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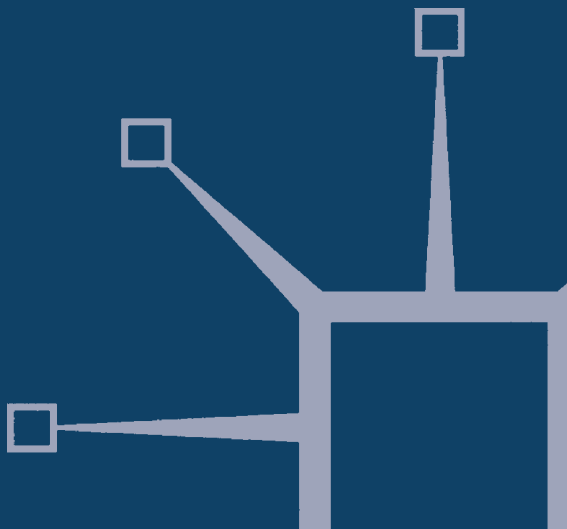
Transnational Lives

Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–present

Edited by

Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott



Transnational Lives

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Transnational Lives

Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–present

Edited by

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Parts of Martha Hodes's chapter were previously published, in a different context and a different form, in *The Sea Captain's Wife: A True Story of Love, Race, and War in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006); in 'Four Episodes in Re-Creating a Life', *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 10 (June 2006): 277–290 and in 'The Mercurial Nature and Abiding Power of Race: A Transnational Family Story', *American Historical Review* 108 (February 2003): 84–118.

Desley Deacon
Penny Russell
Angela Woollacott
June 2009

Foreword

If history is a chronicle of individuals and their communities, transnational history is no less so. Like other approaches to the past, the study of transnational history must be solidly grounded on specific individuals, their ideas, activities, and the organizations they create. It is fitting, therefore, that the Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History series is now publishing *Transnational Lives*, a collection of biographies of people whose lives were significantly transnational.

As the various case studies in this volume show, there is a large variety of 'transnational lives.' Some spent years and decades in various countries, never settling down in one place, while others retained a strong sense of attachment to their homeland even as they lived and worked abroad. Some moved essentially within imperial territories, others were born and raised within an empire as dependent people but sought to achieve freedom by appealing to the world community, while still others sought to transcend national distinctions in pursuit of careers in music, fine arts, dancing, or acting. Some 'transnationals' retained their race and other prejudices, while others struggled for universal human rights. For certain individuals, as one of the contributors notes, 'moving beyond the nation also provided a space from which national identity could be articulated anew.'

Despite such a variety of perspectives, these biographies show that their lives cannot be understood merely in the traditional framework of national history, or of imperial history. While each person was unique, the lives of these men and women were interconnected in that they were part of the larger story of what the volume editors call 'global circulation.' In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even as national and imperial boundaries grew more and more rigidly drawn, millions of men, women, and children established connections across such boundaries. Modern history, as other volumes in our transnational history series show, cannot be fully understood without paying closer attention to non-national, cross-national, and even anti-national forces.

By the time the reader reaches the end of the book, it may become clear that not just the subjects of these studies but also all the contributors as well as all the readers are transnational beings. For transnationality does not necessarily depend on geography, on moving from one part of the world to another. It can also be a vicarious experience, that is to say, when one writes and reads about a transnational human being, one's own thinking may become transformed. One is led to think of other areas of the world, of other races and civilizations. Some may reject such temptation and find comfort in one's more parochial identity, be it race, religion, or nation. But

even these entities are transnational and malleable, as some essays note. There is no such thing as a pure, unadulterated race, religion, or nation, all of which are products of interconnections among people, goods, and ideas. Even if one may never leave home where one is born, 'home' is an elusive concept, as pointed out by a contributor to this volume. Moreover, 'where one is born' is frequently a product of transnational forces, ranging from the natural environment to food, technology, and diseases.

The lives discussed in these chapters are a reminder of the vast distances and spaces humans have traversed, both in reality and metaphorically, in the modern centuries. In studying the subject, we may find ourselves in 'geographical, conceptual, and theoretical borderlands,' to quote from one of the authors. That, too, is an essential aspect of the study of transnational history.

Akira Iriye
Rana Mitter

Notes on Contributors

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Desley Deacon is Professor of Gender Studies in the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University and Immediate Past President of the Australian Historical Association. She taught in the American Studies Department at the University of Texas at Austin from 1985 to 2001. She is the author of *Elsie Clews Parsons: Inventing Modern Life* (1997) and is currently writing a life of the Australian-born international star of theatre and film Judith Anderson. She is co-editor, with Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott, of *Transnational Ties: Australian Lives in the World* (2008) and, with Joy Damousi, of *Talking and Listening in the Age of Modernity* (2007).

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Political Tourists: Travellers from Australia to the Soviet Union, 1920s–1940s, co-edited with Carolyn Rasmussen (2008) and *Beyond Totalitarianism: Nazism and Stalinism Compared*, co-edited with Michael Geyer (2008). She is currently writing memoirs of an Australian childhood and working on a book on Michael Danos and his mother as displaced persons in Germany after the Second World War.

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Kirsten McKenzie is a senior lecturer in History at the University of Sydney, Australia. Her book *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town 1820–1850* appeared in 2004. This chapter is part of a wider project to be published as *A Swindler's Progress: Nobles and Convicts in the Age of Liberty* (2009).

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Pamela Scully is Professor of Women's Studies and African Studies at Emory University, Atlanta, USA. An historian by training, her books include *Liberating the Family?* (1997) and, with Clifton Crais, *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost Story and a Biography* (2009). She co-edited *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (2005). Professor Scully's research interests now focus on the historical dimensions and contemporary implications of colonial histories, sexual violence and international human rights campaigns to end gender-based violence in Africa.

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Angela Woollacott is the Manning Clark Professor of History at the Australian National University. Her books include *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (1994); *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (2001) and *Gender and Empire* (2006). She is currently completing a book manuscript on three iconic 'Australian' women performers of the early twentieth century whose careers fused modernity and racial ambiguity; and researching an Australian Research Council-funded project on gender, culture and political change from the 1830s to the 1860s, placing Australian settler colonialism in imperial context.

Introduction

Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott

In the mid-eighteenth century, the son of an Odawa woman and a French man allied himself with Indians and the French in the North American Great Lakes area to combat British power. Later – according to the multiple legends of his life – he defended the British, combated rebellious American colonists, raised Indian warriors to fight against the expanding American republic and then settled in Wisconsin, where he and his family are known as the first permanent 'European' settlers in the state.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the allegiances of a white, working-class New England woman were severely tested when her brothers fought for the North in the American Civil War while her husband, another New Englander, joined the Confederate army. Worse family tensions followed when, in 1869, she married a second time, a sea captain and a man of colour, and moved with him to his home in the West Indies.

At around the same time a British subject, born in Penang, educated in Mauritius and fluent in English, French and Cantonese, established a flourishing mercantile business in gold-rich Australia. He came and went thereafter on numerous sea voyages without hindrance. By the time of his death in 1888, however, Australian states had introduced a succession of exclusionary acts and poll taxes, which served not only to limit immigration but to preclude the future possibility of Chinese cosmopolitanism in Australia.

In the 1920s and 1930s, an elite Englishwoman led a determinedly transnational life, refusing to be confined by either gender expectations or national boundaries. She travelled in the Arab states like a female Lawrence of Arabia, became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, lectured at the Sorbonne, wrote fiction, autobiography and travelogues, and claimed Benito Mussolini and King Feisal of Syria among her acquaintance.

These are just a few of the extraordinary, fluid, disruptive and yet ordinary lives that are told in this book. Historically, the nationality of individuals has been determined by complex combinations of birthplace, language, residence, citizenship, ethnic identity, racial classification and allegiance. But

human lives elude official classifications. The transnationalism – the mobility, confusion and sheer messiness – of ordinary lives threatens the stability of national identity and unsettles the framework of national histories.

In response, states – and historians – apply their own strategies to repress or ignore these subversive, disruptive presences. A battery of laws regulates emigration and displacement; the qualifications of citizenship come under continual scrutiny; ethnic differences are overridden by re-education and transformations in appearance; inconveniently 'other' pasts are suppressed through marginalization, concealment and outright lies. Yet still, despite these imperatives towards seamless categorization, individuals have always looked beyond the imagined communities and patrolled borders that seek to define their experience, and have found energy, inspiration and attachment in a wider world.

Lives elude national boundaries; yet biography, the telling of life stories, has often been pressed into the service of nation, downplaying its fleeting acknowledgements of lives lived in motion. Dictionaries of national biography, in particular, reify and defend national boundaries by constructing individual significance and achievement within them. Overwhelmingly they have documented the lives of elite men who served their countries in war, politics, business, science or the arts. Although in recent years such projects have sought to rectify previous exclusions of race and sex with addenda and special volumes, it remains the case that many individuals whose lives slipped between national borders have been lost to view.

This book is different. Taking mobility, not nation, as its frame, it captures lives that escape the national biographer's net: lives that crossed national, racial and cartographic boundaries, or that drew emotional energy, ideological conviction or practical understanding from eclectic, transnational experience. Spanning lived experience from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, the book reminds us that mobility has been crucial to a modernizing world, accelerated by technologies of transport and communication and by modern notions of improving and changing the self. The structures of colonialism, slavery and indentured labour, globalizing economies, higher education, professional training, political upheaval, mixed marriages and cultural industries, including film and theatre, have all helped shape lives that transcend or subvert national frames. The patterns of careers, networks, enterprises, relationships, families and households that make up an individual life story have formed themselves across a global canvas. Tracing the unique contours of such a life compels us to see the world as at once profoundly connected and deeply divided.

Transnational Lives presents an astonishingly diverse collection of life stories, rich in historical detail and import, that together rethink the genre of biography. Some of our subjects strode the globe with authority, liberty and purpose, pursuing dreams or professional advantage; some were compelled to travel the world without volition, and could only dream of liberty in

another place. But all have proved at once resistant and elusive to the nation-bound narratives of conventional history. To give expression and meaning to mobile lives found in the interstices of the archive demands careful attention to language and narration, and to the politics of space and motion. The chapters in this book show the insight and analytic strength that this dual attention can produce.

Transnational histories

Interest in transnational studies is so widespread at this time that it is in danger of being dismissed as the latest scholarly 'fad'. The profusion of terminology has prompted at least one observer to wonder whether transnational history is merely 'the latest incarnation of an approach that has successively been characterized as comparative, international, world, and global history'.[1] Others are more convinced of its specific characteristics and strengths. Transnational history may have been sparked by comparative history and world history, but rather than comparison it emphasizes connections, and rather than the macro approaches of world history it attends to regional as well as global scales, and to cultural and social as well as political and economic ties.

Transnational history focuses not so much on *inter*national connections between states as on the connections and movements that have preceded, transcended or exceeded national boundaries. Christopher Bayly rightly points out that 'the "nations" embedded in the term "transnational" were not originary elements to be "transcended" . . . [r]ather, they were the products – and often rather late products' of global historical processes.[2] Nations have been both products and constituents of modernity: their bases, constitutions and self-justifications are all historical artefacts. Relationships between nations and other polities, such as empires and colonies, have changed radically since 1700, the starting point for this volume. Some nations have conquered territories and created empires even as they brought themselves into being. Others have emerged from colonial origins, and through bitter independence struggles. If the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were 'the age of empire', the nature of imperialism itself has changed.

There is growing recognition that to capture these fluid and contingent histories requires a more flexible scholarship. In recent years, for example, American Studies scholars have documented the cultural dimensions of American imperialism and colonialism in various locations, both within and beyond the geographical bounds of North America. Moves to internationalize American history and challenge theories of American exceptionalism date back to the early 1990s, including David Thelen's groundbreaking initiatives as editor of the *Journal of American History*.[3] Not surprisingly, such an ambitious agenda takes time.

Global history is no freer than national history from limiting categorizations. As Isabel Hofmeyr notes, an influential paradigm in global history has been that of a complex, historicized and dominant North versus a simplified and subordinate South.[4] Similarly, Radhika Mohanram has pointed to the ways in which even critical theories generated in the northern hemisphere rely on binary divisions of East and West, First and Third worlds, without fully understanding the differently racialized histories and politics of the southern hemisphere.[5]

Sven Beckert has offered the helpful notion of transnational history as a 'way of seeing' that is open and flexible. The field, he suggests, takes as its starting point 'the interconnectedness of human history as a whole, and while it acknowledges the extraordinary importance of states, empires, and the like, it pays attention to networks, processes, beliefs, and institutions that transcend these politically defined spaces'.[6] Transnational history, reflecting the heterogeneity of subjects of scholarly work in recent years, ranges across cultural, political, economic, material, epidemiological, virtual and intellectual terrains. As Bayly notes, it 'gives a sense of movement and interpenetration'.[7] And in Hofmeyr's words, its 'key claim . . . is its central concern with movements, flows, and circulation'.[8]

The chapters in this book, severally and together, challenge the assumed centrality of imperial powers, displace the preoccupation with national identity and unsettle the hierarchies of scholarly thought. They draw attention to connections between the southern and northern hemispheres, to global circulation that crossed the equator as well as the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans. The book connects studies informed by the histories of white-settler colonies such as South Africa and Australia with others focused on slave and post-slavery societies including the United States, the West Indies and again South Africa. It traces stories from the United States to northern and western Africa, from Europe and the United States to the Antipodes, from Britain to India, and across the Anglophone world, for example, from Canada to Australia. If the genesis of transnational history has lain partly in critiques of nationalist histories, and partly in an insistence on recognizing the legacies of empires and colonialism, the emphasis in this book is on the possibilities of new 'ways of seeing'.

The intimacy of transnational lives

Lives elude national boundaries. So, too, does biography elude disciplinary boundaries. The chapters in this book owe, perhaps, their greatest debt to the intellectual trends of cultural history. But in drawing out the significance of their textual and other sources, the essayists borrow inspiration and methodology from a wide variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary influences. To different degrees, they owe theoretical debts to the intense scrutiny of subjectivity and self-representation that dominated theoretical

literature over a decade ago; to the continuing focus on gender and sexuality prompted by feminist theory; and to the attention to imperial frames and subaltern experience demanded by postcolonial studies. The focus on an individual life, indeed, shows clearly that it is impossible to segregate the public from the intimate, the economic from the cultural or the political from the personal. Such artificially imposed boundaries have never confined human desires or lives.

Transnational Lives insists on the centrality of cultural history and feminist analysis to any understanding of global circulation and interconnectedness. Our revelations of the personal and intimate dimensions of transnational history refute the claim that only more traditional forms of study, such as the economic and the political narrowly defined, can move the field. Recent debate within the field of transnational and global history reveals a gendered schism between the proponents of more traditional, masculinist approaches and a feminist approach that is consonant with cultural history and cultural studies. One protagonist who questions the value of cultural and postcolonial studies has suggested that 'it's time that practitioners of cultural studies start reading more military, economic and diplomatic history.'[9] It is tempting to suggest the reverse: it is indeed impossible, as the life stories analyzed here repeatedly show, to separate the cultural from the diplomatic, economic and military.

These fine-grained analyses challenge those advocates of transnational and global histories who rigidly confine themselves to macro-level analysis of politics and economics. Chapters in this volume illuminate episodes of economic history ranging from the East India Company's seventeenth-century enterprise to the work of cosmopolitan engineers in colonial projects of mining, transport and infrastructure around the globe from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. They shed light on such episodes by seeing the larger significance in the individual stories they recount. Moreover, the authors propose radical interpretations of political boundaries, presenting complex questions of indigenous rights, gendered citizenship and national belonging. They suggest ways of seeing how boundaries defining citizenship and identity were drawn and redrawn across people's lives and territories, almost across their bodies. Borders have crossed lives as often as bodies have crossed borders.

Taken together, these chapters make clear the potential of individual life stories to radically explicate the worlds in which they were lived. They serve, perhaps, to allay the concerns expressed by the editors of a recent volume on transnational history, that this approach may become disconnected from the day-to-day struggles of ordinary people's lives, which are generally conducted within national arenas.[10] The stories collected in this volume show, instead, that individual identity and attachment have long been shaped by the global reach of culture and thought, and by the diasporic movements of people. This has been as true for the disempowered as it

has for the elite. Growing numbers of people have connections that belie or straddle state boundaries, and can see transnational workings in their own lives – because of labour migration, global careers, mixed families and a myriad other reasons. Political movements themselves grow more and more transnational.

To capture this reality demands a central focus on private life, a recognition of the ways that transnational movement and connections have been driven by and reflected in personal experience. *Transnational Lives* is inspired by feminist theory in its determination to show the public dimensions of the supposedly 'private', and how the family, sexuality and intimacy have lain at the core of social structures. Emotional attachments can be at once the cause and the casualty of long journeys across the globe and lives lived 'out of place'. Yet journeying leads in turn to new attachments that may become the basis for lives stretched across two, or more, locations.

The historical subjects documented here include a woman prompted by passion and a spirit of adventure who followed the men she loved from country to country; a wife who mounted an international campaign to rescue her missing husband; and an ambitious young Australian woman who pursued her dreams in Hollywood. Mobility might be driven by passion, anxiety or ambition: but many moves extended, rather than broke, existing family ties. In striking contrast were those who seized upon the potential for self-reinvention offered by international mobility, clouding their family origins in secrecy, fantasy and deception. Apart from deliberate imposture and pretence, some families have constructed their own histories in ways shaped by public attitudes and prejudice, not least the imperative to erase racial complexities. The intimate family practice of passing on details and stories has thus been moulded by the values and restrictions of the public domain.

Our focus on personal lives brings into sharp relief the intimate, human impact of wars, labour systems and forces such as colonialism. Feminist theory insists on analyzing power relations based on gender, sexuality and racial categories – along with those of class and legal status. The life stories contained in this volume allow us to see the social inequalities that lie at the root of some transnational journeys. At the same time, they show the cumulative impact of such journeys on the making of modernity.

Modernizing lives

The partial life stories gathered here illuminate particular historical moments and episodes. They illustrate the mobility of modernity, and grapple with the meanings of displacement, travel and individual quests. Most are not identifiably stories of migration; instead they catalogue lives shaped by chance, desire, adventure, opportunity, trauma, war, avarice, defiance and political ideals.

Recent work on modernity has been beholden to transnational history, with its documentation of increased mobility, commerce and exchange. Even with a growing awareness of global movement and interaction, understandings of modernity have often privileged metropolitan, industrial societies, and relied on stories of familiar actors and driving forces. As Beckert has observed, in fact modernity 'rests just as much on African slaves, Indian peasants, Chinese traders, and Arab mathematicians as on Lancashire mill workers, Scottish philosophers, German chemists, and American political theorists'.[11]

Transnational Lives analyzes the stories of individual actors not usually seen as contributing to modernity, but who, we argue, must be viewed in such a frame. Our historical subjects include, for example, two nineteenth-century sea captains and traders, a mixed-race merchant based in the British West Indies and one of Chinese ethnicity who traded between Australia, India and China; Eurasians who left their Indian pasts behind to achieve fame in Britain and elsewhere in global entertainment industries; and a Latvian 'Displaced Person' in war-torn 1940s Europe who would become a physicist in America. These fragmentary life stories reveal aspects of modernity that span international trade; science, technology and the professions; politics on a variety of levels; and the inherently transnational film, theatre and music industries. They show mobility and self-transformation to have been integral to the modern in all of these spheres. The composite picture that emerges from these stories is of individual lives contributing to the shaping of modernity even as they were constrained and enabled by its possibilities.

Our volume thus contributes to that burgeoning field of scholarship which explores the intersections between globalization and modernity. David Lambert and Alan Lester, for example, emphasize the circulation and global evolution of ideas and practices in their study of individual lives and 'careering' across the nineteenth-century British Empire.[12] Rosamund Dalziell's study of 'selves crossing cultures' explores the globalized commodification of autobiographies in the modern world, which is itself partially driven by changing communications technology.[13] And recent work on migration and assimilation points to the impact of migrant cultures on mainstream societies, migrants' juggling of multiple cultural practices and the migratory practices of sojourning and temporary migration.[14] Evidence has also mounted of the size and significance of return migrations, and even re-returns, as part of the history of migration in the last century.[15]

All these works, in different ways, grapple with the conceptual challenges posed by the dramatic and accelerating increase in human mobility across the last few centuries. The evolving scholarly picture of migration underscores the pervasiveness of transnational lives – lives lived across geographical points and between cultures. The chapters in our book span several centuries, continents and empires. They assemble a remarkable variety of

occupations, migrations and self-representations. Here, cosmopolitanism itself is one theme, the arts are another, and a third is the transnational staging of political protests and movements. With its accounts of opportunism and flight, our volume gives a sense of the life choices that could lie beneath the surface of those global trends.

Migration is not the only kind of geographical mobility. Some of the subjects presented here took advantage of new technologies of movement to travel for pleasure, or out of romantic curiosity: a privilege most readily available to 'white' people of the middle and upper classes. It was they who first knew the thrills of the car and the aeroplane. Travel has traditionally been a male prerogative, shaped by the journeys of war, the masculine quest for adventure and rites of passage; yet we now have a burgeoning field of study on women's travels and their travel writings.[16]

The ways in which women have construed their own travel have been dependent on historically constituted relations of 'race'. Sidonie Smith notes that 'for women displaced from postcolonial Asia, Africa, and the island nations of the Caribbean, many of whom have written of their travels to and in Europe and North America, issues of gendered citizenship, diaspora, and the (de)colonization of subjectivity, rather than technologies of motion, assume primacy.'[17] Smith's comment suggests the variety of meanings linked to travel, and the different desires that drive it. Journeys can be open-ended. Trips that may ostensibly be about tourism can also have other agendas. The stories within this book show the unpredictability as well as the uncontainability of human lives and movement.

Racial hierarchies have been central to modernity, even while ethnic and racial identities constantly evolve. National boundaries have both impeded and framed ethnic identities such as 'African–American', 'Black', 'Chinese' or 'British'. At times, people have moved countries in order to challenge, or to fight for, ethnic identities and political rights. The essays published here complement recent work that has focused on the 'contact zones' of colonialism, empires and cultural exchange. Like much of that work, our studies are concerned with the cultural impacts occasioned by the structures of trade, colonial rule, global capitalism and other historical forces. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton's anthology *Bodies in Contact: Encounters in World History* uses the heuristic device of the body to present a range of episodes of cross-cultural contact as a window into world history.[18] This present collection is full of fresh stories that focus not so much on contact and exchange as mobility, individual transformation and the connectedness that constitutes global history.

* * *

All of the chapters in this book illuminate the relationship between the transnational and the intimate, but they suggest different ways of

understanding that relationship. While all contributors address several of the common issues discussed above, particular themes emerged that allowed us to group chapters together so that they speak to each other in fruitful ways. Our first section on *Writing Lives Transnationally* discusses challenges specific to writing biographies that cross national and other borders. The chapters in this section suggest varied solutions to the practical and epistemological problems of writing lives fractured by forced mobility or categorizations, or fragmented by subordinated status. The first two chapters focus on 'Issues and Methods'. Martha Hodes suggests that to write a transnational life involves reconstructing a series of connected local histories; Pamela Scully argues that we must abandon the search for the 'whole subject' and allow that fragments of identity are produced in specific times and places. The second pair by Michael A. McDonnell and Penny van Toorn explore the particular epistemological issues created when 'Boundaries Cross Bodies'. Dispelling the illusion that nations are stable while lives move, they argue that we must also consider the ways in which cartographic and political changes have created new nations and boundaries that have affected people's lives and subjectivities.

Our second section takes up the theme of *Opportunities*. To move across the globe offered individuals a chance to reinvent themselves: an opportunity that some took up with enthusiasm, employing 'Fantasies' – secrets, lies, erasures and impostures – to pursue social mobility and careers based on pretence and new identities, as Kirsten McKenzie, Adrian Carton and Angela Woollacott show. Another trio of essays by Carroll Pursell, Tiffany Shellam and Rajani Sudan presents stories of 'Livelihoods'. They show that journeys could facilitate careers in a remarkable variety of ways: through developing international professional experience, making Indigenous men locally famous for their work as cultural interlocutors or enabling a governor of a late-seventeenth century British trading post to make a personal fortune that would endow one of America's most hallowed universities. The final two chapters by Cecilia Morgan and Penny Von Eschen link fantasy and livelihood in a study of 'Performances' in the lives of two women, one who successfully exploited the multiple identities offered by the global entertainment industry while the other struggled to create a new hybrid identity.

While some seized on the opportunities of global mobility for personal advantage, others engaged in idealistic, if often doomed, *Quests*. Two chapters in this third section explore 'Subaltern Crossings' in search of liberty: Bruce Dorsey and Fiona Paisley tell strikingly different stories of expatriation in the pursuit of freedom from racial subordination. The middle-class women in the second pair of essays, 'Intimate Crossings', were stateless in a different way, as Penny Russell and Ros Pesman show. Deprived of citizenship, they yet possessed and exploited the privileges of class to construct new communities of belonging, understanding their connections to place through their connections to the men they loved.

Some of those who crossed the world in search of new lives and new identities left their homelands far behind them; others retained a profound attachment to their 'own place'. Our final section examines *Cosmopolitans* who – by force or choice – crossed so many boundaries that the world itself became their 'own place'. The chapters by Marilyn Lake and Desley Deacon in 'The World at Home' consider the meanings of cosmopolitanism through contrasting case studies of itinerant workers, one a merchant seaman and the other an aspiring actress. In our final trio of essays, 'At Home in the World', Sheila Fitzpatrick, Ian Britain and Hsu-Ming Teo take cosmopolitanism to its extreme, examining the meaning of the transnational life for three people who moved continually around the world, one involuntarily through the fortunes of war and two by choice – three people for whom, indeed, 'world' and 'home' converged.

* * *

Perhaps there are as many ways to interpret a transnational life as there are ways to live one. The chapters in this book encompass a transnationalism of physical mobility, of imagination, of emotions, of identity, of politics and of allegiance. They show that lives were sometimes driven into a pattern of wandering; sometimes, conversely, coerced into classifications that had no grounding in experience. They show that some people could traverse the world and never discard their firm attachment to a national identity, while others could inhabit a cosmopolitan universe without even leaving home. They show that mobility could be a product of coercion or opportunism, of strategy or accident, of desire or fear. Above all they show that, when considered in relation to human lives, transnationalism is not a mere analytic category. It is unalterably an element of human experience.

Notes

1. AHR Editor (2006), 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History', *The American Historical Review* Vol. 111, No. 5, p. 1441.
2. C. A. Bayly, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1449.
3. The initiatives are outlined in D. Thelen (1992), 'Of Audiences, Borderlands, and Comparisons: Toward the Internationalization of American History', *The Journal of American History* Vol. 79, No. 2, pp. 432–462.
4. I. Hofmeyr, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1450.
5. R. Mohanram (1999), *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 89–90.
6. S. Beckert, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1459.
7. Bayly, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1442.
8. Hofmeyr, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1444.
9. M. Connelly, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1453.
10. A. Curthoys and M. Lake (eds) (2005), *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: ANU E-Press), pp. 13–15.

11. Beckert, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1460.
12. D. Lambert and A. Lester (eds) (2006), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 25.
13. R. Dalziell (ed.) (2002), *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing), Introduction.
14. R. Alba and V. Nee (2003), *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
15. A. J. Hammerton and A. Thomson (2005), *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).
16. For example, S. L. Blake (1992), 'A Woman's Trek: What Difference Does Gender Make?', in N. Chaudhuri and M. Strobel (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press); S. Morgan (1996), *Place Matters: Gendered Geography in Victorian Women's Travel Books about Southeast Asia* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press); I. Grewal (1996), *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham: Duke University Press); H.-M. Teo (2001), 'Wandering in the Wake of Empire: British Travel and Tourism in the Post-Imperial World', in S. Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).
17. S. Smith (2001), *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), p. xv.
18. T. Ballantyne and A. Burton (eds) (2005), *Bodies in Contact: Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press).

Part I

Writing Lives Transnationally

How do we begin to think of lives transnationally – and what challenges does the attempt pose to biographical or historical method, to research, interpretation and writing? In our opening section, 'Issues and Methods', Martha Hodes and Pamela Scully explore some of the issues inherent in writing about lives lived across boundaries. In her study of Eunice Connolly, Hodes reflects upon the interplay between local and global arenas; the balance between the historian's expansive vision and the more confined day-to-day experiences of historical actors; and narrative strategies that take into account the problem of sources, the question of readership and the intertwining of story-telling and scholarly argument. Scully advocates a form of 'heterographic writing'. She shows how in developing an alternative narrative of Sara Baartman – the woman historically constituted as the 'Hottentot Venus' – she gave up the search for the 'whole subject' and instead sought ways to acknowledge incompleteness, while tracing migration between and within peripheries and across borderlands both theoretical and geographical.

Crossing between cultures can require individuals to enter worlds with profoundly different understandings of self and subjectivity. But what happens when new national boundaries themselves cross cultures, imposing new identities that disrupt and re-frame the ties of community, kin and belonging? In 'Boundaries Cross Bodies', Michael A. McDonnell and Penny van Toorn show how ruthless acts of conquest or colonization can entrap individuals and communities into confused and multilayered identities. They speak eloquently of the dislocation and fragmentation that come when identities based on experience are ruptured by official categorizations. Yet both essays show that the resulting new identities are not simply imposed upon passive subjects, but are formed also through acts of resistance and negotiation. Penny van Toorn shows how in Australia new and old boundaries have co-existed, shifted and intersected, and examines the role of land policies, mapping, writing and print in the formation of new identities, including Aboriginal nationalism. Michael A. McDonnell's attempt to follow

the elusive paper trail of Charles Langlade exposes the limitations of the ethnic, racial and linguistic categories through which historians understand the Great Lakes area of North America. Like van Toorn, he reminds us that the frames through which historians view the past can sometimes close off their understanding of the messy fluidity of lived history.

All four essays in this section show how practical methodological issues can raise epistemological questions, especially for the writing of transnational lives. They show, too, how the fragmentation and elusive mobility of the lives they examine were products of their subaltern status: so that the search for completeness will inevitably privilege the powerful. This theme recurs in later sections of this book (e.g. essays by Shellam, Von Eschen, Dorsey and Paisley). National boundaries are not the only epistemological categories to bedevil the historian's work.

1

A Story with an Argument: Writing the Transnational Life of a Sea Captain's Wife

Martha Hodes

My foray into transnational biography began with a collection of family letters. Revolving around the ordinary life of an extraordinary woman, the letters were written between the 1850s and the 1880s and mailed from one New England town to another, between New England and the Deep South, and between the United States and the British Caribbean. From these 500 or so letters, I wrote *The Sea Captain's Wife: A True Story of Love, Race, and War in the Nineteenth Century*.[1]

The sea captain's wife was Eunice Richardson Stone Connolly, born white and working-class, in New England, in 1831. Eunice's brothers fought for the Union in the American Civil War, while her husband, also a native New Englander, fought for the Confederacy. After her husband died fighting for the South, Eunice married again. Her second husband, William Smiley Connolly (called Smiley), was a mariner from the British West Indies, and a man of colour. The wedding took place in Massachusetts in 1869; one week later, Eunice and her two children moved to Smiley's home on Grand Cayman Island. In 1877, the couple and all of their children embarked on a turtle-fishing voyage to the Mosquito Coast of Central America. Their journey was disrupted by a powerful hurricane, in which they all perished.

Like hundreds of thousands of working-class women in the nineteenth century, Eunice rarely appears in formal historical records beyond the most commonplace documents: a birth certificate, a marriage licence and a census listing. I gleaned everything I could from local vital records, village maps and city directories, then pieced together context from town records, newspaper reports and Civil War regimental histories. My luckiest unintended discovery was to meet descendants of Smiley Connolly's West Indian family in New York and New England, as well as in the same community of former slaves where Eunice and Smiley had lived from 1869 to 1877. After that, I searched for descendants of Eunice's New England family, and found her brother Henry's great granddaughter, living in Massachusetts. As it turned

Figure 1 Photograph of Eunice Connolly from the Lois Wright Richardson Davis Papers located in the Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

out, of all Eunice's relatives, it was Henry who never spoke to Eunice again after she married across the colour line. Just before departing the United States, Eunice wrote: *I wanted to tell Brother Henry how much I had always loved him and how his treatment had pained me, but it is perhaps better that I did not*. In fact, Henry's great granddaughter had never once heard mention of Eunice ('I had no idea I had black relatives!' she marvelled). At least some of Eunice's family, it seemed, wanted to erase her from family memory. Luckily, too, the archives foiled that conviction.[2]

* * *

Whereas comparative historians often study subjects such as slavery and racism in different nations in different eras, transnational historians by contrast explore a wider geographical field in 'real time'. Central to this endeavour is the circulation and exchange of people, material goods, capital and ideas across national borders.[3] Historians immersed in transnational lives can draw inspiration from the methods of anthropologist George Marcus, who writes about 'multi-sited ethnography', in which research is 'designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations'. Among the methods Marcus proposes are to 'follow the people' (e.g. Eunice and her family), to 'follow the thing' (e.g. the family letters) or simply to 'follow the plot or story' to create 'an ethnographical investigation that constructs its sites according to a compelling narrative'. Especially important here is the compelling narrative, for, as all biographers know, 'Actual lives are messy, often boring, and always plotless'. The English professor who made that last observation advised that a well-crafted biography must focus on a story 'that will help to tame the myriad facts of the subject's life'.[4]

The life of Eunice Connolly, for all of its often-tedious daily rhythms, certainly contains the dramatic arc of a good story. Yet, in writing Eunice's life, I wished to convey not only a story but also an argument. As a way to bridge story and argument, then, I turned to a number of unconventional forms. To give readers a sense of Eunice's voice, each of the book's core chapters is prefaced with a single, complete letter that she composed, each one selected as representative of a particular moment in her life. After that, each of those chapters opens with a brief act of historical imagination, conjuring Eunice's surroundings when she lived in the towns and villages of northern New England, the southern city where she found herself when the Civil War broke out, and the remote Caribbean island where she ultimately found a measure of happiness. Last, because I wanted Eunice's voice to precede my own insofar as possible, I rendered her words, from her many letters across two decades, in italic type, and without quotation marks – as I have done here – in an effort to integrate her perspective more seamlessly into the story.

In this essay, I reflect upon three challenges I faced in the process of writing a transnational life as a story with an argument: first, the challenge of writing a narrative that is both local and global; second, the challenge of archival gaps and third, the challenge of finding the historical significance in Eunice's transnational life.

* * *

Scholars who set out to re-create transnational lives must account for both the local experiences of their historical actors and, at the same time, their own more expansive geographical visions. Working with the letters over many years, I found that I was writing Eunice's life by writing a series of local histories. The family letters – loving, hostile and mundane – circulated among three distinct sites: the industrial mill towns of northern New England, where different family members moved in their efforts to find work; the booming urban port city of Mobile, Alabama, in the Gulf South, where Eunice and her first husband, William Stone, moved in the late 1850s, hoping to find a better life; and the tiny British West Indian island of Grand Cayman in the remote western Caribbean, where Eunice moved after she married the sea captain, Smiley Connolly.

Different scales come into play in different parts of Eunice's story. Alongside the individual, Eunice herself, there is also the family (her mother, brothers and sisters; her two husbands and her children) and the household (sometimes larger than a single family, sometimes smaller). There is also the community (ranging from a mill village in New Hampshire, to a particular neighbourhood in the city of Mobile, to a settlement of former slaves on Grand Cayman Island) and the region (New England, the Gulf South and the western Caribbean). Widening out from there comes the scale of the nation (the United States; and the Cayman Islands, which were part of Jamaica, which was under British rule) and, finally, the arena of the transnational. This last is best represented by bodies of water: the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea connect the various historical sites to one another or, from the perspective of the historical actors, separate family members, as when Eunice sailed from New York to Mobile, and then from Boston to the West Indies.[5]

Writing a transnational life, then, in no way precludes or erases smaller scales of geography. Writing Eunice's life required investigations into the regions, cities, towns and hamlets where Eunice had lived, along with knowledge of the larger national histories of the United States and the British Caribbean. How, then, do we write narratives that are both local and global while remaining true to the experiences of those whose lives we are re-creating and interpreting? More readily than our historical actors can, scholars are able to discern the global dimensions of daily lives in the past.

In New Hampshire, Eunice worked in a noisy, lonely room in the cotton mills, sharing her work-day with Irish immigrants, spinning cotton picked by African American slaves and marketed across the Atlantic Ocean. In the West Indies, Eunice lived in a place that one missionary called a 'sequestered isle' of 'extreme isolation' but, at the same time, Eunice's husband and his fellow mariners traded turtle and coffee in Jamaica and Honduras, Cuba, the Gulf South and New York.[6]

To what degree are our historical actors aware of, or impervious to, these kinds of connections: among immigrants, slaves and markets; among isolated island communities and the wider Atlantic world? Because our subjects are not always cognizant of these connections in the same way that historians can be, writers of transnational lives must employ a narrative interplay between what historical actors knew and did not know *in* the past and what historians know and cannot know *about* the past. We must consider local and global narratives in light of one another, in an effort to write stories and histories that unite human experiences with larger historical forces. The key is to construct a narrative of the daily experiences of our actors that conveys the ways in which those actors were aware or unaware of the widening scales of context that surrounded them. We can do so either explicitly, by discussing the particular degree of awareness, or implicitly, through a shift in narrative voice when moving beyond the realm of our actors' awareness.

At the same time, though, scholars must recognize that viewing a single life from the distance of a transnational vantage point may blur local complexities. In reconstructing Eunice Connolly's experiences with racial classification, for example, a transnational angle allowed me to formulate her story's overarching argument, but the complexities of Eunice's daily interactions came into focus only from the vantage point of particular local settings.

* * *

The challenge of archival gaps is one confronted by all biographers. *I write you a good many letters that I dont send*, Eunice wrote to her mother in 1864. *When I feel lonesome and bad as if I must see you, I set down and write, then the next day burn them up* – a discouraging sentence, indeed, for a researcher. But writers of transnational lives may experience this challenge more acutely, precisely because the archival records can be so far-flung. Many of the letters that Eunice's mother and sisters posted from the United States to the Cayman Islands, for example, simply never arrived. 'It does seem so hard that we cannot get a letter to you', a sister wrote to Eunice in 1870. 'Mother got a letter from you about a month ago saying you had never herd from home'. Eunice saved the few pieces of mail that did arrive, though none subsequently survived the tropical climate. Thus even with access to

hundreds of letters, and after years of research in local, regional, national and colonial archives, there was still a great deal about Eunice's life that remained unknown.[7]

Biography, writes Pamela Scully in her reflections on writing the transnational life of Sara Baartman, 'is always a story' of 'how we know what we know'. Of course the differences between Eunice Connolly and Sara Baartman are considerable. For one thing, the subject of Eunice's body – which is the central means by which we know about Sara Baartman – never entered the historical record, except in the most oblique manner. (She once confided in her mother a *lame feeling* in her *pelvic bones*, followed by the words, *I should not dare tell any one but you*.) And even if neighbours in the Cayman Islands reflected upon Eunice's complexion and racial classification, those observations were gleaned from the visibility of her face and hands only, for in the nineteenth-century Caribbean, a sea captain's wife wore hats and long dresses, no matter the climate. Paradoxically, although Sara Baartman's body was the subject of intensive public scrutiny, her own voice likely entered the historical record in only a single instance; on the other hand, Eunice, who lived largely in welcome obscurity, left more than one hundred personal letters. This wealth of sources permitted a more 'confident narration' than Scully found possible, yet Scully's observations about 'acknowledgement of incompleteness, rather than a search for the whole' pertain to Eunice's life as well.[8]

The biggest mystery of Eunice's story lay in the question of when and how she met Smiley Connolly, the West Indian sea captain – that is, precisely how her life came to be transnational. The problem stemmed from a gap in the family letters. In the winter of 1866, Eunice, rather mysteriously, left her mother's home in Massachusetts, where she had been convalescing after the shock of widowhood. She was suffering a depression so severe as to lead to thoughts of suicide. *I believe there comes a time with almost every one when it would be sweet to die*, Eunice explained to her brother before her departure. *My star of hope has set, gone down in darkness and despair and left a dark empty void. Where peace and joy should have a home, is nothing, nothing, nothing*. After that, she went to live with distant relatives in Vermont, and soon thereafter, there were no more letters for three full years, at which point Eunice resurfaced, in the autumn of 1869, as a happy bride about to depart for the Caribbean.[9]

What, then, had come to pass in between her suicidal despair and her newfound happiness? One logical scenario dictates that Eunice Stone met Smiley Connolly sometime after she returned, from her sojourn in Vermont, to her mother's home in Massachusetts. Eunice's mother lived near the mill city of Lowell, and Caymanian seamen were known to sail for nearby Boston in the nineteenth century. It is plausible that the couple intersected at the neighbourhood Pawtucket Congregational Church, where a number of prominent families of colour worshipped alongside the white congregants. In fact, the

minister whose name appears on the marriage licence served as an interim pastor there in the 1860s.[10]

But Eunice may also have met Smiley while she was still married to her first husband. This is a more daring plot line, and yet the evidence could be read to confirm its contours. First, the city of Mobile, Alabama, served as a frequent port-of-call for Caymanian ships (more frequent, certainly, than Boston). There was a church in Mobile, too, where their lives could have crossed: Smiley was a Presbyterian, and his complexion was in all likelihood light enough to permit him entry into the Government Street Presbyterian Church. The pastor in those years was a northern man, which would explain Eunice's presence there. (Whether Eunice believed Smiley to be a white man when she first encountered him also remains unknown, but as she later wrote, speaking of a sister's happy marriage, *I would not change Husbands with her, if hers has got a white skin. I know mine has not.*[11])

At this juncture in writing the book, I coaxed Eunice's letters to divulge a bit more, re-reading each phrase and word for any disguised intimations. If Eunice had met Smiley in Mobile in the early 1860s, and if Smiley had proposed to Eunice following her husband's death in the Civil War, then Eunice's journey to Vermont in 1866 made much more sense. Why, I had wondered, would Eunice have left her mother's home in Massachusetts, while still gravely ill, to make the arduous journey through February snow and ice by stagecoach? As it turns out, Victorian courtship commonly involved a ritualized drama, in which the woman tested her future husband's devotion. It appeared, then, that Eunice had fled to Vermont in the middle of winter in order to measure the sea captain's response to her potential abandonment of their romance. *When I was trying to see if I could bear to tear myself from him*: Eunice later wrote those words from Cayman, illuminating her fulfilment of that social convention.[12]

After that revelation, I combed through earlier letters for any discrete hints of the couple's acquaintance while Eunice was still a married woman. *Well Henry*, Eunice wrote to her brother in 1865, adding a few words in the space left over on a letter from their mother, *Mother ran ashore, or aground, I dont know which, before she filled her sheet*. Did that attempted sailing metaphor foretell thoughts of the gentleman mariner? And another spare hint: *Miss Clara is the same madcap as ever*, Eunice wrote of her young daughter in 1864, invoking the common Caymanian manner of address (she was 'Miss Eunice', her husband 'Mr. Smiley'). Had Eunice just received a letter from the captain, asking after the children, then unwittingly echoed that West Indian turn-of-phrase in a letter to her mother? And still more, for now yet earlier letters yielded the possibility that what had come to pass back in Mobile had been a real tryst, and that Clara was Smiley's daughter. *She has a very white fair skin*, Eunice wrote of her newborn baby in 1862, perhaps in relief, or maybe in order to preclude any suggestion of scandal. If Clara was Smiley's child, that also helps to explain why Eunice made the difficult decision to leave Mobile

when she was seven months pregnant, braving wartime travel to return to New England while her husband remained in the Confederate Army. From the West Indies years later, Eunice wrote, in reference to Smiley, Clara *loves her Father much and thinks there never was another like him*.[13]

Archival gaps in transnational lives may thus require imaginative, if well-grounded, readings of the sources at hand. If Eunice had tried to tear herself away from Smiley Connolly during that Vermont winter of 1866, she discovered instead that he was, as she later wrote, *firm in his attachment and faithful in his love for me*. In this version of events, we can speculate that Smiley sent letters to Eunice – now lost, deteriorated or destroyed – over the course of several years, while he took his schooners to Jamaica and Honduras, the Gulf South and New York. Their content is not hard to conjecture, for Smiley later told Eunice's mother that his bride looked 'more beautiful to me every day' and described her as 'my dear Eunice which is dear to me as my own life'.[14]

* * *

Alongside the problems of integrating local and global scales, and of missing documents, writers of transnational biography face the overarching challenge of finding historical significance in the transnational aspect of our subjects' lives. During many years of reading and re-reading the family letters, and conducting research in the United States, the Cayman Islands and Great Britain, I came to understand Eunice's life as a story about racial classification and racism in transnational perspective. This was a story that moved beyond the comparison of racial systems to offer an argument about the ways in which different racial systems interacted across national borders, in real time, in local, daily lives.

Reflecting on writing the life of Sara Baartman, Pamela Scully describes her subject as, like Eunice, 'a person who crossed cultures and geographies'. Scully writes, too, of 'ambiguity of status' and of 'identity imposed upon Baartman'. For all the differences in their experiences, both Eunice Connolly and Sara Baartman nonetheless lived lives that encompassed 'migration within and between space and place', in Scully's words. For Eunice, too, as for many transnational subjects, 'Movement across and within cultural and political systems opens up spaces for re-imaginings of self'. Specifically, in the life of Eunice Connolly, travels, ambiguity and imposed identity informed the inescapable endeavour of racial classification.[15]

Eunice's transnational life and the consequences of the choices she made expose the complexities and fickleness of racial classification within and across geographical borders, in unexpected ways. First, by marrying across the colour line in 1869, Eunice forfeited the privileges of white womanhood in New England. *Tell me what Mrs Wilson said and every body else*, Eunice wrote just before she sailed to the Caribbean, in a plain reference to white neighbours who disapproved of her actions. *I can not quite get over some of her*

slurs, she commented about another New England neighbour. And from the Caribbean, Eunice wrote, speaking of Smiley Connolly, *I knew I could . . . go from you my Mother easier than I could give him up, even though public opinion was against him and against me on his account*. Smiley, Eunice added, was *in his own home now and feels at liberty to act all the love he feels for me without fear of disturbing any one*.[16]

Eunice had spent her life in the United States on the margins of respectable white womanhood. In her native land, she was the daughter of an alcoholic father who deserted his family; the wife of a white man unable to find employment; a mother compelled to work in a factory and board out one of her children; and a widow forced to labour as a domestic servant, a job largely reserved for Irish immigrant and African American women. Then, as Eunice made a life for herself in the West Indies, there ensued a surprising transformation. In her voyage from the United States to the British Caribbean, Eunice also made a journey from the status of degraded, working-class woman on the margins of whiteness to that of an elite woman of colour. Back in New England, Eunice had been a servant, working as a washerwoman in New Hampshire during the Civil War. In the West Indies, Smiley Connolly's relative wealth permitted Eunice to hire a servant of her own. *She is a good respectable trusty girl*, Eunice wrote to her mother about her Caymanian housekeeper, adding unselfconsciously: *and I think much of her although she is a black girl*.[17]

Eunice's characterization of her Caymanian servant as respectable and trustworthy, although black, exposes her own quickness to echo the attitudes of the West Indian 'coloured' classes, to which Smiley Connolly belonged – that expansive Caribbean category in between 'black' and 'white', African and European. In the United States in the nineteenth century, a person of both European and African ancestry, designated as 'mulatto', stood closer to blackness. In the West Indies, a person of mixed ancestry, designated as 'coloured', stood closer to whiteness. By the same token, generations of one family in the United States could shift between 'black' and 'mulatto', whereas generations of one family in the West Indies could shift between 'coloured' and 'white'. Indeed, missionary census-takers on Grand Cayman in 1855 formulated one category for 'black' inhabitants and another, single category for 'white and coloured' inhabitants. No doubt unable to sort islanders' descriptions of themselves, the missionaries noted that it was 'impracticable to distinguish between the white and coloured population'.[18]

In the West Indies, too, a person's class-standing counted in the pursuit of racial stratification: the higher a person's status, the whiter that person was understood to be. That meant that in Cayman, Smiley Connolly's prosperity, along with his mixed African and European ancestry, shaded him toward the category of 'white'. Although Smiley never expounded upon class or colour in his letters, surely he concurred with Eunice's judgement that their servant's blackness cast doubt upon her trustworthiness. In the words of one

observer in the nineteenth-century West Indies, the 'colored' population would 'scarcely stoop to shake hands with the blacks, whom they regard with disdain'. In studying racial systems in transnational context, and in uncovering the racism of a white woman who dared to marry a man of colour, it became clear that although Smiley Connolly was not a white man in New England, nor was he a black man in the West Indies.[19]

As for Eunice, and her life in a community of former slaves on Grand Cayman Island, she stood somewhere in between the blurred West Indian categories of 'white' and 'coloured', while she gained a status and level of daily comfort that she had never achieved in the United States. Compared with her persistent marginal status at home, Eunice became, in the British Caribbean, a lady with a home of her own who enjoyed a companionate marriage, sent her children to school, taught in the church, directed a dark-skinned maid and sailed the bay with her husband in the evenings. *As for me, I jog along in a quiet easy way*, Eunice wrote. *I have enough to eat & drink, & wear*, she added, noting that in three months' time she had never twice worn the same dress to Sunday services. So remarkable was all of this that she repeated it in another letter. *I have a plenty to eat drink & wear*, she reminded her family, and herself, *and do not have to sit up nights sewing by Lamp light making and trimming dresses*.[20]

Eunice was a white woman who married across the colour line, and yet she married up. In order to achieve that upward mobility, though, it was imperative that she leave the United States. (Recall her pronouncement that Smiley was *in his own home now and feels at liberty to act all the love he feels for me without fear of disturbing any one*.) It took a crossing of racial lines and national borders – that is, a crossing from one racial system to another, and from one racial classification to another – for Eunice to move from labourer to lady.[21]

Through Eunice Connolly's transnational life, I argue not only that racial classification can be unstable and malleable across geographical borders but also, and more important, that such instability and malleability do not diminish the power of race to circumscribe people's daily lives. Simply marshalling evidence to prove the instability of racial taxonomies tells only a partial story. We tend to think of the fluid and the mutable as less powerful than the rigid and the immutable, thereby equating the exposure of unstable racial categories with an assault on the very construct of race itself. Yet the scrutiny of day-to-day lives across national borders demonstrates not only the mutability of race but also, and with equal force, the abiding power of race in local settings. No matter how convincingly we prove 'race' to be a construction, that wisdom alone remains inadequate to diminish the might of racism, because the power of race lies within the very quality of its malleability.

By marrying a man of colour, Eunice defied her New England neighbours and some of her family. In the end, however, her radical choices in North

America turned out not to be quite so radical in the West Indies. When Eunice married Smiley Connolly, she sacrificed any claims to honourable white womanhood in New England, but she soon staked a claim to such honour in the West Indies, by virtue of membership in a well-to-do coloured family. In one place, Eunice was the victim of racism; in another, she was a supporter of it. Almost certainly, she never came to think of herself as a 'coloured' woman since, in the Caribbean, she finally lived the life to which she had always aspired as a white woman in New England. Unstable and malleable racial categories do not diminish the power of race; rather, combined with geographical mobility, that instability and malleability only transfer power from certain people to certain other people. Within one national border, Eunice's status diminished; within another, she rose in rank.

* * *

Just as our historical actors know more about their own lives than biographers ever can, biographers often grasp more about the meaning of those lives than can the actors themselves. Because I fashioned out of Eunice's transnational life and letters a significance beyond her own vision – a story about the extraordinary life of an ordinary woman, and a story with an argument about the workings of racial classification across national borders – I can claim only that *The Sea Captain's Wife* is the story of Eunice Connolly as I have understood and distilled it. It is not *the* story of Eunice Connolly, but rather *my* story of Eunice Connolly. Yet if Eunice's life matters, as a story about an ordinary woman who crossed both a powerful colour line and national boundaries, her life also matters as an argument about race and racism in local and global perspectives. At the same time, Eunice's story also offers an argument about the significance of transnational biography.

Notes

1. M. Hodes (2006), *The Sea Captain's Wife: A True Story of Love, Race, and War in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton).
2. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, continuation of William Smiley Connolly to Lois Davis, Provincetown, Mass., 13 November 1869 letter, in Lois Wright Richardson Davis Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, hereafter LWRD. Telephone conversation with Jane Allerton Cushman (b. 1938), Brewster, Mass., 26 March 2001.
3. See T. Bender (2000), *The La Pietra Report: A Report to the Profession* (Bloomington, Ind.: Organization of American Historians), and T. Bender (2002), 'Introduction: Historians, the Nation, and the Plenitude of Narratives', in T. Bender (ed.), *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 1–21.
4. G. E. Marcus (1995), 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, pp. 105, 106,

109. J. Parini, 'Biography Can Escape the Tyranny of Facts', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 4 February 2000, p. A72.
5. On scales, see Bender, 'La Pietra Report' and Bender, 'Introduction'.
6. *Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church*, 2 June 1873, p. 530; 2 June 1879, p. 537.
7. Eunice Stone to Lois Davis, Claremont, N.H., 3 December 1864; Ann McCoy to Eunice Connolly, Dracut, Mass., 16 February 1870; both LWRD.
8. Pamela Scully, in this volume. Eunice Stone to Lois Davis, Claremont, N.H., 29 March 1863, LWRD. For women's dress, see photograph of Catherine Susannah Conolly (different family members spelled the name with one or two *n*'s), Doris Wood Levy Collection, XG/CN/290/BS/E4, Cayman Islands National Archive, George Town, Grand Cayman, and reproduced in Hodes, *Sea Captain's Wife*, p. 230.
9. Eunice Stone to Charles Henry Richardson, Dracut, Mass., 23 July 1865, LWRD.
10. A. C. Varnum (1888), *History of Pawtucket Church and Society* (Lowell, Mass.: Morning Mail); telephone conversation with Joyce Frazee, Pawtucket Congregational Church, Lowell, Mass., 11 May 2000. Massachusetts Vital Records, Marriages, Dracut, 3 November 1869, vol. 218, p. 166, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston.
11. 'Presbyterian Churches, Mobile, Mobile County', typescript, Alabama Church Records, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 7 March 1870, LWRD.
12. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 7 March 1870. K. Lystra (1989), *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 157–191.
13. Eunice Stone to Charles Henry Richardson, part of Lois Davis to Charles Henry Richardson, Dracut, Mass., 3 August 1865; Eunice Stone to Lois Davis, Claremont, N.H., 18 August 1864; Eunice Stone to Charles Henry Richardson and Luther L. Richardson, Claremont, N.H., 7 December 1862; Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 7 March 1870; all LWRD.
14. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 7 March 1870; William Smiley Connolly to Lois Davis, Provincetown, Mass., 13 November 1869; William Smiley Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman [1870]; all LWRD.
15. Pamela Scully in this volume.
16. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, continuation of William Smiley Connolly to Lois Davis, Provincetown, Mass., 13 November 1869 letter; Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 7 March 1870; both LWRD.
17. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 25 August 1870, continuation of 16 May 1870 letter, LWRD.
18. *Missionary Record*, 1 November 1855, p. 190.
19. D. King (1850), *The State and Prospects of Jamaica* (London: Johnstone & Hunter), pp. 59–60.
20. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 25 August 1870, continuation of 16 May 1870 letter; Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 7 March 1870; Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 14 December 1871, continuation of 13 December 1871 letter; all LWRD.
21. Eunice Connolly to Lois Davis, East End, Grand Cayman, 7 March 1870, LWRD.

2

Peripheral Visions: Heterography and Writing the Transnational Life of Sara Baartman

Pamela Scully[1]

Sara Baartman became famous in 1810 when she appeared on stage in London as the 'Hottentot Venus'. Yet Baartman's life is relatively difficult to document: she speaks rarely in the historical record; her words are always translated and paraphrased; she left no diaries nor letters, so often the staple of biography. On the other hand, the record literally overflows with other sorts of information. World famous scientists studied Baartman, writing articles about the supposed abnormality of the black female body that resonated in literature, science and politics from Dickens to Freud. Cartoonists and satirists left behind many images of the 'Hottentot Venus'. However, we argue that we should not conflate those writings and pictures with the person of Sara Baartman.[2]

Sara Baartman was born in the mid 1770s, on the colonial frontier of the Cape Colony of present-day South Africa. Dutch settlers invaded the land of an indigenous Khoekhoe society, the Gonaqua, in the second half of the eighteenth century. Sara was probably born into a colonized pastoralist community who had already been made into subordinate clients of a Boer farmer. The settlers called the Khoekhoe 'Hottentots', or people that 'stammered'. This pejorative word became the legal name for the Khoekhoe into the nineteenth century. Francois le Vaillant, a naturalist originally from Suriname, made the Gonaqua famous through his descriptions of his travels through the area in the late eighteenth century. Other writers such as Kolb depicted the Khoekhoe women as particularly sexualized, with distended labial folds, but also as peculiar people who did not bathe, but dressed their skins with fat. These representations of 'Hottentot women', who were constituted in travellers' imaginations as both repulsive and sexual, made their way to Europe. It was indeed as the 'Hottentot Venus' – the eroticized native – that Baartman later became famous.[3]

In the 1790s, when Sara was a young woman, the owner of the farm on which she lived sold her to a travelling trader from Cape Town. Baartman

lived in Cape Town for over a decade, working as a washerwoman and servant. In 1810, at the urging of Alexander Dunlop, a Scottish ship's surgeon and doctor in the Cape Slave Lodge, Sara's employer Hendrik Cesars agreed to take Baartman to London. The hope was that, as the 'Hottentot Venus', Baartman would earn enough money to ensure Dunlop a comfortable retirement, get Cesars out of debt and provide some income for herself. And so, in March 1810, the group set off for London.

From September 1810, the display of Sartjee, the 'Hottentot Venus' was a great success in Piccadilly. Clad in tight clothes designed to emphasize her bottom, Sara Baartman stood on stage while London's elite and popular classes looked at her and, for extra payment, prodded her. Towards the end of the year, Zachary Macaulay of the abolitionist lobby persuaded the King's Bench, the highest civil court in the land, to investigate whether Sara Baartman was free or enslaved. This investigation and letters in the paper about her display ensured the fame of the show. The King's Bench concluded that Baartman was free, and the show continued to enjoy great fame into April 1811. Thereafter Baartman joined the county fair circuit, and lived in Manchester for a while, where she was baptized in December 1811. In 1814, she moved to Paris, where she soon garnered the attention of Georges Cuvier, the founder of the discipline of comparative anatomy.

At the urging of her employer, or owner (the terms of her status are not clear), in March 1815, Cuvier organized for artists to draw Baartman, and he and his colleague examined her as she stood nude before them. Baartman refused to let Cuvier see her pubic region while alive. Cuvier managed to do so after Baartman's death at the end of that year, probably of pneumonia in the coldest winter in decades. Cuvier obtained permission to perform an autopsy to investigate the claims made by travellers of the hypersexual nature of Khoekhoe women – indicated by their supposedly large labial folds. His and other scientists' resulting publications on Baartman ensured the creation of a racialized and gendered 'fact' of the difference of the 'Hottentot'. Cuvier concluded that the extended labia owed more to culture than nature, but argued that Baartman's buttocks were central to the body of all Hottentot and San women, and marked them as closer to chimpanzees than humans. In a sweep, racism and sexism became science.[4]

Baartman lived at the intersection of the emerging transnational worlds of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Atlantic. This is a time of which historians have written much, a time of colonial genocides, of the rise of the abolitionist movement, of Humanitarian sentiment and of Napoleon. But the historical record written through the concerns of elites pays little attention to the lives of colonized women, in the Cape or in Europe. To write of the lives of people constituted as marginal in and through history requires a different kind of historical vision. Peripheral vision is that vision we need and yet can never quite see, that vision that lurks on the outside of one's sight, which eludes one as one tries to catch it, but which is also central to seeing clearly. In this chapter, I try to write using peripheral

vision, to suggest both migration within and between space and place and the difficulty of grasping the meaning and significance of things that appear only peripherally. Peripheral vision keeps all information, all subjectivities in the same frame while acknowledging the fiction that we actually see all the information directly.

My goal is contradictory: I start by making a claim for biography and then suggest why biography does not work as a genre for narrating the life of Sara Baartman or of other people marginal to the historical record, if not to History. I suggest that attention to migration between and within peripheries both theoretical and geographical, and acknowledgement of incompleteness, rather than a search for the whole, might inform a narrative of Sara Baartman.

Biography

One of feminist scholarship's major contributions to a variety of disciplines has been to initiate and legitimate the recovery of people, perspectives and voices obscured by or lost to dominant historical narratives. Women's and gender history, with all its fracturings of race, class and sexuality, has provided us in the past 30 years or so with a more nuanced landscape of a past populated by women as well as men. Feminist scholars have grappled productively with representation, self and identity in the lives of people excluded from the body politic, but whose bodies were also made crucial to their public persona. Thanks to this work, we now know much more about Sara Baartman.[5]

Early articles starting in the 1940s and through the 1980s focused almost exclusively on Sara Baartman's body and the scientific uses to which it was purportedly put, without much reflection on the selfhood of Sara Baartman.[6] Recently, feminist scholars have sought to theorize more broadly the worlds within which Sara Baartman lived, to tease out the currents of sexuality and race that cohered to create the nineteenth-century European fascination with the black female body and the Khoi body in particular.

In many ways the political, social and cultural currents of the early nineteenth century, those huge stories of slavery and emancipation, the supremacy of British imperialism and the rise of sexualized racism, lend coherence to the biography of Sara Baartman, especially to the life of the 'Hottentot Venus'. Does not writing Sara Baartman's story within this literature appropriate her in a discursive field that becomes the property of Europe, rather than one that is constituted through Europe? There is now an exceptional clarity to the narrative on and around the 'Hottentot Venus'. It is very difficult to render Baartman in a way that does not capture her or stifle her within European representations.[7]

Why has Sara Baartman's life in South Africa before her emergence in Europe as the 'Hottentot Venus' been so peripheral to scholarship? Why have scholars been uninterested in doing the archival work that would allow

us to expand our understandings of Sara Baartman's subjectivity at both the periphery and heart of empire? One of the reasons for this neglect, lies in our training as historians. Historians are usually trained within geographically and politically defined fields of nation-state and/or continent. These parameters do not help us to study the many people whose lives crossed those boundaries and were not always defined by the nation-state. It is challenging to render narratives at both local and global levels, to recreate lives lived in transnational ways.

Another reason why so little attention has been paid to Sara Baartman's years in the Cape is that Baartman has been most accessible in the archival record once cast as the 'Hottentot Venus'; that is, in Europe. Scholars of African history also have been relatively uninterested in Baartman because she left South Africa in 1810, an era that does not fit easily with the recent grand narratives of South African history: Apartheid, the mineral revolution and resistance. In the case of Sara Baartman, perhaps we have too readily assumed that we could not find anything out about an African woman who was of such marginal importance in Cape Town, and agreed that the one real story of Sara Baartman is her emergence as the 'Hottentot Venus'. We have a hard time thinking of Baartman outside of the figure of the 'Hottentot Venus' precisely because the archival record has made the 'Hottentot Venus' so real.

Has our very rendering of Baartman's story as intelligible within the narrative of the 'Hottentot Venus' in fact undone our ability to understand her as someone who lived her life in the terrible and lonely interstices of colonial and metropolitan cultures? In some respects, narrating the life of Baartman involves narrating the emergence of the life/lives of the 'Hottentot Venus', an identity imposed upon Baartman. The life of Sara Baartman necessitates engagement with those elements of biography that we sometimes take for granted: that biography is always a story of ontology, of being, but also of epistemology, how we know what we know.

In this light, it seems important to attempt, however incompletely, to narrate the life of Sara Baartman. Nevertheless, like Kali Israel in her book *Names and Stories*, I find myself increasingly struggling with the biographical mode. What do we gain or lose in 'knowing' Baartman?[8] As Sands suggests in her marvellous reflection on collaborative biography, awareness of fallibility and of the 'difficulty and ethical ambiguity of undertaking to represent the life of another human being' should be at the forefront of every attempt at representation, be it contemporary or historical.[9] This is particularly the case since the sources more obviously allow for a biography of the 'Hottentot Venus'.

My difficulties with biography include seemingly basic issues, such as how to write the biography of a person about whom we know so little. Like many other women in the era of colonialism and slavery, Sara Baartman did not leave her own written records. She speaks in the archival record only once

for sure, in an interview conducted for the court of the King's Bench in 1810. Biography is a difficult model for this project also because of Sara Baartman's location at the periphery of the kinds of knowledge production often crucial to biographies of women: how do we place Baartman within the wider literature of biographies of women, when the private lives, the roles of mother, daughter or partner, are precisely the roles we know least about?

In contrast to the writing on many women's lives, we primarily know about Baartman's public life: that is, about a more masculine sphere normally easily represented by biographers.[10] But of course in Baartman's case it is precisely that sphere in which she had little autonomy. Therefore, the place that appears to reveal the most also is one of the most complicated to write about if one is trying to illuminate Baartman's own experience and perception of her life. In addition, the life of a servant living in the household of her employer renders the divide between private and public spurious: the so-called intimate sphere always constrained and shaped by bonds of labour.

This challenge helps make one attuned to the complexity presented by the lives of women from the margins of dominant histories and cultures. As feminist authors have argued, biographies have generally assumed the existence of a unified, usually male self. The very idea of biography suggests

Figure 2 Mural of Sara Baartman, Hankey, South Africa; photograph by Clifton Crais, 2005.

a coherent psychological identity rooted in a stable and linear world in which time passes, clocks tick and the individual emerges in stronger and stronger relief.[11] Feminist biography helps us to reflect on the constitution of a female subject in different periods and even different moments in time, as well as the importance of cultural scripts in informing the constitution of the self. This is particularly important in Baartman's case since she came of age within the historical context that witnessed, in Europe at least, the transition to the notion of the individual self, that centre of biography itself. But conventional biography does not adequately address how to talk to the triangulation both in Sara's lived life, and her life within the historiographical and literary records – that of the ostensibly real, the fictional and the quotidian details of everyday life.[12]

Heterography

Striving to bring narrative unity to Sara Baartman's life/lives through biography frustrates our understanding of how to grapple with difference and differences in a transatlantic world of great tumult, wherein even the nature of the self was contested more widely than historians of Europe have suggested. The problem is in part conceptual: can we, should we assume a self that makes biography possible? When writing of a person who crossed cultures and geographies, the very notion of a unitary subject passing through history requires examination. We have to engage with many subjectivities in framing the project. It is not a matter of one being real and the other fiction. The relations between the fictive and the real, media and historical representation give the story of Sara Baartman some of its power, but also make it very hard to write.[13]

'Bio', the prefix in biography, stands for 'life' or 'living organism': the conceptual apparatus thus assumes a singular whole, an individual entity. An approach that explicitly places the notion of subjectivities, rather than one individual subject, at the forefront perhaps allows us more creativity in writing of people for whom we have few records. The lives of women who lived in the cross-currents of cultural and political flows, came from indigenous communities and lived so far in the past as to prevent the kind of dialogic relationship that narrative ethnographers have tried to craft with their subjects invite a different kind of writing.

In this spirit, Clifton Crais and I suggest the term 'heterography' for what we are trying to do in the project.[14] The prefix 'hetero' stands for other, 'different'. Formally, heterography is the study of the different meanings of different sounds for the same syllable in language: for example 'g' in giraffe and 'g' in garden. The notion of heterography assumes difference, but also assumes the possibility of multiplicity of meaning. Heterographic writing involves giving up a search for the 'whole subject'. We might conceptualize such writing as a kind of cubist portrait in which planes of meaning intersect

but do not, even when looked at in totality, render an illusion of having 'captured' the entire subject.

One plane we might consider is the ways in which local cultural systems and meanings migrate through different spheres. These interactions occur not on the axes of peripheries/central, but rather through planes or angles. Meaning and its representations are always, in this vision, incomplete, challenging and suggestive of what we do not know as much as what we think we do. The few biographies of African women as well as recent writing on Native American autobiography suggest, in Julie Cruikshank's words, that authors have to bring together 'modernist global narratives with deeply held local ones embedded in a social order in which human and nonhuman persons are deeply interconnected'.[15]

The autobiography of Mpho 'M'atsepo Nthunya of Lesotho, *Singing Away the Hunger*, challenges the conventional framing of biography and autobiography as well as the divisions historians make between the dead and alive. Ancestors, dead family members, play important roles in her life, helping her to make decisions, helping to mediate with other living family.[16] In short, they are alive in ways that traditional Western narrative strategies of the self and the individual would find hard to account for.

The notion of self expands and is in turn complicated by a more complex relationship to the past, and to what helps constitute the living self. Indigenous views of past and present help us to expand our use of narrative and to think of it less in the sense of a chronological story with beginning and end, and more as a circular, multifaceted way of thinking about past and present. In Sara Baartman's life and death, such attention to ancestors is crucial to rendering her story. By the time of her national reburial in August 2002, Sarah Bartmann, as the government insisted she should be called, had become an ancestor to the post-apartheid nation, a living symbol, in death, of the power of democracy to end one woman's travails in Europe.[17] Sara Baartman haunts South Africa still, people covering themselves in her mantle as they lay claim to her identity, her politics and her meanings for the future.

One strategy we have attempted in the biography is to de-centre the logic of the West. We do this by trying to trouble the notion of the self, that fundamental category of biography. The Gonaqua, Baartman's natal society, did not have a word for 'I': people and animals coexisted and could move between forms, from human to animal, in different contexts. We try to attend to that richness of living while we also write the story of a woman who in moving to Europe moved also into new ways, no doubt, of thinking of being. Baartman lived at the time when the self was being elaborated as a category of identity in Europe. It is that becomingness of both the person and the category that we try to foreground.

One version of how the Gonaqua understood the world might be: The moon, the Khoekhoe say, carries the soul away, the spirits of the dead nestled

in its bone-white palm. Once humankind lived forever beneath the southern skies. Moon promised that we would rise from the places where we fell, to live and to walk again and again with the animals on the veld. But moon's messenger the hare lied. We lost our immortality, and things of flesh must now die. We worship the sun but hate the moon, the unforgiving moon that betrays our presence with its glow or casts us in darkness. All we have is pain and suffering and death, and stories that float along the roads like a wind. The stories come from distant places, touch our heels and whistle through the acacia. And the moon lives on, cradling the departed on their voyages west beyond the hills.[18]

One of the dominant themes of this account is the significance of movement and migration, of souls moving to different places, of the possibility of being reborn in order to participate again in transhumant patterns of movement. Migration of meanings and of individuals in different geographies and conditions of knowledge adds another layer of complexity to Sara Baartman's life. She came from Khoekhoe society, a society of pastoralists who moved with their flocks of sheep and cattle looking for pastures and water. Landscapes and particular features in the landscape had specific spiritual meaning and constancy: a group of Khoekhoe might return each year to a particular cave where earlier people had painted religious symbols of beasts on the walls. To be forbidden to hold celebrations there by a settler who declared the land his ravaged a community's sense of being, of their link to ancestors.

Even after settlers took the land, the land continued to speak. The Eastern Cape of Sara's birth, which became a place of profound oppression, one associated with slavery and bondage, and almost unspeakable violence, also resonated in other cadences. Ancestral spirits, the people who could both abandon and guide one, filled particular landscapes. Did the spirits travel with Sara in her move to Cape Town in the 1790s and again when she moved to Europe? Or did they have to stay behind, watching from the mountains and the acacia bushes, fading as the wind took the ship across the sea?

Migrations constituted Sara's life, which started on the Eastern Cape frontier, moved to Cape Town, and then to Europe. Movement across and within cultural and political systems opens up spaces for re-imaginings of self, exposing our reliance on the notion of a true, whole self to be brought into being through narration, or through biography. Migration and border crossings enable the elaboration of particular forms of self and silence others.

Gloria Anzaldua's concept of 'la mestiza', the woman living in the borderlands, in the intersections and interstices of cultural and disciplinary borders, 'speaking patois, in a perpetual state of transition' suggests a conceptual vision of how to think about Sara Baartman's life. We have paid attention to the phenomena of science, race and the female body as spaces in which Sara Baartman became articulated as the 'Hottentot Venus' – but

how do we think of Sara Baartman's 'perpetual transition' through the intersections of other phenomena and other subjectivities? Anzaldua writes that the 'juncture where the mestiza stands is where phenomena tend to collide'.[19] Sara Baartman's life intersected with the anti-slavery movement, the rise of ethnographic freak shows and the elaboration of European racialized science. If peripheries allow us to narrate the actual movement of Sara Baartman, perhaps they also help us to make sense of her subjectivity in the borderlands where she lived her life.

We might think of Sara's movement from the frontier to Cape Town, for example, as part of many migratory histories, rather than one; with many meanings, some of which we grasp, while others we only guess at. We tend to understand her movement to Cape Town, where she met the two men, Hendrik Cesars and Alexander Dunlop, who would take her to London, as the beginning of the awful logic of her life history. But I am not sure the records permit such a confident narration.

A transnational life

Like Eunice Connolly, Sara Baartman moved through and across racial and gendered orders, but with different effect. Martha Hodes demonstrates how Eunice Connolly's move from the United States to the racial and class hierarchies of the Caribbean allowed Eunice to improve her class status, even though by marrying a black man she appeared to marry 'down' the racial hierarchy. Sara Baartman also moved across regions, travelled the sea and ended her life in a very different setting from her natal home. But Baartman was only minimally able to shape the conditions under which she had to move to England. There and in Paris, the working and reworking of race bound her powerfully to prevailing European concepts of the primitive. Travel provided no liberation, but only a new site in which Sara came to experience the long reach of racism and its multiple elaborations.

