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Worldly Tastes: Mobility and the Geographical Imaginaries of Interwar Australian Magazines

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Abstract:

In the interwar period, increasingly mobile Australians began to contemplate travel across the Pacific, both towards Asia as well as to America. Contemporary writing reflected this highly mobile culture and Pacific gaze, yet literary histories have overlooked this aspect of cultural history. Instead of looking to Australian novels as indexes of culture, as literary studies often do, this article explores the range of writing and print culture in magazines, concentrating on notions of mobility through the Pacific. Its focus is on the quality magazines *MAN* and *The Home*, which addressed two distinct, gendered readerships, but operated within similar cultural segments. This article suggests that the distinct geographical imaginaries of these magazines, which linked travel and geographical mobility with aspiration and social mobility, played a role in consolidating and nourishing the class standing of their readers, and revealed some of their attitudes toward gender and race.

Keywords: Australia, Interwar Print Culture, Sea Travel, Pacific, celebrity, magazines

By the mid-1930s, Australians were enamored with travel and mobility, and took part in a burgeoning culture of tourism and organized travel.¹ While the development of rail

networks and the democratization of car travel stimulated new forms of domestic mobility, travel by sea remained the dominant aspect of Australians' interstate and overseas trips.² Popular sea journeys and destinations continued along established cultural ties of Empire, through the Suez and the Cape routes, and were oriented towards Britain and Europe, but many of these trips took in areas of the Pacific that hugged Australia's shores and extended into South East Asia. Australians also increasingly looked and travelled across the Pacific to America and beyond, particularly as travel through the Panama Canal boosted Pacific traffic on routes to Europe. Contemporary writing in magazines reflected this outward gaze, yet literary histories of the interwar period have elided this narrative, preferring instead a history of literature, and by implication, a history of culture, slanted toward radical cultural nationalism, based largely on a focus on high literary culture in book form.³ While scholars like David Carter, Jill Julius Matthews, Mitchell Rolls, Anna Johnston, and Victoria Kuttainen have begun to consider magazines as an important part of interwar Australian culture, the orientation of these magazines towards foreign travel and the international arena has yet to be examined.⁴ Further, studies of Australians travelling abroad, such as Angela Woollacott's, have drawn on magazines as sources, rather than looking at them as objects of study. While such studies indirectly point to the significance of magazines in cultural history, they leave in question what these publications offered their readers, and how they contributed to an Australian print culture that engaged broadly with the world.⁵

This article explores notions of mobility, especially across the Pacific, in the broad range of writing and visual print culture contained in Australian magazines of the 1930s, and considers what this imagined mobility meant to, and offered, its readers. Our focus is on two culture and leisure magazines, *MAN* and *The Home*, which operated in similar cultural segments of Australia's print market yet were distinct in content, approach, and readership. Where *The Home* addressed a largely female, upper- and middle-class audience, *MAN* spoke

to the working and middle-class, aspirational, urban man. Both magazines addressed an audience that was either highly mobile or that desired upward social mobility expressed in part through participation in modern commodity and consumer culture, of which leisure travel and an imagined participation in international modernity were key parts.⁶ Focusing on all issues of *MAN* and *The Home* within one particular year, 1937, the article follows a slice-approach to history: aiming for in-depth analysis rather than breadth over time, considering a range of content available within them, from fiction to feature articles, international affairs, society notes, photographs, and advertisements.⁷ By discussing an array of genres, albeit briefly, in connection to mobility and importantly in connection to each other, we heed the demand of scholars within the field of periodical studies to read and understand a magazine in its entirety and to approach it as “as a genre or set of genres in its own right rather than just a container of other genres.”⁸ In this, we share not only a methodological approach with the work of Canadianists Faye Hammill and Michelle Smith in *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture*, but also a thematic interest in the linkage between magazines, mobility, and aspirational culture.⁹ Rather than travel per se, however, it is the unity of each magazine in terms of its imagined geography that interests us most.¹⁰

In the interwar period, Australian mainstream magazines such as *MAN* and *The Home* connected readers’ geographical imaginaries to locations across the Pacific as settings of stories, destinations on liner routes, as trade partners in and with Asia, as topics of articles on international affairs, or as subjects of images and photographs, in ways that remain under-examined. Importantly, the imaginaries of the Pacific (and beyond) which these magazines offered their readers aligned with ideas of class, taste, and distinction, as well as gender and race.¹¹ The representations of travel and geographical mobility, we argue, were thus tightly interlinked with notions and aspirations of social mobility.

