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A LOST AUSTRALIAN STORY: *MAN IN THE 1930s*

In early Australia, “a land of newspapers and magazines” (Johnson-Woods 66) where book production was difficult and cheap copy proliferated, the short story played a vital role in literary production. Its development is typically traced from early colonial sketches in diaries and newspapers to a first significant flourishing in the 1890s with the *Bulletin*/Lawson-Furphy tradition, where the priorities were the depiction of the Australian landscape and the expression of vernacular cultural identity. After the war, in the Depression, it went into decline, to bloom again with the first series of anthologies that emerged in earnest in the forties.¹ This period of renaissance for Australian short story writing was also marked by the rise of the first university English-department little magazines, the Jindyworobak movement, and postwar nationalism,² all of which became in due time significant organs for the production of what was to become accepted as canonical Australian literature. The 1970s and 80s are said to have brought another wave of literary nationalism, where the short story again rose to prominence as it was visited by local writers experimenting in the form and as it was critically celebrated in anthologies such as Gillian Whitlock’s *Eight Voices of the Eighties*, a feminist corrective to an already established canon of Australian short fiction.³

Each rise of the short story in Australia coincides with a rise in literary nationalism and this, I think, is not coincidental. As Robert Dixon has recently observed, early attempts at literary history and canon formation in Australia often connected Australian literature to ideas about nation and place, going so far as to create a sense of agonism between nationalist literature where “all-pervasive images of place and landscape play an important role” on the one side and “cosmopolitan” or “expatriate-minded” writers on the other (12). Many of the short stories celebrated in critical and retrospective anthologies of the short story are Australian in the most thorough sense, perhaps because the form — being so thoroughly collectable — lends itself well to the pedagogical project of teaching and writing place. But the question arises: what about all the short stories that are and have been excluded from this literary history, which did not, and do not, make the anthologies?

Without wishing to discount the genealogy of the Australian short story I have traced here, I suggest that its nationalist alignment leads it to systematically overlook — even to repress — non-nationalist, lower brow, mainstream publications which have also played a formative role in Australian writing and culture. In the case of the short story — with its long-time association with

ephemeral medium of the magazine, the critical alignment of highbrow taste and nationalist loyalty risks overlooking the mass of short stories as they were actually published and widely read.

Recent years have seen some welcome correctives to the standard account. Bruce Bennett's 2002 *Australian Short Fiction: A History* is a valuable history of the often critically neglected short prose form in Australia that points out the fact of "original fiction, including short stories...published in increasing amounts from the 1850s" (18) and mentions the importance of the *Australian Journal* in this regard, although his study after 1930 sticks mainly to familiar Australian practitioners. Toni Johnson-Woods's 2001 thesis on the *Australian Journal* examined its fiction extensively, also pointing out that that *The Bulletin* was merely one among many venues for short story publishing in Australia, not all of which were as austere Australian in tone and theme. Studying the circulation of serial fiction in popular periodicals to 1900, she describes a vibrant publishing scene, and makes the major point that much periodical publication has been overlooked by the literati — both at the time of its production and in critical retrospectives — because "[c]ritics did not embrace the cheap publications as a serious literary form" and because "[t]heir very popularity condemned them" (28). Periodicals, however, played an instrumental role in shaping and reflecting the actual reading tastes of the Australian public, and are worthy of critical attention on that ground alone.⁴ The popular reading practices Johnson-Woods traces through the *Australian Journal* can be traced beyond the nineteenth century, as Roger Osborne begins to do in his 2006 *JASAL* article "Behind the Book: Vance Palmer's Short Stories and Australian Magazine Culture in the 1920s," which surveys the culture of short story publication in Australian popular magazines after the war. However, as Dixon insightfully points out in article cited above, Vance Palmer himself, and his wife and literary partner Nettie, were key players in tying the Australian literary project to landscape and the expression of national culture. For example, Nettie Palmer's *Modern Australian Literature 1900–1923* (1924) and her short story anthology *An Australian Story-Book* (1930) present the Australian short story in a thoroughly nationalist, highbrow frame.

The study of popular reading tastes through the interwar period is thus an incomplete project, which perhaps matters more to the historiography of the short story than to other genres because of the story's dependence on popular magazines. In addition, the interwar period is often seen as a time of decline for Australian letters, but a close study of the period leads us to challenge this view. One pertinent, as-yet unsurveyed site whereby we might gauge public taste at this time is the then-new and innovative *Man* magazine: in the 1930s, when many other well-established publications were going bust, *Man* was a spectacular publishing success.

The proliferation of the so-called “gentleman’s magazines” in the Depression years represented a major new trend. Although they produced an enormous amount of fiction and appealed to a wide readership, they have suffered an especially intense form of the critical dismissal Johnson-Woods observes for periodicals in general, in that they tend either to be overlooked altogether or isolated to constructions of gender. Their contribution to culture has been ignored.⁵ Given its simultaneous importance to nationalist literary anthologies and its association with popular magazines, short fiction as a genre can get lost between the highbrow and the lowbrow, as a comparison of the short fiction in a popular magazine such as *Man* with the form recorded in the anthologies allows us to see in sharp relief. As a publication that consciously modelled itself on America’s *Esquire*, *Man* shows Australian cultural production in the 1930s to be at the crossroads of American and British influences — perhaps not as “cosmopolitan” as Robert Dixon describes the more serious, at least more consciously “arty” form of writing often pitted against the more prized bush realism of the period, but certainly open to outside interests, somewhere between mainstream tastes and high cultural aspiration.⁶ While this first trend is important to trace as a corrective to the “dun-coloured realism” often preferred by the anthologists, the second trend is important too. It illustrates an Australian case of Catherine Turner’s hypothesis about the interwar period as a pivotal phase in cultural production where high and low — experimental and mainstream — often came together. This coming together of British and American culture, and the intermingling and clashing of these two registers of cultural production, can be witnessed spectacularly in the pages of *Man*.