Sara Baartman was part of the last generation of Khoekhoe on the frontier to have connections with the world before the imposition of white colonial rule. She was born into a time of tremendous colonial violence. She grew up on a farm on the Eastern Frontier and was appropriated into the local European culture and to history as a colonized subject. Like other indigenous people, she acquired knowledge of Dutch, experienced daily social and physical violence and also heard of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society, who began preaching on the frontier in the late years of the century.

Sara and her family also participated in a world in which news and commodities were exchanged between the frontier and Cape Town through visiting traders, preachers and people fleeing colonial settlement to the west. From the vantage point of a bonded woman on the Dutch Frontier, Cape Town, which the British first captured in the 1790s, might well have

appeared as an escape from slavery. Sara knew about it because her father was a cattle driver who went frequently to the Cape.

After her parents' death, Sara moved to Cape Town, travelling with a butcher. In the multilingual and multicultural city that was Cape Town, she was on the periphery of slavery and freedom. Being of Khoekhoe status she was not formally enslaved, but she was the servant of Hendrik Cesars, a man who owned slaves. It is unclear whether she regarded herself as enslaved or relatively free. That ambiguity of status would have been important to a young woman from the frontier. In those liminal spaces of Cape Town urban culture, Sara spent her twenties. From about 1803 to 1810, she worked for Cesars, the man who would later take her to London.

One picture one gets of Sara Baartman in Cape Town is of a woman trying to forge a life, if not in conditions of her own choosing. While in Cape Town, Sara had two children, although she said that both died young, as had her first child. She had a relationship with Hendrik de Jong, a drummer from Batavia, and later was involved with a man enslaved by Hendrik Cesars. The rituals of affective relationships as well as labour leave their mark in the record of Sara Baartman's life in Cape Town. These slight scratches in the archival record render her life as complex as any other, albeit framed in specific ways within the Cape colonial context of the late eighteenth century: not moving ineluctably to a particular conclusion.

We cannot draw an easy equation between Sara Baartman's later experiences in Europe and those in Cape Town. Although Cape Town was clearly driven through with exploitation based on geographical background and birth, and a particularly violent place for women of colour, it was also a heterogeneous cultural space constituted by difference and noted for its dynamic cultural mix. People of vastly different although often mixed geographical, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds lived together in this city.[20]

When Alexander Dunlop, the ship's surgeon, first started talking of going to England with her in 1808, the different meanings attached to displaying a Khoekhoe female body in England as opposed to Cape Town would not necessarily have been clear to Baartman, but the possibility that London offered in terms of crafting a new life might well have been. How might she have thought of England? Her relationship with the Batavian drummer would already have given her a connection to Europe: that is, Europe had surely entered her imagined world. In addition, for some Khoekhoe already living within the colony, the British appeared as liberators, people concerned to end the depredations of the Dutch. In the frontier region from which she came, the London Missionary Society missionaries practised and preached a fairly radical brand of Evangelical Christianity and tried to get legal help for Khoi against Dutch farmers.[21] Sara might well have imagined Britain as a place of opportunity, excitement and perhaps safety.

I would like to end with the question of Sara Baartman's name. What should we as authors be calling the subject Sara Baartman? Her name

changed from Saartjie to Sartjee to Sarah, in one way marking a linear geographical movement from the Cape to London to Manchester. Saartjie was probably not her given name; Baartman a racist epithet of the Dutch. Baartman signified servile status in the Dutch colonial world: Baart means beard, Baartman: Bearded Man, 'uncivilized' one. We cannot be sure what Sara Baartman's natal name was, but her last name might well have been Baartman. A settler in the region from which Sara came called his farm Baartman's Font, Barbarian's Fountain. By the late eighteenth century, an extended family called Baartman lived on the frontier. From early on in her life, Sara Baartman and her relatives were thus designated outside of civilization, of the civilization that was to matter. The name hovers as an insult, a woman being a bearded man: already her sexuality parodied.

The first records call her Saartje, a Dutch diminutive of Sara. This too could be a signifier of colonized and sometimes servile status in Dutch society: slaves were often given biblical names, often diminutive versions of an adult name. On the other hand, it was also used within families as an affectionate name – the meaning of Saartje within the Baartman family was perhaps different to its meaning amongst the settlers who called her to work. In Cape Town and England Saartje or Sartjee is used in the records. Sara Baartman also became the 'Hottentot Venus', a name that came to override the one she had been called from childhood. By the time she died, she was the 'Hottentot Venus'. But on her baptism in Manchester in December 1811, Sara was baptized Sarah Bartmann. We do not know at the moment if Sara Baartman chose her own baptismal name, or if it was just careless writing down by a clerk. And how do we interpret Sara's baptism into the Anglican church?

One reading of Sara Baartman's baptism is that she sought to join a wider narrative framed by the experience of the Black Atlantic: that movement to England allowed people of African descent to break free of slavery and to practise Christianity. 'Sarah' finally marked her too as British, as opposed to being an African bonded to the Dutch; that is, 'Sarah' marks her own Britishness as well as her geographical and conceptual migration from that far-off periphery of the Eastern Cape.

But heterography enables another reading of her baptism: as a moment in which the local of the Cape met the local of England, in which Manchester Cathedral was appropriated into a Khoisan history. The Khoekhoe of the Eastern Cape were among the first Africans to whom Christian missionaries proselytized. In the early nineteenth century, Sara's brothers moved to Bethalsdorp, one of the first Christian missions in the Eastern Cape. One brother later became a famous rebel fighter against the British. By being baptized, and taking on an English version of her name, Sara Baartman perhaps sought to connect her story back to her natal home. By being baptized she signified her ties to her family also with the knowledge that baptism could coexist with a critique of British policies.

Conclusion

Heterography suggests that as historians we do have to do the basic work of digging in the archives, but that at the same time we recognize how very fragmentary the archives are. Archival research helps us garner the subtle distinctions and similarities offered by evidence of lives lived in discrete local and global contexts, and appreciate how in narration the things that can seem most real and incontrovertible can be the very categories or truths that require examination.

Sara Baartman was triply disenfranchised from history: by birth into a natal culture dismissed by European cultures as inferior; by gender in a patriarchal world that trivialized and brutalized women; and by the confluence of race, working-class status and gender in early-nineteenth-century Cape Town, London and Paris, which dismissed the life of one black poor woman as irrelevant except insofar as her body could further the titillation of the public or the destinies of scientists. She lived within these spheres of disenfranchisement as well as at their intersections.

Sara Baartman moved, and still moves, between and within these geographical, conceptual and theoretical borderlands. It is on and through those borderlands that I think we might try to write her story. However, we will never get to the 'real' Sara Baartman, and perhaps we should not try to do so.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Elizabeth Elbourne and the Women's Studies seminar participants at McGill University, and to audiences at presentations at Emory University and at the 'Reconfiguring the British: Nation, Empire, World, 1600–1900' seminar at the Institute for Historical Research, London. I am grateful to Clifton Crais, Catherine Hall, Bruce Knauft, Clare Midgley, Sonya Rose and Angela Woollacott for their comments on this chapter.
2. This is a major theme of C. Crais and P. Scully (2009), *Sara Baartman and the 'Hottentot Venus': A Ghost Story and a Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
3. P. Kolb and G. Medley (1731), *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope: Or, A Particular Account of the Several Nations of the Hottentots: Their Religion, Government, Laws, Customs, Ceremonies, and Opinions; Their Art of War, Professions, Language, Genius, etc. Together with a Short Account of the Dutch Settlement at the Cape* (London: W. Innys); F. le Vaillant (1972), *Travels from the Cape of Good Hope into the Interior Parts of Africa, Including Many Interesting Anecdotes: With Elegant Plates, Descriptive of the Country and Inhabitants* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp). On Kolb and Le Vaillant, see M.L. Pratt (1992), *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Acculturation* (London: Routledge).
4. See Crais and Scully, *Sara Baartman and the 'Hottentot Venus'* for extended discussion of this narrative. Other works that consider Cuvier's study include G. Badou (2002), *L'Enigme de la Venus Hottentote* (Paris: Petite Bibliotheque Payot) and A. Fausto-Sterling (2002), 'Gender, Race and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy

of Hottentot Women in Europe, 1815–1817', in K. Wallace-Sanders (ed.), *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), pp. 66–95.

5. For a more detailed discussion of this literature, see P. Scully and C. Crais (2008), 'Race and Erasure: Sara Baartman and Hendrik Cesars in Cape Town and London', *Journal of British Studies* 47: 301–323. Some of the important feminist works are Y. Abrahams (1996), 'Disempowered to Consent: Sara Bartman and Khoisan Slavery in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony and Britain', *South African Historical Journal* xxxv: 89–114; Fausto-Sterling, 'Gender, Race and Nation'; Z. Magubane (2001), 'Which Bodies Matter? Feminist Post-Structuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the 'Hottentot Venus', *Gender and Society* 15, no. 6: 816–834; T. Denean Sharply-Whiting (1996), 'The Dawning of Racial-Sexual Science: A One Woman Showing, A One Man Telling', in B. Norman (ed.), *Ethnography in French Literature* (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi), pp. 115–128.
6. The first academic articles on Sara Baartman were published in the late 1940s and early 1950s by a man named Kirby in a series of studies in a South African journal. For example, P. Kirby (1949), the 'Hottentot Venus', *Africana Notes and News* VI, 3: 55–61. Reflecting the racist obsessions of the time in newly Apartheid South Africa, Kirby's articles focused almost exclusively on Baartman's body saying he thought her story would be useful to anthropologists and ethnologists. He detailed her life in London and the interest that scientists had in her once she moved to Paris in 1814. On Kirby, see Scully and Crais, 'Race and Erasure'. Stephen Jay Gould (1985) discussed the 'Hottentot Venus' in *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections on Natural History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), pp. 291–305. Richard Altick (1978) devoted an entry to the display in his *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), chap. 20.
7. Abrahams, 'Disempowered to Consent'.
8. I want to thank the participants in the discussion at the Duke Women's History Month lecture, which I presented in March 2004, especially Cynthia Herrup and Claudia Koonz. K. Israel (1991), *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press).
9. T. Rios and K. Mullen Sands (2000), *Telling a Good One: The Process of a Native American Collaborative Biography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p. xi.
10. L. Wagner-Martin (1994), *Telling Women's Lives: The New Biography* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), chap. 1.
11. As recent studies of Native American history as well as feminist biography by scholars such as Nancy Shoemaker, Rios and Sands have suggested, the narrative structuring of meaning assumes the teleology of Western thinking about time and self. N. Shoemaker (ed.) (2002), *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies* (New York: Routledge); Rios and Sands, *Telling*.
12. An exception is C. K. Steedman (1987), *Landscape for a Good Woman* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press).
13. I am grateful to Bruce Knauft for his thoughts on this triangulation.
14. The larger project is Crais and Scully, *Sara Baartman and the 'Hottentot Venus'*.
15. J. Cruikshank, 'Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography: Perspectives from the Yukon Territory, Canada', in Shoemaker (ed.), *Clearing a Path*, pp. 3–28.
16. M. 'M'atsepo Nthunya and K. Limakatso Kendall (1997), *Singing Away the Hunger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

17. For analysis of this memorialising, see Crais and Scully, *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus*, chap. 7, and M. Samuelson (2007), 'Sarah Bartmann: Re-cast and Re-covered', in *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press), pp. 85–118. Also see S. Kerseboom, '"Burying Sara Baartman": Commemoration, Memory and the Ethics of Heritage', paper presented at the South African Historical Society Conference, University of Johannesburg, 26 June 2007.
18. This is written on the basis of travel literature and the scholarly literature on Khoisan cosmology. W.H. I. Bleek and L. Lloyd (1911), *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (London: G. Allen & Co.); N. Bennun (2004), *The Broken String, The Last Worlds of an Extinct People* (New York: Viking); Isaac Schapera (1933), *The early Cape Hottentots described in the writings of Olfert Dapper (1668), Willem Ten Rhyene (1686) and Johannes Grevenbroek (1695)* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society).
19. G. Anzaldua (1987), *Borderlands: La Frontera; The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinster/aunt lute), chap. 7, p. 79.
20. For an extended discussion of this context, see Scully and Crais, 'Race and Erasure'.
21. This changed in the next decade with the coming of Robert Moffat and George Thom who held a much more conservative idea of their mission to people they considered 'uncivilized'. See E. Elbourne and R. Ross (1997), 'Combating Spiritual and Social Bondage: Early Missions in the Cape Colony', in R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

3

Writing the Entrapped Nations of Indigenous Australia into Being

Penny van Toorn

After winning the women's 400 metre sprint at the Commonwealth Games in 1994, Cathy Freeman, a member of the Australian team, ran her lap of honour carrying a red, black and gold flag that the world had never seen. Instead of the familiar official flag of Australia, she carried the flag of *Aboriginal* Australia. Freeman was sternly reprimanded by the Australian team manager for embarrassing the nation on the international stage. Undaunted, she went on to win the women's 200 metres. This time she carried two flags: the Aboriginal flag and the Australian flag. Her body became a space of doubled identity. By wrapping herself in both flags, she challenged the binary distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians that has underpinned racist discourse and race relations since Australia was formally constituted as a white nation in 1901.

Freeman is one of many Indigenous Australians who live transnational lives, not because they travel extensively or have migrated overseas, but because their homelands have been invaded, claimed and occupied by a foreign nation. What counts as a national border depends on whose laws prevail and whose rights of possession can be enforced. Similarly, what counts as displacement depends on how people demarcate their homeland. The majority of Aboriginal Australians have been dispossessed from their respective traditional countries, without leaving the country called Australia. New borders and boundaries don't necessarily supplant old ones. Australia is a palimpsest in which new and old borders and boundaries intersect and shift underfoot over time. To understand the transnational dimensions of Aboriginal Australian lives, it is necessary to examine the making and breaking of the boundaries within which their various Aboriginal subject formations took place, and in which their life-narratives have been produced.

The Anglo-Celtic nation of Australia created in 1901 has always had an uneasy relationship with its entrapped Indigenous nations, whose homelands were colonized by Britain from 1788 onwards, but whose Australian citizenship was not fully recognized until 1967. Aboriginal history was

shrouded in what William Stanner called 'the great Australian silence'[1] until the 1970s, when white historians began exploring the other side of the frontier and, together with Aboriginal activists, set about penetrating the great white deafness. As the big picture of race relations unfolded in the works of historians such as Henry Reynolds, C. D. Rowley and others, life writings by and about Aboriginal community leaders, activists, artists and sporting heroes revealed how the large-scale economic, political and cultural changes were experienced by individuals. Cathy Freeman is the subject of three such biographies.[2] By their very existence, these life-narratives reflect and enhance Cathy Freeman's reputation as an elite athlete, and place her among the most widely recognized Australians.

Unbound stories, fragments of lives

In the medium of the book, however, we see only the tip of the iceberg of writing by and about Indigenous Australians. Since the first British colonists sailed into Sydney Harbour in 1788, thousands of Aboriginal lives have been documented piecemeal in the form of letters, petitions, applications, reports and other political and bureaucratic genres now housed in government archives. Like many of the book-length life-narratives that have proliferated since the mid-1980s, these writings were produced, as Mudrooroo put it, 'for the governor's pleasure' – that is, mainly for the eyes of non-Aboriginal readers. Yet they can be read as a fragmentary, dialogic, unbound body of life writing, a many-voiced auto/biography of members of Indigenous Australia's many nations. The transnational aspects of these early mini-narratives do not necessarily arise because the subject has travelled overseas or crossed formally recognized national borders.

The first fragment of Aboriginal life writing occurs in a letter dictated by Benelong, a young Dharug man from the Sydney region. His addressee was Mr. Phillips, steward of one of the most powerful men in the world, the British Home Secretary. Dictated to a scribe in 1796, Benelong's letter told of recent news, and alluded to some of the difficulties he had faced upon his return from England. He also recalled a time during his visit when Mr and Mrs. Phillips nursed him through a serious illness. Most pressingly, however, he requested clothing, footwear and accessories that would not only distinguish him from his countrymen, but would also enhance his importance as a link between Aboriginal and imperial trade networks.[3]

Benelong's letter was written three decades prior to the 'protection' era when thousands of Aboriginal people in southeast Australia were relocated onto missions and reserves. In the nineteenth century, as colonial governments sought to 'open up' the country for white settlers, Indigenous people from different language and land-owning groups were enclosed together on missions and reserves. Again, as people crossed borders, borders crossed people. Irrespective of their traditional cultural and political differences, people

were thrust together because newcomers who called themselves 'white' deemed them 'black', 'half caste', 'quarter caste' and so forth. Some people managed to remain on their traditional homelands; others were displaced, living in exile in what they regarded as foreign territory.

The 'protectionist' machinery involved intensive surveillance, record-keeping and written reporting by white officials on Aboriginal people's lives. The system also required Aboriginal people to write about themselves. Every request or complaint they made, every question they asked of the various Aboriginal Protection Boards, all had to be put in writing, in English. These letters and petitions are a mode of life writing outside the book, in forms that are not always recognized as auto/biography.

While non-literary genres of life writing are sometimes called 'outlaw' genres,[4] the Aboriginal people who produced these writings could rarely afford the luxury of deliberate and open defiance of colonial society's discursive conventions. Their polite formal tones, careful penmanship and modest requests all reflect their awareness that their survival depended on performing political compliance. The more we learn of their circumscribed options, the less appropriate it becomes to theorize life-writings predominately as an articulation of agency. Whatever agency people asserted was exercised within very narrow constraints. Then, as now, the institutional protocols and preferences of the dominant audience elicited and shaped the content, the language and the tone of Aboriginal life writing.

Mapping the internal and external borders of Aboriginal Australia

Black and White Australia are not two discrete monolithic blocks. Their complex interpenetrations and entanglements can perhaps be best approached via Bakhtin's view of the social world as an arena where centripetal and centrifugal forces are relentlessly colliding, as borders are drawn, shifted, erased and layered over each other. This dynamic is clearly evident in postcolonial Aboriginal Australia, as people unite and divide along many intersecting axes. One set of pressures and representations pulls Aboriginal people together centripetally as a single imagined community whose external boundaries are more important than its internal divisions. Another set works centrifugally to accentuate their internal differences, at national, regional and local levels.

In *Hidden Histories*, Deborah Bird Rose describes Aboriginal Australia as 'a series of "nations", each with its own internal divisions, its own history, cultural practices, and its members' sense of themselves as part of a group.'[5] In Western cartography, this idea of a multitude of Aboriginal nations has been mapped in different ways. Donald Thomson's 1956 'Map of Australia showing some representative tribes'[6] does not delineate borders between nations, acknowledging perhaps the limits of his knowledge, or the fact that it is not

always appropriate to map Aboriginal land as circumscribed space. Instead he places names on the map to give a general indication of where various nations (which he called 'tribes') are located.

Eighteen years later, Tindale's map of 'Tribal Boundaries in Aboriginal Australia' (1974) clearly demarcated social borders on the basis of language.[7] How he dealt with the fact that Aboriginal people spoke several languages was something he did not explain. Despite this and other problems,[8] Tindale's map has become the accepted view of the distribution of Aboriginal languages and nations. Using it as a starting point, David Horton's team of cartographers produced the map of 'Aboriginal Australia' (1996) that uses names and colour coding to represent Aboriginal Australia as a mosaic of nations.[9] Reproduced in books and posters, and sold at tourist venues, it depicts Aboriginal Australia as a multiplicity of nations, each with its own language and homeland. Borders are marked not by sharp lines but by blending adjacent colours, suggesting that there is some interpenetration and sharing of resources at the margins. Jacobs and Gelder adapt Horton's map, but omit the colours and the names that identify each nation and replace the fuzzy borders with sharp black lines.[10] All that is left is an intricate network

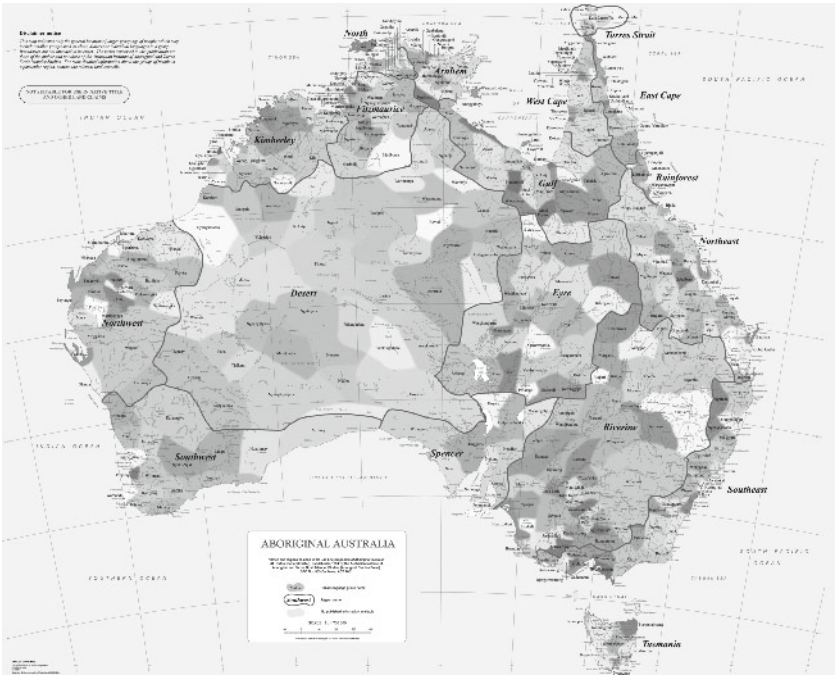

Figure 3 Map of Aboriginal Australia © Aboriginal Studies Press 1996.

of black borderlines on a plain white background. Marking *nothing but* borders, Jacobs and Gelder's map works as an abstract representation of the principle of difference within Indigenous Australia.

While the Tindale and Horton maps do valuable work in breaking down the racist idea of a single Aboriginal race, they have their limitations. By using language as the sole criterion of difference and sameness, the Tindale, Horton and Jacobs and Gelder maps risk creating a false impression that Indigenous Australians never achieved the kinds of regional alliances that pertained amongst the Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Tindale map and its adaptations obscure the connections between different societies on the basis of trade, intermarriage and ceremonial activities. By rendering Aboriginal Australia as a patchwork quilt of districts, they obscure the extent to which Aboriginal Australian nations entered into alliances with one another. Nor do they register that Aboriginal Australia has become a multitude of diasporas, as communities have been expelled from all or part of their land and children have been systematically removed from their kin and country to be raised in distant institutions and white households.

Apart from Donald Thomson's, all of these maps turn traditional Aboriginal mappings of space inside out. For people in the arid interior, for example, who must know their country thoroughly in order to survive, the concentric circles representing sites and the lines marking the pathways connecting them are more important than the borders that demarcate social difference and divide tracts of land from each other.[11] In some cases, a borderline *is* a shared track; and in the context of land claims, borders are becoming increasingly important. Nonetheless, when thinking about Aboriginal life writing in relation to borders and boundaries, it is crucial to remember that modern European cartographic traditions are neither axiomatic nor universally relevant.

Coexisting with these conceptions of a diverse Aboriginal Australia, however, are broader regional identities. Until 1967 each state government was responsible for its own 'Aboriginal affairs'. Although Aboriginal Australians were never as unified as Maori, they now often identify themselves in regional terms such as 'Murri', 'Koori', 'Pallawah', 'Nyungar' and 'Nungar'. These regional social formations reflect the fact that people knew that their lives, and the lives of their neighbours, were shaped by colonial and state laws and policies. By mapping state and territory borders onto Gelder's and Jacob's map, it becomes possible to see that some state lines cut across Aboriginal nations. When the Federal Government took over Aboriginal affairs in 1967, national fellow feeling intensified between people who were interpellated alike in racist language, and who were governed by the same racially discriminatory federal laws. This pan-Aboriginal nationalism is represented by the Aboriginal flag designed in 1971 by Harold Thomas, flown initially at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy next to Australia's Parliament House in 1972, and displayed to the eyes of the world by Cathy Freeman. The Aboriginal

flag makes it clear that Indigenous Australians are treated as aliens in their own land. Pan-Aboriginal solidarity was also strengthened by participation in, and media coverage of, national protests against the 1988 Bicentenary of British occupation. *The Koori Mail* newspaper, established in 1991, was also an institution that, without eroding local and regional ties, bound the many Aboriginal nations of Australia into a single imagined community.

Life writing, literature, newspapers and imagined communities

In the second half of the twentieth century, Aboriginal activists and writers aroused feelings of Aboriginal nationalism. During the 1960s and 1970s, the first generation of Aboriginal poets and dramatists, led by Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Kevin Gilbert and Jack Davis, set out to overcome the tyranny of physical distance, and carry their people's voices and narratives across the racial divide into the white public domain. They used the genre of dramatic monologue to broadcast the diverse voices of Aboriginal Australia. Oodgeroo's people were not only her Noonuccal people of Stradbroke Island in Queensland. Kevin Gilbert's people were not only his Wiradjuri people of central New South Wales. Jack Davis's people were not only the Nyungar people of south-Western Australia. Creative writers saw themselves as disseminators of the many and varied voices of Aboriginal Australia. Kevin Gilbert's anthology *Living Black* (1977) was an especially important book because it brought together for the first time, in a single Penguin paperback volume, the diverse voices of Aboriginal Australia. While texts such as this helped convene an imagined Black Australian community, they also highlighted Black Australia's internal differences, as did Gilbert's later poetry anthology, *Inside Black Australia* (1988).

Fifty years earlier John Patten had established the first printed Aboriginal newspaper, *The Abo Call*. Patten's inaugural editorial, dated 1 April 1938, proclaimed that:

> It is our own paper . . . established to present the case for Aborigines, from the point of view of the Aborigines themselves . . . . Representing 60,000 Full Bloods and 20,000 Halfcastes in Australia, we raise our voice to ask for education, Equal Opportunity, and Full Citizenship Rights.[12]

To the extent that readers of *The Abo Call* could see similar patterns of racial discrimination and abuse across the continent, Black nationalism transcended traditional local and regional boundaries, as well as the state borders set in place by white law. This pan-Aboriginal perspective was earlier articulated in 1925 when Fred Maynard, founding president of the Australian Aborigines' Progressive Association, used plural pronouns – 'we', 'us', 'our' – to refer to people of Aboriginal descent. 'I wish to make perfectly clear on behalf our people', Maynard asserted, 'that we wish to accept no condition of

inferiority as compared with European people. Two distinct civilisations are represented by the respective races.'[13] Here Maynard articulates the kind of national consciousness that Benedict Anderson later described – that when a heterogeneous population is exposed to the same account of current events, they begin to imagine themselves as a group. Despite their differences, they are bound together by common orientation points, if not a common understanding of the past, or a shared set of hopes for the future. Even if people are divided in their views on particular issues, they live, with the help of the press, inside the same landscape of stories, questions and controversies. They realise the extent to which their political circumstances are shared, and the degree to which their difficulties and aspirations are held in common. Paradoxically, people are often united by agreeing what to disagree about. When John Patten established the *Abo Call* in 1938, he was trying to build a national pan-Aboriginal community.

The galvanizing power of voice and hand

Benedict Anderson's focus on the role of print as an instrument of nationalism has deflected attention away from the roles of handwriting and oral communication in the process of nation building. The voice and the hand, as well as the press, played key roles in establishing and reinforcing regional coalitions among Aboriginal communities. Long before there was any such thing as the *Koori Mail* or the Aboriginal flag, Aboriginal people read mainstream metropolitan and regional press reports regarding the policies and laws that were shaping their lives. Yet the seeds of Black regionalism, and occasionally Black nationalism, were also sown by Aboriginal travellers and letter writers who disseminated information between widely separated reserves and missions. These oral and handwritten communications did the same work as a regional or national press. They informed people living in largely enclosed institutions that what was happening to them was also happening to others. The voice and the pen, as well as the press, sowed the seeds of a common regional Koori solidarity based on people's awareness that, because they were subject to the same oppressive laws and racial policies, they shared common political concerns.

James Scott, one of the 'dangerous wanderers' who sowed the seeds of Black solidarity in Victoria, arrived at Lake Condah Mission Station in western Victoria in early November 1880, bringing with him information about people's struggles in other locations. Simply by spreading news and ideas from place to place, itinerants like Scott could galvanize an entire region. The power of individual voices is reflected in the fact that the Protection Board viewed Scott's talk at Lake Condah as a serious threat, acting swiftly to isolate him and ordering him to leave the mission. The Protection Board's 'divide and conquer' policy was symptomatic of their fear of pan-Aboriginal solidarity.

In Victoria, the most indefatigable writers and petitioners were the people at Coranderrk Reserve near Healesville, northeast of Melbourne. Most of the resident groups were already politically aligned as members of the Kulin confederacy, a regional coalition based on intermarriage, trade, ceremonial moiety ties and a shared belief that, united, they might survive the white invasion. At the same time, they were divided by intersecting lines of social difference based on country of origin, language, age, moiety, gender, caste and clan. Some divisions were traditional; others, such as the distinction between so-called 'half-castes' and 'full-bloods', were imposed by white legislation. Nonetheless, some of the Coranderrk petitions galvanized this diverse community. They all begin with the first person plural 'We', implying that the signatories spoke as one. The layout of names, arranged according to age, gender and traditional affiliations to land, was, in effect, a map of the community's internal social structure. As head of the clan upon whose traditional land Coranderrk was located, William Barrack's name was placed at the top of the list, followed by the names of the other senior men (who like Barrack signed with a cross), then the younger men (who signed their own names), the senior women (with their crosses), the young women (who signed their own names) and lastly the children, some of whom signed their own names. These petitions were a site where centripetal and centrifugal forces were held in tension. Gender, age and other differences were reflected in the ways the names were grouped and placed, but the fact that the names were gathered together on the same document signalled that community members wanted to tell a communal story and make their complaints and requests in a united voice.

Aboriginal solidarity crossed state borders after news of handwritten petitions were disseminated in print. When the press reported that Victorian petitions had won favourable results, communities in other states were inspired to put their own grievances on paper. In 1915, after seeing a press report of the success of some of the Coranderrk petitions, residents of Poonindie Mission Station in South Australia lodged a written demand for 'more food and less prayer'.[14]

Naming, individuation and surveillance

At the same time as Aboriginal nationalism was exercising a centripetal force, other pressures were atomising Aboriginal communities by interpellating each person as a uniquely named individual – the unique, individuated subject of most Western biography and autobiography. Traditionally in Aboriginal societies, people are named in relational terms. Because a person's name may vary according to who is addressing him or her, each person may have many names, and many people might be called by the same relational names.

In an effort to assimilate them into European Christian culture, early missionaries and reserve managers bestowed Christian names and surnames on Aboriginal people. Renamed, each person was individually tagged and therefore traceable. On missions and reserves detailed written records documented the nature and duration of every person's work every day, as well as the weekly food rations and the periodic issue of clothing and blankets. Records such as these are a chilling example of the kind of surveillance and control made possible when names differentiate each person from all others. Kinship networks beyond the nuclear family were rendered invisible in these lists of named subjects, each of whom was classified on the basis of skin colour.

Renaming was one means of transforming Aboriginal people into individual subjects. Another was compelling them to narrate stories about the self. When required to report their complaints in writing, they were subjected to what Foucault calls the 'fabrication' of the individual.[15] People who for thousands of years had identified themselves in relation to kin and country transformed themselves into individually named authors.

Politically, these transformations of identity are crucial. Being assigned an individual name meant being subject to white surveillance and record-keeping. Even if an Indigenous writer is merely performing or feigning transformation for the white man's eyes, the assigned name renders each individual identifiable and distinct, just as the prisoner's assigned cell does in Bentham's panopticon. Metaphorically, each assigned name was a gaol cell. Once a person was renamed and registered on official lists, they had a place, as an individual, in the corpus of white bureaucratic knowledge.

Queensland's paper panopticon

The panoptical buildings in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* may seem a far cry from the government reserves, missions, schools, logging camps and cattle stations where Australian Indigenous peoples lived and worked from the early nineteenth century. Yet in Queensland, after the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* was passed in 1897, Aboriginal people lived in an oppressive panoptical regime that involved the fabrication of individuals who lived in prisons without walls. There was no single central prison, and no single warden who, from a central watchtower, had a direct sight-line to every prisoner in his cell. Instead, there was a system of government reserves and church-run missions. Aboriginal people employed in the private sector lived outside missions and reserves, but were nonetheless subject to surveillance. Queensland was divided into administrative districts, each with its own official Protector, usually a (white) policeman or a pastoralist. These district protectors were responsible mainly for ensuring that Aboriginal workers and their employers behaved in accordance with the Act. No one, however, was properly monitoring the monitors. As Rosalind Kidd

has ascertained,[16] corruption was rife among these protectors, who routinely diverted Aboriginal people's wages into their own pockets. In total, local protectors siphoned off millions of dollars from Aboriginal workers' bank accounts.

Bureaucracies, missions, reserves and panoptical buildings alike are instruments of surveillance and remote centralized control that require each individual to be differentiated from all others. As such, the panopticon was, according to Foucault, a diabolically efficient device because prisoners monitored and regulated their own behaviour, knowing that they could always be seen by the unseen guard. Questions remain, however, as to whether the incarcerated Aboriginal subjects were really self-monitoring their way to civilization. Were they genuinely internalising the imposed morals and standards of behaviour, or were they simply feigning 'improvement', performing for a powerful audience?

From the late nineteenth century, Queensland was a state-wide panoptical regime. While those who ran the missions were accountable to their respective church administrators, superintendents of the government-funded reserves were accountable to the two Chief Protectors. From their respective offices in Cooktown and Brisbane, they corresponded with the local protectors who, along with the mission superintendents, were their eyes and ears. Local protectors implemented government policy as codified in the Aboriginals' Protection Act, and carried out the Chief Protectors' instructions. In law, if not always in fact, the pen replaced the gun as the primary instrument of white control.

In Queensland, as in the European societies described by Foucault, 'the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralisation of knowledge' and power.[17] The Chief Protectors were ethnologists whose knowledge, in white eyes, gave them professional credibility. They relied on the local protectors' written correspondence and reports to gain precise knowledge of how their Aboriginal charges were living. In this paper panopticon, written correspondence replaced direct visual surveillance as a means of central monitoring. Power was centralized and deployed, but not through direct, architecturally facilitated visual surveillance. Instead, control was exercised through cycles of bureaucratic correspondence that flowed between the Chief Protectors' offices and the backblocks of rural Queensland.

Writing by the self about the self is usually considered to be an act of agency. In the political and institutional contexts in which writing by and about Aboriginal people was generated in Queensland, however, fragments of Aboriginal life writing were systematically elicited and shaped by the *Aboriginal Protection Act*. Thousands of tiny bits of Aboriginal autobiography, together with fragments of white-authored biographies, were generated, regulated and deployed for political and economic ends by Aboriginal people

and the government officials who administered the Act and carried out its procedures.

The 1897 Act was designed to be a blueprint of Aboriginal people's white future. It set racial boundaries in place by defining the criteria upon which every Indigenous person in Queensland was classified as 'aboriginal', 'half-caste' or 'exempt' (i.e. deemed legally white). It was explicitly discriminatory, sexually as well as racially. On the one hand it trapped everyone of Aboriginal descent in the same legislative net, constituting them in racist terms as 'a people'. On the other hand, it tore Aboriginal societies apart by subjecting individuals to different rules – and hence different fates – on the basis of their racial 'caste', their gender, their marital status, their social connections and the way they lived.

The Act was administered through an elaborate system of local protectors who endorsed, glossed and, in some cases, penned Aboriginal people's complaints and requests either for exemptions or for the meagre rights they were entitled to under its provisions. With so many white protectors reporting to the Chief Protectors, Queensland resembled a giant epistolary panoptical prison. Protectors in each district kept Aboriginal people under close scrutiny and reported in writing to the Chief Protector's office. In these letters and reports we see the piecemeal beginnings of white and Indigenous biographies of Aboriginal people, and of the book-length Indigenous autobiographies that in recent years have been accorded an important place in Australia's literary canon.

Tracking names, tracing lives

Tracking names is part of the process of tracing people's lives, whether the aim is to write their biography or keep them under surveillance. Biographers working within Western traditions share with colonial officials the practice of affixing a consistent name onto each Aboriginal person they want to keep track of. The name is a tag the biographer uses as she/he searches through the archives or oral records, looking for information that can be pieced together into a story. The coherence and completeness of the biographical narrative depends on the consistent identification of the individual. Yet in so far as the biographer takes the individual to be the central object of knowledge, she/he implicitly perpetuates the centrifugal practice of transforming intricately structured societies into an assemblage of individuals, a practice that was part and parcel of Australia's assimilation programme.

Given that Cathy Freeman's unfree forebears, deemed 'a dying race', were excluded from the national census until 1967, there is much poetic justice in the fact that, just over three decades later, she was declared 'Australian of the Year'. Elite international sporting competitions are all about nations and stars. Athletes represent their country: a win for the athlete is a win for

the nation. Heather Gwilliam's and Beth Dolan's biographies of Cathy Freeman are typical of European life-writing in that they place the individual at centre stage, presenting Freeman as outstanding and exceptional. Adrian McGregor's biography, far longer and more detailed, places her inside a broader and more complex family network: her family in Mackay where she was born and her kinship connections with the Aboriginal nations of Cape York and the Burdekin River basin and the mission and reserve communities of Woorabinda and Palm Island. Add to these her Anglo-Australian, Chinese and Syrian connections, and her identity becomes even more complicated. If each Aboriginal nation marked out on Tindale's and Horton's maps had its own flag, Cathy Freeman would have carried a fist-full of flags at the games. It is crucial to bear in mind the fact that, like Cathy Freeman's, the lives of many people of Aboriginal descent are transnational in ways that far exceed the dual identity signalled by her embrace of both the Aboriginal and the Australian national flag. Any attempt to examine the transnational lives of members of Australia's first nations must begin by considering whose social map to use, and by historicizing the complex layers of connection, as well as the borders and boundaries, that make all Aboriginal lives implicitly transnational.

Notes

1. William Stanner (1969), 'The Great Australian Silence' (ABC Boyer Lecture 1968) in *White Man Got No Dreaming*, Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission.
2. Beth Dolan (1997), *Cathy Freeman* (Port Melbourne: Heinemann); Heather Gwilliam (1998), *Cathy Freeman* (Sydney: Hodder Education); and Adrian McGregor (1998), *Cathy Freeman: A Story Just Begun* (Milson's Point, NSW: Random House Australia).
3. See Penny van Toorn (2006), *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press), pp. 53–70.
4. Caren Kaplan (1992), 'Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects', in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds, *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 115–138.
5. Deborah Bird Rose (1991), *Hidden Histories* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press), p. 6.
6. D. F. Thomson (2005 [1956]), 'Map of Australia Showing Representative Tribes', in Bill Arthur and Frances Morphy, General Editors, eds, *Macquarie Atlas of Indigenous Australia* (n.p.: Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.), p. 10.
7. Norman Tindale (2005), 'Tribal Boundaries in Aboriginal Australia', in Arthur and Morphy, *Macquarie Atlas*, p. 11.
8. See for example, Arthur and Morphy (2005), *Macquarie Atlas*, p. 80.
9. David Horton, Gen. ed. (1994), *Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS]).
10. Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs (1998), *Uncanny Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press), p. 58.
11. See for example, Anon. (2005), 'Sketch for a Native Title Claim, 1996', in Arthur and Morphy, *Macquarie Atlas*, p. 24.

12. Michael Rose (1996), *For the Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin), p. 23.
13. David Horton (1994), Gen. ed. *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, vol. 2, p. 672.
14. *Advertiser*, 12 April 1907, in Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, eds (1999), *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin), p. 56.
15. Michel Foucault (1991), *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Ringwood, Australia: Penguin), p. 217.
16. Rosalind Kidd (2006), *Trusties on Trial: Recovering the Stolen Wages* (Canberra: AIATSIS).
17. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 217.

4

Dancing with Shadows: Biography and the Making and Remaking of the Atlantic World

Michael A. McDonnell

Let me start where I have grown accustomed to start this story, at Pickawillany – a tiny place at the confluence of several rivers in what is now known as the Ohio Valley.[1] There, on a June morning in 1752, a force of about 250 warriors from the powerful and influential Anishinaabe communities of Odawa, Potawatomi and Ojibwa Indians of the upper Great Lakes burst out of the woods and attacked a thinly inhabited Miami village. The raiders killed 13 of the defenders and captured several Indians and British traders who were residing with them before the remainder of the village found refuge in a stockade. From within the walls of the fort, the helpless villagers watched in horror as the attackers stabbed one of their captives to death, ripping out his heart and eating it. Next they killed, boiled and ate the Miami village chief, before melting back into the forest in the direction of Detroit. This attack, far from an insignificant skirmish in the woods, set off a chain reaction of events and became the opening salvo in the Seven Years' War in America, a war that would quickly spread to Europe and the Pacific and ultimately transform the imperial and global landscape of the early modern world.[2]

The leader of this deadly raid was Charles Michel Mouet de Langlade, son of an Anishinaabe woman (Domitilde) and a French man (Augustin), who lived among, traded with and allied himself to many of the Indians and French of the *pays d'en haut* but especially the powerful Odawa community of the strategic Michilimackinac area between Lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior.[3] The pivotal role of Langlade and his Indian allies at Pickawillany has been noted by many historians of colonial America. But what most have missed is the fact that Langlade and his allies actually played a direct, sustained and influential role not just at Pickawillany, but for the duration of the Seven Years' War and indeed, in most of the imperial conflicts of the later half of the eighteenth century in French and British North America.

Figure 4 'Braddock's Defeat' (1903) by Edwin Willard Deming. Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Langlade was, for example, reputed to be the leader of the ambush that cut down Braddock's expedition in 1755; he certainly led the largest contingent of Indian warriors at the so-called massacre of Fort William Henry in 1757, the infamous event immortalized by James Fenimore Cooper and now Daniel Day Lewis, in the *Last of the Mohicans*. Langlade was also at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham at Quebec in 1759; he was allegedly among the sharpshooters in the woods who brought down General James Wolfe. When he surrendered Michilimackinac to the British in 1760, he not only played a part in the last phase of the French Empire in America, but he also began forging new relations with the incoming British. When the new British garrison was seized during Pontiac's uprising (one of the greatest pan-Indian rebellions in North American history) in 1763, Langlade and his Odawa kin rescued the soldiers and officers and returned them safely to Montreal. Amazingly, Langlade later joined General Burgoyne in his ill-fated campaign down the Champlain Valley against rebellious colonists in the American Revolution, fought against George Rogers Clark in the Mississippi Valley and raised Indian warriors to fight against the encroachments of the expanding American republic in the form of General Anthony Wayne in 1794. But perhaps most incredibly, Langlade, who also had extensive trading interests throughout the Great Lakes, eventually settled in Green Bay, Wisconsin, where he and his father are today known as the 'Fathers of Wisconsin', as the first so-called permanent European settlers in the state.[4]

Here, then, was the outline of an epic story, first sketched out in an early memoir, then given colour by nineteenth-century antiquarians, but barely noted by twentieth-century historians. For though various imperial officials at the time recognized Langlade's influence and importance, historians have been slower to piece together the nature and full extent of his activities and roles. Langlade does not 'fit' into existing narratives and approaches. He was French, and Indian, in an expanding Anglo-American world. He lived a life that extended beyond the confines of colonial or nation-based narratives to which historians have long been bound. He crossed imperial borders with impunity and slipped through and across the ethnic, racial and linguistic categories that have so often been imposed on the past. In short, he lived a transnational life that defied easy categorization. In effect, Langlade's story has been fragmented and lost by historians wedded to teleological narratives that often end with the development of new nations. Langlade himself has only made cameo and fragmentary appearances in different colonial and national narratives; his full story has remained elusive.

Here were the biographical bones of a story, awaiting flesh. The possibilities were intriguing: an early modern biography – one from the bottom-up, as it were, and a transnational one at that. In an important sense, Langlade's life loomed as the perfect vehicle for putting theory into practice and constructing a model transnational history. Despite recent calls for historians to move 'beyond the nation', we have few examples that really break down traditional historiographic borders. In the early modern history of European expansion, such calls have coalesced around the idea of the Atlantic World as a new conceptual framework, but few scholars have yet been able to produce work that truly reflects or represents such an approach.[5] One of the biggest problems with transnational history is that it lacks a stable context or a unifying perspective. In crossing colonial or national boundaries, researchers find themselves on less certain footing when making comparisons between diverse peoples or institutions across time and/or across places.[6] A biographical approach compels us to confront these problems, for while modern researchers may draw back from the uncertainties beyond their historiographic borders, their subjects, like Langlade, rarely did.

But in a volume devoted to biography, let me confess that I have *less* of a biographical tale to tell than when I first took on this commitment. In the source-scarce world of early modern North America, there was less flesh to put on the bones of this biography than I had imagined. Indeed, after spending many months – years – following the scant but tantalising paper trail left by Langlade in the often dim light of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century imperial records, the closer I drew to Langlade's story, the more I realised I was chasing shadows. Shadows, and not the substance, of just who he was, where he was and what he was. Shadows, and not the substance, of tales told long ago, legends exaggerated, reputations enhanced: and all built on a fragile, fragmentary evidentiary base patched together

by exuberant descendants, antiquarians and historians – including myself – willing the story along. Shadows of an epic life that simply could not be stitched together in quite the manner once boasted of, once told, less often remembered. The more I tried to track those shadows, to catch them, the more elusive they became. The more records I looked at, the more splintered my story became. The quicker I moved, the quicker those shadows moved too. Langlade remained, and remains, an enigma. His motives unclear. His allegiances uncertain. His story shrouded in mystery. His identity not just complex, but opaque. A biographical approach seemed doomed.

What was I to do? Abandon the project? Perhaps. Speculate? There was an urge to follow in the footsteps of John Demos or Simon Schama. But in the hands of someone less artful than they, I thought my story would end up recapitulating the mythic tales of nineteenth-century memoirists and antiquarians. Contextualize what I knew about his life? Now here was something a historian could do. So, following the lead of such scholars as Jon Sensbach (on Rebecca Protten) and Camilla Townsend (on Pocahontas) I set about trying to re-create the different contexts in which Langlade lived, to understand the conditions in which he was able to live such a mobile and seemingly rich life.[7]

Putting Langlade's life into these different contexts, however, has pushed me to consider the story from at least four different perspectives – some old, some new. As well as the biographical I would have to understand the imperial context for Langlade's actions, perhaps the most traditional and well-studied dimension of his life. But it soon became clear that to understand Langlade's role in the *pays d'en haut*, I would have to understand the Odawa and their world, and for that I needed also to understand the family and kinship networks at play in this dynamic world. Ultimately the many shadows that Langlade cast became the story that I needed to tell.

The biographical approach

Langlade's long life can be used as a narrative anchor of sorts. Even his incomplete or sketchy biographical details provide a point of entry and framework: a place to start and a place to end. His movements, too, become a marker, a flag to follow, a fleeting presence in the archives to provide reassurance and corroboration. He might remain an enigma, but his presence, there in the archives, needs an explanation. There is little doubt, for example, that Langlade was at the raid on Pickawillany that began this essay. And, from his French and Anishinaabe seventeenth-century roots to the eponymous County in nineteenth-century Wisconsin, and from his grandfather's name on the rolls of the Regiment Carignan-Salières in 1665 to his grandson's memoirs in 1845, Langlade casts a long shadow over the *pays d'en haut*.

Yet the more I looked, the more I noticed that there were many other movements among the shadows: of people not hitherto noticed; groups not

otherwise considered. Langlade's raid was only successful because of these others, yet we know little about them. Thus Langlade and his story, as incomplete as it might be, came to serve another purpose, forcing me to focus less on him, and more on the world in which he lived and the people with whom he associated.

The imperial approach

Indeed, the shadows cast by Langlade's story allows us to use him in another manner – as a metaphorical window onto the oft-obscured village worlds of Indians, French and Métis in the imperial world of the Great Lakes region. Following the relatively rich paper trail left by imperial officials, it is clear that Langlade was, in an important sense, literally a living product of what scholars now call the 'middle ground' between Indians and empires in the region over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Langlade and the middle ground of Indians, French and Métis that he represented were to play an increasingly important role in the maintenance of informal imperial trade networks as well as the construction of more formal empire in the face of intensifying European rivalries over the eighteenth century, culminating in their crucial role during the series of imperial wars that scholars now call the 'Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes'.[8]

In some sense, this approach mirrors the now familiar message of Richard White and others. At least since the publication of White's landmark study, *The Middle Ground*, the importance of this region in the making of the empires that constituted the Atlantic World is no longer in doubt. Standing at the centre of French imperial policy in North America, the Great Lakes became a critical fault line between expanding French, British and even Spanish empires and a hotly contested region for several hundred years. If the importance of the region is no longer in doubt, White and others have also demonstrated that the creation of those empires cannot be understood without a clear sense of the roles played by the myriad groups with whom Europeans came into contact. Thus tracing Langlade's life through his and his native American allies' role in these dramatic events gives us a sense of how crucial the Indians of the *pays d'en haut* were to French imperial ambitions and what a critical link they provided for the maintenance of empire throughout North America.

Trying to understand Langlade's mixed heritage, for example, forced me to look long and hard at the historic roots of the Algonquian–French relationship in the *pays d'en haut* that developed early in the seventeenth century and lasted until the fall of New France in 1760. This was, of course, a vital period in the tremendous transformation that we now call the birth of the Atlantic World. But revisiting the murky world of the early seventeenth century and the interrelated forces that brought Langlade's Odawa ancestors to the Great Lakes and his French family to the New World reveals the

highly contingent, oft-contested and precariously balanced power politics involved in the business of colonialism. Indeed, from the Odawa perspective colonization is hardly the right word to describe the complex negotiations that marked an alliance between two sovereign and independent peoples. And for most of the seventeenth century, at least, the French were dependent on the Odawa and other Algonquian nations for their very existence. Wherever they travelled, they did so on the sufferance of groups such as the Odawa, who incorporated the French into their own wider system of regional alliances and conflicts. This was no European imperial imposition. This was an alliance in which the Algonquians of the Great Lakes continued to hold the balance of power and dictate the terms of the relationship. Thus the shadow cast by Langlade's rich genealogy speaks volumes about the nature of these early 'colonial' relationships.[9]

In turn, attention to power in these early relations also throws a suspicious light on the benign or accidental creation of the 'middle ground' during the seventeenth century. The mixed relationships that were at the heart of the middle ground described by White, for example, were relatively few and far between until the early eighteenth century at least. For most of the seventeenth century, the French maintained a tiny post at the strategic crossroads of Michilimackinac at the invitation of thousands of Anishinabeg who lived along the shores of the Lakes nearby. With a French post in their midst, the Odawa took advantage. They grew corn, fished, hunted and supplied sugar for the garrison, the local *habitants*, the constant stream of traders and explorers who passed through and the French commanders at the post. They also positioned themselves as key players in what was ostensibly an expanding Anishinaabe–French empire. After the devastating wars with the Iroquois in the seventeenth century, the Odawa became an important link between the French to the east and the thousands of western Indians of all nations who made the journey to Michilimackinac each spring to trade furs and renew their friendship and alliance with each other and with the French. Never in a position to coerce the Odawa, the French were dependent on their hospitality and goodwill and that of other powerful nations of the *pays d'en haut*. To facilitate the expansion of the fur trade, the French were forced to make alliances of the diplomatic and intimate kind.

Yet while figures such as Langlade eventually helped broker a more mutually beneficial relationship between the imperial powers and the Odawa – seemingly demonstrated in the devastating raid on Pickawillany – this approach invariably entails an imperial perspective. Langlade and the communities in which he moved ultimately *responded* to European initiatives, whether they did it well or badly, and the turning points in our narrative inevitably consist of moments of imperial crisis, whether it be the Great Peace of 1701, the battles of the Seven Years' War, or the end of the American Revolution. In some sense, while scholars such as White have done a wonderful job of connecting the small politics of the village worlds of Native

Americans with the large politics of empires and nations, even his cast of characters are often fleeting and ephemeral. For example, White shows us how episodes such as the raid at Pickawillany affected imperial conflicts, but we learn little about why Langlade and his allies were there, and what impact the raid had on the Odawa themselves. For that we need a different approach and perspective again.

Facing east

Trying to track Langlade and his family, the figures in the shadows – both French and Indian – compelled me to ask not just what Europeans were doing, but also what the Odawa were doing at the same time, and what they were doing independent of each other. For despite much discussion of the need to consider the so-called peripheries as well as the metropoles in our new imperial histories, few scholars have taken a truly new – in this case, Atlantic – approach and put those peripheries at the centre of that imperial story. Langlade's story compels us to 'face east' and focus equally on the motives, activities and experiences of mixed communities in the Great Lakes as they sought to negotiate their way through an uncertain world of shifting alliances and seemingly local conflicts that were at the heart of imperial and new national contests. At times, these negotiations were directly related to the imperial story; at other times, they were not. Yet to understand the full picture, *all* of these negotiations need to be understood. Using Langlade as a metaphoric window allows us to recount the story of the Odawa from more than just the traditional perspective of empire.[10]

Still, one of my most surprising discoveries was that there is no full length study of the Odawa during this critical period. There is now at least one on its way. But the kind of detailed attention given to groups such as the Huron and the Iroquois has never been given to the Anishinaabe in general or the Odawa in particular. Misunderstood, ill-defined and often confused with other Algonquian groups by contemporaries and historians alike, the Odawa have eluded the gaze of commentators to a degree far out of proportion to their critical role in the region. As new work on them emerges, and as this chapter will show, there are important political reasons for this neglect.

Though this study is not a comprehensive history of the Odawa, Langlade's story and delving into the long history of French–Algonquian relations forced me to try to understand events from the perspective of the Anishinaabe peoples. Intriguingly, Anishinaabe narratives dating from the nineteenth century emphasize continuities in the midst of change. In three extant nineteenth-century Anishinaabe historical narratives, the coming of the Europeans plays only a minor part. More important were the numerous long-standing rivalries and relationships with nations and tribes east, west, north and south of them, especially the Iroquois. In these native-authored

histories, the Anishinabeg – not the French – stand in the middle of a complex web of social relations, all of which had to be constantly negotiated and re-negotiated. The cyclical rhythms of the annual fur trade, hunt, fishing and agricultural pursuits remain relatively undisturbed in these narratives. Continuities are emphasized over decline, and Europeans stand at the periphery of their own stories.[11]

More specifically, an Anishinaabe perspective helps us put into perspective the kinds of intimate alliances that produced people such as Langlade. While references to interracial marriages in the region were rare before the 1690s, the sudden (and temporary) withdrawal of the French posts in the *pays d'en haut* corresponded with a sudden rise in the number of reported relationships between French men and Algonquian women. Through marriage, French fur traders – *coureurs de bois* – may have been attempting to establish the kin connections that would allow them to trade safely in the area. But if French traders saw advantages to more intimate relationships with native women – and flattered themselves that native women liked 'the French better than their own Countrymen' – they could do so only because their Algonquian trading partners also sought new opportunities.[12] Indeed, well-connected Indian women actively sought fur trade husbands who would be of benefit to their kin. As much influence as Langlade may have later had in the eyes of imperial administrators over the Odawa and other nations in his sphere of influence, the Langlades were also clearly valuable to, and used by, their Indian community and allies.[13]

Though access to trade was often the primary motive in these relationships, Native Americans were able to use them to broker beneficial diplomatic alliances. The Odawa used their thickening relations with the French, for example, to maintain a central place in a developing Algonquian–French alliance chain that stretched from Montreal to Lake Superior and beyond by the early eighteenth century. But while we normally focus on Native relations with the French in this region, closer attention to the Odawa and others shows that they were pursuing their own independent strategies for regional dominance. Charles Langlade's father, Augustin, for example, was brought into the Odawa fold because of his trade connections with the newly established Sioux Company, which promised the Odawa a share in a potentially expansive new westward-orientated market. But the French could not always control these strategies. At the same time as they sought new opportunities in the western fur trade, for example, the Algonquians of the Great Lakes dragged the French into an increasingly destructive, decades-long wasting war with the Fox in order to curb their role in that new trade. The Algonquians' most successful strategy was to raid Fox villages for captives, then sell or give these to the French, driving a deep wedge between the French and their potential allies. Even while officially pushing for peace, French colonists' demands for slaves helped ensure that the Fox would be alienated from the French. Thus, as Brett Rushforth concludes, the wars

'powerfully illustrate the ways in which Indians shaped the contours of the alliance to their advantage against French wishes'.[14]

From the Odawa perspective, then, the French–Algonquian relationship was happily never very stable nor as strong as the French would have liked. Indeed, rather than being symbolic of the strength of their alliance, the Langlade-led raid on Pickawillany was actually an aberration, helping to bring about an end to a massive Algonquian rebellion against the French alliance that had been simmering for years, and which involved disaffected groups from almost all nations in the *pays d'en haut*, including the Odawa themselves. From the Anishinaabe perspective, the raid raises more questions than it answers. What made it possible given the Odawa's own part in the rebellion that it was meant to crush? To answer that, we need to look from a different perspective and examine the 'small politics' of family and kinship.

The family and kinship approach

Even a cursory glance from the Odawa perspective shows that family and lineage dictated the complex interplay of village politics. As we have come to appreciate, family, kin and clan ties were crucial in the Anishinaabe world. Marriage was a social and economic contract between two groups of kin. And the nuclear family was only one, and the smallest, of units in a series of often overlapping kinship groupings. Native households were often composed of multigenerational or extended kinship groups. Among the Odawa, entire lineages shared a common dwelling – usually the longhouse or summer cabin. Marriage was 'a bridge between lineages and clans, ensuring mutual aid and obligations not only between the partners, but between their respective kin groups'. Membership in a patrilineage automatically bestowed membership in a larger kinship unit that cut across band and village lines: the patriclan, or nindoodem.[15]

Moreover, Anishinaabe daughters and sisters usually married out into other families, away from the country of their birth, and to men of a different nindoodem. Women thus made important connections by marrying men who lived in different communities, sometimes quite considerable distances away. Nindoodemic obligations then meant that travellers could rely on the hospitality of kin as they voyaged through the region. War chiefs could also count on the support of in-laws as allies across a large geographic expanse. In the absence of formal alliances, or a consistent French presence, such relationships were crucial for maintaining and expanding commercial and military ties. They also predated the arrival of the French among many Algonquian-speaking peoples.[16]

Thus, incorporating French fur traders through intermarriage was an extension of a pre-existing strategy.[17] And women like Domitilde – Charles Langlade's mother – were vital in creating not just an important role for the

Odawa at Michilimackinac *vis-à-vis* the French empire, but also in creating an important role for the French among the Indian nations. At the same time, however, women such as Domitilde were able to create new, complex and extensive family lineages. And it was these lineages that dictated the politics of Pickawillany and explain why Langlade was able to bring so many Odawa to the field while they were still officially in rebellion. As it was, Langlade managed to cobble together a coalition of Odawa, Potawatomi and Ojibwa warriors from the Michilimackinac region, even while warriors from those same nations in and around Detroit refused to attack the Miami. Many of them, they claimed, had relations among the rebellious Miami. Langlade was only able to capitalise on the fact that the more distant Michilimackinac Odawa had fewer relations among the villages of the southern nations. Ultimately, the raid enhanced the prestige of the families of the participants in the eyes of the emerging nation. One of these was Langlade's uncle, Nissowaquet, who would subsequently become a powerful and influential chief among the Odawa through the turbulent years of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

As much as anything else, then, Langlade's epic tale has to be a story of these relations, broadly defined. And by making the stories of these relations central, we can begin to uncover the ways in which Indian and Métis women in particular subtly pursued a gendered strategy of mobility, intermarriage, reproduction and persistence within and across borders. In doing so, we can also raise important questions not just about intimacy and mobility, but also about hybridity, liminality and our historical subjects. By re-centring such stories, too, we can re-imagine the ways in which women such as Domitilde and the intimate relations they cultivated helped create, sustain and indeed challenge European empires and the conventions of new nations in North America.[18]

Moreover, as I hinted earlier, this history also forces us to challenge the notion of nation at an even more fundamental level. Trying to make sense of Langlade as *either* French *or* Odawa, or even as Métis ultimately helped little in understanding the historical processes I was studying. Langlade, the Odawa and most other inhabitants of the *pays d'en haut* through this period did not adhere to any notion of nation that Europeans desperately tried to apply to them, often with grave consequences to themselves. Nation was an artificial category imposed by Europeans on the peoples of the region and may be one of the most lasting legacies of the imperial project in North America, as elsewhere. And as Michael Witgen notes in his study of the early Sioux, one of the real challenges facing postcolonial scholars of North America will be to question – and undermine – how social categories like nation, Indian and tribe are used to write histories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[19]

Indeed, as I delve deeper into this project, I have realized that we have to understand the world in which Langlade lived – as much as our own – as

a set of relationships, primarily, but not exclusively, held together by family lineages. Perhaps this should not be so surprising. As Penny van Toorn so eloquently warns, 'the coherence and completeness of the biographical narrative depends on the consistent identification of the individual, yet in so far as the biographer takes the individual to be the central object of knowledge, s/he implicitly perpetuates the centrifugal practice of transforming intricately structured societies into assemblages of individuals.' As she notes, this was a practice that was part and parcel of Australia's assimilation program, but one could argue that it also underpins our national narratives more generally.[20]

The key to understanding these historical processes, then, is to uncover, explore and *begin* our stories with these relationships rather than the individual. And to do this, we must ignore traditional periodization and narratives of empire and nation and instead focus on the significant turning points in the lives of ordinary people (and especially the various 'subaltern' groups that could be found throughout this new Atlantic World) and their relationships with others. Using Langlade as a transnational narrative anchor and as a window on to the interconnected French, Indian and Métis worlds he inhabited will thus force us to face east, and to think about the politics of empire and nation-building in the early modern world from a radically different perspective – and to construct an idea of the Atlantic World that had real meaning for the peoples who created it.[21]

In the end, then, there was indeed a world revealed by the shadows cast by Langlade: an interrelated world of Indian, French and Métis families, kin and villages; a complicated world of village politics, imperial power and transnational reach; and a world in which participants such as Langlade could play key roles but change little, while at other times his relations might play more intimate, less obvious roles, changing the course of empire and sustaining new nations. Ultimately, I learned that by dancing with those shadows instead of trying to catch them, this world would be revealed in more complex detail than I ever imagined. Less narratively satisfying, perhaps, than a purely biographical approach, the story could, nevertheless, be a rich reminder of the real power of biography.

Notes

1. For comments and suggestions I thank Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, Angela Woollacott and the participants of the Transnational Lives Conference, the American History Reading Group, participants in the Departmental Seminar Series, University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales and the 'Writing Early America' workshop, Huntington Library, California and numerous colleagues.
2. Alfred T. Goodman, ed. (1971), *Journal of Captain William Trent*... (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., for William Dodge, 1871; reprint Arno Press), pp. 87–89; Charles A. Hannah (1911), *The Wilderness Trail*.... (New York: G.P. Putnam's

Sons), vol. 2, p. 289; Richard White (1991), *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 220–234; R. David Edmunds (1975), 'Pickawillany: French Military Power versus British Economics', *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 58, 169–184. Much of the material in this chapter is drawn from the manuscript for my forthcoming book on Langlade, the French and the Anishinaabe.

3. For Michilimackinac see White, *Middle Ground*, pp. 42–45; 'Relation of Sieur de Lamothe Cadillac . . .' (1718), *Wisconsin Historical Society, Collections* XVI (1902), 350 [*WHC*]; Helen Hornbeck Tanner (1987), *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman, Okla.), 31; *Jesuit Relations* 55, 135–167. For divisions among the Odawa at Michilimackinac see Heidi Bohaker (2006), '*Nindoodemag:* The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600–1701', *William and Mary Quarterly* [WMQ] 63, no. 1. For contemporary names see James M. McClurken (1989), 'Augustin Hamlin, Jr.: Ottawa Identity and the Politics of Persistence', in James A. Clifton, ed., *Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies of North American Frontiers* (Chicago: Dorsey Press), p. 83, and the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians' website www.victoriescasino.com/tribal_history.html. For an indigenous perspective on the history of the Odawa in Michigan see Andrew J. Blackbird (1887), *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan; a Grammar of their Language, and Personal and Family History of the Author* (Ypsilanti, MI: Ypsilantian Job Printing House).
4. See the biographical sketch by his grandson in *WHC* III (1857), pp. 195–295, an account by Joseph Tassé in VII (1876), pp. 123–188, another in XVIII (1908), pp. 130–132, and Benjamin Sulte, 'Origines de Langlade', Wisconsin State Historical Society. The best single source is the short account by Paul Trap in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* IV (1979), pp. 563–564; see also Michael A. McDonnell (2001), 'Charles-Michel Mouet de Langlade: Warrior, Soldier and Intercultural Window on the Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes', in David C. Skaggs and Larry Nelson, eds, *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754–1816* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press), pp. 79–104.
5. See for example David Armitage and Michael Braddick, eds (2002), *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (London: Palgrave MacMillan) and *Journal of American History* (1999), vol. 86, nos 2 and 3; Michael A. McDonnell (2005), 'Paths Not Yet Taken, Voices Not Yet Heard: Rethinking Atlantic History', in Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: ANU Press), pp. 45–62.
6. Alan L. Karras and J.R. McNeill, 'Introduction', in Alan L. Karras and J.R. McNeill, eds (1992), *Atlantic American Societies: From Columbus through Abolition, 1492–1888* (London: Routledge); David Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History', in Armitage and Braddick (2002), *British Atlantic World*, pp. 11–27.
7. John Demos (1994), *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Alfred Knopf); Simon Schama (1991), *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations* (New York: Knopf); Jon F. Sensbach (2005), *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); Camilla Townsend (2005), *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma* (New York: Hill and Wang).
8. See David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson, eds (2001), *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754–1814* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press).
9. See Kathleen DuVal (2006), *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

10. See Daniel Richter (2001), *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press). For a review of the 'new Indian history' see Philip J. Deloria (2004), 'Historiography', in Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, eds, *A Companion to American Indian History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell), pp. 6–24. For the problem of perspective in the new imperial history in the early modern era see Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds (2002), *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820* (New York: Routledge).
11. D. Peter Macleod (1992), 'The Anishinabeg Point of View: The History of the Great Lakes Region to 1800 in Nineteenth Century Mississauga, Odawa and Ojibwa Historiography', *Canadian Historical Review* LXXIII (June), pp. 194–210.
12. Jacqueline Peterson, 'The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Métis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680–1830' (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1981), pp. 59–60.
13. On the 'tender ties' that helped sustain the fur trade see for instance Susan Sleeper-Smith (2001), *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press); Sylvia Van Kirk (1983), *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1679–1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press); Jennifer S.H. Brown (1996 [1980]), *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press).
14. Brett Rushforth (2006), 'Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance', *WMQ* 3rd series LXIII, 1, pp. 54–57.
15. Bohaker, '*Nindoodemag*', 47.
16. Ibid., 47–48.
17. See Susan Sleeper-Smith (1997), 'English Governance in the Great Lakes, 1760–1780', International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, Working Paper no. 97–117, Summer, 3.
18. See Jennifer S.H. Brown (1983), 'Woman as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities', *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* III, pp. 39–46; Theresa M. Schenck (1994), 'The Cadottes: Five Generations of Fur Traders on Lake Superior', in Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles and Donald P. Heldman, eds, *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press), pp. 189–198; Jacqueline Peterson (1978), 'Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Métis', *Ethnohistory* 25, 1.
19. Michael J. Witgen (2004), An Infinity of Nations: How Indians, Empires, and Western Migration Shaped National Identity in North America (PhD diss., University of Washington).
20. See Penny van Toorn in this book.
21. See Michael A. McDonnell (2008), ' "Il a Epousé une Sauvagesse": Indian and Métis Persistence Across Imperial and National Borders', in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds, *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), pp. 149–171.

Part II
Opportunities

Modernization, empire, the technologies of movement and the globalization of capitalism: all have created opportunities for new lives in another place, and many individuals have seized upon those opportunities. In the search for economic or professional advantage, celebrity, escape or simply survival they have crossed the globe, often forging new identities in another place.

Colonialism's structures enabled even those of humble birth to dream big. In 'Fantasies', Kirsten McKenzie presents the intriguing story of serial impostor John Dow who in 1835 was arrested in New South Wales for perpetrating fraud under the name of Edward, Viscount Lascelles. Tracing the transnational connections between the lives of Dow and Lascelles, McKenzie uncovers a wider history of power and pretence amidst the social opportunities of the British imperial world. Adrian Carton explores repressions and silences of another kind, examining the discursive economy of denial and shame that still operates to obscure the 'truths' of the Eurasian past of British music legends Cliff Richard and Engelbert Humperdinck. Angela Woollacott looks at the more overt deceptions that underpinned the career of another Eurasian: mid-twentieth-century film star Merle Oberon. Oberon's professional success took her from her birthplace in Bombay to London and later North America. London studio publicists invented her 'Tasmanian' birth in order to locate her as a colonial while shrouding her lower class and mixed-race origins in obscurity. Together these essays show how relocation enables imposture, secrecy and suppression, and is itself sometimes the product of fantasy and aspiration.

Transnational subjects who pursued economic and career incentives present a different set of issues. The chapters in 'Livelihoods' consider the consequences of following the star of employment. Carroll Pursell explores, through future American president Herbert Hoover's Australian sojourn, engineers' common experience of long periods of expatriation and its effects on their lives, practice and careers. He asks whether mobility and expatriation made 'cosmopolitan' engineers and their work somehow lastingly different from their colleagues who stayed behind. Tiffany Shellam's chapter

focuses on a different instance of professional travel – a brief biographical moment in the lives of two Aboriginal men from King George's Sound, Western Australia, during the 1830s. She tells of a colonial strategy that took Manyat and Gyallipert on a journey from their known 'country' to the distant 'new world' of the Swan River colony. Shellam argues that the two men may be seen as transnational voyagers, acquiring and disseminating natural knowledge in a distant country and exploiting a colonial exercise for their own benefit in ways the colonists did not expect. Rajani Sudan's chapter examines the career of Elihu Yale and his role in East India Company ventures at the end of the seventeenth century. Better known for founding the American university that bears his name, Yale was briefly Governor of Madras in the late seventeenth century before being unceremoniously stripped of the title due to financial and sexual transgressions. Sudan suggests that Yale's life story has been commodified, mythologized and sublimated into the institutionalization of knowledge.

In 'Performances', Cecilia Morgan and Penny von Eschen examine the lives and careers of two women, actor Margaret Anglin and dancer Katherine Dunham, whose work was to bring fantasies to life on the stage – to 'impersonate' others for a living, to use the early twentieth-century term. Both exploited the transnational circuits of performance enabled by modern transport and communication to challenge boundaries of gender, race and nation and to further their careers. But the white, Canadian-born Margaret Anglin was more selective, and ultimately more successful, in her boundary crossing than was the African-American Katherine Dunham. Anglin manipulated her privileged family background, her ethnic and religious heritage, her marriage to an American citizen, and her international stage success to variously claim Canadian, Irish, American, Catholic and imperial identity. Katherine Dunham, by contrast, challenged not only national, gender and sexual binaries, but also the major discourses of race. In trying to 'make on stage' a new hybrid African diasporic identity that did not deny 'race-mixing', she found herself denied official support, forced to travel constantly and to overplay the sexual aspects of her performances in order to make a living, and isolated from major transnational events that she herself inspired and helped organize. The opportunities offered by transnational modernity were not equally available to all.

5

Opportunists and Impostors in the British Imperial World: The Tale of John Dow, Convict, and Edward, Viscount Lascelles

Kirsten McKenzie[1]

In the Sydney autumn of 1835, a slender and balding man with a Scottish accent and a slight speech impediment was recounting the unfortunate story of his life before a rapt audience. Under sentence of transportation, he had taken a fictitious name 'in order that the spotless honor of my family might not be sullied by my disgrace'. He appealed repeatedly to his powerful father for help, but in vain. In the final hour he was abandoned by his 'personal friend, the Marquis of Queensborough' whose evidence would have acquitted him: 'fate had ordered it otherwise – he would not attend – I was convicted'. And thus 'through the malignity of my parent, the being of all others, to whom I naturally looked for clemency' was he 'thrown, a stranger and destitute of the ordinary comforts of life' on the shores of a far and savage country.

If the fantasy seemed familiar, this was no accident. It was, no doubt deliberately, framed in the conventions of popular melodrama. Yet this tale was not enacted in a theatre, but in that equally entertaining auditorium of colonial life, the Supreme Court. And the fantasist who was enthralling a capacity crowd – the courtroom was packed to the rafters – was not merely acting a part (although he was a practised performer) but defending his own person. The judges, however, remained unimpressed by his eloquence. After lengthy deliberations the prisoner was sentenced 'to be transported out of the Colony for the term of his natural life'.[2]

The man being tried before Mr. Justice Burton and a military jury on the charge of forgery was sentenced under the name of John Dow. Witnesses claimed that they knew him as 'John Dow or Doe',[3] a name which to our ears seems singularly appropriate in a trial about imposture.[4] Yet, as we shall see, John Dow was a name laid on the prisoner by the accusation of another, and one he never admitted to in all the various courtroom dramas in which

he took part. 'I have sworn before my God', he intoned in Sydney, 'that I am Edward, Lord Viscount Lascelles, the eldest son of the Earl of Harewood, and heir apparent to that illustrious name'.[5]

My very first encounter with the mysterious John Dow and his aristocratic alter ego was in the reminiscences of the Austrian Baron, Charles von Hügel. During his time in New South Wales, von Hügel came across the story of a former convict who seemed to be making a pretty good living defrauding others while passing himself off as 'Lord Lascelles'.[6] Showing a suitably aristocratic disdain for the Antipodes, the Baron found it 'highly characteristic of the country in which it took place'.[7] And this is where it might be tempting to leave the story of Dow's imposture: as the tale of a brazen felon duping a series of gullible provincials. We could perhaps imagine it as an obscure, somewhat entertaining footnote in a national history charting the emergence of Australian egalitarianism from a too-slavish regard for the social hierarchies of the mother country.

