep herself in funds was selling ad space for Millington's, "Elma Kelly".'
- 24 For a history of advertising in China, see H. Cheng (1999) 'The Embryo, Birth, and Renaissance of Advertising in China: A Historical and Institutional Analysis of Its Seedbed', presented at AEJMC conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, 4–7 August 1999: <http://list.msu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A3=in d9909e&L=AEJMC&E=7BIT&P=1841314&B=-&T=TEXT%2FPLAIN;%20 charset=US-ASCII> accessed 31 October 2015. See also S. Cochran (1999) 'Transnational Origins of Advertising in Early Twentieth-century China', in S. Cochran (ed.) *Inventing Nanjing Road: Commercial Culture in Shanghai, 1900–45* (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University), pp. 37–58; E. J. Laing (ca. 2004) *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press); W. Yeh (2007) *Shanghai Splendour: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China 1834–1949* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), pp. 56–78; T. E. Barlow (2008) 'Buying In: Advertising and the Sexy Modern Girl Icon in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s', in The Modern Girl around the World Research Group (eds.) *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press), pp. 291–92; C. A. Bacon (1929) 'Advertising in China', *Chinese Economic Journal*, 5, 754–67.
- 25 Bacon, 'Advertising in China', p. 758.
- 26 C. Crow (1921) *The Travellers' Handbook for China (including Hong Kong)* (Shanghai: C. Crow); P. French (2006) *Carl Crow – A Tough Old China Hand* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press); C. Crow (ca. 2003 [1937]) *400 Million Customers: The Experiences* (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge).
- 27 French, *Carl Crow*, p. 107. Tungate has Millington opening in 1921, but this might mean Millington Press rather than the advertising agency: M. Tungate (2007) *Adland: A Global History of Advertising* (London: Kogan Page), p. 237.

- 28 Barlow, 'Buying In', p. 291.
- 29 Bacon, 'Advertising', p. 759; 'Founded China Radio Station', *Straits Times*, 1 April 1936, 1; Laing, *Selling Happiness*, p. 70.
- 30 Cheng, 'The Embryo'; Laing, *Selling Happiness*, p. 69.
- 31 See also S. Okazaki (ed.) (2012) *Handbook of Research on International Advertising* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar), p. 147; Tungate, *Adland*, pp. 236–37; and R. Belk and Xin Z. (2003) 'China's First Encounter with Global Brands: Pre-Communist Shanghai', in CHARM proceedings 'The Romance of Marketing History', pp. 220–28.
- 32 Laing, *Selling Happiness*, p. 69; Bacon, 'Advertising', p. 759.
- 33 W. K. K. Chan (1996) 'Personal Styles, Cultural Values and Management: The Sincere and Wing on Companies in Shanghai and Hong Kong, 1900–41', *Business History Review*, 70, 141; J. Fitzgerald (2007) *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: University of NSW Press), p. 191.
- 34 'Founded China Radio Station', *Straits Times*, 1 April 1936, 1; P. French (2009) *Through the Looking Glass: China's Foreign Journalists from Opium Wars to Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press), p. 187.
- 35 W. Yeh (1997) 'Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City', *The China Quarterly*, Special Issue: Reappraising Republic, 150, 375–94. See also C. Warra (1999) 'Invention, Industry, Art', in Cochran, *Inventing Nanjing Road*, pp. 74–83 and M. Bergere (1983) 'The Chinese Bourgeoisie', in J. K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China*, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 721–825.
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- 37 Kelly, interview.
- 38 J. Green, 'Elma Kelly'.
- 39 Kelly, interview.
- 40 stpatrickshk.com/index.php/history/ accessed 31 October 2015.
- 41 Bickers, 'Shanghaianders', pp. 291, 295–96.
- 42 There was a large 'White Russian' diaspora in China: at least 15,000 Russians were living in Shanghai by 1933; H. Yang (2012) 'The Shanghai Conservatory, Chinese Musical Life and the Russian Diaspora, 1927–49', *Twentieth-Century China*, 37, 73–95, n. 3. See also A. Feuerwerke (1983) 'The Foreign Presence in China', in J. K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China*, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 128–32; M. B. Rankin, J. K. Fairbank and A. Feuerwerker (1983) 'Introduction: Perspectives on Modern China's History', in J. K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China*, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge

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- 43 Kelly, interview. For the advertising industry in Hong Kong, see K. Chan (2006), *Advertising and Hong Kong Society* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press) and W. S. Wong, (1999) *Advertising, Culture and Everyday Life I: Hong Kong Newspaper Advertisements, 1945–1970* (Hong Kong: Luck-Win Bookstore).
- 44 About 1,000 expatriate women (including Kelly) remained in Hong Kong when the Japanese invaded: S. Hoe (1991) *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong: Western Women in the British Colony 1841–1941* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press) p. 274.
- 45 B. Archer and K. Fedorowich (1996) ‘The Women of Stanley: Internment in Hong Kong’, *Women’s History Review*, 5, 373.
- 46 G. Priestwood (1944) *Through Japanese Barbed Wire* (London: George Harrap), pp. 40, 49, 53, 56.
- 47 Kelly, interview; ‘From Hong Kong Prison Camp’, *Argus*, 30 March 1946, 14.
- 48 Kelly, interview.
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- 50 G. Cousins, interview with R. Crawford, 15 March 2013.
- 51 Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, K. M. M. Sherrard papers, ca. 1918–1975 Further Papers, 1909–75, with associated papers ca. 1888, 1916–32. MLMSS 2950 ADD–ON 834 (K48975–K48989) R964, Box K48982, Letter from E. Kelly to K. Sherrard, 28 February 1960; Kelly to Sherrard, 23 January 1961; Kelly to Sherrard, 14 August 1961.
- 52 E. Kelly (1963) ‘Advertising in South-East Asia’, *The International Advertiser*, 5–8.
- 53 Kelly to Sherrard, 21 February 1963.
- 54 Kelly to Sherrard, December 1966.
- 55 Kelly to Sherrard, 20 November 1966.
- 56 ‘Advertising Pioneer’, *SMH*, 5 December 1976.
- 57 Cousins, interview.
- 58 J. Green, ‘Elma Kelly’.
- 59 J. Green, ‘The Old Gang – Rooftop Building Hong Kong c. 1962’, cathayadvertisingltdhongkong.blogspot.com.au/2009_09_01_archive.html, accessed 25 July 2015.
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- 62 A. L. Stoler (1997) 'Making the Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures', in A. McClintock, A. Mufti and E. Shohat (eds.) *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- 63 This might explain Priestwood's hostility towards Elma.
- 64 Kelly, interview.
- 65 A. Epstein (2008) 'International Feminism and Empire-Building between the Wars: The Case of Viola Smith', *Women's History Review*, 17, 699–719. See also S. Paddle (2001) '“For the China of the Future”: Western Feminists, Colonisation and International Citizenship in China in the Inter-war Years', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 16, 325–41.
- 66 Kelly, interview.

4

Looking Out to the World

Abstract: *This chapter explores the life and career of the advertising manager, Clara Behrend, including her political work for the Business and Professional Women's Club, an international organisation dedicated to improving professional opportunities for educated women. Dickenson exposes the deep ambiguities at the heart of the engagement of many women with the advertising industry: their ability to argue for women's special status as 'shopper' to justify their own presence in the industry at the same time as they organised against such limiting stereotypes, and their willingness to agitate for equal pay whilst working in an industry that vigorously resisted workers' organisation.*

Dickenson, Jackie. *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
DOI: 10.1057/9781137514349.0010.

When Clara Behrend became the first woman president of the Western Australian Division of the Advertising Institute of Australia in 1954, the *Western Mail* asked rhetorically: ‘Wasn’t it a pity that Sylvia Pankhurst and some of her hunger striking fellow suffragettes, were not here a week or so ago to see one lone woman in an otherwise all-male organisation elected to the chair [sic].’ Behrend attributed her success to the influence of the Queen’s recent visit: ‘It could be that the Queen has finally broken male prejudice against the elevation of women to top positions’, she said.¹ The *Adelaide Advertiser* also noted her breakthrough, reminding its readers that Behrend was well known to the members of the Business and Professional Women’s Club (BPW) in that city, having recently visited them to speak about her commitment to the Club’s international activities.²

Behrend’s achievement was certainly newsworthy – just one of a number of advertising ‘firsts’ she accumulated over the years – but, as this chapter will show, her career is of interest for other reasons, too. First, she constructed her long and successful career across a range of marketing activities, including retail advertising, sales promotion and public relations, ensuring she stayed in touch with the latest developments in these areas. Second, she was, like many other advertising women, committed to using her professional skills in the service of the community. Finally, she demonstrated the deep ambiguities at the heart of the engagement of many women with the advertising industry: their ability to argue for women’s special status as ‘shopper’ to justify their own presence in the industry at the same time as they organised against such limiting stereotypes, and their willingness to agitate for equal pay whilst working in an industry that vigorously resisted workers’ organisation.³

Born in 1905 in Melbourne, Clara Behrend was the seventh child of second-generation Jewish migrants from Prussia, who had settled in Robe Street, St Kilda. Her mother Minnie was a second cousin of Sir John Monash, the Australian war hero. She attended Norwood College in St Kilda before gaining a scholarship to study at University High School.⁴ The family were committed to public service; for example, her brother Phillip stood for State Parliament in 1914, contesting the well-heeled seat of Toorak for the Labor Party and, unsurprisingly, lost by more than 5,000 votes.⁵

Behrend gained her start in advertising because of the expectation of the time: that marriage ended a woman’s business career.⁶ In 1921, aged 16, she took a job as a correspondence typist – ‘like millions of other girls’ – in the mail order department of Read’s store in Prahran. Her

manager noticed her ability to 'write a good letter' and, when the woman who headed the advertising department left to get married, Behrend was transferred to this department, becoming the advertising manager at just 19.⁷ Knowing little about advertising, she set about reading every book she could find on the subject. Nine years later, during the depression and after 'a further such job in the city', she moved to Perth to take up a position as the advertising manager of the Economic Stores in Hay Street. She was 'headhunted' for this position: the store had recently come under the direction of a new manager, C. E. Stuart Smith, who had previously managed Read's.⁸

Over the next two decades, Behrend established a strong social network in Perth, attending numerous society events and making the social pages on a regular basis. In 1944 she presented a paper on 'Propaganda' to the Western Australian Women's Writers Club of which she was an active member: as Chapter 6 will show, Behrend had aspirations as a writer of short fiction. At the Writers Club, she met at least one of the women with whom she would later form the Perth club of the BPW: the Club's chair was Agnes Robertson, future Liberal Senator for Western Australia, whose daughter Jessie would become the secretary and eventually the president of the Perth branch of the BPW.⁹ At some point after its formation in 1945, Behrend also joined the Liberal Party, although she seems never to have held office. She later described herself as 'a small-l Liberal'; that is, committed to classical liberalism rather than the conservatism of the misnamed Australian Liberal Party.¹⁰ Her friendship with the Robertsons suggests Behrend would not have called herself a feminist: in 1950 Agnes Robertson told a group of Liberal women: 'I am not a feminist – I am a co-operationist... I wouldn't like to see a parliament composed entirely of women but the women's point of view should be taken into account.'¹¹

Behrend achieved a number of 'firsts' for advertising women. In 1936 she was elected as a Fellow of the Advertising Association of Australia (AAA). The press reported that she was 'one of the few women in Australia to obtain the diploma' and the first Western Australian woman. The award required 'seven years of experience in executive advertising', which was longer than many advertising careers. The fellowship diploma was granted 'only after the most careful scrutiny of the applicant's recommendations' and its award implied 'integrity and a high sense of responsibility as well as advertising ability and experience'. Behrend was also the only WA woman to gain accreditation as an advertising practitioner by the Advertising Institute. She was the WA president of the institute

for 18 years 'with an entirely male committee' and sat for even longer on its Federal Council as one of two Western Australian representatives.¹² When she started her own agency in 1951, she became the first Australian woman to be accredited as an advertising agent by the Perth Newspaper Proprietors' Association.¹³

Newspaper reports of Behrend's many achievements reveal her attitudes to some of the themes raised in previous chapters. On the gendered division of labour in advertising, particularly the issue of women working only on 'women's products', her views shifted pragmatically over time. In 1938, while still employed in a department store, Behrend argued for the employment of more women in advertising, especially in the department stores, whose advertisements 'must be designated to appeal to women, who constitute the majority of shoppers'.¹⁴ Yet the following year she took a position as the advertising and sales promotion manager for a well-known city motor sales firm, Sydney Atkinson, a job she later described as 'my nicest job'.¹⁵ It was an unusual appointment and she later used her experience at the firm to demonstrate the difference a woman could bring to the marketing of a product aimed mostly at men. In an article she had probably drafted herself, she told of 'a young woman with exceptional business drive and personality plus' who, back in 1940, had devised a stunt that 'proved to be a hilarious success'. 'Twitching nervously with her own daring', Behrend (had) devised a plan to focus public attention on the new spring motorcar offered by her employer. She had sent buttonholes of spring flowers to Perth's 200 most influential males, accompanied by an unsigned 'teaser' that bore the words 'Heralding the spring and happy days'. Two days later, each man received a note saying the sales manager hoped the flowers had been appreciated, and that if they called to inspect the new car, they would be 'taken for a ride'.¹⁶

After a period back in Melbourne, during which she worked for the advertising agents for Malvern Star bikes, Behrend returned to retail advertising in 1941 as the advertising manager at Perth's leading department store, Boan's.¹⁷ A decade later she opened her own advertising agency and, in press coverage that was often a barely concealed PR exercise, promoted the breadth of her advertising experience: she handled 'the publicity for leathersgoods, machinery, electrical and other man-made appliances as well as feminine frills and fashion shows'. Her sex remained a point of difference: 'many of her clients' were 'machinery manufacturers, furniture manufacturers and similar firms who might be expected to prefer dealing with men'.¹⁸ Behrend claimed that her agency

did well until the government introduced 'severe import restrictions'. In what she described as 'a chain reaction', Behrend was then 'ruined'.¹⁹

Throughout her career, Behrend was called on regularly to speak as an advertising expert and could provide useful commentary on a wide range of related topics.²⁰ She had first been interviewed about the 'necessary characteristics' for holding her job as 'advertising manager for a store' on her arrival in that city in 1933. Behrend identified a range of necessities. First, her job required 'a very fair general knowledge of merchandise ... to obtain the best selling point and most desirable display aspect of these goods'. 'Sound judgment and a proper sense of the value of words' were needed too, as 'simplicity and effectiveness were the keynotes of successful copywriting'. A sense of humour was important 'since people reading advertisements were attracted to bright, breezy descriptions' and this, 'after all', was the goal, 'even at the sacrifice of literary style'. Knowledge of type and layout had to be 'a part of one's stock in trade' as well as 'a fair familiarity with commercial art', although being able to draw was not essential. Other requirements were a knowledge of media; accuracy, especially in price; and tact, which was 'an essential' because of 'the hundreds' of people an advertising manager had to keep happy, including the department heads, the sellers of space, the block-makers and the artists – 'all who seem to come at the very wrong moment'.²¹

Twenty years later, Behrend had honed her list of 'necessary characteristics'. She told the Women's Service Guild in 1954 that her job still required a flair for writing, technical knowledge of type and layout, accuracy and an eye for detail, as well as an understanding of media. Two new items, however, revealed a deeper understanding of marketing techniques than previously, especially the impact of psychology on advertising and the emergence of public relations as a tool. Ideas should be directly tied up with the product, she now argued, and, though generally recognised as 'clever and notable', stunts did not 'on the whole' sell the product (unless, perhaps, they involved sending flowers anonymously to potential car buyers!). A good advertising manager also needed ingenuity: Behrend was proud of the ways in which she had 'outwitted the Press in squeezing her product into the news columns'. She repeated the industry cliché that 'no amount of advertising' would 'sell an inferior product' and connected the 'well-known fact' that 85 per cent of shoppers were women to 'the popularity of advertising as a career for women in the Eastern States'. Asked how full-page advertisements and radio prize-giving shows managed to pay for themselves, she replied that the cost was 'very small when divided

among the custom of all the tiny retail stores throughout the State, or in the case of some radio sessions, the whole country'.²²

By the mid-1940s, Behrend had become, arguably, Western Australia's leading woman expert in advertising. She held ambitions beyond her career, however. She had long been committed to the extension of opportunities for professional women and in August 1946 she established the Perth branch of the Business and Professional Women's Club. The BPW had been founded in 1919 in the United States 'to meet the express need of a group between labour and the owners – the emerging managerial class'. The first Australian club was established in 1925 in Melbourne. Membership was open to women holding 'a responsible position in professional, business, industrial or educational organisation, and to women giving distinguished service to the community'; as we saw in the previous chapter Elma Kelly, then a chemical analyst, attended the second meeting in July 1925. As Kelly's presence at that meeting shows the BPW had strong links with numerous local and overseas women organisations, including the Victorian Women's Citizens Movement, the League of Women Voters and the YWCA.²³

In August 1930 Lena Madelin Phillips founded the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW) in Geneva. The new organisation was to be 'non-partisan and non-sectarian', and its chief object was to 'develop women's professional and leadership potential at all levels, with the determination that our effort will lead to "Equal Participation of Women and Men in Power and Decision-Making Roles"'. A member's responsibility was explicitly tied to her citizenship:

Each woman, as a citizen, must bring to the national policy of her own country, the contribution of forward-looking and constructive thought followed by determined action. Each woman must dedicate herself to protect and promote the interests of all other women in business and the professions.²⁴

The Melbourne club immediately affiliated with the new federation and, by 1939, the IFBPW was the largest organisation of business and professional women in the world, with over 100,000 members and clubs in 25 countries. In July 1946, after World War Two, affiliated clubs sent delegates to Brussels for the first IFBPW congress.²⁵

Despite Melbourne's enthusiasm, the BPW spread slowly through Australia. The Sydney club was not established until March 1939: its object was 'to promote the interests of business and professional women, to bring about a spirit of co-operation and to extend their opportunity'. At the end

of World War Two, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth were yet to have their own clubs. Behrend had previously been a member of the BPW – she had joined the Melbourne club before moving to Perth in 1933. In February 1946 she was an official guest at the Sydney club's 'International Night' meeting, where it was announced that she would 'endeavour' to start a club in Perth. Why she waited until 1946 is unclear: perhaps she had struggled to find the requisite 25 interested women, but it is more likely that she had been simply too busy building her advertising career in the 1930s and was then forced to wait until the end of the war before acting.²⁶

In August 1946 Behrend organised a meeting at which 30 women joined the new club. She had secured a room courtesy of Boan's department store, her employer at the time. Located on the company's third floor, the room was to be furnished as a reading and writing room, and placed at the members' disposal. The new club aimed:

[t]o develop a spirit of co-operation between the business and professional women of the community, to secure recognition of the value of women's work and service to the community and extend their opportunities, and to obtain women's active interest in the civic, social, political and moral welfare of the community.