Reconsiderations of the Interwar Scene

Ian Reid’s description of interwar scene in Australian literature is characteristic of the narratives of despair characterising this period. Personally and professionally, publishing firms, periodicals, and writers were, he observes, all in deep decline (115). He shows how drastically the Depression affected the import trade of books and periodicals: “During 1929 English books worth £1,094,346 were brought into Australia — a quarter of England’s total export of books; in 1931 the figure was as low as £483,630 — only an eighth of the export” (115). But even as Reid tells his tale of decline, he notes the complexity of his figures: in fact, England’s total book exports world-wide did not decline during the Depression era. Some countries must have been buying more English books if others such as Australia were buying fewer. As far as Depression economics go, then, the affordability of English books does not seem greatly to have altered on the world market. This also indicates, as Reid notes, that “the Depression, in Australia as well as elsewhere, removed with one hand money that might have been spent on this commodity, [but] with the other enforced leisure to many — and reading was a common pastime.” (115)

So — if imports fell and book production in Australia did not sharply rise, what *were* Australians reading during this period? I suggest that local periodical production must, at least in significant part, have gone to fill this void. This is consonant with Bennett’s observation that “[t]he 1930s saw a boom

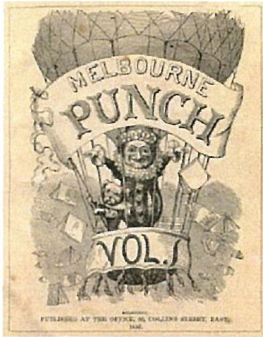


Figure 1: Melbourne's *Punch* Magazine 1855–1925

changing nature of the economy and culture in the 1930s, and set about capitalising on it.

The Rise of *Man*

Many middle-aged men these days remember *Man* magazine, but they are too young to have known its earliest and most important incarnation. They remember a “slightly risqué” girlie mag in barber’s shops and stashed in boxes in sheds — the rude rag that avuncular relatives tried unsuccessfully to hide from prying eyes. By 1974, when the repeal of censorship laws and the subsequent flood of *Playboy* and other foreign glossy magazines into the Australian market finally saw it off, *Man* had long been supplanted by other, trendier publications. But, as the Man Collectible website points out, *Man* was not always a rude rag or a thing of the past. It began as an ambitious local publishing enterprise that accurately perceived a yawning gap in the market for an aspirational gentleman’s magazine that was modern, urbane, and cosmopolitan:

Born in 1936 — the brainchild of ad-man Kenneth Murray — *Man* prospered ... through... the late 1930s and the second world war to become the centrepiece of an astonishingly successful home-grown Australian publishing empire. In its heyday *Man* and its spinoffs like [*Man Junior*] published excellent fiction and non-fiction articles, cartoons and artwork. [In fact] [s]ome of the best of Australia’s writers and artists appeared between its covers and many careers were built on its influence. Priced at... two shillings, *Man* was a bold, undercapitalised venture that took a calculated risk. But the first issue was a big success. The public liked the plush, art deco style, the high-quality and diverse articles and stories, the risqué cartoons, ...



Figure 2: Max Dupain's *The Mechanical Birth of Venus* and Laurence Le Guay's *Conflict* both published in *Man* 1936

and the titillating photographs by such renowned cameramen as Max Dupain and Laurence Le Guay. After a year *Man* had quadrupled its initial circulation (from 5000 to 20,000). By the onset of the second world war circulation was 60,000 and by [the war's end] it was 100,000 [making it one of Australia's most popular magazines in that era, by a landslide]. (Online)

Association with *Man* exposed writers to large readerships in very difficult economic times. Given the declining circulation of other Australian magazines, the economic attractor was very powerful. At the same time, many writers in the 1930s expressed despair with the "intolerable" limitations of *The Bulletin* formula: snappy endings, heavily plotted stories, and bush settings (Osborne 50). Nettie Palmer may have looked down upon *Man*, but the fact is that her husband published in it, drawn perhaps by the money, or perhaps by the fact that it was nothing like *The Bulletin*.

"By 1930," as Roger Osborne points out, "the circulation of *The Bulletin* had dropped to 30,000 (Arnold 265) after a purported circulation of 100,00 at the turn of the century" (50). Although Osborne partly attributes this decline to AG Stephens's departure and the magazine's attendant drop in literary standards — resorting to the more common formula of romance and adventure by the late 1920s (50), disappointed highbrow readers alone could not account it. In fact, *The Bulletin's* turn toward more popular genres in the 1920s and 30s might be seen as evidence that it had lost its almost exclusive hold on the Australian reading public. A generation after its most loyal readers of the 1890s, *The Bulletin* was clearly attempting to attract a broader, more modern readership and was put in a position of following the trends rather than setting them. *Punch*, *Triad*, and *The Australian Magazine* were certainly three major competitors that also published short fiction in the 1920s and their broader publishing agendas and enormous success certainly would have set

The Bulletin on guard. The decline of *The Bulletin*, the closure of *Triad*, and the buy-out of *Punch* signaled a shift in the Australian periodical marketplace. New formats and a fresh approach were called for, and the gentleman's magazine was one such. It both reflected and shaped the changes taking place in culture and reading tastes in the 1930s.