The Middlebrow and Mobility: Class, Gender and Geography

In interwar Australia, magazines and periodicals were an important index of society and its print culture, given that national book publishing was still “seriously underdeveloped.”¹² Weekly and monthly magazines, ranging considerably in content and style, reached an enormous audience and reveal much about the attitudes of their day. In the international market, the titles that upheld the highest production values were the upmarket “quality magazines” such as *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, and *Esquire*, that scholars have subsequently identified with the middlebrow.¹³ The middlebrow, as David Carter has put it, represents “the vast middle where high culture values are folded into the commodity form of quality entertainment or discerning lifestyle choice.”¹⁴ Recent work on the middlebrow as a cultural category has aimed to reclaim what people actually read in their day, including mainstream and quality magazines. The significance of this has been a greater alertness to the dynamics between print and society, and to the shifting and contingent nature of cultural value. As Hammill and Smith put it, by attending to the “dynamic model of interaction between different forms of cultural capital” middlebrow culture reveals “a constant, nervous juggling” between high culture and the mass market, “rather than a stable, in-between category.”¹⁵

The work of Pierre Bourdieu has been vital to the way in which middlebrow scholarship has attended to the social discriminations and identifications involved in judgments of taste.¹⁶ Paying attention to the processes of social validation or exclusion offered by acts of reading has uncovered the anxieties and aspirations of middlebrow as formative aspects of an emerging middle class. Long dismissed as “delightful entertainment” for female readerships and tastes, middlebrow culture has also often been characterized in gendered terms, as Erica Brown and Nicola Humble have separately noted.¹⁷ Yet, recent scholarship has begun to extend the category of the middlebrow to mid-range, masculine, non-fiction writing and its readerships. Kate Macdonald has observed that in the interwar

period, the cultural values of entertainment and elucidation, taste and self-education “were thrown into question,” and so too was “their relationship to changing ideas about masculinity and femininity.”¹⁸ Such re-negotiations of notions of gender in connection to cultural taste and value are also visible in the magazines we discuss here, in terms of their target female and male middlebrow readerships, and in the ways in which the magazines negotiated a particular Australian version of modernity in connection to mobility.

In contrast to the emergence of the middlebrow in Britain, Europe and North America, Carter argues that the middlebrow in Australia did not arise in reaction to experimental literary modernism, but through imported books, and through art more emphatically than literature, most especially in the quality magazines *Art in Australia* and *The Home*.¹⁹ As Richard Ohmann has noted of comparable quality magazines in 1890s America, such publications “nourished” a “class standing ... through instruction in fashion, home design, entertaining,” and also required a “counterpoint in literary culture” which they sustained.²⁰ In 1930s Australian magazines, we argue, fashion, design, entertainment, and literary culture operated as shaping aspects of class, as did travel and mobility. Quality magazines such as *MAN* and *The Home*, like their overseas equivalents *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair* played a key role in linking taste to reading and commodity culture, as well as in connecting Australians’ outward gaze to worldliness through middlebrow aspiration and international modernity. International in their outlook from the very first, in the way they consciously emulated sophisticated quality magazines imported from overseas, they also, we argue, linked social standing and mobility to particular terrains of geography and geographical mobility, in ways that consolidated the shared identities of their readers.

We draw here on the notion of the “geographical imaginary,” and relate it to forms of mobility represented in print culture.²¹ This term emerges from the work of Michael Watts, who builds on Walter Benjamin’s ideas about the role of wish-images in his consideration of

how local segments of culture come to form collective identities. A human geographer, Watts's work on wish-images and geography combines both the imagined apprehension of a domestic space and the imagined projection of an outer geography in constructing identity.

As Derek Gregory explains:

In human geography, a 'geographical imaginary' is typically treated as a more or less unconscious and unreflective construction, but it is rarely given any formal theoretical inflection. It usually refers to a spatial ordering that is tied either to the collective object of a series of imaginative geographies (e.g. 'the geographical imaginary of the Tropics') ... or to their collective subject (e.g. 'the imperial geographical imaginary'). Watts (1999) brilliantly combines the two ... [to examine the emergence] of collective identity tied to space, territory and land. Like Watts, most studies recognize the crucial importance of language, especially metaphor, and of visuality in producing these orderings.²²

The magazines we discuss here appealed to segments of the reading public, rather than the national readerships often addressed by the sorts of newspapers integral to Benedict Anderson's formulation of nationalism through "imagined communities."²³ They also drew heavily upon textual references to, and visualizations of, geography at home and abroad in appealing to the tastes of their readers, and in so doing confirmed readers' identities and images of themselves in the world. We argue that the act of gazing outward upon images of the world as a set of collective objects consolidated the collective subjectivity of readers in relation to class, gender, and race. Further, the concept of geographical imaginary allows us to consider how these magazines appealed to wish-images and consumer fantasies that connected the real world with its possibilities of mobility and actual tourist destinations to an imagined world that was purveyed as attainable and available for purchase through the pages of a commodity-saturated magazine.

The Home and MAN: Australian Tastemakers

The Home and *MAN* were two of a small number of quality magazines that circulated in the Australian marketplace of the interwar period. While such magazines never achieved the high print runs of popular periodicals, they nevertheless represented a culturally significant market segment: cultural tastemakers and agenda setters, whose impact filtered down into more popular, mass-market publications, and which played an important role in determining social ideas of distinction and in offering notions of aspiration or leisured fantasy. *The Home* was launched by Sydney Ure Smith into a fast-changing post-war world in February 1920, with Ure Smith as art editor and first Bertram Stevens, then Leon Gellert as literary editor.²⁴ In its own words, *The Home* was “Australia’s de luxe periodical of general interest”, selling initially for 2s6d, and after 1926 for two shillings.²⁵ At its height, print runs reached a modest 7,500 (compared to 126,000 copies of the mass magazine *Australian Women’s Weekly* sold in 1928),²⁶ but its exclusiveness was part of its cachet, and it was a highly significant part of Australia’s interwar culture, especially in the ways in which it merged art with commerce. In close to one hundred pages *The Home* presented a mix of advertising, fiction, verse, photos, local news, art reproductions, and features covering themes such as the arts, theatre, music and literature, interior design, furniture, home décor and architecture, gardening, society news and commentary, travel and leisure, beauty and fashion. *The Home* saw its readership in middle- and upper-class women keen to participate in a world of glamour, sophistication and high culture, even if only in imagined ways. Typical advertisements, which suggest its target audience, promoted for instance “the new Gulbransen Piano” as “an instrument worthy of selection by the most discriminating and exacting purchaser,” glassware and crystal in “delightful ... cuttings ... and modern shapes,” or the Westinghouse Table Model Radio, advertised as tasteful and modern: “Lovely to look at, delightful to hear.”²⁷