Margaret Battye, a solicitor and Liberal Party functionary, was elected president and Jessie Robertson, the radio announcer, secretary.²⁷ Other office bearers included a nurse, an accountant, a store manager, a university lecturer and a journalist. Behrend became one of two vice presidents and seems to have been the only advertising practitioner at that first gathering.²⁸ She was not the only advertising woman to join the organisation, however. Indeed, advertising women had been at the forefront of the BPW overseas: when the British Federation of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BFBPW) federated with IFBPW Clubs in 1935, it was partly by the inspiration of the Women's Advertising Club of London.²⁹ The activities of that club were reported regularly in *Women at Work*, the journal of the BFBPW, and Ruth Gill, a renowned art director at the Colman Prentis & Varley (CPV) advertising agency in London, designed the cover of the spring 1951 issue.³⁰ In Australia, advertising women had various connections with the BPW. Members included Florence Bennett, the Cyclax Consultant at Hordern Brothers department store, and Ena Parsons, the Imperial Canned Goods' representative, who joined the Sydney club in 1948. The well-known radio and advertising personality Hilda Morse spoke to the Sydney club in 1943 but might not have been a member.³¹

From its inception, the BPW in Australia (had) looked out to the world: at the first meeting of the Melbourne club, Flora Mackay of the Myer department store had spoken of her experiences working in Canada and the United States.³² As mentioned earlier, when Phillips formed the IFBPW in 1930, the Melbourne club immediately affiliated and members of overseas clubs came to speak at the club's meetings. Miss Cooper, a businesswoman from Minnesota, addressed the club in 1934. The BPW Associations in the United States had approximately 60,000 members, she explained, and their slogan was 'Better business women for a better world'. The American organisation provided evening classes, as well as a range of social activities, including horse riding, swimming, golf, bridge parties and dancing. It also funded a permanent woman lobbyist in Washington, DC, who kept an eye out for legislation that might affect women, and it had set up a scholarship fund to enable a disadvantaged girl to continue her studies. 'It is only in a large body that you can accomplish anything', Cooper assured the audience, 'singly or individually you have no influence. Together you can do great things.'³³ Cooper returned to Melbourne the following year and again addressed the club.³⁴ Muriel Heagney, Labor's champion for equal pay for equal work, was a guest at the Sydney club's 1941 Christmas dinner, giving an account of her recent visit to America and the women's clubs she had addressed there.³⁵

The club's international affiliation was a key 'selling point' for the Perth businesswomen. At its first meeting, they were informed that 'publications received from overseas clubs' would be made available in the meeting room at Boan's. The breadth of the organisation – the International Federation claimed to be the largest organisation of its kind in the world, with a membership of 100,000 across 2,000 clubs – offered members ('many of whom will probably be travellers in the years to come') an opportunity to 'get in touch with the business and professional women of other countries', particularly the United Kingdom and United States, where the clubs were 'especially strong'.³⁶

Although Behrend seems not to have attended any of the IFBPW congresses, she became deeply engaged with the international aspect of the BPW. She served as the chair of the International Committee of the Australian Federation of the Business and Professional Women's Association (AFBPW), which had been formed in 1947, and led the celebrations at its annual International Night, lighting a candle for every federation affiliated with the IFBPW 'in an impressive ceremony'. In 1954, as a vice president of the AFBPW, Behrend spoke to the Adelaide club on

the international aspects of the organisation, telling the audience that the IFBPW had a membership of 300,000 women in 19 different countries.³⁷

The membership of the Perth club grew rapidly, counting 148 by 1958. This growth might reflect the fact that the club had started at a time when the BPW was moving beyond its social and networking activities, and starting to look outward at issues that faced professional women around the globe, especially the problem of achieving equal pay for equal work.³⁸ In April 1946 the president of the Sydney BPW informed members that the IFBPW had endorsed the principle of the 'rate for the job and not for the sex', and the meeting resolved that the president should make representations to the prime minister (Ben Chifley) and the premier of New South Wales (William McKell) that the basic wage law:

[b]e amended for the fixation of a basic wage applicable to all adult workers without sex discrimination; rates of wages in industrial awards which are based on the rate for the job and not on the sex of the person who does the job; salary rates for executive and professional officers in the public service which are based on the rate for the job and not on the sex of the worker who does the job.³⁹

The AFBPW continued to pursue women's economic independence, a quest that gained momentum after the Australian Government supported the 1951 International Labour Organisation (ILO) Recommendation No. 90 on equal remuneration for equal work.⁴⁰ Behrend represented the AFBPW in 1951, joining three other women's organisations (the Australian Federation of Women Voters, the Federation of University Women and the Soroptimists Clubs) in signing a declaration in favour of the 'complete equality of men and women in all social, economic, political and legal spheres'.⁴¹ By 1965 the AFBPW was frustrated (as were most women's organisations) with the government's failure to act in support of the recommendation.⁴²

What was Behrend's attitude to the issue of equal pay for equal work in the advertising industry? It is possible that she argued for equal pay in advertising in her position on the board of the Western division of the AIS but it is more likely that she held no strong opinion on the matter. She is likely to have thought of herself and other advertising women as exceptional and to have judged that the campaign she was prepared to conduct wage for other women did not apply to her or her colleagues. As we will see, this was a common attitude held by the advertising women towards the issue of equal pay. Advertising was, and is, a non-unionised

business, a situation that Behrend, as a Liberal woman, would have supported wholeheartedly.⁴³ Pay negotiations in the industry were undertaken individually and in private, and although women might suspect that men in comparable positions earned more, they had no way of knowing this. When they compared their remuneration to that of women working in other industries, they were likely to see themselves as doing rather well and so tended to keep quiet.⁴⁴

When Behrend's agency failed in 1957, she was unemployed for 2 years and then found a job in administration at a technical school, which she left at age 65. Without superannuation, she worked on elsewhere for two years, then retired and lived on the aged pension until her death in Perth in 1991.⁴⁵ She had reached the pinnacle of her chosen career, and, like advertising women before and after her, had leveraged her own economic independence – when she had it – to strive for other women. She had done so by looking outward to the world, committing to an organisation that focused on the problems faced by all professional women, no matter where they came from. A little surprisingly, she did this without leaving Australia. In the next chapter we will meet a cohort of advertising women with itchier feet than Behrend seems to have had: women who left Australia in search of adventure, skills and experience.

Notes

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- 2 'Advertising Honor', *Advertiser*, 28 April 1954, 17.
- 3 L. Rupp (ca. 1997) *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press); F. De Haan, M. Allen, J. Purvis and K. Daskalova (eds) (2012) *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present* (Abingdon: Routledge); J. Smart (2012) 'Mainstream Women's Organisations in Australia: The Challenges of National and International Co-operation after the Great War', *Women's History Review*, 21, 61–79; C. Arrowsmith (1991) 'Networking and the UK Federation of Business and Professional Women', in G. Lovegrove and B. Segal, eds. (1991) *Women into Computing: Selected Papers 1988–1990* (London, New York: Springer-Verlag) p. 43.
- 4 G. R. Hammer (1986) *Phillip Blashki: A Victorian Patriarch* (Melbourne: Blashki).
- 5 'Balaclava', *Argus*, 30 July 1914, 10; 'Victorian Elections', *Western Mail*, 4 December 1914, 50.

- 6 'Women in Business 2', *Daily News*, 14 January 1938, 10.
- 7 Letter from C. Behrend to G. Hammer, 6 December 1984, in possession of the recipient.
- 8 Behrend to Hammer; 'Back to the West', *Sunday Times*, 11 December 1932, p. 14.
- 9 *Mirror*, 23 September 1944, 19; 'What Women Are Doing', *West Australian*, 21 July 1944, 3; Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Business and Professional Women's Club of Sydney Records, 1939–77, MLMSS 3329, 1 (2), Minute Book, 1 July 1960–31 December 1963.
- 10 Behrend to Hammer.
- 11 *Daily News*, 28 September 1950, 7.
- 12 Behrend to Hammer.
- 13 'Social Sphere', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 27 April 1936, 8; 'She Buttonholed Them', *Western Mail*, 22 October 1953, 19; 'Another First for Women', *Advertiser*, 10 October 1951, 11; 'Woman Gets the Votes', *Western Mail*, 22 April 1954, 19.
- 14 'Women in Advertising', *West Australian*, 4 August 1936, 5.
- 15 Behrend to Hammer.
- 16 *Sunday Times*, 2 April 1939, 13; 'Perth Last Night', *Sunday Times*, 7 May 1939, 20; 'She Buttonholed Them', *Western Mail*, 22 October 1953, 19.
- 17 Behrend to Hammer; 'Has Own Advertising Agency', *Advertiser*, 15 October 1952, p. 11. 'For Outsize Women', *West Australian*, 3 March 1950, p. 14.
- 18 'These Women', *Courier-Mail*, 22 October 1952, p. 8; 'She Buttonholed Them', *Western Mail*, 22 October 1953, p. 19.
- 19 Behrend to Hammer. The business appears to have failed from 1955, closing in 1957.
- 20 'Women Will Be Interested', *Daily News*, 12 June 1937, 10.
- 21 'Woman Has the Job', *Daily News*, 26 August 1933, 19.
- 22 'Advertising President', *West Australian*, 26 July 1954, 19.
- 23 'New Club Formed', *West Australian*, 6 August 1946, 9; 'Women's Work', *Argus*, 18 October 1935, 5.
- 24 bpwfoundation.org/about-2/history/ accessed 31 October 2015.
- 25 *Federation News*, 6, 2 (October 1965), 4; bpw.com.au/History; P. A. Herbert (1996) *The Business and Professional Women's Club of Perth: the First Half Century: 1946–1996* (Perth: BPW).
- 26 *Federation News*, 6, 2 (October 1965), 4; 'Women Form New Club', *Courier-Mail*, 31 October 1946, 8; 'Proposal to Form a New Women's Club', *Advertiser*, 3 September 1947, 11; 'Business Women's Club', *Examiner*, 5 August 1947, 5; 'Clubs Now in All States', *West Australian*, 15 October 1952, 14.
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- 28 'New Club Formed', *West Australian*, 6 August 1946, 9.
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- 31 MLMSS 3329, 1 (2), Meeting at Lyceum Club, Sydney, 27 April 1943; Minutes of Executive Meeting, 27 April 1948; Minutes of Executive Meeting, 25 July 1939; 'From Day to Day', *SMH*, 8 September 1936, 5.
- 32 'Social Events', *Argus*, 18 June 1925, 11.
- 33 'Business Women's Club', *Argus*, 16 February 1934, 10.
- 34 'Business Women's Club', p. 10; 'Business and Professional Women', *Argus*, 4 April 1935, 13.
- 35 MLMSS 3329, 1 (2), Minutes, 15 December 1941.
- 36 'A New Club', *West Australian*, 6 August 1946, 9.
- 37 MLMSS 3329, 1 (2), Minutes, 30 January 1948; 'Same Lecture Subject for Every Club', *Sunday Times*, 5 March 1950, 5; 'Roundabout', *Advertiser*, 28 April 1954, 17. See also 'Activities of Club', *West Australian*, 21 August 1950, 13; 'Social Events', 'Social Events', *Argus*, 18 June 1925, 11; 'Business Women's Club', *Argus*, Thursday 16 July 1925; L. Perriton (2007) 'Forgotten Feminists: The Federation of British Professional and Business Women, 1933–69', *Women's History Review*, 16, 79–97; P. A. Herbert (1996) *The Business and Professional Women's Club of Perth: The First Half Century, 1946–96* (Perth, WA: The Club); 'Business Women's Club', *Argus*, 16 July 1925, 13. 'Woman's World', *News*, 17 June 1925, 4; 'Business Women's Club', *Argus*, 16 July 1925, 13.
- 38 For the equal pay movement during and after World War Two, see E. Ryan and A. Conlon (1989) *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin) pp. 123–44.
- 39 MLMSS 3329 1 (2), Minutes 24 April 1946.
- 40 'Women Seek Pay Rise', *Argus*, 13 March 1952, p. 8; A. M. Magoffin and D. Osborne (1965) *The Rate for the Job* (Melbourne: AFBPW), p. 14.
- 41 'Women's Declaration', *West Australian*, 23 October 1951, p. 1.
- 42 Magoffin, *The Rate*, p. 14.
- 43 Behrend to Hammer.
- 44 R. Hall, interview with R. Crawford, 12 December 2012; J. McBride, interview with R. Francis, 7 March 2013.
- 45 Behrend to Hammer.

5

The Girls Who Made It

Abstract: *Dickenson shows that from the first decade of the twentieth century, Australian advertising women used colonial networks to travel overseas to find employment. A few stayed, but most returned, using their overseas experiences to build successful careers in advertising, public relations and social marketing in Australia. After the World War Two, a new generation of Australia advertising women combined the use of these long-established colonial networks with the emerging advertising global networks to travel and gain experience. These women played an active role in the global exchange of advertising skills, knowledge and technological expertise.*

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In July 1951, 3,000 delegates gathered in London to discuss advertising at the first post-war International Advertising Conference.¹ Amongst them was a 23-year-old advertising copywriter and 4As (Australia) youth delegate Valwyn Wishart (maiden name Edwards) from Canterbury in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. Wishart found the international aspect of advertising 'a revelation' and had 'fun speaking French to Italians who can't speak English, showing American delegates the comparatively microscopic space available for advertising in English newspapers, discussing motions with Egyptians and South Africans'.² Wishart was part of a transitional generation, one that combined the use of long-established colonial networks with the emerging advertising global networks to travel and gain experience. As this chapter will show, Australian advertising women played an active role in the global exchange of advertising skills, knowledge and technological expertise. From the first decades of the twentieth century, they used colonial networks to travel overseas to find employment. A few stayed, but most returned, using their overseas experiences to build successful careers in advertising, public relations and social marketing in Australia.

Australian advertising women started travelling overseas to work and gain new skills and experience from the end of World War One. The press likened them, and other 'professional' women who took the plunge, to prospectors:

With the same pluck that marked our grandmothers who came to Australia with their menfolk – adventuring – seeking betterment in a strange unknown land, Australian girls and women are going back to London and pioneering their way in the professional and business world.³

Advertising offered the promise of travel to young Australian women who dreamed of seeing the world before marrying and settling into family life. Brenda Pacey had 'joined the industry with travel in mind'. After six years working in the advertising department of a big store – and no doubt saving towards her fare – Pacey told the press that it was now time to 'seek further knowledge' and 'realize her original intention of working abroad'. The same report mentioned Australian women who were already 'making it' in London, including the renowned Sydney artist Elaine Haxton, who had secured 'a job with a national advertising house within a fortnight of arriving in London' and Ada Rubensohn, the sister of the founder of the Sydney advertising agency Hanson Rubensohn, who had worked as a secretary in Sydney but was now 'a director of one of London's biggest

agencies'. Press coverage implied that London offered limitless opportunity for the adventurous Australian advertising women.

Queensland-born Estelle Louise Mendelsohn – a former 'topical writer' for Sydney newspapers – left Australia for Chicago in 1920, aged 27. She returned briefly in 1922 and between March and June in that year wrote a lively column for the papers about business issues in the United States, titled 'In the Real America'. One column informed readers that advertising in the United States was no longer 'hit or miss' but 'a distinct science governed by orthodox rules and principles'.⁴ Mendelsohn sailed again for Chicago in August 1922 and, over the next 25 years, forged an outstanding advertising career as a copywriter and Copy Chief in Chicago, including a stint at the legendary agency, Lord and Taylor.⁵

These women provided Australian advertising practitioners with a window on the development of the advertising industry around the globe. Lilly Bushby of Myer's advertising department, for example, returned from an overseas tour in late 1924. She spoke of her impressions of English and American marketing methods in an address to Melbourne's Institute of Advertising Men. There were 'more and greater stores in America than in England', she told the audience, but the London houses were better at 'presenting stocks' and had 'a quicker and more courteous sales staff'.⁶

Ada Rubensohn returned to Sydney in 1934, after three years 'working in London and studying advertising both in England and on the Continent'. She told the press that German advertising 'must be the best in the world', and that English advertising was 'sound' and had advanced greatly during the last few years. She was particularly impressed with the posters in the Underground Railway in London, which were 'so beautifully executed that they attract[ed] universal attention'. The German posters were best of all, though, she reported, because they carried 'vital messages'; their layout was 'right to the point' and their colour 'outstanding'.⁷ Rubensohn returned to England in 1936 'to take up an important executive position with a well-known English advertising agency', then returned permanently to Australia in 1941 to escape the Blitz.⁸

Janet Innes, the company secretary of R. S. Maynard Advertising in Brisbane, reported on her tour of North America in 1936, during which she visited 17 advertising agencies, spoke to advertising clubs across America and attended the 4As' convention. She observed that national advertising expenditures in the United States were recovering

to pre-depression levels and newspapers were still the favoured medium, attracting 60 per cent of the advertising spend, with radio the second choice. Innes had returned via Asia and advised colleagues on advertising Australian goods to Chinese.⁹

By the eve of World War Two, advertising was becoming 'a major profession', and increasing numbers of women were 'entering the sphere... which previously had been almost entirely monopolized by men.' Successful agencies around the world and in Australia were now 'entirely run by women' and many women had 'travelled the world in this lucrative profession'. A (probably male) business executive attempted to explain women's success, pigeonholing the woman advertising executive, whose 'greatest success was in selling advertising to women'. 'Intuitively a woman was familiar with the psychological make-up of her own sex, and could determine the female sales sense', he opined. Advertising appealed to women as a career because it gave them freedom of expression, was stimulating, gave 'their flair for variety plenty of scope', and was 'interesting and congenial'. There were other supposed advantages: a woman could continue in advertising 'after youth [was] long spent' and 'equal scales of pay exist[ed] for both sexes'.¹⁰

The promise of good pay and world travel drew many young women to pursue a career as 'a girl advertising specialist'. Wishart had been working at the Melbourne *Herald* during the war,¹¹ but became convinced she was not tough enough for 'all-out journalism'. She was also acutely aware that men returning from the war required jobs and there was every chance she would be 'pushed back into the home'. Most importantly, she needed a job that would enable her to save to go overseas – like so many women of her generation she had been bitten by 'the travel bug'.¹² She responded, successfully, to an advertisement for a radio copywriter at Richardson Cox, a Melbourne advertising agency. There she honed her radio advertising skills and eventually saved enough money to purchase a passage to London. She sailed in early February and arrived in London on Good Friday, 23 March 1951. Wishart did not travel for the advertising conference and it is unclear how she was selected as an Australian youth delegate, but she recalls receiving a letter on her arrival in London that confirmed her selection. Also on board the ship was Adelle Webster (then Kirkby) from Sydney who had worked in the media departments of two agencies, Goldberg Advertising and Thompson Associates. Webster had decided that 'she wanted to go to England as all the young women were doing'. In London, she discovered she too had been selected as a

youth delegate for the Advertising Conference.¹³ In all there were eight Australian youth delegates, including the future managing director of Australia's most influential advertising agency, Peter Clemenger.¹⁴

In London the women sought work to pay for accommodation, food and travel to Europe. Webster recorded in her diary that 'Val [Wishart] has been doing the round of agencies for a copywriter's job, but has found the going tough'. Wishart had been told that 'half the Australian advertising fraternity seem to be looking for jobs in London.'¹⁵ Webster registered with an employment agency and soon started temporary work at the West Australian Agent-General's office.¹⁶ Networks – both formal and informal – were crucial for finding employment and accommodation in London.¹⁷ Wishart found work at the *Herald* office in Fleet Street because she knew the editor from Melbourne. Webster met up with a number of former colleagues from Australia – 'Goldbergians' – for lunch and to seek advice about the forthcoming advertising conference. She also used the facilities provided at the Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship clubrooms in Belgravia to help her settle in.¹⁸ She made the most of her time in London, attending plays, galleries, movies and concerts, sometimes with Wishart, and dining frequently at Lyons Corner House.¹⁹ Webster planned a jaunt around Europe but had struggled to find a travelling companion. Eventually, she set off with three Australian women, returning for the advertising conference in July.

For the duration of the conference, delegates were 'billeted in the private homes of British advertising men.'²⁰ Wishart, who stayed with a family in Surbiton, 'felt compelled to acquit herself well' because she had been endorsed by the Advertising Association 'to represent Australian advertising youth'. She found the atmosphere at the conference 'enlightening and inspirational', recalling that there was 'quite a lot to be learned'; she was especially impressed to find out that London advertising agencies had their own market research departments, which was not usually the case in Australia. Several speakers at the conference inspired her, including the Conservative politician, Lady Tweedsmuir, who 'advocated for a strong partnership between advertiser and consumer', and Mrs Doreen Day, the influential Canadian fashion director who, Wishart recalls, 'demanded to know what effort advertising men [*sic*] were making to interest the woman of fifty ... we are not to be scoffed at. Advertisers don't mention us [older women] at all.'²¹ The conference opened up a lifetime of connections and friendships to Wishart, and her experiences there provided a template for her working life, especially for her future work

in public relations. Webster had numerous memorable experiences. She saw television for the first time, was filmed by 'a movie camera' for a newsreel, toured a newspaper (*The Times*) and an advertising agency (Mather & Crowther), met Sinclair Wood (the owner of Pritchard Wood Advertising) and made 'the first and last speech of her life' at the conference, on behalf of the Australian youth delegates.²² The conference 'had been a simply stupendous week', and Webster hoped the experience would remain with her always.²³

Whether they were using well-worn colonial networks or emerging global advertising networks, the social position of these advertising women mattered. They were educated, middle-class women who had been raised to believe that a career and a trip to London were *de rigueur* before they married and settled down. When interviewed for the job at Richardson Cox in Melbourne, Wishart sensed that 'class came into play' and she was judged to 'be a good fit for the agency', which had a patrician atmosphere. Her father was a master printer and she had attended Camberwell Girls Grammar School.