Changes in Reading Culture

These changing tastes, borne out by increased literacy, new print production and distribution mechanisms and laws, and the exposure of Australian soldiers to European influences during the war, were slow in coming. By the end of the 19th century, working class literacy levels in England and beyond had dramatically increased. During this period reading for pleasure became a working-class fad — indeed my own working-class great-grandfather read the complete works of Shakespeare alongside the adventure stories of Jack London, a star in the then-burgeoning world of commercial magazine fiction. At same time, although commercial nudie pictures first appeared during the 1880s when cheap ephemera such as postcards outstripped older, more expensive text-based forms of pornography, the fad of photographs of naked women eventually found a more permanent place in the jostling, competitive market for cheap magazines and dime-novels.

In *Governing Pleasures: Pornography & Social Change* (2002), Lisa Siegel argues that new technologies and distribution mechanisms at the end of the nineteenth century democratized the erotica that was once the domain of the elite reading classes. In turn, the proliferation of cheap images triggered anxiety among government agencies and advocacy groups (Caslon, online). The 1873 “Cornstock Act” in the US was one direct result. Anthony Cornstock was a New York bookkeeper who conducted a lifelong campaign against “smut” by directly targeting the postal service, “lobbying the US government so long and hard that they finally gave this civilian bookkeeper power over the American postal service” (Hanson 10). Because magazine distribution relied on the post, censoring the postal service effectively cut off supply of what Cornstock regarded as the “flood of vile obscenity flowing into the US from across the sea, which was being dispersed to vulnerable innocents via the US mail” (10). Australia followed suit, officially enforcing postal censorship in 1914. Here and in the US, this was a protectionist move to cut off the contagion of overseas influences. Much erotic magazine ephemera originated with the French, who as far back as the 1870s (Hanson 10) had produced the earliest men's magazines, offspring of cabaret pamphlets and programs that included photos of bare-breasted dancers. The problem was, however, that the authorities' attempts to block supply could not surpass the overwhelming demand, in the USA in particular and, partly because the European magazines had a certain high-art

style, Cornstock could not prevent the entry of all of them. As Diane Hanson points out in her book *The History of Girly Magazines*, “by the 1890s American courts were increasingly considering artistic merit when making obscenity determinations” (10). The Parisian magazines had progressed quickly from cabaret pamphlets to miscellanies that combined nude art studies and discreet nude photographs with “spicy fiction and humour” (10), and these gained widespread acceptance in Europe because they were “relatively sophisticated, something nearly respected in France as fine art” (10). During the First World War, Australian and American soldiers experienced European cabaret and girlie magazines for themselves, such that on their return home they quite literally could not get enough of them.

In Australia in the 1930s, censorship laws kept these publications from the local market, and tariffs on print imports made their passage into eager Australian hands doubly difficult. As Reid notes, one major reason for the “spectacular decline” in the import of print matter in the Depression was that these items were “subjected in mid-1930 to high customs duties in order to counteract effects of the slump” (115). This period of protectionism provided an obvious opportunity for Australian publishers. At the same time, American magazines like *Esquire* (whose pin-ups were made famous by the cover art of Eduardo Vargas) had managed to get around the Cornstalk Laws by imitating the highbrow magazines of Europe. *Esquire* in particular modeled itself on leisure, culture, and art magazines like *Shadowland*, that had taken a cue from the art magazines of Paris. As Hanson describes it, in 1922 *Shadowland* was the “most elegant thing every conceived in Queens, NY...: a sophisticated film and literary review with ‘continental’ photos and illustrations” (66).

Another way that these magazines were made respectable enough for sale was through the pulp fiction market. As Hanson explains:

Cheap, legal popular fiction magazines, called pulps... were new moneymakers [in the USA and Britain] in the 1920s, but they didn't deliver much erotic stimulation — until the Spicy pulps. Spicy meant “sexy,” and the idea was to sell sex without getting busted. Naked breasts were like a red flag to the censors. The word ‘spicy’ on the cover alerted the sex-hungry audience without resorting to nudity, and sexy stories instead of photos meant that these pulps could be displayed on a newsstand... (99)

So these, alongside the arty, aspirational publications like *Shadowland* and *Esquire*, true cosmopolitan gentleman's magazines, and the recently defunct *Punch*, were precursors of Australia's *Man* which cornered the market with its miscellany of nude studies, erotic photographs, cartoons, international affairs, book reviews, and fiction. These magazines were therefore a unique

combination of art and writing that aspired to highbrow status with vehicles that appealed to the basest of lowbrow tastes for soft-porn, comics, and pulp.

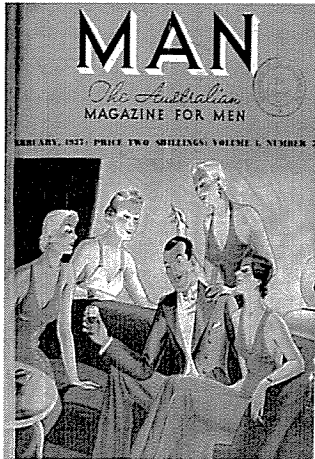
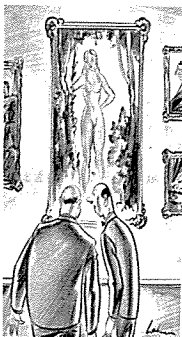


Figure 3: Cover of *Man*
February 1937

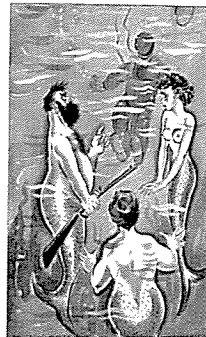
agenda on the cover: this is for a cosmopolitan man of good taste and style, with all the world (and by implication all its women) at his finger-tips.