The Home was also remarkably international in its outlook and emphasized travel and mobility, even publishing dedicated travel numbers in October of each year from 1925 to 1931. In these as well as its regular issues, travelogues and travel writing mixed with highlights of particular Australian and overseas destinations, advice on shipping lines, other modes of transport and accommodation, and advertisements for cars and sea travel. The dedicated travel number in October 1926, for example, included an article by well-known Australian writer and artist Margaret Preston on how to take in all the sights of the 'East' on a budget, including stops in Brisbane and Gladstone, Macassar, Bali, Surabaya, Java, Batavia, and Singapore, as well as Bangkok, the Malay peninsula, Siam, Ream, Phnom Penh and Angkor, Saigon, Hong Kong, Macau, and Davao, an extensive trip through South East and East Asia.²⁸ The settings of *The Home*'s textual and visual features were extraordinarily diverse, and images of globes, bridges, and maps on its covers and in advertisements signaled worldliness to its Australian readers.

Like *The Home*, *MAN* also presented a geographical imaginary to its readers that extended beyond Australia's shores. With journalist Frank S. Greenop as editor, *MAN* was established in December 1936 by Kenneth Murray, an ad-man who had previously worked for Gordon & Gotch, a major Australian magazine and book distributor. If *The Home* saw its target audience in middle- and upper-class women readers, *MAN*, modeled on the American magazine *Esquire*, was addressed to the modern, urban, working man. Its readership consisted of white-collar workers and others broadly belonging to the lower middle classes, as well as members of an emerging clerical class of urban businessmen. Its advertisements for office stationery and furniture as well as business attire speak to this: Macnaught Shoes offered relief from dealing with feet pounding the "hard asphalt or concrete," while W.C. Penfold and Co. promoted "A safe place for every businessman to keep his records."²⁹ Fashions from G.L. Fuller for "Professional and Business Men" were complemented by

advertisements for Toohey's Oatmeal Stout, Philips Radio Players, The Brodie Mack Correspondence Art School, The Langridge Exercise Club for men, and the occasional medical product or treatment for the ailments of modern, urban life, such as high blood pressure or neuritis.³⁰

In comparison to *The Home*, *MAN* boasted much higher print runs and reached a broader market segment, despite also selling for 2 shillings per issue. The editorial in April 1937 claimed a print run of 14,000, and by 1940 circulation had increased to about 40,000 – a spectacular success for a new publishing venture launched in the aftermath of the Great Depression.³¹ *MAN* also assumed a readership with experiences of overseas travel, partly through service in the First World War, or at least a keen awareness of a world beyond Australia. The magazine included regular sections on international and current affairs, world politics, features on a variety of general-interest topics, a large section of fiction, and – perhaps most famously – a number of titillating photographs, often depicting half-clad women in sexually suggestive scenes, and risqué cartoons with desert islands and topless Polynesian belles as favorite subjects. These elements indicated a wide spectrum of modern taste and showcased the way a magazine might host together features that would later appear oppositional and inconsonant: the surrealist camera art of the Parisian cabaret revues, and the commercial art of the *Punch* comic or American pin-up. Anxieties about the changing status of women were filtered through these fantasies, and *MAN* often linked the perceived aspirations of its readership to aspects of escape, which were also connected to mobility.

Mobility, Advertising and Social Aspiration

In advertisements for ocean travel, and in the sheer number of advertisements for shipping lines and travel agencies, an atmosphere of outward-looking mobility comes alive in the pages of *The Home*. In the April 1937 issue alone, to serve as an example, there are eleven

advertisements for sea travel, featuring destinations in Europe (mostly Britain), South Africa, North America, and the Pacific Islands. Four are full-page, colorful adverts for travel to Java, “the Garden of the East” via Surabaya, Semarang, Batavia, and Singapore with Burns, Philp & Co; for “Orient Line Cruises” during the winter to Papua, Fiji, or Rabaul; for a trip to California, a “vacationists’ summer paradise” with stops at New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, and Hawaii with The Oceanic Steamship Company; and for “P&O Pleasure Cruises” to Rabaul and Fiji.³² For a number of years, the first page of *The Home*, after the inside cover - and thus the first page a reader would see when opening the magazine - showed a colorful, full-page advertisement for either Burns, Philp & Co Ltd or for P&O, two of the biggest shipping companies operating in the Pacific. The back cover of *The Home* usually also featured a full-page advertisement for P&O, thus blending cover design with commercial art, and folding the qualitative values associated with *The Home* with those connected to steamship cruising in general and P&O in particular.³³