Conversely, the media magnate Keith Murdoch interviewed Wishart for a journalist's job at the *Herald* and, from his behaviour towards her, she gained the impression that, in this case her background was not good enough. She did not get the job. The importance of social position to the entry of women into these emerging jobs in advertising and public relations was emphasised by the number of women who worked in the industry both in Australia and overseas and who were previously extremely active on the social pages of the newspapers.

As we have seen, Elma Kelly's travels across Australia attracted press coverage. A later example was Joy Donnison, whose social life in Australia, and in London after she moved there in the early 1950s, attracted celebrity-style coverage from the press.²⁴ Advertising was clearly a suitable occupation for a pretty socialite with connections to fashion royalty: Donnison's friends modelled for Frederick Starke. In Sydney she helped to organise a number of large social events and it is likely that this experience had given her the skills to land a job at 'a large [unnamed] London advertising agency' before she married and returned to Australia.²⁵

Melbourne's Moira Keast also attracted coverage from the society press. Keast had been a frequent winner of newspaper competitions as a teenager, during her days at St Andrews Grammar in Mornington. She took a course at Zercho's Business College and showed some skill in stenography.

Her volunteer activities and travels – both domestic and overseas – as a young adult continued to attract attention from the press.²⁶ By the time she left for London in 1949, Keast had become ‘well-known in the advertising industry’, although it is not clear in what capacity (these newspaper items were notably vague), and she was heading for London ‘to study advertising’, perhaps in more depth than she might in Australia.²⁷ Keast returned in 1951 on what the newspapers called ‘a busman’s holiday’ – ‘the former Melbourne advertising specialist’ told the *Argus* that she was in town ‘on behalf of British clients with Australian interests’. In London she found work with a public relations consultancy, a fairly common shift for women, perhaps because gendered stereotyping made it easier for them to find work in this area than in advertising – women’s ‘traditional’ social skills suggested to employers that they would perform better than men at the social gatherings required for PR activities such as fundraising.²⁸ In 1954 Keast worked as the publicity officer for Douglas Vespa motor scooters in the United Kingdom.²⁹ By the mid-1960s she was employed as a public relations officer for Kayser Bondor, the giant hosiery manufacturer; she wrote the official history of the firm in 1969, which was republished in 2007.³⁰ Keast married in England in 1968 at the age of 47 and, as Mrs Moira J. Love, died in Norfolk, in 2008 at the age of 87.³¹

Another prominent Australian advertising woman used knowledge gained on frequent overseas trips to consolidate her business success. Before her appointment as a full director of Georges, the fashionable Melbourne store in 1949, Reta Findlay had been in charge of the store’s advertising, publicity and promotion, which, according to the *Sunday Herald*, was ‘a man-sized job’.³² The *Herald* reported that: ‘still in her thirties, Miss Findlay knows fashion and advertising inside out, and the fashion capitals of the world are as familiar to her as Collins Street’. Two-thirds of this statement was true: Findlay was in fact aged 56 in 1949!³³ Findlay had worked as a commercial artist – driven from fine art by the depression – before joining Georges advertising department as a copywriter in the early 1930s. In 1937 she was promoted to advertising manager: some claimed she was the first woman to become the advertising manager of a large firm, which would have surprised Eleanor Donaldson.³⁴ Findlay travelled widely for Georges, spending most of the 1940s and early 1950s travelling backwards and forwards between North America, Europe and Australia, reporting back on the latest fashion trends and overseeing advertisements for the store based on her experiences.³⁵ She was the first Australian woman store

representative to broadcast from London, and her observations and predictions for each new season attracted widespread press coverage.³⁶ Findlay was ‘renowned for her alert brain... always producing new and brilliant promotional ideas.’ Reputedly one of Australia’s highest paid women business executives, she lectured to business and advertising groups, and, like so many of these advertising women, was active in philanthropic and women’s organisations, notably the ‘Women for Canberra’ movement, which made a determined push to get women elected to federal parliament in 1943 and succeeded in winning a seat in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate.³⁷ When she announced, in 1950, that she was leaving Australia for good, Georges persuaded her to stay.³⁸ The managing director later said of her: ‘I don’t think there was another advertising woman in the whole of Australia to touch her. She led the field. In fact, she had a touch of genius about all she did.’ Findlay died in 1954 and hundreds of Melbourne women attended her funeral.³⁹



FIGURE 5.1 *Immigration: Migrants in employment in Australia*

Source: 1963, National Archives of Australia: A12111, 1/1963/16/54.

An overseas trip could provide a young woman with new, highly marketable skills to leverage on her return. Investigating new technologies presented particularly enticing opportunities for the adventurous young woman. In 1938 Leona Deane – a radio copywriter – embarked on a bicycle tour of Europe. Her ambition was to ‘visit all European radio stations, especially PCJ, the world-famous short-wave station in Holland’ presumably to improve her employability back in Australia.⁴⁰ From radio’s introduction in Australia in the early 1920s, women had carved out a space for themselves at the nation’s numerous stations. Magazine editors such as Connie Robertson of the *Woman’s Budget* and Frances Taylor of *Woman’s World* took to the airwaves to promote their journals and their advertisers to a captive audience: women speaking to women, offering intimacy and companionship, during the day.⁴¹ Women continued this connection, writing radio commercials aimed at women listeners, either for the stations, or, as in the case of Wishart, for a full service, advertising agency.⁴² Like many young women, Wishart positioned herself as a specialist in writing ads for radio, taking advantage of opportunities opened up during World War Two because of newsprint rationing and men’s military service taking away the men.

A decade later, in 1958, Joy Young, a radio producer at Hansen Rubensohn, left for New York. She returned three years later, having been trained to produce content for the next exciting new technology, television.⁴³ Young’s career had started in the early 1940s when, aged 14, she took a job as a temporary typist at the Sydney radio station 2GB. Three years later she joined Bill Rubensohn (the brother of Sim Rubensohn) at World Agencies Pty Ltd, where she ‘did every kind of job’ and eventually became the director of marketing and advertising. After a six-month holiday in the United States, she joined Hansen Rubensohn, and, promoted to radio manager, became keenly aware of the challenge radio faced from the emergence of television. In 1958 she returned to the United States, staying for three years. She worked in the public information department of UNICEF, but when the global advertising giant McCann Erikson bought out Hansen Rubensohn, Young shifted to McCann to be trained at their New York office. Such training ensured there would be someone in the Sydney office who could approach the new technology in the McCann way, which was crucial for the servicing of the agency’s global clients. Within a year of her return to the Sydney office, Young took over TV production. She later became media manager and was eventually appointed the director of agency services, positions that were, traditionally, more available to

women than other managerial positions.⁴⁴ At the time of her appointment in 1966, the industry journal *B&T* called Young the 'Girl Who Made it', despite the fact that she was well into her forties at the time.⁴⁵ The journal's focus on Young and her career shows how few women had made it on to an agency board by the mid-1960s. Young was asked to comment on the standard of Australian advertising compared to advertising she had seen in the United States. She thought Australia was 'holding its own'. Its advertising was 'becoming more sophisticated, and creative work in particular had improved'. Asked whether she had encountered discrimination in her career, she replied that any 'resentment of a woman came only from people who were unsure of themselves or of their ability'. The men she had worked with had 'always treated her as equal'. To succeed in any profession, Young advised, a woman should 'never make a business of being a woman'. Her final comment on the matter revealed more: If she expected to be treated as an equal, she said, a woman must be capable of doing the job 'as well as a man – perhaps even better'. She also acknowledged her mentors in the business: they were all men.

Some Australian advertising women reached managerial positions in advertising agencies overseas before returning to Australia. In 1964 the renowned copywriter Mavis Chamberlain returned to work at Thompson Ansell Blunden Advertising in Melbourne after ten years as a Creative Director at Batton Barton Durstin and Osborne (BBDO) in Montreal, Toronto and London, where she was a Copy Group Chief.⁴⁶ Before leaving for overseas, Chamberlain had earned a reputation as one of Australia's most influential advertising copywriters. She inspired the young Wishart when they worked together at Carden Advertising in Melbourne in the mid-1950s, becoming one of two great mentors in Wishart's life (the other was the PR specialist Esta Handfield). Chamberlain – 'well into her thirties' at this point – had been brought down from Sydney with her husband, the equally renowned art director Bill Chamberlain, to work on the Leroy fashion account. Wishart remembers the Chamberlains as 'bohemian' and 'enormously creative', and the couple 'made waves' in staid Melbourne. Mavis Chamberlain acted as both copywriter and account executive for the Leroy account, 'she was a woman of all talents' and 'darned hardworking, a really solid character'. Wishart credits Chamberlain with 'breaking new ground' for Melbourne's fashion retail business because of her ability to combine an understanding of the tough Flinders Street rag trade with a feeling for the new, more sophisticated fabrics and fashions coming out of Europe. As we will see in Chapter 8,

these attributes made Chamberlain invaluable to Ralph Blunden and the Australian Wool Board (AWB) in the 1960s. Given her success in Australia, Chamberlain might have been forgiven for 'resting on her laurels' and remaining in Melbourne, but it is clear she wished to test her skills on a larger stage: Wishart recalls that Chamberlain was particularly impressed to hear about the younger woman's travels in the mid-1950s.⁴⁷

Women who had trained in advertising overseas also migrated to Australia, bringing their skills and experience to the industry here. Elizabeth Budai, a migrant from Hungary, attracted the interest of the Perth press when she moved from Sydney to become the advertising manager of 'a leading city store' (probably Boan's). Budai had 'studied production, editorial and advertising' at art school, then worked as a journalist on a trade and finance weekly magazine and on an art magazine in Budapest, specialising in layout and production. She had been in Australia for just five years. May Young, who arrived from Scotland in 1950, had 'crashed the advertising field, by applying for a position advertised for a young man.' She started as an office junior and began her studies with the British Advertising Association. She continued studying on her arrival in Australia and was now 'one of the few young women in Australia to hold the Associate Diploma of the Advertising Association.' May Young was multi-talented: she had been in charge of advertising production, produced layouts and copy and hoped to do 'contact work' (account management) – 'interviewing clients and making important decisions as to the way in which big money will be spent'.⁴⁸

By the mid-1950s, women had been working in the Australian advertising industry for half a century. They had run their own agencies, they had represented Australian advertising overseas and they had managed the advertising departments of leading stores. Despite the longevity and depth of their achievements, they were still required to justify their right to work in the industry. 'Is this a field for women?' asked an *Argus* journalist, a woman. Advertising men were 'still cautious' about women in the industry, because, they argued, 'few women' had the right qualifications; in 1953, just 6 out of 100 candidates for the Licentiate in Advertising had been women. An anonymous but 'confident, blonde and young advertising woman' challenged the skeptical men with a familiar argument: as '90 percent of consumer interest is influenced by women' and 'the fair sex do so much of the buying and indirectly determine so much more', women were 'surely destined to play a bigger and bigger part in advertising'.⁴⁹

The press remained uncertain about what to make of the achievements of successful advertising women. Despite her skills, experience and qualifications, the *West Australian* described Budai as ‘Perth’s latest and most charming female acquisition’, ‘a Hungarian lass’ who was ‘bright, cute and intelligent’. May Young, the girl with the courage to talk her way into ‘a man’s job’, was, naturally, ‘attractive and dark haired’.⁵⁰ Whether the Hobart *Mercury* was praising or criticising Mrs Merle Reilly, the advertising manager of a leading Hobart store (probably Fitzgerald’s), was unclear. ‘One of the few women in Australia who has made advertising her career’, Reilly had done so by never allowing her marriage to interrupt her career.⁵¹ Women had recognised the opportunities advertising offered – for good pay, travel and personal fulfillment – and had pursued those opportunities. They had crossed the globe to improve their skills and experience, to train in new technologies, to network and exchange advertising skills, knowledge and technological expertise. The next chapter will introduce a group of women who utilised these skills and expertise beyond the advertising industry, to pursue an artistic imperative or agitate for social and political change.

Notes

- 1 The previous conference had also been held in London, in 1927: ‘Empire Shopping Week’, *Western Star*, 7 September 1927, 6; V. Wishart, ‘Advertising in a Free World – The Selling of Post-war Britain’, unpublished essay, p. 1.
- 2 E. K., ‘Melb. Girl at Talks in UK’, *Barrier Miner*, 25 July 1951, 9; A. Woollacott (2001) *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 207, 209–11, 215, 220.
- 3 ‘Prospecting London’, *SMH*, 8 February 1934, 12; A. Woollacott (2009) ‘Australian Women in London: Surveying the Twentieth Century’, pp. 3.1, 3.3; G. Davison (2009) ‘Tourists, Expats and Invisible Migrant’, p. 14.2 in C. Bridge, R. Crawford and D. Dunstan (eds.) *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth Century Experience* (Melbourne: Monash University E-Press).
- 4 E. L. Mendelsohn, ‘Your Money Back’, *Sunday Times*, 12 March 1922, 1; ‘Chicago City of Service’, 19 March 1922, 13; ‘Dieting v. Die-Eating’, 9 April 1922, 1; ‘You-manising Advertising’, *Gippsland Times*, 13 April 1922, 5; ‘Doing Things’, 23 April 1922, 13; ‘How Much They Don’t Know about Australia’, *Traralgon Record*, 2 June 1922, 5.
- 5 M. M. McBride (1948) *How to Be a Successful Advertising Woman* (New York: McGraw-Hill), p. 236.

- 6 'Advertising Abroad', *Argus*, 4 November 1924, 7; 'News of the Day', *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 6 November 1924, 5.
- 7 'Prince's Visit', *SMH*, 4 May 1934, 4
- 8 'Social and Personal', *SMH*, 7 May 1936, 21; 'In the News Today', *News*, 21 May 1941, 8.
- 9 'Trade and Advertising', *Courier-Mail*, 4 January 1936, 20
- 10 'Careers for Girls', *Queensland Country Life*, 11 May 1939, 6.
- 11 V. Wishart interviewed with J. Dickenson, 27 November 2014.
- 12 Wishart, 'Advertising', p. 1.
- 13 A. Kirkby, Personal Diary: 18 April 1951, in possession of the author.
- 14 Wishart, interview; P. Clemenger, interview with R. Francis ; A. Webster, interview with R. Crawford, 27 December 2013,, 22 August 2012.
- 15 Kirkby, 2 April 1951.
- 16 Kirkby, 28 March; 2 April 1951.
- 17 Woollacott, 'Australian Women', p. 3.5.
- 18 Kirkby, 29 March; 3 April; 4 April 1951; victorialeague.co.uk/history, accessed 31 October 2015.
- 19 Kirkby, 28 March; 30 March 1951.
- 20 Kirkby 21 April 1951.
- 21 Wishart, 'Advertising', p. 4; 'Fashion Director', *Montreal Gazette*, 1 April 1958.
- 22 Kirkby, 7 July 1951.
- 23 Kirkby, 13 July 1951.
- 24 'Pamela Moses', *Newcastle Sun*, 10 March 1948, 5; 'Dining and Dancing', *Truth*, 25 May 1947, 56; 'Miss Ruth Donnison', *Sunday Herald*, 2 July 1950, 15; 'Australians Abroad', *Truth*, 28 September 1952, 35; 'Australians Abroad', *Truth*, 15 March 1953, 39; 'Australians Abroad', *SMH*, 25 March 1954, 6.
- 25 'Miss Joy Donnison', *Sunday Herald*, 11 November 1951, 16; 'And Mere Chatter', *Sunday Herald*, 9 November 1952, 21.
- 26 'The Life of Melbourne', *Argus*, 12 September 1945, 10; 'Gossip', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 7 June 1946, 6.
- 27 'The Life of Melbourne', *Argus*, 27 December 1949, 8. Keast had studied shorthand and typing: University of Melbourne Archives, Zercho's Business College, 1968.0026/10, Progress Report, 1937, p. 225.
- 28 'Interesting People', *AWW*, 27 January 1951, 39; L. A. Grunig, L. Childers Hon and E. L. Toth (1988) *Women in Public Relations: How Gender Influences Practice* (London: Routledge), p. 99.
- 29 M. Farquhar, 'Disciple', *Scootering*, June 2011, 33.
- 30 J. Parkyns Derriman (1964) *Public Relations in Business Management* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, University of London Press), p. 8; amazon.com/Story-Kayser-Bondor-Moira-Keast/dp/B00127JKE2, accessed 25 July 2015.
- 31 <http://announcements.telegraph.co.uk/deaths/89102/love>
- 32 'Interesting Women', *Sunday Herald*, 28 August 1949, p. 10; 'These Have Made Good', *Argus*, 20 March 1954, p. 4.

- 33 R. Leong, 'Findlay, Reta Mildred (1893–1954)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/findlay-reta-mildred-10181/text17989, accessed 18 April 2015; Keith Dunstan (1979) has her age as 53 at her death, *The Store on the Hill* (Melbourne: Macmillan), p. 118.
- 34 F. Irving, 'Fashion Expert', *Argus*, 15 June 1954, p. 5; Dunstan, *The Store*, p. 106.
- 35 Dunstan, *The Store*, pp. 106, 111.
- 36 'First Woman', *West Australian*, Wednesday 23 June 1954, p. 14; 'Silk Stocking Shortage', *Argus*, 14 November 1941, p. 6; 'New and Newest', *Daily News*, 20 November 1948, p. 16; 'Sydney's Talking About', *SMH*, 22 May 1947, p. 12; 'New Colours', *Argus*, 18 February 1952, p. 8.
- 37 'Plenty of Jobs', *AWW*, 7 May 1949, p. 18; 'Women to Canberra', *SMH*, 18 January 1943, p. 3; 'Five Business Lectures', *Argus*, 2 August 1950, p. 10; 'Europe Seeking Its Lost Glamour', *Argus*, 16 July 1947, p. 32; Sawer and Simms, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 68, 71–72.
- 38 'Reta Findlay', *SMH*, 7 September 1950, p. 10.
- 39 'Reta Findlay Dies', *Argus*, 15 June 1954, p. 1; 'Miss Findlay', *Argus*, 16 June 1954, p. 3.; 'Crowds Attend Funeral', *Argus*, 18 June 1954, p. 7.
- 40 'What Women Are Doing', *AWW*, 6 August 1938, p. 38.
- 41 'Other Women's Careers', *Sunday Mail*, 11 April 1937, p. 21.
- 42 R. Warne, 'Woman's Parade', *Argus*, 11 February 1954, p. 9; B. Pepper, *Sunday Mail*, 14 December 1952, p. 8; 'Plenty of Jobs', *AWW*, 7 May 1949, p. 18.
- 43 'Newsmakers', *B & T Weekly*, 25 August 1960, p. 37; 15 June 1961, p. 18; 22 June 1961, p. 27.
- 44 'Newsmakers', *B & T Weekly*, 13 October 1966, p. 10.
- 45 'Joy Young: Girl Who Made It', *B & T Weekly*, 8 December 1966, p. 17.
- 46 P. Carey, interview with J. Dickenson, 13 June 2013; 'Newsmakers', *B & T Weekly*, 14 May 1964, p. 8; *Directory of Advertising Agency Personnel, 1961* (London), p. 3.
- 47 Wishart, 'Advertising', p. 1.
- 48 Warne, 'Woman's Parade', *Argus*, 11 February 1954, p. 9.
- 49 Warne, 'Woman's Parade', *Argus*, 11 February 1954, p. 9.
- 50 'Talk about Town', *Sunday Times*, 1 August 1954, p. 19.
- 51 'Made Advertising Her Career', *Mercury*, 8 July 1953, p. 16.

6

Advertising and Beyond

Abstract: *This chapter shows that the flexible nature of advertising industry work suited women with ambitions beyond advertising as it allowed them to support themselves, their families and their political or creative pursuits. Politically committed women could utilise skills learnt in the advertising industry for developing political propaganda. Creative women could utilise design, illustration and copywriting skills picked up in the industry for cultural production, producing art works and writing novels, short stories, poems, plays and television scripts. And, finally, socially minded women could utilise promotional and organisational skills gained in the advertising industry for philanthropic campaigns and social marketing.*

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Lorraine Salmon's archival papers reveal the contradictions at the heart of her career. An advertising tear sheet for Kia-Ora brand Spaghetti and Beans sits beside a copy of the *Soviet News Bulletin*. Tucked behind a leaflet promoting a 'Tribune Marx Symposium' is a reader's recipe for mock chicken. These juxtapositions expose her dual identities – Lorraine Russell/Salmon, Communist Party member, union leader, theatre reviewer, advocate for the Viet Cong, and 'Marjory Carter', mythical home economist, saleswoman, broadcaster, housewives' friend – and highlight her ability to maintain a career in advertising and public relations at the same time as she engaged with some of the most pressing political problems of her time.¹

The flexible nature of advertising industry work suited women with ambitions beyond advertising since it allowed them to support themselves, their families and their political or creative pursuits. Politically committed women such as Salmon could utilise skills learnt in the advertising industry for developing political propaganda. Creative women could utilise design, illustration and copywriting skills picked up in the industry for cultural production, producing art works and writing novels, short stories, poems, plays and television scripts. And, finally, socially minded women could utilise promotional and organisational skills gained in the advertising industry for philanthropic campaigns and social marketing.