But, as this volume demonstrates, when a biographical thread is pulled, national frameworks that appear comfortably stitched-up are apt to become unravelled. In January 1835 Dow was arrested for forgery, for signing the name of Edward Lascelles to a promissory note. His defence was to claim that it was no forgery – that he *was* Edward Lascelles, that the Viscount had disappeared from Europe, and that the solution to this disappearance lay in the fact that 'through a series of misfortunes' he had been compelled to take a false name as a convict in the Antipodes. We begin, then, with a lie. If we follow the entangled stories of John Dow and Edward Lascelles, of how the lie came to be told, and of the true story that enabled the lie, we find ourselves crossing the globe in multiple directions. In a tale about forged identities we also find ourselves inextricably caught up in a broader story of the relationship between social status and the exercise of power. The real significance of John Dow's adventures in New South Wales is only revealed when it is considered in both local and transnational terms. This ostensibly isolated incident has emerged as a chapter in a sprawling saga of opportunism and imposture which reached right across the British Empire and linked the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In picking Edward Lascelles for his model John Dow provides the transnational biographer with a satisfyingly global twist to his tale. Dow was exploiting the opportunities for impersonation which life in the colonies presented. He evidently felt (rightly in some cases, as it turned out, but wrongly in others) that the Antipodes were far enough removed from the social circles of Britain to successfully impersonate the son of an earl. Yet the Lascelles themselves were imperial opportunists who had engaged in a successful reinvention on a scale grander than even Dow's wildest imaginings.

The earldom to which Edward was heir had been conferred in 1812, after years of protracted lobbying and the expenditure of fabulous sums of

money on political campaigning in the crown's interest. The title brought to fruition seeds sown almost exactly a century earlier when three Lascelles brothers (George, Henry and Edward) left England for the island of Barbados. Although their political rivals would later describe the Lascelles as being descended 'From a Family Nobody knows',[8] the brothers were in fact from perfectly respectable, if minor, gentry stock; the sons of Daniel Lascelles, MP for Northallerton. In the West Indies, however, they (particularly Henry) amassed a spectacular family fortune in a complex web of business interests that involved slave trading, government contracts to provision the armed forces, money lending and (in a later generation) sugar plantations. It was this West Indian money that would raise the family to previously unscaleable social heights.[9]

Henry Lascelles (1690–1753) married two women in Barbados, his three surviving children were all born there, and his fortune was accumulated there. But he had long-range ambitions for that fortune, and they lay, not in the West Indies, but in the place of his birth. Henry, it seems, was founding a dynasty, and a dynasty needs a setting. In 1739 he bought estates in Yorkshire which had previously been owned by a family with whom the Lascelles were very distantly connected. On this land his son would employ some of the luminaries of the age: Robert Adam, Thomas Chippendale, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and John Carr of York. The result was Harewood House, still one of the most splendid of the 'stately homes' to which tourists flock in the north of England. Here the Edward Lascelles impersonated by John Dow was born in 1796.

Edward was grandson to the man who would become first Earl of Harewood in 1812 and who, by a series of deaths without issue, had inherited the fortune of all three of the Lascelles brothers who set out for Barbados in the early eighteenth century. Edward Lascelles the younger, then, was heir to one of the largest fortunes in Britain, but he was also heir to an aristocratic name which had not yet shaken off a certain consciousness about its origins. The 1807 Yorkshire election, in which Edward's father, another Henry Lascelles (1767–1841) was a candidate, showed this only too well. In a year in which the country was celebrating the abolition of the slave trade, the Lascelles family was pilloried by their opponents for both their slave-derived wealth and their 'parvenu' social position.[10]

Edward's background and West Indian associations, then, place Dow's imposture in New South Wales in a somewhat different light. As my investigation into the two men progressed, it became clear that this was a story which linked together the opportunists and opportunities of Empire in a way that made it possible to explore the shifting notions of social status and political power operating in their world. The stories of these two men and those associated with them had their own biographically specific interconnections. They were also part of a period of profound political change in Britain and its empire during which civil liberties were fundamentally

redefined and definitions of status were undergoing a series of dramatic transformations. Adrian Carton's examination of the reinventions of Cliff Richard and Engelbert Humperdinck draws attention to how the fantasy of England as 'Promised Land' was rocked by the experience of moving there from the colonial periphery and negotiating new status hierarchies. Historians of the British Empire, myself included, are liable to be similarly seduced by claims articulated in the nineteenth century that presented an equally fantastical metropole. In this view, England (more so even than Britain) was a place of stable social rank, a fitting contrast to colonies filled by parvenu adventurers. In previous work, I had explored how colonial societies reacted to this idea that they were places of status transformation and social climbing. The penal colonies of the Antipodes were a particular source of these concerns about social inversion.[11] As a localized story, John Dow's imposture fitted clearly within this genre. Yet the Lascelles connection demonstrated how the opportunities of empire worked in *both* the metropole and across multiple colonial sites. Concerns about status permeated diverse social levels right across the empire, from the very heart of its aristocratic establishment to the farthest reaches of its convict colonies.

Under the family circumstances, it was more than usually important for the heir to this newly minted earldom to marry well, with due regard to both political interest and social position. But Edward married, in the common phrase, to disoblige his family.[12] If Dow was accustomed to invoking the tropes of melodrama before the courts, then Edward showed a remarkable tendency to live his life by the same dramatic conventions. The results were equally disastrous.

In the summer of 1818, Edward Lascelles was enjoying a dalliance with a woman called Anne Elizabeth Rosser. An anonymous letter to Edward's father later described Rosser as the daughter of 'a common barge man' and a woman who kept 'a house of ill fame'.[13] Whether true or not, she was clearly working class, though literate, and both Edward and his younger brother (yet another Henry) appear to have been sexually involved with her.[14] On 12 November 1818 Edward's father received an anonymous letter informing him 'that a plan was in agitation to strike a severe blow at the honor of the House of Harewood, by the marriage of the Honorable Edward Lascelles to a person of low situation with whom He had kept up an illicit connexion for some time'.[15] The letter gave an address in Bristol where this 'person' might be found. Henry Lascelles acted with characteristic decision. Within a day one of his agents was in Bristol looking for Edward. He was not quick enough. By the time Henry received the warning, the marriage between Edward Lascelles and Ann Elizabeth Rosser had already taken place in secret some days previously.

By 14 December the honour of the House of Harewood had been ruthlessly protected. A separation between Edward and Ann was negotiated. She was to hand over his letters, he was never to see her again. She would

Figure 5 Edward, Viscount Lascelles by F. Von Lutzendorff, 1826. Oil on canvas. Reproduced by the kind permission of the Earl and Countess of Harewood and Trustees of the Harewood House Trust.

receive £300 per annum, paid quarterly. Edward was packed off to the continent in the care of a minder, one John Russell. Over the succeeding years, Russell led a somewhat harassed existence, as his conscientious reports to Henry attest. Edward showed no signs of abandoning his 'complete weakness for women',[16] going to considerable lengths to pursue his clandestine love affairs despite all Russell could do to keep him busy in various menial diplomatic tasks. Eventually Edward settled down with a woman, the twice-widowed Baroness Testa, whom he met in Vienna in 1821. In 1831, 13 years after their marriage, Ann died in Hereford, and Henry immediately wrote to his son in Munich urging his return.[17]

Edward, however, had other ideas. As soon as he received word of his wife's death, he wrote to Henry announcing his intention to marry the Baroness Testa, with whom he had now been living for some years. For a host of reasons, it was a marriage to which his father was implacably opposed, and to which he refused his consent. By this time, however, Henry knew his son too well to be surprised when the marriage took place against his wishes. Their correspondence remained cordial however, and it is clear that Henry was deeply disappointed by the loss of his son: 'you might have felt disposed to return to England with a view to establish yourself, & to marry a suitable person in your own country. Such a course, accompanied by such an event, would have received every assistance from me.'[18] For his part, Edward willingly renounced both the status and wealth belonging to the heir of Harewood in his younger brother's favour.[19] In the event, the question of succession was a moot point. Edward died in Munich in 1839, two years before his father collapsed and died on the hunting field in his 74th year. Edward's younger brother Henry (who was prudent enough to marry Lady Louisa Tynne, daughter of the second Marquess of Bath) duly succeeded as third Earl of Harewood.

So Edward Lascelles *had* disappeared from Britain, just as Dow claimed before the court in Sydney, although the year he did so was not 1825, as it suited the impostor to suggest. The estrangement between Edward and his family was the stuff of gossip at a variety of levels of society, although the precise way in which Dow heard of the story remains unclear. What is not in doubt is that Edward's removal left a gap to be exploited by one who lived by his wits. Dow was already calling himself Lascelles on the convict ship *Woodman* that bore him to the colony of Van Diemen's Land in 1825.[20] Edward's situation was tailor-made for his purpose. For Dow's *modus operandi* was to make inventive use of the social and financial space that opened up when a young man of fortune was separated from those who held the purse strings. Dow had been sentenced to transportation for this crime, in this instance for stealing the identity of the son of a baronet. But his conviction does not seem to have been a sufficient deterrent to stop him going one better, and trying the same with the son of an earl.

Dow ended up on the *Woodman* in this manner: in the middle of September 1824, the Reverend Dr. William Singer of Kirkpatrick Juxta in the county

of Dumfries was told of a destitute 'young man who had been rather prodigal' who was anxious to see him. Singer consented, and the next day a young man who described himself as John Colquhoun, 'the eldest lawful son of Sir James Colquhoun of Luss', arrived at the manse. He 'had been misled by bad company' he explained, cashiered by his regiment and cast off by his father. Singer was willing to help but he also felt the matter needed investigation. He wrote to Sir James about the circumstances, and under Singer's suggestion the young man did likewise, 'soliciting forgiveness' from his father.

Singer also took the precaution of insisting that his visitor sign a 'voluntary declaration' as to his identity and circumstances. In it John Colquhoun swore that his father had purchased a commission in the 10th regiment of Hussars, which had 'cost his father a great deal of money', but that he had been cashiered for being absent without leave. He then drew on his father for £1300, but had 'squandered the proceeds among gamblers' and his father had cast him off. He mentioned that he had lately met with some gentlemen who knew him, amongst them one Daniel Fisher. He wished to be reconciled with his father, and claimed that he would be of age 'in the course of next month' when he would enter into some property, but that being 'at present so destitute he cannot determine what to do'. He hoped some 'neutral person' might intercede with his father.[21]

Singer seems to have had mixed feelings about the young man's story. He was sufficiently suspicious to get him to sign the declaration. But there was also evidently enough plausibility in the story of a prodigal young man separated from his friends to convince Singer, that it was 'a Christian duty to assist him if he was Sir James' son'. 'If he had known he was an impostor and not Sir James's son', Singer later testified, 'he would not only not have given him a shilling, but adopted means to put a stop to his impostures'.[22] As it was, the prodigal was sent off that day with a letter of credit of £1's worth, on the strength of which he spent five days at the Spur Inn in Moffat, leaving without notice and without giving his name to the innkeepers, who were left to obtain payment from Dr. Singer. Singer covered the bill of 16 shillings, without expecting he would ever be recompensed.

On 24 October, a somewhat dishevelled figure, 'apparently travelling on foot' and carrying no luggage, arrived at the Dumfries and Galloway Hotel in Assembly Street, Dumfries. To the innkeeper Ambrose Clarke and his wife Amelia, evidently a sympathetic couple, he repeated his sad and cautionary tale. His temporary poverty could be explained by the estrangement between himself and his father. He would shortly come into an inheritance, however, and be able to pay his debts. The innkeeper and his wife 'trusted him solely on the faith of the truth of his statement' and did not expect payment till such time as he came of age and took Ambrose Clarke with him to Edinburgh to arrange for his inheritance. Their guest was of an open disposition, eager to tell his troubles to the assembled company. He was much given to reading aloud letters sent to him concerning the estrangement between himself and

his father. The letters that the impostor sent off to various 'respectable people' in order to elicit replies addressed to him were clearly a key tactic in sustaining his identity during the five weeks he spent at the Clarkes' inn. They would also prove to be his undoing. His activities came to the ears of one Patrick Miller, a Justice of the Peace and associate of the Colquhoun family, who took immediate steps to stop him. He tracked down the impostor's correspondents, made his own investigations as to his real identity and chivvied along the Dumfries authorities who felt there was insufficient evidence to proceed.

Amongst those whose names he had used to prove his identity was, as Clarke explained, one Daniel Fisher (the same name that the impostor had given to Singer) 'who he says is his fathers Factor and agent and to whom he refers for any information that may be required respecting him'.[23] Under questioning from Miller, Daniel Fisher now testified that the man calling himself Colquhoun was a 'swindler & the son of a collier & alehouse keeper in Sir James's neighbourhood at a place called Knightswood colliery'.[24] The impostor's true name, continued Miller, was 'John Dow son of John Dow collier & publican in Stirlingshire'.[25] On 10 December 1824 Miller was informed by the Sheriff's office that they had 'caused Colquhoun alias Dow to be apprehended'.[26]

In April 1824 the case came up for trial in the Dumfries Circuit Court of Justiciary. Giving sentence of seven years' transportation, Lord Hermand pronounced that 'the man at the bar was indicted under the name of John Dow; he did not know whether he had any title to that name or not; but he had none to the other honourable name assumed by him'. The prisoner insisted on addressing the court in a florid style that the authorities in Sydney would instantly have recognized. With unknowing and profound irony the judge informed the prisoner:

> it was only because he represented himself as the son of Sir John Colquhoun, he was enabled to carry on his depredations; he ought now to reflect that he was going to a country where a more strict watch would be kept over his conduct, and that, by repentance and improvement of his time, he might still recover his character, and return to this country a better man than he left it.[27]

Some 11 years later, reporting Dow's 1835 trial for forgery in Sydney, the *Hobart Town Courier* gave this explanation for his insistence on the identity of 'Lord Lascelles':

> We have no doubt that the idea that has taken so strong a possession of his mind, though it led to the act of forgery which amounted to a breach of the laws, is the fruit of insanity, and we sincerely trust that on that

> account his case may be dealt with by the authorities with proportionate forbearance.[28]

So was the man called John Dow insane? On the contrary, he showed a very canny understanding of how to exploit the social fissures of his world. As both 'Lascelles' and 'Colquhoun' he was making use of the disjuncture between means and status that occurred when heirs were (or were claimed to be) estranged from their families. It worked for some months in Scotland in the 1820s, until Patrick Miller took up his busy pen, and it worked for some years in New South Wales (where similar methods were used) a decade later. In both cases Dow left a trail of disillusioned and defrauded victims. He was unable to sustain his fantasy for longer precisely because (unlike the stories of Merle Oberon, Engelbert Humperdinck and Cliff Richard told in this section of this volume) there was no wider stake in his status transformation. Indeed, when Dow was arrested and put on trial for fraud in 1835, his victims were the butt of frequent humour in court, and everyone, from the judge to the anxiously tittering spectators, was keen to show that they would not have been taken in. Following his transportation to Van Diemen's Land, Dow was transferred to Port Arthur in December of 1835. He obtained a ticket of leave in 1843, was recommended for a conditional pardon in 1845 and received it in 1846.[29] Thereafter he disappears, mysterious to the last.

Unlike that more famous impostor of historical scholarship, Natalie Zemon Davis's 'Martin Guerre', John Dow never tried to make his models' *lives* his own. He never sought to take the place of their persons, but to make use of the position that a viscount or a baronet's son could command in society. Sustaining the fantasy of his identity depended on successfully performing a generic status role rather than on imitating specific personal traits in front of people who knew either Lascelles or Colquhoun.[30] What was so disturbing to contemporaries about this fantasy was that it demonstrated how far social hierarchies could be reduced to ephemera, rather than resting on firm boundaries. By self-consciously performing their claim to a distinct identity, impostors drop clues in the historical record as to the ways in which status was made manifest, disputed and endorsed. They allow us to identify the weak points in the contested notions of hierarchy being played out in this changing world. In seeking to reinvent themselves, such men and women, as Steven Bullock puts it, 'sensed the gaps and contradictions within prevailing cultural ideals and practices'.[31] Impostors reveal the expectations of their audience at the same time as they subvert them, demonstrating how status differentials were experienced in everyday encounters. Impostors and confidence men and women are likely to flourish at precisely those moments when social hierarchies are especially contested and in flux.[32]

The impostor's performance is thus an extreme version of more widespread behaviour by the socially ambitious. Impostors unmasked put

the status of others at risk, they threw into sharp relief the opportunities for self-reinvention that existed in these societies. The story of John Dow and Edward Lascelles throws a question over the degree to which we can separate the impostor from those of more established status. While there is a real difference between impostors and people with new titles, for example, there is also a connection to be drawn between imposture, performance and social climbing. The Lascelles family rose to power at a time in which England was experiencing acute status anxiety about the colonial origins of new wealth.[33] Dow was performing the peer in a community disturbed by its reputation as a place where criminals could rise to the first rank. When Dow successfully persuaded people of his aristocratic status, he laid bare in uncomfortable ways the degree to which social boundaries were permeable rather than fixed; he exposed the degree to which the elite might be merely the invention of their own ambition.

When Dow was arrested in 1835, his activities were not confined to forging promissory notes. Just as Edward's personal fate was tied to the broader political ambitions of his family and his class, Dow's small-time frauds were caught up in far bigger events in New South Wales. Some months before he was arrested, the *Sydney Monitor* newspaper carried a letter from 'A Subscriber' which described the activities of a 'mysterious personage' in the interior of the colony, who 'goes by the different appellations of Lord Viscount Lascelles, and "Commissioner of Enquiry", and also "Government Spy!"' The supposed Lord Lascelles was accompanied by a servant, carried a mysterious tin box and

> without ceremony enters the convict huts, examines their huts, beds and bedding &c. – and having arranged his scribbling apparatus, asks such questions of the said convicts touching the manners in which they are treated by their masters respectively, and commits both question and answer to paper; and having obtained such information as he requires at one farm he then departs for another.[34]

Dow's activities in investigating convict conditions (which several witnesses confirmed) were well-placed to disturb an anxious set of masters. This was a time of acute political tension about convict discipline and the nature of the proper social hierarchies in the penal colony at large.[35] A convict outbreak at Castle Forbes on James Mudie's estate in the Hunter Valley had occurred in November 1833, and the political consequences of what was a wider confrontation between the liberal Governor Bourke and the self-styled gentry of the Hunter Valley was still in full swing as the 'Commissioner' made his tour. 'A Subscriber', indeed, reported that 'one or two of my neighbours think he may be an agent of the Hunterian party, sent across the country to tamper with our servants, and thereby cause them to be as insubordinate here, as they are represented to be in that quarter.'[36]

Civil liberties were in a state of fundamental transformation on a variety of fronts over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The political disputes in which the Lascelles family was engaged in Yorkshire, and in which Dow was embroiled in New South Wales, are but two examples of this. British and colonial societies alike were convulsed in this period by debates about the proper nature of the public sphere and about the exercise of political power.[37] Such debates were given a heightened tension in the light of the shifting ideas of race and labour associated with industrialization, emancipation and the end of convict transportation. Despite the very real limitations on the liberties gained by these events, they can still be considered as part of a process by which particular patterns of deference, patronage and social order were being challenged. The right to act within the public sphere in both Britain and the colonies was claimed and defended by rhetoric that emphasized particular models of masculine identity. Feeding into this identity were issues such as wealth (and its source), demeanour (which could be racialized as 'civilization') and social influence. All of these changing ideas had important implications for the ways in which status was defined, and, correspondingly, for the possession of political power. The tale of John Dow, confidence trickster and serial impostor, and Edward Lascelles, heir of a family rising towards the apex of Britain's hierarchy on the back of colonial wealth, played out in microcosm these broader forces.

Imperial networks facilitated both geographical *and* social mobility. What stories like those of John Dow and Edward Lascelles offer is a possibility to demonstrate how these interconnections occur both at the level of intimate interpersonal relations and at the level of broader social debate. For the transnational historian, one of the problems of understanding such large-scale social changes taking place on a global scale is to make the analysis concrete. Investigating the interconnections of past biographies offers an opportunity to demonstrate how profoundly local and transnational circumstances were bound together. The chain of lives which stretches across time and space from the twinned stories of John Dow and Edward Lascelles demonstrates how metropole and colony were linked in contemporary debates about status that would have profound implications for the social organization of the British imperial world.

Notes

1. My profound thanks go to Karen Lynch, Melissa Gallimore and Terry Suthers for arranging access to papers held at Harewood House. Karen Lynch also generously shared with me her own research on Edward Lascelles.
2. R. v. Dow or Lascelles, *Sydney Herald*, 14 May 1835.
3. Ibid., evidence of William Gunn, Superintendent of the Prisoner's Barracks at Hobart.
4. It should be pointed out that those in court in 1835 would have heard it slightly differently. John Doe (plaintiff) and Richard Roe (defendant) were used as generic

names in legal actions of ejectment in the eighteenth century. The use of the name 'John Doe' to denote 'an ordinary or typical citizen' (particularly in the United States) appeared in common use only in the twentieth century. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2007) 2nd Edition, 1989 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

5. R. v. Dow or Lascelles, *Sydney Herald*, 14 May 1835.
6. C. Von Hügel (1994), *New Holland Journal, November 1833–October 1834*, translated and edited by D. Clark (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), p. 298.
7. Ibid.
8. Anon (1807), *Yorkshire Election: A Collection of the Speeches, Addresses, and Squibs produced by all Parties during the Late Contested Election for the County of York* (Leeds: Edward Baines), pp. 39–40.
9. On the origins of the Lascelles fortune see S. Smith (2006), *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); and D. Hamilton (2004), 'Private Enterprise and Public Service: Naval Contracting in the Caribbean, c. 1720–1750' *Journal of Maritime Research* www.jmr.nmm.ac.uk (April), accessed 29 April 2005.
10. For a detailed discussion of this topic see K. McKenzie (2007), '"My voice is sold, & I must be a Slave": Abolition rhetoric, British liberty, and the Yorkshire elections of 1806 and 1807', *History Workshop Journal* vol. 64, no. 1 (Autumn), pp. 48–73.
11. K. McKenzie (2004), *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820–1850* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press).
12. The expression, of course, is Jane Austen's in *Mansfield Park*.
13. Anonymous to Henry Lascelles, 11 January 1819, Harewood House, private collection.
14. Keele University, Staffordshire. Sneyd Papers, SC 12/10 Charles Percy to Ralph Sneyd, 19 December (1818). With thanks to Karen Lynch.
15. Notes by Lord Harewood's Agent, undated, Harewood House, private collection.
16. John Russell to Henry Lascelles, 29 July 1820, Harewood House, private collection.
17. Henry Lascelles to Edward Lascelles, 24 August 1831, Harewood House, private collection.
18. Henry Lascelles to Edward Lascelles, 20 September 1831, Harewood House, private collection.
19. Edward Lascelles to Henry Lascelles, 11 September 1831, Harewood House, private collection.
20. R. v. Dow or Lascelles, *Sydney Herald*, 14 May 1835, evidence of Philip Lander Fell, passenger on board the *Woodman*.
21. Scottish National Archives, Lord Advocate's Department, High Court Precognitions, AD14/25/123, pp. 32–37; *Dumfries Weekly Journal*, 3 May 1825.
22. *Dumfries Weekly Journal*, 3 May 1825.
23. Scottish National Archives, Lord Advocate's Department, High Court Precognitions, AD14/25/123, William Goldie to P. Miller, 6 December 1824.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. *Dumfries Weekly Journal*, 3 May 1825.
28. *Hobart Town Courier*, 5 June 1835.
29. Archives Office of Tasmania, Conduct Record 31/9 no. 393; Conduct Record 35/1 no. 1013.

30. N. Zemon Davis (1983), *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 39. On the operation of imposture in the period before photographic recognition see also J. Hurl-Eamon (2005), 'The Westminster Impostors: Impersonating Law Enforcement in Early Eighteenth-Century London', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 461–483 and T. Kidd (2004), 'Passing as a Pastor: Clerical Imposture in the Colonial Atlantic World', *Religion and American Culture* vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 149–174.
31. S. C. Bullock (1998), 'A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series. vol. 55, no. 2, p. 233.
32. Bullock, 'A Mumper among the Gentle', pp. 231–258; and K. Halttunen (1982), *Confidence Men and Painted Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
33. James Raven (1992), *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
34. *Sydney Monitor*, 6 August 1834.
35. A fuller account of Dow's trial and its relation to the social and political upheavals then convulsing New South Wales can be found in K. McKenzie (2004), 'Performing the Peer: Status, Empire and Impersonation', *History Australia* vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 209–228.
36. *Sydney Monitor*, 6 August 1834.
37. Two examples from a large literature that are particularly pertinent to the arguments advanced here are C. Hall (2002), *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) and Z. Laidlaw (2005), *Colonial Connections, 1815–45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

6

Imperial Melodies: Globalizing the Lives of Cliff Richard and Engelbert Humperdinck

Adrian Carton

In 1995, a 55-year-old popular music sensation received a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for his services to charitable institutions, securing his role as a much-loved national treasure in the British imagination.[1] That he should receive the ultimate recognition of service to the country was hardly surprising: he had been a household name since the 1950s, producing an impressive string of hit singles and exhibiting both a style and an attraction that seem to defy both generational change and the whims of fashion. This self-proclaimed religious philanthropist is also one of the most successful musical performers in British history. His single sales have been phenomenal with 33 of them selling over a million copies, and a national survey in 2004 found that he had sold nearly 21 million records in his career, eclipsing *The Beatles* who come second, and Elvis Presley who is in third place.[2] As Sir Cliff Richard posed for photographs outside Buckingham Palace after the event with his three sisters, Donna, Joan and Jacqui, his journey to a distinguished place in the British establishment seemed complete.

Six years earlier in 1989, another venerable British entertainer was acknowledged by an establishment of a very different kind when he was honoured with a star on the *Hollywood Walk of Fame*. While not quite as illustrious as that of Richard, Engelbert Humperdinck's career emerges from a similar cultural context. The swinging sixties provided both Richard and Humperdinck the opportunity to secure fame and fortune, through the revival and attraction of British music and fashion on the international scene, where the global circulation of radio and television provided extraordinary opportunities for transnational success. Engelbert's longevity stems from his early triumph as a transatlantic star and his ability to continue to sell albums consistently over many decades, enjoying mainstream success in both the United States and the United Kingdom. His first single 'Release Me' reached number one in Britain in 1967 and stayed in the charts for 56 consecutive weeks, rivalling *The Beatles* in terms of both record sales and

popularity. Their different images speak of divergent models of masculinity at play: Cliff, the evergreen, asexual Peter Pan of Christian rock remains the quintessential eligible bachelor always waiting for the right girl to come along.[3] His counterpart, Engelbert, is the sultry swooner who combines a heady cocktail of bushy sideburns, gold medallions and gyrating hips to seduce his spellbound audience. However, they both occupy similar places in the British 'pop culture' imagination with long and illustrious careers. With six decades in the music business, they continue to enjoy some measure of success around the world.

It might not be overly simplistic to suggest that the role of Richard and Humperdinck as living British legends rests partly on the legend of their purported origins in small English towns. The former hails from the town of Cheshunt in Hertfordshire where he lived as a child, while the latter's childhood was spent in Leicester. This mobilization of local origins was a significant component in shaping their national identities in the public imagination. In fact, Engelbert was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Music by the University of Leicester in 2006, confirming his status as one of the town's living icons.[4] However, there are also ways in which the celebrity personae of both men reach out to a wider global frame of reference where Britain was also inextricably connected to the Empire. The 1950s and 1960s represented a new confidence in British popular culture at a moment when the country emerged in the immediate post-war period to face the challenges of internal economic and social reconstruction, the shrinking of its empire through the process of decolonization, and the impact of immigration from the ex-colonies. New trends in music, fashion and mass entertainment in many ways sought to redefine British identity in response to its vastly changed imperial status.[5] While Cliff and Engelbert emerge as images of this change in self-perception, it is their real lives that speak in intimate ways to wider imperial connections that have been largely obscured from the public gaze.

The updated biography of Cliff Richard by Steve Turner called *Cliff Richard: The Biography* published in 2005, and Engelbert Humperdinck's autobiography titled *What's In a Name* published in 2004, are two 'pop culture' life stories that illuminate the very real transnational lives of these artists, confirming that their origins are a world away from the small towns of England.[6] Both biographies confirm that these singers were born in India: Richard in Lucknow in 1940 and Humperdinck in Madras in 1936, and they went to Britain as children with their families. In the course of their early music careers, both changed their names. Harry Webb was reinvented as Cliff Richard, while Arnold George Dorsey was born again under the more elaborate name of Engelbert Humperdinck, the name of the nineteenth-century German composer who wrote the opera *Hansel and Gretel*.

In this chapter I consider the apparent paradox that exists between the two very real transnational lives of these men from India called Harry

Figure 6 Photograph of Cliff Richard © Derek Allen/National Portrait Gallery, London.

Webb and Arnold Dorsey, and their transformation into the British music legends Cliff Richard and Engelbert Humperdinck. If these are stories of hidden imperial pasts, then they are also tales of mystery and intrigue in relation to racial origins. What secrets and pretences lie at the heart of these biographies?[7] Did these singers hide their Indian origins as part of this transformation? The annals of British popular music are not without

spectacular stories of social whitening, perhaps the most famous example being that of Farrokh Bulsara, who was born in Zanzibar of Indian Parsi parentage, completed his education in India and arrived in Britain with his family at the age of 17.[8] But the 'make-over' case of the man who was to become Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of the successful rock group *Queen*, is quite different to that of Richard and Humperdinck. The latter were born in India but they were part of domiciled British communities who consciously identified with their European descent and their status as colonizers. However, whether they were also of 'mixed-race' descent – or 'Anglo-Indian' – is another question altogether and a core issue that informs my interest in this study. If the invention of Richard and Humperdinck is not a straightforward case of celebrity 'white-washing', then how did the politics of whiteness in colonial India shape the lives of the real Webb and Dorsey? Were the tunes performed by these two British icons in relation to racial origins merely mimicking an older imperial melody?

Children of the Raj

According to these biographies, the real Cliff Richard and Engelbert Humperdinck were very much children of the British Raj. Harry Webb was born at the King's English Hospital in Victoria Street, Lucknow, the son of Roger and Dorothy Webb. Both of his parents were born in India. Webb spent the first few years of his childhood in Dehra Dun, and then the family moved to 'a small first floor apartment over a chocolate factory by Howrah station'[9] in Calcutta, and his earliest memories are of his childhood there. In September 1945, 'Harry started at St Thomas' Church School in Church Road, Howrah, a building set among the banana trees. He clearly remembers one of the family servants, Habib, bringing his lunch up to him each day wrapped in a napkin.'[10] The son of an engineer from Leicester who was stationed in the army, Arnold was one of ten children and he spent the first ten years of his life in Madras. His childhood memories reveal the typical lifestyle of British Raj families, recalling 'a large red-bricked house with a veranda running around it with balconies and numerous bedrooms'.[11] He also describes idyllic and enchanting memories of a secluded life, almost displaced in the Indian environment. He talks of his parents' entertaining, of learning musical instruments and going for late afternoon strolls. Living in less salubrious surroundings than those of the Dorsey family home in Madras, the Webbs nevertheless enjoyed the comforts of European privilege. We learn that 'although it was company accommodation, the Webbs were well off by the standards of their contemporaries back in England. They enjoyed the services of a cook, a bearer, a sweeper, a washer, and an ayah, the servant who looked after the small children.'[12]

The colonial environment provided the social leverage where lower and middle-class people from England were able to reinvent themselves as something much grander far from home.[13] Long-distance mobility

facilitated the breaking down and reconstruction of new social boundaries that remained both precarious and in flux, where new and largely artificial European societies threw old class markers into disarray. For the British in India, this was exacerbated by racial arrogance: a sense of superiority over the 'natives' and the creation of heavily policed social barriers between Europeans and Indians. Turner notes that while Harry's mother had been in India all of her life, 'she would never have known a native Indian as a close friend. The Indians had their homes on the outskirts of the big towns and lived entirely separate lives.'[14] Engelbert returned to Madras in 1984 to trace his own childhood memories upon the death of his father, and remarked with a certain regret and nostalgia the loss of quarantined 'white' residential areas where his own family home once stood:

> When I looked out of the car's window, the surroundings looked utterly different from anything I remembered from my childhood when British occupation has spit and polished certain areas, and the front gates to our house were protected by militia and manned by servants.[15]

While these narratives do speak of privileged European worlds, of strong social barriers and exclusive spaces, they also speak of vulnerabilities in regard to one's place as a 'Britisher'. They reveal lives where the uncertain boundaries of class and race fuelled a sense of perpetual status anxiety.

The family was part of the local Railway Institute club which was a space designed for meeting, and connecting with, other Europeans. Webb's biography is particularly illuminating for showing how the European 'club' was a space that marked out both internal class and racial differences within the British community itself as much as it sought to provide an oasis away from Indians.[16] Harry's cousin, Joyce Dobra, remembers that there were also deeply entrenched rules to observe in the social hierarchy of 'club' etiquette:

> I had the education of a civil servant and could get into almost any club. But because my father had been born in India, he was looked down on by those who had been born in Europe. We in turn looked down on the railway people who, like the post and telegraph, lived in rented accommodation. There were very strict social codes laid down by the wives of army officers and diplomats. The rich Indians were allowed to socialize with the whites but even they weren't admitted to any of the clubs.[17]

This description of the racialized social pecking order of European life is telling, and the entire question of what was meant by the identification 'white' in the context of late colonial India, as Elizabeth Buettner and Lionel Caplan point out in their respective studies of British and Anglo-Indian life in India, is both ambiguous and slippery.[18] There is a clear sense of uncertainty in regard to the differing ranks of whiteness within the 'club',

revealing that British officials who were born and raised in Britain ranked higher than the 'domiciled Europeans' who identified as British but were born and raised in India (and were themselves highly stratified on lines of social class); and the 'mixed-race' community of Anglo-Indians who found themselves in an 'in between' category on the fringes of European life. By the 1930s, the 'domiciled Europeans' and the 'Anglo-Indians' were collectively known as the 'domiciled community' and there was, indeed, much connection and inter-marriage between them.[19] Both groups were 'country-born' and they had identical social and political interests. However, while both were looked down upon by the British-born community in India, 'domiciled Europeans' were clearly advantaged in matters of employment, earning up to three times more than Anglo-Indians for the same occupation.[20] Darker skin colour put Anglo-Indians further down the social scale since it was a physical symbol of their mixed-race origins, and the ultimate barrier to their complete acceptance. Both biographies remain ambiguous on the question of where the Webb and Dorsey families actually fitted into this social schema of 'domiciled European' and 'Anglo-Indian', as both families claimed to be members of the former group.

Proving that one was a member of the European community, through the demonstration of appropriate markers of whiteness to differentiate oneself from Indians, figures strongly in this quest to prove 'domiciled European' status. This sense of aloofness from Indian society in the making of imperial subjectivity runs deep through both of these life stories, where India is imagined as a foreign place where one lived temporarily and from which one sought refuge. Dorsey and Webb prefer to see themselves as British children living in the colonies, as transient and temporary sojourners. Ironically, however, both men had mothers who were born and raised in India, and who were much more culturally anchored in the Indian environment than either of their fathers. In her comprehensive study of the spatial politics of 'home' for Eurasians in late colonial India, Alison Blunt notes that 'Anglo-Indians felt both at home and not at home in British India.'[21] However, she relates this ambivalence to contesting notions of descent which saw the development of complex attachments to their adopted country. While Anglo-Indians were defined primarily in relation to their ability to verify British descent on the father's side, this patriarchal loyalty to Britain as a homeland was often at odds with a maternal attachment to India.[22] Questions of belonging seem to surface most poignantly when the act of returning 'home' to England after Indian independence is raised. Joyce Dobra speaks of the Webbs' passage to Britain as no surprise since, in her words, 'we were white and were always brought up with the idea that one day we would be "going home to England".'[23] In Dorsey's autobiographical account of the return home, he also speaks of himself 'returning' to a country that he had never been to: 'Dad had brought us up to be British and had told us such a wealth of stories about life in England that I had absolutely no regrets.'[24]

Fantasies of whiteness

If the life stories of Webb and Dorsey speak of families who aspired to be of the rank of 'domiciled Europeans' who lived in India, then these fantasies of whiteness contrast with the probable reality that their 'dark looks' are an indication of mixed-race descent through their maternal sides. While their lives demonstrate a subversion of colonial binaries and neat boundaries of racial identity, straddling both British and Indian worlds, they never explicitly refer to themselves as 'Eurasian' or 'Anglo-Indian', and they seem reluctant to identify themselves in this way. On the contrary, rather than refer to their Indian birth and descent in an exploratory manner, these are stories where the main subjects self-consciously fashion themselves as British boys growing up in India where Indians themselves remain distant from their lives except as servants or bystanders.[25]

In terms of historical context, the biographies are situated in the immediate pre-independence period when nationalist agitation against British rule was intense. While Indian leaders called for Indian control over Indian business and government, British institutions became the targets of anti-imperial attacks. In arguably Dorsey's most striking childhood reminiscence, he recalls being directly affected by the intensity of the pro-independence riots in the 1940s, recalling a scene outside of his school:

> I was just eight years old when I saw my first beheaded policeman lying in the dust and dung of the roadside, and before my next birthday had come around I'd seen a dozen such sights. Our school, St Kevin's, a Catholic school run by nuns and priests, was located within a compound and we would often see mutilated, dismembered bodies, minus heads, eyes, and limbs, and other spoils of the riots, placed in rolled mats on either side of the gates that led to it.[26]

Dorsey's reflections indicate the extent to which the majority of Domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians supported British rule in India, perceiving the British occupation as the natural order of things, distancing themselves from Indians in terms of their friendships and everyday contacts, and embracing the political culture of the British Raj. As a consequence, this meant that many Anglo-Indians attempted to mask, conceal or deny their Indian heritage, denying aspects of their own selves in order to prove that they were loyal 'Britishers'.

The reluctance to be self-consciously identified as Eurasian was also related in significant ways to the politics of moral respectability in late imperial India, where inter-racial relationships were often out of wedlock and inter-racial sex was perceived to politically undermine the social fabric of the British Raj.[27] Conversely, relationships across the racial divide were also socially taboo in the moral cosmology of Hindu society, adding to the sense

of double alienation felt by those of mixed-race origins. Webb's aunt, Olive Queenie, reveals how miscegenation was viewed from the other side of the colonial frontier:

> The Indians didn't like the idea of a mixture of races. They thought that any white person who mixed with an Indian was trash, any white girl who went with an Indian man was trash to them. They wouldn't respect her. Similarly, any of their girls who went with a white man was automatically considered to be trash.[28]

As a result, both life narratives are deeply ambiguous in their treatment of racial origins and identifiable strategies of avoidance, pretence or diversion are at play within the selective remembering and acceptance of their imperial pasts.[29] Both biographies dodge around the issue of skin colour and Indian origin, revealing perplexing and startlingly contradictory details. Richard's biographer, Steve Turner, notes that 'it has been rumoured that Cliff's dark looks are due to mixed race,'[30] and then proceeds to refute the observation with the suggestion that Webb has 'a great-grandmother on his mother's side [who] was half Welsh and half Spanish. Photographs of her in middle age show that she had distinctive Mediterranean looks which passed to her children.'[31] This suggestion that Webb's great-grandmother was of Spanish origin may well be true, yet it is more likely that her 'distinctive Mediterranean looks' were the result of Portuguese Eurasian heritage; the proposition that she was of Spanish origin could be a convenient device to erase any suggestion that she might have been 'mixed-race'. Descended from previous generations of inter-racial marriage between the Portuguese and Indian women, Portuguese Eurasians were forebears of the later 'domiciled European' and 'Anglo-Indian' communities and Portuguese names remained a common reminder of that legacy.[32]

While the biographies of Webb and Arnold sketch childhoods where both boys were constructed as 'white' in relation to Indians, occupying a relative position of racial privilege, their racial status in relation to other Europeans was unstable and vexed, revealing that social class and skin colour had the potential to undermine their already tentative and vulnerable places in the power structure of imperial rule. Another tactic of diversion and pretence in these biographies is to claim spectacular and obscure aristocratic origins to explain exotic looks. According to Turner, Webb's paternal grandmother, Donella Eugenie, 'had slightly oriental looks. Rumour had it they were due to a Burmese princess who had married into Donella's mother's family. Her direct ancestry was Dutch and English, but, if the Burmese connection is true, it would further explain Cliff's dark colouring.'[33] Eurasians or Anglo-Indians in colonial India were a cosmopolitan and diverse community whose paternal ancestors may have come from a variety of European countries, and where it was not unusual for maternal ancestors to have come from

Burma as well as India.[34] But the story of the Burmese princess appears to speak to a deep desire among Anglo-Indians for status and legitimacy in the eyes of the British colonizers. It mobilizes a fantastic claim to a distant royal connection as a way of rendering Asian descent acceptable to an imperial culture in which it was viewed as a source of moral anxiety. Similarly, Sally Morgan tells of stories of esteemed aristocratic origins in her classic autobiography *My Place*: the leitmotif of having an Indian or Chinese princess as part of one's own personal genealogy as a strategy to claim high status for those deprived of any status whatsoever; and how the deep trauma of the 'mixed-race' Aboriginal experience was repressed in a narrative of mythical origins.[35]

In her essay in this collection, Angela Woollacott charts a similar imposture in her analysis of Anglo-Indian filmstar, Merle Oberon, who invented a Tasmanian aspect to her past as a strategy to divert attention away from her real Indian origins. Oberon's case and those of Richard and Humperdinck all remind us that these respective pretences were fuelled by the real power of racial hierarchies in imperial settings, where revelations of Indian descent destabilized legitimate claims to white status. The tensions existing between 'domiciled Europeans' and 'Anglo-Indians' in colonial India were very real, shaped by material disadvantage and racial prejudice, with imperial commentators often noting that the favouritism accorded to the former group gave lighter skinned Eurasians opportunities to 'pose' as Europeans as economic expediency dictated.[36] These efforts to 'pass' as white people to get ahead in a society that awarded privileges on the basis of lighter skin colour meant that the threat of disclosure of Indian descent was tantamount to social and economic death. As seen in the case of Oberon, transnational mobility facilitated elaborate stories of exotic origins in order to keep the truth of a darker maternal ancestry at bay. This reminds us of the enduring effects of the stigma of miscegenation in an imperial order where dark skin colour within domiciled European societies was both a marker of lower social rank and a potential source of moral shame. Feeling that their political loyalties to the British Raj and their cultural affiliations to the European community were never really reciprocated with social acceptance, some Anglo-Indians resorted to abandoning their real pasts altogether.[37]

Imagined homelands

Arriving in England to start a new life was the beginning of the transformation of these children of the Raj into the British household names that have been so enduring for the past five decades. Dorsey's family departed in 1946 just before Indian independence, and the Webbs arrived in England in September 1948. Both biographies trace their first reactions to England as children from the colonies and their subsequent adjustment and resettlement process. According to Steve Turner, Cliff's biographer, the young Harry

Webb was struck by the landscape and vegetation of his adopted country. Webb remembers seeing the green landscape of England compared to the 'brown dust' of India in an almost 'Ruskinesque' trope of imperial nostalgia:

> Harry's first impression of his new country was the typical one of those who had never seen the motherland – the appearance of well-watered vegetation after a lifetime surrounded by brown dust. 'I can remember nothing of the white cliffs of Dover or even of Tilbury,' he once said, 'but I shall never forget the green fields, the trees and the flowers; particularly the flowers on Carshalton station.'[38]

Of course, Harry's first memories of his childhood, coinciding with his first experiences of school, were based in colonial Calcutta in a largely urban environment and far from 'a lifetime surrounded by brown dust'. However, this seems to convey the metaphorical sense that arriving in England represented a fresh beginning and a new direction. The 'brown dust' of life in the colonies is replaced by a new chapter in the Promised Land where the symbolism of regeneration and rejuvenation dovetails with the imagery of England as the centre of the world. This fantasy of the welcoming green oasis, however, stands in stark contrast to the reality of arrival in the immediate post-war years when the country was still immersed in food rationing and severe housing shortages and devastated by bomb damage in parts of its inner cities. Beyond the rhetoric of green fields and pretty flowers, the real social and political landscape waiting for these children of the Empire on their arrival was one of dislocation, austerity and hardship.

Inevitable downward shifts in social status are reflected in both biographical narratives where working-class life in post-war English towns replaced the secluded clubs of the 'domiciled community' in India. Dorsey remembers the absence of servants and the fact that he had to play with other boys in the street. These were symbols of a larger shift in class position:

> Once there, however, England required a bigger adjustment than I'd ever imagined. We had moved into a detached house which, although quite large, was by no means as grand as the one we had just left. I used to play football in the street with other children who lived in the same street, and go hunting for money in the grilles which covered the coal chutes. There were no servants to wait on us hand and foot; we had to do everything ourselves![39]

The Webb family of two adults and three children lodged in a small room with other family, and it was not until two years after their arrival in Britain that they eventually moved into their own council house on the Bury Green Estate in Cheshunt in 1951, with both parents finding work at Thorn Electrical Industries in Enfield.[40] Dorsey's childhood in post-war Leicester as

one of ten children was equally tinged with stories of hardship and struggle, of collecting rationed eggs, of doing two years' National Service in the army and of returning to a blue-collar job at the Cannon and Stokes engineering factory.[41] This restructuring of their lives as the modest 'boys next door' from small English towns who emerged from nowhere to take on the mighty American rock music machine struck a chord in the post-war British imagination.

However, cultural notions of what it meant to 'be British' in India did not map neatly onto preconceived racial categories in England. Families such as the Dorseys and the Webbs who strove to be part of the 'domiciled European' community in India, discovered that they were both culturally and physically different in their new environment. As a consequence, Anglo-Indians crossed the boundaries of different languages of whiteness, judged by different criteria and described according to a different syntax and grammar. Turner writes tellingly that Webb's 'deep tan hadn't stood out in India. In fact, he had been the "white boy". But here in south-west London, where very few white children had seen a person who wasn't white, he was thought exotic. The difference was accentuated by his Anglo-Indian accent.'[42] In this description, there are clearly two different notions of whiteness at play. In fact, whiteness is a relational field informed by specific circumstances and localized hierarchies of power and privilege.[43] Being 'European' in colonial India was a more elastic identification that could encompass darker skinned Anglo-Indians depending on their relative class position, education and social rank. This colonial construction of whiteness was at odds with the British context where skin colour was an immediate signifier of cultural difference and where those who considered themselves to be 'white' in the colonies found that they were not necessarily perceived as such in the metropole.[44] Hence, the young Dorsey and Webb arrived in England as darker-skinned 'British' children of the Empire to face a cultural reading of 'race' that saw them as outsiders.

In her chapter in this collection, Kirsten McKenzie investigates the class performance of the colonial adventurer, John Dow, unravelling his life to reveal him as an impostor who had taken the name and status of a son of an earl: Edward, Viscount Lascelles. Dow's fraudulent act was spurred by delusion. Thinking that the tyranny of distance between the colony of New South Wales and the Mother Country could erase both collective memory and possible detection, he took the name of Lascelles to give himself both a new life and a new status. However, based on further investigation, McKenzie reveals that Lascelles himself was the product of social self-reinventions of a different kind, exposing that all claims to status in colonial worlds are in themselves imagined, inaccurate and arbitrary.

Of course, the cultural transformations of Webb and Dorsey are both vastly different, and yet philosophically similar, to the instructive lesson of Dow's story. They are not adventurers or impostors, nor did they have such selfish

motivations for reckless misadventure. While both did change their names to get ahead, with Dorsey in particular taking the stage name of a famous classical composer in a more-or-less ironic attempt to grab attention, they did so within the realm of stage and screen fantasy, rather than to gain advantage from using a false identity. Their primary social fantasy was nurtured not by a desire to deceive, but by a historically informed desire to belong to their Promised Land. Their quest was to be re-packaged as attractive 'white' performers from small English towns to enhance their appeal across a wide cross-section of British society. More significantly, these are stories of reverse migration from the colonies to the metropole where identities framed by the imperial politics of whiteness in India did not fit easily with the racial boundaries operating within Britain itself. While Dow's story reveals the essentially fictive nature of social class and status, the stories of Richard and Humperdinck reveal that the same rings true for notions of 'race' in the imperial world. Unmasked, they expose the fictive nature of all notions of whiteness under imperialism, requiring historians of colonial situations, myself included, to pay more attention to the cultural specificities of their articulation.

These are stories in which the stigma of miscegenation and questions of illegitimacy, coupled with the low self-esteem of those inhabiting the margins of both British and Indian worlds, speak of a deep psychic violence at the heart of the Anglo-Indian life story. Those of mixed-race, whether they acknowledged their pasts or whether they erased them, were hanging in the categorical cracks of a strictly hierarchical racial system, viewed as outsiders on both sides of the colonial divide where they struggled to find true acceptance. As Ashis Nandy has argued, the trauma of the colonized soul is exemplified by the consumption and acceptance of the culture of the colonizer into the body of the colonized. In his terminology, the enemy is so intimate that it forms a part of one's own corporeal being.[45] In order to understand the transformation of Harry Webb and Arnold Dorsey into Cliff Richard and Engelbert Humperdinck, we need to understand them as products of an imperial society where whiteness was of a different colour and where their aspirations to be 'domiciled Europeans' in India underscored the ways in which they chose to remember their real transnational lives. In this sense, the real impostors are the racial categories imposed by imperial conditions rather than the people who fall victim to them.

Notes

1. See K. J. Connelly (1998), 'Sir Cliff Richard and British Pop Musicals', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* Vol. 25, No. 4: 146. Connelly claims that Richard was knighted in 1996. The announcement was made on 16 June 1995 while the actual ceremony at Buckingham Palace took place on 25 October 1995. See *The Guardian*, 17 June 1995, p. 1 and Steve Turner (2005), *Cliff Richard: The Biography* (Oxford: Lion Hudson), p. 304.

2. See P. Gambaccini et al. (eds) (1978), *The Guinness Book of British Hit Singles* (London: Guinness Superlatives), p. 114.
3. See W. Holden (1999), 'Why Cliff Richard Is Still On Top', *New Statesman* Vol. 128, No. 4465: 17.
4. See *The Times*, 6 January 2006, p. 4.
5. See D. Bradley (1992), *Understanding Rock'n'Roll: Popular Music in Britain, 1955–1964* (Birmingham: Open University Press).
6. Engelbert Humperdinck and Katie Wright (2004), *Engelbert: What's in a Name* (London: Virgin) and Turner, *Cliff Richard*. Since this essay was written, Cliff Richard has published his autobiography *My Life, My Way* (London: Vox, 2008). His birth and early life in India are briefly mentioned on pages 5 and 6, including the following:

   > We came to England in 1948 when the British all flooded back home after India won its independence. My parents were British, but both of them had been born abroad and neither of them had ever been to England, so they had no "home" to go to. My father was born in Burma, and my mother, Dorothy Dazely, in India, which is where they met. (p. 6).

7. See G. Whitlock (2007), *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 10–11, 20.
8. See *The Times*, 25 November 1991, p. 3; *The Guardian*, 25 November 1991, p. 1.
9. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 36.
10. Ibid., p. 37.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 24.
13. See K. McKenzie (2004), *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820–1850* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), p. 4.
14. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 33.
15. Humperdinck and Wright, *Engelbert*, p. vi.
16. See M. Sinha (2001), 'Britishness, Clubbability and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution', *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 40, No.4: 489–521.
17. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 34.
18. See E. Buettner (2004), *Empire Families: Britons in Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 12–24, 74–79; and L. Caplan (2003), *Children of Colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a Postcolonial World*, (London: Berg), p. 78.
19. See H. Gidney (1934), 'The Future of the Anglo-Indian Community', *Journal of the East India Association* Vol. XXV, No. 1: 27–42.
20. See E. Abel (1988), *The Anglo-Indian Community: Survival in India* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications), p. 6.
21. A. Blunt (2005), *Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home* (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 50; and A. Blunt (2002), ' "Land of Our Mothers": Home, Identity and Nationality for Anglo-Indians in British India', *History Workshop Journal* No. 54: 49–72.
22. Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora*, p. 51.
23. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 215.
24. Humperdinck and Wright, *Engelbert*, p. 4.
25. See N. King (2000), *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p. 3.

26. Humperdinck and Wright, *Engelbert*, p. 14.
27. See S. Sen (2001), 'Colonial Aversions and Domestic Desires: Blood, Race, Sex and the Decline of Intimacy in Early British India', *South Asia* XXIV: 35–45.
28. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 33.
29. On the role of 'strategic remembering' in the self-fashioning of autobiography, see G. Whitlock (2002), 'Strategic Remembering: Fabricating Local Subjects', in R. Dalziell (ed.), *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing), p. 172.
30. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 21.
31. Ibid.
32. See C. Hawes (1996), *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India; 1773–1833* (Richmond: Curzon), p. 85.
33. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 24.
34. See C. Dover (1937), *Half-Caste* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd.).
35. See S. Morgan (1987), *My Place* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press).
36. See K. E. Wallace (ed.) (1930), *The Eurasian Problem Constructively Approached* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co.), p. 30.
37. See F. Anthony (1969), *Britain's Betrayal in India: The Story of the Anglo-Indian Community* (Bombay: Allied Publishers), p. ii.
38. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, p. 41.
39. Humperdinck and Wright, *Engelbert*, p. 8.
40. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, pp. 43–48.
41. Humperdinck and Wright, *Engelbert*, pp. 9, 17, 31.
42. Turner, *Cliff Richard*, pp. 43–44.
43. See A. Carton (2007), 'Historicising Hybridity and the Politics of Location: Three Early Colonial Indian Narratives', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 28, No. 1: 143–155.
44. See A. Woollacott (1997), '"All This Is the Empire I Told Myself": Australian Women's Voyages "Home" and the Articulation of Colonial Whiteness', *American Historical Review* Vol. 102, No. 4: 1003–1029.
45. A. Nandy (1983), *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), p. 7.

7

Colonial Origins and Audience Collusion: The Merle Oberon Story in 1930s Australia

Angela Woollacott

Colonialism has depended upon the plasticity of class status and racial categories, even as colonial elites sought constantly to shore up the boundaries and markers that sustained their elite status. As Homi Bhabha has helped us to understand, colonialism also fostered subject positions in which the colonized were supposed to emulate the colonizers, only to be mocked for their mimicry of their superiors.[1] For the mixed-race, such as the Anglo-Indian community in late colonial India that Adrian Carton discusses insightfully in the previous chapter, any aspirations to be accepted as fully British were constantly checked by structural exclusion and marginalization. For the young woman who would become mid-twentieth-century film star Merle Oberon, transnational mobility, her imperial access to the metropole, was a way of escaping those constraints and reinventing herself as part of the colonial ruling elite. That she did so through a fabrication of herself as another kind of colonial – Tasmanian – suggests the connections between transnational mobility, fantasy and pretence, as well as the requirement of whiteness for stardom in the early to mid-twentieth century.

In her chapter Kirsten McKenzie shows the ways in which colonial distance from Britain enabled John Dow's impersonation of Viscount Lascelles, and thus the connections among empire, mobility and fraud. Moreover, McKenzie points to the fabrications of social status within Britain made possible by profits from the colonies. Adrian Carton's study of Cliff Richard and Engelbert Humperdinck reveals some of the same dynamics as my study of Oberon: the ways in which racial hierarchies have forced the 'mixed-race' to suppress their actual origins in order to get ahead, and the enabling of that pretence by the distance between colony or former colony and metropole.

If some transnational life stories have hinged upon secrecy, suppression and lies, in Oberon's case there was another element – the willing participation in belief of an audience from a country in which she never set foot until two or three brief visits late in life. Oberon's lifelong pretence to be Tasmanian – an invoking of a safely remote, colonial location associated with white settlers – was enabled by the eager collusion of her imagined

compatriots. Thus, a film star whose life was lived in the northern hemisphere, purported to hail from a distant southern hemisphere location, trusting in that very distance to preclude the possibility of detection, just as John Dow in early colonial Australia trusted in the same distance. While Oberon and the studio publicists who invented her story saw that geographic distance – close to half the circumference of the earth – as a buffer, at the same time it strengthened the desires of Tasmanians and other Australians to claim her. The transnational imaginations – or the transnational lives of the mind – of those southern fans stretched around the globe to incorporate someone none of them had met, as one of their own.

* * *

Merle Oberon's life was transnational in real ways: she moved from Calcutta to London to establish her career, and later to Hollywood, then Mexico and back to Hollywood. We know these basic elements from the work of biographers Charles Higham and Roy Moseley, whose book *Princess Merle* was published in 1983. From them we know too about the propaganda work of the London studio publicists who in the 1930s invented her 'Tasmanian' birth in order to locate her as a colonial and at once to obscure her lower-class and mixed-race origins. From Cassandra Pybus's 1998 essay 'Lottie's Little Girl', and Maree Delofski's 2002 film *The Trouble with Merle*, we know about the tenacious Tasmanian mythology of Oberon's imagined Tasmanian birth to Chinese hotel worker Lottie Chintock. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Pybus followed stories and leads in north-eastern Tasmania trying to establish Oberon's origins. Confronted with the clear absence of a Tasmanian birth certificate for Oberon, and a remarkable set of variations of the Tasmanian story, in her essay Pybus muses on the power of narratives.[2]

Delofski conducted both archival research and oral interviews in the process of making her documentary. One startling result of her research was a revision of Higham and Moseley's biography. Higham and Moseley had consulted Harry Selby, an Anglo-Indian Canadian resident who said at the time that he was Oberon's nephew, and who provided the biographers with much of the material on her early years in Bombay. Selby shared with Delofski some key facts he had not been prepared to tell the earlier researchers because of his then concern for his own family. With a birth certificate to prove it, he claimed that he and Oberon had had the same mother – that he was not Oberon's nephew, but half-brother. Their mother Constance Selby had become pregnant by her stepfather, was 15 at the time of Oberon's birth, and had given her daughter to her own mother to raise.[3] Yet this archival revelation was only one of the film's concerns. The heart of the film is the late-twentieth century and continuing mythology that denies Oberon's birth in Bombay and locates her instead as Tasmanian. Through interviews with descendants of Lottie Chintock and other Tasmanians, Delofski evokes

the emotional investments of the storytellers. As Delofski wrote in a recent article about making the film: 'The Tasmanians' stories of Oberon's upbringing had been, in the main, second- or third-hand accounts exchanged across generations and, generally, outside the lived experience of the storytellers. Ultimately, their significance lay more in what they revealed about the tellers' struggle for identity than as authenticated information about Oberon's provenance'.[4]

Both Pybus and Delofski's work documents the cultural processes in which the mythology of Oberon's Tasmanian birth has been shaped and sustained in recent decades, and the attachment of some Australians to it. Even in the early twenty-first century, some Australians – particularly Tasmanians – perpetuate the mythology of Oberon's Antipodean birth in part because of the transnational cultural legitimacy it lends them. In recent years that process has had a boost from an unrelated source, the celebrity of Tasmanian Mary Donaldson, now Crown Princess of Denmark; another story of a Tasmanian attaining international glamour, albeit a demonstrably true one. It should be added that this tenacious mythology was supported by Oberon's own lifelong adherence to the studio-publicity fiction of her birth; she never admitted to her mixed-race, Indian origins, and herself provided various versions of her life that linked a Tasmanian birth with brief time spent in India.

* * *

In this chapter I consider how Australians in the 1930s – including but not only Tasmanians – participated in the construction of Merle Oberon as Tasmanian. Rather than the mythology of recent decades, I examine the Oberon story as it was first being spread and elaborated through the popular press. I have come to this topic from an interest in the racial interpretations of 'Australian' female celebrities from the 1910s to the 1940s; how in making themselves recognizable, a few women performers created newly modern, racially ambiguous Australian femininities, and how those ambiguities played out in popular culture. This chapter is about an imagined transnational life story rather than an actual transnational life. It is also concerned with how popular culture shaped such stories, how lives have been transnational in fictitious as well as material ways and how a belief that whiteness was necessary to success underpinned both colonial cultures and the emergent world of film. The geographical mobility facilitated by colonialism, such as the colonial pilgrimage (or 'return') to the metropolitan 'Home', enabled some mixed-race colonial subjects to reinvent themselves as quite 'white'.

Oberon was born Estelle Merle O'Brien Thompson in Bombay in 1911; her mother was Anglo-Indian, originally from Ceylon, and her father English. In 1917 she and her (grand)mother moved to Calcutta, where for a while Queenie (as Oberon was known during her years in India) attended a prestigious

boarding-school as a charity student. She left school early, attended business school, became a typist and telephone switchboard operator, and performed with the Calcutta Amateur Theatrical Society. In 1929, Oberon sailed for London, with a brief stop in Nice, her sights set on film acting. At first she resorted to work as a dance hostess, but before long began to get work at Elstree Studios.[5] Very briefly, Oberon's first film was *Alf's Button* in 1930 – a bit part. She had a few more bit parts before she was picked up by producer and director Alexander Korda in *Wedding Rehearsal* (1932). She was first really recognized with *The Private Life of Henry VIII* by Korda in 1933. Then she was reasonably successful in, for example, *The Battle* 1934; *The Broken Melody* 1934; *The Private Life of Don Juan* 1934 and *The Scarlet Pimpernel* 1934. Oberon's first big hit was *The Dark Angel* in 1935; which was followed by *These Three* in 1936 by Sam Goldwyn co-starring Joel McCrea; *Beloved Enemy* in 1936 by Goldwyn co-starring David Niven; *Over the Moon* in 1937 by Korda, co-starring Rex Harrison; *The Divorce of Lady X* in 1938 by Korda, co-starring Laurence Olivier; *Wuthering Heights* in 1939 by Korda and William Wyler, in which she played Cathy opposite Olivier's Heathcliff, and many more. She featured regularly in films into the 1950s; made a few late films in the 1960s, and starred in a last one in 1973, six years before her death at the age of 68.[6]

An examination of the 1930s Australian popular press shows racial ambiguities in representations and reports of Oberon, perhaps because gossip about her origins may have circulated in transnational popular culture despite the official studio publicity story. Australians were drawn to Oberon partly because of her imagined exoticism, which suggests that their collusion in the myth of her Tasmanian birth was based on ambivalence about racial categories. Stories from the mid-1930s in papers and magazines including *The Australian Women's Weekly*, *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, *Everyones*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and the Hobart *Mercury* show Australians struggling with racial ambiguities in relation to Oberon. They instantly accepted the claim that she was Australian, yet found themselves negotiating the ambiguities of her appeal in order to make her fully so.

My research focussed on the very early years when she was becoming known, because I wanted to see what Australians made of her when they first found out about her. In the 1930s the White Australia policy, which restricted immigration to Australia through the mechanism of a dictation test which could be arbitrarily given in any European language, was in its heyday. Chinese and other Asian immigration had dropped from various high points of the nineteenth century, not least because of the restrictions put in place from the 1880s, yet small communities existed, as did scattered and itinerant workers of Asian descent. Popular Australian fears had been fed from the late-nineteenth century onwards by pulp horror narratives of Asian invasion, as well as by widespread debate over Australia's 'empty' inland and north, putatively an incentive for such invasion.[7] By the interwar decades, racism and popular eugenics made miscegenation a hot topic. Governmental

policy now included the removal of Aboriginal children from their mothers. As David Walker discusses, in these years Australians' racist talk of degenerative 'half-castes' included Eurasians – not least Anglo-Indians.[8]

Tellingly, in making Oberon Australian, Australians happily stressed her Englishness or Britishness. Australianness became blended with Oberon's 'belong[ing] to a very great extent, to the Empire'. But in as far as that imperial belonging was a product of her 'working acquaintance with two of the largest countries in the British Empire',[9] Australia and India, it was entangled with questions of racial classification. Partly because they embraced Oberon as part of the empire, Australians sought to clarify her status as 'white', as one of the imperial ruling class. Transnational life stories, this one suggests, have helped to construct racial categories as hierarchies, through fantasy and desire.

* * *

Three main points are evident from the Australian press between 1934 and 1937. One is the instant and unquestioning eagerness with which writers claimed Oberon as Australian, despite the variations in stories about her provenance even then. A second point is their awareness of racial ambiguity surrounding her and her imagined 'exoticism'. And thirdly, the press reports show a transition that Oberon herself articulated, and that Australians participated in, from a worrying dark siren image, to becoming the English 'girl next door'.

A representative press item about the new 'Australian' star soon after her emergence was typically proud, even as it raised the issue of recognition:

> Some of the mystery surrounding the identity of Merle Oberon, who leapt to fame in a hundred feet of film as Anne Boleyn in 'The Private Life of Henry VIII', has been dispelled by Stephen Watts in FILM WEEKLY – the English one. The actress is Estelle Merle O'Brien Thompson, aged twenty-two, Tasmanian born of Irish-French parentage with Indian associations. The Oberon of her new stage name is a modification of the family O'Brien. Taken by her Indian uncle for a holiday in England, she tried her luck in films. Australians have seen her (but not recognised her) in 'Aren't We All?' and 'Wedding Rehearsal.' She is now being featured in England in 'The Broken Melody,' and will share feminine leads in Fairbanks's forthcoming 'Exit Don Juan.' Then America wants her. So the world is at her feet.[10]

Yet the accounts of her Australian childhood varied:

> Just 13 years ago a small girl of seven called Merle Thompson O'Brien was living the life of any youngster her age in Hobart, Tasmania.

> She went to school every day; she became film-struck, and adored 'going to the pictures,' where she could glory in her beloved Mary Pickford, Pauline Frederick, Louise Lovely, Theda Bara, Mary Miles Minter, and all the other big stars of the day.
>
> To-day in London, at the age of 21, that small cinema enthusiast has blossomed into Merle Oberon – the girl who was chosen as leading lady for Douglas Fairbanks as the direct result of her performance as Anne Boleyn in the British film, 'The Private Life of Henry VIII.' . . .
>
> You do not find a trace of that small girl who lived in Hobart in the soignée, sophisticated young woman who is Merle Oberon to-day. Since then she has lived with her parents in Calcutta for several years; has had four years' experience in London of the life of a struggling aspirant to film fame. She talks with perfect poise, and deprecates with delightful modesty any praise and congratulation.[11]

While these early reports sought to explain her Australian origins, soon she was just reported as Merle Oberon, the 'Tasmanian girl', or the Australian actress, Merle Oberon, as a matter of fact.

Yet however automatic and standard the identification of Oberon as Australian became, worries about her racial identity were aired repeatedly. In the 1934 film *The Battle* (which had overtones of Madame Butterfly), Oberon was cast as Japanese, not surprisingly exacerbating the anxieties about her so-called exoticism. Some reports sought to suppress the worry:

> Merle Oberon, the Tasmanian girl . . . looks fascinating with her artificially elongated Oriental eyes; and she brings conviction to the heroine's mingling of Japanese and European traits in her movements and gestures.[12]

Other reports mixed Australian pride in Oberon with anxiety about the ease with which she could appear 'Oriental'.

Interestingly, in this period in particular, descriptions of her often emphasized her affinity with and fondness for the colour brown, a theme that could well be read as an expression of racial ambiguity. The *Australian Women's Weekly*, for example, sought to balance these racial worries with an emphasis on Oberon's education and intellect, as though that would counteract the concern:

> Merle Oberon, the Tasmanian girl . . . . is very petite, with bright brown hair. Her eyes are dark and almond shaped, so that she needed very little make-up to obtain the Oriental effect in the part of a Japanese beauty, which she took in 'The Battle,' soon to be released in Australia.

> Merle is intelligent, and is always poring over history books . . . .
>
> Everyone in the film world is enthusiastic about Merle Oberon. She is not only a very beautiful and appealing girl, and a fine little actress, she is a well-read and charming woman. More than that, she is reputed to be the best-dressed woman on the English films. She gets almost everything from Schiaparelli, and is particularly fond of an unusual shade of brown, which brings out all the bronze of her rich brown hair.[13]

The *Sydney Morning Herald*'s note on Oberon's appearance in the 1934 film *The Scarlet Pimpernel* at once combined serious racial concern with the view that this was merely a cosmetic issue:

> Merle Oberon makes Lady Blakeney a personage of exceptional loveliness and of delicate sensibilities, in keeping with this proud but generously impulsive character. The only disturbing feature is her tendency strongly to orientalise her appearance by means of facial makeup, and the slant of black brows.[14]

The combined messages of these Australian press reports added up to clear unease with Oberon's origins, an unease that was reiterated in the very process of its apparent alleviation.

It was the 1935 film *The Dark Angel* which allowed Oberon and her Australian fans to whiten her, and turn her into 'an ordinary British girl'. An iconic story of the tragic losses of the Great War, Oberon played the respectable English sweetheart at home, with Fredric March and Herbert Marshall playing the two male leads. The three are childhood friends in the provinces, the two boys being cousins who vie for Merle's [Kitty's] affections. When they grow up and the war erupts, the two young men valiantly go off to the front while Merle takes the quintessential feminine wartime role, waiting with her mother and aunt. Fredric March as Alan is captured and blinded in France; when he returns to England he refuses to disclose his name and tries to hide so that Kitty won't marry him out of pity. Merle as Kitty Vane is on the verge of marrying Gerald (Herbert Marshall) instead, but accidentally finds Alan, and the plot suggests that her true love for Alan overcomes his blindness. Merle/Kitty's self-sacrifice in accepting his blindness is linked to her class status and respectability, which for Oberon could be translated as whiteness.

For the Australian media in the interwar period, not long after the emergence of the Anzac mythology that held the nation was born in the blood and sacrifice at Gallipoli in 1915, it was a role that vindicated Oberon's Australianness and deflected concerns about her racial identity. The *Sydney Morning Herald Women's Supplement* interviewed Oberon and shared her apparent pleasure at her newly British role:

Figure 7 Advertisement for *The Dark Angel*, *Everyones* magazine, 8 January 1936, p. 12. Held in Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

> On the strength of her performance in 'The Dark Angel,' Merle Oberon, the young Tasmanian girl, has been mentioned as a likely winner of the gold statuette presented by the Academy of Arts and Sciences for the best film acting of the year. . . . And it is not the Merle who, after she came to America, characterised exotic and mysterious sirens. She has entirely changed her screen personality. Interviewed during the production of her latest picture, she said, 'I've given up those sirenish roles, and am going in for real honest-to-goodness human being parts. Mr Goldwyn feels that I can transfer my real self to the screen if I'm given the chance.' So, when 'The Dark Angel' comes to the Regent Theatre on Friday week you will have your first opportunity of seeing her minus those bizarre coiffures and that air of mystery with which she has been surrounded in her recent pictures. For the first time you will see her as a normal British girl – 'Which I really hope I am,' says Merle.[15]

The *Australian Women's Weekly* reporter Cassie Marshall, 'an Australian in Hollywood', recorded her surprise and pleasure at Oberon's new persona with the subtitle 'No Longer Exotic':

> I was first introduced to Merle when she was working on 'The Dark Angel.' Previously, I had seen her pictures, of course, and had always remembered

> her as creating exotic roles. As Kitty Vane in this new production, she surprised me. For the first time, I saw her playing a normal English girl of good family and social position. And, judging by her work on the lot, she was doing it brilliantly.[16]

In the logic of empire, being 'a normal English girl' ratified Oberon's Australianness.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was definitive that Oberon's transition to English respectability had been made. In its review of 'The Dark Angel' the paper declared:

> a good deal of interest is added to the picture by the appearance of Merle Oberon surprisingly and very successfully transformed from the exotic, Oriental creature of her earlier films into an inhabitant of the everyday world. Except in the small part she played in 'The Private Lives of Henry VIII', Merle Oberon was never a complete success in her former character. This picture reveals that her real talent is in a diametrically opposite direction – that she is at her best not as a slant-eyed frail blossom from an Eastern garden, but as a natural, tender girl. *The lotus flower has been changed* (under the magic wand of make-up artists and an astute producer) *into a cornflower*.[17]

Moreover, Oberon's racial transition was supposedly shored up by evidence of her patriotism. On 8 February 1936 the *Australian Women's Weekly Movie World* breathlessly announced:

> Here's Hot News from all the Studios! . . .
>
> Merle Oberon likes to be surrounded by lovely things and doesn't hesitate to indulge herself. She has a most elaborate portable dressing room, and loves to entertain . . . At the entrance to her dressing-room is a table, and on it stands a small British flag. Australia's fair daughter is loyal.[18]

Loyalty for an Australian meant allegiance to Britain and the empire.

But even at the moment that Oberon achieved her first great success, and some Australians celebrated her triumph and her arrival as a properly British star playing 'white' roles, malicious gossip about her origins continued to be printed. Only three weeks later the same paper published an overtly racist cartoon obviously designed to unmask Oberon as Anglo-Indian. In a feature-corner cartoon titled 'Screen Oddities by Captain Fawcett', with other jokes including one about Charles Laughton trying to lose enough weight to be able to play Captain Bligh, a pen drawing of Oberon shows her as very dark-skinned, with her hair in what would have been considered an Indian style, and characteristically Indian jewellery. The cartoon is explained with the

caption: 'Merle Oberon wears earrings clasped to the side of her ear instead of the lobe' (that is, in an Indian style).[19]

The transition from 'lotus flower' to 'cornflower' was a key one for her career, yet even as it was declared complete it was still undermined and shadowed. Ambiguity and doubts about her racial identity lingered, eventually fuelling the Tasmanian mythology of her birth to Lottie Chintock, the Chinese hotel worker. Such ambiguities, scandals and anxieties circulated around the world in gossip columns. The *Australian Women's Weekly Movie World* could run the cartoon because its meaning would be instantly comprehensible to Australians.