Man's true inheritance is thus both high- and lowbrow, and this point is of interest because of the way that canonical collections of Australian short fiction have overlooked *all* of the fiction it produced, despite its spectacular success. In its prime, it boasted the fastest growing readership of any magazine in Australia, and with that came a capacity to reach both a broad and discerning readership. A quick look at the early issues of *Man* shows that its target readership was affluent, aspirational, and educated: the glamour of the modern shines from its glossy pages. In its early incarnation *Man* was no smutty rag, but a tasteful publication for gentlemen who liked to think of themselves refined, elegant, and sophisticated but also fun and modern. The third issue puts its

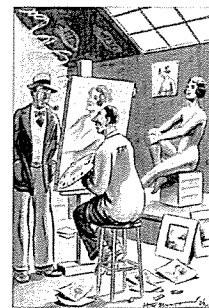
But just like *Esquire*, *Man's* claim to highbrow status is also designed to keep the censors at bay. Cartoon formats were employed strategically to lend the magazine respectability. They were a way to escape the censor's pen. Drawings of nudes were doubly mediated to make sure they were extra safe: the full-nudes in drawings were mermaids, figures from art, or cartoons of nude-studies — pictures of pictures, clear ruses to avoid the accusation that *Man* actually showed naked bodies.



"They say it took Angello two years to get as far as her knees."



"Is that him?"



"She doesn't know it, but I ran out of paint two days ago."

Figure 4: Cartoons of drawings and mermaids doubly mediated the nude figure. Captions here are 'They say it took Angello two years to get as far as her knees,' 'Is that him?' and 'She doesn't know it but I ran out of paint two days ago.'

These strategies, like their arty photos, enabled the popular publication to pass as a sophisticated gentleman's magazine, an aspiration that also had implications for the tone the magazine set for its writing and fiction.

Almost immediately into its publication *Man* formed a cross-promotional partnership with Angus & Robertson in which A & R exclusively supplied all of the books *Man* reviewed. Despite Nettie Palmer's remarks about the crassness of popular books that A & R put out during this time in which its Australian market also expanded rapidly (Palmer qtd. in Reid 116), the books that *Man* selected for review — novels like *Capricornia*, and titles by Hemingway and Steinbeck — show the kind of readership they expected to attract. The choice of books for review shows a modern sensibility that attempts to overcome Australia's insularity, looking to America and American books, interested in cosmopolitan art movements and international affairs. The books *Man* chooses for review are aspirational in taste, but also deemed by the editors to be accessible enough to attract a wide readership. In 1939, the fiction editor Gilbert Anstruther wrote a telling article entitled "Are we Too Well Educated?"

The education system is highly beneficial. Only one thing hampers it — that is the PREJUDICE AND SNOBBISHNESS OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO, CONSCIOUS OF THEIR OWN SUPERIORITY ARE JEALOUS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE IMPROVING THEMSELVES, AND COLD-SHOULDER THE ENDEAVOURS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO ATTAIN A HIGHER LEVEL OF CULTURE. (35)

Man saw itself as helping this "common man" attain this "higher level of culture." But Anstrutherr did not believe this "higher level of culture" had to oppose popular tastes. In a representative film review, Anstruther mixes his love of American popular culture with English highbrow tastes, and also demonstrates that he pays attention to the general public:

Hollywood, in its relentless search for something different, turned to Bill of the Shakespeare ilk...The first Wagglestaff epic left much wanted on the credit side of the ledger but MGM have no fear of that happening with their production of "Romeo and Juliet"...It will not only satisfy GP, and it's the General Public that, not unlike the female of the species, pays and pays and pays...It's as near a perfect production as one would dare hope. (2 December 1936)

In May 1937, in a satirical article called "How to Write," he scorns high modernism — "If you scorn to use a plot your are either lazy or ultra modern" but his next issue includes an interview with a surrealist artist and discusses the "elegant lines" of modernism. This jostling of highbrow, lowbrow, and the market is seen in the magazine's mix of luxury advertising and cartoons.

COOL HEADS UNDER SMART HATS.....

Hawley TROPPER *the crown hat*

SUNPROOF RAINPROOF PRICES UP TO 15%.

WINE AND SPIRITS for the discriminating

CHAMPAGNE - CHARLES HEIDECOCK VINTAGE 1878
SERRIES - GONZALES BYASS VINO DE PASTO AND ANTELOPE
PORT - GONZALES BYASS TYS TINE OLD DOURO
WHISKY - GLENGLARY DE LUNE SCOTCH
BRANDY - PELLEGRIN 10 YEAR OLD COGNAC
CIN - BODROT'S ORIGINAL LONDON DRY
VERMOUTH - NOBLY FRAZ FRENCH FOR THE PERFECT COCKTAIL
VERMOUTH - COPIA ITALIAN
CHERRY BRANDY - BEEHIVE ORIGINAL DANISH
GRAND MARNIER - COGNAC ROUGE
LIQUEURS - BARDNET'S CREME DE MENTHE AFFOCT BRANDY TYPICAL

MAN

Give her **CRYSTAL FOR XMAS**

GRIMWADE

The Gift of Taste

Figure 5: Luxury Advertising and Cartoons

It is apparent too in the way *Man* marketed its fiction and brand name commodities, praising the quality while promising to pack in more bang for the buck.