Some advertising women used their skills to pursue a political cause that sought to render the advertising industry obsolete. An oral history of the Australian advertising industry has identified a small cohort of left-wing activists, including members of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), who supported themselves and their families by working for lengthy periods in the advertising industry. Some of these activists were women who were able to use their creative skills pragmatically to support themselves and their families by working in advertising because, despite advertising's economic purpose, the industry provided a conducive and flexible environment suitable for artists and writers.²

The renowned Australian playwright Mona Brand trained in advertising at Sydney's Metropolitan Business College and worked as copywriter in a range of advertising jobs, including in the advertising departments of the Sydney retail store, Anthony Hordern's and Melbourne's Myer Emporium and Manton's department store.³ Brand left the industry in the late 1940s to pursue a literary career, using knowledge picked up in her advertising training and work experience to craft content and form. Brand's training at the Metropolitan Business College had included at least some aspects of psychology: from the 1920s, Australian advertising

practitioners had become increasingly interested in using the new 'science' to provide psychological insights that would ensure products were pitched effectively to consumers. In her work as an advertising copywriter, Brand developed psychological insights to her audience's desires and motivations, and created idealised worlds through which to capture their attention and persuade them that a particular product or brand would fulfill their desires. She learnt to compose copy with economy, efficiency and speed, producing the precise number of words to fill the limited and specific space available in a print advertisement. By writing radio commercials, she developed an ear for natural dialogue, practised writing for a specific length and gained experience in ensemble performance, voice work, direction and production. Brand did not regret her early experiences in the industry: 'Even advertising, which I grew to dislike, taught me something about how our highly commercialised economy works.' She explored this in her play *Our 'Dear' Relations*, which dealt humorously with the excessive commercialisation of Mother's Day, and parodied the commercial jingles she used to write in the collection *Church Commercials*, which provided commentary on religious issues.⁴

While Brand chose to leave advertising as soon as she was able, Lorraine Barnett Bremner (later known as Lorraine Russell and Lorraine Salmon) kept one foot in the industry for most of her career. Salmon was, like Brand, an aspiring writer who recognised the potential of advertising as a means of financial support. With two young children to support, Salmon found work as a radio scriptwriter with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Melbourne radio station 3UZ, then moved to the publicity department of the wartime Rationing Commission, where her duties included writing scripts, liaising with radio stations and preparing weekly sessions for commercial stations and the ABC in Melbourne. Her work was broadcast nationwide and she became a public face of the Commission. Salmon wrote numerous articles to educate people about rationing: in her first year, she claimed to have written almost one million words.

As we have seen, Australian advertising taught women how to consume new brands and products as they appeared on the market. The next chapter will show the important role played by women home economists such as Salmon in this process. Advertising agencies and broadcasting stations employed these experts to show women how to incorporate brands and products into their lives. In 1946 Salmon joined O'Brien Publicity, one of the oldest advertising agencies in Australia, as a home economist, and

was briefed to prepare radio sessions for Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia and New Zealand (ICI ANZ). Adopting the pseudonym 'Marjory Carter', Salmon prepared publicity material and operated a cookery advisory service to promote ICI's phosphate raising agent 'Aerophos', a 'modern' Australian product that had replaced 'old-fashioned products'. For six years, she conducted daily radio sessions, travelled to Victoria speaking at Country Women's Association meetings, schools and technical colleges, and developed the *Aerophos Recipe Book*, of which she was very proud. Her efforts increased the Aerophos market share to 94 per cent and 'improved relations with public schools, radio stations and newspapers'. Salmon promoted other products too. For example, she wrote and produced the advertorial series 'What's New in Home Economics', providing (amongst other things) 'healthful ways with California Oranges'.⁵

Salmon spent almost a decade with O'Brien's before leaving the advertising industry in 1952. Her shift away from advertising and promotional work coincided with the Communist Party ratcheting up its critique of consumer culture. In the 1950s left publications such as the *Tribune* lampooned fat cat spending at Christmas and bemoaned the overwhelming choice faced by young couples setting up a home.⁶ A series on hire purchase ('a necessary evil') condemned compulsory deposits, 'the express aim' of which 'was to stop working people buying goods': 'Why do we have the howling contradiction of people being stopped from buying, say, refrigerators, when workers in the factories making them are being sacked because there is no market', asked one writer.⁷ Radical criticism of consumer culture would continue into the 1960s, sometimes extending into a critique of the advertising industry itself.⁸

On leaving O'Brien's, Salmon became the secretary of the Victorian branch of Actors Equity and seems to have joined the Communist Party at the same time. In 1955 she led the Equity branch in a campaign for better pay, using the promotional skills she had honed as Marjory Carter. When the CPA sent her second husband, Malcolm Salmon, to Hanoi in March 1958, Salmon joined him there. Her commercial writing skills and radio experience were again put to good use as she helped media outlets to establish a presence, working, for instance, with her husband for the English-language service of Radio Hanoi. Unlike Brand, Salmon returned to marketing work when she came back to Australia in 1960 (perhaps for financial reasons) and seems to have supported herself with this work until her premature death, whilst also publishing a memoir of her experiences in Vietnam and writing literary reviews. She found 'a

small amount of radio and television work' with the ABC and her last job seems to have been at the Australian Sales Research Bureau. She joined the Bureau in June 1966 as an interviewer and sales-force trainer, working with the renowned researcher Irving Saulwick.

Both Brand and Salmon used the skills they had honed in advertising to help the Communist cause: Brand to promote her political ideas through poetry and plays, and Salmon to help the Viet Cong on the ground in Vietnam and then, on her return to Australia, to educate her compatriots about life in the Democratic Republic. Other advertising leftists made less precise use of their advertising knowledge, choosing instead to concentrate on art rather than propaganda, meeting with other like-minded creative people to encourage each other. Betty Blunden, for example, appears to have made less obvious use of her advertising skills for political purposes. Simultaneously a successful advertising art director and a member of the CPA, Blunden used advertising to support her family, making particular use of the industry's flexibility.



FIGURE 6.1 *Betty Blunden drawn by Patrick Russell*

Source: Taken from Thompson Ansell Blunden promotional booklet, courtesy of Claire Nilsson.

A daughter of one of the foremost social reformers of Melbourne, Oswald Barnett, Blunden started work as a graphic designer in the advertising department of a Melbourne hosiery factory in 1934, where she met her future husband, Ralph Blunden. The couple joined the Communist Party in 1938 and a year later Betty played a leading role in the foundation of the Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists Association (ACIAA) 'a union to look after the interests of people in [commercial art]', which represented commercial artists until well into the 1980s.⁹ She joined Elaine Haxton as one of five women to exhibit in the association's first Sydney exhibition.¹⁰ The Blundens were part of an influential group of left-wing artists and writers based at Eltham in Melbourne, most of whom supported their creative activities by working for advertising agencies. While Ralph fought in World War Two and then pursued a career as a copywriter in Melbourne agencies, Betty worked as a freelance designer from their home in Kew, raising their three children, one of whom was severely disabled.¹¹

In the late 1950s, the Blundens started their own agency, Ralph Blunden Advertising, with the Australian Wool Board as their first client. By this time, the couple had left the Communist Party, as had many Australians after the events of 1956, when the brutality of Stalinist Russia became clear. Betty joined Ralph in the agency, working as studio manager and remained in this position until Ralph left the marriage and the agency was bought out.¹² The left-wing advertising cohort had long looked out for each other in terms of employment and Betty was soon offered a job as the studio manager at Masius Melbourne, a branch of the international advertising agency headed by the managing director, Len Reason, another former member of the CPA. Betty worked in this role until her retirement (she was apparently an excellent studio manager) but never abandoned her commitment to left, especially Maoist, politics: she travelled to China as part of Australia-China Society group in 1974, and recorded her rather naive observations in a comprehensive diary.¹³

In magazines, on the radio, and later on television, the boundaries between advertising and cultural production were often indistinct, with advertising making use of the tropes and techniques of both literary and popular culture.¹⁴ This close relationship between advertising and cultural production was reflected in the literary and artistic ambitions of advertising women. As we saw in Chapter 2, several British advertising women became successful authors, sometimes using their knowledge of the advertising industry to provide a background for their stories.

Australian advertising women also had literary and artistic ambitions. Clara Behrend, the Western Australian advertising expert we met earlier, regularly contributed short fiction to the newspapers, though not always successfully.¹⁵ When published, Behrend's stories centred on romantic misunderstandings and the value of selflessness in relationships.¹⁶ Australian writers also published novels and short stories using the advertising agency as a setting, most of which indicated at least a passing knowledge of the industry's workings. The novel *Trusting Journey* (1950) by the British-Australian writer Marjorie Weaver was an example of this. A romantic fiction, the novel tells the story of Gail, a young British woman, who travels to Melbourne to marry an Australian she fell for during the war. When her lover fails to meet her from the ship, she is forced to make her own way. She finds a job in an advertising agency, hired because of her 'good looks, beautiful clothes and tony English accent', as well as her natural ability to provide the 'women's angle'. Agency life is 'ruthless and stimulating' and she becomes 'hell bent' on a scriptwriting career. By the book's end, she has fallen for her former lover's brother and is ready to settle down to married life, abandoning all thoughts of an advertising career.¹⁷

Some women built reputations as writers or artists whilst holding down a day job in the advertising industry. The Western Australian author Freda Vines, for example, worked as a copywriter for the Perth radio station 6PR to support her creative endeavours. The station broadcast her plays and narrative poems in the mid-1940s and Vines went on to publish a range of works, including historical novels and children's picture books.¹⁸ Sheila Sibley, the Melbourne-born journalist, short storywriter and television scriptwriter (with credits for the television soaps *Prisoner*, *A Country Practice* and *Neighbours* in the 1980s), wrote advertising copy to support her children in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1955, Sibley, a single mother whose stories were well received in England and the United States, acknowledged the link between writing advertising copy and writing for popular culture: 'Advertising teaches you the most direct way to communicate with your audience', she wrote.¹⁹ Her story of the same year, 'The Job That Wouldn't Wait', captured the ambivalence of many young women towards their growing options. Louisa had left a job in advertising when she married. Now a mother, she is determined to go back and find out whether it was 'really as glamorous and exciting as she remembered'. She pays a visit to her previous employer and encounters a familiar trope, the successful advertising woman who is single and

unloved. Louisa decides that her family offers her more than agency life ever could, at least for now, and walks away without regret.²⁰

There was a hint of disapproval in estimations of the work of the artist and theatre designer Elaine Haxton (1909–99). Her paintings showed ‘a strong decorative sense’ and were ‘agreeable to look at’; in post-war Australia she became a leading member of what was derisively called the ‘Charm School’, a group of artists whose work was easy on the eye. This assessment of Haxton’s work reflects her close association with the world of commercial art, a world in which she found ‘an avenue of independence.’ For three years from 1926, Haxton worked fulltime as a fashion artist at the Sydney department store, David Jones, studying painting at East Sydney Technical College at night. When she left the store, she ‘teamed up’ with a group of advertising illustrators to support her painting with freelance work in commercial art, making ‘much more money’ so she could save to go overseas. From 1933 Haxton spent eight years in London, working for various advertising agencies, including Thompson’s (JWT), London Press Exchange (LPE) and Crawford’s. On her return to Australia, she again worked in advertising and continued to do so throughout the 1940s and 1950s, travelling to New York and London in the late 1940s before settling back in Australia to marry in 1948. Haxton was one of five women artists to participate in the first Sydney exhibition of ACIAA in 1940, and she continued to take part in commercial art events throughout the rest of her career.²¹ In the 1960s, the Australian national airline Qantas flew her around the world at its expense, on the understanding that the airline could use two of any drawings she made on the trip for advertisements. Despite working for advertising agencies for most of her career, Haxton never ‘swayed from her true vocation’.²² She travelled extensively through America, Mexico, Europe and England to paint in oils and, on the Qantas trip, trained in printmaking in Japan.²³

When Betty Quin set sail from Adelaide in the mid-1950s to embark on the next stage of her scriptwriting career, she took with her to London skills honed in the small but creative worlds of Adelaide’s theatre, radio and advertising industries.²⁴ Thanks to Quin’s father, Bill Smallacombe, the city’s first radio broadcasting licensee, Betty and her two siblings were raised in a kind of theatrical playground, where creativity and commerce were closely entwined.²⁵ As a young adult Betty Smallacombe wrote and performed in radio soaps sponsored by the clients of the advertising agency, L. J. MacNamara, where her father was second in charge.²⁶ Later,

she and her husband Don Quin staged pantomimes and vaudeville at night, while Betty worked as a copywriter at the agency during the day.²⁷ After five years in London, including a stint at the BBC, Betty returned to MacNamara's as 'Air Media Manager'.²⁸ Through her theatrical, radio and advertising work, Betty Quin developed scriptwriting skills that, in the 1970s and 1980s, would enable her to become one of the leading television writers in Australia, with credits for the popular soaps *Young Doctors*, *Prisoner* and *Neighbours*.

The award-winning novelist Maria Quinn (then known as Maria Fogarty) worked as an advertising copywriter at Jackson Wain Advertising in Sydney in the early 1960s. She then travelled to North America and London, again working as a copywriter and, in London, as a creative director. After a career as a magazine editor and a television presenter back in Australia, Quinn produced the highly acclaimed novel *The Gene Thieves* in 2009.²⁹

A third group of women used their advertising skills and experience beyond the industry in the not-for-profit sector. We have seen how the Sydney advertising woman Aileen Small honed her marketing skills during World War One, writing and marketing a book about the Fifth Division to raise funds to help the division's soldiers, then used those skills to set up her own agency. By the start of World War Two, Australian women were adept at the marketing required to promote a worthy cause, including the emerging techniques of Public Relations or PR.³⁰ Advertising women joined women's organisations, such as the Women's Auxiliary National Service (WANS), and used their campaigning and organisational skills to aid the war effort. An example of this was Ada Rubensohn, the sister of Sim Rubensohn, who was appointed the WANS executive officer because of her experience as an advertising executive in London.³¹

After the war, the emerging discipline of public relations attracted a number of advertising women, perhaps in a further example of women moving into a new field or adopting a new technology before men fully recognised its career potential, as women had been drawn to radio work in the 1920s. As we will see in the following chapters, many of these women worked producing fashion advertising or in home economics, combining this latter discipline with demonstration, promotional and advertising work. Others responded to the growing critique of advertising that built throughout the 1950s as the counter-culture gained strength and left the industry; Mona Brand was an example of this.

Another example was the radio copywriter Valwyn Wishart who returned from London disenchanted with the capitalist imperatives of advertising, and resolved to use her skills and experience for more worthwhile social causes. Wishart began her slow transition from advertising to social marketing and public relations work at Carden Advertising, which was breaking new ground as one of the first Melbourne agencies to establish a public relations (PR) section. She began to build 'good relations' with the editors of the women's pages at newspapers such as Melbourne's *Age* – a crucial move for a PR consultant – and left the advertising world completely in 1956. 'Fed up with the crassness of commercialism' and 'also going through a spiritual development', Wishart took a job as the PR Officer for the Methodist Babies' Home in Victoria. The children's home was overseeing 'astonishing new developments in caring for children', introducing the Orana cottage system, which Wishart says was 'very new, visionary'. She was the Home's first PR officer and stayed there for two years, fundraising for the organisation.³² Wishart views this period as an important transition both for her and for non-profit organisations, which were beginning to realise the value of marketing to raise funds. She worked with a committee of women from the 'Who's Who of Toorak' (a wealthy Melbourne suburb) 'doing good works', and was able to use her industry knowledge to produce advertising campaigns to raise funds for Orana. Wishart also leveraged the fashion industry contacts she had made during her advertising career to help organise a gala event at the Melbourne Town Hall, at which the Victorian Governor launched the Orana fundraising campaign. Wishart had 'moved on from advertising to social justice and social welfare', using 'the ability to generate ideas' that she had gained in her previous career.³³

The advertising industry provided these women artists, writers and activists with a conducive and flexible environment. At a time before the Australian government supported creative people through the Australia Council, advertising provided a space in which women artists and writers could use their gifts pragmatically to support themselves and their families, whilst developing skills that proved useful in their creative pursuits. Despite advertising's economic purpose, the industry also provided a space in which those committed to social change were able to develop skills they could use in their philanthropic and political activities, as well as support their families.³⁴ Advertising work provided a steady source of income for those women whose main ambitions lay elsewhere but the nature of their engagement with the industry draws attention to a problem long faced by Australian advertising women.

The chapter has emphasised the fluidity of women's work in advertising, as they moved in and out of the formal industry in order to raise children or to pursue other activities. This was clearly of benefit to women such as Betty Blunden who could help to support her family financially and, at the same time, look after a disabled child. But this flexibility had a flip side. Women were much less likely to achieve continuous employment in the industry, which prevented them from being able to 'move up the ladder' in the 'traditional' ways used by men and might help explain why so few women have managed to attain executive positions in advertising agencies. As women moved into the advertising industry in increasing numbers from the late 1960s, this inability to reach the highest levels of management would become a source of significant frustration.

Meanwhile, another group of Australian women also maintained a flexible relationship with advertising in all its manifestations. As we will see in the next chapter, these women took advantage of society's propensity to view domestic work as women's 'natural' domain, attaching this perception to the requirement of manufacturers for educators to show women how to use the new, 'modern' products. They positioned themselves as a new type of woman, the qualified domestic expert, using the advertising industry and its commercial imperatives to construct an entirely new career for women, the celebrity cook.

Notes

- 1 Salmon Family Papers, 1927–86, MS 6105, Box 16/5, Mitchell Library, NSW: 'Kia-Ora Spaghetti and Beans', 1 October 1950. Marjory was sometimes spelt Marjorie.
- 2 C. Andrew, interview with J. Dickenson, 27 September 2013.
- 3 M. Brand (ca. 1995) *Enough Blue Sky: The Autobiography of Mona Brand, an Unknown Well-known Playwright* (Potts Point, NSW: Tawny Pipit Press), pp. 67–101; C. Tilley (1981) 'Mona Brand: A Checklist, 1935–1980', *Australian Literary Studies*, 10, 117–27; G. Poole (1992) 'A Very Humanitarian Type', *Australian Drama Studies*, 21, 3–22; Nicole Moore (2007) 'Art Makes the World', *Overland* 189, 93–4.
- 4 Brand, *Enough Blue Sky*, p. 97.
- 5 Mitchell Library, SLNSW, Salmon Family Papers, 1927–86, MS 6105, 16/5.
- 6 'Every Day Is Xmas Day', *Tribune*, 20 December 1955; H. A. B., 'Can't Get by without Getting into Debt', Wednesday 15 April 1955, 11; W. J. Brown, 'Pause in a Furniture Shop', 6 July 1955, 8.