Geographer Alison Blunt has shown, from her research on Anglo-Indian communities and migrations, that they were unwelcome in 1930s Australia. Moreover, there was a general belief that Anglo-Indians could be judged from visual appearance – a belief that must have fuelled the gossip and anxiety about Oberon's origins. After all, by the mid-1930s Oberon's face was one of the best known in the Anglophone world. The White Australia policy, entrenched by the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, in practice prohibited the immigration of Indians or Anglo-Indians. The depth of resistance to Anglo-Indians, and the stress placed on appearance, became apparent in the 1940s when many Australians, British and Anglo-Indians sought to leave India during the turmoil surrounding independence. In August 1947, at the height of the upheaval, an Australian ship sent to evacuate Australian and British people returned to Western Australia with more than 700 Anglo-Indians on board. While this group of Anglo-Indians was admitted, an investigation blamed the inability of immigration officers to screen properly those embarking in Bombay. In response, immigration restrictions were further tightened. In 1947, a new form was introduced for applicants from India, including questions about the applicant's parents' and grandparents' race, with applicants required to specify whether they were 'wholly European', or if partly Indian, whether that fraction was a quarter, a half, or three-quarters. Photographs were required with applications but not always considered sufficient proof; interviews were sometimes required as well. From 1949, applicants for migration to Australia had to prove that they were 'predominantly European in race or descent', as well as 'predominantly European in appearance'.[20] Before, during and after the 1930s, immigration policy reflected Australia's obsession with whiteness, and was regarded as one of, if not the, most restrictive in the British Commonwealth.

* * *

The ways in which Australians accepted Oberon as an Australian, based on the film studio propaganda, tell us about the transnational imaginations of even those who never left Australia's shores. The Australian popular and women's press, at least, and presumably their readers, leapt at the idea

of an Australian on the global silver screen, especially such a famous and glamorous star. As one reporter put it:

> Many Australians, male and female, have achieved success in Hollywood and the English studios. But Merle Oberon is the first to have won for herself a place in that small group of stars whose names are known to millions, and whose photographs are recognised by film fans in New York or London, Oshkosh, Pa., [*sic*] or Little Huddlecombe – to say nothing of the cities and towns of the six states of the Commonwealth.[21]

For Australians, it was a mixed blessing when the English paper *The Morning Post* referred to Oberon as 'probably England's best known screen actress', because they wanted her to be not just famous but known as Australian.[22]

Jill Matthews has described the process in which movies, fans and fan magazines became part of Australian modernity in the decades from the 1910s. As did people elsewhere in the world, Australians rapidly became movie-goers, embracing the fantasy world of the screen as an exciting new form of leisure and escape. They too became appreciative and discerning film audiences, and part of the global market for films and film-related commodities. Integral to the development of transnational film culture in the 1920s and 1930s was the cult of individual stars, a commodification of actors which fan magazines and movie studios both encouraged. Australian audiences participated in the construction of the glamorous film star as much as audiences elsewhere, through locally produced magazines as well as American imports.[23] Part of the appeal of film stars were their stories of emerging from anonymity and rising to celebrity, their embodiment of the magical possibilities of success. Curiosity about their background and origins, then, was inherent to the cult of individual stars, their stories and reputations. Fans were drawn to the stars through their visual appeal, the characters they played, the romance and opulence of their private lives and through fascination with the question of what it took to become famous.

Stage actors had long used make-up, but with film there were now two layers of illusory visual effects for audiences to conjure with: the make-up and the camera. As Liz Conor has shown of Australian culture within its broader transnational contexts, in the 1920s femininity became even more closely linked to visual spectacle and the female body than it had been. Fashion revealed the female body more than in any earlier period in cultural memory, at the same time that women newly transgressed cultural boundaries of space and public behaviour. Women office and shop workers – themselves encroaching on urban and public spaces – consumed fan magazine articles about movie stars, as they sought to dress, look, act and dance like them. The female screen star was the very model of feminine spectacularity, even as her 'illusory qualities were used as evidence that the spectacularized modern feminine was not to be trusted'.[24] If even Mary Pickford was

regarded as visually deceptive because of her heavy make-up, then Oberon's ethnic provenance was only another matter for speculation and curiosity – perhaps all the more so because her beauty was universally acclaimed. Yet Oberon's career hinged upon her passing as 'white', a fact her fans would fully have appreciated, just as she herself never wavered from the story of her Tasmanian origins. Thus, in largely accepting her as Australian, Australian fans played a crucial role in helping Oberon to secure her whiteness and consequently her career.

Australians negotiated racial ambiguities in order to claim Oberon as Australian through imagining her as quintessentially English or British. Susan Courtney, in her recent book on Hollywood and miscegenation, suggests that the Production Code's refusal of cinematic representations of miscegenation in the 1930s and 1940s marked a particular phase of racial thinking. She argues that racial thinking moved away from earlier discourses of 'blood' and ancestry, as cinema itself became partly responsible for increasing belief in visible bodily markers of racial difference. The 'dominant cultural assumption that racial difference is in fact visible', Courtney argues, '[was] an elaborate cinematic production'.[25] Courtney's argument is a useful frame within which to consider Oberon's acceptance as white. It is clear from the coverage of her films in the Australian press that there was early anxiety and doubt surrounding her racial identity, but these were largely overcome because – once she was playing proper, respectable British and American roles – she looked sufficiently Anglo to pass. Of course, the facts that she was beautiful and successful, and cultivated an English accent, all helped. In their eagerness to claim an Australian movie star, Australians set aside their doubts and bought into the studio propaganda. Yet in doing so, at some level, they showed that the category of white Australianness was negotiable. Through the transnational cultural imaginary, Australians grappled with and embraced racial ambiguities, in order to celebrate an extension of themselves on the global silver screen.

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8

Herbert Hoover and the Transnational Lives of Engineers

Carroll Pursell

Engineering was the largest of the new, modern professions unleashed by the Industrial Revolution, and during the hundred years between 1850 and 1950 many of those practitioners, especially in the areas of mining and civil works, were true cosmopolitans. The rage for exploration and exploitation during these years of High Imperialism created the context for and dictated the mobility of these transnational lives. The profession itself, and the men who followed it, sought out, embraced and were shaped by that experience.

Hoover

In 1904 poet Henry Lawson wrote in 'Australian Engineers' that 'hundreds of boys in Australia long to be engineers', but these young dreamers stood in sharp contrast to the reality of the actual 'stunted and white-faced Australians' who sold foreign-made goods in 'our sordid shops'. But in another poem that same year, 'Those Foreign Engineers', he invoked a larger reality when he referred to the Russo–Japanese war and imagined a Russian battleship that was really run not by its captain but by its engineer, 'Old Ivan McIvanovich', and a Japanese battleship run by another engineer, Jock McNogo. The conceit that Scotland not only produced engineers, but that one could find them working all over the world was a trope as old as the Industrial Revolution itself, and as recent as the Star Ship *Enterprise*.[1]

Herbert Hoover was important in this context because during his engineering career, which lasted from 1895 to 1914, he too worked all over the world: first in California, then in Australia, China, London, Burma and Russia; he had business interests in Africa and South America, and from 1908 had consulting offices in London, New York, San Francisco, Petrograd and Paris. He was almost continually absent from the United States for the two decades from 1897 to 1917.[2] Indeed, a review of one biography of Hoover claimed in the *Australian Book Review* that his 'career before 1914 had more impact on this country than on his own'.[3] In 'Herbert Hoover's Forgotten Years', Geoffrey Blainey made the same point: 'at the age of forty he was

known to more people in Kalgoorlie than Chicago and was more important in North Burma than in North America. In the imagination of most Americans he had had a split life'.[4] If Hoover's was hardly an 'ordinary' life, it was marked by that transnationalism which, as the editors of this volume assert, 'threatens the stability of national identity and unsettles the framework of national histories'.[5]

Hoover was born in West Branch, Iowa, on August 10, 1874. He entered the first class at Stanford University, California and graduated with a degree in geology in 1895. Beginning as a day labourer in California mines, he soon joined a San Francisco consulting group, and was recommended by Stanford patrons to the firm of Bewick, Moreing & Co. in London. Reportedly, the firm was looking for an experienced mining expert, 'someone at least 35 years old'. Hoover, who later admitted that he had never before been east of the Mississippi, was only 22, though the ship's passenger list had him down as 36. On shipboard he grew a moustache and beard, and by the time he reached London he had begun that process of transformation which one scholar described as release 'into the flow of elite, international, intellectual nomads riding the cutting edge of technology'.[6] In May 1897, just two years after graduating, Hoover arrived in Western Australia to act as a 'mine scout' for his new employers. His role there was strikingly analogous to that of the Aboriginal explorer Manyat's decades before described in this volume by Tiffany Shellam: he was hired to be a player in the 'knowledge economy' of the area.[7]

Hoover's career in Western Australia lasted only until 1899 when he was sent to China to be Chief Engineer of a large coal-mining and cement-manufacturing enterprise which was in the process of raising additional funds in the European financial market to expand operations. The Chinese Director-General complained to Moreing that he was being buffeted by

Figure 8 February 1898 in Western Australia. The individuals are identified as (left to right): Abdul, H.C. Hoover (high atop the camel), F.A. Hisort, Mrs. Goldstone and L.P. Goldstone. Courtesy of the Hoover Presidential Library.

numerous European interests to appoint one of their people, and the latter had suggested Hoover as a capable, but equally importantly, an American engineer. When a cable was sent to Hoover offering him the job and a substantial raise, 'what with a temperature of 100 at midnight, and the prospect of a new and romantic world, never was a message more enthusiastically received'.[8]

The China episode lasted from 1899 to 1902 and occupied 37 pages in his *Memoirs* as compared with only 6 for Australia. Before beginning his assignment he returned to California to marry a fellow geology graduate from Stanford, Lou Henry, and together they travelled to China, where he successfully acquired mines for his employers and helped protect fellow westerners during the Boxer rebellion, thus 'encountering the equivalent of the American Indian/frontier outlaw combined in the Chinese'. In a sense, however, this was all more of the same, because it was in fact the 'short Australian experience [which] unquestionably changed him forever'.[9]

Most obviously, it was in Australia that Hoover began to amass that fortune that allowed him, at a relatively young age, to turn his back on business and make a career of public service. He started with a good salary, acquired shares in mining companies he helped reorganize and became a partner in Bewick, Moreing & Co. by 1907, owning 30 per cent of the firm.[10]

Australia also laid the base for his later reputation as the 'Great Engineer', which he carefully fostered and which followed him into the White House in 1929. But it also began his many years of exile from America. He had aspired to the role of 'universal man', subscribing to a remarkable number of journals, including *Century*, *Strand*, *Windsor*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Pearson's Monthly Magazine*, *Review of Reviews*, *Australian*, *Punch*, *Illustrated London News*, *Graphic*, *Scientific American* and *Pall Mall Magazine*. But by 1914 his actual society was that of the far-flung mining world, London and Stanford University, and he 'hungered for wider recognition within the United States'. As he wrote a friend, 'The American is always an alien abroad. He can never assimilate. Nor do other peoples ever accept him otherwise than as a foreigner. His heart is in his own country. Yet there is less and less of a niche for him when he returns.'

> One feels that one should have built one's fortune in America. It might have been less imposing. Yet one would be among one's own people; and the esteem that one hopes to build among one's associates would not be wasted by leaving it and them behind, only to go home later and then try to build it again.[11]

That building was under way at least by 1912 when he was still living in London. In that year he offered his services to the committee planning the Panama–Pacific Exposition for San Francisco in 1915 to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal and the new era for America in the Pacific that it

promised. A world engineering congress was to be an important part of the celebration. In 1914 he was appointed head of the Commission for Relief in Belgium that led, in turn, to his appointment as head of food administration for the United States in 1917. He was made chair of the Inter Allied Food Council in Paris at the end of the war and held such other posts during European reconstruction as chair of the European Coal Council. He had some support for nomination to the presidency of the United States in 1920, but refused to campaign, and instead was appointed Secretary of Commerce in the new administration of President Warren G. Harding. He held the post throughout the 1920s and in 1928 accepted the Republican nomination for president, winning the election and serving one term before his defeat for re-election in 1932. His political career in America won him a place in the massive *Dictionary of American Biography*, just as his engineering career in Western Australia had won him a place in the equally definitive *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Hoover's transnational engineering years proved to be a complex legacy for his emerging political career. On the one hand, his wealth and experience were clearly fundamental to his successful wartime and post-war activities: he was popularly known as not only the Great Engineer, but also the Great Humanitarian, the Great Liberal, the Great Statesman and the Great Administrator.[12] In a progressive era which had begun to celebrate technical expertise as a solution to political problems, his was an almost ideal background and record. At the same time, his long years away from America, and particularly his extended sojourn in London, gave him more than a whiff of the alien exotic. It was an oft-told story that his belief in the superiority of American technology and workers in Western Australia had led the locals to claim the initials of his given names, H. C. for Herbert Clark, really stood for 'Hail Columbia'.[13] It seems possible, however, that the tale was deliberately deployed in the United States to provide evidence of his persistent American-ness in the face of a transnational career.

Such evidence was needed, in part, because of attacks on Hoover's character from his entry into politics through when he ran, unsuccessfully, for re-election in 1932. In 1920 the Democrat candidate for vice-president said in a speech that 'If I ever desire to change my residence, I will not spend the greater part of my life in a foreign country, nor apply for citizenship under a foreign flag.' That false claim had apparently grown out of an alleged offer by the British to grant Hoover citizenship, with perhaps a knighthood thrown in. His defenders claimed that Hoover's answer had been 'I'll be damned, if I'll give up my American citizenship.'[14] Before the 1932 campaign, two unsavoury authors undertook to expose unethical, perhaps even criminal episodes in Hoover's mining career.[15]

One charge was based on assertions that he had colluded in the abuse of Chinese 'coolies' in South African mining operations with which he was concerned.[16] The charge was unfounded, but underlined the importance of the

transnational engineer's manly ability, by sheer weight of character, to command armies of indigenous workers in hard toil – an ability often expressed in racialized terms. Hoover, for example, admitted that 'a great proportion of underground work in a mine is of a type which can be performed after a fashion by absolutely unskilled and even unintelligent men, as witness the breaking-in of savages of low average mentality, like the South African Kaffirs.' He implicitly claimed the authority of his own experience, however, when he asserted that 'how far intelligence is a factor indispensable to skill can be well illustrated by a comparison of the results obtained from working labour of a low mental order, such as Asiatics and negroes, with those achieved by American or Australian miners.' What is striking about such comparisons is that it reveals the workforce of the global mining industry at the turn of the twentieth century to have been every bit as transnational as were the engineers who gave them direction.

Hoover insisted that 'the very essence of the [engineering] profession is that it calls upon its members to direct men. They are officers in the great industrial army.' Furthermore,

> from the nature of things, . . . our mines must be found in the mountains and deserts where rocks are exposed to search. Thus they lie away from the centres of comfort and culture, – they are the outposts of civilization. The engineer is an officer on outpost duty, and in these places he is the camp leader.[17]

As Angela Woollacott has emphasized, 'race, nationality, class, education, technical, logistic and administrative skills, and physical strength were all in play in shaping the hierarchies of masculinity and authority on construction sites that could involve thousands and go on for years.'[18]

Engineers as cosmopolitans

Herbert Hoover was important not because he was unique, but because he was typical. When American John Hays Hammond graduated from Yale in 1876 and moved to Freiberg in Germany for postgraduate studies in engineering, he found that that ancient school of mining had what he called probably the world's most 'cosmopolitan student body: Russians, Englishmen, Americans, Italians, Canadians, South Americans, Mexicans, Japanese, Chinese, Australians, Poles, Austrians, Bohemians – a truly heterogeneous collection of nationalities'.[19]

Their education complete, these young engineers fanned out across the globe, locating and opening mines, building railways and harbour facilities, urban water and sewerage systems, digging tunnels and planning irrigation systems; in short, exploiting and modernizing areas across the globe. Hoover told an audience at Oxford University before First World War that there

were 'more than a thousand American engineers of all breeds in the British Empire, occupying top positions'.[20] When the historian R.A. Buchanan made a study of British engineers in Australia from 1788 to 1890, he counted 180 who had been of sufficient prominence to have entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.[21]

Almost forty years ago Raymond Merritt, studying American engineers during the third quarter of the nineteenth century wrote in a chapter titled 'The Cosmopolitan' that they 'were more interested in the advancement of civilization than in cultivating a national spirit'.[22] Increasingly after mid-century in American schools of engineering they tended to have classmates from all over the world, especially Latin America, and often took jobs overseas. The book put together to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Lehigh University class of 1896 revealed that some worked in the Transvaal gold mines, in Cuba, on the Panama Canal and in Nicaragua. Many were in the Philippines, one worked on streetcars lines and power houses in Sydney and another in Mexico, 'acquiring a varied experience in mining, milling and general engineering work, such as is needed in frontier life'.

Perhaps the most travelled was Davis Sanno Williams, who spent time in the Philippines, including as assistant city engineer of Manila, then departed for China for a job in railroad construction for the Canton–Hankow line. 'I had the time of my life,' he wrote, 'for two and a half turbulent years, dodging pirates, sitting up at nights for tigers (which we never saw), scrapping with the natives, and doing the heavy diplomatic with officials over numerous cups of tea'. He returned briefly to the Philippines, but returned to 'China, my true love'. Over the years he saw other Lehigh graduates in Manila, Hong Kong and Shanghai, including 'the first Chink I met in Canton.... A fat, provincial looking old boy, most Chinese of Chinamen, Lehigh, '80, and anti-American to the core...'.[23]

As these engineers matured in their profession they corresponded with colleagues across the globe. They often belonged to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), which had an international membership. Headquartered in New York City, it was a meeting place for local engineers and those passing through to or from overseas assignments. The Canadian engineer J.A.L. Waddell based his practice in the United States, but taught at the Imperial University of Tokyo, designed bridges in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, New Zealand, Russia and Japan, was a member of the national engineering societies of Spain, Peru and China, and correspondent of the Academy of Sciences in Paris and the Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts in Barcelona. He also held knighthoods from Japan, Russia, China and Italy.[24] At meetings of the ASCE, like at those of other engineering societies, members talked formally and informally of their experiences on the job, a category of action which, for engineers, was analogous to research for scientists: the way new knowledge was systematized and communicated. Like their training and employment, their experience was transnational. The

Charter of the British Institution of Civil Engineers proclaimed that their work was 'the art of directing the great sources of power in Nature for the use and convenience of man', and as the first of the modern professions, steeped in the values of the Enlightenment Project, it saw this art as universal rather than narrowly national.[25]

Historian Bruce Sinclair has persuasively described the 'power of ceremony' in 'creating an international engineering community' in this era.[26] After travelling to a number of international expositions, which featured industrial progress and engineering marvels from the Suez Canal to the Eiffel Tower, American engineers decided to hold what they called the first International Engineering Congress in conjunction with the Columbia Exposition in Chicago in 1893. A second was held in St. Louis in 1904, a third in San Francisco to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal in 1915, and a final one in Tokyo in 1929.

In part those earlier expositions were aimed at establishing international standards for everything from electrical measurements to steam boiler safety. They also addressed issues of transnational best-practice in the several branches of engineering and industry. Such activity was seen to be above petty issues of politics and nationalism, harnessing science to the progress of civilization for all humankind. The rhetoric of self-congratulation was dense: in Tokyo, with East Asia already reeling into war, Admiral M. Kondo, leader of the Japanese delegation, declared that 'I think that among engineers there is a sort of bond which unites us in a brotherhood which knows neither nationality nor class distinction.'[27]

The expatriate experience

As Sinclair points out, however, 'engineers liked to link internationalism with fraternity, but their long reach to faraway places always had the matching of materials to industrial capabilities and appetites as its central concern.'[28] The arts of engineering may have been universal in the sense that it could be applied to a variety of imperial sites, but its applications were personal and specific. For American engineers, the common experience of long periods of expatriation, often involving numerous countries on several continents, had its effect on their lives, practice and careers. Engineering journals took notice of overseas opportunities. After the outbreak of war in Europe *Engineering News-Record* editorialized on 'Opportunities for Engineering Work in Foreign Fields'. Noting that 'the average compensation of engineers engaged in work in foreign countries is far higher than that of those working in the US,' it promised that 'if the engineer combined with his technical knowledge that ability to act as a promoter and organizer, he has at least as good a chance for those prizes as anyone'.[29]

One engineer, who served as a surveyor in the Philippines from 1913 to 1916, expressed a rather negative view of his experiences, which he

generalized to include those of his colleagues. After warning that 'during much of the time the surveyor is required to lodge at the home of some farmer or villager, since hotels and restaurants are seldom found', he typically translated this experience into one of 'being alone', 'in lonely places where amusements are few, where the restraints of American ideals and society is lacking, where it is easier to degenerate than to live decently'. 'Association with the natives', he added, 'is interesting and informing, and while it is not especially elevating, it need not be otherwise'. His overall conclusion was overwhelmingly negative. 'A few surveyors', he wrote,

> have been maimed or murdered by revengeful or fanatical natives, and some have been physically unable to stand the strain of the work and isolation. Others have suffered because moral laxity in the Philippines is easy and the retribution for it is swift. Nearly all, after three or four years of service, have returned to the United States, wiser than when they left, but no better and little wealthier, and have found that their foreign experience has been of little value to them in furthering their interests here.[30]

Writing in 1917 of working in Latin America, one author warned that the decision to go 'is not a trifling one, as it will probably have much to do with shaping the young engineer's career'. He thought that the technical experience gained would not prove useful in the United States because conditions were so different. But since 'Americans are so well insulated from the rest of the world that they are prone to think that nothing that is not American is of importance', he thought that 'perhaps the greatest advantage of a trip to South America is the non-technical experience. To a young man just out of school the trip serves as a postgraduate course with a particular value that could not be obtained from school training.' He concluded that 'experience and money may be gained, some characters may be strengthened, some will be ruined. But whatever may come to pass, no one can escape the stamp that the three to five years impress on his life . . .'. Again there was also the warning that 'the refining influence of home has been taken away, and in its stead is the influence of a reckless, care-free life [which] is a terrific strain on a man's character, and it is conservative to say that the majority of men who go to such localities are ruined.'[31]

One commentator linked the nature of youth with what he saw as recent trends in American society. 'Many young men choose engineering as a profession', he asserted, 'because it suggests adventure' but at the same time and working against this natural exuberance was the fact that 'American industry . . . may have become too Prussianized', a place where 'spontaneity and originality are faults, not assets', with a belief that engineering 'is all a sordid grinding of the nose', and a way of imposing only a 'dependable mediocrity'. Such a culture, he hinted, had become feminized, citing A. J. Balfour to the effect that the Roman Empire had been lost because of the 'too Oriental'

ideals of its government – ideals alien to what he called 'Western minds'. Adventure, he declared, 'is a state of mind. A fat man living in Brooklyn may have it, while a young fellow travelling among the gold mines and opera bouffe and senoritas may be absorbed in getting back home to the old, familiar routine.'[32] Absorption with home, and the lack of domestic restraints, appeared to be the Scylla and Charibdis of the engineer abroad.

The frequent mention of 'senoritas', the lack of domestic 'restraints', 'moral laxity' and similarly veiled terms strongly suggests that, like other white men in imperial roles, young engineers were likely to sexually exploit indigenous women. Indeed, this was no doubt a part of the 'adventure' which was so attractive about a transnational life.

Even the upright Hoover has been seen, belatedly, as susceptible. He described the Australian barmaids as 'simply entrancing', and in 1933 a journalist published an amorous poem allegedly written by Hoover many years later to a Kalgoorlie barmaid, 'My red-lipped sun-browned sweetheart, dark-eyed daughter of the south'. Whether or not the sun-browned and dark-eyed woman was meant to be an Aborigine, the description speaks to the stereotyped allure of native women everywhere. There is no real evidence to link the poem with Hoover, but its notoriety is testimony to the strength of the belief in the sexual temptations of a transnational engineering career.[33]

Importantly, during these years engineers, at least in the United States, were often viewed as the very model of masculinity, an identification which was not only constructed by their experience but thought to be a prerequisite for success. A strong and healthy male body was needed for the hard work in disease-infested climes, along with a clean and upright moral character that was tried and strengthened by resisting the temptations to 'go native'. That manliness, often won in work beyond one's own national borders, was the mark of a good engineer; one who could be trusted with the command of money and men under any circumstances.

Not surprisingly, the figure of the transnational engineer became popular in American literature during the early nineteenth century. In Willa Cather's first novel, *Alexander's Bridge* (1912), her protagonist was Bradley Alexander, an international bridge builder. Born in the American West, Alexander travels to London, where a colleague likes 'Alexander because he was an engineer. He had preconceived ideas about everything, and his idea about Americans was that they should be engineers or mechanics.'[34] In 1897, *Soldiers of Fortune* by Richard Harding Davis, sold over half a million copies to readers wanting to follow the adventures of Robert Clay, an engineer born in the Rocky Mountains but professionally famous in Paris, Edinburgh and Berlin. 'Though I hope I am a good American', Clay admits, 'it happens that I've more friends on the Continent than in the United States.'[35]

It is significant that both Alexander and Clay were born in the American West, an area popularly constructed as being 'American', but not yet fully integrated into the 'nation' and therefore representing possibilities beyond

those available to the long-settled East. Hoover himself became the first president of the United States born west of the Mississippi, in an area which only 71 years before had been claimed by France. At Stanford he lived in a state seized from Mexico less than 50 years before. There was a real sense in which Hoover, like these fictional engineers, not only moved from country to country, but also experienced the tectonic shifts of nation building in his own times.

Cecilia Tichi has suggested that 'mobile, adaptive, tough yet gentlemanly, these engineers are literally all-American men, integrating the nation's regions as birthplace and workplace cojointly manifest the national character in them.' At the same time, 'in the engineer the national vision remains pure and America's destiny intact', and that destiny now included what one historian has called 'planetary engineering', that is, the transnational exploitation of an American empire.[36] In the case of Robert Clay this engineering conquest occurs in the imagined South American nation of Olancho where he represents the Valencia Mining Company. When a corrupt official demands a bribe to allow the concession, Clay reacts with manly disdain: 'if you interfere with our conceded rights to work those mines, I'll have a man-of-war down here with white paint on her hull, and she'll blow you and your little republic back up there into the mountains.'[37]

Conclusion

The transnational life has been invoked as critical not only for engineers at the turn of the twentieth century, but for the American nation as a whole. In his essay 'Offshoring the American Dream' Bruce-Novoa harks back to the influential 1893 essay of Frederick Jackson Turner exploring the meaning of the American frontier and its declared closing three years before. Bruce-Novoa points to the 1901 pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, with its 'beaming Electricity Tower . . . that cast a wide, imaginative circle to start the second period of U.S. history and renew the American Dream of open spaces for self-realization by offshoring its scope of action toward new frontiers'. Instead of looking back to American origins, as had Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1892, the pan-American Exposition looked forward towards the future of Americans overseas. With the first overseas expansion of the American empire into the Caribbean and the Pacific having taken place so recently, it was an opportune time.

This imagined frontier, like the old, he suggests, resembles a 'liminal experience: a space and time in which group members are distanced from familiar surroundings and exposed to the threatening unknown as a rite of passage to maturity that eventually returns them back to the community of origin, which itself evolves and is perpetuated through the process'. The process 'also was linked to contact with the unruly "Other" – Indians and outlaws – or one's own, inner, unruly "other" in the form of behaviour unrestrained by

traditional norms'.[38] Bruce-Novoa's collection of three 'Microscopic Biographies' includes Hoover, but his understanding of the process illuminates the experience of countless other young American engineers who chose, at least for a period, to abandon their domestic context and expose themselves to the isolation, boredom, adventures and professional challenges offered by a transnational exchange. In so doing they were agents of corporate and imperial expansion, but also of their own reformation.

Notes

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3. *Australian Book Review*, November 1984, p. 23.
4. G. Blainey (1963) 'Herbert Hoover's Forgotten Years', *Business Archives and History* 3, 53.
5. See the editors' introduction to this volume, p. 2.
6. W. J. Coughlin (2000) 'Into the Outback: How the Young Herbert Hoover Made His Name – and Fortune – in Australia', *Stanford* 28, 62; Bruce-Nova (2003) 'Offshoring the American Dream', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, 123.
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10. Wilson, *Herbert Hoover*, p. 14.
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13. See for example Wilson, *Herbert Hoover*, p. 33.
14. E. Emerson (1932) *Hoover and His Times: Looking Back through the Years* (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co.), p. 119.
15. John Hamill, *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover, or Under Two Flags*; and James J. O'Brien, *Hoover's Millions and How He Made Them*, discussed in B. J. Bernstein (1992) 'Hoovergate', *American Heritage* 43, 106–110.
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30. J. W. Evans (1917) 'The American Surveyor in the Philippines', *ENR* 79, 158–159. See also 'Engineers' Imperialism', in M. Adas (2006) *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), pp. 129–182.
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9

Manyat's 'Sole Delight': Travelling Knowledge in Western Australia's Southwest, 1830s

Tiffany Shellam

Between 1828 and 1833 on the southern tip of Western Australia a series of journeys took place. Men from Britain in the new settlements of Swan River and King George's Sound were eager to explore, map, name and take hold of the surrounding country.[1] Once they gained knowledge of the landscape (and extracted samples for their botanical and geological collections) and recorded what it had to offer to emigrants, they passed this information on to the metropole in official reports, letters and publications.

Mary Louise Pratt has described how, in late eighteenth-century Europe, natural history was viewed as a system of knowledge, designed to classify all the plant species on the planet. This natural knowledge system created an impetus to travel towards the interior, as opposed to maritime exploration. Pratt calls this phase 'planetary consciousness', which was marked 'by an orientation toward interior exploration and the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatus of natural history'. This 'planetary consciousness' created a new genre, while many travel writers dissociated 'themselves from such traditions as survival literature, civic description, or navigational narrative, for they were to be engaged by the new knowledge-building project of natural history'.[2]

The explorations in southwestern Western Australia by surveyors and botanists were acts of possession, in David Malouf's words, 'in the form of knowledge', where the country's inland spaces were absorbed into the consciousness of the European newcomers.[3] These explorers gained fame and prestige for the natural knowledge they collected and were celebrated as noble pioneers.

Many such expeditions into Australia's interior included Aboriginal men, referred to as 'guides' or 'native interpreters', who showed the foreigners the way, found them water and acted as intermediaries with Aboriginal people they encountered.[4] In the southwest the benefits often flowed both ways. Travel writings of British men at King George's Sound and Swan River

Figure 9 Robert Havell, 'Panoramic View of King George's Sound, part of the colony of Swan River', 1834, London. nla.pic-an7404363-7. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

suggest that there were interesting advantages for some of the Aborigines who 'guided' them: they too gained knowledge about new country, people and vegetation which elevated their status in the minds of the colonials and among their kinsmen and women as they brought that knowledge back to their communities.

This travelling knowledge gained high currency in the Aboriginal knowledge economy where such information was a valuable commodity, as it was among nineteenth century naturalists and metropolitan savants who traded in natural history objects and anthropological information. Geographic knowledge and kin networks were extensive in Aboriginal cultures across Australia. Ceremonial requirements, initiation rites and having kin in faraway country meant that the Aborigines of King George's Sound travelled often, sometimes over vast distances. Travelling far was not desired by everyone, but there were a few, mostly single or old men, who were revered in their community as master travellers.

Manyat, an Aboriginal man from King George's Sound was one such traveller. Through the stories of his travels this chapter seeks to show how his livelihood of travelling challenges and inverts the assumed binary of power and passivity within perceived colonial and Aboriginal boundaries of the early nineteenth century; it also reflects on the connections Manyat made transnationally on a personal level which led the way for ongoing transnational community connections and similar livelihoods.

In May 1832 the Resident Magistrate at King George's Sound, Scottish doctor Alexander Collie, asked Manyat to be his guide on a journey that would

take them 100 kilometres away from the settlement. With new settler John Henty, a servant, three soldiers, a horse and a pony, they travelled for ten days to the north and north east of King George's Sound over the rugged terrain of the Porrongorup mountain range. Collie created two records of this trip: his daily travel diary chronicles the expedition and his ethnography on the Aboriginal world at King George's Sound reflects on the journey several months later.[5] He reported that Manyat was given the job of 'fireman, not for extinguishing, but for lighting up and carrying a banksia cone' – an important and exacting task. Manyat was also to act as 'guide' as they traversed the alien landscape and as 'interpreter' or 'intermediary' if and when they encountered Aborigines. Collie was not initially aware that Manyat was travelling out of his country – which was the shores of King George's Sound and Princess Royal and Oyster Harbour and adjacent land – and beyond his known geographical range. In fact, it was foreign country for him as well as for Collie. As they did not meet one Aboriginal person on their journey, Manyat was able to put his efforts into the procuring of knowledge.

Explorers like Collie show how a landscape was filled differently by Aboriginal people and newcomers. Whereas Collie used previous explorers' maps and travel notes and helpful natives to guide him, Manyat's mind map was a collection of stories – of knowledge about this foreign country that circulated within his kin groups and came from encounters with kinsmen from the west and strangers from the north. Collie's writings show him mapping out the land, his eyes searching for important considerations – fertile land, cow pastures, hunting and grazing land – which he called the 'First Steps of Colonization'.[6] He was also unwittingly describing an already occupied land as he carefully copied down the native names for hills, swamps, valleys, vistas, trees and animals, changing the spellings of names as he got what he thought was a better grasp of their pronunciation.

Throughout the journey Manyat named places and plants. Collie reported with some amazement that this naming came 'not from his actual knowledge but according to what he had heard from others never having been to this country before'. Manyat's itinerary, wrote Collie, was 'the recollection of accounts of others, which gave the names to most of the places and plants' that were encountered. He recognized a valley from his mind map and called it *Woorongurup*. He called a grassy bight *Yambagallup* 'on the same hearsay evidence as before'.[7] Collie was creating material maps for future explorers to rely on, scrutinize and alter; Manyat had a cartographic mind and his maps were retold and danced in story and ceremony.

It was an unfamiliar land for Manyat and Collie, both relying on the knowledge of others to guide them. Collie used the names for things that Manyat gave him throughout his diary, unless he had his own name or word to give it. He mentioned a hill several times using Manyat's name for it, *Pwakkenbak*. By the end of his travel diary the name Mt Barker was written next to *Pwakkenbak* in brackets. As alien geological formations became more

familiar, a familiar name was given in place of a native one. Collie did not recognize the strange looking trees, but Manyat recognized their descriptions and Collie adopted his name for them, *wornt* and *moongirt*, until he found something familiar, *she oak*. Manyat did not just take knowledge with him from his community, but, importantly, he also brought new knowledge home with him. Collie recorded that Manyat

> treasured up in his memory a detailed recollection of the various incidents and scenery arranged in the form of a Diary, where each day was designated by some leading distinctive mark, in place of numerals, as the killing of a kangaroo (1st day), shoot white cockatoo (2nd day), cow meal; see a bullock (3rd day), and such like.[8]

Collie and Manyat each recorded this journey using their own culturally defined processes. They recorded the important parts of the journey: Collie writing down distances travelled, angles and vegetation; Manyat remembering the animals and new vegetation, the food he ate and his success in shooting a cockatoo. Seeing a bullock, as Manyat did, would have produced much excitement: this was a new animal at King George's Sound, having wandered a long way south from the Swan River settlement. Manyat was near *Warre-up*, more than 70 kilometres from the King George's Sound settlement, when they saw this animal feeding on the banks of a stream. Even the tracks of these animals were enough to create rumours and much drama throughout the southwestern Aboriginal world. Writing to Governor Stirling about this animal and a herd of 14 cattle seen during an expedition a few months later Collie enthused about the 'high condition' of the 'Java Bullock' and the herd of cattle 'pasturing on the verdant slopes'.[9]

It is important to note that it was Collie who described Manyat's recollections as a diary. It was his interpretation of Manyat's remembering but it may have meant something else to Manyat. This knowledge and memory of the journey was not all stored in Manyat's mind. He was also a collector of natural knowledge and objects. A tree the travellers came across captured Manyat's interest and Collie recorded: 'Its native name is Wang, and such importance did Manyat attach to it that he took a specimen as well as myself.'[10] Kew Gardens botanist Stephen Hopper has identified it as a peach *Santalum acuminatum* or *quondong*: 'Noongars knew this plant as wolgol, and its richly-coloured fruits with single pitted seed is gunnar.'[11] Perhaps Manyat had watched the many naturalists and botanists collecting and preserving specimens during their visits to King George's Sound. Collie, a botanist himself, certainly saw the value and esteem in this natural knowledge collecting. In a letter to his brother George he joked about his own collections: 'As usual I wander into the woods and gather a few bits of floors [*sic*] to make me think myself a Botanist, a great naturalist, whereas others most likely set me down as a great natural.'[12] Collie gave status to Manyat's

collecting, believing that his collecting of plants and specimens was to 'show his comparatively untravelled friends at King George's Sound his far travelling or Some other advantage in which he prided himself over them'.[13] This proved to be correct. Collie recorded a dramatic image of Manyat being celebrated by his friends on his return home, as he rehearsed his diary to a crowd of 'curious and eager countrymen'. This, Collie wrote, crowned Manyat's joy 'and afforded no little amusement to the dingy groups which assembled round him'.[14] One can only imagine what he reported back to them: obviously the landmarks and animals he saw, especially the bullock, which would have been of particular interest, but also the new plant species of which he brought samples and the new terrain he had 'discovered'. It is impossible to know what this plant sample symbolized for him. Was it exciting to Manyat because he had never seen this plant before or was it a marker of distance, showing his friends how far he had travelled, perhaps in hostile territory? Manyat's 'vanity', Collie wrote, 'revelled in the idea, that he had penetrated farther from King George's Sound than Nakina (King of his tribe) or any other acquaintance'. It is difficult to ascertain whether this was Collie's assumption, or if Manyat actually felt proud and dignified from his travel. Collie saw travel as a civilizing ritual, an educational process: in Britain in the early nineteenth century, travel was seen as a social ritual intended to prepare young men to 'assume leadership positions preordained to them at home'.[15]

Collie wrote that the excursion seemed to afford Manyat 'considerable pleasure'. He had ample rations as well as procuring food for himself. But, Collie warned, his 'sole delight must not be supposed to have consisted after all, in animal gratification'. Rather, Collie believed, it was the mental treat of travelling over unknown and far distant ground, seeing, touching and even collecting and preserving portions of trees he had hitherto only known to exist in name.[16] It might have been as exciting to travel over well known but dangerous ground, especially in the presence (protection) of a powerful foreigner.

Aboriginal travellers like Manyat, who returned home with valuable knowledge of faraway country, were celebrated by their community, suggesting that they too saw value in travelling as a knowledge-gaining ritual. Collie wrote of Manyat's reception, 'How the gentler sex will look upon such exploits, we little know . . .,' and not long after his return Manyat was offered a wife, in response to which, Collie wrote, Manyat left the settlement in search of his bride 'as perfectly delighted as any more civilized bride groom could well be at such a joyful prospect'. Manyat also gained notoriety in Collie's imagination, who wrote with admiration and respect of his new 'knowledgeable' friend. Months after their travelling, Collie wrote of Manyat, 'His name will be handed down as another Bruce to the rising generation,' likening him to the eighteenth-century African traveller James Bruce.[17] Collie's travel writing invokes not only Manyat's increasing mobility

but also the changes in status he experienced as a result of the new knowledge that he brought home to his community and the elevation of the calibre of his character in the minds of the colonists.

* * *

One year after Manyat's first expedition, he took part in another journey. This proved to be much grander in distance and knowledge accrual than the first. And this time Manyat travelled in a ship. Accompanied by Gyallipert, another Aboriginal man from King George's Sound, Manyat travelled in the schooner *Thistle* on a wild ten-day journey along the rugged coastline to the Swan River colony. A colonist from Swan River, Robert Menli Lyon, had requested the assistance of a few King George's Sound Aborigines – famous for their pidgin-English and their friendly nature – to help pacify the so-called 'violent' Aborigines at Swan River. Lyon travelled to King George's Sound to find some willing Aboriginal men, but his request was abruptly refused by the colonial secretary.[18] Manyat and Gyallipert must have known about Lyon's proposition because in January 1833 they sent an 'urgent request' to the new Government Resident at King George's Sound, Donald Hume McLeod, to travel and meet with the Swan River Aborigines.[19] They also urged that on their 'safe return home' some of their kinsmen might also be given the opportunity to go on a subsequent voyage.

The Aborigines of King George's Sound were not traditionally seafarers; they had no form of water craft, nor did they swim, yet Gyallipert and Manyat volunteered to embark on this 'distant' and 'dangerous' voyage.[20] This was an epic voyage. They would have seen their country with new eyes, from a new perspective. The scale of the country changed as did the well-known shapes and contours. They would examine the windings of the coast for the first time.

Gyallipert and Manyat arrived at the port of Fremantle in early January. They were met by the Government Registrar and Collector of Revenue, Richard McBryde Brown, and fellow traveller and friend Alexander Collie. Collie had left King George's Sound in 1832 to take up the position as colonial surgeon at Swan River. Now it was his turn to 'guide' these men around an alien environment, touring them through the strange new world of the rapidly developing Swan River colony. The first edition of the *Perth Gazette* reported on their travels and encounters. Their presence was of great interest and they featured in every edition during their stay as well as in letters to the colonial office and in colonials' journals.

The Swan River colonists held high expectations of this visit from 'friendly' Aborigines. Needing a happy and hasty resolution to their increasing Aboriginal 'problem', they hoped that Manyat and Gyallipert would show the Swan River Aborigines how to behave towards them: to stop spearing them and taking their livestock. Gyallipert and Manyat, who insisted on

their embassy, were warmly welcomed by the desperate colonials: the *Perth Gazette* wrote with optimism that 'the arrival of these natives will lead in every probability to the ultimate establishment of an amicable intercourse with the original possessors of the country, throughout the Colony, a result most sincerely desired.'[21]

Gyallipert and Manyat attended several meetings with at least two different Aboriginal groups at Swan River, travelling from Fremantle to Perth, to Monger's Lake in the north and to the east. Whilst they were there they were attached to the Superintendent of Native Tribes, Captain T. T. Ellis, who gave them rations, blankets and clothes; but they were always accompanied by a colonist, eager to host and guide them.

Collie and Brown guided Gyallipert and Manyat to Monger's Lake to meet with Yellagonga, leader of the Aborigines whose country *Mooro* stretched from Fremantle to the north of the Swan River.[22] Yellagonga, who was described by one colonist as 'most distinguished' with a 'humane peaceable disposition',[23] was camping at Monger's Lake with 'a considerable number' of his group, but he was not expecting visitors. The King George's Sound men were foreigners to Yellagonga's group and they received Manyat and Gyallipert initially with 'indifference'. As they did not share a common language they could only 'interchange of the names of their respective districts, and those of some of the adjoining tribes'. However, Gyallipert and Swan River man Mundee eventually exchanged kangaroo skin cloaks and he received 'a most hearty salutation on both sides of the face from an aged lady as a seal of this testimony of friendship'.[24]

Even though in the eyes of the colonists Manyat and Gyallipert travelled to Swan River to help pacify the 'violent' Aborigines, the journey offered them something more. The Swan River Aborigines were, according to Francis Armstrong, Native Interpreter at Swan River, not great travellers. As he wrote in 1836: 'There is good reason to believe that few, if any, of the Swan men have been further from the Swan than 80 to 90 miles, unless with settlers.'[25] How would the comparatively less travelled Swan River groups have perceived these voyagers far from home?

News travels fast in a small community. It was not long before news of the two foreigners had whispered its way through the Swan River gossip networks, white and black. Yagan, an Aboriginal warrior who lived on *Beeliar* country, (to the southeast of *Mooro*) was considered an 'outlaw' by the Swan River colonists (although he was allowed to roam 'free' for several months in 1833). Having already met with Yellagonga, he expressed the wish to the colonists to meet Manyat and Gyallipert when he heard they were visiting. An interesting role reversal can be conceived as the Aborigines negotiated through colonial intermediaries and were guided by them in foreign terrain to meet other Aboriginal groups who not only spoke different languages, but also had different cultural expectations. A week after their meeting with Yellagonga's group, Manyat and Gyallipert were guided again

to Monger's Lake by colonists Robert Dale and George Smythe. This second meeting had some important differences from the first. There were no women present, and Yagan and about ten other men eventually made their appearance 'well armed'. A corroborree was danced before any exchange of names or gifts took place. The *Perth Gazette* reported that the 'Dialects of either party was perfectly unintelligible to the others' and they seemed to apprehend each other's meaning in 'some few instances rather from gestures than language . . .'.[26] They finally spoke a language that both groups understood: a spear throwing trial in which the colonials considered Yagan the winner as he 'struck down a walking stick' 30 metres away.

Manyat and Gyallipert related to the colonists present that their conversations with Yagan included a 'description of their native District, detail of the kind treatment and benefit they had received from the "white people" and an exhortation to Yagan and his followers to conduct themselves in a peaceable and friendly manner towards their white neighbours'.[27] Gyallipert also relayed this meeting to Advocate General, George Fletcher Moore, who recorded in his diary what he said to Yagan in King George's Sound Pidgin-English: 'me wonka (tell) black man pear (spear) white man cow, white man yeep (sheep), white man kill black man: black man no pear cow, no pear yeep, white man give black man jacket, towlyer, yerk (shirt) and bikket (biscuit) plenty; black man wonka (say) no pear no more'.[28]

Through such meetings with foreigners in a faraway country Manyat and Gyallipert were procuring knowledge. They were extending their kinship networks with strangers such as the *Mooro* and *Beeliar* people and gaining geographic knowledge of this distant world. They had heard about Swan River from the colonists and probably through their knowledge networks, but to travel and visit the British settlement and attend meetings with foreign Aboriginal groups was another experience altogether. Expanding their networks and familiarity with Swan River groups was highly valuable in their 'knowledge economy'.

It was not just knowledge of distant Aboriginal groups that Gyallipert and Manyat gained from this voyage. Whilst at Swan River they were celebrated by the colonists and entertained by the most important people in the colony. Mrs. Leake, wife of the Civil Commissioner, played her piano for them and they performed the chase of the kangaroo dance for her; Advocate General George Fletcher Moore accompanied them from house to house and Colonial Storekeeper and Justice of the Peace John Morgan had them to tea and accompanied them to divine service. Like Collie, Morgan wrote with admiration of these men. In a letter to Colonial Secretary Hay, he said: 'I am certain that both Manyat and Galyput, would very soon learn to write our language, and to understand it sufficiently for promoting a friendly intercourse with the tribes in this neighbourhood.'[29]

In such a small community they became the talk of the town (and the bush). One *Perth Gazette* report stated: 'The stately air of Manyat, as he

parades the streets with his feather-tufted stick, and feathered cap, approaching closely to some of our most dignified and polished actions, acquired by art, has led us to reflect how unjustly we estimate the savage, by our own acquirements.'[30] These men were not just any 'savages' in the minds of the Swan River colonists, they were well travelled and had come to aid the settlers in their relationships with the Aborigines.

On 15 February Gyallipert and Manyat boarded the schooner *Ellen*, accompanied by the Lieutenant Governor, George Moore and Robert Dale, to return to their country. Six days later they disembarked at King George's Sound. Moore wrote that they were welcomed by the 'clamouring "allalo" (how d'ye do) of a dozen of their comrades, who expressed the greatest joy at seeing their friends Manyat and Gyallipert again'.[31] In a similar style to the welcome home and celebration of European pioneering parties after a successful expedition into unknown country, the Aboriginal community provided an equally impressive reception. As Robert Dale observed: 'They were received with every sign of attachment, and several of the neighbouring tribes came in to welcome them; and held their corrobaries every night.'[32]

The records give little information about what happened in the Aboriginal camps in the following weeks, but no doubt these travellers revealed their knowledge of the new world at Swan River and recounted stories of meeting foreigners – Aboriginal and colonial – to a curious community. They had met new people, collected information about the Swan River groups' kin relations and possibly added these to their own networks. They had explored a new world, traversing vast distances across foreign country, and voyaged aboard a schooner. They had been hosted, guided and celebrated by the colonists during their visit.

The impact these travellers had on their kinsmen and women can be seen by the repercussions of this voyage. It instigated a series of visits to Swan River by other King George's Sound Aborigines – led once again by Manyat, master traveller – who held several more meetings with the Swan River Aboriginal groups.

Before the schooner left King George's Sound bound once again for Swan River, a large group of Aborigines – all single men like Gyallipert and Manyat – were drawn up in line hoping to be chosen to travel. We are told that every unmarried man volunteered 'without exception' to travel to Swan River and the six most 'intelligent and docile' were selected by the Government storekeeper, Mr. Morley. Among them was Manyat, who had relished the taste of travel beyond his traditional borders. The fact that so many King George's Sound men wanted to repeat Manyat's and Gyallipert's voyage is testimony to the value that travel to, and knowledge collection of, foreign country had in the Aboriginal world of the southwest during the early 1830s.

Manyat and Gyallipert were moving transnationally both in their interactions with the colonists and foreign Aborigines and in their journeys to

Swan River. What is interesting about Manyat's increasing mobility are the changes in status he experienced in his community and among the colonists due to the new knowledge he brought home. In an 1834 report to Governor James Stirling, Alexander Collie wrote of the effect of the voyages on the 'knowledge economy' at King George's Sound:

> Their vanity is perhaps a beneficial quality, even in their intercourse with each other, and certainly so, to a considerable degree with us. They make a boast of the learning obtained from the white people among the more distant tribes; and if I have deduced a correct inference from the details which some of them . . . have given me, this ostentation not only affords them delight at the time, but the bare recollection of the astonishment, wonder and envy it excited, gives them an ecstasy of pleasure. Their vanity, too, prompts them to procure those things which distinguish the learned, admired and envied foreigner from the ignorant and despised savage; and this may be advantageously cultivated until the capricious hunter grows into the steady labourer.[33]

These episodes could be read as they were intended to be by the colonists who recorded them, thinking that Gyallipert and Manyat visited Perth to help pacify the 'violent' Swan River Aborigines. Many European travel narratives (and histories which utilize these sources) render the Aboriginal 'guides' as passive troupers, side players in European heroic efforts at discovery of 'new' land.[34] Aboriginal accounts are trivialized or ignored and their intentions and purposes for travel are obscured under the topics of 'guides', 'interpreters' or other aids to the European. However, it is evident that some of these expeditions were collaborative accomplishments to which the Aborigines at King George's Sound and their knowledge systems made significant contributions. When probed and analysed, the Europeans' travel writing reveals the complex, multi-layered dynamics of cross-cultural engagements around the southwest and shows the specifics of an Aboriginal cartography.

Through the writings about these journeys we can read something of the biography of a transnational traveller, Manyat, who began his travels in 1832 with Alexander Collie and ended up aboard a schooner on voyages to the 'new world' of the Swan River colony. His livelihood of travel and knowledge accrual constantly subverted his cultural and national boundaries, and the episodes told here reveal how this livelihood can be conceived as challenging the familiar binaries of power and subordination of colonial encounters across place and culture.

Manyat's name has not gone down as the 'Bruce of the rising generation', and until recently his name was publicly absent from the landscape he explored. A peak in the Porrongorup Range, named Daisy Summit after anthropologist Daisy Bates, was renamed *Manyat Peak* in 1977. It now remembers the livelihood of this transnational traveller (alongside colonial

explorers), whose movement and procurement of knowledge showed an Indigenous use of colonial resources to improve his wealth in a transnational knowledge economy.

Notes

1. Swan River is now Western Australia's capital Perth and King George's Sound is the large regional centre Albany. Dr. Bronwen Douglas and Dr. Kirsty Douglas provided useful advice on early drafts of this chapter.
2. M.L. Pratt (1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge), pp. 15, 24.
3. D. Malouf (1998) *A Spirit of Play, The Making of Australian Consciousness*, Boyer Lectures (Sydney: ABC Books), p. 10.
4. In the Albany area between 1826–1833 these guides included Mokare, Nakina and Manyat. See J. Shoobert ed. (2005) *Western Australian Exploration, vol. 1, 1826–1835* (Victoria Park, WA: Hesperian Press).
5. See 'Account of an Exploration to the NW of King George's Sound, in 1832 by A. Collie, Surgeon RN', 26 May 1832, reprinted in Shoobert, *Western Australian Exploration*, pp. 307–315; and A Collie (1834) 'Anecdotes and Remarks Relative to the Aborigines of King George's Sound', in *Perth Gazette* [*PG*] 5, 12, 26 July, 2, 9, 16 August, 315–340.
6. 'Account of an Exploration', p. 311.
7. Ibid., pp. 307–308.
8. Collie, 'Anecdotes and Remarks', *PG,* 16 August, 340.
9. A. Collie, 'Letter to Governor Stirling, 31 July 1832', in J. Cross ed. (1833) *Journals of Several Expeditions made in Western Australia during the years 1829, 1830, 1831 and 1832* (London: J. Cross), p. 204.
10. 'Account of an Exploration', p. 312.
11. Professor Stephen Hopper, Director, Kew Gardens, UK, personal communication, 23 November 2006.
12. A. Collie, 'Letter to George, 28 July 1832', *Letters 1828–1835*, microfilm, Battye Library, Western Australia [BL].
13. 'Account of an Exploration', p. 312.
14. Collie, 'Anecdotes and Remarks'.
15. J. Buzard (2002) 'The Grand Tour and After', in P. Hulme and T. Youngs, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 37–38.
16. Collie, 'Anecdotes and Remarks'.
17. Ibid.
18. R. Menli Lyon to F. Robinson, 1 January 1833, *Swan River Papers* [*SRP*] vol. 10, pp. 110–117, State Records Office, WA [SRO].
19. This expedition was believed to be a government-sponsored voyage, but Irwin to Goderich, 26 January 1833, *Report of Select Committee*, Appendix 4, item 7, p. 132, BL makes it clear that it was Gyallipert and Manyat who approached the colonists.
20. *PG*, 19 January 1833, 10.
21. Ibid.
22. 'Manners and Habits of the Aborigines of Western Australia, from information collected by Mr. F. Armstrong, in Perth, 29 October–12 November 1836,' gives details of Aboriginal groups and their territorial boundaries.

23. J. Gregory and G. Bolton (1999) *Claremont: A History* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press), p. 8.
24. *PG*, 19 January 1833, 10.
25. 'Manners and Habits of the Aborigines of Western Australia'.
26. *PG*, 26 January 1833, 15.
27. Ibid.
28. G.F. Moore (1834) *Extracts from the Letters and Journals of George Fletcher Moore: Now filling a judicial office at the Swan River Settlement* (London: Orr and Smith), p. 224.
29. J. Morgan to R. Hay, 3 February 1833, *SRP* Vol. 15, p. 50.
30. *PG*, 9 February 1833, 23.
31. G.F. Moore (1884), *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia, and also a Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language of the Aborigines* (London: M. Walbrook), p. 162.
32. *PG*, 9 March 1833.
33. 'Dr Collie's Report to Governor James Stirling, 24 January 1832', *SRP* vol. 9, pp. 110–121.
34. See Henry Reynolds (1990) *With the White People* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin) for Aborigines as 'black pioneers' rather than passive guides.

10

Connecting Lives: Elihu Yale and the British East India Company

Rajani Sudan

The October 2007 Yale University Alumni Newsletter featured an article on 'Yale's expanding engagement with India'. As part of the Incredible India@60 campaign organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Government of India, Yale convened two panels examining the 'challenges that India will face in the coming decades and the rise of women leaders in all facets of India and its global diaspora'.[1] Both panels were held at the exclusive Yale Club of New York City, a gesture that solidified Yale President Richard C. Levin's statement that the study of India and South Asia had 'blossomed' at Yale, and that he expected 'expanded exchanges and partnerships with India in the years to come'. At the end of the letter was a short column explicating the connections between Yale and India 'at a glance', and the first item noted Elihu Yale's tenure as Governor of Madras, and his gift of 'books, Indian textiles, and other goods' that resulted in the vaunted institution of the university.

My chapter addresses the life of Elihu Yale. This collection of 'transnational lives' asks us to pay attention to the 'connections and movements that have preceded national boundaries, transcended or exceeded them'. In that spirit, my story of the life of Elihu Yale is not a biography that celebrates a particular national history or standpoint, despite the fact that the American university most dominantly articulates Yale's legacy. Richard White contends that the 'history of the nation has involved the subordination of any entity operating on a smaller scale', which is to say that regional and local histories are frequently metonymically called up into the service of national histories. But, as White continues, even if the 'global has emerged as a real and important space', to 'allow it to erase other social spaces and scales, as the national did before it, would be a serious mistake'.[2] In *that* spirit, then, my life of Elihu Yale connects histories of the objects constituting his gift – the 'books, Indian textiles, and other goods' that also have histories – with the various local spaces Yale occupied, regions on the verge of being established as nation-states.

I therefore start my study of Yale with the *event* of one of the 'other goods' of his bequest: nutmeg. As an object, the fruit of this plant – a small, unassuming, round brown nut – has had, at various times, substantial histories attached to it that increase or decrease its value in Europe and the United States. This object has been variously prized for its use as a spice, a preservative and a medicine, and has, therefore, also been central to the subject of economic competition and colonial warfare. In yet another capacity, this object has been crucially forgotten: another jar on the spice-shelf gathering dust, and has, therefore, transformed into a subject of (national) complacency. As an event, however, it radically shaped the identity of Enlightenment Europe and the New England colonies that, consolidating as the Thirteen Colonies, eventually became the United States.[3] As an event, nutmeg played a critical part in institutionalizing Linnaean taxonomy, European epistemology and, finally, American academic hegemony.

Nutmeg's move from its high visibility as a valuable commodity with a plethora of capacities to its relative invisibility as simple spice, however, is not a result of the inevitable march of progressive history. Such a history imagines a central narrative with a central theme that inevitably results in the eradication of ostensibly anomalous, marginal or peripheral material. That is, if one removes nutmeg from the centre of the narrative of Europe's entrance into global trade, it is relegated to the back of the spice-shelf. Replaced by the intrepid advance of European commerce which culminates in the grand narrative of Enlightenment pre-eminence, nutmeg is forgotten, only brought out when the occasion demands its use. If, however, nutmeg is itself the central narrative, multiple, often competing, histories emerge that render Enlightenment authority largely the result of its self-image.[4]

It is the latter paradigm I want to use to reconceive biographical representation as transnational phenomena. Nutmeg happens to share a history with a figure whose personal life, colourful as it was, has since yielded to its own institutionalization: Elihu Yale. Nutmeg has a long and complicated relationship with several European trading companies, most notably the Portuguese and the Dutch, but also the English and the Americans; and its specific connection to Yale, although apparently tangential, turns out to be crucial in rethinking the phenomenon of biography.

Growing only under the extraordinarily specific conditions that the microclimate of the Banda Islands provides, nutmeg entered British cultural consciousness through the marketplaces of Venice and Constantinople. Nutmeg had always been prized as a preservative as well as a spice, but its value increased exponentially when Elizabethan physicians decided – perhaps because of its rarity – that nutmegs were the only sure cure for the plague. Thus its medicinal properties acquired mythical and mystical status which goaded English merchants to brave the hazards of Portuguese and Dutch competition and their own myopic understanding of the Indian Ocean in order to find the origins of this spice.[5]

The entrance of nutmeg into European sensibility is compellingly told in Giles Milton's historical fiction, *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*, and more academically engaged by environmental historians Richard Grove and E. C. Spary.[6] Milton's account traces the origins of the British entry into the trade of nutmeg for its profit and is thus invested in participating in the grand narrative of British and European commercial ascendancy. Grove and Spary are concerned with the history of another aspect of this spice: the politics of scientific conservation and botanical knowledge that created a space for nutmeg in European taxonomy. Their studies of colonial botany contribute less to the discourse of Linnaean taxonomic pre-eminence than to the complex political manoeuvres European and British nations were forced to engage in, in order to have any purchase whatsoever in the lucrative spice trade that had hitherto been monopolized by nations of the Indian Ocean.

Grove outlines the ways in which the French 'examined the possibilities of growing spices in their tropical territories, especially nutmeg and clove plants'. The French were particularly interested in annexing Mauritius (which they ruled from 1722 to 1790) in response to their competition with Britain to 'build up spheres of influence in India and the East Indies'. Like the British, the French had a less than secure audience with the powerful rulers of the Moghul Empire and the lucrative marketplaces they controlled. What with the Dutch hegemony of the European spice trade, it made a good deal of sense for the French to set up alternate potential plantations in order to compete effectively in European markets. Under French rule, Mauritius 'became the location for the flowering of a complex and unprecedented environmental policy', mostly to displace the Dutch monopoly of the spice trade. Mauritius 'occupied a strategic position in French thinking and soon invited the prospect of direct intervention by the French Crown'. Mauritius thus transformed from the material to the abstract: from a geographical site, a botanical experiment to further French purchase in the spice trade to a 'strategic position' in European consciousness.[7]

Spary's approach to the nutmeg phenomenon also addresses the cultivation and conservation of the environment for the production of nutmeg. Her approach, however, focuses on the transmission of nutmeg from its East Indian material origins to the intellectual property of French physiocrats: how nutmeg simultaneously operates as spice and knowledge-claim. Spary focuses on stabilizing the identity of nutmeg through the mastery of Linnaean classification. 'For a plant such as nutmeg to be the subject of scientific experimentation and agricultural exploitation', she writes, 'it had to be assimilated into existing classificatory and descriptive schemes, yet clearly distinguished from similar species.' This particular scientific process was necessary even after nutmegs had entered European discourse and had been established by European botanists because only 'these social and medical practitioners could stand as credible guarantors of authenticity of a particular

species'. Here Spary is using Steven Shapin's arguments for the credibility of a knowledge-claim to address the care with which Pierre Poivre – the physiocrat who was responsible for introducing forest and climate protection measures to French colonial holdings in the East Indies – took to authenticate 'true' nutmeg.[8] With the Dutch monopoly on the nutmeg trade firmly entrenched (and the measures they took to insure high prices, even to destroying the orchards producing them on other islands), it behoved the French to try cultivating the plant elsewhere – a measure that eventually proved successful.

The problem was how did one know that one had a 'true' nutmeg and not some interloping hybrid? Spary argues that it is 'testament to the difficulty we should ascribe to the identification process that criteria such as odour and appearance were not enough to settle the issue . . . even for consumers more familiar with nutmeg'. Scientific discourse then authenticates nutmeg in all its unique value, firmly secured in the annals of institutional knowledge. The desire for nutmegs – as spices, as medicines, as immensely valuable commodities – was transformed into a knowledge of them: their primary value transformed from the material to the abstract. Botanists thus 'simultaneously engaged in the micropolitics of botanical identity and the macropolitics of eighteenth-century colonial and social life'.[9] In so doing, however, they replaced or supplemented the material presence of the foreign object initially resisting classification (think of the Elizabethan doctors who were so certain that pomanders made of these strange nuts would cure the plague) with encyclopaedic knowledge.[10]

By the end of the seventeenth century, nutmeg moved from being a material good that operated along networks of trade, consumption and economics to an abstraction – part of scientific discourse and botanical knowledge. The status of nutmeg therefore shifted. Still prized for its substantial value as a commodity – a staple of everyday cuisine in one culture could, when dried and packed and shipped across oceans to another, accrue a mark-up of 60,000 per cent – nutmeg transubstantiated from a spice to a knowledge-claim.[11] This claim was dependent on Enlightenment models of empirical experimentation that defined nutmeg as a natural object only once the social setting in which its meaning would be granted had been controlled. Nutmeg's value as a desirable commodity was inextricably linked to its place within a European taxonomy.

Thus far I've pointed to several stories about how nutmeg functions as an event as well as a thing. But what of its relation to Elihu Yale? My thesis, as reductive as it may sound, is this: Yale is a nutmeg.

Elihu Yale is probably most famed, at least in the United States, for founding a major university in the state of Connecticut. Yale turns out also to have been the Governor of another kind of 'state' in India: the English holding of Fort St. George or Madras.[12] Such a fact is less well-known in the United States although in India Yale's position in Madras (in addition to

his connection with the university) is something every school-aged child knows. As the founder of a university, Yale's biography is clearly American; as a factor of the British East India Company, his biography becomes murkier, less lucidly defined by national interests. *My* interest in Yale's as a 'transnational life' comes from these apparently contradictory positions. I'm not suggesting that one couldn't be simultaneously the founder of an American university and a Governor of a 'British' settlement; rather, I argue that these biographical positions seem impossibly distant from one another. In other words, the event of Yale University seems utterly detached from the event of Elihu Yale no matter what discourse the university invokes about his history or his biography.[13] I want to identify the intersections between these disparate biographical positions in order to think about other connections that are equally incongruent. Bringing these biographical standpoints together, for example, reveals the connection between the sublimation of nutmeg into a discursive position that articulates Enlightenment science and the sublimation of the life of a failed governor employed by the British East India Company into a narrative that articulates one of the great intellectual institutions of the Western world.

Yale was born in Boston but emigrated (with his family) to England when he was still quite young. The title of Hiram Bingham's 1939 biography attempts to put together the various subject positions Yale occupied: *Elihu Yale: The American Nabob of Queen Square*. Such a title appears to attend to the discontinuities of Yale's life, but it is still written in the interests of representing national identity. The blurb attached to the inside cover is equally telling: 'The *Weekly Gazeteer* announcing the death of Elihu Yale did not mention that the deceased had begun his career as a penniless American in London. Today Elihu Yale's bequest has grown beyond his wildest expectations, but his own colorful career has been well nigh forgotten.' This copy announces Yale as unproblematically 'American' even though the New England colonies in which he resided (at a very young age) and to which he never returned were a far cry from the nation 'America' that subsequently emerged. His tenure as an Indian 'Nabob' in Madras and master of 'Queen Square' in London – places where he did spend a good deal of his adult life – seem ancillary to his presence as a great American life. Secondly, the markers of his 'colourful' life seemed to have slipped off, sublimated, or abstracted into the gravitas of the university, despite the promises the text makes. Both of these assumptions can be made (as does this biographer) only if we think of biography – life writing – as a monolithic representation serving a single nation's interests.[14]

The fact is that Yale set off from London for Madras as a young factor for the British East India Company (EIC). Most of his duties in Madras had to do with receiving and invoicing textiles, where he was confronted by the difficulty of nomenclature of the incredible variety of cloths whose names – indigenous ones – varied with texture, place of origin, breadth,

weave, weight, fineness, stripes or prints. This challenge he successfully overcame, demonstrating his fitness for this kind of work. He was appointed Governor in 1687 and deposed in 1692, primarily for exceeding his juridical powers under the EIC charter, but also for other forms of transgression against charter, monarch, church and nation. For example, he had made lucrative deals with the then interloper, Thomas Pitt (who later became a governor himself), and engaged under Pitt's offices in a profitable business in diamonds and spices, most notoriously, cloves, cinnamon and, of course, nutmeg.

He also almost certainly profited from the burgeoning slave trade: in 1683 the Directors reported 'The trade in slaves growing great from this Port, by reason of the plenty of poor, by the sore famine, and their cheapness, – it is ordered for the future that each slave sent off this shore pay one pagoda to the Right Honourable Company.'[15] But this lucrative trade in slaves came after he had been deposed as governor and during the seven-year tenure he spent in Madras amassing an enormous fortune. In fact one of the pet grievances the EIC had against Yale was the very fact that he returned to England having made a fabulous personal profit, none of which accrued to the EIC. While governor, however, he was accused of overreaching the administrative powers vested in him by the Company. The governor who followed him, Higginson, along with the Scots lawyer, Fraser, who first levelled charges against him, were appalled by his executive decision-making, which included the unilateral resolution to use local materials (chinam, Madrasi mortar) to fortify some of the ramparts of Black Town and White Town that were being eaten away by the sea. This in and of itself was not necessarily problematic for the Directors of the Company, but the fact that Yale resisted supplying the Company with its share of the local taxes and revenues gleaned from the call for 'all coolies, carpenters, smiths, peons, and all other workmen, and all that sufficient materials be provided, that they may work day and night to endeavour to put a stop to [the sea's] fury' was very much of a problem for the Home Office, especially considering their estimation that 'the inhabitants . . . do live easier under our Government than under any Government in Asia'.[16]

Such ease, however much it was to reflect on the beneficence of EIC rule, also defined Yale's erotic life. His wife, Catherine, fearing for the health of her daughters (especially considering that their sole son had died) returned to England with her children. No sooner had she set sail on the *Rochester*, carrying with her a substantial fortune in diamonds garnered from the most successful diamond merchant in Fort St. George, Jaques de Paivre, than he took up with Paivre's wife, Hieronima. Yale's brother Thomas returned from China to India to find his brother consorting with her (she eventually bore him a son), and his distress was not only due to the matrimonial trangressions but religious ones as well: the de Paivres were Jews. Governor Higginson was particularly annoyed by

> a story told all about Towne of a Mrs. Nicks [who] then lived with Mr. Yale at his Garden house where she and Mrs. Paiva, a Jew, with their children have and doe frequent to the scandal of Christianity among heathens.[17]

Yale's blatant disregard for the EICs directives, demonstrated by the openness of his association with Pitt, the fact that he remained in Madras after he had been disgracefully deposed, the ways in which he flaunted his sexual liaisons with women who were not only married but, to the distress of this consciously Christian community, Jewish – none of this would have been so problematic had the Company not resolved to make Madras its headquarters in Eastern India (in 1658 the Company declared all of its settlements in Bengal and the Coromandel coast subordinate to Fort St. George).[18] Yale's unsteady loyalty to company and nation, monarch and religion challenged an already vexed position the British had in a land of immense wealth and power. In 1695, the Director's efforts to destroy Yale's character through its suits and countersuits had the following unpleasant effect: Princess Anne (shortly to be Queen) gathered a Privy Council in order to 'peruse the Charter granted to the East India Company and report their opinion as to the Company's powers in matters of Judicature and Courts in the East Indies'.[19]

Yale was deposed in 1692. Seven years later he returned to England, and word of his immense fortune spread across the Atlantic to his native New England. In 1718, Cotton Mather, at that time the representative of the Collegiate School of Connecticut, asked the now aging Yale for help with that struggling institution. Yale responded by giving Mather a portion of the cargo he brought back from Madras. In addition to the books and textiles of more popular fame, this cargo included '31 pieces of Madras chintz, 2 pieces of choice cloth flowered with silver, a piece of rich satin with gold flowers, 13 pairs of large gingham sheets, two jars of mango chutney, a case of soy sauce' and 'a jar of nutmeggs'.[20] This gift resulted in a substantial endowment for the college, which then changed its name to honour its benefactor and the rest, as they say, is history.

One of the premises of this collection is to think about biography not only as a representation of national identity but as a transnational phenomenon. It is with that in mind that I refer to both the 'biographies' (so to speak) of nutmeg and Yale as events: something that happens that then becomes an occasion for other things to happen. Yale's random collection of things, produced in spite of a history of administrative failure and donated to the college, resulted in the manufacture of a lasting name, an authoritative institution. Reading Yale's story as a conventional biography – a history of American entrepreneurism – must disconnect one life from another and focus on the lack of cultural coherence. But putting Yale's story next to the story of nutmeg refashions biography as a transnational event.

Just as nutmegs shifted their cultural meaning from exotic spice to botanical lore, that is, they were abstracted from their material significance to become a knowledge-claim by eighteenth-century scientists, so Yale's material life became abstracted to an institution of knowledge. James C. Scott accounts for this process of abstraction as a way of rendering landscapes legible. He claims 'certain forms of knowledge and control require a narrowing of vision' that, in turn, brings into 'sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality'. Citing the example of forestry as it was developed in the early modern German European state, he emphasizes the distance that the administrative state has from various productive locales and the consequent distance between the kind of knowledge produced by the state – the standardization of measurement that, in a Foucauldian sense, putatively serves the interests of the modern subject – and local knowledge and practice.[21] Bruno Latour argues that the concept of modernity is a fantasy; that the state-created subject is always bumping up against the material reality of local differences. In the case of Yale, his refusal to administer Madras according to the charter created by the Right Honourable Company in London, his propensity to engage in local trade and customs, to endorse a kind of miscegenation, fraternizing as he did with the likes of Jewish women, producing, not unlike those bastard hybrid nutmegs, his own hybrid progeny who stood to inherit the bulk of his brother's estate, provided too great a material obstacle for the Company to continue its business and thus he was deposed.

Driven by commercial interests, to be sure, what came back to Europe and England and the state of Connecticut in the ships from the Indian Ocean was totally unexpected and therefore introduced a new history. Yale's 'jar of nutmeggs' turns into a university; nutmegs become the material metaphor for Yale himself that abstracts into an institution for furnishing authenticated knowledge: the desire for nutmegs turns into a knowledge of them.