★ **MORE CARTOONS THAN ANY MEN'S MAGAZINE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD . . .**

and THESE NAMES

EXTRA COLOUR & A NEW COVER

★ **THE LAW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND** ★

It seems no time since we said "As many cartoons as any men's magazine in the world." That regime finishes with this issue. From May MAN will take number one place for quantity (no less than 40) and, if we know our Australian humorists, for quality, too. And, incidentally, MAN will also lead the world with two examples of an entirely new kind of cartoon.

Ion Idriess, Francis Birtles, E. V. Timms, J. M. Prentice, Bruce Dive on Tennis, Hugh Anderson on Golf, Charlie Messenger on Shark Fishing, Gilbert Anstruther, Avlet Norris. All writing for you in May issue.

You'll like this extra brightening, particularly as a glossy share of it will go into MAN'S widely appreciated fashion section. The new cover will express a vertical motif rather than horizontal as at present.

We regret that so many have found it difficult to procure copies of MAN in recent months. Production costs on the publication are particularly high and the possibility of over supplying the market had to be guarded against. We made sure of achieving this end by undersupply and each issue sold out. In May we are adding an extra three thousand copies but still think that you will be well advised to get in early.

Figure 6: "And these names" — Magazine Feature and Fiction Writers as Celebrity Commodities

Australian literature as second-rate and defends his choice to review American fiction, but in July discusses American literature in these terms:

[S]ince I am a bit sore on the subject of American literature we shall dally a space with that subject. It would be interesting to know how much Australians spend, each year, on American books... what does make me very annoyed is the fact that the great, self-centered United States of America will never — *never*, mind you — publish, or sell in any appreciable quantities, an Australian book.

They make absolutely no attempt to do so. Idriess is probably the only Australian author who has ever sold anything in America. I...eat the next issue of *MAN* if the total amount paid by America to all Australian authors since the beginning of our history exceeds 1,000 pounds. (111)

Anstruther goes on to argue for an embargo on American fiction — “one Australian book sold over there for every American one imported here...” He regularly discusses books as commodities, and continues discussing admirable sales figures by referring to bestselling American novels. Even if he thinks he has sorted out his love-hate relationship with the Americans here, he still has his brows muddled. He complains in one review of a book that has “the kind of surprise ending that any short-story writer turns out by the dozen to catch a couple of quid here and there from magazines”(113), even though this was exactly the kind of fiction that *Man* itself featured, which Anstruther was personally responsible for selecting.

Writing in *Man*

The Man Collectible website describes the fiction thus:

In its brief description on the AustLit database, *Man* is characterised as “not aiming for literary quality” though this was not entirely the case. *Man* published many short stories and some poetry: some of its stories clearly aimed for a higher brow, and some were popular, formula driven genre-pieces. A 1938 editorial reported that between four and five hundred manuscripts were received each month. In addition to the many amateur writers who contributed to *Man*, writers such as Vance Palmer, E. V. Timms, Will Lawson, R. Carson Gold, J. M. H. Abbott, Ruth Park, Dal Stevens and Dulcie Deamer also appeared. Another [later, wartime] literary feature of *Man* was the “magazine within a magazine” called “Australiasia.” Edited by Ion Idriess, this section published essays and adventure fiction set in places like the Australian Outback or in the South Seas. Idriess contributed many of these, but contributions were also received from Frank Clune, Will Lawson, and a wide variety of other writers. Austlit also claims that “While *Man* asserted an Australian attitude in early issues, its later contents often reflected the adoption of language and commercial attitudes of the United States.” (online)

However, as I have sought to show, *Man's* attitude toward the USA was distinctly ambivalent. Its early advertising gives evidence of British and American influences, and although they were written by Australians, many early stories were remarkably American in tone, in marked contrast to that very "eucalyptus setting" of *The Bulletin* stories of the same era. *Man's* stories were likely to be cosmopolitan and urban in their settings: city streets, theatres, cinemas, hotels, and taxi-cabs feature prominently. A busy world in motion is also reflected in the international travel section that spanned destinations as diverse as the Pacific Islands, Chinatown, San Francisco, Europe, and Alaska. These settings are the backgrounds of the stories, too — crime fiction set against a tropical South Pacific, or spy fiction in Eastern Europe. And although many of these were genre stories, in the '30s and early '40s at least, they discernibly more original than mere formula fiction. A wide array of genres, writers, and themes was represented — something akin to the level of writing now in up-market popular magazines. A few steps below *The New Yorker*, perhaps, but many above the "spicy pulps."

Interestingly, when in July 1938 it first advertised advance subscription, *Man* promoted its next issue, which it touted as the MOST LITERARY YET, as a particular selling point. Australian Post approval for circulation was crucial to *Man's* survival at this time, and the grab for literary status is clearly designed to promote the magazine's respectability to that end. But literary quality is also an asset *Man* advertises to the general public. In fact, the August 1938 issue is particularly remarkable for three stories in it have explicitly Australian settings and themes, and that it includes no nude photography and no scantily clad women, even in the cartoons. Certainly this suggests that *Man* was doing everything to win approval for circulation within Australia Post (subscription coupons are offered for only the second time in this issue). It is significant that the rise of Australian-themed fiction corresponds with their effort to appear highbrow, and so acceptable for circulation. Indeed, in the next issue, two years after its inception, *Man* is registered for circulation — perhaps not coincidentally, in the previous month's issue *Man* promised to add an extra 32 pages of Australian material. This spike in the Australian-themed fiction occurs only in the build-up to GPO approval; it is not generally sustained thereafter.