- 7 'Hire Purchase', *Tribune*, 10 August 1955. See also 'Buying Spree a Myth of Newspapers', 5 January 1955, 3; 'Prosperity Boast Rang Hollowly in the Ears of Millions', *Tribune*, 11 January 1956, 7.
- 8 M. Taylor, 'Advertising Age', *The Realist*, 27, 2 (1967), 22.
- 9 hom.mira.net/~andy/betty/memorial-meeting, accessed 22 January 2013; A. Blunden, interview with R. Francis, 8 August 2013; Andrew, interview.
- 10 'Women in Advertising Art', *SMH*, 10 December 1940, 15.
- 11 Blunden, interview; Andrew, interview.
- 12 Thomson Ansell Blunden promotional booklet, p. 6; hom.mira.net/~andy/betty/memorial-meeting, accessed 22 January 2013; Blunden, interview; Andrew, interview.
- 13 Blunden, interview; ethicalpolitics.org/andy/betty/china/ch1.htm, accessed 5 May 2015.
- 14 For the parallels between advertising and fiction in early magazines, see E. G. Garvey (1996) *The Adman in the Parlour: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 15 'A Chat', *Western Mail*, 23 March 1944, 9.
- 16 'A Chat', *Western Mail*, 29 October 1942, 11; C. Behrend, 'Latest Model', *Western Mail*, 15 October 1942, 3; 'Bachelor 25', *Western Mail*, 15 July 1943, 6, 32.
- 17 M. Weaver (1949) *Trusting Journey* (London: Hodder and Stoughton), pp. 1, 22, 112–118, 135, 251. Reviews: 'Literary Nook', *Cairns Post*, 20 May 1950, p. 4; 'Lift-Out Fiction Supplement', *Sun-Herald*, 24 January 1954, 37–38. See also J. A. Moore, 'Love Comes Last', *Northern Champion*, 22 February 1941, 8 and R. Gill, 'Framed', *Advertiser*, 29 April 1950, 7.
- 18 'W. A. Girl Poet Rises to Fame', *Daily News*, 9 October 1944, 6; 'Exciting New Serial', *AWW*, 12 November 1958, 29; austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/A12457.
- 19 S. Sibley (1955) 'Accent on Love', *Writer*, 68, 44, quoted in N. A. Walker (2000) *Shaping Our Mother's World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press), p. 141; A. Dyson, 'Undaunted', *Age*, 17 October 2011, 18; 'A Life Write Large', *SMH*, 23 November 2011, 20.
- 20 S. Sibley (1955) 'The Job That Wouldn't Wait', *Collier's Weekly* (September), 65–71.
- 21 'Art's Part in Industry', *SMH*, 12 December 1940, 3; Athena, 'A Woman Views the News', *Western Mail*, 15 May 1941, 15; *Australian Worker*, 4 August 1948, 12; 'Women in Advertising Art', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1940, 15; M. R. D. Foot, 'Obituary', 28 July 1999.
- 22 P. Coombes (1990) *Elaine Haxton: A Biography, Achievements in Paint and Print* (Elizabeth Bay, NSW: Communication Programs), p. 16; E. Haxton interview with J. Gleeson, 22 November 1978, nga.gov.au/Research/Gleeson/pdf/Haxton.pdf, accessed 5 May 2015.
- 23 E. Haxton, interview; M. R. D. Foot, 'Obituary', 28 July 1999.
- 24 J. F. Ross (1978) *A History of Radio in South Australia 1897–1977* (Plympton Park, SA: J.F. Ross).

- 25 P. Smallacombe, interview with J. Dickenson, 30 October 2013; A. Killey, interview with R. Crawford, 13 December 2013; 'The Three Bears', *News*, 19 September 1927, 9.
- 26 B. Ekins, 'The Story of Betty and Don', *News*, 7 October 1954, 25; A. Killey, interview with R. Crawford, 13 December 2013.
- 27 Ekins, 'The Story', 25; 'Strange Meeting', *Mail*, 19 December 1953, 62.
- 28 'Newsmakers', *B&T Weekly*, 28 April 1960, 55; 26 January 1961, 4.
- 29 T. Quinn, 'Maria Quinn', *SMH*, 3 July 2010.
- 30 J. Johnston and J. MacNamara (2013) 'Public Relations Literature and Scholarship in Australia: A Brief History of Change and Diversification', *Prism*, 10, prismjournal.org/homepage.html.
- 31 'In the News', *News*, 21 May 1941, 8.
- 32 'Sky's for Sale', *Argus*, 29 June 1956, 8.
- 33 Wishart, interview.
- 34 Andrew, interview.

7

Women Experts and Consumer Culture

Abstract: In Australia, as elsewhere, women learnt from female home economists to consume the timesaving domestic appliances and food products that flooded the market from the end of the nineteenth century. Women built careers in home economics based on gendered ideas of women's domestic expertise combined with an appeal to modern scientific method. Manufacturers, their advertisers and the media who needed advertisements to support their publications used this dual 'expertise' to sell products to women who would not have otherwise seen how these new appliances and processed foods might fit into their lives. In their turn, Dickenson shows, home economists used the publicity provided by their marketing efforts to promote themselves, turning their names and the expertise attached to them into brands of their own.

Dickenson, Jackie. *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
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In the early 1940s Olwen Francis – a prominent home economist – told a young Margaret Fulton that, after the war, the promotion of ‘food, energy and cosmetics’ would provide opportunities for the ‘new, progressive women.’ Food advertising became Fulton’s goal, with spectacular results.¹ As this chapter will show, however, the engagement of women with food and with marketing was not quite as new as Francis suggested, although she was correct to anticipate its extraordinary growth.

In Australia, as elsewhere, women learnt from female home economists to consume the time-saving domestic appliances and food products that flooded the market from the end of the nineteenth century. Women built careers in home economics based on gendered ideas of women’s domestic expertise combined with an appeal to modern scientific method, sometimes, but not always, officially recognised.² This dual ‘expertise’ was used by manufacturers, their advertisers and the media – who needed their advertisements to support publication – to sell products to women who would not have otherwise seen where and how these new appliances and processed foods might fit into their lives. In their turn, these home economists used the publicity provided by their marketing efforts to promote themselves, turning their names and the expertise attached to them into brands of their own.

Australian women moved relatively slowly into selling products based on their domestic expertise. The first demonstrators were men, showing women how to use the new mass-produced canned foods and cooking stoves of their own invention.³ In the final decades of the nineteenth century, however, the expansion of the major cities and the shortage of domestic workers caused growing concern about bad cooking and poor housekeeping, prompting governments across Australia to introduce domestic science classes for women.⁴ The Sydney Technical School appointed the first cookery and domestic economy teacher in 1886, and the College of Domestic Economy (later the Emily McPherson College) opened its doors in Melbourne in 1906.⁵ The first graduates of these schools had credibility because it was assumed their sex gave them a ‘natural disposition’ for such work. This disposition was now underpinned by recognised qualifications in the ‘rules laid down by home economics schools’, and manufacturers latched onto these qualifications in order to give their products the endorsement of the new woman ‘expert’.⁶

The early graduates began to teach domestic science across Australia, engaging only tentatively with the commercial world by publishing

cookery books, writing cookery columns for newspapers and promoting government-supported primary producers. Amy Schauer, for example, who was an early graduate of the Sydney Technical College, moved with her sister Minnie to Brisbane to teach cookery and domestic classes, privately at first, then from 1895 at the Brisbane Technical College.⁷ Over the next 40 years, Schauer would become Queensland's leading cookery expert, her recipes reaching a wide audience through regular newspaper columns and the publication of three cookery books.⁸ Besides her teaching and frequent judging duties, for which she might have been paid a fee, Schauer's only commercial activity appears to have been her work for the Brisbane Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing, which utilised Schauer's popularity to promote the preservation of Queensland fruit. Written with Minnie, Schauer's book *Fruit Preserving and Confectionery* was first published in 1908.⁹ Her contemporary, Mrs Edith O'Neill, also produced recipes for publication in newspapers and books, including the *Wilgor Cookery Book* (1926) and the *Coronation Cookery Book* (1912), of which it was written: 'It can safely be said that any Cairns girl armed with this book can enter upon her duties, as wife and housekeeper without any further help, and in the most approved manner to carry out the injunction to "Feed the Brute".' O'Neill's recipes showed she was 'conversant with the requirements of the climate of Queensland and the North, in particular'.¹⁰

In Melbourne, the teaching of domestic science at government girls' high schools began from 1916, but was restricted at private girls' schools 'because of the cost of equipment'.¹¹ This changed in 1928 with the opening of Mrs Vassall Cox's Homeleigh School of Domestic Science in Hawthorn, a privately owned school that provided 'a central, economic location for the education of interested girls'. According to 'Cornelia' of the *Hobart Mercury*, such a school was vital – she wanted one in Tasmania – because the training of girls in 'Homecraft' was 'a big National Health and National Morality question': once again, the ubiquitous anxiety about 'the Modern Girl'. Mrs Vassall Cox did not share this anxiety. She had 'a high admiration of the modern girl', 'thousands of whom' had 'passed through her hands as domestic art instructor'. 'There is an underlying seriousness in the modern girl', she told the *Advertiser* in 1933. 'She is not so frothy and pleasure seeking as people believe. The modern girl... likes to be efficient in everything she takes up, whether it be a profession, sport, or home duties.'¹² Girls had previously resisted

studying domestic science, Mrs Vassall Cox explained, because it was mundane – ‘familiarity breeds contempt’ – and because mothers felt they could train their daughters themselves. Scientific research, however, had changed domestic science – it now dealt with everything ‘from batters to babies, from custard to calories, from dust to disease germs’ – and the training was ‘never wasted, whether a girl uses it to earn her living or as a preparation for an even older and more womanly profession—that of wife and mother’. As it did not ‘encroach on the manly professions’, it provided women who were obliged to support themselves with a non-threatening entrée into professional work.¹³

The girls who graduated from domestic science schools – both government and private – could not all find positions as teachers. Those who needed to work required jobs in which they could use their new qualifications and, fortunately for them, the development of new home appliances and consumer goods provided them with unprecedented opportunities. Manufacturers needed demonstrators to show Australian women how to use the appliances that were starting to appear on the market, and how to incorporate new products into their daily lives.¹⁴ Mrs Alice Cooke showed ‘housewives’ how to make at least 100 dishes using gelatin; Mrs O’Connell baked cakes for them using Bushell’s White Wings flour, and Miss. A. L. Sharman advised them on methods and recipes for gas cooking.¹⁵ Nellie W. Holmes, the Chief Demonstrator of the Adelaide Electric Supply Company, provided the *Advertiser* with regular cooking columns, promoting her employer at the same time.¹⁶

Two graduates of Melbourne’s Emily McPherson College of Domestic Science, Thelma Crump¹⁷ and Helen Potter, travelled Australia throughout the 1930s, showing women how to use the increasingly popular gas stoves sold by their employer, the Colonial Gas Association.¹⁸ Although Crump and Potter had important marketing roles, they were not engaged in sales transactions; after their demonstrations, head office sales staff would arrive in the town to canvass for ‘sales possibilities’. Nevertheless, their demonstrations were incorporated into more indirect marketing techniques, for example, a sales promotion in 1933, when, at the instigation of the Country Women’s Association, the Colonial Gas Association linked up with Melbourne’s *Sun News Pictorial* to conduct a cooking campaign that toured country Victoria. Crump and Potter demonstrated baking in a New World oven and there was a ‘guess the weight of a sack of pollard’ competition. ‘Hundreds of interested housewives’ attended the demonstrations. The Gas Association got to promote its new oven

and the *Sun News Pictorial* gained priceless publicity. Crump returned to Mount Gambier in 1936 and stayed 11 weeks 'giving expert advice' before moving on to Horsham.¹⁹

Crump seems to have given up demonstrating after her marriage in 1939, but some women managed to combine marriage and childrearing with a demonstrator's itinerant career: Ena Parsons, for example, whom we met in a previous chapter, gave her occupation as 'Sales and Advertising' when she joined the Sydney branch of the Business and Professional Women's Association. A teacher's daughter, Parsons attended Methodist Ladies College and Sydney University, graduating with a BA in 1930. She started showing women how to cook with Imperial Canned Foods – a W. Angliss & Co. brand – before her marriage in 1935, becoming known as 'Miss Imperial', the face of the brand.²⁰ Despite giving birth to three daughters, Parsons continued to travel Australia promoting imperial products, possibly working casually, and was still promoting the brand in 1962.²¹

Some women demonstrators went on to build successful media careers. Jess Robertson, the founder of Phoebe's School of Domestic Art and 'Phoebe the Early Cook' of Perth radio station 6IX fame, also promoted stoves. Robertson, the daughter of the future Liberal Senator Agnes Robertson, studied domestic economy at Teachers Training College, before opening her own school in 1931.²² Robertson supplemented her teaching income with promotional activities from the beginning of her career. She wrote cookery articles for the *Daily News*, and judged recipe competitions for various firms (including Fulcreem, the company that later introduced the popular cookery card indexes to Australia²³) 'to foster local industries and products', and demonstrated cookery for the Electricity and Gas Department, as well as for various local stove firms, including the Parkinson Stove Company (Australia) Ltd and Metter's Ltd, the makers of the famous 'Kooka Stove'.²⁴ In 1934 Robertson was selected by the ABC to broadcast four educational talks on her pet subjects, which included invalid cookery and dietetics.²⁵ The success of her talks led to her joining W. A. Broadcasters Ltd, the owners of 6IX, and she built a successful radio career broadcasting to women and children. During World War Two, she joined the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) and was put in charge of the cooking arrangements, making sure that girls in camp were fed well and received an elementary training in canteen cooking. Metters lent her stoves to use at the camp. Robertson returned to her broadcasting career at the end of the war.

These collaborations between women experts, manufacturers and the media all had one thing in common. They framed housework, especially cooking, as a problem for the modern woman. Working women were too busy; stay-at-home women uninspired; household budgets too small; countrywomen too isolated. Every woman had a problem, and the solution lay in an innovative, cheaper, more convenient product. Inside the can, at the flick of a switch, or with the acquisition of a new recipe, lay the promise of an easier, more glamorous life. Little wonder then that the next stage in the evolution of the home economist was promotion to celebrity status, as a household name, a trusted friend to time-poor, unimaginative Australian women.

No Australian woman achieved more in this regard than Margaret Fulton. But on the way, many women came close and their success was entwined with the rise of the global brands, the global advertising agencies that handled them, and the women's press in which their advertisements appeared. The activities of these women in presenting prosaic products in glamorous ways helped to blur the lines between entertainment and everyday life:

Every morning at 9 o'clock five days a week, Jean Bowring arrives at a city office, puts on an apron and begins cooking. But when she has turned out one of her luscious recipes she does not serve it. Instead she puts it under powerful lights and cameras and has it photographed. Mrs Bowring, home economist for *Woman's Day*, advises tens of thousands of housewives throughout Australia on their domestic problems.²⁶

In 1957 Bowring became Australia's first television chef; the Gas and Fuel Corporation sponsored her 15-minute show on HSV.²⁷ Other cooking 'experts' were fictional characters. 'Elizabeth Cooke', the 'famous Kraft Cookery and Nutrition Expert', who wrote 'from the Kraft kitchen', was perhaps the best known and the most completely fictitious, an abstract manifestation of the Kraft brand.²⁸ 'Marjory Carter', ICI's 'Aerophos' expert, was a little different. Behind Carter was a real woman, Lorraine Salmon, the political activist whom we met in the previous chapter. Salmon played the role of Carter on radio and occasionally at live product demonstrations, plugging the 'innovative' self-raising flour. Being fictitious, Cooke and Carter were portrayed in advertisements using illustrations. These were remarkably similar: both drawn as idealised, early middle-aged women with pleasant faces, short, fashionable hairdos, and pearls, no doubt representing the aspirations of the advertisers' target audiences. No

one seems to have complained about Salmon's likeness (or not) to Carter, after meeting her in the flesh. The magazines used fake names too, but with real people behind them. 'Ann (later 'Anne') Maxwell', for example, the cooking expert of *Woman* magazine, was 'played' for some time by Margaret Fulton.²⁹ Fulton's stellar career began at the Australian Gas Light Company (AGL) in 1943, when this Scottish migrant, the daughter of tailors, made her way to Sydney from Glenn Innes in northern New South Wales. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s gas companies promoted their 'modern' and 'progressive' gas cooking appliances through demonstrations designed to illustrate 'the enormous strides taken in gas cooking methods and modern gas ranges' and 'intended to bring housewives up-to-date with the latest in gas cooking and gas appliances'.³⁰

AGL employed a team of women home economists in its Home Service department, including Jean Bowring before she moved to *Woman's Day*. After changing Margaret Fulton's life with her advice, Olwen Francis, the AGL team supervisor, joined the *Australian Women's Weekly*.³¹ The glamorous Francis was a graduate of Adelaide University who had studied for

Marjory Carter
AEROPHOS COOKERY EXPERT

Gives You Delicious Recipes to Delight Friends and Family Alike!

Marjory Carter, who is an authority on baking, has been engaged specially by the manufacturers of "Aerophos" to give you tested recipes that are delicious, tempting, and easy to bake. Try these two recipes! Follow the directions carefully and make sure you use a brand of self-raising flour containing "Aerophos" to be certain of success! Keep looking in later issues of this journal for more special recipes recommended by Marjory Carter.

BIRD'S NEST CAKE

CAKE: 4 egg whites 1/2 cup. shortening 5 egg. center sugar 1 egg. self-raising flour containing "Aerophos" 1/2 cup. pink salt 4 eggs 1/2 cup milk 1 tablespoon coffee essence	FILLING AND ICING: 10 egg. yolk 1/2 cup. shortening 1/2 tablespoon coffee essence Vanilla essence 2 tablespoons boiling water few nuts	BIRD'S EGGS: 2 egg. ground almonds or meal 1/2 cup. center sugar 1/2 cup. milk sugar 1/2 cup. milk Almond essence Vanilla essence Candy Or milk almond paste may be used.
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Place cake in the B. and the bottom with ground sugar. Beat 10 egg yolk and mix coffee essence and milk. Lightly stir in sifted flour and beat at 100 beats. 100 beats. Bake in a moderate oven for 1 hour. Cream filling ingredients together, allowing to firm. Mix the ingredients for the bird's eggs with a stiff paste, coloring as liked, moulding into shapes on the hands and clearing with fine finger. When done in color, fix a rubber in the centre hole. Fill and top with, moulding into peaks with a knife. Sprinkle with a few nuts, and a little ground almond. Arrange eggs in the centre.

FIGURE 7.1 Section of Aerophos advertisement

Source: *Australian Women's Weekly*, 9 February 1946, p. 39.

a diploma in domestic science at Kings College London, before travelling to Scandinavia, France and the Balkans to learn about 'Continental' foods.³² Francis had returned to Australia in 1936, and, in her role at AGL, had promoted the company's products on radio as a spokesperson and copywriter – a role she continued for the AWW – and through regular columns in local papers.³³ She also had experience in public relations, participating in promotional events such as the 'Foods and Fashions Greet You' evening held at Sydney's Trocadero in August 1939.³⁴ Francis joined the AWW in 1942 and was having a busy war. She had recently been acting as honorary home economist to 'the Minister of Economics [*sic*]' and, like Robertson, was active in the WANS, helping to coordinate canteen cooking.³⁵ She served on the board of YWCA, volunteered for the Red Cross, and was appointed to an expert committee enquiring into day and night baking in the bread industry, representing NSW consumers alongside Victoria's Jean Daley.

Francis moved to the AWW because its 'enormous circulation' would enable her to widen her 'sphere of usefulness'. She clearly saw her work there as an opportunity to hone her PR skills and position herself for the opportunities she believed would open up for women at the end of the war.³⁶ In 1946 Francis became concerned about the lowly status of housework. At a meeting to consider the establishment of an Australian Institute of Good Housekeeping, she lamented that the status of the home-worker had not improved in the last 20 years. It remained, 'on the whole, the refuge of the financially desperate and the mentally backward'. 'Not one political ideology to-day considers the position of the house worker, who is untrained in a world where the unskilled worker commands no respect', Francis said.³⁷ Her anxiety was widely shared: many ex-servicewomen undertook a course in domestic skills at the end of the war under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS).³⁸

Francis also formed 'an unusual partnership' with two women she had met at the YWCA. They joined forces to pursue what they called 'The Woman's Angle in Public Relations'. Francis briefed the *SMH* on their mission: 'A person engaged in public relations must take an active part in helping to shape policies in order to serve the public better: to win public favour there must first be service to the public.' Her colleague, the designer and lecturer Bessie Mitchell (later Bessie Guthrie), explained that their partnership would promote 'names' (i.e., brands) which 'represent service and solid worth to our community'.³⁹ The consultancy seems to have failed: it has been suggested the left-leaning Mitchell's design ideas did

not appeal to a well-off clientele.⁴⁰ Francis moved to London and, from 1962 to at least 1967, was a board director of Benson's Public Relations Limited, where she mentored the British celebrity home economist Mary Berry.⁴¹ In 1966 Francis was the only woman of three board directors.⁴²

Margaret Fulton started work at AGL as a clerk, then transferred to 'Home Service', giving cookery classes demonstrations, showing women how to use and save gas, and teaching them about gas appliances. She developed her cooking skills there: AGL girls made the lightest highest cakes and Fulton 'never lost the touch'.⁴³ Although it was 'prim' at AGL – the girls had to wear hats and gloves, with discreet makeup and no nail polish – the young Fulton felt she had 'plugged into an exciting creative artistic life' with her move to Sydney and was 'dreaming of film stars, lifestyle, and social whirl'. She saw herself as 'one of the new breed of women on the march' with a 'good job, impeccable contacts, an expense account and travel opportunities'.⁴⁴ She left AGL in 1947 to become first a home service advisor, then a sales manager at Overseas Corporation Ltd, selling the famous Namco pressure cookers, which were made from recycled aluminium saucepans.⁴⁵



FIGURE 7.2 *Personality Del Cartwright demonstrates a Crosley freezer*

Source: David Jones, Melbourne, 1954, State Library of New South Wales.