It turns out that Connecticut is known as the 'nutmeg state', and that one nickname for people from Connecticut is 'nutmeggers', effectively associating, albeit affectionately, its people not with the majesty of statehood but with the commodity that has an infamous history. Connecticut's state motto also alludes to nutmeg's history. 'Qui Transtulit Sustinet (He Who Transplants Still Sustains)' originates from Puritan beliefs in a sustained faith that survives being uprooted from native England and transplanted in New England. But such a motto is also informed by other more agricultural forms of uprooting and transplanting that defined not only early modern American life but the ways in which botanical experimentation reproduced knowledge – hybrid or otherwise – that Pierre Poivre determined with his nutmegs on Mauritius. I don't think this is simply a happy coincidence, but I also don't think that there's a one-to-one correspondence with Yale's jar. Rather, the state's nickname came about, so the story goes, by the reputation Yankee peddlers had up and down the Atlantic seaboard for manufacturing

false nutmegs (out of wood) and selling them to people anxious to prove their cosmopolitan tastes. Grating the shavings of wood or nutmegs into their pumpkin pies apparently didn't make much of a difference to these intrepid souls, but it didn't have to because the tastes were equally peculiar and neither commodity cured the plague. Authenticity, therefore, was irrelevant. What was relevant was the *fantasy* they produced, just as the fantasy of botanical knowledge of this plant replaced the desire for this spice. Yale turned product into fantasy; and what gets invented in this shift is the move from mercantilism to capitalism: emerging from the unknowable void that separates Yale University from Fort St. George is the mystified product, luxuries that become signifiers of exchange value, not use value.

Biographical writing operates as national hegemony, as the master text, as the institution of knowledge: what gets represented is the enduring sense of a unified, coherent state that progresses from its infancy, of course, but progresses nevertheless. One needs biography in order to render India and Connecticut radically disconnected. Transnational lives function as a form of backward reading, a hysterical demand that continually desires nutmegs, real or fake. Putting the textual remainders of Yale's life beside the nutmeg's furnishes a differently situated knowledge that may or may not dispel the myth of modernity.

What do transnational lives do? They allow for discontinuities. They also allow for the possibility, to return to Badiou, of subjectivity without subjects. If it is, as Badiou writes, 'abusive to say that truth is a subjective production', but, rather, that a 'subject is much rather taken up in fidelity to the event, and suspended from truth', then we have another event of Yale University.[22] The materiality of the university replaces desire with knowledge, and the kind of knowledge produced by the university is one that is, for all intents, discernible, masterful, and therefore unassailable. No matter how much attention Yale University paid to the IncredibleIndia@60 event in October of 2007, their investment in maintaining such relations obviates the radical connection between the two disparate standpoints and renders the modern nation-state of India under Yale's obligation.[23] And so we move from the Master of Madras to Yale University.

Notes

1. http://www.yale.edu/opa/eline/2007/200710.html, 1.
2. R. White (1999) 'The Nationalization of Nature', *Journal of American History* 86, 2.
3. See A. Badiou (2005) *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Fetham (London and New York: Continuum), pp. 146–147 for his definition of the 'event of truth'. Badiou argues that an event is a decision about something undecidable, a 'hole' in an established 'encyclopedia' of knowledge, where an 'encyclopedia' is the general system of predictive knowledge internal to a situation; that is, what everyone knows about politics, sexual difference, culture, art, technology, etc. Into this text I am putting the genre of biographical representation, one that primarily serves the interests of

nation and state, but also of an imperial epistemology. Badiou goes on to identify the expressions that are meant to solidify the uncertain status of floating signifiers (e.g. 'illegal immigrants') that are unstable sites and therefore can explode, resulting in what Thomas Kuhn termed a 'paradigm shift'. Elihu Yale's life is a known entity, documented in a hard and fast epistemological structure, equally solidified by his metonymical relation to Yale University – another known or 'discernible' entity. But putting together the events of other things existing at the margins of knowledge may 'explode' the truth-claims of hegemonic biographical representations.

4. S. Shapin and S. Schaffer (1985) *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press) raise such an issue in their study on the history of experiments.
5. G. Milton (1999) *Nathaniel's Nutmeg, or, The True and Incredible Adventures of the Spice Trader Who Changed the Course of History* (New York: Penguin), pp. 1–8.
6. R. H. Grove (1995) *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Eden's and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) and E. C. Spary (2000) *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) and 'Of Nutmegs and Botanists: The Colonial Cultivation of Botanical Identity', in L. Schiebinger and C. Swan, eds (2005) *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), pp. 187–203.
7. Grove, *Green Imperialism*, pp. 168–171.
8. S. Shapin (1994) *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press); Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*.
9. E.C. Spary, 'Of Nutmegs and Botanists', p. 188.
10. I am using 'supplement' here in the Derridean sense – the thing that signifies lack by replacing its initial articulation.
11. This is a soft figure based on Milton's estimates in *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*, p. 6. His sources are diaries, journals and letters, mostly collected by Samuel Purchas in *Purchas His Pilgrimes* [1625].
12. The 'state' that the Collegiate School occupied was, of course, only a small part of the New England colonies – far from being the emerging nation-state that eventually constituted part of the Thirteen Colonies. Similarly, England's only claim to Madras was the Fort St. George. These emergent states articulate what Richard White, 'The Nationalization of Nature', p. 3 identifies as the simultaneous fragility and strength of national histories.
13. The narratives about Yale's life and legacy sanctioned by the university would necessarily foreclose some of the more dubious aspects of his career, even if the manner of such foreclosure takes shape as the 'colorful' exploits of Yale's life.
14. H. Bingham (1939) *Elihu Yale: The American Nabob of Queen Square* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company).
15. J. T. Wheeler (1878) *Early Records of British India: A History of the English Settlements in India* (London: Curzon Press), pp. 84–85.
16. H. Davison Love (1913) *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640–1800*, Vol. 1 (London: Murray), pp. 534–545.
17. Love (1913) *Vestiges of Old Madras*, pp. 490–493.
18. W. W. Hunter (1912) *History of British India*, Vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co.), pp. 180–181.
19. Privy Council Registers in the Public Records Office, MSS.

20. H. Bingham (1937) *Elihu Yale: Governor, Collector, Benefactor*. Proceedings American Antiquarian Society (Worcester: AAS), Vol. 47, pp. 93–144.
21. J. C. Scott (1998) *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 11.
22. Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 406.
23. Yale's conscious decisions to reinforce its distance from Madras is exemplified in the fact that its architectural tribute to Elihu Yale is a replica of the Welsh chapel where he is buried, not his scandalous garden house in Madras.

11

'That will allow me to be my own woman'[1]: Margaret Anglin, Modernity and Transnational Stages, 1890s–1940s

Cecilia Morgan

In Henry Morgan's 1912 biographical collection, *The Canadian Man and Woman of the Time*, Canadian-born actor Margaret Anglin – then aged 36 – was presented to the English-Canadian reading public as having created a 'veritable sensation in the dramatic world'. Morgan cited theatre critics who compared her to Sarah Bernhardt; Bernhardt herself was quoted as speaking enthusiastically of Anglin's work; and the American press hailed her as 'one of the few great actresses the American stage possesses'. But Anglin's reputation was not limited to US theatre circles for, as Morgan declared, she had also made very successful tours of Canada and Australia.[2] Anglin, it seemed, was destined to assume a significant place in cultural history, in the country of her birth and internationally.

Yet this has not been the case: like many of her contemporaries who were born in Canada but moved across national borders to pursue careers in various cultural industries during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Anglin has all but vanished from the writing of history in English Canada.[3] Her experiences and significance have been obscured by historiographic frameworks that have paid more attention to nationally bounded subjects and to those women who were actors in the field of social, not cultural, history. The stages on which Anglin mounted her life and career have not attracted much of an audience within the English-Canadian historical profession.

However, I would argue that it is precisely those features of Anglin's life – a theatrical career that spanned three countries, included a range of cultural genres, and encompassed acting, directing and producing – that now warrant more serious and sustained attention. Anglin's career was forged through transnationalism: circuits of performance, reviews published in a number of countries that also circulated across borders and the types of plays she chose. By no means unique in her generation of cultural producers,

Anglin's life illustrates how one particular framework or national historiography cannot capture their multiple experiences. Through her pursuit of a transnational theatrical career, Anglin challenged the boundaries that circumscribed and often thwarted middle-class English-Canadian women's professional and artistic ambitions. However, her challenges to gendered

Figure 10 Miss Margaret Anglin, by Otto Sarony. Frank Anglin collection, C-038088, Library and Archives Canada.

conventions were carefully crafted so as not to overly disrupt norms of respectable white femininity. They also upheld dominant discourses of race and empire. Anglin's life can, in Martha Hodes' words, be treated as both story and argument[4]: as a story of selective boundary crossing and as an argument for seeing transnationalism as a significant category of historical analysis.

Born in Ottawa in 1876 to an Irish-Canadian Catholic family of political prominence and privilege, Anglin died in Toronto in 1958.[5] She was educated at the École du Sacré-Coeur near Montreal, trained at New York's Wheatcroft School, and there decided to make acting her career. She was first cast as an emergency replacement in *Shenandoah* in 1896 and then toured with James O'Neill, Eugene O'Neill's father, in – amongst other plays – *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Over the next 25 years Anglin would perform in and produce a range of plays in the United States, Canada and Australia: Shakespeare, modern dramas and farces. She was also known for her productions of Greek 'classics,' particularly on the University of California's Berkeley campus. Anglin made frequent and lengthy trips to Britain and Europe, both for leisure and to keep in touch with developments in theatre. Although her theatrical career slowed somewhat in the 1930s, she continued with her attempts to 'be her own woman' through acting, producing and radio broadcasts. Her last recorded performance onstage was in 1943, in Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*.[6]

Anglin's life was shaped by transnational theatrical circuits that facilitated not only movement across North American borders but also around the world.[7] In Anglin's case, being 'transnational' meant claiming various national locations and identifications and using each to bolster and support her claim on the other. These were locations and identifications of which Anglin was well aware: the story of her movements across national borders was one that, to no small extent, she helped write herself, with the cooperation of a willing media. At a time when press agents were becoming an increasingly important part of the new culture of personality and celebrity, Anglin became very skilled at dealing with the press.[8]

The first of these boundaries was transcontinental: in reviews and interviews Anglin was portrayed as both a great Canadian and a great American actress (despite the fact that after 1911, when she married the American Howard Hull, she became legally an American citizen).[9] The Canadian press was particularly zealous in its appropriation of Anglin: the Toronto *Saturday Night* announced to its readers in 1911 that the 'noted Toronto actress' would be appearing at the city's Royal Alexandra Theatre in the comedy *Green Stockings*.[10] Two weeks later the magazine suggested that Anglin might appear to different national audiences in different ways – known in the United States as a tragedienne but in Canada as a comedienne.[11] For the 1927 Golden Jubilee of the Confederation of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Anglin was invited by Prime

Minister Mackenzie King to read an ode to Confederation written by the Canadian poet Bliss Carman. King's appeal to Anglin's nationalism included the inducement that the programme would be broadcast in Britain 'and for the ode I can think of no one whose name would lend to it such appropriateness and éclat as would your own'.[12]

Anglin was not just an unhyphenated Canadian, however: she was also eager to claim Irish descent and often emphatically denied that she was English. This may originally have been rooted in the defence of the rights of Irish Catholics in Canada by her Irish-Canadian father, journalist and politician Timothy Anglin. But Anglin insisted that her 'Irishness' revealed itself not only in the political domain but personally as a performer in the embodied realm of voice and sensibility. In an interview with the Toronto periodical *Every Woman's World* in 1917, Anglin told her audience that O'Neill had told her that she would 'go far' as she had the 'Irish Sea' in her voice. Although she was not sure what O'Neil meant by that, she was sure that 'there can be no reasonable question as to my being full-blooded a whole-hearted Celt, for I am Irish through at least fifty generations, and I glory in that fact quite as much as I do in being a Canadian.'[13] Ten years earlier, in a *New York Times* interview, Anglin declared that she was 'born in Canada, you know, . . . but I came of Irish parentage, and I have an awful sense of humour that seems possessed to seize me at the wrong moment'.[14]

Anglin's Catholicism also linked the personal and the transnational. Her New York marriage (which was covered by *The New York Times*) took place in the Lady Chapel of St. Patrick's Catholic Cathedral.[15] Five years later, in one of a series of multi-year interviews with *Every Woman's World*, she pinpointed her convent school as introducing her to the theatre's world of sensory delights in the ingenuous scenery and luxurious costumes worn by the girls in the theatricals put on by the nuns.[16] In turn, the Catholic Church recognized Anglin as an exemplary member: in 1927 Notre Dame University awarded her its Laetare Medal, 'one of the highest honours for an American Catholic', according to *The New York Times*, presented annually to a Catholic American who had 'achieved distinction in arts, literature, and science'. The ninth woman and second member of the theatrical profession to win the award, Anglin was chosen because of her 'brilliant artistry, always a faithful interpretation of the highest ideals of the theatre' and because she has 'refused to play any part picturing woman as debased'. While 'one of the best known actresses on the American stage', the article went on, Anglin 'is a native of Canada . . . born in the house of Parliament, Ottawa . . . her father being Speaker of the House'.[17] Anglin's Catholicism might thus be celebrated as an affirmation of her respectability and moral character. And yet, by proclaiming and performing her religious identity on public stages and by linking it to reputable and accomplished womanhood, Anglin might also have challenged the deeply rooted anti-Catholicism of English-speaking Canada and the United States.[18]

A theatrical career, then, made it possible – possibly logical – to challenge notions of national identification as a fixed and one-dimensional way of belonging. To no small extent Anglin and those who wrote about her were playing to audiences who wanted to see her in multiple ways. To English-Canadians she could serve as a reminder of their ability to move within transnational circles while simultaneously not losing national connections and markers. This was particularly important during the Edwardian years when matters such as imperial federation, distinct Canadian nationalism, and the possibilities and pitfalls of a closer relationship to the United States were hotly debated. Although the motivations of the US press in heralding her as both an American and a Canadian are not as obvious, it is possible that her Canadian origins made her familiar but different, while her self-proclaimed Irishness suggested to her audiences that she might not view them with the condescension of a Canadian too closely aligned to England and empire.

Anglin's movement across and manipulation of national boundaries also took place within the context of cultural genres that were themselves transnational and imperial. During her early and mid-career years, the New York theatrical world was marked by productions that relied on various gendered and racialized images and symbols and was structured by the intertwined relations of gender and sexuality, race and class.[19] And the 'legitimate' or 'serious' stage on which she moved was itself part of a transatlantic cultural world, in which scripts, production values and styles and people criss-crossed the ocean, appearing in both metropolitan centres and on provincial tours. Many of these cultural patterns had been in place since at least the eighteenth century, but they took on a new intensity and frequency in the late nineteenth century with the expansion of steamship travel, rail and telegraph and the inclusion of the countries of the Indian and Pacific oceans in this world.[20]

Despite Anglin's desire to play down her links to Britain, she appeared in numerous productions of its playwrights' work in New York and across the United States, Canada and Australia. This was particularly the case with the work of Oscar Wilde, with whom she claimed a closer acquaintance than merely that of his interpreter. Her account of 'my career' to *Every Woman's World* began with her meeting Wilde at a family garden party in Ottawa during his celebrated tour of North America in 1882, when the young writer was 28 and she was a small girl of six. 'If any present had the presentiment of Tennyson's lover in *Locksley Hall* to see into the future', she told Canadian readers, 'he might have studied Wilde by whispering that the "small bit of frilly pink and white" he was tossing about in his gleeful mood would some day produce his plays.'[21] It may well be that Anglin identified with Wilde's Irish background and, possibly, with his deathbed conversion to Catholicism.

The British playwright Henry Arthur Jones, whose *Mrs. Dane's Defence* marked the start of her career as a 'leading lady', also played a role in her career. The play had its American premiere at New York's Empire Theatre in December 1900; in it the 24-year-old Anglin played Felicia Dane, a 'confidence woman' whose past included an adulterous affair, a performance that one American reviewer claimed was the 'perverse triumph of the Sinner'.[22] The first review was sent via transatlantic telegraph at the insistence of Alfred Harnsworth, the future press baron Lord Northcliffe, who jolted a lackadaisical reviewer into filing his copy by telling him that this was a play by a 'great English playwright' and that Margaret Anglin was a 'great Canadian actress'.[23] In 1912, when Jones's *Lydia Gilmore* opened in the United States with Anglin in the title role, he told *Theatre Magazine* that he wrote the play with Anglin in mind as she had done 'such excellent work' in *Mrs. Dane*.[24]

Anglin also starred in drawing room dramas and comedies such as *Zira*, set in England but with plots that relied on their invocations of colonial links. The first act of *Zira*, which opened in New York in September 1905 with Anglin in the lead role, was set in South Africa during the Boer War. Anglin played a British army nurse, a social outcast 'at home' who seeks to rehabilitate herself socially. She seizes the opportunity presented by the supposed death of a young white South African woman of British descent to take the woman's passport, travel to England, and pass herself off as the young woman, entering her extended family and winning the love of a distant relative, the 'son of the house'. Her deception is successful until the young woman – who was only stunned and slightly wounded – turns up and claims her inheritance. After a dramatic struggle, Zira is 'turned out into the street'. While one reviewer believed that 'the happenings are so improbable, so impossible, that only the acting of Margaret Anglin makes the play worth while,'[25] *Zira* was a popular success. A number of her other roles featured characters whose return from various colonies – Africa, Australia – were significant plot devices.[26] Overseas colonies became unseen but not unimagined locations, offstage 'others' whose existence is necessary to allow acts of masquerade, deception and intrigue to unfold in the domestic setting. The colonial discourses and imagery that permeated British culture in this period thus migrated to stages in North America, transmitted through the transatlantic world of middle-class theatre and transnational actors such as Anglin.[27]

While the intertwined relationships of colonies and metropole were woven through Anglin's contemporary theatrical work, her relationship to empire also emerges in her performances of Shakespeare. From the mid-nineteenth century until First World War productions of Shakespeare were ubiquitous, not just in England but in touring companies that travelled to places such as India, Ceylon, southeast Asia, Australia and Canada, following the path of imperial expansion. 'These actors', as British theatre historian

Richard Foulkes makes clear, 'were inevitably implicated in the spread of British hegemony'.[28] Given her antipathy towards England, Anglin would probably have denied that her interest in Shakespeare was implicated with the broader imperial context in this way. Her frequently voiced desire to be known as much as a comedienne as a dramatic actor undoubtedly lay behind the selection of plays such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*. They were also ones in which her contemporaries – Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, Modjeska, Maude Adams, Julia Marlowe and Julia Arthur – were keen to appear.[29] When Anglin announced her 1913 Canadian tour of 'notable Shakespearean actors' that would cross Canada offering *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, she and the press stressed her experience in Shakespearean productions in the United States and Australia.[30]

Yet Anglin's Shakespearean work cannot be separated from both Englishness and imperialism. When she put together the company for her Shakespearean tour, *Saturday Night* pointed out that the leading male members of the company had experience in England, having played at Stratford-upon-Avon and with Beerbohm Tree's company, and had appeared alongside such notables of the English stage as Johnstone Forbes-Robertson, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. (The periodical made sure to tell its readers that both Forbes-Roberson and Irving had been knighted.) She did so out of a desire to 'assemble an organization of players that would render the text of the plays and the delineation of the characters in as nearly an ideal manner as possible', she told the magazine.[31] Anglin's notion of the 'ideal manner' was, it seems, indebted to English productions: the review of her 1914 performance as Viola by English-Canadian critic Hector Charlesworth pointed out that she had adapted English director Frank Benson's 'stage management' technique, striking a balance between tradition and modernity by using old-fashioned settings alongside 'modern' aesthetic innovation.[32]

Furthermore, as her biographer points out, Anglin kept in close contact with directors and producers in England. In 1901 she was invited by a friend of Irving to play Marguerite in a revival of *Faust* but, she claimed, could not go through with it, as she was 'haunted' by the memory of Ellen Terry in the role.[33] On her first trip to London in 1903 Anglin was 'wooed' by Tree to perform with his company; but she refused, supposedly out of loyalty to her American manager. En route to London in 1908 to consult with its playwrights after her tour of Australia, she met up with Tree again in Cairo.[34]

In 1904 Anglin bought a manor house in Surrey, although it is not clear whether she did so because of her liking for the English countryside or because it was a good investment, like the properties she owned in the United States.[35] And she was not above supporting imperial cultural influences in Canada. She donated a gold bracelet as a prize in the Earl Grey drama competition to promote Canadian amateur theatre that was sponsored by the British Governor-General and featured plays heavily indebted

to English drawing-room dramas. She later gave permission for an amateur company in New Brunswick to call themselves 'The Anglin Players', and they went on to win honourable mention in the Dominion Drama Festival, the competition that succeeded the Earl Grey.[36]

If Anglin's was a transatlantic world, though, it was not England that represented its easternmost point. Developments in German and French theatre interested her.[37] One of her first major – and, judging from the reviews, successful – roles in New York had been Roxanne in Edmund de Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*; later in her career she performed in Victorien Sardou's plays. Anglin's identification with France became even stronger in 1921, when she translated, produced and starred in Emile Moreau's *Joan of Arc*. Although the play ran for only one week and Anglin lost money on it (the sets were large and the lavish costumes were spread over a cast of 150 members), its box-office potential was not her primary motivation. Once again, Anglin was compared to Bernhardt, both in her choice of role and in the fact that, like Bernhardt and other famous actresses, she portrayed a woman much younger than herself (Joan is depicted in Moreau's script as 19 and Anglin made no secret of the fact that she was 45).[38] France's Consul-General awarded her a gold medal and, at a benefit performance, she was presented with flowers and a silk tricolour by the *Société des Femmes de France*. She then sailed to France and made a pilgrimage to Domrémy.[39] Anglin continued to portray herself as having a strong connection to France and highlighted her bilingual abilities. Two years later she mounted a production of *The Great Lady Dedlock*, an adaptation of Dickens' *Bleak House* in which she played both Lady Dedlock and her ill-fated maid Hortense, whose speeches she translated into French.[40]

As much as these circuits of performance might transcend national boundaries, however, Anglin's appearances in plays set in the United States continued to reflect the racial hierarchies of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century America. Unlike the later performances of American dancer Katherine Dunham discussed by Penny Von Eschen in the next chapter, Anglin's did not transcend racial divisions; rather, she took on the roles of besieged and ultimately triumphant white women. In *The Great Divide*, which opened in Washington's Belasco Theatre in 1906, Anglin played Ruth Jordan, a young white woman from New England who ended up in a deserted cabin in the wilds of Arizona, her virtue threatened by violent and drunken gold miners, one of whom is Mexican. The plot revolves around Ruth's redemption of one of the white miners and her eventual – and happy – settling with this man and their infant in Arizona. American audiences could thus be reassured that it was possible for Puritan New England and free-wheeling frontier capitalism to be united successfully through the domesticating force of a Ruth Jordan. In the process, the threatening 'other' of the Mexican was banished.[41] Picturing the American West in this fashion tapped into a reservoir of images and discourses about the meanings

of frontier, civilization and nation structured by the relations of gender, ethnicity and race.[42] Ten years later Anglin repeated similar themes in *The Vein of Gold*, a drama set in Wyoming.[43] In *The Great Divide* and *The Vein of Gold*, then, the intimate and the domestic upheld publicly constituted racial boundaries of the American nation.

Anglin's public performances offstage, moreover, were clearly shaped by beliefs in her own racial and class superiority. During her 1908 tour of Australia she was taken to an Aboriginal reserve outside Melbourne, where she bought souvenirs and watched Aboriginal men perform boomerang throwing and foot racing. In an interview the following year, Anglin described the Aboriginals as having the 'lowest intelligence' in the human family. 'I believe the Bushmen of South Africa are below them,' she went on condescendingly, 'but not far . . . Still, they have a remarkable sense of humour, and may be recommended for their invariable good nature.'[44]

On the voyage from Australia to England Anglin replicated many of the experiences of Australian women travellers who, as Angela Woollacott has argued, used the voyage to reiterate their white imperial identities: she stopped in Calcutta, Sri Lanka and Egypt, where she and her sister took a trip up the Nile and rode camels in the desert.[45] Unlike Woollacott's travellers, though, the voyage did not result in a salutary assessment of the British Empire and her position as one of its subjects. Instead, Anglin's aligned her belief in white superiority with support for American, not British, imperial power. She compared various aspects of the Empire's colonies unfavourably with the United States, particularly with Honolulu, where she had stopped on the voyage to Australia. Aden in particular disgusted her: 'I think Aden is the most frightful place I have ever visited for heat, dirt, squalor, and depression. Aden is another part of Great Britain's wonderful Dominions!'[46] Anglin's public pronouncements on Australia and 'the East' thus suggest how the transnational circuits of performance gave certain white women opportunities to participate in internationally circulated constructions of racial hierarchy. In doing so they not only observed and assessed those they deemed racially 'other': they also shored up their own position as modern white women.

* * *

In historian Jo Margadant's words, Anglin fashioned her self and her career from the 'cultural material she had at hand' – in her case, the rapidly expanding transnational world of early twentieth-century modernity and theatrical celebrity.[47] She negotiated this world in order to present her self in multiple roles that appealed to a variety of class, gender, ethnic, national and imperial audiences. In playing characters such as Zira, Joan of Arc, Viola, Ruth Jordan and Medea, she portrayed herself as an innovative artist whose movements across national boundaries and continents – 'conquering' Australia,

'charming' Broadway and 'captivating' Canadians – was a measure of her artistic worth. She also represented herself as a hard-working and competent producer, manager and businesswoman, combining these public roles with the domestic pleasures of a happily married wife. In these multiple parts, then, Anglin appeared to be the epitome of modern, white womanhood, her ability to move across multiple boundaries and unite seemingly divergent roles emblematic of the promises and freedom that a transnational career might bestow. Like some of the other subjects examined in this collection, Anglin 'strode the world with authority, liberty, and purpose',[48] performing 'being her own woman' with flair and aplomb.

And yet it is important not to end this story and my argument on too celebratory a note. The various boundaries that Anglin was prepared to cross did not include those of racial difference and hierarchy: she maintained the privileges of white middle-class womanhood both on and offstage. Creating a celebrity self was, after all, a process that both revealed and suppressed various forms of 'truth': there were hints – well suppressed in the media – that her marriage might well have been less than idyllic;[49] and, despite her many successes, Anglin suffered her share of artistic and commercial failures, setbacks that she could not afford to dwell upon or admit to publicly. The very self-assuredness and charm with which she fashioned her public identity should also remind us how the medium of performance that allowed her to create a transnational life might be riddled with unvoiced, yet all too real, uncertainty and exigencies.

Notes

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3. For Anglin's career see Mary M. Brown (1990) 'Entertainers of the Road' in Ann Saddlemyer (ed.) *Early Stages Theatre in Ontario, 1800–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 144–145; Robert B. Scott (1997) 'Professional Performers and Companies' in Ann Saddlemyer and Richard Plant (eds) *Later Stages: Essays in Ontario Theatre from the First World War to the 1970s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 17–20.
4. Martha Hodes in this volume.
5. William M. Baker 'Timothy Warren Anglin' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* Vol. XII Online (www.dcb.ca).
6. This sketch of the key events of Anglin's life has been taken from her biography written by her great-nephew: John LeVay (1985) *Margaret Anglin a Stage Life* (Toronto: Simon and Pierre).
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14. (1906) 'Not Much Trickery in This Kind of Acting, Says Margaret Anglin' *EWW*, 21 October.
15. (1911) 'Margaret Anglin Weds Howard Hull' *NYT*, 9 May.
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17. (1927) 'Laetare Medal Goes to Margaret Anglin' *NYT*, 27 November.
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21. Anglin 'My Career', 5.
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33. LeVay *Margaret Anglin*, 56.
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39. Ibid., 198.
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12

Made on Stage: Transnational Performance and the Worlds of Katherine Dunham from London to Dakar

Penny M. Von Eschen

In April 1966, the American choreographer, dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham capped nearly two decades of transnational touring and performance when she joined her old friend, the renowned poet and Senegal's president Leopold Senghor, as adviser and co-organizer of the First World Festival of Negro Art in Senegal's capital, Dakar. Dunham and Senghor were a fitting pair to lead the unprecedented gathering of black artists from the United States, Africa and its diaspora in a celebration of black culture. Senghor was a leading exponent of *Négritude*, the Francophone literary movement that asserted a distinct and universal black expressive culture. Dunham had studied Afro-diasporic dance and culture in Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad as an anthropology student at the University of Chicago in the 1930s. By the time she joined Senghor in the months before the festival, she had spent more than half of her life bringing Afro-diasporic dance styles to audiences in over 50 countries throughout Europe, South and East Asia, the Americas and Africa.

Like the Canadian-born actress Margaret Anglin, whose career on the stage is considered by Cecilia Morgan in the previous chapter, Dunham's career as dancer, choreographer, scholar and founder of her own dance company and dance school was forged through transnational circuits of performance. In this chapter I trace Dunham's career from her first European tour in 1948 through the 1966 festival in Dakar, arguing that although transnational performance was the critical enabling condition for her artistic and intellectual work, she faced, as a black woman heading one of the first interracial dance troupes in the United States, personal and professional obstacles that sometimes almost defeated her.

In thinking about the importance of Dunham's performances in fostering a transgressive counter-public that challenged normative gender, racial

and sexual ideologies, I am indebted to Diane Taylor's work on embodied performance as a critical site of alternative knowledge production.[1] Persuaded by her anthropological training that culture was a critical tool in dismantling western hierarchies, Dunham combined her anthropological training with earlier training in classical and modern dance to embark on decades of artistic creativity. Fusing modern and what she termed 'primitive' and traditional forms, she was determined to demonstrate the beauty and complexity of Afro-diasporic cultures. More importantly, she sought to challenge normative views of race and society by showing that the modern world was born of precisely such fusions. In performing modernity as a hybrid and *creative* fusion of European, African and indigenous forms, Dunham's work challenged the very core of racialized Western societies who denied the value of 'race-mixing' and the cultural contributions of black peoples. As she created new worlds of modernity through performances that challenged dominant epistemologies, bringing these performances to fervently responsive audiences across the world, Dunham's embodied transnational expression influenced metropolitan and provincial cultures alike.

In analyzing Dunham's highly self-conscious attempts to remake race, gender and sexual relationships and categories across the worlds she traversed, I also find useful Pamela Scully's discussion in this volume of 'heterography' as a way of mapping multiple subjectivites and positionalities in a life. As a twentieth-century artist and intellectual, Dunham strove for an integrated sense of self and society. As we will see below, in her effort to explain and fuse the relationship between anthropology and art, and in her desire to dismantle racial hierarchies, Dunham was profoundly committed to *comprehending* and *transforming* a 'whole'. Scully's emphasis on multiple subjectivities, however, helps me to explore Dunham's attempts to negotiate the distinct terrains of anthropology and performance in a world, where she was consistently interpolated by audiences and critics alike in terms of race, sexuality and gender. Dunham employed multiple discursive strategies in a quest for legitimation, in her struggles to keep her company together and in her relentless challenge to racial exclusions while being acutely aware of her dependence on her husband and costume designer John Pratt and other white friends such as the filmmaker Maya Deren to book hotels and make property arrangements from which she was denied access.

I became interested in Dunham while investigating US State Department cultural programs abroad during the Cold War. Selection committees made up of critics and journalists who determined which artists went on these tours repeatedly rejected Dunham. (I will return later to the circumstances of her exclusion.) This made her presence at Dakar especially intriguing, given her prior exclusion from State Department sponsorship and the prominent role at the festival of State Department sponsored artists, who included the jazz composer Duke Ellington, the choreographer Alvin Ailey and the gospel singer Marion Williams.[2]

I was surprised to find, however, that despite Dunham's international fame and her critical role in developing the festival, she appears to have been marginalized at the actual meeting. Nowhere is Dunham's absence more puzzling than in the 1966 film on the festival by the pioneering black American documentary filmmaker William Greaves commissioned by the United States Information Service (USIA). Greaves's film stands out not only as the most thorough documentation of the festival, but also as the most popular USIA film in Africa over the next decade.[3] Greaves structured his film around the poetry of Langston Hughes and the music of Duke Ellington, prominently featuring both artists along with narrative commentary on the cultural contributions (especially dance) of several African nations. In the featured spots on African dancers, the influence of Dunham's style is evident. Dunham herself, however, is a shadowy figure, not even identified as she is seen walking by a group of people and not looking at the camera.

To understand the discrepancy between Dunham's central role in organizing the festival and her virtual absence in the film – striking for an artist known for her arresting presence on stage or in front of a camera – we need to consider the broader trajectory of her remarkable career as an anthropologist, choreographer and performer on the world stage. Born outside Chicago in 1909, Dunham had already trained in modern and classical dance when, as a 25-year-old anthropology student at the University of Chicago working under the direction of Melville Herskovits, she studied dance in Haiti in 1935, moving on to Jamaica and Trinidad.

When she returned to the United States in 1936, Dunham chose not to pursue a PhD, but embarked instead on a remarkable period of artistic creativity. In 1939 she choreographed the Labor Stage production *Pins and Needles*. The following year she collaborated with George Balanchine on the Broadway musical *Cabin in the Sky*, starring the great African-American singer Ethel Waters, considering herself an equal partner in its choreography although Balanchine took full billing. During the 1940s she did a series of celebrated Hollywood revues and worked on a number of films including the celebrated *Stormy Weather* (1943) featuring her choreography and dance company.[4]

Dunham formed her own dance company and established an influential school of dance in New York City, renowned for its demanding 'Dunham technique'. While the company and school initially met with rave reviews, Dunham's unique fusion of Afro-diasporic and European-American forms proved controversial. Some US critics compared her unfavourably with Pearl Primus, who was praised for 'authenticity' in presenting African forms when she came on the scene in 1943. As Julia Foulkes has argued, many critics read Primus – who had dark skin and an athletic style of dance – as a distinct racial 'other', while Dunham's lighter skin and hybrid dance styles confronted audiences with a history of race-mixing that most Americans were profoundly invested in denying.[5] In its celebration of cross-cultural fusion,

Figure 11 Katherine Dunham: Woman with Cigar, circa 1940s. Courtesy of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

Dunham's choreography was read as a threatening, 'miscegenated' form – to use the pejorative word of that day. Moreover, the transformative work of Dunham's fusion was achieved and viewed on a sexualized black female body, threatening mores that sought to contain women's sexuality.

For Dunham such cross-cultural fusion was an embodiment of the creative spirit and a remaking of a modern world wracked by racial and gender hierarchies. Of this period, Dunham wrote:

> At the time I was considered daring . . . being on stage was like making love. It was an expression of my love for humanity. This is what took Europe by storm. Initially I was embarrassed by discussions of sexuality and my legs. I didn't realize that sexuality was a dominating factor in my life or that it was different for anybody else.[6]

Dunham's sense of performance – as well as of sexuality – was based on an idea of generative communication and transformation. When Dunham says 'this is what took Europe by storm,' she is celebrating the transformative

impact of performance and its possibilities for creating a new modern public with liberating forms of expression.

The first European tour by Dunham's company in 1948, beginning with an extended run in London and continuing in Paris and Germany, began out of necessity when she was no longer able to keep her dance school open. Dunham's fusion style, involving criss-crossing the Caribbean, invoking transnational histories of the slave trade, coerced sexuality and exploitative labour, proved particularly successful in Europe, and this greater receptivity allowed the company to continue performing and adding to their creative repertoire.

Despite her more enthusiastic reception in Europe, Dunham still had to navigate recalcitrant racial restrictions. Her extended run in London overlapped with a remarkable array of black American performers, from Duke Ellington to the tap-dancing Nicholas Brothers. Like Dunham, many of these artists had been associated with popular front culture and were possibly lying low to escape the pall that McCarthyism had cast over the United States. Overlapping for six months in a bleak and severely war-damaged London, in an atmosphere of competition and camaraderie that was nonetheless heady, these black American artists vied for audiences as they coped with racial restrictions in housing.

After London, Dunham and her dancers found the adoration and free-flowing champagne of Paris exhilarating, but noted that Paris had its own boundaries. They tired of being objects of fascination at parties, while in what symbolized to them the limits of intimacy, they were 'never invited to dinner'. In Paris, as elsewhere, Dunham was relentless in challenging racial boundaries. Indeed, she met Senghor during her first tour of Paris in 1949. Disturbed to find on opening night that there were no black people in the audience, Dunham, who was fluent in French, visited the Sorbonne to invite African students to her performances. There she met Senghor, along with Sekou Toure, the future president of Guinea.

While in Paris Dunham had rejected Josephine Baker's offer of an introduction to the Parisian scene, insisting that she did not need her help. A closer look at Dunham's strategies for legitimacy offers insight into her insistence on distancing herself from this popular African-American performer. Given Baker's association with highly sexualized and exoticized primitivism, Dunham may have worried that she indulged white audiences searching for more 'authentic' ideas of the primitive. The survival of the Dunham Company without patronage was accomplished because of its flexibility in venues, ranging from the concert stage to cabarets. Dunham was uncomfortable, however, with performing in cabarets, as Baker did. Such venues often offered the only opportunity to keep working between more lucrative and prestigious engagements.[7] But Dunham felt that their promotions overemphasized sexuality in a way that threatened her credibility as an artist.

In contrast to the modernist search for physical and emotional liberation through primitivism, Dunham was committed to fusion, seeking to

remake modernity by demonstrating the universality of rhythm and the interchangeability of cultures. Seeking to dissociate herself from exoticized images of the primitive, her most significant legitimation strategy involved invoking her authority and expertise as an anthropologist. Dunham was invested in what she saw as the scientific truth claims of anthropology for debunking racism as well as for legitimating her projects. Throughout her decades of international touring, she appeared widely as a lecturer at universities and public venues.[8]

Dunham saw the relationship between ethnography and theatre as exceedingly complex. In a talk given to anthropology students at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, Dunham described her greatest anthropological influences as coming from her teacher Dr. Redfield, a 'great acculturation expert', and from the functionalist school of Dr. Radcliffe Brown. She regarded dance as a crucial site of acculturation as 'the dance is one of the strongest meeting points of cultures.' From the functionalist school Dunham derived the belief that 'a single point cannot be taken out of its context. To make a study of dance, I had to be interested in social aspects, artifacts, ceremonial use, language, etc.'[9] At the same time she insisted that her work as a dancer and choreographer was that of a creative artist. For Dunham, 'it would be a sacrifice for a creative artist to present theatre in a purely ethnographic form.' 'In theatre', she argued, 'the relationship between form and function *is made* (my emphasis). In usage, a true item is taken then used creatively along true but simple lines.' Using the example of her staging of the Brazilian Choros, she pointed out that even though 'Choros is not danced that way in Brazil,' the instruments, music, clothing and underlying rhythms were Brazilian.[10]

Dunham believed that her creative re-contextualization of Afro-diaporic cultures could at once inspire audiences to appreciate the dignity and accomplishment of these forms and honour the integrity of anthropological investigation in pursuing the 'truth'. Both were integral elements in her project of challenging racial hierarchies. In response to the question, 'Is yours a theatrical approach to anthropology, or an anthropological approach to theatre,' Dunham replied that 'what you saw on stage' is 'just theatre without using the word anthropology'.[11] Yet, she explained, anthropological methods and field techniques had fundamentally shaped her investigation of the issues she wanted to raise on the stage. Responding to another question about whether *Barrelhouse* was theatrical or a picture of race relations in America, Dunham declared that scientific and objective pursuit of the truth was critical to exposing histories of racism, and linked her creative project to her challenge to racial hierarchy:

> I try to do things on the stage that I know. That era was to me very important and very serious. Barrelhouse is tragic and it a comment on the situation of a great segment of the American Negroes at that time. If I did not touch on the American Negro, I think I would be avoiding

> the issue uselessly. The purpose of science is to be objective. It may seem offensive to you but I see so much truth in it.[12]

Over time, the pressure of international touring exacerbated the tensions Dunham faced in her attempts to legitimate herself as a creative artist. After a decade on tour, facing financial challenges that made the continued existence of the company precarious, Dunham explained her dilemma to Dave Jampel in an interview for the Tokyo newspaper, *Manichi*:

> We've got to convince people that it's high class and also for the man in the street. Sometimes at a press meeting I have to catch the eye of our local press representative to find out whether I should talk about sex or culture. In Singapore, they wouldn't let me talk about anything other than sex but at a press session in Tokyo I brought up sex and the interpreter hasn't gotten through the stuttering yet.[13]

Further reassessing her career in light of publicity issues, Dunham explained to Jampel that from the beginning of her work with impresario Sol Hurok, who first presented her work on a large scale, Hurok had 'deemphasized' her 'anthropological tendencies and turned the attention of our drum-beaters to the mass sell of sex'.[14]

Hurok himself noted the ironies in Dunham performing in venues ranging from nightclubs to opera houses. He recalled that she performed 'Barrelhouse' 'both in San Francisco's Art Museum and in Chicago's Chez Paree, to the rousing applause of both audiences'.[15] But Dunham confessed that she was 'terribly embarrassed over the stress on sex in the publicity for the first tour'.[16] Although her choreography celebrated the creative energy of sexuality, the marketing so necessary for an 'unsubsidized' company violated the delicate balance between her anthropological influences and her creative theatre. As an interpreter of the functionalist school of anthropology she was committed not to take things out of context, and this is precisely what Hurok's publicity did with sex.

Dunham's preoccupation in the late 1950s with the over-playing of sex in her publicity no doubt stemmed in part from her disappointment at not winning State Department sponsorship. She frequently reminded people of her unique position in heading a company that was unsubsidized in a dance world deeply dependent on private patronage and government sponsorship. State Department tours abroad, for example, regularly employed companies such as those of Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, Jose Limon and Alvin Ailey.[17] Ironically, she had already embraced of the role of cultural ambassador. In a strategic positioning of her company – perhaps continuing the spirit of the wartime popular front – she often suggested that she was serving her country through artistic excellence as well as by challenging racism. In 1958 she reminded Dorothy Quarker, an administrator for

the American National Theater Academy (ANTA) (which managed the State Department/USIA performing arts programs), that over the years, 'In many countries of the world diplomatic representatives of the United States have been aware of our importance and have expressed to us their gratitude that we have able to represent American on such a level.'[18] Dunham praised the assistance she received through the US embassy in Cairo in 1951 and celebrated what she saw as the benefits of that cooperation to the embassy as well as to her company.[19] Her 1954 German performances had included Star-Spangled Banner motifs with red, white and blue costumes.[20] No wonder Dunham was disappointed when government cultural tours expanded in the mid-fifties, but her company was excluded.

Dunham's applications for state subsidization erupted into a confrontation with the USIA following her company's extended tour of Australia and East Asia that concluded in Tokyo in 1957. The State Department had barred her from accepting an invitation from the People's Republic of China, and she had disbanded her company in Tokyo for the first time since its formation and stayed on into the summer of 1958 for a period of research, writing and rest.[21] Over the past two years she had written repeatedly to ANTA, citing the recognized accomplishments of her company as cultural ambassadors and the grievous obstacles they faced as an unsubsidized group beholden to a double taxation burden. She also argued that competition from State Department sponsored tours directly contributed to her financial woes as her company was much more expensive for local impresarios.[22]

During her prolonged stay in Tokyo, she enlisted the help of Congressman Charles Diggs and Dave Jampel, the Tokyo representative of *Variety*, whose May 1958 article was headlined: 'Left to Her Own Resources in Global Touring, Katherine Dunham Gibes at Robert Schnitzer of ANTA.' In her interview with Jampel, as well as in her correspondence with ANTA and Congressman Diggs, Dunham stressed her enormous contribution to cultural exchange and her positive impact on the world's perception of 'America's racial problem'.[23]

Dunham believed that her rejection for a State Department tour and USIA sponsorship was related to her 1951 production *Southland*, the portrayal of the lynching of a southern black man that premiered in Santiago, Chile, over the objections of the State Department. Valis Hill has argued that *Southland* marked the demise of Dunham's Company. The influential columnist Walter Winchell, who had had previously covered her favourably, explained to Dunham that FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover had registered his disapproval of her with a 'vicious slur'.

If Dunham was correct in seeing the State Department as punishing her for *Southland*, the radical aesthetics of her eclectic style of dance was, in any case, anathema to them. In an echo of those critics who had questioned Dunham's authenticity in the 1940s, preferring what they viewed as an authentically black 'other' to 'miscegenated' fusion, dance critics serving

on State Department committees considered her fusion of Afro-diasporic and modern dance too 'sexual' and hence 'vulgar', as one critic put it. Another charged that she had become 'cheap and theatrical in the worst sense', marking her work as 'mere entertainment', not art. Dunham continued to insist on the importance of fusion, inverting the critics' dismissals by arguing that 'we have made attractive for general consumption the thing that has been avoided because it always had a burlesque element.'[24] As she insisted on performing the 'truth' of modernity, the improvisatory fusion that could be celebrated in the work of male jazz artists was unacceptable when viewed on the body of a black woman.

Dunham finally won technical 'qualification' for State Department support in 1959. But after reassembling her company for a final unsubsidized European tour, she was informed in 1960 that it was 'impossible for them to work [her] into the schedule' and that 'the State Department has already run over the allotment of funds.' Adding insult to injury when her company had just fallen apart, Schnitzer condescendingly chided her: 'I cannot help pointing out to you that each time your request comes with tremendous financial pressure on you and time pressure on the State Department.' He then insisted that 'a government program just is not set up to move with such rapidity,' an entirely disingenuous claim, given that many of the tours were hastily arranged.[25]

In 1965, with her company gone, Dunham finally received a six-month grant from the State Department, following her invitation from Senghor to work on the Dakar festival.[26] She welcomed the opportunity to join her old friend in a celebration of the Afro-diasporic performance styles she had been bringing to international audiences for decades. During her forced retirement from her company, however, she had returned to her anthropological work, and at the festival the studies that had worked in productive tension with her creative art – and had been critical to her struggles for legitimacy – became an albatross that plunged her into conflict with friends and colleagues.

Dunham startled some festival participants when in one of her two public lectures she discussed the need to 'return dance to where it first came from, which is the heart and soul of man, and man's social living'.[27] This functionalist view of dance contrasts markedly with Dunham's conception of performance as a transformative space that in *making* form and function generates new possibilities for performers and audiences alike. Vévé Clark has argued that Dunham's work on Haiti – the most important of which was written in the festival's aftermath – relies on a form/function structuralist analysis of dance, whereas her choreography belongs to a modernist narrative tradition.[28] This fits with what I see as an uncharacteristic position taken by Dunham at the festival that moved away from her nuanced discussion of the relationship between anthropology and theatre towards a view that emphasized the social function of dance as a cathartic release of tension.

Dunham's statement apparently generated a great deal of controversy, as many objected to what they heard as a defence of tradition over change and modernity. In her second public lecture she acknowledged that 'there was among certain of the participants, a kind of mistrust, a *méfiance* at the likelihood of a reversal to the traditional that might serve to inhibit "modernization".' Sceptically placing modernization in quotes, Dunham assured her audience of her commitment to combining traditional and contemporary forms, and her belief that art must be original. 'Influence,' she declared, 'is inevitable but nothing that is copied is true art'.[29] But even in light of Dunham's affirmation of the creativity of dance, when she asked that dance be returned to the place from which it came, *from where* did she want to return it? Did she want to wrest it from the influence of the State Department patronage and its deep entanglements with the dance patronage network? Did her desire for place and social function represent a temporary abandonment of her project of cross-cultural fusion?

I do *not* want to suggest that Dakar marked a moment of decline in Dunham's work. I do want to suggest that it was a moment of profound unease that made it particularly difficult for her to negotiate the different discursive fields that had always mediated her approach to dance. I see Dunham's refusal to engage the camera in Greaves's documentary as a refusal in part to acknowledge the USIA, who had continually snubbed her. The triumphant presence of Ellington and Ailey – both underwritten by the State Department – was most likely a painful affront to Dunham, only a few years after her own company had been forced to disband.

Dunham's unease at Dakar was further compounded by the immediate political context. Dunham had met Senghor with Sekou Toure in Paris; but by 1966, Senghor and Toure were fundamentally opposed in a deep political divide. Senegal's pro-Western politics led to such black Americans as Harry Belafonte and James Baldwin to boycott the conference; and controversy raged at the festival over Senghor's concept of *Negritude* and his determination to articulate a distinctly African contribution to modern civilization. In Dunham's second address at the festival she obliquely referred to 'tensions' and expressed relief that the festival had actually come off. She herself, perhaps asserting her independence from any particular camp, and certainly espousing a view compatible with her fusion style, told reporter Lloyd Garrison that the term *Negritude* was 'meaningless'.[30]

Without a company to return to and with a keen interest in writing, Dunham agreed when Senghor asked her to stay on after the Dakar festival. Over the next year she wrote what is considered her finest work on Haiti, *Island Possessed*.[31] The fissures of the festival may have persuaded her to end her pursuit of government support and turn to a different form of activism expressed in her militant criticism of US imperialism in Haiti. From her marginalization by US critics and her exclusion from State Department

tours to her anomalous outsider position at Dakar, Dunham had paid a high price for her commitment to cross-cultural fusion. But in her courageous staging across multiple continents of dances rooted in the deepest fissures of the world into which she was born, Katherine Dunham had already helped make on the stage the new transnational modernity she had worked for all her life.

Notes

1. Diana Taylor (2003) *The Archive and the Repertoire Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press), p. 21.
2. Recent scholarship on Dunham includes Joyce Aschenbrenner (2002) *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press); Julia L. Foulkes (2002) *Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism From Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press); and Susan Manning (2004) *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press); Vévé Clark and Sara E. Johnson (eds) (2005) *Kaiso! Writings by and About Katherine Dunham* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press).
3. William Greaves, dir. (1966) *The First World Festival of Negro Arts* (Motion Picture and Television Service of the United States Information Agency). For Greaves see Adam Knee and Charles Musser (1992) 'Documentary Filmmaking, and the African-American Experience' *Film Quarterly* 45:3, 13–25.
4. Katherine Dunham (2005) 'Early New York Collaborations' in *Kaiso!*, p. 141; Constance Valis Hill (2005) 'Collaborating with Balanchine on *Cabin in the Sky*: Interviews with Katherine Dunham' in *Kaiso!*, pp. 235–247; Ann Barzel (2005) 'The Lost ten Years: The Untold story of the Dunham-Turbyfill Alliance' in Clark and Johnson, *Kaiso!*, p. 178.
5. Foulkes *Modern Bodies*, 72–76.
6. (1976) Dunham interview with Gwen Mazer, *Essence*, December, reprinted in Clark and Johnson, *Kaiso*, p. 421.
7. Katherine Dunham Papers, University of Illinois, Carbondale, Box 13.
8. Dunham's first book *Journey to Accompong* (New York: Henry Holt), recounting her experiences among the Maroon people of Jamaica, was published in 1946. During her 1948 London tour she delivered an address to the Royal Anthropological Association. Her University of Chicago M.A. thesis (1938) was translated into Spanish by Javier Romero and published as (1947) *Las danzas de Haití* as a special issue of *Acta antropológica* 2.4 (Mexico). It was subsequently published in French (1950) as *Les danse d'Haïti*, with a foreword by Claude Lévi-Strauss (Paris: Éditions Fasquelle).
9. Dunham's University of Chicago M.A. thesis (1938) was titled 'Dances of Haiti: Their Social Organization, Classification, Form, and Function'.
10. (1957) 'Notes on Open Forum Held By Miss Dunham for Anthropological Students From University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand' 30 March, p. 1. Dunham Papers, Box 22 Folder 3.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 4.
13. Excerpts from article by Dave Jampel (1957) *Manichi* [Tokyo], 30 September Dunham papers, Box 26, Folder 2. See also Auschenbrenner, *Dancing a Life*, pp. 130–131.

14. Jampel, *Manichi*.
15. Solomon Hurok with Ruth Goode (1953) *Impresario A Memoir* (New York: Random House), pp. 284–285.
16. Jampel, *Manichi*.
17. On government funding of dance see Naima Prevots (1998) *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press).
18. (1958) Dunham to Dorothy Quarker, 7 May. Dunham Papers, Box 23 Folder 9.
19. Dunham papers, Box 14.
20. Dorothy Fischer-Hornung (2003) 'Jungle in the Spotlight? Primitivism and Self-Esteem: Katherine Dunham's 1954 German Tour' in Heike Raphael-Hernand (ed.) *Blackening Europe The African American Presence* (New York: Routledge), pp. 53–72.
21. Aschenbrenner *Katherine Dunham*, p. 150.
22. Dunham to Quarker.
23. Dave Jampel (1958) 'Left to Her Own Resources in Global Touring, Katherine Dunham Gibes at Robert Schnitzner of ATNA' *Variety*, 7 May.
24. Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham*, pp. 150–151; Wendy Perron (2005) 'Katherine Dunham: One Woman Revolution' in Clark and Johnson, *Kaiso*, pp. 626–627; Vévé Clark (2005) 'An Anthropological Band of Beings: An Interview with Julie Belafonte' in *Kaiso*, pp. 379–381; Constance Valis Hill (2005) 'Katherine Dunham's *Southland*: Protest in the Face of Repression' in *Kaiso*, pp. 345–363.
25. (1960) Robert Schnitzer to Katherine Dunham, 6 May. Dunham Papers, Box 27 Folder 4; Penny M. Von Eschen (2004) *Satchmo Blows Up the World* (Harvard: Harvard University Press).
26. Dunham refers to the six-month funding in another application to the Ford Foundation, but her papers are closed indefinitely for the period surrounding the Dakar Festival.
27. Katherine Dunham (1968) 'The Performing Arts of Africa' in *Primier festival mondial des arts négres Colloque/First World Festival of Negro Arts Colloquium* (Dakar: Éditions Présence Africaine), pp. 478–479, quoted in Eugene Redmond (2005) 'Cultural Fusion and Spiritual Unity' in Clark and Johnson, *Kaiso!*, p. 560.
28. Vévé Clark (2005) 'Performing the Memory of Difference in Afro-Caribbean Dance: Katherine Dunham's Choreography, 1938–1987' in Clark and Johnson, *Kaiso!*, pp. 320–340.
29. Katherine Dunham (2005) 'Address Delivered at the Dakar Festival of Negro Arts, 3 April, 1966' in Clark and Johnson, *Kaiso!*, pp. 416, 415. See Julia L. Foulkes (2005) 'Ambassadors with Hips: Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus, and the Allure of Africa in the Black Arts Movement' in Avital H. Bloch and Lauri Umansky (eds) *Impossible to Hold Women and Culture in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press), p. 89.
30. Dunham 'Address Delivered at the Dakar Festival,' pp. 416, 412. For a discussion of the political complexities surrounding the festival see Von Eschen *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, ch. 6.
31. Katherine Dunham (1969) *Island Possessed* (New York: Doubleday).

Part III

Quests

A desire for mobility and self-reinvention has not always been motivated by the careful calculation of personal advantage. This section investigates transnational journeys that were framed in more idealistic terms, as quests for love or liberty. Yet even so, questions of power and self-interest continually obtrude, suggesting that the boundary between idealism and opportunism is easily blurred.

In the archives of the powerful lie traces of subaltern lives, presenting historians with challenging possibilities for their reconstruction and reinterpretation. In 'Subaltern Crossings: Looking for Liberty', Bruce Dorsey and Fiona Paisley follow very different archival trails to uncover complex stories of lives that crossed the globe on elusive quests for liberty and human dignity. Drawing on his research into the lives of African Americans who were sent to West Africa by the American Colonization Society in the early nineteenth century, Dorsey considers that historical experience through the frames of imperial expansionism and cultural transplantation. The colonizers of Liberia led transnational lives that spanned two continents and several nations, sustaining complex, intimate relationships and an ongoing reformist engagement with the United States. Fiona Paisley pieces together the life of Aboriginal activist Anthony Martin Fernando, who represented himself as an Indigenous world citizen, and the future of indigenous people as a global issue. She considers the efficacy of this determinedly transnational life and its assertion of the importance of 'resistance in exile'. The quest for liberty, both these essays show, could spark an unending journey of escape and resistance, dreams and disillusionment and restless mobility.

'Intimate Crossings: Looking for Love' shifts the frame from race to gender, examining the transnational lives of two very different middle-class women. In the early 1850s the wife of explorer, Sir John Franklin, issued a transnational appeal for aid in Britain's search for his expedition, missing in the Arctic. Jane Franklin envisioned a community of feeling in which 'civilised nations' shared human sympathy for men's suffering and women's fears. Penny Russell argues, however, that Franklin was making a

conscious, calculated appeal to the vanity of national feeling. Mary Berenson once described herself as doomed, like all women denied citizenship, to be an alien in any country. Ros Pesman traces Berenson's migrations from the United States first to Britain and then to Italy, as she sought to escape familial constraints and find sexual and emotional freedom. Italy offered social and cultural worlds hitherto unknown to her: but Berenson remained firmly attached to the expatriate community of Florence, living on, but perhaps not in, Italy. Both women embraced partnerships that promised mobility, adventure or escape; yet although both crossed national boundaries in the pursuit of love and happiness, each remained firmly insular in outlook. Perhaps a truly transnational identity was most difficult to achieve from the heart of the metropolitan middle class: there, transnational fantasies strongly resembled imperialist appropriation.

13

The Transnational Lives of African American Colonists to Liberia

Bruce Dorsey

People who lived transnational lives were at the centre of an early nineteenth-century project that in the United States was known simply as 'colonization'. This is the term that people – black and white – used to refer to efforts between 1817 and the end of the American Civil War to send African Americans (freed slaves and free blacks) across the Atlantic to colonize the west coast of Africa, which in 1847 became the republic of Liberia.

Examining the transnationality of the lives of Liberia's colonizers gives an intriguing twist to two important historiographical streams. First, recent histories have forced us to push back the historical moment when we begin to talk about the United States and empire building. Rather than a narrative that begins with the Spanish–American–Cuban War in the 1890s and understands American imperialism as a twentieth-century phenomenon, Amy Kaplan, Amy Greenberg and others have asked historians to think about the Mexican War, Latin American filibustering or Indian wars and Indian removal as earlier manifestations of a United States empire.[1] Yet most often these histories set their gaze in a westward direction – the same bearing as 'manifest destiny' – rather than noticing that before these examples of westward expansionism, empire-builders headed east across the Atlantic: the African American colonists who migrated to Liberia (with the support of white colonization reformers).

The second historiographical stream is that of the Atlantic World. Atlantic World history has recently put West Africa and a forced African diaspora at the centre of a sophisticated analysis of oceanic and global networks and transnational lives, perhaps best synthesized by Ira Berlin's exploration of 'Atlantic Creoles' in *Many Thousands Gone* (1998).[2] Yet often this transnational-focused history of Africans and African Americans ends abruptly with the formation of the United States. At that point, the canon of US history and African American history shifts to the principal narratives of the cultural world of antebellum slave societies in the South or the

citizenship struggles of free African Americans in the North, where African Americans become players in sectional or national dramas rather than actors on a transnational stage.[3]

The colonizers of Liberia did indeed live transnational lives, both by their residences on two different continents and several different nations and also by the fact that their relationship to the people, culture and social forces at work in their native home (the United States) did not cease once they departed for Liberia. In fact, it is those very intimate and complex relationships between the United States and Liberia that mark their lives as truly transnational, and highlight why the topic of Liberian colonization is a rich field for historians of race, empire, gender and the black Atlantic. In this chapter, I offer a glimpse of three African American lives. These biographies not only illustrate the transnational dimensions of African colonization but also demonstrate three significant historical themes that must foreground the work of historians of the United States and the black Atlantic as they explore the history of African Americans in Liberia: colonization as empire; colonization as cultural transplantation and the place of the intimate in colonization.

* * *

Our first biography focuses on a person living in West Africa before African Americans began to colonize Liberia. In 1818, when two white agents of the American Colonization Society arrived in West Africa to purchase land for the Society on Sherbo Island, south of Sierra Leone, they were approached by John Kizell, president of a local creole fraternal organization, who offered to be their guide and interpreter. Kizell's biography traces the contours of the black Atlantic. The son of a local African chief, he was kidnapped, sold to European slavers, shipped across the Atlantic and purchased by a planter in South Carolina on the eve of the American Revolution. When the Revolutionary War began, Kizell was one of tens of thousands of slaves who fought for the British in exchange for a promise of freedom. Set free when the war ended, Kizell, like thousands of other Black loyalists, migrated to Nova Scotia, but found the residents there even less welcoming than the harsh climate. He re-crossed the Atlantic to England, and eventually journeyed to the British colony of Sierra Leone, where he became one of the few African slaves to return to the location of his capture.[4]

Kizell's transnational journeys can be interpreted as part of the broader phenomenon of the African diaspora. In fact, the experiences of retracing the Middle Passage – an experience that Kizell shared with African American colonists to Liberia – should be considered integral to rather than separate from the analytical frameworks of that diaspora. Recently Robin D. G. Kelley has pointed to the importance of African diaspora studies for truly internationalizing US history. According to Kelley, scholarship on the African diaspora sets its sights on 'the dispersal of people of African descent, their

role in the transformation and creation of new cultures, institutions, and ideas outside of Africa, and the problems of building Pan-African movements across the globe'. Kelley concludes, 'Diasporan subjects are transnational subjects: their thoughts, desires, allegiances, and even their bodies are between and betwixt nations.' John Kizell's journeys were among the earliest re-crossings of the Atlantic by such transnational diasporic subjects.[5]

Kizell was, in Ira Berlin's words, an 'Atlantic Creole', uprooted from both African and Euro-American cultures and yet an ideal mediator between the two.[6] Like other Atlantic creoles, Kizell navigated the Atlantic economy, acquiring sizeable plots of land near Sherbo Island. For the next 4 months, Kizell led the American agents on a wild-goose chase, encouraging them to lavish gifts on local chiefs and subordinates, but never securing a promise from locals to sell any land to the Americans. These agents heard from 'our friend' 'Mr. K' what they wanted to hear: that colonization would 'prevent insurrection among the slaves' in America, that the colony would be a place to remove troublesome slaves or free blacks, that the vast majority of people of colour in the United States wanted to return to Africa and that the African chiefs would welcome Protestant churches and schools.[7] When the first group of African American colonists arrived 2 years later, Kizell was waiting for them with a settlement he had handpicked in a marshy swamp that he owned, and where all the drinking water and food needed to be imported by Kizell at the colonists' expense. Kizell's scheme for his own profits contributed to the colonists' high mortality rate, the survivors' insurrections against the Colonization Society's leadership, and their suspicion that Kizell was, in the words of one white colonization supporter, 'a selfish and deceitful man'.[8]

John Kizell's life story illustrates our first theme. The colonization of Liberia in the early nineteenth century bridged systems of empire and colonialism in the Atlantic world. Transnational lives of Atlantic creoles like Kizell appear everywhere during the era of European colonization of the Americas and the flourishing of the Atlantic slave trade. At the same time, the American movement to colonize West Africa was one of the earliest instances of empire building in the United States, reminiscent of the new forms of nation-state driven empires and colonialism by Europeans in Africa, India, Indonesia and elsewhere.

African colonization was an example of American empire building, although in the US historical literature it is usually depicted as a domestic reform movement. Few histories of US imperialism, in fact, look in the direction of African colonization. Yet colonization advocates openly discussed an empire. A writer in the *African Repository*, for example, believed that the Colonization Society should sell land to Liberian settlers so that 'such coloured people in the United States as possess the enterprise and spirit', rather than the 'lazy, vicious malcontents', would try this adventure: 'and you will prove *who* are the men *fit* for the glorious work of founding an empire there'.

African colonization sustains remarkable similarities to other instances of nineteenth-century American expansionism. Just as Amy Greenberg and Amy Kaplan have stressed in their cultural histories of early US empire building, this vein of American imperialism also has been constructed in myriad ways around discourses of gender.[9]

The movement for African colonization was primarily constituted as an expression of manhood – both a vicarious manly adventure for the white reforming men who supported the society, and an effort to assert the manhood of African American men (if and when they were removed from American society and transformed into 'free men', property-owners and citizens in Africa). White and black colonization supporters spoke with the masculine-inflected language of 'manifest destiny'. One advocate was convinced that the migration of American blacks to West Africa was 'essential to create among them the bold and manly vigor which is carrying our white brethren to the West, to Texas, to Canada, and to every nook and corner of the wide globe'. In an American colony in Africa, the *Colonization Herald* declared, 'Slaves are acknowledged to be men and are made free. They go there to assume a rank denied them here.'[10]

The gendered construction of US empire building can also be seen in the filibustering origins of the African colonization project in Liberia. Before the American Civil War, filibustering referred to numerous instances in which private Americans invaded other countries without the official sanction of the US government. The colonization of Liberia was a similar private endeavour. In 1821, after failed attempts to obtain land for the colony, the Society commissioned Baltimore physician Eli Ayres and Navy lieutenant Richard Stockton to acquire a location on their behalf. One of Stockton's contemporaries described their adventure in the explicitly gendered and sexualized language of manly conquest: 'It was doubtless an enterprise of great risk. The route to it lay through swamps and jungles, where the white man had never penetrated before, where wild beasts frequented, and where savages more dangerous, habituated to every atrocity, were the only inhabitants.'[11]

Negotiating a purchase of Cape Mesurado from the local chief, Stockton pointed a pistol at the chief's head when he showed reluctance to sell the land, and proceeded to convince him that the Americans 'came there as their benefactors, and not as their enemies'. Not surprisingly the chief agreed to sign a deed for the land. Amy Greenberg has distinguished between 'restrained manhood' and 'martial manhood' in American filibustering; more often than not, the American colonies in Liberia relied on martial manhood and, after this first encounter, it was just as likely to be displayed by African American colonists as it was by white colonization society officials.[12]

* * *

Our second transnational biography involves perhaps the most famous African American who migrated to Liberia, John B. Russwurm. Russwurm

was one of the first African Americans to graduate from college in the United States. The transnational contours of his life began early. He was born in Jamaica, the son of a white planter and a slave woman of mixed African and European descent. At the age of eight, his father moved him (never to see his mother again) to Quebec, Canada, where he began his schooling.

Figure 12 John Russwurm from *The Afro-American Press and its Editors* by I. Garland Penn (Springfield, MA: Willey & Co., 1891).

Five years later his father married a white woman and moved with his son to Portland, Maine. Russwurm attended Hebron Academy, then taught in Boston schools before attending Bowdoin College with three of its most famous graduates, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and future US President Franklin Pierce. After graduation, Russwurm and Samuel Cornish launched the first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in New York City in 1827. The voice of a burgeoning free black community in the North, the *Journal* challenged any attempts to restrict the full citizenship rights of African Americans, including the hated colonization movement, which many northern free blacks considered the 'offspring of prejudice' and a tool of the slave owners' interests.[13]

Imagine the reaction, then, when Russwurm switched the editorial position of the paper to favour the Colonization Society, severed his partnership with Cornish and announced that he was emigrating to Liberia to assume the position of superintendent of schools and editor of the *Liberia Herald*. Russwurm waxed rhapsodic about Liberia, 'where the Man of Colour freed from the fetters and prejudice, and degradation, under which he labours in this land, may walk forth in all the majesty of his creation – a new born creature – a Free Man!'[14] For this, Russwurm was hated by northern free blacks, who hung his effigy in New York City, pelted it with stones and burned it.[15] In his words, he encountered 'violent persecution' at the hands of 'the most influential of our people'. Russwurm set sail for Liberia in September 1829, where he became colonial secretary, and eventually moved to the new Maryland colony, where he served as governor until his death in 1851.

John Russwurm's life story illustrates our second significant theme for the history of African Americans in Liberia: the transplanting of culture from America to Liberia. At the very least he demonstrates the way transatlantic print culture continued communication between the United States and Liberia. US abolitionists continued to read and comment on Russwurm's *Liberian Herald*, and many colonists eagerly read the *African Repository*, the Colonization Society's official paper. Colonists pleaded repeatedly for books – medical, legal, religious and agricultural – and supporters sent a continuous stream of reading material to Liberia.

Yet print was only a small part of the cultural exchange that took place. African Americans were Americans after all; and never were they more American than when they travelled to other locales, particularly Africa. Liberia's colonists carried with them and reproduced many of the features of pre-Civil War American culture. Anyone who peruses the records left by these colonists will find the kind of documents that cultural historians of the early United States regularly explicate. Consider, for example, Independence Day festivities. Over the past decade, many US historians have explored the cultural constructions of nationalism in American festive culture.[16] When Henry B. Stewart, a black Presbyterian preacher from Georgia, arrived in Liberia in 1849, his first letter back to the States described in great

detail a public dinner with toasts and speeches commemorating the second anniversary of Liberia's independence. On another occasion, Stewart described a procession on the occasion of the arrival of Liberia's President. Bands, parades, flower-laden banners prepared by the local women, songs, speeches: this was American politics transplanted to a West African locale.[17]

One of the strangest and most surprising references to a transplanted American cultural product is found in a document produced by Russwurm's Bowdoin classmates. *Journal of an African Cruiser* is an account of the 1843 voyage to West Africa of US Navy officer Horatio Bridge, best friend of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was credited as its editor. The entry for his first day in Liberia reads:

> August 2 – We were visited by Governor Roberts, Doctor Day, and General Lewis, the latter being the colonial secretary, and military chief of the settlement.... In the evening, we brought out all our forces for the amusement of our distinguished guests. First, the negro band sang, 'Old Dan Tucker,' 'Jim along Josey,' and other ditties of the same class, accompanied by violin and tambourine. Then Othello played monkey, and gave a series of recitations.[18]

Here we witness US sailors performing the most popular American minstrel songs for an audience of former slaves and free-born African Americans in West Africa. Surprising as this might seem, we must remember that blackface minstrel shows dominated American commercial entertainment during the 1840s, and blackface performance, with all its crude and cruel racism, remained a foundation of the 'show business' industry that Americans came to dominate and export internationally by the twentieth century. It also represented a deeply felt desire by working-class white Americans to 'play' at blackness in ways that ultimately confirmed their shared white racial identity.[19]

What is fascinating about Bridge's account (or was it Hawthorne's?) is that blackface play and entertainment had also been part of their white masculine world at Bowdoin at a time when it was one of the only colleges in the nation to admit African American students. Several of Russwurm's white schoolmates displayed 'a curious fondness for blackening their faces with burnt cork' and setting bonfires on campus, along with other forms of reckless disorder. These pranks were part of a regular form of intimidation of blacks in northern cities. Working-class white men in Philadelphia, for instance, blackened their faces and built bonfires for Independence Day and inflicted physical violence on black neighbourhoods and residences. No wonder Russwurm lived off campus at Bowdoin, since his classmates made it clear that blackness was the means of demarcating the boundaries of, and access to, public spaces. Bridge's *Journal* is littered with descriptions of these kinds of physical pranks on African Americans. In the next entry in

his *Journal* after the minstrelsy entertainment in Monrovia, however, Bridge recorded that they sailed for Cape Palmas, set anchor and lunched with Governor Russwurm; but he made no mention of performing minstrel songs in his old schoolmate's presence.[20]

As Robin D. G. Kelley has noted, 'the movement and transformation of cultures' in the African diaspora 'was never a uni-directional process'. West African societies, an African American republic in Liberia, and a 'white republic' in the United States, were all transformed by the dynamic exchange of cultural forms across the Atlantic.[21]

* * *

Our third and final life story is that of Malinda Rex, or perhaps Jacob Gibson, or Martha Harris, or Cecilia Lyon or Joseph Blake – that is, any of the thousands of ordinary slaves and free-born black men and women who migrated to Liberia for the promise of freedom, citizenship and autonomy. It is not that these life stories are interchangeable (in fact, each has a fascinating transnational biography), but rather that they are representative of lives lived in continual interaction between Africa and the United States. One of the most fascinating sets of documents at the disposal of the historian of African colonization are the thousands of letters written by Liberia's colonizers back to the officers of the Colonization Society or to the former masters who emancipated them.[22]

Letters from colonists in Liberia present some intriguing problems of interpretation, since these letter-writers needed to position themselves strategically when writing to former masters and colonization officials. It would be simplistic to assume that the black colonists shared the assumptions of the white colonizationists, and incorrect to write these emigrants off as 'Uncle Toms' who betrayed African American slaves by writing positively about their experiences in Liberia. Rather, within nearly every letter from Liberian emigrants, even those most overtly enthusiastic, can be found some glimpse of resistance and independence, some tone of criticism of their patrons, some 'hidden' as well as 'public transcripts' (to borrow James Scott's phrasings).[23]

The letters also offer a perspective on the gendered discourse of home and empire. There are, in fact, parallels between colonists' letters back to Colonization Society officers or former masters and the 'begging letters' to giants of industry that Scott Sandage has explored; like Sandage's letter writers, there is in the colonization letters exchange and negotiation (indeed, a market) in sentiment.[24] Jacob Gibson, for instance, left his family in bondage when he migrated to the Maryland colony at Cape Palmas. In 1833, he wrote to the Society's white agents: 'I will be ten thousand times obliged to you if you will make an effort to get my children freed & sent out to me. Neither of you, perhaps, know the pain which a father feels at being seperated from

his offspring.' Tabb Smith likewise complained about the Society's failed promise to send his family to join him in Liberia: 'This is not as it should be', he wrote. 'Liberty here, and all the boasted privileges of a Liberian, are worth but little, if all the better feelings of my nature are to pay the price of its possession, in the absence of those to whom I am bound by affection.'