In the 1930s, while other magazines were in decline, *Man* established a prominence among Australian periodicals that it maintained for more than thirty years. In its first decade it published nearly 1500 short stories, almost 500 by Australian writers to readers with an interest in modern culture who were eager to embrace the tone and content of a contemporary Australian commercial magazine. Such readers were not in principle averse to the highbrow, but neither were they wedded to it as a value in itself. This was the time when writers of the calibre of William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald

were writing for Hollywood. Such developments allowed *Man* to embrace the cachet of the gentleman's magazine and be bought and read by the average reader. And despite the familiar jokes about buyers never reading the stories in girlie magazines, the early issues of *Man* were heavy on text and light on images.

Furthermore, *Man* was designed for a reader who saw reading and writing as ways to improve himself. The Writers' and Artists' Yearbooks common in the 1920s and 30s, which included advice for aspiring amateur writers, would list periodicals that accepted stories and sketches from unknown names. A salon writer and amateur-artist culture was emerging, that fostered writing of the kind that *Man* published in the 1930s. In turn, *Man* carried a number of advertisements for night classes in writing. The aspirational class that arose between the wars saw writing as a means both to income and self-improvement, and as a mark of class, talent, and education.

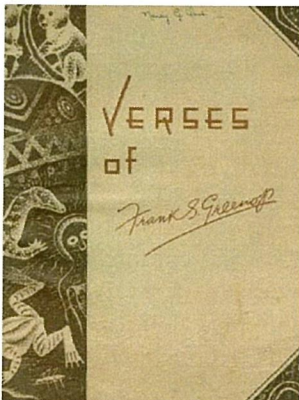
By the mid-1940s this jostling of literary brows and tastes was sorting itself into two distinct streams, as is evident with the formation of the little magazines. *Southerly* and *Meanjin* emerged in the early war years, in '39 and '40, flanked by others after the war such as *Overland* (1954), *Quadrant* (1956), and *Westerly* (1956). All of these were, or soon became, connected with the universities, and helped to maintain highbrow (art) literature rather than popular (trash) writing. At the other end of the spectrum, the lowbrow and popular became decidedly mainstream, pulp, and Americanised, and *Man* followed this trend. In the mid-to late 1940s it reflects a rising Australian patriotism, and its content begins to abandon the cosmopolitan ambitions of the late '30s. It seems that during the war nationalist expression became the property of highbrow art-house fiction, while the lowbrow stuff fell to the Americans. After the war, tired of the expense of sourcing and screening work by independent writers, Murray publishing moved toward pulp. Regular staffers cranked out short fiction according to formula thereafter, and with the lifting of paper-rationing, the Murray franchise moved into the production of pulp dime-novels, many of which were cheap reprints of American books. The *Man* of the 1930s is thus a very different phenomenon from the pulp magazine most people remember now, different too from the print culture we derive from the short fiction anthologies that survey this period.

A Comparison with Anthologies

Short fiction has long been tied to the twin agenda of nationalism and pedagogy. Early collections were school readers, but colonial editions of local colour fiction also supplied cosmopolitan readers with exotic snapshots of life in the colonies. These too served a pedagogical purpose, along with their entertainment value. Another early version of the short fiction book was the

single-author collection, which rose to prominence with the commoditisation of big names, recycling the ephemera of well-known authors and books. A third kind of collection was the Periodical Annual, like *The Sunday Times Book*. In Australia, these were the first discernibly non-colonial short fiction anthologies. In stark opposition to the short fiction anthologies designed for distribution through New York or London, *The Bulletin* published its *Storybook* “for Australia.” The strident nationalism of Nettie Palmer’s 1928 anthology, coupled with the *Bulletin* tradition, tied the idea of the Australian anthology to a certain idea of Australianness. After 1928, Palmer’s nationalism became so closely associated with high Australian standards that cultural nationalism won the purchase of highbrow.

Testing all of the anthologies of Australian short fiction I could find between 1901 and 1950 to an Australian subject matter/setting check produced some interesting results. Collections after the war are replete with Australian settings and stereotypes. The odd urbane or cosmopolitan story stands out starkly from the rest. But what is most interesting for our purposes is that despite the relative lack of Australian themes and backgrounds in stories in *Man* magazine, the *Man Storyteller* collections follow these trends, too. *Man* published two short fiction annuals in the early '40s, both clearly marketed as giftbooks for the Christmas buyer. In stark contrast to its magazine fiction, and despite the fact that it was collected from these same magazines, the anthology fiction is remarkably Australian in tone, setting, and theme. This development suggests that some tweezing of brows occurred toward the end of the war — what went into a “book” was something lasting, and therefore of a certain class. *Man*’s anthologies seem to suggest that, in Australia at least, by the mid 1940s a high-class original story in Australia story had begun to mean an Australian story. By the late 1940s, then, *Man* seems to have divided its fiction into two streams: a popular, American-style formula that subsequently filled the pages of its magazines after the war, and an Australian-themed with which it aimed for cultural respectability, and which it preserved in its annuals.



Conclusion

Man magazine’s fall between brows can be traced by following the subsequent output of its two 1930s editors, Frank Greenop and Gilbert Anstruther. Greenop, the general editor, wrote poetry and fiction. His collection of poetry proudly bears his name and is emblazoned with all the requisite tokens of Australian nationalism on its cover.