Her next move was to the homewares department of David Jones, the Sydney store, where she joined a team of girls dressed in white starched uniforms and trained in the selling points of the washing machines, ovens and refrigerators Australia was now manufacturing in the post-war boom.⁴⁶ At DJs, Fulton developed a more cosmopolitan view of home economics, anticipating Australia's gradual embrace of European food and culture. Inspired by the new products brought back by the kitchenware buyer from yearly buying trips to Europe, she and the other women in the team 'imagined ourselves in Les Halles, the Paris markets'.⁴⁷ She also met Del Cartwright, a fellow home economist, who would become 'one of Australia's most successful and best-known young career women' and, like Fulton, build a successful media career with weekly newspaper columns, radio broadcasts with 2UE and, later, a regular slot on television with 'Good Morning Australia'.⁴⁸ Fulton had kept up her training, taking classes in Hotel and Restaurant cookery under Jules Weinberg at East Sydney Technical School, and found work as the 'home economist for a leading firm of cereal manufacturers [Kellogg's]'. She addressed women on the benefits – economy and speed – of ready-to-eat cereals:

With more wives and mothers working, speed and ease in food preparation is a 'must'. Many women have had no training in home making, and packaged and ready-prepared foods, like cereals, cake, pastry and biscuit mixes, canned and frozen foods, make life easier for busy working mothers... the modern housewife has not time for failures, and with cereal cooking one did not have failures.⁴⁹

After Elizabeth Riddell, the editor of *Woman*, suggested Fulton write for the magazine in 1954, her rise to household name progressed anonymously with her new byline, 'Anne Maxwell'.⁵⁰ She learnt to sell copies of the magazine by means of a cover story about cooking with a celebrity but over the next decade she herself would become the celebrity.⁵¹

A trip to Melbourne put her firmly on that path. Invited there by Kraft Foods, she met Deke Coleman, the managing director of J. Walter Thompson (JWT), Kraft's advertising agency, a meeting that Fulton later described as life changing.⁵² She joined the agency as a home economist on Kraft, Kellogg's, and, for a short time, Coca Cola, preparing these products for photographic shoots and television commercials. Fulton also worked as an account executive on the CSR (Colonial Sugar Refining Company) account, working to persuade people to eat more jam: Fulton called it her 'Money for Jam' account.⁵³ Besides demonstrating little interest in healthy eating, her work at JWT involved public relations,

which she learnt on the job, organising publicity for jam-eating sessions, and volunteering for duty on the exciting new medium, television, to promote Kellogg's cornflakes, which she found to be 'fun'. For Kellogg's and Kraft, she was expected to get 'inches' of coverage in the press.⁵⁴

Fulton's work as an account executive required 'negotiating skills, the tact of a diplomat and the wisdom of a marriage counsellor'. The pressure was constant; she had to be an enthusiast, 'to sell, sell, sell.' On the CSR account, she did everything: wrote copy, produced artwork, planned the budget and media buy and liaised with the client. She found the agency people to be 'a lively bunch', 'highly skilled, highly trained and highly sensitive' and 'protective of their own expertise'.⁵⁵ But agency life was tough for a single mother. She worked long hours and travelled a lot, worrying about her daughter whom she had left with a nanny. She also struggled with the healthy egos of the men brought in to shoot the Kraft and Kellogg's television commercials, men such as Hans Von Adlerstein (the 'Baron') whose Germanic approach she found charming but autocratic. After working with him, advertising 'didn't seem so loveable', so 'in 1960', she wrote, 'my days as a high-flying, hard living, hard working ad girl came to an end'.

After honing her public relations skills at JWT, Fulton went on to great fame throughout Australia as *the* celebrity cook. During the 1960s and 1970s, her books sold in their tens of thousands – especially the *Margaret Fulton Cookbook* (1968) – and she became a household name: the quintessential Australian home cook. All the while, she supplemented her income by following in the long tradition of Australian women home economists who had built careers around the promotion of commercial products. Like Schauer before her, she promoted Australian primary products: she made a Sunrise rice television commercial for the new Australian Rice Marketing Board.⁵⁶ Like Robertson and Salmon, she wrote newspaper columns and made radio shows. But Fulton's generation had new opportunities. Television, for example, allowed Fulton and Cartwright to become household names, minor celebrities whose lives outside of their work became of interest to the viewers who admired them. And, as Francis had predicted, the markets were expanding, globalising, providing women such as Fulton with exciting opportunities. The producers of Spanish olive oil flew Fulton to Spain and 'wined and dined' her with the expectation that, on her return, she would promote Spanish olive oil in her columns. Her television fame led to lucrative testimonial work for big global brands. She appeared in advertisements for cleaning

products of the global giant Johnson & Johnson, and for Sellotape, telling her followers 'I use it each week for sticking my hundreds of recipe clippings into reference books'.⁵⁷ Producing a booklet on entertaining for Coca Cola, she roped in her second husband for the photo shoot.⁵⁸ After years promoting other people's brand and products, Margaret Fulton had become a brand and she used her hard-won marketing skills to 'sell, sell, sell' herself.

From the end of the nineteenth century, manufacturers and their advertising agencies marshalled an army of women experts to show women consumers how to incorporate new brands and products into their lives. Some of these women turned training aimed at making them better housewives into hugely successful media careers. Paradoxically, the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s would, rhetorically at least, break the 'natural' link between women and housework, and men – Peter Russell Clarke is just one prominent example – would increasingly recognise the opportunities of a television cooking career. The next chapter will examine women's promotional work for an industry that they also managed to make their own with, perhaps, more long-term success.

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8

Selling Fashion after World War Two

Abstract: *This chapter examines the women who promoted the fashion industry during an important period in its development, the two decades after World War Two. In the affluent 1950s and 1960s, as more women could afford to follow fashion, the Australian rag trade began to reinvent itself, using advertising and promotional events to appeal to the new 'European' sensibility, as well as embrace the ground-breaking synthetic fabrics that were arriving from the United States and Europe. At the same time, the fashion industry sought to blend this new cosmopolitanism with a nationalist appeal in order to help the Australian wool industry tap into the expanding market for women's fashion. Dickenson shows that Australian advertising women were at the forefront of this two-pronged campaign.*

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It was hard to escape Marisa Martelli and her elegant ensembles in the early 1950s. For the Sydney press, Martelli, an Italian migrant, provided a fashionable and highly photogenic example of European style, which, as the deprivations of the war receded, was increasingly of interest to Australian women. Martelli worked as a copywriter in the advertising department of Anthony Hordern's Sydney store, writing ads that promoted the fashions she wore to the receptions, parties and art shows reported in the press.¹ The young Marion Von Adlerstein, then a junior copywriter at Hordern's, modelled herself on the 'chic and kind' Martelli, incorporating the Italian's cosmopolitan style into her own 'Westie' (Sydney working-class) pragmatism.²

'Fashion is a woman's business', the *Sydney Morning Herald* had written in 1940.³ From the end of the nineteenth century, as the mass production of fashions created new opportunities for advertising women, women had managed the advertising departments of Australian retail stores.⁴ Eleanor Donaldson at Sydney's David Jones was the standout example; others included DJ's advertising manager in Brisbane, the 'exceptional' Joan Little; Hordern Brothers' advertising manager, Mollie Devitt, and Farmer's deputy advertising manager, Zelda Stedman.⁵ This chapter looks at the women who promoted the fashion industry during an important period in its development, the two decades after World War Two. In the affluent 1950s and 1960s, as more women could afford to follow fashion, the Australian rag trade began to reinvent itself, using advertising and promotional events to appeal to the new 'European' sensibility, as well as embrace the ground-breaking synthetic fabrics that were arriving from the United States and Europe. At the same time, the fashion industry sought to blend this new cosmopolitanism with a nationalist appeal in order to help the Australian wool industry tap into the expanding market for women's fashion. Australian advertising women were at the forefront of this two-pronged campaign.

In the early 1960s the resurgence of an iconic national industry, wool, became one aspect of the broader reframing of Australian national identity as an independent, young and confident country – this was the 'new nationalism'.⁶ Australian textile and fashion designers were, perhaps for the first time, impelled to turn away from slavish regard for British fashion trends and look for inspiration in the Australian national story, producing designs that were uniquely Australian. The roots of this reframing lay in the confidence of Melbourne's post-war rag trade and

its willingness to meld local fabrics with European style. The marketing of the new synthetic fibres that arrived from the United Kingdom after World War Two was also significant as it suggested new avenues for promotions and challenged Australian advertisers to be more innovative in their fashion marketing.⁷ The result was the positioning of Australian wool as a truly international product, newly cosmopolitan and sophisticated, and the wool industry was rejuvenated as an industry of which Australians could again be proud.⁸

A generation of advertising women made significant contributions to this renaissance of the wool industry. The copywriter Mavis Chamberlain was an early influence. In 1952 Carden Advertising, whose principal, the flamboyant Basil Carden, had previously been a director of Goldberg Advertising, brought Chamberlain down from Sydney to modernise the image of the Melbourne fashion industry. With her husband Bill, a gifted art director, Chamberlain 'made waves' in the city; the pair 'were enormously creative' with a strong reputation for creative excellence, especially in the realm of fashion advertising; Chamberlain in particular was recognised as an innovative strategist. 'A woman of all talents', she ran the Leroy fashion account at Carden, working as the account executive, copywriter and creative director.

Melbourne in the early 1950s was the centre of 'fashion and glamour' in Australia; of 'life enjoyment post World War Two'.⁹ Run by Jack Shaw ('the doyen of Flinders Lane'¹⁰), the clothes manufacturer Leroy had played a leading role in this resurgence.¹¹ Chamberlain's innovation was to pair up Leroy, the 'tough operators in Flinders Lane' who knew 'all there was to know about selling and retailing' with 'an Italian printmakers...that imported Italian fabrics...an astonishing fabric-printing business in Tasmania with lots of European knowledge and flair'.¹² Another Italian migrant, Claudio Alcorso, managed this printmaker – the Silk and Textile Fabric Company of Hobart – which had 'improved [Australian] merchandising expertise' and 'lifted the profile of Australian fashion, making it more sophisticated and more elegant through the use of pure silk'.¹³ Chamberlain planned a national textile design competition, promoted by a Leroy-Alcorso partnership and supported by the fashion guru Marion Harper's five-minute slot on syndicated radio.

The first Leroy-Alcorso promotion in 1954 was a huge success with entries from international and national artists, as well as the general public. Coincidentally, Betty and Ralph Blunden's middle son, Andrew, aged eight,

won the junior prize in the competition with a design based on his impressions of 'Melbourne's coronation illuminations'. The competition was, of course, a commercial enterprise, so an additional prize was later offered for the design that sold the most fabric. The competition ran again in 1955, when the winning designs were to be 'used for printed frocks for Australian women to wear in summer 1955-6', and would also be printed by leading textile houses in Britain and the United States 'if thought suitable'.¹⁴

Back from her London adventures, Valwyn Wishart was now employed at Carden Advertising and worked closely with Chamberlain as a radio copywriter, 'pretty much on fashion and fashion promotion, particularly with Leroy'. Chamberlain became an important mentor for Wishart, who found the older woman to be 'darned hardworking, a really solid character'. Chamberlain showed Wishart 'the links between creativity and marketing', and helped her to develop 'a toughness', which was necessary in order to deal with the 'temperamental creative people' advertising attracted.

Wishart and Chamberlain also worked together on Cann's Corner Store, a women's retail emporium located at the corner of Swanston Street and Little Collins Street in Melbourne. Chamberlain 'was breaking new ground with women's fashion', introducing 'international ideas of fashion retail', and was instrumental in retailers such as Leroy and Cann's 'making themselves more upmarket'. Above all, Chamberlain established a good working relationship with the tough and sometimes difficult retailers; the liaison at Cann's, a Mr Wilks, was particularly fussy and Chamberlain handled him well. She also had a good eye for talent: she brought the renowned art director and future international photographer Patrick Russell down from Sydney to work on Leroy. Wishart recalled 'the whole team' attending photographic shoots for Leroy: the photographers included Athol Shmith and the German-Australian (and future international star) Helmut Newton. At these shoots, she learnt to choose the right garments and 'the right mannequins for the garments'.¹⁵ Russell's willingness to shift highlights the extent of 'the exodus' of creative people from Sydney in this period. They moved down to Melbourne with the idea of 'creating a more elegant [Australian] fashion industry', demonstrating the strength of the businesses in Flinders Lane and 'the accelerated social standing of the rag trade' in the immediate post-war years.¹⁶ Melbourne's bigger, more successful clients meant larger pay cheques, too.

When Chamberlain left Carden Advertising to work overseas, Joy Jobbins replaced her.¹⁷ Born in Sydney in 1927, Jobbins grew up around the film industry; her father, George Malcolm, was a cameraman at Sydney's Cinesound Productions.¹⁸ Jobbins worked as a model and helped to produce fashion parades before joining the advertising industry. Her early career followed a familiar pattern. She started in advertising at Hordern's department store, took art classes at East Sydney Tech, then joined the creative exodus from Sydney, shifting to Melbourne 'to look after fashion advertising' for the Myer Emporium, where she was exposed to and influenced by US fashion advertising. She subsequently worked at the Richardson Cox advertising agency (where Wishart had begun her advertising career) before joining Carden Advertising to work on Leroy and on Terylene, the synthetic fabric developed by the British firm, ICI.¹⁹

At Carden Jobbins teamed up with three people who would influence her career for the next decade. One was a man: Carden's manager, Ralph Blunden, who also ran the AWB account, and would become an important mentor. When Blunden took the wool and Terylene accounts from Carden and set up his own agency, Jobbins moved to join him there.²⁰ Jobbins' other influences were women: Barbara Robertson and Nan Sanders. Barbara Robertson, the 'top fashion artist of the day' with whom Jobbins worked closely, inspired her creatively: Jobbins describes Robertson as her 'hero' in this period. Patrick Russell supported Robertson in her artistic endeavours and in 1958 the young illustrator left Carden to set up her own shop, 'a new kind of advertising agency', one that was owned and run by the creative department. At Walker Robertson Maguire, Robertson worked alongside two highly regarded advertising men, the copywriter, Ron Walker, and the graphic designer, Eric Maguire. The agency was an immediate success, eventually becoming known as National Advertising Services (NAS). The writers Peter Carey and Barry Oakley both served copywriting 'apprenticeships' at NAS, and Oakley recalls being briefed by the 'super smart' Robertson when he joined the agency in 1963.²¹

The third and perhaps most significant influence on Jobbins was Nan Sanders, the advertising manager at Imperial Chemical Industries – Australia New Zealand (ICI-ANZ) – with whom Jobbins produced parades and couturier events to promote Terylene. In Sanders, Jobbins had found a 'feisty' and inspirational mentor. She recalls Sanders telling

her: 'I'm not a servant to any man, myself only and to God'. Sanders (later known by her married name, McDonald) played a crucial role in the making of the modern Australian textile and fashion industry.²² Born in Queensland in 1920, she was a schoolteacher before travelling to London at the end of World War Two to work in market development for the agency handling the chemical company British Celanese. In London, she learnt about the manufacturing and retailing of man-made fibres, specifically the nightwear and lingerie launched by Celanese. Back in Sydney, the company gave her a promotional budget to produce advertising campaigns in cooperation with local garment manufacturers and retailers. In 1955 Sanders joined ICI in Australia to direct the launch of their new 'miracle' fibre, Terylene, working with Blunden at Carden Advertising. The launch was a huge success and Bill Gunn (later Sir William), the newly elected chairman of the AWB, wanted the same team to re-establish wool as the premier fibre.²³ In 1959 he invited Sanders to join the Bureau as the director of promotion.²⁴ Sanders' appointment 'was controversial as few women in Australia held executive positions in major industries': 'It was unheard of that a woman should formulate policy and share equal status at the top level of management.' According to the press, Sanders was the highest-paid female executive in Australia with an annual salary of £10,000. When asked to comment on this claim, she pointed out that she earned much less than a man would for doing the same job.²⁵

With her in-depth knowledge of the local textile industry, Sanders was the ideal person to manage the reinvention of the Australian wool industry. The nation had long relied on the industry for export income and jobs, and benefited from surging world demand and record prices in the late 1940s. But the arrival of the cheaper synthetic fibres after World War Two had given wool 'a battering' and the industry's traditional markets were seriously eroded. Sanders was charged with 'recovering wool's lost ground and reinstating it as the nation's premier fibre'. Over the next ten years she delivered on this charge, improving the relationship between the wool growers and the government; introducing fresh, more sophisticated techniques for product publicity, fashion merchandising, retail store liaison, co-operative and direct advertising, public relations and increasing domestic wool consumption. She retired from the AWB in 1969.²⁶

The promotion of Australian wool became notable for its regular competitions and special events.²⁷ National Wool Week and the Annual

Wool Fashion Awards were covered on the front pages of newspapers and trade show displays reproduced in retail store windows. From her training at East Sydney Tech and her work on Terylene, Joy Jobbins had developed a highly disciplined approach to the task of promoting textiles and fashion, ensuring she understood the product and what the client was trying to say and relating this to 'the media of the day'. Her strength was that she was able to explain what was needed to her creative team, which included the photographers Russell and Helmut Newton.

As mentioned, Ralph Blunden took the Terylene and Wool Bureau accounts from Carden Advertising in 1958 and set up his own agency, Ralph Blunden Advertising.²⁸ Jobbins, who felt that Carden had declined when Blunden and Robertson left, decided to join Ralph at Blunden's and resume her work for the Terylene account. Soon after her move, Blunden persuaded her to shift across to handle the Wool Board account, and with her ability to 'create a look', Jobbins became instrumental in reinventing the Wool Board's advertising over the next decade, turning the brand into the vanguard for modern Australian fashion.

Blunden had put together an impressive team. Betty Blunden joined her husband's agency as art director and co-owner, and it was she who used her excellent eye for talent and hired Newton, who would later gain international fame.²⁹ Another recruit, June McCallum, joined the agency as secretary to Ralph and was soon helping Jobbins with the creative and fashion work. There she got to know Russell whom she considered 'a great talent' and the pair would later create 'the most iconic of images reflecting Australian life' when they worked together at *Australian Vogue*.³⁰

The promotional events Jobbins produced for the Wool Board were often on a grand scale. In 1963 she organised an event at the unfinished Sydney Opera House to launch a 'Scandinavian' colour range and to convince architects to incorporate the new fabrics into their buildings. Because she 'needed all the components to come together', Jobbins made a personal appeal to the New South Wales State minister responsible for the Opera House, explaining to him that the event was of national importance because 'Wool equalled Australian'. The event proved 'unbelievably successful'. Another success was the Woolmark parade, which 'brought advertising and promotion together': 'Advertising is what you see – promotion gets the media talking'.