Despite the rhetoric of manly adventure, these letters reveal that poor black migrants to Liberia did not cross national and continental boundaries with the same measure of volition and agency as wealthier Euro-Americans. With each passing decade, Liberian colonists were more likely to be southern slaves rather than northern or southern free blacks – slaves whose emancipation and promise of freedom and citizenship rights were conditional upon their departure to Africa. These emigrants quickly discovered that they had been sent to a death trap. Prior to 1844, one of every five emigrants died within the first year. Hundreds abandoned the colony, trying their luck in Sierra Leone or attempting to return to the United States. But for those colonists who stayed and survived, letters became one of the ways that they could translate their personal and individual sacrifices into transnational discourses of resistance and intimate connection.[25]

Such letters are filled with the tensions between Liberian colonists' overt criticisms of their patrons and a need to echo the rhetoric of the colonization movement. While appealing to a marketplace of sentiment – challenging the reputation of these white reformers as benevolent men – Jacob Gibson also reminded them of his commitment to the civilizing mission: 'I hope you will go on in the work of colonization', he told the Society officers. 'I look upon it as the cause of God & the hope of benighted Africa.' In a similar vein, Malinda Rex wrote to the executors of her former master's estate in North Carolina, demanding that her expenses and provisions be paid out of the estate. On the one hand she wrote, 'Truly I am in Africa where I cum to be free.' On the other hand, she openly criticized these white planters: 'My Dear Sir if you had of known that this place was as poor as it is you would not [have] consented for us to come here. If I had of known myself when you was telling me I would not of been so willing to come.'[26]

The transnational lives of ordinary former slaves-turned-Liberian colonists reveal a final interpretive theme. The local and transoceanic interactions between African American slaves, white masters, Liberian colonists, native Africans and Colonization Society agents illustrate Ann Laura Stoler's insight that 'intimate domains – sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement, and child rearing' defined the 'racial coordinates and social discriminations of empire'.[27] American empire building, even by the most unlikely agents of 'manifest destiny', was fraught with the intimate tensions of the domestic and the sexual. Former Philadelphia ship carpenter Joseph Blake, for instance, faced an acute dilemma when, after a decade of success in Liberia, he discovered that the Colonization Society's white agent in Liberia had seduced and 'debauched' his wife, and left Blake with not only a child to

support, but a wife who had become, in Blake's words, 'haughty, insolent, and disobedient' and 'careless' about family matters. At the same time, Blake worried about the repercussions for the colony's reputation. 'Had I killed the man', he wrote, 'it would have been a stigma casted upon the Colony, that never could have been rubbed off.' Blake never received an apology or other redress from Colonization Society officials, and subsequently abandoned Liberia for Sierra Leone. Yet Blake's transnational story reveals one of thousands of tales of intimacy and empire that surrounded the lives of former slaves who made the unpopular choice of a colonial life in West Africa rather than a struggle for freedom in North America.[28]

* * *

African colonization in the early nineteenth century disrupts nearly all the assumptions we hold about the earliest manifestations of American imperialism. Expecting to set our sights westward, we instead find our gaze resting eastward on a set of reluctant, ambivalent and previously powerless agents assigned to establish an empire's beachhead. Like Fiona Paisley's chapter that follows, this essay has examined relatively powerless historical actors asserting a modicum of agency by travelling in the opposite direction from what might be expected in conventionally written histories. This glimpse of three transnational lives demonstrates that the colonization of Liberia needs to be examined as a form of American empire building and the transatlantic spread of American culture. These life stories also alert historians to remain attuned to the critical importance of intimate domains and discourses of gender in this eastward-facing US expansionism. By applying a diaspora framework to African Americans' participation in American empire building, we move closer to the kind of transnational history in which, in the words of Robin Kelley, 'the boundaries are determined not by geopolitics but by people and their movements – physical and mental, real and imagined.'[29]

Notes

1. Amy Kaplan (2002) *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press); Amy S. Greenberg (2005) *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
2. Ira Berlin (1998) *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
3. Notable exceptions are W. Jeffrey Bolster (1997) *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press); R.J.M. Blackett (1983) *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press); Cassandra Pybus (2006) *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their*

Global Quest for Liberty (Boston: Beacon Press); Simon Schama (2006) *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (New York: Ecco); Lamin Sanneh (1999) *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press); Marie Tyler-McGraw (2007) *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

4. See (1819) 'Abstract of a Journal of the Late Rev. Samuel John Mills, Written While in Africa', in *The Second Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free people of Colour of the United States* (Washington), pp. 19–67; Archibald Alexander (1849) *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia), pp. 102–106; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*; Schama, *Rough Crossings*.
5. Robin D. G. Kelley (2002) 'How the West was One: The African Diaspora and the Re-Mapping of U.S. History', in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 123–147, esp. 124.
6. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 17–28.
7. 'Abstract of a Journal', pp. 31, 35–39.
8. Alexander, *A History of Colonization*, p. 102.
9. *African Repository* [*AR*], March 1836.
10. *AR*, March 1836; *Colonization Herald* n.s. 1 (January 1839), pp. 27–28; see also Bruce Dorsey (2002) *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 136–150.
11. Samuel John Bayard (1856) *A Sketch of the Life of Com. Robert F. Stockton*... (New York), pp. 39–47.
12. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, pp. 11–52, 135–169, 231–268.
13. *Freedom's Journal* [*FJ*], March 30, April 13, June 8 and August 17, 1827; Leonard P. Curry (1986) *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800–1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 235; Leon Litwack (1961) *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 25; Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, pp. 141–142.
14. *FJ*, March 14, February 21 and March 7, 1829.
15. *Liberator*, May 21, 1831; *Colored American*, January 27, 1838; Robert Johnson, Jr. (2005), *Returning Home: A Century of African–American Repatriation* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press), p. 178; John B. Russwurm to Ralph R. Gurley, July 24, 1829, quoted in James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton (1998), *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 198.
16. See for example David Waldstreicher (1997) *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press); Shane White (1994) '"It Was a Proud Day": African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741–1834', *Journal of American History* 81, 13–50.
17. Henry B. Stewart to William McLain, October 20, 1849 and May 23, 1857, in Bell I. Wiley (1980) *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), pp. 281–282, 295–297.
18. Horatio Bridge (1853) *Journal of an African Cruiser*, ed. Nathaniel Hawthorne, 2nd edn (New York: George P. Putnam), p. 14.
19. See for example Robert C. Toll (1974) *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press); Eric Lott (1993) *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford

University Press); William J. Mahar (1999) *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press).

20. Robert Cantwell (1948) *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years* (New York: Rinehart), pp. 73–74; Susan G. Davis (1986) *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), pp. 38–48; Bridge, *Journal of an African Cruiser*, pp. 14–15, 11. See also Elaine Frantz Parsons (2005) 'Midnight Rangers: Costume and Performance in the Reconstruction-Era Ku Klux Klan', *Journal of American History* 92, 811–836.
21. Kelley, 'How the West was One', p. 128.
22. These letters can be found in the American Colonization Society papers at the Library of Congress, the Maryland State Colonization Society papers at the Maryland Historical Society, and in white southern family papers.
23. James C. Scott (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
24. Scott Sandage (1999) 'Gender and the Economics of the Sentimental Market in Nineteenth-Century America', *Social Politics* 6, 105–130; and Scott A. Sandage (2005) *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), ch. 8.
25. Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, pp. 157–158; Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic*, pp. 73, 128; Eric Burin (2005) *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), pp. 144–145.
26. Jacob Gibson to John H. LaTrobe and William McKenney, August 31, 1833 in Wiley, *Slaves No More*, p. 216; Tabb Smith to Ralph R. Gurley, October 7, 1834, American Colonization Society Papers, Library of Congress [ACS], Reel 153; Malinda Rex to Duncan Cameron, November 3, 1839, in Wiley, *Slaves No More*, p. 253.
27. Ann Laura Stoler (2001) 'Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies', *Journal of American History* 88, 829–865, part of a Round Table: 'Empires and Intimacies: Lessons from (Post) Colonial Studies', 829–897; Stoler, ed. (2006) *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press).
28. Joseph Blake to R.R. Gurley, March 9 and May 13, 1835, ACS, Reel 153; 'Roll of Emigrants That Have Been Sent to the Colony of Liberia, Western Africa, by the American Colonization Society and Its Auxiliaries, to September 1843', US Congress, *Senate Documents*, 28th Congress, 2nd Sess., 1844, IX, pp. 152, 156; Tom W. Shick (1980) *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth-Century Liberia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 38; James Wesley Smith (1987) *Sojourners in Search of Freedom: The Settlement of Liberia by Black Americans* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America), ch. 7.
29. Kelley, 'How the West was One', p. 128.

14

Resistance in Exile: Anthony Martin Fernando, Australian Aboriginal Activist, Internationalist and Traveller in Europe

Fiona Paisley

In the late 1980s, a collection of photographs was forwarded to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies from the Australian Embassy in Berne, Switzerland. Donated by the grandson of Swiss architect and engineer Hans Buser, the collection documents his visit to Northern Australia in the late 1910s. Chronicling Buser's contributions to the state capital, Darwin, the photographs provide evidence also of his interest in the local Aboriginal people, shown working in the trepang industry, playing cricket and performing 'corroboree' at the government's Kahlin Compound.[1] In one image, Buser appears as an intrepid colonial: wearing a white suit, he stands alongside three Aboriginal men adorned in body paint and carrying spears for the camera.[2] Although not a settler, he was a white man in northern Australia, and he was eager to record his status as a civilizer on the fast-disappearing frontier.

While exchanges between Europe and Aboriginal Australia remain central to this chapter, in the following discussion I turn from Buser and his narrative of the white man's frontier to consider the agency of Aboriginal people in their concerns to represent a different account of frontier colonialism to an overseas audience. By so doing, I aim to reverse the colonial gaze exemplified in Buser's photographs. Although the Aboriginal men appearing as 'natives' in Buser's representation as 'colonial man' are beyond my reach, not so the critical account of one of their generation who employed the exact reverse order of transnationalism in critiquing white man's Australia. Calling on the progressive race politics of cosmopolitan Europe, he set about promoting an international critique of colonialism from the streets of Switzerland.

Leaving Buser on his heroic frontier until the end of this chapter, I nonetheless use his papers as my departure point. Included among his photographs is his transcript of a 1921 Swiss newspaper report and subsequent letters to the editor (of which his was one) concerning an Aboriginal activist, Anthony Martin Fernando. Then midway through an extraordinary life as an itinerant worker and protestor in Europe, Fernando made a direct appeal through the Swiss people for an international intervention into Aboriginal conditions in Australia. In the process, he fundamentally contradicted Buser's image of the white man as progressive colonial agent and indigenous people as passive objects of his gaze.

Fernando's life of exile during the first decades of last century remains largely outside the parameters of the growing historiography of Aboriginal rights.[3] Firstly, Fernando's story contradicts our assumptions concerning the 'national' context for Aboriginal people seeking to bring about change in Australia during these years. While pre-contact Aboriginal nations were engaged in vibrant, internal exchange and externally with northern neighbours (see van Toorn in this volume), and generations in between petitioned overseas, only in the 1960s did direct Indigenous engagement with international and transnational race politics re-emerge.[4] From within Australia by the interwar years, Aboriginal protestors sought to contribute to, as they drew from, the changing context of international and transnational politics on race. Significant numbers mobilized British notions of *rights* in their efforts to draw attention to the injustices they faced, and by the interwar years sought to strengthen nation-based protest by appealing to international organizations and lobbies such as the League of Nations and the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection League in London.[5] In terms of an emerging Black politics at this time, historian John Maynard has shown that Australian docks provided a vibrant contact zone between Aboriginal activists and the pan-African politics of Marcus Garvey in the 1920s.[6]

Secondly, Fernando breaks with expectation by eluding the extreme restriction of movement prosecuted against Aborigines in their official management from the late nineteenth century.[7] While a few Aboriginal people travelled to Europe in these decades, they did so under white supervision. As Roslyn Poignant has shown, for example, in the late nineteenth century a small group of Aborigines from Queensland were taken to Europe as sideshow performers. Displayed as 'savages', they were also subject to ethnographic study, and attracted a variety of popular and scientific audiences across Europe.[8] In contrast, Fernando travelled alone, determined to voice his criticisms of Australian conditions to a range of audiences in Europe. The early twentieth century was an important era in the formation of discourse concerning indigenous peoples. Where the idea of self-determination had been important to Woodrow Wilson's vision of a just post-war peace,[9] the interwar period saw new languages of minorities and indigeneity emerging to replace those of 'savage' and 'native'.

Thirdly, Fernando would contribute to these emerging transnational and international discourses by insisting upon his Aboriginality, his greatest resistance against disavowal by authorities and by asserting the responsibility of the international community to intervene in Australian race relations. A man appearing disconnected from his 'natural' locale, he mobilized a metropolitan, cosmopolitan indigeneity in a particularly postcolonial way. Asserting his right to be an indigenous subject while living in Europe, he represented himself as a member of a world community of dispossessed peoples, and hence as a world citizen empowered to speak from both local and transnational perspectives.

Fernando's life in exile represented an act of resistance – that of asserting his right to live as an Aboriginal man, even if this meant leaving Australia forever. As Homi Bhabha has noted, dominant colonial discourses have produced not only notions of cultural difference and 'Others', but also unintended and often ambivalent hybrid subjectivities.[10] As a modern indigenous subject on the streets of Europe, Fernando was certainly one of these. Over following decades, he would advise audiences in Europe and England that living as an indigenous man in Australia – always dangerous – had proven more and more difficult in recent years, under increasingly restrictive forms of assimilation. Whereas in the nineteenth century Aboriginal people had been widely expected to 'die out', the growing numbers of a mixed-descent population gave contrary evidence to this prediction. Administered under separate legislation with increasingly draconian impact, Aboriginal people's exclusion from the national polity was confirmed by the constitution establishing the Federation of Australia in 1901.

Fernando proclaiming his identity as an 'Australian' (that is, a First Australian) represented a radical resistance to this national exclusion, and one he considered only possible from overseas. Where the introduction to this volume notes that 'transnationalism of ordinary lives' contradicts the closure effected by the limits of national history, moving beyond the nation also provided a space from which national identity could be articulated anew.[11] Fernando's story represents a third possibility: that transnational mobility could offer an opportunity to proclaim a 'national' identity denied at home. In Europe, he confronted the notion of the honourable British nation with the fact of Indigenous Australia. Of the dialogic relationship between 'the nation' and 'empire', Antoinette Burton has noted that 'empire is not simply a backdrop but an active agent in the construction of cultural and especially social reform discourses.'[12] This agency applied also in those ideologies of race articulated within, and contested by, the emerging transnational indigenous politics of the early twentieth century.

In this account of Fernando's life, focusing on his interview in Berne, I make no claim to a biographical overview of my subject. Rather, I approach Fernando as a marginalized subject who, in the words of cultural theorist Sidonie Smith, struggled against 'founding mythologies of the subject' and

official histories in order to articulate their autobiography and the biography of their people on their own terms.[13] His mobility in Europe and his direct engagement with modern international politics on indigenous rights disrupted any primitivist reading of him as a 'native', essentially different in body, mind and soul. His agency was in engaging white audiences in a form of dialogue implicitly asserting common humanity, while ascribing to First Nation peoples' particular needs and rights. Hence, the 'resistance in exile' of my title alludes to the archival effects of a politics that was necessarily dialogic. As Gillian Whitlock advises in her study of autobiographical writing in the context of empire, the power of 'binaries, thinking in terms of origins and authenticity, centre and periphery' in 'colonizing discourses' means that 'the work of decolonization is to return ambivalence and duplicity, and to look at intersubjectivity in cultural formations and texts.'[14] Fernando's success was in part due to his capacity to read his potential audiences and to provide them with sufficiently familiar ideas before leading them into new territory. He worked within and against the dominant scripts of colonial authority in order to initiate a series of what Holloway Sparks has called 'dissenting interactions' with non-marginalized subjects.[15]

The archive at my disposal reflects these metropolitan-colonial effects. It holds the traces of a series of such intersubjective interactions undertaken by Fernando with various sympathetic white people. His views would be well received by progressives in Europe and England, contributing to their greater comprehension of colonial injustice in Australia, and inspiring some to greater involvement in public criticism. For those he met along the way, and for those who have crossed paths with him in the archives, Fernando is one of those 'travelling "indigenous" culture makers' described by James Clifford in *Travelling Cultures*. Such 'a person is out of place but not entirely – he is a person in history', someone met *en route* in transit lounges and cafes,[16] or, as in this story, in the editorial room of a newspaper.

* * *

On 24 June 1921, while on a seven-day pass to Berne, Fernando walked into the offices of the respected independent *Der Bund*. Founded in 1850 to promote anti-imperial, nationalist sentiment in support of the formation of a Swiss nation, *Der Bund* continued to attract a vibrant and engaged cosmopolitan readership into the inter-war years. Educated middle class, self-consciously liberal and cosmopolitan in outlook, its editors would prove interested in indigenous rights also. Already inherently newsworthy as an indigenous eyewitness, Fernando impressed them with his international perspective on native people's rights. While work on the next edition hummed around them, their conversation turned towards the question of land. Fernando led the way. Although endorsing the reserve system in the United States, he proposed a far more radical response in Australia: the

Figure 13 *Der Bund* headquarters on Effingerstrasse where Fernando was interviewed in 1921. This photograph (c. 1910–1911) appears in the newspaper's anniversary volume, (1950) *Hundert Jahre, Der Bund 1850–1950* (Bern: Atktengesellschaft Press), n.p.

establishment of self-governing Aboriginal reserves in Australia under direct European mandate.

Speaking as they were with possibly the first Aboriginal internationalist to be directly active in Europe in the early twentieth century, the editors promised to publicize his case and asked him to write a letter to accompany their report. Fernando accordingly put pen to paper in one of the city's alcohol-free restaurants, designed to attract the 'respectable' working class. On 30 June, under the title 'A Call for Help from Australia', his letter and the editors' sympathetic commentary drew immediate if largely hostile attention from a lively readership. Letters to the editors poured in, one of them written by Hans Buser. The majority rejected Fernando's insistence that genocidal practices were gathering pace in Australia. Could this man really be an Aboriginal from Australia, many asked? Defending their informant, the editors confirmed, yes, Mr. Fernando 'really is a (very dark) Australian native'.[17]

Our knowledge of Fernando is gleaned from a partial archive, including newspaper reports, protest letters written by Fernando himself, an Australian government surveillance report and the accounts of two white eyewitnesses who met and were impressed by him. According to these sources, Fernando was born in 1864 in Woolloomooloo, New South Wales. As such, he was one among Aboriginal language groups residing in close proximity to not only British colonists, but also a range of Europeans, Americans, Asians, Africans, Indians and others – convict, indentured and free – who comprised this multi-ethnic and highly mobile harbour suburb. His people may well have heard from other 'natives' of Euro-American empires of their experiences of colonization and enslavement, as well as of the various forms of transnational networks through which they remained interconnected with various domestic locales and anti-colonial politics across the globe.[18] Later in life, while on remand in London's Central Criminal Court, Fernando apparently told the white Australian humanitarian Mary Bennett that he was the last of this tribe, taken from his mother while a young boy.[19]

Whether Fernando actually used the word 'taken' – in the sense of being forcibly removed by whites – or claimed to be 'last' is not clear, but he did leave whatever family he had behind and began his life of travel. He would inform the editors of *Der Bund* that he was educated by Spanish Benedictines in Western Australia (possibly New Norcia, but no record of his attendance has been found). Perhaps he made his way to the Western Australian mission by working as a seaman, and may indeed have sailed in the interim around the globe, returning to Australia through the first port of call, Perth. With his reported propensity as a Catholic for quoting the bible, especially the Book of Judges, and his capacities as a charismatic speaker – put to great use in his life of protest – Fernando may well have been intended for the priesthood.

We can be fairly sure that Fernando is not an ancestor of Aboriginal Fernandos living in New South Wales today, the descendants of a Singhalese

sailor, George Fernando, who jumped ship in the early 1900s.[20] Nevertheless, Fernando's story fits within an earlier chapter of the history of interaction between Aborigines and Indian migrants, sailors and indentured labourers.[21] In 1903, a middle-aged Anthony Martin Fernando was living in Australia, this time in the Western Australian town of Peak Hill, not far from New Norcia. From here he wrote a long letter of complaint to the first Chief Protector of the Aborigines, Henry Prinsep.[22] Despite threats made against his life by the local policeman–honorary protector, he asserted, Fernando sought a copy from the Chief Protector of the legislation under which he lived.

From the late 1870s, the Western Australian government had legislated to restrict the movement and composition of the Aboriginal population by extending its powers over residency, employment, child removal and the placement of young people into unpaid employment. But this legislation also asserted that its local representatives were to protect, not harm, their Aboriginal charges.[23] Hoping for ammunition against the local protector, Fernando railed, as he would throughout his life, against a regime that allowed abuse of Aboriginal people while claiming to ensure just, humane treatment. But although Chief Protector Prinsep made a note that he would like to know more about the writer of this 'curious' letter, he does not seem to have replied. He was soon to be the focus of a royal commission into the status and conditions of Aboriginal people in his state, the worsening reputation of his Aborigines Board drawing ever more critics arguing for an increased focus on the Aboriginal population.[24]

Soon after this exchange, Fernando despaired of the possibility of change, and left Australia forever. He had become convinced that a viable future for Aboriginal people in Australia could only be achieved through external intervention. Henceforth his aim in life (indeed his purpose in exile) was to win the support of international opinion. He would later assert that the final impetus to leave Australia came when he was refused the right to give evidence in the trial of a white man accused of murdering a number of Aborigines. This experience was conclusive evidence not only that the British were unfit to rule, but also that the vast distance between their claims to civilize on the one hand (in this case, by upholding the supposed humanity and impartiality of the bench) and their illegal and immoral actions on the other made them irredeemable. Neither the international system of missions nor its effective replacement, the modern management of indigenous peoples, should be left to self-monitoring by nation-states. An internationally monitored system was urgently needed, its modernity measured in the separation of capitalist interests (whether church or state) and nationalist mythmaking from the management of minority rights.

It seems likely that Fernando travelled again through South Asia to Europe and London as a seaman (hence not requiring papers or a passport). If he was indeed of Aboriginal and Indian descent, he may well have found a ready connection with Lascars,[25] itinerant Asian, Indian and Chinese sailors well

versed in the cross-cultural and interracial fluidities of transnational life. In England Fernando found a diverse and highly mobile postcolonial population[26] including political networks calling for black rights and various forms of self-determination. He contributed to vibrant street cultures of protest such as Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. And while a prisoner of war in Austria, he would sign himself an honest, hardworking, black man,[27] aligning himself with working-class and pan-racial politics.

Fiercely independent throughout his life, Fernando made his living as best he could, as an acetylene welder in Europe and Britain, and as a mechanic in Italy. When he couldn't find work in London, he survived as a toymaker selling his wares on the streets or in the city's thriving toy markets.[28] The toy hawker's method of carrying a tray and placard would be first utilized by Fernando in his street protest in Italy, and later picketing outside Australia House in London, when he pinned toy skeletons onto his old army coat (perhaps a method used by toy sellers). Wearing a placard accusing the British people of genocide in Australia, Fernando handed out skeletons from his tray to passers-by, telling them that these represented his people.

Fernando did not escape racism in Europe. Twice accused of brandishing a pistol at a white man for a racial slur, he used the opportunity to inform the court of the Old Bailey (the Central Criminal Court in London) of racial hostility in Australia and England: 'I have been boycotted everywhere. Look at my rags. I cannot make ends meet. All I hear is "Go away, black man." It is all tommyrot to say that we are savages.'[29] And, yet, remarkably, throughout his exile Fernando found white people who were prepared to give credibility to his cause, their readiness reflecting the changing views on indigenous peoples held by progressives across Europe in these decades. Not least among them, the editors of the Swiss newspaper *Der Bund* reported to their readers in 1921 that an Australian Aboriginal man had 'an urgent request. Would the Swiss press help to save the remnants of his people [?]' He was a man driven by the threat, they claimed, of impending genocide: '[he] is of extraordinary eloquence . . . despairing of the impending destruction of the natives by the latest measures [the new legislation?] in Australia.' In his letter, Fernando appealed to the Swiss people in 'the name of humanity' on behalf of 'the Australians', the Aboriginal people, who were subjected to shootings, starvation, forced labour, poisoning and sexual abuse. Articulating his prescription for a just future, Fernando called for a combination of inviolable lands, education and freedom from violence.[30]

That Fernando was an extraordinary individual is evident. But he should not be considered exceptional in the sense of the broader history of Aboriginal activist politics, especially given their emergence as a determinedly national voice in these same years. Heather Goodall, for instance, situates Fernando's politics in exile alongside those of another leading Aboriginal activist of his generation, William Cooper of the Australian Aborigines League.[31] While Cooper remained in Australia, he was concerned also to appeal to the international community, collecting signatures on a petition

for Aboriginal rights to be presented to the King of England, and corresponding with the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society in London. Both were engaged in the fight for land, education and employment as a matter of local and international urgency.[32] Like Aboriginal activists in Australia, Fernando argued strongly for the right to education. In his *Der Bund* interview, he accused British Australians of denying education to Aboriginal people although they were a race of the highest quality. Fernando's eloquence surprised the editors, whose readiness to publish his story probably expressed benevolence as much as commitment to real change. In their terms, the just treatment of Aboriginal people might entail preservation rather than the kinds of self-determination that minority peoples sought in the aftermath of First World War.

But where Fernando established new territory for Australian Indigenous activism was in his argument that land for Aboriginal people could be secured only through the direct mandate over Australian reserves of a neutral European nation. In drawing this conclusion, Fernando joined an international community of non-white activists who overestimated the capacities of the League of Nations. Such false hopes were shared by many fighting for the end of racial discrimination. They welcomed the Minority Treaties through which states constituted or enlarged following First World War were bound to protect minority peoples within their borders, and they dreamed without success of the eventual independence of mandated territories.[33] In his life of protest overseas, Fernando sought to influence whites towards recognizing that the future of indigenous people was a world issue. During his testimony to the Swiss editors, Fernando made it clear that he understood himself to be an indigenous world citizen whose mission it was to inform international organizations, the international press, and whoever was willing to listen, of the conditions he believed were facing the Aboriginal people of Australia.

Over the next several days after his story appeared in the Berne newspaper, letters to the editor highly critical of his claims were published. Hans Buser was the writer of one of these. Reading *Der Bund* had inspired him and other Swiss men who had spent time in Australia (and some who had not) to offer their first-hand experiences of Australian race relations. In general, they refuted Fernando's claim of ill-treatment. Aboriginal workers were well treated and received payment for their labour, they asserted (although their evidence concerned rationing, not wages). As to genocide, while admitting early frontier violence, they found in contemporary colonialism a benign and just force. As was widely known, one asserted, it was savages who enjoyed violence, not civilized peoples. In any case, Aborigines were difficult to uplift, being fond of alcohol and naturally indolent (and perhaps here we see the strategy behind Fernando deciding to write his letter in an alcohol-free restaurant).[34]

While this debate continued, Fernando left for Geneva where he hoped to secure the support of the League of Nations. As he advised the editors

before leaving, however, he held little expectation of a League dominated by the British (Great Britain being 'the land which grew big through the blood of the black man').[35] Fernando soon turned away from international institutions towards the more individualistic form of political protest that characterized the last phase in this activist career. As his experiences in 1921 seemed to confirm, neither the League nor the independent press of a neutral nation would offer a way forward for indigenous peoples. Rather, they seemed to provide evidence of the growing ascendancy of a transnational whiteness that was contemporaneously consolidating its global reach.[36] Not long after his departure from Berne, Fernando's call for help in the pages of *Der Bund* came to the notice of the Australian government. In a report marked confidential and secret, the Attorney General's Investigation Branch offered a profile purporting to describe the life of Mr. Anthony Martin Fernando, an Australian native living in Europe who was highly critical of the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia.[37]

If Australian authorities were aware of his protests, what was Fernando's impact on Aboriginal activisms in Australia? The evidence is slim. Press clippings in the *London Times* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting Fernando's appearances at the Old Bailey were kept by leading Aboriginal activist, Pearl Gibbs, among her prized personal papers. Like Fernando, she considered the League of Nations should take a direct interest in Aboriginal rights, and wrote to its Director in the early 1920s.[38] Gibbs would go on to participate in the organization of the 'Day of Mourning', a silent march in the streets of Sydney in 1938 coordinated by Aboriginal activist groups from across southeastern Australia protesting Australia's sesquicentennial celebrations; and she would campaign over following decades for the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the national census, a breakthrough finally achieved by the 1967 referendum that provided the groundwork for nascent citizenship rights in the 1970s.[39] Fernando never knew of these developments. He remained overseas for the rest of his life, passing away in Essex in 1949 after spending his final years in an aged persons' home.

The transnationalism of ordinary lives described in this volume reminds us that national histories, national borders and national subjects are inherently unstable entities. Notions of 'home' and the domestic on which narratives of nation and citizenship are built have been formed in dialectic relationship to the imperial and the colonial, the acknowledgement placing metropole and colony on a common plane. As an inherently unstable subject far from home, Fernando daily enacted the fact of colonization by claiming 'Australia' while overseas. Although London would draw his attention for large parts of his exile, his travels in Europe remind us of the diversity of transnational circuits in the formation of social reform movements, and that a variety of 'national' and 'imperial' cultures played intersecting roles in shaping notions of indigeneity, the reform of settler colonialism and the meaning of minority rights.

Notes

1. Buser Collection, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, translated by Christine Winter [BC].
2. Aboriginal people expected payment for such staged photographs. See Jane Lydon (2005) *Eye Contact*: *Photographing Indigenous Australians* (Durham: Duke University Press).
3. Heather Goodall (1988) 'An Aboriginal Calls for Justice: Learning from History', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin* 2:33, 4–6; and (1988) 'When Anthony Fernando went to Confront his Colonisers', *Land Rights News* 2:10, 32–33. See also Fiona Paisley (2006) 'An "education in white brutality": Anthony Martin Fernando and Australian Aboriginal Rights in Transnational Context', in Annie E. Coombes (ed.) *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 209–226.
4. Ravi Di Costa (2006) *A Higher Authority: Indigenous Transnationalism and Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press), p. 4.
5. For example see Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus (1999) *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin); Penny van Toorn (2006) *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press).
6. John Maynard (2005) ' "In the Interests of Our People": The Influence of Garveyism on the Rise of Australian Aborigines' Political Activism', *Aboriginal History* 29, pp. 1–22.
7. See for example Anna Haebich (2000) *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000* (Fremantle: Fremantle University Press); Heather Goodall (1996) *From Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin).
8. Rosalind Poignant (2004) *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle* (Sydney: UNSW Press).
9. Erez Manela (2006) 'Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East–West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919', *American Historical Review* III:5, pp. 1–30.
10. Homi Bhabha (1990) 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge), pp. 315ff.
11. Angela Woollacott (2001) *To Try her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
12. Antoinette Burton (1994) 'Rules of Thumb: British History and "Imperial Culture" in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *Women's History Review* 3:4, 488.
13. Sidonie Smith (1993) 'Who's Talking/Who's Talking Back? The Subject of Personal Narrative', *Signs* 18:2, 392–407, esp. 393.
14. Gillian Whitlock (2000) *Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (London: Cassell), p. 6.
15. Holloway Sparks (1997) 'Dissident Citizenship: Democratic Theory, Political Courage, and Activist Women', *Hypatia* 12:4, 1–39.
16. James Clifford (1997) *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 25.
17. 'A Call for Help from Australia', 30 June 1921, *Der Bund* transcript, BC.

18. See Cassandra Pybus (2006) *Black Founders: The Unknown Story of Australia's First Black Settlers* (Sydney: UNSW Press).
19. Mary Montgomery Bennett to Mr. Lees, 18 June 1929, Constance Ternent Cooke Papers, GRG 52/32/25, State Archives of South Australia.
20. James Kohen (1993) *The Darug and their Neighbours: The Traditional Owners of the Sydney Region* (Blacktown: Darug Link-Blacktown and District Historical Society, NSW).
21. Marie M. de Lepervanche (1984) *Indians in a White Australia* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin).
22. Anthony Martin Fernando to Henry Prinsep, 10 October 1903, 255/557A/1903, State Archives of Western Australia.
23. Anna Haebich (1988) *For their Own Good: Aborigines and the Government in the South West of Western Australia* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia).
24. G.C. Bolton (1981) 'Black and White after 1897', in C.T. Stannage (ed.) *The New History of Western Australia* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press), pp. 129–132.
25. Rozina Visram (1986) *Ayahs, Lascars, and Princes: Indians in Britain, 1700–1947* (London: Pluto Press), pp. 52–53.
26. See for example Antoinette Burton (1998) 'A "Pilgrim Reformer" at the Heart of the Empire: Behramji Malabari in Late Victorian London', in *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 152–187; Laura Tibili (1994) '*We Ask for British Justice': Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press); Carmen Faymonville (2003) 'Black Germans and Transnational Identification', *Callaloo* 26:2, 364–382.
27. Anthony Martin Fernando to the British Ambassador, 8 June 1916, A11803/1, 14/89/475, National Archives of Australia.
28. 'Fernando, Anthony Martin: Confidential Report', 18 October 1921, D1915/0, SA 608.
29. 'Australian Aborigine at the Old Bailey: Accusations against the British', *Argus*, 2 February 1929, 19.
30. 'A Call for Help from Australia'.
31. Heather Goodall (1988) 'Aboriginal Calls for Justice: Learning from History', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin* 2:33, 4–6.
32. Bain Attwood (2003) *Rights for Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), pp. 31ff.
33. Paul Lauren (1988) *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder: Westview Press), p. 112
34. Fernando to the Editors, 25 June 1921, *Der Bund* transcript.
35. 'Call for help from Australia'.
36. Paul A. Kramer (2002) 'Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880–1910', *Journal of American History* 88:4, 1315–1356.
37. 'Fernando, Anthony Martin: Confidential Report'.
38. Pearl Gibbs, General Secretary, Aborigines Progressive Association, to President, League of Nations, 4 July 1938, 'Situation of Aborigines in Australia', Political Division, 1/34895/1 34895, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
39. (1983) 'Three Tributes to Pearl Gibbs (1901–1983)', *Aboriginal History*, 7:1, 4–22; Marilyn Lake (2002) *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), p. 55.

15

'Citizens of the World?': Jane Franklin's Transnational Fantasies

Penny Russell

During the middle years of the nineteenth century, an English woman sent forth a series of appeals to foreign nations for aid in the quest to save her husband's life.

The wife of the commander of a missing polar expedition, Jane, Lady Franklin urged the rulers and people of America, Russia and France to think of the probable sufferings of men who had gone out on a geographical enterprise, and to help save them from a lingering fate, perishing of cold and starvation in the Arctic wastes. Lest the claim of imagined suffering prove insufficient, she strengthened her appeal with references to her own intense anxiety. If men's desperate plight failed to move, a wife's heartfelt plea might have better effect. Jane Franklin thus mounted an impassioned appeal for a humanitarian response that would transcend the narrow limits of national obligation. Not England alone, but the whole of the 'civilised world', she urged, should deem this quest a sacred obligation.[1]

Jane Franklin's vision of a transnational enterprise, cemented by the bonds of civilization and humanity, offers a valuable opportunity to explore the dimensions and limitations of a 'transnationalism of sentiment' across Western nations in the mid-nineteenth century. It was a period when national boundaries were being defined and defended, when nationalist feeling was implicated in both rule and revolution, when international alliances were being re-formed and severely tested and when the extended reach of empire filled colonizing nations with a mingled sense of their own strength and vulnerability. In this context, Jane Franklin was not alone in seeking to highlight the common bonds of feeling that might extend harmony of purpose beyond the boundaries of competing national interests.

Such transnationalism of sentiment, however, was far from representing a broad embrace of shared humanity. For the purposes of her quest – to search the Arctic for the missing ships – Jane Franklin had little use for any but the principal maritime nations. Her wishes meshed neatly with her cultural prejudices: France, Britain and (with some reservations), America and Russia lay within her identification of the 'civilized world'. And not by coincidence: as Norbert Elias observed, the concept of 'civilization', expressive as it is of 'the

self-consciousness of the West' and its presumption of superiority,[2] developed earliest in Britain and France. The concept of civilization, argues Elias, plays down national difference: 'it emphasizes what is common to all human beings or – in the view of its bearers – should be'.[3] It is a concept that thus belongs to confident, established and expansionist nations. It was to this presumption of superiority, and not to any egalitarian assumptions about a universal humanity, that Jane Franklin directed her careful appeals.

She was, nevertheless, very conscious of their transgressive potential. She was begging for the aid of foreigners, offering them scope for glory in what might have been deemed a British responsibility. The uneasy relations that existed during the middle decades of the nineteenth century between Britain and the nations she addressed – exacerbated by revolution and regime change in France, political turmoil in America and the build-up to the Crimean War – made her actions all the more complex. While she dwelt on the idea of simple human sympathy between civilized nations, Jane Franklin knew that her appeals might have deeper political ramifications. Beneath the apparent innocence of her transnational rhetoric lay a more calculating awareness of costs and benefits.

To look beyond her own country for aid in her quest was not the only boundary that she crossed. In addressing pointed requests for action to the leaders of other nations, she deftly combined images of hapless suffering with practices of active agency. Her rhetoric sketched an ideal of wifely devotion at once intimate and abstract, and in either guise far removed from the affairs of states and nations. But the idealized wife repeatedly transgressed the boundaries of ideal wifeliness, seeking to embed her actions in the politics of government, nationally and internationally. To understand this paradox, it is necessary to understand something of Jane Franklin's life before this period of crisis.

Hers had been a well-travelled life. Born Jane Griffin in 1791, the daughter of a Huguenot silk-weaver of Spitalfields, she grew up in an atmosphere of prosperity and cultural education, which included annual excursions to places of interest in Great Britain and on the Continent. The young Jane Griffin combined an intense curiosity about the world with a profound conviction – which travel did little to eradicate – of the superiority of the English over all other people. She added to the mix a certain diffidence about her own capacity, as a young woman, to acquire the authority of knowledge. Combining the smugness of class and ethnocentrism with the habitual diffidence of gender and the cultivated humility of the scholar, Jane Griffin looked upon the wider world with a combination of desire and repugnance, which found expression from time to time in complex, inconclusive, romantic attachments.

During her twenties and thirties she was several times drawn to men of brilliance whose world was foreign to her own: but the allure of the unknown could not outweigh her corresponding fear of crossing,

irrevocably, the gulfs of culture, class or ethnicity. Mary Berenson, as Ros Pesman argues in the next chapter, might find in love the opportunity for both flight and quest. Jane Griffin hesitated on the brink – unwilling, and perhaps unable, to abandon her English identity in the pursuit of pleasure or passion.

Captain John Franklin, when she met him in her thirties, represented a compromise. In personality almost a caricature of unimaginative English solidity, devoted to professional duty and the service of his country, he yet bore about him the breath of distant lands and bold enterprise in the pursuit of knowledge. Naval service had taken him to Australia, America and – three times – to the Arctic; he had faced death more than once, but rather than boast of the dangers he had passed, he brought home reports of measurements, thermal and magnetic observations and navigational triumphs. He was a man who knew his way around, who was contributing to British knowledge and mastery of the globe. He was, in this respect at least, everything Jane Griffin had dreamed of: an Englishman, who yet promised her access to the world.

She eagerly took up the promise. The early years of her married life took her first to the Mediterranean, where her husband served several years as a post captain, and later to the distant penal colony of Van Diemen's Land, where he held the post of lieutenant governor. Both ventures offered Jane Franklin multiple opportunities to explore the world, and she pursued them with enthusiasm. The fascination of travel was deepening its hold, but it was a fascination with civilizations long destroyed or, in Australia, as yet scarcely established. The living cultures of the present that she encountered she passed over, with more than a touch of disdain.

In Van Diemen's Land, disdain sharpened into contempt. John Franklin fell foul of a number of intersecting interest groups in the colony, and his period as governor was an unhappy one. Jane Franklin's attempts to help him – with advice, writing skills or diplomacy – fell on stony ground. Colonists saw her husband's trust in her judgement as a sign of his own weakness, and the colonial press soon began cruelly to caricature the 'She-Governor' who ruled the colony, or aspired to do so, through her amiable but weak-willed husband. Her enthusiasm for travel, scientific pursuits and cultural entertainments, and her corresponding dislike of balls and dinner parties, did not help the situation.

By the time Jane Franklin returned to England in 1844, she had learned to despise the narrow provincialism of the colonial mind, to dread publicity and to loathe the machinations of bureaucrats. But she had also learned some tough lessons in diplomacy, and the value of masking her vigorous agency under a cloak of flattering, feminine dependence on masculine expertise and skill. The longest journey she had ever taken in her life had thrust her amidst the narrowest social attitudes she had ever suffered under, and her consequent unhappiness was acute. She returned home with a new

Figure 14 Jane, Lady Franklin, by Thomas Bock, 1838. Chalk on paper. Courtesy of Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston.

understanding of the social hazards to which her own intelligence and energy might expose her; yet with a converse thirst to taste once more the greater freedoms that a woman of her age and social standing could enjoy at the heart of English society.

The further she had travelled, the more England had come to represent the stable centre of her moral universe, the hub from which her journeys

extended and her point of reference on all questions of comparison or evaluation. And yet, living amongst expatriates and colonists, she had learned what could happen when others applied to her their own narrow standards of proper English conduct. Only in England itself, amidst the greater variety of social attitudes that could be accommodated in the metropolis, could she hope to enjoy a cosmopolitan outlook.

John Franklin returned to England equally determined to throw off the negative judgements he had encountered in the penal colony. He found it impossible to clear his name at the Colonial Office, where he was too evidently held in contempt. But the opportunity soon arose to overwrite his sorry record with a more glorious enterprise. The Admiralty was keen to recommence the quest to complete the discovery and navigation of the Northwest Passage. John Franklin was desperate for the command.

His age was against him – he was almost 60 – and it was 18 years since he had last been in the Arctic. But in the absence of any younger and more experienced candidate willing to take on the role, the honour fell to him. The *Erebus* and *Terror* left England in May 1845, their commodore brimming with confidence in his glorious mission. For Jane Franklin, despite her natural anxiety, the appointment came as a relief, restoring her own identity from a wife taking too active an interest in the enclosed politics of Hobart to that most respectable of beings, a wife awaiting the return of her heroic explorer husband. She could now, she thought, recommence her journeys of pleasure and curiosity, and leave the worlds of politics and exploration to others.

She was wrong: her history was destined to follow a very different course. In September 1846, John Franklin's two ships were beset in the ice in Victoria Strait, a region hitherto unexplored by Europeans. Despite the summer thaw, the ice held them through the whole of the following year. In the spring of 1848, a diminished party of desperate, starving men abandoned the ships and attempted to escape overland – a venture that was doomed from the outset. By that time, John Franklin had been dead almost a year. Although some members of the party may have lived on as far as 1850 – perhaps even longer – none would ever return to England to tell their miserable tale. At home, Jane Franklin found that after all, she could not simply wait.

The ships had been provisioned for 3 years, but John Franklin had hoped to spend no more than one winter in the ice. By late 1846, his wife was beginning to look anxiously for his return, and her anxiety intensified with every passing month. By the end of 1847, while the Admiralty was making its first gentle plans for relief expeditions, she was frantic with worry. Although three expeditions set off in the early months of 1848, she was all too conscious of the vast areas of unexplored Arctic that were not covered by the relief plans. She began, with growing urgency, to consider how best to augment the searches. She pleaded with the Admiralty to send additional searches, or to lend her two small ships so she could organize her own: they

refused. In this crisis, she looked hopefully across the Atlantic. In April 1849, she addressed a letter to the President of the United States, Zachary Taylor, outlining the 'extreme exigence of the case', the magnitude and overwhelming difficulties of the task and the necessary limits to what England could attempt.

In thus extending her appeal beyond the limits of her own nation, Jane Franklin was conscious of temerity. She was asking a foreign government for aid in an expensive and open-ended undertaking, with a view to saving, perhaps, a handful of lives, her husband's among them. The British government had at least a recognizable responsibility towards men sent into danger in the nation's service. America could have none: she must therefore present the case as one of universal human concern. She confessed to Taylor that she feared her 'intense anxiety' might have led her to press her cause 'too earnestly' upon him, 'and to presume too much on the sympathy which we are assured is felt beyond the limits of our own land'. But if he found it so, she was sure he would also find 'even in that personal intensity of feeling, an excuse for the fearlessness with which I have thrown myself on your generosity'. And, with careful flattery, she hoped he would 'pardon the homage I thus pay to your own high character, and to that of the people over whom you have the high distinction to preside'.[4]

A woman who had travelled less widely might have been less ready to imagine the search for her lost husband being conducted on a global stage. Jane Franklin possessed a cosmopolitan outlook, and she showed great facility in using a language of universal human sympathy and benevolence. And yet it would be problematic indeed to understand her appeal to America as a product of pure transnational sentiment. She had passed through a baptism of fire in dealing with the press and bureaucracies of a hostile colony, and now the experience stood her in good stead. Perhaps the lesson she had absorbed most successfully was that of appealing to the self-interest of her auditors. Writing to a head of state, it was a national self-interest that she evoked. Her own goals were strictly pragmatic: the area of search was too vast for Britain to cover effectively; therefore aid was needed. She dressed that point up in an eclectic array of rhetorical flourishes, in which ideals of human sympathy jostled with calculated appeals to national pride. The two were combined in her oft-repeated image of 'generous rivalry': a term that seems to encapsulate the symbiotic relationship between transnational and national sentiment.

Desiring an act of sympathetic benevolence she could not claim as a right, Franklin ventured to 'hope' that Taylor would 'deem it not unworthy of a great and kindred nation to take up the cause of humanity which I plead, in a national spirit, and thus generously make it your own'. Her plea thus allowed free play to the chivalric impulses of a nation and its heroes. The more impermissible her request, the more glowingly a positive response would

reflect upon the eager generosity of the American people. Russia, she hoped, would soon also send exploring parties north from Bering Strait. 'It would be a noble spectacle to the world, if three great nations, possessed of the widest empires on the face of the globe, were thus to unite their efforts in the truly Christian work of saving their perishing fellow-men from destruction.' But this image of noble unity soon slid gently into one of 'noble competition', in which, she hinted, American seamen might have 'the good fortune to wrest from us the glory . . . of solving the problem of the unfound passage, or the still greater glory of saving our adventurous navigators from a lingering fate'.[5]

America's initial response similarly represented sympathy as a national attribute. John M. Clayton, Secretary of State, wrote with admirable promptness to assure her that her sentiments 'would strongly enlist the sympathy of the rulers and the people of any portion of the civilized world'. But especially that of the United States, 'a kindred people' who shared 'in the emotions which agitate the public minds of your own country', and to whom 'the name of Sir John Franklin has been endeared by his heroic virtues and the sufferings and sacrifices which he has encountered for the benefit of mankind.' The 'hearts of the American people', he assured her, would be 'deeply touched' by her eloquent address.[6]

So, too, were English hearts. In the British House of Commons, Robert Inglis dubbed it 'one of the most eloquent letters addressed *by* man or woman *to* man or woman'. Benjamin Disraeli was struck by the feeling response the letter had evoked from America, remarking that incidents such as these were calculated to cultivate 'the best feelings among nations', and would do more to establish fraternity 'than any of those political crotchets which would soon occupy the attention of the house'. Inglis agreed: the co-operation of the 'three greatest empires of the world . . . in a scheme of beneficence' must promote the cause of general peace.[7] Harnessing the chivalric mode to the language of national honour, Franklin's letter had enabled a self-congratulatory response – on both sides of the Atlantic – that transformed chivalry and manly sympathy into national virtues.

Very little came of these early initiatives. The Russian searches fell short of Franklin's expectation, and America soon discovered that the season was too advanced to attempt anything that year. When British searchers returned to report failure at the close of 1849, Franklin renewed her appeal to America, begging them to 'join heart and hand in the generous enterprise!' and promising them the 'respect and admiration of the world, which watches with growing interest every movement of your great republic'.[8]

When the matter came before Congress for discussion that winter, the compassion of American hearts seemed to be inextricably entangled with their thirst for national distinction. Few disputed that – however remote the prospect of saving life, at this late date – humanity demanded that

America should contribute to the search. In the words of one supporter, 'public feeling – the feeling of humanity', would not be satisfied until the fate of Franklin was ascertained. The issue for heated debate was not whether America should participate at all, but rather what form of participation would reflect most honour upon the nation. A New York merchant, Henry Grinnell, had purchased and equipped two vessels for an Arctic search. He now offered them to the government to use in the undertaking. And the question that chiefly troubled the Congress was whether national honour would be served, or only diminished, by accepting this generous offer. The debate split along party lines, 'the Democrats', as Larzer Ziff has commented, 'seeking to embarrass the consenting Whigs'.[9]

Some argued that the government should not share credit for the enterprise with a private individual; others countered that the United States should not 'envy the individual his share of honor and glory';[10] nor should it delay the search while new government ships were fitted out, since: 'Every hour's delay may be worth the life of a man.'[11] Governor Seward argued that the alliance between the nation and its citizens in 'an enterprise so interesting to the cause of science and humanity' was a spectacle to illustrate the 'magnanimity of the nation'. And he summed up the paradox that lay at the heart of these deliberations, the complementary and yet contradictory tug of national and humanitarian feelings, warning: 'Enterprises which spring from a desire of glory are very apt to end in disappointment. True national glory is always safely attained by prosecuting beneficent designs, whatever may be their success.'[12]

And so two American ships sailed for the Arctic in 1850, sent with the approval of a government ostensibly intent on 'prosecuting beneficent designs', silently convinced of the hopelessness of the task, but assured that America must benefit, even from a failed quest.

* * *

Jane Franklin might never have thought of France in connection with her quest, had not a young lieutenant in the French Marines written to her in 1851, when she was in the throes of arrangements for a private expedition funded by herself, and desperate for a competent second-in-command to lead a boat party. 'Such men as Lord Franklin are citizens of the world,' wrote Joseph-René Bellot:

> All civilized nations find a share in His Lordship's glory, & are anxious to evince their gratitude and sympathies. The large family of seamen is of course most peculiarly concerned in every enquiry about his fate, and I an humble member of it, would feel very proud to bring any amount of endeavours in such a noble undertaking.[13]

Should she accept his offer? Jane Franklin's trusted advisers among the staff at the Admiralty discouraged her. Suspicious of his foreignness, they also feared that, as a naval officer, he could neither agree with nor respect the man she had chosen as her commander, a trader named William Kennedy of mixed Cree and British descent, late of the Hudson's Bay Company. But Kennedy himself was enthusiastic, and Jane Franklin, lacking alternatives, was not hard to persuade. And Bellot himself soon disarmed criticism, his devotion to her cause and growing affection for Kennedy alike fuelling her fantasies of the quest as a multinational enterprise. The expedition sailed under two flags, Lady Franklin insisting that to honour Bellot the French flag should fly alongside the British.

The search dragged on. Expeditions large and small were despatched to the north each year, but their hopes of achieving a rescue were rapidly fading from the unlikely into the impossible. In the autumn of 1851, the American ships came home, compounding Franklin's disappointment at the unlooked-for return of two British expeditions at the same time. The 'squadron of ships . . . all engaged in our sacred cause', which had once given her hope, seemed to have clustered together in the ice, concentrating their efforts in ways far removed from Franklin's vision of multiplied searches threading through the Arctic.[14] Journalists might praise the fraternal spirit that had characterized the expeditions as they worked together in the ice for their mutual safety, but Jane Franklin had no further use for fraternalism. Her devoted niece and scribe wrote crisply to Henry Grinnell of their disappointment at the outcome, and still deeper disappointment that the American public were now expressing despondency as to the likely fate of the missing men.

> The main impulse to our Govt has been a feeling of rivalry with your country – the fear that if we abandoned the search, you wd have the field all to yourselves and put them to shame – but now this argument and impulse fails us, the prop is taken from beneath our feet, and we can no longer quote you.[15]

Once Jane Franklin had told the US President that she should 'rejoice' in American success.[16] Now, she waspishly suggested that she had only ever meant that to be a spectre, designed to spur the British government to greater efforts. Her transnationalist sentiments were fragmenting under pressure.

They received a boost, however, when Bellot returned from his first expedition, having acquitted himself well, and seemed keen to go again. He would have liked to command a French-sponsored expedition, and suggested to Franklin that his Emperor, Napoleon III, might be responsive to such an appeal as she had earlier made to the United States: indeed, if she would so write to him, or even to the Empress, Bellot thought he could 'warrant success'.[17]

Jane Franklin was no admirer of the Emperor, or, in general, of the French, and she would not have dreamt of making such an appeal had Bellot not urged her to it. But he argued that nothing could be more appropriate: after all, he reminded her, John Franklin had 'his citizenship in France, than which no other country associated more with his success.' Franklin had been made a member of the French Geographical Society – why then, Bellot was often asked by his compatriots, had Lady Franklin chosen to appeal to America but not to France?[18] Bellot hinted at the strength of a cosmopolitan scientific community, a brotherhood of scientists and seafarers that crossed the civilized nations of Europe and surpassed the grudging loyalties of a 'kindred' but disaffected former colony.

Yet Britain's relations with France had long been tense, and still were so. Reluctant as she was to ignore any prospect of aid, Jane Franklin had no wish to alienate her English supporters, or to entrench the Admiralty's growing hostility to her plans, and she feared that an appeal to France might prove unpopular indeed. She tried out a few arguments in its favour to a trusted friend:

> It appears to me at this moment when a war is so much dreaded that such an event might excite in the French navy an improved feeling towards us and be not without its use. If so, I should readily be forgiven in England for enabling such an application, if forgiveness is needed.

But she was not confident. Her next step was to 'privately sound' the Admiralty for their reaction by writing to her ally John Barrow, the Second Secretary.

> What would the public say to such a step? What would the Admiralty say? Mr Cobden would like it, for it would be a very fraternal act on the part of the French, & not without importance in our present political relations. If I could hide the doing it from people's knowledge, I would not mind.[19]

Barrow could not see what 'the Admiralty or any one else have to do with the French sending an expedition . . . if they chuse'. But he added in a postscript: 'It certainly would be fraternizing with us and very desirable on that ground.'[20]

A politician friend advised her to couch her appeal to the Emperor in very general terms, and avoid what she appeared to be contemplating, 'an almost personal appeal to the Emperor'.[21] Franklin replied that to make 'a strong personal appeal to Louis Napoléon' would be 'repugnant to my taste & judgement', but added: 'I must I fear express some degree of personal feeling in order to excuse the step at all.'[22] It was an echo of her earlier apology to the US President. Here was encapsulated at once Franklin's greatest dilemma and

her favourite strategy. She could not ask heads of state to act purely out of human sympathy for her individual sufferings and anxieties. Accountable to their governments and their people, they needed better reasons than that to enter into the expense and risk entailed in the search. Again and again she denied having any desire that governments should plunge their people into danger only to satisfy her wishes: for such a desire would be indefensibly selfish. Governments must act from reason, for humanity and for the common good: her role therefore was to persuade them of the sense, the practicability and the benevolent tendency of what she proposed. But could a woman presume, could she dare, to explain to a head of state where his duty lay? Franklin did dare, but again and again 'intensity of feeling' had to serve as her excuse.

Bellot wrote that he wished he could have spared her all this anxiety by making a successful appeal himself, either to the Emperor 'or the Empress whom I would rather have addressed as being a woman and a Lady she would have most readily sympathized with such a noble cause'.[23] The idea attracted her. In March, after a month of doubt and hesitation, she addressed a letter to the Empress Eugénie that intertwined the rhetoric of universal womanly sympathy with the rhetoric of nation. She hoped that the Empress would 'as a woman and a wife sympathize with the humble efforts of one whose life is devoted to the rescue, if possible, of her husband and his countrymen'.[24] But she hoped also to stir her pride in French gallantry and enterprise – for there was still, she insisted, scope for glory.

> There is still room for the glorious spectacle of another great nation taking part in the generous rivalry which has made the rescue of the lost navigators the care, and the stimulus to enterprise of the new world and the old, – as if that mission of universal interest on which they were sent forth and the perils they have dared to execute it, gave them citizenship with the whole civilized world![25]

And she gently reminded Eugénie 'that the leader of that band of devoted men is already in recognized membership with the highest scientific Institutions of France'.[26]

Franklin's letter blended her appeals to universal female sympathy, the bonds of the 'civilized world', the ties of a cosmopolitan scientific community and the special interests of nation. It was an ambitious exercise in rhetoric, but this time it missed its mark. Eugénie wrote with sympathy that she hoped that Heaven would at last grant her the success merited by her '*tendresse conjugale*' and assured her that on that day no one would share more intensely 'the joy of the wife of Captain Sir John Franklin' than 'the wife of the Emperor Napoleon'.[27] Jane Franklin tried to find grounds for hope in this reply. She wrote months later that Eugénie's 'most gracious and

touching and beautiful letter' had given her hope 'that such generous sympathy as is there expressed might not be, eventually, without its fruits'.[28] But it was probably wishful thinking. Despite its formal expressions of hope, the note of finality in Eugénie's letter contained nothing to suggest that the French nation would embark upon the expenses and danger of search. Womanly sympathy was the beginning and the end of her response.[29]

* * *

Jane Franklin combined breadth of outlook with a singleness of purpose that was almost startling. Her appeals to universal qualities of humanitarian sympathy were to the sole end of rescuing her husband's lost expedition. She dwelt with emotive energy on the probable sufferings of 130 starving men, while remaining apparently unmoved by the appalling impact of the Irish famine at the same period, or, later, by the plight of soldiers stricken by disease on the Crimean battlefields. But what is perhaps most interesting about her rhetorical campaign is not so much its insularity as its pliable, chameleon character, as she drew upon a richly varied language of virtue to couch her intensely individual appeals. In the grab bag of images that she deployed so effectively, we find appeals to fraternalism, chivalry and sisterhood, to unity and rivalry, co-operation and competition. And we can see, too, that not all appeals had equal effect. Americans might respond exuberantly to her hints of sibling rivalry – one US periodical chortling in 1851 that Britain's apparent inactivity in the search furnished the opportunity 'for the display of an American superiority in a great moral enterprise', in which 'America will gain an advantage over England worth all the victories she has yet achieved.'[30] But her sentimental appeals to a brotherhood of scientists and the sympathy of a wife in France prompted only a sentimental response. A transnationalism of sentiment, at this period at least, seemed to flourish best in the fertile ground of national self-interest.

What do we do with the 'nation' whose shadowy presence lurks so immovably at the heart of the 'transnational'? As other stories in this book show – and as Jane Franklin's own life trajectory repeatedly demonstrated – human lives do not observe the imagined boundaries, or even the reinforced borders, that define nations. Lives draw from experience where they find it; they are lived in motion as well as in defined spaces. Both individuals and communities can possess multiple identities, allegiances and attachments. Yet such fluidities of identity and experience do not find ready expression in public discourse. The organizational structures of power and the organizing principles of language alike ensure that the 'imagined communities' of state and nation disrupt the fantasy of universality with their defining, constraining presence. When Jane Franklin attempted to make a transnational appeal to common humanity, the rhetoric that most readily served her purpose was, after all, the rhetoric of nation.

Notes

1. I am grateful to the archivist at the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge UK (SPRI) for permission to quote from Jane Franklin's papers. The best biography of Jane Franklin is still Frances J. Woodward (1951), *Portrait of Jane: A Life of Lady Franklin*. London: Hodder and Stoughton. See also Penny Russell (2005), 'Wife Stories: Narrating Marriage and Self in the Life of Jane Franklin', *Victorian Studies* 48 (1) Autumn 2005, pp. 35–59.
2. Norbert Elias (2000), *The Civilizing Process* (trans. Edmund Jephcott), rev. ed. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 5.
3. Elias *Civilizing Process*, p. 7.
4. Jane Franklin to the President of the United States, 4 April 1849: correspondence tabled in US Congress under the heading 'Message from the President of the United States, communicating copies of a correspondence with the lady of Sir John Franklin, relative to the expedition to the arctic regions under the command of her husband', presented to the 31st Congress on 4 January 1850. A copy of these papers is held in the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) Pamphlet file (*41): 91(091).
5. Jane Franklin to the President of the United States, 4 April 1849.
6. John M. Clayton to Jane Franklin, 25 April 1849, SPRI MS 935/3
7. *The Times*, 13 June 1849.
8. Jane Franklin to the President of the United States, 11 December 1849, SPRI Pamphlet file (*41): 91(091).
9. Larzer Ziff (2003), 'Arctic Exploration and the Romance of Failure', *Raritan*, 23 (2), Fall, p. 61.
10. In P. L. Simmonds (1851), *Sir John Franklin and the Arctic Regions*. London: George Routledge and Co., p. 344.
11. Simmonds, *Sir John Franklin and the Arctic Regions*, p. 342.
12. Ibid., p. 346.
13. Joseph-René Bellot to Jane Franklin, 19 March 1851, Letterbook of Arctic Searches, SPRI MS 248/107.
14. Jane Franklin to Samuel T. Griffin, 22 March 1850, Letterbook of Arctic Searches, SPRI MS 248/104.
15. Sophia Cracroft to Henry Grinnell (draft copy of letter), 21 October 1851, SPRI MS 248/250/2.
16. Jane Franklin to the President of the United States, 4 April 1849.
17. J. R. Bellot to Jane Franklin, MS 248/348//24 February 1853.
18. J. R. Bellot to Jane Franklin, 9 February 1853, Letterbook of Arctic Searches, SPRI MS 248/110.
19. Jane Franklin to John Barrow, 8 February 1853, Letterbook of Arctic Searches, SPRI MS 248/110.
20. John Barrow to Jane Franklin, 9 February 1853, Letterbook of Arctic Searches, SPRI MS 248/110.
21. Robert Inglis to Jane Franklin, 11 February 1853, Letterbook of Arctic Searches, SPRI MS 248/110.
22. Jane Franklin to Robert Inglis, 14 February 1853, MS 248/110.
23. MS 248/348/3 J. R. Bellot to JF, 23 February 1853.
24. Jane Franklin to Empress Eugénie of France, 12 March 1853, SPRI MS 248/210.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.

27. Empress Eugénie to Jane Franklin, cited Woodward *Portrait of Jane*, p. 284.
28. Jane Franklin to Roderick Murchison, 26 October 1853, Royal Geographical Society, Franklin and Cracroft Correspondence Block.
29. Bellot wrote soon afterwards to Franklin that his own appeal to the Minister of Marine for a French expedition had failed. J. R. Bellot to Jane Franklin, 1 April 1853, SPRI MS 248/348/5.
30. *The North American Miscellany and Dollar Magazine*, November 1851, p. 120.

16

The Meanings of a Transnational Life: The Case of Mary Berenson

Ros Pesman

> I do not feel myself to be any different as an English subject than as an American. I have not the vote in either place, as I am not a citizen of either and have no call to be patriotic. In fact, I do not see how women can ever feel like anything but aliens in whatever country they may live, for they have no part or lot in any, except the part and lot of being taxed and legislated for by men.[1]

Such was the lament in 1888 of a North American woman, Mary Berenson, some three years after her move to Britain following her marriage to a London barrister, Frank Costelloe. That sense of perpetual alienation would pursue her for the rest of her life through further border crossings and other relationships. This chapter explores a premise prompted by her lament: are women, less embedded in the national, more able to live in the transnational?

Mary Berenson's life crossed many national borders, yet to describe it as a transnational life poses as many questions as it answers. What, after all, constitutes a transnational life? Is it necessary, or is it sufficient, to live abroad – and if so, for what periods of time and under what circumstances? Or is a transnational life one lived with multiple reference points and loyalties? What kind of transnationals, then, are expatriates, who live on top of, but not within, other societies? At what point might one shift or change terminology, and refer rather to a cosmopolitan life? And what is the relationship of transnational to cosmopolitan? What is a cosmopolitan life?

Mary Berenson lived across Northern America, England and Italy.[2] The first was her home from her birth in 1864 until 1885, the second from 1885 until 1891 and the third from 1891 until her death in 1944. During her 50 years in Italy, she regularly commuted to England, where her family lived, and to the connoisseur circles of Paris. For a number of years, she also made return visits to the United States. For most of her adult life, Mary Berenson was torn between her ties to England, home of her daughters, mother and sister, and Italy, the dwelling place of Bernard Berenson, her lover then

husband. The attraction of the latter – in her mind the site of independence, culture and self-fulfilment – generally proved stronger, at least until the later years of her life. On the face of it, Mary Berenson's moves first to London and then to Florence were to follow men, but on each occasion the man represented far more than emotional attachment. Both moves were also flight and quest.

Encouraged by the strong belief in women's education of her Revivalist and unorthodox Quaker mother, Hannah Whitall Smith, the young Mary Smith, later Berenson, grew up with interests in religion, philosophy, literature, art and architecture, interests which she further pursued first at Smith College and then at the Harvard Annexe. While at Harvard and thirsting for culture, knowledge and independence, Mary met an Irish-born barrister practising in London and would-be Liberal Member of Parliament, Frank Costelloe. Nine years her senior and a practising Catholic, Costelloe was anathema to Mary's mother who also held strong views on early marriage ruining a woman's opportunities for self-development. Costelloe, an Oxford graduate and a first-rate scholar in Latin and Greek with strong interests in philosophy and a deep sense of social responsibility, offered Mary Smith escape from what she later represented as the philistinism of her family and native land; he was a person 'whose culture was at the time far better grounded than anything America could give'.[3] Within a short period, Mary Smith and Frank Costelloe were engaged and they married in London in the summer of 1885. Three years later, Mary's parents, who had already spent long periods in England, followed her and settled in England where they were joined by the rest of the family, Mary's sister, Alys, who was to marry Bertrand Russell, and their brother, Logan Pearsall Smith. Thus one result of Mary's transnational marriage was the transplanting of her family from Quaker Philadelphia to Britain where, through Logan Smith's Oxford and literary connections and the marriages of Alys to Russell and of Mary's two daughters into the Stephen and Strachey families, they moved in the circles of the British intellectual aristocracy.

With Costelloe, Mary Smith hoped to pursue a life of philanthropy and culture. She also believed him sympathetic to her feminist aspirations. In her first year in London, it seemed that her hopes would be fulfilled. She wrote to Alys in March 1886 that she had found that more English men than American 'go in for a strong programme as far as Women's Rights go', and that while most married women in England were foolish and stupid to a degree that American women could not imagine, 'a woman here can take any position that she is equal to fill, and an interesting and thoughtful woman can have a splendid time here.'[4] Five years later, Mary Costelloe was not so sure. Her marriage had given her two daughters and a life immersed in feminist, philanthropic and political activities – including work with the National Society for Women's Suffrage, the World Christian Temperance Movement, the Home Rule Committee and the Liberal Federation Committee – and the

Figure 15 Mary Smith Costelloe (later Berenson), 1886. Courtesy of The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

failed election campaigns of her husband. But this, while exhausting, was not enough. Mary Costelloe felt frustrated and oppressed by her husband's Catholicism, by what she now saw as his patriarchal views of marriage and by his failure to give her access to the education and life that she sought.[5] In returning to her earlier interest in art, she found some relief from her frustrations.

It had been in 1888 that Mary Costelloe first met the young Lithuanian Jewish-born, Harvard-educated art connoisseur and critic in training, Bernard Berenson. When he returned to London in 1890 after three years travel in Europe, he and Mary spent the summers in the art galleries of London. A year later Mary, already Berenson's lover, left her husband and two infant daughters to join him, ostensibly for a year and as his apprentice in connoisseurship. They travelled together in Northern Europe and then settled in the hills above Florence. When the year was up, Mary Costello did not return to her husband and daughters, electing instead to spend the rest of her life with Berenson in expatriate Florence: a place on Italian soil but not *in* Italy. Her turning to Berenson was again both flight and quest: flight from or, in her words, 'revolt against' religion, marriage, philistinism, conventions and 'accepted ideas in general'; quest for independence, sexual freedom and a life full of culture, sophistication and 'interesting' people.[6] To her mother she wrote: 'it seems like a matter almost of life and death to me to have liberty to shape my life as best I can.'[7]

For Mary Costelloe, Berenson personified cosmopolitan culture. She later wrote that he 'exhaled an enticing, if frightening atmosphere of foreign culture'.[8] He was a 'mysterious' youth far removed from her hide-bound, anti-cultural milieu who unrolled before her a 'great panorama of human history and achievement': Greek poetry and sculpture, Arab poetry, music of Wagner, European painting. 'At last I felt really as at the centre of things', she wrote, 'not sitting on a bench listening to a lecture but partaking in imagination at least, of the real feast'.[9] Berenson's letters made her feel that she 'was taking part in the kind of life I longed for, devoted to beauty, fortified by study and leading to endless spiritual and aesthetic adventures'.[10]

Mary Costelloe may have fled England and family ties and responsibilities, but these constantly impinged on her new life. She was involved in battles with her husband over custody and access to her small daughters, for the elder of whom at least she expressed a strong sentimental attachment. During her first year with Berenson, she wrote in her diary of her 'curious despair about improvement in the lot of women', of the struggle of having to choose between 'being a person' and 'being a mother': 'I know that all that is personal to me, all that means self-development, real education, knowledge, enjoyment, is with Bernhard.'[11] She found the struggle against the chains of womanhood – 'the *inside* chains' – 'terribly hard', but she never seriously considered returning to London and her daughters. In reply to her mother's urgings that she return to her family, Mary wrote that if she yielded

to her husband's demand, she was admitting his right to dictate to his wife: 'in short I am not my own but his property'.[12]

Mary Costelloe's public story was that she was developing a career as a recognized art critic and connoisseur; she told her mother in 1895 that she was now convinced that 'with time and freedom, I can become one of the most important people in my profession, as well as one of the most interesting women to cultured people.'[13] But the following year Mary Costelloe told an apparently different story to the sculptor, Hermann Obrist, who was at the time her lover:

> With certain people, you can't say 'Damn it all! I like to live in Italy, among cultivated people of my own age rather than in London among stuffy politicians.' One has to sort of assume a grave hypocritical face & say My WORK!! Carissimo amico, my work as work is a wee, tiny affair, and never will be important either to me or to anyone else, except as a way of living that I like. Objectively it never will matter very much, yet I have to talk of it as if it were my excuse for my life, and not merely a sort of unconscious flowering of my association with B.B. and my general intelligence & activity.[14]

While Mary Costelloe's capacity for deception, of self and others, was not inconsiderable, the two accounts are not incompatible. She wanted an exciting and fulfilling life with Berenson among cultivated people and she wanted to be a recognized art historian and connoisseur. She worked hard on her profession in the early years. In her first decade in Italy, as well as working with Berenson on the listing and identification of Italian Renaissance paintings and on his writing, she published a small book and a number of articles and reviews. Mary Costelloe's story for Obrist also points to a recognition of her own limitations – of drive and discipline – as well as to some scepticism about the worth of minor academic scholarship.

Quest, escape, conversion are the norms in narratives of travel to Italy, which was also a popular place of chosen exile for those whose intimate and domestic arrangements departed from the social conventions of their time and class. By the end of the nineteenth century, Italy had also become a place where women believed that they could find 'la bella libertà'.[15] If Mary Costelloe's move to Italy conforms to a pattern, the Italy to which she moved was the Italy of Bernard Berenson's experience and imagination, and she discovered it under his guidance in the first days of love and passion.

> It was a magical time, growing love developing hand in hand with education of eye and expansion of intellect. I do not believe that any two people existed in Italy at that moment who were so much under the spell of its beauty, who were so intoxicated with new enchantments of thought

> and feeling as we were the couple who trudged through the rain and glued their eyes to the 'sights' of Rome and Florence – . . .[16]

After these days, 'it never entered our heads we could live anywhere else' but Italy.[17] Coinciding with love, Italy was doubly for Mary Costelloe the site of rebirth, one of the conventions of travel to Italy: 'Italy has done so much for me. It is beautiful & so sane. I am coming back a "changed being".'[18]

The Italy in which they lived was the land of Renaissance art. Describing the joy of her first visit to Rome, when 'Bernard, darting around in the winter cold and sleet, showed me its treasures', what Mary Berenson later chose to remember were the Melozzo da Forlì Angels in the Vatican – in part because they seemed to 'incarnate the joy the abandonment to rapture that I began to suspect my nature was capable of'.[19] Italy as sexual liberation is again a stock response. Mary and Bernard spent the next years exploring churches and galleries across cities, towns, villages and hamlets and cataloguing and writing up their discoveries. And indeed in these early days of development in modern art criticism, when 'the new connoisseurship was in its infancy', they saw themselves not as pilgrims but as pioneers: 'our feeling was that of real explorers, of pioneers, and great were the joys of exploration, of discovery, of identification.'[20]

The couple, like so many Italophiles, also shared a passion for the Italian landscape:

> That is the marvellous thing of living up here; no matter what sort of weather, it is glorious to watch. I feel as if I could never again live in a town. It would be like voluntarily shutting off one of one's senses. The sense of landscape is so complicated, too – the sights & sounds, & the feel of the temperature, of the wind on your skin & the air in your lungs, and the odours all combine to make it one of the greatest sources of enjoyment, and here above all, in the midst of these classic bare shapes of mountains, with the Val d'Arno sometimes green, sometimes blue, sometimes purple – or even opaline in the mist – with our cypresses & olives, and the church towers & the cupola of the Duomo, we have the very best of nature & art combined.[21]

Both Bernard and Mary were keen walkers and the hills and slopes of Florence became their tramping ground. Mary's diaries abound in references to moments and days of breathtaking beauty. And she observed to her mother that: 'landscape is certainly the modern substitute for religion'.[22]

Beyond Italy the land of art and nature, Mary rarely ventured. Her interest in politics did not survive the move to Italy, and sophisticated and cosmopolitan life did not necessarily mean involvement in contemporary Italy. This was a society that existed for her only in the form of landladies, servants, officious railway personnel and customs officials, the local peasants,

doctor and priest, some fellow art critics and the odd intellectual or aristocrat who shared their interests or wished to associate with foreigners, and about most of whom Mary was fairly contemptuous. Despite lessons, she was never fluent in Italian. While both Mary and Bernard Berenson were to be hostile to the Fascist regime, and their friends included the anti-fascist socialist historian Gaetano Salvemini who, when he was forced to flee Italy, found refuge in London with Mary's sister, Alys Russell, they did not express their opinions outside their own circles. The earlier political upheavals of the 1890s and the immediate post-war period are barely observed in Mary's letters and diaries. As their friend Carlo Placci observed: 'You strange people, inhabiting hills and abstract ideas, how do you manage to exist outside actualities and a large base.'[23]

Mary Costelloe made her particular friends among the British and North American women living around Fiesole, a world she would later label as Frumpignano. This was a world of women who were not only independent in their sexual lives but also in their cultivation of their talents as writers, artists or art critics: women such as the truly cosmopolitan, by anyone's definition, Vernon Lee; or budding art historian Maud Cruttwell, 'sapphic' follower of Lee, who was later to write a number of more than competent biographies of Italian Renaissance artists; or Janet Ross, the fourth generation in a dynasty of writing women, whose works ranged from books on Florentine palaces and gardens to a recipe book to a travel book on Apulia, and who was a formidable and eccentric presence on the hills. Relations with other art critics and the neighbours were those of sexual intrigue and intellectual competition, of family or small town politics, of friendships punctuated by rivalries, jealousies and quarrels that rarely went deep or lasted long.