Figure 7: Cover of Frank Greenop's *Verses*
(Sydney: K.G. Murray, 1944)

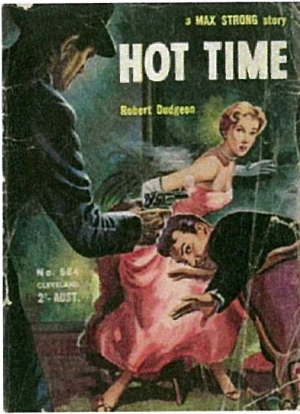


Figure 8: One of 38 titles produced by Greenop under the pseudonym Robert Dudgeon

His fiction, however, remained something of an embarrassment to him. He wrote it because it sold, but he was evidently unwilling to put his name to it. His pulp production amounts to a total of 122 works, penned under the pseudonyms Robert Dudgeon, Hart E. Martin, Lee Thorpe, and Walt Dundee (Johnson-Woods, online).

“Gilbert Anstruther,” the name of the literary editor, was a pseudonym itself. (His birth name was Russell S. Clark.) Perhaps he took the name Anstruther to protect his personal respectability, perhaps to lend a hint of foreign exoticism to the magazine, to help the highbrow culture-culture pose he tried to maintain in the 1930s. Interestingly, his work, too, continues to cross streams after the '30s — he produced one middlebrow serious novel (*Three Went West*, 1939)

and a number of less serious books that sold well, which suggests that his role as literary editor at *Man* had given him a substantial personal readership, and that his readers were indeed reading that magazine rather than merely salivating over soft-porn eye-candy.

Man in the 1930s affords us a vibrant snapshot of Australian writing and culture at that time. When we do read *Man* magazine for the stories, especially in its formative years, they show us a bustling time for literary production in a period that is too often described as miserable, bereft of energy, and in decline. And this, I think, invites the conclusion that we should adjust to what we mean by “culture” when we talk about Australian literature. The merging of brows and their subsequent sorting into high and middlebrow-Australian and lowbrow-American pulp that we see by following *Man* magazine from its inception to its post-war decline affords us insight into a time when Australian culture began to look beyond its insular concerns and Eucalypt settings. What is patently clear is that we do not understand or even glimpse this phenomenon if we continue to view it retrospectively through the short fiction collections, either those that emerged at the time or those which have appeared since. The nationalist emphases of these collections are often anachronistic and unsympathetic, but they have for too long been understood to preserve the best and the brightest.

By contrast, the image of 1930s’ Australian writing that emerges from the pages of *Man* bears surprising similarities with our own time, of which Delia Falconer has this to say in her Introduction to *The Best Australian Stories* of 2009:

Are stories of transnational identity where the literary action is these days? the *Los Angeles Times* wondered on the publication of *Granta's* markedly diverse best of young American novelists last year. Having read my way through the submissions for this year's best Australian stories, I can only answer yes. Put it down to a change of government or a dissatisfaction with the last one but a great restlessness characterises so many of these stories. As many seem to be set offshore as on. Others spanned ambiguities of living across several countries or cultures.... They stretch across a disorienting in-between space, like the overlap between two scenes in a film... and [subject matter] is diverse. (iX)

A term like "transnational identity" perhaps belongs too closely to the aftermath of the culture wars and to the postcolonial to serve for the 1930s, but that sense of looking beyond Australian cultural borders and the comparison with film that Falconer discerns now is as appropriate to *Man* in the 1930s. In its pages then we gain a sense of the short story in Australia that is modern, commercial, and confident. It is telling that it has taken us the better part of a century to return to such an outlook, and to put this kind of writing back in focus. As Elizabeth Webby has pointed out, putting the reader rather than simply the writer of fiction is part of this shift in focus, and it is no easy task to reconsider Australian literature in this way:

If histories of literature have, until recently, showed scant regard for anyone but authors, apart from an occasional glance at a publisher or critic, it is largely because authors, or at least those who manage to achieve book publication, have a public profile which readers do not, with the exception of some highly specialist readers such as critics or reviewers. Those interested in the history of what was read, as opposed to what was written, have to look much harder for their evidence... (Webby 308)

Even so, the phenomenon of *Man* produced masses of short fiction during a period that has previously been regarded by critical histories as a decade of dearth and decline. If we adjust our definition of "decline," too, to avoid the elision of quality and quantity that has been implied by literary histories, a very different history of culture and literature in Australia begins to emerge. *Man* produced a quantity of short stories that were read by large numbers of Australians, and the magazine is worth our attention because of its large readership. Overlooking this magazine and the fiction it printed simply *because* of its popularity skews the history of the short story in Australia and the history of Australian reading and writing culture more generally.

Endnotes

¹ Certainly, anthologies of Australian short fiction emerged before the 1940s, but the sheer volume produced in the 1940s represents the first major critical mass in terms of production. Volumes before these tended to be Christmas gift books, often produced as annuals by *The Bulletin*, or one-off primers of colonial tales. The emergence of *Coast to Coast* became a major force driving production of the Australian short story anthology in the 1940s. Titles from this period include the following: *Tales by Australians* (1939) edited by Edith M. Fry (London: British Authors' Press, 1939); *Some Stories by Ten Famous Australian Writers* edited by Albert Dorrington (Sydney: New Century Press, 1940); *Out of the West* compiled by James Pollard (Perth, W.A.: Paterson's Printing Press, 1940); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1941* selected by Cecil Mann (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1942* selected by Beatrice Davis (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1943); *New Signatures in Australian Literature* edited by J.M. Stevenson (Melbourne: View Publishing, 1944); *Pillar to Post: A Collection of Australian Short Stories* selected ["at random"] by Harley Matthews (Sydney: Frank Johnson, 1944); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories 1943* selected by Frank Dalby Davison (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1945); *Australian Short Stories* edited by George Mackaness (London: J.M. Dent; Melbourne: G. Jaboor, 1945) (This is a reprint of the 1928 edition, which shows there was a mature market for the anthology that was only just emerging when the collection was first in print and when it represented a much rarer phenomenon); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories 1944* selected by Vance Palmer, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1945. *An Australian Muster* selected by A.A. Phillips (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1946); *Twenty Great Australian Stories* compiled by J.L. Waten and V.G. O'Connor (Melbourne: Dolphin, 1946); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1945* selected by Douglas Stewart (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1946); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1946* selected by M. Barnard Eldershaw (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1947); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1947* selected by Don Edwards (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1948* selected by Brian Elliott (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1949); *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories 1949–50* selected by Nettie Palmer (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1950); *Australian Round-up: Stories from 1790–1950*. Edited by Colin Roderick. (Sydney : Angus and Robertson, 1953).