In 1963 the parade was held in a bond store on Sydney's Rocks area. The theme was 'Wild Colonial Colours'; there was 'rum damper' and the

actor Chips Rafferty shore a sheep. 'It worked. The media went bananas', and, Jobbins asserts, the event was the beginning of the resurgence of the Rocks. At the Sydney Royal Easter Show in April, 'the well known sisters, Pamela and Yvonne Wyatt, performed 'an hourly musical fashion show' in the Wool Industry Pavilion. The theme – 'Australia's colourful past' – 'emphasised the new "Wild Colonial Colours" available in wool for men and women.'³¹ Under the headline 'Wool's Wild Colours', the advertising copy supporting the promotion read:

Rewards – colours that set a mood as explosive as the Bounty Mutiny, as female as petticoats and crinolines. Wool's Wild Colonial Colours emerge from the time when Sydney town was a rip-roaring sprawl of bluestone barracks and bullock tracks – from convict beginnings and gold rush days. 'Redcoat' – bold and brilliant... 'Pioneer Green' – the lush, new green the explorers discovered... 'Raw Whisky' – strong and fiery. Wild Colonial Colours are in wool alone. Find them in hand-knitting and knitwear departments of all leading stores.³²

Jobbins, by now a mother of five, found the work 'very exhilarating'. 'Selling a total industry, a way of life', working on an industry of 'importance for the national economy', 'gave you a great feeling of importance, pleasure, privilege and pride'. It was important for Jobbins to believe in the product – 'the best motivation' – and of all the campaigns she worked on she was most proud of her work for the Wool Board: 'I feel proud that we made wool king around the world in the 1960s.'³³ 'Travelling through the US to convince film stars to become ambassadors for wool' was exciting, but the work took a heavy toll on her family life. Despite asserting in 1971 that 'she stands quite firmly in her two worlds – business and family – getting the best out of both worlds', Jobbins has more recently said: 'There are many lost years as a mother that the Wool Board owes me.'³⁴

The wool growers were suspicious of the new-fangled PR and complained about their money being spent on 'champagne and movie stars', but the promotions succeeded; wool 'again became a fashionable fibre'.³⁵ Apparel uses of Australian wool increased, and the ground 'we thought we had lost' in the national and international fashion market had been regained.³⁶ Blunden's team of women fashion experts had earned themselves a reputation for producing excellent fashion advertising not just for the Wool Board, but also for Australian fashion businesses such as Fletcher Jones, Sportsgirl, and Sportscraft.³⁷ In 1964 Jobbins was seconded to the Wool Board and spent the rest of

the decade as the board's Advertising Promotion co-ordinator and advertising manager.³⁸ Mavis Chamberlain returned from working in Europe and North America to take a position as co-creative director of Blunden's (now called Thompson Ansell Blunden), working alongside Patrick Russell who had been persuaded by Ralph Blunden to return from London and, once again, mentoring a younger woman, the copywriter, Paddy Stitt.³⁹

As this chapter has shown, from the end of World War Two a new more confident approach to fashion advertising and promotion led to a resurgence of an important Australian primary producer, the wool industry, and the emergence of a uniquely Australian fashion aesthetic. Beginning with the Flinders Street rag trade, this shift was propelled by a group of highly talented Australian advertising women, who were inspired by a combination of European chic, Australia's natural fibres and the new marketing techniques that had been developed overseas to promote the new synthetic fibres.

These advertising women developed promotional events, wrote advertising copy, designed advertisements and directed illustrators and photographers. They linked together European chic and Australia's natural fibres, remaking them into something uniquely Australian to rein-vigorate what was Australia's most important primary product (at least until minerals overtook it in the 1970s). They showed women how to purchase and wear clothes, guiding them through the increased choice that came with the more affluent society. They used their design and management skills to carve out influential careers around the fashion industry, running fashion accounts for primary producers, manufacturers and advertising agencies, and, in the case of June McCallum, using the expertise gained in advertising to establish one of the most influential fashion magazines of Australia. As the editor of *Australian Vogue*, this former secretary became 'probably the most prominent woman in the Australian fashion industry for decades.'⁴⁰

These gifted women worked collectively, pulling together to produce a new, modern aesthetic, at the same time providing mentoring, friendship and support to each other, sharing their knowledge and experience. In the process, they achieved leadership positions in business that few, if any women, had previously reached. They broke through a barrier but, as we will see in the next chapter, their successes did not automatically herald higher, sustained levels of achievement for Australian advertising women.

Notes

- 1 'Women Art Enthusiasts', *SMH*, 14 March 1951, 10; 'One Pound of Butter Cost Just £1', *Sunday Herald*, 4 June 1950, 12; 'Fashion Tips', *Argus*, 30 May 1950, 10; 'She Studied in Italy', *Daily News*, 19 June 1950, 8; 'Pages for Women', *Mail*, 27 May 1950, 41; 'Italian Legation', *SMH*, 13 September 1951, 15; *SMH*, 27 November 1952, 5; *Sunday Herald*, 28 June 1953, 24; 'Sydney People and French Painting', *Sunday Herald*, 1 March 1953, 32; 'At School Dances', *SMH*, 7 July 1954, 7; 'Seen Out and About', *SMH*, 28 October 1954, 10; 'Arrived on Orontes', *Sunday Herald*, 4 June 1950, 12; 'Social Jottings', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 7 July 1954, 31; 'Architects Attend Two Crowded Exhibitions', *SMH*, 12 May 1954, 10; 'Personal Preferences', *SMH*, 14 May 1953, 1.
- 2 Von Adlerstein, interview with R. Crawford, 14 December 2012.
- 3 'Fashion Is a Woman's Business', *SMH*, 17 September 1940, 6, 15.
- 4 Frederick, 'Historical Introduction', p. xx.
- 5 R. Blakeney, phone interview with J. Dickenson, 4 August 2015; M. Von Adlerstein, 'There Were Mad Women Too', *Ad News*, 6 December 2011; 'Art Department', *SMH*, 12 January 1939, 4; 'Fashion Is a Woman's Business', *SMH*, 17 September 1940, 6, 15; L. Christopherson, interview with R. Francis, 24 June 2014.
- 6 S. Sheridan (2000) 'The "Australian Woman" and Her Migrant Others in the Postwar *Australian Women's Weekly*', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 14, 2; S. Ward (2005) "'Culture Up to Our Arseholes": Projecting Post-Imperial Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 51, 1, 53–66; S. Ward (2007) 'The "New Nationalism" in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: Civic Culture in the Wake of the British World' in K. Darien-Smith et al. (ed.), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press); J. Curran and S. Ward (2010) *The Unknown Nation: Australia after Empire* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press); J. Caro interview with R. Crawford, 5 February 2013.
- 7 For advertising and Australian national identity, see J. Bryden-Brown (1981) *Ads that Made Australia: How Advertising Has Shaped Our History and Lifestyle* (Lane Cove, NSW: Doubleday); M. Cozzolino (1980) *Symbols of Australia* (Coburg, Victoria: Cozbooks); J. Sinclair (1989) 'Imperialism, Internationalism, Nationalism: Advertising', *Australian Studies*, 15, 38–46; J. Sinclair (1991) 'The Advertising Industry in Australia: Globalisation and National Culture', *Media Information Australia*, 62, 31–40; R. Crawford (2002) 'Selling a Nation: Depictions of Australian National Identity in Press Advertisements, 1900–1969', PhD thesis (Monash University); R. Crawford (2007) "'Anyhow ... Where D'yer Get It": Ockerdom in Adland Australia', *Australian Studies*, 90, 179–80.
- 8 Andrew, interview with J. Dickenson.

- 9 J. Jobbins, interview with R. Francis, 15 November 2012; P. Stitt, interview with R. Francis, 12 June 2012; 17 July 2013. In 1971 the city was still considered to be 'the heart of the textile industry', M. McNuckey, 'Figure', *SMH*, 3 June 1971, 10.
- 10 Wishart, interview.
- 11 L. S. Rosenthal (2005) *Schmattes: Stories of Fabulous Frocks, Funky Fashion and Flinders Lane* (Melbourne: LSR), pp. 17–25.
- 12 archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?detail=1andtype=Aandid=NGo2242;alcorso.org.au/
- 13 L. Williamson (2010) 'Interlaced: Textiles for Fashion' in B. English and L. Pomazan (eds.), *Australian Fashion Unstitched: The Last 60 Years* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press), pp. 104–7, 112–13.
- 14 'Child Designer', *SMH*, 15 February 1954, 4; 'Boy 9, Artist Neck and Neck', *News*, 25 October 1954, 18.
- 15 Wishart, interview.
- 16 Wishart, interview.
- 17 Jobbins, interview.
- 18 J. Jobbins (2009) *Shoestring: A Memoir* (Sydney: Flock Publications).
- 19 'Terylene', *Singleton Argus*, 6 December 1946, 2; H. Dvoretzky, 'New Magic Fabric', *AWW*, 17 December 1952, 3; 'Terylene Arrives', *Farmer and Settler*, 18 November 1955, 21.
- 20 Jobbins, *Shoestring*, pp. 176–79.
- 21 Jobbins, interview; agda.com.au/inspiration/hall-of-fame/eric-maguire/ accessed 31 October 2015; B. Oakley (2012) *Mug Shots: A Memoir* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press), p. 78.
- 22 Sander's staff in the Promotions Department of the AWB were not all as appreciative of her leadership style as Jobbins: S. Kune (1974) 'Organisational Change: A Case Study of the Australian Wool Board', Thesis (MA), University of Melbourne, Department of Arts, pp. 190–91.
- 23 billabout.com/qa-a-journey-with-nancy-pilcher-behind-the-cover-of-vogue-australia/, accessed 25 July 2015.
- 24 Jobbins, *Shoestring*, p. 179; F. E. Hitchens (1972) *Skeins Still Tangled: Historic Survey of Australian Wool Marketing, 1952–1972* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press), p. 36.
- 25 For the sexism Sanders endured from the conservative wool growers, see Kune, 'Organisational Change', pp. 205, 261, 276.
- 26 J. Jobbins, 'Australia's "Highest-paid Woman"', *SMH*, 4 September 2014.
- 27 Kune, 'Organisational Change', pp. 166, 168–69.
- 28 Andrew, interview.
- 29 Andrew, interview.
- 30 J. McCallum, interview with R. Francis, 26 November 2013; Andrew, interview; <http://billabout.com/qa-a-journey-with-nancy-pilcher-behind-the-cover-of-vogue-australia/>

- 31 'New Colours Go Colonial', *Western Herald*, 29 March 1963, 10; 'The Wild Colonial Girls', *Western Herald*, 5 April 1963, 6; Kune, 'Organisational Change', 164.
- 32 'Wool's Wild Colonial Colours', *AWW*, 3 April 1963, 60–61.
- 33 K. Penfold (2007) 'Glamour Days', *Beyond the Bale* (October–November), 4.
- 34 M. McNuckey, 'Figure: Mrs Joy Jobbins', *SMH*, 3 June 1971, p. 10.
- 35 Kune, *Organisational Change*, pp. 182, 203–8; Jobbins, interview.
- 36 Jobbins, interview.
- 37 McCallum, interview. Stitt, interview; Nilsson, interview.
- 38 McNuckey, p. 10.
- 39 Jobbins, interview; *B&T Weekly*, 14 May 1964, 8; Stitt, interview; Andrew, interview.
- 40 Andrew, interview.

9

Bold Invaders: The Impact of the Women's Movement

Abstract: The chapter traces the experiences of three consecutive cohorts of women working in advertising agencies, each of which had differing expectations of an advertising career than the generation before them. The first cohort entered the industry before the full impact of the resurgent women's rights movement. With access to reliable birth control and higher education, and inspired by the women's movement, the second cohort questioned the gendered assumptions that had long pertained in the industry. Better educated and more ambitious, the final cohort entered the industry in the 1980s. They were less tolerant of the gendered division of labour and overt sexism they encountered in the Australian advertising industry. But, as Dickenson shows in this final chapter, their advertising ambitions were only partly realised.

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In 1977 the *Canberra Times* listed the ten women considered to be the most powerful in the United States. Ninth on the list was Mary Wells Lawrence, the founder of the renowned New York advertising agency, Wells Rich Greene. Lawrence and the other women listed – the former First Lady and environmental campaigner, Ladybird Johnson; the publisher Katharine Graham; the Washington governor and former biologist, Dixie Lee Ray; Charlotte Curtis, the op-ed editor of the *New York Times*; the current First Lady, Rosalynn Carter; the tennis star Billie Jean King; the newscaster Barbara Walters; the opera conductor Sarah Caldwell; and the Democrat politician Barbara Jordan – ‘had overcome formidable odds in boldly invading traditionally male-dominated areas’.¹ Would an advertising woman have made it onto an Australian version of this list?

By the 1960s women had been working in the Australian advertising industry for 60 years. Better educated than any generation of women before them, they were employed in all departments of advertising’s increasingly important mode of organisation: the agency.² Yet with very few exceptions, they had failed to reach the highest echelons of agency life. When they did attain management positions in the industry, it was either as the representatives of agency departments in which women had long had a presence (media, finance or administration); as the principals of their own, typically ‘one-man band’ agencies; or in a sharply defined aspect of the advertising industry: working in home economics or in the advertising departments of retail stores, where their ‘natural’ expertise as women was valued.³

This chapter traces the experiences of three consecutive cohorts of women working in advertising agencies, each of which had differing expectations of an advertising career than the generation before them. The first cohort entered the industry in the 1950s and early 1960s, before the full impact of the women’s movement. The next cohort entered the industry from the late 1960s through to the late 1970s. With access to reliable birth control and higher education, and inspired by a resurgent women’s rights movement, these advertising women questioned the assumptions that had long pertained in the industry: that women were of value only because of the insights they provided into the behaviour of their own sex, and that the serious business of advertising – contributing at the highest levels of company management – was strictly ‘men’s business’: ‘the top brass was always men’.⁴ Did those who made it beyond the reception desk in the 1970s find themselves working on

food brands, fashion labels and baby products, like previous generations of women, or were they able to transcend the traditional gendering of work distribution? The final group entered the industry in 1980s. Better educated and more ambitious, this cohort was less tolerant of the gendered division of labour and overt sexism they encountered in the Australian advertising industry.

Most women who joined Australian advertising agencies in the late 1950s did so in support roles, as secretaries and typists. More made it into the media departments and a few women – those with creative, business or research skills – broke through into the creative or account service departments. Once there, they were often the only women in that department. Women mostly worked on ‘women’s accounts’; the argument that women best understood women continued well into the 1960s.⁵ Paddy Stitt joined the Melbourne branch of J. Walter Thompson (JWT), the first multi-national agency to arrive in Australia from the United States in 1929, in 1957. Stitt (or Miss Doyle as she was called in the office) wrote copy for two of the agency’s largest accounts, Kraft and Chesebrough Ponds, which were both aimed at women consumers.⁶

When Janice McBride joined the Australian-owned Paton Advertising Service in Melbourne the following year, she was the first woman graphic designer/commercial artist in the agency’s 40-year history. Employed initially as a typist, she was transferred after a fortnight to the art department, where ‘the boys did not want her because they wouldn’t be able to swear’ and she was ‘expected to make the coffee’. She worked there for six years, only later being joined by another woman. The expectation that she made the coffee proved the least of McBride’s problems. The agency men were consistently favoured over the women, provided with car spaces and given the ‘best gigs’. Accounts were divided by gender, with McBride working on Lady Pelaco (women’s fashion) and the men on Mobil Oil.

By 1961, when Rosemary Bertel dropped out of university to join Melbourne’s United Service Publicity (USP) as a copywriter, the number of women working in the industry had hardly advanced. At the agency (which had been founded by ex-servicemen after World War Two) she was the only woman creative. Later, at Australia’s largest agency George Patterson, she worked alongside ‘two other girls’. Bertel would eventually become ‘the first female Associate Director’ across the Patterson network.⁷ The RMIT-trained art director Claire Nilsson found ‘quite a few women’ at Blunden’s in Melbourne, the fashion agency discussed

in the previous chapter, when she started there in 1963. By this time, 'women were starting to enter the workforce in greater numbers, inspired by articles in magazines' and Nilsson remembers a ratio of two women for every five men; there were some women copywriters, and three of the seven studio workers were women. Unsurprisingly, 'all the secretaries were women', although there were 'some' women in production.⁸

At the Sydney agency Jackson Wain, Gaye Merchant took dictation, typed scripts and bought cigarettes and lollies for 'her bosses'. The secretaries were homogeneous: all were from Sydney's northern beaches, 'not bad looking', and interested in 'clothes and shoes'. Merchant was in awe of the telephonists (again all women), and, less surprisingly, 'scared of the Managing Directors' (all men). When the account group asked her to model a client's hosiery, she 'did not mind or find it offensive'; such requests were 'normal then'. Most agency women were employed as secretaries but there were 'one or two women in the art department', as well as 'women in the media department, maybe planners or buyers'. Two women ran the casting department: 'the only women doing specifically female roles'. The pair smoked and seemed glamorous to Merchant. Despite this, she had no ambition to join them. Although the secretaries were never asked for their 'input or opinions' – they were 'just there to type and fetch and go' – 'it was enough for them'. 'Girls then got married or went overseas', and Merchant 'didn't hanker for anything else'. When she became engaged to her boss's son, who also worked at the agency, Merchant was expected to leave to find a job elsewhere, while her fiancé stayed where he was.⁹

From the late-1960s the women's movement gained momentum in Australia as elsewhere.¹⁰ As part of its coverage of this phenomenon, the Australian press continued its long fascination with the achievements of overseas advertising women, publishing articles that promoted the industry as one in which women could succeed. These reports were far from radical, perpetuating advertising's stereotypical division of labour and providing no critique of pay inequality. Helene Bourallard, for example, 'A Woman Executive from Paris', had achieved a stellar business career, including in the advertising industry, but noted that 'the only really masculine side' of her job was 'the financial side'. Reassuringly for any woman considering a career in business, Madame Bourallard had 'never noticed any man in the firm resenting the fact that their boss is a woman.'¹¹ Reva Korda, the legendary creative director of Ogilvy & Mather (O&M) New York, was a more ambiguous role model. She lived

a life that 'was not for all women.' Having produced two children 'with no noticeable interruption to her career', which had been well established when she first reproduced, she had kept working because 'it would have been false to stop' and it 'was who she was.' Korda later wrote a novel entitled *Having It All* (1992), but her own secret was employing a 'terrific' housekeeper. Jane Trahey – 'twice named America's advertising woman of the year' – thought the role of the housewife was 'a nice sweater and for those who it fits it should not be ripped or shredded by the women's movement', but it was not for her because, like Korda, she was 'different from most other women.'¹² Ann Burdus, the Chairman of McCann Erikson and the *Times* Business Woman of the Year in 1979, took a more radical approach, urging ambitious advertising women to avoid being pigeonholed as experts in 'a women's product' such as cosmetics, when they could be running a multi-national agency. Nevertheless, her success was a cautionary tale, as it came at a personal cost. The twice-divorced Burdus worked 12-hour days and her extensive travel commitments precluded childrearing.¹³

For women working in Australian advertising from the 1960s, awareness of the industry's sexism dawned slowly, and personal experience was essential to the realisation. Robyn Hall worked for JWT in New Zealand, Sydney and London but 'never noted sexism, especially not in London.' Many of the girls she worked with there were 'Sloanies' with private incomes who were just 'waiting to meet the right man'; 'everyone wanted to be married by 25'. A 'roving PA', Hall did not consider 'career advancement' until 'Germaine Greer started talking about it': Hall had been 'brought up to toe the line [and] didn't take umbrage if asked to make a cup of coffee'. Hall is ambivalent about the changes Greer's work wrought: '[It] changed the dynamics but not as well as she thought it might. [Greer] talked some sense but she made women dissatisfied, not really fulfilled.' Back in Australia, Hall 'began to see the importance of equal pay for equal work'. Her personal experience proved key. She had been 'thrilled' to be appointed an executive, but found it 'unfair that she wasn't paid equally' to the men executives. With hindsight, she thinks she 'should have been earning the same', especially because when she left, 'two men took over her job plus a PA'¹⁴

Some women worked, unpaid, as 'advertising wives'. Luella Copeland-Smith came to Australia from Britain as the wife of the deputy managing director of O&M. Before she married, Copeland-Smith had been interviewed at the London office to ensure she was suitable. In Australia,

though not employed by O&M, she was given clothing and entertainment allowances, a list of people to entertain and a separate list of wives to contact and entertain in her own right. The agency was applying 'a formula, a system for getting new business', and the principals were 'adamant that it had to be done'. Copeland-Smith's husband was considerably older than she was and he just assumed she would take on the work, which she did. She was 'green'; her mother had been 'a great hostess and coached her over the phone from the UK'.