The year 1900 marked a number of changes in Mary Costelloe's life. Following the death of Frank Costelloe, and despite the increasingly quarrelsome nature of their relationship, Mary and Bernard married and moved to I Tatti, the villa above Settignano which they were to buy in 1907 and which quickly became a mecca for European and North American cultural elites, 'a cosmopolitan crossroads'.[24] This was a world which Bernard enjoyed, but it was one in which Mary was rapidly losing interest.

> What thee writes about 'the world' and its values might also have been written by me. I have, however, come to the conclusion that my bad dressing and lack of French really cut me off from the enjoyment even I might have had in it. But that would never be much, even if I were young and slender and well dressed, for it is not the sort of thing I have ever cared for. You can't help accepting for the moment their values but they really aren't one's own . . . We are frumpy intellectuals and that is our world.[25]

But Bernard was no longer interested in 'frumpy intellectuals'. He increasingly criticized Mary's dress and weight and spent more time among thinner and sleeker women in San Moritz, in the villas of the Italian aristocracy and, as he became more and more involved in commercializing his expertise, among art dealers and the American plutocracy.

Although for the rest of her life Mary Berenson continued to work on the lists of artists and art works which she and Bernard were continually compiling and revising, her own professional writing on Renaissance art began to taper off from the time of the move to I Tatti. Her intention to establish herself as a known scholar in the field of art criticism had suffered early setbacks because of her gender, flouting of the moral strictures of her time and family pressure. Her mother's intervention made the author of her booklet, *Guide to the Italian Pictures at Hampton Court* (1894), not Mary Costelloe or Mary Smith but Mary Logan. The first book that Bernard Berenson published, the *Venetian Painters of the Renaissance* (1894), had begun as her work and it seems that it was substantially her book, but again family pressure was exerted to prevent her name appearing as joint author.[26] She later wrote while this did not mean much in itself, 'it becomes a sadness to remain anonymous and unrecognized as the years go by.'[27] After the move to I Tatti and the long drawn out nightmare of the renovations, it became clear that Bernard Berenson's agenda for a wife was less the collaborative work of equals and more the dependable research assistance, a smoothly run household and a hostess to the world. These roles Mary willingly handed over from the 1920s to Berenson's new companion, Nicky Mariano.

Mary Berenson continued to write and published three rather detailed and dull travel books. The first two were based on tours that she took with Bernard, the last on the letters that he and Nicky Mariano sent to her from a trip that she did not make with them.[28] The focus of Mary's writing in her later years was her biography of Bernard, a biography that she never finished. A number of unfinished versions of the biography have survived, versions that belong to the 'wife of a great man' genre. Central to Mary's story of Bernard was her role in the making of Bernard Berenson, in forcing him to go beyond the cultivation of personal connoisseurship to writing and publication, in editing and re-editing his prose.

> I do not for a moment mean to suggest that without me he might not have become a remarkable connoisseur of Italian pictures and a passionate lover of art in every form, but he might never have written on these subjects . . . my enthusiasm for his studies confirmed him in sticking to them, and my practical sense and my ambition drove him into writing on Italian art.[29]

The problem of the relative roles of each in the collaboration of Mary and Bernard Berenson is one that is yet to be explored and unravelled but a

recent thesis on Mary's early life suggests that her claims should be taken seriously.[30]

At the same time that Mary began to abandon her professional ambitions, her feminism also began to wane. She wrote in 1904 to her 17-year-old daughter, Ray, that when Ray was born she was still 'terribly in earnest over the Woman question', but she had since spent most of her time 'studying and enjoying the achievements of the despised male section of humanity'. She confessed that 'my crest is lowered upon the question of the potentialities of women.' All she dared say now was they 'ought to have their *fair chance*'.[31] Ironically, Ray Costelloe (later Strachey), while rejecting her mother's world of cosmopolitan culture and sophistication, took up her early commitment to feminism by immersing herself in the suffrage campaign in Britain and becoming parliamentary secretary of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.[32]

In the early 1890s, when her children were small, Mary Berenson had chosen independence, personal development and a future as an art connoisseur and historian over maternal obligations. From the time of the move to I Tatti, coinciding with the evaporation of her ambition to become a person in the art world in her own right and the maturing of her daughters into young women, she became increasingly absorbed in them and in designing their lives as women of independence, intellectual achievement and aesthetic sensibility. Her passion to provide her family with everything was a source of continual friction with Bernard, who resented her constant travel to England and the visits of her family to I Tatti as well as the permanent financial contributions to their support. In her later life, increasingly beset by both illness and hypochondria, Mary withdrew from the world into her family.

Bernard and Mary Berenson continued living together at I Tatti. They still quarrelled, each resenting their need of the other and what each perceived as the other's failure to recognize the contribution to a joint life and, by now, legend. Common self-interest and a measure of continuing affection kept them together. When the Germans occupied northern Italy in 1943, Berenson went into hiding. Mary remained at I Tatti where she died in the following year.

Bernard Berenson wrote in his diary after Mary's death that:

> Her life was in many ways based on mistaken premises. Literature, art, people were only adolescent curiosities. Later they were mere condiments. Her dominant and deep concern was for her daughters and their children.[33]

While this critical judgement is plausible when viewed from the perspective of her later years, it omits the journey of Mary Berenson's life, the quest for a life of culture, sophistication and professional achievement that took her

from North America to Europe, from the provincialism of Quaker Philadelphia to chatelaine of I Tatti. It also omits the role of gender in her life: the conflict between individual fulfilment and maternal and family responsibilities, between her desire to be a professional participant in the art world and the role of the wife as household manager, hostess and research assistant. In many ways, she might be said to have fulfilled the destiny against which she railed in her disillusionment with her first marriage and which she thought she could avoid in her second: 'The woman sacrifices all and after a crisis, settles down to take what comfort she can in her children, the success of her husband's life, and if she has it – religion.'[34] But Mary Berenson was not a victim and it was also her choice that having gone into the world, she turned her back on it and withdrew into the family.

Mary Berenson could be said to have lived a transnational life, and certainly hers was a transnational world. In her early years with Berenson she saw herself as belonging to some international and cosmopolitan elite of scholars and connoisseurs in the fine arts. But she did not develop any form of transnational identity. She had argued early in her life that her lack of citizenship prevented her having a sense of belonging to any country, and thus deprived her of any sense of national identity. It may be that this absence of national identity partly explains her failure to develop a sense of transnational identity. An alien at home, she was also an alien abroad. Mary Berenson is but one case study and the complex question of whether women when less embedded in the national are more or less able to embrace the transnational is one deserving of more investigation and exploration. Her life is also relevant for the study of marriages across borders and their impact on both partners, children and families, and for the role of 'foreign wives' as cultural mediators and as brokers in the construction of transnational networks.

Notes

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2. For Mary Berenson's life, Barbara Strachey (1980), *Remarkable Relations: The Story of the Pearsall Smith Family*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd; Barbara Strachey and Jane Samuels, eds (1983), *Mary Berenson: A Self-Portrait from her Letters and Diaries*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company (*cit. Mary Berenson*); Ernest Samuels (1979), *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur*, Boston: Harvard University Press; Ernest Samuels (1987), *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Legend*, Boston: Harvard University Press.

3. Mary Berenson, Life of Bernard Berenson, Chapter 1, p. 8, typescript and manuscript, n.d., H.W. Smith Papers, Box 15, folder 27 (*cit*. Life Lilly).
4. Mary Costelloe to Alys Pearsall Smith, 9 March 1886, *Mary Berenson*, p. 33.
5. Mary Berenson, Journal entry, 9 December 1889, Ibid., p. 40.
6. Mary Berenson, Life Lilly, Chapter 1, p. 13.
7. Mary Berenson to Hannah Whitall Smith, 20 March 1893, Letters MB.
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10. Mary Berenson, Life Bib. Ber., Chapter 3, p. 15.
11. Mary Berenson, Diary, 14 October 1892, *Mary Berenson*, p. 50.
12. Mary Berenson to Hannah Whitall Smith, 19 October 1893, Letters MB.
13. Mary Berenson to Hannah Whitall Smith, 14 September 1894, *Mary Berenson*, p. 56.
14. Mary Berenson to Hermann Obrist, 13 April 1895, Letters MB.
15. See for example the essays in *Women's Writing*, 10, 2, 2003, special number, 'La Bella Libertà: Women and the Flight to Italy,' ed. Barbara Caine.
16. Mary Berenson, Life Bib, Ber., Chapter VI, p. 4.
17. Mary Berenson, Life Lilly, Chapter 2, p. 2.
18. Mary Berenson to Hannah Whitall Smith, 8 January 1891, letters MB.
19. Mary Berenson, Life Bib. Ber., Ch. VI, p. 1.
20. Mary Berenson, Lilly Life, Chapter 2, p. 6.
21. Mary Berenson to Hannah Whitall Smith, 12 February 1895, Letters MB.
22. Mary Berenson to Hannah Whitall Smith, 14 April 1893, Ibid.
23. Samuels, *Bernard Berenson, The Making of a Connoisseur,* p. 274.
24. Ibid., p. 53.
25. Mary Berenson to Bernhard Berenson, 26 August 1905, *Mary Berenson,* p. 124.
26. Mary Berenson to Robert Pearsall Smith, 16 November 1893, Ibid., pp. 54–55.
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Part IV
Cosmopolitanism

People who are transnationals by choice may fittingly be termed 'cosmopolitans'. Indeed, people may become cosmopolitans without leaving the land of their birth or permanent settlement. Cosmopolitanism is a state of mind as much as a description of action.

In 'The World at Home' Marilyn Lake traces the end of one cosmopolitan career, and Desley Deacon the launch of another. In the mid-nineteenth century Lowe Kong Meng, a British subject of Chinese parentage, was the beneficiary of international agreements between European, American and Asian powers that enabled him to establish himself in the Australian colony of Victoria as an honoured member of British and Chinese communities, and to maintain family and business interests in both Asia and Australia. By the end of his life, local and international developments had made travel a white privilege. Lake shows how Lowe Kong Meng struggled against this trend, deploring the disappearance of sentiments of 'human brotherhood and cosmopolitan friendship'. But he could not prevent the discriminatory measures that were designed to turn the Australian colonies from cosmopolitan centres into 'white man's countries'. For white women, in contrast, the benefits of being part of the network of 'white man's countries' could unite with a lingering cosmopolitanism to create new freedoms of movement in the modern world. Desley Deacon shows how the young actor Judith Anderson, born in Australia in 1897, exploited these opportunities to launch an international career that started in Hollywood and ended in glittering success on Broadway and in London. Like Lowe Kong Meng, she became 'a cosmopolitan at home'.

Our final section, 'At Home in the World', examines the lives of three people who saw themselves as 'citizens of the world', defined neither by their nation of birth nor by any subsequent geographical or national allegiances. Sheila Fitzpatrick tells the story of her late husband, theoretical physicist Michael Danos, 'born cosmopolitan' in Latvia, who became a stateless person following Second World War, studied in the international community of the Heidelberg Physics Institute in Germany, and went to the United States

as a postdoctoral student in 1951. Refusing to confine himself to any nationality, Danos identified himself only by his profession. The international world of physics became his home. Ian Britain describes artist Donald Friend's 'ceaseless, radiant embrace of the world' – an embrace that included his country of birth, Australia, as well as England, Nigeria, Italy and Bali, among the many countries in which he settled. What seemed like a pattern of escape and return, Britain argues, was really for Friend a means of extending, fuelling and testing the self – a self-exploration, or self-confrontation, by which he became a more creative artist and a more sensitive friend and lover. Writer Rosita Forbes, in contrast, used her intrepid travels to shed herself. Hsu-Ming Teo shows how, aided by her Britishness and her social contacts with world leaders, Forbes turned herself into a celebrity, orchestrating transnational talk in the tradition of the literary salon. As she memorably declared: 'However fascinating one may think one is, there is a limit to what one can know about oneself. Other people are infinitely more interesting, have infinitely more to say.' Her exuberant transnationalism provides a fitting endpoint for this collection.

17

Lowe Kong Meng Appeals to International Law: Transnational Lives Caught Between Empire and Nation

Marilyn Lake

In 1894, future United States president Theodore Roosevelt waxed lyrical over the unprecedented opportunities available to 'the ordinary man of adventurous tastes' in the late nineteenth century. 'At no period of the world's history', he wrote, 'has life been so full of interest and of the possibilities of excitement and enjoyment'. He noted in particular the possibilities of global travel: 'Never before . . . have there been such opportunities . . . in the way of building new commonwealths, exploring new countries, conquering kingdoms . . .' Man was now better off beyond measure than his forefathers: 'He can travel round the world; he can dwell in any country he wishes; he can explore strange regions . . . he can take part in a campaign here and there.'[1]

* * *

Even as he wrote, however, the opportunity to travel and dwell in any country was increasingly confined to white men and women, as freedom of movement became one of the privileges of whiteness institutionalized by emergent nation-states. The advent of steam-based travel had made possible the great age of modern migrations, which in turn provoked the introduction of new race-based immigration restrictions, the first such law implemented in the British colony of Victoria in 1855. It was repealed during the next decade only to be replaced by harsher measures in 1881 and 1888. That repeal and re-instatement point to the contradictory tendencies at work in the nineteenth century, for free trade and freedom of movement had been encouraged by international agreements and treaties between European, American and Asian powers. In 1860, the Convention of Peking contracted between the British and Chinese imperial governments extended rights of freedom of movement and guarantees of protection for persons and property in each other's empires. British pressure on Australian

colonists to adhere to the new treaty provisions led Victoria to repeal its initial discriminatory legislation in 1863.

In 1868, the Burlingame Treaty between the United States and China went even further, commending 'the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance and also the mutual advantage of the free migration and emigration of their citizens and subjects respectively from one country to the other for purposes of curiosity, of trade or as permanent residents.'[2] This treaty represented the high point of nineteenth-century liberal internationalism.

Between 1850 and 1920, millions of people from all backgrounds migrated across the world. Adventurous and ambitious, contracted or free, they travelled in pursuit of work or a new life, to provide fresh opportunities to their families or simply to satisfy their curiosity. It has been estimated that during these decades some 50 million Europeans migrated to new lands, the same number of Chinese and around 30 million Indians.[3] Chinese travelled to and between the United States, Peru, Cuba, the West Indies, Hawaii, the Philippines, the Malay Peninsula, the East Indies and Australia.[4] At the same time, and in direct response to these unprecedented movements of population, the new nations of South Africa, North America and Australasia began to introduce more severe immigration restrictions, and increasingly referred to their homes as 'white men's countries', although the demographic composition of South Africa, at least, rendered such a claim absurd.

Peoples defined as not-white were, in consequence, deported or segregated and gradually excluded altogether: measures that effectively denied the freedom of movement that ebullient white men like Roosevelt and his white fellow countrymen took for granted. Individual liberty and freedom of movement were heralded as universal rights, but only Europeans could freely exercise them.[5] The excitement and adventure of living transnational lives, the gratifications of colonization and cosmopolitanism were pleasures increasingly confined to those who were recognized as 'white'. Non-whites had to know their place in the world and stay in it, whether segregated on the edge of towns in South Africa, Australia and the United States, confined to the Tropical Zone or 'penned up' within their own national borders.[6]

The extent of white men's proprietary claims worried some liberal commentators, who predicted a dangerous worldwide reaction to white arrogance and aggression. 'The whites are a minority by comparison with the more Eastern races,' warned 'Viator' in the British *Fortnightly Review* in 1908. 'Yet they claim to reserve for settlement, development, or political control three of the other Continents in addition to Europe . . . [T]hey affect to pen up within the limits of Asia, something like half the whole number of mankind, and that by far the most prolific half.'[7] White men's presumption in taking for granted their own mobility, while confining Africans and Asians

to their homelands would surely precipitate the very mobilization against white dominance that white men feared.

In Melbourne, Victoria, in the 1870s, the possibility of Asian retaliation in response to white insult was on the minds of three leading Chinese merchants, whose patience had been sorely tried by the treatment of their fellow countrymen. Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Moy wrote a long pamphlet, *The Chinese Question in Australia*, setting out their grievances and rights under international law, including their 'perfect right to settle in any part of the British Empire'. What had become, they asked, of those lofty sentiments of 'human brotherhood and cosmopolitan friendship' once proclaimed from pulpit, press and platform? In place of the hospitality and mutual obligation guaranteed by treaties under international law, Chinese colonists ('natives of China and citizens of Victoria') found themselves harassed and vilified as 'ignorant pagans' by Australians who had never travelled to China and '[knew] nothing of its moral, intellectual, and social life, and who [formed] hasty judgements and violent prejudices against its people from a very slight acquaintance with immigrants'.[8]

In this chapter I focus on the experience of one of the authors of this pamphlet, Lowe Kong Meng, in order to explore the racial barriers that increasingly constrained the transnational lives characteristic of Chinese Australians in the late nineteenth century. Rather than cast him and his compatriots simply as victims of racial discrimination, however, the chapter emphasizes their distinctive strategies as colonists, including their political and rhetorical strategies. Their persistent invocation of international law and their discourse on cosmopolitanism and human rights to defend their membership of two cultures and two empires would provoke, in turn, assertions by white Australian colonists that their self-governing status gave them sovereign rights that extended to control over the vital question of immigration.

This conflict over 'freedom of ingress and egress' highlighted competing and changing understandings of the basis and meaning of sovereign rights in the nineteenth century and encouraged white colonists to articulate an ideal of self-government that was masculinist and racist in its assertion of the sovereignty of the white male subject and nationalist in giving primacy to border protection as the foremost expression of self-government.

When Lowe Kong Meng arrived in Melbourne in 1853, only 22 years old but already master of his own small fleet of ships, he carried neither naturalization papers nor passport. A British subject, born in Penang and educated in Mauritius, Lowe Kong Meng was fluent in English, French and Cantonese. He was a self-styled cosmopolitan, a man of the world: his ships plied regularly between Australia, India and China. Having learnt of the gold discoveries in Victoria, he determined to check out the prospects for trade, found they were very good indeed and sailed away to obtain fresh cargo from Calcutta.[9]

Figure 16 Mr. Lowe Kong Meng, by Frith, 1866. Wood engraving. Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria.

On his return to the bustling city in 1854, Lowe Kong Meng opened a shop in Little Bourke Street, still the heart of Melbourne's Chinatown, where he sold provisions to fortune-seekers bound for the goldfields. During the next three decades, as merchant, banker and philanthropist, active in commercial life and civil society, he became an honoured member of both the British and Chinese communities, with business interests in Hong Kong as well as Victoria. He presided over the Chinese Club House in Little Bourke street, 'an establishment arranged for the reception of such Chinese immigrants, as may land on Victorian soil armed with no better passport than a certificate of good character from the land of Confucius', as one contemporary put it.[10]

In 1860, he married a European woman from Tasmania, Mary Ann Prussia, and they would raise 12 Australian children. In 1863, the Chinese Emperor elevated him to the rank of Mandarin of the Blue Button, Civil Order. By 1888, the year in which he died, he was regarded by the Chinese community

as 'a kind of unofficial consul in Australia' and by the white business and political community as a true liberal gentleman, as portrayed in the 1888 centennial publication, *Australian Representative Men*.[11]

In the late 1870s, however, Australian attitudes towards the Chinese had become more hostile, a response to a number of inter-related and international developments: the plans by local shipowners to employ Asian labour that led to the Seamen's Strike of 1878; the increasingly virulent anti-Chinese agitation in California, where politicians lobbied for the repeal of the Burlingame Treaty and new immigration restriction laws; and the arrival of thousands of Chinese in north Queensland in response to gold discoveries there. Suddenly the continent was preoccupied with the question of 'the coloured man', as British colonist John Wisker wrote in *Fortnightly Review*. He was 'the stock subject of the newspapers, the regular topic at public meetings and theme of numerous parliamentary debate'.[12] Diverse types of coloured men in Australia – Aborigines, Pacific Islanders, Indians, Chinese, Malays – posed different challenges, but as 'an object of public interest and public dread' the Chinaman had no equal. 'This ubiquitous, all-suffering, all-capable individual – the future possessor of the world in his own opinion – has invaded Australian in thousands,' Wisker warned.

Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Moy published *The Chinese Question in Australia* in response to the 'grave emergency' that now engulfed them, to explain 'the primary cause of the immigration of Chinese subjects into these colonies'. Not surprisingly, Chinese immigrants had the same sort of aspirations as other colonists. As Ann Curthoys has pointed out, non-British immigration did not follow colonization; rather it was part of the same process.[13] Lowe Kong Meng and his co-authors wrote that when news arrived that

> there was a great continent nearly half as large again as China, and containing only a few hundreds of thousands of civilized people thinly scattered around the coast; that it was rich in precious metals and very fertile; and that it was only a few weeks' sail from our own country, numbers of Chinese immigrants set out for this land of promise.[14]

In China, they explained, with a population of more than 400 million, many men, women and children died each year from starvation. Australia comprised an area of close on three million square miles, but its population was small: 'no more than 2,100,000 white people, and a few thousand blacks'. In the 'face of those facts', they asked their fellow colonists:

> Would you seek to debar us from participating in the abundance with which a bountiful Providence – or, as our Master Confucius says, the most great and sovereign God – rewards the industrious and the prudent in this country? Did man create it, or did God?

Whoever had created Australia, however, white men were certain that 'this land of promise' belonged to them. It thus seemed fortuitous that the original inhabitants – the 'few thousand blacks' noticed by the Chinese – appeared destined to fade away before the superior forces of civilization.

In fact, the Indigenous population had been decimated by the rapidity of dispossession in Victoria, where a lack of natural barriers and the discovery of gold meant that settlers moved onto Aboriginal lands, in Richard Broome's words, 'as fast as any expansion in the history of European colonisation'.[15] By the end of the gold rush decade, the Aboriginal population had fallen to less than 2000 people, the survivors mostly living on reserves or missions. In Melbourne, one Chinese resident observed that 'eight out of every ten of the Yarra Yarra tribe, the late possessors of the soil on which the great City of Melbourne is built . . . are dead.'[16] Having learnt that the population of China already exceeded 400 million, European colonists became preoccupied with the possibility that they, in their turn, might be overwhelmed: hence the beginning of strident assertions that Australia was a 'white man's country'.

* * *

In response to these proprietorial claims, Chinese colonists appealed to the precepts of international law that guaranteed freedom of movement and settlement. The Australian colonies were bound to honour the treaties between the British and Chinese Empires, treaties that were contracted at the insistence of British government. For although the Chinese Emperor had traditionally prohibited emigration of his subjects to 'barbarian lands', China had been forced to engage in trade and treaties with Western powers following the first Opium War in 1840–1842.[17] Under the terms of the Treaty of Nanking, Britain opened five Treaty Ports and Hong Kong became a Crown Colony. In allowing the British to 'hire any kind of Chinese person who may move about in the performance of their work or craft without the slightest obstruction of Chinese officials', the Treaty effectively imposed freedom of movement.[18]

In their protest against the violation of the treaties, Lowe Kong Meng and his compatriots stressed the significance of British imperial intervention to subsequent Chinese emigration. The British had forced their way into China in pursuit of trade, saying in effect: 'We must come in, and you shall come out. We will not suffer you to shut yourselves up from the rest of the world.'[19] The British had incited the Chinese to engage with the world and invited them to travel and work in their colonies. The emerging conflict between Chinese and European colonists in Australia over immigration highlighted not only the increasing salience of 'race' to the constitution of British national communities, but also competing and changing understandings of the sovereign rights of empires and self-governing colonies.

Calling upon the authority of the 'illustrious Vattel', the Chinese invoked their 'perfect right to settle in any part of the British empire' on the basis of reciprocal rights accorded British and Chinese subjects by the Peking Convention of 1860.[20] Quoting Vattel, they pointed out that:

> as the engagements of a treaty impose, on the one hand, a perfect obligation, they produce, on the other, a perfect right. The breach of a treaty is therefore a violation of the perfect right of the party with whom we have contracted; and this is an act of injustice against him.

Accordingly they protested against the violation of their rights at the hands of 'these British dependencies' and demanded restitution in the name of international law and the comity of nations.[21]

In response to these appeals to international law, Australians insisted with increasing stridency on their masculine right to self-government. Like the Californians, they utilized a republican discourse on the democratic rights of sovereign male subjects to determine who could join their self-governing communities. In 1879, Chinese colonists in Victoria (if male) were still equal members of their self-governing community, entitled to vote for the legislature; within 2 years, however, Victoria passed an amendment to a new immigration restriction law that disenfranchised them. There was strong protest against the unconstitutional nature of this measure. 'The idea of the Constitution', liberal barrister Henry John Wrixon told the Legislative Assembly, 'was that every man should have a vote as the only way by which he could protect himself'.[22]

The Chinese Influx Restriction Bill was introduced by the Victorian government in October 1881. The debate was notable for the numerous references to China's vast population, which the Chinese had themselves publicized to justify their migration. Charles Pearson, erstwhile Professor of History at King's College, London, and recently elected liberal member of the Legislative Assembly, was especially eloquent in warning of the prospect of the 'white population' being swamped by a Chinese tidal wave:

> The population of China was nearly 400,000,000, and the mere natural increase of that population in a single year would be sufficient to swamp the whole white population of the colony. Australia was now perfectly well known to the Chinese . . . and, in the event of famine or war arising in China, Chinamen might come here at any time in hordes.[23]

Pearson warmly commended the Victorian legislation, which imposed an entry tax, a prohibitive restriction of one Chinese migrant to every 100 tons shipping and most controversially, a requirement that Chinese departing temporarily be required to obtain a certificate of identity they would have to show on their return. This measure was explicitly aimed at disrupting the

transnational pattern of the lives of many Chinese colonists: henceforth if they left the colony they might not be able to return.

Most Chinese migrants left wives and families at home, sent money back and commuted at regular intervals. Chinese families, more perhaps than most, were transnational in formation: 'migrants could, indeed, live both here and there.'[24] Within this context, the Chinese migrant has been called, in an especially infelicitous phrase, the 'prototype "hypermobile transilient"'.[25] Migrants' plans to return to China, or visit other overseas settlements and return, took freedom of movement for granted.[26] If they stayed for 10 years or so in the new country, they might bring their families to live with them, but the escalation of violence against Chinese in Victoria deterred most from doing so. In evidence before a Victorian Select Committee in 1857, Lowe Kong Meng pointed out: 'I do not think [the Chinese] would bring their families to settle here under any circumstances now.'[27] Three years later he married his European wife.

Returning more than 20 years later to the question of the reluctance of Chinese colonists to bring their families to Australia, Lowe Kong Meng and his co-authors asked: 'Can it be wondered at?'

> Treated as pariahs and outcasts by the people of this great, 'free' country, the Chinamen in Victoria have hitherto had but scanty encouragement to invite their wives to accompany or to follow them. Subject to be insulted and assaulted by the 'larrikins' of Australia, what Chinaman could be so destitute of consideration for the weaker sex as to render them liable to the same ignominious and contumelious treatment?[28]

A number of Chinese colonists anchored their transnational lives by supporting two families, one in Australia and one in China; and they continued to pay filial visits. Nevertheless, Lowe Kong Meng insisted: 'It cannot be denied that our countrymen have been good colonists.' Indeed,

> Had it not been for them, the cultivation of vegetables, so indispensable to the maintenance of health in a hot climate like this, would scarcely have been attempted in the neighbourhood of some of the goldfields . . . and as hawkers of all kinds of useful wares, they are indefatigable, cheerful, obliging, and patient. Unhappily . . . this class of dealers is now subjected to . . . threats of personal violence from many members of the working classes, who forbid their wives to deal with them.[29]

The passionate protests of Lowe Kong Meng and his compatriots had little effect, however, on the Victorian government's determination that 'the Chinese must go'.

Chinese community leaders found further opportunity to lodge a possibly more effective international protest against the oppressive colonial law

and their public vilification when two Chinese Imperial Commissioners, General Wong Yung Ho and U Tsing Wang, charged with investigating the grievances of Chinese subjects living in British and Spanish colonies, arrived in Melbourne in 1887. Once again, Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy (together with 44 fellow petitioners) emphasized their rights under international law and demanded the redress of 'international wrong'.[30]

The petition enumerated the 'penalties and disabilities inflicted on [their] nation by the law of the land', but they had three main grievances. The first was the demeaning poll tax, 'a yoke of national ignominy and dishonour' that departed from 'all the principles of international right and equity'; the second, the injustice of the demand that they pay the tax again, should they leave the colony and attempt to return. The only alternatives were that they 'expatriate themselves by choosing to become naturalized British subjects' or obtain 'tickets of leave' or an exemption certificate. Otherwise, when they travelled, even to another colony, and attempted to return they would be 'seized like contraband goods' and detained until they could 'pay the duty levied upon us'. Chinese colonists refused to accept that their Australian and Chinese loyalties were mutually exclusive: why, they asked, could they not receive fair treatment as human beings without having to 'expatriate themselves'. 'Imagine what an outcry would be raised against Chinese perfidy if a Briton were thus treated in China,' they wrote, 'yet such is precisely the treatment meted out to us by these dependencies of the British crown'. The petitioners' third grievance centred on the abuse directed at Chinese vendors by youth incited to violence, they alleged, by Victorian lawmakers. They recommended the introduction of corporal punishment for the larrikins who assaulted them.[31]

The Commissioners duly reported on the colonists' grievances to the government in Beijing, and the Chinese Ambassador in London lodged an official protest with the British Foreign Office, seeking an explanation as to why Chinese subjects were subjected to discriminations 'at variance with Treaty obligations and International Usage'. Why, he asked, were there different practices in the Crown Colonies and 'those Colonies on whom a certain amount of self-government has been conferred'?[32]

Australian colonial governments, however, heartened by the Chinese Exclusion Act passed by the United States in 1882, determined to emulate the 'great republic' by enacting uniform restriction measures. Freedom of movement was becoming a global political issue, the Melbourne *Age* noted in April 1888.[33] Australian opinion was divided, however, as to whether Australia-wide immigration restriction could be best achieved by the British government seeking to re-negotiate international treaties or by the colonies passing their own uniform legislation. To rely on the initiative of the British government, some claimed, was to surrender a portion of their right of self-government. 'It should be clearly understood', wrote the *Age*, 'that treaty

or no treaty we are legally entitled to exclude any contribution to our population which we object to, and that we intend to exercise that right by excluding the Chinese'.[34]

* * *

On 27 April 1888, these constitutional discussions acquired greater urgency with the arrival of the *Afghan*, carrying 268 Chinese passengers, of whom 67 expected to land in Melbourne. Some carried naturalization papers, while for others the ship's master intended to pay the tax required under the 1881 Act. The ship's arrival precipitated political panic. Government leaders joined trade unionists, newspaper editors and members of Anti-Chinese Immigration Leagues in denouncing these passengers as harbingers of Chinese invasion.

Much has been written about this hysterical reaction.[35] Yet just as interesting is the information that emerged about the transnational lives of the Chinese passengers, many of whom were not new migrants, but old colonists who were returning to their homes. As the unofficial Chinese consul, Lowe Kong Meng was called in to act on their behalf. Many of them already knew the prominent merchant and indeed were in his personal employment. He was thus severely embarrassed by the Victorian government's intransigent stand.

Although the ship was quarantined, the press were permitted to go on board. They reported that 37 of the 67 passengers who expected to land in Melbourne claimed to hold Victorian (British) naturalization papers, as required by the 1881 legislation; yet there was widespread scepticism as to the validity of their documents. The *Age* interviewed 20 of the passengers:

> They professed to be nearly all shopkeepers in Melbourne, or gardeners employed by a well known tea merchant, and from their statements one would be led to conclude that half the population of Little Bourke-street had recently been home to China on a holiday, and that Mr Kong Meng had lately commissioned a large staff of gardeners to visit the Flowery Land as a sort of Celestial vegetable products commission.[36]

Lowe Kong Meng led a deputation of leading Chinese in an attempt to persuade the authorities to allow them on board the ship, but they were refused. The *Age* reported with a mixture of condescension and bemusement:

> Mr Kong Meng and a select coterie of Chinese gentlemen and savants, in silk jumpers and green spectacles, were yesterday hovering around the office of the secretary of the Customs for hours, discussing and consulting on the matter with all who would give ear, and professed to have powers in connection with the ordering of their countrymen.[37]

Kong Meng and his 'coterie' had also become concerned about the position of another group of 14 returning Chinese who had been trans-shipped from Sydney on the *Burrumbeet*, only to be transported to the quarantine station, where they were kept under guard. The government, the spokesmen declared, was dealing unfairly with these men. Meanwhile, the *Afghan* departed for Sydney. 'There was nothing in the appearance of the vessel to denote that she carried as passengers a community of persons whose presence was strongly agitating the public mind,' reported the *Age*. 'The 300 pig-tailed heads which have caused all the trouble were gibbering and chattering over their morning rice.'[38]

On investigation of the passengers on board the *Burrumbeet* it was found, once again, that many of the men carried naturalization papers and had, in any case, also paid the tax, intending to return to their homes in Victoria. Reports of their backgrounds (and names) varied. One account referred to Ah Hay (in another version, Ah Haa), who had worked as a miner at Sandhurst (Bendigo), as speaking good English. Of his companions, one was a storekeeper; two worked as miners; one was labourer and another a gardener. One newspaper report named Wang Gay as the group's 'guide, philosopher and friend':

> He claims to have resided in the colonies for a period of 13 years.... He went home some months ago with the filial intention of seeing his father, and returned with his 13 companions in one of the China steamers, transhipping at Sydney into the *Burrumbeet*.[39]

The group expressed the utmost confidence in Lowe Kong Meng. Wang Gay, it was said, had taught his companions to regard the merchant's name as a sort of 'fetish'. The passengers remained hopeful, therefore, as to the outcome of Kong Meng's good offices. Another newspaper suggested, however, that the passengers had signed a paper expressing a wish to be sent back to Hong Kong.[40] But free trade supporter Robert Harper, in an angry speech in the Legislative Assembly denouncing the treatment of the Chinese, claimed that 'the men were frightened into giving their consent, if they did so at all. Mr. Kong Meng was told... that they had better go because, if they did not, they might perhaps be maltreated.'[41]

Lowe Kong Meng, now in declining health, must have reflected on how much had changed since he had first stepped ashore in Melbourne without let or hindrance 35 years before, how he had departed and returned again the following year and made many sea voyages since. Now, in 1888, even passengers carrying British naturalization papers and the small number eligible to come ashore on the payment of the tax were prohibited from landing by the executive decision of the Victorian government – an act characterized by Cheok Hong Cheong (who had succeeded Lowe Kong Meng as

chief spokesman for the Chinese community) as a '*coup d'etat*' and by other political opponents as 'arbitrary and high-handed'.[42]

Eventually, the Chinese incarcerated at the quarantine station were brought to Melbourne and released, but the recent dramas had reinforced colonial leaders' views that – in the American phrase – 'the Chinese must go'. The debate on the issue also reinforced the distinction between the 'Asiatic birds of passage' (or 'hypermobile transilients') and those 'old and well known residents', who had become fixed local identities.[43] It was the plural loyalties and mobility of Chinese migrants – their indeterminate transnational status and multiple attachments – that the colonial governments challenged as much as the fact of Chinese immigration.

In the event, the government's right to refuse entry to passengers on the *Afghan* who had expressed their willingness to pay the poll tax was struck down in the Supreme Court of Victoria. The case also became a test of the sovereign will of the Victorian government and the powers of self-governing colonies. Despite the argument of the lawyers for the Collector of Customs that every nation had a sovereign right to forbid aliens or foreigners from entering its dominions, the majority decision held that: 'The prerogative to exclude aliens does not exist as part of responsible Government in Victoria.'[44] Lowe Kong Meng, close to death in his Melbourne home, must have felt vindicated; but the government appealed to the British Privy Council, which reversed the decision. To the British Lords, the principle was simple: aliens had no legal right, enforceable by action, to enter British territory.[45]

Even as the Privy Council reinforced the distinction between British subjects and aliens, however, the Australian colonies re-affirmed their determination to exclude all Chinese immigrants, regardless of their status as British subjects. This represented a radical rebuff to the ideal of imperial citizenship and an important assertion of the Australian will to sovereignty. This new insistence on the rights inherent in national sovereignty represented a complete retreat from the ideals of international law and universal human rights. 'Is it possible', the Chinese community wrote in a *Remonstrance* to the people of Victoria,

> That common human rights accorded to other civilized people are to be denied to us? That it is to be a crime, punishable by imprisonment with hard labour, if man or woman of the Chinese race travel over the line separating any of the colonies without a permit, which might not be obtainable? If such is to be then we protest in the sight of heaven that this is a crime, not as committed against us only, but against the great Creator of all 'who made of one blood all nations of men'.[46]

Those who had already made Victoria their home, like Lowe Kong Meng, might continue to live there, some indeed honoured as pioneer colonists. Unlike Pacific Islanders a few years later, they would not be deported. When

Lowe Kong Meng died on 22 October 1888, local newspapers paid tribute to him as 'a very old resident of Melbourne' even though he was only 57 years old. He had earned his status as an exemplary colonist, not only because of his generous disposition, but because he had come to stay.

The determination of Australian governments to curb the freedom of movement of Chinese Australians and eventually to exclude all 'Asiatics' paradoxically worked to enhance the mobility of Chinese Australians – and their international, commercial and political networks – in the early decades of the twentieth century.[47] As Chinese residents became subject to, and regulated by, the laws of the new Commonwealth of Australia, they were denied citizenship rights in the new nation and largely prevented from bringing family members to join them. As a consequence, Chinese residents made thousands of journeys back and forth between China and Australia, armed with newly invented documents of surveillance. New categories of transients – students, merchants and tourists – were allowed to travel to and reside in Australia for limited periods of time. Denied rights of permanency, Chinese Australians were incited to live transnationally, a circumstance many turned to political purpose and personal profit, forging international connections at a time when White Australia was busy building what a British journalist called a 'Hermit Democracy' in determined isolation from the region and the wider world.[48]

In 1919, following First World War, Australian Prime Minister W.M. Hughes led the alliance of 'white men's countries' at Versailles that defeated the Japanese bid (supported by China) to have a racial equality clause written into the Covenant of the League of Nations. Not until 1948, following a Second World War, did the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide international recognition of human rights regardless of nationality or race, as invoked by Lowe Kong Meng and his compatriots, although 'the perfect liberty of locomotion' hailed by their liberal supporter, William Shiells, as one of the dearest rights of all would prove elusive still.[49]

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18

Becoming Cosmopolitan: Judith Anderson in Sydney, Australia, 1913–1918

Desley Deacon

The Australian-born actress Judith Anderson was one of the twentieth century's greatest international stars of stage and screen. She is probably best known as the brilliant character actress who made the cool, menacing housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, in Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 classic *Rebecca* one of the most memorable roles in film history. But she was considered, above all, as one of the world's finest female actors on the legitimate stage from the 1930s to the 1950s, best known for her extraordinary performance of *Medea*. Her long career in theatre, film and television continued into her late eighties, when she played the Vulcan Priestess in *Star Trek III* and Minx Falconbridge in the American soap *Santa Barbara*. She died, by then Dame Judith Anderson, in 1992 at the age of 95.

But before any of this she was one of many Australian girls trying to break into the acting profession in Sydney in the early years of the twentieth century. And she was one of thousands from around the world who set off for Hollywood and Broadway, hoping to make their name in these new world centres of theatre and film.

Film scholar Miriam Hansen has argued that American mainstream cinema during the 1920s and 1930s developed what she calls a 'global vernacular' that helped explain its appeal around the world. This mass international modernist idiom, to use Hansen's words, was derived from diverse domestic traditions, discourses and interests, including those of the cosmopolitan Hollywood community. 'Hollywood did not just circulate images and sounds,' she argues; 'it produced and globalized . . . new subjectivities and subjects.'[1] In other words, American film affected how people around the world looked, how they felt, how they talked, how they thought of themselves as citizens and as citizens of the world.

I want to suggest in this chapter that the theatre was an important precursor of the new cosmopolitan culture Hansen attributes to film. Theatre was, from the nineteenth century, a global industry whose touring companies

penetrated deep into local communities (Richard Waterhouse has shown this beautifully in his study of American companies touring Australia with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*).[2] From its earliest days, film was closely related to the theatre in terms of material and of personnel. This chapter examines Judith Anderson's early career in the theatre in Sydney, Australia, before she left to try her fortune in Hollywood and Broadway, showing how Sydney's situation in the world circuits of theatre and trade and its increasing incorporation into the global labour markets of film and theatre based in Hollywood and New York made Anderson into what I have called 'a cosmopolitan at home'.

Frances Margaret Anderson – as she was then called – came to Sydney from Adelaide in 1913. She made her professional debut in 1915, when she was 18 years old, and left to try her luck in Hollywood less than 3 years later. She was not conventionally pretty by the Mary Pickford standards of the time, though her looks were striking and she had a beautiful figure. She had not yet played in a leading role, and she was by no means a star in the Australian context, even though she always received appreciative reviews that predicted a bright future.

Setting off for Hollywood in 1918 seems, then, an extraordinary step into the void for this 20-year-old Australian aspirant to an acting career. The question that has interested me from the beginning is: What was it about the Australian – and particularly the Sydney – context of those years that gave her the self-assurance to take this step? I was particularly prompted to ask this question because those were the years, we are always told, when Australians were unsure of themselves, still looking to Britain for affirmation, still children – to use the analogy often used – who came of age only with the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. It seemed to me, however, as I scanned the pages of Sydney's *Theatre* magazine, and examined the actions of those involved in its theatre world as managers, actors and audiences, that what I was seeing was a very adult, self-assured Australia, with citizens confident of their place, literally, in the world. (And, I must add, it was not a world in which whiteness was overvalued. The lack of colour prejudice – or even awareness – in this journal is remarkable. As vaudeville entrepreneur Hugh McIntosh put it in 1910, his managerial policy was 'purely cosmopolitan'.)[3]

The 16-year-old Fanny Anderson who arrived in Sydney in 1913 had grit and ambition. Her father had deserted the family when she was young and her mother supported her four children by running a small grocery store. Fanny was brought up to earn her own living. She had won a number of elocution prizes and was set on an acting career; and she knew that Sydney was the place to go if she wanted to break into the profession. After working for 2 years with acting teacher, Lawrence Campbell, she was taken on by British actor Julius Knight as part of his touring company under the auspices of the Australian theatrical giant J.C. Williamson.[4]

Figure 17 Francee Anderson, New York, 1918. Apeda photographic studio. Reproduced by kind permission of University of California, Santa Barbara Special Collections.

When Knight retired and left Australia at the end of 1916, Anderson joined a touring American company led by Gaston Mervale, this time under the auspices of Williamson's new rivals, the Tait Brothers, who took over Williamson's in 1920.[5] Mervale was an actor–director who had moved between Australia and the United States since he started with Knight in 1897, in a career that encompassed both live theatre and the new movies.[6] The Americans in Mervale's company, Anderson told interviewers in later years, urged her to go to the United States – 'God's Country' they called it – and she set off for Hollywood early in 1918 armed confidently with a letter of introduction to Cecil B. De Mille.[7]

Adventurous as it may seem to us now, Anderson was actually taking a well-trodden path when she left for America – and Hollywood – in 1918. Knight's company had, in fact, been the jumping off point in 1897 for Mervale's transnational and multi-faceted career. And he had been followed by many more from the same stable. In February 1917, just after Knight had retired, E.J. Tait noted, on his return from a talent-scouting visit to New York, that former members of Knight's company were enjoying remarkable success in the United States. Jerome Patrick, who had left Australia in 1913, was the best juvenile lead he had seen in his extensive tour of the United States, he reported. Also mentioned by Tait were Rupert Julian and his wife Elsie Jane Wilson, Ronald Byram and Leonard Willey and his wife Irby Marshall, who had written and played in a number of Australian films before Willey joined Margaret Anglin's tour of North America and Marshall won a succession of parts on Broadway.[8]

These names may have been forgotten now, but all of them, and many others, enjoyed successful transnational careers in theatre and film. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted on Knight's retirement: [He] 'took infinite trouble with the raw dramatic talent that he was called upon to school. Quite a number of young players who passed through his hands have demonstrated the soundness of his method.'[9]

But Francee Anderson – as she now called herself – was not just lucky in her mentor. She was lucky in the theatrical system she found herself in in Australia. Theatre scholar Veronica Kelly has called it a 'complementary economy'.[10] What she refers to is an almost independent theatrical economy that was linked into the world centres of London, and increasingly New York and Hollywood, but had its own tastes and its own territory – *country* Australia, New Zealand, what was then called the East, and from 1913, South Africa.[11] Within this complementary economy, a system developed that was espoused by J.C. Williamson's then-partner George Musgrove in 1896, when he first proposed bringing Julius Knight to Australia.[12] Williamson preferred to import stars with their entire company; but Musgrove argued that this was uneconomical and risky. He proposed instead a sort of repertory company, with some imported actors such as Knight – established actors but not stars – and some local players.[13] Indeed, Knight's company was billed when

it opened in Melbourne in February 1897 as 'Julius Knight with English & Australian Actors'.[14]

Musgrove's system worked: the Australian public took the handsome young actor to their hearts and made him *their* star. He returned again and again between 1903 and 1916 – by which time Francee Anderson was part of his company – spending 16 years of his career in Australia and training several cohorts of actors. As the *Theatre* pointed out in 1917,

> As long as Mr Knight was before the public, there was always a number of good, sound, versatile actors on the Williamson payroll. He insisted upon having reliable people in the company he headed, and as he ran to an extensive repertoire of plays his tours meant steady employment for a number of actors.[15]

The downside of this system was that these well-trained actors had little opportunity for leading roles in Australia. Local actors generally had to content themselves with supporting roles or leave. But the Australian system trained them very well for leaving, not only in terms of acting skills, versatility and the rigours of touring, but also in terms of a global or transnational outlook. By forming a stock company that worked with visiting actors, the Australians became part of what Veronica Kelly calls a 'global freemasonry' that gave them entrée into a worldwide theatrical labour market.

When you study these labour market networks it seems as if everyone is only one degree of separation from everyone else. The sort of serendipitous (and ultimately useful) meetings that occur again and again are epitomized by a snippet in the *Theatre* to the effect that Mrs. Henry Bracy (the actress wife of Williamson's stage director), along with Arthur Greenaway (later part of Knight's company) and Nance O'Neil (the American star who toured Australia for Williamson twice between 1900 and 1905), appeared in Los Angeles in 1906 with the struggling actor Lawrence Griffith, who became by 1914 the most acclaimed movie producer in the world – D.W. Griffith.[16]

Theatre magazine gives a very strong sense of this global freemasonry and Australia's place in it, publishing letters from Bombay, Hong Kong, Chicago, Toronto, London, Los Angeles and New York, and articles that conveyed familiarity with actors and managers all over the English-speaking world.[17] As American-born J.C. Williamson put it:

> In seeking new attractions I keep in touch with the market all over the world. I watch everything in the theatre world and personally visit England and America every two or three years. I see the most notable productions and talk with my representatives, whom I at the same time acquaint with the prevalent taste of theatregoers in Australia. I also read carefully press notices for all parts of the world and keep a careful and systematic record of them.[18]

Following the career of actor–impresario Hugh Ward through the pages of *Theatre* magazine illustrates this global freemasonry and Australia's place in it. Ward was from 1911 to 1922 managing director of J.C. Williamson Ltd., and therefore an important figure in the young Francee Anderson's early career. A comedian and dancer, he first visited Australia with an American company in 1899. His fellow countryman, J.C. Williamson, then consolidating his pre-eminent position, engaged Ward for his Royal Comic Opera Company. After leaving Australia to play in New York, London and Paris, Ward returned in 1906 for an 18-month Australasian tour. From 1908 to 1909, he toured with his own company through India, Burma, China, the Straits Settlements and again through Australasia. He settled in Sydney when the company reached there in Christmas 1909. In 1911, he joined J.C. Williamson's management team. He became managing director of what was by then known merely as 'the Firm' in 1913 when Williamson died.[19]

As transplanted Americans, Williamson and Ward did much to consolidate a lively new theatrical circuit that linked Australasia and North America. American actors and theatrical companies had always visited Australia, and Australian actors had been successful in North America. But Williamson established a definite taste for American actors, companies and plays among Australian audiences in the early years of the twentieth century. In 1900, J.C. Williamson brought Nance O'Neil to Australia for what the *Argus* called a 'remarkably successful' tour.[20] From 1904 to 1909, Minnie Tittell Brune thrilled Australian audiences with *Sunday*, *Diana of Dobson's*, *Merely Mary Ann* and *Parsifal*.[21] In 1906, the young John Barrymore toured Australia with William Collier's company in *The Dictator*, *On the Quiet* and *The Christian*.[22]

But the actors who won Australian audiences over to distinctly American material and acting styles were the comedian Fred Niblo and his wife Josephine Cohan, whom Hugh Ward brought to Australia soon after he joined Williamson's management team.[23] Ward was an old friend of Josephine Cohan's parents, the well-known vaudevillians Jerry and Nellie Cohan, and her famous brother, George M. Cohan ('Yankee Doodle Dandy'); and he considered Niblo the best light comedian of the day.[24] 'The Firm' brought the Niblos and their company to Australia in 1912 for 2 years to stage such George M. Cohan hits as *'Get-Rich-Quick' Wallingford, Officer 666* and *The Fortune Hunter*. Such was their popularity that they stayed for 3 years.

According to *Theatre*, Niblo's was the first American company of comedians to score a success with Australian audiences.[25] As Katherine Brisbane points out in her history of Australian amusements, Niblo's company 'gave American comedy a brilliant reputation'.[26] 'Niblo has in a rare degree the art of simulating ease and spontaneity,' the *Theatre* wrote of his 'natural' acting style.[27] 'Sensation drama and Worst Woman plays' were no longer popular, the *Bulletin* noted in 1913. Instead, the public now favoured 'the fairly lucid, well-made play of moderately human men and women' like [the American] *Within the Law* or the [Australian] 'slap-dash comedy of contemporaneous

folk', like *On Our Selection*.[28] In an excess of enthusiasm, the drama critic on the *Sun* declared that George M. Cohan was cleverer than Shakespeare.[29]

Leading theatrical figures like Ward and Williamson were influential culturally and socially. Australians were enthusiastic playgoers, and Williamson's and other productions penetrated deep into rural Australia. When Francee Anderson toured with Julius Knight's company for 6 months in 1915, for instance, they played in every sizable town in Australia and New Zealand.[30] Ward and his wife were central figures in Sydney's social life, welcoming Prime Minister Billy Hughes to first nights, and farewelled at lunches by the Lord Mayor when he left for overseas.[31] As Niblo told *The New York Times* when he returned to the United States, 'People on the stage [in Australia] are not only received socially, as in England, but they are sought after. The best homes are open to players.'[32]

The New York *Player* reported in 1912 that theatrical visitors to Australia were not successful professionally if they were not at the same time a social success; and the Niblos made a great hit socially as well as artistically.[33] The charming Niblo – 'handsome, curly-haired, pleasant, spruce'[34] – became a familiar name in *Theatre* magazine, writing with enthusiasm and familiarity about theatre in America and the art of acting. The New York theatre was not just American, he wrote soon after his arrival. Instead it was 'thoroughly cosmopolitan', with more theatres than London and Paris combined, featuring drama in Italian, French and German as well as English. It was open to all comers, he pointed out, and was willing to absorb the best of any country. *Theatre* praised American managers' methods and the acting of American players such as Niblo, and Australian playwrights were urged to study American plays for their 'wonderful technical dexterity', their modern pace ('action-action-action') and, above all, for their 'cosmopolitanism'.[35]

'Australians are more like Americans than any other people on the face of the earth,' Niblo told the *Theatre* soon after his return to the United States;[36] and Australia was imbued with the same spirit of cosmopolitanism.[37] 'We did not have to change the plays much,' he told *The New York Times*. 'Australians are very adaptable and caught on rapidly to the slang with which they are filled . . . . There was one concession we made – we cut down the speed appreciably . . . . But we always found that at the end of a week or so we were playing at full speed.'

When the Niblos left Australia in 1915, after 3 years in the country, the Australian Actors Association (AAA), of which they were now life members, gave them a farewell dinner attended by 250 actors, journalists and civic leaders. The AAA President George S. Titheradge, supported by Hugh Ward and leading critic Gerald Marr Thompson, remarked that Australian audiences judged actors on their merits, and that they had responded enthusiastically to the Niblos' attractive personality on the stage, their extreme charm of manner, the sound advice they had given to younger actors and

their clear-headed business instincts. In reply, Niblo graciously proclaimed that this Australian engagement was the best they had ever played.[38]

This sense of camaraderie continued after the Niblos' return to New York, where Fred was starring in George M. Cohan's *Hit-the-Trail Holiday*. They remained enthusiastic ambassadors for Australia and Australian theatre and actors, and became a major conduit for news and employment opportunities between the two countries.[39] On his regular trips abroad in search of plays and talent accompanied by his secretary Claude McKay, Hugh Ward's first port of call in New York was Niblo, who wined and dined them at Churchill's, Rector's and the Friar's Club (where George Cohan presided as Abbot), and took them to see the latest and best on Broadway.[40] Writing as 'Van Eyck' in *Theatre*, McKay (who later established the irreverent post-war magazine *Smith's Weekly*) kept his readers informed of their trips to the United States, painting glowing pictures of Hollywood and Broadway, talking of the giants of American movies and theatre in intimate terms and chronicling the fortunes of Australian actors and theatre personnel in this cosmopolitan arena.[41] Niblo also contributed to this flow of theatrical news. Writing from the Lambs Club, he declared he was 'Home-Sick for Australia', and reported on the Australians he had seen recently who are all 'doing very nicely over here'. He looked forward to going back to 'dear old Australia' when the war was over – 'two countries in the world that have made me suffer the pangs of home-sickness – America and Australia.'[42] When Josephine Cohan died in 1916 from heart disease, Australian actor Ronald Byram wrote that every member of the Australasian acting community in New York had been at her graveside.[43]

Because of the poor health Josephine Cohan had suffered while in Australia, the Niblo company provided Australian actresses with a splendid opportunity to train in the new style of 'natural' American comedy. Newcomer Enid Bennett was quickly seen as having star quality when she began to replace Cohan in mid-1913.[44] When Williamson's began making films of their plays in 1914 under Niblo's direction, Bennett starred in two of them;[45] and when Niblo and Cohan left Australia in June 1915, she travelled with them. Within a few months she had secured a role in *Cock o' the Walk* with Otis Skinner, which ran for a year on Broadway and went on to tour the West Coast.[46]

In Los Angeles the beautiful young Bennett met the wife of movie producer Thomas Ince, a partner in the Triangle Film Corporation with Mack Sennett and D.W. Griffith. Ince boosted Bennett as the greatest find since Mary Pickford.[47] By early 1917, she was starring in *Princess of the Dark* – the first of several movies with heartthrob Jack Gilbert.[48] When Ince left Triangle and moved to Famous Players-Lasky, she went with him. A year after Josephine Cohan died, Niblo and Bennett met up again and married soon after Ince brought him to Hollywood, where they became one of the film colony's leading couples.[49] By mid-1917, Enid Bennett had been joined

by her sister Marjorie and by Sylvia Bremer, another Williamson actress, as well as handsome young Australian actor Arthur Shirley.[50] November 1917's *Theatre* featured a photograph of Australian impresario E.J. Tait with Enid Bennett and Sylvia Bremer in Los Angeles.[51]

The success of Bennett and Bremer undoubtedly encouraged the ambitious Francee Anderson to strike out for Hollywood. When she joined Julius Knight's company in 1915, J.C. Williamson's regularly employed several talented Australian actresses, including Bennett and Bremer.[52] When Knight's company disbanded in December 1916, Anderson could not find a place among Williamson's plethora of leading ladies, and had to content herself with a tiny part in the Taits' *Turn to the Right*.[53] Already former Knight actress Dorothy Cumming, the 'most distinguished looking girl on Australian stage' who 'has brains too', had left for America. In a letter to the *Theatre* that December she wrote excitedly from New York that she had signed a movie contract with Famous Players.[54] Six months later she was back in Australia as a member of Cyril Maude's touring company at twice the salary she had commanded before she went abroad. The audience was 'completely enthralled', *Table Talk* reported after her opening performance. 'Dorothy Cumming maintains the high standard set by the "star". She has improved almost incredibly in her work.'[55] In her short stay in America she has got what she wanted, she told *Lone Hand*, chattering 'in her bright wholly Australian way despite the USA stamp on her beautiful clothes and much of her personality'. She has played in a New York comedy and several Famous Players movies and intends to return to America.[56] Meanwhile *Lone Hand* reported that Knight's former leading lady Lizette Parkes, who, like Anderson, was currently in *Turn to the Right*, was leaving for America.[57]

In July 1917, *Lone Hand* commented that Enid Bennett 'does nothing that a hundred other Australian girls couldn't do, if only Mr Ince would put his fine producing eye upon them'. 'This Sydney girl has proved a great success as a movie actress in America,' they reported, 'and will probably be the cause of a good many other young Australians going over to the States to try their luck'.[58]

As *Turn to the Right* finished its Sydney run in June 1917,[59] one of Bremer's films was showing at the Lyceum and *Lone Hand* was giving the life story of this Sydney actress who had traced the same path as Anderson, 'from St James's Hall [where amateur theatricals were presented] and Williamson's to the US'.[60] Already Anderson was thinking of a movie career. 'I'm just now looking out for that *reel* good news you were hopin' for,' her admirer Oliver Hogue wrote from Palestine, where he was in the Imperial Camel Corps. 'It will *film* e with joy to hear of your movie successes . . . .'[61] A few weeks later he wrote, 'So you are off to America: Well my little angel there will be many in Sunny New South Wales who will follow your career with interest.' Along with 'commandments' on how to conduct herself in the United

States, Hogue sent her the address of his brother J. Roland Hogue and his wife Gwen, who were musical comedy artists in New York.[62]

As Anderson told it in later years,

> I was just a kid. This man [in the *Turn to the Right* company] told me I should think about films. They were silent films in those days, of course; but he pointed out that if I did a good job in pictures, it would be a stepping-stone to the American stage. He gave me a letter to Cecil B. De Mille. I immediately sent word to mother . . . to pack and go to Hollywood with me.[63]

It may not have been as simple as she remembered it. 'My dear Sweet Little Woman', Hogue wrote in January 1918,

> There now . . . . At last you've convinced me that you are a real big woman & not a little girl any longer . . . . you were in quite a melancholy mood Honey when you churned out that recent letter . . . . Don't you worry about the big problems of the world Honey. Just you "carry on" & be a good little Angel, & the problems will solve themselves in due course . . . .[64]

But whatever the quandaries her decision to leave Australia involved, Anderson and her mother boarded the *S.S. Sonoma* on 9 January 1918 for San Francisco, where a new life awaited her, not in Hollywood as she first hoped, but in New York.[65] 'It is not so long ago since Francee Anderson, the pretty ingenue with J. and N. Tait's, was a promising Sydney amateur,' *Lone Hand* wrote that February.

> Then she played bits here and there, until her charm and ability made Julius Knight single her out for special instruction. Graceful, dainty, and pink with youth, she made much progress . . . . and though lengthy parts do not often come her way, a keen observer can see that she is ready and competent enough for them.

'She was to appear [tour] in *Turn to the Right*,' the article ended abruptly, 'but has left for U.S.A.'[66]

Conclusion

Francee Anderson's precipitous move to try her luck in the United States does not seem so daring when we consider the context she found herself in during her Sydney years. Marilyn Lake (in the preceding chapter) has shown us that the Australian colonies were, in the second half of the nineteenth century, part of a zone of free trade and movement guaranteed by the Chinese and

British empires and by the American government; and Carroll Pursell (also in this volume) has described the 'offshoring' of the American Dream in the early years of the twentieth century, extending its imagined frontier into the Caribbean and across the Pacific. Despite the increasing restrictions discussed by Lake, Sydney was still, in this period, 'a sailors town; a free trade port where sailors from all nations jostled in the crowd at Circular Quay,' which was, in turn, 'the nucleus of the crowded city, pulsing with vitality as the core of its prosperity'.[67] But its orientation was increasingly away from Asia and towards America, exemplified by the visit of the US Great White Fleet in 1908.[68]

This was the Sydney that greeted 16-year-old Fanny Anderson when she arrived in 1913. Like aspiring novelist Christina Stead 15 years later, living by the water, in full view of international shipping lanes, made boarding a ship for elsewhere 'so natural, because these ships were always in and out, in and out'.[69] But it was more than that for the young Francee: she was part of a global theatrical labour market, facilitated by those shipping lanes, that brought to Sydney the miscellaneous group of people – the British-born Julius Knight and the American-born Hugh Ward, J.C. Williamson and Fred Niblo – who also made that larger world, including Hollywood and Broadway, 'natural' to her. And she was part of the new global audience for American movies, brought by those same shipping lines and made 'everyday' by rubbing shoulders with people from that world like Fred Niblo, Enid Bennett and Sylvia Bremer and entering their lives through the gossip of *Theatre* magazine.

Jill Matthews has shown us that Sydney's 'unsettled settlers' of the early twentieth century were outward-looking citizens of the world.[70] And Beverly Kingston has reminded us of New South Wales's 'native-born, pragmatic, confident culture'.[71] The cosmopolitan nature of Australia's – and Sydney's – theatrical world adds significantly to this new interpretation of the years that have been characterized as Australia's pre-adulthood. Perhaps there were some colonial adolescents waiting to be given the key of the door by their imperial betters. But Australia's place in the global theatrical and film economy gave ambitious young women like Francee Anderson the self-assurance to grasp that key and stride out into the world – which they were confident was their oyster. Indeed, it made her into a cosmopolitan before she ever left the Antipodes.

Notes

1. Miriam Hansen (1999) 'The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism' *Modernism/Modernity* 6: 2, 68–71.
2. Richard Waterhouse (1990) *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington: NSW University Press).

3. *Theatre* [*TM*], November 1912: 18. See Chris Cunneen (1986) 'McIntosh, Hugh Donald (1876–1942)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* [ADB], Vol. 10 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), pp. 284–286.
4. See *TM* (1912) 2 December, 9; *Times* [London] (1941) 25 February, 1 (for Knight); and Helen M. van der Poorten (1976) 'Williamson, James Cassius (1845–1913)' *ADB*, Vol. 6, 406–407.
5. *Lone Hand* [*LH*] (1917) 1 May, 279–281; Viola Tait (1977) *A Family of Brothers: The Taits and J.C. Williamson A Theatre History* (Melbourne: Heinemann).
6. *TM* (1909) 1 April, 15; (1899) 1 January; (1917) 1 May; *LH*, February, 112.
7. For 'Americans' in *Turn to the Right* see *LH* (1917) 2 April, 229–232.
8. *TM* (1917) 1 February, 20. For Patrick see (1919) 1 November, 5–9; *The New York Times* [*NYT*] (1914) 27 September, X5; (1916) 22 December, 9; (1917) 1 November, 13; for Julian and Wilson *TM* (1914) 1 December, 26; (1916) 1 September, 34; 1 December, 23; for Willey and Marshall *TM* (1914) 1 August, 7; (1915) 1 May, 39. For Anglin see Cecilia Morgan in this volume.
9. *Sydney Morning Herald* [*SMH*] (1917) 1 February, 38–39.
10. Veronica Kelly (2005) 'A Complementary Economy? National Markets and International Product in Early Australian Theatre Managements' *New Theatre Quarterly* 21, 77–95.
11. For example of touring see *TM* (1915) 1 February.
12. See Jean Gittins (1974) 'Musgrove, George (1854–1916)' *ADB*, Vol. 5, pp. 324–325.
13. Musgrove to Williamson (1896) 20 March; 7 August; 13 and 20 November; 4 and 11 December, all from London. J.C. Williamson Collection, National Library of Australia.
14. See M. Tallis (1999) *The Silent Showman: Sir George Tallis, the Man Behind the World's Largest Entertainment Organisation of the 1920s* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press).
15. Veronica Kelly (2003) 'Julius Knight, Australian Matinee Idol: Costume Drama as Historical Re-Presentation' *Australasian Victorian Studies Journal* 9, 128–144; 'Exit Julius Knight: Australia Loses Sterling Actor' *TM* (1917) 1 February, 38.
16. *TM* (1916) 1 July, 25; Tony Mills (1979) 'Bracy, Henry (1841–1917)' *ADB*, Vol. 7, pp. 377–378.
17. See for instance *TM* (1914) 1 March, 19; (1915) 1 January, 35, 55; (1916) 1 December, 23; (1917) 1 June, 54–55.
18. Peter Downes (nd) 'J C Williamson 1845–1913 Trans-Tasman Man of the Theatre' Unpublished paper, Victoria University, Wellington.
19. Martha Rutledge (1990) 'Ward, Hugh Joseph (1871–1941)' *ADB*, Vol. 12, pp. 383–384.
20. *Table Talk* [*TT*] (1900) 7 June, 10; 14, 11; 21, 11; 23 August, 10; (1901) 1 March; 11 April, 18; *Argus* (1900) 18 June, 6; 2 July, 7; 30 August, 6; (1901) 8 April, 6; 15, 6.
21. See Veronica Kelly (1995) 'J.C. Williamson produces *Parsifal, or the Redemption of Kundry*: Wagnerism, Religion and Sexuality' *Theatre History Studies* 15, 161–162.
22. See Tallis *Silent Showman*; *Argus* (1906) 28 May, 6.
23. For Niblo see *NYT* (1948) 12 November, 23.
24. *TM* (1915) 1 April, 5–8.
25. *TM* (1912) November, 43.
26. Katharine Brisbane (ed.) (1991) *Entertaining Australia: An Illustrated History* (Sydney: Currency Press), p. 169.
27. *TM* (1915) 1 January, 16.
28. *Bulletin* (1913) August, quoted in Brisbane *Entertaining Australia*, 169.

29. *TM* (1914) 2 November, 12–14.
30. *SMH* (1915) 24 April, 8; *TM*, 1 May, 2, 8, 22.
31. *TM* (1917) 2 July, 17–18, 22.
32. *NYT* (1915) 11 July, X2.
33. *TM* (1912) 2 December, 11.
34. *Los Angeles Herald* (1919) 13 November.
35. *TM* (1913) 1 January; 2 June, 17; 1 July, 23; 1 August, 8, 14–15; (1914) 1 February, 3–4; 2 November, 12–14; (1915) 1 February, 21–22, 53–54; 1 March.
36. *TM* (1915) 1 September, 31, 36.
37. *TM* (1912) November, 4.
38. *TM* (1915) 1 April, 5–8.
39. See for example *TM* (1916) 1 February, 5.
40. *TM* (1915) 1 October, 10–14; (1916) 1 January, 10–12.
41. Rutledge 'Ward, Hugh Joseph'; V. J. Carroll (2000) 'McKay, Claude Eric Fergusson (1878–1972)' *ADB*, Vol. 15, pp. 233–234; *TM* (1916), 1 May, 11–14. See for instance *TM* (1915) 1 September, 34–36; (1916) 1 July, 25–26; (1917) 1 April, 19–20.
42. *TM* (1916) 1 August, 24.
43. Ibid., 2.
44. *TM* (1913) 2 June, 25; *Daily Telegraph* (1914) 14 December; *TM* (1915) 1 March: cover, 13.
45. *TM* (1916) March.
46. *TM* (1915) 1 July, 27; (1916) 1 July, 6, 52; *LH*, June, 31–32, 50.
47. *TM* (1917) 1 June, 27–30.
48. See extensive reports in *TM* (1917).
49. *Motion Picture Classic* (1918), August.
50. For Bremer see *TM* (1917) May–December; for Shirley 1 March, 45–51.
51. *TM* (1917) 1 November, 9.
52. In Knight's company were imported star Irene Browne and Australians Lizette Parkes, Dorothy Cumming and Alma Phillips. Williamsons' stable also included Eily Malyon, Gwen Burroughs, Eileen Sparks, Nancye Stewart, Marion Marcus Clarke, Olive Wilton, Tempe Piggott, Sylvia Bremer, Jean Robertson, Shirley Huxley and Eileen Robinson.
53. See *Argus* (1917) 26 February, 9; *TT*, 1 March, 24–25; *LH*, 2 April, 229–232; 1 June, 330; *TM*, 1 May, 9, 17, 23.
54. *TM* (1917) 1 February, 10; (1916) 10 December.
55. *TM* (1917) 1 June, 17; *TT*, 21 June, 24.
56. *LH* (1917) October, 531.
57. *LH* (1917) August, 435–436.
58. *LH* (1917) July, 381–384; August, 435–438.
59. *TM* (1917) 1 June, 23; 1 July, 21.
60. *LH* (1917) 381–384; *TM*, 1 July, 21–24.
61. Oliver Hogue to Judith Anderson, 9 July 1917. Judith Anderson Papers, Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara [UCSB]. She may have been referring to the announcement of the takeover of Australia Feature Films by Famous Players-Lasky to produce films in Australia under the supervision of de Mille. See *TM* (1917) 1 February.
62. Hogue to Anderson, 25 July 1917. UCSB.
63. Rodney Fisher, Adelaide Festival Centre, 1–2.
64. Hogue to Anderson, 23 January 1918. UCSB.

65. Anderson Passport, 2 January 1918. UCSB; Passenger List *S.S. Sonoma*, 9 January 1918, State Records, X578, Shipping Masters Office, Outward January–March 1918.
66. *LH* (1918) 1 February.
67. Norman Lindsay (1965) *Bohemians of the Bulletin* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson).
68. http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/nlanews/2004/aug04/article5.html</e>
69. Rodney Wetherell (1980) 'Interview with Christina Stead' *Australian Literary Studies* 9:4, 437.
70. Jill Julius Matthews (2005) *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press).
71. Beverley Kingston (2006) *A History of New South Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

19

A World War II Odyssey: Michael Danos, En Route from Riga to New York

Sheila Fitzpatrick

Michael Danos was one of the millions of Europeans whose war began in one country (Latvia) and ended in another (Germany), and who within a few years had left Europe altogether for a third (the United States). But, like every one of those millions, his story was particular, and it was that particularity – the sense of himself as an individual, not just a pawn of fate and part of a faceless crowd of refugees – that was essential to him, surviving the experience, and to me, writing his story.[1] In this chapter, I will try to explore its meaning, but first I must identify my relationship with my subject, which is different from that of any of the other chapters in this book: he was my husband for the last 10 years of his life.[2] This is not my story, for we didn't meet until more than 40 years after his departure from Europe in a troop ship packed with seasick DPs (displaced persons), but it is a story about someone I love, and I am writing it because I want to bring him back to life in the only way I can. At first I thought that made this writing different from any other I had done as a professional historian, but now I am not so sure. Historians have so many ways of explaining what they are doing with the past and why it matters that they sometimes forget the simplest and oldest: it's their job to remember, in other words to raise the dead.

The Story

Mischka was born cosmopolitan. His birthplace was Riga, and he was the second son of a Hungarian–Latvian family, the Hungarian side being at least partly Jewish, whose basic language at home was German. His father, Arpad, 39 when Mischka was born on 10 January 1922, was an opera singer who later became a businessman and singing teacher. He came from Budapest, but it is not clear that he considered himself Hungarian in any sense but that of citizenship: his gymnasium records classify him as Jewish (though he did not so identify himself in Riga) and his son Jan believes him to have been the

son of a German-colonist father and Spanish–Jewish mother.[3] Arpad's arrival in Latvia was accidental: he was on tour there with the Hamburg Opera at the outbreak of the First World War, found himself stranded and in danger of internment an 'enemy alien', and coped with this situation by joining the Riga Opera, singing under his stage name of Arimondi. In youth, he was an athlete, and family legend has it that he competed for Hungary in the hop, step and jump at the 1900 Olympic Games in Paris (unfortunately this does not seem to be literally true).

Olga Danos, née Viksne, Mischka's mother, was much younger – only 22 when her first son, also named Arpad, was born and 24 at Mischka's birth. The family was liberal, anti-nationalist and cosmopolitan. In the 1920s, it was prosperous, but in the early 1930s, the father's business collapsed and plunged them into poverty.[4] Mischka, the middle and brightest of three brothers, was first educated at home and then studied at German classical gymnasium in Riga. In 1939, Baltic Germans – including teachers and pupils at Mischka's school – were 'called back to the Reich' by the Führer; later in the same year, Soviet forces entered Latvia. Mischka graduated from school in 1940 and went to work at Riga's electrical factory. The next year, a few months after Soviet occupation had been succeeded by German, he entered the University of Riga as a student of electrical engineering.