² Bruce Bennett points out that "[t]he *Illustrated Australian Annual*, edited by William H. Williams from 1869 was the first series anthology containing stories" (19) and that an anthology of stories by women writers — *Australian Ladies Annual*, was published in 1878 (19). These were along the lines of the annuals I discuss later in this paper, and in the vein of colonial short fiction anthologies like *The Red Kangaroo* published for the overseas market that I also discuss at this later point. The significant point about these publications is that there *were* anthologies published before the 1940s, but that they were not in the vein of the kind of cultural nationalism that we see characterising later anthologies produced by Australia's literary and critical elite, and certainly not in the spirit of the first of these kinds of nationalist collections such as the exemplum published by Nettie Palmer in 1928 — *Australian Storybook* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson).

³ Volumes like Leonie Kramer's edited *My Country — Australian Poetry & Short Stories — Two Hundred Years* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1985) were typical of the bicentennial zeitgeist in the 1980s. Others that emerged around this time included *The Australian short story : a collection 1890s to 1990s* edited and introduced by Laurie Hergenhan (St Lucia, Qld: U of Queensland P, 1992); *Neighbours: Multicultural Writing of the 1980s*, edited by R.F. Holt (St. Lucia, Qld.: U of Queensland P, 1991) http://books.google.com/books?id=PXCpAAAAIAAJ&cd=1&source=gbs_ViewAPI *Australian Short Stories* edited by Carmel Bird (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991) and *Relations: Australian short stories* edited by Carmel Bird (Wantirna South, Vic: Houghton Mifflin Australia, 1991); and *The Penguin Best Australian Short Stories* edited by Mary Lord (Ringwood, Vic. : Penguin, 1991). These were just some of them that emerged in the 80s and 90s, most of them with the aim of providing a corrective to previous anthologies — that is, a sense of more inclusive female and multicultural coverage of the national voice. Since then, a steady stream of anthologies continues to be published, but most of these are from local writers' groups and are either self-published or present a regional rather than national voice. Others are single-author collections, anthologies of emerging writers rather than established or canonical writing, themed anthologies (like Delia Falconer's *Penguin Book of the Road*) or more significant anthologies that aim for tome-like inclusion, such as *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature* edited by Peter Pierce (Cambridge; Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and *The Penguin Century of Australian Stories* edited by Carmel Bird (Camberwell, Vic.: Penguin Group, 2007). An emerging trend is the period anthology, like Ken Gelder and Rachel Weaver's *The Anthology of Colonial Romance Fiction* (Carlton, Vic. : Melbourne UP, 2010) which encouragingly aims to consider often-dismissed popular short fiction and to place it in its historical context, rather than establish or celebrate a canon of representative Australian writers.

⁴ Roger Osborne makes a similar point — citing David Carter, as well as Richard Nile and David Walker very succinctly:

With little opportunity for book publication in Australia or overseas (Nile and Walker 286–89), the payments and exposure offered by newspapers and magazines were essential to any established or aspiring freelance writer. As cultural institutions, these periodicals performed a significant critical function and their pages often reveal a “lively, wordy, intelligent, sometimes intellectual and certainly literate and ‘literary’ local culture.” (Carter 9–10)

⁵ While undertaking the research for this paper, the SBS documentary *Paper Dolls: Australian Pin-Ups of World War 2* was produced by the Film Finance Corporation Australia, Film Victoria, and Paper Dolls. This documentary showcased the significant role played by *Man* in Australia. However its focus was on war-time, not pre-war, and this was within the context of the “pin-up,” so again it was a study focused on gender. Nonetheless, the production and its subsequent DVD sales demonstrate rekindled public notice of this magazine, which is exciting considering the long period that interest in this publication has lain dormant.

⁶ The term “gentleman’s magazine” is in fact the oldest name for a periodical using the term “magazine,” derived from “miscellany.” (See the OED: “A periodical publication

containing articles by various writers; *esp.* one with stories, articles on general subjects, etc., and illustrated with pictures, or a similar publication prepared for a special-interest readership. The use of the word (rather than *periodical*) typically indicates that the intended audience is not specifically academic. Cf. quot. 1731 at sense 1a, with reference to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, or *Monthly Intelligencer*."). The fact that the term "girlie magazine" is not documented until 1942 but that the term "girlie," in reference to "a publication, entertainment, etc.: featuring young women, usually naked or partially naked, in erotic contexts" was in currency since 1906 (according to the Oxford English Dictionary) implies that in the decade leading up to the war, in particular, the status of the gentleman's magazine *as* girlie magazine was in transition — a larger point to be derived from the trends I document here regarding its mixed highbrow and lowbrow content in this decade.

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