After her divorce Copeland-Smith went on to build her own successful advertising career, moving outside of the mainstream agencies like many of her predecessors and specialising in direct marketing. She had found every agency in which she worked sexist in some way: 'Advertising was one of the last bastions of male dominance... Women were madly trying to break through.' Understanding it was a 'hard road for women at that stage' and she later mentored a lot of agency women 'because it was tough'. She found no difference between the United Kingdom and Australia in this: 'It was the era: if you were a woman you were behind a typewriter.'¹⁵

Most of the women interviewed noted how few women worked in departments outside the typing pool.¹⁶ The account manager Suzie Otten found 'a very even spread of men and women' in her first agency but, as noted earlier, observed that men occupied the top positions.¹⁷ Sexual harassment was everywhere and accepted: the 'passing gentle touch of a male leader on a woman' raised few eyebrows.¹⁸ Clients were 'not accepting of women with the personalities to deal with a tough gig', so 'women tended not to be as driven as men'.¹⁹ And some agencies were more hierarchical than others: media manager Jane Mara found herself the only woman group head at the Sydney office of the Chicago-based multi-national agency Foote Cone and Belding (FCB), where 'the expectations of women were not high and there were no female role models'.²⁰

Some advertising women, however, were content to work in a male-dominated industry. The copywriter Faie Davis found 'all of the men' she worked with 'delightful and thoughtful'; it was the women who were the problem: they 'were vicious'. When Davis secured a plum job in San Francisco, for example, the other women in the agency assumed she must have slept with Hal Riney, the charismatic creative director, to get the job from Australia.²¹

Australia's most successful woman advertising creative, Jacqueline Huie, was outspoken on the matter of women's economic rights. The

divorced mother of three boys, Huie was a former art teacher who had entered advertising in 1956. Despite her assertion that 'women copy-writers had always been admired but not at [the] highest levels', Huie was elevated to the board of the local office of the US agency Compton International in 1968, as managing director. She then 'took a risk' and by 1970 was a principal of her own agency, Huie Lamont and Partners. Huie told *AWW* that 'woman' was 'perceived as a second class citizen by herself and by men'. She was that way because 'she has been positioned in a dependent role – economically'. Most girl children were brought into the world believing that one day they were going to meet a nice boy who has a good job, who can afford a nice house, pay the children's school fees, take them out to dinner, buy their bus ticket, pay the maintenance if they break up and generally take care of them. 'So I ask you', Huie concluded, 'how can any woman be considered anything but citizen No. 2 while she takes it as her God-given right to be financially supported by men?'²² Huie's comments represented a fresh perspective from Australian advertising women who had long accepted the stereotypical division of the sexes into male 'providers' and women 'consumers', and the consequent division of labour in the advertising industry, and, as we have seen, in some cases had actively exploited this simplistic formulation in order to advance their careers free of competition from men.²³

A recurring theme in the advice offered to women contemplating an advertising career was that they had to do the job better than men to succeed. The influential feminist and magazine editor Ita Buttrose addressed women's role in advertising in her columns on a number of occasions. In 1978 she discussed some tips for success offered by the women employees of (ironically) the advertising agency FCB, which included:

Be not only as good as your men colleagues. Be just a little better.

Be prepared to be 'conspicuous. Being female in a mainly male domain means being watched more closely. Mistakes and achievements tend to be magnified. Give more. Do more. Lead more. Care more. Console more. Contribute more. And the more is not in relationship to anyone else – but more than you thought you could do.

'Now you know the true meaning of the saying – "it isn't easy being a woman!"' Buttrose told her readers.²⁴

Two years later, when the account manager Suzanne Mercier joined Patterson, 'being a woman' was no easier. She soon noticed that women

missed out on the requisite 'overseas stint' that men executives accepted as a 'way of jumping through the ranks'. The agency made use of its regional networks and 'every once in a while a talented person was sent to run an agency in Asia'. When her turn came, she was told that 'women don't do very well in Asia', and was refused the opportunity. A man went instead and 'came back much higher up'. Like Hall, Mercier 'didn't think twice of it at the time'. Only in hindsight, does she consider it unfair. As had many advertising women before her, Mercier found 'an old boys' network' at the agency. Again, like advertising women before her, Mercier had a 'traditional' view of sex roles in advertising, linking women to consumption and finding it 'odd' that so few women worked (at Patts) given that 'women made most purchasing decisions'. When she was elevated to the board 'everyone was surprised', including Mercier. She was the first and only woman director at Patts, 'a very lonely role.' She was 'seduced by the title', but she received no extra money, and so she complained and they gave her an additional \$20,000: a valuable life lesson. But she knew that she was 'never on the same level as they [the men] were'. Once on the board, Mercier became vulnerable, 'able to be shot at', no longer protected by her male mentor, and she soon left.²⁵

The cohort that entered the industry from the late 1970s had a more critical perspective on the issue of gender relations. The executive Marie Jackson believes the 'boy's club' atmosphere at O&M was already a thing of the past when she joined the agency in 1974, but a younger recruit, Esther Clerehan, disagrees. Clerehan took 'a women's path' at O&M, starting in despatch and traffic, but, like many advertising women before her, deliberately chose not to learn to type to avoid being pigeonholed as a secretary.²⁶ Alert to sexism because of 'her mother's transformation under the influence of Germaine Greer', she found the production department 'blokey'; 'all men, who drank beer, ate chips, and smoked'. The reps she had to deal with were also all men, 'talking footy' and casual with their sexism. Clerehan recalls the demonstration of a new 'film machine' by the print production company Show Ads, in which the product innovation was demonstrated by 'removing a bikini' from a model.

Clerehan had thought women's liberation was a 'done and dusted period in history', but her experience at O&M told otherwise. Expected to wash up, make tea, answer the phone and observe men being promoted over her, she also had to babysit other women's children. Despite all of this, Clerehan loved working at O&M, because there were 'lots of

women, and she could see that 'women who had a bit of spark [were] promoted', for example, the hardworking Jackson, who had started as a secretary and became an important mentor for Clerehan and others. O&M proved more woman-friendly than Clerehan's next agency, the Melbourne shop Monahan Dayman Adams (MDA), which she found 'like a football club, very sexist, very blokey'. She soon moved to the retail agency Mattingly and Partners, which was more egalitarian again, because it handled the Myer department store account and so employed mostly women. Despite her experiences, Clerehan is forgiving of the industry. Asked whether she had felt exploited because of her gender, she answered: 'No, like will always employ like', an attitude that precludes meaningful change. Clerehan also reframes the obstacles preventing women reaching the highest levels (institutional sexism, lack of childcare and long, unpredictable hours) as choice: 'Women make a choice not to go into the boardroom'. Clerehan went on to build a successful career in advertising recruitment and recalls being told by the renowned boutique agency, The Campaign Palace, that she should not send them 'dogs' – that is, 'unattractive women' – for job interviews. This raises the issue of the industry's predilection for employing 'attractive women', and not just for 'front-of-house' roles, in order to reinforce the agency's aesthetic judgement and please their male clients.²⁷ Interestingly, a number of the interviewees (both women and men) felt entitled to comment unreflectively on the attractiveness of the women they had worked with.²⁸

Women who pushed the industry's boundaries took a risk. The American copywriter Sandy Lodico earned a reputation in Australia for being 'difficult' – 'people say you're brilliant but you're mad' – because she demanded unquestioning support from account management. Lodico struggled with Australian advertising's masculine culture. In New York she had taken it for granted that men would treat her as an equal, but this did not always happen in Australia. Asked whether it was easier to be a woman in advertising than other areas of commerce because 'clients could be persuaded that being a woman is an advantage because of the nature of our work and our audience', Lodico demurred. 'Women have used it [being a woman] to their advantage', she replied, 'but only on the surface'. Although experience was 'a good resource', men or women with imagination were equally capable of dealing with any product: 'the very good can do anything – a combine harvester as well as a sanitary towel'.²⁹

Nevertheless, Australian women struggled to gain access to accounts outside of their 'natural' interests. A male art director refused to work with

the copywriter Jane Caro on a pitch for a tobacco account because 'it was a product for men'. When Caro pointed out that he had recently worked on the beauty product Oil of Olay, he replied: 'Oh well, I still don't want to work with you.' When the television producer Anne Miles worked on 'some very masculine accounts', she experienced numerous 'inappropriate exchanges'³⁰, and the account executive Toni Lawler was removed from a presentation to the oil company Shell because of her gender.³¹

Another O&M recruit, the art director Kaye Schirmann, was ready to join 'other women' and 'make advertising her life' in the early 1980s. She acknowledges that 'at that time it was hard for women to get on', but does not consider gender an excuse for failure. Women had to 'work hard and do a good job'. She always felt there were opportunities – 'if you didn't succeed it wasn't because of gender'. Brought up 'not to defer', Caro was more attuned to sexism. When management asked her to wear a frock rather than pants to a new business pitch, she told them she did not own a frock. Reverse sexism also annoyed her: the 'she's very bright for a girl' approach to putting a woman in her place. Miles found the industry 'white, male and aggressive'. When she first started work, the gender balance was about 50:50 but the women were in lowly roles. Later (in the 1980s) lots of women appeared in middle-level account service roles, when the men started to shift to the more challenging and lucrative planning roles. When no opportunity for advancement presented itself to her, Miles 'moved sideways'. She followed in the footsteps of many advertising women before and after her by starting her family and 'going freelance'. The account executive Laura Henschke encountered sexual harassment in agencies in Lima, Peru (where she grew up) and also in Sydney, after she migrated there in the late 1970s.³² She recalls 'people touching her during the work day' but there was 'nobody to tell'. It was terrible. '[You] didn't want to lose your job; if you complain you will lose your job.'

Mo Fox, who joined JWT as an account manager in the 1980s, found 'Sydney sexism unstated but alive and well'. She endured intimidation, including abuse and swearing – the men were 'testing to see if you would put up with it'. She had entered a 'gendered workplace' and 'you didn't go in unless you had some chutzpah'. 'As a female you were gone unless you could hold your own' and she used her 'intellectual ability and wit' to do so. She felt she was well respected but still copped it as 'a junior and a chick'. Although the 'women in [account management] were superior in ability to the men', it remained their job to make tea and coffee. Her

experiences were even worse in the United Kingdom where sexism was coupled with class discrimination, which she found 'insidious and foul'. Non-U, 'colonial and a chick', she had to be 'three times as good'.³³

Motherhood and childcare remained a problem for advertising women, as it did and does for most working mothers, but a woman in the 1970s accepted that family life would restrict her career options. When Henschke's first child was born prematurely (she was still working when her waters broke), her employer responded by retrenching her because 'a woman with a child cannot work'. Henschke did not argue because 'that was the way people thought in those days'. Nicol recalls that childcare was always her job and Otten's excitement at becoming O&M's first woman Associate Director was tempered by 'trying to work and cope with a new baby [which] was all too hard'. Talented women such as the copywriter Jenny Bing had uneven careers because of the vagaries of marriage and the responsibilities of motherhood.³⁴ Few of the numerous women Jackson worked with had children: 'Some had them later; some stayed in the industry and did not.' As Jackson notes: 'It is still a complex issue for the whole workforce.' Farrelly observed that 'when they were too old for advertising, men might move to business or marketing', but women 'got out, often when they had children, because of the hard work and long, unpredictable hours'. At O&M there were lots of women in junior to middle roles, 'because it was very difficult to maintain a senior position as a woman'. When Farrelly started, 'it was the beginning of generational change, but the role of mother still makes this work difficult'. She returned to work when her first child was six months old, a decision she now regrets because it was 'hard to work full time'. 'Maternity leave and part-time work came later'; 'it was the way it was'. Senior women now 'all have partners at home'.

In the years between 1960 and 1990, advertising women grew more confident. Awakened by changes in the broader society, they became increasingly aware of sexism in the industry and the range of obstacles that prevented women from reaching the highest levels, including the entrenched gendered division of labour. A few women were outspoken against these inequalities. Others avoided drawing attention to them, fearing they might lose their jobs. Others again retreated into exceptionalism, joining many advertising women before them in arguing that if a woman only worked hard enough, she could, as they had, overcome any obstacles placed in her way.

Besides asking why so few of their sex could be found on agency boards, some advertising women spoke out about the representation of women in advertisements, reflecting broader concerns about the place of women in society.³⁵ Their interest in these issues had limits, however. Advertising was and is a notoriously non-unionised industry. Practitioners have resisted moves to organise, asking ‘How does a union fit with a service industry?’³⁶ Some advertising women had been engaged with issues concerning women, such as equal pay for equal work, especially in the 1950s. As we saw in Chapter 4, Clara Behrend worked hard for equal pay through the ABPW but does not seem to have considered it a necessary goal for advertising women. Of the women interviewed, McBride was affronted that advertising women did not receive equal pay and disappointed that even her professional association, the ACIAA, had ‘women way down on their pay scale’, but few others mentioned concern with the issue at the time.³⁷ Thus, the campaign for equal pay waged by other working women – labour women – in the 1960s and 1970s seemed irrelevant to most advertising women who were used to negotiating their own pay and conditions and who had, as we have seen, been told repeatedly that women were treated on merit, and thus equally to men, in the advertising industry.³⁸

Only in hindsight did some advertising women come to recognise the relevance of the equal pay debate to their own circumstances. Embedded in the powerful culture of an advertising agency – which emphasised the importance of work over home life, individuality and unflinching commitment to the organisation – and anxious to ‘belong’, many women were unable to recognise the inequalities at the heart of their careers until long after they had left those careers behind.

Notes

- 1 ‘Women of Power: Bold Invaders of a Man’s World’, *Canberra Times*, 2 November 1977, 7.
- 2 Duke University Archives: Hartman Center, J. Walter Thompson Company (1963) ‘Advertising a Career for Women’, 6.
- 3 In 1971 most women were still employed in traditional women’s work: as clerks, saleswomen, typists, stenographers, domestic workers, process workers, nurses and teachers: E. Ryan and A. Conlon (1989) *Gentle Invaders; Australian Women at Work* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin), pp. 174–75.
- 4 S. Otten, interview with R. Francis, 28 May 2013; 25 June 2013.

- 5 'Advertising a Career', p. 5.
- 6 Stitt, interview.
- 7 R. Bertel, interview with R. Francis, 27 April 2012; S. Chadwick, 'OK Rosie, What Happened?' *B&T Weekly*, 20 April 1984, 28, 30.
- 8 Nilsson, interview with R. Francis, 1 October 2013.
- 9 G. Merchant, interview with R. Crawford, 14 June 2013.
- 10 Sawyer, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 171–72; Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 220.
- 11 'A Woman Executive', *AWW*, 24 December 1969, 29.
- 12 'For Women Success Is Spelt H-A-R-D W-O-R-K', *AWW*, 18 December 1974, 40, 41, 44.
- 13 M. Knuckey, 'Advice from the Top', *SMH*, 28 August 1980, 8; M. Boston (Lady Boston of Faversham), interview with R. Francis, 22 September 2014.
- 14 R. Hall, interview with R. Crawford, 12 December 2012.
- 15 L. Copeland-Smith, interview with R. Crawford, 15 February 2013.
- 16 H. Nicol, interview with R. Francis, 19 April 2013; S. Borland, interview with R. Francis, 23 April 2013; J. Mara, interview with R. Crawford, 7 March 2013.
- 17 Otten, interview.
- 18 Nicol, interview.
- 19 Nicol, interview.
- 20 J. Mara, interview.
- 21 Davis, interview with Robert Crawford, 12 March 2013. See also L. Henschke, interview with R. Crawford, 1 February 2013.
- 22 R. Munday, 'The Image of Woman', *AWW*, 30 November 1977, 9.
- 23 L. Nicklin, 'Reducing Advertising', *SMH*, 15 December 1971, 4.
- 24 I. Buttrose, 'At My Desk', *AWW*, 6 September 1978, 3.
- 25 S. Mercier, interview with R. Crawford, 7 March 2014.
- 26 Boston, interview.
- 27 E. Clerehan, interview with R. Crawford, 4 February 2013.
- 28 For example, Bertel interview.
- 29 S. Chadwick, 'I'll Make You a Millionaire', *B&T Weekly*, 9 November 1984, pp. 28–29.
- 30 A. Miles, interview with R. Crawford, 7 September 2012.
- 31 T. Lawler, interview with R. Francis, 25 March 2013.
- 32 Henschke, interview.
- 33 M. Fox, interview with R. Crawford, 11 September 2012.
- 34 S. Chadwick, 'Jenny Won Two Caxtons', *B&T Weekly*, undated.
- 35 Buttrose, 3.
- 36 'Advertising "Would Resist" PKIU (Printing and Kindred Industries Union)', *Canberra Times*, 2 November 1976, 7; R. Black, interview with R. Crawford, 15 February 2013; F. Rutherford, interview with R. Francis, 1 May 2013.
- 37 J. McBride, interview with R. Francis, 16 October 2013.
- 38 See Chapter 1, n. 4.

Conclusion

Dickenson, Jackie. *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
DOI: 10.1057/9781137514349.0016.



Women were central to the development and expansion of Australian consumer culture in the twentieth century. Tempted by popular representations of varied and enjoyable work, good pay and the opportunity to travel, they sought work in the Australian advertising industry from its earliest days. Mostly educated and middle-class women joined the industry with a range of skills, gained sometimes though not always through formal training in business schools and art institutes. Journalists, commercial artists, home economists, typists, even a chemical analyst, all found their way into the growing industry in its multiple forms. They worked in retail advertising, sales promotion, commercial broadcasting, public relations and advertising agencies, shifting from one form to another, using a set of flexible communication skills. Some spent their entire working lives using these skills to sell. Others left the industry to marry, never to return. Others still took advantage of the industry's loose structure to combine family responsibilities with a patchy career.

Australian advertising women used advertising to fund their feminist activities and to educate women on how to use the new consumer goods that would free them from housework. Ad women travelled overseas to work, returning with skills and ideas that helped transform the local industry. With few exceptions, however, their achievements were not in 'the main game', that is, in the large local and (after the 1950s) multinational advertising agencies. Women did find work in these organisations but usually as typists and secretaries, or in junior creative or account management roles. Most left the industry when they married or moved into 'feminised' management positions within agencies, as media or finance managers.

Others, however, made the most of the opportunities advertising offered ambitious women. The industry's relaxed approach to qualifications, especially compared to law and accountancy firms, meant that a typist who showed intelligence and initiative – Eleanor Donaldson and Clara Behrend are two examples – could embark on an advertising career with little or no professional development.

Such accessibility had a downside. Women found it easier to get a start in advertising than they did in the 'real' professions because they were deemed to have an expertise the industry needed. As women they were presumed to know instinctively how to pitch new products and appliances to other women, the manufacturers' key target audience. This biological determinism would have significant consequences for women's prospects for success in the advertising industry. Yes, there was a place

for them there, but this place would be restricted and those restrictions not easily transgressed. Only with the influence of the women's movement from the late 1960s would a new generation of women demand access to a wider range of opportunities and responsibilities.

They had only limited success. From the 1970s, women's entry into public relations roles accelerated to the degree that, by the 1980s, they outnumbered men, reflecting what has been identified as the 'coding of public relations as feminine'.¹ Women now dominate the highest levels of public relations work: Qantas's head of Marketing and Corporate Affairs, Olivia Wirth, is just one notable example.²

This success has not been replicated in advertising agencies, which remain male-dominated environments. Shifts in the use of gender in advertising have both helped and hindered women's success in advertising agencies. Women remain the key consumers but are valued now more for their control of discretionary expenditure than for their 'natural' expertise as homemakers. This shift has freed women from biologically determined roles but it has also restricted their entry into the industry, as women's earlier route into advertising as 'women experts' has all but disappeared.

Especially significant, however, has been the economic reorganisation of the advertising industry. Since fee-based contracts replaced lucrative commissions in the 1990s, it has been harder for advertising agencies to make money. As the industry shrinks, it has become even more competitive, which has hardly helped women's access to management roles. The industry resists quotas and, despite equal representation at junior and middle management levels, fewer women than men make it to the top. This is especially true of women creatives – the copywriters and art directors – and advertising education scholars in the United States and beyond struggle to explain this phenomenon.³ Given women's improved access to other professions that also provide good pay and opportunities for travel, advertising is possibly not as attractive to ambitious women as it once was.

With the rise of the Internet and the subsequent crisis in the newspaper and television industries, advertising agencies face an uncertain future. Whatever form the industry assumes over the next century, it is likely that women will continue to contribute to its output. Without a significant shift in workplace culture, however, with more flexible hours and family friendly conditions, there's a good chance that Australian advertising women will emulate their predecessors and continue to

make use of their advertising skills beyond the confines of the advertising agency.

Notes

- 1 Fitch, K. A. and A. Third (2010) 'Working Girls: Revisiting the Gendering of Public Relations', *Prism* 7 (4), p. 2.
- 2 Cameron Stewart, 'Olivia Wirth Is Qantas's High Flyer', *Australian*, 20 April 2013.
- 3 This was the topic of a recent panel discussion, 'Gender, Creativity and the Asia-Pacific' at the Global Conference of the American Academy of Advertising, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, 9–11 July 2015. Sean Nixon (2003) has shown that agencies encourage aggressive masculinity believing it to be 'essential to the generation of effective creative advertising', *Advertising Cultures, Gender, Commerce, Creativity* (London: SAGE Publications).

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