The Danos family, meanwhile, struggled like everyone else to cope with the successive political upheavals. They disliked both the Communists and the Nazis, and suffered losses under both occupations. Mischka's two cousins, Ariadna and Jogita Sachs, were arrested under the Soviet occupation for 'contact with German spies' in June 1941,[5] after one of them had married a Danish sailor in the hope of getting out of Latvia, and deported to the distant region of Ufa in the Soviet Union. Their mother, Olga's sister Mary, escaped disaster under the Soviets but was arrested under the German occupation for hiding Jews and sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. As for Mischka's immediate family, his younger brother Jan was arrested by the Nazis during the war and spent time in prison, while his elder brother Arpad was arrested by Soviet forces reoccupying Latvia at the end of the war, and sent to labour camp in Vorkuta. Except for Mischka's father (who declared that he had been stateless and uprooted by war once already, and once was enough), all members of the family tried to escape from Latvia and get to the West, but only Mischka and his mother made it.

On the plus side, although all three brothers were of call-up age during the war, all of them miraculously managed to avoid being mobilized by the three armies that successively tried to recruit them: Latvian, Soviet and German. This seems to have been largely due to the resourcefulness and determination of their mother, the family's main breadwinner (as the founder of a fashion atelier) since the mid 1930s. Olga converted her atelier into a tailoring workshop, established useful contacts with well-placed German officials, and obtained a contract to supply the German Army with suspenders. The

contacts enabled her both to travel to Prague and Vienna, ostensibly for supplies, and to employ Jewish workers from the Riga ghetto, whom she fed, clothed and protected. According to a later newspaper interview, she

> assisted in saving and hiding what she describes as 'an army of refugees,' during several years work being arrested only once, and detained that time for a single day. Her scheme was to contract to supply 60,000 pairs of suspenders for the German army, and on the strength of that to get passes to fly to Prague over-frequently 'for materials.' Arrangements for hiding, feeding, and passing on the refugees were made during these Prague visits. Many of them she also employed surreptitiously in the 'factory'.[6]

Several of Olga's ghetto workers survived the war, and one of them later served as her and Mischka's sponsor for immigration to the United States.

Mischka, although a healthy 20-year-old in 1942, and a competitive athlete like his father and elder brother, managed to evade German call-up – probably because of his mother's string-pulling – until December 1943, when he was called before the German mobilization commission, passed as fit for service in the Waffen SS, and told that he would be inducted at the next call-up in a few months. But there was an alternative plan, devised by Olga, in Mischka's later account. Mischka was to apply to study in Germany, under an arrangement whereby students of the University of Riga – Aryans, of course – could transfer to a university in Germany to continue their studies.[7] With the Germans' Eastern front already collapsing, the family's calculation was that Riga would soon fall to the Soviets, and that the Allies would win the war sometime thereafter; when that happened, they wanted to be in Germany, not Latvia, to avoid being trapped in the Soviet zone. Mischka duly applied for transfer, was accepted (without political screening, fortunately, as otherwise his Jewish grandparent and his aunt's and brother's arrests might have come to light), and assigned to go to Dresden to study electrical engineering with Professor Barkhausen. He arrived in Dresden in June 1944.

For his two brothers, meanwhile, Olga arranged an illegal departure by sea to Sweden, but this plan misfired. (We know it was actually a plan, as a coded letter survives from her husband, from whom she was now divorced or at least separated, asking if she had managed to 'launch the little fledglings' on schedule.) She herself, thanks to her business, was mobile; in fact, despite ill health in 1943 and 1944, she was frequently on the road. Sometime in this period she moved her workshop from Riga to Tetschen-Bodenbach, a town not far from Dresden in the Sudetenland (now called Děčin and in the Czech republic).[8]

The plan as it developed was that Olga and Mischka would head for Flensburg, on the border with Denmark, to sit it out until the end of hostilities. Mischka's farewell party in Dresden was on Tuesday, 13 February 1944, the night of the great bombing raid. '*Ausgebombt, gesund*' (bombed out, healthy)

was his laconic telegram to Olga on the 16th, but he wrote pages of shocked description in his diary on the long train journey north. Half a century later, he remembered that party: he had made fruit kissel (jelly) for his guests, and as they were eating it, 'suddenly, without any warning or reason the door, which was closed, keeled into the room, it seemed quite slowly, but inexorably, and remained on the floor in a horizontal position. That interrupted the party, and in fact ended it . . .'[9]

Mischka escorted one of the girls (not his girlfriend, but he had invited her and felt responsible) home, a nightmarish journey under continued bombing and through rubble that made familiar streets unrecognizable ('no impressions, just climb, girl is crying, just drag her along, climb, the street could be traversed in 4 or 5 minutes, it must soon end . . .'). It was afternoon by the time they finally reached the girl's house, were fed by her mother and fell soundly asleep. Mischka remembered the next day in fairy-tale terms: the mother offering him her daughter's hand, he politely declined but asked for a suitcase to continue his travels. He left, suitcase in hand, and somehow linked up with his girlfriend, Nanni (Marianne) Schuster and headed for her home in Chemnitz, after leaving a message about his whereabouts for his mother at his old lodgings ('in conformity with the custom which had evolved at that time, I attached a piece of cardboard to a stick with the message of being well and alive and expecting to get to T[etschen]-B[odenbach] within a week or so – which I actually did').[10]

On 12 March 1945, Mischka set off for Flensburg, as he and his mother had arranged. She made the same journey separately.[11] He felt it to be a momentous departure: 'In my memory on the date 12345 [12 March 1945] begins a new chapter,' he wrote later.[12] But it was nearly a last chapter. En route, he came down with diphtheria in Hamburg and barely survived the train journey on to Flensburg, collapsing at the station and being picked up by a (still-functioning!) ambulance service and taken in critical condition to the local infectious diseases hospital, from which he was not released until a week after the Germans' surrender. He found his mother in Flensburg, and they were reunited with her sister Mary, liberated by the Allies from Ravensbrück.

At war's end, Mischka and Olga registered as DPs in the British zone, though neither seems to have spent much (or any?) time actually living in a DP camp. Mischka later remembered both DP camps and British occupying forces with distaste: the British officers were 'arrogant' and 'aloof', he wrote; 'they did not see the person standing in front of them,' whether German or DP.[13] He spent much of the autumn of 1945 in movement: to Munich to collect things he had left there, to Chemnitz to see Nanni and to various university towns to find out which universities were functioning and which were taking DPs. At the beginning of 1946, he managed to register as a student at the Technische Hochschule in Hanover, where he switched from electrical engineering to physics and became a student of

future Nobel Prize winner Hans Jensen, moving with Jensen to the University of Heidelberg in 1949. Other friends were less fortunate: Nanni, working as a doctor in her father's practice near Chemnitz and unwilling to abandon her family, found herself trapped in the Russian zone; by the time she got out in 1948, the relationship with Mischka had lapsed. Mischka formally left DP status in 1949, since he was now earning a salary as Jensen's assistant and able to 'live on the German economy' (as the IRO put it); and in the same year he married a German girl he had met at the Hanover sports club, Helga Heimers. Olga, meanwhile, was in Fulda, earning a living as a restorer of church sculpture damaged during the war.

News came indirectly from Riga that Arpad, Mischka's father, had died. Mischka's reaction can only be guessed at (he was unwilling even in later life to discuss his father's death) but Olga, as she confided to her diary, was devastated. Another cause of anguish was that there was no news at all of Mischka's brothers after the Soviet reoccupation in the autumn of 1944 until the loosening of Soviet controls in 1956 (in fact, both were alive and living in Riga, though Arpad's health was permanently damaged by his year in the labour camp). By the late 1940s, many of the Danoses' Latvian DP friends had emigrated to Australia, Chile or wherever they could get visas. Olga at one point evidently considered trying for Latin America, a plan that Mischka

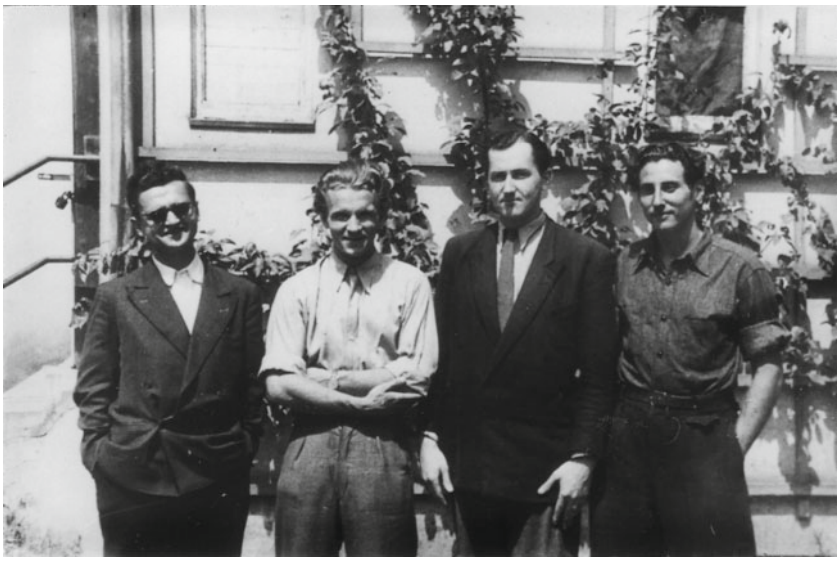

Figure 18 Left to right: Dailonis Stauvers, Boris Bogdanov, Andrejs Bičevskis and Misha, all DP students from Riga at the Hannover Technische Hochschule, Hannover, circa 1947.

with uncharacteristic sharpness rejected in a letter of 13 July 1946: from his standpoint (presumably physics-based), it had to be 'America', that is, the United States. Olga was cleared for emigration in 1948, but it was not until 1950 that she finally got her US visa, sponsored by Simon Mirkin, one of her Jewish protégés from the ghetto, and left for New York; Mischka stayed until he finished his PhD (awarded February 1951) and then followed with Helga at the end of 1951.

What's in a Name?

Mischka's birth certificate gives two versions of his name, Mikelis Danoss (the Latvian version) and Michael Danos. But these were only a few of the variants. Michael/Mikelis was also rendered as Mikhael, Mikhail, Mischa, Misha, Mischka, Mishenka, Michel and Mike at different times and places.[14] He claimed to have no preference among these variants, to consider no particular one of them his 'real' name. Danoss/Danos was not the original family name: Mischka's schoolteacher grandfather had changed his name from Deutsch around 1900, in response to a Hungarian government edict requiring all state employees to have Hungarian names.[15] In Mischka's birth certificate, his father's religion was given as Catholic (though his school graduation certificate from Hungary identifies him as Jewish) and his mother's as Lutheran, but in fact both parents were agnostic or atheist. Mischka himself was sometimes identified in official documents as Russian Orthodox, evidently because his Orthodox maternal grandmother, Julia Viksne, had had him baptized without the consent of the parents. As for citizenship, the Danos family had Hungarian citizenship (from the father) up to 1934,[16] when pressure from Kărlis Ulmanis's nationalist regime caused them to take Latvian citizenship. In Germany, Mischka's nationality was recorded first as Latvian (except in one instance, where it was Hungarian) and then as 'former Latvian citizen'; he took American citizenship in the 1950s after emigrating there. Successive DP ID cards identified him as Mikelis Danoss (the Latvian form) and Michael Danos.

The Danos family spoke Latvian, Russian and German in Mischka's childhood, not to mention Italian in the year they spent in Palermo when he was about four. But German was the language generally spoken at home, the one in which both he and Olga usually wrote their diaries and corresponded with each other, and in which he received much of his education. In Riga's ethnically divided population, the Danoses may have counted as part of 'German society', more or less;[17] the two elder boys were first educated at home and then sent to the German gymnasium, though the youngest, after a stint in a French language kindergarten in Riga, went to Latvian schools. As teenagers, Mischka belonged to the German sports club, Arpad to the Latvian.

Although in later life Mischka would deny that German was effectively his native language, he asserted his German cultural and linguistic identity

strongly in his adolescent diary, and was further attracted to Germany because of his interest in physics, where Germany was still in the pre-war period pre-eminent. The Danos family had suffered in various ways from the Ulmanis government's nationalist policies of the 1930s, which were implicitly directed against Latvian Germans, as constituting the pre-war economic and cultural elite in the Baltics. According to Jan Danos's recollection, both Mischka and Arpad wanted the family to leave Latvia and move to Germany after the recall of the Baltic Germans to the Reich in 1939, resenting their father's adamant refusal on the grounds that with three sons approaching call-up age, he was not about to provide 'canon fodder for Adolph'.[18] Mischka wrote in his diary: 'When the news came that we – that is, the Germans here (*die hiesigen Deutschen*) should go to the Reich, it was quite clear to me: I'm going too! But I need to get this through at home. I hope I can convince them. For a long time I have planned to go to Germany after finishing high school and make my life there.' German was the language they spoke at home, Mischka noted, and most of his children's books had been German. More recently he had 'learned comradeship' in the German sports club 'and got more and more like a German'.[19]

But the war radically changed Mischka's attitude to Germanness. Although he conceded in an undated letter to his mother from the early post-war years that there were some 'positive' types among the Germans (such as his Dresden mentor, Professor Barkhausen), his self-identification as a quasi-German had obviously crumbled after his move to Germany in mid-1944. In his later recollections, he mentioned this only obliquely, remarking that he had lost his pure German accent when he became part of the multi-lingual DP population, but his first wife, Helga, remembers him as being highly critical of the stiffness and formality of the Germans – including, or perhaps particularly, her family, who were not delighted to have their daughter marrying a DP.[20] By the late 1940s, Germans had become very definitely 'them' in his letters; and he praised his PhD *Doktorvater*, Hans Jensen, for being a citizen of the world first and German second. Although he often visited Germany in later life, he was not comfortable there and spoke critically – and definitely from an outsider position – of German society and mores.

Latvian had apparently never been an option for national identification for Mischka: his cosmopolitan father despised the small-nation nationalism of the 'mini-Mussolini', Ulmanis; and as a child Mischka disliked his Latvian-speaking grandmother (who lived with them). While the brothers remaining in Riga developed some Latvian-nationalist feelings in the post-war Soviet (and especially post-Soviet) period, Mischka never did. Unlike many expatriates as they grow older, he never became nostalgic about Latvia or dreamt of returning.

The Jewish part of his background was problematic and somewhat mysterious. In his adolescent diary, there is one reference to his father as a Jew, which could conceivably be read as simply pejorative rather than literal;

it comes from a critical characterization of her husband by Olga in a conversation that Mischka recorded verbatim but without comment. In later life Mischka never mentioned Jewish ancestry (Helga and their daughters were surprised to learn of it from Latvian relatives after Mischka's death in 1999) or identified himself as Jewish. Brother Jan's account, in an interview in 2006, was equally cloudy: perhaps he half-knew of the Jewish ancestry in childhood, but it was not until the 1980s, re-establishing contact with the last of the Danos family in Budapest, that he really 'found out' and passed the news on to Mischka. The father's Jewishness – which was obviously known to Olga and Arpad himself, if not to the children – makes the decision to send Mischka to university in Nazi Germany to escape conscription into the Waffen SS in 1944 somewhat breathtaking. It is perhaps not surprising if under the circumstances Mischka 'forgot' about his father's Jewishness – not just at the time he needed to forget it for survival, but for decades after.

It was an enormous relief for Mischka to get to the United States in 1951, and for a while (as he told the story later to me) he was in love with all things American, especially ice cream and big cars. But he would never have described himself (at least in later years) as an American, any more than he would describe himself as Latvian or Jewish; and in time his story of 'coming to America' changed into a story of 'going to Columbia' (that is, as a postdoctoral student of physics at Columbia University in New York, a year or so after arrival). In fact, he strongly rejected the notion that national categories applied to him, or were meaningful in general, except in a negative way (stirring up nationalisms and hostilities). In one of his Musings in the early 1990s, he noted that some people make a distinction 'between nationalism and other prejudices. However, from my point of view such distinctions do not matter. I do not care which word one uses; the affliction is the same.'[21]

The Knapsack on his Back

In his travels through Germany in the last throes of the war, Mischka carried a bamboo pole in his hand and, on his back, a knapsack containing a cherished volume of *Zeitschrift für Physik*. This at any rate is the picture he gave me in the 1990s; it is a 'Dick Whittington' image of a young man off to seek his fortune, and he may well have known this (English children's literature being supplied by his cosmopolitan father). We will return to the 'Dick Whittington' theme, but first we should consider the trappings, for these were of the greatest significance to Mischka. First, the physics journal. Becoming a physicist was his driving aspiration from the late 1930s. In the hardest moments, he drew sustenance from it, as when he wrote to his mother in April 1945 to tell her (on the back of a postcard) that (a) he was in hospital with diphtheria, (b) his baggage was probably waiting at Flensburg railway station and (c) 'I am occupying myself mainly with Theoretical Physics' (his

capitalization). In his later American life, 'theoretical physicist' was the only self-identification he would willingly offer. He considered physics, the quest to understand nature, to be an avocation, one of the highest forms of human activity. The community he thought of himself as belonging to, starting with the atomic physicists' *Tee-Colloquium* in Heidelberg in the late 1940s, was the (international) community of physicists.

The bamboo pole, too, was important. It was for pole-vaulting, one of several sports in which Mischka competed at national and even international level from adolescence. He was a 'sportsman' as well as a physicist in his youth. All the friends from Riga who survived to be interviewed in the 2000s knew him from the sports club, the place where he had first experienced 'comradeship', according to his pre-war diaries. His letters to his mother in the immediate post-war years are full of information about training and competing in meets, first DP and YMCA events, then German national ones; it is not until 1948–1949 that sport recedes as a dominant preoccupation. Until the Physics Institute at the University of Heidelberg superseded it, the Hannover sports club where he met Helga, a sprinter, seems to have functioned for him as a kind of home.

The third touchstone was music. Both of Mischka's parents were professional musicians at one time or other. According to his brother Arpad, Mischka was an accomplished pianist as an adolescent, and while living in Germany he tried to keep up his piano playing in lodgings where there was a piano. He remained a dedicated music-lover and concertgoer; and both he and his mother had the habit in their letters to each other of including detailed critical reviews of whatever music they had heard. In later life, he had vivid and exact memories of occasions when a specific performance or musical work had particularly moved him. One such memory was of the summer evening in 1949 when, arriving in Heidelberg from Hanover as a new doctoral student and taking the stiff climb up Philosophen Weg to the Physics Institute, he heard Fritz Kreisler's recording of the Beethoven violin concerto wafting through the night air from Jensen's room, and felt, as one waking from a nightmare, that he had come home.

Conclusion

The 1940s were a traumatic period for Mischka, as for millions of others. The Dresden bombing left psychic scars, and after the near-fatal bout of diphtheria in 1944 he had problems with reduced stamina and concentration for at least a year. His correspondence with his mother and wife in the late 1940s indicates great concern (on their part as well as his) about his nerves, for which he at one point consulted a psychiatrist. Nevertheless, the image of himself as a victim, a pawn of fate, was never acceptable. 'Life is still beautiful!' he remarked to his diary on 14 March 1945, en route from bombed-out Dresden to Flensburg. Such buoyancy was not always possible in private: his

diary for 1947 records with distressed precision the month (January 1943) in which he had 'lost his feel for [Beethoven's] *Moonlight Sonata*', one of his favourite pieces as a pianist. But in public, Helga and his DP friends from Riga agree, he was cheerful and gregarious, the life of every party. We were young people enjoying life, say his friends from Riga, repudiating any notion of trauma or preoccupation with loss on Mischka's part or their own.

We could think of Mischka, the DP immigrant to the United States, as someone 'looking for liberty': as he told Jensen in the 1950s, and often repeated to me in the nineties, he had never felt 'free' in Germany (meaning by that a spiritual condition, not a political one), except at the Heidelberg Physics Institute.[22] Yet I cannot see freedom as the main purpose of his journey, and he would certainly have had strong disagreements with Donald Friend about 'art and love' as the justification of a life and disdained (to use no stronger term) Rosita Forbes' pursuit of happiness in the guise of glamour and celebrity.[23] He was a young Dick Whittington, off to seek his fortune in the big world beyond, but his fortune was not, like Dick, to be Lord Mayor of London. His quest was to become a Physicist and understand Nature (I capitalize these words because that was the way he said them). In his own mind not a refugee but a man on a journey, he considered the term 'displaced person' meaningless as applied to him. He rejected classification as a man who had lost home and country because the world, or the world of physics, was his home, not the place he happened to start from. He thought nationality and ethnicity were random attributes to which people attached irrational significance. The transnationalism of his own life was neither a misfortune in his eyes nor, probably, an important benefit, but rather an irrelevance. There were things in life that mattered more.

Notes

1. My main documentary source base are the diaries that both Mischka and his mother intermittently kept; the correspondence between them in the 1940s; and Mischka's correspondence with other people, mainly school and university friends from Riga who ended up scattered around Europe at the end of the war. These papers, which I have roughly classified, are in the possession of Mischka's daughter, Johanna Danos, in Ellicott City, MD; unless otherwise noted, all information in this chapter comes from them. In addition, I draw on what he told me about his life, orally and in the form of written Musings, which are now in the Michael Danos Papers, Series 1, Special Collections, University of Chicago, and on interviews with his two surviving brothers, Arpad and Jan Danos conducted in Riga, 7, 9 and 10 September 2006; his first wife, Helga Danos (née Heimers), in Ellicott City, 22 and 23 November 2007; his second wife, Victoria Danos (née Nieroda), in Washington, DC, 15 October 2006 and three of his Riga friends who were also DPs in Germany after the war: Helen Machen (née Klumberg), in Downers Grove, Ill., 2 February 2007; Dailonis Stauvers, by telephone to Cleveland, 10 and 14 April 2007; and Andrejs Bičevskis, in Brisbane, 30 July and 1 August, 2007.
2. He died in Washington, DC, on 30 August 1999.

3. Interview with Jan Danos, Riga (2006), 7 September.
4. Ibid., 8 September.
5. According to NKVD files in Riga, Jogita Saks [I have used the German form of the name: her father was the singer Paul Sachs], born in 1920, was arrested on 23 June 1941: see Vīksne, R./Kangeris, K. (eds), *No NKVD līdz KGB. Politiskās prāvas Latvijā 1940–1986. Noziegumos pret padomju valsti apsūdzēto Latvijas iedzīvotāju rādītājs [Vom NKVD zum KGB. Politische Prozesse in Lettland 1940 bis 1986. Verzeichnis der Einwohner Lettlands, die wegen Verbrechen gegen den sowjetischen Staat verurteilt worden sind*] (Rīga, 1999). This file does not mention Ariadna, but according to the family, she was arrested at the same time. Thanks to Björn Felder for this information.
6. Interview with Olga Danos, *Miami Herald* (1954), 27 June. Mischka and Jan knew in general terms about their mother's activities, but neither had detailed information on the Prague connection.
7. It is not clear that any such arrangement formally existed – neither Dailonis Stauvers nor Andrejs Bičevskis, Mischka's contemporaries at the University of Riga, ever heard of it – so Mischka may have been an individual beneficiary of Olga's string-pulling.
8. Michael Danos, 'Dresden1' (Musings), 20–21 January 1996.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. I once asked Mischka why he and his mother didn't travel together on this and other occasions and he said, as something self-evident (though I didn't and don't understand why) that it was safer to travel separately.
12. Ibid.
13. Michael Danos, 'Ocuparmy' (Musings), 25 July 1994.
14. I called him 'Misha', the Russian diminutive, which his brothers usually called him in childhood, but in this chapter – to impose a measure of separation from my subject that should not be mistaken for detachment – I have used the name by which he was familiarly known to Helga and other German-speakers in the 1940s and later: 'Mischka'.
15. Interview with Jan Danos, Riga (2006), 7 September.
16. Ibid.
17. Jan Danos (interviews September 2006) was adamant that the Danos family was part of Riga's 'German society' (*nemetskoe obshchestvo*), though neither Bičevskis nor Stauvers (both Latvians) saw the Danos family in these terms. On the basis of the older and younger sons' affiliations they seem to have had at least a foot in Latvian society too.
18. Interview with Jan Danos, Riga (2006), 9 September.
19. The undated diary entry follows those for November 1939.
20. Interview with Helga Danos (2007), 23 November.
21. Michael Danos, 'Nationalism' (Musing), 14 October 1991/4 April 1992.
22. Recalling Jensen's suggestions that he come back to work at Heidelberg after his postdoc, Mischka wrote: 'I . . . did not want to move to Heidelberg; as I . . . told Jensen, the Institute [of physics] was the only place in Europe where I felt free, and at home; in contrast, I felt quite a pressure in Germany . . .' Michael Danos, 'Kruzhki' (Musings), 14 September 1994.
23. See the chapters by Ian Britain and Hsu-Ming Teo in this volume.

20

Donald Friend: An Australian Artist's Affair with Italy

Ian Britain

'All I want is love, sex, money,' Donald Friend announced in his diary during a visit to Italy in 1950, when he was nearing his 35th birthday.[1] For dauntless cheek, you may think, as well as ruthless simplicity, this is beaten only by the Beatles' refrain a decade or so later: 'Money, that's what I want.' At hardly any stage in his life did Friend ever want *for* money, sex or love. By the general measure of such things – if we take it, say, from Philip Larkin's rueful belief that 'sexual intercourse began in 1963', just before 'the Beatles' first LP' – Friend was extraordinarily privileged for his time, and enviably precocious.

Of the youthful Donald, at least, it would be hard to surpass, in succinctness and accuracy, Jane Austen's famous description of her 20-year-old Regency diva, Emma Woodhouse: 'handsome, clever and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition'. So the description kicks off, though the real, subtle kick is in the words that immediately follow: 'seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence'. *Seemed* . . .? *Some* . . .?

On the verge of middle age, the time of his European travels in the early 1950s, Friend may have recognized himself all too well in this ambiguous description. Here he is in London at the end of 1952: 'I spent the evening alone at home, feeling a bit blue, and reading Jane Austen, which is not my favourite occupation'[2] – perhaps because it made him bluer, though it's interesting that he persists enough to call it an occupation.

The more endowed we are with nature's, or culture's, blessings, the more precarious they may appear to us, especially as we age, and the more inappeasable our hunger for them may become. Friend was the scion of a gilded caste in twentieth-century Australia but his experiences as an adolescent of the 1930s Depression – relatively limited as his exposure to this was – taught him not to trust to the security or stability of this world.

He was the second of four children born to a prosperous grazier father and a highly cultivated socialite mother. His father ran two large properties in rural New South Wales, while his mother, who hailed from a dynasty of fine art auctioneers in Sydney, presided over a salon of musicians, singers and others of an aesthetic bent at her spacious, stylish flat in Double Bay. The

flat had to be given up in 1931 (Donald's mother was threatened with insolvency) and Donald was taken out of his current school, Sydney Grammar (he'd earlier been at the exclusive Cranbrook and Tudor House) and packed off with his brothers to one of the family properties, Glendon, near Moree, in far northwestern New South Wales.

'The end of the rich pampered life', he labelled this period more than 50 years later,[3] somewhat over-dramatizing the situation, but faithfully registering the sense of sudden deprivation. At Glendon, he was expected to join in the hard, ceaseless work of running the property, mustering and castrating sheep among other menial and domestic tasks that previously a team of servants and hired hands had performed. Some of these employees were retained, however, and his indulgent mother saw to it that Donald had a studio on the homestead, where he could retreat to paint and draw, carve, design fabrics and ruminate in the diary he'd begun keeping at Cranbrook a few years earlier.

Following his sexual initiation with an alluring itinerant worker from Thailand, which threatened to cause a family crisis,[4] he ran away from the property, with his mother's complicity, and fetched up in northern Queensland and the Torres Strait Islands, where he lingered for a couple of years before coming back to Sydney to attend the classes of émigré artist Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo. It was the start of a pattern in Friend's life that was soon to expand to a global, a truly 'transnational' scale: a pattern of escape and return, as one might sum it up, except that each of these components at every stage involved for him an advance in self-exploration or self-confrontation. They were never merely forms of escap*ism* or retreat.

You can see the resoluteness of this process from some of the earliest entries in Friend's dairies, when he was just 14 and as the Depression was making its first visible dents in Australian daily life: 'I have lately studied myself,' he declared in September 1929, and 'the reward of my studies is this – I am a state of being gay, longing to leave this horrible political tangle of Australia.' A state of optimism, he means (there's no conscious sexual connotation to these words; he wasn't as precocious as that). A state of complacency, if not selfishness, may also be detectable; his obliviousness to the 'tangle' elsewhere in the world is certainly naïve, if understandable in one so young and so cosseted up to now. But that's not to diminish the extraordinary steeliness and scale of his ambitions:

> I long to travel on the Continent, and meet the gaiety in Paris, of great and untalented persons. At other times I am greatly impressed by pure beauty . . . Each new phase leaves some small expression or trait in my soul . . .
>
> Arthur Benjamin [the composer] . . . proposed that I should journey to England with him! He shall introduce me, and I shall seriously take up

> painting and drawing of which I am so fond . . . Perhaps this day shall put an absolutely new light on my life.[5]

In 1931, confined to Glendon and deprived of what aesthetic consolations Sydney life had once offered him, he observed: 'Australia is a very beautiful country, and full of adventure. But it is not the land of an artist, no, not this uneducated and new land for me.'[6] By the mid-1930s, Donald was already on the way to realizing his ambition and had moved to London, where he enrolled at the Westminster Art School, found a gallery for his works and publicly exhibited them for the first time in a group, then a solo, show. He also made his first forays on the Continent, fell in love with another alluring 'exotic' (this time a young Nigerian called Ladipo), travelled to West Africa, where he started drafting a book on rituals and arts of the Yoruba people, and then, following the outbreak of the Second World War, decided to come back home. His first one-man exhibition in Australia was held at the Macquarie Galleries in Sydney in 1942 just before he enlisted in the Australian infantry forces.

No great success as a soldier, by his own confession, he nevertheless made those confessions the basis of his first success as a writer, with the publication of extracts from his wartime diaries in 1943, when he was still just 28. And his consummate talents as a figurative draughtsman were sufficiently recognized for him to be appointed as an official war artist a couple of years later. In this capacity he served in New Guinea and parts of Indonesia in the last year of the war, significantly noting at one point, when based on Morotai in the Moluccas, how 'all tropic islands are alike. The jungle is international.'[7]

Beguiling as the tropics remained for him throughout his life, there's a hint of ennui in that epithet 'international'. (Friend would not have been a friend of the homogenizing tendencies that we now call globalization.) The *trans*national scale of his ambitions for himself, and the pattern of escape and return necessary to the self if it was to be extended, properly fuelled and duly tested, were succinctly captured in a diary entry of his a couple years earlier, while he was still doing his army training in Australia:

> Life's not long enough to do all the things I want to. For immediate consideration after the war I want to do a lot of painting, publish the *Disasters* [his title, after Goya, for his wartime diaries], finish off my book on the Yoruba, spend a while in Tahiti. Then I must return to Africa. After that Europe, Spain, Greece, France. Then places like Cambodia and the Celebes. Then probably back here again to remind the world I'm alive, since there is no joy in creating unless one can be confirmed in what one has done by the approval of people who understand.[8]

It's a sign of his maturity that he can now accept Australia as an important token of 'the world', or at least of the world that matters to him as an artist.

As it turned out, on being demobilized in 1946, Friend retained an attachment to the now legendary community of artists and bohemians at Merioola House in Sydney; but his home town could not be expected to contain him for long stretches and, while offering him sufficient stimuli and challenges, it also contained too many of the world's distractions. 'The sooner I leave the better,' he confided in his diary at the end of August 1947. 'Here I don't work enough, or seriously enough. They are right, it seems, the people who say my work is frivolous. Certainly, it lacks depth.'[9]

The creative self must be opened to scrutiny and challenge once again; so, after making an extended return visit to his friends in the Torres Strait Islands, Friend sought out a new horizon, opting to settle in the country, in a former gold town, Hill End, near Bathurst in New South Wales with Donald Murray, his close friend and occasional lover for more than a decade.

The comforts and challenges of a home in a new place, of a relatively stable relationship and of burgeoning recognition in a profession of his choice were not to be scorned; neither were they ever enough for Donald Friend. Within a couple of years, he'd left Australia again for Europe, and it was there and then we find him compiling that list of abiding 'wants' in his life: love, sex, money. If we read on, this turns out to be not quite as brutally definitive as he first avers, not quite 'all'. In the next breath he supplements and elaborates on those basic items with: 'Work and a good place in the country and friends. In other words, Attilio [his current beloved, of whom more later], painting, bank account, Hill End *with* Donald Murray.'[10]

In one sense these may represent, if not pretty standard home thoughts from abroad, then the dilemmas of expatriates or transnationals everywhere: perpetually divided within, gnawingly conscious of missing someone, or some place, all of the time, wherever they are. Yet Friend was more than usually resourceful – for all that he claimed of his lack of resources – in mitigating any such dilemma and turning it to creative effect. Among past and present Australian expatriates (and I've studied a few[11]) I'd be hard pressed to name any that was *more* 'transnational' than he: there was that first, youthful foray in Europe, the Nigerian venture at the end of the 1930s, his spells in New Guinea and Indonesia as war artist, and then, following his return visit to Europe in the early 1950s, a quickly hatched trip to Ceylon (as it then was) in 1957 that turned into a five-year stay, and jaunts in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia in the mid-1960s that prefaced a decade-or-longer commitment to Bali – all punctuated by long (in some instances more than three-year-long) return trips to Australia, where he was also to return for the last decade of his life.

Much of this travelling was done long before the jet age made global commuting a routine exercise. Friend turned himself into what we might call a serial expatriate, and as remarkable as the restlessness in him that his to-ings and fro-ings reflect are the speed and ease with which he adapted himself to each destination. Well, more than just adapted. Clive James has recently

saluted Friend's generation of Australian artists and their capacity to submit to another country, another culture – 'the big secret of learning anything', as he contends.[12] Friend, it needs to be added, was exceptional in this company for his multiple, and successive, 'submissions' – and perhaps, too, for the readiness and passion of his periodic 're-submissions' to his homeland. Just as I've found little real evidence in him of the fear, shame, guilt or other forms of a tortured self-consciousness with which homosexual men of that generation are customarily associated, so I've found nothing in him of that 'condition of Australian cultural self-hatred', that 'self-tortured relationship with the rest of the world', by which a recent British reviewer of Peter Carey's novels is still inclined to characterize the Australian sense of identity.[13]

It has become a bit of a cliché – cheap comfort for us lesser mortals – to point out these insecurities that lurk beneath the confident front of this or that celebrity. With Donald Friend, I'm interested, rather, in the inner core of confidence that lies beneath the vaunted anxieties and protested deprivations. What impelled and sustained his elaborate trajectories – this ceaseless, radiant embrace of the world?

To answer such questions comprehensively would require a full-scale biography (on which I am only just embarking). But we can get a clear enough sense of his imperatives by focussing on the relatively, seemingly, brief period of Friend's 'submission' to Italy after the end of the Second World War: *relative*, that is, to the length of time spent there by so many of his

Figure 19 Donald Friend, 'The Studio, Florence, 1949' (1949). Ink and wash on paper, 30 × 47 cm. Private collection © owner.

fellow Australians, artists or otherwise, and to his own protracted tarrying in Asian climes; *seemingly*, because the time he physically spent on Italian soil – I calculate this to be no more then about a year and a half, broken up and mainly spread over a four-year period between 1949 and 1953 – gives no idea of the pervasiveness of its allure for him, long after he left but also before he even arrived. It is fitting, I think, that it should be this milieu, at what turned out to be the mid-point of his life, that prompted his ruminations on what he most wanted out of life. It didn't satisfy all those wants – for such a compulsive transnational no one country or culture *could* – but it did help crystallize for him (as it does for us) their range, complexity and interdependence.

His initial, instinctive attraction to Italy can be traced back as far as his childhood and schooling in Sydney, and especially perhaps his artistic apprenticeship under the charismatic Datillo-Rubbo. Bearing out another of Clive James's generalizations about Australian expatriate artists that they often 'discovered Europe before [they] got there', Friend wrote in his diary on beholding Florence in 1949:

> It's fantastically beautiful – every house, every street shows something admirable, something one has known about as long as one was conscious of art. I feel sick and lonely but at last a place that pours over me the richness of the civilisation I need.[14]

The feeling of loneliness here alludes to other needs consonant with those basic 'wants' he articulated elsewhere; and in these departments of love and sex you could say that his engagement with Italy resulted in a kind of marriage that survived for many years after he left. Given the speedy, and continuing, succession of 'infidelities' on both sides, 'marriage' is maybe too strong a word. But certainly, the intimacy he forged with the young Italian fisherman and diver, Attilio Guaraccino, on the second of his four visits, proved to be one of the most sustained (and sustaining) relationships of Friend's life. Winning him away from fellow painter, Jeffrey Smart, Friend managed to pack Guaraccino off to Australia before he himself returned there. Many battles lay ahead in Australia, not so much with Smart as with Guaraccino, whose main sexual interest was clearly in women, for all the emotional (and occasionally physical) generosity he could extend to his own sex. But Guaraccino – if often at a considerable geographical distance – remained as attentive a friend of Friend's as Friend's own prickly personality allowed. He (Guaraccino, that is) continues to live on in Australia, some several years after Friend's death, and has just married for a third time (to a fellow Italian in this instance).

At Portofino, on the first of his post-war visits to Italy, Friend relished 'the beauty of the place . . . the coloured houses clustered round a tiny piazza . . . and villas, bright pink set in gardens on the steep olive-covered

slopes'; but, never one to idealize any place in Italy – even Florence, as it turned out – he was soon complaining that 'This is too pretty and picturesque, too much of a decoration. And the people are simple, aloof . . . My thoughts cannot turn away from love and my need of love.'[15] Yet once he had moved to Florence he soon found love, or thought he had, in the arms of young Rolando, who came to model for him: 'a boy of seventeen, with a good figure' as he described him.[16] The second of his visits to Italy was dominated by his passion for Guarracino and the battle over this youth that he waged with Smart. On the third of his visit to Italy – with Guarracino now safely installed in Australia, though not entirely out of Smart's clutches if we can believe Smart's own version in his memoir[17] – Friend allowed himself temporarily to fall for the charms of yet another young and obliging model, Rosario.

Was this Friend's real attraction to Italy, or, subsequently, any foreign place far from the conventions and constrictions of his native land? Christopher Isherwood in his autobiography took mischievous pleasure in puncturing any exalted explanations for his own continental cavortings in the 1930s: 'For Christopher', he famously insisted, 'Berlin meant boys.'[18] And of Donald Friend and his adventures in Italy in the 1950s one might easily (too easily) conclude the same, from various sorts of testimony, including some of his own.

In the first flush of his passion for Guarracino, he reflects: 'I am become a sentimental pederast.'[19] (Hazardous, potentially inflammatory words in today's moral climate, unmoved as it is by any appeal to the classical lineage of this disposition; so one needs to remember that when Friend first met him this 'boy' was an 18-year-old, and in Guarricino's case an extraordinarily mature and savvy one.) It was a few days after this declaration that Friend made his more general confession: 'All I want is love, sex, money.' More than a decade and a half later, back in Australia, and when his passion for Guarracino (by now married to the first of his wives) had mellowed into a rich friendship, Friend found himself

> rather bogged down in a sort of contentment . . . One wonders, is one's personal view of geography entirely coloured by sexual fantasies? I suppose so. The world outside one's own particular location sometimes seems to promise to be one vast sodatic zone.[20]

Our age's now almost unconscious immersion in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, or its vulgarized forms, have encouraged us to view sexual impulses as somehow in conflict with, or at the bottom of, seemingly more 'civilized', cultural imperatives. No less an authority on Australian literary life in its cosmopolitan contexts than David Marr, the biographer of Patrick White, confidently pronounced on a recent television history of homosexuality in Australia that up to his own generation at least battalions of expatriate gays,

from whatever walks of life, had left their homeland for no other reason than to assuage their sexual thirsts, for which they could be prosecuted if they stayed at home. Forget any cover story such as cultural enrichment. These pink-blooded Aussie blokes were checking out the rest of the world for 'roots' – Marr's own word, and he didn't mean the ancestral variety.[21]

There's probably a lot of truth in such pronouncements, which might also be applicable to these young men's more red-blooded brothers or blue-stockinged sisters or whatever other brands of expat there've been. And, of course, it's hard to be less than blunt on TV documentaries, or your point is missed. The beauty of a diary, as a form of historical record, is that you can be as blunt as you like or you need, but you also have the space for more leisured, more nuanced reflection and for all manner of retrospective qualifications or corrections. These may not be truer than first impressions or spontaneously made judgements but they complicate the picture in interesting and challenging ways. I recommend Donald Friend's diaries of his brief encounter with Italy for its capacity, in so small a compass, to abet but also to challenge the notion that sexual urges underlie all other imperatives, including aesthetic ones. There are numerous passages in these diaries that suggest a much more complicated and dynamic interaction between the sexual and the aesthetic.

You will remember how Friend immediately qualifies his basic wish list of love, sex and money with other items: work, friends, Guarraccino, painting and so on. The drawing of the young Guarracino that adorns the jacket of the third volume of his published diaries is a testimony to the power of sex as an artistic muse – but may it not also suggest the power of an aesthetic object as a sexual turn-on? Friend's observations on his other, more transient Italian lovers suggest something of the same dialectic. Here he is cataloguing the charms of Rolando on just the second day that the boy came to model for him: 'Good humour, and the largest member I have ever seen, which waggles when he coughs. I am tremendously pleased about it all – boy, waggle, drawings and every detail of my present life, the good life of the artist.'[22] The focus of Rosario's interest for Friend was located elsewhere on the boy but the nature of the interest was similarly complex: 'I *am* happy with Rosario, and enchanted with him. His face expresses the whole person – half innocent, yet savage, a little cunning and not very intelligent, but extremely affectionate. And young enough (seventeen) to be bossed about a bit. And certainly perfect to draw.'[23]

Prompted by reading Bernard Berenson's *Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, and frustrated by its lack of any explanation for why artists do what they do, Friend was happy to supply his own: 'Cock, cunt and spaghetti I think would cover the field.' A reversion, you might think, to the blunt, unillusioned fundamentalism of Christopher Isherwood, David Marr and Friend himself in certain moods. Except for this teasing rider – that cock and cunt 'provide the painter with the only means of comprehending his fellow beings *from*

within'.[24] There's still the possibility that it's just a wry anatomical joke, but I think it's also a reflection on his own motivations and on the difficulty, when observing these, of making any rigid divisions between the aesthetic and the sexual.

Friend was apt to disdain artists in whom he could detect such divisions more clearly. Christopher, or his kind, were among them – not Isherwood as such but his chief pal from the old Berlin days, W.H. Auden, who was living in Ischia with his American partner and fellow writer, Chester Kallman, around the time Friend arrived on the island. From Friend's account, you might get the impression they'd just moved from one fleshpot to another: 'God knows how these creatures write poetry: it would seem from their talk that they give themselves day and night without cease to promiscuous sex with the local boys and think of nothing else.'[25]

However accurate or fair this may be as an account of the Auden ménage, what's significant is the yearning it evinces in Friend for something more: an extra dimension to the wanderlust of the artist, though not just an optional add-on. Friend would be the last to condemn either wandering or lusting as long as he felt that each was somehow integrally combined with the development of the creative self. He once remarked in a filmed interview: 'art's not really a hobby, you know, that's if you're really going to be a painter. It's the whole thing, it's yourself, it's self-recognition.'[26] It would be tempting to say of him what his great friend, fellow painter, fellow wanderer and temporarily (very temporarily) bedfellow, Margaret Olley, said of herself in a recent interview: '*Art* was my big love affair.'[27] Except that in Friend's case at least, that would still make too much of a separation between art and love when, for him, at their best and truest they were inextricably fused. His sojourn in Italy provided him with some of those best and truest moments.

Notes

1. Paul Hetherington (ed.) (2005) *The Diaries of Donald Friend* [*DFD*], vol. 3 (Canberra: National Library of Australia), 13 April 1950, p. 70.
2. Ibid., 23 December 1952, p. 177.
3. Paul Hetherington (ed.) (2006) *DFD*, vol. 4 (Canberra: National Library of Australia), 1 January 1983, p. 577.
4. Gwen Friend (1994) *My Brother Donald: A Memoir of Australian Artist Donald Friend* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson), pp. 49–52, 57–61, 97.
5. Anne Gray (ed.) (2001) *DFD*, vol. 1 (Canberra: National Library of Australia), 21 September 1929, pp. 7–8.
6. Ibid., 5 July 1931, p. 47.
7. Paul Hetherington (ed.) (2003) *DFD* (Canberra: National Library of Australia), vol. 2, 27 May 1945, p. 247.
8. *DFD*, vol. 1, 5 October 1943, pp. 304–305.
9. *DFD*, vol. 2, 31 August 1947, p. 540.
10. *DFD*, vol. 3, 13 April 1950, p. 70.

11. See for example my book (1997) *Once an Australian: Journeys with Barry Humphries, Clive James, Germaine Greer and Robert Hughes* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press).
12. Clive James (2006) 'How the Australian Painters Came Home' lecture to the National Trust, Sydney, 27 June; published in shortened version as (2006) 'Out from under the Balcony' *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 September.
13. James Wood (2006) 'Damaged Beasts' *London Review of Books*, 8 June.
14. Clive James (1989) 'Approximately in the Vicinity of Barry Humphries' in *Snakecharmers in Texas* (London: Picador), pp. 37–38; *DFD*, vol. 3, 3 June 1949, p. 12.
15. *DFD*, vol. 3, 12 May 1949, p. 9.
16. Ibid., 22 June 1949, p. 16.
17. Jeffrey Smart (1996) *Not Quite Straight: A Memoir* (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia), pp. 285–286, 303–304.
18. Christopher Isherwood (1977) *Christopher and His Kind* (London: Methuen), p. 10.
19. *DFD*, vol. 3, 10 April 1950, p. 70.
20. Ibid., 28 October 1966, p. 643.
21. Con Anemogiannis (2004) *The Hidden History of Homosexual Australia* (Australia: Fortian Productions/Special Broadcasting Service [SBS] Television).
22. *DFD*, vol. 3, 22 June 1949, p. 16.
23. Ibid., 14 March 1952, p. 135.
24. Ibid., 11 May 1952, p. 141.
25. Ibid., 10 January 1950, p. 51.
26. Archive footage reproduced in 'Artist Donald Friend's original diaries on display' (2006) *The 7.30 Report* (Australian Broadcasting Commission TV [ABC]), 14 November.
27. Janet Hawley (2005) 'Good Golly, Miss Olley' *Age Good Weekend*, 24 September, p. 23.

21

Gypsy in the Sun: The Transnational Life of Rosita Forbes

Hsu-Ming Teo

In the summer of 1920, Rosita Forbes was stranded at the Milan railway station. It was the era of *Il Biennio Rosso* – Italy's Two Red Years. Communist riots had broken out and the station was shut down. Forbes's luggage was locked in a sealed carriage. She was en route to Libya where she would attempt to travel to the Islamic holy city of Kufra – a city in the middle of the desert forbidden to infidels. Impatient with the delay, she harangued a stranger to retrieve her luggage for her. 'He found an axe, and with the help of two or three lads who followed him as if he were the Baptist, broke open the wagon and produced my luggage.' He introduced himself as Benito Mussolini, editor of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, and asked her for an interview because, he told her, 'It is the age of women.' When she confided her plan to travel to Kufra, he laughed. 'That will never be. Some man will make love to you, and so it will end.'[1]

Nearly a decade later, she was in Rome and was summoned to the Palazzo Venezia by Mussolini, by that time *Il Duce*. 'Well, was I right – did somebody make love to you at Bengazi?' he demanded.

> 'No,' I retorted. 'You weren't right about anything. I got to Kufra.'
>
> 'I know you did. That journey of yours will be useful to us – when I send an army in your steps.'
>
> 'You won't get it over the dunes,' I said.[2]

But she was wrong. In 1931 – 10 years after her legendary journey to the Senussi desert capital – Forbes, the self-appointed champion of Arab independence and unity, who had spent much of the decade persuading Western officials of the possibility of a 'United States of Arabia', read that Mussolini's tanks and aircraft had followed her route and conquered the city.

Rosita Forbes (1893–1967) achieved fame as the first infidel woman to travel to Kufra – a journey that nearly cost her life. The Antwerp Geographical Society and the French Geographical Society awarded her gold medals

and she was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. She was a glamorous and sensational figure, for not only was she a stalwart and indefatigable traveller, but she also graced the social pages of newspapers and magazines in Britain, Europe and North and South America throughout the interwar years.

Forbes travelled extensively through the Middle East and Africa in the early 1920s, then through Central Europe, Central Asia and the Soviet Union, before turning her attention to South America in the mid-1930s and the Bahamas by the late thirties. She was a prolific writer of travel books as well as fiction and autobiography, producing three volumes that told not only of her travels, but also of her encounters with famous people. She counted among her friends and acquaintances large swathes of British and European aristocracy, politicians and dignitaries, King Feisal of Syria and later Iraq, King George of Greece, Queen Marie of Rumania and King Boris of Bulgaria. She hero-worshipped Kemal Ataturk and Franklin Roosevelt, and was charmed by Mussolini, who flattered her vanity, and repulsed by Hitler, who did not.

Longing to live a life of significance, Forbes nurtured ambitions as a foreign correspondent or commentator on international affairs. But despite the precedents of women journalists Flora Shaw, Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Banks, she was told that, at the age of 28, she was too young and too good-looking. 'As long as you look like that,' the financial manager of the *Daily Telegraph* informed her, 'you haven't a chance to be taken seriously.'[3] Without a university education, she did not have the intellectual *gravitas* of a Gertrude Bell or Freya Stark.[4] Perhaps this was because her interests, her 'causes,' as well as her life were peripatetic. It must have pained her to realize that no matter how widely she travelled and how many foreign dignitaries she interviewed, the British government was unlikely to consult her for her expertise, as they did Bell and Stark. When the Second World War broke out, she hurried back to England to 'do something useful', but rebuffed, she went to Canada on a lecture tour for the National Council of Education to raise funds for the Canadian war effort. She retired to the Bahamas after the war and died there in 1967.

Forbes's first autobiography, *Adventure*, was written at the height of her fame in 1928.[5] Combining travel narratives of the Middle East and Africa with accounts of various women's lives, it exudes confidence and enjoyment of her own life and celebrity. By the time she wrote her second autobiography, *A Gypsy in the Sun* (1944), and its sequel, *An Appointment with Destiny* (1946), however, she was not only older, but she and her husband had lost a fortune in the stock market crash and she had tasted the limits of her celebrity.[6] *Gypsy in the Sun* is more tentative and fragile, but also more urgent, penned in the midst of war. Forbes recognized that her travelling days were almost over, and this was one of the last books she would write.

Figure 20 Photograph of Rosita Forbes, from Forbes (1944) *Gypsy in the Sun* (New York: E. Dutton & Co.).

In obvious ways, Forbes lived a transnational life, physically transgressing boundaries of all sorts. She moved back and forth across national boundaries, crossing oceans, continents and vast geographical landscapes – deserts, mountain ranges, rainforests, jungles and the steppes of Central Asia; and she crossed class, racial, religious and cultural lines when she 'went native'. These experiences were transformed into saleable cultural knowledge, commodities she traded for fame, public attention and social invitations as she moved back and forth across the transatlantic world: her home in London, weekends in country houses, speaking engagements in North America and summer holidays with royalty in eastern Europe.

This chapter considers how the national, transnational and imperial are imbricated in Rosita Forbes's writings from the 1920s to the 1940s. Although the abundance of information about Forbes, gleaned from her three autobiographical works and her 11 travel books, saves us from the methodological problems encountered by other authors in this volume who have to piece together 'heterographies' from biographical fragments, Forbes's life story is still partial and incomplete. Her books foreground her public achievements, while her personal life is marginalized except to claim status and authority from her class and family background. Her accounts are also fragmentary and journalistic, often reporting conversations held or overheard rather than providing sustained reflection on her experiences or personal life. In her travel books of the mid-twenties to mid-thirties especially, 'Rosita Forbes' – the character in her story – is often sidelined as she assumes the role of listener and observer.

In those sections of her work where Forbes is to the fore, we learn little about her interior life. Rather, what we see in each book are deliberate, self-conscious performances or presentations of different selves. As Anthony Giddens has pointed out, the modern individual faces a diversity of possible selves because identity in the modern world is no longer firmly structured by social hierarchies and traditional authorities: 'Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her own biography.'[7] Telling stories about one's life and one's self is an important process, not only constructing an acceptable interpretation of the self, but also orienting oneself towards the future[8] – something Forbes was apparently doing when she penned *Gypsy in the Sun* and *An Appointment with Destiny* on the verge of retirement from public life.

The traveller/narrator Forbes constructs in each book is thus shaped by different models of the traveller and of the modern woman who positions herself in relation to different nations and cultures. These identities are also shaped by how she understands and presents herself in temporal relation to her larger life story. She is, at various times, the pert young flapper (*Unconducted Wanderers*); the romantic solitary traveller overwhelmed with sentiment and succumbing to what Kathryn Tidrick has called 'the English

romance with Arabia'[9] (*The Secret of the Sahara: Kufara*); the purposeful New Woman striding through the new republics of Central Asia (*Conflict: Angora to Afghanistan*); the explorer and political analyst (*Eight Republics in Search of a Future* and *Forbidden Road: Kabul to Samarkand*); the sensationalistic ghoul of modern penny-dreadfuls (*Women Called Wild*) and the reflective, middle-aged woman – perhaps conscious of fading celebrity – looking back on her life, anxious to explain and defend her achievements and mark her place in a world from which she was retiring (*Gypsy in the Sun* and *An Appointment with Destiny*).[10] Within each book the scenarios created by her travels set the stage for Forbes to present herself in different guises. Throughout all her books, however, she conveyed a strong sense that the story and significance of her life were bigger than the nation; hers was a life that, in the words of the editors of this volume, 'drew emotional energy, ideological conviction or practical understanding from eclectic, transnational experience'.

National Significance through a Transnational Life

Joan Rosita Torr was born in 1893 in Lincolnshire, where her family had lived for generations. Her father was a landowner and social reformer who stood for Parliament as a Liberal before falling out with the party and returning to farming. Her mother was half-Scots, half-Spanish, with relations in Toledo and Peru. In 1911, she married Colonel Ronald Forbes, whom she accompanied to India, China, South Africa and Australia where, she later wrote flippantly, 'I acquired a little self-confidence – and I mislaid my husband.' She divorced Forbes in 1917, citing his infidelity and abusive temper. It was a traumatic experience; the divorce took place 'much against my parents' wishes, for they regarded marriage as indissoluble'.[11]

In many ways, Forbes's idea of biography is highly conventional. Barbara Caine has pointed out that the 'model of biography as the study of great or exceptional people makes women marginal . . . It reinforces the idea that only public achievement is significant and that those women who lead predominantly domestic lives are of no particular interest.'[12] Thus, although Forbes provides the bare bones of her background in order to highlight her status as a member of the landed gentry, *Gypsy in the Sun* is focused largely on her public achievements. The things that might have made for common ground with women of her time – an unhappy childhood and even unhappier first marriage, with its hints of verbal abuse, and a difficult divorce – are quickly dismissed. She was insistent that she had little in common with her compatriots and remembered little of her childhood except a haunting frustration of being '"different" from other people and therefore "never right"'.[13] Yet it was her unhappiness that drove her to the incessant travel that would garner her fame as a transnational celebrity.

A sense of patriotism, duty and adventure, a deep-seated desire to live a meaningful life that transcended the domesticity or social rounds of middle-class womanhood and, no doubt, a desire to escape the gossip that must have accompanied her estrangement from her husband led Forbes to the Western Front during the First World War. Working as an ambulance driver, she was wounded and received two gold medals from the French government. She then embarked on a round-the-world tour with a friend. Out of that trip came her first travel book, *Unconducted Wanderers* (1919), as well as a taste for life abroad that she hoped would offer opportunities unavailable to her in England. After the war she went to Paris for the peace conference 'with forty pounds and the intention of earning my living'.[14] Like many middle-class women who earned their own living for the first time during the war, she probably enjoyed the power of economic independence and experienced a new sense of confidence and purpose. Turning to journalism in order to fund further travels abroad, she was commissioned by *The Daily Telegraph* to write articles on French colonization in North Africa. There she met King Feisal, Gertrude Bell, T.E. Lawrence and many of the British involved in re-shaping the Middle East. Sir Harold MacMichael, later governor of Palestine, introduced her to Military Intelligence who asked her to gather informal intelligence during her travels. From this little incident arose the unlikely myth (perhaps self-perpetuated) that she was a British spy – a romantic enough figure that Robert Boucard would attribute to her all sorts of improbable exploits and talents in his 1926 book on English spies.[15]

While her reputation in the interwar years would rest on her intrepid travel adventures, especially in the Middle East, Forbes herself made more grandiose claims as to her significance in that region. On the day that Syria learned the French had been granted a mandate over the country, she wrote, her lunch was interrupted by the Syrian Prime Minister, Hashim Pasha, who told her that the Damascus Assembly was voting unanimously to go to war with France. The following day, invited to speak to the Syrian House of Assembly, she persuaded the Assembly to refrain from a declaration of war against France:

> without thought and in the end without fear – I made the speech which, repeated and exaggerated, gave me for awhile some standing in the Arab world then struggling for independence from Baghdad to Cairo. Why the old Sheikhs listened I do not know. It may have been because I was British. My accent was that of the men with whom they had fought.[16]

Forbes must have been aware that this was an opportunity that, as a woman, would not have been afforded her had she not enjoyed privileges of race, class and nationality. 'It was, I suppose, proof of Arab goodwill towards England that nobody objected,' she wrote.[17] Being white and British guaranteed her safety and garnered respectful treatment, enabling her to ignore or

transcend local gender customs. Like Gertrude Bell and Mary Kingsley before her, she was treated by the colonized locals as an honorary white man with all the privileges that attended such a position. Her transnational ambitions were fulfilled, therefore, because of her national and imperial identity, which overrode the disadvantages of gender.

Many authors have noted that women travellers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had an ambivalent relationship with their Britishness and the structures of empire. The empire paved the way for British women's travels but provoked other anxieties. For Isabella Bird, an 'authoritative imperialist stance' and assertions 'that British rule brought security to the region was undercut by persistent anxiety about her own safety'.[18] Eileen Power, on the other hand, left England with great confidence in 1920 but developed a 'sense of inadequacy, and a somewhat diminished self-esteem' after her encounter with the sexism of British officialdom in India.[19]

Forbes was a fervent advocate of the superior colonizing skills of the British. Throughout the colonial regions she traversed, she insisted that the locals would have preferred British governance. In the Middle East, for example, she reported that Arabs openly declared a preference for British suzerainty to Turkish or French control. When she visited the Moroccan Islamic rebel, Sherif Ahmed er Raisuli in the Rif mountains, Raisuli (who had kidnapped US citizen Ion Perdicaris and held him for ransom) purportedly told her: 'All the mountain is yours. You are free to go where you will . . . I am honoured by your visit, for I have much friendship for your country.'[20] Forbes explained his statement as follows:

> This, I believe, is always true of the Arabs. For England lives by the men who serve her where Kipling's 'strange roads go down.' They keep her torch burning when, in the offices of Whitehall, a political draught or the accumulated dust of files and pigeonholes threaten its extinction.[21]

Far from allowing the paternalism or sexist assumptions of British officials to discourage her or undermine her confidence, Forbes used her class background, her experience as a traveller and her gift for making friends with the locals to stake a claim to greater expertise. The strategy she adopted to authorize her views was similar to the British men and women in India whose life writings have been examined by Mary Procida. As Procida argues, the British in India were convinced that

> through their lives and individual actions they could affect the course of British imperialism. In their autobiographies, these men and women presented their individual life stories as a mirror of the larger history of British imperialism in the subcontinent, as they constructed autobiographical narratives that linked the intimate personal events of their

individual and family histories with the public, political questions of the empire.[22]

Similarly, the identification of self and nation, person and place, are closely intertwined in *Gypsy in the Sun*. Unlike the British in India, however, Forbes's understanding of self not only encompassed the nation and empire but also transcended them. When she stood before the Damascus assembly in 1920 and urged non-aggression against the French, she was simultaneously the voice of British imperial reason *and* the exceptional Rosita Forbes whose interests and sympathies were not narrowly bound by gender or nation. She went on to fashion herself as a champion of Arab independence and nationalism, pleading their cause before the British and American people. In this she was, of course, following in the footsteps of T.E. Lawrence, with whom she would work for a time after her journey to Kufra brought her to the attention of British officials in Egypt. It was that journey, however, that eclipsed her previous efforts at political action and brought her fame around the Western world.

Kufra and Britishness

In 1920, Forbes and the Egyptian explorer Ahmed Mohammed Hassanein made arrangements to travel to Kufra together. The journey would be an extremely difficult one because of Senussi hostility towards Europeans and infidels. The Senussi were a religious order founded in 1837 by Islamic cleric Sayyid Mohammed Ali as-Senussi whose capital was the isolated city of Kufra in southeastern Libya. The only European to have reached Kufra in the nineteenth century was the German explorer, Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs. In preparation for her journey, Forbes, like Gertrude Bell and T.E. Lawrence before her, transformed herself into an Arab. Romantically, she invented for herself the identity of the Sitt Khadija, daughter of an Egyptian merchant, Abdullah Fahmi and his Circassian concubine – 'slave in the harem of the Bey of Tunis'. She used her social connections to acquire letters from King Feisal and the current Senussi leader, Sayed Mohamed Idris es-Senussi, urging free passage through the desert and support from the Senussi tribes. Forbes again attributed their help to her Britishness: 'the Senussi princes paid tribute to Britain in my person. This, I think, is the explanation of the help and support they accorded us.'[23]

Britishness was her passport through the world; but she also believed that the empire benefitted from people like herself, since her integrity in her everyday dealings with local people enhanced the prestige of Britain and created goodwill towards the empire. Because the empire was the British self writ large, as Procida has argued, even the 'little things' of daily life 'were intimately related to the fate of empire. The imperial community believed that the power of the individual, his "personality and prestige",

as one autobiographer described it, could "[win] the day"'.[24] National, imperial and transnational identities were thus mutually reinforcing in Forbes's account. More importantly, they overrode the limitations of gender. Procida, in her study of British travellers in Tibet, has argued that British women were able to renegotiate gender roles and to revert to a looser, freer adolescent femininity during their travels. Far from being limited by constraints of femininity – as Shirley Foster and Sara Mills have argued[25] – women 'frankly and unashamedly note those few instances in which they deviated from appropriate feminine behaviour' because they classified such behaviour as 'British'.[26]

Britishness, moreover, ensured the success of transition into another cultural identity. The history of the British in the East is punctuated with instances of men (and occasionally women) such as Richard Burton, Edward Lane, Gertrude Bell and T.E. Lawrence who transgressed racial and cultural boundaries to masquerade as 'natives'. Such a feat is celebrated in John Buchan's *Greenmantle*: 'We call ourselves insular, but the truth is that we are the only race on earth that can produce men capable of getting inside the skin of remote peoples. Perhaps the Scots are better than the English, but we're all a thousand per cent better than anybody else.'[27] Forbes made the same boast in writing of her success at moving across racial, cultural and religious lines. Transformed from an upper middle class English New Woman into a traditional Muslim Egyptian woman on pilgrimage, she delighted in her masquerade, proudly describing her adeptness at Muslim dress and her familiarity with the Qur'an and prayer rituals. She revelled in immersing herself in another identity and the challenge of mimicking the bodily movements of Arab women and speaking Arabic even in her dreams.[28]

Commodification of the Transnational Self

Masquerade taught her to commodify herself and to present 'Rosita Forbes' as a modern spectacle as well as a transnational brand connoting glamour, adventure and Oriental expertise. Returning to England, Forbes found herself much fêted, accorded an audience with King George and Queen Mary, and the guest of various socialites. Fame, as well as social and familial connections, opened the doors of European royalty, aristocracy, politicians and dignitaries. She enjoyed the publicity she cultivated, not only through her geographical adventures but also through her social ones. When she married Colonel Arthur T. McGrath in 1921, she wore black and sported a black wedding ring to signify the end of Rosita 'Forbes'. The result, she recalled, was that 'there were headlines in two continents, and when . . . I lectured about North Africa and the Middle East, reporters were far more interested in the quite ordinary black dress I had worn . . . than in the Arabs'[29] – an outcome at which she affected surprise.

Forbes understood the power of glamour that Stephen Gundle has discussed in relation to Hollywood and Italian mass culture in the mid-twentieth century. Glamour, Gundle argued, is 'associated with commercial strategies of persuasion':

> Through consumer products people are promised instant transformation and entry into a realm of desire. This effect is achieved by adding colorful, desirable, and satisfying ideas and images to mundane products, enabling them to speak not merely to needs but to longings and dreams.[30]

The product Forbes was selling was herself as a glamorous modern woman adventurer and international celebrity, advertised through the presentation of her modern female self as spectacle. As Liz Conor has argued about Australian women's experiences of modernity in the 1920s:

> perhaps for the first time in the West, modern women understood self-display to be part of the quest for mobility, self-determination, and sexual identity. The importance of this association of feminine visibility with agency cannot be overestimated . . . This dramatic shift from inciting modesty to inciting display, from self-effacement to self-articulation, is the point where feminine visibility began to be productive of women's modern subjectivities.[31]

Forbes's glamorous presentation of her modern self, as much as her feats of travel or her achievement of an exclusive interview with the elusive brigand, Mulai Ahmed er Raisuli, gained her a worldwide audience and ensured her a favourable reception when she went to the USA during winter 1923–1924 on a lecture tour about the Middle East. The 'brand' was lucrative, but she also faced the limitations of her strategy: 'Unfortunately, it was the moment of *The Sheik*. So I arrived in New York with one purpose and Americans welcomed me with another. They wanted romance. I wanted a United States of Arabia.'[32] While she 'talked earnestly of Anglo-Saxon responsibility across the Bridge of Asia', clubmen and clubwomen were only interested in asking her: 'Is there romance in the desert?'[33]

Travel and Transnational Mediations

This was a disappointing response for the woman who imagined that she might serve as a mediator of Arab interests in the Western world. Part of her inspiration for travel and her sense of self-worth rose from the political causes she espoused, particularly Arab nationalism. The possibility did not seem to occur to her that there might be a contradiction between her championing this cause and her pride in the British Empire. Nationalism was a notable feature of many of the places she travelled to – new nations

or republics born in the aftermath of the Great War. Her travel books, especially of the 1920s, chart the transnational impact of modern nationalism: the heady atmosphere of social and political reform and experimentation, the optimism regarding a utopian future found in many of these fledgling nations, only to fall prey to the splintering effects of tribalism.

Forbes was enchanted with the idea of political federation, seeing in the coherence of the USA and the USSR a blueprint for dealing with regions with disparate peoples and cultures. Travelling through the Middle East and central and eastern Europe, 'amazed and appalled by the number of "irredenti"[34] created by . . . politicians at Versailles,' she believed that the empires of old should be replaced by loose federations of states and tribes with porous trade boundaries.[35] Although she wrote earnest newspaper articles reporting what she saw in central and eastern Europe and advancing her views on federation, she felt ignored.[36] Commenting on this lack of attention, she concluded:

> At last it dawned on me that I had started with three serious mistakes. The most important was irrevocable. I had most foolishly been born a woman. I was young. In those days, I suppose, I was good-looking. In America, in Russia, in modern Europe, these things would not have mattered. But in England the triple handicap was too heavy.[37]

The privileges afforded her by race and nationality were of utmost importance in her travels, while her international fame and class position permitted her to defy traditional gender roles. Yet although she was spectacularly successful in disregarding the traditional roles prescribed for British women, her ambitions and public reception were ultimately constrained by her femininity, youth and beauty – and perhaps by her lack of an Oxbridge education.

Conclusion

By any measure Joan Rosita Forbes was an exceptional woman who seized the new opportunities opening up for women in the early twentieth century to fashion for herself an exciting transnational life. She was able to do so because she was well-positioned within various class, racial and imperial hierarchies. Her landed gentry background and the political connections of her father gave her access to military and political leaders, kingmakers and the socially powerful. This was a considerable advantage in her travels, especially in her dealings with North and South Americans and British imperial officialdom. Added to that were her traditional 'feminine' weapons of youth, beauty and the considerable personal charm that diverted Mussolini from revolutionary activities in order to retrieve her luggage at the Milan railway station. Yet her gender would have been a problem in her

travels through strongly patriarchal societies had not her racial and imperial identity as white and British permitted her treatment as an honorary white man backed by the military power of the British Empire.

Reading her autobiographies and travel writings, one is aware of the extent to which identity and self-representation are never static but always positional and performative. Where it suited her, she adopted the mantle of the national and imperial in order to overcome the disadvantages of being a woman in male-dominated societies. In recounting her story to a British and American readership, however, she acknowledged her debt to British imperial officialdom and the status and prestige of the empire globally before moving to an insistent self-display which emphasized her achievements *as a woman* – in order to demonstrate her *difference* from other women. Group identities are never easily reconciled with the claims of individualism.

Forbes's familial, class, racial and imperial identities thus enabled her to cross a remarkable number of national and geographical boundaries as well as gender, racial, religious and cultural ones. It was this continual cross-border movement that gave her self-worth and helped her to regard her life as a valuable and significant one, privately and publicly, at the levels of the personal and social, national and transnational. She achieved fame in the dawning age of modern celebrity, and she worked this for all it was worth, creating 'Rosita Forbes' as a transnational brand connoting the modern woman, glamorous adventure, Oriental expertise and cross-cultural knowledge. This was not only lucrative but personally fulfilling. She had become someone people wanted to know and to invite to social gatherings. She was important. If this was all it took to satisfy her, Forbes would surely have felt contented with her transnational life. However, she wanted more. She wanted to be politically significant, to be taken seriously as a social commentator and foreign correspondent and to be of service to a just cause. In desiring these things, she placed her happiness and contentment in the hands of others and in doing so, she tasted the limitations as well as the delights of her transnational life.

Notes

1. Rosita Forbes (1944) *Gypsy in the Sun* (New York: E. Dutton & Co.), p. 39.
2. Ibid., p. 197.
3. Ibid., p. 70.
4. See Georgina Howell (2008) *Gertrude Bell Queen of the Desert Shaper of Nations* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux); Jane Geniesse (2001) *Passionate Nomad The Life of Freya Stark* (New York: Modern Library).
5. Rosita Forbes (1928) *Adventure Being a Gipsy Salad—Some Incidents, Excitements and Impressions of Twelve Highly-Seasoned Years* (London: Cassell).
6. Rosita Forbes (1946) *Appointment with Destiny* (London: Cassell).
7. Anthony Giddens (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in Late-Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press), pp. 5, 53.

8. Luke Desforges (2000) 'Traveling the World: Identity and Travel Biography' *Annals of Tourism Research* 27:4, 932.
9. Kathryn Tidrick (1989) *Heart Beguiling Araby The English Romance with Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co.).
10. Rosita Forbes (1919) *Unconducted Wanderers* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head); (1921) *The Secret of the Sahara Kufara* (London: Cassell); (1931) *Conflict Angora to Afghanistan* (London: Cassell); (1933) *Eight Republics in Search of a Future: Evolution and Revolution in South America* (London: Cassell); (1937) *Forbidden Road—Kabul to Samarkand* (London: Cassell); (1935) *Women Called Wild* (London: Grayson & Grayson).
11. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, pp. 12, 15.
12. Barbara Caine (1994) 'Feminist Biography and Feminist History' *Women's History Review* 3:3, 250.
13. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, p. 11.
14. Ibid., p. 13.
15. Robert Boucard (1926) *Les dessous de l'espionnage anglais* (Paris: Editions Henry Etienne).
16. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, p. 35.
17. Ibid., p. 34.
18. Christine Doran (1998) 'Golden Marvels and Gilded Monsters: Two Women's Accounts of Colonial Malaya' *Asian Studies Review* 22:2, 189.
19. Ellen Jacobs (1998) 'Eileen Power's Asian Journey, 1920–21: History, Narrative, and Subjectivity' *Women's History Review* 7:3, 303–304.
20. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, p. 99.
21. Ibid., p. 99.
22. Mary A. Procida (2002) ' "The Greater Part of My Life Has Been Spent in India": Autobiography and the Crisis of Empire in the Twentieth Century' *Biography* 25:1, 130–131.
23. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, p. 42.
24. Procida ' "The Greater Part of My Life Has Been Spent in India"', 143.
25. Shirley Foster (1990) *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth Century Women Travellers and their Writings* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf); Sara Mills (1991) *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge).
26. Mary A. Procida (1996) 'A Tale Begun in Other Days: British Travelers in Tibet in the Late Nineteenth Century' *Journal of Social History* 30:1, 195.
27. John Buchan (1916) *Greenmantle*, ch. 2 http://www.classicreader.com/read.php/sid./bookid.1248/sec.3/
28. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, p. 38.
29. Ibid., p. 67.
30. Stephen Gundle (2002) 'Hollywood Glamour and Mass Consumption in Postwar Italy' *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4:3, 96.
31. Liz Conor (2004) *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 29.
32. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, p. 102.
33. Ibid., pp. 102, 104.
34. Regions under the political jurisdiction of one nation but linguistically, culturally or historically connected to other nations.
35. Forbes *Gypsy in the Sun*, p. 91.
36. Ibid., p. 91.
37. Ibid., p. 36.

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Note: The bold entries refer to the illustrations.