Ads for steamship companies presented cruising as prestigious, elegant and glamorous, taking in a world of sights en route to one’s destination, at ports of call that encompassed a dizzying array of colonial locales. Sea travel featured most prominently and captured the imagination of readers most vividly, but advertisements for railway journeys and motorcars also featured in *The Home*. Like the ads for ocean liners, the advertisements for cars also linked the practices of actual mobility to distinctions of taste. An ad in the issue of September 1937 praised La Salle, a model of Cadillac, as “designed for the discriminating” and “as the most strikingly beautiful car ever seen on Australia’s roads – irrespective of price.”³⁴ In all of these ads, readers of *The Home* were addressed as actual travelers and as having the means and leisure for mobility, be it ocean travel, domestic excursions by train, or road trips exploring Australia’s sights.

In stark contrast, the readers of *MAN* were much less likely to be actual travelers abroad, but more likely to imagine the distant world drawn near through features like the international affairs section or profiles of writers who travelled. While the first issue of *MAN* in December 1936 included a full-page travel advertisement on its back cover for the KPM Line, not only is the advertised international travel closer to the shores of Australia (“Java Seas, Bali, Surabaya, Semarang, Batavia, Singapore”) than the trip “home” to London often advertised in *The Home*, it also stands out as the only time *MAN* managed to secure a liner ad in this prominent position. The first issue openly courted this lucrative advertiser with an article explicitly linking travel to business ventures. In the “Big Business” section, this article, “We Pleasure Cruise” highlights the enjoyment of modern liner travel in the new Pacific pleasure periphery of Australia, an economical alternative to the more expensive Cape or Suez trips: Port Moresby, Suva, Rabaul, Samarai, Tulgai, Papua, Great Barrier Reef, Noumea, Fiji, and New Zealand.³⁵ Far more frequently than the expensive overseas travel advertised in the pages of *The Home*, *MAN* promoted and advertised the more accessible though still aspirational lifestyle of automobility. Advertisements for cars and car parts signaled taste and gestured to other forms of mobility, such as the December 1937 advertisement for KLG Sparking Plugs picturing “Girl in a Million Miss Jean Batten”, the well-known New Zealand aviator, and the two-page advertisement for “the new Pontiac motorcar” which also showed an image of an airplane.³⁶ The figures in these and other advertisements, like the one for Ardath Cigarettes on the inside cover of the September 1937 issue, were depicted engaging in leisure activities, and associated with glamour: “Smart people prefer Ardath Specials.”³⁷ In both *MAN* and *The Home*, travel was connected to smartness, modernity, and fashion.

Gossip, Distinction and Travel

Paired with the advertisements, which visualized the allure of tropical paradise, island romances, overseas adventures, and the luxuries of cruise liners, the social gossip pages within *The Home* and the artists' and authors' pages in *MAN* detailed the movements of actual travelers, and made the link between imagined and real travel. In *The Home*, the "social and personal" pages profiled and addressed a class of readers of distinction, who had the means not only to imagine travel but to actually embark on overseas trips. Society gossip, a common feature of the interwar popular press of a range of qualitative registers, was placed at the front of the magazine, before any other content except advertising, and before the table of contents, suggesting the popularity and relative importance of this section.³⁸ As in the rest of the magazine, the social gossip notes combined intimate details of home life with the sophistication of travel. In fact, it was travel that often justified a mention. Mobility conferred an aura of respectability, authority, and prestige. Among the announcements of engagements, weddings, garden parties, and dinners held in honor of charitable organizations, a large proportion of the notices relayed information about notable locals returning from overseas or about to depart. Often, a notice could be as short as "Mr. and Mrs. G. Mengler, Mayor and Mayoress of Claremont, left by the *Orion* for a six months' holiday abroad"; at other times, travel destinations were also stated.³⁹ In many of these announcements, the name of the ship by which people travelled was given as the only detail of the voyage, implying that readers were familiar with the details of shipping lines and particular routes. The gossip notes were complemented by regular photo series, variously entitled "Arrivals from Abroad", "Travellers Return", "Ocean Travellers" and "P & O Portraits",⁴⁰ or, stressing Pacific travel, "The Way of the East" and "Pacific Travellers".⁴¹ The gossip notes and photo series connected steamship travel with social prestige, and created an imagery of Australia's travelling elite comparable to local celebrities.

Looking at a sample issue of *The Home* in 1937 gives a good sense of the thematic dominance of travel within the gossip pages. The February 1937 issue devotes seven pages to social notes: of the one hundred and twenty individual “news” items, fifty-four relate information about travel activities of Australia’s social elite.⁴² The connection between mobility and upper-class leisure culture is reflected in and tied to the travel destinations, with a clear look towards Britain and Europe – the former the imperial centre of culture and commerce, the latter perceived by readers of *The Home* as the centre of modern culture, art, and fashion.⁴³ In addition to the usual flow of Australians to London in the interwar years – an annual exodus of 20,000 Australians and New Zealanders embarking on a journey Woollacott has termed a “secular pilgrimage” of colonials that was not only confined to the well-to-do, but which conferred prestige even on those who scrimped the passage⁴⁴ – much of the focus on England in the first few months of that year was also related to the Coronation ceremony of King George VI.

A notable number of destinations listed in the gossip news could also be found in the Pacific, especially along its Western shores. East and South East Asia were increasingly travel destinations in their own right, but importantly, they also continued to be ports of call en route to North America and on to Europe. Japan and China, for instance, were linked to the northern routes across the Pacific to Canada or San Francisco. The Pacific Island travel destinations listed in the gossip notes – New Guinea and Noumea in the February 1937 issue – were also the subject of educational articles and photo essays. These features offered ethnographic surveys of customs and traditions, and highlighted the beauty of the Pacific Islands and the untouched and exotic nature of their landscape and people as perfect settings for leisure cruises. In this way, readers of *The Home* and the travelers featured within its pages engaged with the Asia-Pacific region in a variety of ways, often associated with leisured self-education, even as their ultimate view remained on the voyage “home.”

In contrast to *The Home*'s society gossip suggesting a readership acquainted through their membership in a tight network of colonial elites, though perhaps not personally in touch with each other in actuality, *MAN* profiled authors in its "Authors and Artists" pages as traveling celebrity emissaries of the clerical class. This celebrity framing of the magazine's contributors elevates a class of highly mobile writer from the rank of journalist, whom a reader might imagine as a proxy for himself, as a self-made man who has cultivated worldliness by sheer will and adventurous spirit. Exemplars of these are writers such as George Farwell, Matthew Thynne, Browning Thompson, Eric Minns, and Bill Baverstock. Many of these profiles are accompanied by glamorous photographs of the authors in exotic locations, such as the debonair George Farwell relaxing in his swimming trunks on a palm-fringed beach, next to notes that recount his journalistic career and adventures:

GEORGE FARWELL

Born just a quarter of a century ago. Wasted his first twenty-two years in a more or less conventional English background. Inherited some money, migrated to America and the South Seas ... and spent it. Discovered the ideal place to live ... Tahiti.

Dropped in there meaning to stay a month, stayed eighteen. Was admitted to Australia after passing the language test with honours. Originally intended for the Law, but... preferred the quest for adventure to the mustiness of the Law Courts. Professions: South Sea treasure-hunter and lotus-eater; in Australia became a seaman and, later, journalist, radio and film actor... working on volume of stories with new angle on Tahiti.⁴⁵

Unlike the advertisements in *MAN*, which promoted domestic automobility, the travels of *MAN* writers and contributors detailed in these columns linked international mobility and sea travel with adventurous and cosmopolitan experiences.

The mobile men of the authors and artists pages in *MAN* also represent the kinds of aspirational, modern working men that the magazine addressed. The journalists and freelancers signal a form of vernacular cosmopolitanism often as a result of overseas posts in the First World War. They gesture toward a shared understanding of a world connected by the names of R.A.N. ships on which the magazine's readers also might have once served, or by copra and plantation liners on which readers might have worked in the colonial periphery of Australia, in New Guinea, the Solomon Islands or farther afield. Like the social gossip notes in *The Home*, the authors' and artists' pages highlight travel and geographical mobility, which form a key part of their status. Rather than consolidating prestige and feminine propriety, as in the social gossip and travelers' photographs in *The Home*, however, these features are linked to male notions of adventure, fantasy, and escape, as well as new kinds of mobility linked to colonial modernity, industrial capitalism, or their combination in war service.

As in *The Home*, the portraits of travelling authors and artists are supplemented by non-fiction articles, especially the detailed International Affairs section edited by J.M. Prentice. Prentice had served in the Australian Imperial Forces, then risen to prominence as a commentator on foreign affairs and politics.⁴⁶ He represents a class of reader whose horizons had been broadened through the experiences of war, and who understood international affairs and literacy in the matters of politics as currency by which class mobility could be attained. Throughout 1937 and beyond, Prentice keeps an eye on the emerging crisis in Europe and the growing threat of world conflict. His geographical ambit covers Great Britain and Germany most prominently, but extends to Prague, New York, Buenos Aires, Petrograd, Mexico City, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Albania, Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Palestine, Rumania, Poland, Turkey, the Balkans, and the Vatican with terrific ease. His eye on the rise of communism and fascism is sharp, but his gaze extends across the Pacific also to the threat of Japanese

territorial invasion of the Pacific, to the Philippines, and relations between China and Japan.⁴⁷ In the International Affairs section, as well as in other *MAN* features like fashion notes, sporting news, and book and film reviews, and classy black and white photographs of foreign destinations, readers look out to the wide world beyond Australia's shores. Aspiration structures these aspects in *MAN*, even as its cartoons, author biographies, and fiction present opportunities for male escape. A category of quality periodical identified by George Douglas as the "smart magazine," *MAN* suggests a "love-hate relationship with all forms of elitism" in line with other such publications that "may have attempted to ride the coattails of the smart set for stylish effect" but which were just as often characterized by "disaffected eccentrics, sardonic castaways".⁴⁸ While *The Home* omits material that might be deemed vulgar or lowbrow, *MAN* folds the lowbrow into its aspirational brief, and these divergences affect the way each magazine canvases geography, perhaps most obviously in the differences between their fiction sections.

Fiction and Imagined Mobility

MAN's stories, which are often set in foreign locales, are organized almost entirely around the anxieties of modern urban life or fantasies of escape. This is in line with David Carter's observations about the emergence of the modern genre system and popular fiction in mainstream publishing, which reached an apogee in the interwar years, featuring detective fiction, crime, thrillers, spy stories, and horror. Writers of these genres, Carter points out, were remarkably mobile, as were their plots and settings: "Mobility was not only a generic feature" of these stories, "with many plots turning on rail, ship, or air travel, it was a recurrent characteristic of writers' own careers."⁴⁹ While this aspect of genre fiction explains *MAN*'s fiction and its authors' mobility, it fails to account for the cachet offered by the mobility of these writers to *MAN*'s audience, and the particular geographical ambit of their settings.

Certainly a tropical fantasy is offered by the *MAN* plots. South Seas genre fiction such as the December 1936 “The Woman on My Island” moves from San Francisco, London, and China to a fictional “James Island” somewhere in the South Pacific, where a man and a woman both jump ship from liners in transit to find themselves in each other’s company, on the run from the law and escaping the pressures of urban living.⁵⁰ Phillip Lewis’s “Hawaiian Interlude” and Ion Idriess’s “The Castaway” also offer anti-modern tropical fantasies and provide tonics to ease the reality of modern urban life.⁵¹ Julian Hillas’s “Island Destiny” invokes the timeworn fantasy of a South Seas belle but gives it a modern twist.⁵² In Bay Webb’s “Buried Alive” a former schoolteacher who has fallen on hard times finds himself divested of social status; he slums in remote Queensland, mistreats Aboriginal people, and dreams of the leading hotels of the world.⁵³ Other stories update the “ripping yarns,” or colonial adventure stories, discussed by Robert Dixon as characteristic of the new imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁵⁴ This collision of culture and class, primitive and modern, occurs throughout the stories in *MAN*. Pearl luggers, trucks, cities, and dockworkers connect global spaces with industrialization and urban crime and class-, race- or gender-based conflict. While typically classed as lowbrow, the presence of this genre fiction in a smart magazine suggests that for men these types of stories of escape and fantasy, adventure and anxiety, were still perceived as acceptable reading for an aspirational class – akin perhaps to the spy thrillers of today.

In marked contrast, the fiction in *The Home* presents relative immobility. Stories of sentimental domestic social melodrama prevail, highlighting tensions in romantic relationships or misunderstandings based on uncertainty about changing gender roles and social expectations. For stories set out of doors, locations outside of Melbourne are most common: along rail lines or in the nearby seaside or surrounds. High profile writers who had already become focused on the project of literary cultural nationalism also appeared, such as

Eleanor Dark, Rex Ingamells, and Katharine Susannah Prichard, drawing on pioneering and bush settings. In the few stories with foreign settings, cosmopolitan travel looks to Europe. Mary Mitchell's "Pilgrim's Progress,"⁵⁵ which profiles travel to France, and Alison McDougall's "Gypsy Horses,"⁵⁶ which recalls travel to France, Germany, and Switzerland, confirm this trend of European settings, and also suggest the emergence of social realist approaches. On the whole, Pacific settings and class conflict are absent from the 1937 fiction in *The Home*, and characters of other races do not feature. Unspoken codes of respectability appear to deem the kind of genre fiction that is acceptable to the reader of *MAN* inappropriate for the reader of *The Home*, and the geographical ambit of this magazine's more securely female fiction aligns to quite different locations of imagined travel. Escape and adventure in the Pacific or excitement and enticements in urban environments were apparently considered appropriate for the target reader of one quality magazine, but not the other.

Conclusion

Travel and mobility were constant and dominant themes in both *MAN* and *The Home*, and offered their predominantly white, middle-class audience an imaginary of glamour, luxury, and worldliness. Such outward-looking visions were part of the sections on international affairs and travel features, but they also found expression throughout the magazine: in other, sometimes mundane news items; social gossip notes and photos of local celebrities; advertisements; and fiction. The representations of travel, mobility and a world beyond Australia's shores highlight the importance of sea journeys and foreign places, international news and trends to Australia in the interwar period, as well the emergence of a Pacific consciousness.

Yet, even as these two magazines both suggest a growing familiarity with the Asia-Pacific region and the development of a trans-Pacific gaze in this period, they took up these

locations differently. *The Home* focused very much on people of attainment, who may have had or wished they had the means to comport themselves in a particularly mobile class of modernizing, colonial elites “in the know.” This magazine consolidated female sophistication and distinction through its travel notes and its opulent advertisements. Its gossip pages profiled people who actually did travel, and whose travels may have taken them into the Asia-Pacific or Pacific Isles, but who were mainly oriented “home” toward England. Readers who may not have travelled or possessed the means to access international travel, could associate themselves with people who did through gazing upon the advertisements for liner routes and the photos of travelers leaving or returning to Australia’s shores. The light fiction of 1937 deemed suitable for such readers of refinement and taste only occasionally touched on foreign settings, in Europe exclusively.

In contrast, reading *MAN* provides insight into a male, aspirational target audience who shared with readers of *The Home* an outward gaze upon international locales, but who appeared much less likely to travel internationally. Democratic forms of car travel are profiled more often than the more exclusive forms of sea travel in the advertisements in *MAN*, but the stories’ and features’ international settings imaginatively project the reader abroad. International affairs address readers who may have travelled in Europe through war service, and who are keeping their eye on the coming conflict as a mark of someone in the know. In *MAN*, the Pacific emerges as a space of modernizing, colonial adventure or industrial opportunity, as well as a location of storied escape from modern life and its pressures, particularly on white masculine hegemony.

Reading these magazines with a focus on mobility and geography thus suggests several important conclusions. First, the significance of travel and mobility to Australian modernity is registered through them, as is the way in which travel, even if only through print, constituted a form of cosmopolitanism present in interwar Australia. Second, these

magazines imply that this travel was framed by, and was an index of, larger social, cultural, or political contexts, which aligned with social markers of aspiration or distinction. Third, readerships were coded predominantly as feminine or masculine, and they suggest that different geographical imaginaries corresponded with, and perhaps coalesced, the collective subjectivities of readers.

As Richard Ohmann has pointed out in the American context, “[m]agazines circulated nationally to people with common values and interests; they entered similar homes everywhere, and were part of what made those homes similar”.⁵⁷ Reading *MAN* and *The Home* shows that the inverse is also true: different values and tastes oriented readers toward different magazines; and reading a certain magazine that aligned with a particular outward view of the world consolidated readers’ affiliations, and established distinctness from homes that did not possess those products. Both magazines register the anxieties and aspirations of their middlebrow readerships, and link these not only to mobility but also to particular geographical imaginaries. Yet, these magazines also suggest that male and female readers, perhaps even in the same home, oriented and ordered their reading, and their worlds, in different ways. In Australian quality magazines of the interwar period, mobility is not just a mark of actual movement, but of distinction, wish-fulfillment, and class and gender affiliation.

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Notes

¹ Agnieszka Sobocinska and Richard White, “Travel and Connections,” in *The Cambridge History of Australia, Vol. 2*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart McIntyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 472-793; Richard White et al., *On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia* (Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005), especially chapter 3. See also

Georgine Clarsen, "Mobility in Australia: Unsettling the Settled," in *Mobility in History: the State of the Art in the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility*, ed. G. Mom, G. Pirie & L. Tissot (Neuchatel: Editions Alphil, 2009), 123-128; Georgine Clarsen, *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); and John William Knott, "The 'Conquering Car': Technology, Symbolism and the Motorisation of Australia before World War II," *Australian Historical Studies* 114 (2000): 1-26.

² Sobocinska and White, "Travel and Connections," 477. Emma Robinson-Tomsett also notes the dominance of sea travel up until the 1940s in the British context in *Women, Travel and Identity: Journeys by Rail and Sea, 1870-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 4.

³ The recent transnational trend in Australian literary studies, however, has begun to highlight the "international" in Australian literature. Examples are "Australian Literature/ World Literature: Borders, Skins, Mappings" Special Issue of *JASAL: Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* 15 no. 3 (2015); and Robert Dixon and Brigid Rooney (eds.), *Scenes of Reading: Is Australian Literature a World Literature?* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013).

⁴ See especially Carter's most recent essay collection, *Always Almost Modern*. See also Jill Julius Matthews, "Hidden Treasures of the Mitchell Library: Sydney Periodicals 1895-1930," *AusLit*, 2010, <http://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/C769610> (accessed March 11, 2013); Mitchell Rolls and Anna Johnston, *Travelling Home: Walkabout Magazine and Modern Australia* (London: Anthem Press, 2016); Victoria Kuttainen, "A Lost Australian Story: Man in the 1930s," *LiNQ* 36 no. 1 (2009): 161-180.

⁵ Angela Woollacott, *To Try her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity*. (New York: Oxford, 2001).

⁶ Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall and Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005), 1-2.

⁷ We have chosen the year 1937 as this was the first year these magazines were simultaneously in print.

⁸ David Carter, "Magazine Culture: Notes Towards a History of Australian Periodical Publication 1920-1970," in *Australian Literature and the Public Sphere*, ed. Alison Bartlett, Robert Dixon and Christopher Lee (Toowoomba: ASAL, 1999), 69-79, here: 72.

⁹ Faye Hammill and Michelle Smith, *Magazines, Travel and Middlebrow Culture: Canadian Periodicals in English and French, 1925-1960*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Cary Nelson speaks of periodicals as "texts that have a unity different from but comparable with that of individual books." Cary Nelson, *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory, 1910-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), cited in Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, "The Changing Profession: The Emergence of Periodical Studies as a Field," *PMLA* 121 no. 2 (2006): 517-531, here: 517.

¹¹ We would like to stress here that the focus in this article is predominantly on class, as well as, to a lesser degree, on gender. The magazines we are analysing here addressed white Anglophone readers, and reinforced white hegemony, though space does not permit us to further explore this point here.

¹² Carter, *Almost Always Modern*, xii-xiii. See also Frank Greenop, *The History of Magazine Publishing in Australia* (Sydney: K.G. Murray, 1947), 234; Roger Osborne, "A National Interest in an International Market: The Circulation of Magazines in Australia during the 1920s." *History Australia* 5.3 (December 2008): 75.1-75.16.

¹³ Faye Hammill, *Women, Celebrity and Literary Culture Between the Wars* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); Faye Hammill and Karen Leick, “Modernism and the quality magazines,” in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume II North America 1894-1960*, eds. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 176-196; Sharon Hamilton, “Intellectual in Its Looser Sense: Reading Mencken’s *Smart Set*” in *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows 1920-60*, ed. Erica Brown and Mary Grover (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 130-147; George H. Douglas, *The Smart Magazines: 50 Years of Literary Revelry and High Jinks at Vanity Fair, the New Yorker, Life, Esquire and The Smart Set*, (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1991); David Carter, “Colonial Modernity and Print Culture Studies: Books and Readers in Australian Society,” *Pacific and American Studies* 9 (2009): 63-82.

¹⁴ David Carter, “The Mystery of the Missing Middlebrow or The C(o)urse of Good Taste,” in *Imagining Australia: Literature and Culture in the New World*, ed. Judith Ryan and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 173-201, here: 174.

¹⁵ Hammill and Smith, *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture*, 8-9.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ Erica Brown, *Comedy and the Feminine Middlebrow Novel* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 1; Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Kate Macdonald, “Introduction,” in *The Masculine Middlebrow, 1880-1950: What Mr Miniver Read*, ed. Kate Macdonald (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2011), 1-23, here: 11.

¹⁹ Carter, “The Mystery,” 182.

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- ²⁰ Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 28.
- ²¹ Michael John Watts, "Collective Wish Images: Geographical Imaginaries and the Crisis of National Development," in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Doreen Massey et al. (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 85-107.
- ²² Derek Gregory, "Geographical Imaginary," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. Derek Gregory et al. (Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 282.
- ²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1982).
- ²⁴ John Docker, "Feminism, Modernism, and Orientalism in *The Home* in the 1920s," in *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), 117-130, here: 18.
- ²⁵ *The Home*, January 1926, 13.
- ²⁶ Nancy D.H. Underwood, *Making Australian Art 1916-1949: Sydney Ure Smith, Patron and Publisher* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991), 200.
- ²⁷ *The Home*, February 1937, 9; May 1937, 20; August 1937, 9.
- ²⁸ *The Home*, October 1926, 31.
- ²⁹ *MAN*, July 1937, 81, 82.
- ³⁰ *MAN*, July 1937, 7, 12, 83, 84.
- ³¹ *MAN*, April 1937, 7. Richard White, "The Importance of Being *Man*," in *Australian Popular Culture*, ed. Peter Spearritt and David Walker (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1979), 145-168, here: 147.
- ³² *The Home*, April 1937, 1; 19, 79, back cover.

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- ³³ On the cultural associations connected to steamship travel in the interwar period see Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), introduction and chapter 6.
- ³⁴ *The Home*, September 1937, 2.
- ³⁵ *MAN*, December 1936, 18-21.
- ³⁶ *MAN*, July 1937, 4-5; December 1937, 95.
- ³⁷ *MAN*, September 1937, inside cover.
- ³⁸ Sarah Newman, "Gentleman, Journalist, Gentleman-Journalist: Gossip Columnists and the Professionalization of Journalism in Interwar Britain," *Journalism Studies* 14 no. 5 (2013): 698-715.
- ³⁹ *The Home*, March 1937, 3.
- ⁴⁰ For instance *The Home*, January 1937, 18; March 1937, 18, 82; June 1937, 18; November 1937, 22.
- ⁴¹ For instance *The Home*, January 1937, 65; April 1937, 15; May 1937, 80; June 1937, 82.
- ⁴² *The Home*, February 1937, 3-4, 6-8, 10, 12.
- ⁴³ See, for instance, fashion notes from Paris (*The Home*, May 1937, 34, 35, 90) or the regular fashion and gossip feature "Princess Troubetzkoy's Notes from London" (*The Home*, March 1937, 60, 77).
- ⁴⁴ Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 5, 19.
- ⁴⁵ *MAN*, July 1937, 2.
- ⁴⁶ Andrew Moore, "Prentice, John Murdoch (1886–1964)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prentice-john-murdoch-11454/text20417> (accessed May 2, 2015).
- ⁴⁷ *MAN*, October 1937, 9-10; November 1937, 10-11.

⁴⁸ Douglas, *The Smart Magazines*, 2.

⁴⁹ David Carter, “Antipodean Romance, Crime and Sensation: Australian Popular Fiction in British and American Markets 1890-1925,” in *Scenes of Reading: Is Australian Literature a World Literature?*, ed. Robert Dixon and Brigid Rooney (North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013), 86–100, here: 88-89.

⁵⁰ Stephen Phillips, “The Woman on My Island,” *MAN*, December 1936, 50-52, 54, 88-90.

⁵¹ *MAN*, February 1937, 48, 80; May 1937, 23.

⁵² *MAN*, May 1937, 58-60.

⁵³ *MAN*, March 1937, 32.

⁵⁴ Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction 1875-1914*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁵⁵ Alison McDougall, “The Gypsy Horses,” *The Home*, January 1937, 43, 68, 70, 72.

⁵⁶ Mary Mitchell, “Pilgrim’s Progress: Story of the Month,” March 1937, 40, 41, 68.

⁵⁷ Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 160.